

EFL Reading Test-takers' Characteristics and Performance at an English Medium University

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between test-taker characteristics and performance on an EFL reading test at an English medium university. Many studies about test-taker characteristics have been conducted, and the purpose of the present study was to answer the following research questions: (1) What are EFL reading test-takers' characteristics at an English medium university? (2) What is the EFL reading test-takers' performance at an English medium university? (3) Is there any statistically significant relationship between EFL reading test-takers' characteristics and performance at an English medium university?

The study was empirical in nature, which employed quantitative research methods. The data were collected from 88 students from the Department of English Language Teaching and the Department of Computer and Instructional Technology Teacher Education at Eastern Mediterranean University in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The data collection was done by the means of administering a student questionnaire and an English reading test.

The major findings of the study were as follows: (1) the characteristics of the EFL reading test takers such as gender, age, years of studying English, nationality, CGPA, proficiency level in English, parents' educational level, number of siblings, parents' residence and income, parental importance given to education, parental encouragement given to learn English, reading strategies, and reading attitudes greatly vary; (2) the performance of the undergraduate students on the English reading test is average; (3) there is a statistically significant relationship between the test-takers' characteristics and their performance on a reading test in case with the

participants' reading attitudes, number of years of studying English, nationality and their CGPA. However, no statistically significant relationships were observed between the participants' gender, age, father's or mother's educational level and their EFL reading test performance. In addition, the relationships between reading performance of the students and the number of siblings they had, their parents' residence and income, parental importance given to education, the amount of encouragement to learn English given by the participants' parents, or the reading strategies the students used were found to be statistically not significant.

In conclusion, the study provides some implications for teaching practice, as well as suggestions for prospective research.

Keywords: Test-taker Characteristics, L2 Reading as an Academic Skill, Reading Test.

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, İngilizce ortamlı üniversite öğrencilerinin sınav adayı özellikleri ile yabancı dil olarak bir İngilizce okuma sınavındaki başarımları arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırmayı amaçlamıştır. Bağlamdaki sınav adayı özellikleri konusundaki araştırmaların sayıca az olmasından hareketle, bu çalışmanın amacı şu araştırma sorularını yanıtlamaktır: (1) İngilizce ortamlı üniversitede yabancı dil olarak İngilizce okuma sınav adaylarının özellikleri nedir? (2) İngilizce ortamlı üniversitede yabancı dil olarak İngilizce okuma sınav adaylarının başarımları nedir? (3) İngilizce ortamlı üniversitede yabancı dil olarak İngilizce okuma sınav adaylarının özellikleri ile başarımları arasında anlamlı istatistiksel ilişki var mı?

Çalışma, doğası bakımından görgül olup nicel araştırma yöntemlerine yer vermiştir. Veriler, Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti'nde Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bölümü ile Bilgisayar ve Öğretim Teknolojileri Eğitimi Bölümünden 88 tane öğrenciden toplanmıştır. Veri toplama, bir öğrenci anketi ile bir İngilizce okuma sınavı uygulaması yoluyla gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Çalışmanın başlıca bulguları şunlardır: (1) Cinsiyet, yaş, İngilizce öğrenme yılları, uyruk, genel başarı ortalaması, İngilizce yeterlik düzeyi, ebeveyn eğitim düzeyi, kardeş sayısı, ebeveyn ikamet türü ve gelir düzeyi, ebeveyn tarafından eğitime verilen önem, İngilizce öğrenmek için ebeveyn tarafından yapılan teşvik, okuma taktikleri ve okuma tutumları gibi yabancı dil olarak İngilizce okuma sınav adayı özellikleri adamakıllı çeşitlidir; (2) Lisans düzeyindeki Türk üniversite öğrencilerinin İngilizce okuma sınavındaki başarımları orta seviyededir; (3) Okuma tutumları,

İngilizce öğrenme yılları, uyruk ve genel başarı ortalaması açısından İngilizce okuma sınav adayı özelliklerinin herbiri ile başarımları arasında anlamlı istatistiksel ilişki vardır.

Ancak, katılımcıların cinsiyeti, yaşı, anne veya babalarının eğitim düzeyi ile yabancı dil olarak İngilizce okuma sınavı başarımları arasında hiçbir istatistiksel anlamlı ilişki gözlemlenmedi. Ayrıca, öğrencilerin okuma başarımları ile kardeş sayıları, ebeveynlerinin ikamet türü ve gelir düzeyi, ebeveynleri tarafından eğitime verilen önem, İngilizce öğrenmek için katılımcıların ebeveynleri tarafından yapılan teşvik miktarı veya öğrencilerin kullandığı okuma taktikleri arasındaki ilişkiler istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bulunmadı.

Özetle, çalışma hem uygulamaya yönelik bazı sonuçlar, hem de gelecekte yapılması olası araştırmalar için öneriler sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sınav Adayı Özellikleri, Akademik Beceri Olarak İkinci Dilde Okuma, Okuma Sınavı

To my beloved family

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Presentation

The first chapter presents the study's background, statement of the problem, the study's purpose and the study's significance, respectively. It also introduces the significant terms and their definitions.

1.2 Background of the Study

A recent concern among researchers in the field of language testing has been the identification and characterization of the individual characteristics that influence performance on tests of English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL). One group of characteristics that has been identified and characterized to some extent is what is broadly called background characteristics or test-taker characteristics (TTCs) (Bachman, 1990). These test-taker characteristics encompass individual characteristics or attribute such as native language, age, gender and culture, pedagogical characteristics like background knowledge, years of studying English or earlier instruction, along with cognitive, psychological and social characteristics like attainment strategies and styles, motivation and attitude, intelligence and aptitude, field dependence and independence, introversion and extroversion, and identity, anxiety, and risk-taking (Bachman, 1990).

Research on several of these characteristics or factors from the point of view of second language acquisition has presented that they influence language learning to different degrees (Gardner, 1985, 1988). However, from the perspective of language testing, the impact of the test-taker characteristics has not been given sufficient attention, although research in this area is crucial for our understanding of EFL test performance generally, and reading test performance particularly.

In this line of thought, Farhady (1982) states that "considering as many variables as possible and taking them into account in designing language tests seem to be crucial" (p.45). Since test-taker characteristics have significant roles in language learning, they should be taken into consideration while preparing language tests. In his study, Farhady (1982) used four variables like sex, university position, main field of study, and ethnic group. At the end, the researcher found out that each of the characteristics had great impact on the students' test performance. To support this, the scholar explained that students from other educational background have particular performance profiles which demonstrate strengths and deficiencies in other language skills.

Similar to Farhady (1982), Yien (1999) carried out a study on test performance and test-taker characteristics. The outcomes of the study explained that there were significant test performance variances within all the characteristics such as sex, residence, area of study, and so on. Yien (1999) found out that female students significantly outperformed their male counterparts. Yien (1999), like Farhady (1982), also evaluated that characteristics like age, residence, area of study, and school type significantly differentiated the rate of success in test-taker performance.

The participants of this study were from the ELT Department as well as CITE Department at Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU). For more information about the departments mentioned in this section of the study, please visit the official web page (www.fedu.emu.edu.tr) of the Faculty of Education.

The aim of English Language Teaching Department is to help the students merge with the world's new style of education. The department in the first place, as well as its distinguished staff, supplies the students and provides them with all the possible opportunities to develop international standards of excellence in teaching and research to train competent professionals who will play significant educational roles in today's globalized world (<http://fedu.emu.edu.tr/?page=14:34:0:4:english>).

Computer and Instructional Technology Teacher Education Department aims to provide students with all the knowledge and professional skills necessary for competent computer and instructional technology teachers. To be able to achieve this aim, CITE students are offered courses helping them gain self-improvement skills, as well as provided with chances to work at computer laboratories in the department to develop their theoretical backgrounds and enrich them with the needed experience (<http://fedu.emu.edu.tr/?page=4:24:0:4:english>).

The goal of the present study, therefore, was to investigate the influence of certain of the test-taker characteristics on EFL reading test performance at an English medium university.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Language use can barely be seen as a fully uniform hoard in an optimistic way but depends on the case of use and the language user's characteristics (gender, age, education, social and geographical origin, conquest, etc.). These factors are linked to one group of characteristics and the identification as background characteristics or test-taker characteristics (Bachman, 1990). Generally, test-taker characteristics comprise personal characteristics (e.g., age, culture, gender), pedagogical characteristics (e.g., previous instruction in English), psychological and social characteristics, and cognitive (e.g., attitude and motivation, learning strategies and styles).

It has been recognized that sometimes test-takers' erroneous responses may not suggest incorrect understanding but reflect opinions not collaborated by them. The intricacies of these factors that are out of control disparately affect the test-takers' performance. The impact of test-taker characteristics on their test performance has been demonstrated by a casual survey of the gauge literature over the past two decades where it was clearly certified to the development of test bias in college administration instructional aptitude scales as one of the most combusted and debated issues in the field of testing and evaluation (Bachman, 1990).

Measuring learner's mental abilities and their language abilities can be considered as part of the problem in this context. Bachman, L. F. (1990) states that there is a concern in the indirectness of the measuring, that the conditions for measuring language ability might be limited, and the relatively restricted sample of performance that has been obtained. The prime concern is wether an individual's reading test

performance can be interpreted as an indication of his competence, or ability to use language appropriately and effectively and whether the characteristics can play a significant role in the overall potential language use of the individual.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

This study investigated the relationship between test-taker characteristics of the students at an English medium university and their performance on an EFL reading test. A clarification should focus this point: in any test situation (including the language test situation), there are test takers and tests. Test takers (in ESL/EFL) come to the test setting with certain personal attributes or background characteristics that may have a critical influence on their performance in the tests, in addition to the influence exerted by their language abilities.

Given the insufficiency of the study into test-taker characteristics in the context, the purpose of the current study was mainly to explore EFL reading test-takers' characteristics like age, gender, nationality, educational background, socio-economic background, etc. and their performance at Eastern Mediterranean university.

Specifically, the following three major research questions were investigated in this study:

1. What are EFL reading test-takers' characteristics at Eastern Mediterranean university?
2. What is the EFL reading test-takers' performance at an English medium university?
3. Is there any statistically significant relationship between EFL reading test-takers' characteristics and their performance at an English medium university?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The current study can be counted significant since it can assist to the field of language testing and second language acquisition in theoretical, methodological and practical ways. First, although previous studies in second language acquisition have explored the relationships among some of the test-taker characteristics and language achievement (Gardner, 1985), only a few studies (Hansen and Stansfield, 1981; Stansfield and Hansen, 1983; Fouly, 1985; Chapelle, 1988) with relatively few variables have investigated these relationships from the language testing perspective. The results of this study can, therefore, inform language test developers and researchers regarding the factors that affect test performance, and, thus, about the validity of the theoretical underpinnings that inform these language tests. Bachman (1990) writes about this concern:

A major concern in the design and development of language tests is to minimize the effects of test method, personal attributes that are not part of the language ability, and random factors on test performance. (p. 166)

In addition to the theoretical and methodological significance, this study can provide useful insights for language testing practitioners. For example, any significant relationships between test-taker characteristics and reading test performance for the different groups can inform test users and test developers as well as language and curriculum developers and language teaching material writers.

