

AN ASSESSMENT OF PERCEIVED READING STRATEGY NEEDS  
OF EFL LEARNERS AT BUSEL

A THESIS PRESENTED BY

NIGAR CEYHAN SARIKAYA

TO THE INSTITUTE OF ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS  
IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

BILKENT UNIVERSITY

AUGUST 1997

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## **ABSTRACT**

Title : An Assessment of Perceived Reading Strategy Needs  
of EFL Learners at BUSEL

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Research on reading in a second language and efforts to improve second language reading instruction have grown remarkably in recent years. This current expansion of research in second language reading has focused on reading strategies employed by good second language learners resulting in new insights for reading instruction. With these new insights, it has become evident that less competent learners may improve their reading abilities through training in strategies evidenced by more successful learners as identified in the literature.

In order to train learners to develop effective reading strategies, the first step to be taken is to assess their strategy needs to become successful readers. This study, therefore, investigated the reading strategies that learners of English as a foreign language at Bilkent University School of English Language (BUSEL) need to develop in order to become more efficient readers, and thus, be able to carry out their academic studies successfully in their respective fields of study in various faculties at Bilkent University.

Learners' needs in terms of reading strategies were assessed as perceived by learners themselves, their instructors and curriculum designers. Each group of subjects was given a questionnaire. In addition, a semi-structured interview was conducted with curriculum designers. Both quantitative and descriptive data were obtained by the analysis of the questionnaire items and the interviews. The mean scores of the responses were computed for each item in the questionnaires given to all groups of subjects involved. The findings were analyzed to identify the perceived frequency and proficiency of use of particular strategies as well as the importance given to these strategies by all the groups of subjects.

Overall, the findings revealed a high agreement as to the perceived needs of students by all three groups of subjects involved. It was found that the strategies that BUSEL students need to develop most as perceived by these groups include those to deal with unknown vocabulary, to understand text organization and make use of textual signals, to make summaries of and notes of information presented in texts, and to evaluate the content of reading materials.

**BILKENT UNIVERSITY**  
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The examining committee appointed by the Institute of Economics and Social  
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The Committee has decided that the thesis of the student is satisfactory.

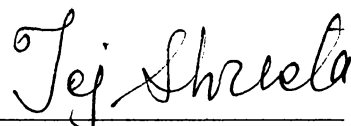
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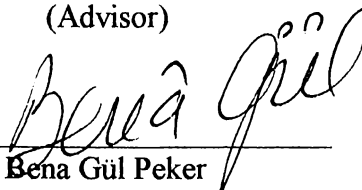
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We certify that we have read this thesis and that in our combined opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.



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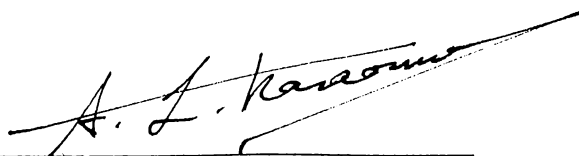


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Finally, I must express my deep appreciation to my husband for his great understanding, patience, and support throughout the program.



To my beloved husband

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background of the Study

There has been a growing research interest in recent years concerning theories of how a second language is learned with a great deal of emphasis on the role of the learner in the learning process. Insights from both humanist psychology stressing the importance of self-concept in adult learning and cognitive psychology emphasizing learners' mental processes, have guided language teaching methodologies that have shifted the focus from the teacher to the learner. The development of teaching methods reflecting humanist and cognitive views of learning has increased the concern to "make the learner a better learner" by helping them "learn how to learn" (Wenden, 1991, pp. 1-2).

Currently, there have been attempts "to systematize the content and procedures for helping language learners learn how to learn" and to provide a framework from which suitable training courses can be planned (Sinclair & Ellis, 1992, p. 211). Learner training as defined by Ellis and Sinclair (1989) "aims to help learners consider the factors that affect their learning and discover the learning strategies that suit them best so that they may become more effective learners and take on more responsibility for their own learning" (p. 2). Based on this idea of self-direction, the notion that special learner strategies might assist second language acquisition has directed research in learner training which has been an area of increased focus in recent years.

Implementation of learner strategy training might range from those which are learner-directed, allowing learners to make decisions about their own learning, to those

which are teacher-directed assuming that learners need a teacher to help them by teaching the best strategies as identified by research. Both approaches to learner training are considered as extremes and a middle path is suggested. This path “permits the focus on the process of learning to be teacher-guided, but enables the learners ultimately to make their own decisions about their learning, thus ensuring that learning strategies are not imposed” (Sinclair & Ellis, 1992, p. 213). This path also provides learners with the growing ability to manage their own learning with the help of strategies which are defined as the “keys to greater autonomy and more meaningful learning” (Oxford, 1990, p. ix).

The effectiveness of using learning strategies for learner autonomy has been supported by studies of second language learners; and the findings show that appropriate use of these strategies leads to improvement in proficiency or achievement overall or in specific skill improvement (Oxford, 1993). Among these skill areas is that of reading skill, development of which requires the learner to use cognitive strategies to promote greater comprehension of foreign language texts. Research into reading strategy instruction in a foreign language stresses the value of training learners to monitor their reading comprehension. There is a growing number of studies which demonstrate that learners can be trained to develop and use efficient strategies to improve reading comprehension.

Reading has been regarded as an important skill to be developed by students in academic contexts. Most survey research carried out at universities (Ostler, 1980; Johns, 1981; Robertson 1983; cited in Grabe, 1986) conclude that ESL (English as a Second Language) students use the reading skill the most, and they consider it the most important

skill for future academic success. As Grabe states, the reading skill should be focused on in an academic context since students at certain points in their academic studies are required to “read exhaustively in classes” (p. 37). He furthermore points out that undergraduates at almost all universities are required to take freshman writing classes -- which also is the case at Bilkent University. Research shows a positive correlation between reading and writing abilities (Stotsky, 1983; Krashen, 1984; cited in Grabe, 1986). As Smith (1984; cited in Grabe, 1986), notes “we learn to read by reading, and we learn to write by reading”, and as Grabe states, “both crucially involve calling on the full range of world-background knowledge, language conventions, and vocabulary development which can only be internalized through reading” (p. 36).

In an EAP (English for Academic Purposes) program, reading instruction should encourage and assist the student to make the transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn” which requires an ability to cope with materials and tasks faced in academic content classes (Shih, 1992, p. 290). Students in EAP reading classes, then, should be trained to develop a variety of strategies to enhance their reading and learning process.

Effective reading strategies as identified in the literature are categorized into two levels: “text-level” and “word-level” strategies. According to Barnett (1988) the former refers to those strategies that are “related to the reading passage as a whole or to large parts of the passage” (p. 150). These include strategies such as considering background knowledge, predicting, using titles and illustrations to understand, reading with a purpose, skimming and scanning. Some of the word-level strategies include using

context to guess word meanings, identifying the grammatical category of words, following reference words and recognizing meanings through word families and formation.

It is clear that in order for second language readers to approach a text effectively and make sense of what they read they need to develop efficient reading strategies. If learners are made aware of and trained to develop reading strategies they will be given the opportunity to strengthen their reading skills, and thus, better comprehend what they read. Training learners to use reading strategies to become autonomous readers in the target language is essential in such academic contexts as Bilkent University School of English Language (BUSEL) where the syllabus is designed with a primary focus on meeting learners' needs and enabling them to function successfully in their future studies.

The fact that reading has been regarded as an important academic skill and that training learners to develop effective strategies for learner autonomy is a desirable goal in a learner-centered program has determined the focus of this research. The belief that learner strategy training should be incorporated into the syllabus of a language program encouraging instruction with a focus on the learner has led to the research interest in investigating the reading strategies learners need to develop to become effective readers and thus carry out their future academic studies successfully.

### Statement of the Problem

As English is the medium of instruction at Bilkent University, the BUSEL preparatory program aims to equip students with the necessary English language and



study skills they need to carry out their studies successfully in the respective faculties and schools of the university. From the beginning of the BUSEL program, certain skills are introduced, refined and practiced throughout the courses at different levels which include Foundation, Intermediate, Upper-intermediate and Pre-faculty. As stated in the BUSEL syllabus, (1996-1997) “the type of language, functions and skills which are focused on and developed through the pre-sessional English program are those particularly associated with academic studies, such as note-taking, giving oral presentations, organizing and writing reports” (p. 3). One of the particular characteristics which defines the BUSEL syllabus (1996-1997) as an EAP syllabus is its focus on certain basic features of academic discourse in terms of text type. This focus, particularly at Pre-faculty level, intends “to enable the students to firstly recognize and understand text type and typical discourse features, and secondly, to be able to use them in their own production of language” (pp. 4-5).

The BUSEL syllabus states that students at Pre-faculty level are required to read information “that has been researched, organized and documented in accordance with the rules of academic discourse” (p. 75). Students at this level are required to develop their reading skills through mainly academic and subject specific authentic texts. Therefore, they should be equipped with effective reading strategies that will help them to cope with specific types of texts they are required to read both inside and outside the classroom.

The current BUSEL syllabus designed by the Curriculum Unit is based on the academic needs of the learners in the faculties in terms of language and study skills. It is the third version of a design based on the data obtained from the Student Needs Analysis

(SNA) conducted in 1993. The SNA was carried out in order to identify the needs of students finishing BUSEL and entering their faculties in terms of academic skills they need to develop to carry out their studies in their respective fields of study. These needs were identified by means of questionnaires and interviews administered to BUSEL students and teachers and Freshman students and teachers. Among the aims of this study (SNA) was to find out students' and teachers' expectations for the new syllabus in terms of course content, methodology, materials, learner roles, program design, testing and assessment. However, "learning strategies" was only one of the eleven components of the SNA; that is, the study did not exclusively focus on learning strategies.

Findings from the SNA have led the Curriculum Unit to develop the Independent Study Component (ISC) which aims to equip learners with the study skills they need in order to enable them to develop learner independence. Learners at BUSEL need to develop learner autonomy since at the faculties of the university they are exposed to a learning situation demanding independent work outside the classroom which includes reading for academic purposes. In order to become autonomous learners they need to develop efficient reading strategies.

Reading strategy development is one of the areas which needs to be focused on in learner training for learner autonomy. In order for learner training to take place the first step is to assess learner needs in terms of reading strategies. With the help of such a training program learners will be able to rely more on themselves, become more self-directed, and activate their strategies outside the classroom, transferring what they have learned into new situations.

### Purpose of the Study

In order for learner training to take place, the first step to be taken is to identify the strategies learners need to develop and then to establish procedures to plan courses for strategy instruction. The identification and analysis of learner needs in terms of strategies which will help them develop autonomy is essential for the learners to achieve an expected level of success in their future academic studies. The purpose of this study was, therefore, to investigate and identify the reading strategies that BUSEL and Freshman students need to become autonomous readers and thus carry out their academic studies more successfully. The needs of students in terms of reading strategies were identified as perceived by themselves, instructors at BUSEL and at various faculties of the university, and BUSEL Curriculum Unit members.

