

**AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONTENT
FAMILIAR TEXTS DERIVED FROM READERS' INTEREST AND
READING PERFORMANCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AT
UNIVERSITY LEVEL**

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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ABSTRACT

AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONTENT FAMILIAR TEXTS DERIVED FROM READERS' INTEREST AND READING PERFORMANCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL

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This study aimed to examine the relationship of background knowledge in relation to topic interest and reading performance of English language learners at TOBB University of Economics and Technology. For that, a reading interest questionnaire and three reading comprehension tests, which were accompanied with a 2-item background & interest questionnaire, were developed by the researcher. These instruments were implemented on 75 English language learners studying at TOBB ETU Preparatory School. The results obtained from the instruments were analyzed through SPSS 15.0. In analyzing the data, descriptive statistics as average and standard deviation besides inferential statistics as one-way ANOVA and Spearman's correlation test were used. The results of the study revealed that there is a significant difference among the three reading performance scores of the language learners. Besides, the correlation of topic background knowledge and interest is highlighted for each of three reading comprehension tests, so are the significant relationships of (a) background knowledge and reading

performance as well (b) topic interest and reading performance also among the results for “Animal Testing; Science or Fiction?” which is the moderate-interest & background knowledge and “Eurovision Song Contest- 2009” which is the high-interest & background knowledge test.

Keywords: background knowledge, reading comprehension, reading performance, interest.

ÖZ

OKUR İLGİSİNE DAYANAN TANIDIK İÇERİKLİ METİNLER İLE ÜNİVERSİTE DÜZEYİNDEKİ İNGİLİZCE HAZIRLIK SINIFI ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN OKUMA BAŞARISI ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİNİN İNCELENMESİ

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Bu çalışma, TOBB Ekonomi ve Teknoloji Üniversitesi öğrencilerinin okuma başarısı ve konu ilgi alanı ile ilişkilendirilmiş konu art alan bilgisi ilişkisini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Veri toplamak için araştırmacı tarafından katılımcıların okuma ilgi alanlarını araştıran bir anketin yanısıra konu art alan bilgisi ve ilgisini ölçmeyi amaçlayan iki maddelik bir anketle beraber sunulan üç adet okuma testi geliştirilmiştir. Araçlar TOBB ETU Hazırlık Okulunda İngilizce öğrenimi gören 75 öğrenciye uygulanmıştır. Elde edilen veriler SPSS 15.0 programı ile analiz edilmiştir. Veri analizi için betimsel istatistik olarak ortalama ve standart sapma, çıkarımsal istatistik olarak tek yönlü varyans analizi ile Spearman korelasyon testi kullanılmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçları, öğrencilerin her bir okuma testinden aldıkları okuma başarısı puanları arasında anlamlı bir farklılığın olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Bunun yanında, konu art alan bilgisi ile konu alan ilgisinin her bir test düzeyinde anlamlı düzeyde ilişkili olduğu ve (a)

konu art alan bilgisi ile okuma başarısının bunun yanı sıra (b) konu alan ilgisi ile okuma başarısının da orta-ilgi&art alan bilgisi testi (Animal Testing; Science or Fiction?) ile yüksek-ilgi&art alan bilgi okuma başarısı testinde (Eurovision Song Contest- 2009) ilişkili olduğu elde edilen bulgular arasındadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: art alan bilgisi, okuduğunu anlama, okuma başarısı, ilgi.

*In the precious memory of my dear grandfather,
Mehmet ÖZGÜR who always loved and supported me infinitely...*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of background information to the study, which is mainly about reading and one primary factor (background knowledge) affecting reading comprehension, along with the problem statement. The purpose and significance of the study are also highlighted while basic key terms of the study are defined.

1.1 Background to the Study

It was after the capitalist cold-war period whose effects on countries stand dominantly as economic restructuring English has become one of the main components of new era by gaining an important role in politics, commerce, military and culture due to some organizations like the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the European Union, NATO and Hollywood products or BBC World (Phillipson, 2001). Bowen (1975) estimated that the number of people using English exceeded 600 million even in last quarter of the 20th century; half of them picked up the language and the rest was instructed in formal settings, yet all have had some good reasons to use it up to a certain level of proficiency. Namely, English has had the biggest number of non-native users for at least three decades, while many other foreign languages have been restricted (Stevens, 1978). One of the possible reasons for such an increase is that many countries perceive English as a basic educational requirement to serve for international intelligibility (Stevens, 1978) in a global world, it is not simply an attractive academic accomplishment anymore (Maurais and Morris, 2003). Therefore, most of the educational systems, just like Turkish education system, aim to educate their citizens accordingly, so that they can meet the challenges of global world market and keep up with the rest of the developing world by using their innovative, competitive and analytic thinking skills (Akçay, 2003). In such a situation, knowledge and use of English is inevitable.

As Harris, Leung and Rampton (2001) highlighted the developments and demands of free market capitalism have shaped educational policies and actions of many universities because "... students whose access to a good employment track on graduation depends heavily on their proficiency in English." (Coleman, 2006, p. 5-6) and to fulfill that purpose, they are instructed with "... the research which teachers cite in today's classrooms is increasingly in English, not only in sciences but across the disciplinary panoply." (Hoberg, 2004, cited in Coleman, 2006, p. 6). Moreover, Graddol (2006) mentioned some good reasons for this case;

One of the most significant educational trends world-wide is the teaching of a growing number of courses in universities through the medium of English. The need to teach some subjects in English rather than the national language is well understood in the sciences, for example, up-to-date text books and research articles are obtainable much more easily in one of the world languages and most readily of all in English (p. 45).

That is to say, the language serves for international communication in oral and spoken forms. Although scientists are in different countries; they share some common information for science and technology to enrich their knowledge and practice. It is used adequately and elegantly as a vehicle for expressing and discussing matters of science; therefore, in "...many countries, the scientific community switches into English when serving scientific purposes..." (Strevens, 1979, p. 74). Also in many situations, apart from being the medium of instruction at university, English is used as a vehicle for public education as well; most of the seminars and conferences to which enough audiences attend and understand the content are offered in English (Strevens, 1979).

Moreover, in the modern industrialized society, the existence of many improvements in science and technology lead unskilled and semiskilled workers to be replaced by the machines. In past, people spend both time and effort on doing tasks like keeping records; however, nowadays it is done by a single machine in seconds. As a result, certain levels of education and special training are required for many occupations (Harris, 1970). In such a case, it is impossible

to ignore one of the important properties, being literate in order to have an active role in “urban technological societies (which) operate on the premise that their members can read” (Wallace, 1992, p. 5). In other words, reading stands as one of the basic sources of information because of being one of the most efficient ways to knowledge, production and reproduction (Adams, 1980; Altunay, 2000). So, if the citizens are not good readers, they will face with handicaps both in educational and professional fields (Adams, 1980). However, although the importance of reading is exceedingly emphasized, it is still not amply enough to survive in a global world. The citizens need much more than reading in the native language as the research stresses. Farrell and Grant (2005) interviewed with 83 human resources professionals and it was highlighted that there would be a resistance to hire Chinese graduates in a foreign company because of their poor English for eight out of nine jobs investigated. While in Malaysia in 2003, for foreign employees basic proficiency in English became a must (Graddol, 2006).

According to Bernhardt (1998), there are several reasons to read in a foreign language. First of all, in terms of social-political aspect, especially in developed countries, there are several students who don't speak the majority language but educated in majority language. So they have to rely on their literacy skills of the foreign language rather than their native language for their own success. Or else the students who are willing to attend advanced degrees at universities need to possess sophisticated literacy skills, even sometimes “more sophisticated than those achieved by the majority of native speakers of a language” (Bernhardt, 1998, p. 4). The second reason for the emphasis of literacy skills in a foreign language stems from pedagogical implications. Acknowledged as the most durable and stable skill of a foreign language, reading stands like a life boat when a person loses his productive skills or else in some contexts, it might be impossible to use them, he still can use his receptive skills to understand the texts and communicate with the writer to some extent of proficiency. Also, written texts are cheaper, more practical and very accessible sources of foreign language which make reading a very cost-effective skill. Lastly, reading in a foreign

language is a cognitive interest for some educational research community because its analysis may help them to understand Universal Hypothesis better. That is to say, some researchers are interested in the existence of two language systems and their simultaneous parallel cognitive processes (Bernhardt, 1998).

Although there have been lots of definitions, one of the most prominent researchers in the field, Goodman (1967), defines reading as ‘a psycholinguistic guessing game’ through which the reader is exposed to a reading text, makes hypothesis about upcoming ideas or facts with the use of available minimal language cues based on the expectations while sampling the text based on his knowledge of vocabulary, syntax and the real world experiences in order to confirm or reject the hypothesis.

Moreover, due to numerous simultaneous physical and cognitive actions, some other researchers have emphasized reading as a combination of processes to analyze and understand it better just like William Grabe (1991) who defines reading as a rapid and efficient process through which automatic word recognition, syntactic parsing, critical evaluation, linkages to prior knowledge cooperating all together at the same time. First of all, it is mentioned as a *purposeful evaluation* since it is directed according to the purpose of text and individual purposes of the reader who decides if something useful is presented or not. By the way, it is also a *comprehension process*, since people read to understand what the writer intends to communicate and find answers for their questions in mind through interpretation (Grabe and Stoller, 2002). Moreover, reading is an *interactive process* between the reader and the writer because the reader “actively constructs the meaning of the text by comprehending what the writer intends and by interpreting it in terms of background knowledge activated by the reader” (Grabe, 1991, p. 15). In addition, reading is a *strategic process* since there are some certain skills to be used for prediction of the text, selection of key information, organization and mental summary of the information, monitoring the comprehension while repairing comprehension breakdowns and

for appropriate match of comprehension output to reader goals. It is a *flexible and purposeful process*, too. The reader adjusts the reading process and goals according to his interest and purposes. Last but not least, it is also a *learning process* because while reading, the reader decides how to respond the text with the use of a strong set of background knowledge while inferencing (Grabe and Stoller, 2002; Grabe, 1991).

It is important to understand the effects of background knowledge on reading comprehension so that it becomes more meaningful to explain why students fail to comprehend the material. Most of the research on reading comprehension reveals that if the topic is familiar to the reader (content schemata), if the discourse level and structural make-up of the text are appropriate to the reader's proficiency level (formal schemata), if the reader is skillful in decoding words and in recognition how they fit together in a sentence (language schemata), comprehension of the message is better, or else deficiency in any schemata will result in a comprehension deficit (Al-issa, 2006).

In literature, background knowledge of the content and subject matter of a text are attributed to content schemata, while schemata in general is defined as "(t)he background information that readers bring to a text-including the knowledge of habits and beliefs from their own life experiences-is often referred to as schema" (Aebersold and Field, 1997, p. 8). That is to say, it consists of "our assimilated direct experiences of life and its manifold activities, and our assimilated verbal experiences and encounters" (Swales, 1990, p. 83). So, what people know about music, school, movies, sports, politics, internet, history or animals help them to comprehend the text because they exist as cognitive blocks of the related concept and activated when it is necessary (Aebersold and Field, 1997). Having the knowledge of the content of the text and activating that prior knowledge is crucial for accurate understanding since the text doesn't carry meaning but it guides the reader to construct meaning with the help of previously acquired knowledge (Rumelhart and Bransford, 1980). While reading, the most appropriate schema is

selected to understand the incoming words; if it doesn't exist, the reader tries to comprehend word by word, reaching the limits of short term memory quickly. Henry (1990) mentioned the importance of background knowledge by saying "limited world knowledge results in students who lack the capacity to comprehend what fully literate and well- educated professors assign them to read and expect them to understand" (p. 430). So the students whose prior knowledge is limited will experience reading difficulties, and who experience reading difficulties cannot broaden world knowledge; in a way this is a vicious circle since poor reading stands both as a cause and as a result of the problematic case.

In language teaching, background knowledge has an important role since schematic knowledge is not only essential for successful communication without paying attention to every minor detail but also it saves the reader from the bewilderment (Cook, 1994; Widdowson, 1983). However, in EFL reading, although the effects of background knowledge are the neglected factors, it is important to keep in mind that the reader can associate what he is reading to a proper set of pre-stored knowledge and he can comprehend the messages while holding a set of attitudes, beliefs and information (Clarke and Silberstein, 1977). As Anderson and Pearson (1984) besides Smith (1971) stated that comprehension occurs thanks to the interaction of new information and old knowledge, as well if the reader has considerably more background knowledge on a topic, he reads the text more efficiently and differently (Grabe, 1991). Due to background knowledge, the reader predicts more successfully and adjusts his expectations and the purposes accordingly. This theory is important as it provides insights to understand the structure of knowledge and its presentation used in learning, comprehension and inferencing (Anderson and Pearson, 1984).

During reading, inferencing is one of the main processes which should be activated and utilized. Anderson and Pearson (1984) mentioned four types of inference in reading comprehension. First of these is that the reader selects a potential schema among the alternatives to comprehend the text. It is also possible

that some slots of the selected schema are assigned with some values. Next, there comes default inferencing which is assigning default values to the slots of an activated schema. On the other hand, absence of knowledge inferencing involves conclusions in the absence of certain knowledge. They didn't focus on the last kind of inferencing but explained it with logic by saying "if X were true, I would know it were true. Since I do not know X to be true, it is probably false" (p. 269-270). So, "the reader comprehends top-level features better simply as a function of the relevant schema that he or she brings to the task of interpreting the text" (Nassaji, 2007, p. 93). Because of pre-existing mental representations of ideas, the reader can recognize, arrange and interpret the ideas accordingly, while reader's schemata are being adapted through assimilation and accommodation continuously (Piaget, 1971).

According to Carrel and Eisterhold (1983), the basic goal of an EFL reading session is to minimize reading difficulties while maximizing comprehension by providing or activating necessary background information through exposure to different topics. Goodman (1979) focuses on the issue when he says;

Even highly effective readers are severely limited in comprehension of texts by what they already know before they read. The author may influence the comprehensibility of a text particularly for specific targeted audiences. But no author can completely compensate in writing for the range of differences among all potential readers of a given text. (cited in Carrel and Eisterhold, 1983, p. 566).

1.2 Problem Statement

It is mostly mentioned that reading is an interactive process which involves lexical, semantic, syntactic and world knowledge; however, it is unclear that which component to what extent affects comprehension (Alderson and Urquhart, 1988; Eskey, 1988) and what really helps the reader to confirm the expected reading hypothesis.

In the foreign language education context at TOBB ETU, Department of Foreign Languages Education, although students are trained in language forms, use and skills, it is not enough to assume that they know how to read since there is a point which is missed; if they adequately understand what they read or not. Readers try to comprehend the meaning by analyzing the sentences through their purposes and world knowledge which depend on various variables like interest, gender, age and educational purposes. Yet, they have lost motivation to become fluent readers because what they reveal is that even though they read, at least struggle to read, and know the sentence structures and vocabulary in the text; they still get low grades in the exam. Therefore, sometimes they don't read the text fully to answer the questions, but they just try to guess the answer or even they don't speculate on the answer. Some of the students mentioned that the reasons for that case are their not liking the topic or not being interested in the topic. Besides, although they read the sentences, the meaning is not clear for them because they knew nothing or very little about the topic.

Moreover, they have revealed that they don't like reading and writing skills sessions, because the texts are too long, too boring or too unfamiliar. Some of the students have mentioned that while it is time to read, they either scan the texts in case the teacher asks some questions or read some parts if they appeal to them. If neither of the case is real, they don't really read but go over the sentences.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to contribute to foreign language reading research in Turkey by defining the relationship between background knowledge and reader's interest besides the relationship between background knowledge and reading performance in order to help students improve their reading performance. More specifically, the study aims to see if students who read three different reading texts regarding the content familiarity derived from readers' interest show any difference in their reading performance. It is also aimed to determine how successful the students

are, when they read texts of high-, moderate- and low-interest topics which are supposed to be related to the amount of background knowledge. That's why; this study ultimately intends to put light on the reasons why the reader needs to broaden his world knowledge and how he can utilize background knowledge for better reading performance.

1.4 Significance of the study

In this study, background knowledge derived from reader interest is elaborated on since reading comprehension is closely linked to some good reasons to read. It is generally believed that the comprehension level in reading indicates the proficiency level of students, yet it is also very probable for one not to comprehend well, although he can read. If the text is unfamiliar to the reader or very little interesting, he will struggle a lot to understand, resulting in some comprehension problems (Eskey, 1986). As LeLoup (1993) stated "no research has been done exploring interest in text topic as a primary variable or the link between interest and background knowledge and their concomitant effect on reading comprehension" (p. 7). Therefore, the study is primarily important for providing data within the limited amount of foreign language reading research concerning the relationship between background knowledge, readers' interest and reading performance. Also for better practice, useful pedagogical implications are provided for the EFL instructors.

It is also important to keep in mind that the outcomes of the study put light on the text choice for the course books writers and reading skills curriculum developers. Most of the time, the texts are chosen in consideration of readability; however, most readability formulas deal with word difficulty and sentence length. Therefore, what course book writers mostly ignore is one of the most influential characteristics, which is content difficulty and familiarity. By choosing proper motivating and interesting materials, students should be enabled to build their background information which is not only beneficial for reading improvement but

also for the students' academic work; since they get better in writing, reasoning and conducting research (Henry, 1990). The students who read little are not exposed to the diversity of subject matter and text organization which help them to develop their writing style. Apart from the fact that lack of prior knowledge affects reading ability, it also stands as the partial explanation for poor student writing since the writer uses his prior knowledge for rhetorical organization and plans the topic to be discussed accordingly (Flower and Hayes, 1981). As Tierney and Leyes (1986) stated students who understood what they had read produced better organized, more coherent and higher content quality writing than the ones who realized less. If such knowledge is not available to them, they need to be able to acquire it by reading. If students have difficulties in reading since they don't have enough world knowledge, it is not possible for them to produce qualified writing (Henry, 1990). Petrosky (1982) explained the relationship;

When we read, we comprehend by putting together impressions of the text with our personal, cultural and contextual models of reality. When we write, we compose by making meaning from available information, our personal knowledge, and the cultural and contextual frames we happen to find ourselves in (p. 16, cited in Tedick, 1998, p. 12).

To add, "One of the objectives to teachers is to develop independent readers outside the EFL/ ESL classroom, readers whose purpose in learning to read in English as a foreign or second language is to learn from the text they read." (Carrell, 1983, p. 569). For that task, the reader needs to develop some criteria to summarize important information and exclude the rest, while generating hypothesis about the missing part and pointing to other information to fill in the gaps (Wilson and Alderson, 1986). That's why, the reader needs guidance how to utilize background knowledge, so that he can easily determine the important aspects of a text to be recalled. These help the reader to succeed more especially in academic settings.

