

Research Article

The Impact of Language and Environment on Primary Students' Reading Preferences and Habits

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History	Reading habits are behaviors that demonstrate preferences for reading, explain why one reads, and indicate how often one reads. The present study aims to investigate the primary students' preferences and habits and the impact of language and environment in improving reading. A quantitative approach using survey questionnaire was utilized to conduct the study. The targeted sampling was used to collect the data which were 124 primary school students, 61 female and 63 male learners from one of the international primary schools in Sulaimani, Kurdistan region of Iraq. The participants were in grade 5 and grade 6. The data was analyzed through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. The findings showed that students are interested in reading activities in the English language, and they enjoy reading activities in the classroom. Reading could be an important factor to elevate the knowledge level of the learners if it could be implemented as a habit. Besides, it is essential that reading could be a culture and one of the daily activities for students so as to make it habitual among the primary students. These outcomes could be beneficial for teachers, educators, and policymakers by providing insights into students' preferred reading languages and environments, enabling them to design more engaging reading programs and curricula. Understanding these preferences can help integrate reading more effectively into daily classroom activities, foster a reading culture, and ultimately improve literacy levels among primary school students.
Received Nov 12, 2024	
Revised Mar 31, 2025	
Accepted Apr 09, 2025	
Keywords	
Classroom Environment	
Kurdish EFL Learners	
Reading Activities	
Reading Habit	
Primary Student	



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1. Introduction

Developing strong reading habits at an early age plays a vital role in language acquisition and academic success. For primary school students, regular reading not only enhances vocabulary and comprehension but also fosters critical thinking and a lifelong love for learning. In particular, the language of reading materials and the surrounding environment can significantly shape students' reading preferences and behaviors (Majid & Tan, 2007). Reading is the most precious way and a great deal to approach life successfully and efficiently. The more we read, the more experience and exposure we gain (Leppänen et al., 2005). Reading is one of the four skills that everyone should know to learn a new language, that is an unnatural

act, also it is different from listening skill which is a natural act.

Furthermore, reading in academic performance has a fundamental impact (Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2014). Reading has an essential role in getting success to become a good student (Ip et al., 2021), students can enhance their reading habits through consistent practice at both home and school. Additionally, dedicated studying also plays a role in improving reading habits (Ahmad et al., 2021). For primary students, reading English sources like magazines and books can be an effective way to learn, especially for those students who are involved with the English language in English texts and references in their education courses (Yusof, 2021). Reading is a gateway to knowledge and essential for developing strong communication skills (Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2014; Yusof, 2010). Proficiency in reading is a very important skill that transcends borders and cultures, enabling individuals to thrive in today's global society. When individuals who read to manage their experience in a huge number of advantages with enhanced stages of self-confidence and self-esteem also with constant mood improved decision making and planning aptitudes and improved interpersonal and intercultural communication proficiencies (Mujan et al., 2019; Pandey et al., 2022).

Cultivating regular reading habits is essential for students' academic progress and personal growth throughout their lives (Pandey et al., 2022). Reading is not an innate skill, so teachers must carefully select engaging materials to improve students' reading comprehension. Previous studies have explored the use of print media, such as comic books and graphic novels, to support English reading proficiency (Balan et al., 2019; Clark & Foster, 2005), emphasizing the role of cartoons in fostering creativity, language use, and reading capacity.

While numerous studies have highlighted the importance of reading habits in enhancing language development among young learners, limited research has focused specifically on how language choice (e.g., mother tongue vs. English) and environmental factors influence reading preferences and behaviors in multilingual contexts such as the Kurdistan Region. Moreover, there is a lack of practical strategies and classroom-based activities tailored to promote reading habits among primary school students in private international schools. To address these gaps, this study investigates the reading habits and preferences of grade 5 and grade 6 students, with a focus on the role of language and environment in shaping these habits. A quantitative research design was adopted, using a structured survey questionnaire to gather data from 124 primary school students. The study aims to explore how reading habits affect students' language development and to propose targeted strategies and classroom activities to enhance reading engagement.

To achieve these objectives, the researchers seeks to answer the following research questions.

1. What are the primary students' viewpoints on reading habits and preferences in English?
2. What are the impacts of reading habits on primary school students in the English language?

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Importance of Reading in Primary Education

Reading is essential for teaching second languages because it is studied as one of the most important academic abilities (Pradhan & Wangchuk, 2024). Children can acquire reading in primary school as one of the most important skills. It helps them think critically, analyze knowledge, and problem-solve. Those who are not interested in reading do not perform well in learning, and the influences they encounter throughout the school system, as well as more independent study, require reading, which is essential for studying and achieving success (Zenelaga et al., 2024). When children begin to emphasize writing, they are in the pre-reading phase. Also, children will be taught the way of reading words called phonics when they start school, including expressing the sounds at the time they read the letters in the word. Ahmed (2016) suggested that reading is a thrilling journey to self-discovery and a means of better understanding one's own experiences. There is a positive correlation between someone's reading rate and their skills in reading (Bråten et al., 2017).

2.2. Cognitive and Linguistic Benefits of Early Reading

Reading involves a range of cognitive and linguistic factors, and it is known as a complex activity (Ghani et al., 2021). Reading is very useful for the human brain, and it is naturally a relaxing activity. According to a study by Hassan et al. (2021), reading can be influenced by the idea of top-down processing for the whole language approach. Children should be similar to those who are experts at reading in which they use context to predict what words are coming in sentences, just processing the print to the degree is essential to confirm their expectations (Cheki et al., 2023). It is important that children concentrate on the meaning of what they read rather than laboriously sounding out each word. Children can master their spoken language by speaking to others and giving them an opportunity to answer, so if children are persuaded to see it, they will become literate when their environment is filled with print. Teachers prefer to use a whole language approach rather than each letter and sound out in order to concentrate on the meaning and reason of printed language (Garces-Bacsal et al., 2018). Pictures can be used to help them understand better the texts and stories during the activities. Children can receive title guidance to sound the words they are

struggling with and help them learn how to do this. Children who are involved in reading and writing will be encouraged by whole language teachers to write independently from an early age and provide little or no systematic instruction in conventional spelling (Poedjiastutie, 2018).

In addition to this, reading can be the best way of learning new words rather than taking part in most daily communications and watching lots of programs (Dungworth et al., 2004). While children read books, they can promote cognitive development in a great way. It helps them to improve their imagination and enhance their self-discipline. Furthermore, parents can read books to their children as it assists them in developing language skills, and children at an early age can absorb everything in their environment. Therefore, when parents read aloud to their children their brains develop better. Studies have pointed out that children are less likely to acquire the bulk of their vocabulary through direct teaching, a view agreed upon by most theorists. Instead, they learn vocabulary throughout their lifetime in indirect ways through language exposure (Adnan et al., 2016; Balan et al., 2019). Moreover, Blake and Dearborn (1935) recommended that children be able to understand texts well by monitoring comprehension and concentrating meaning based on appropriate information from memory. Readers can gain excellent skills with phrases, words, and their meanings and more focus on comprehending with individual rereading. (Mugambi, 2015; Vandenhoeck, 2013).

