

## Experiences of Primary School with Students with Reading and Writing Difficulties\*

**Hayati Akyol<sup>i</sup>**  
Gazi Univesity

**Murat Temur<sup>ii</sup>**  
Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli Univesity

**Mustafa Erol<sup>iii</sup>**  
Yıldız Teknik Univesity

### Abstract

This study aims to examine in-depth the practices and the problems of primary school teachers in identifying and eliminating reading and writing difficulties. The current study employed phenomenology method, one of the qualitative research designs and the data of the study were collected through observation and interview techniques. Criterion sampling, one of the purposeful sampling methods was utilized in determining study group. Six primary school teachers were selected in accordance with the determined criteria to collect the interview data. To collect observation data, 3 primary schools were selected and a total of 16 hours of observation was made. According to the findings, most of the teachers did not receive education about identifying students with reading and writing difficulties, conducting studies with these students, and preparing materials, activities, and etc. suitable for them. Moreover, primary school teachers expressed that although there were some disadvantages of inclusive education, students with reading and writing difficulties should continue their education in inclusive classes. However, the necessity of providing supplementary support to these students in addition to inclusive education was frequently emphasized. When the practices of primary school teachers with students having reading and writing difficulty were examined, it was observed that they generally used letter/syllable trinkets, gamification, letter cards, individual syllable work, memorization assignments, dictation work, story reading, drama and colored syllables. On the other hand, it was determined that methods, techniques or strategies that stated to be effective in the literature were either used very little or not at all in classrooms.

**Key words;** Reading Difficulty, Writing Difficulty, Specific Learning Difficulty, Phenomenology

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<sup>i</sup> **Hayati Akyol**, Prof. Dr., Gazi Faculty of Education, Department of Basic Education, Primary School Education, Gazi University, ORCID: 0000-0002-4450-2374

<sup>ii</sup> **Murat Temur**, Research Assist, Faculty of Education, Department of Basic Education, Primary School Education, Hacı Bektas Veli Nevsehir University, ORCID: 0000- 0001-8548-6342

<sup>iii</sup> **Mustafa Erol**, Research Assist, Faculty of Education, Department of Basic Education, Primary School Education, Yildiz Technical University, ORCID: 0000-0002-1675-7070

**Correspondence:** merol@yildiz.edu.tr

## INTRODUCTION

Reading is the process of creating meaning from written texts. It is a complex skill which requires the coordination of inter-related knowledge sources (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985). Writing is defined as a complex action consisting of cognitive, kinesthetic and perceptual motor components (Rosenblum, Weiss, & Parush, 2003). Reading and writing skills are the basic requirements of the 21st century. Social media tools such as e-mail, messaging, facebook, etc. and other applications that require reading and writing skills are now widely used for communication. Individuals now frequently use reading and writing skills to read or take notes on billboards, vehicles, medicine and food boxes in their daily lives (Graham & Hebert, 2001; Bayraktar, 2013).

Reading and writing skills seriously affect the education life of individuals. Reading and writing skills form the basis for other courses such as Social Studies, Science and Mathematics in addition to Turkish Language lessons (Baştuğ & Demirtaş Şenel, 2019; Yılmaz, 2019), and students who cannot develop these skills may not succeed in most of the other courses (Akyol, 2018). In addition, problems with reading and writing can negatively affect students not only academically but also socially (Yıldız, 2004). For this reason, it should be ensured that every student who studies at primary school gains these skills at an adequate level, and in the event of a problem, the support of all stakeholders (family, special education teacher, school administrator, lecturer, etc.) should be taken to solve the problem.