All these shape the assessment period, too because test takers' interest in the topic, their background knowledge and their attitudes on the topic affect their performance (Jennings, Fox, Graves and Shohamy, 1999). That's why, as the

study emphasized, the test doesn't assess students' general cultural level but proficiency in language or in short term, it should assess the realization of the educational objectives. Therefore, while assessing students in reading, it is important to keep in mind that the subject matter of the text is not completely new to them or uninteresting because it is not fair to let them struggle with language and world knowledge barriers at the same time as the second one is not among the objectives to be tested.

1.5 Definitions of the Key Terms

Foreign Language: A foreign language is not one's mother language but is associated with a country whose mother tongue is and the user expresses himself and communicates with another in different sounds with different rhythm of speech, different words, different grammar and different phraseology in different styles for different situations (Dunlop, 1985).

Reading: Reading, "not as a reaction to a text but as an interaction between writer and the reader mediated through text" (Ajideh, 2003, p. 2), is a broad activity through which the reader establishes purposes, utilize necessary reading strategies, make inferences while drawing on the background knowledge, monitoring comprehension and evaluating the information (Grabe and Stoller, 2002).

Reading Comprehension: Comprehension is constructing meaning by relating what is known and not known, or new information to what is already known by using all available sources from the text and from "cognitive structures" in the reader's head (Smith, 1982; Yazdanpanah, 2007).

Reading Performance: Assessed mastery of text comprehension through different question methods like multiple choice, open-ended question, sentence completion (Yazdanpanah, 2007).

Schemata: “(t)he background information that readers bring to a text-including the knowledge of habits and beliefs from their own life experiences-is often referred to as schema” (Aebersold and Field, 1997, p. 8).

Content Schema: Content schemata are the organized background knowledge which helps the reader to expect, predict and interpret in the constructive discourse (Ajideh, 2003)

Background Knowledge: Zhang (2005) defines background knowledge as “ones previously acquired comprehensive knowledge or world knowledge and one’s special knowledge on a certain subject. ... knowledge means learning either in or out of school and an accumulation of a variety of experiences.” (p. 112).

Interest: Interest is defined by Renninger, Hidi and Krapp (1992) “a phenomenon that emerges from an individual’s interaction with his or her environment” (p. 5) in which there is a certain type of object, an activity or an area of knowledge which the individual has a relatively long-term orientation toward (Schiefele, 1992)

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, the literature on reading and its influential components are presented. More specifically, the first section gives details about (a) the definition and nature of reading, (b) the nature of reading comprehension, and (c) psycholinguistic model of reading. In the second section, (a) the nature of schema theory and its relation to reading comprehension, (b) background knowledge within the course of content schemata and (c) the relationship between background knowledge and interest are explained. Empirical studies with respect to background knowledge, interest and reading comprehension are presented. Finally, a summary of related literature and the results of the studies are presented in a nut shell.

2.1 Reading

2.1.1 Definition and Process of Reading

“Reading is like an infectious disease; it is caught not taught”
(Nuttall, 1983, p. 192)

For Goodman (1973), reading is a “psycholinguistic process in that it starts with a linguistic surface representation encoded by a writer and ends with meaning which the reader interprets and constructs” (p. 163).

Wallace (1992) mentioned reading as a communicative reaction to a written text; there is a communicative intention of the reader to understand what the writer has written, that is accompanied with different reading purposes, situational context and social expectations in different settings.

Schick and Schmidt (1962) defined reading as “a complex psychological process that fuses symbols with their spoken meaning to comprehend the writer’s thought” (p. 19). It is also the universal way of accumulating knowledge through thinking and feeling without limitation; the process of interaction and reaction since not only are attitudes, beliefs, morals and behavior affected but also the way of thinking, participation in society and even living are shaped through reading.

Smith (1985) had an explanation on reading, too. It was mentioned as a wide topic, covering not only eyes, memory and attention but also nature and use of language, speech comprehension, interpersonal relations, and socio-cultural differences besides learning in general. Reading occurs thanks to indispensable combination of visual input and non-visual information. Visual information consists of printed materials which reach to brain and disappears when the eyes cannot see them. Besides, they are in the familiar language and on a familiar topic. Still, they are not enough if one doesn’t hold general reading ability of visual information and non-visual information in the head. Non-visual information refers to the knowledge of language, background knowledge, attitudes or interests. To combine these, Smith (1985) stated that the more non-visual information the reader has, the less visual information he needs. On the other hand, the less non-visual information he has while reading, the more visual information he needs to proceed.

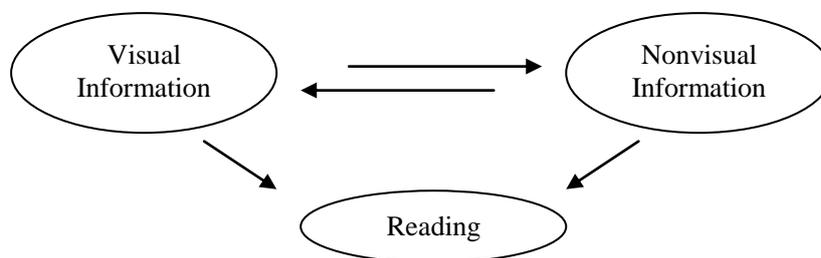


Figure 2.1 Reciprocal relationship of visual and non-visual Information
Smith (1985), p. 14

While reading, to some extent, visual and non-visual information can substitute each other since visual information that the brain can handle is limited. In other

words, if the reader brings a lot of non-visual information or prior knowledge, the eyes can be relieved. If the case is just the opposite, the reader needs to slow down and handle more visual information; reading gets difficult. So, it is a basic skill of reading, which is gained by reading practice. The more the reader is exposed to different reading topics, the better he gets to make good use of what he already knows and the less he depends on the visual information. That's why reading depends on non-visual information more, as the brain benefits from the use of visual information to make decisions by reducing uncertainty about what proper words might be within the topic context (Smith, 1985).

Mackay and Mountford (1979) clarified the definition by stating reading as a "selective process. It involves partial use of available minimal language cues, which are selected from perceptual input, on the basis of the reader's expectations" (Goodman, 1967, p. 128). It is also an active process through which the reader forms a previous expectation with the help of most productive and fewest cues to confirm or reject it. That process is possible with the knowledge of vocabulary, semantic, syntactic and a certain amount of world knowledge, ideas, attitudes and beliefs which have been accumulated through spoken and written interactions. All these become crucially essential for the reader because "skills in reading depend on the efficient interaction between linguistic knowledge and knowledge of the world." (Mackay and Mountford, 1979, p. 137). Keeping all these in mind, it is not possible to measure reading efficiency by just taking the amount of the information in the text into consideration, since how much knowledge the reader brings to the text and how much he wants to extract from it are among the deciding factors. Therefore, reading efficiency is the effectiveness of a discourse which the reader can create from the text by taking it beyond its graphic representations and placing it in a proper group of concepts in mind (Clarke and Silberstein, 1977). That's why Ajideh (2003) defines reading "not as a reaction to a text but as an interaction between writer and the reader mediated through text" (p. 2).

In the 48th Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, it is stated “it (reading) can and should embrace all types of thinking, evaluating, judging, imagining, reasoning and problem solving” (cited in Harris, 1970, p. 4). During reading, being reflective and evaluative to get the meaning and the organization of the writer is important for the reader, but it’s not enough to compare the presented facts and arguments without using previous knowledge and experience. Therefore, instead of focusing too much on the reading product which is very changeable depending on the readers’ purpose, interest and even time, reading process becomes important to be studied (Alderson and Urquhart, 1984) since the process emphasizes the reader’s development through a text; how reader get a specific interpretation rather than what the reader has got out of the text. Reading as a process means bringing one’s life experiences and thinking power to understand the meaning presented by an author (Badrawi, 1992).

Many of the definitions underline reading processes. These are mainly categorized into lower-level and higher-level processes. Lower-level process is considered to be more skill oriented and more automatic linguistic process; on the contrary higher-level process is about comprehension for which reader uses his background knowledge and inferencing skills. First of all, rapid and automatic word recognition (lexical access) is one of the crucial components of lower-level process during reading comprehension. Also, to support clause level meaning, extracting basic grammatical information (syntactic parsing) is important by taking in and storing the words. It is the ability of recognizing phrasal groups, word order information, and the relation between subordinate and super-ordinate clauses; in other words, it is the ability how words are to be understood in a specific context appropriately. The next automatic process is the one which combines word meanings and structural information into basic clause-level meaning units (semantic proposition formation). Since the elements of meaning are connected after being introduced, they become more vivid in the memory and become core ideas if repeated. When these three functions work well in working memory, words are recognized, information is decoded grammatically and

meaning is active for a while. To form a precise meaning, all these processes should be combined rapidly since the information is active and coordinated for few seconds. If not, the information fades away and must be reactivated by taking more resources leading to inefficiency of reading process (Grabe and Stoller, 2002).

On the other hand, forming a meaning representation of a text with the coordination of ideas about the main point and supporting details is the most primary higher-level comprehension process which is affected by the reader purposes, reading strategies and background knowledge during inferencing, monitoring comprehension and evaluating. The reader should add sentence level meaning units to a growing network of ideas in the appropriate places of the text by creating useable linkages to other information. If not, the ideas which are not efficient in connecting new information or supporting connecting inferences fade from the reader's network. So, pruning of less important ideas leads more useful and active information function better. With the support of background knowledge and internal summary of main ideas, the reader anticipates the discourse organization of the text. Besides, these help word or sentence level ambiguities become clearer, while incorporation of new information gets easier. As interpretation of the text is affected by a combination of factors including the reader's background knowledge, inferences, interest, expectations, goals, motivation, reading task, text difficulty, as well the author, it explains how the reader understands both what the writer aims to say and how the reader interprets the meaning for his purpose by summarizing and criticizing the text. So higher-level comprehension process is a way which the reader assesses his understanding of the intended meaning and evaluates his success (Grabe and Stoller, 2002).

2.1.2 Reasons to Read and the Reader

Reading which is a receptive skill is used for many purposes just like for relaxation, entertainment, knowledge, solution to problems, reward, appreciation,

esthetic development, escape, personal development, curiosity, emotional involvement, status, compulsion, vicarious experience, insight and development of judgment (Schick and Schmidt, 1962).

Reading is an important skill as schooling is concerned. It is a study tool; apart from the teacher, the main source of knowledge becomes the textbook. However, it becomes useless if the students cannot utilize the material, so reading stands as one of the prerequisites of academic success. Being able to read leads to achievement in any subject area; through reading, students enhance their world knowledge and learn subject matters. Besides, it affects the development of a wholesome personality through positive contributions to school, social and personal adjustment because it stimulates and fosters interests; it also contributes to mental health (Schick and Schmidt, 1962). On the contrary, lack of vocabulary and unfamiliar grammatical structures interfere with the reading process and create a strong feeling of frustration often leading to failure, all these tend to separate children from school (Laffey and Shuy, 1973). Moreover in a democratic society, it is expected that the public can read because school exist to train people who develop continuously by selecting challenging materials. Through reading, citizens keep being informed on politics, economics and civic life, so “reading contributes to the effectiveness of the adult” (Schick and Schmidt, 1962, p. 13).

Based on the general purposes of reading and nature of the reading material, the reader makes initial decisions, most of the time, unconsciously when he starts to read. Grabe and Stoller (2002) mentioned seven main headings as reading purposes; *reading to search for simple information*; the reader simply scan the text for an exacting piece of information; yet, the reader may prefer *to read through skimming* the text to find out important information in the text and then to use basic reading comprehension skills for the general idea of the text. *Reading to learn from text* happens mostly in academic and professional cases where an extensive amount of information should be gathered from different sources and synthesized. In such a case, the reader keeps the main idea and details in mind by

building rhetorical frames and linking the text to the reader's knowledge base, so it asks stronger inferencing demands. *Reading to integrate information* is one of the other purposes through which the reader critically evaluate the information so that he can decide which information to put together and how to incorporate the available data to his goal. So, *reading to write and reading to critique texts* are the variants of reading to integrate information when the reader needs to compose, select and assess information. Lastly *reading for general comprehension* is another purpose hold. It is a basic purpose which serves the others because it asks very rapid and automatic processing of words, skills to form main ideas and efficient coordination of different processes.

Wallace (1992) mentioned three basic purposes of reading as for survival, learning and pleasure. First of all, survival reading is for immediate needs and wishes like the caution regulations or instructions on baby food for the parents. Also, reading is a good goal oriented activity to enhance general world knowledge, considering the academic context; it may as well be related to school reading since a good deal of reading occurs there. However, reading for pleasure is just voluntary and asks for fluency. If the reader is not fluent in reading, any kind of material for any purpose becomes boring, so the reader becomes demotivated to read but jut survival function of reading works.

For any of the reasons aforementioned, a good reader is the one who uses meaning-based clues stemming from his background information instead of relying on word-level input, while he is able to connect new information to his knowledge repertoire and life. They are efficient in assimilating or accommodating new knowledge to construct meaning while having some kind of agreement with the original meaning. The reader is also efficient in constructing meaning, using appropriate strategies to reduce uncertainty and utilizing previous conceptual and linguistic knowledge (Block, 1992; Goodman, 1973; Landry, 2002).

“Effective reading means a flexible and appropriate response to the material in hand; and it is always guided by the reader’s purpose” (Wallace, 1992, p. 5). That is to say, the reader has the right to choose what, how and when to read, if he likes, he can just give up as reading is selective. Although a reader decides to read a certain material, some parts are to be read with greater care and some are to be skipped. The more proficient the reader is, the more adaptive he is in choosing the method and the material of reading according to his interests and purposes which are important to predict and make decisions about the text (Tedick, 1998).

On the other hand, Anderson and Pearson (1984) mentioned that poor readers experience some problems even in their native language:

- ✓ They have gaps in their world knowledge. The less she knows, the less she comprehends since what one knows determines to a great extent what she comprehends.
- ✓ The existence of a poor understanding which is about the relationship among the facts of a topic is so possible for them. They encounter with slow learning, processing and insufficient reasoning because of confusion created by arbitrary information.
- ✓ They are really ineffective to infer the required information and present it in a coherent way (cited in Bensoussan, 1998).

When it is time to engage in a foreign language, he encounters even more problems like language structures and cultural background knowledge problems (Bensoussan, 1998).

For an efficient comprehension outcome, the characteristics of the reader like what he knows, who he is, what values he holds, what purposes he wants to reach and what he is interested in are important to consider while choosing the materials especially for EFL readers as they play a vital role in reader-text transaction (Goodman, 1984).

2.1.3 Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is stated as an interactive process between the reader's background knowledge and the text since "it is not getting meaning from the printed page, as there is no meaning there, but only lines and curves that we call letters and from which we build worlds" (Badrawi, 1992, p. 16). Therefore, one needs more than words, sentences or even the reading text because "every act of comprehension involves one's knowledge of the world" (Anderson, Reynolds, Schallert and Goetz, 1977, p. 369).

Reading activity is selective; that's to say people can read any print but they don't try to extract all of the information; nevertheless, they deliberately search for the information which they need within the text (Smith, 1985). As a result, the product of reading varies according to each reader because they have different purposes, interests and motivation (Royer *et al.*, cited in Alderson and Urquhart, 1984) as well their characteristics and interactions with the text are not the same (Widdowson, 1979b). For Smith (1985) being able to ask right questions to different texts means comprehension because the answers are based on precise predictions which are possible with the good use of non-visual information. The reader cannot comprehend the text if he is not able to find answers to the questions because at such a case, the text becomes beyond his understanding or nonsense for him. Therefore, comprehension is a tranquil state which the reader doesn't have any questions and doesn't feel any vagueness. It is also individual and relative. Although one can answer all the questions in a test, it doesn't necessarily mean that he comprehends unless he feels satisfied with the answers of his purposeful and personal questions. To reach such a result, the reader principally engages in prior elimination process of unlikely alternatives which is called as theory of the world. Every human being has been constructing and carrying it in the head all the time, while constantly testing and adjusting it due to the interaction with the different stimulus in the environment. It is the source of predictions which let the reader figure out the text. If the reader cannot relate the

confronting situation to his theory of the world, there can be no comprehension (Smith, 1985). While reading it is not that much important if one knows the meaning of the word or its function, because reading simply is not identification of the words which are presented by the symbols. However it is mostly related to reader's experience and knowledge of how to put up with these words encountered within a specific context.

Based on the comprehension research, models which present metaphorical generalizations come into use. Bottom-up models defines reading as “a mechanical pattern in which the reader creates a piece by piece mental translation of the information in the text, with little inference form the reader's own background knowledge” (Grabe and Stoller, 2002, p. 32). In such a case the reader processes the text in a linear fashion by reading sentence by sentence which is processed word by word which is processed letter by letter (Grabe and Stoller, 2002).

On the other hand top-down models suggest that “reading is primarily directed by reader goals and expectations” (Grabe and Stoller, 2002, p. 32). These models assume that the reader has some expectations about the text and get enough information from the text to confirm or reject these expectations; that's why the reader looks for the most useful and likely information. The expectations might be created by the reader himself or by a general monitoring mechanism, but in each case the reader needs to inference by using his background knowledge. The potential interaction of all processes (lower and higher lever processes) is emphasized (Grabe and Stoller, 2002).

Interactive models are proposed to compromise these extreme cases. In that model, the reader makes use of bottom-up models for favorable ideas and top-down models for key ideas to be combined with useful ones; in other words fast and efficient word recognition should be in harmony with the use of background knowledge for text understanding, inferencing and predicting. However the

automatic process of bottom up models should be carried with little inference from the other process levels or knowledge resources. Activation of grammatical knowledge is to be carried out automatically or word recognition shouldn't wait for the use of context or background knowledge because it is inefficient to wait for confirming information to clarify structural information. So use of interactive model depends mostly on the purpose of the reader (Grabe and Stoller, 2002).

In relation to these, Weber (1968) claimed that comprehension is what a reader expects to read and how much he wants to achieve, but not the phonetic transcription of a text. So even before the words are decoded, meaning occurs in the mind of the reader. Yet for this, the reader is to be a master on a variety of written forms and topics in order to overcome the drawbacks of face to face communication.

In a reading situation, some factors, which determine the level of understanding, interact. These determinants are classified as;

- ✓ *Psychological*: reflecting the purpose of the reader. It is also highly related to the interest, sensitivity and attitudes of the reader. It can be indicated that a reader's comprehension level changes based on the degree of involvement with the text (Lunzer and Gardner, 1979).
- ✓ *Intellectual*: reflecting the background knowledge of the reader. No matter how much motivated the reader is, the comprehension will be influenced by the existing intellectual framework dominantly. What the reader brings to reading process determines the depth of understanding.
- ✓ *Methodological*: reflecting the reader strategies and skills to process the text. The methods adapted by the reader will affect the efficiency of reading.
- ✓ *Technical*: reflecting the ordering and sequencing of the material as well linguistic form of the message. The author should be careful to form a mode of presentation which makes his meaning clear to the reader as the reading is reconstruction of meaning in the mind of author. In 1975, Klare proved that if the text is readable, which is appropriate for the reader's level of background

knowledge, cognitive and linguistic development, the reader can learn and understand more compared to a more complex text. However, if the text is too difficult for the reader, he becomes naturally frustrated and comprehension suffers.