2.3. Factors Influencing Reading Habits in Primary Students

McGeown et al. (2015) suggested reading is shown to have a huge impact on mind development which is converted into mental ideas during reading text. Symbols may be explained, derived the meaning and in the brain, a structure is formed. Those students who come from another academic environment would have difficulty with their preference for reading. Nowadays, people rely more on technology because all the information they search for they get on the internet and social networks; therefore, they have less time to spend on reading (Pradhan & Wangchuk, 2024). Thus, there are some other reasons that affect reading habits, such as family, home environment and teacher practices, that we are going to discuss below (Ramzan et al., 2022).

2.4. Family and Home Environment

Parents can persuade their children to be interested in reading due to one of the main things being the investment of time and energy. Parents are also providing the best possible start for reading by sitting with their children and spending time reading to them (Yusof, 2010). Parents can engage their children in reading activities by teaching their children to spend their time reading books and stories, especially at an early age,

because every kind of activity at an early age can affect child habits in their future education. Children learn habits by coping with adults' habits in their environment (Jabbar et al., 2021). Therefore, reading books by parents in front of them has a great effect on their reading habits. Johari et al. (2013) state that it is essential that parents sit with their children to show them how to utilize reading in their lives because this is an effective way reading can be a daily routine of the family. Research shows that those students who have higher achievement are more likely to discuss their school studies and what parents are reading with them or caregivers than those who do not (Lee & Yeo, 2014). The reading habits and students who wish to study are less likely to be affected by family monthly income, as has been shown by studies. Children can get aided indirectly by their parents to see reading as a part of everyday life to persuade them to read for pleasure. For example, magazines, to have books including newspapers in the house. Parents are required to see if children read more, they would be better at reading and they enjoy more at reading (Ferriman, 2013).

2.4.1. School Policies, Curriculum, and Teacher Practices

Those students who improve their reading ability are encouraged by their teachers as they play an important role in the learning process. For that reason, affection for English reading is raised and questions regarding teachers' reading habits (Tella & Akande, 2007). Whereas teachers are good at reading or are not necessary to be investigated to help the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Reading becomes an everyday habit due to reading practice repetition in a conscious time in the teaching and education field (Morrison et al., 1998).

Reading activities can also be assumed as class work, engaging children in comprehension, vocabulary building, or other reading activities. Predictable books, with repeated patterns, can be very helpful in building children's decoding skills and fluency, and also help them to develop confidence in their reading. Because of the concentrated attention to language aspects, these kinds of exercises are commonly referred to as intensive reading. They aid in improving learners' comprehension of language features and their command of reading strategies (Garces-Bacsal et al., 2018). Children can also be given time in class to share their reactions to books or other texts with the class, encouraging other children to read what they have enjoyed. Amara and Abdesslam (2023) claim that one approach that has become popular is to divide the class into small book clubs or literature circles, with each group reading a book and then creating a poster or other product that they share with the class. It is important to help your learners select books or other materials that are at their reading level.

Mushtaq et al. (2021) argue that school administration can play an important role in increasing reading habits, and this can be done in several ways one of them is to make the school's Library a magical Space for the students. The school staff can create a reading competition for students to progress and increase their reading activities and to make reading an important part of their lives; therefore, this competition has so many advantages to gathering information through reading books. This is the effective reading that opens the window of knowledge to personalities and students in many subjects that the demand for teaching reading through the curriculum cannot be under emphasized (Edeole & Adejoke, 2016). Students have good vocabulary information improvement and intelligence when teaching reading through the curriculum helps them. Furthermore, they can discover and use texts and contents to their own benefit in the different materials (Awan, 2023). Teaching reading through the curriculum is important for balancing and integration in addition to wholesome and expressive learning. While in this stage of knowledge and communication technology. To make learners attracted in reading, educators can also encourage learners to read in the classroom and bring their own reading materials to the classroom as well as the teachers can give them the freedom to choose their own reading materials to read and practice in the classroom (Ahmed, 2024; 2023; Celik, 2020). Moreover, they should be supportive while they are reading in the classroom and spending time with the students. Besides, teachers have to remind their students not only to spend their time reading academic books also they read magazines, stories, and motivational books (Cheki et al., 2023). Additionally, teachers can give specific time for the students to spend silent reading in the classroom as a useful method to achieve a healthy reading environment. Reading books in the classroom is an efficient method of teaching students because they can share their information with each other, and obtain information through class reading time (Ahmad et al., 2021).

2.5. Motivational Theories in Reading

Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) state that reading motivation involves a certain emotional connection that influences whether readers engage with or avoid reading materials. If one wants to have successful skill participation in society, reading is the foundation (Ahmed & Fatah, 2024; Ehiobuche, 2013). Students achieved reading and success in school by motivation which is a significant contributor. Guthrie and Coddington (2009) proposed a set of motivational constructs for the Motivation for Reading Questionnaire (MRQ) that contains reading efficacy, importance, curiosity, involvement, preference for challenges, recognition, grades, competition, and social sharing of reading. There are several factors that help learners read

more, the most important one is reading motivation. McGeown et al. (2015) reported that although reading is important and useful, not all learners prefer to read due to this skill is highly based on motivation.

Motivated readers thus will engage more in reading as stated by Kannan et al. (2023), students can influence their reading comprehension through reading motivation. The researchers continued that reading motivation can play a big role in all stages of motivation and understanding reading strategies in a variety of situations. Researchers highlighted that students' motivation completely impacts their reading which informed that those students with greater reading motivation are likely to read extra at a wider range. They clarified in detail that the study has drawn two major motivational constructs such as intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation.

2.5.1. Intrinsic Motivation

Fishbach and Woolley (2022) expressed that students who involve themselves in an activity will be given satisfaction, enjoyment, interest, or challenge to the activity itself as intrinsic motivation. Those who spend more time reading and often achieve for their own sake than students who are definitely intrinsically motivated and have an inherent interest in what they read (Lindenberg, 2001). A few experimental studies recommend that increases in intrinsic reading motivation leads to more reading engagement and more curiosity relating to reading (Miyamoto et al., 2019). Students freely attempt to learn what is the most paramount thing for them. Having intrinsic motivation there are not any negative effects. Those students who attempt intrinsic motivation will be learning without getting any rewards based on their desire, not external factors. According to Kanonire et al. (2022), teachers need to encourage learners to create a supportive environment which has less impact on their learner's intrinsic motivation as it is from a different background.

2.5.2. Extrinsic Motivation

According to Suárez-Fernández and Boto-García (2022), extrinsic motivation which includes engaging in a behavior or in order to receive external rewards or avoid punishment. Those who want to gain a reward and avoid punishment are best suited for extrinsic motivation. This kind of motivation emphasizes the external need to urge students to be involved in learning activities like assignment, grade, or performing something that makes teachers happy. Bråten et al. (2017) mentioned that there are two main branches of extrinsic motivation and those are integrative and instrumental motivation. Following this, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation has a negative effect on the students because they are less likely to take on information with their strong intention and internal desire; however, they learn as they are forced by the concern in the rewards or the punishment. Money or grades are two other rewards of extrinsic motivation

if a student does his tasks individually without fear of his parents and believing it is worth it for his chosen career means he is extrinsically motivated because he is doing it for instrumental value. External rewards can be a very effective way for learners to stay encouraged on assignment because extrinsic motivation is a good thing (Ahmed et al., 2023; Froiland & Oros, 2014).