Although reading and writing skills have such a great importance in the lives of individuals, students who have problems in acquiring and using these skills effectively can be seen in every school. Thus, it is especially important for Primary school to know what the reading and writing difficulties are and what the characteristics of students who have this problem are. Yılmaz (2019) defines reading difficulty as a student's reading skill below expected despite having a normal or higher intelligence level, having appropriate teaching conditions and socioeconomic level, and not having a physical impairment such as sight, hearing, etc. (p.25). In students with reading problems, mistakes can be seen in reading too fast or too slowly, using gestures and mimics excessively or too little, not paying attention to punctuation marks, repeat, pause, mispronounce, add, skip, finger follow, shuffle, flip, spelling, reading word by word, murmur, misreading (Taşkaya, 2017, p.235-236). Difficulty in writing is the problem of not being able to write the shapes that make up the handwriting in the appropriate size, irregularly or at an angle. Problems such as holding the paper in the wrong position, wrong wrist position, slow writing and getting tired quickly, not being able to use the space on the paper, not being able to fully form the words, skipping, not leaving appropriate spaces between letters and words can be seen in students with writing difficulties (Doğan, 2012, p. 24).

Students who have problems in reading and writing develop a negative attitude towards reading and writing because they cannot overcome these problems after a while. Because of this negative attitude, students avoid works that require reading and/or writing, thus they fall behind their peers academically. In addition to teacher support, effective methods are needed to overcome these problems of students. Teachers should evaluate the areas in which these students lack, using formal or informal tools, and decide on the most appropriate method for them (Akyol & Sever, 2019). In studies to be conducted with students who have problems in reading and writing, activities such as using different senses such as vision, hearing and touch, doing attention and memory studies, developing motor skills, supporting the development of concepts and thoughts as well as other language skills (listening, speaking, etc.) should be included. Therefore, teachers should be made experts in this field so that they can overcome all these efforts. Teachers who specialize in this subject will become more competent in identifying the shortcomings of the students, designing an education to eliminate this deficiency, and evaluating the student (Koç, 2012, p.2-3). However, although teachers have such a great importance in solving reading and writing problems, they have difficulties in identifying and solving the problems (Ketenoğlu Kayabaşı, 2019; Kuruyer & Çakıroğlu, 2017).

The incomplete or insufficient knowledge of teachers about detecting and overcoming reading difficulties causes them to misunderstand the concept of learning disability and prepares an

environment for them not to know how to guide these students (Foreman-Sinclair, 2012). At this point, when the relevant literature was examined, it was determined that teachers and lecturers did not have sufficient information about children with learning disabilities, they could not define learning disabilities, their knowledge about learning disabilities was limited and they could not guide students. (Aladwani & Al Shaye, 2012; Altun & Uzuner, 2016; Altuntaş, 2010; DeSimone & Parmar, 2006; Doyran & Canca, 2013; Ghimire, 2017; Kirby, Davies, & Bryant, 2005; Moothedath & Vranda, 2015; Saravanabhavan & Saravanabhavan, 2010; Sezer & Akın, 2011; Shetty & Rai, 2014; Yangın, Yangın, Önder and Şavlığ, 2016). However, when the studies on the subject are examined, it is seen that in order to overcome these problems, methods and techniques such as repetitive reading, echo reading, pre-listening to the paragraph, harmonious reading, peer reading, choral reading, word box strategy, reading theater as well as individual reading-writing exercises, large and small muscle exercises to improve writing skills, sitting on the desks in a proper position, keeping the notebook correctly, studies on the way of holding the pencil, copying and dictation exercises have been carried out and successful results have been achieved in majority of them (Akyol & Sever, 2019; Eber & Miller, 2003; Kaya, 2016; Ketenoğlu Kayabaşı, 2019; Kodan, 2016; Kuşdemir, Kurban & Bulut, 2018; Meyer & Felton, 1999; Yıldız, 2013; Yüksel, 2010).