2.1.4 Psycholinguistic Model of Reading

One of the influences that teaching reading in English as a foreign language has undergone is psycholinguistics and Goodman's psycholinguistic model of reading (see Appendix A). That model describes reading as a best reconstruction of the message which is presented as a graphic display (Goodman, 1971). While reading, if the reader, who doesn't need to use all of the textual information, makes less use of visual perceptual information, he can predict better. As Goodman claims:

The reader does not use all the information available to him. Reading is a process in which the reader picks and chooses from the available information only enough to select and predict a language structure which is decodable. It is not in any sense a precise perceptual process. (cited in Bedir, 1992, p. 65)

It is "a process of hypothesizing, sampling and confirming information based on background knowledge, expectations about the text, sampling of surface features of the text and context information from the text" (Grabe and Stoller, 2002, p. 34). It is like a "psycholinguistic guessing game" in which the reader uses three cue systems; first one is the knowledge of visual and phonetic features of the language, then there comes syntactic constraints, like possible word order of the language and they also make use of semantic constraints, which is about the knowledge of word meanings and their collocations, act as a bridge between semantic and propositional knowledge; while reading, the cues of semantic and syntactic knowledge are so powerful that the reader doesn't need to get all the graphics to comprehend. Thanks to contextual support, although there are deleted items, the reader can guess and replace them well (Wallace, 1992). So during reading process, the accuracy of the prediction against previous topic information,

which is the store of information in long-term memory, as well as the information from the text under consideration are to be checked. If the reconstruction is in a harmony with the previous knowledge, the cycle of sampling begins again. Yet, if there is a disagreement, the reader can compensate it with some strategies. As Goodman calls reading as a “psychological guessing game”, it is very expected for some readers to guess wrong. The poor reader may fall into a cycle of wrong previous information leading to wrong predictions; on the other hand some can recover quickly from wrong guesses so that their performance may be hampered little. It is proposed that the most fluent reader will derive meaning by using minimum sampling of the text features but by using world, language and reading knowledge. However, the reader who is less skilled samples much more from the text. Smith (1971) talks about the dangerous outcomes of word-by-word reading; there will be no meaningful relationship between the words since the meaning of one word will be forgotten before the next word is built. That is to say no comprehension is possible.

In that model, miscue analysis which involves the observation of oral reading errors such as correction, graphemic proximity, substitution, intonation and grammatical category has proved that background knowledge which the reader brings to the text affect their comprehension (Bernhardt, 1986). For that, Smith (1971) had a famous cloze testing example to show how reader overcomes uncertainty by referring to his linguistic and schematic knowledge. He presents a sentence as “the captain ordered the mate to drop the an_____” (p. 5). So to comprehend the printed graphics, the reader uses his graphic information first; his English knowledge tells that there is possibilities following “an__” combination but “p” is not one of them since there is no English word sequencing as a-n-p. Then, his phonetic information helps him to reduce the possibilities by the sounds which come together. The syntactic information is also quite helpful as the reader knows that after the article “the” there needs to be a noun, noun phrase or adjective phrase. Lastly, with the semantic information, it is sure that e.i. “anticyclone” is not possible to use. Therefore, the reader draws on his semantic

knowledge to guess what kind of things a captain may ask his mates to drop, so the answer “anchor” stands as the most likely item. Yet, if the content is different there may be other options for that.

Grellet (1981) presents reading as a “constant process of guessing” (p. 7) and prepared his reference book accordingly. He states that while reading, the eyes don’t follow each word; on the contrary the reader skips many words and he goes backwards or forwards to confirm the hypothesis which he has developed. He carried the model further by providing exercises which focus on guessing and predicting. One of the exercises presents the first sentence of the text and asks the students to guess the next sentence among the number of possibilities. The rationale lies on the psychological model of reading; it is stated throughout that “one does not read all the sentences in the same way, but one relies on a number of words -or ‘cues’- to get an idea of what kind of sentence (e.g. an explanation) is likely to follow (Goodman, 1967, p. 56).

In his model for the readers of foreign language Coady (1979), mentioned the reader expectations, which are based on the knowledge of the subject, and three interactive factors; high level conceptual abilities, background knowledge and process strategies, to explain comprehension as the outcome. Conceptual abilities are highly associated with intellectual capacity. So, in an EFL program, there is not much to improve these apart from some study skills instruction. Yet, background knowledge is really important because the students whose native language has in common with the foreign language feel more secure and learn the foreign language easily because background knowledge can compensate for weak syntactic control if the reading material is related to the reader’s background knowledge or if it is a high interest topic for him. The reader definitely demonstrates great effort to keep involved in the text and to comprehend in spite of syntactic difficulty because there are vivid motivational reasons like interest in topic and background knowledge to read. Besides, process strategies are available subroutines to the user for a lot of purposes. They are grouped as grapheme-

morphophoneme correspondences, syllable-morpheme information, syntactic information, lexical meaning and contextual meaning, cognitive strategies and affective mobilizers. In a psycholinguistic model of reading, although it is generally claimed that the reader begins with more concrete process strategies such as phoneme-grapheme correspondences and word meaning, he gradually learns to utilize more abstract process strategies such as context and syntax; however, it is important to keep in mind that reader constructs the meaning based on the sampling taken by using the most suitable combination of these strategies which vary from reader to another reader according to the type of the material, the degree of comprehension desired and the time available. But the best combination is to be decided to deliver the most accurate reconstruction. That's why when students with a high level of foreign language proficiency fail in comprehending the material, it becomes a reading problem not a language one because of a poor combination of process strategies.

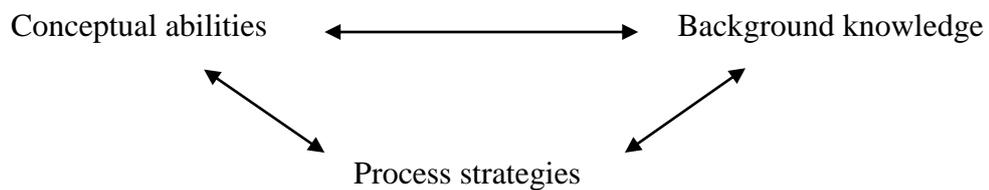


Figure 2.2 Coady's model of EFL reader
(Mackay, Barkman and Jordan, 1979, p. 7)

As a good sustaining proof for the functions of the theory, Kolers (1970) studied with the bilingual speakers of English and French and found that they read regarding mostly the meaning but not graphic display. It was found out that when the text was composed of both languages, they read it as well as monolingual readers do. Yet, when they were asked to translate the text in one particular language, the process was delayed. It was declared that they could alternate an equivalent word in the other language; therefore, meaning is stored in the memory but not the words of a particular language. Also, Doff (1988) stated the importance of taking whole sentence in instead of reading word-by-word with an example. He didn't write all the letters of the words in the sentence but potential

readers can probably read the sentence easily with the help of background knowledge, process strategies and conceptual abilities. “A m.. was walk... d..n the s....t, c.r..ing a gr..n” (p. 68). In the sentence, there is a three letter word starting with “m” so the reader can guess that is “man” accompanied with the article “a”, he can walk down the street and the word starting ‘c’ and whose third letter is ‘r’ most probably is ‘carrying’.

2.2 Schema Theory

2.2.1 Definition of Schema

Schemas-schemata- are “the cognitive constructs which allow for the organization of information in long-term memory” (Widdowson, 1983, p. 34). Rumelhart (1981) calls them as “building blocks of cognition” since they allow the reader to relate new information to the already existing one. It is a whole range of knowledge of the world; any related information goes into that knowledge pack just like flowers smell nice or more specialized information like applied linguistics (Wallace, 1992). Moreover, schemata “reflect the experiences, conceptual understanding, attitudes, values, skills and strategies... (we) bring to a text situation” (Vocca and Vocca, 1999, p. 15).

In his paper, DeChenne (1993) defines schema as a hierarchy of related and subsuming constructs, generalizations, and concepts which shape the intellectual framework. In this pyramid, the construct includes a number of generalizations which define and are about the construct. While generalization consists of relevant concepts, which define and about the generalization; at the bottom facts, which fit into each concept, exist.

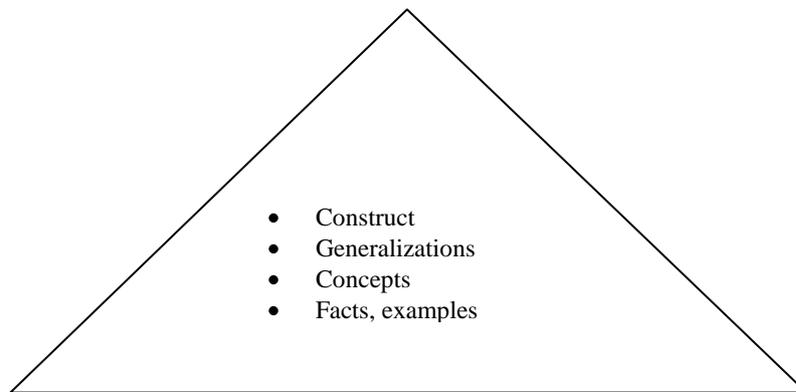


Figure 2.3 A generic schema
(DeChenne, 1993, p. 117)

Schemata is the concept map, the mental model, the ideational framework which let the reader to transform random facts into meaningful, related and constructive idea-structures rather than standing isolated (Dewey, 1997). Not only do these schemata contribute to meaningful and efficient initial learning but also they facilitate decoding of information in long term memory for proper retrieval and potential use. If such schemata don't exist, the reader gets new information by rote and in isolation which leads to faster decay of it and bewilderment of the reader. It is not possible to process new information in a meaningful way, if the reader doesn't have appropriate schemata. Since the information cannot be related to any conceptual structure, facts stand out as nonsense and ready to be forgotten in a short period of time (Anderson et al., 1977).

For Brown (2001), schemata are the concrete knowledge structures which are used to infer the meaning in the text with the activation of previous knowledge. Whereas Swales (1990) stated schema is mostly associated to cognitive aspects of text processing, it is also related to socio-psychological aspect of language. That's why a concept may have different values and attitudes among different people although they all know it well. So, while reading they bring these social expectations to the text to fulfill their own reading purpose.

In his paper, Özenci (2007) defines schemata as concrete cognitive structures which

- ✓ hold pre-acquired knowledge in long-term memory
- ✓ are adapted and enhanced through accommodation and assimilation
- ✓ organize the information hierarchically, directs the perception and attention, help the retrieval of the information in long-term memory
- ✓ accompany new information by relating it to the current related schematic group of information (p. 9).

Following all these definitions, the functions of schemata are;

- ✓ stating the relationship between the concepts
- ✓ helping the perception of that relationship
- ✓ providing necessary vocabulary items and context to infer
- ✓ organizing all the experiences and adapting the structure to accommodate new incoming data in an appropriate frame
- ✓ determining the amount of attention and importance for a set of information
- ✓ creating cognitive presentations for new set of data or skills
- ✓ controlling the recall process in harmony with the purpose
- ✓ filling the gaps, if there are, in the process of perception and inferencing (Brown, 2001; Dochy and Bouwens, 1990; Mergel, 1998)

2.2.2 Schema Theory and Reading Comprehension

The role of background knowledge in language comprehension is formalized as schema theory. As Rumelhart (1981) stated the theory clarifies that the text is only the source of the directions for the reader who finds and brings the back from their own previously acquired knowledge to construct meaning. That previously acquired knowledge is called reader's background knowledge, and the previously acquired structures are schemata (Adams and Collins, 1979). In relation to schema theory, comprehension is defined by Rumelhart (1980) as the process of

selecting appropriate schema which points up input and variable constraints to fill in the slots.

Related to this theory, Smith (1985) stated that knowledge of the world makes reading process smoother for the reader since the difference between two concepts such as a cat and a dog cannot be put into language; it is already implicit in our heads. That world knowledge of them cannot be communicated by pointing to a part of these two to show the difference but the reader knows that they are different but they are also related to many other things in the world. When they try to state the differences, some awkwardness occurs.

In second language comprehension, the relationship of language proficiency and schemata is emphasized because of its being interactive and effective as stated by Anderson *et al.* (1977) “every act of comprehension involves one’s knowledge of the world as well” (p. 369). The construction of the meaning is possible with the combination of new knowledge from the text to the schema through assimilation or accommodation. So, Wallace (1992) suggested using texts which require use of background knowledge, context and tasks all together to let the reader achieve goals while compensating for the automatized skills. Besides, with the use of schema, the process of the interpretation is enriched and guided since every input is mapped against some existing schema and all aspects of that schema is well-matched with the new information through two basic modes of information processing, called bottom-up and top-down processing (Paris, 2005).

Bottom up level processing is activated by the incoming data which enter the system through the best fitting, bottom level schemata. Schemata are hierarchically organized, from the most general at the top and the most specific at the bottom which meet higher-level, more general schemata. That’s why both higher and bottom level schemata are activated so bottom-up processing is called data driven. Thanks to bottom-up processing, the reader is more sensitive to fresh information.

However, top-down processing is triggered by general predictions made based on higher-level general schemata while a partially satisfied higher-order schema is searched for the new information fitting in. That's why top-down processing is called conceptually driven (Carrell, Devine and Eskey, 1989). The reader can easily deal with ambiguities and choose the best interpretation of the incoming data among alternatives.

The effects of background knowledge, semantic interpretation and simultaneity of top-down and bottom up processes can be clarified through the example which was provided by Rumelhart (1977) "The policeman held up and stopped the car" (p. 267). The reader, who is exposed to that sentence, tries to relate it to something familiar to comprehend. The reader will most probably choose the schema which involves a traffic police who is signaling to a driver to stop his car among the possible alternatives. When the sentence is interpreted within the proper schema, many related concepts are activated although they are not mentioned clearly. In the linguistic form, there is no driver but the reader can easily infer that the car cannot work itself; surely it needs a driver, besides the policeman stopped the car by signaling but not by putting an obstacle in front of the car; therefore, the driver put on the brakes of the car which caused the car to stop. Thanks to the schema, the interpretation of the sentence includes the cause of stopping as the brakes. Moreover, the hand of policeman is interpreted as the signal to stop for the driver. All these are the outcomes of prior knowledge about traffic police who communicates with drivers in traffic. However, if the policeman were known to be Superman and the car were known to be without the driver, the interpretation would change because a different schema would be needed to understand the text. If the sentence is to be interpreted within the Superman schema, his holding up may be understood as the direct physical mechanism to stop the car. So when a comprehension question is asked, completely different answers would be received.

QUESTION	ANSWER	
	Traffic Police schema	Superman schema
a) Did the police's hand touch the car?	NO	YES
b) Were the car's brakes applied? (Carrel and Eisterhold, 1983, p. 558)	YES	NO

In schema-theoretic view of reading, Anderson and Pearson (1984) state that schemata include “1) information about the relationship among the components; 2) a major role for inference; and 3) acceptance that during language comprehension” (cited in Hudson, 2007, p. 47). In that theory, inferencing is a key for accurate interpretation of the text. When the reader encounters a new concept, he will be dealing with it in the process of problem solving to associate it in. So, inferencing process becomes easier if the topic is more familiar because the reader can match the old and new information easily.

Rumelhart (1977), who tried to find evidence for the effects of schemata on reading comprehension, provided various examples like the following one; “Mary heard the ice cream man coming down the street. She remembered her birthday money and rushed into the house...” (p. 265). After reading these lines, most of the readers interpret that Mary is a little girl who heard ice cream man's voice and really wanted to buy some ice cream from him because she rushed into the house. She needs money to buy ice cream and remembers the money which has been given for her birthday; most probably it is somewhere in the house since she runs into there. Also her birthday, most probably, has just passed since she still has the money. Although the text does not state all these points, the reader can infer these or some others thanks to the related schemata (Carrel, Davine and Eskey, 1989). Based on these examples, as Zeliha (1995) states, reading doesn't only ask for linguistic proficiency but also asks for knowledge of the world since while

reading some hypothesis which go beyond the linguistic knowledge are tested in an interactive fashion.

Willingham (2006, cited in Özenci, 2007) provided the example about a man going to a party. It was about John who frowned when he saw his huge stomach. He got an invitation card and on it, it was written wearing a black bow-tie and tuxedo was obligatory. It was twenty years ago that John wore a suit for his wedding ceremony. When John went down the stairs, Jeanine was examining him from top to toe- said “I am really glad to have some fish in my pocket”. So reader’s world knowledge which was most probably gained when he was a small kid helps him to recover from the case of uncertainty and astonishment of having fish in the pocket. After making use of linguistics clues which are black suit, wearing it rarely, and having fish in the pocket, all these pieces of information are related in a meaningful set of concepts in the mind; it becomes clear what Jeanine thinks. In such a black suit with a bow-tie and being a bit fat, John is like a penguin. That’s why she makes fun of him by offering some fish. A child graphs such information about animals at the very early years of life, so while reading in L1 or L2, all this knowledge helps him to carry out the tasks without cognitive hindrances as “ L1 is present in the L2 learners’ minds, weather the teacher wants it to be there or not. The L2 knowledge that is being created in them is connected in all sorts of ways to their L1 knowledge” (Cook, 1991, p. 584). That is to say, schemata contribute to L2 readers’ comprehension, especially in the case of adult L2 readers holding an already developed first language. The reader makes good use of it cognitively by referring to previous expectations and experiences

2.2.3 Background Knowledge in the Course of Content Schemata

No matter how well a reader knows the language, she cannot comprehend well if the subject matter or the content is one of those which the reader knows nothing about. Especially related to content schemata, it is commonly said “if the topic... is outside of their experience or base of knowledge, they (readers) are adrift on an

unknown sea” (Aebersold and Field 1997, p. 41). Henry (1990) stated that free from his proficiency, any reader will fail to comprehend an unfamiliar text, if meaning lies outside the text. As Pearson and Valencia (1987) suggested “at all levels of sophistication, from kindergartener to research scientists, readers use available sources (for example, text, prior knowledge, environmental clues and potential helpers) to make sense of text” (p. 727) because if the reader can distinguish the relationship between the text and its content, comprehension occurs (Freire and Macedo, 1987), however during that process simply relying on the ‘knowledge of a language’ is not enough to understand the linguistic message, he needs the use of interconnected link between knowledge of language symbols and world.

According to Rivers (1983), readers employ a small amount of information from the printed page. Before reading, they have some expectations about the content and its development as they are stimulated by what they have kept in their mind. Thus, schematic (prior knowledge) indications of the actual visual forms are important for the reader because these symbols are to reduce the uncertainty of the reader.

