

# The Level of University EFL Students' Reading Motivation in Jordan

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**Abstract**—The purpose of this study was to investigate the level of university EFL students' reading motivation in Jordan. The participants of the study consisted of 20 first-year university undergraduate EFL students at Ajloun National University, Department of English Language and Literature, Jordan. The instrument was a motivation questionnaire based on Wigfield and Guthrie's (1997) scale for measuring reading motivation. Data was collected and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS v. 26). The findings revealed that the level of Ajloun National University EFL students' reading comprehension motivation is high, with an overall mean of 3.40. Moreover, the findings indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between male and female students due to gender in the domains of challenge, curiosity, recognition, social aspects, competition and commitment. However, there were statistically significant differences in the domain of grades according to gender in favor of females. The study concludes with recommendations for further research.

**Index Terms**—motivation, EFL students, ANU, reading comprehension

## I. INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process. It is one of the main basic skills of language which plays a significant role in language learning. It requires students to learn vocabulary items and recognize phrases, clauses, and sentences. To do so, students need motivation in a way that encourages them and raises their self-esteem. Reading is also a way to obtain knowledge and information from a certain text. Harmer (2007) indicated that students read to get information related to their jobs, professions, study purposes, or enjoyment, and to get experience that may help them in life. Alexander (1988) states that reading is important to all subjects and school materials, as the more students read, the more information they gain.

Different factors affect students' reading performance, such as reading strategies, grammar, vocabulary, and syntax knowledge (Koda, 2007). In addition to that, other factors influence students' reading performance. These include students' awareness of reading motivation strategies, effective comprehension techniques, breadth of engagement in reading, extensive vocabulary knowledge and chances for oral and written expressions (Trehearne & Doctorow, 2005).

Moreover, reading is divided into many types, such as intensive reading, that includes scanning, which is reading a text silently and quickly to get certain specific points; Skimming, which is reading a text silently and quickly to get the main ideas.; reading comprehension, which is reading the text silently and answering different kinds of questions that need more time; extensive reading, which is reading literary texts for enjoyment; critical analysis, which is reading to have a look at other people's knowledge production to analyze and see its strengths and weaknesses that require a high level of education and time; and social reading, such as reading newspapers and magazines (Saragih & Oktavia, 2016, p. 59).

Motivation plays an important role in the education process and achievement. It affects human behavior psychologically. It is difficult to give a single definition. Ryan and Deci (2000) define it as "a stimulus and an intention." Bani Younis (2007) states that "motivation is self-strength that pushes and stirs behavior to achieve a certain goal.;" Atkinson (2000) defines motivation as "the degree of individual efforts and selections." Ghbary (2008) explains that motivation is "an internal tension that arouses behavior and urges it towards achieving a certain aim".

Researchers relate motivation to achievement aspects, such as reading, which is known as reading motivation. Abdel-Haleem (2009), Matheson (1985), and Alexander (1988) stress that motivation is very important and a key factor in enhancing the student's proficiency. Therefore, reading is the window through which the reader looks and sees a lot of written materials in books, which contain the experiences and knowledge of the world's authors and scientists.

### A. Statement of the Problem

Teachers, parents and educators complain that students' reading motivation is low. However, the researchers observed through their work as instructors in the educational field that students' reading motivation is low. As the

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problems of motivation may affect the students, classroom activities, there is a need to investigate the level of motivation, especially for university students, as few studies have been conducted on university students measuring motivation in light of gender variable. Therefore, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

- What is the level of university EFL students' reading motivation in Jordan?
- Are there any statistically significant differences ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) between university EFL students' reading motivation levels due to gender?

### *B. Significance of the Study*

Few studies were conducted on reading motivation at the university level in Jordan. Therefore, the researchers tried to attract teachers, educationists and curriculum planners towards the importance of reading motivation in teaching reading comprehension and stress the importance of using more reading activities related to reading motivation.

