

**TURKISH EFL TEACHERS' BELIEFS  
REGARDING READING STRATEGIES<sup>1</sup>**

**Türk İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Okuma Stratejileri ile İlgili**

**İnançları**

**Serdil İLK<sup>2</sup>**

**Abstract**

Present study aimed to explore EFL teachers' beliefs regarding reading strategies. In order to identify teachers' beliefs on reading strategies, a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were used. The study was carried out with 50 participants working at English preparatory school of Istanbul Aydın University. Thirty-eight of participants were female and eleven of them were male. Thirty-four participants' work experiences at the university were between one and five-years. Fourteen participants' work experiences were between five and ten years. One participant's work experience was between eleven and twenty years and one participant's work experience at the university was more than twenty years. Thirty-one participants have been teaching reading for between one and three years. Thirteen participants have been teaching for between five and ten years and six participants have been teaching for more than ten years. Thirty participants have bachelor degree, nineteen participants have master degree and one participant has PHD degree. The obtained data was analyzed by utilizing both qualitative and quantitative analysis to investigate whether there is a relationship between teachers' use of strategies and such variables as gender, degree, ...Etc. The results of the study revealed that there aren't any statistical relationships between the teachers' gender, degree, years of teaching reading and the strategies they use in the classroom. On the other hand, there is a statistical relationship between the teachers' experiences in teaching at the university and the pre-reading strategies they use.

**Key Words:** *Reading strategies, teachers' beliefs, teachers' attitudes.*

**Özet**

Bu çalışmanın amacı, İngilizce öğretmenlerinin okuma stratejileri konusunda sahip oldukları inançları ve derste uyguladıkları stratejileri araştırmaktır. Öğretmenlerin okuma stratejilerine ait inançlarını belirlemek için anket ve görüşme yapılmıştır. Bu çalışma İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller bölümünde görev yapan 50 İngilizce öğretmeni ile yapılmıştır. Elde edilen veriler niceliksel ve niteliksel analizler yapılarak öğretmenlerin kullandıkları okuma stratejileri ile öğretmenlerin cinsiyeti, eğitimi gibi değişkenlerle bir ilişki olup olmadığı araştırılmıştır. Çalışmanın sonucuna göre öğretmenlerin sınıf içerisinde kullandığı okuma stratejileri ile cinsiyetleri, eğitimleri, okuma dersindeki tecrübeleri arasında hiçbir istatistiksel ilişki bulunmamaktadır. Ancak öğretmenlerin üniversitede çalışma tecrübeleri ve kullandıkları okuma öncesi stratejileri arasında istatistiksel bir ilişki vardır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Okuma stratejileri, öğretmenlerin inançları, öğretmenlerin tutumları.*

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this study was previously presented in Çukurova International ELT Teachers (CUELT) Conference: An Insider View into Practice, in Adana, Turkey, May 21-22, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Instructor, İstanbul Aydın University, e-mail: [serdililk@aydin.edu.tr](mailto:serdililk@aydin.edu.tr)

### **Introduction**

Reading is one of the most essential skills for English as a foreign language. Carrell(Nga,2009) claims that “for many students, reading is by far the most important of the four macro skills, particularly in English as a second or a foreign language ( p.3). Urquhart and Weir (Grabe, 2009) defines reading as “process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print.”(p.14).

In this context, we can see the interaction between the text and the reader. The researchers explain the process of the reading with three models which are bottom-up, top-down and interactive model. While Nunan (1999) views the bottom-up approach as” a process of decoding written symbols into their aural equivalents in a linear fashion”(p.252), Carrell views the top-down process as “a process in which the readers’ background knowledge plays a critical role and Carrell also defines the interactive approach as “an interaction of the top-down and bottom-up models ( Uzunçakmak, 2005).

