



THE CLASS TEACHERS' OPINIONS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS' READING SKILLS

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Abstract

Reading is the most basic tool used in learning and acquiring knowledge. Reading skills gained through education plays an active role in gaining different kinds of knowledge and skills in school life. It is very important for students to have sufficient reading skills in the first grades of primary school. Because this skill plays a key role in success when faced with advanced academic education throughout their education. Otherwise, the student is unable to fulfill the overlapping academic responsibilities and develops a negative attitude towards school and education. Qualitative research method was used in the research. The study group consists of 76 classroom teachers working in various primary schools in İzmir in the 2019-2020 academic year. The personal information form questionnaire and open-ended questions developed by the researcher were asked to the study group, the obtained answers were analyzed with the content analysis method and the results were interpreted.

Keywords: Reading, reading skills, primary school teachers, teacher opinions.

INTRODUCTION

Reading skills constitute the basis of educational life. The reading skills assumed to have been acquired in the early years of primary school affects both academic and social developments of students. As Erbasan and Erbasan (2020) reported, reading is considered the first and most important step of the education process, which takes many years. For this reason, the success of the first reading education will determine the level of the next educational life. The reading skill, which is at the very heart of the education process and affects the skills to be acquired later, it is a basic skill, which the individual will use not only in his/her educational life but also throughout his entire life (Dundar and Akyol, 2014). Since the acquisition of knowledge is mostly based on the reading ability, students will be able to develop them more effectively during later educational periods. It is known that students who have good reading skills succeed in both academic and social life (Elliot and Gibbs, 2008). For this reason, increasing the reading skills of students and providing them with necessary support are among the priority tasks of educational institutions and educators (Förster, Kawohl & Souvignier, 2018).

The ability to read, which provides the individual with the opportunity to know the outside world, makes sense of life and makes it become easier, must be developed continuously to contribute to educational life (Uzunkol, 2013; Uysal, 2018). Because the act of reading is the most effective means in learning and in obtaining information. The acquisition of reading skills is one of the most important targets of the curricula applied in primary schools. One of the most important elements in the acquisition of this skill is the classroom teachers in the early years of primary school. With the spread of technology use, access to information has become easier. However, finding and use of accurate information depends on the effective use of reading ability. The development of reading skills, which students must use during their educational lives starting from elementary school years, increases the expectations from classroom teachers. Classroom teachers are the only authorized staff in classroom to conduct educational activities. Because of these characteristics, they undertake important responsibilities for teaching and developing reading skills in students. It is important to learn the

reading skills of students, to identify the problems they face, and to take measures. Classroom teachers can make use of the results of the present study to determine the skill levels of students in reading and studying and work in developer studies. In this context, the purpose of the study was to determine the viewpoints of classroom teachers regarding the development of reading skills, answers for the following questions were sought:

- What are the reading difficulties you observed in your students?
- What activities do you do to deal with reading difficulties?
- What methods do you use to determine the reading and comprehension levels of your students?
- What do you do to improve the reading and comprehension levels of your students?
- How do you make use of educational technologies to improve the reading skills and reading habits of your students?

METHOD

This study was conducted to determine the viewpoints of classroom teachers regarding the development of the reading skills of students, and the case study design was used, which is among qualitative research methods. According to Yildirim and Simsek (2011), the case study design is "a research method allowing the researcher to examine the depth of a phenomenon or incident, which the researcher cannot control based on questions like how and why". The semi-structured interview technique was used to collect the data of the study.

The Study Group

The study group consisted total 56 classroom teachers, including 44 women and 12 men, who worked in various primary schools in Izmir in 2019-2020 Academic Year. The questions in the personal information form, which was developed by the researcher, and open-ended questions were asked to the Study Group, the answers were analyzed, and the results were interpreted by Content Analysis Method.

Data Collection Tool

The Interview Form, which was developed by the researcher consisting of 5 open-ended questions, was used in the study as the data collection tool. To create the semi-structured interview form, the literature was reviewed in this context. The semi-structured interview form, which was created after the literature review, was presented to expert opinions. Then, the final interview form was given its final shape. The views on improving reading skills of students were questioned.