### Significance of the Study

The SNA (1993) carried out at Bilkent University identified reading skills as the most important to BUSEL students' needs as perceived by instructors. However, no particular needs assessment has been carried out thus far in order to identify students' learning strategy requirements for academic reading comprehension. This study, therefore, fills an institutional gap by carrying out a needs assessment study in terms of reading strategies since after the implementation and analysis of the findings of the SNA, 1993, it was stated by the Curriculum Unit that "an extensive survey into students' language learning strategies... should be instituted" (p. 116).

The findings obtained from this reading strategy needs assessment study will provide data for the Curriculum Unit which designs the syllabus and also for the Textbook Committee when they begin to write the course book for Pre-faculty level students at BUSEL. Although this study is limited to subjects at BUSEL, it may provide data for other preparatory school curriculum planners as well as guidance for researchers in English Language Teaching (ELT) contexts who intend to carry out similar studies at their own institutions.

### Research Questions

The main question that guided this research was: What are the reading strategies that BUSEL Pre-faculty students need to develop to carry out their future academic studies successfully in their respective fields of study?

To be able to identify the reading strategy needs of BUSEL students, various data sources from both the current (BUSEL) and the target situation (faculties) were addressed. Thus, specifically, the following questions were addressed in the study:

1. How frequently are particular reading strategies used by BUSEL Pre-faculty students and Freshman students to cope with texts they are required to read?
2. What strategies do these two groups of students perceive as important for efficient reading?
3. How proficient do these two groups of students think they are at using these strategies?

4. What are the reading strategies perceived as most important for efficient reading by BUSEL and faculty instructors?
5. How proficient do these two groups of instructors think their students are at using particular reading strategies?
6. What are the reading strategies that Pre-faculty students at BUSEL need to develop as perceived by BUSEL Curriculum Unit members?

In this chapter, the purpose of the study as well as the statement of the problem and the research questions to be addressed are stated. Having identified the focus of the study, in the next chapter, the relevant literature will be reviewed in relation to the focus and the purpose of the study.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Since the early 1970s, theories of learning have shifted away from “the conditioning models” of the behaviorists, to “the information processing models” of the cognitive psychologists. Within the framework of cognitive theory, second language learning is viewed as the acquisition of a complex cognitive skill. With this cognitive view, the conception of second language learning has gained new dimensions assigning the individual learner an active and dominant role in the language acquisition process.

The incorporation of ideas from cognitive psychology to second language acquisition research has led researchers and educationalists to focus on how learners acquire a second language, and specifically, what techniques or strategies assist them to become “effective” or “successful” language learners. The research on second language learning strategies has been guided by the following questions as stated by Wenden (1987, p. 6) :

1. What do L2 learners *do* to learn a second language?
2. How do they *manage* or *self-direct* these efforts?
3. What do they *know* about *which* aspects of their L2 learning process?
4. How can their learning skills be refined and developed?

With the attempts to identify what special techniques or strategies second language learners use, a considerable number of learning strategy classifications and

inventories have been developed. The concern to find out about how second language learners manage and control their own learning process and what they know about this process has led to the distinction between metacognitive strategies that “involve planning and directing learning at a general level”, cognitive strategies that “involve specific conscious ways of tackling learning” and social strategies that “involve interacting with other people” (Cook, p. 78).

Analysis of strategies currently used by learners, and evaluation of their degree of potential for improving learning has caused a growing interest in learner training. In order to be able to train learners to develop the strategies they need to improve their language learning skills, the first step to be taken is to identify their strategy use needs since identification of the learners’ needs in terms of learning strategies is a major requirement in learner-focused syllabus design.

Since the aim of this research study is to identify reading strategy needs of learners, in the following sections of this chapter, first the constituents of a needs assessment study will be described providing definitions of needs and guidelines for the assessment. Then research on learning strategies will be reviewed and the relationship between learning strategies and learner autonomy will be established. In the following section, second language reading research and research on reading strategies will be investigated. Finally, the relationship between strategic reading, metacognition and learner autonomy will be established.

### Needs Assessment

In learner-centered language teaching contexts, being responsive to learners' needs has been regarded as one of the fundamental principles underlying a well-developed course design. Needs analysis has currently been accepted as a major requirement in the development of language programs since it is seen as "a vital prerequisite to the specification of learning objectives" (Brindley, 1990, p. 63).

The concept of needs assessment dates back to the work of the team of experts which the Council of Europe charged in 1971 with investigating the feasibility of a European unit/credit scheme for foreign language learning by adults which was "envisaged ... as learner-centered, needs- and motivation-based" (Richterich & Chancerel, 1987, p. vii). Since then, the notion of needs analysis has been extended and enriched. It has now moved from a simple prediction of future language use needs to "the personal and social development of the individual, as well as the development of study skills and of self-reliance as a learner" (p. vii).

In their approach to needs analysis, Richterich and Chancerel (1987) put the learner at the center of the educational system maintaining that "everything starts from him and ... goes back to him" (p. 5). This central position, however, as they point out, does not ensure that the learner will not be subject to pressures and influences by the teaching establishment since it is not the learner but the system who has put him or her there. Centering language learning on the learner, then, requires "a compromise between the resources, objectives, methods of assessment and curricula thought of by the learner" and that of the teaching establishment (p. 5). With this compromise, course planning can



be based on the needs of the learner as well as the institution providing the educational framework. Since the varying needs, expectations and motivations of learners do not remain constant, continuous monitoring is required in order to be responsive to the changes in learner needs throughout the learning process in a language program.

Stating that any course in a language learning context should be based on an analysis of learners' needs, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) make the basic distinction between *target needs*--what the learner needs to do in the target situation-- and *learning needs* --what the learner needs to do in order to learn. *Target needs* are defined as necessities, lacks and wants. Necessities as a type of need are determined by target situation demands; that is, "what the learner has to know in order to function effectively in the target situation" (p. 55). The gap between the "target proficiency" and "the existing proficiency" of learners are referred to as "the learner's lacks", and wants are defined as learner perceived or felt needs (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, pp. 56-57).

Lacks as identified by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) are considered as "a starting point", necessities as "the destination" and wants as "what that destination should be" (p. 60). They further identify "the way to get from the starting point to the destination" as the route which is indicated as learning needs (p. 60). Target situation needs analysis may include such information as language items, skills, strategies and subject knowledge. What it cannot do, however, is to state how these language items, skills and strategies used by the learner are learned. Thus, the complex process of needs analysis --as a major requirement in the establishment of a well-developed, learner-centered course design-- should focus on the target situation to obtain information on

“what people do with language” as well as on “how people learn to do what they do with language” (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 63). That is, a learning-centered approach to needs analysis is needed.

As stated by Berwick (1990) the definition of need constitutes the basis of any needs assessment. Although most often it is expressed as a gap or measurable discrepancy between the current and the desired future state, “an operational definition must be constructed anew for each assessment because its elements will change according to the values of the assessor or influential constituents of an educational system” (p. 52). Regardless of the manner in which a needs assessment is conducted, Smith (1989) asserts that all assessments should follow the general guidelines in his work, Needs Assessment Guide, which are

1. A comprehensible plan should be developed to give direction to all needs assessment activities.
2. Information should be collected or generated from as many potential data sources as feasible.
3. The data analysis process should result in a clear identification of high priority student needs.
4. A report should be prepared that accurately describes the needs assessment process (pp. 5-21).

The major activities that should be included in any needs assessment design as stated by Smith (1989) are

1. identifying the sources for data collection;
2. developing procedures for collecting the data;
3. establishing procedures for analyzing the data that has been collected;
4. determining needs assessment priorities; and
5. reporting the results of the assessment.

As stated earlier needs analysis should take the learner as its focus (Richterich & Chancerel, 1987). Then the processes that a learner goes through while learning a language need to be taken into consideration. This can be achieved by analyzing the strategies learners need to develop in order to become successful language learners. These strategies as defined by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) are "the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information" (p. 1). The following section of this chapter will review literature on learning strategy classifications and definitions and describe how they relate to autonomous learning.

#### Research on Learning Strategies and Learner Autonomy

The literature in the field of learning strategies in second language learning emerged with the concern to understand why some language learners were more successful than others. The early efforts to identify learning strategies focused on *the good language learner* (Rubin, 1975; Naiman et al., 1978), and maintained that the strategies applied by learners while learning a second language can be described and identified. These efforts also suggested that by knowing about the strategies successful

learners use to learn a language, procedures could be established to train less successful learners to use these.

Since then, there have been numerous attempts to define and classify learning strategies and useful distinctions have been drawn to explain how these strategies function in second language acquisition. The effectiveness of using learning strategies has also been supported by research, and findings have shown that appropriate use of these strategies “leads to improved proficiency or achievement overall or in specific areas” (Oxford, 1993, p. 178). The learners defined as successful “can rather easily explain the strategies they use and the reasons why they employ them, as documented in diary studies by Lavine and Oxford (1990) and in think-aloud procedures reported by O’Malley and Chamot (1990)” (Oxford, 1993, p. 179). Thinking aloud as a means to observe learning strategies require the learner to let “his or her thoughts flow verbally in a stream-of-consciousness fashion without trying to control, direct, or observe them” (Oxford, 1990, p. 195).

Learning strategies have been classified in many different ways; but the most important distinction was drawn by O’Malley and Chamot (1990). Giving particular significance to the contributions of cognitive psychology, which formulated learning strategies via an “information-processing theoretical model,” O’Malley and Chamot (1990, p. 8) propose three major categories that include metacognitive, cognitive and social/affective strategies. *The metacognitive strategies* identified in the literature on cognitive psychology “involve thinking about learning process, planning for learning, monitoring of comprehension or production while it is taking place, and self-evaluation

after the learning activity has been completed” (p. 8). *Cognitive strategies* that are more directly related to individual learning tasks “operate directly on incoming information manipulating it in ways that enhance learning” (p. 44). The third type identified as *social/affective strategies* involve “either interaction with another person or ideational control over affect” (p. 44). The distinction among these three types of learning strategies is emphasized as they all are considered to be required for effective strategy training (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990).

Insights from research on learning strategies have led to development of activities to train learners to become more efficient at their learning and to guide them towards self-direction. The current literature on strategies and learner training provides the basis for many projects aimed at developing autonomy in language learners.

Learner autonomy is defined by Wenden (1991) as “willingness to take responsibility for one’s learning and confidence in one’s ability as a learner” (p. 59). In order to develop autonomy learners must be provided with appropriate strategies and opportunities to practice using them. They need to be helped to accept responsibility for their own learning since they often do not automatically accept such a responsibility in formal educational contexts (Little, 1995).

It is emphasized that in order for learner autonomy to develop, it is essential for the learners to become aware of the learning processes they are involved in and capable of judging the effectiveness of the strategies they have developed. Learners who have been able to develop effective strategies will be able to continue their learning on their

own once they leave the classroom and once the teacher is not around directing, and providing them with input (Wenden & Rubin, 1987).