2.6. Self-Determination Theory and Student Motivation in Reading

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), proposed by Deci and Ryan (2012), offers a more subtle understanding of motivation beyond the intrinsic–extrinsic dichotomy. SDT argues that learners are more motivated when their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met. In the context of reading, autonomy refers to students having the freedom to choose what they read, competence refers to their belief in their reading ability, and relatedness involves connecting with others through reading experiences (Deci et al., 2017). These components help explain why students in this study expressed more interest in reading when the environment supported their interests, confidence, and peer interaction. SDT has been applied in several studies on reading and language learning (e.g., (McEown & Oga-Baldwin, 2019; Printer, 2021), showing that when students are intrinsically motivated and feel supported, they are more likely to develop long-term reading habits.

2.7. Contemporary Studies on Reading Preferences

A considerable amount of literature has been published on reading habits and preferences among students. Loan (2017) employed a study at Delhi Public School, Srinagar, India, surveyed 150 students in grades 11 and 12 (ages 14–16) to examine their reading habits and preferences. The findings revealed that adolescents predominantly enjoy reading on electronic media, with fiction being the most favored genre, followed by non-fiction. Crime/detective fiction and self-help books emerged as popular choices among respondents. The study also highlighted how authors strategically use engaging elements, such as aggression, romance, and explicit content, to capture the interest of adolescent readers, reflecting the evolving landscape of reading preferences among senior-grade students.

Moving on now to consider the gender-based differences, a study was conducted by Loan (2017) on gendered reading habits that highlight differences between boys and girls, often portraying their preferences as distinct. However, studies of Singaporean adolescents (aged 12 to 17) challenge this notion, showing significant overlap in reading preferences. Survey findings from 4,830 students indicate that while girls are more likely to enjoy reading, both genders read for pleasure, with shared interests in genres like Adventure

and Science Fiction. Girls also engage more in online reading, consistent with their overall higher reading levels. These findings suggest that adolescent reading preferences are less polarized than often assumed, emphasizing the need for an intricate understanding to better address diverse reading needs. Furthermore, Ramasamy and Padma (2020) explored the influence of gender on the reading habits, preferences, and attitudes of school students, focusing on secondary and higher secondary students from five matriculation schools in Madurai City, Tamil Nadu, India. Using a well-structured survey method, 200 completed questionnaires were collected out of 250 distributed. Findings indicate notable gender-based differences: boys prefer non-fiction genres such as science fiction, crime, fantasy, and biographies, while girls show a stronger preference for horror and motivational books. Boys spend less time reading weekly (1–2 hours), prioritize job-oriented reading, and rely on school libraries, whereas girls dedicate 3–4 hours weekly to reading, focus on personal knowledge enhancement, and depend on their collections. Despite these differences, both boys and girls share preferences for fiction and non-fiction in English and Tamil, silent reading, and using e-resources like e-books and search engines for reading purposes.

Furthermore, Lee (2018) examined the evolving role of technology in language education, focusing on Human-Machine Peer Learning (HMPL), where children and AI co-learn through interactive engagement. Part of the Personal Primer project, it emphasizes limiting technology use to foster balanced learning, exploring properties like "Circadian," "Habit-disrupting," and "Online-Offline." Using Giorgi's phenomenological method, findings reveal that uncontrolled technological use can lead to 'bad education,' reinforcing harmful habits. Practical applications include aligning screen use with circadian rhythms, reducing habitual scrolling, personalizing learning with AI, and minimizing sensory strain using E-ink panels.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The present research follows a quantitative methodology using a descriptive approach. The quantitative method focuses on statistical measurements, mathematical analysis, and numerical analysis of data collected through questionnaires and surveys (Newman & Benz, 1998). The aim of quantitative approach is systematically defining a population, situation or phenomenon. The study examines how reading habits among primary students can improve their English language skills. It also explores the impact of reading habits on students' ability to understand complex vocabulary and their motivation to read when they encounter books that match their interests.

3.2. The Population of the Study

The population of this study consisted of 124 primary students (61 female and 63 male) enrolled in the fifth and sixth grades at an International Primary School in Sulaymaniyah, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, during the fall semester of the 2023–2024 academic year. The students were between 10 and 12 years old, and their mother tongue was Kurdish. However, they were receiving their education in English, following an international curriculum appropriate for grades 5 and 6. A targeted sampling technique (also known as purposive sampling) was used, as the selected participants represented a specific group of interest—young learners exposed to English as a medium of instruction in a multilingual setting. This sampling method was suitable for the study's purpose, which aimed to explore reading habits within this particular context. Data was collected between December 2023 and January 2024 through a structured questionnaire.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was used to collect data from the participants. Since the data were collected from primary school students, the questionnaire was distributed in physical form due to their young age, limited internet accessibility, and lack of access to smart devices. The questionnaire was initially designed by the researcher and then reviewed by the scientific committee of the College of Education to assess content quality, language appropriacy, and ethical considerations. As a result of the revision, minor modifications were made to the wording of certain items to ensure clarity and age-appropriate language, and one item was rephrased to avoid ambiguity. After the students completed the physical version of the questionnaire, responses were entered into Google Forms to enhance readability and organized for statistical analysis using SPSS.

Before the actual data collection, a pilot study was conducted with a small group of students from the same age group to evaluate the clarity, structure, and feasibility of the survey. The pilot study helped identify two confusing items, which were subsequently simplified for better understanding. The results also confirmed that the length and format of the questionnaire were appropriate for the students' comprehension level. Overall, the pilot study validated the reliability of the survey and ensured smooth administration during the main study.

Exploratory factor analysis using principal component extraction and varimax rotation revealed a two-factor structure. Factor 1 included items related to reading frequency, preference for English texts, and engagement with books at home. Factor 2 included items about perceived benefits of reading and enjoyment in classroom reading activities. The total variance explained was 65.3%, supporting construct validity.

3.4. Instrument

The instrument used in this study was a researcher-designed questionnaire aimed at investigating the

reading habits, preferences, and perceptions of primary school students. The questionnaire consisted of 10 items developed based on relevant literature and classroom observations, tailored specifically for fifth and sixth-grade students. A five-point Likert scale was used for all items, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), allowing for the measurement of varying levels of agreement and behavior.

To ensure content validity, the initial draft of the questionnaire was reviewed by a panel from the scientific committee of the College of Education, who provided feedback on item clarity, age-appropriateness, and ethical considerations. Based on their recommendations, minor modifications were made to improve the phrasing of several items. A pilot study was then conducted with 15 fifth-grade students from the same school to test the clarity and comprehensibility of the survey. As a result, two items were simplified for better understanding based on student feedback. The pilot confirmed that the structure, language, and length of the questionnaire were appropriate for the target age group.

To assess the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated. The internal consistency of the 10 items yielded a Cronbach's Alpha value of .809, indicating a high level of reliability. Cronbach's Alpha above .700 is generally considered acceptable, while values above .800 are regarded as good, thus confirming that the instrument reliably measures students' reading behaviors and perceptions (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

3.5. Data Analysis Procedure

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27.0. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, and mean, were employed to examine grade-based differences in participants' responses. Moreover, independent sample t-test was used to investigate the differences between male and female learners.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

4.1.1. Grade-Based Differences of Reading Habits and Preferences

This section examines participants' grade-based variations, emphasizing how students' reading preferences and habits vary by grade. This section investigates the changes in reading engagement, language preference, and attitudes toward reading as students move through primary school by examining responses from various grade levels. By comprehending these variations, one can gain vital knowledge about how reading habits change with age and academic progress, which can be used to customize reading materials and assistance to each grade level.