It is assumed that if the reader cannot transfer the missing information in the text from his repertoire of existing knowledge, he will be at a serious disadvantage because as Rumelhart (1981) stated, knowledge at all levels of abstraction is represented by schemata. “(T)he schemata theory of reading comprehension proposes that structures embodying background knowledge provide the ideational scaffolding for understanding the setting, mood, characters and chain of events in a text” (Carrel, Devine and Eskey, 1989, p. 79). The absence of the related schemata most probably causes collapses in reading comprehension, whereas it is possible to construct the meaning “...because a reader who already has an elaborate schema can more easily fit incoming textual information into that schema” (Hudson, 2007, p. 142). Even if the case is significant, due to lack of background information, the reader cannot provide related details and can have

problems in processing the facts explicitly stated because of misinterpretation or improper correspondence as necessary background information is unavailable. If the reader encounters with unfamiliar topics, he may sometimes compensate for absent schemata by reading in a slow, text-bound manner; or sometimes just by wild guessing (Carrell, 1988). Therefore, it is not wrong to say “some students’ apparent reading problems may be problems of insufficient background knowledge” (Carrell, 1988a, p. 245). As the case is topic-related, ‘narrow reading’ within the student’s area of knowledge or interest is suggested to improve the situation (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983), it is also important to motivate the reader with their own interests (Eskey and Grabe, 1988) because “field-familiarity is a much stronger indicator of rapid and successful processing than native-like competence in the language” (Mohammed and Swales, 1984, p. 206)

Koh (1986) advised that readers should be made conscious of what the text involves for the activation of content schemata instead of their focusing on single words. His study revealed that one’s comprehension depends on the amount of background information that the reader has about the subject matter of the text. As a good example to the case Xie (2005) presented a short part from a text without its title;

The cutter selects the shape that is most advantageous to his stone- the cut that will create the greatest play of light, that will best show the colours we call fire. It is the simple design that gives the most brilliant play of light (p. 71).

There is no problem in relation to vocabulary or sentence structures even for the lower proficiency levels of L2 readers to understand the gist; but the problem is lack of language hint for the schema activation; therefore, it is not easy to predict the theme. Yet, if there were a title like “Precious Stone Making”, piece of reading becomes much more meaningful. So while decoding the text through bottom up processing, which is not sufficient itself for satisfactory comprehension, the reader needs to use top-down processing simultaneously to

infer based on the activated previous knowledge and to comprehend successfully (Xie, 2005).

Background knowledge includes all experiences; related to life, education, text organization, first language, second language and culture. That's why it is suggested by Krashen (1993) that EFL students to read in their first language to enrich their background knowledge, so that they can understand what they are reading in second language. That is to say, for example, a student has no familiarity with the topic of horoscopes; if he encounters with a text on that topic in the foreign language, he will have trouble in understanding it, even he may experience comprehension problems if it is presented in the first language due to lack of familiarity. Yet, if he reads about that topic more, it becomes familiar and comprehensible. In relation to what Krashen advised, Zhang (2005) focused on comparison between native and foreign background knowledge which is necessary for a good memory. While comparing different backgrounds, the students develop an awareness to avoid the barriers and think actively as much as possible. So reading widely is important because human share a large amount of information which is same all around the world, beyond the cultural limitations; "common knowledge is to some extent equally or even more important than language itself" (Zhang, 2005, p. 115).

All these definitions and strategies to activate background knowledge are important because of its contributions to reading as noted by Wilson and Alderson (1986). A schema;

- ✓ directs attention; the reader can highlight the important points in the text by selecting the relevant issues to the text content and topic
- ✓ allows systematic searches of memory; the reader is guided to access specific pre-learned information which need to be reminded.
- ✓ facilitates editing and summarizing; it includes criteria to summarize crucial parts and exclude secondary information.

✓ allows inferential reconstruction; the reader can generate hypothesis about the missing information and find out the one which is appropriate to fill the gap.

For that purpose, the schema-based strategies which are proposed by Anderson (1999) for the activation of background knowledge are as;

- ✓ Asking questions based on the title
- ✓ Semantic mapping
- ✓ Accessing prior knowledge
- ✓ Making predictions based on previewing
- ✓ Skimming for general idea (Auerbach and Paxton, 1997, p. 259)
- ✓ Reading the first sentence of the paragraphs (Chia, 2001).

2.2.4 Topic Interest as a Base for Background Knowledge

Individuals are always active and “always interested in one direction rather than another” (Dewey, 1913, p. 19) as the environment presents them an activity, an object or an area of knowledge continuously (Schiefele, 1992, cited in Renninger, Hidi and Krapp). In relation to learning, Herbart (1086, cited in Renninger, Hidi and Krapp) emphasizes that they are closely related to each other since interest does not only help recognition of an object but also it stand as a strong drive for meaningful learning, long-term storage of knowledge and motivation to learn more. Besides, it also affects the outcome of a cognitive task or activity. So if reading comprehension is the goal, students can learn more in a case the reading material appeals to their interest (LeLoup, 1993) because as stated by Weber (1980) knowledge and interest are highly correlated and have a positive effect on comprehension because the existence of knowledge possible due to interest.

It is a fact that a rarely studied issue in L2 reading comprehension, interest is one of the influencing factors in reading L1 comprehension (Bernstein, 1955) as Guthrie (1981) proved in his study, high-interest materials were comprehended better by native children because they knew more about the topic. In relation to

L2 reading process, Hudson (1992) states that “such as the reason(s) he or she is reading a particular passage, personal interest in the topic, reactions to the difficulty or ease of comprehending a passage and interactions with others in the vicinity” (p. 2).

Based on the research, LeLoup (1993) assumed that “a learner may demonstrate more interest in something about which he or she has a certain amount of previous information” (p. 6). Related to that assumption, Garner and Gillingham (1991, cited in LeLoup, 1993) had a study to examine the relationship of cognitive interest, topic knowledge and recall in their study involving 36 undergraduate psychology students. What the results revealed is that superior comprehension is the outcome of an interesting interaction; “moderate topic knowledge was associated with high cognitive interest, which in turn was related to high text recall” (LeLoup, 1993, p. 15). That is to say, if the reader knows nothing and everything about the topic, he or she may not be interested in the topic and has low recall scores (LeLoup, 1993).

Gatbonton and Tucker (1971) stated that the performance of the reader deteriorates if he isn't interested in it because he gets bored with the task as a consequence of misunderstanding created by content schemata filter. Since “interest and prior knowledge are related concepts: people often know more about topics that interest them” (Bugel and Buunk, 1996, p. 16) so Tedick (1998) emphasized topic familiarity and being interested in the subject. It is not only important for the reader but also for the writer because the discourse affects the level of proficiency and reading outcome.

All these support what Goodman (1967) argues about reading comprehension which results from reader-text interaction mostly affected by the characteristics of the reader just like purpose, interest and prior and/or world knowledge. That's why, defining the specific topics in which the reader is interested in is important for L1 reading research and it is found out that it matters for the process and

product of comprehension as it reveals prior knowledge and attitudes, which are less frequently investigated in L2 (Lee, 2009). In relation to these, Lee (2009) also stated that topic familiarity and topic interest have significant effects on recall levels. It is revealed that high topic interest outperformed low topic that is to say topic interest is an outstanding factor in L2 reading process because it helps them to remember what is in the text better. Less interesting reading topics may negatively influence recall even at upper-intermediate and advanced levels

While it is difficult to separate cognitive aspects (like topic knowledge) from affective aspects (like topic interest) in reading comprehension (Lee, 2009), it is important to remember what Henk and Homes (1988) stated;

It concerns not only psychologists, but also educators, sociologists, journalists and political strategists alike. Yet despite the apparent breadth of this knowledge base and its interdisciplinary appeal, the actual effect of topical attitude on learners' concept acquisition and recollection, particularly in reading, remains largely unknown (p. 206, cited in Lee, 2009).

2.3 Previous Research: Reading Comprehension Facilitated by Background Knowledge

2.3.1 Studies Abroad

Lots of researches have proved the positive effects of background knowledge on reading comprehension as Au (1979) proved the usefulness of experience-text relation method (ETR) by observing the minority students. In the ETR method, the teacher helps the students to express what they know about the topic. After completion of this step, the teacher helps the students with the interaction between the students and the text, so that the students are aided to draw the relation of his knowledge and reading material in the text. That method proves the importance of activation and effectiveness of background knowledge in reading

comprehension since minority children demonstrate better reading comprehension than the ones who are not trained.

In his study, Stevens (1982) proved the crucial importance of pre-existing knowledge on reading comprehension. Two groups of tenth-grade students were in his study. The experimental group of students increased learning with provision of the relevant background information for the history passage while the control group has just the same reading passage; but don't have as much increase as the others in learning.

To assess if background knowledge and advance organizers assist students in acquiring and retaining factual information in history DeChenne (1993) conducted a limited research project. For that students had been given a packet of primary source documents about labor-management which wasn't mentioned in class, and then they were asked to write an essay discussing the topic. The outcomes were analyzed accordingly if the students had made good use of the organizer. The results of the study revealed that over 80 % of the students used the model to realize the objectives and content mastery.

In the experiment done by Anderson, Reynolds, Schellert and Goetz (1976, cited in Xie, 2005) students were asked to read the same vague reading material without its title, yet the departments of the students were different. The students from the department of educational psychology perceived the main character as the criminal who is going to escape from the prison, yet the students whose major is physical education though that the man is a wrestler in a match. Both groups inferred in a different way based on the cues as the related schemata were different because of the subject matters covered in the department.

In 1982, Hayes and Tierney did a study and showed how a text draws upon background information to aid in the comprehension of a new topic. In that study, a group of American students who attend to high school were exposed to the texts

about the game of cricket, these texts included analogies from baseball. The other group of students read newspaper articles about cricket matches. The results revealed that prior knowledge about baseball and the review of analogous instructional text explained more of the variance, so that group's comprehension was much better.

Carrel (1983) pointed out native and non-native speakers of English do not process the reading text in the same way. Non-natives don't use context or textual clues efficiently while reading in the second language. Yet it is proved that the short-circuiting effect or limited second language proficiency can be overcome by existing prior knowledge or induced schemata on the topic.

Anderson *et al.* (1977) presented college students a text which allows different interpretations; it may be understood as a card-game or a music practice. The results were highly depended on the background knowledge; the ones who had musical background interpreted the passage about music while the ones with card-playing background interpreted the same text as a card-games passage.

Also another study done by Bransford and Johnson (1972), clients were presented two vague passages which were the "Balloon Serenade" and the "Washing Clothes" passages. Of the two groups, one received them with the titles and the other group got them without titles. The results revealed that the group who got the text with the title comprehended and recalled better. Therefore to be able to understand such passages, the reader must refer to an existing schema to figure out the message by instantiating its slots and filling that gaps within the activated schema.

In 1990, Peretz and Shoham presented their research findings at the meeting of Academic Committee for Research on Language Testing, they stated that the subjects, who were 117 advanced students of English at Ben Gurion University, and studying either at Humanities- Social Science Faculty or at Science-

Technology Faculty, prefer texts which are on familiar topics and are related to their majors. That is to say, there is a significant interaction between the faculty and text preference since they labeled familiar-in filed text as easier and more comprehensible than the tests which cover unfamiliar topics, it is kind of an implicit assumption that they would know more if the topic was familiar. Baldwin, Peleg-Bruckner and McClintock (1985) studied the effects of topic interest and found the additive effect of these on reading comprehension.

Brantmeier (2003) also carried out a study to find out the relationship between content familiarity and gender with 78 intermediate level Spanish learners. The subjects were given two different texts about boxing and frustrated housewife. In that study, males were more familiar with boxing passage while females were acquainted with frustrated housewife. The males got higher score on boxing passage while they got low on the other; on the other hand the case was vice versa for the females; therefore, it is clear that reading comprehension was significantly affected by the familiarity of passage content.

Al-Shumaimeri (2006) conducted a study with 132 subject to find out the effects of content familiarity in relation to proficiency on reading comprehension. In that study, two texts were used to test the students one is about titanic, which is rated as familiar one, and the other one is about jet stream, which appears to be unfamiliar as the result of the questionnaire show. The results revealed that there is a significant and positive relationship between content familiarity and language ability in students' reading comprehension. Yet in relation to students' overall performance on two different texts, it is seen that there is a significant difference between the performances on the familiar and unfamiliar text since students are much more successful on familiar passage test. That is to say "content familiarity may have affected the comprehension performance of both low- and high- ability students" (p. 10).

Johnson (1982) studied on ESL students recall performance on the topic of Halloween. There was familiar and unfamiliar information in the text, while reading some of the readers were let to study the meanings of unfamiliar words in the text. What the results revealed is that exposure to unfamiliar words doesn't have a significant effect on reading comprehension as long as the reader has prior experience (background knowledge) for comprehension of the familiar information.

Keshavarz, Atai and Ahmadi (2007) studied on the effects of linguistic simplification and content schemata on reading comprehension. The subjects were 240 male students of EFL; they were divided into 4 groups; while the texts were content familiar and content-unfamiliar in 4 versions; original, syntactically simplified (the sentences which students underlined because of grammatical difficulty were simplified), lexically simplified (the vocabulary items which were unfamiliar or difficult for the students were replaced), syntactically-lexically simplified. Each participant group was tested on one of the linguistic versions of content familiar and content unfamiliar texts. The test results revealed that content schemata have a greater effect than lexical or syntactic simplification on EFL reading comprehension and recall. Even, it was stated by Davies (1984) that distortion of authenticity of text, which make them less readable, is the result of syntactic simplification while it is known that topic and reader interest were more important than sentence length (McAdams, 1993). Related to the lexical simplification, the results of the study proved that lexical simplification had a facilitative effect on reading comprehension on content-unfamiliar texts, but it had an impeding effect on the participants' comprehension of the content-familiar text, although the effect was not significant (Keshavarz *et al.*, 2007). That is to say, the reader can guess the meaning of unknown words if they appear in a familiar content so linguistic simplification doesn't affect readers' comprehension. Yet, while they are reading unfamiliar content, simplification works since the reader doesn't have to cope with the unknown vocabulary as the content is already strange to him.

Besides, in 1987, Carrell conducted an experiment to explore the effects of both content schemata and formal schemata on reading comprehension. In her study, high intermediate ESL students, who were of Catholic and Muslim religion, read two texts, which are authentic historical biographies of little-known religious people. So the students are exposed to one familiar and one unfamiliar context while half of the students read the text in a familiar, well-organized rhetorical format and the rest read it in an unfamiliar, altered rhetorical format. The results of mixed condition (familiar content with unfamiliar rhetorical form; unfamiliar content with familiar rhetorical form) revealed that content schemata affected reading comprehension more than formal schemata. Since reading familiar content even in unfamiliar rhetorical form is relatively easy, whereas reading unfamiliar content even in a familiar rhetorical form is relatively difficult (Carrell, 1987, p. 473). About the case, Steffensen, Joag-dev and Anderson (1979) stated that “the schemata embodying background knowledge about the content of a discourse exert a profound influence on how well the discourse will be comprehended, learned and remembered” (cited in Carrell, 1987, p. 476).

Lee (1986) replicated Carrell’s (1983) study, which investigated effects of background knowledge in three domains; context, transparency and text familiarity carried out with high-intermediate L2 and native readers, provided no positive support for text familiarity and even revealed that both native and L2 readers recalled more and better unfamiliar passages than the familiar texts, and asked the subjects to recall the text in their native language unlike Carrell asked them to remember in L2 since assessing comprehension in the target language may limit the students to show what they comprehend actually; the difference between comprehension and performance. That time there was a main effect for context but still the overall findings were similar regarding the familiar and unfamiliar text; unfamiliar one was recalled better under no-context condition; not associated with any title or picture. However, it was stated that the learners appear to use context in relation to topic familiarity; they remember well if the text is associated with a title and picture page. On the other hand, Wu and Hu (2007)

stated that textual schemata, about topics, discourse signals and key words, have an important impact on reading comprehension. The more adequate the textual schema the reader is equipped with, the higher reading achievement he enjoys.

About the case Kotte, Lietz and Lopez (2005) examined the factors which enhance or slow students' achievement down, especially in reading, in Germany and Spain in the OECD Programme on International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2000 since these countries performed poorly than the average of the OECD in reading, mathematics and science. The results related to Germany revealed that if students read in harmony with their interest, they read better; although the effect is moderate compared to other factors. On the other hand, in Spain, it was found out that "interest and enjoyment in reading ($\gamma = 0.21$) have a considerable influence on reading (p. 120).

What LeLoup (1993) reveals about the case is that 9% of the variance was accounted by topic interest and 17% was accounted by background knowledge in L2 reading comprehension scores of high school students who learn Spanish as a foreign language while "subjects exhibited less background knowledge for topics of low interest than for those of high interest" (LeLoup, 1993, p. 68).

Li, Wu and Wang (2007) stated that content domain of reading material is the key for understanding since language is not only vocabulary, grammar or the structure of the sentences but it is more than these; it is the carrier of meaning. They also mentioned that readers have more difficulties in correct comprehension when the content is unfamiliar to them, while they remember most when the content and rhetorical forms are familiar.

2.3.2 Studies in Turkey

Çekiç's study which was done in Turkey with 115 subjects had an aim to examine the effects of content schemata, formal schemata and combined effect of both. The passages were taken from Carrell who wrote four versions of the same text

about the loss of body water. Two of the texts contained identical information in description and comparison format but the organization of the information was different as comparison text presented the information tightly organized and the other had a loosely organized presentation. The students were assigned four groups to be trained. The first group trained with the texts which were chosen depending on their interest for three hours in a week since students free choice of topics which they are interested in is a motivational factor to read more (Doy and Banford, 2002). While students were allowed to choose topics, still they were directed to find out texts in relation to loss of body water. The second group was trained in rhetorical structures of the text. Five common types including the target ones were taught in three hour sessions in a week. The third group was trained both in formal and content schemata group without any special treatment, while the control group had no training. The results revealed that content schema is a strong predictor of EFL readers' comprehension, whereas the formal schema does not seem to affect reading comprehension in foreign language (Cekic, 2007). Besides there is no cumulative effect of content and formal schemata building simultaneously on EFL readers' comprehension. As reported by Fischer and Mandl (1984), while reading, the awareness of rhetorical structures may prevent the reader from relying on content schemata and focusing on the high-level information.

In 2008, Çakir also examined if the readers use different processing strategies for different texts. In the study, there were eleven 6th grade students who were exposed to an expository text and a narrative text in Turkish. The students completed a think-aloud process and a free-recall process for the data which was analyzed qualitatively. It was among the results that when the students read a text about which they had strong background knowledge, they could monitor their comprehension process more efficiently and provide a more accurate reconstruction of the texts.

Özenci (2007) studied the effects of schema theory on student's attitude, achievement and retrieval of the information. For that purpose, he has defined two groups as control and experiment who has applied the schema theory KWL training. After being tested in German, the students who were trained prove to be more successful than the control group. Also that group of students remembers the information presented in the text better since their comprehension is better. Finally, he has also proved that the learning outcome of training group is much more permanent as what they read is related to a group of information and they become more meaningful to the reader.