### *C. Limitations of the Study*

The findings of the study can be generalized to university first-year undergraduate EFL students who studied the course 'Reading Comprehension' at Ajloun National University, Department of English Language and Literature, in the first semester of the academic year 2023-2024.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Baker and Wigfield (1999) stated that many research studies published on reading focus on processes and cognitive shapes of reading, such as word distinction, compulsions that need motivation towards reading, and taking care of reading activities.

Sobh (2015) investigated the level of reading motivation in light of gender, grade, and achievement of basic school students. The instrument was Wigfield's and Guthrie's questionnaire for measuring reading motivation. The sample consisted of 738 male and 651 female students from government schools. A three-way ANOVA and LSR test were used. The findings showed that the reading motivation of the Jordanian basic school students was high; the domain of marks was listed first.

Ahmadi et al. (2013) investigated the relationship between students' reading motivation and reading comprehension in Malaysia. They included motivation constructs (interest, perceived control, collaboration, involvement, efficacy), text genres, specific versus general contexts, and the self-versus. Using qualitative research, the results showed that reading motivation positively affects reading comprehension. Thus, students with higher motivation can score higher on reading comprehension tests.

Meniado (2016) conducted a study to find out if there is a relationship among metacognitive reading strategies, reading motivation, and reading comprehension performance. The researcher used descriptive survey and descriptive correlational methods with 60 randomly selected college-level EFL students in Saudi Arabia. The results revealed that the respondents moderately use the different metacognitive reading strategies when reading academic texts. It also showed that the respondents have high motivation to read. They particularly prefer to read humor and comic books. There is also no correlation between reading interest or motivation and reading comprehension.

Abu Abeeleh et al. (2021) investigated the reading difficulties faced students at Ajloun National University to get more insight into the causes influencing the students' reading process. The researchers used a questionnaire as an instrument. The findings showed that students have high estimations of some difficulties they encountered because of text complexity, word recognition, and anxiety. The findings of the study also revealed that there were statistically significant differences between male and female students in their reading comprehension difficulties in favor of female students. The researchers recommended that teachers should encourage students to practice reading as much as possible in order to overcome reading difficulties.

Maneba et al. (2021) analyzed students' motivations in reading English. The population was 11 classes, with 345 students. The sample was 25 students in Grade seven, chosen randomly. The instrument was a reading questionnaire. The findings revealed that 5 students had a high level of motivation, 13 students had an average level of motivation, and 7 students had a low level of motivation. Moreover, the study showed that the students' reading motivation level is an average.

Li and Gan (2022) investigated the reading motivation, self-regulated reading strategies, and English vocabulary influence on the English reading comprehension of undergraduate students from five universities in southern China who completed a questionnaire test. The findings showed that vocabulary depth predicted reading comprehension.

There have been some research and studies conducted on reading motivation, such as those by Guthrie, Wigfield, Penencevich, and Toboada (2006), who investigated reading motivation and comprehension, but few were done on university EFL students in Jordan. This study comes to fill the gap as it investigates the effect of motivation on university EFL students' reading comprehension in Jordan because reading motivation still needs more exploration to arrive at certain results that may help teachers, students, researchers, and textbook and curriculum planners.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. Research Design

The quantitative method was applied in the present investigation. The data were collected by using a questionnaire that was directed to university EFL students to reveal and analyze university students' motivation in English language reading comprehension. The questionnaire was designed and developed by the researchers to answer the research questions.

#### B. Participants

The participants of the study consisted of 20 first-year university undergraduate EFL students at Ajloun National University, Department of English Language Literature, Jordan (n = 20). Their age ranges between 18 and 20 years (10 male students and 10 female ones). They were chosen using a simple random sampling procedure.

TABLE 1  
SHOWS THE FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES OF THE GENDER

Category	Frequency	Percent
Male	10	50%
Female	10	50%
Total	20	100.0

Table 1 shows the frequencies and percentages of the participants in the study sample by "gender," with a percentage of 50% for females and a percentage of 50% for males.