Analysis of Data

The semi-structured questionnaire form was used to obtain the viewpoints of teachers in this study. The "Descriptive Analysis" Method, which is a qualitative research technique, and percentage (%) and frequency, which are among quantitative research techniques, were used in the analyses of the data. The data obtained in the descriptive analyses were summarized and interpreted according to the pre-determined themes. The data can be edited according to the themes stated by study questions, or can be presented by considering the questions or dimensions used in the interview and observation process. In descriptive analysis, direct quotes are frequently included to strikingly reflect the views of individuals interviewed or observed. In this analysis type, the purpose is to present the findings in an edited and interpreted way for the reader (Yildirim and Simsek, 2005: 224). Each interview form was numbered from 1 to 56 when the data are analyzed. Validity as targeted by placing direct quotations from the participants.

FINDINGS

In this section, the findings obtained as a result of the content analysis are included. The study questions were considered in organizing of the contents.

Table 1: Findings on Determining Reading Difficulties

Determining Reading Difficulties	Frequency	%
Mis-spelling	12	19
Skipping letter-syllable-words	11	17,5
Having difficulty in joining/saying sounds	10	15,9
Slow reading	8	12,7
Addition	7	11,1
Not comprehension what is read	6	9,5
Not reading the sentence-word until the end	6	9,5
Reversing	3	4,8
Total	63	100

As shown in Table 1, 12 (19%) of the class teachers, who participated in the study, said that students had problems like mis-spelling, and 11 (17.5%) said students skipped letters, syllables and words. In addition, according to the Table, 10 (15.9%) teachers said students had difficulty in combining and singing sounds, 8 (12.7%) said they read slowly, and 7 (11.1%) said that students had the problem of adding something to what they read. Again, 6 (9.5%) of the class teachers said students did not understand what they read, 6 (9.5%) said that students did not read the sentence or word until the end, and 3 teachers (4.8%) said that they reversed the letters while reading.

Some of the views on determining reading difficulties are given below.

They start reading quickly, but meaningful reading and speed reading come late. The reading comprehension does not happen much in the process. It comes after the sounds are completed. In short, the problems are slow reading and not understanding what is read. (T45)

If the word created after combining syllable is abstract (manually), if it is not a words children face directly in everyday life (for example, filter), it becomes difficult for children to understand. If the words taught are both proper and common noun, it is contrary to the principle of "from known to unknown". For this reason, children may experience conceptual turmoil. (T39)

Children began to hold the pencil at a very early age and learn letters by their parents. When we teach sounds, parents make it difficult for children to read letters. Unfortunately, this habit cannot be changed when a student who keeps pencil wrong comes to first grade. (T47)

In the literacy process that is conducted with the sound-based sentence method, it is difficult to understand for students to read syllables, words, or sentences because we connect the sounds together and reach the whole. Eye jumps, quick and meaningful reading takes longer. They may have trouble using punctuation correctly. They read by skipping letters. They read by heart by looking at the first letter. These problems are usually faced. (T52)

Table 2: Findings on Activities Regarding Eliminating Reading Difficulties

Activities Regarding Eliminating Reading Difficulties	Frequency	%
Reading aloud	8	18,6
Conducting dictation exercise	7	16,3
Conducting reading exercise	7	16,3
Conducting visual reading	7	16,3
Teaching syllables accompanied by rhythmic sounds	5	11,6
Explaining the meaning of unknown words	5	11,6
Teaching confusing words by associating with visuals	2	4,7
Eye exercises	2	4,7
Total	43	100

As seen in Table 2, 8 (18.6%) of the class teachers, who participated in the study, said that they did loud reading activity, and 7 (16.3%) applied to dictate to students. In addition, according to the table, 7 (16.3%) of teachers said they did reading practices, 7 (16.3%) did visual readings, 5 (11.6%) said they taught syllables accompanied by rhythmic sounds. Again, 5 (11.6%) of the classroom teachers

said students explained the meaning of unknown words, 2 (4.7%) taught by associating confused letters with images, and 2 teachers (4.7%) did eye exercises. Some of the data obtained to address reading difficulties are given below.