2.4 Summary

Reading is one of the primary skills which should be practiced and enhanced from the very beginning of language learning process. It is either used as a tool for the practice of some language forms and vocabulary or simply presented as a practice of a receptive skill. No matter what the purpose is, there is always a strong reading objective which is a satisfactory reading comprehension outcome. As aforementioned researches pointed out, reading comprehension is greatly affected by background knowledge which is correlated with interest. Background knowledge has a positive effect on reading comprehension as the interpretation of the information and inference are more accurate. Also, due to existing previous world knowledge, students are able to monitor their own comprehension process, while they are filling the possible gaps in the process of writer's message appreciation. Moreover, availability of background knowledge eases the reading process even if the text presents language forms which are above the proficiency level of the reader. While the reader is exposed to a familiar context, he can proceed the complex sentences or unknown vocabulary items more easily compared to the ones in an unfamiliar context. Besides these, the information in a familiar context is remembered for a long time without difficulty as the reader prefers such texts more. The researches also support the additive effects of schemata training or in other words pre-reading activities since not only the

reading performance but also the writing performance of the students increase dramatically. Being in relation to background knowledge, interest is the other factor that should be paid attention since even the results of a multinational exam proved that students like to read the texts which are in harmony with their interest and they are more successful in such tests due to their higher performance scores.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

This chapter presents the method of the study. The overall design of the study, participants, variables, data collection instruments along with data collection procedure as well pilot study and data analysis procedures are explained and discussed.

3.1 Overall Design of the Study

The study was carried out in the last week of the second semester of the 2009-2010 academic year in the English Preparatory School at TOBB University of Economics and Technology. The study was conducted in four A level (intermediate) EFL classrooms, after the pilot study had been administered in two classes.

The study was created and designed on the base of students' complaints to satisfy some of their needs and enrich their learning process. Most students nagged about their poor reading performance and revealed that they have difficulty in reading parts of the exams and even more they didn't like most reading texts in the book since they were not interesting or else although they read, they didn't understand some bizarre information much. Therefore, the main aim of the study was to determine how much important the use of content-familiar texts which are derived from their own interest to test students' reading performance. Also, the study aims to examine the relationship between topic interest and background knowledge.

Therefore, the study became a correlation study since the relationship between topic interest and background knowledge as well the relationship between background knowledge and reading performance were to be explored.

There were 15 A level classes whose students were randomly assigned to any class by the administrator at the beginning of the term. However, two of the classes were taken out of the possible subject group as they were high achievers gathered in two special classes by the administration. The other two classes participated in the pilot study since their instructors agreed to collaborate with the researcher. Among the rest of 11 classes, two were instructed by the researcher herself and the other two classes were selected due to the agreement with their reading and writing skills instructors to help. These selected classes were compared by using their first term overall grades to check if they were similar in terms of English proficiency. It was concluded that there is no statistically significant difference in these classes' means of language proficiency.

The necessary data were collected through 3 types of data collection instruments. For that purpose, a reading interest questionnaire and three reading comprehension tests which were accompanied with a 2-item Background & Interest Questionnaire (low-interest: "Basic Descriptions in Economics"; medium-interest: "Animal Testing; Science or Fiction?"; and high-interest text: "Eurovision Song Contest-2009") were produced to collect quantitative data for the study. The questionnaire was designed after examination of lots of book and magazine websites to define the main topics. Following the first draft, the questionnaire was examined by a curriculum expert and two reading and writing skills instructors to check if possible alterations were necessary. Then it was pilot tested in two classes. Getting satisfying reliability result for the reading interest questionnaire, it was applied in main study classes. Next, reading comprehension tests were produced on the base of interest questionnaire results. For the authenticity of the reading texts, internet articles were used; however, they were adapted with necessary linguistic and conceptual change done by three reading and writing skills instructors at TOBB ETU, Department of Foreign Languages and one native speaker. Besides, Flesh readability ease formula was utilized to test the readability of each reading text so that, they were made proper for the target students' language proficiency and cognitive development. Following these

steps, comprehension/ inference questions were prepared by the researcher with the guidance of a measurement and evaluation expert who analyzed the questions later on with one foreign language teaching methodology expert and two testing staff at TOBB ETU, Department of Foreign Languages. Moreover, at the end of each test, a 2-item Background Knowledge & Interest Questionnaire attached to get information about how much students knew about and how much they were interested in the topic of the text. Once the first drafts of these reading comprehension tests were piloted for reliability, the main study was carried on in the four homogenous classes. In a week, the same reading comprehension test was applied in each of these four classes at the same instructional hour of the same day. Every second day, a reading test was given. It was avoided to give out all the reading comprehension tests at the same time since that would affect the results; the students might become demotivated to read or answer great amount. Or else, instead of giving the test every day, not boring the students with extra work would be better to get reliable results.

3.2 Subjects of the Study

The participants of the study consisted of $N=75$ students from four different A level preparatory classes, in the Department of Foreign Languages at TOBB Economics and Technology University, the second term of 2009-2010 academic year. All groups, who study English for academic purposes, received 30 hours of instruction in a week. All students were enrolled in a four-year program which was to start next academic year.

For 2009-2010 academic year, there were 15 A classes. At the beginning of the term, all the students were randomly assigned to the classes by the administration who reported that 13 classes' averages were not significantly different from each other. However 2 of them who had better averages than the rest of the group were taken out of the group of possible subjects. So the classes for the main and pilot study were selected among the rest 13 possible options. Due to the fact reading

and writing skills colleagues were few and every of them was not willing to give a hand for the study which would be carried in class hours, 2 classes were added in the pilot study and for the main study there were 4 classes. The researcher, herself, instructed two classes; while the other two classes whose instructors answered positively to help were included in the main study.

As Table 3.1 presents in class 4, there were 20 students with an average of first term overall score $M=70.65$ ($SD=9.7$), the scores ranged from 54 to 85 out of 100. In class 5, there were 19 students whose first term overall grade average was $M=69.52$ ($SD=9.9$) and their scores were between 52 and 85 out of 100. besides, class 6 consisted of 21 students, their first term overall grade had a mean of $M=69.33$ ($SD=10.3$) and the scores varied between 51 and 85. Lastly, in class 9, there were 21 students with an average overall first term grade $M= 68.71$ ($SD=10$) and their grade range started from 52 and ended in 84.

Table 3.1

Descriptive statistics for English proficiency scores of four classes

Classes	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
4	20	70.65	9.71	54	85
5	19	69.52	9.95	52	85
6	21	69.33	10.36	51	85
9	21	68.71	10.01	52	84

Foreign language proficiency of the classes wasn't tested by the researcher herself since the participants had been placed into groups depending on their first term English proficiency grade. However, ANOVA test revealed the homogeneity of the four classes in terms of their English proficiency levels. So, depending on

their first term grades, there is not a statistically significant difference in English proficiency of A4, A5, A6 and A9 $F(3, 77) = .13, p > .05$ (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2

English proficiency level similarity in four different classes

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Between Groups	39.86	3	13.28	.13
Within Groups	7730.23	77	100.39	
Total	7770.09	80		

$p > .05$

At the very beginning of the study, there were 81 students who had taken the reading interest questionnaire; however, when it was time to reading comprehension tests, some of the students didn't answer all the questions in the tests, so their data were taken out of the study.

3.3 Research Questions

In Turkey, as stated by Çekiç (2007), most of the L2 reading research focus on reading strategies and strategy training, while these studies have revealed the positive effects of activation of content background knowledge. Therefore, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the reading interest areas of the A level students who study at TOBB ETU, Preparatory School of English at the second term of 2009-2010 academic year?
2. Are reading performance scores of three reading comprehension tests significantly different from each other?

3. Is there a significant relationship among reading performance score, topic background knowledge and interest when each reading comprehension test is analyzed?

3.1 Is there a significant relationship among reading performance score, topic background knowledge and interest for the text “Basic Descriptions in Economics”?

3.2 Is there a significant relationship among reading performance score, topic background knowledge and interest for the text “ Animal Testing; Science or Fiction?”?

3.3 Is there a significant relationship among reading performance score, topic background knowledge and interest for the text “Eurovision Song Contest-2009”.

3.4 Variables

Reading Performance: In the study, the dependent variable is “reading performance” and it is measured by the reading performance scores obtained from three reading comprehension tests.

Background knowledge: Being an independent variable, background knowledge is measured by the scores on 2-item Background Knowledge & Interest Questionnaire with a 5 point Likert-scale following each reading comprehension test.

Interest: Interest, the other independent variable, is measured on the 2-item Background Knowledge & Interest Questionnaire with a 5 point Likert-scale scores placed at the end of each reading comprehension test.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

3.5.1 Instructors' Information System

The researcher used Foreign Languages Department instructors' information website to get information about students' proficiency level based on the first term overall grades and to be sure if homogenous and same proficiency level classes were chosen.

3.5.2 Development of Reading Interest Questionnaire

In the study, as young adult learners were the subjects with a wide variety of background knowledge and interest, the researcher modeled herself on Carrell and Wise (1998) as it was aimed to find out the real-life topics among a wide range of potential topics and prior knowledge. So, a reading interest questionnaire was developed to gather information about participants' topic interest in reading (see Appendix B). For that purpose, lots of bookstore and magazine web-sites were visited to name the most basic and frequent topics of the books and articles; as well for the layout, an informal reading questionnaire prepared for young learners was examined. Therefore, with the use of that information the questionnaire was designed. In that part, the students were asked to assess each of the thirty-seven topics on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 5 (interested in reading/ reading a lot) to 1 (not interested in reading/ reading less). So that high- moderate and low-interest topics were measured and identified (see Appendix C).

The first draft was examined by a curriculum expert and two reading-writing skills instructors, after that necessary layout alterations were done to make it more user-friendly and clearer.

3.5.3 Development of Reading Comprehension Tests

The analysis of questionnaire revealed that “humor, movies, current events, technology and games” were the top high-interest topics, on the other hand “law, astrology and economics” were low-interest topics. Among the moderate interest topics, there were “science, animals, health”. So based on topic interest results, three reading comprehension tests were developed to assess students’ reading performance. First reading text was for high-interest topics on recent events and it is about Eurovision song contest in 2009. The other text covering the topic of economics is about inflation and its types, it was for low-interest topic. The next text covered three moderate interest topics which were aforementioned; it was about animal testing and the health related facts (See Appendix D, E, F).

To compose these texts, the researcher used the internet due to the importance of using authentic texts. The necessary adaptations and language check were done by the researcher and with the help of three voluntary reading-writing skills instructors at TOBB ETU, Department of Foreign Languages and also one native speaker went over them for reading fluency. In the texts, there were no terminological vocabulary items to hinder the comprehension of participants.

Then Flesch Readability Ease formula, which is designed to indicate comprehension difficulty of a reading passage of contemporary academic English with a readability score on a 100-point scale, was utilized to check each reading text. According to that readability formula, if the score is 100 or very close to 100, it indicates that it is an extremely simple document, while the score which is very close to 0 would describe a very complex document to read. The readability scores between 60 and 70 are considered acceptable because these texts are quite standard; they are not much difficult or not easy to distort the test results (“Can you read me now?”, n.d.)

To test readability of the reading texts, formula on www.read-able.com website was used and it proved that the reading texts for the study were equivalent. They were also appropriate for the use of eleventh grade and intermediate learners as being approved by three reading -writing skills instructors as well. The readability of texts are 63.8, 60.7, and 60 relatively for low, moderate and high-interest topics (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3

Readability test results of three reading texts

<i>Reading Test</i>	<i>Flesh Readability Score</i>
Basic Descriptions in Economics	63.8
Animal Testing; Science or Fiction?	60.7
Eurovision Song Contest-2009	60

Readability test also reported that economics text contained 28 sentences, with 578 words (20.64 per sentence) whose 11.59% was complex. On the other hand, animal testing text had 28 sentences, with 577 words (20.61 per sentence) whose 11.79% was composed of complex words. Lastly, Eurovision text held 29 sentences, with 585 words (20.17 per sentence) of which 11.97% was complex.

Following these steps, reading text were accompanied with multiple choice questions of comprehension/ inference. For that study, multiple choice questions were utilized because Şahindokuyucu (2006) compared and correlated multiple choice tests and the cloze procedure, he found out that the differences among students for reading comprehension abilities are distinguished and their reading comprehension is measured better by multiple choice tests. In relation to the multiple choice question construction, the researcher asked the guidance of a measurement and evaluation expert, and testing office at TOBB ETU, Preparatory School. After the researcher created 15 multiple choice questions for comprehension, inference and vocabulary/pronoun, the measurement and

evaluation expert, one foreign language teaching methodology expert and two testing office staff examined the item stems and options. In the end, 10 of them were selected by testing staff to be used in the test for each reading comprehension text.

For “Basic Descriptions in Economics” reading comprehension test, there were 4 comprehension, 3 vocabulary/pronoun and 3 inference questions. For the reading test of “Animal Testing: Science or Fiction?”, 4 comprehension, 2 vocabulary/pronoun and 4 inference questions were presented. Lastly, “Eurovision Song Contest-2009” held 4 comprehension, 2 vocabulary/pronoun and 4 inference questions. The comparability of the questions validated by the experts opinions; the measurement and evaluation expert, two testing staff at TOBB ETU preparatory school and foreign language teaching methodology expert examined them and agreed they were similar enough in terms of type and level of difficulty.

3.5.4 Development of 2-item Background Knowledge & Interest Questionnaire

This is a 2-item questionnaire prepared by the researcher to examine the relationship between the background knowledge and interest. The questions asked the amount of the reader’s background knowledge and interest about the topic which the reading text covered. The participants were expected to provide answers on a 5 point Likert-scale ranging from 5 (interested in the topic a lot/ knows about it a lot) to 1 (not interested / knows nothing about it). It was presented at the end of each reading comprehension test and in the native language of the learners in order to hinder any misunderstanding. Just like other instruments, it was also examined by a curriculum expert, a measurement and evaluation expert, one foreign language teaching methodology expert and two testing office staff. No alteration was done on that instrument as it was already a clear and simple one.

3.5.5 Reliability and Validity of the Instruments

According to internal reliability data, reading interest questionnaire had a highly reliable score since it was .89. While, the examination of a curriculum expert, a reading skills testing staff and one foreign language teaching methodology expert checked it for face and content validity, found proper to be used.

The comparability of the reading texts was cross-validated through several steps. First, the researcher asked three experienced non-native EFL reading and writing skills instructors, two testing staffs and one native speaker of the language to judge the texts' reading difficulty in terms of vocabulary, syntactic structure and conceptual organization. Overall, while reading teachers agreed that the passages had comparable reading levels and were suitable for the students, the native speaker had the same opinion that the passages were fluent to read and there was no extra cognitive barrier for the participants. Moreover, as mentioned beforehand, the readability test proved that all three reading passages were within the standard limits, appropriate to the level of students and had similar language characteristics like sentence length and the number of the complex words. The inference/comprehension questions were prepared by the researcher with the guidance of a measurement and evaluation expert and later they were examined by two testing staff and one foreign language teaching methodology expert for necessary adaptations and analysis

After examining the test results, topic of low interest, economics, test's reliability was measured and found as .70 with 10 comprehension/ inference questions. The reliability value of moderate interest reading comprehension test of 10 comprehension/ inference questions was .68. Lastly, reliability of high interest topic reading comprehension test, which also covers 10 comprehension/ inference questions was .68 (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4

Reliability statistics of all instruments

Instrument	α	<i>N of Items</i>
Basic Descriptions of Economics (1)	.70	10
Animal Testing; Science or Fiction (2)	.68	10
Eurovision Song Contest-2009 (3)	.68	10

About the reliability values, although it is expected to be as close as to 1.0, values which are as low as .5 are satisfactory for short tests like 10 - 15 items (Kehoe, 1995).

3.5.6 Pilot Study

Before collecting data, a pilot study was conducted to check face, content validity and reliability of the instruments. As well, readability value of the reading texts was assessed.

For that purpose, the classes of two reading and writing skills instructors who had agreed to help were first given the reading interest questionnaire. There were no problems during the use and application of the reading interest questionnaire; the instructions were understood well; therefore, no change was done on that part. After running reliability test for it, .90 was a good value to reuse it in main study classes. Then, based on the results of the reading interest questionnaire of main study classes, three reading comprehension texts were developed and their readability was checked. Being within the standard limits, each reading text was accompanied with 15 multiple choice questions. The questions were prepared with a measurement and evaluation expert. Also, these were examined by a foreign language teaching methodology expert and two testing experts at TOBB ETU to check if they were similar to each other in consideration of difficulty and

questioning technique. All agreed that the questions were similar in terms of type and level of difficulty. During the application of reading comprehension tests, no problem encountered, however after reliability analysis, the number of the questions for each test was reduced to 10 to increase the reliability score. For test of “Basic Descriptions in Economics” the reliability value was .46 but after 5 items were deleted it increased to .68. Next, for the second text “Animal Testing; Science or Fiction?”, the reliability value was .37, then after deleting 5 items it became .60. Lastly, “Eurovision Song Contest-2009”, the value was .46 at first, and then it became .62. Besides, the instructors revealed that the students would not be graded for their performance; the scores would only serve for research purposes. They were told that these research results would serve for the choice of reading exam topics so that their reading performance could be better. To complete each test, the students were given 15 minutes. The tests were applied every second day in the same instructional hour to get reliable data. There were 32 students, who had similar language proficiency to the participants in the study.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

Before applying the data collection instruments, necessary permission was gotten from the Applied Ethics Research Centre (UEAM) and from the head of the Department of Foreign Languages, TOBB ETU. Basically, the data were gathered by administering three main instruments, reading interest questionnaire and three reading comprehension tests which were accompanied with 2-item Background Knowledge & Interest Questionnaire. Also, instructor information system was utilized for students’ English proficiency level comparison.

First of all, proper classes were to be chosen, so instructors’ information system was utilized to check the first term overall proficiency grades of the classes. Although the students were randomly assigned to the classes, there were some special classes whose average was higher than the rest. After analyzing the data, reading and writing skills instructors were asked if they would apply the

instruments in their classes during their class hour. Some of them answered positively, so two homogenous classes were selected for the pilot study and four classes, whose proficiency levels were also close, were selected as the subjects of main the study. They were chosen for the reason of data accessibility, since the researcher herself would instruct the two and for the rest, their reading and writing skills instructors agreed to collaborate with the researcher.

Piloting the questionnaire just took one day; as it was found reliable; .90, the following day, and the reading interest data from main study classes were collected immediately without any comment on the students' answers and without any change. The administration of the interest questionnaire was done at the very beginning of the second term of TOBB ETU in 2009-2010 academic year. It took about 10-12 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Next, based on the results of the questionnaire, three reading comprehension tests (high-interest, moderate-interest and low-interest topic tests) which were piloted beforehand were applied at the end of the term in a week. The tests were administered in the last week of the term since a real class environment created with the mutual interaction of students and teachers, besides it was important not to make students feel stressed for the probability of being evaluated for these tests. For that, the students were informed that the results would not be utilized for their assessment but just for research purposes. Each reading test was applied in four classes at the same instructional hour of the same day. To deal with the reading motivation problem of the students, three tests were not given all at once. Therefore, every second day, the same reading text was tested in all target classes in the same instructional hour. Reading the passages and answering the comprehension/ inference questions took about 15 minutes approximately for each reading comprehension test. However, in one class, there happened a problem and it took 17 minutes. Also the participants were informed and reminded that the data were confidential and anonymous; they were used just for

the research purposes but not to grade them, so they were told not to write their names on the answer sheet (see Appendix G).

