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Title:
Effects of Drama on the Use of Reading Comprehension Strategies and on Attitudes Toward Reading

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Biography:

Arzu Güngör earned her Masters and Ph.D. degrees from the Department of Educational Sciences at Dokuz Eylül University in Izmir, Turkey. Currently, she is a Instructor and Researcher at the same department. She completed her post-doc research at the Department of Childhood Education, Reading, and Disability Services, College of Education, at Florida State University. In addition, she was employed as researcher in the Individualizing Student Instruction Project at the Florida Center for Reading Research, Florida State University. Her research interests are creative drama, active learning, reading strategies, and attitudes towards reading. At Dokuz Eylül University, she currently teaches new approaches in learning and reading processes to elementary and high school teacher candidates.

Abstract:
The purpose of this research is to study the effects of drama and traditional methods on primary school students' use of reading strategies, on their attitudes toward reading, and on

their perceptions of the drama method. A pre- and post-test experimental design with the control group was employed for this study. The drama technique was used in the experimental group and traditional teaching methods in the control group. The research was conducted on 5th grade students (experiment=28, control=26) of a Turkish language/art course at a state elementary school in Izmir, Turkey. Research data were collected through semi-structured interview technique and "The Scale for Attitudes Toward Reading", both of which have been developed by the researcher. The data analysis indicates that the drama method is more effective than traditional methods with respect to strategy use. There is no significant difference between the groups in terms of attitudes towards reading. In addition, it has been determined that students in the experimental group have positive perceptions of the drama method.

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As issues such as globalization in the information age and the development of new educational standards gain more importance, leaders in education are looking for more effective teaching methods for students who make use of various learning strategies. Drama has recently become a center of attention and "an important part of the literature curriculum in many countries" (Urian, 2000, p. 1-2). Since it is a potentially powerful tool for instruction and learning (Schneider & Jackson, 2000; Smith & Herring, 1993) propagating the methods and techniques of drama for early childhood education takes on great significance. As a learning tool, drama is beneficial to students of all age groups, because it provides them the opportunity to develop more effective learning techniques, strategies, and solutions (Booth, 1985). It helps them to comprehend the world they live in and construct their knowledge and increases the chances for children to express themselves independently in any subject area, including reading.

Drama and Reading: General Considerations

Reading comprehension is a process that consists of making predictions, interacting with the text, decoding the meaning embedded in the text (Tortello, 2004, p.206), providing "the active construction of meaning"(Jennings, Caldwell, & Lerner, 2006, p. 267), and building up schemata in reconstructing the text's meaning. Likewise, during a drama activity students interact with others, decode what others say and do, and construct their own self. "Literacy is concerned with reading… drama involves reading… thus drama must help with literacy" (Kempe &

Nicholson, 2007, p.52). Contrary to some claims, drama activity is not wasted time (Rose, Parks, Androes, & McMahon, 2000), because, for one thing, students learn to develop language skills necessary in studying literature (Booth, 1985; Kelner & Flynn, 2006). Research findings indicate that drama helps to improve students' reading, speaking, and listening abilities, as well as vocabulary acquisition (Bolton, 1983; Booth, 1985; Brown & Pleydell, 1999; Fennsessey, 2006; Heathcote, 1981; Kornfeld & Leyden, 2005; McMaster, 1998; Schneider & Jackson, 2000; Winston, 2004). It provides specific opportunities for literacy development (Kempe & Nicholson, 2007, p.52), giving students the chance to use all skills in decoding meaning, understanding the feelings of others, expanding vocabulary, making appropriate use of syntax, analyzing discourse, generating feedback within context, and building metacognitive knowledge (McMaster, 1998; Urian, 2000). Moreover, the link between drama and reading comprehension is a strong one (Kelner & Flynn, 2006); drama helps students to develop skills embedded in the reading process, such as contextualizing what they read in a text to their own experience, feelings, attitudes, ideas,values, and life situations (Booth, 1985). In particular drama practices such as story dramatization, character interviews, tableau, and human slide show are effective in this respect.

During interactive drama activities, students learn not only about themselves as humans but also as readers (Miller, 1996); they "live" a literary work of art by putting themselves in the position of a character in the story and by solving problems that help them gain insight into

themselves, their classmates, and the events they experince (Miller, 1996). In other words, through drama, students not only read what is in a text but also actually "live" in it, a process that will lead to better comprehension and retention. By expressing themselves in the fictitious world they have constructed, they can realize their ideas through imagination (Cremin, 1998; McMaster, 1998; O'Neill, 1985; Smith & Herring, 1993). Moreover, drama helps students to develop their verbal interpretation (Hoyt, 1992) of their reading.To reach positive results in integrating drama and reading, Kelner & Flynn (2006, p.17) propose a five-step plan for a high-quality arts-integrated drama and reading comprehension lesson:

1) clearly stated and explained objectives in both drama and reading comprehension.