In students who have articulation disorders, this process takes longer. In short, "baby speech" is the main indicator of articulation disorder. I teach compensatory lessons with the knowledge of their families for these students. During the classes, I try to do activities like blowing, chewing, putting sugar under the tongue, holding pens in the mouth, and exercises for lips, jaw, cheek, make students produce the sounds at that moment and help them gain self-confidence. (T41)

We do listening and recording the voice activity when reading aloud. Some children try to read very fast, saying they are reading well. They do not obey punctuation rules, make the rhythm of reading. For this reason, we do reading activities according to different sound emphasis and punctuation. (T47)

Table 3: Findings on Methods Used to Determine the Reading and Comprehension Levels of Students

Activities Intended to Determine Reading and Comprehension Levels	Frequency	%
Asking questions after reading	15	27,8
Wh- Questions	8	14,8
Creating story maps	5	9,3
Measuring reading speeds	5	9,3
Reading aloud	4	7,4
Writing a story about the text read	4	7,4
Requesting that questions are asked about what is read	4	7,4
Telling what one understands	3	5,6
Drawing about the text read	3	5,6
Drama activities	3	5,6
Total	54	100

When Table 3 examined, 15 (27.8%) of the class teachers, who participated in the study, said that they asked reading questions to students, 8 (14.8%) applied Wh- questions activity. In addition, 5 (9.3%) of the teachers said they created story maps, 5 (9.3%) said students measured their reading speed, and 4 (7.4%) read aloud. According to the table, 4 (7.4%) of the class teachers said that they wanted students to ask questions about the text they read, 3 (5.5%) said they wanted to explain what they understood after reading, and 3 teachers (5.6%) did drama activities on the text they read.

Some of the data obtained in determining reading and comprehension levels are given below.

First of all, I think that motivation and reading the book that attracts interest are important. (T38)

Children with good Turkish vocabulary voice words quickly and dedicate most of their energy to understand. Attention affects focus. Firstly, attention strategies should be used before reading. After I have the attention. (T49)

I believe that the reading habit can develop by being exposed to enhanced stimulants. After creating a purpose of reading, I start reading activity. First of all, a visual reading with pictures in the material for reading improves the attention in children. T39

Table 4: Findings on Methods Used to Improve the Reading and Comprehension Levels of Students

Activities Intended for Reading and Comprehension	Frequency	%
Asking questions about the book/text read	12	15
Organizing Reading Hours at Classrooms	10	12,5
Making students adopt reading habit	9	11,3
Having Reading Hours with Parents at Home	8	10
Making students choose books	8	10
Cooperation with parents	7	8,8
Telling the importance of reading	6	7,5

Directing students to reading according to their interests areas	5	6,3
Story map	4	5
conducting Wh- Questions activity	4	5
Finding the main ideas of the book read	4	5
Drawing what is read	3	3,8
Total	80	100

In Table 4, the class teachers participating in the study intended to read and understand activity for students; 12 (15%) said that they asked students questions from the book or text, 10 (12.5%) said they had reading hour in the classroom. In addition, 9 (11.3%) of the teachers emphasized that they made students adopt reading habits, 8 (10%) of them allowed students to create a reading time at home with their parents, and 8 (10%) allowed students to choose books to read. According to the table, 7 (8.8%) of classroom teachers said that they cooperated with parents for reading, and 6 (7.5%) said they often discussed the importance of reading. In addition, 5 (6.3%) teachers emphasized that they directed students to read according to their interests, 4 (5%) did story maps, 4 (5%) did Wh- question activities. Finally, 4 teachers (5%) told students that they did the finding the main idea of the text activity, and 3 (3.8%) teachers said that students draw a picture of the text they read.

Some of the data obtained for improving reading comprehension levels are given below.