Primary school have a great role in the acquisition and development of reading and writing skills. Therefore, it is the primary school who are the first to encounter students who have problems with this issue, work with them or direct them to relevant places. On the other hand, since school is the environment where students spend the most time after their families, it can be said that classroom teachers are the most influential people after families. Thus, it is required that how primary school identify students who have problems with reading and writing, what the characteristics of these students are, what kind of work they do to solve students' problems, how successful they are, whether they received an education in identifying students' problems, doing studies and elimination of the same, and what their recommendations to other teachers or prospective teachers about these students are. In this direction, it was tried to determine in the study what the current practices are about students who have problems in reading and writing, whether there are methods/techniques/strategies that have been found in the literature and proven effective in these practices, and what the deficiencies are. In addition, it was aimed to determine the teachers' opinions, recommendations and expectations on this subject.

## **METHOD**

### **Study Model**

In this study, since it was aimed to determine the opinions of primary school about students with reading and writing difficulties by using their experiences, phenomenology, which is one of the qualitative research designs, was used. With this qualitative research method, it is tried to discover what individuals know, what they do, what they feel or think by making observations and interviews or by analyzing documents (Patton, 2018, p. 145). Phenomenology, a qualitative research design, "focuses on phenomena that we are aware of but do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding". In fact, we encounter these phenomena in different ways in daily life. However, although we have encountered facts, we cannot fully understand them. Phenomenology appears as the most appropriate design for studies aiming to investigate these phenomena (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, p. 69).

### **Working Group**

Criterion sampling, which is one of the purposeful sampling types, was used to determine the study group of the study. Since the opinions of teachers about students with reading and writing difficulties will be taken, the elected classroom teachers should have encountered and worked with such students. Therefore, criterion sampling was used in the study to obtain rich data.

In purposeful sampling, rich data sources are determined in line with the aims of the study planned by the researcher, and these sources, which are rich in information, are studied in detail (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2014). In the criterion sampling type, the basic understanding is to form a study group by taking into account the criteria determined beforehand or formed by the researcher based on the study and to carry out the study with this group (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016).

In this context, the researchers established the criteria of (1) "having a student with reading or writing difficulties before", (2) "teaching for at least five years" and (3) "being a primary school" and determined 6 primary school as participants. 2 of the participants are male and 4 of them are female. In addition, the researchers determined 3 primary schools to make observations within the framework of certain criteria. Then, 6 lesson hours in 2 classes and 4 lesson hours in 1 class with students having difficulty in reading and writing (total 16 hours) were observed.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

In the study conducted to determine the opinions of primary school about students with reading and writing difficulties, interview and observation forms were used as data collection tools.

According to Karasar (2017), interview is the name given to data collection through verbal communication. It is used as the shortest way to learn the opinions, knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, etc. of individuals on different subjects and their possible reasons. Observation "defines the process of collecting the data needed in the study by focusing on certain targets such as human, society or nature and monitoring it with the naked eye or by using a tool" (Büyüköztürk et al., 2014, p.140).

The researchers prepared the interview and observation form by first examining the conceptual framework and sent the forms to three faculty members with a doctorate in classroom education and a lecturer with a special education doctorate for expert opinion. In line with expert opinions, the forms were finalized. Then, face-to-face interviews were made with 2 teachers for the preliminary application and the expression defects, unclear parts or differently understood parts in the forms were corrected.

During the study process, all participants were asked whether they allow voice recording. Three of the participants gave permission for audio recording. Since other three responded as "It would be better not to take it", no audio recording was taken and notes were taken during the interview process. The interviews were generally conducted in an environment that the principal deemed appropriate. In total, 50 minutes of interviews were conducted with teachers (3 people) who allowed voice recording. All sound recordings were carefully transcribed and checked. Then, 3 interview data, which were noted, were transferred to the computer environment. Also, observations were made during the study process. A total of 16 hours (6+6+4) of observations were made in three different primary schools. Observation data were likewise transcribed and transferred to computer media.

