

## **The Effects of Reading Habits on Test Performance by Foundation-level Omani Students**

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Received: 3/30/2022

Accepted: 5/27/2022

Published: 6/24/2022

### **Abstract**

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the effects of reading habits among college-level foundation Omani students and their impact on the participants' performance in tests. The study used a qualitative and quantitative research method in which 70 participants from the foundation level were included. A survey questionnaire was used to collect qualitative data, while two college-based reading tests were used to collect quantitative data from the college-based tests. The main research question this study attempted to answer was whether foundation-level students have positive reading habits and attitudes towards books. At the end of the study, the data were analyzed quantitatively, using descriptive and inferential statistics to ascertain whether there was a correlation between positive reading habits in English and the participants' performance in an examination setting. The results indicated that positive reading habits correlated positively with the participants' test scores on two consecutive tests. Given the positive effects that emerged from the current study, the researchers would like to recommend that English reading teachers guide and encourage their learners to engage in reading as much as possible, as such habits will help them improve all aspects of literacy and succeed in achieving their educational and life goals with ease.

*Keywords:* Academic achievement, literacy development, reading habits, tertiary Omani learners, test performance,

**Cite as:** Samaranayake, S.W., Suneeta, K., & Vachira, J. (2022). The Effects of Reading Habits on Test Performance by Foundation-level Omani Students. *Arab World English Journal*, 13 (2) 37- 49. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol13no2.3>

## Introduction

Rapid change is being experienced in information, information resources, and access to information in the current society, where change is unavoidable, just as it is in every other field. It can be assumed that a person who keeps their knowledge up-to-date would be able to adapt quickly to this transformation and succeed in life and any career. The relevance of reading in adjusting to this changing era can be better understood when you consider that reading accounts for a significant amount of learned knowledge. Reading is a complex process that involves several phases of development. It is defined as "the act of the brain analyzing and making sense of signs and symbols observed through the eyes" (Pulvermüller, 2013, p. 464). Bamberger (1990) maintains that reading is a perceptual process in which symbols are identified. Krashen (2020) writes that reading habits will improve all aspects of literacy and increase school success. One of the school's primary goals is to teach positive habits among its students and keep them going throughout their lives.

A habit is a typical behavioral pattern learned and reinforced automatically in every circumstance (Erdem, 2015). Habits creep into our lives gradually and become established after some time. If patterns are not broken, they become set with time (Wood & Rüniger, 2005). When it comes to reading, which is the most basic method of absorbing information, it becomes a habit, and a new concept known as "reading habit" will emerge. The act of reading is carried out in a consistent, regular, and crucial manner throughout life due to the individual's perception of it as a need and source of pleasure (Verplanken, Myrbakk & Rudi, 2005).

Students at the tertiary level are expected to read academic resources such as textbooks and scholarly journals because such readings help them to expose themselves to different viewpoints, arguments, facts, and information, which allows them to consider the validity of such opinions, perspectives, and, as a result, students can perceive a better understanding of how others' ideas and views differ from their own (<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/waymaker-collegesuccess/chapter/text-the-purpose-of-academic-reading/>). Tertiary-level youth are curious and have developed a scientific mentality; have created a unique youth culture, and tend to be future leaders of society. Given all that has been stated above concerning the positive effects of reading habits and test performance, the researchers decided to conduct a study to investigate whether there is a correlation between the students' reading habits and their arrangement on reading tests, given the critical role that reading plays in Omani tertiary education, Tuzlukova, Eltayeb, and Gilooly (2003) state that teaching reading skills in English in tertiary educational institutions in Oman is considered vital for all academic courses taught through the medium of English. Therefore, it is mandatory for the students studying at the colleges of technology in Oman to be proficient in academic reading skills. The college where this study was conducted falls under the purview of the Ministry of Manpower in Oman, and it is one of the seven colleges that offer professional courses in Engineering, Information Technology, and Business Studies, leading to a certificate, diploma, and bachelor's degrees. It is a requirement for the foundation-level students to acquire a satisfactory level of competence in all four primary language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) to function well in the post-foundation program. The students are instructed medium of English.

