

## Language Learners' Reading Comprehension Needs in the Turkish Context: A Comprehensive Needs Analysis

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**Abstract:** This study investigated the reading comprehension needs of 8th-grade Turkish EFL learners in lower secondary education. A mixed-method design was employed in which data were gathered using needs analysis forms, environmental needs analysis checklists, and teacher interviews. Data were collected from 28 students and 23 teachers. The findings revealed that students' reading comprehension needs can be categorized into three primary areas: (1) reading skills and strategies, including the effective use of reading strategies, vocabulary development, and critical thinking skills; (2) language proficiency, encompassing proficiency in both native and target languages and cultural understanding; and (3) environmental factors, such as access to resources, technology, and supportive learning environments. These findings underscore the complex nature of reading comprehension. Effective reading comprehension requires a holistic approach that encompasses various factors, including language proficiency, reading strategies, diverse and engaging reading materials and a supportive learning environment. By addressing these interconnected elements, more effective and inclusive reading experiences can be cultivated for Turkish EFL students.

**Keywords:** *Turkish language learners, reading comprehension, English as a foreign language, needs analysis, lower secondary school*

### INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, proficiency in English is a valuable asset, particularly in Türkiye, where it is the most studied foreign language, because of its perceived ability to unlock diverse career opportunities. However, despite their high demand, Turkish learners face significant challenges on their path to English mastery. Research has continuously revealed a range of obstacles hindering the progress of Turkish language learners, such as L1 interference (Kazazoglu, 2020), insufficient pragmatic knowledge (Ozcan, 2022), challenges in cultivating communication readiness (Altiner, 2018; Barin & Eyerici, 2021), and specific difficulties in reading comprehension in English (Beceran, 2020). This article delves into one of these obstacles, reading comprehension, as the capacity to comprehend reading is essential for the developing of other skills during learners' academic journeys.

Reading comprehension, the cornerstone for understanding written English and developing other language skills, such as writing and listening, is crucial for academic success (Adhi et al., 2019; He, 2008; Lervåg et al., 2017; Suhita et al., 2018). However, Turkish learners face some challenges on this path; some of them have limited vocabulary knowledge (Beceran, 2020; Gungor & Yaylı, 2016), encountering unfamiliar cultural references (Erten & Razi, 2009) and reading anxiety (Altunkaya, 2018; Isler & Yıldırım, 2022). Difficulties in understanding English grammar and sentence structure also create barriers to mastering reading comprehension (Susoy & Tanyer, 2019).

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Needs analysis involves examining the needs, aspirations, and challenges of learners as well as their learning preferences (Richards, 2009), thus providing valuable insights for designing targeted instruction (Long, 2005). This study utilizes Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) model to identify the reading comprehension needs of 8th-grade Turkish EFL learners. Unlike previous studies, which have primarily examined reading comprehension either in students' native language or among university-level and general EFL learners, this research specifically addresses 8th-graders at a critical transition stage, moving from basic to more complex academic reading. Given the importance of English in the Turkish context, this initial step toward engaging with more complex texts and higher cognitive demands is particularly significant. By incorporating data from needs analysis forms (NAF), environmental needs analysis checklists (ENAC), and interviews with language teachers, this study offers a more nuanced perspective on reading comprehension challenges faced by young learners. Understanding these specific needs is particularly significant in the Turkish EFL context, where limited research exists on this demographic. A comprehensive needs analysis will contribute to developing targeted pedagogical interventions that enhance 8th-graders' reading comprehension skills, ultimately supporting their academic success and future language learning.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study's theoretical framework is grounded in key principles from reading comprehension theories, second language acquisition (SLA), and needs analysis frameworks. These perspectives collectively inform the study design and guide the selection of research instruments to assess reading comprehension strategies employed by Turkish 8th-grade EFL learners. By integrating the cognitive, sociocultural, and pedagogical dimensions, this framework provides a comprehensive basis for understanding students' reading challenges and instructional needs.

Reading comprehension is a cognitive and constructive process that involves integrating background knowledge, processing linguistic input, and creating meaning at multiple levels. This study draws on Kintsch's (1998) Construction-Integration Model, which posits that comprehension requires constructing meaning from surface text, while integrating it into a coherent mental representation. Schema theory underscores the role of prior knowledge in understanding texts (Carrell et al., 1989). Turkish learners bring cultural and linguistic schemata that shape their reading experience in English. Thus, how well students activate relevant background knowledge influences whether they utilize bottom-up or top-down processing in their comprehension strategies. Building on this, the information processing theory provides insights into the mental processes involved in reading, such as decoding, vocabulary retrieval, and working memory load (Paris & Hamilton, 2014). This framework helps explain the cognitive mechanisms that support reading comprehension, and how instructional interventions can support efficient information processing. From an SLA perspective, Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory highlights the importance of scaffolding, interactions, and social mediation in language learning. The collaborative reading activities, teacher-guidance, and peer interactions facilitate comprehension development, but teacher and learners' perspectives were the focus of this study. A key aspect of reading comprehension development is self-regulation, which involves learners actively monitoring and managing their reading process. The self-regulated learning theory underscores the role of metacognitive strategies, such as goal setting, self-questioning, and summarization (Paris & Hamilton, 2014). Students' awareness of their reading strategies can be enhanced through explicit instruction in self-monitoring techniques.

To ensure that instructional suggestions align with learners' specific challenges, this study employed a needs analysis framework. This approach involved using student forms, and teacher interviews to capture a nuanced understanding of learners' difficulties, instructional practices and environmental challenges. By integrating these reading comprehension theories, SLA perspectives, and self-regulation principles within a needs analysis framework, this study offers a comprehensive lens through which to examine the reading comprehension processes of Turkish 8th-grade EFL learners. Theoretical insights directly informed the study's methodology and guided the selection of



research instruments and instructional considerations. Ultimately, this framework supports the development of targeted pedagogical interventions that address both the cognitive and social dimensions of reading comprehension, thereby fostering more effective reading instruction for Turkish learners. To further contextualize these theoretical considerations and understand how they have been applied in similar research, existing studies on reading comprehension needs, particularly those employing needs analysis in EFL contexts, with a focus on relevance to the Turkish setting were reviewed.

Studies conducted in the Turkish context have provided valuable insights. Sonmez (2019), focusing on native Turkish-speaking secondary school students, found that learners required increased awareness of reading difficulties, focused instruction in comprehension, pronunciation, and text tracking, adequate family support, and differentiation for struggling students. Kayaoglu and Akbas (2016) examined first-year medical students' language needs and identified the need for practical language skills tailored to medical settings, alignment with academic standards, and focused on oral communication instruction. Both studies underscored the critical importance of addressing learners' specific challenges and contexts.

Building on this foundation, studies that offer insights into pedagogical and instructional strategies for improving reading comprehension were examined. McLaughlin (2012) emphasized the social constructivist nature of learning and the importance of diverse text types and assessment practices. Salam (2017), focusing on Indonesian language students, identified the need for teaching materials that offer a variety of text types and topics, balance theory and practice, incorporate engaging activities, and utilize clear evaluation methods. These findings underscore the importance of effective teaching materials that are relevant to learners' needs and that promote a holistic reading experience.

Furthermore, motivation and engagement are crucial factors for successful reading comprehension. Ahmetović and Dubravac (2021) studied Bosnian elementary school students and found that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation influenced learners' attitudes and preferences. Recognizing the influence of grade level, they urged instructors to prioritize the development of intrinsic motivation over excessive use of external motivators. Andrés (2020), focusing on adult language learners in Colombia, identified a positive attitude toward English and a desire for reading practice as critical needs. Razavi and Gilakjani (2020) demonstrated that incorporating cultural content enhanced reading comprehension among Iranian EFL learners. AlGhamdi et al. (2018) conducted a reading needs analysis of preparatory-year EFL learners in Saudi Arabia and found that students preferred reading fiction but faced challenges with reading speed and critical reading. Alvarez et al. (1993) delved into the perspectives of Spanish educators and learners on reading needs and desires, revealing a disparity in viewpoints and highlighting the need to align teaching methods with students' preferences.