Recent research in reading has concentrated on the cognitive processes involved in learning. A large number of studies has been carried out to identify what reading processes consist of and to train learners to develop a variety of reading strategies in order to read better. Reading strategies are defined in the literature as “mental operations involved when readers approach a text effectively and make sense of what they read” (Barnett, 1988, p. 150). There have been two major reasons for the expansion of research in reading: first, a concern to address the needs of different learner groups and second, the desire to improve second language reading instruction.

Before reviewing research on reading strategies it is necessary to look at what reading models are proposed in the literature. In the following section, therefore, after a brief look at reading models identified in the literature, research into reading strategies will be discussed, and the relation between strategic reading, metacognition and learner autonomy will be established.

## Second Language Reading Research

### Reading Models

Reading research has undergone numerous changes, particularly in the last decade, resulting in significant insights for reading instruction. The needs of many different learner groups have been one of the causes of expansion in research on reading

in a second language. Another contribution to this field of research has been “the challenge to explore and understand basic comprehension processes” (Grabe, 1991, p. 376) and their implications for reading instruction in a second language.

Efforts to describe the processes in reading comprehension have resulted in proposals for different reading models. The early work in second language reading presumed a rather passive, *bottom-up* view (Carrell, 1990a, p. 1) :

...that is, it was viewed primarily as a decoding process of reconstructing the author's intended meaning via recognizing the printed letters and words, and building up a meaning for a text from the smallest textual units at the “bottom” (letters and words) to larger and larger units at the “top” (phrases, clauses, intersentential linkages).

For the development of reading proficiency, “decoding sound-symbol relationships” were considered to be the primary steps (p. 2). Although the importance of background knowledge --called “schemata”-- was acknowledged, the focus in early theories of second language reading remained on decoding; that is bottom-up processing.

During the past decade, reading theory both in ESL and EFL has been influenced by psycholinguistics and particularly by the psycholinguistic model of reading proposed by Goodman (1967,1971,1973; cited in Carrell & Eisterhold, 1990). In the psycholinguistic model

the reader reconstructs meaning from written language by using the graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic systems of the language, but he or she merely uses cues from these three levels of language to predict meaning, and most important, confirms those predictions by relating them to his or her past experiences and knowledge of the language (Carrell, 1990a p. 3).

In the literature, although not by Goodman himself, this theory has been characterized as a top-down process which involves interaction of higher-level

processes with lower-level processes. Thus, the reader in this model is viewed as an active participant in the reading process (Carrell, 1990a).

Schema theory research has shown the importance of background knowledge within a psycholinguistic model of reading. Within this framework, the most efficient processing of text is interactive; that is, it involves a combination of top-down and bottom-up processing. The interactive model of reading is significant in reading comprehension since skilled readers are found to constantly shift their mode of processing to accommodate the demands of a particular text as opposed to less skilled readers who “tend to overrely on processes in one direction, producing deleterious effects on comprehension” (Spiro, 1978, 1979; cited in Carrell, 1990b, p. 101).

Taking the schema-theoretic view into consideration, it can be concluded that in order to achieve success in EFL reading classrooms, there needs to be a “balance between the background knowledge presupposed by the texts” learners are required to read and the background knowledge learners possess (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1990, p. 88). One of the goals of reading instruction in EFL classrooms, then, should be to encourage readers to “become more aware that reading is a highly interactive process between themselves and their prior background knowledge, on the one hand, and the text itself, on the other.” (p. 89). In sum, an interactive model of reading assumes that for second language readers, both top-down and bottom-up strategies must be developed jointly since “both contribute directly to the successful comprehension of text” (Eskey & Grabe, 1990, p. 227).



### Research on Reading Strategies

Reading, a cognitive skill, is of foremost importance in contexts where English is taught as a foreign language, especially in English-medium universities where extensive use of academic materials written in English is required. Thus, for the learners in EFL contexts with a need for English for academic purposes, effective use of strategies to improve their reading skills is essential and critical.

In educational research, a considerable number of studies have been conducted on the cognitive processes involved in learning from instruction. Many of these studies show sizable gains in reading comprehension. Research on comprehension strategies has concentrated on describing those strategies which are involved in understanding, and many studies have been carried out in order to find out the differences in the strategies used by “successful” and “unsuccessful” readers.

Based on the practices of “effective” or “successful” readers, a process approach to reading instruction has been encouraged. Applications of this “text-strategic approach”, as termed by Hamp-Lyons (1985; cited in Rusciolelli, 1995), in the classroom involves

- \* creating general expectations about the topic by activating background knowledge,
- \* using titles and illustrations to predict content,
- \* searching for main ideas,
- \* practicing various modes of reading,

- \* guiding lexical guessing,
- \* summarizing,
- \* interpreting, and
- \* integrating/transferring information beyond the text.

Hosenfeld (1992) used think-aloud and introspective/retrospective research techniques in her three studies to identify the strategies used by successful and unsuccessful readers. The data obtained in her first study (1977; cited in Hosenfeld, 1992, p. 223) showed that successful readers (high-scorers) tended to

- \* keep the meaning of the passage in mind,
- \* read in broad phrases,
- \* skip inessential words,
- \* guess from context the meaning of unknown words, and
- \* have a good self-concept as a reader.

When the protocols obtained in this study (Hosenfeld, 1977) and additional protocols were analyzed they revealed that in addition to the strategies mentioned above successful readers tended to

- \* identify the grammatical category of words,
- \* demonstrate sensitivity to a different word order in the foreign language,
- \* examine illustrations,
- \* read the title and make inferences from it,
- \* use orthographic information (e.g. capitalization),

- \* refer to the side gloss,
- \* use the glossary as a last resort,
- \* look up words correctly,
- \* continue if unsuccessful at decoding a word or phrase,
- \* recognize cognates,
- \* use their knowledge of the word,
- \* follow through with a proposed solution to a problem, and
- \* evaluate their guesses.

In Kern's study (1989; cited in Rusciolelli, 1995), the students who received strategy training showed considerable improvements in comprehension and the poorer students were reported to have benefited most from the training. The results of a recent study by Rusciolelli (1995) on reading strategies showed that every strategy selected to be developed by the students was successful to some extent. The data obtained from the study also indicated students' comments as favorable regarding the value of the reading strategy instruction.

As stated by Block (1986), the results of many studies on reading strategies suggest that good readers

- \* are more able to monitor their comprehension than poor readers are,
- \* are more aware of strategies they use than are poor readers,
- \* use strategies more flexibly,
- \* adjust their strategies to the type of text they are reading and to the purpose

for which they are reading,

- \* distinguish between important information and details as they read,
- \* are able to use clues in the text to anticipate information and/or relate new information with information already stated,
- \* are able to notice inconsistencies in a text and employ strategies to make these inconsistencies understandable (pp. 465-466).

An overall look at the research studies carried out to define the characteristics of good readers and to classify these characteristics into reading strategies show that they all share common observations. With the identification and codification of the strategies used by good readers it has become a fundamental tenet of learner training that these strategies can be taught to poor readers to increase their reading efficiency.

### Strategic Reading, Metacognition, and Learner Autonomy

The types of strategies readers use to get at meaning as well as the transfer of reading strategies from a first language to a second language has been one of the focal points in empirical studies in the literature. Research has also been directed at improving the second language readers' use of strategies through specific training.

It has been suggested by researchers that teaching readers how to use strategies should be the prime consideration in a reading classroom, and that learners also need to be taught how to determine their success in their use of strategies (Anderson, 1991, p. 470). It has become evident through research that "strategic reading is not only a matter of knowing what strategy to use, but also that the reader must know how to use a

strategy successfully and orchestrate its use with other strategies; a reader must also be able to apply them strategically” (pp. 468-469).

Strategic reading has been defined in the literature as “the flexible, adaptable, and conscious use of knowledge about reading to remove blockages to meaning” (Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991; cited in Brown, 1992, p. 4). This definition suggests that strategy use is a conscious activity which involves overt actions on the part of the reader. Strategic reading is regarded as fundamental to monitor and improve comprehension and as a prime characteristic of good readers. There are several reasons why strategic reading is considered as essential for better comprehension. First, “strategies allow readers to elaborate, organize and evaluate information derived from text” (Paris, Wasik, & Turner, 1991, p. 609). Second, strategies are controllable by readers and can be used selectively and flexibly. A third reason is that strategic reading reflects metacognition since “readers need to have both the knowledge and disposition to use strategies” (p. 609).

Recent studies, with a focus on metacognition, investigate “metacognitive awareness of reading strategies, and the relationships among perception of strategies, strategy use and reading comprehension” (Carrell, Pharis, & Liberto, 1989, p. 640). Brown (1992) states that “strategic reading operates within the realm of metacognitive awareness, which is defined as the knowledge and the active monitoring of one’s own cognitive processes” (p. 5). It has been suggested by Baker and Brown (1984; cited in Brown 1992) that metacognition consists of

knowledge, the awareness of the strategies needed for successful performance, and self-regulation, the effective use of these strategies. In this context, strategic reading is a metacognitive activity characterized by (1) a recognition of a problem while reading, (2) selection of a strategy to resolve the problem, (3) application of the strategy to the problem, and (4) assessment of the success of the strategy (p. 5).

Brown (1992) states that readers with a metacognitive awareness “reflect on their purposes and objectives of reading, consciously select and use strategies while reading and monitor their performance”, and that these activities require self-regulation which is an important factor in the development of effective and autonomous readers (p. 6). It is evident by research that metacognitive awareness has a facilitating effect on students’ learning as they see themselves “as initiators of their own learning and it helps them to rely more on their own potential as good language learners” (Victori & Lockhart, 1995, p. 225). These students, apparently, develop a more active and autonomous attitude that allows them to take charge of their own learning.

As is pointed out by Victori and Lockhart (1995) “one of the premises of any self-directed program, ...should be that of enhancing students’ metacognition to prepare them for approaching their own learning autonomy.” (p. 223). If learner autonomy, as defined in the literature, is the ability to take responsibility for one’s learning, then learner training should help the learner develop “a self-directed approach whereby he can eventually set his own needs and objectives; choose materials and resources in accordance with his goals; and monitor and evaluate his own progress over time...” (p. 223). Such a learner, apparently, requires support in developing metacognitive strategies together with a range of cognitive strategies to handle reading tasks efficiently

and in a confident manner. Thus, it can be concluded that strategic reading acts in conjunction with metacognition which in turn leads to learner autonomy.

### Conclusion

The idea of learner training interacts with self-directed learning, in which learners take responsibility for their own learning. Strategy training assumes that conscious attention to learning strategies (i.e. metacognitive awareness) is beneficial and that strategies are teachable. Research on learning strategies provides encouragement for strategy training to develop strategic readers.

