Online Interactive Book Reading and Game Applications for Individuals with Autism: A Case Report

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to examine the implementation of online games and interactive book reading applications for individuals with autism with maternal participation. For this purpose, this case was studied with the support of mother participation with a 2-year-old child diagnosed with autism of a family living in the Netherlands who immigrated from Turkey. In the study, online interactive book reading and game applications were carried out under the leadership of an expert, and in this direction, the interventions with the participation of the mother were monitored by the expert. As a result of the study, the gains obtained in the final evaluation made on the child with autism show that online interactive book reading and game applications are effective in the development of the behavior and language skills of the child with autism.

Keywords: Autism, Online education, Interactive Reading, Early Childhood, Play.

Introduction

The Internet is known as an opportunity presented to the world by the 21st century. With digitalization, access to information and everything digital has become easier thanks to the internet. Educational practices have also been affected by the opportunity of easy access with the developing technology. Today, online applications have started to be used to increase the effectiveness of educational activities. Especially in recent years, it has been seen that online education and teaching practices have been carried out at all levels of education (Sarıtaş & Barutçu, 2020). Online education is an education model that represents a process in which students and teachers do not have to be in the same physical environment (İşman, 2011) and offers lifelong education opportunities.

With the development of technology in recent years, online applications are preferred at all levels of education for different reasons (Nigam et al., 2021). Individuals' perspectives towards online education and their level of focus, course efficiency, and success levels show parallelism. In addition, online education environments organized by considering the needs of students are also effective in the success of online education (Usta, 2015). Rasmitadilla et al. (2020) also emphasized the need for teachers and parents to make a technological preparation before the lesson in order for online education to be successful. From this point of view, family participation in online education has been a remarkable issue. Because the support that parents provide at every stage of the children's learning process also contributes to their later lives. (Coley et al., 2020; Hanson & Pugliese, 2020). Bozkurt (2020) emphasized in his study that parents are more involved in learning and teaching processes in online education. This result reveals that the educational environments that parents share with their children are important in terms of quality and quantity (Zhang, 2020).

Special education is also among the fields of education conducted with online education applications. The home education process in special education tries to shape a norm with a broad perspective that meets both the needs of the individual with special needs and the educational needs of the family (Toseeb et al., 2020). The interactive book reading method is among the effective practices that provide support for the individual and the family together in the special education process and highlight the educational role of the family (Prince & Kalil, 2019). Interactive book reading method is one of the picture story book reading activities. While reading interactive books, children can actively participate in the reading process. The interactive book reading method is carried out in line with some determined strategies (Whitehurst, 1992). In the interactive book reading application, the child can move from the role of listening to the story to the role of telling the story, under the guidance of the adult. Thanks to this application, the child can communicate more actively, ask questions about the story and interpret the story. Therefore, interactive book reading is an application that supports the active learning of the child thanks to the active participant role it provides (Ergül et al., 2013; Ergül et al., 2015; Justice & Pullen, 2003; Lonigan et al., 1999). In addition, interactive book reading is a planned practice consisting of pre-reading, reading and post-reading (Akoğlu, 2016). When the researches on interactive book reading are examined, it is a method that improves children's reading comprehension skills, supports their language and social development, improves children's vocabulary and gives them print awareness, and contributes to their storytelling and illustration skills. (Efe & Temel, 2018; Ergül et al., 2017; Fettig et al., 2018; Fleury & Schwartz, 2016; Flores et al., 2014; Grolig et al., 2020; Holt & Asagbra, 2021; Karadoğan & Şahan, 2020; Kılınçcı et al vd., 2021; Simsek & Erdogan, 2015; Yılmaz et al., 2020). Interactive book reading program (IBRP) is among the early intervention programs for children with normal development. For this reason, it has been expressed in different studies that children support language and early literacy skills in the early intervention process (Lonigan et al., 1999; Justice & Ezell, 2002; Baydık, 2003; Akoğlu et al., 2014; Ergül et al., 2014; Ergül et al., 2015; Er, 2016). When the interactive book reading method is applied together with different educational methods, it produces more effective results. For example; Making use of game activities while making applications related to the interactive book reading program with children at risk contributes to the focus of the child (Ronimus et al., 2019). Play has a very important place in the development of individuals with special needs (Babik & Gardner, 2021). Play has an important role in providing individuals with special needs