2) an acting tool- and /or skill-building activity or warm-up.

3) a drama strategy that encompasses both sets of stated objectives (drama and reading).

4) a reflection activity on the drama to allow students to implement gained understanding.

5) an assessment from both the drama and reading comprehension perspective.

Following these steps through group activities, children learn not only how to think more clearly by speaking with others and listening to them but also how to find more efficient ways to comprehend the text.

Drama and Reading: Benefits for Reading Strategies and Attitudes

Toward Reading

As stated by Kelner and Flynn (2006, p. 14), "teachers can strengthen students' reading comprehension with specific instruction," because the methods employed by teachers have an impact on the students' use of strategies and their attitudes toward reading (Güngor, 2004). Drama enables the students to develop specific strategies for metacognitive knowledge, monitoring, and effective reading comprehension (McMaster, 1998). In other words, through drama, students develop the same strategic knowledge as they do through their reading activities (Kelner & Flynn, 2006), which leads to their awareness of the comprehension process. If students are aware of how they can better understand a text, they become more attentive and capable readers (Kelner & Flynn, 2006, p.14).

DuPont (1989) states that drama is a more effective instructional strategy than traditional reading instruction for enhancing reading comprehension skills of fifth graders as they use reading comprehension strategies while acting. Those who take part in a drama activity have true-to-life experiences by making use of strategies such as decision-making, weighing alternatives, working out social problems, and creating dialogue, all of which lead to a kind of exploratory learning (Tate, 2005). Drama by its very nature helps students with specific strategies such as the transfer of information and skills obtained from readings (Booth, 1985; King, 1981) to visualize scenes from literature (Hoyt, 1992) and to approach

past and present experiences in an analytical way (Fennsessey, 1995). Last but not least, drama simply creates a great opportunity to make children read, and if they start to enjoy reading through drama, they may read more outside school. It provides students with background knowledge and general reading skills and, most importantly, with more positive attitudes toward learning (Smith & Herring, 1993) and motivation for reading (King, 1981; McMaster, 1998).

Since reading comprehension is a key to success in all stages of education, it must be fostered by effective methods and strategies. Improving reading comprehension and increasing its effectiveness depend on the use of a variety of effective comprehension strategies. Since drama is one of the effective methods that allow students to use such strategies, we need to gain a better understanding of how it can be used and improved as a method in reading classes and how it can help students develop positive attitudes toward reading. This study attempts to contribute to the research on the effects of drama on the use of reading comprehension strategies and attitudes toward reading in Turkey. The purpose of this research is to study the effects of the drama method in comparison to traditional methods, on primary school students' use of reading comprehension strategies, on their attitudes toward reading, and on their perceptions about the drama method. The research questions to be answered can be formulated as follows:

1. What are the effects of the drama method and the traditional methods on

a) reading comprehension strategies and

b) attitudes toward reading in a Turkish language/art course?

2. What are students' perceptions of the drama method in a reading

comprehension lesson in a Turkish language/art course?

Method

Research Model and Participants

A pre- and post test research design with a control group was used

for this study. One experimental and one control group participated in the

research. This research was applied in a reading comprehension class in a

Turkish language/art course and limited to fifth-grade elementary

students.

Two groups of fifth graders (n= 54) at a state elementary school

(Ötüken Elementary School, Izmir, Turkey) with students of a low socio-

economic status, generally considered to be poor readers, participated in

this research. There were 10 girls and 18 boys in the experimental group

and 12 girls and 14 boys in the control group. Their ages ranged between

10 and 11 years old.

Instruments

The data for the research were collected through the "Scale for

Attitudes Toward Reading" (SATR) as well as the semi-structured

interview technique. The SATR is a 5-point Likert-type scale including 36

items. After having been administered to 250 students to determine the

factorial validity of the scale, a Factorial Analysis was conducted on the

answers given by the sample group. As a result, the items with factorial values are above 0.40 were chosen for the scale.