3.7 Data Analysis Procedure

The data were analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 15.0.

First of all, a one-way ANOVA was utilized to check if all four classes English proficiency level was similar to each other. Then, a reliability analysis done for the interest questionnaire, the reading comprehension tests and for the 2-item Background Knowledge & Interest Questionnaire. The questionnaire let the chance to collect data about the topics for interest levels through questions on a 5 point Likert scale, all were analyzed through descriptive statistics. Moreover, following a one-way ANOVA checking if there is a statistically significant difference among the three different reading performance scores and a set of Spearman correlation analyses were done to examine the relationship among topic interest, background knowledge and reading performance score for each and every reading comprehension test (see Appendix G). The statistical significance level was set as .05 for all independent sample findings.

3.7.1 Assumption Check

Prior to the main analyses, assumptions were checked. The main assumptions for ANOVA were independence of observations, normality and homogeneity of variances for dependent variable.

Firstly, at the beginning of the term, all the participants of the study were randomly assigned to the classes by the administration, when it was time to collect data any four of the classes, whose reading-writing skills agreed to collaborate with the researcher, chosen. Besides, independent observations

assumption was taken for granted as the researcher observed the participants' responding to the questions independently of one another in the data collection process.

Next, normality tests; skewness and kurtosis values; histograms, Q-Q plots of the dependent variable (reading comprehension performance) at each level of the each independent variable (background knowledge and topic interest) were explored to examine the validity of normality assumption. Skewness and kurtosis values were close to zero. Moreover, visual inspection of histograms, and Q-Q plots indicated no great deviations from normality. The tests, Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk, indicated the classes had a perfect normal distribution. However, the significance values reported by normality tests of reading performance (Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk) indicated significant difference between a perfect normal distribution ($p < .05$) for each reading comprehension test.

Lastly, homogeneity of variance test (Levene's test) demonstrated equal variances assumption is not rejected since the p values are not less than .05 (Table 3.3) both for the classes and for their reading performance.

Table 3.5

Test of homogeneity of variances for reading performance

<i>Levene Statistic</i>	<i>df1</i>	<i>df2</i>	<i>p.</i>
.158	2	222	.854

$p > .05$

Table 3.6

Test of homogeneity of variances for subjects

<i>Levene Statistic</i>	<i>df1</i>	<i>df2</i>	<i>p.</i>
.063	3	77	.979

$p > .05$

For Spearman's correlation analysis within each reading comprehension test, monotonicity between the variables is not violated, either because the depended and independent variables have a monotonic relationship as presented in the next chapter.

3.8 Limitations

For this study, the findings were limited to the reading performance scores and the effects of background knowledge derived from reading interest topics of 75 A level prep class students who study their second term at TOBB University of Economics and Technology, 2009-2010. It would be better if the sample size were larger because of the validity and reliability issues, even from the selected classes, some of the participants were removed because some of them didn't submit all the reading comprehension tests fully completed. Having a larger sample is important as the smaller the sample, the more difficult to generalize the findings.

For the reading tests, only multiple choice items were used but the results might have changed or become stronger if different measures of reading comprehension, just like true-false statements, open-ended questions and short answer questions, had been used. Moreover, there were just 10 items for each test, it would be better to have more comprehension/ inference questions. If there were more items, the reliability of the tests would be stronger and the reading performance scores might be higher.

The findings depend on a single shot evaluation. If the students are to be evaluated for a period of time in the same research design, the results may change since time series are successful in giving an insight about the problem.

Besides the reading texts' topics were decided by the researcher from the each group, there might be some changes if the topics were different from the ones covered within the texts. Although the topics belong to the proper interest groups, still in these groups there were other potential topics to be studied which might create some other results. So with a proper design testing the reader many times in a long term would let most of the topics from each interest group be tested periodically.

When examined, it is seen that the texts actually appeal to low and moderate interest levels in fact; therefore, the amounts of topic background knowledge of these are low and moderate, too. However, it is better to study, if the reading interest inventory results help, to choose topics which has higher interest scores like four or more than that on the 5 point Likert-scale. Although the topics are categorized into three for that study, two of them can be labeled as moderate interest topics and they hold moderate background knowledge. The results may change if these two have higher scores.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter focuses on data analysis and presentation of the results. The research questions of the study were answered with the help of statistical tests and data. Following these, a brief summary of the findings was presented.

4.1 Results of the Research Questions

4.1.1 Research Question 1

What are the reading-interest areas of A level students who study at TOBB ETU, Preparatory School of English at the second term of 2009-2010 academic year?

After processing descriptive statistics for Reading Interest Questionnaire, it was concluded that participants were interested in reading about “humor, recent events, movies and technology...etc” most, while they like reading about and/or are interested in “law, astrology and economics...etc” the least. They held moderate interest in a great variety of topics like “science, animals, health, language, psychology and art” (see Appendix C).

4.1.2 Research Question 2

Are reading performance scores of three reading comprehension tests significantly different from each other?

After running a one-way ANOVA test reported in Table 4.1, it was observed that the reading performance scores of three different reading comprehension tests

were significantly different from each other $F(2, 222) = 36.41, p < .05$, Table 4.2 showed the significant mean differences among the tests.

Table 4.1

Comparison of three reading tests' performance scores

	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p.</i>
Between Groups	254.88	2	127.44	36.41	.00
Within Groups	776.96	222	3.50		
Total	1031.84	224			

* $p < .05$

The first reading test serving for the low interest-low background knowledge had the lowest reading performance score average $M: 2.54 (SD:1.79)$ and the second reading test covering the moderate interest and moderate background knowledge text had a relatively higher score $M: 4.01 (SD: 1.94)$ and the third test of high interest –high background text had the highest reading performance score $M: 5.14 (SD: 1.86)$ (Table 4.2).

Table 4. 2

Means of three different reading tests performance scores

Tests	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Basic Descriptions in Economics	2.54	1.79
Animal Testing; Science or Fiction?	4.01	1.94
Eurovision Song Contest-2009	5.14	1.86

4.1.3 Research Question 3

Is there a significant relationship among reading performance score, topic background knowledge and interest when each reading comprehension test is analyzed separately?

4.1.3.1 The test of “Basic Descriptions in Economics”

The text, which covers a low-interest topic, aimed to test students’ reading performance with 10 comprehension/inference questions (see appendix C). The reading performance score mean of the test was $M: 2.54$ ($SD:1.79$) out of 10. The test had an average of $M: 1.82$ ($SD: .60$) for topic background knowledge and $M: 1.73$ ($SD: .79$) for interest in the topic (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3

Descriptive statistics for Basic Descriptions in Economics

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Reading score</i>	2.54	1.79
<i>Background</i>	1.82	.60
<i>Interest</i>	1.73	.79

Also, for one of the low-interest topics, it was seen that background knowledge and interest were significantly related $\rho = .34$, $n=75$, $p < .05$, two-tailed test. However, the relationship of reading performance score and background knowledge was insignificant $\rho = .15$, $n=75$, $p > .05$, two-tailed test, as there was no significant relationship between topic interest and reading performance score $\rho = .16$, $n=75$, $p > .05$, two-tailed test (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4

Results of correlation test for Basic Descriptions in Economics

	Reading score	Background	Interest
Reading score	1	.15	.21
Background		1	.34**
Interest			1

** p <.01 level (2-tailed).
N=75

4.1.3.2 The test of “Animal Testing: Science or Fiction?”

The moderate-interest topic tested students’ reading performance with 10 comprehension/ inference questions, too (see Appendix D). The mean of the reading performance score for the test was $M: 4.01$ ($SD: 1.94$) out of 10. Also, the test presented a mean score $M: 2.57$ ($SD: .80$) for topic background knowledge, and for the average of interest in topic was $M:3$ ($SD:.90$).

Table 4.5

Descriptive statistics for Animal Testing: Science or Fiction?

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Reading score</i>	4.01	1.94
<i>Background</i>	2.57	.80
<i>Interest</i>	3	.90

Moreover, the results of animal testing reading comprehension test revealed a significant relationship between topic background knowledge and interest as $\rho = .60$, $n=75$, $p <.05$, two-tailed test. Besides, there was also a significant relationship between background knowledge and reading performance score $\rho = .68$, $n=75$, $p <.05$, two-tailed test. When Table 4.6 examined, it was also

observed that there was a significant relationship between topic interest and reading performance score $\rho = .54$, $n=75$, $p < .05$, two-tailed test.

Table 4.6

Results of correlation test for Animal Testing: Science or Fiction?

	Reading score	Background	Interest
Reading score	1	.68**	.54**
Background		1	.60**
Interest			1

** $p < .01$ level (2-tailed).
N=75

4.1.3.3 The test of “Eurovision Song Contest- 2009”

Eurovision song contest text served for the high interest topic and it aimed to test student reading performance with 10 comprehension/inference questions, too (see Appendix E). The mean of the reading performance score in that test was $M: 5.14$ ($SD: 1.86$) out of 10. Besides these, it was concluded that the students’ background knowledge average was $M: 2.96$ ($SD: .66$), while their interest rate had a mean of $M: 3.37$ ($SD: .85$), (Table 4.7).

Table 4.7

Descriptive statistics for Eurovision Song Contest- 2009

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Reading score</i>	5.14	1.86
<i>Background</i>	2.96	.66
<i>Interest</i>	3.37	.85

The results of correlation test proved a significant relationship between topic background and interest as $\rho=.59$, $n=75$, $p <.05$, two-tailed test. Also, the relationship between background knowledge and reading performance score was significant $\rho= .46$, $n=75$, $p <.05$, two-tailed test. Besides, there was a significant relationship between topic interest and reading performance score $\rho= .50$, $n=75$, $p <.05$, two-tailed test (Table 4.8).

Table 4.8

Results of correlation Test for Eurovision Song Contest- 2009

	Reading score	Background	Interest
Reading score	1	.46**	.50**
Background		1	.59**
Interest			1

** $p <.01$ level (2-tailed).

4.2 Summary of Findings

The general findings obtained throughout the Reading Interest Questionnaire (RIQ) and three reading comprehension tests accompanied with 2-item Background Knowledge & Interest Questionnaire are presented below.

The common interest areas of English young adult learners are grouped into three. In the high interest group, there are some topics like humor, recent events, movies, technology, music and science, while in moderate interest group art, literature, psychology, health and animals exist among topics. Besides all these, law, astrology, economics and military are some of the topics which fall in the low interest group (see Appendix C).

The reading performance scores change regarding the three different reading comprehension tests. Low interest-low background knowledge test was the one which students were able to succeed the least, while moderate interest-moderate background knowledge test presented them a chance to achieve more. Lastly, the students got their top score when it was time for high interest-high background test.

The amount of topic background knowledge changed based on the amount of interest in topic. If the students are interested in the topic, they hold sufficient amount of background knowledge since the highest interest topic proved to serve for the highest background knowledge unlike the low interest text holds the least amount of background knowledge.

Reading performance score and background knowledge of the topic were significantly related. Their reading performance score go awry when the amount of background knowledge decreases. That's is to say, students get the highest grade in the test whose reading text serves for the highest amount of background knowledge, while they get the lowest grade in accordance with the lowest background amount, although that test didn't prove a significant relationship between two variables.

The tests proved a relationship between topic interest and reading performance score, too. Students got the highest reading performance score in the test of high interest while their score deteriorated for moderate-interest test and even got the worst when it was time for low-interest test, although for that test there had no proven relationship between the two variables.

Reading performance score was seriously affected by the amount of topic background knowledge, while the contribution of topic interest was not possible to ignore since it had also an important upshot.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, discussions in relation to the results derived from statistical analysis, pedagogical implications and recommendation for further research are presented.

5.1 Discussion of the Findings

5.1.1 Relationship between Background Knowledge and Topic Interest

The results of current study revealed similar findings to the ones in the study of Weber (1980) and Entin (1981) who highlighted that background knowledge and interest are correlated factors and have an additive effect on reading comprehension since either low interest or low prior knowledge causes less persistence in reading. Although there is not much research on this issue and even one of the studies done by Carrell and Wise (1998) revealed a weak correlation of topic interest and prior knowledge, it should be kept in mind that possible correlation leads the reader to develop some positive attitudes towards the text and generates appropriate questions which are answered with the harmony of the information from the text and the reader experience (Williams, 1987). Unlike Carrell and Wise's (1998) study, Guthrie's (1981) study revealed a high correlation between prior knowledge and topic interest, just like the present study suggested. The participants demonstrated the least background knowledge for the low interest topic; whereas, it has increased when topic interest has, too. That is to say, the greater the amount of the topic interest is, the greater the amount of background knowledge is. The explanation of Reynolds and Shirey (1988) pointed out that if the reader is interested in the topic, there will be little cognitive effort to learn from the text because they have much background knowledge

about it. Moreover, Leloup (1993) stated that one is more interested in the topic which he holds certain amount of previous information.

5.1.2 Relationship between Background Knowledge and Reading Performance

Similar to the findings of Al-Shumaimeri's study, the most prominent finding of the present study was the significant relationship between reading performance score of English language learners and the amount of topic background knowledge. As the results revealed, the subjects scored best in the test of the most familiar topic since they held the greatest amount of background knowledge. Carrell (1987) provided an explanation for the case by stating that unfamiliar topics create difficulties for the reader than even an unfamiliar form can do after the study, which the effects of language difficulty and topic familiarity on reading comprehension were examined in. It is because inferencing and mental representations of the materials were basically affected by background knowledge but not by linguistic difficulty (Chang, 2006). That outcome is highly related to the present case which underlines that the lowest grade was associated with the unfamiliar topic. As the definition of the reading always emphasized the most productive interaction of ideas, arguments, intentions and experiences of the reader and the writer to derive the meaning happens due to the reader's background knowledge which is facilitative for a better understanding (Adam and Collins, 1979 cited in Levine and Reves, 1994). Besides, among the three schemata, content schema labeled as the best predictor of text comprehension (45%) by Levine and Reves (1994). Because with the use of appropriate schemata, the reader determines the important and relevant aspects of a text by excluding the secondary ones within text processing criteria, generating hypothesis for the gaps in comprehension and recalling them when it is necessary (Wilson and Alderson, 1986). Therefore, if there is not appropriate background knowledge, the reader cannot make sense well what he is reading. Besides these, Brantmeier (2003) referred the effects of gender stereotypes in the study by

stating that males score higher if they are given male-oriented topics; it is still the issue of topic familiarity since females are more familiar with some certain topics just like housework than males are, because they have more experiences and ideas about it which form their background knowledge about the topic.

Apart from all these, as stated by Hudson (1992), background knowledge is necessary to overcome the language problems during the comprehension process. The present study revealed that for the low background knowledge text, when the readers were asked to answer some language questions testing vocabulary knowledge, approximately 75% of them failed and for another pronoun inference question 70% were unsuccessful to answer that question. On the other hand, when it was time to answer questions in moderate background text, again they needed to answer two vocabulary question, for the first one 50% of the students and for the second one 70% of the students failed to answer. Next, the high background knowledge text tested inference of one vocabulary and one pronoun. This time 30% of the students failed to answer the vocabulary question and 40% couldn't answer the other correctly. About the case Landry (2002) mentioned that presenting the meaning of specific words and phrases is not enough to help the student comprehend a text; because all these linguistic cues become meaningful in a context with the help of prior world knowledge. Although these present texts were standardized and equal to each other in terms of language as readability check results highlighted; the amount of background knowledge most probably determined the performance and led the reader to tag the text as complex, difficult or easy and fun. The study of Keshavarz and Atai (2007) supports the claims of the present study, since they also found out that linguistic simplification doesn't have any effect to enhance reading comprehension and recall but does content schemata. Besides all these, Dijk and Kintsch (1983) focused on the malfunctions during the macroprocessing, the global semantic structure of the reading material under the influence of prior knowledge. If the reader encounters with an unfamiliar text, the cognitive load increases, for that reason he needs to understand each single idea unit. In other words, memory constraints are

increased while cognitive resources are reduced; making comprehension process more difficult (Al-Shumaimeri, 2006).

There may be another possible explanation for the effects of background knowledge on reading performance as studied by Peretz and Shoham (1990); their study revealed that the students felt more comfortable with a familiar topic while they were threatened by an unfamiliar text because they rate the familiar texts as being easier. While reading unfamiliar topics, the reader also deals with psychological burdens like greater amount of stress and fear of failure; especially if it is an exam, the case is worse. After Bensoussan's (1998) study, it was stated that having enough amount of background knowledge about the topic most probably relaxed some students and reduced test anxiety leading to higher performance. In present study, all texts were within the standard limits of readability; even high-background knowledge text was closer to the lower limit of standard values. Keeping aforementioned facts in mind, it is not surprising that readers got the higher grade in the familiar reading comprehension test although it was relatively the most difficult text.

5.1.3 Relationship between Topic Interest and Reading Performance

The other distinctive result of the present study was the positive correlation of reading performance and topic interest; readers' performance increased parallel to increasing amount of topic interest because if the reader has high interest in a text, he utilizes more strategies while reading (Olshavsky, 1976). That is to say, it cannot be expected to realize the desired reading performance by simply asking the students read and understand the texts since some of the dynamics which are motivation and purpose to read may be missing (Williams, 1987). Therefore, high interest topics improve comprehension, yet it was also stated comprehension was not always depressed due to low interest materials (Williams, 1983); however in the present study, low interest text led to the minimum reading performance score, while the high interest text stimulated the highest grade. After being

presented a pre-studied text and a new one about love and marriage, the readers scored better in the second one; Bensoussan (1998) explained the case on the base of readers' interest because students are concerned about the new topic, they have scored higher. Besides Leloup (1993) found a strong effect of topic interest on reading performance; it accounted for 9% of variance in foreign language reading comprehension so it is important to refer to the readers' interest since it encourages them to use their reading skills which is highly important for reading performance and efficiency (Robinson, 1958; Shores, 1947; Witty, 1961) as stated by Shnayer (1968) following the study, "reading interest, as a factor of reading comprehension, may enable most students to read beyond their measured reading ability" (p. 6) and "reading interest, as a factor of reading comprehension is significant ($p < .001$) to children with reading ability from two years below grade level to one year above grade level" (p. 6). Further, they focus their attention more and make great efforts to read if the topic is interesting to them (Lee, 2009) as topic content and interest were more important when compared to language structures in a text (McAdams, 1993).

5.2 Implications for Practice

"People learn to read, and read better, by reading"

David Eskey (1986, p. 21)

Foreign language reading has been affected by various affective factors apart from cognitive dynamics. Among these, background knowledge and topic interest are crucial to pay attention in teaching practice.