Another important factor in reading is the purpose. When people start reading they read for a certain purpose. One can read just for pleasure or to get information. According to Aebersold and Field (1997) “purposes determine how people read the text” (p.15), so purposes determine the strategies of the readers. Devine (Aebersold & Field, 1997).claims that “both teachers and researchers have attempted to identify the mental activities that readers use in order to construct meaning from a text. These activities are generally referred to as reading strategies. (p.16).Reading researchers usually divide reading strategies into two groups which are cognitive and metacognitive (Salatacı&Akyel, 2002) .According to Carrell (Livingstone, 1997), cognitive strategies help the readers to construct meaning from the text. Metacognition is simply defined as “thinking about thinking” (p.1).

In the context of EFL, teachers have also an important role. Richards&Lochart (Khonamri&Salimi, 2010) claim that “beliefs are built up gradually over time.” In other words, beliefs are formed as a result of teachers’ experience. They also imply that “beliefs may be derived from other sources like established practices, teachers’ personality factors, educational principles, research-based evidence, and principles derived from an approach or method”.(p.3)

As a result, reading is an important skill for English as a both foreign language and second language. In order to be a successful reader, readers use some strategies. In the context of teaching reading, teachers’ beliefs play an important role regarding reading strategies.

### **Aim of the Study**

This study aims to elicit English language teachers’ beliefs concerning the reading strategies they employ in reading lessons. It also aims to compare the teachers’ gender, degree, and experience in teaching English and in reading with the strategies they use in the classroom. In order to achieve these aims a questionnaire was designed and administered by the researcher to EFL teachers at Istanbul Aydın University of preparatory school and foreign languages as to find out the frequency of the reading

strategies they claimed to use in reading lessons. This study aims at investigating the following research questions:

1. What are the beliefs of Turkish EFL teachers regarding reading strategies?
2. Is there a significant difference between teachers' preferences of reading strategies and their gender?
3. Is there a significant difference between teachers' preferences of reading strategies and their experience in teaching?

### **Method**

This study aims to investigate EFL teachers' beliefs regarding reading strategies. As the aim was to describe EFL teachers' beliefs about reading strategies, descriptive design was used as the research design. Two questionnaires were developed by the researcher to investigate teachers' beliefs. The obtained data were analyzed by utilizing SPSS computer program to find out whether there was a significant difference among the teachers and their beliefs regarding reading strategies.

### **Participants**

The study was conducted at Istanbul Aydın University. Fifty teachers were selected randomly from preparatory school and foreign languages department. Thirty-eight of participants were female and eleven of them were male. Thirty-four participants' work experiences at the university were between one and five-years. Fourteen participants' work experiences were between five and ten years. One participant's work experience was between eleven and twenty years and one participant's work experience at the university was more than twenty years. Thirty-one participants have been teaching reading for between one and three years. Thirteen participants have been teaching for between five and ten years and six participants have been teaching for more than ten years. When we look at their degree of education, thirty participants have bachelor degree, nineteen participants have master degree and one participant has PHD degree.

### **Instruments**

In this study, a questionnaire developed by the researcher was used in order to gather. The aim of the questionnaire was to explore teachers' beliefs. Furthermore, the questionnaire aimed to investigate teachers' attitudes to reading. The questionnaire for this study consisted of three parts. The first part aimed at gathering participants' background information; their gender, years of teaching at the university, years of teaching reading and their degrees.

The second part of the questionnaire aimed to find out the frequency of the reading strategies teachers claimed to use in reading lesson. This section was based on a Likert scale including 5 statement of preference (1: Always; 2: Usually; 3: Sometimes; 4: Rarely; 5: Never). In this section, participants were asked to circle the number which reflected the frequency of reading strategies they use.

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of fifty-one questions. First fifteen items were designed to elicit the teachers' practices regarding pre-reading strategies. Items from sixteen to forty-three were designed to elicit the teachers' usage of reading strategies

while reading and items from forty-four to fifty-two were designed to investigate the teachers' reading strategies after reading. In this section participants were asked to choose one item that described the frequency of their reading strategy usage.