#### C. Instrument

The researchers developed a questionnaire based on Wigfield and Guthrie's (1997) scale for measuring reading motivation. The validity and reliability of the instrument were tested, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated. The instrument was also validated. The questionnaire consists of 17 items that cover different aspects: efficacy, challenge, curiosity, recognition, competition, grades, commitment, and social aspects. The first part of the questionnaire relates to university students' demographic information, which asks them about their gender. The variables in current studies have been conceptualized and constructed from a review of several previous studies. The responding scale is (4 = strongly agree, 3 = agree, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree). Before collecting the data, the researchers explained to the participants the objectives of conducting this research.

#### D. Statistical Analysis

The data were analyzed using (SPSS v. 26). A descriptive analysis technique was applied to analyze the generated data. Frequencies and percentages were used to summarize the attributes of the data set of the questionnaire.

#### E. Instrument Reliability

The researchers applied reliability analysis (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) as a measure of internal consistency in the current questionnaire. This analysis is necessary to study scale features and internal consistency between the questionnaire items. The analysis was done by calculating Cronbach's alpha for the items in the instrument. Cronbach's alpha for the items of challenge value is (.789), and for the items of the curiosity value is (.847). For items with recognition the value is (.812). For the grade, the value is (.778). For items of the social aspect, the value is (.725). For items of the competition, the value is (.708). For items of the commitment the value is (.717), and the items' overall values are (.851).

#### F. Instrument Validity

As shown in Table 2, the researchers analyzed the correlation between all items in the instrument to confirm its validity. The analysis was done by calculating the Pearson Coefficient for the items in the instrument.

TABLE 2  
VARIABLES CORRELATIONS

No	Items	Pearson Coefficient
<b>1. Challenge</b>		
1	I like reading texts that challenge my abilities.	.419
2	I like reading texts that need critical thinking questions and answers.	.391
3	I learn a lot from difficult texts.	.767
<b>2. Curiosity</b>		
4	I like reading texts on new topics	.694
5	I like to read about famous people	.537
6	I feel happy to read about topics of my interest	.632
<b>3. Recognition</b>		
7	I love to hear the teacher say that I am a good reader	.581
8	my classmates say that I am a good reader	.630
9	The teacher reinforces me for my good reading	.668
<b>4. Grades</b>		
10	I read to get high grades	.619
11	My parents inquire about my reading grades	.617
12	I read to better my reading grades	.648
<b>5. Social Aspects</b>		
13	I read for my parents	.553
14	I talk to my friends about my readings	.616
15	I consult my friends about what I should buy a book or a story.	.635
<b>6. Competition</b>		
16	I love to be the best to read in the class	.402
17	I study more to be the top in the class.	.682
18	I love to be the first one who answer the question.	.302
<b>7. Commitment</b>		
19	I exert efforts to finish my readings on time.	.477
20	I try to do all my reading tasks required by my teacher.	.646
21	Completing all my reading tales is one of my important interests.	.472

Based on Table 2, the Pearson correlation coefficient between all items for the challenge ranges between .391 and .767. Whereas the Pearson correlation coefficient between all items for commitment ranges between (.472-.646). Means and standard deviation (SD) were measured for each item. These items were ranked according to the following scale: (less than 1.75 = low; 1.76–2.51 = high; 2.52–4 = high).

#### IV. FINDINGS

Findings related to the first question: What is the level of university EFL students' reading motivation in Jordan? Table 3 shows means, standard deviations, ranks and levels of university EFL students reading motivation in Jordan.