We do at least two hours a week book reading activity in classrooms. At the end of the year, we give documents like bookworms or book-friend awards to students who read the most books. It is very encouraging. (T16)

The student should be provided to explain views on the book read. The more the child reads, the more s/he can tell about what s/he reads, and the more s/he understands it. (T25)

We conduct projects to read books. I do Questions & Answers contests in classrooms. I recommend games with plenty of instructions at home. I suggest they watch a subtitled film. (T46)

I do supervised reading activity until they have a habit of reading books. By selecting books to fit their levels, I analyze the book with the students. Students are offering their favorite books to their friends. Activities like summarizing and finding the main idea should be made in reading and comprehension. Story maps should be created, the characteristics of the heroes should be asked, the author's life should be questioned. (T15)

In reading, they must choose books suitable for their levels. Students who read the books they are interested and love, and make a habit of reading. (T21)

I do activities like giving 1 piece of puzzle to the student after each book, continuing in this way until the last puzzle piece, finally merging and exhibiting puzzles. (T33)

I read and leave the first few sentences of books to increase the curiosity and interest of children. They want to read because they wonder about the rest of the book. (T40)

Table 5: Findings on How to Make Use of Educational Technologies in Improving Students' Reading Skills and Reading Habits

Making Use of Educational Technologies	Frequency	%
Listing-reading audio books	15	26,8
Watching visuals about the book read	9	16
Making use of "Morpa Kampüs"	7	12,5
Creating visuals and presentations about the book read	6	10,7
Making us of the audible reading websites	4	7,1
Supporting reading with visual materials	4	7,1
Watching films about the book read	3	5,4
Visualization of the characters in the book with Web 2 tools	2	3,6
Introducing the books at the website of the school	1	1,8
Watching visuals about the books	1	1,8
Watching the life stories of authors	1	1,8
Total	56	100

It is seen in Table 4 that the classroom teachers, who participated in the study, made use of educational technologies to improve the reading skills and reading habits of students as follows; 15 (26.8%) of them listened to audiobooks and read, and 9 (16%) made students draw images about the book. In addition, 7 (12.5%) teachers (12.5%) said that they made use of Morpa Kampüs, 6 teachers (10.7%) made students prepare visuals about what is read, and 4 (7.1%) made use of audible reading websites. Again, according to the table, 4 (7.1%) classroom teachers said that they supported reading activities with visual materials, and 3 (5.4%) watched films about the book with students. In addition, teachers visualized the characters with Web 2 tools, and 1 (1.8%) emphasized that books were introduced on the school's website. Finally, 1 teacher (1.4%) said that s/he used images to introduce books, and 1 (1.8%) teacher had students follow the life stories of authors.

Some viewpoints about how to use educational technologies to improve students' reading skills and reading habits are given below.

I do not think that educational technologies are needed to read books. I think it is more effective to read by touching the book, smelling it. T14

They are very eager to prepare presentations introducing the book they read on the smart board and share them with the class. T18

It is done by using Web 2 tools. When reading the character abstractly, we can animate the character in our minds, and be embodied with him/her with Web 2, and combine creativity and technology. T32

DISCUSSION AND RESULT

According to the findings of the present study, classroom teachers evaluated reading difficulties as mis-spelling, skipping letters, syllables and words, difficulty in combining and saying sounds, slow reading, addition, not comprehension what is read, not reading the sentence and word until the end, and reversing. Akyol (2003) reported reading difficulties as reversing (such as reading "b" as if it were "d", or reversing words like "and" and "home" (in Turkish "ve" and "ev")), skipping and passing words (leaving or adding) and repetitions. Babayigit (2017) conducted a study and emphasized that parents did not support them and students in Turkish teaching. Classroom teachers also said that they taught the sounds of the letters in Turkish classes, but that parents taught the name of the letters, and caused children to learn wrong.

Classroom teachers examine the activities that perform for the purpose of eliminating the difficulties regarding reading as reading aloud, conducting dictation exercise, conducting reading practice, conducting visual reading, teaching syllables accompanied by rhythmic sounds, explaining the meanings of the unknown words, teaching confusing words by associating with visuals, and eye exercises. Erbasan and Erbasan (2020) conducted a study to determine the problems classroom teachers faced during the initial literacy teaching processes, and reported that the teachers mentioned problems caused by students and families. According to them, students' being irrelevant and not aware of their responsibilities is one of the problems faced. The other is that parents do not support students and teachers during the initial reading process, but rather cause incorrect learning in students. In the same study it was stated that it is important to establish parent and teacher cooperation, and that some of the problems faced can be prevented by collaborating with teachers and families to carry out the initial reading and writing teaching successfully. In his study, Karaarslan (2015) reported that most teachers used paragraph and story reading method to address the difficulties faced in reading and reading comprehension.