Table 1: Definitions, Example Items and Cronbach Alpha Reliability for SATR

Sub-scale	Definition	Example Item	Reliability
NFCR (9 items)	Students' negative expression concerning reading.	I don't have a reading habit. While reading, I get very bored.	.84
PFCR (9 items)	Students' positive expression concerning reading	Reading is a part of my life. While reading, I feel very happy.	.80
ECD (10 items)	Effects of students' attitude toward reading on their cognitive development	The more I read the better are my ideas. I think I develop my native language via reading.	.71
PP (4 items)	Obstacle for reading according to students' probable reasons.	While reading, I lose my concentration very easily. I don't have time to read.	.60

The 32 items selected for the scale were analyzed again, and four factors were determined in SATR, Negative Feelings Concerning Reading-NFCR, Positive Feelings Concerning Reading-PFCR, Effects on Cognitive Development-ECD, and Probable Problems-PP. (See Table 1.) According to the Reliability Analysis, the SATR Alpha Reliability Coefficient is 0.87.

Another data collection tool is the semi-structured interview protocol, which is a kind of descriptive research technique. Interviews give researchers a chance to gain insight into phenomena that are not clearly observable, for example the learner's self-reported perceptions and attitudes (Mackey & Gass, 2005). It is an excellent interview tool, because it increases reliability through standardizem questions, and it also increases validity by covering all interview criteria systematically and

completely (Segal, Coolidge, O'Riley, & Heinz 2006). In this research, the semi-structured interview technique was used to find out: a) which strategies students were using while reading in order to better comprehend texts; and b) what students' perceptions were about drama intervention. Two interview protocols that contained open-ended questions were developed by the researcher and used systematically for all interviews. The first interview protocol and the research's pilot work were carried out by interviewing fifteen children separately in an entirely different group of eleven-years old. After the pilot work, necessary changes were applied in view of the research.

Students in the drama class were also interviewed to learn their perceptions about drama at the end of the intervention. The pilot work of the interview protocol was carried out by interviewing five children in the drama class. After the pilot work, necessary changes were applied in accordance with research results.

In order to boost the validity of the interview protocol, the views of both experts and the views of teachers working in this field were taken into account. In order to assure the reliability of the two interview protocols, all data were coded by the researcher and also by a graduate student volunteer. Interview results obtained by both the researcher and the volunteer were compared. The Alpha reliability coefficients were found to be above 0.90 both for the strategy and perceptions protocols.

Experimental Procedure

In the curriculum instruction plans, the Turkish language/art course takes place for six hours a week. The language/art teacher, who also teaches a variety of other subjects from first through fifth grades to the same group of students, dedicates one hour of this class to reading comprehension and the rest of the time to grammar and composition. In addition to the six hours. The teacher has another hour at her disposal, which can be used for math, science, social studies, or reading, depending on the students' needs; however, most teachers use it for sustained silent reading. In this research, both the hour for language/arts reading and the additional hour for sustained silent reading were used for reading comprehension in both the experimental and control groups. Students received instruction for 10 weeks, and the study lasted for 20 class hours in the regular class setting and schedule (not including the pre- and post-tests). While both classes were taught by the researcher, the regular teacher of each group stayed in the classroom during instruction. The same texts were utilized both in experimental and control groups during the same week. In the control group, whole class instruction was implemented with some activities. In the experimental group, drama was combined with active learning strategies such as the story tree, making conclusions, finding mottos, writing poems and songs, and asking questions. (See Table 2.) (A sample lesson plan for a drama class can be found in the appendix.) After some initial preparation, the research was

carried out according to the following instructional process for the drama and the traditional class:

Drama Class:

In the experimental group, drama was used as a method in combination with different active learning strategies. The steps of the drama method were applied in the following order.

a) Warm-up:

1. All students were gathered in a drama circle, either standing or sitting.

2. Different kinds of warm-up activities were implemented before reading. Those warm-up activities were organized according to the text's content. When the text was about the importance of listening, a listening activity of different sounds was used. These activities included short improvisations (in small groups or in pairs).

b) Development:

3. Students were randomly assigned in four to five groups of four to five students each.

4. Each group sat at the table, just on a chair, or on the carpet, but always in a circle. (Group members had to be face to face.)

5. The activities were clearly explained to the students, as well as what was expected of them.

6. Students were instructed that the group members were responsible for each other's learning and reading.

7. Students were asked to read the text. At first, the teacher would sometimes read the story for them while they were still in a circle; at other times the students read the story/text silently. One student also read the text aloud to his/her group.

8. Students were asked to work on the text together according to the drama activities.

9. Students were asked to do a variety of dramatic activities, such as acting out, hot-seating, conscience alley through tracking, freezing picture, story dramatization, etc. (For more information about these drama techniques, see Kelner & Flynn, 2006; McCaslin, 2006; Winston & Tandy, 2001.)

c) Reflection and Evaluation:

10. Each group was given a worksheet with exercises focused on reading comprehension strategies, such as finding the main idea, completing the story, summarizing the story. (See Table 2.)

d) Elaboration:

11. All worksheets were posted on the board or on the wall so that all students could see the other groups' work.

During the intervention, the participants pursued a drama activity and worked on the worksheet prepared by the researcher. The reading materials and class hours distribution are given in Table 2.

