

## Reading Habit and Its Role on Students' Academic Success at Language Preparatory School: A Research on Tishk International University Preparatory School Students

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### Abstract

The purpose of the research was to examine the impact of students' reading habits on their academic success. For this matter, among 110 students, 44 students of language Preparatory School of Tishk International University have been selected randomly to respond the survey questions. According to the 24-week annual language teaching curriculum in Preparatory School, 44 students' annual academic success has been observed. Data has been analyzed by SPSS software and the results were shown in the heading of the effect level and quality of reading habit on students' academic achievement. In this empirical study, students were not forced to read. They read books as an extracurricular reading activity during their academic year.

**Key Words:** academic achievement, department courses, language preparatory school, reading habit.

### Introduction

The reading culture of university students in developing countries is well below comparing to the developed country averages (Odabaş et al., 2008). The answer to the question of "what is reading" is perceived as a waste of time and entertainment for some. Ozdemir (2007) proposed a definition to reading saying that: "It is a mental activity based on the perception and understanding of printed words through sensory organs and understanding, comprehending and interpreting them." In other words, it is an important tool in learning life and a ramp to bounce to success and a means to take the individual to happiness. If a comparison is made on the basis of countries that have reached the age of technology, the reading habits of individuals of the country (infogram.com, 2019) can be grouped as follows:

1. Strong reading habit: Reading 3 books or more a month
2. Average reading habit: Reading 1 book a month
3. Weak reading habit: Reading 1 book or less in 3 months

As Padmi (2008) states that reading, like listening, is called receptive skill and is indispensable for understanding-based activities. Some universities even take reading and listening skills as criterion for success on student admissions rather than writing and speaking skills what are known as productive skills. While reading skill triggers writing, listening skill triggers speech. The individual who has acquired the habit of reading books is open to lifelong learning and has the ability to use the information obtained on time and in place. The habit of reading books should not be seen as just a tool for individuals to gain a better understanding of social sciences at school, and it should not be taken that the greatest role in this direction should be only assigned to teachers. The reading habit is known as a skill which is aimed in the formal education system for students to gain. However, before the school age, parents can read to their children before going to bed, or parents who have returned home from work in the evening can create a reading time culture at home, which will help their children acquire a reading habit. In this context, the individual will be sensitive to reading before coming to school

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age, and his / her understanding and expression skills will develop during school age. Otherwise, it is quite difficult to give the individual the habit of reading books during adulthood.

According to Sahin (2011), reading education in children becomes a character until the age of 15 and this habit develops throughout life. For this reason, primary school teachers have great responsibilities. The contributions of constructive and motivating teachers to the students are great.

There are social and individual factors in acquiring the habit of reading. Social factors include a sociocultural structure that encourages reading, education systems and methods that lead to reading, thinking and analysis, media and social media having projects that support reading, and the establishment of city, district and even neighborhood libraries.

Within individual factors, creating a library at home with the awareness of the parents, parents being a model in reading, reading books regularly to the child in the preschool period, taking the child to the book fairs, making the child a member of the library or taking them to the library, helping the child to read the books, giving the child a gift of books can be handled as motivating them to read. There are many things to do for teachers to develop reading habits. But teachers need to be conscious and sensitive in their work.

The role of teachers can be listed as: establishing a rich classroom library, organizing in-class contests for the habit of reading, sending students to the library of the school, making them members of the library, allocating 15 minutes of the first lessons in the school education programs to reading books, asking bonus questions from the book, taking students to book fairs, taking students to the author signature days.

In addition, friends and the use of the Internet can be added to environmental factors. A friend who supports reading, watching television and playing computer games or using the internet at a level that does not interfere with reading plays a role in the continuation of children's reading habits. However, lately, internet reading has tended to increase. According to Şaşmaz et al. (2013), there is a positive relationship between internet addiction and regular reading. The important thing here is to encourage students to read books. Sometimes, the desire to gain status in society and to appear special can also be considered among the reasons why students read

online or printed books (Aksaçlıoğlu & Yılmaz, 2007).

In Iraq, as in most of the Middle Eastern countries, it is clear that families and society are weak about the habit of reading books. Additionally, the book reading rates in the Middle East are quite low. While the perceived need to read books in European countries rank 18th in queue, Turkey, as an integrated country with Europe and having an important place in Asia, and the Middle East puts reading average in needs ranking to 222 (Ortaş, 2014).

Academic success is gained by a student in a short or long term, and it shows that if the student has reached her/his educational goals. The academic achievement of the student is indicated by the grades given by the teachers. According to these grades, the student is determined as "successful" and "unsuccessful". Reading habit enables students to improve their understanding, comprehension and analysis skills (Kanmaz & Saracaloğlu, 2012). While the interpretation of knowledge and experiences through mental activities takes place during the reading process, learning, interpretation, research, discussion and critical thinking skills will also be acquired. Reading is one of the most basic ways of learning and being informed (Sever et al., 2008). Through the reading action, the student will be able to understand what he / she reads better when he / she is confronted with written texts, will take better marks in the exams because of improved comprehension skills and will understand the teacher's explanation. Of course, success will be seen by monitoring whether the planned activities are regularly implemented.