First of all, for an author, it is not possible to write a text which addresses all the possible readers who have different background knowledge and interest. Sometimes writers' assumptions about the reader, with a certain amount of world knowledge to comprehend text, create some difficulties because writers put them into groups. However, if the reader is not one of the intended ones, most probably he will be strange to the dialogue between the writer and writer's expected model

reader. Therefore, in such a case, EFL reading teachers need to handle the problem by manipulating either the text or the reader (Wallace, 1992). One of the techniques to increase comprehension is the use of students' ideas and own selection; so that students become interested in what they are reading. That's why Carrel and Eisterhold (1983) suggested choosing the texts in consideration of content, level of difficulty and length but relevant to readers' experiences and interest which activate appropriate schemata to understand the text. For that purpose, an awareness of the topics which students are interested or how much they know about a set of topics would be beneficial.

Also, in pre-reading part of the sessions, providing background information and previewing content for the reader are among the most helpful strategies. For that purpose different techniques like brain-storming, discussion, role playing, video watching can be utilized or else making good use of the title or other visuals is very beneficial for the students since apart from activation necessary schemata, these also create a purpose and motivation to read well (Landry, 2002). Moreover, As Mackay, Barkman and Jordan (1979) stated a high interest topic or sufficient background knowledge of a specific subject can be a great help against lack of syntactic control over the language. These will enable the reader to be motivated to read and comprehend reasonably though it is syntactically difficult. All these are especially important for the less proficient students, with the provision of background knowledge; they will be free from the invisible boundaries of vocabulary and structure of the content. It is always better for the reader to take advantage of the strengths in order to compensate for his weaknesses (Al-Shumaimeri, 2006). That's why teachers should be educated on pre-reading activities and how to apply these facilitators since it is a well-known fact that activation of related background knowledge lessen the cognitive load (Nassaji, 2007) while the reader can allocate more time to analyze and interpret the text. So, achieving background knowledge creates a balance between the text and the reader, that is to say, manipulation of one or both has a crucial effect on comprehension (Carrel and Eisterhold, 1983).

Successful reading depends on not only students' use of strategies and language knowledge but also the nature and content of reading passage. In contrast to the idea that the shortest passage is the easiest, students should be provided with conceptually complete passages (Lee, 1986). As Hudson (2007) stated foreign language reading methods, materials and instruction should be context focused to help the reader to possess a purpose and it also provides an explanation for the question why different people remember different stuff after reading the same text. It is because of background knowledge; information in the text may be important for a teacher since it is already linked to some knowledge sets in mind, but it may not be that much important for a doctor who cannot associate the new information; as a result he recalls poorly. If the teacher creates a reading purpose by using the context, the students get accustomed to doing it, and out of the class they will read purposefully. That is to say, while they are building on their world knowledge, there will be an awareness to choose the most appropriate text for their needs.

Moreover, Williams (1987) suggested that instead of random pre-reading vocabulary teaching, to improve background knowledge and word meaning simultaneously, the words are to be taught in semantically and topically related sets. Educational representations of these sets are referred as "advance organizer" (AO) by Ausubel (1960). Through expository presentation, AOs offer an instructional approach to master the content which is free from rote memorization and which appeal to higher level learning objectives (DeChenne, 1993). They not only make learning meaningful and relevant but also require students to be active in assimilating, categorizing, and cataloging information into their existing mental structure (Joyce and Weil, 1972).

Also Hudson (2007) advised to enhance readers' background knowledge through extensive reading and free volunteer reading activities (Carrell and Wise, 1998). These can be done in the foreign language, or else especially the students who are resistant towards the foreign language or the beginners/elementary learners can be

encouraged to read even in the native language since accumulation of the topic knowledge and getting familiar with it are important because "in general people forget the actual language but remember the message." (Sinclair,1990, p. 16)

Lee (1986), based on his experiment, suggested curriculum developers to present reading as a skill especially at the lower levels rather than presenting it as reinforcement for grammar and a source of vocabulary since without sufficient development of reading skills, it is difficult to deal with both unfamiliar topics and language items.

In class, there may be some students, with low background topic knowledge but they may also have personal interest in that topic; so that they may feel motivated to read. Or else, the opposite case is just so possible students with a great deal of background knowledge may not be interested in the particular topic. However, it should be remembered that with low prior knowledge and interest, comprehension suffers. So in such a case, using different mechanisms to gather information about topic-interest and prior-knowledge is really good for the students. An inventory at the beginning of the term may serve for that purpose very well. Identification of reading topic interests and the level of background knowledge is crucial as high interest topic is necessary to motivate the students that they can read and understand. Yet for the other topics, an urgent need and purpose are created; the students feel an urge to improve background knowledge in case they can encounter a similar text in any exam.

Apart from being instructed, the readers are tested for their L2 reading proficiency (Cohen, 1980). Bernhardt (1998) suggested some crucial facts to keep in mind before applying the test;

An assessment mechanism must incorporate a sense of the individual reader-not a 'generic' reader; must include an adequate description of textual features; must provide an understanding of how and what readers select from tests for processing and finally, must indicate how culturally accurate the reconstruction of a text is (p. 193).

That's why the test should balance the linguistic and background cues for comprehension process not to be hindered by any of two (Bernhardt, 1998) because as Bensoussan (1998) stated completely unfamiliar topics place the reader at an unfair difficulty. As Shnayer's (1968) warned test makers to create instruments which discriminate readers based on their reading skills and abilities but not on low interest or background knowledge. Identification of these variables is important because of some reasons. First of all, the test will be appropriate for cognitive and affective domain which should be appealed in a learning environment. As well, it is necessary for students' self confidence. If the reader engages in language structures and aims to communicate in any channel but he is hindered because of the topic that he is not interested as if he has to be, or because of a topic which the reader perceives quite weird, he will be demotivated and he will not feel confident enough in the learning process. Therefore, the students should be presented topics from various areas; at least they are to become familiar with them although they don't crave to read.

5.3 Implications for Further Research

Based on the current findings, the following suggestions might be helpful for prospective studies;

Keeping the study's design same, a time serial study can be done; so weekly or periodical testing can be applied to see the effects of background knowledge on reading performance. Instead of one reading comprehension test for one area, a study design which includes many reading comprehension tests for each of the three interest-background groups will provide more stable and consistent data. Or else by changing the current design and having a 3x3 factorial design of background and interest would be more helpful to understand the simultaneous effects of them on reading achievement.

Also, an experimental study design might explain the relationship of the variables better, even the effects of interest or background knowledge can be accounted for. For that an experimental group is given the chance to choose the topics that they want to cover and are trained for these to be tested while a control group gets no training and is not given the chance to speak out about the topic interests.

Besides, it would be better to increase the number of subjects. The participants, also, would be selected from different universities. Since the greater the number of the sample is, the more possible to generalize the results.

Moreover, other variables can be also examined. The relationship between gender, department or even the geographical location of the students' hometown and their reading interest and/or background knowledge can be studied while the effects of these can be utilized on reading instruction.

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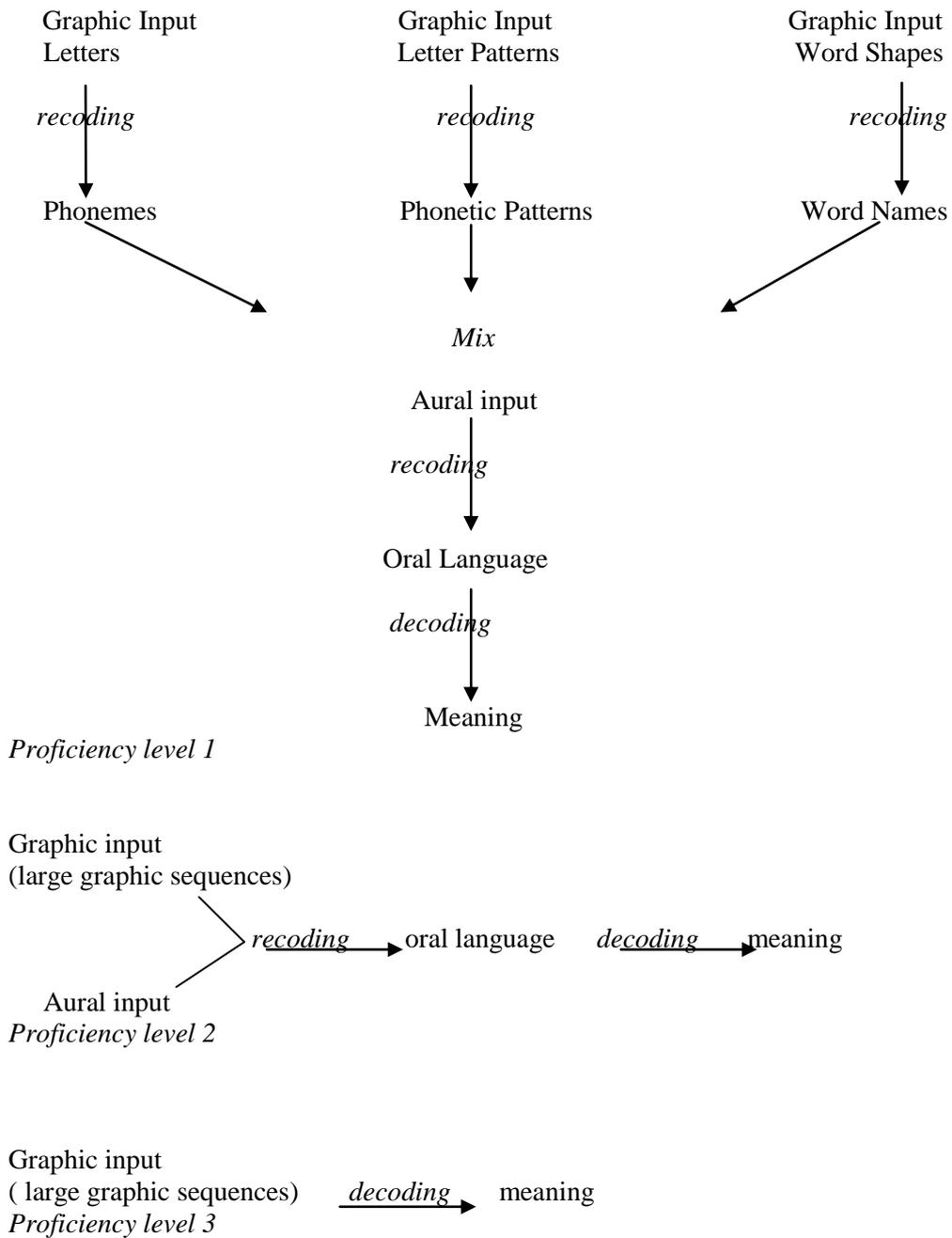
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

THE GOODMAN READING MODEL



APPENDIX B

READING INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE

Sevgili Öğrenciler,

Bu anketle, TOBB Ekonomi ve Teknoloji Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Bölümü öğrencilerinin okuma konu alanı ilgilerinin belirlenmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Uygulanan bu ankete vereceğiniz cevaplar değerlendirilerek, araştırma süreci çerçevesinde, ilgi alanınızdaki konulardan birini/ bir kaçını kapsayan ve konusu okuma ilgi alanınıza girmeyen okuma parçalarıyla konu alan ilgisi, art alan bilgisi ve okuma başarısı arasındaki ilişki çalışılacaktır.

Lütfen her bir konu alanı için 1' den (hiç) 5'e (en çok) kadar derecelendirilmiş diziye kullanarak konuya karşı ilginizi değerlendirip uygun seçeneği işaretleyiniz. Anketten sağlıklı sonuçların elde edilmesi vereceğiniz samimi cevaplara bağlıdır bu yüzden tüm soruları eksiksiz cevaplayınız. Vereceğiniz cevaplar sadece araştırma amaçlı kullanılacaktır.

Katkılarınızdan dolayı teşekkür ederim.

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Aşağıda verilen konuları okuma ilginize en uygun şekilde *1' den (hiç okumadığınız/ okumayı hiç sevmediğiniz) 5'e (en çok okuduğunuz/ okumayı en çok sevdiğiniz)* kadar bir derecelendirme yaparak ikinci sütunda seçtiğiniz rakamı işaretleyiniz (X). İlgilendiğiniz konu ile ilgili, varsa, alt başlıkları üçüncü sütuna yazınız.

1 2 3 4 5
(Hiç (En çok
Okumam) Okurum)

KONULAR	DERECELENDİRME					(Varsa) İLGİLENDİĞİNİZ KONU ALT BAŞLIKLARI
	1	2	3	4	5	
askerlik						(ordu, askeri kurallar vs)
astroloji						(burçlar, gezegenlerin insana etkileri vs)
bilgisayar						(yazılım, bilgisayar yararları vs)
bilim						(klonlama, H1N1 tedavisi vs)
bilim kurgu						(geleceğe yolculuk, gezegenler arası iletişim)
biyografi						(Atatürk'ün hayatı vs)
dil						(ispanyolca, dil edinimi vs)
din						(islamiyet, budizm vs)
doğa						(dağların yapısı, çiçek bakımı vs)

doğüstü olaylar						(UFO, doğüstü gücü olan kahramanlar vs)
edebiyat						(hikaye, roman, yazarlar vs)
eğitim						(çocuk gelişimi, öğrenme vs)
ekonomi						(gayrimenkul, döviz işletimi vs)
felsefe						(varlık, gerçeklik vs)
filmler						(titanik, 2012 vs)
gizemli olaylar						(mucizeler, reinkarnasyon vs)
güncel olaylar						(terör, etnik sorunlar vs)
hayvanlar						(kedi bakımı, kuşların özellikleri vs)
hobi						(dans, yağlı boya vs)
hukuk						(hukuk tarihi, kadın hakları vs)
kişisel gelişim						(amaçları gerçekleştirme, etkili iletişim vs)
korku						(hayalet hikayeleri, cinayet vs)
mitoloji						(afrodit, yunan tanrıları vs)
mizah						(komedi filmleri, komik karakterler vs)
moda						(90lar modası, değişen trendler vs)
müzik						(gruplar, müzik tarzları vs)
oyunlar						(tavla, tabu, bilgisayar oyunları vs)
özel günler						(sevgililer günü, yılbaşı vs)
psikoloji						(kişilik gelişimi, psikolojik hastalıklar vs)
sağlık						(tedavi yöntemleri, hastalıklar vs)
sanat						(tiyatro, opera, sinema vs)
seyahat						(Avrupa ülkeleri, seyahat zamanı vs)
siyaset						(iç politika, politik kutuplaşma vs)
spor						(futbol, yüzme, golf vs)
şiiir						(şairler, şiiir akımları vs)
tarih						(2. dünya savaşı, sanayi devrimi vs)
teknoloji						(cep telefonu, güneş arabası vs)

Diğer (Lütfen belirtiniz):

.....

.....

.....

.....

APPENDIX C

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS for READING INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
Mizah	3.83	1.09	1.00	5.00
Güncel olaylar	3.79	1.10	1.00	5.00
Filmler	3.78	1.15	1.00	5.00
Teknoloji	3.31	1.36	1.00	5.00
Oyunlar	3.27	1.47	1.00	5.00
Müzik	3.23	1.53	1.00	5.00
Bilim	3.17	1.23	1.00	5.00
Gizemli olaylar	3.17	1.32	1.00	5.00
Siyaset	3.10	1.38	1.00	5.00
Bilim kurgu	3.08	1.41	1.00	5.00
Tarih	3.06	1.38	1.00	5.00
Spor	3.05	1.50	1.00	5.00
Kişisel gelişim	3.04	1.35	1.00	5.00
Seyahat	3.00	1.24	1.00	5.00
Bilgisayar	2.90	1.42	1.00	5.00
Sanat	2.90	1.30	1.00	5.00
Doğüstü olaylar	2.84	1.36	1.00	5.00
Biyografi	2.83	1.36	1.00	5.00
Edebiyat	2.82	1.48	1.00	5.00
Korku	2.75	1.44	1.00	5.00
Şiir	2.69	1.45	1.00	5.00
Doğa	2.67	1.31	1.00	5.00
Hobi	2.67	1.40	1.00	5.00
Psikoloji	2.64	1.27	1.00	5.00
Din	2.52	1.31	1.00	5.00
Dil	2.46	1.20	1.00	5.00
Sağlık	2.45	1.17	1.00	5.00
Hayvanlar	2.41	1.28	1.00	5.00
Felsefe	2.38	1.36	1.00	5.00
Mitoloji	2.35	1.44	1.00	5.00
Özel günler	2.35	1.28	1.00	5.00

Moda	2.35	1.31	1.00	5.00
Eđitim	2.35	1.26	1.00	5.00
Askerlik	2.23	1.23	1.00	5.00
Ekonomi	2.13	1.09	1.00	5.00
Astroloji	2.04	1.08	1.00	5.00
Hukuk	1.95	1.17	1.00	5.00

APPENDIX D

LOW-INTEREST & LOW-BACKGORUND KNOWLEDGE READING COMPREHENSION TEST

Basic Descriptions in Economics

To understand the term of inflation, it is necessary to know the meaning of the word. The Economics Glossary defines inflation as an increase in the price of a basket of products and services representative of the economy as a whole.

Since inflation is a rise in the general level of prices, it is basically related to money, as said "Inflation is too many dollars chasing too few goods". To understand how this works, imagine a world that only has two things: Oranges picked from trees, and paper money printed by the government. In a year, where there is a drought and oranges are insufficient, the price of oranges rises, as there will be quite a few dollars to buy few oranges. On the other hand, if there's abundance of oranges, the price of oranges falls, because orange sellers will need to reduce their prices to clear their stock. These scenarios are respectively inflation and deflation, which are the changes in the standard price of all goods and services.

Inflation and deflation can occur by changing the amount of money in the system. In view of that, inflation is caused by a combination of four factors; while money supply raises, the supply of goods, in contrast, drops. Besides, the demand for money decreases while there is an increasing demand for the goods. On the contrary, deflation may be caused by decline of the money supply with the rise of goods supply or low demand for goods leads a decrease in the money supply. Actually, deflation is neither good nor bad. It depends on the cause if people will suffer or be pleased about. When the cause is increase in the supply of goods, it will be good. In the late 1800's the industrial revolution dramatically increased productivity. However, if deflation is caused by a decrease in the supply of money as in the great depression, it's bad. In 1863, people lost their jobs and banks stopped loaning money, unfortunately the Federal Reserve did not **satisfy** that demand, therefore banks collapsed one-by-one.

There are two types of inflation as "Cost-Push Inflation" and "Demand-Pull Inflation ". The text "Economics" (2nd Edition) by Parkin and Bade give the following explanation for cost-push inflation "... results from a decrease in total supply". The main sources for the case are increase in the pay rates and the price of raw materials. These sources are controlled by increasing costs; thus the higher the cost of production is, the smaller the amount of production is. At a given price level, rising prices of raw materials such as oil cause firms to decrease the quantity of labor and reduce production. Any combinations of the four factors

could cause **that**, but the most likely ones are raw materials' becoming more **scarce** and increase in the demand for raw materials and labor.