Table 1. Grade-based Differences of Reading Habits and Preferences

	Grade	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Grade 5	63	50.8	50.8	50.8
	Grade 6	61	49.2	49.2	100.0
	Total	124	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 shows the distribution of primary school children by grade level who are participating in a study on reading habits that aims to determine how these habits differ between grade levels. There are 124 students in the sample, split nearly evenly between Grades 5 and 6. Of them, 63 students (50.8%) are in Grade 5, while 61 students (49.2%) are in Grade 6. Because the distribution of grades is so evenly distributed, the study may provide a comprehensive view of reading habits in these two classes.

For the two grades, the frequency, percentage, valid percentage, and cumulative percentage are shown in each row of the table. Each grade level's representativeness in the total sample is further supported by the Valid Percent column, which shows that the proportions roughly match the actual number of students. By the conclusion of Grade 5, the Cumulative Percent column has increased to 50.8%, and by the end of Grade 6, it has reached 100%, indicating that the sample is completely represented in both classes. This cumulative approach provides a thorough understanding of students' reading habits as they progress through primary school, highlighting the nearly equal contributions of Grade 5 and Grade 6 students to the findings.

The study's goals are greatly aided by this grade-level balance, which makes it possible to compare the reading habits of students in Grades 5 and 6 and helps researchers spot any variations that might arise as grade levels rise. As a result, the table provides a basis for examining how students' reading habits change as they move through the grades and provides information on grade-specific methods for improving language development and reading habits. These results from the present study can then be modified to meet the unique requirements of every grade, which will ultimately lead to more successful interventions to encourage primary children's reading habits. The current study's findings contradict those of (Tshering, 2021), who noted the distinctions between younger and older students at Lhuentse District, India. He discovered that older students have a higher desire for reading and it is more habitual among older students compared to younger ones.

4.1.2. Gender-Based Variation of Reading Habit

With the goal of determining how reading preferences and engagement levels may change between male and female participants, this section examines gender-based variations in reading habits among elementary school students. By looking at these differences, the study sheds light on any clear patterns or trends associated with gender, which may help teachers create focused strategies to increase reading engagement among all children.

Table 2. Reading Habits and Gender-based Differences

Reading Habits Variables	Male		Female		<i>t</i> (122)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Reading Preferences and Habits	36.02	6.61	37.93	6.11	1.68	.557	.301
Language and Environmental Influences	17.70	4.19	18.49	4.07	1.07	.901	.192

Table 2 provides the results of an independent samples *t*-test comparing male and female students' scores on two variables: Reading Preferences and Habits and Language and Environmental Influences. A thorough breakdown of the gender distribution of the primary school students who took part in the study.

For Reading Preferences and Habits, female students ($M = 37.93$, $SD = 6.11$) scored slightly higher than male students ($M = 36.02$, $SD = 6.61$). However, this difference was not statistically significant, $t(122) = 1.68$, $p = .557$. The effect size, measured by Cohen's $d = 0.301$, suggests a small to moderate practical difference between the groups. For Language and Environmental Influences, female students ($M = 18.49$, $SD = 4.07$) also scored marginally higher than male students ($M = 17.70$, $SD = 4.19$). This difference was again not statistically significant, $t(122) = 1.07$, $p = .901$, with a small effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.192$).

Overall, while the mean scores for female students were slightly higher in both variables, the differences were not statistically significant, and the effect sizes indicate only minor gender-based variation in reading preferences and perceptions.

The study is well-positioned to investigate if there are any significant differences in reading habits, preferences, or language development outcomes that might emerge along gender lines because it was able to obtain a virtually balanced gender sample. This will improve the research findings' depth and relevance.

This result runs counter to earlier research that emphasized gendered variations in teenage reading habits, including Loh and Sun (2019) and (Ramasamy & Padma, 2020), with some studies highlighting similarities in preferences and others highlighting disparities. Nonetheless, this study's results, which were obtained from Kurdish EFL undergraduate students, demonstrated no significant difference between male and female learners.

4.1.3. Students' Perceptions towards Reading Habits

The purpose of this part is to investigate how primary school students perceive their reading habits and the role that reading plays in both their personal and academic life. Gaining insight into these impressions is essential because it reveals the attitudes, driving forces, and possible obstacles that affect students' reading engagement. This study aims to determine the elements that support or undermine reading habits by looking at their perspectives. This will provide a foundation for creating focused tactics to promote a culture of reading.

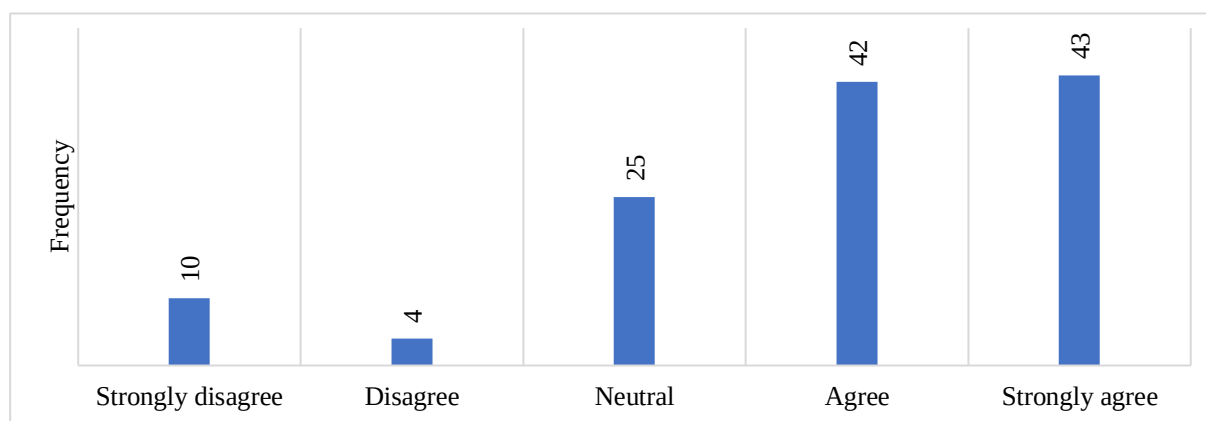


Figure 1. Frequently engaged in reading activities in English

Figure 1 shows the distribution of primary school students' responses to the statement "I frequently engage in reading activities in English" is shown in Figure 1. A bar chart displaying the data shows the frequencies for each degree of agreement. A considerable percentage of the students regularly participate in English-language reading activities, as evidenced by the findings, which reveal that 42 students "Agree" and 43 students "Strongly Agree" with the statement. In contrast, 25 students selected "Neutral," indicating a modest degree of participation. On the lower end, four students selected "Disagree," and ten selected "Strongly Disagree," indicating a smaller group of students who do not often engage in English reading activities. This distribution suggests that most students in the sample are positively inclined toward engaging in reading activities in English.