The second instrument for data collection was semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interview protocols were administered to 7 teachers. The participants for the interview were chosen according to gender, years of experience and degree. The rationale behind such criteria was to see the diversity among the participants' responses. The main aim of the interview was participants' beliefs regarding reading strategies. During the interview participants were asked to elaborate on the answers they wrote in the questionnaire.

### Data Analysis and Findings

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques were utilized. While the questionnaires yielded quantitative data, interviews provided qualitative data of the study. The items in the second were analyzed using the statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequencies and percentages were taken for every item. Chi-square tests were also used to find the significance of the differences among the variables.

The interviews were transcribed and analyzed by the researcher. Interview data were analyzed using content analysis.

**Table 1.** The results of Pre-reading Strategies

	Items	1		2		3		4		5	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	I ask students to look at the title and guess the subject of the text	21	42	16	32	7	14	4	8	2	4
2	I ask students to identify the topic	17	34	21	42	7	14	3	6	2	4
3	I ask students to look at the pictures and predict how it relates with the text	20	40	19	38	4	8	7	14	-	-
4	I ask some warm-up questions before reading	35	70	10	20	2	4	2	4	1	2
5	I ask students to read the text silently	22	44	13	26	10	20	5	10	-	-
6	I ask students to skim the text quickly before reading	12	24	15	30	19	38	3	6	1	2
7	I ask students' experience related with the topic	14	28	22	44	11	22	3	6	-	-
8	I teach some important words before starting to read	16	32	16	32	12	24	4	8	2	4
9	I encourage students to activate their background knowledge related to the content of the text	22	44	23	46	4	8	-	-	1	2
10	I evaluate guesses and try new guesses if necessary	12	24	22	44	14	28	2	4	-	-
11	I adjust strategies to the purpose for reading	13	26	21	42	14	28	1	2	1	2
12	I ask students to establish the purpose in	9	18	21	42	16	32	4	8	-	-

13	reading text I encourage students to increase the speed in silent reading	8	16	15	30	16	32	11	22	-	-
14	I recommend my students the process of note-taking	9	18	16	32	17	34	7	14	1	2
15	I use the same strategy for all texts	6	12	12	24	8	16	18	36	6	12

The results presented in Table 1 indicate the teachers' beliefs regarding pre-reading strategies. The items in this part aimed to investigate teachers' practices before starting the reading. Fifteen items are related with the pre-reading strategies.

When we analyze the data concerning the teachers' beliefs regarding pre-reading strategies, we observe that almost every teacher uses pre-reading strategies. On the other hand, the percentage of the teachers is variable regarding pre-reading strategies. The data reveals that asking some warm-up questions before reading is the most frequently used strategy by the participants. We can infer that teachers give importance to the preparation of the students. The preferences about activating the prior knowledge of the students indicate that teachers use this strategy quite frequently. Another most frequently used strategy is asking the students to read the text silently. The reason for such a finding might be that reading silently can increase the learners' speed.

When we compare the teachers' gender, degree, years of teaching at the university and years of teaching reading, we see that there aren't any significant relationships between teachers' gender, degree, and experience in teaching reading and pre-reading strategies they use. However, there is a relationship between teachers' experience in teaching at the university and pre-reading strategies.

**Table 2** The results of while reading strategies

		1		2		3		4		5	
Items		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	I ask students to read the text only once.	4	8	18	36	22	44	3	6	3	6
2	I ask students to read the text aloud more than once.	4	8	7	14	10	20	13	26	16	32
3	I encourage students to pay attention to the parts of sentences such as phrases and clauses.	16	32	20	40	11	22	3	6	-	-
4	I encourage students to pay attention to the sentence structure, such as subjects and objects.	10	20	9	18	19	38	9	18	3	6
5	I ask students to read clusters of words as a unit.	11	22	20	40	16	32	2	4	1	2
6	I encourage students to avoid habits such as reading word-	19	38	17	34	8	16	5	10	1	2