### **Theoretical framework**

Generally, the aim of the language preparatory education in preparatory schools is to prepare students for the department courses they will take in a foreign language, while extracurricular reading activities that can be done will give the students a habit of reading, and the reading habit will be an element that increases the efficiency and success in education.

Although there is no deep-rooted research and data showing that the academic achievement of the preparatory school students related to this study is increased by only reading, there are some studies showing that the academic achievement of the students has increased in different ways. For instance, Cox et al., (2003) questioned the relationship between academic achievement and reading skill courses given to university students

and found that there was a positive relationship between the academic achievement of students and reading books. Besides, in a study by Cooper et al., (2014), "Matthew Effect" was explained that the strong reading habits gained at an early age lead the student to success in the long term.

### Methodology

It is not the students' reading habits and reading skills that determine success in language preparation schools. Students are required to be proficient in four basic skills. However, the question "Does the habit of reading have an impact on success in education?" has been the subject of study for a long time. In this study, the relationship between students' free book reading habits and academic achievement variables will be examined. In short, the level and quality of the relationship between free reading habits of prep school students and school achievements will be determined. The results of the research will give some clues about the relationship between the two variables.

This study was conducted by informing the foreign language preparatory students of Tishk International University's language preparatory school in 2018-2019 academic year. The total number of students in the relevant school is 110. The number of students randomly sampled was 44. The power of the sample to represent the universe

is 40%. The research was conducted in May 2019. A questionnaire consisting of 6 questions was applied to the students who participated in the research using the description method. The results of the questionnaire were evaluated with SPSS 24 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

### Results and discussion

In this section, 44 students' responses to questionnaire questions were evaluated. 54.5% of TIU Prep School students were female and 45.5% were male. When the educational status of the parents is examined, it is seen that they are mostly high school graduates. 65.9% of the fathers are high school graduates. The rate of university graduates is 29.55%, while the rate of those who say that their father has not finished any school is 4.45%. The rates for mothers are more different than in the answers given for fathers. 50% of mothers were high school graduates, 20% of them were university graduates, and 30% of mothers did not finish any school.

#### Students' Attitudes towards Reading Books and School Achievements

Whether students like to read books or not is an important issue in the evaluation of the research. In addition, reading attitudes can be considered as another dimension of habit.

**Table 1.** Whether students like to read books

Generally, do you enjoy reading books?	n	%
Yes	19	43.2
A little	15	34.1
No	10	22.7
Total	44	100

According to the data of Table 1, less than half of the students (43.2%) stated that they like to read books, approximately one third (34.1%) said that they liked "a bit" and an important part of them (22.7%) did not like to read books. In general, it can be said that students' attitudes towards reading are "positive". However, the proportion of students with weak attitudes cannot be underestimated.

The main criterion of student achievement in language preparatory education is the final results at the end of the semester. The relationship between the average score of 70 and the attitude towards

reading will give a clue about the relationship between reading habit and educational achievement.

The data of Table 2 is given below. The relation between the students' success in the final exam which was taken after a two-semester, 24-week education in prep school and if they enjoy reading has been handled in that table. The crucial point that attracts attention is that there are few students who do not like to read books among the students who are successful in the first and second semesters.

**Table 2.** Whether or not students who have achieved 70 in the two-term language preparatory education finals like to read books.

Academically Successful Students' Book Reading Rates								
44 students' success rates in one semester	Yes (19)		A little (15)		No (10)		The rate of successful ones	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1.Semester-13 weeks	13	68.4	10	66.6	3	30	26	59.1
2.Semester-11 weeks	16	84.2	11	73.3	4	40	31	70.4
2 Semester average	14.5	76.3	10.5	69.9	3.5	35	28.5	64.8

As can be seen in Table 2, the majority of the students who love reading books and who like reading books a bit are successful in the first semester and this success rate has increased in the second semester. On the other hand, although the success rate of students who do not like reading in general seems to be low, they can be said to be a little more successful in the second term final exams. In short, the increase in the overall success in the second semester in general

shows that the students who like to read books are more successful.

The final results are an important measure of student achievement at the university language preparatory school. In both semesters, students take the final exam. The data revealing the relationship between reading attitude and school achievement score are important for the main purposes of the research. Table 3 presents the data on the students' GPAs and their attitudes towards reading.