Classroom teachers intend to determine the level of reading and comprehension of students by asking questions after reading, with Wh- Questions application, creating story maps, measuring reading speeds, reading aloud, writing about the text read, requesting that questions are asked about what is read, telling what one understands, making a picture of the read text, making drama. When the literature was reviewed, it was seen that there are studies targeting to determine the level of reading and comprehension of students (Keskin and Akyol, 2014; Karaarslan, 2015; Uysal, 2018). Activities are

mostly carried out in the form of determining reading skills like reading speed, accurate reading and prosodic reading, which are measured by structured reading method to provide solutions for the problems faced in this context. The structured reading method and "Mistake Analysis Inventory" are used in this respect. Mistake Inventory serves the goal of determining the level of comprehension of students in reading individually. By using the audible reading method, the word recognition levels, in other words, the mistakes in reading are determined; and by conducting silent reading, the levels of comprehension of readers based on the answers to the questions asked are determined. These levels are as follows.

Free Level: It refers to the student reading and comprehension texts, which are suitable for his/her level without the need for the help of a teacher or another adult. *Teaching Level:* It refers to the reading and comprehension of the student as desired with the support of a teacher or an adult. *Anxiety Level:* It refers to the level at which the student understands very little of what is read, and/or does many reading mistakes (Akyol, 2010; Karaarslan, 2015).

According to the findings of the present study, classroom teachers use the following methods to improve students' reading and comprehension levels: Asking questions from the book or text read, organizing reading hours at classrooms, making students adopt reading habit, and organizing reading hours with parents at home. In addition, the participants also mentioned activities like making students choose books, cooperation with parents, telling the importance of reading, directing students to reading according to their interests, making story maps, finding the main idea of the book read and painting what was read. Dundar and Akyol (2014) recommended fluent reading and repetitive reading to improve the level of comprehension of students in reading and reading comprehension. According to the authors, the ability to recognize words is at the very heart of fluent reading. Fluent readers recognize and more easily distinguish words they read in the text. Repetitive reading, on the other hand, can be used as an effective method by teachers for students who have reading problems. Teachers and parents should cooperate in repetitive reading activities.

Classroom teachers stated the way the students used educational technologies to improve the reading habit as; reading and listening to books audiobooks, watching images of the book read, making use of the Morpa Kampüs. In addition, the also mentioned visual creation and presentation of the book read, making use of audible reading websites, supporting reading with visual materials, watching movies about the book read, visualizing the character in the book with Web 2 tools, introducing the book on the school website, watching images about books, watching the life stories of the authors. Ciampa (2012) conducted a study with an 8 elementary school students who was reluctant to read books. Five students read e-books from tablets, and the others read from traditional texts. According to the feedback received from the teachers and parents as a result of the study, it was concluded that the use of e-books increased the willingness of students to read. In addition, an increase was detected in e-book reading of students both at home and at school in the observations of teachers, parents and researchers. Büyükkarcı and Müldür (2017) conducted a study in which they tried to determine the viewpoints of teachers regarding the reflection of technology use in writing skills, and found that although the use of technology contributed a little to the ability to write, they concluded that it reduced writing activities and, as a result, negatively affected the ability and process of writing. Katrancı and Uygun (2013) reported that the use of educational technologies in classroom environment made the course more interesting for students, facilitated achieving the relevant targets, prevented waste of time, and made learning more permanent. In addition, they also found that classroom teachers used technological tools mostly in the field of visual reading, visual presentation, and listening learning fields, and used them less in the learning speaking field. Gunes and Ozerbas (2015) reported that the frequency of classroom teachers using educational technologies in the elementary school period was at an "sometimes" level. They also emphasized that classroom teachers used flat-structure technologies (i.e. books, texts, pictures, etc.) more; however, they did not make use of educational technologies during the initial literacy process at an adequate level.

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