Within the scope of the study, the data obtained through the interviews were transferred to the computer media and analyzed by content analysis. The main purpose in content analysis is to reveal the concepts and principles that can explain the data obtained. For this purpose, firstly, the collected data is conceptualized. Then, it is organized in a logical way according to the concepts formed and the themes that explain the data are obtained (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). The data set prepared in this direction was coded separately for each teacher. While coding, the aims of the study were taken into account. Then the codes obtained were tabulated and the themes were determined by working on this table. Finally, the findings were interpreted in line with the codes and themes and supported with the data obtained from the observation technique. Also, the teachers interviewed were given a code name, and the observed students were given a different name, and their information was kept confidential.

## Studies Conducted to Ensure Validity and Reliability

**Table 1. Measures taken for the validity and reliability of the study**

Validity and Reliability Type	Works carried out
Internal Validity (Credibility)	Long-term interaction Variation Expert review
External Validity (Transferability)	Detailed description Purposeful sampling
Internal Reliability (Consistency)	Examination by an experienced expert at all stages of the research Examination of codes and themes by different researchers
External Reliability (Verifiability)	Transferring and saving data to computer environment Recording of data with a voice recorder

Yıldırım and Şimşek, adapted from Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen (1993), (2016, p.277)

According to Table-1, researchers should stay in the field for a long time and make more than one observation in order to increase the internal validity of the study. The prolongation of the data collection process and its extension over time will also contribute to internal validity. For this reason, observations were made an average of 3 times in each school. Observations were made for a total of 16 hours. Also, care was taken to ensure that the interview data were face-to-face and an atmosphere of trust was created before the interview. Regarding internal validity, it was also aimed to obtain data with different methods and observation-interview techniques were used. Finally, expert opinions were taken from 4 individuals about the data collection tools and the research was examined in all dimensions by a faculty member who attended the first reading and writing teaching course and was experienced in qualitative research.

In order to ensure external validity, it is aimed to present the findings obtained clearly to the reader. Here, the concepts, themes, and direct quotations from the statements of the interviewees are presented to the reader. In this way, the validity of the data was tried to be ensured by detailed description. In the second step, purposeful sampling method was used in the study. Thus, it is aimed to reveal the variable characteristics of events and facts.

For internal reliability in the study, the creation of data collection tools, data collection, analysis, report writing process, etc., was examined by one expert faculty member whose name is not given in the study. In addition, the codes and themes were prepared by two individuals and were worked on and finalized. For external reliability, audio-recording or face-to-face interviews and observations made were transferred to the computer environment. Thus, other researchers were enabled to operate and examine the confirmation mechanism whenever they wanted.

## FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

In this section, there are findings obtained as a result of interviews and observations. First, the findings collected by the interview technique were given and then the findings were supported by the data collected by the observation technique.

### 1. Findings on whether primary school were trained for reading or writing difficulties

In this title, the findings about whether the primary school received any training to solve these problems of students with reading and writing difficulties (course, seminar, in-service training, etc.), and if so, the content of the training were included.

**Table 2. Information on whether or not class teachers receive training**

Participant	Whether or not to Receive Training
P-1	I did not
P-2	I did not
P-3	I did (Training to diagnose dyslexia and dysgraphia)
P-4	I did (courses at the university, in-service training, seminar)
P-5	I did (Seminar)
P-6	I did (In-service training)

When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that 2 primary school did not receive training to solve the problems of students with reading and writing difficulties, while 4 teachers took a course on this subject during in-service training, seminars or university education. The training that only one of the four primary school received is more detailed than the others. The content of the training received by the participant is listed below;

- The importance of one-to-one, regular and continuous study,
- How are students diagnosed,
- How to be guided after diagnosis,
- What kind of applications are made?
- How to prepare materials for these types of students?

The other 3 teachers stated that training was generally related to the mentally disabled, autistic students and gifted students, but also the subjects related to students who have reading and writing difficulties, even if a little, were mentioned. **P-4**, one of the primary school, said, "There are some trainings we received at the university within the scope of the course. We also have in-service training. We took our special education seminars or counseling practices under subtitles within it. For example, in the special education seminar, it is under the name of general mentally disabled, autistic students, and then as a subheading of it, students with dyslexia problem. For example, we took 3 hours of a 20-hour course on this subject." **P-6** said "Generally, operations for gifted people were explained. In the other, there was a lot of emphasis on autism. Learning difficulty was not explained much."