Each class session combined drama with reading strategies, which are listed in Table 2. More than one reading strategy was used in each

class session during the intervention. During intervention, dramatic

activities and strategies changed according to the context.

Table 2: Reading Texts and Class Hours Distribution According to Intervention Plan for the Experimental Group

Date	Hours	Title of Text	Method and Instructional Activity
03/29/2006	2X40	Owl	Drama, Drawing Pictures, Finding the Main Idea
04/05/2006	2X40	Story of Salt	Drama, Finding the Main Idea and Generating a Slogan
04/12/2006	2X40	Ekin and Hand Glass	Drama, Story Completion, Prediction
04/19/2006	2X40	Colors	Drama, Writing Poems, Making Conclusions, Summarizing
04/26/2006	2X40	Power of Love	Drama, Story Tree, Questioning
05/03/2006	2X40	Love of Reading	Drama, Drawing Picture, Summarizing
05/10/2006	2X40	Do we know how to listen?	Drama, Identifying, Listing, Highlighting
05/17/2006	2X40	Brindled Dog	Drama, Story Completion, Drawing Pictures, Predicting
05/24/2006	2X40	Story of One Eagle	Drama, Making Questioning, Summarizing
05/31/2006	2X40	Pictures and People	Drama, Creating Stories, Inferring

Traditional Class:

The following steps were followed in the control class:

a) The text or story was read aloud by the instructor.

b) A few students read the text to the whole class.

c) The meanings of some unknown words were explained to the whole class.

d) The teacher asked a few questions related to the text to which the students answered accordingly.

e) A worksheet was given to each student. (All active learning activities were used in the control group for this last step.) Each student completed the worksheet individually.

f) A discussion with the entire class concluded the hour.

During the implementation, the teachers stayed in class as observers.

Data Analysis

The data of this study were analyzed using SPSS 15.0 and Excel. Percentage, Correlation, Arithmetic Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD) and *t* test were employed in the data analyses. Some of the data were analyzed manually. During data collection, the instructors teaching the sample groups were given data collection tools and asked to fill them out (for SATR).

Findings and Interpretation

In Table 3, interview protocol results are given with percentages, followed by the results of the interview (students' answers, whose transformed scale items are given with the t-test) and by the results of the analyses of attitudes toward reading. Following the reading comprehension strategies, attitudes toward reading results and perception about drama results are given with interpretation.

Students' Use of Reading Comprehension Strategies in Fifth Grade

In order to determine which reading comprehension strategies students use while reading a text, students in the experimental and control groups were interviewed before and after implementation, and the frequency distribution of students answers was calculated for each group. The results are given in Table 3.

Pre-test results show that students in the experimental and the control group use the following strategies: reading the text more than once; asking the teacher and/or their friends to read; using the dictionary, and trying to get involved in text.

Table 3:   Percentage of Pre-and Post Test Interview Results in Terms of Students' Use of Reading Comprehension Strategies in Fifth Grade

All items from Control and Experimental groups	Pre-control		Pre-experiment		Post-control		Post-experiment	
I…	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
Read more than one time, and I read again and again.	21	32.31	26	37.68	17	24.64	24	24.49
Ask my teacher	10	15.38	11	15.94	08	11.59	08	8.16
Ask my friends	06	9.23	04	5.80	06	8.70	04	4.08
Look words up in my dictionary	03	4.62	05	7.25	07	10.14	04	4.08
Scan and skim the text	01	1.54	01	1.45	01	1.45	01	1.02
Ask one of my parents	09	13.85	01	1.45	02	2.90	04	4.08
Explain the text aloud to myself	02	3.08	03	4.35	05	7.25	03	3.06
Predict and think about the text	02	3.08					01	1.02
Look at other resources	06	9.23	01	1.45	02	2.90		
Try to get involved and concentrate	03	4.62	06	8.70	02	2.90	07	7.14
Ask someone (friends, teacher, etc.) to read for me	02	3.08	04	5.80	01	1.45	06	6.12
Take notes on the text			01	1.45	01	1.45		
Read aloud to someone			02	2.90	02	2.90	04	4.08
Visualize the story			04	5.80			17	17.35
Find the main idea					01	1.45	02	2.04
Summarize the text					01	1.45	02	2.04
Underline important ideas					06	8.70		
Find out the meanings of unknown words					03	4.35		
Ask someone to read aloud for me					04	5.80	02	2.04
Answer questions related to the text							01	1.02
Ask my friend to explain the text to me							02	2.04
Try to imagine myself as part of the text							05	5.10
Make inferences							01	1.02

In the control group, students say that they often look at other resources. In the experimental group, students also say that they often ask someone (friends, teacher or parents) to read to them and visualize the story.