1.6 Definition of Terms

There are several important terms to be defined in order to eliminate confusion. These are test-taker characteristics, reading, and reading comprehension. These terms are defined by different scholars in a number of different ways. However, most of these definitions have similarities to a greater extent.

1.6.1 Test-taker Characteristics

Bachman (1990) has characterized test-taker characteristics, or personal attributes, as one of the four factors that might influence language test results or provenances of difference in language test results. These characteristics are made up of, in Bachman's list of sources, "cultural background, background knowledge, cognitive abilities, sex and age" (p. 350). The three other factors or sources are communicative language ability, test method facets, and random factors.

In addition to the characteristics mentioned by Bachman, four kinds of characteristics have been discussed in the SLA literature:

1. previous exposure to English obtained through formal and/or informal exposure in their home country;
2. previous exposure to English obtained through formal and/or informal exposure in an English speaking country (if they visited such a country);
3. motivation orientation to learn English, whether this was instrumental or integrative (Gardner and Lambert, 1959); and
4. monitoring (Krashen 1985) their own speaking and writing for English language errors as well as monitoring other people's English language errors.

(Kunnan, 1995, p. 16)

1.6.2 Reading

As defined by Wixson and Peters (1984), reading is an efficient interaction between the characteristics of a specific reader, the characteristics of a specific text, and the peerless context in which the reading occurs.

1.6.3 Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension can be defined as a capacity to comprehend the text that someone reads. According to Grabe and Stoller (2002), reading comprehension is “the ability to understand information in a text and interpret it appropriately” (p. 17). Dutcher (1990), on the other hand, defines reading as an interactive process of the readers’ background knowledge, the information concluded from the text and the reading context in constructing the meaning.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Presentation

The present chapter presents an overview of test-taker characteristics, also reading in L2 as an academic skill. It also reviews literature on main models of reading processing. Furthermore, reading comprehension strategies, and the characteristics of successful and unsuccessful readers are focused on. Finally, the current chapter concludes with an overview of related literature on L2 test-taking strategies.

2.2 Test-taker Characteristics

According to Gu, L. (2011), Foreign language (FL) learners come into a language testing situation as complex human beings, characterized not only by their prior target language achievement but also by their native language background, gender, past and current learning conditions, and many other characteristics. Life experiences and identities of test takers are also the information which is valuable to understand test takers' current learning profiles. The research community has gradually reached the idea that treating test-takers regardless of their identities and life experiences will grant an over-simplified picture of their test performance. Therefore, FL test performance can be explicated more meaningfully by considering test-taker variability (Bachman, 1990).

Bachman (1990), claimed that when designing a language test, the need to consider the characteristics of the language use situation and tasks and of the language users and test takers is necessary. In order to insure and demonstrate the ways in which test

takers correspond to language use tasks, it is important to consider task characteristics, as well to consider the characteristics of individuals in order to be able to demonstrate the extent to which these characteristics are involved in language use tasks and test tasks. Thus, two sets of characteristics that affect both language use and language test performance are of central interest. One set, the characteristics of individuals, is relevant to the construct validity of any inferences that made about language ability. The other set, the characteristics of the tasks, is relevant to determining the domain to which these inferences generalize.

The 1980s saw a wealth of research into the characteristics of test takers and how these are related to test performance, generally under the rubric of investigations into potential sources of test bias. A number of studies have shown differences in test performance across different cultural, linguistic or ethnic groups (e.g., Alderman & Holland, 1981; Chen & Henning, 1985; Politzer & McGroarty, 1985; Swinton & Powers, 1980; Zeidner, 1986), while others have found differential performance between sexes (e.g., Farhady, 1982; Zeidner, 1987). Other studies have found relationships between field dependence and test performance (e.g., Chapelle, 1988; Chapelle & Roberts, 1986; Hansen, 1984; Hansen & Stansfield, 1981; Stansfield & Hansen, 1983). Such studies demonstrate the effects of various test taker characteristics on test performance, and suggest that such characteristics need to be considered in both the design of language tests and in the interpretation of test scores.

2.2.1 Gender

A major goal of this study was to investigate the relationship between the sex variable and learners' performance on English reading test. According to Ellis (1994), female learners generally do better than males in language learning. Taking

this primary hypothesis into consideration, many studies were done in the field of language learning. However, Farhady (1982) claims that, there was no significant difference between male and female students in their performance on the part of reading comprehension as a subtest. Cunningsworth (1995), illustrates that though the presentation of women and men shows an equal balance, there are some unbalanced topics such as famous people in which famous men outnumber women in history. On topics on famous people eighteen out of twenty characters are males, which show an unbalanced distribution.

2.2.2 Age

The age factor is an essential issue in second language learning and there are several different studies in relation to this variable. In this study, age is one of the variables, which is emphasized as one of the important factors that should be considered in FL language learning.

There is a common assumption in the field of second language acquisition (SLA), that adults and children learn in different ways. According to Ellis (1994), there is a belief that younger learners generally do better than older learners. Critical period hypothesis is a supporter of this view, suggesting that there is a period in human progression when the brain is predisposed for success in language learning.

According to Lightbown (2000), “it is difficult to compare children and adults as second language learners” (p. 60). Not only the biological differences suggested by critical period hypothesis, but also the stipulations for language learning are apparently various. The young learners in colloquial language learning environments commonly have better chance and time to practice the target language, and have more chances to hear and use the language in its natural environment without

pressure on them. By contrast, older language learners are in more complex situations in which they try to use more complex language to express more complicated ideas, experiencing pressure and stress.

Most of the researches in this field are related to the speed of learning some aspect of language by learners of different ages. According to Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991), these studies typically involve the presentation of ingenuity on morphological and/or syntactic rules, showing speed of learning, not final achievement.

2.2.3 Language Exposure

According to Kunnan (1995) exposure to the target language was critical to SLA. However, Kunnan claims that exposure can be in different ways. As an instance, second or foreign language students can be exposed to the target language through a formal school setting in their home country, or through an informal situation in a country the first language of which is English; Kunnan (1995) also indicated that English-speaking country exposure showed substantial positive impact on the language test.

Furthermore, critics of bilingual inundation programs had suggested the maximum exposure controversy. In their points of view, exposure to L2 was very much important to succeed in acquisition. According to Scarcella (2003), Schleppegrell (2004) and Bailey, Butler, Stevens, & Lord (2007), the low exposure may be related to the lacking of explicit teaching of academic vocabulary and grammatical structures on the specific contents, and insufficient knowledge of language functions like explanation, descriptions, summarizations, etc., used in academic settings.

2.2.4 Socio-cultural Background

Considering reading literacy as an extremely culture-specific type of activity and differences in the importance placed on reading may give altitude to a literacy accomplishment hiatus among cultural groups in a society (Serpell, 2001). According to Au (1993), literacy variances in accomplishment within cultural groups can to a large step be explained by linguistic and cultural behavioral types that struggle with mainstream education. Similarly, Jenks and Phillips (1998) have discussed that the varying levels of various cultural groups reflect real differences to reach a perfect elaboration for literacy rooted in home as well as the experiences gained at school.

Although it is alleged by numerous writers that the evolution of reading understanding and also the assistance of component skills is influenced by socio-cultural context, research directory is only rare. However, the relationship between socio-cultural and reading comprehension factors has been investigated in most of the the cases using a cross-sectional design that makes explaining the reason of relations difficult. In reading comprehension most studies have been exploring the socio-cultural difference; a bound design has been followed that takes only a very restricted number of predictor variables into consideration. In fact, in most of the cases, measuring reading comprehension was at a single period and a real developmental approach was ignored (Goldenberg, Rueda, & August, 2006).

2.2.5 Parental Support to Learn English

Many studies on foreign language learning contexts have established a relationship based on parents' attitudes and the performance of their children (e.g. Shibata, 2000; Mushi, 2002). As regards the French inundation in Canada, Gardner (1966) notices that the parent who is active by monitoring learning progress and promoting success

can truly motivate a child to learn the language. While on the other hand, promoting negative feelings across the target language community by this parent might demotivate the child from learning the language. A negative parent might take possession positively or negatively according to the feelings toward the target language group not openly by expressing opinions regarding language learning, while the child can sense about it (Gardner, 1966).

2.2.6 Reading Habits

To learn how to read is crucial, and considered as one of the most important academic skills that prepare children to succeed in their future at school. Many studies explored the influence of reading for pleasure, like out-of-school reading, on children's literacy acquisition (e.g. Greaney & Hegarty, 1987; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1991; Stanovich & Cunningham, 1992). It was found in these researches that print exposure is connected with reading performance (e.g. Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992).

Nonetheless, generally previous studies about the relations between reading habits and reading performance were cross-sectional (e.g. Allen, Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992) for that matter it did not allow the examination of the potential associations between children's reading habits and their reading performance. Another point, the majority of researches has centered the light on older learners (For example, Cunningham & Stanovich, 1991; Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997).

2.2.6.1 Reading Performance and Reading Habits

One significant matter in developing reading through the exposure to reading-related materials outside school is to what extent it could help students to improve their

reading performance. For example, Cunningham and Stanovich (1990) noticed that whatever time that was spent outside school on reading was connected with orthographic knowledge and word recognition ability even after IQ, memory ability and phonological awareness were controlled for. Furthermore, it has been found that reading outside school is associated to reading comprehension ability (Anderson, Wilson & Fielding, 1988).

Nevertheless, most previous researches on the relationship between reading performance and reading habits have been cross-sectional, with only a few studies providing longitudinal information (Koolstra & van Der Kamp, 1997; Juel, 1988). Although the main claim has been that an influence on reading performance can be because of reading out of school, it can be also that reading skills can be affected regarding what kind of materials (e.g., books, magazines, comics, song's lyrics, and subtitles of television programs) pupils use to read outside school and for how long.

One of the goals of the current research was to explore the cross-lagged associations between undergraduate students' reading test performance and their out-of-university reading habits through examining their reading skills on the level of sentence comprehension and word recognition.

2.2.7 Reading Attitudes (Attitudes toward Reading)

Recent improvements in samples of reading attitudes evolution (McKenna, 1994; Mathewson, 1994) have portrayed attitudes as dominator of accomplishment, instead of immediate result. Fazio, Zanna and Cooper (1978) suggested that the incompatible relationships that can be gained between behavior and attitude might be better comprehended if scholars asked “what kinds of attitudes can be held and under what conditions by what kinds of individuals predict what kinds of behaviors?” (p.206),

devoting factors to the focus on cognitive variables, rather than affective, indicate as follows: (1) poor reading attitudes are not causal as many literacy experts believe, but consequential, may damage a child's ability from spending effort in learning new strategies for efficient reading (Ajzen, 1989) also (2) a lot of experimental researches have been unsuccessful to distinguish reading performance from reading attitudes (Ajzen, 1989).

Alexander and Filler (1976) have conceptualized certain definitions of attitudes. Reading attitudes were described as a continuity of positive to negative feelings towards reading, and a corresponding tendency to find out or obviate reading activities. McKenna (1994) and Mathewson (1994) have individually described reading attitudes as a multidimensional structure. Attitudes definition by Mathewson (1994) is predominant feelings and evaluative beliefs about reading, and action readiness for reading. McKenna (1994) specified beliefs about the results of reading, beliefs about the expectations of others when it comes to one's motivation and the results of specific incidents of reading as key attitude components.