Contextual factors significantly influence reading comprehension. Atai and Nazari (2011) explored the reading comprehension needs of Iranian students of health information management, identifying key reading comprehension skills and highlighting the need to tailor reading courses to specific student needs. Karakoc et al. (2022) conducted a study to identify the reading requirements in first-year undergraduate courses in humanities and social sciences disciplines at a New Zealand university. This study emphasizes the importance of exposing students to a variety of academic texts and highlights the need for students to develop critical thinking and argumentation skills.

Language proficiency also plays a crucial role in this process. Zarifi and Asadpour (2017) investigated the target and present reading comprehension needs of undergraduate EAP students in Persian literature in Iran. The findings revealed that the students were weak in skills such as setting goals, predicting meaning, skimming, scanning, vocabulary knowledge, and understanding structure. This study emphasizes the importance of involving multiple stakeholders to gain a comprehensive



understanding of reading comprehension needs, aligning targets, and presenting reading comprehension needs.

A comparison of findings across EFL reading comprehension studies revealed common themes. Across both Turkish and international contexts, there is a strong emphasis on the need for exposure to diverse academic texts, such as textbooks, journal articles, and other sources. Such exposure is essential for developing not only comprehension but also higher-level reading skills, including critical thinking and argumentation. By engaging with various genres and formats, learners enhance their ability to analyze and construct arguments effectively. Lecturers in different educational settings prioritize these advanced reading skills beyond basic comprehension. Additionally, student motivation both intrinsic and extrinsic along with positive attitudes and instructional approaches that cater to learner preferences, plays a key role in promoting engagement with academic reading materials.

However, significant differences were observed between groups, suggesting that cultural and educational factors play a crucial role in reading comprehension. For instance, preferred reading strategies and learning styles may vary across cultures, influencing how students engage with texts. Additionally, differences in educational systems such as curriculum design and instructional focus affect the development of reading skills. While challenges like vocabulary acquisition and reading speed are common across contexts, other difficulties stem from specific cultural and educational environments. Cultural backgrounds shape learners' familiarity with topics, text structures, and ways of interpreting information, leading to disparities in comprehension. For example, in some educational cultures, instruction is primarily teacher-directed, whereas other systems emphasize student-centered learning. Cultural values also shape learning preferences, with some societies prioritizing collaborative learning while others emphasize independent study. Furthermore, educational systems influence reading development through their curricular focus; for instance, an emphasis on rote memorization may hinder deeper comprehension by prioritizing factual recall over inferencing and critical analysis. Given these cultural and educational influences, teaching methodologies, particularly explicit instruction in reading strategies become essential for equipping students with the necessary tools to navigate complex texts. In the context of Turkish EFL learners, a reliance on rote learning and a possible mismatch between instructional approaches and reading demands may contribute to specific comprehension difficulties, even though certain challenges, such as vocabulary acquisition and reading speed, remain universal.

Despite the existing research, a significant knowledge gap remains regarding the reading comprehension needs of lower secondary school students in Türkiye. Most studies focused on university students, leaving this group relatively unexplored. This lack of research makes it difficult to develop evidence-based interventions tailored to 8th-grade learners. Without targeted studies, instructional strategies for older students may be inappropriately applied to younger learners, potentially overlooking their cognitive and developmental needs. Moreover, the absence of research on this age group limits educators' ability to design curricula that align with students' linguistic and cognitive abilities. Younger learners may require more structured scaffolding, explicit strategy instruction, and motivation-driven approaches than university students, but these factors remain underexplored in the Turkish EFL context.

This lack of studies has broader pedagogical implications. If teachers are unaware of the specific reading challenges faced by 8th-graders, they may rely on generic instructional methods that do not effectively support comprehension development. Policymakers may also struggle to implement curriculum reforms that address the precise needs of lower secondary students without empirical data on their reading difficulties and strengths. This review highlights the importance of tailoring reading instructions according to the specific needs of Turkish EFL learners. To address the existing knowledge gap, this study focused on the reading comprehension needs of 8th-grade students in the Turkish students.



## METHODOLOGY

Following Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) framework, this study categorized learners' needs into target needs, which pertain to the specific reading skills required for academic success, and learning needs, which encompass the strategies and resources necessary for effective reading comprehension development. To achieve this, a mixed-method sequential exploratory design was employed. This design involves two phases: in the first phase, qualitative data were collected and analyzed, providing foundational insights; the second phase involved quantitative data collection and analysis, building upon the results of the qualitative findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Document analysis and semi-structured interviews with language teachers served as the primary qualitative method, with key themes identified and analyzed for frequency. These key themes directly informed the development of NAF and ENAC, which were then used for quantitative data collection. The quantitative data was subsequently analyzed to further examine learners' reading comprehension needs. The procedures of the design are illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1. The mixed-method sequential exploratory research design procedure (Adapted from Berman, 2017)**

Phase	Procedures	Products
Qualitative data collection	Document analysis (Articles, Books, Legal documents, master's theses, PhD dissertations)  Semi-structured Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues related to reading comprehension identified</li> <li>• Identifying perspectives and beliefs, challenges and difficulties, pedagogical practices and strategies and source usage language teachers</li> </ul>
Qualitative data analysis	Coding and thematic analysis with MAXQDA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Codes listed</li> <li>• Frequency tables</li> </ul>
Connecting the qualitative and quantitative phases	Expert opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Items merged and finalized issues to stand as a base for quantitative data collection instrument</li> </ul>
Quantitative data collection	NAF ENAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nominal (categorical) item scores</li> </ul>
Quantitative data analysis	SPSS descriptive analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NAF and ENAC data results, frequencies and mean scores</li> </ul>



Integration of the quantitative and qualitative results

Interpretation and explanation of the qualitative and quantitative results

- Discussions of implications.

The instruments used for the data collection, purposes, sources of the data, and validation procedures of the instruments used for data collection are listed in Table 2.

**Table 2. The data-gathering instruments**

Data-gathering Instruments	Purpose	Source	Validation Procedure
NAF (35 items)	Identifying eighth-grade learners' reading comprehension needs, including beliefs, strategies, and challenges.	28 eighth-grade students	Expert opinion (three rounds), piloting with 34 students, field notes, guided reflections, and Cohen's kappa (0.80) to assess translation agreement.
ENAC (20 items)	Identifying environmental factors affecting students' reading comprehension		
Semi-Structured Interviews	Identifying the perspectives of language teachers in terms of their students' reading comprehension needs	23 language teachers	Expert opinions to verify and refine questions, revisions based on feedback, member-checking, audio-recording, verbatim transcription, and 0.77 coder agreement

This study explores three research questions that aim to identify the reading comprehension needs of eighth-grade Turkish lower-secondary-school students.

RQ 1. What are learners' perceptions of their reading comprehension needs?

RQ 2. What environmental needs do learners perceive in relation to reading comprehension?

RQ 3. What are learners' reading comprehension needs from language teachers' perspectives?

## Participants

This study used purposeful sampling to recruit two participant groups, offering insight into Turkish learners' reading comprehension needs. The first group comprised 28 eighth graders, selected due to their representation of a typical 8th-grade Turkish EFL classroom, with diverse reading habits and varied parental education levels. The participants consisted of 20 students aged 13 (71.40%) and 8 students aged 14 (28.60%). Of these students, 15 were female (53.57%) and 13 were male (46.43%) without prior reading comprehension strategy training. The participants' reading habits were diverse. Most participants (64.29%) read between 1 and 100 pages per week, while a smaller group (14.29%) read between 101 and 200 pages, and another 14.29% read between 201 and 300 pages. Only 7.14% of participants read more than 300 pages per week. Regarding parental education, the majority of mothers (42.9%) had graduated from lower secondary school, followed by primary school (28.6%) and high school (25%). Only one mother (3.6%) had a bachelor's degree. Fathers had a slightly higher level of education, with 46.4% graduating from high school, 32.1% from lower secondary school, and 14.3% from primary school. Two fathers (7.1%) had bachelor's degrees. Notably, none of the parents had a master's or doctoral degree.