	by word.										
7	I encourage students to translate the text into L1.	5	10	5	10	13	26	18	36	9	18
8	I encourage students to use dictionary for the unknown word.	11	22	12	24	12	24	9	18	6	12
9	I encourage students to use the context as parts of words (prefixes, suffixes, and stems) to work out the meaning of unknown words.	18	36	17	34	10	20	4	8	1	2
10	I read the text fully and the present it to the students.	11	22	14	28	7	14	9	18	9	18
11	I ask students to skim the text.	17	34	20	40	9	18	1	2	3	6
12	I comment on the significance of content and question the information in the text.	16	32	20	40	13	26	1	2	-	-
13	I help the students to visualize the information in the text.	18	36	14	28	13	26	4	8	1	2
14	I ask students to connect new information with the previously stated content.	14	28	24	48	9	18	2	4	1	2
15	I ask students to guess the unfamiliar words in co-text.	19	38	18	36	11	22	1	2	1	2
16	I ask students to distinguish main idea from minor ideas.	19	38	16	32	12	24	3	6	-	-
17	I allow students to go on reading even if they're unsuccessful.	24	48	11	22	9	18	5	10	1	2
18	I ask students to focus on meaning of the text not the form	19	38	14	28	13	26	3	6	1	2
19	I encourage students to disregard insignificant words.	13	26	15	30	16	32	5	10	1	2
20	I ask students to deduce the meaning from context.	18	36	26	52	5	10	1	2	-	-
21	I ask students to deduce meaning from word structure.	8	16	16	32	15	30	9	18	2	4
22	I encourage students to benefit from relationships of cause and effect.	11	22	17	34	16	32	5	10	1	2
23	I recommend my students the process of note-taking.	7	14	16	32	20	40	7	14	-	-
24	I ask students to re-read for better understanding.	5	10	28	56	14	28	3	6	-	-
25	I ask students to take notes, highlight or underline the important notes.	17	34	20	40	9	19	4	8	-	-

26	I give active role to the students.	17	34	22	44	9	18	1	2	1	2
27	I ask students focus too much on form at the expense of meaning.	4	8	8	16	19	38	9	18	10	20

1: Always            2: Usually            3: Sometimes            4: Rarely            5: Never

The results presented in Table 2 display the opinions of teachers regarding the strategies they use. Almost all teachers use while reading strategies. Some of the teachers use different strategies more frequently than the others. As it is seen in the table above, only few participants never use some strategies. On the basis of the data, we can propose that every teacher uses while reading strategies. Moreover, most of the teachers allow their students to go on reading even if they are unsuccessful. Additionally, we see that deducing the meaning from context and asking the students to analyze unknown words are the most frequently used while-reading strategies. This finding might stemmed from the fact that the students can remember unknown words better in this way.

When we compare the teachers' gender, degree, experience at the university, years at teaching reading to the strategies they use while reading, we observe that there isn't any statistically significant relationship among them.

**Table 3** *The results of after reading strategies*

Items	1		2		3		4		5	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
I ask students to look back over a text and summarize it	6	12	14	28	17	34	13	26	-	-
I ask the students whether the text is relevant to their reading goals.	1	2	9	18	19	38	16	32	5	10
I have students go back to read the details of the passage to find the answers of the questions.	16	32	20	40	12	24	2	4	-	-
I monitor the students reading and the state of learning.	28	56	16	32	3	6	3	6	-	-
I ask comprehension questions about the text.	36	72	13	26	-	-	-	-	1	2
I give students a quiz about the text.	3	6	8	16	27	54	9	18	3	6
I give students follow-up activities related to the text.	18	36	20	40	8	16	4	8	-	-
I ask students to evaluate and criticize the text.	10	20	17	34	15	30	7	14	1	2
I ask students to discuss the text after reading.	16	32	20	40	12	24	1	2	1	2

1: Always            2: Usually            3: Sometimes            4: Rarely            5: Never

On the basis of the data, we can claim that every teacher uses after-reading strategies though the frequencies are variable. When we analyze the results, we see that a great number of the teachers give importance to comprehension questions. This may indicate that teachers want to test whether the text is understood. For this reason, most of the teachers monitor their students reading and state of learning. Additionally, teachers give the students follow-up activities related to the text. We might infer that using follow-up activities can also increase the students' participation to the lesson.