Defining attitudes lack consistencies, this lack made the focus on cognitive factors rather than affective components of reading. Notwithstanding such a shift, the relationship still appears to be important and is studied across a variety of contexts (Petscher, 2010).

2.2.8 Motivation

The significance of motivation in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is widely accepted among researchers in the field. Most researchers also agree that learners' achievement in L2 is based on motivation.

According to Gardner and Lambert's (1959) classification, there are two levels to realize motivation such as core motivation and goal-oriented motivation. At goal motivation that contains the learner's core motivation which includes "the learner's direction toward language learning and the attitudes towards the learning situation" (Gardner & Lambert, 1959, p. 269). Gardner and Lambert (1959) explained that attitudes and motivation were both cause and effect of successful L2 achievement.

Moreover, Gardner and Lambert (1959) specified for learning a language two distinct 'orientations'. These are 'instrumental' and 'integrative' motivation. Integrative motivation indicates a learner's ambition in learning more about the L2 cultural community or to predigest as much as possible in the target community. In other words, integrative motivation indicates a learner's wish to increase the affiliation with the target community. However, saying utilitarian orientation can easily describe the instrumental motivation; in other words instrumental motivation indicates learners' desires and their willingness to learn the language for some non-interpersonal purposes such as to advance a career (Gardner & Lambert, 1959).

One more element of Gardner's aim, motivation is how learner reacts towards the learning situation. In the language classroom context, the learning situation might contain variables like the instructor, classmates, the material, classroom activities, etc. Here it is possible to expand the meaning of context. To this end, what gives the enjoyment to studying the language is the positive attitudes towards the learning situation; willingness to learn the language, and how much efforts have been invested in learning the language.

To deny the importance of Gardner and Lambert's theory (1959) is difficult; however, scholars have also indicated that its emphasis is obviously not on the role of motivation in the classroom but on the social aspects of motivation (Dornyei, 1994a, Crookes & Schmidt, 1991, Oxford & Shearin, 1994) As a matter of fact, Gardner (1985) personally declared that he surely did approach the research as a social psychologist. As a social psychologist, Gardner (1985) was worried about the effect of social variables on learner's motivation; whereas language instructors are more concerned with the effect of the syllabus, lesson plans, and activities that the learners experience in the classroom. For that, especially in the last decade, many researchers aimed in adapting and modifying Gardner's theory and other theories of motivational psychology and apply them to educational situations.

Dornyei (1994b) developed another framework of motivation. He dealt again in this model precisely with motivation in the classroom language. Dornyei's classified motivation basically based on three levels: (i) the level of language, (ii) the level of learner, and (iii) the level of learning situation (Dornyei, 1994b). The language level is the most general one, which focusing on "orientations and motives related to various aspects of the L2" (Dornyei, 1994b, p. 279). At this level, the language studied and the most basic learning goals are determined through the orientation and motives. Dornyei (1994b) specifies motivation at this level can be by using the concept of orientation presented by Gardner and Lambert (1959). The learner level involves the influence of individual traits of language learners. Motivation is influenced at the learner level by the learner's need for achievement and self-confidence. What can affect the learner level are the internal; expectancy related to affective characteristics of the learner. The motivation can be influenced at the

learning situation level by number of intrinsic and extrinsic motives that are course specific, teacher specific, and group specific (Dornyei, 1994b).

Nevertheless, an investigation in second language acquisition about the role of motivation shows that it is a very complex issue. The exact nature of motivation is not so clear. However, what is so interesting is that when various definitions are compared, it becomes apparent that the definitions which refer to motivation differ in many ways.

2.2.9 Reading Performance and Test Anxiety

Studies about anxiety have shown that anxiety is centric to second language research since the 1960s (Sellars, 2000; Leow & Sanz, 2000; Cassady & Johnson, 2002; Hsu, 2004; Cassady & Gridley, 2005). From a cognitive perspective, test anxiety has been classified as what the students experience during an evaluation or during formal testing from a negative psychological emotion (Cassady, 2004). This phrase indicates annoying ideas, distracting feelings, deflecting emotions, or engaging in a test situation might cause fear of evaluation. Proficiency weakness in a case of test is linked to test anxiety at a higher level as mentioned in the majority of the previous studies; the relationship in cause-and-effect has to be comprehended in more depth between the two of them (Scovel, 1978; Saito & Benjamin, McKeachie, Lin, & Holinger, 1981; Samimy, 1996). In test anxiety, symptoms are getting to be clear on students of high levels; they tend to show some behaviors in order to catch up with such situations (Musch & Bröder, 1999; Zeidner, 1998). Facing problems might happen to these students with storage processes and encoding, which outcomes an unsuitable conceptual representations of the content (Naveh-Benjamin, 1991; Benjamin, McKeachie, Lin, & Holinger, 1981). Furthermore, it has been reported

that test anxiety is related to students' low grades and performance decrement (Carrier & Jewell, 1966).

Generally speaking, test anxiety and test performance can keep a negative relationship. By exploring the influence of test anxiety of 168 undergraduate participants who were sophomores and juniors, Cassady and Johnson (2002) applied this examination on three course exams and students' self-reported performance on the Scholastic Aptitude Test. As a result on each of the three course exams and lower Scholastic Aptitude Test scores, it was shown that lower test scores were linked with higher levels of test anxiety. McDonald (2001) claimed that the correlation between test anxiety and performance extent to the highest point of the inverted "U" which reaches an optimal level of anxiety bent on the basis that what helps students stay concentrated on the task and keeps them feel challenged is the different degree of test anxiety. However, any level of test anxiety whether too much or too little may either have no inspiring effect or create pressure, consequently causing damage in performance.

In short, research on test anxiety has produced conflicting results. McDonald (2001) claimed that test anxiety, regarding its basic level, is explored to be linked with performance. Particularly, students who face anxiety usually perverse while trying to perform well. Students can carry out tasks successfully only when test anxiety reaches an optimal level. But, measuring the quantity of test anxiety in an objective manner is hard process.

2.3 L2 Reading as an Academic Skill

Reading is presumed to depend broadly on automatic processes (Brown, Gore, & Carr, 2002a; Rawson & Middleton, 2009), which place little or no requirements on visual attention under normal situations (Risko, Stolz, & Besner, 2005; Cohen, Dehaene, Vinckier, Jobert, & Montavont, 2008). Generally, it has been suggested that this efficiency of automatic processes is due to experience with written words, through which neural substitutions are acquired for increasingly intricate word features (Dehaene, Cohen, Sigman, & Vinckier, 2005; Vinckier, Dehaene, Jobert, Dubus, Sigman, & Cohen, 2007) or even for individual words (Glezer, Jiang, & Riesenhuber, 2009).

Moreover, dual-task researches that present slow attitudes in automaticity in reading in the course of time (Lien, Allen, Ruthruff, Grabbe, McCann, & Remington, 2006), as well as a relationship between reading proficiency in young adults and the degree of automaticity; for the role of experience in skilled reading (Ruthruff, Allen, Lien, & Grabbe, 2008) provide corroborative evidence.

2.3.1 Schema Theory

According to Simpson (2004) "Schema theory is an umbrella term covering a range of individual cognitive models at the heart of which are situated the core concept schema and the attendant concepts frame, scenario and script" (p. 89). In accordance to Bartlett (1932), only the written information given in a text is not sufficient for the specification of the meaning of it, in other words, the complete meaning and comprehension is possible by combining information from prior knowledge and linguistic and the like to understand the context of the text.

2.3.1.1. Functions of Schema in Reading

Cognitive framework consists of a number of organized ideas; schemata can be defined as abstract knowledge structures or models which might be used in solving problems. Those knowledge models as it is supposed are stored in one's memory. So one can deal with a problem in reading quite easily by the application of the stored knowledge structures, (Carell, 1983).

Drawing information in reading forms the comprehension of a message, from both the external graphic message and the internal schemata, and that is directly followed by the reconciliation of the two as a single or new schema. Texts are the very key of schema theory, spoken or written. They provide listeners or readers clues to be utilized to form or generate new ideas. The principle that every input is mapped against some existing schema and that all aspects of that schema must be compatible with the input information and this is what guides the process of comprehension.

Readers usually understand what they are reading and while they are reading they try to take the motivation after its graphic representation and specify its membership to an appropriate group of concepts which had been stored in their memories. Reading skill differs according to the efficiency level of interaction between them. Therefore, the reading process, include identification of genre, formal structure and topic, all of which activate schemata and allow readers to understand the text. Therefore, the schemata of various knowledge and experiences play a very important role in reading comprehension.

2.3.2 The Main Models of Reading Processing

It is particularly instructive that nothing can be account for all of the differences due to the reading components as a complete model. Rather, Rayner, K., Pollatsek, A.,

Ashby, J., & Clifton, C. (2010) claimed that the emergence of models designed to account for some specific aspect of the reading process is what has developed over the past 20–30 years. Consequently, there are models that account for as the review below shows, (1) syntactic parsing, (2) discourse representations, (3) word identification, and (4) how certain aspects of language processing (e.g., word identification), in conjunction with other constraints (e.g., limited visual acuity, saccadic error) direct readers' eyes. Unluckily, it is the case that these various models addressing specific aspects of the reading process seldom make contact with models dealing with other aspects of reading. Therefore, for instance, what make contact with models of eye-movement control are the models of word identification seldom and vice versa (though the latter types of models perhaps make more contact with the former type of model than the reverse. As it has been suggested, reading itself is a very complex process so this may be unfortunate in some ways, but it is still understandable in other ways (Rayner & Reichle, 2010).

2.3.2.1 The Bottom-up versus Top-down Reading

As mentioned by Goodman (1967) and Smith (1971), in top-down reading, the focus basically is on what the readers bring to the reading process. According to (Sereno, Brewer, & O'Donnell (2003), Simpson (1994), and Van Petten (1995), in order to lead to the appropriate meaning of an ambiguous word, top-down reading involves role of readers' information on the interpretation of the context.

Readers using top-down reading process do not skip normally most words, as much as the bottom-up readers do, and mostly process the words rather more deeply. Theories concentrating top-down processing focus on how readers form hypotheses on words they see in the text (for example, Smith 1971, Goodman 1967). However,

readers' extracted information from the passage is what theories concentrating on bottom-up processing focus on (e.g., Gough 1972).

According to Rayner and Pollatsek (1989), predictable words of a context are fixated for shorter periods of time and are normally skipped more than less predictable ones, but overall the effects are almost the same; then it can be concluded that bottom-up reading and top-down reading do not necessarily have different effect on reading comprehension, if they are used in balanced and appropriately, as mostly successful readers do.

2.3.2.2 The Interactive Reading Model

Some researchers argue that reading is a bottom-up process, on the other hand the claim comes that it is a top-down process where readers use to comprehend the graphic cues and they have a scheme of what should be in the text. Therefore, it is requisite to count Interactive Models of reading, so readers can have the chance to combine both processes.