The second group consisted of 23 language teachers representing diverse school backgrounds: lower secondary school (39.1%), Imam Hatip lower secondary school (43.5%), and Science and Art Centers (17.4%). These school types were selected to represent the variety of educational settings in the Turkish context, allowing for the exploration of how different school environments might influence reading comprehension instruction. Teachers from different schools may implement distinct strategies based on their students' needs and the school curricula. Among the teacher participants, 17 were female (73.9%), while 6 were male (26.1%). Their teaching experience varied, with 21.7% having 1-10 years, 43.5%–11–20 years, and 34.8% over 21 years. The teacher ranged from 28 to 59, with four holding MA degrees (17.39%). Notably, none of them had received specific training that focused on reading comprehension strategies.

### **Setting**

The study included teachers from two different types of schools and one institution, so a brief overview of each type will be provided. These school types which aims to identify different school environments might influence reading comprehension instruction and implement distinct strategies based on their students' needs and the school curricula. Science and Art Centers nurture gifted students by providing specialized skill development programs beyond regular school hours. These centers emphasize hands-on learning and exploration within scientific and artistic domains, often utilizing a task-based approach. Imam Hatip Lower Secondary Schools prioritize Islamic religious education and integrate Arabic language instruction alongside the standard curriculum. Additionally, these schools typically implement intensive English programs from grades five to seven to enhance students' English proficiency. General Lower Secondary Schools are public schools where students receive different amounts of English instruction. Some schools offer a more intensive program with extra English classes, especially in the 5th grade. This intensive program is limited to the fifth grade, and English classes revert to four hours per week in subsequent grades up to the eighth grade. Due to this educational structure, students are expected to achieve an A2 level of English proficiency by the end of education, as outlined in the Teaching Program published by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE).

### **Data collection**

The data collection process involved two distinct stages: quantitative data from students and qualitative data from language teachers.

### **Stage 1: Identifying Reading Comprehension Needs and Challenges**

This stage aimed to identify the essential reading comprehension needs of eighth-grade Turkish lower secondary students. To achieve this, the NAF and ENAC items were developed through a comprehensive document analysis of books, articles, official MoNE documents including Language Teaching Programs at various levels and vision statement 2023, PISA reports, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations. Additionally, semi-structured interviews with language teachers provided evidence for the forms' content and relevance.

The process began with an analysis of reading comprehension in the target language and identifying its key components, assessment instruments, and strategies for comprehension and awareness. Based on this, each item in the NAF was designed to address different aspects or stages of reading comprehension. The first section (Items 1-10) examined participants' beliefs about reading comprehension, including support, legibility, and fluency. The following sections focus on pre-reading (Items 11-17), while reading (Items 18-28), and post-reading strategies (Items 29-35) to assess comprehension needs. After drafting the items, the form underwent three rounds of expert validation by experts in reading comprehension and foreign language education who evaluated content validity, clarity, and relevance. Revisions have been made accordingly. Initially, the NAF contained 50 items; however, after revisions, it was refined to 35. A pilot test, conducted with 34 students, distinct from those in the main study, was implemented to assess clarity and comprehensibility. During the pilot phase, students provided feedback on item relevance and the researcher recorded field notes to identify common misunderstandings. Based on this feedback and field notes, further refinements were made to improve the instrument's wording and accessibility.



ENAC was included in this study to provide a holistic understanding of the external factors that influence students' reading comprehension. While the NAF focused on students' beliefs and reading strategies, the ENAC captures environmental conditions that might impact reading engagement and comprehension outcomes. Previous research has highlighted the importance of factors such as access to learning materials, technological resources, and classroom settings in shaping students' reading experiences. However, many studies on reading comprehension focus primarily on cognitive and metacognitive strategies, often overlooking broader learning environments.

The ENAC was designed to complement the NAF by identifying non-cognitive barriers to reading comprehension. Analyzing ENAC results alongside students' reading strategy preferences allowed the study to assess how external conditions supported or hindered effective reading practices. This integration aligns with the study's overarching goal of identifying and addressing the reading comprehension needs of 8th-grade Turkish students. By evaluating both individual learning strategies and environmental conditions, this study offers a comprehensive analysis that can inform targeted educational interventions and ensure both pedagogical and infrastructural improvements. The ENAC underwent the same step-by-step validation process as the NAF. Based on document analysis and data gathered from interviews, an initial 30-item form was developed to identify external factors affecting comprehension. After three rounds of revision, the final version was found to contain 20 items. To assess clarity and comprehensibility, a pilot test was conducted with 34 students separate from those in the main study. The researcher maintained field notes, and ten participants provided guided reflections on item clarity. Following the pilot phase, the final version of the form was administered to the same student sample. ENAC consists of 20 items categorized into five sections: physical environment (Items 1-9), access to learning materials (Items 10-13), technological resources (Items 14-16), multimedia and visual aids (Items 17-18), and supportive staff and instructors (Items 19-20).

Both the NAF and ENAC were administered in the learners' native language to ensure full comprehension, as their proficiency in the target language could have affected their ability to accurately interpret the items. Using the native language minimized potential misinterpretations and ensured that responses genuinely reflected the students' perceptions and experiences. For the purposes of this study, the forms were also translated into English. To verify the accuracy and consistency of the translation, Cohen's kappa was calculated, yielding a score of 0.80. This high level of agreement indicates strong reliability (Tantiwatniyom & Nagaviroj, 2022), reinforcing confidence that the translated form accurately conveys the intended meaning and effectively captures the reading comprehension needs of Turkish language learners.

## **Stage 2: Exploring Language Teachers' Perspectives on Students' Reading Comprehension Needs and Challenges**

The second stage of the research involved semi-structured interviews with 23 language teachers from various schools in Türkiye to gain deeper insights into students' reading comprehension needs from their perspective. Before conducting face-to-face interviews at their respective schools, informed consent was obtained from all participants.

The interview questions (Appendix A) were carefully designed to comprehensively cover key aspects of reading comprehension. To achieve this, the questions were structured around four main themes: (1) teachers' conceptual understanding of reading comprehension, (2) perceived student challenges, (3) pedagogical strategies employed, and (4) approaches to promoting student awareness and self-regulation. To ensure their relevance and clarity, expert feedback was obtained, and revisions were made accordingly. All interviews were audio-recorded, and detailed procedural information is provided in the following sub-section.

### **Data Analysis**

The quantitative data obtained from the NAF and ENAC were analyzed using SPSS 21 software. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the frequency and distribution of the responses for each item on the instrument. Qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews with language teachers were analyzed using MAXQDA. This software facilitated the identification of recurring themes and patterns within teachers' perceptions of students' reading comprehension needs.



A thematic analysis approach was employed to identify and categorize recurring themes and patterns within the interview data. This analysis followed a systematic process: familiarization with the transcripts, coding of relevant passages, theme identification, and review and refinement of the thematic framework. To ensure the validity of the findings, member-checking was conducted, inviting participants to review their transcripts and provide feedback on the accuracy and interpretation of the identified themes. This process enhanced the trustworthiness and credibility of the research.

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researchers and critical friends, who possessed expertise in transcription and a thorough understanding of the research context. To ensure data accuracy and reliability, a multi-tiered validation process was implemented. First, the data were coded by the researchers, and then two critical friends independently coded a portion of the transcripts. Coder agreement was established through code comparison, yielding a Fleiss's Kappa of 0.77, indicating substantial agreement (Maybrier et al., 2018). Second, to ensure transcription accuracy, the transcriptions were shared with participants for member-checking, confirming that they accurately reflected their spoken words and intended meaning. Finally, randomly selected portions of the transcripts were compared, and any discrepancies were resolved through discussion.

## FINDINGS

The findings of this study were presented in line with the research questions to provide a holistic picture of the reading comprehension needs of eighth-grade Turkish lower-secondary-school students.

### RQ 1. What are learners' perceptions of their reading comprehension needs?

The frequencies of the items in NAF were presented using a 5-point Likert scale in Table 3. 5 represents "it totally reflects me," 4 is for "it mostly reflects me, 3 is for "it reflects me a little" 2 is for "it hardly reflects me", 1 is for "it doesn't reflect me at all".