TABLE 3  
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, RANKS AND LEVELS OF UNIVERSITY EFL STUDENTS' READING MOTIVATION

N	Domain	M	SD	Rank	Level
3	Recognition	3.52	0.33	1	High
1	Challenge	3.45	0.39	2	High
5	Social Aspects	3.42	0.34	3	High
2	Curiosity	3.37	0.42	4	High
6	Competition	3.37	0.34	4	High
4	Grades	3.35	0.48	5	High
7	Commitment	3.30	0.36	6	High
	<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.40</b>	<b>0.15</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>High</b>

Table 3 shows that Ajloun National University EFL students' motivation level is high in all domains. It can be noticed that domain number (3) "Recognition" recorded the highest level mean value among the statements being rated by the study sample, thus it was ranked first with the mean of (3.52), a high level, and ( $SD=0.33$ ). The researchers relate this to the students' interest in receiving new information and connect it with their previous experience. While domain number (7) "Commitment" was ranked last with a mean of (3.30) a high level, and  $SD = 0.36$ . The overall assessment of this variable was rated by the mean of (3.40), suggesting a high level, and ( $SD = 0.15$ ).

##### A. Challenge

Analyzing the mean and standard deviation for the "Challenge" domain.

TABLE 4  
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF THE CHALLENGE DOMAIN

N	Item	M	SD	Rank	Level
1	I like reading texts that challenge my abilities.	3.55	0.76	1	High
2	I like reading texts that need critical thinking question answers,	3.50	0.51	2	High
3	I learn a lot from difficult texts.	3.30	0.86	3	High
<b>Overall</b>		<b>3.45</b>	<b>0.39</b>	-	<b>High</b>

Table 4 displays students' perceptions of "Challenge." It can be noticed that item number (1) "I like reading texts that challenge my abilities" recorded the highest level mean value. Thus, it was ranked first with a mean of (3.55) a high level, and (SD=0.76). While item number (3) "I learn a lot from difficult texts." was ranked last with a mean of (3.30), a high level, and SD=0.86. The overall assessment of this variable was rated by the mean of (3.45), and (SD=0.39).

#### B. Curiosity

Analysis of the mean and standard deviation of the "curiosity" domain.

TABLE 5  
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF THE CURIOSITY DOMAIN

N	Item	M	SD	Rank	Level
1	I feel happy to read about topics of my interest	3.45	0.60	1	High
2	I like reading texts on new topics	3.35	0.75	2	High
3	I like to read about famous people	3.30	0.66	3	High
<b>Overall</b>		<b>3.37</b>	<b>0.42</b>		<b>High</b>

Table 5 indicates students' perceptions of "curiosity.". It can be noticed that item number (1), "I feel happy to read about topics of my interest," recorded the highest level mean value; thus, it was ranked first with a mean of (3.45) a SD of (SD=0.60). While item number 3, "I like to read about famous people," was ranked last with a mean of (3.30) a high level, and (SD=0.66). The overall assessment of this variable was rated by the mean of (3.37), and (SD=0.42).

#### C. Recognition

Analysis of the mean and standard deviation for the "Recognition" domain.

TABLE 6  
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF THE RECOGNITION DOMAIN

N	Item	M	SD	Rank	Level
1	My classmates say that I am a good reader	3.65	0.49	1	High
2	The teacher reinforces me for my good reading	3.50	0.51	2	High
3	I love to hear the teacher say that I am a good reader	3.40	0.60	3	High
<b>Overall</b>		<b>3.52</b>	<b>0.33</b>		<b>High</b>

Table 6 presents students' perceptions of "Recognition". It can be noticed that item number (1), "My classmates say that I am a good reader," recorded the highest level mean value. Thus, it was ranked first with a mean of (3.65) a high level, and (SD=0.49). While item number (3), "I love to hear the teacher say that I am a good reader," was ranked last with a mean of (3.40) a high level, and (SD=0.60). The overall assessment of this variable was rated by the mean of (3.52), and (SD=0.33).

#### D. Grades

Analysis of the mean and standard deviation for the "Grades" domain.