According to Stanovich (1980) for a perfect model of reading, appropriately and interactively using of both skills at all levels of reading process is required. Interactive model's predictions are in consistency with successful L2 reading perspective and the Language Competence. Reading requires a high degree of grammatical control over structures according to this prediction. There is no way to deny the importance of vocabulary in all models of reading as well, it is still not enough to have a large vocabulary, context clues is not as much important as fluent processing of text, so word recognition is playing an essential role. Obviously, thinking about the words make poor readers spend too much time rather than recognizing them. Over relying on a particular processing model (bottom-up or top-

down) makes L2 readers facing difficulties. Therefore, in order to assist L2 readers becoming interactive readers, there is a need to teach reading comprehension strategies to them.

2.3.3 Reading Comprehension Strategies

Many studies have explored the role of comprehension monitoring in reading process (Flavell, 1981; Baker & Brown, 1984; Cheng, 1998; Yang, 2002). Although the existence of more than 400 researches on the field of comprehension monitoring strategies and reading strategies, there is yet no clear clarification between them. Padron & Waxman, (1988); Hosenfeld, (1984) emphasize that in order to improve students' reading comprehension, they can be taught good strategies.

As a conscious action Pritchard (1990) and Cohen (1986), suggested the term strategy. Barnett (1988) on the other hand mentioned it as both conscious and unconscious action. Similarly, Davies (1995) defines the term strategy as “a physical or mental used consciously or unconsciously with the intention of facilitating text comprehension and/or learning” (p. 50). Reading strategies categorized by Block (1986) into two major categories: general strategies and local strategies. General strategies attempt to high-level reading comprehension, monitoring; and local strategies focus on basic linguistic knowledge, like the meaning of a vocabulary.

Due to the result of Carrell's (1992) study that claimed, “use of certain strategies does not always result in better reading comprehension, and use of other strategies does not always lead to unsuccessful reading comprehension” (Carrell, 1992, p. 168). According to Cohen (1986), different strategies may lead or may not lead to a successful comprehension, depending on the reader and the context, and the chosen specific strategies. So strategies are not inherently good or bad.

Thus, in order to use strategies in reading effectively, knowing what strategies to use is not enough in this regards, students need to know why, when, and how to use these strategies as it should be (Cheng, 1998). Metacognitive awareness is the ability to use various strategies effectively, (Yang, 2002). Flavell (1981) tried to make distinctions between cognitive and metacognitive strategies, by claiming that cognitive strategies are aimed at the direct goal of making cognitive progress, but metacognitive strategies monitor cognitive strategies.

2.3.3.1. Cognitive Strategies

As cited in Forget and Bottoms (2000), most students are having problem in comprehending and comprehending information when written in a text. Similarly, Meltzer (2001), states that most of the students and readers need to be taught how to be successful, by learning some reading styles and strategies.

Cognitive strategies are claimed as mental processes, which directly lead to the processing of information in order to understand, learn, storage, and use of information (Williams & Burden, 1997). Brown (1994) states that cognitive strategies are limited to specific learning tasks and focus manipulation of the learning material.

2.3.3.2. Metacognitive Strategies

Reading comprehension is a complex task which depends on many different strategic cognitive processes as mentioned by Cain, Oakhill, & Bryant (2004). As described by Paris, Wasik, and Turner (1991) strategies are "tactics that readers use to engage and comprehend text" (p. 610). These strategies can be used selectively by different readers any time in any reading activities.

According to Brown (1980) metacognitive strategies examples which engaged in reading comprehension are (1) the purpose of reading clarification (2) the important aspects of the passage identification (3) controlling ongoing activities to decide whether comprehension is active (4) engaging in self-questioning to determine whether goals are being achieved (5) taking corrective action when failures in comprehension are detected.

2.4 The Characteristics of Successful and Unsuccessful Readers

Rong & Xiaomei (2004) claimed that there are differences in using reading strategies between successful readers and unsuccessful ones. In fact, successful readers could understand the message of the passage, while unsuccessful ones had troubles comprehending the meaning. They came up with the following conclusions: (1) successful readers are interacting with text, while unsuccessful readers decode the text word by word; (2) successful readers try to use their background knowledge and experience for getting the meaning; however, unsuccessful readers just focus on the passage itself; (3) successful readers concentrate on the whole message of the text, but the unsuccessful readers tend to get detailed meaning. In other words, successful readers skip the unimportant parts and details, but unsuccessful readers focus on unimportant and minor details of the text.

Furthermore, successful readers use metacognitive strategies more frequently than unsuccessful ones, in other words, successful readers know how to use these strategies appropriately, because of their higher knowledge of structure and grammar (Rong & Xiaomei, 2004). Finally, the successful readers are good paraphraser and try to understand the text in their own words; in contrast unsuccessful ones translate the words of the text for themselves in order to understand.

In conclusion, the differences between the successful readers and unsuccessful readers are both quantitative and qualitative; in other words, unsuccessful readers may use the same strategy used by successful readers but differently and in a different position. They may also use a strategy which is never used by the successful readers.

2.5 L2 Test-taking Strategies

Test-taking strategies mainly derived from ‘test-wiseness’ which can be defined as “one’s capacity for using test characteristics and formats and/or test-taking situations to raise test scores” (Millman, Bishop, & Ebell, 1965, cited in Ritter & Idol-Maestas, 1986, p. 50). According to Cohen (2000), language test-taking strategies consisted of both strategies in using the language and strategies of test-wiseness. Cohen (2000) defined test-taking strategies as test-taking processes that candidates to some degree consciously select (Cohen & Upton, 2006). Also, Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson, (1996) defined test-taking strategies as facilitating steps used by test-takers for retrieving information and classified them into four categories—(1) reader-initiated strategies, (2) text-initiated strategies, (3) bilingual strategies and (4) interactive strategies.

To explore the relationship between cognitive and metacognitive strategies used by test-taker and EFL reading test performance, both quantitative and qualitative data analyses are employed by Phakity (2003). In a study at Thai university, 384 participants were taking a fundamental English course, took an 85-item multiple-choice reading comprehension achievement test and filled in a cognitive–metacognitive questionnaire. Thereafter, and for retrospective interviews only eight of them were selected. Results of the study by (Zhang, Liu, Zhao & Xie, 2011) on the relationship between the choice of strategy by test takers and their performance,

was found that using cognitive and metacognitive strategies makes is a positive relationship with the reading performance.

2.6. Summary

The current chapter presented the review of literature regarding test-taker characteristics such as gender, age, language exposure, socio-cultural background, parental support to learn English, reading habits, reading attitudes, motivation, and reading performance and test anxiety. In addition, literature on reading in L2 as an academic competency was focused on. In addition, literature on theories, models and strategies involved in reading comprehension was reviewed. The characteristics of successful and unsuccessful readers were discussed; and finally, L2 test-taking strategies were reviewed.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Presentation

The chapter's aim is to present the methodology of the research. In section one, overall design's introduction will be presented. The following sections characterize the context, the participants of the study, the instruments applied, and also the distribution of steps used for collecting data and analysing them. Ultimately, final section illustrates the present study's limitations.

3.2 Overall Research Design

A research design is the overall plan for obtaining answers for questions being studied and for handling some of the difficulties encountered during the research process (Polit & Beck, 2004). Research designs are developed to meet the unique requirements of a study. According to De Vos (1998), a research design is a "blueprint or a detailed plan for how a research study is conducted" (p. 123). Polit and Beck (2004) and Wood and Haber (1998) indicated that selecting a good research design should be guided by a consideration of whether the design does the best possible job of providing trustworthy answers to the research questions.

To achieve the research objectives and to come to the research problem and hypotheses, the researcher conducted a quantitative research. A quantitative research generates quantifiable data. It is primarily concerned with observable and measurable phenomena involving people, events or things, and establishing the strength of the relationship between variables, usually by statistical tests (Couchman & Dawson, 1995). According to Polit & Beck (2004), a quantitative research lends itself to

investigating phenomena that require precise measurement and qualification often involving a rigorous and controlled design. To this end, a quantitative design tends to be fairly structured to enhance objectivity of the study.

This study aimed at examining the relationship between EFL reading test-takers' characteristics such as age, gender, nationality, educational background, etc. and their performance at an English medium university. The study is empirical in nature. It was held at Eastern Mediterranean University in the Department of English Language Teaching (ELT) in the Department of Computer and Instructional Technology Teacher Education (CITE).

3.3 Research Questions

The following three major research questions were investigated in the present study:

1. What are the EFL reading test-takers' characteristics at Eastern Mediterranean university?
2. What is the EFL reading test-takers' performance at an English medium university?
3. Is there any statistically significant relationship between the EFL reading test-takers' characteristics and performance at an English medium university?

3.4 Context

The participants of this study were from the ELT Department as well as CITE Department at Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU). For more information about the departments mentioned in this section of the study, please visit the web page (www.fedu.emu.edu.tr) of the Faculty of Education.

The aim of English Language Teaching Department is to help the students merge with the world's new style of education. The department in the first place, as well as its distinguished staff, supplies the students and provides them with all the possible opportunities to develop international standards of excellence in teaching and research to train competent professionals who will play significant educational roles in today's globalized world (<http://fedu.emu.edu.tr/?page=14:34:0:4:english>).

Computer and Instructional Technology Teacher Education Department aims to provide students with all the knowledge and professional skills necessary for competent computer and instructional technology teachers. To be able to achieve this aim, CITE students are offered courses helping them gain self-improvement skills, as well as provided with chances to work at computer laboratories in the department to develop their theoretical backgrounds and enrich them with the needed experience (<http://fedu.emu.edu.tr/?page=4:24:0:4:english>).

3.5 Description of Participants

A total of eighty-eight (88) students participated in the present study. They were undergraduate students at Eastern Mediterranean University, faculty of Education departments of ELT and CITE, who participated in this study on voluntary basis.

Table 3.1: The distribution of participants with respect to their departments

	Frequency	Percent
ELT	66	75.0
CITE	22	25.0
Total	88	100.0

Table 3.1 shows, the distribution of the participants according to departments they study. As can be seen in Table 3.1, 66 of the participants were students from ELT

department and 22 were from CITE Department. The majority of the participants (34) were sophomores, 18 were freshman, 18 were juniors, and 18 were seniors. The age of the participants ranged between eighteen (18) and twenty-five (25) and above. Female participants (N= 51, 58%) outnumbered male participants (N= 37, 42%).

Furthermore, the majority of the participants (N= 42, 47.7%) were from the Republic of Turkey, 32 participants (36.4%) were from TRNC-Northern Cyprus, and the rest 14 participants (15.9%) were from other countries. In addition, the student questionnaire revealed that socio-economic statuses of the participants varied as it is explained in chapter 4 in the present study.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

Two instruments were used in this study for collecting data. The first data collection instrument was a reading test adopted from an English placement test that was developed as it was an English language test and the use of this test is by the institutions offering courses in English as a foreign language by Corrigan, Dobson, Kellman, Spaan and Tyma, the members of the certification and testing section at the University of Michigan of English language institute. The second instrument, a student questionnaire, was prepared by the researcher.

The reading test included 20 multiple-choice items with 4 answer alternatives. To answer the multiple-choice questions in the reading test, the participants marked the letter of the best answer alternative in each question. The interior reliability analysis was run to define the interior reliability of the reading test; also the calculation of Cronbach alpha found to be 0.792. This degree demonstrates the reliability of the instrument.