In order to design and develop a successful strategy training program, it is essential to assess learners' needs for strategy instruction by analyzing the strategies that they are currently using, by evaluating their degree of success and by identifying the strategies learners need to develop to improve their learning. It is essential to consider learner strategy needs in conjunction with the general course objectives of a particular language program so that strategy training can be incorporated into materials and course design.

Recently, it has been widely accepted in educational contexts that it is the learners' strategies and their own ability to use these strategies that accounts for success in foreign languages and that learners must be encouraged to develop independence both inside and outside the classroom. This can be achieved through learner training which will equip learners with strategies to guide, control and assess their own learning.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

This study investigated the reading strategies EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners at Bilkent University School of English Language (BUSEL) need to develop to become effective readers and thus carry out their future academic studies successfully in their respective faculties. Reading strategy needs of learners were identified through a needs analysis study which involved administration of questionnaires to the learners themselves as well as their instructors, and administration of a questionnaire and a structured interview to Curriculum Unit members.

The main question that guided this research was: What are the reading strategies that Pre-faculty students at BUSEL need to develop as perceived by themselves, BUSEL instructors, Freshman students, faculty instructors, and BUSEL Curriculum Unit members in order to become autonomous readers and be able to carry out their future studies in their academic fields?

In the following sections of this chapter the subjects, materials, procedures and data analysis methods will be discussed in detail.



### Subjects

This study was conducted at Bilkent University School of English Language (BUSEL). Since English is the medium of instruction at Bilkent University, BUSEL --the preparatory program-- aims to equip students with basic language and study skills they need in order to be able to carry out their future academic studies. At the beginning of each academic year newly arriving students at the university are required to take the Certificate of Proficiency in English Exam (COPE) prepared by the Testing Unit at BUSEL. Students who perform as required on this exam are allowed to go directly into their chosen faculties and schools. Those who do not meet the required standards are placed in one of the four levels at BUSEL as determined by the grades they receive on the exam.

The BUSEL program consists of four levels, Foundation, Intermediate, Upper-intermediate and Pre-faculty. BUSEL students are evaluated continuously throughout the program, and they proceed from one level to another if they meet the required standards as determined by the achievement tests they take at the end of each course. Those students who successfully complete the Pre-faculty level sit for the COPE and, if they perform as required, they enter their freshman year.

In order for an effective assessment of students' needs to be carried out, both the present situation --BUSEL-- and the target situation --freshman year-- are required to be addressed. Thus, the subjects of this study were selected from both the current and the target population.

Two groups of student subjects were randomly selected from Pre-faculty level at BUSEL and from freshman year students. The number of students for the study constituted about 10% of the whole population for each group. Thus, 57 freshman year students --who studied English at BUSEL before they entered their faculties--, and 43 BUSEL Pre-faculty students were included in the study. As for the instructor subjects at BUSEL, 18 instructors who teach the Pre-faculty level students were involved in the study. The number of instructors at the faculties were determined by contacts with each faculty considered relevant for the study. These faculties were Faculty of Art Design and Architecture, Faculty of Business Administration, Faculty of Economics and Administrative and Social Sciences, Faculty of Humanities and Letters, Faculty of Science, and Faculty of Engineering. A total of 16 faculty instructors from these faculties participated in the study. As to the third group of subjects, all BUSEL Curriculum Unit members (CUMs) --consisting of four coordinators and the Unit's head--were involved in the study.

### Materials

Reading strategy needs of learners in this study were assessed by means of questionnaires that were administered to all the groups involved in the study. Two members of the BUSEL Curriculum Unit were interviewed in order to determine their perceptions of reading strategy use needs of students and learning strategy training at BUSEL. The questionnaire for the learner groups --BUSEL Pre-faculty students and Freshman students-- consisted of two sections. The first section was designed to obtain

background information about the students (see Appendix A, Section 1), and the second to obtain data on perceived reading strategy needs of students (see Appendix A, Section 2). The questionnaire items to elicit students' reading strategy use needs as perceived by themselves (Section 2) were developed based on the following questionnaires used in various studies on reading strategies:

- \* Barnett (1988), Questionnaire to Elicit Perceived Strategy Use,
- \* Carrell (1989), Metacognitive Questionnaire,
- \* Miholic (1994), Metacognitive Reading Awareness Inventory,
- \* Rusciollelli, (1995), Reading Strategies Survey, and
- \* Oxford (1989, in Oxford, 1990), Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), version 7.0 (ESL/EFL).

The items from these questionnaires were examined, and the ones that were appropriate to both the design and the purpose of this study were selected and modified. Each item was validated against the strategies used by good second language readers as identified in the literature. Thus, each item included in Section 2 of the questionnaire focused on one strategy used by good second language readers. In the first part of this section, students were asked to respond on a 5-point Likert-type scale indicating "how appropriate for them each statement is" (see Appendix A, Section 2, Part 1). In the second part, students were asked "how important they think each strategy is for efficient reading" and "how proficient they think they are at using it" (see Appendix A, Section 2, Part 2). The items in this part were developed based on the questionnaires listed above, and in addition, they were checked against "some of the strategies that good second

language readers are likely to use to a lesser or greater extent” as identified in the literature (Cohen, 1990, pp. 10-11).

The questionnaire administered to both BUSEL and faculty instructors consisted of two parts (see Appendix B). The first part was designed to obtain background information about the respondents. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of the same 10 items as in Section 2, Part 2 of the student questionnaire. This part required the instructors to respond on a 5-point scale indicating “how proficient they think students are at using each strategy” and “how important they think these strategies are for efficient reading.”

The BUSEL CUMs, as the third group of subjects, were administered a questionnaire consisting of the same 10 items described above (see Appendix C). Two of the CUMs --the Curriculum Unit head and the CUM who is responsible for the Pre-faculty level syllabus design-- were administered a semi-structured interview consisting of open-ended questions to obtain further information regarding the incorporation of reading strategy training into the objectives of the BUSEL syllabus and regarding their perceptions of the reading strategy needs of students (see Appendix D).

### Procedure

In order to conduct this study at BUSEL, first the management was informed of the study to be carried out, and after obtaining management approval, heads of Teaching Units for the Pre-faculty level were consulted and instructor subjects selected (18 instructors). As for the learner subjects, individual instructors at the Pre-faculty level

were contacted and learner subjects identified (43 students). To identify the subjects at freshman year, the Freshman Unit head was contacted and Freshman students to be involved in the study determined (57 students). The contacts for each faculty considered as relevant for the study determined the number of faculty instructors (16 instructors). As for the Curriculum Unit, each member --a total of 5-- was contacted individually for the administration of both the questionnaire and the interview.

All the questionnaires were piloted and revised before they were administered to the relevant groups for the study. The piloting was done with a number of subjects representative of each group via personal contacts by the researcher. According to the feedback received from students the wording of some of the items in the student questionnaire were simplified. No items were added to the questionnaire since no response was received to the open ended item which asked students to specify any strategy which is not included in the questionnaire by the researcher. As for the feedback received from the instructors and the CUMs, one item (item 6) was added to the questionnaire after piloting, and some items were omitted since they were considered as strategies which cannot be directly observed by these groups. That is, the questionnaire administered to the instructors and the CUMs consisted of items which these groups considered they could respond to based on their experiences and observations of the students as they perform in the classrooms. Therefore, the items in the questionnaire administered to student subjects were different from those administered to instructor subjects and CUMs.

### Data Analysis

Both quantitative and descriptive data were obtained by analysis of the questionnaire items and the interviews. To identify the reading strategy use needs of students, mean scores for the student ratings to the items in Part 1 and 2 of the student reading strategies questionnaire were computed. As for the questionnaires administered to instructor groups and CUMs, for the same items as the student reading questionnaire Part 2, means were computed for the ratings to each item. The data obtained was analyzed to find out whether there is agreement between and across the groups of subjects in their responses to the items regarding strategy importance and strategy proficiency. These analyses yielded the perceived reading strategy needs of students.

In the following chapter the data obtained from the questionnaires administered to all groups of subjects involved in the study, and from the interviews administered to CUMs will be analyzed in order to identify what particular reading strategies students need to develop in order to become efficient readers.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### Overview of the Study

This study was designed to identify the reading strategies that BUSEL (Bilkent University School of English Language) Pre-Faculty students need to develop in order to become efficient readers, and thus carry out their studies successfully in their respective academic fields. The main question addressed in this study was : What are the reading strategies that BUSEL Pre-faculty students need to develop as perceived by themselves, BUSEL instructors, Freshman students, faculty instructors, and BUSEL Curriculum Unit members in order to become efficient readers?

The data were collected through questionnaires administered to all the groups identified and interviews administered to two of the Curriculum Unit members (CUMs). Questionnaires were administered to a total of 43 BUSEL students, 57 Freshman students, 18 BUSEL Pre-faculty instructors, 16 faculty instructors, and 5 CUMs.

The questionnaires administered to the two groups of student subjects asked these subjects how frequently they currently use each strategy type, how important each strategy is for them to become better readers, and how proficient they think they are at using each strategy. The questionnaires administered to instructors and CUMs identified their perceptions as to the importance of each strategy for efficient reading and the current level of proficiency of students in using these strategies.

In the following sections of this chapter, first, student responses to the reading strategies questionnaire will be discussed and interpreted, and then the instructors' and CUMs' responses to the questionnaire items regarding the degree of importance given to each strategy, and level of proficiency of students using each strategy as perceived by instructors and Curriculum Unit members will be analyzed.

## Results of the Study

### Student Reading Strategies Questionnaire Part 1

As described in the previous chapter, Part 1 of the Student Reading Strategies Questionnaire consisted of 14 items and was designed to answer the first research question regarding the identification of the frequency of use of each reading strategy as stated in the questionnaire items. To analyze the data obtained from this part of the questionnaire, mean scores and standard deviations for each item in the questionnaire were computed as is presented in Table 1. While reporting the data, out of the possible 5.00, the mean rating 3.50 and above is considered as "high frequency of use", 2.50-3.50 "average frequency of use", and any mean rating below 2.50 is considered as "low frequency of use" of the strategy.



Table 1

Students' Responses to Reading Strategies Questionnaire Part 1

STRATEGY TYPE	BUSEL STUDENTS	FRESHMAN STUDENTS
	n: 43	n: 57
	FREQUENCY OF USE M (SD)	FREQUENCY OF USE M (SD)
1. Skimming and rereading	3.30 (1.30)	3.75 (1.07)
2. Using contextual clues to guess meaning	3.90 (1.04)	3.77 (0.77)
3. Note taking/summarizing	2.88 (1.36)	3.00 (1.21)
4. Reading without looking up every unfamiliar word	2.48 (1.29)	3.26 (0.99)
5. Using title/subheadings/ illustrations to predict content	3.67 (1.20)	3.50 (1.12)
6. Using linguistic clues to guess meaning	2.39 (1.04)	2.47 (1.19)
7. Skipping unknown words	3.16 (1.23)	3.28 (0.92)
8. Distinguishing between main ideas and supporting details	3.60 (1.07)	3.54 (0.82)
9. Relating text to background knowledge	3.60 (0.92)	3.66 (0.98)
10. Monitoring comprehension	3.88 (0.90)	3.91 (0.73)
11. Anticipating text development	3.67 (0.91)	3.77 (0.86)
12. Clarifying purpose	3.74 (1.15)	3.85 (1.04)
13. Adjusting reading pace	3.83 (1.13)	3.89 (0.83)
14. Using knowledge of text organization	2.41 (1.29)	2.45 (1.18)

Note. 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Usually, 5 =Always.