**Table 3. Frequency of the items in NAF (N=28)**

Items	F					M	Sd
	5	4	3	2	1		
<b>Learners' beliefs towards reading comprehension</b>						3.52	.64
1. I comprehend better when I read the same subject from different sources.	7 (25.0%)	5 (17.9%)	14 (50.0%)	2 (7.1%)	0 (0%)	3.60	.95
2. I need my teacher's guidance to comprehend what I read.	1 (3.6%)	6 (21.4%)	8 (28.6%)	8 (28.6%)	5 (17.9%)	2.64	1.12
3. I need the support of my friends to comprehend what I read.	3 (10.7%)	3 (10.7%)	4 (14.3%)	3 (10.7%)	15 (53.6%)	2.14	1.45
4. To comprehend what I read, the text must be legible.	8 (28.6%)	9 (32.1%)	4 (14.3%)	4 (14.3%)	3 (10.7%)	3.53	1.34
5. I comprehend texts supported with visuals better.	14 (50.0%)	5 (17.9%)	3 (10.7%)	4 (14.3%)	2 (7.1%)	3.89	1.37
6. Having information about the cultural elements (holidays, traditions, special days, etc.) in the texts I read makes it easier for me to comprehend.	9 (32.1%)	6 (21.4%)	9 (32.1%)	0 (0%)	4 (14.3%)	3.57	1.34
7. I comprehend better when I read to use my free time.	5 (17.9%)	8 (28.6%)	10 (35.7%)	4 (14.3%)	1 (3.6%)	3.42	1.06
8. I can better comprehend texts that I read fluently.	19 (67.9%)	5 (17.9%)	3 (10.7%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.6%)	4.46	.96
9. I comprehend better if the subject of the texts I read interests me.	14 (50.0%)	8 (28.6%)	2 (7.1%)	2 (7.1%)	2 (7.1%)	4.07	1.24
10. I can comprehend better if I choose the texts, I want to read myself.	12 (42.9%)	6 (21.4%)	6 (21.4%)	2 (7.1%)	2 (7.1%)	3.85	1.26



Items	<i>F</i>					<i>M</i>	<i>Sd</i>
	5	4	3	2	1		
<b>Pre-reading strategies</b>						3.50	.73
11. I comprehend better if I have prior knowledge about the subject of the text.	10 (35.7%)	9 (32.1%)	4 (14.3%)	4 (14.3%)	1 (3.6%)	3.82	1.18
12. I look at the title of the text I read to comprehend what I read.	4 (14.3%)	7 (25.0%)	12 (42.9%)	2 (7.1%)	3 (10.7%)	3.25	1.14
13. I comprehend better when I read according to the instructions.	5 (17.9%)	6 (21.4%)	8 (28.6%)	7 (25.0%)	2 (7.1%)	3.17	1.21
14. Completing the tasks given beforehand makes it easier to comprehend what I read.	9 (32.1%)	5 (17.9%)	6 (21.4%)	3 (10.7%)	5 (17.9%)	3.35	1.49
15. I comprehend better when I have a purpose for reading.	17 (60.7%)	4 (14.3%)	6 (21.4%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.6%)	4.28	1.04
16. I need to plan what I am going to do before I start reading.	4 (14.3%)	4 (14.3%)	11 (39.3%)	3 (10.7%)	6 (21.4%)	2.89	1.31
17. I skim the text quickly before reading.	11 (39.3%)	7 (25.0%)	4 (14.3%)	4 (14.3%)	2 (7.1%)	3.75	1.32
<b>While-reading strategies</b>						3.49	.63
18. I underline what I think is important while reading.	14 (50.0%)	6 (21.4%)	4 (14.3%)	4 (14.3%)	0 (0%)	4.07	1.11
19. I read the text slowly to comprehend every detail.	6 (21.4%)	10 (35.7%)	7 (25.0%)	5 (17.9%)	0 (0%)	3.60	1.03
20. I can guess the meaning of unfamiliar words.	1 (3.6%)	7 (25.0%)	9 (32.1%)	7 (25.0%)	4 (14.3%)	2.78	1.10
21. I take notes on unfamiliar words.	7 (25.0%)	5 (17.9%)	8 (28.6%)	4 (14.3%)	4 (14.3%)	3.25	1.37
22. I comprehend better if I take notes while reading.	11 (39.3%)	4 (14.3%)	3 (10.7%)	4 (14.3%)	6 (21.4%)	3.35	1.63
23. I look up the meaning of every unfamiliar word in the dictionary.	1 (3.6%)	6 (21.4%)	4 (14.3%)	9 (32.1%)	8 (28.6%)	2.39	1.22
24. I put the events into order in text to comprehend what I read.	4 (14.3%)	6 (21.4%)	9 (32.1%)	6 (21.4%)	3 (10.7%)	3.07	1.21
25. I comprehend better when I translate every sentence in the text into Turkish.	13 (46.4%)	10 (35.7%)	2 (7.1%)	2 (7.1%)	1 (3.6%)	4.14	1.07
26. I read several times to comprehend what I read.	13 (46.4%)	8 (28.6%)	2 (7.1%)	5 (17.9%)	0 (0%)	4.03	1.13
27. I look at the pictures given to comprehend what I read.	10 (35.7%)	10 (35.7%)	5 (17.9%)	2 (7.1%)	1 (3.6%)	3.92	1.08
28. While reading, I try to check whether I comprehend what I read.	7 (25.0%)	10 (35.7%)	8 (28.6%)	2 (7.1%)	1 (3.6%)	3.71	1.04
<b>Post-reading strategies</b>						3.51	.77
29. I comprehend better when I identify the main idea of the text.	4 (14.3%)	14 (50.0%)	3 (10.7%)	6 (21.4%)	1 (3.6%)	3.50	1.10
30. I need to comprehend information that is not clearly stated in the text I read.	5 (17.9%)	8 (28.6%)	6 (21.4%)	6 (21.4%)	3 (10.7%)	3.21	1.28
31. I comprehend better if I create a graph, table, or concept map to comprehend the events or relationships in the text I read.	10 (35.7%)	9 (32.1%)	3 (10.7%)	5 (17.9%)	1 (3.6%)	3.78	1.22



Table 3 continued

Items	F					M	Sd
	5	4	3	2	1		
32. I ask myself questions to check my comprehending.	7 (25.0%)	5 (17.9%)	8 (28.6%)	5 (17.9%)	3 (10.7%)	3.28	1.32
33. It is enough for me to comprehend the main idea.	9 (32.1%)	5 (17.9%)	7 (25.0%)	4 (14.3%)	3 (10.7%)	3.46	1.37
34. After reading the text, I evaluate what is said in the text from a critical point of view.	8 (28.6%)	10 (35.7%)	4 (14.3%)	4 (14.3%)	2 (7.1%)	3.52	.64
35. I summarize what I read to comprehend it better.	11 (39.3%)	7 (25.0%)	4 (14.3%)	4 (14.3%)	2 (7.1%)	3.60	.95

The findings from the NAF revealed diverse perspectives among 8th-grade Turkish EFL learners regarding their reading comprehension needs. In terms of participants' beliefs about reading comprehension, a significant proportion (42.9%) indicated that reading the same topic from diverse sources helped their comprehension. While 25% relied on teacher guidance, indicating a need for scaffolding, a substantial number felt confident about their independent comprehension, revealing varying levels of learner autonomy. The majority (53.6%) found peer support unhelpful. The strong emphasis on clear and legible texts (60.7%) underscored the importance of accessible materials. The preference for texts with visuals (50.0%) indicated a potential need for multimodal resources. A significant majority of students (85.6%) indicated the importance of cultural references, supporting schema theory's emphasis on background knowledge. Similarly, a strong correlation was observed between fluency and comprehension (85.7%). Interest in the topic (78.6%) and autonomy in choosing materials (64.3%) pointed to the significance of intrinsic motivation and learner engagement.