skills such as communicating in a social environment, working together, spending time with peers, and recognizing their individual characteristics (Küçük Alemdar, 2015). For this reason, individuals with special needs should create rich environmental stimuli in play environments, and this environment should be prepared in accordance with the type of special needs (MEB, 2014). In the play environments of individuals with special needs, first of all, care should be taken to have materials for their sensory development. Because as the learning experiences of individuals with special needs in play environments become different, their level of sensory development will also increase (Neaums, 2022). This research is important in terms of combining interactive book reading and play, which is an application that provides active participation of the child by strengthening the interaction with the child, with online education that supports the development of children in educational practices today. In line with these considerations, in this study, it was aimed to present a case study of a child with autism, living in the Netherlands, on online interactive book reading and play activities in cooperation with the mother and expert.

Case Report

R. is 2 years old and lives with his family in the Netherlands. After a normal pregnancy process, she was born with a normal delivery. His mother took care of him. He has an 8-year-old older sister. Both Dutch and Turkish are spoken at home. Mother and older sister mainly speak Dutch. Despite being two years old in August, the family applied to the hospital because he could not speak yet, could not do many of the skills that his peers did, and could not interact with the family. As a result of the medical diagnosis, it was learned that he was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. An application was made to a private education institution for the educational diagnosis of R. As a result of the application, a developmental evaluation was carried out by a child development specialist and the institution's guidance and psychological counselor. Since R. cried during the session and did not participate, his guidance and psychological counselor preferred AGTE to evaluate R. However, due to his negative behavior, the expert could not observe R. very much. As a result of AGTE, it was determined that there were developmental delays. Developmental practice suggestions were given to the family. The family has returned to the Netherlands. One month later, a telephone response was requested. The family did not make any communication for three months, and at the end of three months, they made a phone call back and stated that there was no progress. In the first online interview with the mother, all the details of how the child was raised from the pregnancy period to the present were discussed. It was questioned how family support was given to the child. It has been determined how much quality time the mother can spend with the child. In this direction, it was discussed about the conditions for the mother to carry out game activities and book reading practices. Then, due to the father's long working life, it was decided to conduct online games and interactive book reading activities with the mother. In the second online interview, the mother was first told about the interactive book reading program. Detailed information was given on how to implement the interactive book reading application, it was decided which book to read. In the third online interview, the trial of the interactive book reading application was carried out under expert guidance. Then, assuming that her child was in front of her, the mother made another application. In the fourth online