The student questionnaire was prepared and inspired by the questionnaire used by Ebner, G. R. (2012) and the questionnaire used by Griffiths, C. (2007), (see Appendix E); which included three sections – background information, reading strategies, and reading attitudes. The numbers of the items in these sections were 13, 12, and 10, respectively. Section 1 of the questionnaire included questions about the participants’ gender, age, exposure to English, nationality, and opinion about their English proficiency level. Moreover, the student questionnaire included questions about their parents’ educational level, number of brothers and sisters, the place of their parents’ residence, and their monthly income, the degree of importance that the participants’ parents give to their education, and the amount of parental encouragement given to the participants. To answer the items in Section 1, the participants marked their responses.

Section 2 of the student questionnaire consisted of 12 items about their reading strategies. The items in Section 2 of the questionnaire were in 4 point-Likert scale response alternative format and they were as follows:

- (4) Very Frequently,
- (3) Frequently,
- (2) Sometimes,
- (1) Never.

Section 3 of the questionnaire included 10 items about the participants’ attitudes towards reading in English. The items in the Section 3 of the questionnaire were in 5 point-Likert scale response alternative format and they were:

- (5) Strongly Agree,
- (4) Agree,
- (3) Undecided,
- (2) Disagree,
- (1) Strongly Disagree.

To answer the questions in Section 2 and Section 3, the participants marked their responses in the boxes corresponding to the Likert scale response alternatives.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

The data collection for the study was carried out during the Spring semester of the 2011-2012 academic year in the Department of ELT and the Department of CITE at Eastern Mediterranean University in Famagusta, North Cyprus.

Before administering the reading test and the student questionnaire for collecting data, official permissions, were obtained by the researcher from the Department of ELT and the Department of CITE (see Appendices A & B). Thereafter, the data collection process started with the participants in the Department of ELT in the second week of May, 2012. Right before starting the data collection procedure, it was required from the participants to complete a consent form (see Appendix C), and after confirming the form the reading test was administered to the participants.

In addition to written instructions right before administrating the test, oral instructions were provided for the participants about the test. The participants had the chance to complete the reading test in 20 minutes. Directly after administrating the reading test, the student questionnaire was distributed to them and they were required to complete it within 15 minutes. In the third week of May 2012, a similar data collection procedure was carried out in the Department of CITE. Each student participant was assigned with an identification code on their forms right after getting their consent in order to match the data collected through 2 instruments for each participant.

3.8 Data Analysis Procedures

The analyses of all the data obtained from the students were done by using SPSS 15.0 for Windows (SPSS Inc, 1995). As regards the first research question, which was related to the EFL reading test-takers' characteristics at an English medium university, descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage distributions) were run.

To answer the second research question, which was related to the EFL reading test-takers' performance at an English medium university, descriptive statistics (minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation) were determined. In addition, to interpret the English reading test performance mean score of the participants, a set of criteria was pre-determined, which was as follows:

- 0-19= Very Low,
- 20-39= Low,
- 40-59= Average,
- 60-79= High,
- 80-100= Very High.

For answering the third research question, that was concerned with determining whether there was any statistically significant relationship between the EFL reading test-takers' characteristics and their performance at an English medium university, descriptive statistics (minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation), Pearson correlations, Independent samples t-tests, and one-way ANOVA tests with post-hoc Scheffe tests were run.

3.9 Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations on the scope of this study. The results of the study are of limited generalizability in many areas: first, population generalizability: the participants for the study were non-native speakers of English mostly from Turkey

and Turkish Republic of North Cyprus who studied at both of ELT Department and CITE Department. Therefore, the results should only be generalized to individuals who have similar background characteristics and performance.

Second, ecological generalizability: the results of this study should only be generalized to those countries with similar native languages and cultural settings. The results might be invalid across native languages and cultural settings.

Third, temporal generalizability: the results of the present study should not be generalized beyond the present time, as the individual abilities could change because the status of English could be different in those countries as time goes by, and in turn, access to English could differ. Thus, the results might be invalid across time.

3.10 Summary

The research methodology of the study has been presented in this chapter. At first, it briefly showed the overall design of the present study was briefly explained. Thereafter, it described the context, the students who participated in the study, the instruments applied, and also procedures that were followed for collecting data and analysing them were described. At the end, this chapter was concluded with the study's limitations.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

4.1 Presentation

Chapter four aims at presenting the findings of the present study. Initially, it shows EFL reading test-takers' characteristics at an English medium university. Then, it discusses the EFL reading test-takers' performance at an English medium university. Finally, the chapter investigates whether there is any statistically significant relationship between EFL reading test-takers' characteristics and their performance.

4.2 EFL Reading Test-takers' Characteristics at an English Medium University

4.2.1 Gender

When the students' identity in terms of their gender is examined, it can be seen that more than half of the participants (58%) are females. As Table 4.1 shows, 42 % of the students are males.

Table 4.1: The Distribution of Participants' Gender

	Frequency	Percent
Male	37	42.0
Female	51	58.0
Total	88	100.0

4.2.2 Age

Table 4.2: The Distribution of Participants' Age

	Frequency	Percent
18-20	14	15.9
21-24	57	64.8
25-above	17	19.3
Total	88	100.0

Table 4.2 clearly demonstrates that the age of the participants varied. More than half of the student population (64.8%) was in the age range between 21 and 24 years; 17 students (19.3%) were in the age range of 25 and above; and the remaining 14 students (15.9%) were between the age range of 18 and 20.

4.2.3 Years of Studying English

Table 4.3: The Distribution of Participants with Respect to Years of Studying English

	Frequency	Percent
Only at EMU	16	18.2
Since High School	13	14.8
Since Secondary School	17	19.3
Since Primary School	42	47.7
Total	88	100.0

In addition to exposure to English, it has been revealed that the participants of this study have shared various educational histories through the student questionnaire. As can be seen in Table 4.3, while 42 students (47.7%) declared that they had been studying English since primary school, 17 students (19.3%) notified to have been studying English since secondary school. Moreover, the numbers of the students who claimed that they had been studying English only at EMU and since high school were 16 and 13, respectively.

4.2.4 Nationality

As it can be seen in Table 4.4, the participating students' distribution in terms of their nationality was as follows: 42 students (47.7%) were from the Republic of Turkey, 32 students (36.4%) were from the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, and 14 students (15.9%) were of other nationalities.

Table 4.4: The Distribution of Participants in Terms of their Nationality

	Frequency	Percent
TR	42	47.7
TRNC	32	36.4
Other	14	15.9
Total	88	100.0

4.2.5 CGPA

The student questionnaire revealed that CGPAs of the majority of the sample (34.1%) were in the range between 2.00 and 2.49 (see Table 4.5). Furthermore, 21.6% of the students declared to have CGPAs in the range of 2.50 and 2.99, while 18.2% of the participants reported their CGPAs to be in the range between 0.00 and 1.99. In addition, Table 4.5 shows that 14.8% and 11.4% of the students claimed their CGPAs to be rather high, i.e. in the range of 3.50 to 4.00 and 3.00 to 3.49, respectively.

Table 4.5: The Distribution of Participants' CGPAs

	Frequency	Percent
0.00-1.99 Low.	16	18.2
2.00-2.49 Average.	30	34.1
2.50-2.99 High.	19	21.6
3.00-3.49 Very High.	10	11.4
3.50-4.00 Excellent.	13	14.8
Total	88	100.0

4.2.6 Proficiency Level Perception

As it is seen in Table 4.6 more than half of student participants (59.1%) perceived their proficiency level in English to be high. Out of the 88 participating students 26 of them (29.5%) rated their proficiency level as moderate, whereas 10 of them (11.4%) reported their English proficiency level to be low.

Table 4.6: The Distribution of Participants with Respect to their Proficiency Level Perception

	Frequency	Percent
Low	10	11.4
Moderate	26	29.5
High	52	59.1
Total	88	100.0

4.2.7 Father's Educational Level

the questionnaire revealed that father's educational level of 33 participating students (37.5%) was university. Furthermore, 32 participants (36.4%) claimed their father's educational level to be high school. As Table 4.7 illustrates, 12 students (13.6%) reported their father's educational level to be primary school and 11 of them (12.5%) stated that middle school was the highest educational level of their fathers.

Table 4.7: The Distribution of Participants with Respect to their Father's Educational Level

	Frequency	Percent
Primary School	12	13.6
Middle School	11	12.5
High School	32	36.4
University	33	37.5
Total	88	100.0

4.2.8 Mother's Educational Level

The situation with respect to the mother's educational level of the participants appeared to be completely different from that of their fathers. As it can be seen in Table 4.8, the majority of the students (44.3%) claimed that their mother's educational level was high school. Moreover, almost equal number of participating students (21.6% and 20.5%) reported their mother's educational level to be primary

school and university, respectively. Analysis of the student questionnaires also revealed that mother's educational level of 12 students (13.6%) was middle school.

Table 4.8: The Distribution of Participants with Respect to their Mother's Educational Level

	Frequency	Percent
Primary School	19	21.6
Middle School	12	13.6
High School	39	44.3
University	18	20.5
Total	88	100.0

4.2.9 Number of Siblings

As it can be seen in Table 4.9, the background of participants varied in terms of the number of siblings they had. The majority of the students (52.3%) reported to have only one sibling. 30 participating students (34.1%) stated that they had 2-3 siblings, and 10 students (11.4%) claimed that they had no siblings at all. Furthermore, only 2 participants (2.3%) reported to have 4 or more siblings.

Table 4.9: The Distribution of Participants with Respect to Number of Siblings

	Frequency	Percent
None	10	11.4
1	46	52.3
2-3	30	34.1
4 or more	2	2.3
Total	88	100.0

4.2.10 Parents' Residence

Table 4.10: The Distribution of Participants with Respect to Parents' Residence

	Frequency	Percent
City	55	62.5
Town	19	21.6
Village	14	15.9
Total	88	100.0

Table 4.10 shows that the majority of the participants' parents (62.5%) were living in a city. The remaining 21.6% and 15.9% of them were residing in a town and a village, respectively.

4.2.11 Parents' Income

Table 4.11: The Distribution of Participants with Respect to their Parents' Income

	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1000 TL	9	10.2
1000-2000 TL	21	23.9
More than 2000 TL	58	65.9
Total	88	100.0

According to the results in Table 4.11, the income of 65.9% of the students' parents was more than 2000 TL. Moreover, 21 participants (23.9%) reported their parents' income to be in the range between 1000 and 2000 TL. Nine students (10.2%) claimed that the income of their parents was less than 1000 TL.

4.2.12 Parental Importance Given to Education

Table 4.12 shows that majority of the participants' parents (70.5%) were giving 'very much' importance to education of their children. 'Much' importance was given to children education by 22.7 % of parents, and 'little' importance was given by 6.8% of the participants' parents.

Table 4.12: The Distribution of Participants with Respect to Participants' Parental Importance Given to Education

	Frequency	Percent
Very Much	62	70.5
Much	20	22.7
Little	6	6.8
Total	88	100.0

4.2.13 Parental Encouragement Given to Learning English

As it can be seen in Table 4.13 below, ‘very much’ and ‘much’ encouragement was given to learning English by 52.3% and 30.7% of the participants’ parents, respectively. Ten participants (11.4%) reported that their parents were giving them ‘little’ encouragement to learn English. In addition, 5.6 % of the students assured that their parents were giving them ‘very little’ encouragement to learn the language.