Post-test results show that students in the experimental and the control groups often use the following strategies: reading the text more than once; asking the teacher and/or their friends to read; and using the dictionary. In the control group, according to the results of the interviews, students often underline important ideas. In the experimental group,

students also say that they often ask someone (friends, teacher, or parents) to read for them and that they try to get involved in the text. They visualize the story and try to imagine themselves as a part of the text.

Each student's response, coded as an item scale, was calculated for the Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviation. To find out whether mean differences were significant or not, a t test was utilized. For two groups, pre-test and post-test results for mean, Standard Deviation, and effect size (EF) are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Experimental (EG) and Control Group (CG) Pre- and Post-Test Results in Terms of Students' Use of Reading Comprehension Strategies (M, SD, t test, and EF)

Pre-Post-Test	Group	n (post)	M (post)	SD (post)	df (post)	t (post)	ES d (post)	r (post)
	EG	28 (28)	2.54 (3.43)	1.47 (1.20)	52	1.10	0.03	0.01
	CG	26 (26)	2.50 (2.65)	1.03 (.74)	(52)	(2.82)	(0.78)	(0.36)

According to the figures in Table 4, results show that before implementation in the experimental and the traditional groups, pre-test means are very close to each other, and, according to the t test, the difference between the groups is not significant [(52) =2.00, p<0.05].

The experimental group's mean pretest score (2.54) was increased by the treatment (drama), as shown in the mean post-test scores of the same group (3.43). However, the means in the control group (2.50 vs. 2.65, respectively) were not found to be statistically significant. In the same table, according to post-test results, the means of the experimental group are higher than those of the control group. Pre- and post- test results can be seen in Table 5.

The difference between post-test means is determined to be significant according to the t test [(52) =2.00, p<0.05]. Results show that the students in the drama group use more strategies than the traditional group.

Table 5: Experimental and Control Group Pre- and Post-Test Results in Terms of Students' Use of Reading Comprehension Strategies
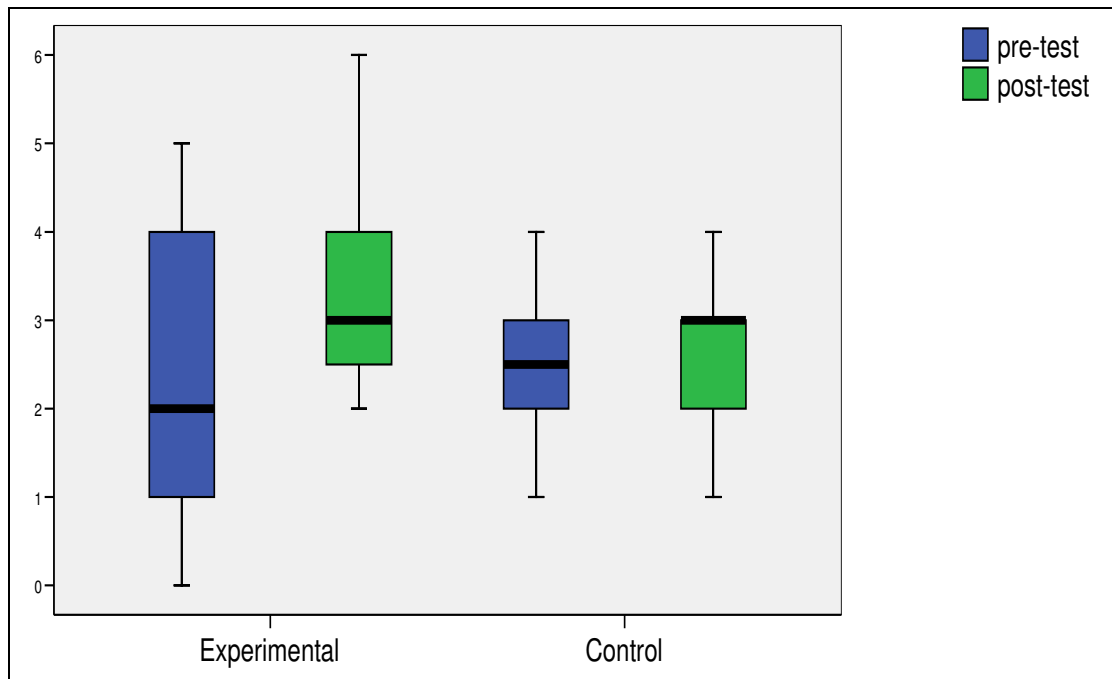
Students' Attitude Toward Reading in the Fifth Grade