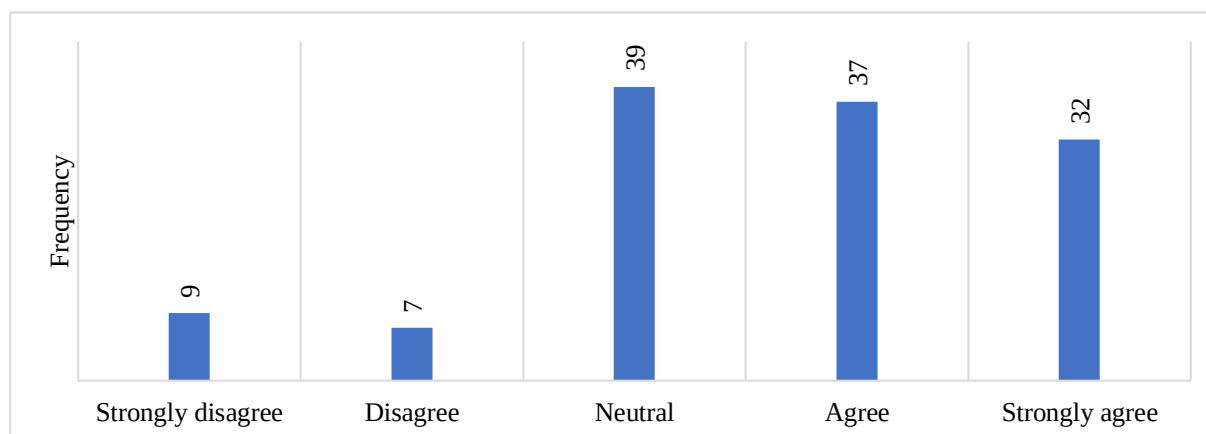


Figure 2. Finding joy in exploring various reading genres

The figure shows the distribution of responses to the statement "I find joy in exploring a variety of book genres, including fiction and non-fiction" among primary school students. This bar chart displays the frequency for each level of agreement. The "Neutral" category has the highest frequency, with 39 students, indicating a moderate level of interest in exploring different book genres. Additionally, 37 students "Agree" and 32 students "Strongly Agree," suggesting that a substantial number of students enjoy reading various genres. On the other hand, 9 students "Strongly Disagree" and 7 students "Disagree," showing that a smaller

portion of the sample does not share this interest. Overall, the chart suggests that while many students are enthusiastic about reading diverse genres, a significant group remains neutral, potentially indicating a varied approach to genre exploration among the participants.

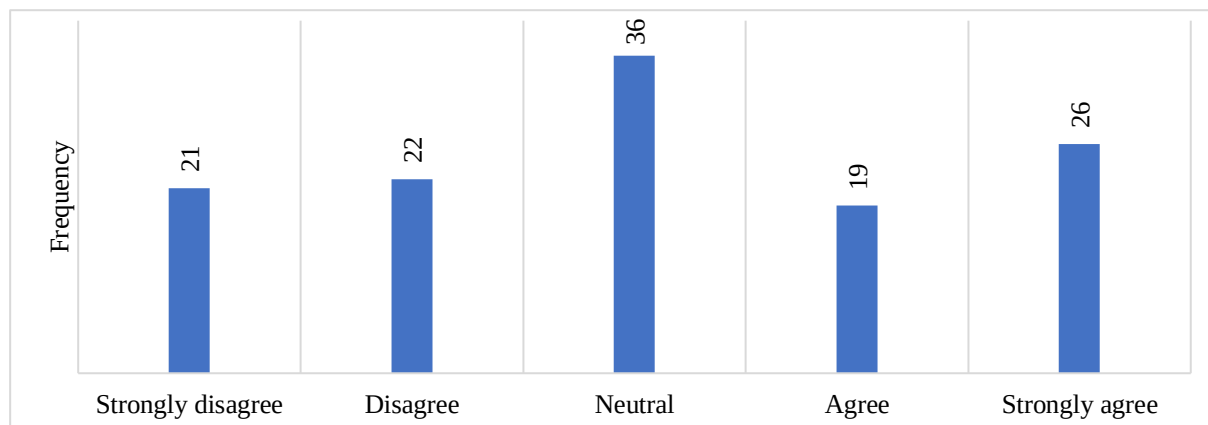


Figure 3. Appealing to reading various genders of texts

Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of responses to the statement "Reading novels is more appealing to me than reading comics" among primary school students. The chart reveals a mixed set of responses, with the "Neutral" category having the highest frequency at 36 students, suggesting that many students are indifferent regarding their preference for novels over comics. Among those with a distinct preference, 26 students "Strongly Agree" and 19 students "Agree" that they find novels more appealing, indicating that a notable portion of students favor novels. Conversely, 22 students "Disagree" and 21 students "Strongly Disagree," showing a considerable group that does not share this preference and may be more inclined toward comics. The distribution suggests diverse reading preferences among the students, with a balanced mix of enthusiasm, neutrality, and disinterest in favoring novels over comics.

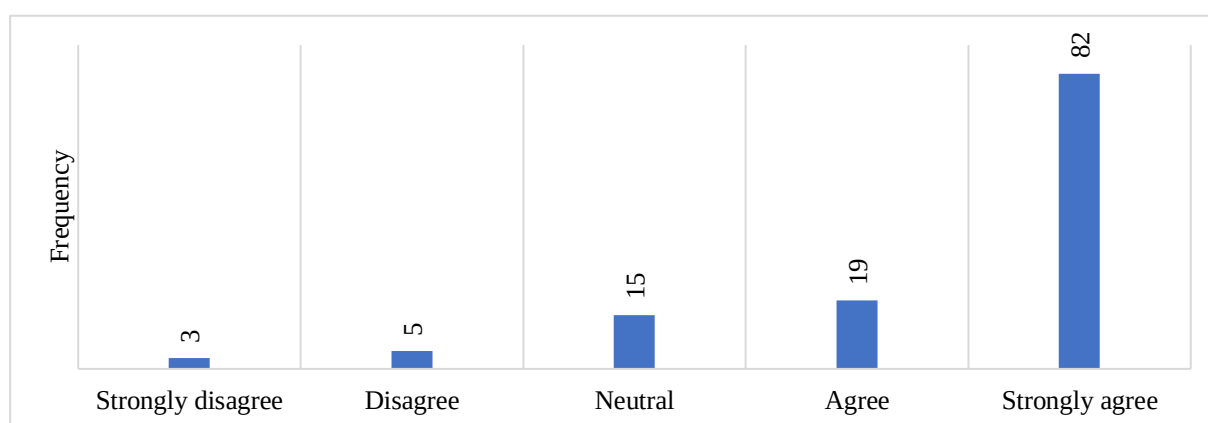


Figure 4. Preferred language for reading

Figure 4 displays the distribution of responses to the statement "English is the language I prefer for reading" among primary school students. The chart indicates a strong preference for reading in English, with the majority of students, 82 in total, selecting "Strongly Agree." An additional 19 students "Agree" with the statement, further

reinforcing the inclination towards English as a preferred language for reading. A smaller group of students expressed indifference, with 15 choosing "Neutral," while a minimal number showed disagreement—5 students "Disagree" and 3 students "Strongly Disagree." Overall, the distribution suggests that English is highly favored as a reading language among these students, with only a few expressing a lack of preference for it.