The mean ratings presented in Table 1 reveal that more than half the number of strategies are rated as high in their frequency of use by both BUSEL students (BSs) and Freshman students (FSs). Since the aim of this study is to identify the strategies that students need to develop, only the strategies which received an average or low mean rating in terms of frequency of use by both groups will be discussed.

As is shown in Table 1, the mean ratings for the strategy *note-taking and summarizing* (item 3) show that the frequency of use of this strategy by both groups of

students is average (BSs  $\underline{M}$  = 2.88, FSs  $\underline{M}$  = 3.00). As for item 4 which is *reading without referring to dictionary for every unfamiliar word*, describing one action to deal with unknown vocabulary items, the mean ratings show a low use of this strategy by BSs ( $\underline{M}$  = 2.48) and an average use by FSs ( $\underline{M}$  = 3.26). As an alternative way to deal with unknown vocabulary, the mean ratings indicate a low *use of linguistic clues to guess meaning* (item 6) by both groups (BSs  $\underline{M}$  = 2.39, FSs  $\underline{M}$  = 2.47). The mean ratings for the strategy *skipping unknown words* (item 7) indicate an average use of this strategy by both BSs ( $\underline{M}$  = 3.16) and FSs ( $\underline{M}$  = 3.28). Overall, these results indicate that students need training to develop their word inferring and guessing strategies, and thus, to avoid the overuse of the dictionary.

As for the last item of the questionnaire, which dealt with *using knowledge of text organization*, the mean ratings indicate that neither BSs nor FSs pay much attention to patterns that signal how the text is organized since use of this strategy is rated as low by both groups (BSs  $\underline{M}$  = 2.41, FSs  $\underline{M}$  = 2.45).

Overall, the results indicate that the strategies that both BSs and FSs need to develop most are the ones dealing with unknown vocabulary items. Since the mean ratings for using knowledge of text organization is quite low, another series of strategies that students need to develop are the ones for understanding coherence in text, that is, use of clues in the text that signal how the text is organized.

Having identified the strategies that are used least frequently by students, in the following section of this chapter the responses to the Student Reading Questionnaire Part 2 will be analyzed to identify the degree of importance given to particular reading

strategies by the students and their proficiency at using these strategies as perceived by themselves.

### Student Reading Strategies Questionnaire Part 2

As explained in the previous chapter, Part 2 of the Student Reading Strategies Questionnaire comprised 10 items, each stating a reading strategy used by good second language readers as identified in the literature. Students were required to respond to each item on a 5-point scale indicating degree of importance they give to each strategy type and also their proficiency at using these strategies. Table 2 presents the mean scores and standard deviations computed for each strategy type according to the responses of both the BSs and FSs. The results in this section will be reported with a focus on the items that received lower mean ratings for proficiency when compared to mean ratings for importance.

Table 2

Students' Responses to Reading Strategies Questionnaire Part 2

STRATEGY TYPE	BUSEL STUDENTS		FRESHMAN STUDENTS	
	n: 43		n: 57	
	IMPORTANCE M (SD)	PROFICIENCY M (SD)	IMPORTANCE M (SD)	PROFICIENCY M (SD)
1. Understanding purpose	4.02 (1.12)	3.95 (0.78)	4.00 (1.01)	3.87 (0.88)
2. Understanding organization	3.65 (1.23)	2.60 (1.07)	3.05 (1.20)	3.66 (1.04)
3. Distinguishing between important and trivial points	3.86 (0.80)	2.67 (1.04)	3.85 (1.05)	2.94 (1.10)
4. Predicting content by using titles, subheadings and illustrations	3.81 (1.25)	3.70 (1.17)	3.54 (1.10)	3.73 (1.04)
5. Relating prior knowledge to text content	3.67 (1.10)	3.56 (1.13)	3.70 (1.01)	3.78 (0.93)
6. Evaluating content	3.88 (0.82)	2.44 (0.82)	3.84 (1.29)	2.49 (0.94)
7. Relying on contextual and linguistic clues to guess meaning	4.44 (0.87)	2.87 (1.04)	4.07 (0.99)	3.14 (0.95)
8. Note-taking/ summarizing	3.79 (0.86)	2.44 (1.22)	2.94 (1.10)	2.33 (0.89)
9. Interpreting grammatical markers	3.41 (0.98)	2.37 (0.92)	3.01 (1.06)	2.63 (1.01)
10. Reading without referring to the dictionary	3.88 (0.85)	2.46 (0.799)	4.01 (1.00)	2.47 (0.90)

Note. 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = average, 4 = high, 5 = very high.

As is shown in Table 2, the highest importance is given for item 7 which deals with *vocabulary guessing by relying on both contextual and linguistic clues* by both groups of students (BSs  $\bar{M} = 4.44$ , FSs  $\bar{M} = 4.07$ ). However, the mean ratings for proficiency at using this strategy is average in both groups, and BSs' proficiency mean rating ( $\bar{M} = 2.87$ ) for this item is lower than that of the FSs' ( $\bar{M} = 3.14$ ). Another strategy given high importance by both groups is *reading the material without referring*

*to the dictionary for each unknown vocabulary item* (item 10). Although the importance given to this item is high (BSs  $\underline{M} = 3.88$ , FSs  $\underline{M} = 4.01$ ), the mean rating of proficiency for the same item is quite low in both groups (BSs  $\underline{M} = 2.46$ , FSs  $\underline{M} = 2.47$ ). These results indicate that both groups of students need to develop their vocabulary inferring and guessing strategies.

Another item (item 6) rated as high in importance by both groups is *evaluation of the content of the material* (BSs  $\underline{M} = 3.88$ , FSs  $\underline{M} = 3.84$ ). Although the importance given to this item is high, the proficiency rating given by both groups is among the lowest ones, and is below the average (BSs  $\underline{M} = 2.44$ , FSs  $\underline{M} = 2.49$ ). The mean ratings of proficiency for this item indicate that both groups of students have difficulty in evaluating the information presented in the reading material.

Both BSs and FSs gave a high importance rating to item 3 which is *distinguishing important points from trivial points* (BSs  $\underline{M} = 3.86$ , FSs  $\underline{M} = 3.85$ ). The proficiency mean rating of this item, however, is lower and average by both BSs ( $\underline{M} = 2.67$ ), and FSs ( $\underline{M} = 2.94$ ).

As for the item *understanding the organization of the reading material* (item 2), mean ratings show that it is given high importance by BSs ( $\underline{M} = 3.65$ ) and average importance by FSs ( $\underline{M} = 3.05$ ). The proficiency rating for this item by BSs is average ( $\underline{M} = 2.60$ ), and it is high by FSs ( $\underline{M} = 3.66$ ). Another item related to the organization of the reading material is *interpreting grammatical markers indicating the logical organization of the text* (item 9). The importance given to this strategy by both groups is average (BSs  $\underline{M} = 3.41$ , FSs  $\underline{M} = 3.01$ ), yet the proficiency of BSs at using this strategy

is low ( $\underline{M} = 2.37$ ), and of FSs is average ( $\underline{M} = 2.63$ ). These results indicate that both groups of students have difficulty in understanding the organization of the reading material as well as interpreting grammatical markers that indicate text organization, two strategies they need to develop.

Another item *making written notes and/or summaries of the material read* (item 8) is rated as high in importance by BSs ( $\underline{M} = 3.79$ ) and average by FSs ( $\underline{M} = 2.94$ ). Mean ratings of proficiency for this item, however, show that both groups perceive their proficiency at using this strategy as quite low (BSs  $\underline{M} = 2.44$ , FSs  $\underline{M} = 2.33$ ). As the results indicate this strategy is also among the ones students are least proficient at using, and need to develop most.

### Instructors' Questionnaire Responses

As in Part 2 of the student questionnaire, instructors were required to respond to the 10 items in the questionnaire on a 5-point scale indicating the degree of importance they give to each strategy type and students' perceived proficiency at using these strategies. Table 3 presents the mean ratings to each item given by both BUSEL (BIs) and faculty instructors (FIs).

Table 3

Instructors' Responses to the Questionnaire

STRATEGY TYPE	BUSEL INSTRUCTORS		FACULTY INSTRUCTORS	
	n: 18		n: 16	
	IMPORTANCE M (SD)	PROFICIENCY M (SD)	IMPORTANCE M (SD)	PROFICIENCY M (SD)
1. Understanding purpose	4.22 (1.06)	3.00 (1.02)	4.43 (0.89)	3.12 (0.71)
2. Understanding organization	4.05 (0.87)	2.88 (0.96)	3.87 (0.71)	2.62 (0.88)
3. Distinguishing between important and trivial points	4.22 (0.87)	2.88 (0.90)	4.31 (0.79)	2.81 (0.91)
4. Predicting content by using titles, subheadings and illustrations	4.00 (1.02)	3.16 (1.04)	4.06 (0.57)	3.00 (0.96)
5. Relating prior knowledge to text content	4.00 (0.97)	3.05 (0.72)	4.43 (0.62)	3.50 (0.73)
6. Evaluating content	4.33 (0.76)	2.61 (0.84)	3.75 (0.93)	2.37 (1.08)
7. Relying on contextual and linguistic clues to guess meaning	4.33 (0.90)	2.77 (0.87)	3.87 (0.71)	2.75 (1.06)
8. Note-taking/ summarizing	3.33 (1.02)	2.38 (0.77)	4.18 (0.83)	2.81 (1.32)
9. Interpreting grammatical markers	4.05 (0.93)	2.72 (0.75)	3.43 (0.81)	2.37 (0.88)
10. Reading without referring to the dictionary	3.77 (1.11)	2.44 (0.61)	3.25 (0.93)	2.12 (0.95)

Note. 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = average, 4 = high, 5 = very high.

As is presented in Table 3, overall, the mean ratings show that the importance given to each strategy type by both groups of instructors is quite high, yet, the mean ratings regarding students' proficiency at using these strategies are either average or below the average. Except for the strategy *making written notes and/or summaries of the material read* (item 8) for which the importance mean rating is average ( $\bar{M} = 3.33$ ), all the other items are rated as high by BIs. As for the importance ratings by FIs, mean

ratings show that all items are given high importance except for items 9 and 10. That is the lowest importance rating by FIs is given to the strategies *interpreting grammatical markers indicating the logical organization of the text* ( $\underline{M} = 3.43$ ) and *reading without referring to the dictionary for each unfamiliar vocabulary item* ( $\underline{M} = 3.25$ ).