In order to determine whether students' attitudes toward reading vary in terms of implementation, the Arithmetic Means of the pre- and post-test results were calculated for the experimental and control groups. A t test was subsequently employed in order to determine whether the differences between the Arithmetic Means are significant or not. For the two groups, pre-test and post-test results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Experimental Group (EG) and Control Group (CG) Pre-Test and Post-Test Results in Terms of Student Levels of Attitude Toward Reading in Fifth Grade (Mean, Std. Deviation, t test and Effect Size)

Sub-scale	Group	n (post)	M (post)	SD (post)	df (post)	t (post)	ES d (post)	r (post)
NFCR	EG	28 (26)	18.53 (20.70)	6.52 (7.67)	(51)	(.17)	(0.04)	(0.02)
	CG	26 (27)	15.65 (20.26)	4.97 (10.72)	52	1.81	0.50	0.24
PFCR	EG	28 (26)	35.89 (36. 07)	6.45 (6.04)	(51)	(1.57)	(0.43)	(0.21)
	CG	26 (27)	38.38 (38.50)	4.83 (5.09)	52	1.59	0.44	0.21
ECD	EG	28 (26)	39.03 (40.25)	5.30 (5.30)	(51)	(.78)	(0.21)	(0.10)
	CG	26 (27)	41.65 (41. 42)	5.04 (5.51)	52	1.85	0.51	0.24
PP	EG	28 (26)	10.32 (9.96)	3.36 (3.68)	(51)	(.39)	(0.10)	(0.05)
	CG	26 (27)	9.26 (9.53)	3.16 (4.09)	52	1.18	0.32	0.16
Total	EG	28 (26)	103.78 (107.00)	9.44 (10.16)	(51)	(1.00)	(0.28)	(0.13)
	CG	26 (27)	104.96 (109.73)	7.32 (9.68)	52	.50	0.13	0.06

According to the figures in Table 6, the means are very close to each other in either pre-test or post-test for both the experimental and the control groups. Pre-test result shows that the difference between the two groups is determined not to be significant according to t test result [(51) =2.00, p<0.05]. According to post-test results, Means and Standard Deviation were calculated, and to understand whether the means vary significantly or not, the t test was utilized. The difference between the two groups is determined not to be significant according to t test results [(52) =2.00, p<0.05]. Although the difference is not significant according to post-test results, the means are higher for the experimental group than for the control group.

Students' Perceptions of Drama in the Experimental Class

In order to discern the students' perceptions of drama in the reading comprehension class, those in the experimental group were interviewed

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after the intervention, and the frequency distributions of students'
answers were calculated. The results are given in Table 7.

Table 7: Students' Perception about Drama in Experimental Group (Percentage)

Dimensions	Items: It…/ I…	f	%
Communication, Sharing, Empathy	Reinforced the relationship with my classmate.	*14*	*9.46*
	Enjoyed expressing myself without feeling embarrassed.	*10*	*6.76*
	Learned to share my ideas with my friends.	3	2.03
	Was able to put myself in somebody else's position.	3	2.03
	Played some drama games with my brother	1	0.68
	Improved the relationship with my friends.	6	4.05
Awareness	Was happy and I enjoyed it	*18*	*12.16*
	Wish it didn't finish	*11*	*7.43*
	Felt very special and different.	2	1.35
	Liked dramatization and improvisation	*16*	*10.81*
	Learned about myself.	4	2.70
	Noticed my classmates' abilities	3	2.03
Cognitive and Emotional Acquisition	Improved my creativity	4	2.70
	Improved my reading, vocabulary and speaking	*6*	*4.05*
	Improved my imagination	3	2.03
	Learned many things from my friends	3	2.03
	Read more. My reading level was low, but now it is high.	6	4.05
	Learned about the importance of listening	3	2.03
	Enjoyed to visualize the story through drama	2	1.35
	Learned about the importance of reading	*14*	*9.46*
	Increased my reading speed.	3	2.03
	Even improved my math ability	1	0.68
	Read more carefully	2	1.35
	Increased my success via learning new things.	*10*	*6.76*

According to Table 7, students' perceptions of the drama class are
positive. Most of them said that, after drama, they communicated better
with their classmates, realized the importance of reading (n=14), had a
good time (n=18), liked dramatization (n=16), did not feel embarrassed
to express their feelings, and increased their knowledge (n=10) through
drama. According to these answers, student perceptions can be divided
into three groups, namely "communication" (e.g., "I improved my
relationship with my classmate."); "awareness" (e.g., "I learned about

myself."); and "cognitive and emotional acquisition" (eg., "It improved my reading, vocabulary, and speaking.").