When the findings above are examined, it is seen that two of the teachers have not received any training, while the others do not receive sufficient training in determining students with reading and writing problems, working with these students, preparing materials, activities, etc. suitable for them, monitoring and evaluating their academic development. Today, it is very important to support teachers in this regard, as there is a high probability of having students with reading and writing problems in most of the schools.

In this part, the classroom teachers were also asked to recommend a content (in-service training, seminar, course, etc.) regarding the education to be given to students who have problems in reading and writing. Classroom teachers stated that instead of theoretical training, an education which is supported with concrete examples and prepared by taking the observed cases and events into account would be more beneficial. In addition, teachers stated that the problems of children should be determined together (family, counseling service, school administration, academic staff and RAM (Counseling Research Center)) based on these case studies and education should be given to these children according to their problems. One of the opinions received from teachers on this issue is given below:

**P-1** stated that "Concrete examples, observed cases, events experienced should be brought to the education environment. Then, the problems of these children should be determined together and these children should be educated together. Teachers should be

*informed about reading and writing assignments/exercises to be given. There are different types, they should be informed about it."*

It is possible to encounter problems during the implementation phase even if the courses, seminars, in-service trainings or trainings given by experts at the university are easily understood in theory. For this reason, while preparing the educational content, enough attention should be paid to the application dimension. When the opinions of the teachers are examined, it will be understood that the application dimension of the given trainings should be emphasized, even if possible, they want to see what has been done gradually by doing joint studies on a student.

## 2. Findings on the process of determining students with reading and writing difficulties by classroom teachers

In this section, as a second step, the findings about how teachers identify these types of students are included. The codes obtained about how students are determined were basically evaluated within the framework of two themes.

**Table 3. Problems seen in students in reading and writing**

Theme	Codes	N	%
Problems with Writing Skill	Wrong writing	3	17
	Mixing up the direction of letters	3	17
	Skipping	2	11
	Having trouble combining letters or syllables	1	5
	Not paying attention to the lines in the notebook	1	5
	Not paying attention to spaces	1	5
	Mixing up upper-case and lower-case letters	1	5
	Punctuation errors	1	5
	Forgetting the letter order while typing	1	5
	Inability to distinguish letters	1	5
	Inability to achieve hand-eye coordination	1	5
	Illegible writing	1	5
	Sloppy writing	1	5
	Problems with Reading	Misreading	3
Adding		2	13
Skipping		2	13
Inability to distinguish letters		2	13
Difficulty in making voices		1	6
Inability to combine letters or syllables		1	6
Slow reading		1	6
Low self-confidence		1	6
Forgetting		1	6
Swapping letters/words		1	6
Being nervous when given the task to read		1	6

Table 3 lists the characteristics seen in students with reading or writing problems according to teachers' opinions. **Characteristics seen in students with writing problems** were determined to be wrong writing (17%), mixing up the direction of the letters (17%), skipping (11%), having trouble combining letters or syllables (5%), not paying attention to the lines in the notebook (5%), not paying attention to spaces (5%), mixing up upper-case and lower-case letters (5%), punctuation errors (5%), forgetting the order of letters when writing (5%), inability to distinguish letters (5%), inability to provide hand-eye coordination (5%), illegible writing (5%), sloppy writing (5%) and **characteristics seen in students with reading problems** were determined to be wrong reading (19%), adding (13%), skipping (13%), inability to distinguish letters (13%), difficulty in making sounds (6%), inability to combine letters and syllables (6%), slow reading (6%) low self-confidence (6%), forgetting (6%), swapping letters/words (6%), being nervous when given a task to read (6%).

In addition, it was determined that classroom teachers took their own experiences, parents' and classroom teachers' opinions as a reference while determining students with reading and writing difficulties. Also, one of the classroom teachers stated that he/she had difficulty in identifying the students because he/she did not receive any training on this subject and that the main diagnosis was made by RAM (Counseling Research Center).