The researchers, English teachers in the English foundation program at the English Language Center (ELC) of the college for the past three years, have observed that a great majority of foundation students from all the four levels (Levels 1 to 4) demonstrate low performance in the college-based examinations (Mid-Semester and Level Exit exams) carried out during the past three academic years from 2017 to 2018 (Quality Assurance Department (2018). Test result analysis (2017–2018) indicated that 1142 students from the four levels (1, 2, 3, and 4) sat for the Level Exit Exam, and 915 (80%) of them were promoted to their respective levels as a total (Test result analysis, 2018). However, 227 (19%) students failed the LEE. Compared to the pass rate of students on the Level Exit Exam, it is obvious the failure rate is high. A condition of this nature indicates that many students from all four levels (levels 1 to 4) have not performed well in the LEE. In addition, according to data from the Higher Education Admission Centre, 10725 students dropped out of school during the academic year 2016–2017. Among them, many students who studied in colleges of technology have withdrawn from engineering and technology majors at 31.3 percent, followed by administration and commerce majors with 28.9 percent, while information technology recorded 12 percent of students' withdrawal. One of the reasons for the exit from the colleges is that some students find it challenging with the education level they enter into higher education institutions ("Oman Education: More than 10,000 students dropped out of colleges," 2018). A condition such as the one described above can have pernicious effects on individuals and the whole country's socio-economic development in the future. Therefore, it is the onus of all educators to see that these issues are adequately addressed at the grassroots. Given the conditions prevailing in Omani education set up in general and the colleges of technology in particular, the researchers decided to conduct a study to examine possible reasons that negatively impact the performance of foundation-level students in reading test performance.

### **Research Problem**

Foundation-level students must sit for two college-based examinations, and, in general, commercially produced textbooks are used as instructional materials for foundation-level English programs. During the first semester (September-December) of the 2017-2018 academic year, the researchers taught reading skills to four different groups of level two students and found that their performance in reading was low in that test results analysis for the academic year of 2016-17 indicated that most students had received low marks for reading skills in both mid-semester and level exit exams. Therefore, the researchers who are also reading teachers in the foundation program hypothesized that there might be a possible link between the students' positive reading habits and performance on reading tests. They then decided to test the hypothesis postulated at the beginning of the study by conducting a survey and an analysis of the reading test results obtained from the study sample (Level Two-Foundation program).

### **Literature Review**

This section will provide an overview of the research investigating the reading habits and students' performance in reading tests concerning the published literature. A growing number of studies indicate that promoting reading can significantly affect children's and adults' academic and social lives. A study conducted by Clark and DeZoya (2011) found a significant positive relationship between enjoyment and educational attainment, indicating that pupils who read more are also better readers. In addition, evidence from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and

Development (OECD) (2002) showed that reading enjoyment is more important for children's educational success than their family's socioeconomic status. Likewise, Clark and Rumbold (2006) argue that reading for pleasure could be one meaningful way to help combat social exclusion and raise educational standards, while Twist, Schagen, and Hodgson (2007) observe that children with the most positive attitudes towards reading were more likely to do well on the PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) reading assessment. Clark (2011) and Clark and Douglas (2011) also reported a relationship between reading frequency and attainment. Another study by Sheorey and Mokhtari (1994) examined the habits of 85 college students at a Midwestern University in the USA. The researchers found the students who engaged in reading an average of 4.75 hours per week had scored higher on a reading comprehension test.

The researchers found one study partly relevant to the current study since it was conducted in tertiary education in Oman. Al Mansalli (2004, p. 212) wanted to refute the common perception of expatriate teachers working at the English Language Center of Sultan Qaboos University that "Omani students do not have a reading culture and Omani students are not motivated to read." Based on the findings of her study, the researcher refuted the claims made by expatriate teachers. However, Al Masalli's study did not investigate any effect of the reading habits of university students on their performance in the context of an examination setting.

The students at this college of technology are expected to master academic reading skills. They will study Engineering, Information Technology, and Business Studies during their post-foundation programs. The responsibility of the reading instructor is to expose students to various reading strategies, which include a set of steps that good readers use to make sense of the text. Comprehension strategy instruction helps students become purposeful and active readers who control their reading comprehension (Adler, 2001). As a result, considering the importance of reading in higher education, the section following will look at the importance of reading.