As for the proficiency mean ratings, neither group rated students' proficiency at using these strategies as high. As perceived by BIs, the strategies BSs are least proficient at using are the those regarding *note-taking/summarizing* (item 8;  $\underline{M} = 2.38$ ), and *reading without referring to the dictionary for each unfamiliar word* (item 10;  $\underline{M} = 2.44$ ).

With regard to the strategies FSs are least proficient at using as perceived by FIs, they include items 6, 9 and 10 for which the mean ratings are below the average. The proficiency mean rating for the item concerning *evaluating content of the material read* (item 6) is rather low ( $\underline{M} = 2.37$ ). Another strategy rated as low by FIs is *interpreting grammatical markers indicating the logical organization of the text* (item 9;  $\underline{M} = 2.37$ ). *Reading without referring to the dictionary for each unfamiliar item* (item 10) is the strategy which is given the lowest proficiency rating ( $\underline{M} = 2.12$ ) by FIs. The proficiency mean ratings for all the other items by both the BIs and the FIs are average. Overall analysis of responses by both groups of instructors show that the proficiency of students at using the 10 strategies included in the questionnaire is lower as perceived by instructors than as perceived by students themselves (see the previous section for student responses).



### Curriculum Unit Members' Questionnaire Responses

In this section Curriculum Unit members' (CUMs) responses to the questionnaire consisting of the same 10 items as the students' and instructors' questionnaire will be discussed. In Table 4, the mean ratings for the importance given to each strategy, and the proficiency of students at using these strategies as perceived by the CUMs are presented.

Table 4

### Curriculum Unit Members' Responses to the Questionnaire

STRATEGY TYPE	CURRICULUM MEMBERS n: 5	
	IMPORTANCE M (SD)	PROFICIENCY M (SD)
1. Understanding purpose	4.40 (0.54)	2.20 (1.30)
2. Understanding organization	3.80 (1.30)	3.00 (0.70)
3. Distinguishing between important and trivial points	4.00 (1.73)	2.20 (1.09)
4. Predicting content by using titles, subheadings and illustrations	3.60 (1.51)	2.40 (1.14)
5. Relating prior knowledge to text content	4.00 (1.22)	2.00 (1.00)
6. Evaluating content	4.60 (0.54)	2.20 (0.83)
7. Relying on contextual and linguistic clues to guess meaning	4.40 (0.89)	2.00 (0.70)
8. Note-taking/summarizing	3.80 (1.09)	1.80 (0.83)
9. Interpreting grammatical markers	4.00 (1.73)	2.20 (1.30)
10. Reading without referring to the dictionary	3.40 (1.51)	2.40 (0.89)

Note. 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = average, 4 = high, 5 = very high.

As is presented in Table 4, all items are rated as high in importance except for item 10, *reading without referring to the dictionary for each unfamiliar item*, for which the importance mean rating is average ( $M = 3.40$ ). With regard to student proficiency

ratings by CUMs, item 2, *understanding organization of the reading material*, is rated as average ( $M = 3.00$ ), and all the other items in the questionnaire are rated as low.

Compared to the results of the student and instructor questionnaires (see Table 2 and 3), CUMs' ratings regarding their perceptions of the students' proficiency at using the strategies included in the questionnaire are the lowest. The proficiency mean ratings as given by CUMs indicate that according to them, students need to develop all of the strategies included in the questionnaire.

#### Findings from Interviews with Curriculum Unit Members

As mentioned in the previous chapter, two CUMs, one being the head and another the CUM responsible for designing the syllabus for the Pre-faculty level students, were administered a semi-structured interview (see Appendix D for transcription). These CUMs were interviewed to obtain data regarding their perceptions of students' reading strategy needs and additional data on how student strategy needs are identified, and to what extent and how strategy training takes place at BUSEL.

The CUMs' responses to the questions asked in the interview revealed that the objectives included in the current syllabus are based on the student needs analysis (SNA) carried out throughout the university in 1993. However, it was revealed that, currently, another needs analysis is being carried out with the help of various English language support units in the faculties. It was pointed out that this needs analysis is being carried out on an informal basis through class visits in faculties and informal talks with the lecturers and students themselves. Nevertheless, this needs analysis addresses overall

student needs and --as in the case of the SNA 1993-- does not specifically focus on the reading strategy needs of students.

When asked about the learner strategy training carried out at BUSEL, it was discovered that this year, the 1996-1997 academic year, some class hours are specifically devoted to learner training, and that a variety of strategies are taught in these hours including reading strategies. It was maintained by the CUMs that the strategies identified for instruction are supported by materials prepared for this purpose. As to what specific strategies students are encouraged to develop no specific strategies were mentioned.

Regarding responses to the researcher's questions about whether sufficient instruction is devoted to strategy training and what actually happens in the classrooms, the CUMs' responses revealed that it is difficult to know how these strategies are taught in the classrooms. The Curriculum Unit head suggested that the Unit, "at some point, should be involved in observing what's going on in the classrooms to see how the materials are used" since "if the teacher is not fully aware of the aim of the material", and conduct instruction "with a different focus" then the particular strategy focused on in the material will not be covered.

It was agreed by both CUMs that although the materials lend themselves to learner training, teachers --as well as students-- need training to help students develop the strategies focused on in these materials.

As for the reading strategies the CUMs regard as most crucial for the students to develop these include

- identifying main ideas from texts,
- note-taking,
- following text coherence, which requires an understanding of how ideas relate to each other,
- reading critically/evaluating the content of the material which involves distinguishing fact from opinion and making inferences, and
- understanding the organization of the text.

The above listed strategies show a total agreement with the questionnaire results of the CUMs as well as those of students' and instructors' except for *identifying main ideas*, which was worded differently in the questionnaire (i.e. distinguishing important points from trivial points) and which received either an average or a high rating by both student and instructor groups regarding proficiency of use. As for the other strategies, they correspond with the perceptions of both student and instructor subjects' in terms of needs since these strategies are also among the ones for which students are perceived as least proficient in using and therefore need to develop most.

In this chapter the data from questionnaires administered to all groups of subjects and interviews administered to CUMs are analyzed in accordance with the research questions developed in this study. In the following chapter, results of the study will be summarized and implications of the findings will be discussed.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

#### Introduction

The main concern of this study was to identify the reading strategies that Pre-faculty students at BUSEL need to develop in order to become more efficient readers, and thus to carry out their studies at the respective faculties of the university. Reading strategy needs of Pre-faculty students were assessed as perceived by themselves, their instructors, Freshman students, faculty instructors and Curriculum Unit members (CUMs). The data were collected through questionnaires administered to all the groups of subjects, and interviews were administered to two CUMs to obtain additional data on the strategy needs of students, identification of these needs and current strategy training at BUSEL.

In the following sections of this chapter, first, the findings of the study will be summarized and discussed in relation to the research questions developed before the implementation of the study. Then, in the light of the procedures followed to collect the data in this study and the findings obtained as a result of the analyses of these data, the limitations of the study will be examined. Finally, implications for further research as well as pedagogical and institutional implications will be discussed.

## Summary of Findings and Discussion

### Data from Students

The findings with regard to frequency of use of particular strategies revealed that the strategies that received the lowest ratings by both BUSEL and Freshman students include

- reading without looking up every unfamiliar word in the dictionary,
- using linguistic clues to guess meaning,
- skipping unknown words,
- using knowledge of text organization,
- making written notes/summaries of the material read,

The same set of strategies received the lowest proficiency ratings by both groups of students except for *skipping unknown words* which was not included in the proficiency section of the questionnaire. As for the importance given to these strategies, they were rated either as high or average in importance by both groups. In addition to the above listed strategies, *evaluating the content of the reading material* is among the strategies that both groups of students perceive themselves as least proficient at using. The proficiency of use of the strategy *interpreting grammatical markers indicating the logical organization of the text* received the lowest rating by BSs, and an average rating by FSs.

This being the case, these strategies can be considered as the ones that students need to develop most in order to become more efficient readers. A cogent reason why students should develop these strategies is because they are used by good second language readers as identified in the literature and are considered as essential for better comprehension and retention of the information presented in reading materials.

*Knowledge of vocabulary* is recognized as a “critical feature of reading ability”, and it is argued that fluent readers need a large recognition of vocabulary (Grabe, 1991, p. 380). In order to read without looking up “every” unfamiliar word in the dictionary students need to develop their word recognition strategies among which is making use of linguistic clues to make guesses at word meaning. It is essential for readers to use strategies to guess meaning before they refer to the dictionary since it is argued that overuse of the dictionary distracts the reader away from the text (Cohen, 1990).

As for the *knowledge of text organization* of a particular text and of textual signals, it is argued that these help the reader identify important information as well as relationships between ideas in the text (Shih, 1992). As stated by Cohen (1990), a wise reader looks for markers of cohesion to aid the reading process and not paying attention to these markers may result in incoherent interpretations of the information presented in the text. Students, therefore, need to be taught how to make use of such useful cues for better comprehension.

*Making written notes and summaries* of the reading material are considered as aids for retention of what is read (Cohen, 1990) and are regarded as useful strategies for organizing and condensing information to be remembered. In an academic context where

students frequently need to organize information for test preparation, or ideas for an oral presentation or written assignment, it is clear that note-taking and summarizing are among the strategies that students need to develop most. For the same reasons students need also to evaluate the information presented in a text. *Text evaluation strategies* are regarded as critical components of the reading ability. As Grabe (1991) states, fluent readers take a position with respect to the author's intentions and decide whether or not the information is useful, and draw inferences by predicting and interpreting them in order to achieve a full understanding of what they read.

#### Data from Instructors

Analysis of the data from questionnaires with regard to students' proficiency at using particular strategies as perceived by both BIs and FIs, revealed that the following strategies received the lowest proficiency ratings (i.e. mean ratings between 2.12 and 2.72):

- reading without looking up every unfamiliar word in the dictionary,
- making written notes/summaries of the material read,
- evaluating the information presented in the text, and
- interpreting grammatical markers indicating the logical organization of the text.

These results highly agree with those of the students', since as discussed in the previous section, the same four strategies are among those that students need to develop most as perceived by themselves.



### Data from Curriculum Unit Members

As perceived by Curriculum Unit members (CUMs), BUSEL students need to develop all the strategies included in the questionnaire since the mean ratings for all the items regarding proficiency of use are much lower than those of students' and instructors' (between 1.80 and 2.40) except for *understanding organization of the reading material* which received an average rating. However, the strategy that received the lowest rating by CUMs and that students need to develop most is *note-taking and summarizing*. Thus, this result agrees with that of students' and instructors' regarding the same strategy.

Analysis of the interviews with two CUMs revealed that the strategies they consider as crucial for students to develop agree to a great extent with those revealed by the questionnaire results. These include *identifying main ideas from texts, note-taking, following text coherence and organization* and *critical reading*.