Table 4.13: The Distribution of Participants with Respect to Participants' Parental Encouragement Given to Learning English

	Frequency	Percent
Very Much	46	52.3
Much	27	30.7
Little	10	11.4
Very Little	5	5.6
Total	88	100.0

4.2.14 Reading Strategies and Reading Attitudes

Table 4.14 shows the descriptive statistics for the reading strategies and reading attitudes of the participating students at EMU. The mean score for strategies is 2.5086 (SD = .49855); therefore, it can be concluded that the participating students apply all these strategies frequently. As it can be seen in Table 4.14, the mean score for attitudes is 4.2261 (SD = .54720); so, a conclusion can be drawn that the student participants agree with the reading attitudes positively.

Table 4.14: Descriptive Statistics for Reading Strategies and Attitudes

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strategies	88	1.67	4.00	2.5086	.49855
Attitudes	88	2.40	5.00	4.2261	.54720

4.3 EFL Reading Test-Takers' Performance at an English Medium University

Table 4.15 illustrates the descriptive statistics for the English reading test performance of the participants. According to the criteria (see 3.8 Data Analysis Procedures) specified for the interpretation of the participating students' performance on the English reading test, the mean score is average (53.64).

Table 4.15: Descriptive Statistics for Reading Test Performance

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reading	88	10	95	53.64	22.020

4.4 The Relationship between EFL Reading Test-takers' Characteristics and Performance

The third research question investigated the relationship between test-takers' characteristics and their performance on the English reading test. Table 4.16 presents the correlation between the test-takers' reading strategies and the reading test performance of the participants, as well as the correlation between the test-takers' attitudes towards reading and their reading performance. As it is seen in Table 4.16, the correlation is small and non-significant (.199) at .05 α probability level between the test-takers' reading strategies and their performance on the reading test. On the other hand, there is a medium and positive correlation (.396) at .05 α probability level between the test-takers' reading attitudes and their performance on the reading

test. Therefore, it can be concluded that the reading performance of the participants changes according to their reading attitudes.

Table 4.16: Pearson Correlations between Test-takers' Characteristics and Reading Performance

	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Reading Strategies Reading Performance	.199	.063
Reading Attitudes Reading Performance	.396*	.000

* $\alpha < .05$

Table 4.17 illustrates that the descriptive statistics for reading test performance between gender groups. 'Male' group's mean score is 51.08 (SD = 23.068) while the mean score of 'female' group is 55.49 (SD = 21.266). The females seem to have slightly better reading test performance than males.

Table 4.17: Descriptive Statistics for Reading Test Performance with Respect to Gender Groups

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Male	37	10	95	51.08	23.068
Female	51	15	95	55.49	21.266

Table 4.18 shows that there is no relationship between reading test performance and gender groups because the mean difference is not significant at .05 α probability level.

Table 4.18: Independent Samples t-test Result for Reading Test Performance Difference between Gender Groups

	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Equal Variances Assumed	.256	.614	-.926	86	.357	-4.409

* $\alpha < .05$

Table 4.19: Descriptive Statistics for Reading Test Performance with Respect to Age Groups

Age	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
18-20	14	20	90	51.43	22.051
21-24	57	10	95	54.39	23.185
25-above	17	30	95	52.94	18.797

As it can be seen in Table 4.19, reading test performance scores are all around average (between 51.43 and 54.39).

Table 4.20 illustrates that there is no statistically significant mean difference in reading test performance between age groups.

Table 4.20: One-way ANOVA Test Result for Reading Test Performance Difference between Age Groups

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	108.485	2	54.243	.110	.896
Within Groups	42077.879	85	495.034		
Total	42186.364	87			

* $\alpha < .05$

Table 4.21 demonstrates the descriptive statistics for reading performance with respect to exposures to English groups. As it is seen in Table 4.21, the top mean score of 60.24 (SD = 21.611) is for the group of student participants who reported to have been studying English since primary school, while the lowest mean score is for ‘only at EMU’ group (M = 41.88; SD = 16.317).

Table 4.21: Descriptive Statistics for Reading Test Performance with Respect to Years of Studying English Groups

Years of Studying	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Only at EMU	16	25	80	41.88	16.317
Since High School	13	10	90	46.54	19.936
Since Secondary School	17	20	95	53.82	24.465
Since Primary School	42	15	95	60.24	21.611

As is seen in Table 4.22, there is a statistically significant mean difference between exposure to English groups. In order to find out which of the specific groups differed, post-hoc Scheffe analysis was done.

Table 4.22: One-way ANOVA Test Result for Reading Test Performance Differences between Years of Studying English Groups

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4699.293	3	1566.431	3.510*	.019
Within Groups	37487.070	84	446.275		
Total	42186.364	87			

* $\alpha < .05$

Table 4.23 illustrates that there is a statistically significant mean difference in reading test performance between the group that studied English only at EMU and since primary school.

Table 4.23: Post-hoc Scheffe Test Results for Reading Test Performance Differences between Years of Studying English Groups

Years of Studying English	Years of Studying English	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Only at EMU	Since High School	-4.663	7.888	.950
	Since Secondary School	-11.949	7.358	.455
	Since Primary School	-18.363*	6.206	.039
Since High School	Since Secondary School	-7.285	7.783	.831
	Since Primary School	-13.700	6.705	.251
Since Sec. School	Since Primary School	-6.415	6.073	.773

* $\alpha < .05$

Table 4.24 presents the descriptive statistics for reading test with respect to nationality groups. The highest mean score is for Turkish Cypriot students ($M = 65.00$; $SD = 21.440$) followed by a mean score of 61.79 ($SD = 19.962$) for students from other nationalities.

Table 4.24: Descriptive Statistics for Reading Test Performance with Respect to Nationality Groups

Nationality	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
TR	42	10	90	42.26	17.292
TRNC	32	25	95	65.00	21.440
Other	14	40	95	61.79	19.962

As is seen in Table 4.24, the minimum mean score is 42.26 ($SD = 17.292$) for Turkish students group who performed at a medium level.

Table 4.25: One-way ANOVA Test Result for Reading Test Performance Differences between Nationality Groups

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	10495.887	2	5247.944	14.076*	.000
Within Groups	31690.476	85	372829		
Total	42186.364	87			

* $\alpha < .05$

One-way ANOVA analysis was applied to detect a statistical significance in reading test performance between nationality groups. As it can be seen in Table 4.25, there is a statistically significant mean difference in reading test performance between nationality groups. In order to find out which of the nationality groups differed, post-hoc Scheffe test was implemented.

Table 4.26: Post-hoc Scheffe Test Results for Reading Test Performance Differences between Nationality Groups

Nationality	Nationality	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
TR	TRNC	-22.738*	4.531	.000
	Other	-19.524*	5.959	.004
TRNC	Other	3.214	6.187	.862

* $\alpha < .05$

As it can be seen in Table 4.26, there is a statistically significant mean difference in reading test performance between Turkish and Turkish Cypriot students. In addition, Table 4.26 shows that there is a significant mean difference between Turkish participants and students from other nationalities.

Table 4.27: Descriptive Statistics for Reading Test Performance with Respect to CGPA Groups

CGPA	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
0.00-1.99 Low.	16	20	95	52.81	22.874
2.00-2.49 Average.	30	10	90	43.33	18.724
2.50-2.99 High.	19	25	95	58.68	21.721
3.00-3.49 Very High.	10	25	95	55.00	20.000
3.50-4.00 Excellent	13	30	95	70.00	20.207

Table 4.27 illustrates descriptive statistics reading test performance with respect to CGPA groups. The mean scores for the five CGPA groups are in the range between 43.33 and 70.00.

Table 4.28: One-way ANOVA Test Result for Reading Test Performance Differences between CGPA Groups

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7179.154	4	1794.789	4.255*	.004
Within Groups	35007.209	83	421.774		
Total	42186.364	87			

* $\alpha < .05$

Table 4.28 illustrates that there is a statistically significant mean difference in reading test performance between CGPA groups. Post-hoc Scheffe test was then done in order to find out which of the CGPA groups differed.

Table 4.29: Post-hoc Scheffe Test Results for Reading Performance Differences between CGPA Groups

CGPA	CGPA	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
0.00-1.99	2.00-2.49	9.479	6.358	.571
	2.50-2.99	-5.872	6.968	.916
	3.00-3.49	-2.188	8.279	.999
	3.50-4.00	-17.188	7.668	.175
2.00-2.49	2.50-2.99	-15.351	6.021	.090
	3.00-3.49	-11.667	7.499	.530
	3.50-4.00	-26.667*	6.819	.002
2.50-2.99	3.00-3.49	3.684	8.023	.991
	3.50-4.00	-11.316	7.392	.546
3.00-3.49	3.50-4.00	-15.000	8.638	.418

* $\alpha < .05$

As Table 4.29 shows, there is a statistically significant mean difference in reading test performance between the CGPA group of 2.00 – 2.49 and 3.50 – 4.00 CGPA group.

Table 4.30: Descriptive Statistics for Reading Test Performance with Respect to Proficiency Level Perception Groups

Proficiency Level	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low	10	20	80	38.00	16.364
Moderate	26	10	95	47.12	20.257
High	52	15	95	59.90	21.659

Table 4.30 presents the descriptive statistics for reading test performance with respect to proficiency level perception groups. Table 4.30 demonstrates that high proficiency level perception group's mean score is 59.90 (SD = 21.659) while moderate proficiency level perception group's mean score is 47.12 (SD = 20.257). The lowest mean score of 38.00 (SD = 16.364) is for the low proficiency level perception group.

Table 4.31: One-way ANOVA Test Result for Reading Test Performance Differences between Proficiency Level Perception Groups

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5593.191	2	2796.595	6.496*	.002
Within Groups	36593.173	85	430.508		
Total	42186.364	87			

* $\alpha < .05$

Table 4.31 shows that there is a statistically significant mean difference in reading test performance between proficiency level perception groups since the significance level. In order to find out which of the proficiency level perception groups differed, post-hoc tests were applied.

Table 4.32: Post-hoc Scheffé Test Result for Reading Test Performance Differences between Proficiency Level Perception Groups

Proficiency Level	Proficiency Level	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Low	Moderate	-9.115	7.721	.501
	High	-21.904*	7.164	.012
Moderate	High	-12.788*	4.984	.042

* $\alpha < .05$

Table 4.32 outlines the post-hoc Scheffe test result for reading test performance differences between proficiency level perception groups. As it can be seen in Table 4.32, there is a statistically significant mean difference in reading test performance

between the groups that perceived their proficiency level to be low and high and between the groups that perceived their proficiency level to be moderate and high.

Table 4.33: Descriptive Statistics for Reading Test Performance with Respect to Father's Educational Level Groups

Father's Education	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Primary School	12	10	70	48.75	15.829
Middle School	11	20	90	57.73	22.064
High School	32	20	95	51.72	22.987
University	33	15	95	55.91	23.334

The descriptive statistics for reading test performance with respect to father's educational level groups are presented in Table 4.33. As Table 4.33 shows, the highest mean score is for 'middle school' group (M = 57.73; SD = 22.064) whereas the lowest mean score of 48.75 (SD = 15.829) is for 'primary school' group. Generally speaking, all the groups are in the average level with very small differences.