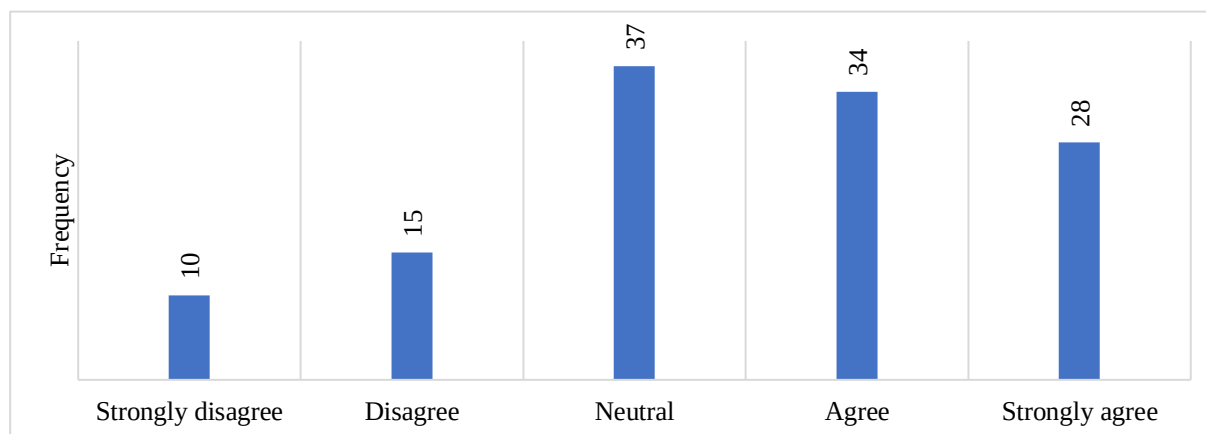


Figure 5. Dedicating time for daily reading as a daily routine

Figure 5 shows the distribution of responses to the statement "I often set aside dedicated time for reading in my daily routine" among primary school students. The "Neutral" response has the highest frequency, with 37 students, indicating that a significant portion of students neither strongly agree nor disagree about having a set time for reading. A considerable number of students, however, do affirmatively set aside reading time, with 34 students selecting "Agree" and 28 students selecting "Strongly Agree." On the other hand, 15 students "Disagree" and 10 students "Strongly Disagree," reflecting a smaller group who do not prioritize dedicated reading time in their daily routines. The overall distribution suggests that while many students incorporate reading time into their schedules, a large portion remains neutral, perhaps indicating variability in their reading habits.

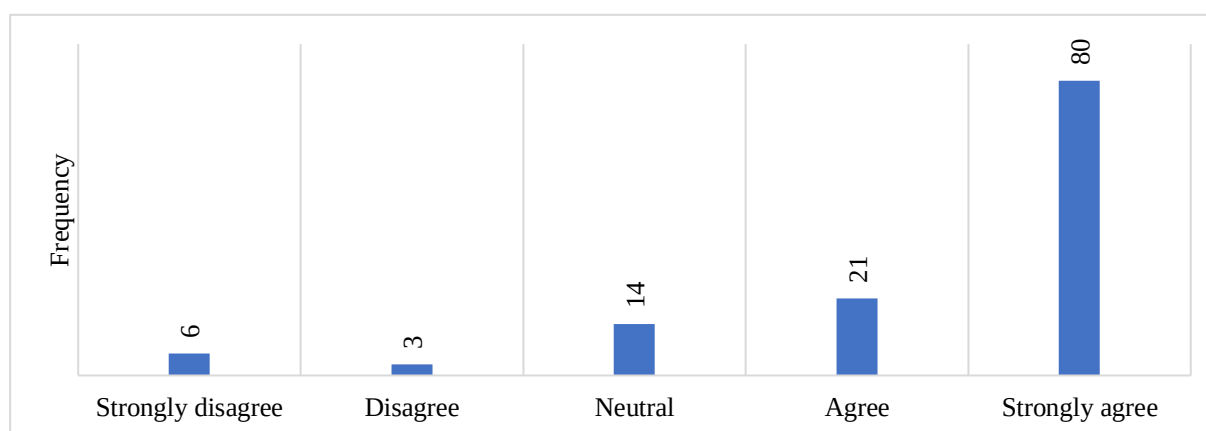


Figure 6. Preferred and comfortable reading environment

Figure 6 displays the distribution of responses to the statement "I prefer to read in a quiet and comfortable environment" among primary school students. A significant majority of students, 80 in total, selected

"Strongly Agree," indicating a strong preference for quiet and comfort while reading. Additionally, 21 students chose "Agree," further emphasizing this inclination. The "Neutral" category includes 14 students, suggesting a smaller group of students who are indifferent to the environment in which they read. Only a few students expressed disagreement, with 3 students selecting "Disagree" and 6 students choosing "Strongly Disagree." This distribution highlights a strong overall preference among students for a calm and comfortable reading setting, suggesting that environmental factors play a key role in their reading experiences.

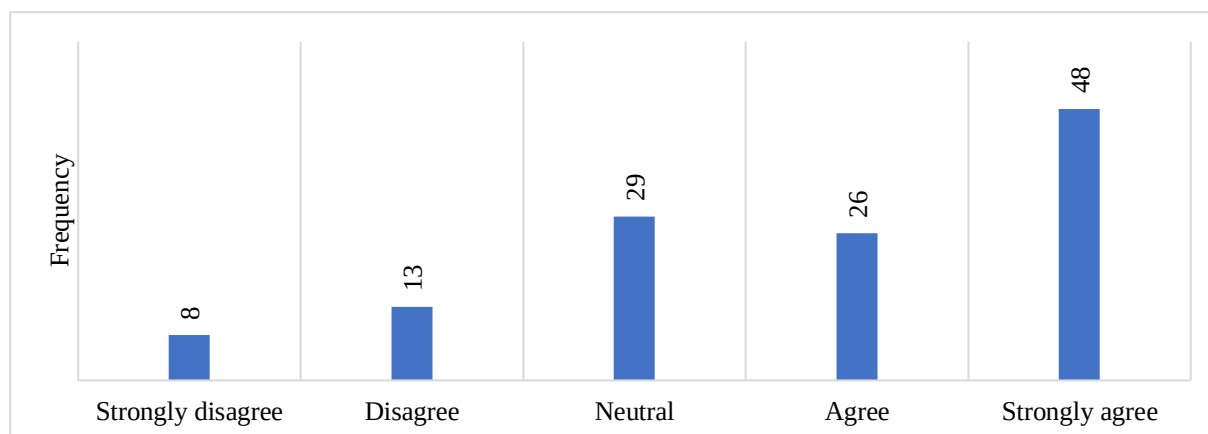


Figure 7. Reading at home vs. other places

Figure 7 presents the distribution of responses to the statement "I prefer reading at home rather than in other places" among primary school students. The highest number of students, 48, selected "Strongly Agree," indicating a strong preference for reading at home. An additional 26 students chose "Agree," further supporting this inclination. Meanwhile, 29 students selected "Neutral," reflecting a moderate stance, as they may not have a strong preference for reading location. At the opposing end, 13 students "Disagree" and 8 students "Strongly Disagree," indicating a smaller portion of students who prefer reading in locations other than home. Overall, the data suggests that most students favor reading at home, though a substantial number remain neutral or prefer alternative locations for reading.