TABLE 7  
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR THE GRADES DOMAIN

N	Item	M	SD	Rank	Level
1	I read to improve my reading grades	3.45	0.83	1	High
2	My parents inquire about my reading grades	3.35	0.81	2	High
3	I read to get high grades	3.25	0.64	3	High
<b>Overall</b>		<b>3.35</b>	<b>0.48</b>	-	<b>High</b>

Table 7 shows students' perceptions of "Grades". It can be noticed that item number (1) "I read to improve my reading grades" recorded the highest level mean value. Thus, it was ranked first with a mean of (3.45) a high level, and (SD=0.83). While item number (3) "I read to get high grades" was ranked last with a mean of (3.25) a high level, and (SD=0.64). The overall assessment of this variable was rated by the mean of (3.35), and (SD=0.48).

#### E. Social Aspects

Analysis of the mean and standard deviation for the "Social Aspects" domain.

TABLE 8  
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR THE 'SOCIAL ASPECTS' DOMAIN

N	Item	M	SD	Rank	Level
1	I read for my parents	3.50	0.51	1	High
2	I talk to my friends about my readings	3.40	0.50	2	High
3	I consult my friends about what I should buy a book or a story.	3.35	0.67	3	High
<b>Overall</b>		<b>3.42</b>	<b>0.34</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>High</b>

Table 8 illustrates students' perceptions of "Social Aspects". It can be noticed that item number (1), "I read for my parents" recorded the highest level mean value. Thus, it was ranked first with a mean of (3.50) a high, and (SD=0.51). While item number (3), "I consult my friends about what I should buy a book or a story." was ranked last with a mean of (3.35) a high level, and (SD=0.67). The overall assessment of this variable was rated by the mean of (3.42), and (SD=0.34).

#### F. Competition

Analysis of the mean and standard deviation for the "Competition" domain.

TABLE 9  
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR THE COMPETITION DOMAIN

N	Item	M	SD	Rank	Level
1	I love to be the best reared in class.	3.50	0.51	1	High
3	I love to be the first one who answers the question.	3.50	0.51	1	High
2	I study more to be the top in class.	3.10	0.97	3	High
<b>Overall</b>		<b>3.37</b>	<b>0.34</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>High</b>

Table 9 shows students' perceptions of "Competition". It can be noticed that item number (1), "I love to be the best reared in class," and item number (2), "I love to be the first one who answer the question," recorded the highest level mean value. Thus, they were ranked first with a mean of (3.50) a high level, and (SD=0.51). While item number (3), "I study more to be the top in class." was ranked last with a mean of (3.10) a high level, and (SD=0.97). The overall assessment of this variable was rated by the mean of (3.37), and (SD=0.34).

#### G. Commitment

Analysis of the mean and standard deviation for the "Commitment" domain.

TABLE 10  
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR THE COMMITMENT DOMAIN

N	Item	M	SD	Rank	Level
1	Completing all my reading tales is one of my important interests.	3.45	0.51	1	High
2	I extend my efforts to finish my readings on time.	3.35	0.59	2	High
3	I try to do all my reading tasks required by my teacher.	3.10	0.85	3	High
<b>Overall</b>		<b>3.30</b>	<b>0.36</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>High</b>

Table 10 presents students' perceptions of "Commitment". It can be noticed that item number (1), "Completing all my reading tales is one of my important interests," recorded the highest level of mean value among the statements being rated by the study sample. Thus, it was ranked first with a mean of (3.45) a high level, and (SD=0.51). While item number (3), "I try to do all my reading tasks required by my teacher," was ranked last with a mean of (3.10) a high level, and (SD=0.85). The overall assessment of this variable was rated by the mean of (3.30).

Results related to the second question: Are there any statistically significant differences ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) between university EFL students' reading motivation levels due to gender?

To answer the second question, the means and standard deviations of analysis of university students' motivation in English language reading comprehension according to the gender variable, and to show the significance of the statistical differences between the means, a (T-Test) was used, a Table 11 that shows this.