interview, the expert explained to the mother how game-based practices were applied in the special education practices of the individual with special needs. How the teaching processes related to the concepts of color and number can be gamified was conveyed by the expert as a model. The basis of the practices that the mother will make with her child is formed in this way. As the interviews progressed with a focus on the child, additional interviews were conducted with the mother. Interim evaluations were made in these interviews. As a result of these evaluations, it was decided to carry out the process in online sessions and with mother interaction, if possible. With the support of the mother, it was decided to conduct an online developmental assessment with R. During the online evaluation, it was observed that R. was not even sitting on his mother's lap but was running away constantly. Thereupon, the evaluation was made with the mother, except for R.'s participation. A detailed anamnesis was taken. In the next session, the camera was set to show the entire room, and an environment arrangement was made in which the mother could communicate with the use of wireless headphones. In this prepared room, the game clock of R. and his mother was observed by the expert. A semi-structured observation was made. In order to evaluate some behaviors and skills, the mother was informed in advance and materials were provided. The mother was given instructions on how to perform the behavior desired to be observed. For example, "Get in front of R.," "say his name," etc. "If he doesn't look, shake the toy he likes and say his name", etc. However, the behavior of the mother and R. during the game hour was also observed without any guidance. According to this observation result, it was observed that the mother gave too many instructions and long commands to R. In addition, it was observed that the mother gave R. the object she wanted by screaming, despite not making eye contact, and did everything R. wanted so that she would not cry. As a result of this observation, the first online session lasted 25 minutes with the decision taken jointly with the mother. Then, the time was increased according to the development of R. and the behaviors observed in the session. At the end of the lesson, after 10 minutes of lesson evaluation with the mother, the next online session was planned. In this way, nine sessions were conducted online. Later, the family came to Turkey. 12 face-to-face sessions were held at the institution. In this process, the session duration was increased to 40 minutes. A form has been created by the practitioners to follow the online sessions and plan the next lesson. In this form, there are titles such as long-term and short-term goals to be worked on in the session, an explanation about the skill being studied, the studies that attracted attention in the session, the materials to be used, the reinforcements to be used, and the notes for the next session. Thus, the process of evaluating the lesson and planning the next lesson was followed in a functional way. A face-to-face session was also held with the mother. In one of these sessions, the mother was informed about interactive game- based applications. In the face-to-face session, the play behaviors of the mother and R. were observed. It was observed that R. did not come into contact with his mother during the game. In addition, it was observed that he did not make eye contact, and that the mother wanted to take the toy she had picked up by screaming. It was observed that the mother constantly directed and interfered with R. In this intervention, it was seen that the mother was trying to attract R.'s attention with a toy other than the object she was playing. But despite the mother's best efforts, R. was playing on his own. R. did not include the mother in the game. In the other face-to- face session, the practitioner applied an interactive game to R. and the mother participated in the session as an observer. It was observed that R. wanted to play alone in the session and did not interact with the practitioner. It has been observed that R. tends towards kitchen toys. The practitioner sat opposite R. and observed R. When R. took the teapot and glass, the practitioner said, "R. He will drink tea, R. is

pouring tea into the glass now," said he. It was observed that R. pretended to drink tea at this time. The practitioner also imitated R. by taking another glass. The practitioner continued his guiding statements by saying, "We are now drinking tea with R.". An interactive game was played by using reflective sentences in this and similar ways and allowing R. to be the leader in the game. The mother participated in all face-to-face sessions as an observer. The practitioner explained the important steps in the game to the mother. However, in each face-to-face session, interactive book reading was practiced with the practitioner, R., and the mother. It has been studied with books with thick covers, plain pictures, suitable for the 2 age group. The family was informed that after returning to the Netherlands, they will continue to work on interactive book reading in online sessions. The practitioner sitting opposite R. drew attention to the pictures and said the name of the picture R. was looking at. R. was allowed to take the book and turn the pages and examine the pictures. As a result of the face-to-face interview sessions, it was determined that R. learned seven of the objects in the game and interactive book reading, and when he saw it, he said his name while playing the game. Before returning to the Netherlands, the family was given a list of books, toys and materials related to R.'s development and age-appropriate skills to study. This list includes flash cards, matching toys, beads, string, children's picture and hardcover children's books, double puzzles, color and object cards, geometric shapes and toys. The duration of online sessions after the family returns to the Netherlands has been increased to 40 minutes. It has been observed that R.'s attention span and the duration of the game behavior increased. In order to support this development, eye contact was practiced in the online session to support mutual interaction with the mother in the game. The mother was asked to stick stickers on her face and take the stickers by looking at her face when she called R.   A In addition, during the online session, the mother was directed by the practitioner to hold the mica plate to her face, R. to draw a picture on this plate, the mother to name the pictures R. drew, and to meet R.'s eyes. R. was reinforced each time eye contact was made with the mother. While each positive behavior was reinforced by using a fixed-rate reinforcement schedule at the beginning, a variable-rate reinforcement schedule was adopted as the behavior developed, and reinforcements were tried to be developed over time. As a reinforcer, the chocolates that R. loved were used by breaking them into very small pieces. Except for the session, these chocolates were not given to R. Activities were prepared by prioritizing the fact that the implemented program was game and interaction based by activating the senses. Homework was given to the family after each session, and they were asked to repeat the same session at least twice in a 40 minute session. As a result of all these sessions, it was observed that R. did imitation exercises with interactive play, recognized and started naming objects, and R. used words in the family's daily life. In order to increase the interaction of R. in the family, sessions were held with his older sister. The older sister often participated in the study as a model. For example, the mother first asked the older sister to show the object. Then he asked R. While the instruction was being studied, first the command to "take the toy" was given to the older sister and then the same command was given to R.. In order to improve the game interaction, sister and R. were asked to work together on activities such as playing dough and unconstrained painting. For example, the coloring pencils were placed away from R., near his sister. R. was allowed to ask his sister for the crayons. It was determined that he used many of these skills in his life, "for example, when he has something for dinner, he wants it by saying give it to his mother".