### ***Importance of reading***

This literature review informs us that in any higher-level learning context, reading is considered one of the most crucial academic skills for both second and foreign language learners (Noor, 2011), while Loan (2009) observes that individuals with good reading habits have the chance to widen their mental horizons and multiply their opportunities for academic goals. Supporting Loan's view, Noor (2011) stresses that reading is essential in teaching individuals how to cope with new knowledge in today's technologically changing and developing world. Holte (1998) also emphasizes that reading increases the quality of life and creates a reading culture. According to Ndikubwayezu (2009), learners become skilled and adaptable readers who can enhance their chances of success at school and beyond. In the context of higher education in Oman, it seems necessary and crucial to creating a reading culture since the common perception of academia in Oman is that there is no reading culture among Omani students studying both at schools and higher educational institutions (Al-Musalli, 2014). In addition, several authors claim that reading is not just for school; it is for life and is vital to our becoming better informed, having a better understanding of ourselves and others, and our development as thoughtful, constructive contributors to a democratic and cohesive society (Adler, 2001).

In light of previous research studies and the motivation for the current study, the research questions are as follows.

### **Research Questions**

1. Do foundation-level students have positive reading habits and attitudes towards books?
2. Do positive reading habits affect foundation-level students' test performance?

### **Research Hypothesis**

The following hypotheses were investigated in the present study:

1. Foundation-level students have positive reading habits and attitudes towards books.
2. There will not be a possible link between positive reading habits and reading test performance.

### **Methodology**

#### ***Participants***

The participants for this study were selected from the general foundation English program (level-2), which consisted of 14 groups, and each group had 22 students of both sexes. The reason for selecting the participants from level two was that the researchers were assigned to teach reading skills for level two for the given semester. The 14 groups of the level two section had 308 students in the first semester of the academic year 2017-2018. Using the students' list of names, five participants were randomly selected from 14 groups, making a total of 70, of which 37 were female, and 33 were male students. Random selection of participants was made as follows: The first five students were selected as per the list of names of the first group, and then the second five students from group 2. The last five students from group 3 and the same selection pattern were followed up in group 14. All participants had finished studying English skills (listening, speaking, reading, grammar, and writing) for one semester at level one at the college and learning at school for 12 years. Given the participants' age (17–18) and educational and social backgrounds, they were homogeneous in the current study.

#### ***Data Collection Procedure:***

Before conducting the study, the researchers received permission from the English Language Center to conduct the research. Before distributing the questionnaire, the researchers explained the purpose of the survey to the participants in both English and Arabic (Researchers sought the assistance of an Omani English instructor to explain the purpose of the study to the participants). A questionnaire was used to gather information about reading habits among the level two students. The researchers asked the students to write their college ID numbers in the questionnaire instead of their names because the researchers felt that the respondents would feel comfortable answering the questions frankly. Having collected the questionnaire from the respondents, the researchers used the SPSS statistical program (Version 20) to analyze the data gathered from the respondents. Scores obtained from the participants for the MSE and LEE Exams during the first semester of the 2017–18 academic year were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

### **Questionnaire**

The questionnaire for this study was extracted from the Booktrust Reading Habit Survey (2013), a national survey of reading habits and attitudes to books among adults in England conducted by Gleed (2013). However, some questions were adapted to suit the context of the respondents in the current study. To improve the reliability and validity of the research instrument, the researchers piloted the questionnaire with a similar but smaller sample of students (N = 10) from level 2 in the foundation program during the second semester of the academic year of 2015-16. Some of the observed errors required corrections, and rewording was incorporated into the main questionnaire. The revised questionnaire version included 14 closed-ended multiple-choice items to yield three types of data from the respondents: factual, behavioral, and attitudinal (Dörnyei, 2007). During the fifth week of the first semester (September–December 2018), the researchers distributed the questionnaire to 70 participants, and after responding, they collected them all on the same day. The participants' responses were then organized and examined using proper statistical tools, with simple percentages being generated to estimate response frequency.

### **Reading scores on the Mid-Semester and Level Exit Exams**

After the mid-semester and level exit exams were over, the researchers obtained the reading test results. They copied the study group's reading scores into an excel sheet for data analysis. Both reading tests were scored out of 25, and two examiners rated each answer script. The agreement between the two raters was calculated using Pearson's Product Moment ( $r = 0.93$ ,  $n = 70$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). The statistics showed that the general agreement between the two raters concerning the reading test scores of the study groups (70) was 0.93, which was a high agreement. The examination results for reading were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to answer the second research question. The results obtained from the survey and the analysis of the reading scores of the participants in the MSE and LEE are presented below.