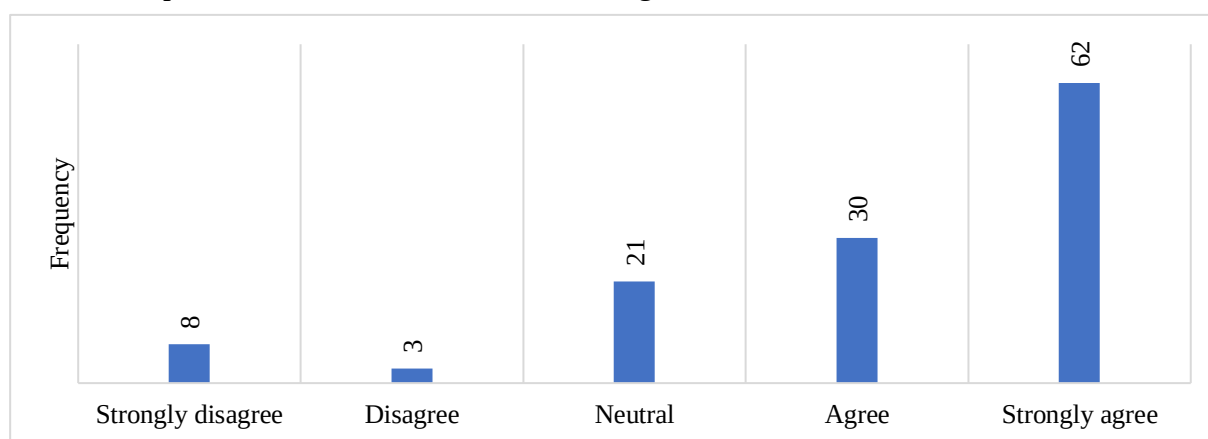


Figure 8. Contribution to overall knowledge and skills

Figure 8 shows the distribution of responses to the statement "I believe reading in English contributes to my overall knowledge and skills" among primary school students. A significant portion of students, 62 in total, selected "Strongly Agree," indicating a strong belief in the positive impact of reading in English on their knowledge and skills. Additionally, 30 students chose "Agree," further supporting this perspective. A smaller group, 21 students, indicated a "Neutral" stance, suggesting some uncertainty about the benefits of reading in English. Only a few students expressed disagreement, with 3 choosing "Disagree" and 8 choosing "Strongly Disagree." Overall, the distribution demonstrates a strong consensus among students that reading in English enhances their knowledge and skills, with minimal opposition.

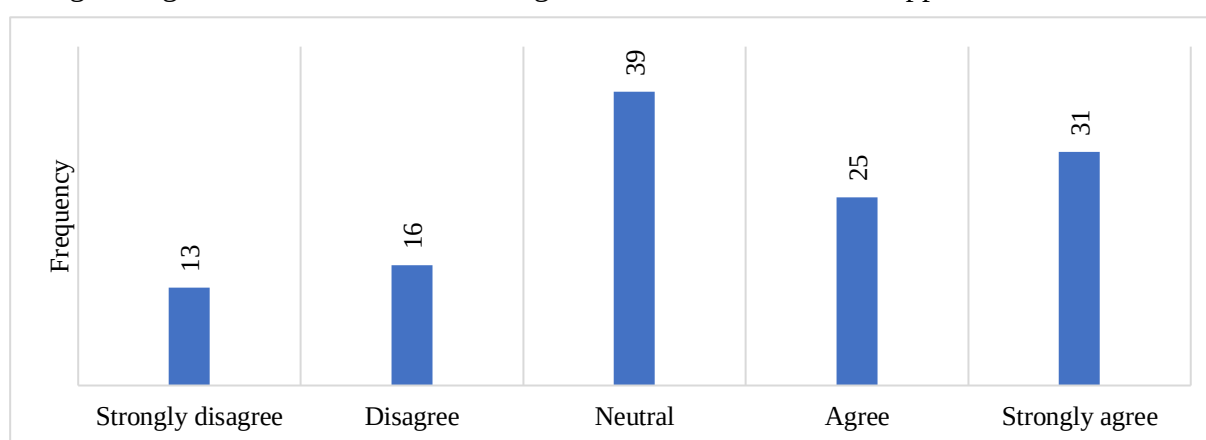


Figure 9. Effectiveness of reading with others to improve reading experiences

The figure illustrates the distribution of responses to the statement "I believe that discussing books with others enhances my reading experience" among primary school students. The "Neutral" category has the highest frequency, with 39 students, indicating that a substantial portion of students neither agree nor disagree with the idea that discussing books improves their reading experience. However, a positive inclination is evident, with 31 students selecting "Strongly Agree" and 25 choosing "Agree," suggesting that many students do find value in discussing books with others.

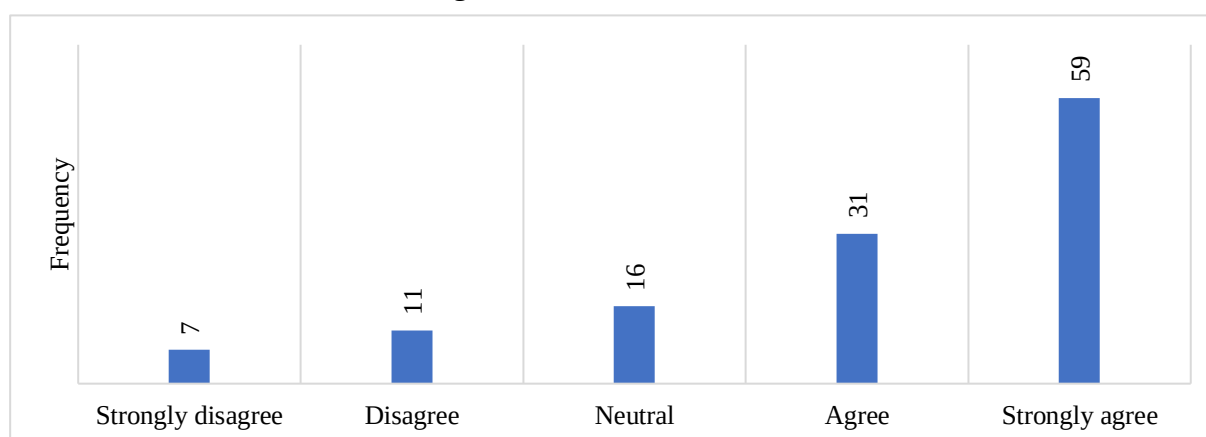


Figure 10. Confidentiality in understanding and analyzing English texts

On the opposing side, 16 students "Disagree" and 13 students "Strongly Disagree," indicating a smaller group that does not see book discussions as beneficial. Overall, the data shows a range of opinions, with many students appreciating discussions to enhance their reading experience, though a significant neutral stance suggests varied views on the practice's impact.

The figure presents the distribution of responses to the statement "I feel confident in my ability to comprehend and analyze English texts" among primary school students. The majority of students expressed high confidence, with 59 selecting "Strongly Agree" and 31 choosing "Agree," indicating a generally positive self-assessment of their comprehension and analytical skills in English. A smaller group of students took a neutral stance, with 16 selecting "Neutral," suggesting some uncertainty about their abilities. On the lower end, 11 students selected "Disagree" and 7 chose "Strongly Disagree," reflecting a minority who lack confidence in their comprehension and analytical skills. Overall, the chart shows that most students feel capable of understanding and analyzing English texts, with only a few expressing doubts about their abilities.

4.2. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the reading habits, preferences, and attitudes of elementary school students, with a focus on English reading. As a fundamental ability that promotes language development, critical thinking, and academic achievement, reading helps to clarify how these elements appear in Kurdish EFL learners. The sample's fair mix of grades and genders offers a thorough understanding of these problems.