Along with game-based online applications, interactive book reading activities were first studied with the

mother. Later, the work of mother and R. was followed by the practitioner in online sessions. In the selection of the book, attention was paid to determine a book containing the words R. was familiar with. Due to R.'s interest in animals, it was decided that the book to be used in interactive book reading should be about animals. The content of the story books prepared by the Ministry of National Education was examined and found suitable for interactive reading. Interactive book reading steps were explained to the mother. The first application was carried out online between the mother and the specialist. First of all, the expert read the book, the mother became the listener (child). Afterwards, the roles were changed and the mother became the reader and the expert listener (child). While the mother was applying, guidance and corrections were made where necessary. It is mentioned that by examining the cover of the book, it is possible to talk about the pictures on the cover. It was informed that R. could start to study from any page he wanted, and read any book he wanted, even if it was multiple times. The words aimed to be taught were determined by examining the book. Cards related to these words have been prepared. For example, the chapters in the book where the words are mentioned; After the sentence "per month, my dog" was read, "R. Look at this dog", then the prepared card was shown and instructions were given such as "this dog, show the dog, the dog makes a sound like woof, come on, say the same". R. was given the opportunity to speak, and the pictures on the page he examined were discussed. Unfamiliar objects were shown, their names were said, and R. was asked to repeat those words. After each repetition, feedback was given to R. After the words he said correctly, "well done, how well you said" etc. reinforced with sentences. The words learned during the reading period were repeated frequently. The studied words are associated with daily life. Ö for example; "We saw a dog in the park yesterday, it was making a 'woop woo' sound, remember?" dialogues such as. At the same time, sentence expansion applications were made by the mother after R. repeated the words. For example;

R. showed the dog picture, mother; "Yes, it's a dog, a cute little dog with soft fur," he said. R oller changed mother became a listener and repeated the pictures R. looked at and the words she said. After reading, the word cards that were aimed to be taught in the book were studied and repeated one by one. A brief summary of the book is often made. The heroes and words in the book are reminded. With the role-playing technique, Mother, R., Practitioner also took the role of mother. First of all, the words aimed to be acquired by the child were determined. Care has been taken to ensure that these words are words used in daily life. Afterwards, the book was held towards the mother and read in such a way that she could see the pictures. The determined words are shown through the pictures. For example, one of the words is "cat". After the sentence containing the word cat was read, the picture of the cat was shown, then the mother was asked to show the cat in the book, and then R. was given the opportunity to make a sound by saying "the cat makes a meow sound, let's be a cat now". In order for the mother to make a meow sound, the mouth was shown and she was asked to imitate the sound by drawing attention with exaggerated lip movements. Showing a toy cat, he says "look at this cat" and commands "show the cat". It is verbally reinforced when the mother shows the cat or completes her name. The practitioner gave the book to the mother and allowed her to turn the pages. On the pages where he looked at his pictures, he asked the mother what kind of questions. Then, the mother was asked to perform the same application with R. Feedback and corrections were made during the implementation. The determined words were repeated continuously. The skill demonstrated by R. in the first and last session of the interactive book reading program

has been prepared to be given to the school he will attend.