For pre-reading strategies, the finding that 67.8% of participants found prior knowledge helpful. The moderate use of preview titles (39.3%) and following instructions (39.3%) suggest potential gaps in pre-reading strategy instruction. The strong association between reading purpose and comprehension (60.7%) emphasized the importance of purposeful reading activities. The use of skimming (64.3%) suggests that learners recognize the value of efficient reading techniques.

The widespread use of underlining (71.4%) highlights the popularity of active reading strategies. The varying responses regarding reading speed (35.7%) may reflect individual differences in cognitive processes. Moderate use of guessing word meanings (28.6%) and note-taking (53.6%) pointed to a need for explicit vocabulary instruction. The low reliance on dictionaries (25.7%) suggested that learners lacked effective dictionary-use skills. The high agreement on translation (82.1%) indicated a potential reliance on L1 mediation. The frequent use of rereading (75%) underscored the importance of repetition in comprehension. The use of visuals (35.7%) and monitoring comprehension (60.7%) pointed to the importance of metacognitive awareness.

For post-reading strategies, the emphasis on identifying the main idea (64.3%) highlighted the importance of summarization skills. The use of visual organizers (68%) suggested that learners found visual representations of information to be helpful. The balanced response regarding self-questioning indicated varying levels of metacognitive strategy use. The high percentage of participants who critically evaluated texts (64.3%) and summarized them (64.3%) suggested that they understood the value of active post-reading processing.

In sum, while learners appreciate the value of various reading strategies, the diverse responses and lack of a strong preference for any particular type suggest a need for more explicit and individualized instruction on effective reading strategies. These findings highlight the importance of considering learner beliefs, motivation, and individual differences in the design of reading interventions.

**RQ 2. What environmental needs do learners perceive in relation to reading comprehension?**

ENAC investigated students' perceptions of their environmental needs on reading comprehension. The findings are presented in Table 4.



**Table 4. Frequency of the items in ENAC (N=28)**

Items	YES	NO	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Physical Environment</b>			0.36	0.21
1. My classroom is well lit.	18 (64.5%)	10 (35.5%)	0.64	0.48
2. There are no distractions in my classroom.	7(25.8%)	21 (72.4%)	0.25	0.44
3. The seating arrangement in my classroom is suitable for reading activities.	16 (58.1%)	12(41.9%)	0.58	0.50
4. The furniture or resources in my classroom are rearranged according to specific learning needs.	7 (26.7%)	21 (73.3%)	0.26	0.45
5. My classroom is adequately ventilated.	14 (48.4%)	14 (51.6%)	0.48	0.50
6. There are no heating and cooling problems in my classroom.	16 (58.1%)	12 (41.9%)	0.58	0.50
7. My classroom has a designated area for reading and language learning resources.	4 (13.8%)	24 (86.2%)	0.13	0.35
8. My classroom has a quiet area for reading activities.	3 (9.7%)	25 (90.3%)	0.09	0.30
9. My classroom has measures in place to minimize noise and disruption during reading activities.	6 (22.6%)	22 (77.4%)	0.22	0.42
<b>Access to Learning Materials</b>			0.39	0.07
10. My class has sufficient reading materials (various books, magazines and online resources) in English.	10 (35.5%)	18 (64.5%)	0.35	0.48
11. I have access to reading materials in English in my classroom.	12 (43.3%)	16 (56.7%)	0.43	0.50
12. The English books in my class are suitable for my level.	13 (46.7%)	15 (53.3%)	0.46	0.50
13. English reading materials in my class are interesting for me.	9 (32.3%)	19 (67.7%)	0.32	0.47
<b>Access to Technological Resources</b>			0.70	0.09
14. My classroom has a smart board, computer, or tablet for digital reading activities	20 (72.4%)	8 (25.8%)	0.74	0.44
15. My classroom has secure Internet access to read online resources.	22 (77.4%)	6 (22.6%)	0.77	0.42
16. I have access to a digital library or e-resources in my classroom.	17 (60%)	11 (40%)	0.60	0.49
<b>Multimedia and Visual Aids</b>			0.44	0.08
17. My classroom has visual materials (pictures, posters, diagrams) for reading activities.	11 (38.7%)	17 (61.3%)	0.38	0.49
18. My classroom has audio materials (audio recordings, video recordings) for reading activities.	14 (50%)	14 (50%)	0.50	0.50
<b>Supportive Staff and Instructors</b>			0.57	0.13
19. My classroom has knowledgeable and accessible tutors or staff to help with reading comprehension activities.	19 (67.7%)	9 (32.3%)	0.67	0.47
20. My classroom has a system where students can get help or clarification when they need it.	14 (48.4%)	14 (51.6%)	0.48	0.50

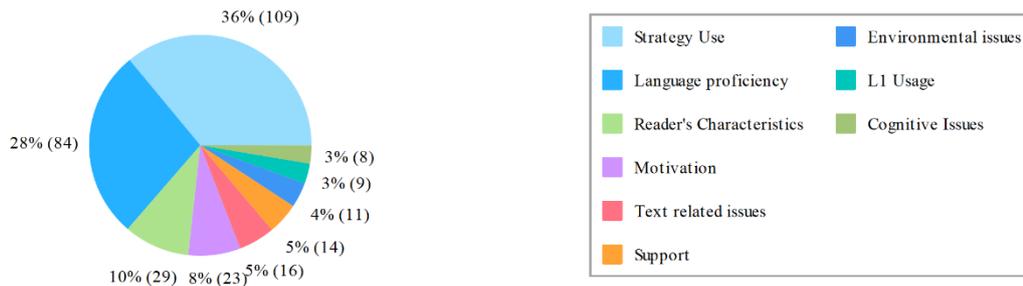
The ENAC provided insights into the environmental factors influencing 8th-grade Turkish EFL learners. The data revealed a complex picture highlighting both the strengths and weaknesses of the participants' learning environment.

In terms of physical environment and resources, the perceived adequacy of classroom lighting (65.6%) suggests a positive physical learning environment conducive to reading. However, the high level of reported distractions (72.4%) indicated a significant impediment to focused reading, potentially reflecting issues with classroom management or external noise. The mixed responses regarding seating comfort (58.1% positive) and the perceived lack of furniture arrangements to support diverse learning styles (73.3%) suggest the need for a more flexible and student-centered classroom design. The reported lack of adequate ventilation (51.6%) and inconsistent heating/cooling (41.9%)