Some of the teachers' opinions about the above findings are given below;

*P-1 stated that "I made a decision with my experience, I did not give any guidance. I did literacy exercises as a criterion. He/she confuses the direction of letters in writing. He/she writes incorrectly. Not paying attention to punctuation, capitalization, letter or syllable spacing. In the same way, attention is paid to skipping, adding, and reading. Whether there is any sound he/she can not make is checked. His/her status on active, open and closed syllables is examined. For example, I worked with a 2nd grade child who reads open syllables correctly. But, he/she confuses letters"*

*P-2 stated that " In his/her writing, he/she misses while writing what is written on the board in the notebook. For example, he/she will write words on the board. He/she was writing by looking at letters one by one. After that, he/she was forgetting what letter or word he/she was on. He cannot write in a complete line, you must see that notebook. After that, he/she cannot write exactly what is written on the board. His/her writings are constantly incomplete. You can't read; he/she makes the letters a different. "*

The data obtained as a result of the observation regarding this part of the study are listed below.

*"The teacher gave Kerim the task of writing on the board. He writes the letter very small. Skipping and misspelling is too much. The sizes of the letters are not the same. He cannot even draw the line straight. Also he is very slow"*

*"Emre also has a difficulty in writing. He is very slow and skipping and confusing is too much. He didn't pay attention to the line. Letters are formed incorrectly; sizes are not suitable. He writes both unwillingly and incorrectly."*

When the observation and interview data above are examined, it will be seen that in general, classroom teachers determine students in line with their knowledge and experience rather than a standard method or technique. The problems observed in students during reading and writing are decisive for teachers.

### **3. Findings regarding the educational environment of students with reading and writing difficulties**

This section includes findings on whether students with reading and writing difficulties should receive education individually or through inclusive education.

When the findings were examined, it was seen that all of the teachers stated that students should receive inclusive education in normal classrooms. There are some advantages to study in regular classrooms according to teachers' views. They are:

- Peer teaching,
- Social development,



- Positive communication skills,
- Desire for success,
- Empathizing with other students,
- Benefiting from a positive classroom atmosphere,
- Competing with other students and increasing study time to beat them.

On the other hand, the two interviewed teachers stated that additional studies are definitely needed to overcome the problems of these students although this type of students should be educated in the normal classroom with mainstreaming. In other words, according to the teacher's opinion, these students should receive support from their family or another person outside of normal school hours. Apart from the positive aspects of students studying in regular classes, there are some difficulties encountered. They are:

- Not being able to catch up with other students,
- Parents' dissatisfaction as a result of the difference, frequent repetitions of the teacher, slow reading and writing activities, teachers showing more interest in such students, etc.,
- Being nervous of teacher for this reason,
- The student who fails in reading and writing tasks being reacted by others and not getting on well with friends,
- Difficulty to deal with such students due to crowded classes,
- Other students teasing, laughing while reading or writing.

Some of the opinions of the teachers about the above-mentioned findings are listed below;

**P-1 stated that** “ *If it is provided with family support, mainstreaming is better, otherwise they should benefit from it, the teacher is not enough. Because if the child doesn't get enough support, he/she can't keep up with other students. Other families don't want him/her. The teacher becomes nervous. The child is being oppressed. He/she is at odds with his friends* ”

**P-2 stated that** “*When he/she is educated with his/her own class, he/she develops socially. After that, his/her communication with his/her friends would be better. He/she grows better, I think he/she would see from his/her friends, gets help from them while playing games, while he/she is doing lessons. Children already helps. They help each other. He/she should be in his class to me. He/she should not be excluded* ”

**P-3 stated that** “ *Let me say this. This is my personal opinion. Yes, he/she should be in the classroom, but additional work should be done. So I think an extra work needs to be done outside of school. I think that this process can be corrected, even if little, over time by accelerating by looking at other friends, correcting this issue with other friends, for example imitating them or sampling them.*”