An overall look at the findings from both the questionnaires and the interviews shows an agreement both between and across the groups as to the strategies that students need to develop most. In sum, the results indicate that students need help to develop strategies to deal with unknown vocabulary, to understand text organization and make use of textual signals, to make summaries of and notes of the information presented in a text, and to evaluate the content of the reading material. Since this study addressed both the present --BUSEL-- and the target situation --Freshman-- the set of strategies identified are those both BUSEL and Freshman students need. Therefore, these strategies should be given priority in learner training program at BUSEL so as to help

students to become efficient readers and thus to carry out their studies in various faculties of the university.

Having summarized and discussed findings from questionnaires and the interviews, in the following sections of this chapter, first the limitations of the study will be examined, and then future research implications as well as pedagogical, and specifically, institutional implications will be discussed.

### Limitations of the Study

One major limitation of this study is that the results regarding the reading strategy needs of EFL learners are limited to the perceptions of the particular subjects involved in the study and the context where the study is conducted. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized to populations in other EFL contexts. However, its findings and design can serve as a starting point and provide guidance for future researchers when designing a needs assessment study with a similar focus.

Another limitation of the study is related to the research design with regard to the materials used to collect the data. One problem encountered was that the questionnaire items designed to identify the frequency of use of each strategy were not exactly the same set of items developed to assess the importance given to each strategy type and perceived proficiency of use of these strategies by the students. This limitation made it difficult to assess the relationship between the frequency and proficiency of use of particular strategies by students. Related to the data collection instruments, one further limitation is that the only instrument used to collect data from student and instructor groups was

questionnaires. Further researchers might, therefore, consider using different methodological procedures such as interviews, or classroom observations as well as group discussions conducted in the classrooms to increase the reliability of the research findings.

One final limitation is that the reading strategy needs assessed in this study are limited to the questionnaire items developed, therefore, further research might focus on another set of strategies to assess; and instead of the strategies predetermined by the researcher the subjects might be asked to determine the strategies that they feel they need to develop. Hence, the strategies to be included in the questionnaire items would not be limited to ones predetermined by the researcher.

### Implications for Further Research

An area of future research that should be considered is why certain strategies that have proved to be efficient for better comprehension and retention of the reading material are used more frequently, while others are used less. The way that strategies are taught may influence the frequency of use of effective reading strategies as well as proficiency of students at using these strategies.

Although at BUSEL the development of the particular strategies focused on in this study are among the objectives of the syllabus, the findings revealed that students are not perceived as proficient at using these strategies despite the fact that they are --to an extent-- aware of the importance of these strategies as indicated by the results. This consideration raises the question of *how effectively they are taught*. Future research

therefore, could examine how strategies are taught in the classroom. Students' and instructors' perceptions as to the effectiveness of strategy instruction and materials used for this purpose could also be examined. Additional research on these aspects would be of great interest and value in understanding the role of instruction in the development of particular strategies.

Instead of assessing students' *perceived* needs by means of questionnaires, future research could examine what specific strategies students actually employ as they are engaged in a given reading task. Verbal reports or think-aloud protocols can be implemented as a method to identify the type and variety of strategies students use. Thus, whether students employ effective strategies to aid their comprehension could be investigated. Identification of effective and ineffective strategies used by the students and raising their awareness of these strategies would be of great value for the success of classroom instruction to increase students' reading proficiency.

### Pedagogical and Institutional Implications

This study aimed at identifying students' perceived reading strategy needs so that an effective reading strategy training program which focuses on the strategies learners need to develop most in order to become more efficient readers can be designed and implemented. Having identified the particular reading strategy needs of students, the next step is to interpret these into curriculum guidelines and effective teaching practices. Therefore, the strategies identified as those students need to develop most can be given higher priority when designing the new syllabus, and consistent practice encouraged by

the materials designed to be used for reading instruction. These strategies can also be focused on by the Textbook Committee when designing the new coursebook for the Pre-faculty level students at BUSEL.

A further implication which can be generalized to the foreign language teaching field is that not only the needs of students in terms of strategies should be addressed and the syllabus designed accordingly, but the need to train teachers to implement such a syllabus should also be considered. For a syllabus with a focus on strategy training to work, the instructors must themselves be knowledgeable of the nature and use of strategies in reading and be capable of teaching these strategies. In an EFL reading curriculum that incorporates instruction in strategy use, the role of the teacher should be to provide learners with means of becoming independent and self-regulating readers.

It is emphasized in the literature that low-proficient readers need guided practice if strategy training is to be successful. Therefore, the *when* and *why* of strategy use as well as the *what* should be emphasized by strategy instruction (Anderson, 1991). It has been stated in the literature that the teacher has an important role in a successful strategy training program. It is suggested that the teacher provide the learner with the information about and explanation of “what the strategy is, why and how it should be learned, where and when to use the strategy, as well as how to evaluate the use of the strategy” (Anderson, 1991, p. 470). Therefore, having identified the strategy needs of students and incorporated them in the materials for classroom instruction, how the training is carried out in the classrooms and how much assistance is provided by the teacher for the

development of these strategies should also be considered as a focus for further research in strategy training.

To sum up, in order for a strategy training program to be effective, language learners should be assisted continuously and systematically to improve their use of strategies and increase their ability to comprehend and retain information presented in the texts they are required to read in their respective fields of study. In order for learners to become strategic and independent readers by developing effective strategies to enhance their reading, they require assistance not only in mastering the strategies but also in knowing when, where, how and why they should use these strategies.

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## Appendix A

Questionnaire for BUSEL and Freshman Students**SECTION 1****Part 1**

Please fill in the following information.

1. Name : \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age : \_\_\_\_\_
3. Male / Female : \_\_\_\_\_
4. Nationality : \_\_\_\_\_
5. Mother Tongue : \_\_\_\_\_
6. Faculty : \_\_\_\_\_
7. Department : \_\_\_\_\_
8. Type of high school you graduated from (Please circle):
  - a. State high school
  - b. Vocational high school
  - c. Anatolian high school
  - d. Private high school
  - e. Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 2**

Please check (✓) the appropriate box.

A. Please fill in this part if you are a BUSEL student.

1. This is my first year at BUSEL. ☐
2. This is my second year at BUSEL. ☐

B. Please fill in this part if you are a Freshman student.

1. I studied English at BUSEL: 1 year ☐ 1, 5 years ☐ 2 years ☐
2. I did not study English at BUSEL. ☐

## **SECTION 2**

### **Student Reading Strategies Questionnaire**

#### **Part 1**

Dear student,

This questionnaire is designed to find out what you do as you read in English. Please read each statement and circle the response (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) that tells how true of you the statement is. Answer in terms of how well the statement describes you. Do not answer how you think you should be, or what other people do. There are no right or wrong answers to these statements. It is important that you answer honestly. Thank you very much for your help.

Please circle the number that best tells how true of you the statement is.

Use the following scale:

1. Never true of me    2. Rarely true of me    3. Sometimes true of me    4. Usually true of me    5. Always true of me

1. I first read the whole text quickly to see what the general idea is, then I go back and read it more carefully.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

2. I guess the meaning of an unfamiliar word by relating it to the context, that is the topic or subject of the sentence and the section where the word appears.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

3. I make written notes/summaries of information that I read.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

1. Never true of me   2. Rarely true of me   3. Sometimes true of me   4. Usually true of me   5. Always true of me

4. I read without looking up every unfamiliar word in the dictionary.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

5. I look at the title, subheadings and illustrations (if any), and try to guess what the text might be about.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

6. I guess the meaning of an unfamiliar word by paying attention to its form or grammatical function.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

7. I skip the words I don't know and continue reading.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

8. As I read, I pay attention to main points, and try to distinguish them from supporting details.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

9. I relate the text to what I already know about the topic.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

10. When reading I have a good sense of when I understand something and when I don't.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

11. As I read, I can relate new information to the previous information in the text.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

12. Before I start to read, I think about why I am reading.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

13. I adjust my reading pace depending on the difficulty of the material.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

14. As I read, I pay attention to specific patterns that signal how the text is organized.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

15. Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**Part 2**

B. Please read each item in the following table. Circle the response (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) that tells **how important** (COLUMN I) you think it is for you to read more efficiently, and **how proficient** (COLUMN II) you think you are at doing what is stated in the item.

<b>READING STRATEGY TYPE</b>	<b>COLUMN I</b>					<b>COLUMN II</b>				
	<b><u>IMPORTANCE</u></b>					<b><u>PROFICIENCY</u></b>				
	1. very low 2. low 3. average 4. high 5. very high					1. very low 2. low 3. average 4. high 5. very high				
1. Understanding the purpose for reading the material at hand.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
2. Understanding organization of the reading material.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
3. Distinguishing important points from trivial points.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
4. Making use of titles, subheadings, and illustrations to guess what the reading material might be about.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
5. Relating prior knowledge to the content of the reading material.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
6. Evaluating the information presented in the reading material (i.e. identifying writer's purpose and attitude, distinguishing fact from opinion, making inferences).	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
7. Relying on contextual clues, vocabulary analysis, and/or grammar to deduce the meaning of unknown vocabulary items.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
8. Making written notes and/or summaries of the material read.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
9. Interpreting grammatical markers (such as connectives or reference words) indicating the logical organization of	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
10. Reading the material without referring to the dictionary for each unfamiliar vocabulary item.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
11. Other (please specify):	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

## Appendix B

### Questionnaire for BUSEL and Faculty Instructors

Dear colleague,

This questionnaire is designed for a research study which is being carried out as a part of the MA TEFL program at Bilkent University. The purpose of the study is to assess BUSEL and Freshman students' needs in terms of reading strategies. Therefore, I would greatly appreciate your cooperation. Thank you very much for your participation.

#### **Part 1**

Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Age : \_\_\_\_\_

Gender : \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality : \_\_\_\_\_

Mother tongue : \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty : \_\_\_\_\_

Department : \_\_\_\_\_

Teaching experience : a) 1-4 years b) 5-9 years c) 10 years & above



**Part 2**

Please complete the following part based on your experiences and observations about your students.

The 10 items in the table below state the reading strategies used by efficient second language readers.

Please read each item and circle the response (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) that tells **how important**

(COLUMN I) you think it is for your students to become efficient readers, and **how proficient**

(COLUMN II) you feel your students are at doing what is stated in the item.

READING STRATEGY TYPE	COLUMN I					COLUMN II				
	<b>IMPORTANCE</b>					<b>PROFICIENCY</b>				
	1. very low 2. low 3. average 4. high 5. very high					1. very low 2. low 3. average 4. high 5. very high				
1. Understanding the purpose for reading the material at hand.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
2. Understanding organization of the reading material.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
3. Distinguishing important points from trivial points.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
4. Making use of titles, subheadings, and illustrations to guess what the reading material might be about.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
5. Relating prior knowledge to the content of the reading material.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
6. Evaluating the information presented in the reading material (i.e. identifying writer's purpose and attitude, distinguishing fact from opinion, making inferences).	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
7. Relying on contextual clues, vocabulary analysis, and/or grammar to deduce the meaning of unknown vocabulary items.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
8. Making written notes and/or summaries of the material read.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
9. Interpreting grammatical markers (such as connectives or reference words) indicating the logical organization of	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
10. Reading the material without referring to the dictionary for each unfamiliar vocabulary item.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
11. Other (please specify):	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

### Appendix C

#### Questionnaire for BUSEL Curriculum Unit Members

Dear colleague,

This questionnaire is designed for a research study which is being carried out as a part of the MA TEFL program at Bilkent University. The purpose of the study is to assess BUSEL Pre-faculty students' needs in terms of reading strategies. Therefore, I would greatly appreciate your cooperation.