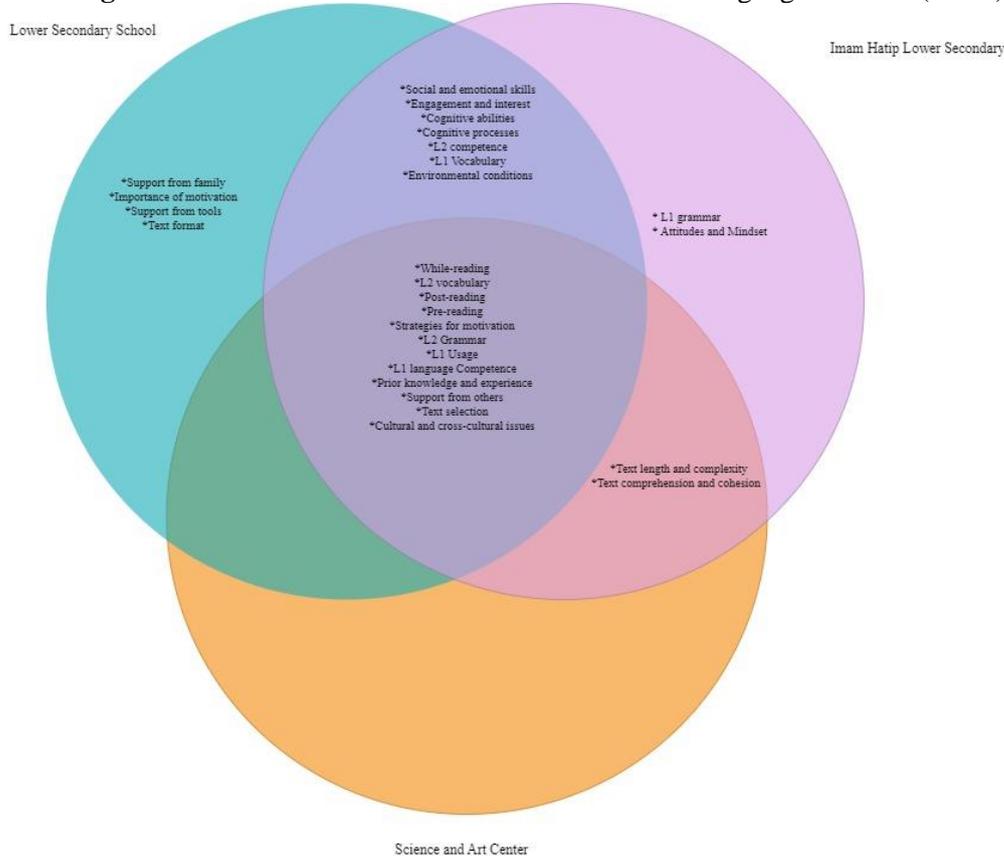


**Figure 2.** Code system (N = 23)



Language teachers identified strategy use as the most crucial factor that influences students' reading comprehension. Visual representations of the two-case model are provided in the appendices. Based on this data, a Venn diagram was constructed to offer a more comprehensive interpretation.

**Figure 3.** Results of semi-structured interviews with language teachers (N=23)



Students' language proficiency in both the native and target language and reader characteristics were also emphasized by language teachers. They also reported diverse student needs in reading comprehension, including adequate grammar and vocabulary, ability to think in English while reading, and skills in interpreting texts, predicting content, and questioning information. The lack of vocabulary knowledge and understanding of the cultural context were identified as potential sources of reading comprehension difficulties. Teachers employed various strategies to address these challenges, such as encouraging dictionary use, promoting independent reading, vocabulary practice, and group work.



Collectively, the findings from the three research questions provided a comprehensive understanding of the reading comprehension needs of eighth-grade Turkish lower secondary school students.

Based on Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) learning-centered approach, the target needs and learning needs of eighth-grade learners are presented in Table 5 below.

**Table 5. Reading comprehension needs of 8th-grade Turkish lower secondary school students**

Challenges	What Students Need	How We Can Help
<b>Limited reading materials</b>	Students do not have a sufficient variety in what they read.	Providing more interesting and diverse reading materials, both online and in print.
<b>Weak vocabulary &amp; guessing</b>	Students struggle with new words and guess their meanings instead of learning them.	Teaching strategies for building vocabulary, such as semantic mapping and learning word parts.
<b>Difficulty adjusting reading style</b>	Students read everything the same way, regardless of the purpose (e.g., skimming for main idea vs. reading closely for details).	Teaching students how to adjust their reading approach based on what they need to obtain from the text.
<b>Not checking understanding</b>	Students do not stop to ensure that they understand what they are reading.	Encouraging students to ask questions, summarize what they have read, and predict what might come next.
<b>Trouble predicting content</b>	Students found it difficult to guess what a text might be based on clues.	Teaching strategies for predicting content based on contextual clues, such as titles, pictures, and what they already know.
<b>Weak grammar &amp; vocabulary (Both languages)</b>	Students struggle with grammar and vocabulary in both Turkish and the target languages (e.g., English).	Providing targeted instruction to improve grammar and vocabulary skills in target language. Collaboration between native language and target language teachers to create a cohesive reading experience.
<b>Difficulty thinking critically</b>	Students have trouble analyzing and interpreting texts in English.	Teaching strategies for critical thinking in English, such as questioning the author's perspective and finding evidence to support ideas.
<b>Trouble analyzing texts</b>	Students found it difficult to break down and understand the meaning of a text.	Teach techniques for effective text analysis and interpretation.
<b>Limited resources &amp; teacher training</b>	Students do not have access to sufficient technology and resources, and teachers may need more support.	Providing secure Internet access, a wider range of digital learning resources, and professional development for teachers regarding effective reading comprehension strategies.



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<b>Potential cultural barriers</b>	Reading materials may not reflect students' cultural background.	Using culturally relevant materials and activities to ensure understanding.
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## DISCUSSION

This study explored the reading comprehension needs of eighth-grade Turkish EFL learners. These findings indicate that language learners have multifaceted needs in this context. In alignment with the first and third research questions, which aimed to identify learners' and teachers' perceptions of reading comprehension needs, a clear consensus emerged. Both groups agreed that a lack of vocabulary knowledge is a significant barrier to reading comprehension. Many students reported difficulty with unfamiliar words, and language teachers emphasized the importance of adequate vocabulary for better comprehension. This challenge has also been highlighted in studies conducted in various contexts, including in Saudi Arabia (AlGhamdi et al., 2018; Alshehri & Zhang, 2022) and Iran (Atai & Nazari, 2011).

The study's findings underscored the significant role of reading strategies in enhancing student comprehension, with both students and teachers acknowledging their importance. Students reported utilizing a variety of strategies, including skimming, underlining, and translating, indicating an awareness of their value. However, they also expressed a desire to explicit instruction in more advanced techniques, such as making inferences, summarizing, and using visual organizers, to further refine their reading skills. Notably, teachers confirmed this need, employing a wide array of pre-, while-, and post-reading strategies in their instruction, including think-alouds, questioning, and note-taking. This consensus on the importance of strategy instruction aligns with previous research, such as Kanmaz (2022) and Fadilah et al. (2021), which demonstrated that explicit and comprehensive strategy instruction significantly improves reading comprehension outcomes.

Student participants also indicated that motivation plays a crucial role in their reading experience. They noted that reading texts that were engaging or culturally relevant improved their willingness to engage in the reading tasks. This finding is consistent with the research of Razavi and Gilakjani (2020), who highlighted the positive impact of culturally relevant materials on learner motivation and reading comprehension. However, as suggested by Karakoc et al. (2022), it is important to consider learners' diverse needs by providing texts that are both culturally diverse and suitable for various age groups.

Addressing the second research question, this study sought to understand learners' self-reported perceptions of environmental needs related to their reading comprehension. Learners identified several environmental needs that affected their reading comprehension. One of the most commonly cited needs is the availability of a conducive reading environment in classrooms. Students emphasized the need for a quiet, well-lit classroom with easy access to reading materials. This finding aligns with AlGhamdi et al. (2018), who highlighted the impact of physical and social settings on students' reading experiences and noted the importance of having access to a variety of reading materials, including digital resources. The finding that students benefit from reading materials that are interesting and relevant to their lives is supported by previous research, such as studies by Brantmeier (2003) and Karakoc et al. (2022), which demonstrates that topic familiarity significantly influences the comprehension of various academic texts.

The participants also emphasized the need for greater social support in the classroom. However, this finding has two dimensions: while students perceived a need for increased teacher support, teachers highlighted the importance of peer support and fostering a supportive learning environment. These findings are consistent with the principles outlined by McLaughlin (2012), which demonstrate that collaborative learning environments significantly enhance both student motivation and reading comprehension.



This study investigated language teachers' perspectives on learners' reading comprehension needs as outlined in the third research question. From the teachers' perspective, the primary needs of students revolved around explicit instruction in reading strategies and differentiated instruction. Many teachers noted that their students lacked awareness of advanced reading strategies, which hindered their comprehension. This finding aligns with Duke and Pearson (2009), who argued that explicit strategy instruction is essential for helping students become active strategic readers.

Teachers also emphasized the importance of addressing students' diverse needs. This finding aligns with the related literature, which highlights the significance of tailoring instruction to individual learning styles and preferences to enhance motivation, engagement, and comprehension (Ghavamma & Kashkouli, 2022). By recognizing and respecting each learner's individuality, as emphasized by Alvarez et al. (1993), more effective learning environments can be constructed for students in this context. Language proficiency of students is one of the areas emphasized by language teachers, which aligns with Endley (2016) and Maghsoudi (2022), who emphasized the critical role of language proficiency in reading comprehension.