In this process, R. came of age to start school in the Netherlands. Since he cannot communicate by speaking Dutch, she must attend a language training program. Due to the long duration of the program to be implemented, as a result of a general evaluation with the family, it was decided to take a break from the online sessions for a while and focus on participation in the program in the Netherlands.

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this case report is; The aim of this study is to examine the effectiveness of online interactive book reading and play on a child with autism. It has been observed that the program conducted with online mother interaction has positive effects on the child's cognitive, receptive language skills and motor development. However, it was observed that expressive language skills showed a limited development. There are studies in the literature showing that interactive book reading improves children's language skills. In the compilation study of Towson, Akemoglu, Watkins, Zeng (2021); shows that interactive book reading is a viable intervention that positively affects the development of language skills for children with developmental delays or delays. In the study of Chow and McBride-Chang, (2003); shows that the 8-week interactive book reading intervention applied to kindergarten children has strong and direct effects on the language development of children. In the study of Akaoğlu, Ergül and Duman (2014); It has been shown that interactive book reading practices have positive effects on the expressive language skills of children aged 4-5 years in need of protection. Hargrave and Senechal, (2000), in their study; They state that the interactive book reading program applied to children with delayed speech improves children's expressive language skills. Lever and Senechal, (2011) in their study; It has been stated that 8 weeks of interactive book reading applied to 5-6 year old children expands the vocabulary of children. In the study of Dale, Crain-Thoreson, Notari-Syverson, and Cole, (1996), it was seen that the interactive book reading education given to the parents of children with delayed speech at the age of 3-6 improved the expressive language skills of the children. In the research conducted by Acar Şengül (2019); It has been concluded that interactive book reading applied to children with delayed speech between 29-36 months has positive effects on children's language development. In the study of Lonigan, Anthony, Bloomfield, Dyer, and Samwel (1999), it was seen that interactive reading had a positive effect on the language skills of pre-school children at risk. In the study of Er, Yıldız Bıçakçı and Aral (2018); It has been determined that the parents of 46-62 months old children have positive effects on the language development of the children when they read interactive stories. In the study of Kotaman (2008); It has been determined that the interactive book reading education given to the parents of preschool children improves the receptive vocabulary. It is known that the involvement of parents in the education process of children has a positive effect on the education process and the development of the child (Şeker, 2013; Turan, Koca & Uzuner,2019). In addition, the effectiveness of play-based intervention programs, which have an undeniable importance in the development of children, has also been proven by researches. In the study of Ekici, Yıldız Bıçakçı, Gürkan and Tatlı, (2019); It was emphasized that the parent-interactive neuroplay intervention method in a 28-month-old child diagnosed with autism

spectrum disorder helped the autism findings of the case disappear. In the study of Beyazoğlu (2014); It has been stated that the practice of play therapy applied to a child with autism reduces the frequency of problem behaviors in the child. In the research conducted by Besler (2015); It has been seen that teaching with the video model presented with mother interaction improves children's game skills. In the research conducted by Ökcün (2008); It was emphasized that the practice of play activities with mother interaction improves the child's social interaction skills. Online programs, the frequency of use of which has increased with the pandemic process, is an alternative method. In the study of Kılıç and Arslan Kılıçoğlu (2021); It was stated that the program, which was carried out with an online application with mother interaction during the pandemic process, positively affected the development of the case with autism. In addition, studies show that online education with children with autism improves communication skills (Meadan, Snodgrass, Meyer, Fisher, Chung & Halle, 2016) and expressive language skills (Benson, Dimian, Elmquist, Simacek, McComas, & Symons, 2018). Based on the conclusion that this research supports the development of children with autism, it reveals that online education can be done in applications such as interactive book reading and games. Research is limited to a single case. In future studies, it may be recommended to study parent involvement and multiple case studies in children with similar development.

Notes

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