Some of the observation data made by the researcher on this subject are given below;

*"His friends get angry during their writing assignments. "Kerim, write big", "what did you write", "I don't understand". He gets excited when the students react. It was noticed that his hand was shaking. He uses a lot of erasers, lags behind. He tries to write fast under the pressure of his teacher and his friends. However, this time the errors are increasing.*

*During reading, he reads so slowly that other students forget what he said at first. Other students laugh after a while because they do not understand anything during the reading task. The students are breaking away from the lesson. After a while there is humming. While reading, he forgets his place, constantly turns to the beginning, what he read is not understood anyway. The classroom is adversely affected by this situation"*

*"He looks at his friends' notebooks and makes corrections during the lesson. From time to time he asks them questions. His friends help him even though they sometimes respond wrongly. Kerim gets angry when it doesn't."*

When the findings above were examined, it was emphasized that, students who have problems with reading and writing due to problems such as having different types of students in the classroom, time problem, not having enough information about the subject, etc., need additional support although mainstreaming education is supported by teachers. In addition, it is among the findings that these students experience some academic problems in the mainstreaming education process, they get reactions from their friends on different issues, they act more hesitantly and are emotionally affected by this situation.

#### **4. Findings regarding the studies conducted to solve the problems of students with reading and writing difficulties**

In this section, findings on what kind of studies the classroom teachers do with students who have reading and writing difficulties are included.

When the views of the teachers were examined, it was understood that trinkets in the form of letters/syllables, gamification, letter cards, individual syllable work, memorization assignments, dictation work, storytelling, drama, additional literacy exercises and colored syllables were used to solve students' problems. Some of the opinions of teachers on this subject are given below;

**P-1** stated that *"Reading is our priority; we focus on it. If he/she can, we try to take them together. We examine the letter groups from Group 1. We examine all the groups in turn. If there are any problems, we troubleshoot them according to the normal teaching schedule. We made the eye active by pasting the studied letters and syllables in his room, house and places he could see in the form of trinkets"*

**P-2** stated that *"In the first grade, I used to call and have them read by dividing them into individual syllables. For example, I give them memorization assignments, simple memorization poems, rhymes, dictation, simple sentences, story readings, and home story assignments. But they get bored with the story quickly. Having small texts read and giving small texts for home. I did not do anything different; I generally had the whole class read by memorization, story reading, small texts, and the texts I gave one by one every day."*

**P-4** stated that *"while reading the words, we gave 5 sentences to other students and gave 10 sentences to him. We have letters and syllable books, we had him read 2 pages while others read 1 page. But we did it one to one. For example, while we were reading in the classroom, having him read one by one, we did it in a way that the student noticed his mistake by taking him with us and making eye contact. There are syllables in the color book; For*

*example, Ali's A is written in red and Li is written in green. We made such books used. So that he does not misread the letters and read them by separating syllables and making correct vocalizations. "*

Some of the observations made by the researcher on this subject are given below;

*"I can say that I have not encountered any method or technique such as repeating reading, echo reading, Fernald, etc. Whatever the teacher asks or tells other children, does the same to Kerim. He/she gives the writing task. If he cannot write, he/she passes. He/she gives a reading task, if he cannot read, he does not stop and pass. While writing, he gives commands such as pay attention to the line, write carefully, write correctly, but he/she passes right away and does not care much. A special work plan is not applied to him. The education plan is arranged and carried out according to normal children. That is because there are many different types of students in the classroom. Foreign students (Syria, Afghanistan, Iran) were seated together in the row in front of the door (the leftmost row when looking against the classroom). The teacher becomes nervous because foreign students, Turkish students and students with literacy problems, such as Kerim, are in the classroom. He has difficulty to keep up with all of them"*