**Table 3.** Grade averages at the end of the year and attitudes of students about reading books (N = 44)

Students' Year-End Achievement Status	How much does the student enjoy reading?					
	YES		A LITTLE		NO	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
69 and less	4	23.7	4	30.1	6	60
70 and more	15	76.3	11	69.9	4	40
Total	19	100	15	100	10	100

When the proportions of students' two-term grade point averages and their attitudes towards reading books are examined, it is seen that the success rate of a total of 30 students who like to read, who like to read a little, and who do not like book reading accounts for 68.2%. The failure rate of 14 students who like to read, who like to read a little and who do not like books is 31.8%. On the other hand, while the year-end success rate of the students who like reading books and who like reading books a little is 76.47%, the success rate of the students who do not like reading books is 40%. It was observed that the students who like to read books and who like to read books a little are more successful at the end of the year.

Another element of reading habit that we will examine in parallel with the year-end success of language preparatory school students is the frequency of reading books. Table 4 presents the data on the students' read-out success averages and their frequency of reading.

### Students' Reading Frequency and Academic Success

One of the most important points to be determined in the research is the level of reading habits of language preparatory students.

**Table 4.** Frequency of Language Preparation Students Reading Books

Student's Reading Frequency	Student	Percentage
Three books a month and more	1	2.3
One book per month	17	38.6
One book in every 3 months and less	20	45.4
I never read	6	13.6
Total	44	100

When the data in Table 4 is examined, it cannot be said that the reading habit levels of the students are generally positive. The fact that the majority of students are classified in "reading a book in 3 months", which is a weak reading frequency (45.4%), shows this negative situation. The number of students who read books once a month (38.6%) and those who finished three books every month (2.3%) cannot be underestimated. The fact that 13.6% of students have never read can be seen as a

large proportion. In short, it can be said that students who have language preparatory education have the habit of "average and weak reading" (84%).

One of the most important criteria to emphasize the effect of reading habits on students' educational achievement is to determine the relationship between grade averages and frequency of reading books. The relevant data are given in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Year-end final grade averages and reading frequency of language preparatory students (N = 44)

Students' Year-End Achievement Status	Three books a month and more		One book per month		One book every 3 months and less		I never read	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
69 and less	0	0	2	11.8	7	35	4	66.6
70 and more	1	100	15	88.2	13	65	2	33.4
Total	1	100	17	100	20	100	6	100

Accordingly, none (0%) of students with strong reading habits (3 books or more per month) is considered to be unsuccessful at the end of language preparatory education, while this rate is 35% in poor reading habits (One book every 3 months and less), and 66.6% among those who have never read. Among the students who were considered successful, 33.4% of the students who did not read any books, 100% of the students with strong reading habits, 88.2% of the intermediate students (one book per month) and 65% of students with poor reading habits (one in three months) were

found to be successful. It can be claimed that the success of students in the language preparatory education depends on the increase in the frequency of reading books and this contributes positively to the students' grades.

The opinions of the language preparatory students whose success was tried to be explained with numerical data related to the relationship between reading habits and school success are found important for the research. Student thoughts are given in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Student opinions about the effect of reading habits on school success

"The fact that I am a book reader affects my academic performance in preparatory language education in a positive way." Do you agree with this statement?	n	%
I agree	23	52.3
I partially agree	12	27.3
I disagree	9	20.4
Total	44	100

The majority of the students (52.3%) think that the habit of reading books positively affects their school success. Only 20.4% of them state that there is no such effect. Approximately 27.3% believe that there is an effect partially.

### Conclusions

In this era, being centered among technology-addicted humans, it is a big burden for the educators to transfer the reading desire to students. The learners should first of all see this action as a necessity in education, be able to continue with constant pleasure and share what they have learned after the reading with the people around. While planting the reading habit in students' world depends on individual and social factors, it is essential that idealistic and motivating people are also a need to spread this habit to their mind to be established.

To summarize the results of the research it can be said that:

1. The students think that reading habits positively affect their foreign language learning.
2. Students' attitudes towards reading a book in language preparatory education affect their success. Thus, students who love to read books are more successful than students who do not.
3. The two-semester final achievement levels of students who like to read books are higher than those who do not like to read books. In other words, there is a direct proportion between attitudes towards reading and success.
4. It can be stated that there is a relationship between students' reading frequency and their final achievement. As the frequency of reading books increases, the success of the students increases.
5. At least, students have moderate and weak reading habits.
6. The majority of students like to read books intermediately. However, those who do not like to read should not be underestimated.

To sum up, it is not only the reading habit that determines the academic achievement of the students. Additional lessons learned about school achievement, group work, or use of social media can be counted as factors. Therefore, in this study, there are some variables whose effects we have not investigated on the relationship between reading habits and year-end course achievement.

Since the purpose of this study was not to find out the effect of variables other than reading habits on school success, only the tendencies towards the relationship between these two variables were investigated. Multiple analyses including other factors can be performed. Thus, it can be said that there is an interaction between the two variables discussed in this study.

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