According to the results, students show a significant preference for reading in English, and many of them express confidence in their capacity to understand and evaluate English-language materials. The availability of a variety of reading resources and the importance of English in their educational environments are probably the reasons for this engagement. Significant factors impacting children's reading behaviors were also identified, including their preference for calm, cozy settings and the part that parents and instructors play in encouraging good reading habits.

The findings of the present study can be competently interpreted through the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), proposed by Deci and Ryan (1985), which focuses on the significance of intrinsic motivation in nurturing sustained education. In line with SDT, motivation is upgraded through three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The present study promises the existence of overwhelming preferences for reading in English and enjoyment of reading activities to select

genres in supportive environments. Additionally, the element of competence is demonstrated by students who felt that reading in English enhanced their language proficiency and increased their self-assurance in class. The results also demonstrated that students appreciated reading conversations with others, which is consistent with SDT's relatedness component. Students feel more connected and inspired to read more when it is presented as a shared and communal activity. According to these findings, reading programs and instructional strategies that encourage autonomy, self-assurance, and teamwork can boost students' intrinsic motivation and help them develop long-lasting reading habits.

Overall, the data offer a thorough picture of the reading preferences and attitudes of elementary school learners, especially with regard to reading in English. Numerous students have a strong interest in reading in English, and many of them say they prefer reading in English. The influence of English in their learning environment may be the reason for this positive orientation, which shows that learners are at ease and inspired to read in a second language. Significant environmental preferences also emerge, with the majority of students stating that they prefer to read in a calm, cozy environment, frequently at home. Whether at home or at school, this preference emphasizes how crucial it is to create reading conditions that encourage concentration and enjoyment. Additionally, students generally recognize the benefits of reading in English, with many feeling that it enhances their knowledge and comprehension skills. This self-assurance in reading ability further motivates engagement with English texts, supporting language development. However, opinions on reading's social component and preferred genres differ. It is important to introduce primary students to a variety of book genres in order to spark their interest, as some students find enjoyment in exploring different book genres while others are less enthusiastic or remain indifferent. Similarly, students have differing opinions on discussing books with others; some believe it improves their reading experience, while others would rather read alone. The significance of attending to individual reading preferences is highlighted by these diverse replies. Despite having varying tastes in terms of genre and social interaction, students often exhibit a strong desire to read in English and acknowledge its advantages. Teachers and parents can better assist children in forming healthy reading habits that improve language proficiency and enjoyment by taking these preferences into account.

There are a number of reasons why primary school students are positively engaged with reading in English. First, English's dominance in educational settings probably has a big impact. Students may feel more at ease and inspired to read in English as they get more familiar with it through curriculum and classroom

activities, seeing it as a necessary skill for academic achievement. Second, students may interact with English texts more regularly if a variety of easily accessible English-language reading materials are available, such as books and internet content. Students may find reading materials that suit their interests with more resources available to them, which makes the process fun and interesting. Lastly, the nurturing surroundings that parents and educators create may help to further promote these reading habits. A good reading experience is promoted by calm, cozy settings and support at home or at school, which highlights the importance of reading in English as a skill for both academic success and personal development.

The results provide valuable information about the reading preferences, habits, and attitudes of primary school students, especially with regard to reading in English. The data represents a range of viewpoints thanks to the balanced distribution of grades and genders, which enables insightful comparisons and insights. Students' motivations, preferred environments, and the advantages they see in reading in English are the main themes that come to light.

The participants show a significant preference for reading in English, and many of them express confidence in their capacity to understand and evaluate English-language materials. The incorporation of English into their learning environment, where regular exposure and academic relevance emphasize its significance, may be the cause of this positive engagement. Additionally, students acknowledge the importance of reading for improving their knowledge and abilities, indicating that the activity has both academic and personal significance.

A large majority of people choose calm, comfortable environments, frequently at home, for their reading activities, demonstrating the importance of environmental preferences. This emphasizes how crucial it is to create situations that encourage concentration and enjoyment. Individual differences are further highlighted by the diverse genre choices and social reading activities. While a sizable percentage of students are neutral or prefer reading alone, many others take pleasure in exploring a variety of genres and engaging in peer discussions about books.

In contrast to earlier research, this study supports findings by Adnan et al. (2016) and Balan et al. (2019) that highlight how parents influence their children's reading habits. However, previous studies by Loh and Sun (2019) and Ramasamy and Padma (2020), which documented clear gender-based variations in reading habits, are called into question by the gender balance in reading preferences that have been observed. Cultural or environmental factors, such as the inclusion of English in the curriculum and the

impact of contemporary teaching methods in Kurdistan, could be the cause of this disparity.

One intriguing discovery is that students strongly like English as a reading language and believe it contributes to the development of knowledge and skills. It may be a sign that the students see English as a useful instrument for their own development as well as a necessary academic subject. Similar to this, some students find social reading activities beneficial, even though many students prefer reading alone. This suggests that reading treatments should be adaptable to accommodate a range of preferences.

The study concludes by emphasizing the value of establishing reading-supportive settings in both homes and schools. In order to promote persistent reading habits, educators and parents should think about offering a variety of reading resources, cultivating a positive reading culture, and attending to individual preferences. Future studies should investigate the long-term effects of reading engagement on language development as well as how these findings relate to other age groups or geographical areas.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that primary school students show a generally positive engagement with reading in English, influenced by factors such as educational exposure, accessibility of diverse reading materials, and supportive reading environments. These findings highlight the importance of fostering comfortable, resource-rich settings that encourage reading and align with students' interests. While most students recognize the benefits of reading in English, preferences vary regarding genre exploration and the social aspects of reading. To further enhance reading habits, educators and parents should consider these individual preferences, offering a range of genres and opportunities for both independent and collaborative reading experiences. Ultimately, nurturing these habits can support language development, boost academic achievement, and foster a lifelong appreciation for reading.

These results imply that in order to accommodate a range of interests and requirements, parents and educators should embrace flexible approaches. They can promote more regular and pleasurable reading habits by providing a variety of genres, promoting social contact when appropriate, and creating supportive environments. Furthermore, the confidence and interest shown in reading English-language materials point to a promising foundation for future linguistic and intellectual development. Students' motivation and general reading experience might be further improved by attending to their specific preferences and obstacles.

The findings of this study have meaningful implications for educators, parents, and policymakers aiming to enhance reading habits and language development among primary school students. By exploring

students' preferences across gender and grade levels—along with their favored reading environments, genres, and attitudes—this research underscores the importance of designing targeted interventions. Educators can implement age-appropriate and interest-driven reading programs that cater to diverse student needs, while parents can foster conducive reading environments at home to support their children's engagement. Policymakers are encouraged to increase investment in diverse, age-appropriate English-language reading materials and provide professional development for teachers focused on integrating reading activities into daily instruction. School libraries should be regularly updated to reflect students' evolving interests. In this research it was noticed that the study showed some issues about the number of the students that they were 124 students, and this number is not much enough, so we recommend that it needs more participants so that the results become more sufficient and more realistic. And another problem was that our study did not include the teacher's perspective. Also, we recommend that using the teacher's perspective will make the study more sufficient.

Data Availability Statement: Data are available upon request.

Funding: The authors declare that no funding was received for this research.

Declaration of Competing Interest: The authors declare that they have no known competing of interest.

Research Involving Human Participants: This study adhered to the ethical guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki and National Laws. The study approved by Ethical Committee of Tishk International University. Participants were informed about the research regulations. Written Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

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