### **Results of the questionnaire**

The first question in the questionnaire asked about the students' reading habits of English books. According to responses, only 5% of students read English books very often, while 57% would sometimes read. However, 20% of students rarely read, and 17% of responses were negative in that participants expressed that they do not read English books. The second question dealt with the frequency of reading an English text by respondents who answered negatively, indicating that they were reluctant readers. When students were asked how often they read an English book, 15% responded, "Every day," while 21% said, "Once a week." The choice of 10% was "Twice a week." Thirty-seven percent chose to read when a need arose, while fifteen percent expressed that they did not like to read in English.

Question three concerns the amount of time the respondents spend reading in English when it is their choice. The choices for this question ranged from more than 'one hour of reading' to 'not reading at all' unless it was required for them to do so. Only 15% of students spent more than one hour reading, while 32% spent between 15 and 30 minutes. Thirty-eight percent of participants spent less than 15 minutes reading. The fourth question sought to investigate the different reading preferences of the participants in that their preferences ranged from storybooks, fiction, and magazines to reading no material. The respondents equally preferred to read stories and vision,

and their next choice was magazines. Fifteen percent of respondents tended to read magazines, and ten percent said they liked to read e-books, with 5% of students opting to read on websites. However, twelve percent of students did not choose any reading material, indicating that they liked reading "Nothing."

Question five in the questionnaire asked the participants' motivational factors for reading in English. Twenty percent of students found college assignments as a motivational factor for reading in English, while 4% of students chose recommendations from lecturers. However, 24% of students wanted to read because of their friends. A clear majority of students (35%) were prompted to read to find out the information they needed, while a small proportion of students (13%) took to reading for pleasure and relaxation. Given the responses gathered from the study sample, it could be concluded that a significant motivational factor for most students was that they read in English to get information. In contrast, the minor motivational factor for reading was relaxation.

Question six was meant to explore the degree the students enjoyed reading English. Most of their responses to this question were positive in that 41% said that they enjoy reading very much in English, while 18% of students believed that they enjoy reading quite a lot. Ten percent of students found reading joyful, while a similar number (10%) reported that they do not enjoy reading much. However, 20% of students were highly negative, stating that they did not consider reading to be a form of entertainment.

Table 1. *Attitudinal questions and responses of the participants*

Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?				
Statement (Check the choice that best applies to you)	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I feel reading is relaxing.	9 (12%)	47 (67%)	9 (12%)	5 (7%)
2. I read to learn new things.	22 (31%)	30 (42%)	14 (20%)	4 (5%)
3. I feel happy if I receive a book as a present.	26 (37%)	18 (25%)	16 (22%)	10 (14%)
4. Reading improves my academic and social life.	26 (37%)	25 (35%)	9 (12%)	10 (14%)
5. I often start reading a book but get bored after a few chapters.	14 (20%)	28 (40%)	21 (30%)	7 (10%)
6. I can't find the time to read.	11 (15%)	25 (35%)	17 (24%)	18 (25%)
7. I can't find reading materials that interest me to read.	0	5 (7%)	49 (70%)	16 (22%)
8. I read all day at the college, so I don't want to read when I get home.	16 (23%)	14 (20%)	25 (36%)	14 (20%)

The attitudinal statements were presented in a random order, but they can be grouped into two areas such as 1. benefits and positive views of reading. 2. Reading impediments and negative attitudes. However, these statements asked about their general attitudes to reading, including both Arabic and English. When asked about the extent to which they agreed with "I feel reading is relaxing," very few (12%) of the respondents said they strongly agreed, and 67% confirmed they agreed. Twelve percent of them responded that they did not feel relaxed when reading. However, students (7%) strongly disagreed with "I feel reading is relaxing."

Regarding the second statement, "I read to learn new things," researchers found that most of the students strongly agreed (31%) while (42%) agreed. Twenty percent, however, disagreed, while five percent strongly disagreed with the second statement. Sixty-two percent of the participants felt happy when they received a book, while 47% were not pleased to welcome a book as a present. "Reading improves my academic and social life" received positive responses where 72% stated that they agreed. At the same time, twenty-seven percent responded that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the perceived benefits of reading. Sixty percent of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that they feel bored after reading a few chapters of a book, while 40% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the fifth statement.