Table 4.34: One-way ANOVA Test Result for Reading Test Performance Differences between Father's Educational Level Groups

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	758.736	3	252912	.513	.675
Within Groups	41427.628	84	493186		
Total	42186.364	87			

* $\alpha < .05$

Table 4.34 illustrates that there is no statistically significant mean difference in reading test performance between father's educational level groups, it can be stated that the father's educational level does not affect the participants reading performance at an English medium university in either positive or negative way.

Table 4.35: Descriptive Statistics for Reading Test Performance with Respect to Mother's Educational Level Groups

Mother's Education	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
No Schooling	1	70	70	70.00	.
Primary School	19	10	95	53.42	17.564
Middle School	12	20	90	48.75	25.327
High School	39	20	95	54.36	21.739
University	18	15	95	55.56	25.718

As it is seen in Table 4.35, the descriptive statistics for reading test performance with respect to mother's educational level groups are very similar and in the range of average. Due to the fact that some groups' numbers are not balanced, it is not convenient to run one-way ANOVA.

Table 4.36: Descriptive Statistics for Reading Test Performance with Respect to Numbers of Sibling Groups

Siblings	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
None	10	20	95	65.50	25.435
1	46	15	95	52.93	22.100
2-3	30	10	95	51.83	20.615
4 or More	2	35	40	37.50	3.536

Table 4.36 illustrates the descriptive statistics for reading test performance with respect to numbers of siblings groups. The highest mean score is for 'none' group ($M = 65.50$; $SD = 25.435$) while the lowest mean score of 37.50 ($SD = 3.536$) is for '4 or more' siblings group. However, in average the groups '1' and '2-3' appear to have almost similar mean scores (i.e., 52.93 and 51.83, respectively).

Table 4.37: One-way ANOVA Test Result for Reading Performance Differences between Number of Siblings Groups

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2048.393	3	682798	1.429	.240
Within Groups	40137.971	84	477.833		
Total	42186.364	87			

* $\alpha < .05$

As it can be seen in Table 4.37, there is no statistically significant mean difference in reading test performance between numbers of siblings groups. So, it can be concluded that the number of siblings does not affect the participating students' reading test performance in either positive or negative way.

Table 4.38: Descriptive Statistics for Reading Test Performance with Respect to Parents' Residence Groups

Parents' Residence	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
City	55	15	95	50.36	22.564
Town	19	10	95	59.74	22.759
Village	14	35	90	58.21	17.053

* $\alpha < .05$

Table 4.38 presents descriptive statistics for reading test performance with respect to parents' residence groups. The highest mean score is for 'town' group (M = 59.74; SD = 22.759) while the lowest mean score of 50.36 (SD = 22.564) is for the group of parents residing in cities.

Table 4.39: One-way ANOVA Test Result for Reading Test Performance with Respect to Parents' Residence Groups

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1589.595	2	794798	1.664	.195
Within Groups	40596.769	85	477.609		
Total	42186.364	87			

* $\alpha < .05$

Table 4.39 illustrates the one-way ANOVA test result for reading test performance with respect to parents' residence groups. As it can be seen in Table 4.39, there is no significant mean difference in reading test performance between the parents' residence groups.

Table 4.40: Descriptive Statistics for Reading Test Performance with Respect to Parents' Income Groups

Parents' Income	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Less than 1000 TL	9	20	95	62.22	21.522
1000-2000 TL	21	10	90	47.14	20.951
More than 2000 TL	58	20	95	54.66	22.200

Table 4.40 presents the descriptive statistics for reading test performance with respect to parents' income groups. The highest mean score is for 'less than 1000 TL' group (M = 62.22; SD = 21.522) while the lowest mean score is for '1000-2000 TL' group (M = 47.174; SD = 20.951).

Table 4.41 One-way ANOVA Test Result for Reading Test Performance Differences between Parents' Income Groups

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1609.133	2	804567	1.685	.192
Within Groups	40577.230	85	477.379		
Total	42186.364	87			

* $\alpha < .05$

Table 4.41 demonstrates the One-way ANOVA test result for reading test performance differences between parents' income groups. As it can be seen in Table 4.41, there is no statistically significant difference in reading test performance between parents' income groups. So, it can be interpreted that the participating students' parents' income does not affect their reading test performance at an English medium university in either positive or negative way.

Table 4.42: Descriptive Statistics for Reading Test Performance with Respect to Importance Given by Parents Groups

Parental Importance	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Very Much	62	15	95	57.18	21.513
Much	20	10	95	47.50	22.624
Little	5	20	55	37.00	16.808
Very Little	1	40	40	40.00	.

Table 4.42 illustrates the descriptive statistics for reading test performance with respect to importance given by parents groups. As it is seen in Table 4.42, the top mean score is for ‘very much’ parental importance given to education group (M = 57.18; SD = 21.513) while the lowest mean score is for ‘little’ importance given by parents group (M = 37.00; SD = 16.808). It is not convenient to run the test since some groups’ numbers are not balanced.

Table 4.43: Descriptive Statistics for Reading Test Performance with Respect to Parental Encouragement Groups

Parental Encouragement	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Very Much	46	15	95	57.50	21.441
Much	27	20	80	46.11	16.486
Little	10	10	95	51.50	30.464
Very Little	5	30	90	63.00	29.069

The descriptive statistics for reading test performance with respect to parental encouragement groups are outlined in Table 4.43. As it is seen in Table 4.43, the top mean score is for ‘very little’ parental encouragement group (M = 63.00; SD = 29.069) whereas the lowest mean score is for ‘much’ parental encouragement group (M = 46.11; SD = 16.486). Due to the fact that groups’ numbers are not balanced, it is not convenient to run one-way ANOVA.

4.4 Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the study. First, it focused on EFL reading test-takers' characteristics at an English medium university. Then, it discussed the EFL reading test-takers' performance. Finally, the current chapter investigated whether there was any statistically significant relationship between EFL reading test-takers' characteristics and their performance.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Presentation

This chapter introduces a discussion of the major findings of this study. The results are presented and interpreted in the line with the research questions of the study. Further, pedagogical implications for practice, and suggestions for further research are discussed.

5.2 Discussion of the Major Findings

In this section, the findings are examined according to the relevant sub-headings linked to the research questions of the present study.

5.2.1 EFL Reading Test-takers' Characteristics

In order to answer the first research question related to the EFL reading test-takers' characteristics at an English medium university, a questionnaire was administered to undergraduate students from ELT Department and CITE Department. In this study, the following characteristics of the EFL reading test-takers were examined:

- i) gender,
- ii) age,
- iii) years of studying English,
- iv) nationality,
- v) CGPA,
- vi) proficiency level in English,
- vii) father's educational level,
- viii) mother's educational level,

- ix) number of siblings,
- x) parents' residence,
- xi) parents' income,
- xii) parental importance given to education,
- xiii) parental encouragement given to learn English,
- xiv) reading strategies,
- xv) reading attitudes.

In terms of gender, 58% of the student participants were females and 42% of them were males. As regards age, the majority of the population (64.8%) was in the age range between 21 and 24; 19.3% of the participants were in the range of 25 years of age and above; and the rest 15.9% were between 18 and 20 years of age.

Furthermore, the questionnaire revealed the fact that the participants of this study did not share common educational histories in terms of exposure to English. The majority of the population (47.7%) notified that they were studying English since primary school. Almost equal number of the student participants (19.3% and 18.2%) claimed that they have been studying English since secondary school and only at EMU, respectively. The rest of the research population (14.8%) reported to have been studying English since high school.

In terms of nationality, the participants' distribution was as follows: 42 students (47.7%) were from the Turkish Republic, 32 of the participants (36.4%) were from Northern Cyprus (the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus), and 14 students (15.9%) were from other nationalities.

In addition, the analysis of the student questionnaires revealed that CGPA of the majority of the population was in the range between 2.00 and 2.49, while 21.6% of the participants claimed their CGPA to be in the range of 2.50 and 2.99. Moreover, while 18.2% of the students reported their CGPA to be low (i.e., in the range between 0.00-1.99), 14.8% and 11.4% of the population stated that their CGPA was rather high (i.e., in the range of 3.50 – 4.00 and 3.00 – 3.49, respectively).

As regards proficiency level perception, 59.1% of the participants perceived their English proficiency level to be high, 29.5% of the students rated their proficiency level as moderate, and 11.4% of the them reported their proficiency level to be low.

Moreover, the questionnaires revealed that father's educational level of 37.5% and 36.4% of the student participants was university and high school, respectively. Almost equal number of the participants (13.6% and 12.5%) reported their father's educational level to be primary and middle school, accordingly.

Regarding the mother's educational level of the participants, while 44.3% of the students stated that the highest educational level of their mothers was high school, almost equal number of the participating students reported their mother's educational level to be primary and university, respectively. The rest 14.6% of the population claimed that their mother's educational level was middle school.

Furthermore, the background of the participants differed in terms of the number of siblings they had. More than half of the population (52.3%) stated that they had only one sibling, 34.1% of the students reported to have 2-3 siblings, and 11.4% of the

participants assured that they had no siblings at all. The rest 2.3% of the population reported to have 4 or more siblings.

As regarding the parents' residence, the analysis of the student questionnaires revealed that the majority of the participants' parents (62.5%) were living in a city, whereas the remaining 21.6% and 15.9% of them were residing in a town and a village, respectively.

In terms of parents' income, the income of the majority of the participants' parents (65.9%) was more than 2000 TL, while 23.9% of the research population claimed that their parents' income was in the range of 1000 and 2000 TL. Also, 10.2% of students stated that their parents' income was less than 1000 TL.

Regarding the parental importance given to education, a great majority of the students (70.5%) reported their parents to give 'very much' importance to their education. 'Much importance' was reported to be given to education of children by 22.7% of parents, whereas 'little' and 'very little' importance was reported to be given to education by 6.8% of the participating students' parents.

In addition, the analysis of the student questionnaires revealed that 'very much' and 'much' encouragement was given to learning English language by 52.3% and 30.7% of the students' parents, respectively. 'Little' encouragement to learn English was reported to be given by 11.4% of the participants parents, while 5.6% of the students stated that their parents were giving them 'very little' or 'no encouragement' to learn English.

5.2.2 EFL Reading Test-Takers' Performance at an English Medium University

To answer the second research question aiming at exploring the EFL reading test performance of the test-takers at an English medium university, the English reading test was administered to the research participants. Having analyzed and interpreted the participating students' performance on the English reading test, it was noticed that the students were average performers. According to the criteria (see 3.8 Data Analysis Procedures) specified for the interpretation of the participating students' proficiency on the English reading test, the mean score is average (53.64).

5.2.3 The Relationship between EFL Reading Test-takers' Characteristics and Performance

In order to find any possible relationships between the characteristics and the English reading test performance of the participants, the related results were further investigated. To begin with, a medium and positive correlation was found between the test-takers' reading attitudes and their performance on the reading test. Another statistically significant relationship was observed between the number of years of studying English and the participants' performance on the English reading test. There was a statistically significant difference in reading performance between the group of students who studied English only at Eastern Mediterranean University and the group that studied English since primary school.