Conclusions and Suggestions

The following are the main conclusions of this research about the effects of the drama method on primary school students' a) reading strategy use; b) attitudes toward reading; and (c) perceptions of the drama method.

a) The results of this study indicate that drama is more effective than traditional methods in using reading comprehension strategies and in having the students use more learning strategies. According to the interview results, students in the drama class also reported that they were often asking someone (friend, teacher, or parent) to read for them, and that they were trying hard to be involved in a text by visualizing the story and by imagining themselves as part of the text. This indicates that drama activities give students a chance to be completely involved in a story through improvisation, which fosters mental imagination.

These results are similar to previous findings concerning the improvement of reading comprehension through the drama method. According to McMaster (1998, p.580), "mental imaging is a comprehension strategy that aids readers in storing information for retrieval." Students significantly increase performance in this strategy when they are asked to act out the text they have read. Moreover, dramatization supports other reading strategies, such as higher-level question development about texts, hypothesizing, testing possible

solutions and alternatives, and redefining problems for the students'

comprehending process (Heinig, 1993). This, in turn, forces students to

find a variety of ways to comprehend texts. Drama is revealed as a

superior reading strategy, especially as a result of the interaction

opportunities it provides. In such activities, students are able to observe

each other reading, explaining, questioning, criticizing, and thinking aloud,

which results in their acting or improvising together. By having a dramatic

picture of what they read, they become actively and intensely involved in

the reading process. In addition, different drama activities promote

reading strategy uses by activating the students' bodies in addition to

their minds, a significant difference from all other methods. Consequently,

students reach higher levels of reading comprehension, as reading

becomes not only seeing and understanding, but also being actively and

physically involved. Finally, students in drama classes know how

important it is to comprehend the text from their group before acting in

front of the other groups. After working with the drama method in a

classroom environment, students start becoming more focused on

understanding a text while they improve their personal drama

performance. In short, students in a drama class go beyond reading

quietly in class and answering some comprehension questions about the

text**.** The drama method in contrast to the traditional method, motivates

them to employ a wide range of reading strategies and to read more

voluntarily on their own. The results of this study have corroborated these

findings.

b) According to the results obtained through The Scale for Attitudes Toward Reading, in the drama class strategies increased positive attitudes in the dimensions of "Negative Feelings Concerning Reading", "Positive Feelings Concerning Reading" and "Effects on Cognitive Development". Although there was no *significant* difference in any dimensions in these two classes, drama had a positive effect on students in the experimental group. The results of this study show that if the learner is provided opportunities for dramatic activities, he/she tends to improve his/her attitudes toward learning. It should also be said that since this experiment only lasted ten weeks and students received instruction for no more than two hours each week, conclusions might have been different if intervention had been done more than once a week and for more than ten weeks. This could explain why the difference is not significant in the actual findings.

Unfortunately, instruction efforts in reading comprehension often do not reach their real objectives. Young children who are initially excited and motivated to read often lose those feelings over time and end up reading only compulsory texts to get through the class. One of the major reasons for this situation is that traditional methods consider students passive recipients of knowledge. In traditional classes, the teacher is at the center and makes all decisions about student learning, and, for exams, students are often required to repeat the text word for word. This pushes students to memorize texts instead of understand and comprehend them, which then produces reading difficulties and negative attitudes toward reading.

Research results indicate that students do not spend much time on reading outside of the curriculum (Güngör, 2004). For these reasons, more non-traditional methods are needed to help students comprehend, transform, question, criticize, and produce ideas (Güngör, 2004), as well as help transform them from passive recipients into active processors. In that respect, drama can be an effective and feasible solution to promote positive attitudes and effective use of strategies. If we can promote that, we can also pursue students' high reading achievement, which is directly correlated with these variables. Moreover, the increase in reading achievement will also provide a good basis for teaching other subjects effectively (Güngör & Açıkgöz, 2006).

c) As a result of drama method students have positive perceptions about drama class. According to their answers, perceptions are divided in three dimensions.