Statement number six, presented to the respondents, was about finding time to read. Forty-three percent of students strongly agreed or agreed that they could not find the time to read, whereas 49% did not agree or strongly agreed with the sixth statement, meaning they could find time for reading. Statement seven asked for their opinions on reading materials that piqued their interest. A large percentage of students (92%) believed they could find reading materials that piqued their interest. Only a small percentage (7%) said they couldn't find reading materials that piqued their interest. The last statement in the attitudinal category was as follows: 43% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they read all day at college and they do not want to read at home. In comparison, 56% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea that they should skip reading at home after college.

The sections below present the descriptive and inferential test results for the participants' reading skills in the MSE and LEE. According to the bylaws of the college of technology (2004), foundation students are awarded 20 marks in MSE and 25 in LEE for reading. To find out whether the students' reading habits had any effect on their performance in reading in the MSE and LEE exams, the students were grouped into two based on the marks they had received in the MSE and LEE exams as follows: The two groups were named Group A and B. The students who belonged to group A were those who received 15 marks or above for SE and LEE, and group B were those who received less than 15 for MSE and LEE. A case where a student who received a mark of 15 or above for MSE but below 15 for LEE and vice versa was exempted from the descriptive and inferential test analysis. Then, the students' responses in group A were given to the following questions: "How often do you read when it is your choice?" How much time do you spend reading when it is your choice? What do you usually choose to read? What motivates you to read? Do you read English books? ") were tallied with their marks in MSE. The same procedure was followed with group B. The researchers hypothesized that the answers given to the questions above were directly related to the positive reading habits of the students. Tables 2 and 3 below indicate the

descriptive and paired-sample t-test results of MSE and LEE of the participants. Test results were analyzed using SPSS statistical software (version 20).

Table 2. *Descriptive statistics of Mid-semester and Level-exit exams*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	MSE	12.78	70	3.33	.39
	LEE	15.92	70	3.74	.44

Table 3. *Paired Samples T-test*

Paired Differences								
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	MSE	3.11	.37	Lower	Upper	-8.44	69	.000
				LEE	-3.14			

As shown in Table 3, a paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the scores between MSE and LEE. According to the test results, there was a significant increase in scores between the MSE ( $M = 12.78$ ,  $SD = 3.33$ ) and the LEE ( $M = 15.92$ ,  $SD = 3.74$ );  $t(69) = -8.44$ ,  $p = .001$ . This shows that students in the study group improved their reading scores more in the LEE than in the MSE, with a mean difference of -3.14.

Table 4. *Pearson's correlations test results*

		MSE	LEE
MSE	Pearson correlation	1	.619**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
N		70	70
LEE	Pearson correlation	.619**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
N		70	70

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2. tailed).

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the test scores and reading habits. As shown in Table 4 above, there was a strong positive correlation between the test scores and the reading habits,  $r = 1.000$ ,  $n = 70$ ,  $p = .001$ .

### Discussion of the findings related to the first research question

As described above, the current study was conducted to investigate whether the foundation level students have positive reading habits in English and attitudes toward reading in general and also to ascertain whether there is any relationship between the positive reading habits in English and the students' performance in reading skills in an examination setting. To answer the first research question, the researchers hypothesized that the foundation-level students have positive reading habits in English and attitudes toward reading in general. According to the responses obtained through the questionnaire circulated among the respondents of the study, taking all their

answers together, it can be concluded that a clear majority of students do not spend a considerable amount of time on reading. If students tend to spend more time reading, as Krashen (1993) has pointed out, students will be able to develop reading comprehension ability, writing style, vocabulary, grammar, and spelling. One of the possible reasons for such kind of behavior can be ascribed to the fact that most students nowadays tend to spend more time watching TV or using a computer for surfing the internet for primarily entertainment purposes rather than reading a book or any other printed material (Liu, 2005; Neuman, 1982; Ramirez, 2003).

This study found evidence that most Omani students are not motivated to read for academic purposes or pleasure. As noted in the literature review, evidence from studies suggests that reading for pleasure leads to increased attainment and academic success. Given the assumptions above, this study provides concrete evidence as to why most students in the foundation program do not perform well on reading tests.