TABLE 11  
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND (T-TEST) ANALYSIS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS MOTIVATION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE READING  
COMPREHENSION ACCORDING TO THE GENDER VARIABLE

Domains	Gender	N	Mean	Standard deviations	T	DF	Sig.
Challenge	Male	10	3.50	0.42	0.557	18	0.584
	Female	10	3.40	0.38			
Curiosity	Male	10	3.40	0.26	0.349	18	0.731
	Female	10	3.33	0.54			
Recognition	Male	10	3.53	0.32	0.218	18	0.830
	Female	10	3.50	0.36			
Grades	Male	10	3.07	0.49	-3.258	18	0.004
	Female	10	3.63	0.25			
Social Aspects	Male	10	3.37	0.29	-0.648	18	0.525
	Female	10	3.47	0.39			
Competition	Male	10	3.37	0.40	0.000	18	.999
	Female	10	3.37	0.29			
Commitment	Male	10	3.27	0.38	-0.408	18	0.688
	Female	10	3.33	0.35			
<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3.36</b>	<b>0.14</b>	<b>-1.153</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0.264</b>
	<b>Female</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3.43</b>	<b>0.16</b>			

As for the domains of (Challenge, curiosity, Recognition, Social Aspects, Competition and Commitment), Table 11 shows that there were no statistically significant differences according to gender. As for the domain of "Grades," there are statistically significant differences according to gender in favor of female students.

## V. DISCUSSION

The findings related to the first question: -What is the level of university EFL students' reading motivation in Jordan? The means and standard deviation were calculated for the students' questionnaire item responses in gender and for each item aspect: challenge and curiosity, love of reading and recognition, getting grades, social aspects, competing with others and commitment.

The results showed that the reading motivation level of Ajloun National University EFL students is high with the means of (3.40) and a standard deviation of (0.15) domain number (3) "Recognition" recorded the highest level of mean value among the statements being rated by the study sample. Thus, it was ranked first with a mean of (3.82) with a high level, and (SD=1.32). The researchers relate this to the students' interest in receiving new information and connect it with their previous experience. The 'challenge' domain was of high level and ranked second with a mean of (3.45), and (SD=0.39). It was of high level because it was a challenge to their abilities, and they like to appear capable in front of their teachers and classmates. The fifth domain 'social aspects' ranked third, with a mean of (3.50) a high level, and (SD=0.51), because university students like to feel happy and proud showing themselves as good readers. They like to read in class, in front of their classmates, and to their parents at home. Then, came fourth 'curiosity' and 'competition' with a mean of (3.37) a high level, (SD=0.42), and (SD=0.34) respectively. This may be because the reading materials and subjects provided by the university are very good and arouse their curiosity; they enjoy reading such subjects and materials. Then ranked 'Grades' with a mean of (3.35) a high level, (SD=0.48). The results of this study agree with the results of Sobh (2015); Ahmadi et al. (2013) and Meniado (2016).

The results related to the second question: Are there any statistically significant differences ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) between university EFL students' reading motivation levels due to gender? To answer this question, means and standard deviations of university students' motivation in English language reading comprehension according to the variable (gender) were analyzed. To show the significance of the statistical differences between the means, a T-test was used. The findings indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between male and female students due to gender in the domains of challenge, curiosity, recognition, social aspects, competition, and commitment. However, there was a statistically significant difference in the domain of 'Grades', according to gender in favor of females. The researchers think that female students in general take more care of developing their reading as part of their ambitions than male students. Females exert more efforts to get higher grades to get better work opportunities, as society has more opportunities for males.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that the overall mean of the level of university EFL students' reading motivation at Ajloun National is high. There were no significant differences due to gender, as both male and female students study under the same circumstances, are taught by the same teachers, and live in the same environment for the domains of challenge, curiosity, recognition, social aspects, competition, and commitment. But for the domain of 'Grades', there was a significant difference due to gender, in favor of females.

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Depending on the results of the study, the researchers recommend the following: Curriculum developers, textbook writers, and educational experts should take reading motivation into consideration. There should be training for teachers on reading motivation strategies. Further studies should be conducted using other instruments and other variables that affect reading motivation.

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