As regards the participants' nationality, there was a statistically significant difference in reading performance between Turkish and Turkish Cypriot participants, and between the group of Turkish Cypriot student participants and between the groups of students of other nationalities. Yet another statistically significant relationship was observed between the participants' CGPA and their English reading test performance. To be more precise, there was a statistically difference between the

group of the participants with 'average' CGPA and the 'excellent' CGPA group. Moreover, a statistically significant relationship was discovered between the groups that perceived their proficiency level to be 'low' and 'high', as well as between the groups that perceived their English proficiency level to be 'moderate' and 'high'.

However, no statistically significant relationships were observed between the participants' gender, age, father's or mother's educational level and their EFL reading test performance. In addition, the relationships between reading performance of the students and the number of siblings they had, their parents' residence and income, parental importance given to education, the amount of encouragement to learn English given by the participants' parents, or the reading strategies the students used were found to be statistically not significant. Language testers have begun to approach L2 test performance in relation to reading performance used by test-takers through the process of taking the test (Cohen, 1986). The major attempt of early L2 studies in testing was to identify and describe test taking performance.

5.3 Pedagogical Implications

The present study aimed at considering if there is any relationship between test-takers' characteristics and their performance on a reading test. It was found that the score of the students from both departments as regards the mean score as mentioned earlier is average. The relationships between test-takers' characteristics and their reading test performance were analyzed in terms of strategies that the participants applied in their reading and their attitudes towards reading, and since the correlation is small and non-significant between test-takers' reading strategies and their performance on the reading test, it is suggested to implement pedagogically different

strategies in teaching to enhance the students with the right strategies to follow and apply.

By considering test-takers' characteristics in language test design as one of the most important implication that was provided by the result of other studies. Farhady (1982), stated that if some of these test-takers' characteristics could be incorporated in the design of language tests can be a step in the right direction. Test-takers' characteristics would definitely influence test scores in one way or another no matter the purpose of the test might be. As Yien (1999), indicated it was important for teachers to recognize that some academic subjects might have different preferences in terms of academic subjects.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

There are several suggestions on the scope of this study. The quantitative data collected from the participants in the Department of ELT and in the Department of CITE can be suggest for further research to consider the participants from other departments in order to determine the relationship between test-takers' characteristics and their performance on a reading test.

Moreover, the sample size was limited and the group sample number was unbalanced, It is suggested that a large sample size should be considered in order to understand the relationship between test-takers' characteristics and their reading performance in future research.

Further, following studies can combine both quantitative and qualitative research procedures in order to determine if the responses of the participants are consist or

not, and to obtain more accurate evidence on the relationship between test-takers' characteristics and their reading performance.

Finally, by considering the non-significance of the participants' background knowledge, it is suggested for further research to seek deeper by applying the study in higher education institutions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Request for Permission to Collect Data at the Department of English Language Teaching

Date: 20.04.2012

To: Chair of English Language Teaching Department

From: Ammar Kamal Abdullah Shawahneh

Subject: Request for permission to collect data at the Department of English Language Teaching

Dear Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gülşen Musayeva Vefalı,

As part of my ELT 500 Thesis work supervised by Assist. Prof. Dr. Ali Sıdkı Ağazade, I would like to get permission to collect data for the research study entitled “EFL Reading Test-takers’ Characteristics and Performance at an English Medium University” at the Department of English Language Teaching and the Department of Computer and Instructional Technology Teacher Education.

The study will be centrally concerned with examining EFL reading test-takers’ characteristics such as age, gender, nationality, educational background, etc. and reading performance at an English medium university. Specifically, the following three research questions will be investigated in this study: (1) What are EFL reading test-takers’ characteristics at an English medium university? (2) What is the EFL reading test-takers’ performance at an English medium university? (3) Is there any statistically significant relationship between EFL reading test-takers’ characteristics and performance at an English medium university?

A reading test along with a questionnaire on test-taker characteristics are planned to be administered to about 100 students in each of the two departments (i.e., about 25 students in each year of study). The data collected will be analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The results of the study are expected to shed light upon EFL reading instruction practice for English medium university students.

In compliance with the rules and regulations of conducting educational research, the data collected will be used only for research purposes, ensuring at the same time the confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants. I would like to ensure you that there will be no interference or interruption in the regular routines of the lectures in any way due to the data collection process.

I would be grateful if you would grant me the permission to collect data from the students at their convenient time.

Yours sincerely,

Ammar Kamal Abdullah Shawahneh (MA in ELT Student)

The Researcher

Mobile: 0533 8306690

Email: 105093@students.emu.edu.tr

Attachment 1: Student Research Participation Consent Form

Attachment 2: Reading Test

Attachment 3: Students’ Questionnaire

Appendix B: Request for Permission to Collect Data at the Department of Computer and Instructional Technology Teacher Education

Date: 20.04.2012

To: Chair of Computer and Instructional Technology Teacher Education Department

From: Ammar Kamal Abdullah Shawahneh

Subject: Request for permission to collect data at the Department of Computer and Instructional Technology Teacher Education

Dear Asst. Prof. Dr. Ersün İřciođlu,

As part of my ELT 500 Thesis work supervised by Assist. Prof. Dr. Ali Sıdkı Ađazade, I would like to get permission to collect data for the research study entitled “EFL Reading Test-takers’ Characteristics and Performance at an English Medium University” at the Department of English Language Teaching and the Department of Computer and Instructional Technology Teacher Education.

The study will be centrally concerned with examining EFL reading test-takers’ characteristics such as age, gender, nationality, educational background, etc. and reading performance at an English medium university. Specifically, the following three research questions will be investigated in this study: (1) What are EFL reading test-takers’ characteristics at an English medium university? (2) What is the EFL reading test-takers’ performance at an English medium university? (3) Is there any statistically significant relationship between EFL reading test-takers’ characteristics and performance at an English medium university?

A reading test along with a questionnaire on test-taker characteristics are planned to be administered to about 100 students in each of the two departments (i.e., about 25 students in each year of study). The data collected will be analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The results of the study are expected to shed light upon EFL reading instruction practice for English medium university students.

In compliance with the rules and regulations of conducting educational research, the data collected will be used only for research purposes, ensuring at the same time the confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants. I would like to ensure you that there will be no interference or interruption in the regular routines of the lectures in any way due to the data collection process.

I would be grateful if you would grant me the permission to collect data from the students at their convenient time.

Yours sincerely,

Ammar Kamal Abdullah Shawahneh (MA in ELT Student)

The Researcher

Mobile: 0533 8306690

Email: 105093@students.emu.edu.tr

Attachment 1: Student Research Participation Consent Form

Attachment 2: Reading Test

Attachment 3: Students’ Questionnaire

Appendix C: Consent Form for the Reading Test and Student Questionnaire

Dear Student,

The study entitled “EFL Reading Test-takers’ Characteristics and Performance at an English Medium University” is designed to examine the relationship between EFL reading test-takers’ characteristics such as age, gender, nationality, educational background, etc. and reading performance at an English medium university. If you agree to participate in this research, fill in the consent form below and complete the reading test and the questionnaire that follow. The data collected will be used for academic purposes only and kept confidential.

Thank you for your participation and contribution.

Ammar Kamal Abdullah Shawahneh (MA in ELT student)
The Researcher
Department of English Language Teaching
Faculty of Education
Eastern Mediterranean University

Consent Form

Student number:

Name & Surname:

Department:

Signature:

Appendix D: Student Questionnaire

Student Questionnaire

Section 1: Background Information

Directions: Respond to the following items (1-13) by marking your choices on the optical answersheet provided.

1. Gender: (A) Male (B) Female
2. Age: (A) 18-20 (B) 21-24 (C) 25 – above
3. Years of studying English: (A) Only at EMU (C) Since secondary school
(B) Since high school (D) Since primary school
4. Nationality: (A) TR (B) TRNC (C) Other (please specify):.....
5. Your last CGPA: (A) 0.00 – 1.99 (B) 2.00 - 2.49 (C) 2.50 – 2.99 (D) 3.00 – 3.49 (E) 3.50 – 4.00
6. Your opinion about your English proficiency level:
(A) Very low (B) Low (C) Moderate (D) High (E) Very high
7. Your father's educational level:
(A) No schooling (B) Primary school (C) Middle school (D) High school (E) University
8. Your mother's educational level:
(A) No schooling (B) Primary school (C) Middle school (D) High school (E) University
9. Number of brothers and sisters:
(A) None (B) 1 (C) 2-3 (D) 4 or more
10. The place of your parents' residence:
(A) City (B) Town (C) Village
11. Your parents' monthly income:
(A) Less than 1000 TL (B) 1000-2000 TL (C) More than 2000 TL
12. The importance your parents give to your education:
(A) Very much (B) Much (C) Little (D) Very little (E) Never
13. Parental encouragement for you to learn English:
(A) Very much (B) Much (C) Little (D) Very little (E) Never

Section 2:

Directions: Using the alternatives (A, B, C, and D), respond to the statements below according to the scale from 4 to 1 [(A) very frequently = 4; (B) frequently = 3; (C) sometimes = 2; (D) never = 1] and mark your choices on the optical answer sheet provided.

Statements		A	B	C	D
		Very Frequently	Frequently	Sometimes	Never
1.	How often do you read books, magazines, or newspapers in English?	4	3	2	1
2.	How often do you ask for someone's help when you have problems with learning English?	4	3	2	1
3.	How often do you consult reference sources when you have difficulty while reading in English?	4	3	2	1
4.	How often do you look up unfamiliar words in English to English dictionary?	4	3	2	1
5.	How often do you try to guess what unfamiliar English words mean while reading?	4	3	2	1
6.	How often do you underline unfamiliar English words while reading?	4	3	2	1
7.	How often do you read the same English text several times?	4	3	2	1
8.	How often do you read English texts aloud?	4	3	2	1
9.	How often do you take some notes while reading English texts?	4	3	2	1
10.	How often do you summarize English texts while and/or after reading?	4	3	2	1
11.	How often do you search in English websites?	4	3	2	1
12.	How often do you try to guess what you are going to read before reading something in English (i.e., by looking at the title, pictures, contents table etc.)?	4	3	2	1

Section 3

Directions: Using the alternatives (A, B, C, D, and E) decide how much you agree with the statements below according to the scale from 5 to 1 [(A) strongly agree = 5; (B) agree = 4; (C) undecided = 3; (D) disagree = 2; (E) strongly disagree = 1] and mark your choices on the optical answer sheet provided.

Statements		A	B	C	D	E
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Reading in English is interesting.	5	4	3	2	1
2.	Being able to read in English is important.	5	4	3	2	1
3.	Being able to read in English is necessary for professional life.	5	4	3	2	1
4.	Being able to read in English is necessary for self-development.	5	4	3	2	1
5.	I would like to improve my ability to read in English.	5	4	3	2	1
6.	Improving my English reading ability is possible.	5	4	3	2	1
7.	I like reading in English.	5	4	3	2	1
8.	I read in English in my free time.	5	4	3	2	1
9.	I like reading in English fast.	5	4	3	2	1
10.	My reading English proficiency level is satisfactory.	5	4	3	2	1