When we analyze the data statistically concerning the teachers' gender, degree, years of teaching at the university and teaching reading, we see that there aren't any relationships among them.

### **Conclusion**

**RQ 1:** What are the beliefs of Turkish EFL teachers regarding reading strategies?

The responses to the first question were analyzed under three groups: pre-reading strategies/while reading strategies/post-reading strategies. In response to the pre-reading strategies, the findings revealed that "asking warm-up questions and encouraging students to activate the background knowledge related to the content of the text" are the most frequently applied pre-reading strategies. On the other hand, "Using the same strategy for all texts is the least frequently applied for pre-reading strategies?

In response to the while-reading strategies, the findings revealed that while "Asking students to deduce the meaning from context" is the most frequently applied while-reading strategies, "Encouraging students to translate the text into 11" is the least frequently applied while-reading strategies.

In response to the post-reading strategies, the findings presented that "asking comprehension questions about the text" is the most frequently applied post-reading strategy. However, "Asking students whether the text is relevant to their reading goals" is the least frequently practiced after-reading strategies.

**RQ2** Is there a significant difference between teachers' preferences of reading strategies and their gender?

Data analysis of the questionnaire revealed that there isn't a significant difference between teachers' preferences of reading strategies and their gender.

**RQ3** Is there a significant difference between teachers' preferences of reading strategies and their experience in teaching?

There is only a significant relationship between teachers' experience in teaching at the university and pre-reading strategies.

The results that were obtained in the present study can be summarized as follows:

The most frequently practiced type of reading strategies are pre-reading strategies for the teachers.



"Asking warm-up questions" and "encouraging students to activate their background knowledge related to the content of the text" are the most frequently applied pre-reading strategies as 90% of teachers reported they "always"/"usually" apply these strategies.

Second most frequently practiced pre-reading strategy is asking students to identify the topic.

"Using the same strategy for all texts" is the least frequently applied for pre-reading?

"Asking students to deduce the meaning from context" is the most frequently applied while-reading strategies.

Second most frequently practiced while-reading strategy is "giving active role to the students."

"Encouraging students to translate the text into L1" is the least frequently applied while-reading strategy.

"Asking comprehension questions about the text" is the most frequently applied post-reading strategy as 98% of teachers reported they "always/usually" ask comprehension questions about the text.

Second most frequently practiced post-reading strategy is "monitoring the students reading and the state of learning.

"Asking students whether the text is relevant to their reading goals" is the least frequently practiced after-reading strategy.

### References

- Aebersold, J., & Field, M. (1997). *From reader to reading teacher issues and strategies for second language classrooms* (pp.15-16). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grabe, W. (2009). *Reading in a second language moving from theory to practice*(p.14). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Khonamri, F., & Salimi, M.(2010) .The Interplay between EFL high school teachers' beliefs and their instructional practices regarding reading strategies. *Novitas Royal*,4(1)
- Livingston, J. A. (1997). Metacognition: An overview. Retrieved February, 8, 2010, from <http://www.gse.buffalo.edu/fas/shuell/CEP564/Metacog.htm>.
- Nga Thi Thu, G. (2009). Teachers' beliefs about teaching reading strategies and their classroom practices: a case study of viet be high school. *The Asian EFL Journal*
- Nunan, D. (1999). *Second language teaching & learning*. Boston: Heinle&Heinle Publishers.
- Salataci, A. A. (2002). Possible effects of strategy instruction on L1 and L2 reading. *Reading in a Foreign Language* , Volume 14.
- Uzuncakmak, P. (2005). Successful and unsuccessful readers' use of strategies. (Unpublished M.A dissertation) Bilkent University, Ankara.