Another area of concern for teachers was students' vocabulary development, which they also emphasized as a significant challenge. Teachers observed that many students struggled with unfamiliar words, which were identified as major obstacles to comprehension. This echoes findings from Alshehri and Zhang (2022) and Atai and Nazari (2011), who emphasized that limited vocabulary knowledge is a persistent challenge in EFL contexts.

As emphasized by the teachers who participated in this study, it is crucial to address the challenges faced by lower secondary school students in Türkiye, particularly their limited reading habits. Bağcı and Ünveren (2020) found a positive correlation between reading habits and self-efficacy in reading comprehension. Students with poor reading habits displayed low levels of self-confidence and reading comprehension. Thus, encouraging and developing reading habits among lower secondary school students in Türkiye could significantly improve reading comprehension.

The three research questions of this study collectively aimed to comprehensively investigate the reading comprehension needs of eighth-grade Turkish lower secondary school students. An analysis of the data collected from students and teachers revealed that eighth-grade Turkish EFL learners face multifaceted challenges in reading comprehension. Central to their needs are language proficiency, particularly vocabulary knowledge, effective use of reading strategies, motivation, and a conducive reading environment. The interplay between these factors underscores the need for tailored instruction that addresses both the cognitive and affective dimensions of reading comprehension.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Fostering proficient reading comprehension among Turkish EFL learners requires a multifaceted collaborative approach that prioritizes learners' needs. Understanding learner diversity is of paramount importance. By conducting thorough needs analysis and utilizing learning-style inventories, educators can gain invaluable insights into students' reading preferences, strengths, and challenges.

Tailored instruction is the cornerstone for effective reading comprehension. This involves customizing instruction to individual learners through adaptive teaching strategies, personalized learning plans, and the strategic use of technology. Various instructional methods can be implemented through tiered assignments, flexible grouping for reading activities, and a variety of reading materials to cater to diverse interests and levels. Personalized learning plans can guide individual learning journeys by setting specific, measurable, and achievable goals; providing personalized feedback; and recommending appropriate reading materials. To effectively support these customized learning approaches, a well-designed curriculum is essential. Curriculum developers play a crucial role in this process by conducting thorough needs assessments, setting clear and attainable learning objectives, and selecting engaging and culturally relevant reading materials. By designing objectives that



accommodate various learning levels and styles and offering diverse instructional activities, the curriculum can provide a rich, engaging learning experience. Activities may include visual aids, group discussions, hands-on projects, and integration of online resources.

Leveraging technology can revolutionize personalized reading instruction. Interactive online platforms, educational apps, and digital libraries offer a wealth of resources for individualized learning experiences including personalized reading assessments, access to a wide range of digital texts, and opportunities for interactive reading.

Creating a supportive learning ecosystem requires strong collaboration among stakeholders. School administrators play a vital role by providing the necessary resources, including access to a rich and diverse collection of high-quality reading materials, technology, and professional development opportunities for teachers. Investing in teachers' ongoing professional development is of paramount importance. This could focus on equipping educators with the knowledge and skills needed to implement effective reading instruction strategies such as customized teaching methods, personalized learning, and the use of technology to support reading comprehension.

Families play a crucial role in supporting children's reading journey. By creating a language-rich home environment, engaging in shared reading experiences, and encouraging independent reading, families can significantly enhance their children's reading comprehension and cultivate a lifelong love for reading.

Several limitations of this study should be considered when interpreting these findings. First, the relatively small sample size of 28 eighth-grade students and 23 language teachers may limit the generalizability of the results to the broader population of Turkish EFL learners across different grade levels. While the purposeful sampling strategy allowed for the collection of rich, detailed data from specific participant groups, the limited number of participants restricts the applicability of the findings to broader statistical inferences and to larger or more diverse educational settings.

Another limitation is the nature of the instruments used. Although self-reported questionnaires and semi-structured interviews provided valuable qualitative data, they may not have captured the full spectrum of factors that influence reading comprehension. Specifically, participants might not have been fully aware of or able to articulate all relevant factors affecting their reading processes.

Furthermore, the cross-sectional design of this study has temporal constraints. This approach does not allow for the tracking of changes in reading comprehension needs over time, thereby limiting our understanding of how these needs may evolve as students' progress on their language learning journey.

Finally, the specific Turkish EFL context in which this study was conducted may limit the transferability of the findings to other educational settings or contexts characterized by different cultural, linguistic, or educational features.

Future research could investigate the long-term effects of factors such as language proficiency, reading strategies, motivation, and environmental influences on reading comprehension development among Turkish EFL learners. This includes examining how these variables interact over time to shape learners' reading ability and comprehension. Additionally, studies could assess the effectiveness of targeted interventions designed to address specific reading comprehension needs, such as personalized teaching approaches, personalized learning plans, and culturally relevant materials.

The role of technology in supporting reading comprehension warrants further research. Future research could evaluate the impact of digital tools such as educational apps, online platforms, and AI-driven resources on enhancing motivation, engagement, and comprehension in Turkish EFL classrooms.



Future research can consider increasing the sample size to improve the generalizability of the findings and employ different methodologies to provide a more comprehensive understanding of reading comprehension needs. Longitudinal studies are particularly recommended to track changes in reading comprehension over time and identify the most effective strategies for supporting sustained improvement. Furthermore, future research could explore the applicability of these findings across diverse educational settings and contexts, including schools with varying resources and student demographics.

In conclusion, this study investigated the reading comprehension needs of eighth-grade Turkish EFL learners and revealed the complex interplay of factors influencing their reading development. The findings underscore the multifaceted nature of these needs, encompassing language proficiency, particularly vocabulary, the effective use of reading strategies, motivation driven by engaging and culturally relevant materials, and supportive environmental factors. Specifically, the study highlighted learners' need for explicit instruction in advanced reading strategies such as inference and summarization, access to diverse and level-appropriate reading materials, and a learning environment free from distractions. Teachers corroborated these needs, further emphasizing the importance of adaptive instruction and addressing potential cultural barriers.

Therefore, a comprehensive and collaborative approach is crucial for improving reading comprehension outcomes. Through adaptive instruction, this approach can prioritize explicit instruction in a range of reading strategies tailored to learners' diverse needs. Providing culturally relevant and engaging reading materials is essential to promote motivation and engagement. Supportive learning experience involves fostering collaboration, ensuring access to sufficient technological and digital resources, and reducing distractions. Providing targeted professional development for teachers further strengthens these efforts.

The insights provided by this study contribute to a deeper understanding of the specific challenges faced by Turkish EFL learners in developing reading comprehension. These findings offer valuable guidance for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers in Türkiye. By addressing identified needs through evidence-based practices and encouraging collaboration among stakeholders such as teachers, administrators, and families, Turkish EFL learners can be empowered to become more confident, proficient, and engaged readers, ultimately leading to improved academic and personal success.

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### **Declaration of AI use in the writing process**

The authors of this paper acknowledge that in developing this manuscript, Chat GPT 3,5 was used to assist in refining the clarity of writing. Continuous human oversight (editing and revising) and verified the AI-generated output were maintained. AI was never used to find, locate, or review literature or resources, summarize the articles, analyze the selected articles, or synthesize the findings. All analyses and higher-level efforts were completed by the authors.

### **Ethical Statement**

This study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Graduate School of Education (E-84026528-050.01.04-2200276280, 18.11.2022).

The research adheres to ethical standards ensuring that participants are fully informed of their role as research subjects, the voluntary nature of their participation with the right to withdraw at any time, the purpose and scope of the research project, the measures taken to maintain confidentiality, and any potential risks associated with their involvement. Participants are aware that the results of the study may be presented for publication, and their informed consent is obtained before their participation.