Taken all the responses provided to the attitudinal questions as indicated in Table 1 by the respondents together, it can be established that the learners' attitudes towards reading habits are positive in that a clear majority of students thought that reading books is essential for them to improve their academic skills while at college and in social life when they are out of college. These attitudes indicate that students love to read and want to be a part of a reading culture. Given the mixed results that emerged from the survey, the hypothesis that the researchers formed at the beginning of the study that "Foundation level students have positive reading habits and attitudes towards books" cannot be accepted in terms of reading habits because the survey results showed that a majority of students did not have positive reading habits. However, regarding attitudes, it can be accepted because the responses that the students provided to the attitudinal questions were positive in that most students believed that reading books and other materials is essential for them to improve their academic skills while they are at college and in social life when they are out of college. Such attitudes reflect students' love for reading and their desire to become a part of a reading culture in their society. Given the mixed results that emerged from the survey, the hypothesis that the researchers formed at the beginning of the study that "Foundation level students have positive reading habits and attitudes towards books" can be refuted in terms of reading habits because the survey results showed that a clear majority of students did not have positive reading habits. However, concerning attitudes, the hypothesis can be accepted because the responses that the students provided to attitudinal questions were positive.

### **Discussions of the findings related to the second research question**

As described above, the second research question examined whether positive reading habits affect foundation-level students' performance on reading tests. To answer the second research question, the researchers formed a null hypothesis that there would not be a possible link between the positive reading habits of students and their performance in reading tests. According to the descriptive and inferential statistics, (inferential test statistics as shown in Tables 2 and 3) there is a significant increase in scores between the MSE ( $M = 12.78, SD = 3.33$ ) and the LEE ( $M = 15.92, SD = 3.74$ );  $t(69) = -8.44, p = .001$ . This shows that students in the study group got greater gains in LEE than in MSE, with a mean difference of -3.14. Therefore, given the results described above, the null hypothesis that the researchers formulated at the beginning of the study that "There

will not be a possible link between positive reading habits in English and their performance in reading tests" can be disproved. Moreover, as described in the Results section, when tallying the reading scores of (group A) students (those who received 15 and above for both MSE and LEE) with the responses that they had provided to the questions in the questionnaire, it was found that students in group A had specifically answered positively to the five questions below.

1. Do you usually read English books?
2. How often do you read an English book?
3. How much time do you spend reading English when it is your choice?
4. What do you usually choose to read in English?
5. What motivates you to read in English?

Similarly, when tallying the marks of group B (those who scored below 15 sports for both MSE and LEE) students with their responses to the same five questions as above, it was evident that they had explicitly given adverse reactions to the five questions. Moreover, the results of the current study are in line with the studies conducted by Clark and DeZoya (2011); Clark and Rumbold (2006); Twist et al. (2007); Clark (2011); and Clark and Douglas (2011), who reported that there is a relationship between reading frequency and attainment. In addition, Sheorey and Mokhtari (1994) also said that students engaged in reading for 4.75 hours per week. The students who scored higher on a reading comprehension test had spent more time on non-academic reading. Similarly, Cunningham and Stanovich (1991) and Krashen (1993) state that students who read in their spare time become better readers, score higher on achievement tests in all subjects, and have more content knowledge than those who do not. What Cunningham and Stanovich (1991) and Krashen (1993) have expressed concerning students' performance and their positive reading habits were further confirmed as accurate in the current study because we found the participants who did not read English books, who read in English very rarely, who spent very little time reading English materials, and who were not motivated to read English materials had performed poorly in both the MSE and LEE reading tests. Given the results of this study, it becomes imperative for EFL/ESL tertiary level instructors to provide more opportunities for their learners to read for pleasure and academic purposes in English.

### **Limitations and delimitations of the study**

As noted above, the current study mainly focuses only on reading performance in a college-based examination setting. It did not deal with other language skills such as speaking, listening, and writing, even though they are also critical language proficiency skills. This study presents an overview of what reading habits the foundation level students have because it will allow the researchers to see the weaknesses and strengths of the current reading course and make necessary modifications to help EFL foundation level students inculcate positive reading habits and attitudes to reading in English.

### **Conclusion**

This study was conducted to investigate the existing reading habits of tertiary level students who study English in a foundation program in the context of technological education in Oman, as well as to determine whether there was any link between the participants' positive reading habits

and their performance in reading skills in an examination setting. The study's key findings indicated that positive reading habits affected students' performance in an examination setting. Therefore, based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that students should be guided and encouraged to read as it will particularly help learners achieve higher attainments in education and, in general, they can lead a happy and contented life in the future.

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