Thank you very much for your participation.

#### **Part 1**

Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Age : \_\_\_\_\_

Gender : \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality : \_\_\_\_\_

Mother tongue : \_\_\_\_\_

Teaching experience : a) 1-4 years   b) 5-9 years   c) 10 years & above

Experience in the

current position : a) 1-2 years   b) 3-4 years   c) 5-6 years

**Part 2**

Please complete the following part based on your experiences and observations about BUSEL students.

The 10 items in the table below state the reading strategies used by efficient second language readers.

Please read each item and circle the response (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) that tells **how important** (COLUMN I) you think it is for BUSEL students to become efficient readers, and **how proficient** (COLUMN II) you feel BUSEL students are at doing what is stated in the item.

READING STRATEGY TYPE	COLUMN I					COLUMN II				
	<b>IMPORTANCE</b>					<b>PROFICIENCY</b>				
	1. very low 2. low 3. average 4. high 5. very high					1. very low 2. low 3. average 4. high 5. very high				
1. Understanding the purpose for reading the material at hand.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
2. Understanding organization of the reading material.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
3. Distinguishing important points from trivial points.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
4. Making use of titles, subheadings, and illustrations to guess what the reading material might be about.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
5. Relating prior knowledge to the content of the reading material.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
6. Evaluating the information presented in the reading material (i.e. identifying writer's purpose and attitude, distinguishing fact from opinion, making inferences).	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
7. Relying on contextual clues, vocabulary analysis, and/or grammar to deduce the meaning of unknown vocabulary items.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
8. Making written notes and/or summaries of the material read.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
9. Interpreting grammatical markers (such as connectives or reference words) indicating the logical organization of	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
10. Reading the material without referring to the dictionary for each unfamiliar vocabulary item.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
11. Other (please specify):	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

## Appendix D

### Transcriptions of the Interviews with BUSEL Curriculum Unit Members

#### Transcript of the Interview with the Pre-faculty Level CDC

Note. Int: Interviewer/researcher and CDC: Curriculum Development Coordinator for Pre-faculty level.

Int: How does the Curriculum unit identify the objectives included in the syllabus?

CDC: Right. O.K. What happened three years ago when the new syllabus was designed was that a needs analysis was carried out. It was this SNA. It was carried out on quite a large scale, I think. I was not involved in that so, I cannot tell you about the details. But...now...at the moment, the syllabus needs to be revised, and syllabus objectives need to be revised, and that is supposed to be done by the CDC, the Curriculum Development Coordinator. Now, I don't know what has happened so far, but, I know that the text book group is involved because they need to have some data as well on what the students will need in their faculties and departments, and I know they work together with the CDC, and a needs analysis on a small scale is being carried out at the moment by...I think...the text book group and CDC, and I think they work closely with the fast team, language support group, in faculties and departments. So, that is one thing. Now, I haven't really played an active part but, of course, I'm involved in implementing the syllabus, and I know...it was very very useful. And I had some informal chats with the lecturers and the heads of departments, and I made notes, and it was extremely useful to me. That was on a very informal basis. I used that information for sharing ideas, training, training issues, and thing like that.

INT: To identify what strategies students need to become better language learners, do you think they should also be asked what they think their needs are?

CDC: No, I don't think so. Because first of all, I think that we're the experts, and we know what they need. I doubt whether students are aware of their needs. I doubt that very much. They have certain wants, they have certain desires but I know from experience that these wants do not always correspond with what we think are good for them. I think that our job is to make them aware of what kind of strategies, skills they need, and to make them aware of these skills. Because, I think, at this moment this awareness is completely lacking, so, there is no point in asking the students.

INT: When we think of learning strategy training, can we say that it is incorporated in the syllabus? Is strategy training included in the objectives?

CDC: There are certain elements of learner training in the syllabus. There is a separate strand as well. Learner training.

INT: And are all the skills involved in this?

CDC: Yes, and reading is one of them. For example, something like deducing the meaning of unknown words from context. That is a reading strategy isn't it? So, these kind of things.

INT: Do you think there is sufficient instruction devoted to strategy training at the moment?

CDC: At this moment I don't think so. As I said the syllabus needs to be revisited and revised, and I think, we need to carry out another needs analysis, in a more detailed way, and I think quite some strands need to be broken up more. And one of them is learner training.

INT: And how are the learners trained to develop these strategies? Through the materials prepared or...?

CDC: I think quite a lot depends on the teachers. As you know, in BUSEL, the teaching body, to a large extent, consists of teachers who are still inexperienced, and who I think lack the necessary training, especially in teaching EAP. I think it's very important to identify those teachers and concentrate on training them. ...I'm not sure whether all teachers spend time on learner training. I think only teachers who are really confident in helping students develop their academic skills and know what exactly is required, I think, have quite a lot for students. I do think the materials we give to students lend themselves for learner training.

INT: Are the students only made aware of these strategies or are they also taught how to apply them?

CDC: Hopefully they are. I mean I don't know what is going on in each classroom, but the aim certainly is to teach them how to apply these strategies. I mean the aim of curriculum is to do this.

INT: Do you think a special strategy training program is required in order to enable students to become better readers?

CDC: Not necessarily. I mean it could be integrated. It depends. I mean, you could do, definitely. You could also integrate it with, let's say, a reading lesson. ...It, I think, depends on what's useful, what you look for. But, I think, it could be specified more, and certain skills could be broken up into more detail.

INT: Based on your experiences and observations and feedback you receive from colleagues, what reading strategies do you see as crucial for students to develop in order to become better readers?

CDC: I think one of the most important strategy they'll need is to identify main ideas from texts. They have to first get the gist of the text they read, and later on they can read for more detail. So, that is one thing, reading for main ideas. Another is following the text. For that they need an understanding of the text coherence. Something that is very very important is that they know how the text hangs together, how the ideas relate to each other. That is very very important. I think those are the two most important strategies they need to develop. Of course there are many other strategies that are very important, but I think these are the most important ones.

INT: Anything else you would like to add?

CDC: No, I don't think so.

INT: Thank you very much.

Transcript of the interview with the Curriculum Unit Head

Note. Int: Interviewer/researcher and CDH: Curriculum Unit Head

INT: How does the Curriculum Unit identify the objectives to be included in the syllabus?

CUH: How did we? Well, they did, when they did the needs analysis, and at the moment the people concerned, I mean, the head of FAST [Faculty Support Team], head of ELSU [English Language Support Team], and head of Freshman English are currently doing a sort of very informal needs analysis by attending lectures and by talking to lecturers. We had a meeting last week, because we are particularly interested in the objectives for the Pre-Faculty level. So, some of that feedback came from those people as a result of these meetings. There is going to be a series of meetings with the heads of Freshman Unit, ELSU, FAST and the Curriculum Unit and Textbook Committee to design the Pre-Faculty textbook.

INT: You only go to lecturers then, not the students.

CUH: No. The heads have asked the students...I mean they do it in different ways. In FAST, the head went to different classrooms, and asked students their impression of what they were doing on that course, what their needs were, what they have done in BUSEL, and whether BUSEL have met their needs or not. So, that's a sort of evaluation in a sense.

INT: O.K. when we think of learning strategy training can we say that it is incorporated in the syllabus? Is it encouraged by the current syllabus?

CUH: Not necessarily by the syllabus but by the course outlines, yes, definitely. We have started with the very low level, I mean, Foundation level, to put in slots that we call learner training which involves looking at strategies.

INT: Strategies in all skills areas or specific ones?

CUH: Well, I mean, a range, a variety of different things.

INT: And reading strategies are among them. I mean, can we say that reading strategy training is incorporated in the course outline?

CUH: I think so. By the materials, and in many ways, by the course books we use as well. Modern textbooks take strategy training into account, I think.

INT: O.K. Do you think sufficient instruction is devoted to reading strategy training?

CUH: Sufficient instruction?

INT: Yes. You said it is included in the materials and encouraged by the coursebooks, but what happens in the classrooms?

CUH: That's a good question, and I don't know. Because, I think, that is where Curriculum, at some point, should be involved in observing what's going on in the classrooms to see how the materials are used. Because if the teacher is not fully aware of the aim of the material, doesn't fully understand it, then they will do it in different way, I mean, with a different focus, and so the strategy encouraged by the material won't be covered in the classroom.

INT: So, do you think teachers need some kind of training to train students to develop these strategies?

CUH: Definitely. I think a lot of teachers... they need, I mean, people who do courses have raised awareness of these sort of things, but I think, there is a lot of awareness raising still needed.

INT: Do you think a special strategy training program is required in order to enable students to become better readers? I mean, something separate from the normal program.

CUH: I think, it would be difficult to do it in isolation. I think that it has to be integrated. It would be difficult, because, you see, it's selling it to our students. Because you know, what our students want here is... they want formulas to pass exams. If we are telling them something that will be useful for them in the future, if it is not useful to them for the next exam they've got to sit, they're not interested. That's another reason. I think, when we have training in isolation, it would be very difficult to sell it to the students. They want some sort of magic formula for passing the exams.

INT: Based on your experiences and observations, how do you see the overall reading proficiency of BUSEL students?

CUH: They are very poor. Yeah, generally. I mean, I'm now talking about not only my experiences in BUSEL but also my experiences of students in Freshman, through contacts this year. And, yeah, they're very poor. Students don't read when they go to their faculties. They're given by their lecturers a lot of reading to do. They have to read... I don't know... a hundred pages in a week let's say, and they start reading it and if they find it very difficult they give up. Don't do it. In many cases because... again the exam link. They know that the exam is going to be on what the lecturers said in that lecture, so they are not bothered about doing the reading. If you ask students in a class in BUSEL how many read the newspaper, you know even in English, you know they're not readers basically. They don't see the value of doing that. They have a huge difficulty in identifying main ideas, putting them into note form... we still see a list of odd words, if you ask them to use these notes in a weeks time they won't mean anything to them. They do the note-taking because they have to do it. They still don't really see the value of it, I think.

INT: What reading strategies do you see as most crucial for students to develop?

CUH: I think, initially, develop somehow the motivation, and to realize there's a purpose for reading. And then, reading critically. I mean distinguishing fact from opinion, making inferences... it's actually critically evaluating what they read, and obviously, understanding the organization of the text. This is really important.

INT: Anything else you would like to add?

CUH: ...

INT: Thank you very much.