On the other hand, Parkin and Bade explain demand-pull inflation as an increase in total demand. Such inflation may arise from any individual factor but the main causes, which proceed parallel to total demand, are money supply, government purchase and price level in the rest of the world. Suppose you are living in the United States. If the price of gum rises in Canada, it is expected that fewer Americans buy gum from Canadians and more Canadians purchase the cheaper gum from American sources. From the American perspective, the demand for gum has risen causing a price rise in gum

Adapted from: http://economics.about.com/cs/money/a/inflation_terms.htm.

👉 You are supposed to complete the following statements according to the information presented in the text. Complete each statement with the most appropriate option given.

1. The reason of inflation is.....
 - a) lack of products or services
 - b) need for products or services
 - c) great amount of products or services
 - d) demand for products or services
2. Deflation occurs when there is (a)
 - a) great number of the goods in the market
 - b) shortage of the goods in the market
 - c) cost increase in goods
 - d) cost decrease in goods
3. Inflation does not occur, if.....
 - a) the demand for goods goes up
 - b) the demand for money goes up
 - c) the supply of money goes up
 - d) the supply of goods goes down
3. The word "satisfy" means to.....
 - a) accept
 - b) supply
 - c) achieve
 - d) recognize
4. The word "scarce" means.....
 - a) inadequate
 - b) popular
 - c) available
 - d) expensive
5. In the text, the word "**that**" means.....
 - a) reduction in the quantity of labor
 - b) reduction in the production
 - c) raise in the raw materials price
 - d) raise in production fee
6. Demand-full inflation doesn't occur, in case of
 - a) government buying increase
 - b) government money increase
 - c) worldwide buying increase
 - d) worldwide price increase
7. If a company decides to sell its extra abroad products in-country market, this causes
 - a) inflation
 - b) deflation
 - c) demand-full inflation
 - d) cost-push inflation
8. If a country decides to buy electricity from neighbor countries, this causes.....
 - a) cost-push inflation
 - b) demand-full inflation
 - c) inflation
 - d) deflation
10. The text may not be studied primarily in
 - a) laws of economics
 - b) commercial law
 - c) laws of banking
 - d) international law

*Okuduđunuz paradaki konu ile ilgili *daha 6nceden ne kadar bilginiz vardı*.....

1 2 3 4 5
Hi ok az Biraz Olduka ok fazla

*Okuduđunuz paradaki konuya ne kadar *ilginiz var*...

1 2 3 4 5
Hi ok az Biraz Olduka ok fazla

APPENDIX E

MODERATE-INTEREST & MODERATE BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE READING COMPREHENSION TEST

Animal Testing: Science or Fiction?

Most people know that cancer, heart disease and stroke are the major causes of death in the West. But many would be surprised by the next biggest killer: side effects of medicines. The drug organizations continuously make sure that all drugs are tested for safety and effectiveness before they can be used by humans. When challenged about the ethics of animal testing, their defense typically goes like this: ‘Which one is more important: your child’s life or a rat’s?’ Given this choice, most people would thankfully kill the rat.

New drugs go through three basic testing stages; test-tube, computer modeling and animal testing. There should be persuasive evidence which states the drug is safe and effective before being tested in humans. In animal testing, animals are intentionally given diseases to see if a new drug will have an effect and if it has any serious side effects. Test animals may develop tumors and are often killed **on purpose** at some point in the test to examine the signs of damage. However, no method can predict the reactions of every patient with 100 per cent accuracy as they differ between sexes, ages, ethnic groups, even between family members. We are all different, but not as different from each other as we are from animals. Non-animal methods do not completely fail or succeed, but do offer more security.

But many studies which compared drug side effects in humans and animals, have found that animal tests are less predictive than tossing a coin. Hundreds of drugs to treat strokes have been found safe and effective in animal studies and then injured or killed patients in clinical tests. Hormone-replacement therapy (HRT), prescribed to millions of women because it lowered monkeys’ risk of heart disease and stroke, increases women’s risks of these conditions significantly. In August 2003, *The Lancet* said that HRT had caused 20,000 cases of breast cancer over the past decade in Britain, as well thousands of heart attacks and strokes. Moreover, Penicillin, the world’s first antibiotic, would have been waiting forever, if it had been tested on guinea pigs as they were killed.

Also, cosmetics companies kill millions of animals to test their products. Many shampoos and other personal-care products go through safety testing before they’re made available to consumers. For instance in the Draize eye-and skin-irritation test, rabbits are immobilized while a substance is dripped or sprayed into their eyes. Rabbits often scream in pain and many break their necks trying to get free. It has been shown to over predict the effects that could be seen in the human eye, and does not reflect the eye **hazard** for man. The human four-hour patch skin test has proved that skin-irritation data is essentially superior to that given by a

substitute model, such as the rabbit.

It has been known among scientists for decades that animal testing is scientifically unreliable. As *The Lancet*, January 2005, commented 'We must face the fact that the most careful tests of a new drug's effects on animals may tell us little of its effect in humans.' In 1964 Dr J Gallagher admitted that animal studies, which were used even by Greeks in the second century BC, are just done for legal reasons. Animal data provide responsibility protection when drugs kill or injure people. Industry can point to the animal tests and state that they have done their best to ensure against tragedies.

Adapted from: <http://www.indymedia.org.nz/article/69621/animal-testing-science-or-fiction>

☞ You are supposed to complete the following statements according to the information presented in the text. Complete each statement with the most appropriate option given.

1. The text presents information from
a) the USA
b) Europe
c) Britain
d) all around the world
2. The phrase “on purpose” doesn't mean.....
a) by design
b) with intent
c) by accident
d) with resolve
3. If a scientist group uses Turkish women to test Asprin, its variation is under investigation.
a) racial
b) gender
c) age
d) biological
4. In animal testing, HRT may not be examined for before human use.
a) the heart attack
b) the stroke
c) side effects
d) the breast cancer
5. The Lancet is a medical
a) article
b) magazine
c) book
d) encyclopedia
6. About Penicillin, it can be said that it ...
a) had the same effects on animals and humans
b) was tested on animals before human use
c) was tested on animals after human use
d) was discovered after any other antibiotic
7. may not be one of the products which can be tested in the Draize test.
a) lipstick
b) acetone
c) shampoo
d) perfume
8. The word “hazard” means.....
a) irritation
b) damage
c) effect
d) problem
9. After four-hour patch skin test, it can be concluded that
a) human is superior to animals
b) animal skin is more sensitive
c) animal tests may underestimate the effects
d) non-animal tests are more trustworthy
10. The writer most probably supports the idea that
a) non-animal testing should be utilized more
b) animal testing should become more reliable
c) animal testing should be done for legal issues
d) non-animal testing should include human

*Okuduđunuz paradaki konu ile ilgili *daha 6nceden ne kadar bilginiz vardı*.....

1 2 3 4 5
Hi ok az Biraz Olduka ok fazla

*Okuduđunuz paradaki konuya ne kadar *ilginiz var*...

1 2 3 4 5
Hi ok az Biraz Olduka ok fazla

APPENDIX F

HIGH-INTEREST & HIGH BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

READING COMPREHENSION TEST

Eurovision Song Contest- 2009

The Eurovision Song Contest-2009 was the 54th edition of the contest. It took place between 12-16 May at the Olympic Indoor Arena in Moscow, Russia. Being a singer, composer, violinist, pianist, writer and actor of Belarusian descent, Alexander Rybak, and his "Fairytale", created for his old girl friend, got a record-breaking 387 points for Norway. It was the highest score in Eurovision history by 95 points. Second place went to Iceland, third to Azerbaijan, fourth to Turkey, and the United Kingdom taking 5th, seeing their best place since 2002.

The contest was held in Russia after its victory in 2008 in Serbia, chosen best in Ukraine. Host **broadcaster** Channel One introduced the sub-logo and theme for the contest on 30 January 2009. The sub-logo is based upon a "Fantasy Bird", which can be used with many colors. Since 2001, it was the first year that there was no slogan for the contest. The stage, which was designed by Eurovision experienced Casey, had a theme of modern innovative Russian. The postcards included Miss World 2008, Ksenia Sukhinova wearing a T-shirt with the colors of the country's flag, a group of famous buildings, monuments and landscapes from the related country, and an expression in Russian and its English translation were shown. The opening song was from the very first winner of Eurovision , Lys Assia.

Before the contest, a discussion on format changes was held at a EBU meeting in Athens. It could have resulted in the "Big Four" losing their automatic place in the final of the contest although they are the largest economic contributors to **that**. Still, thirty-seven countries participated in one of the semi-finals of the contest, with the "Big Four" countries (France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom) and the host pre-qualified for the final. In addition to those, the final also included the ten selected countries from each semi-final, making a total of twenty-five participants.

Current rules state that countries can have up to six performers on stage. Performers must be at least 16, on the day of the semi-final. There is no nationality restriction for the performers, so countries can be represented by artists who are not nationals of that country. One of the most well-known artists, Canadian Céline Dion represented Switzerland in 1988. From the first Contest until 1965, there was no restriction on language but from time to time, songs were to be performed in a national language. After 1999 Contest, the restriction was again lifted, and songs may be performed in any language. As a result, many of the songs are sung partially or completely in English to reach more audiences, though this is sometimes looked on as unpatriotic. In 2003, Belgium made full

use of free language rule, and played a song in an artificial language created especially for it. Totally instrumental composition isn't let as they are considered equivalent to cheating. All songs must be completely original in terms of songwriting and music and must be sung live.

This year, the changes in the voting of the Eurovision Song Contest Final was introduced as for the first time in years, the winner wasn't decided only by televoting. In contrast, a mixture of televote and a national jury was used. For this purpose, at the beginning, juries of 5 music industry professionals gathered in all 42 countries and their vote, which were then combined with the televoting results, accounted for half of the country's votes.

Adapted from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eurovision_Song_Contest_2009

☞ You are supposed to complete the following statements according to the information presented in the text. Complete each statement with the most appropriate option given.

1. In 1987, it was.....th edition of Eurovision.
a) 30
b) 31
c) 32
d) 33
2. was the highest score until 2009.
a) 387
b) 95
c) 482
d) 292
3. The chronological order of countries where Eurovision was held is
a) Serbia, Russia, Norway, Ukraine
b) Ukraine, Serbia, Russia, Norway
c) Norway, Russia, Ukraine, Serbia
d) Russia, Norway, Serbia, Ukraine
4. The word "broadcaster" means....
a) channel
b) anchor
c) organization
d) presenter
5. While Turkish team is on the stage, that..... is not true.
a) Sukhiova wears a red and white t-shirt
b) Ephesus is presented on the screen
c) Fantasy Bird becomes red
d) The song is displayed in Russian
6. The pronoun "that" means the
a) final
b) contest
c) meeting of EBU
d) semi-final
7. The 2009 contest held semi final(s).
a) one
b) two
c) three
d) four
8. In 2009, a singer who would be 16 years old on could not apply for Eurovision.
a) 11 May
b) 12 May
c) 14 May
d) 15 May
9. A performer who..... cannot join the contest.
a) is Turkish presenting Germany
b) sings in oversea expressions
c) backtracks his song
d) dances with at least 4 people
10. A competitor should care about
a) tone of voice
b) song lyrics
c) instruments
d) dialect

*Okuduğunuz parçadaki konu ile ilgili *daha önceden ne kadar bilginiz* vardı.....

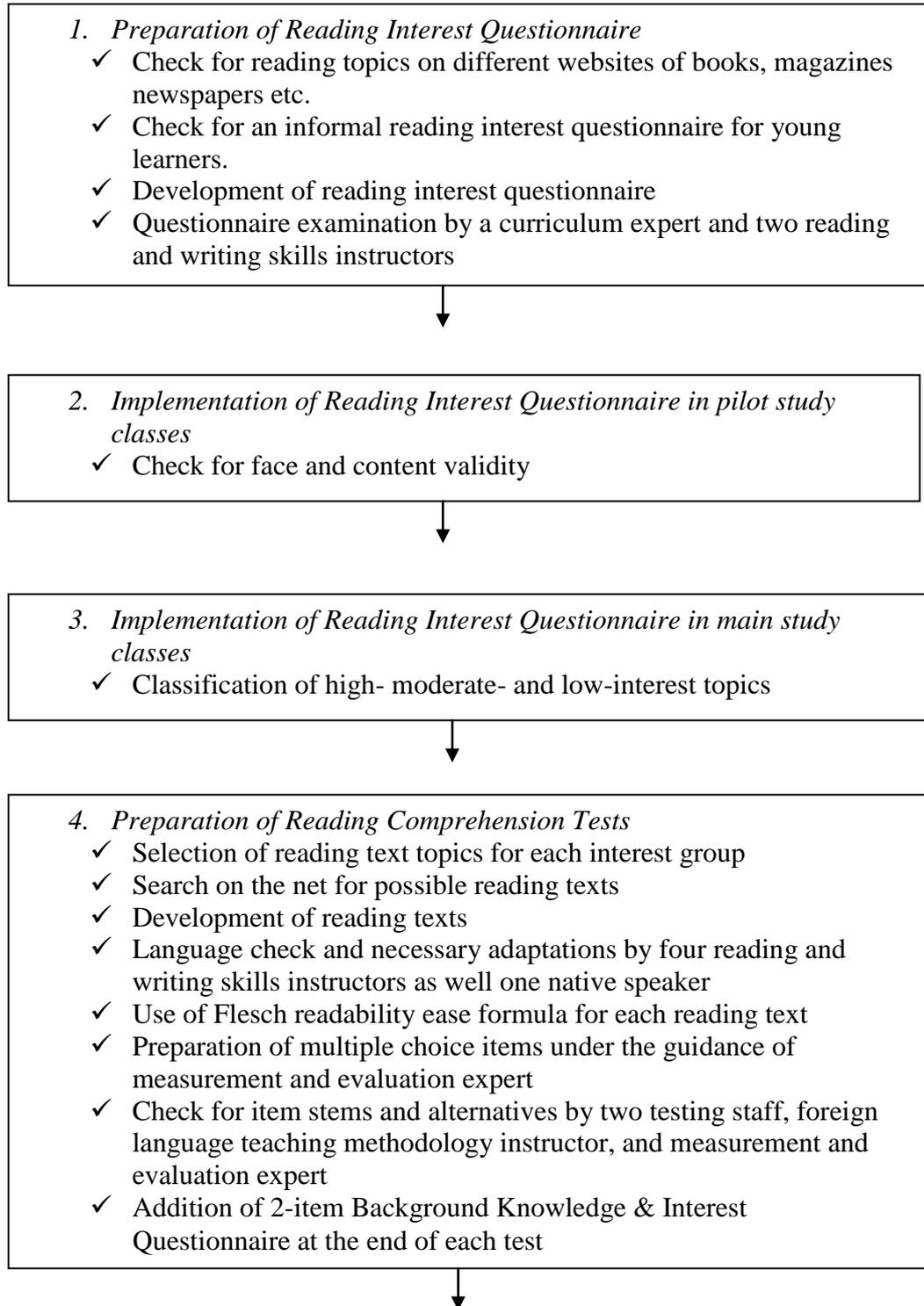
1 2 3 4 5
Hiç Çok az Biraz Oldukça Çok fazla

*Okuduğunuz parçadaki konuya ne kadar *ilginiz* var...

1 2 3 4 5
Hiç Çok az Biraz Oldukça Çok fazla

APPENDIX G

STEPS FOR DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES



5. *Implementation of Reading Comprehension Tests in pilot study classes*

- ✓ On the same every second day
- ✓ In the same instructional hour
- ✓ With the warning; the scores for research purposes only
- ✓ Reliability Check



6. *Adaptation in Reading Comprehension Tests*

- ✓ 10 multiple questions for each test
- ✓ Language check by reading and writing skills instructors
- ✓ Format check of item stems and alternatives by two testing staff



7. *Implementation of Reading Comprehension Tests in main study classes*

- ✓ Every second day
- ✓ In the same instructional hour
- ✓ On the same day
- ✓ With the warning; the scores for research purposes only
- ✓ 15 minutes
- ✓ Reliability check



8. *Running one-way ANOVA test*

- ✓ Answer of research question 2



9. *Running Spearman correlation test*

- ✓ Answer of research question 3 (3.1/ 3.2/ 3.3)

APPENDIX H

VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION FORM

Bu çalışma, Prof. Dr. Meral AKSU danışmanlığında, ODTÜ Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü yüksek lisans öğrencisi Nesrin Öztürk tarafından yürütülmekte ve TOBB Ekonomi ve Teknoloji Üniversitesi Hazırlık Okulundaki öğrencilerinin okuma başarısı, konu alan ilgisi ve konu art alan bilgisi arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda okuma ilgi anketi ve okuma testleri uygulanacaktır. Çalışmaya katılım tamamiyle gönüllülük temelinde olmalıdır. Ankette, sizden kimlik belirleyici hiçbir bilgi istenmemektedir. Cevaplarınız gizli tutulacak ve sadece araştırmacı tarafından değerlendirilecektir; elde edilecek bilgiler sadece bilimsel çalışmalarda kullanılacaktır.

Okuma ilgi anketi ve okuma testleri, genel olarak kişisel rahatsızlık verecek soruları içermemektedir. Ancak, katılım sırasında sorulardan ya da herhangi başka bir nedenden ötürü kendinizi rahatsız hissederseniz cevaplama işini yarıda bırakmakta serbestsiniz. Böyle bir durumda uygulamacıya, anketi ya da okuma testini tamamlamadığınızı söylemeniz yeterli olacaktır. Veri toplama süreci sonunda, bu çalışmayla ilgili sorularınız cevaplanacaktır. Çalışmaya katıldığınız için şimdiden teşekkür ederim. Çalışma hakkında daha fazla bilgi almak için Nesrin Öztürk (Oda: TOBB ETU YDB 331; Tel: 292 4378; e-posta: ozturknesrin@gmail.com) ile iletişim kurabilirsiniz.

Bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum ve istediğim zaman yarıda kesip çıkabileceğimi biliyorum. Verdiğim bilgilerin bilimsel amaçlı yayımlarda kullanılmasını kabul ediyorum. (Formu doldurup imzaladıktan sonra uygulayıcıya geri veriniz).

İsim Soyad

Tarih

İmza

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APPENDIX I

APPROVAL OF RESEARCH CENTER FOR APPLIED ETHICS



1956

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5 Temmuz 2010

Gönderilen: Prof.Dr. Meral Aksu
Eğitim Fakültesi Dekanı

Gönderen : Prof. Dr. Canan Özgen
IAK Başkan Yardımcısı

İlgi : Etik Onayı

“An Examination of the Relationship between Content Familiar Texts Derived from Readers' Interest and Reading Performance of English Language Learners at University Level.” başlığı ile yürüttüğünüz çalışmanız “İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Komitesi” tarafından uygun görülerek gerekli onay verilmiştir.

Bilgilerinize saygılarımla sunarım.

Etik Komite Onayı

Uygundur

5/07/2010

Prof.Dr. Canan ÖZGEN

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