First, results show that drama improves students' empathy and communication skills and helps students to build better relationships with their peers. (See also Walsh-Bowers & Basso, 1999.) Students indicate that, through drama, they can explain their feelings without being embarrassed, indicating that they have better social skills after exposure to the drama method than before. Kara and Çam (2007) also found that the drama method has a significant effect on pursuing group work, initiating and maintaining a social relationship, and on using self control social skills. Other research results support those findings (Güngör & Can, 2006; Heinig, 1993; Wagner, 1988; Yassa, 1999).

Second, a positive perception about drama is students' awareness, as they realize what they like about the learning process and what they noticed about their classmates' abilities. Results of this study show that students come to a greater degree of self realization through drama. Many researchers in the field stress the same point (Bolton, 1983; Brown & Pleydell, 1999; McMaster, 1998; Miller, 1996). Drama activities support awareness in their role of rehearsing for life (Heinig, 1993).

Third, positive perception about drama is linked to acquisition of cognitive and emotional skills. Drama helps to improve students' reading, speaking, and listening abilities, as well as their vocabulary acquisition. This result also supports other research findings (Booth, 1985, Bolton, 1983; Brown & Pleydell, 1999, Fennessey, 2006, Kornfeld & Leyden, 2005; McMaster, 1998; Schneider & Jackson, 2000; Winston, 2004).

Finally, students declare that drama enables them to understand the importance of reading and to increase their reading and learning abilities. According to students' perception, drama also increases their reading speed. Rose, Parks, Androes and McMahon's (2000) research results support these conclusions. Bournot-Trites, Belliveau, Spiliotopoulos and S´eror (2007) indicate that students in the drama group obtained a significantly higher overall score on composition writing. The results of this and other studies thus indicate that drama and other active learning strategies should be used in order for students to develop more positive attitudes toward reading, to enjoy reading, to improve their reading comprehension and writing skills, to make them generally more aware of

themselves, to help them to learn how to communicate, to improve their relationships with peers and to be able to use more reading strategies.

Based on our research results, the following suggestions can be made to program designers, to institutions educating elementary teachers, to elementary teachers themselves, to reading teachers, and to researchers working in this field. In general, drama should become a more widespread method in elementary education institutions, especially for reading teachers. Specifically, trainee teachers should be taught effective drama methods in university institutions educating elementary teachers. For teachers working in the field, applied elementary education studies should be planned by lecturers who are expert in this field. Teachers should be instructed and guided about how to teach children to play in groups and how to use group work processes for improvisation and other drama techniques. Finally, teachers who are new to drama methods in elementary school education should be given counseling services in this area.

As for further research on this subject, it is important to pursue observation studies related to learning and teaching processes in class. These studies should be sufficiently descriptive to allow for the pursuit of further research for childhood education in general and reading in particular. There is also a need to further investigate the correlation between drama and attitudes toward reading over a period longer than 10 weeks in order to clarify the relationship between them.

Appendix

Example of a Drama Lesson

Lesson: Language / Arts

Class: Fifth Grade Time: 40 min. + 40 min.

Text Title: Owl

Aim: Comprehend the text in accordance with the students' level

Behavioral aims:

1) To find the main idea of the text.

2) To create a new title for the text.

3) To make use of prior knowledge.

Method: Drama and Active Learning Activities

Materials: Short Stories

Instructional Procedure:

a) Warm-up:

All students gather in the drama circle, either standing or sitting. Students are asked to think about the birds they like the most. Would you like to be that bird? Students throw a ball to each other in the circle while making the sound of the bird they chose. Then each of them in turn comes to the middle of the circle to imitate that bird. Then all the students/birds are flying through the class/rainforest/park, wherever the bird lives (sea, lake, mountain, tree, desert, etc.). Students are given a signal at which they freeze; then each of them says which bird he/she is and where he/she lives when the teacher touches them. A signal is then given that a hunter is coming (teacher). What to do now? Fly faster, and hide somewhere else.

They are safe now. Then make pairs. Pairs tell each other about the family of that bird (brother, sister, parent, etc.).

b) Development:

All students gather in the drama circle and sit down. The teacher reads the story aloud. Then the students are randomly assigned in 4-5 groups of 4-5 students each. One or two times they read the story aloud to each other. Each group has a group name (they can decide themselves, e.g. the bird name). Each group prepares a different part of story as selected and assigned by teacher (beginning, middle, and last part). Each group improvises the part of story assigned by the teacher

c) Reflection and Evaluation:

A worksheet is given to the each group. The students are asked to close their eyes and have an image of an owl. Then they are asked to draw the main idea of story and write down a new title for story (hang activities on the board so that all of them can see the work of each group).

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