### **Conflict of interest**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.



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## APPENDIX A

### Semi-structured interview questions

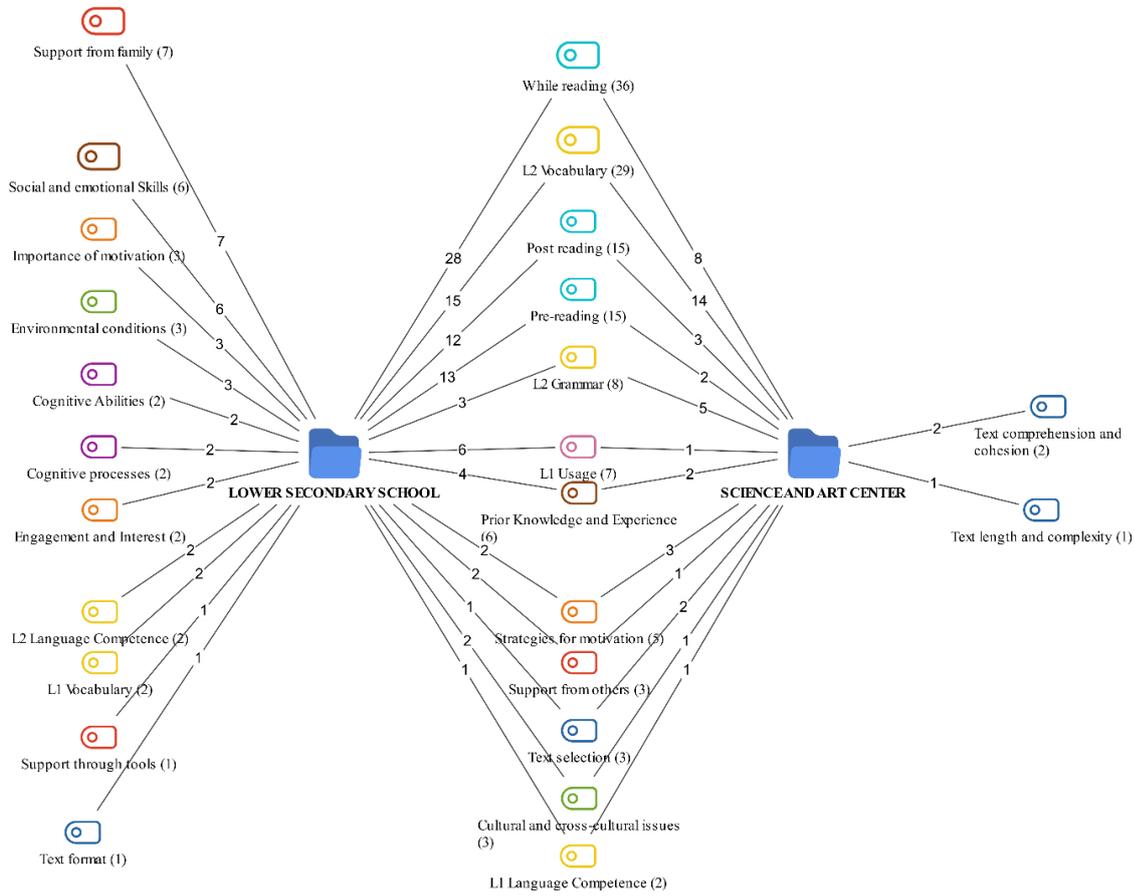
1. How would you define reading comprehension in the context of language learning?
2. What unique challenges do you think students face when reading in a foreign language compared to their native language?
4. What competencies are required for successful reading comprehension in a foreign language, specifically
5. What are the most common reading difficulties you observe in your students?
7. What do you think are the underlying reasons for these common reading problems?
8. Can you describe some specific techniques or activities you use to help students overcome reading comprehension challenges?
9. What do you consider to be the most crucial skill, competency, or strategy for effective reading comprehension in the target language? Explain why you believe this particular skill or strategy is so important.
10. How do you identify the signs that a student is struggling with reading comprehension?
11. What proactive steps do you take to prevent reading comprehension problems?
12. Are there any supportive strategies in the textbooks that you use?
13. Can you provide examples of how you use cognitive strategies to support reading comprehension during your lessons?
14. Can you describe specific metacognitive strategies you employ to help students become more aware of their own reading processes?
15. What specific techniques do you use to support students in developing and using cognitive strategies for reading comprehension?
16. How do you help students become more aware of their own thinking processes while reading,



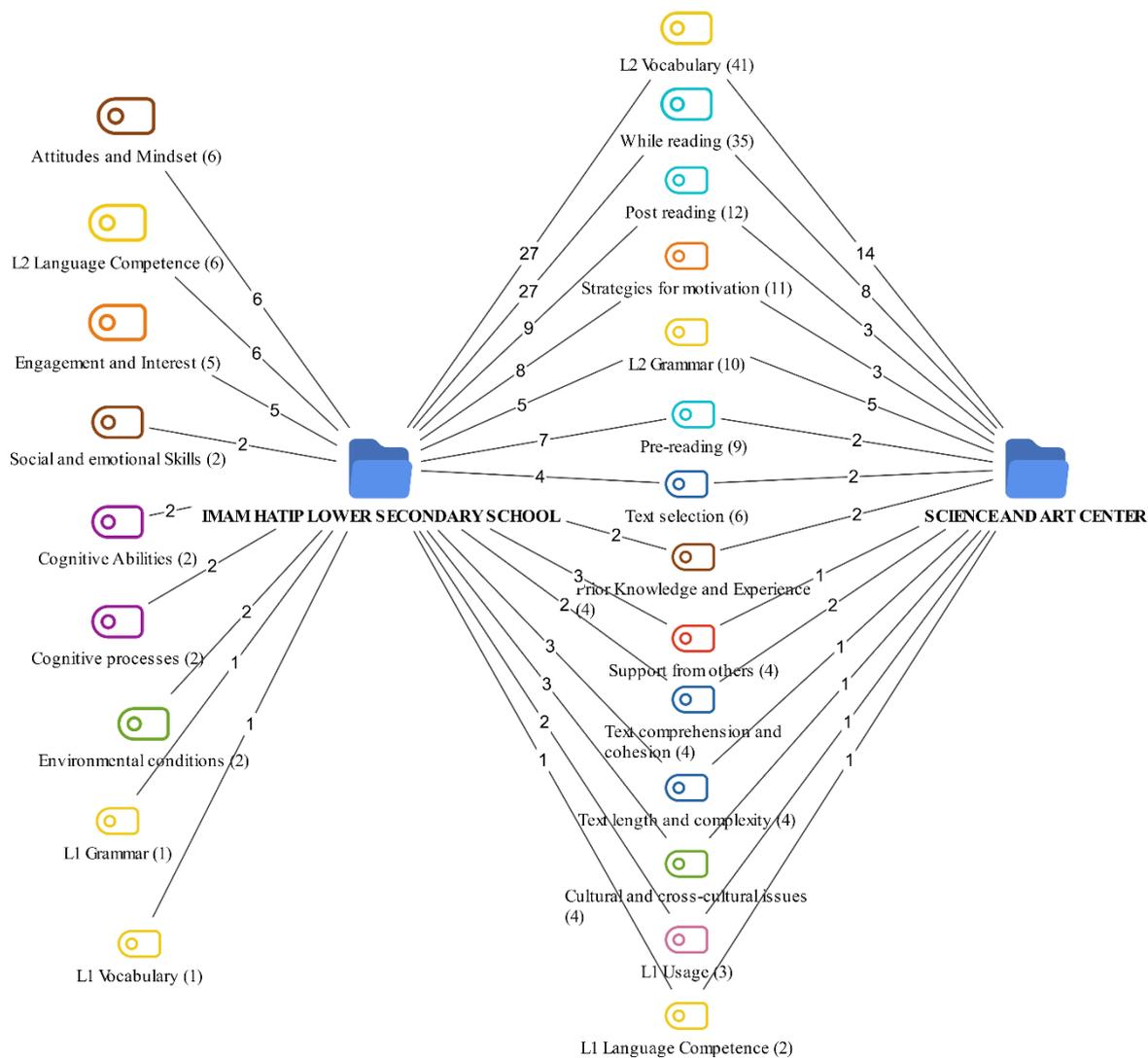
and how do you support their use of metacognitive strategies?

**APPENDIX B**

**Figure 4.** Codes defined from Lower Secondary School and Science and Art Center



**Figure 5.** Codes defined from Imam Hatip Lower Secondary School and Science an Art Center



**Figure 6.** Codes defined from Lower Secondary School and Imam Hatip lower secondary