*"There is no strategy used. The teacher gave a reading task. Emre's reluctance is so obvious that although the lesson started for 15 minutes, he just opened the book and turned the pages reluctantly. He waited for a long time (40 seconds or so) before reading it, looking at the text. The teacher warned politely 5 or 6 times. The student read letter by letter, both reading with a very low voice and not being understood. Therefore, noise started in the classroom. Other students got angry and reacted "my teacher." He is reading the words incorrectly. Too much skipping, too much pause between words. Finally, other students reacted by saying 'we don't understand anything, my teacher.'*

*"The teacher usually asks the child to give additional work and complete it. The student has to do what is done in the school and often cannot complete the extra homework. In this case, the child has to go to breaks less often. Even if the teacher says you do what I said, do not write the blackboard, the child wants to write on the blackboard like his friends, this case tenses the child. The teacher cannot spare enough time for this student due to the class crowd"*

When the findings of the study were examined, it was seen that although there were many techniques/methods/strategies for solving reading and writing problems in the literature (repeat reading, echo reading, choral reading, peer reading, Fernald technique, word box strategy... etc), most of these techniques were not included in practice. Rather, classroom teachers repeat the path they followed in the normal education period in their work with these students.

##### **5. Findings regarding whether the problems of students with reading and writing difficulties have been solved.**

In this section, the difficulties encountered in the process of working with students who have reading or writing problems and the findings about whether the students' problems are solved are included.

All of the teachers stated that students progressed more or less as a result of the studies. They listed the factors affecting the progress of students as family support, regular work, doing homework, and one-on-one work. Classroom teachers were asked how they noticed the developments in their

students. In general, they gave answers such as the increase in the reading speed of the students, the decrease in their mistakes, the visible improvement in their writing. Some of the opinions of teachers on this subject are given below;

*P-1 stated that "If the family reinforced it, if sufficient implementation was made, if there was no disrupt, there was no problem. Of course, there was a problem during holidays, when families could not make him/her read and write regularly and continuously."*

*P-2 stated that "For me, the memorization homework I gave home was useful. I said read small texts 5 times at home read 10 times and then I made them read in turn. I think they were useful in the whole class. A little better than before. We achieved some success."*

*P-3 stated that "Since education is always there, I always say education is like a trivet, it is useless for me one of the three, the teacher, parent and student, is not good."*

This section also includes findings on the difficulties encountered in the process of working with students who have reading and writing difficulties.

**Table 4. Difficulties encountered in working with students who have reading and writing difficulties**

Theme	Code	N	%
Problems Caused by the Student	Students not wanting to write	4	19
	Students not wanting to read	3	14
	Reluctance to study	3	14
	Having a sense of failure	3	14
	Low self-confidence	2	9.5
	Being introverted	2	9.5
	Low motivation	1	5
	Being careless	1	5
	Failing to do homework on time	1	5
	Not being at the appropriate level of preparedness	1	5
	Problems Caused by the Family	The family's unawareness	2
Family not taking time		1	33
Problems Caused by the Teacher	Teachers' desire to teach reading and writing as soon as possible	1	50
	Negative attitude of the teacher	1	50
Problems Caused by Physical Conditions	Time shortage	2	50
	Working Environment	1	25
	Crowded classes	1	25
Problems Caused by Other Students in the Classroom	Immigrant children	1	33.3
	Other students getting bored	1	33.3
	Negative intervention of other students	1	33.3

When Table 4 is examined, it will be seen that the difficulties that classroom teachers encounter while working with students who have reading and writing difficulties are basically gathered under 5 themes. These themes are problems caused by the student, problems caused by the family, problems caused by the teacher, problems caused by physical conditions, and problems caused by other students in the classroom.

Under the theme of problems caused by the students, it can be seen that the codes of students are not wanting to write (19%), students not wanting to read (14%), unwilling to study (14%), having a sense of failure (14%). Teachers' views on the subject are listed below;

*P-2 stated that "They are more reluctant compared to others. We are waiting for him for two hours to read a passage. Children are also bored. He has more difficulty, does not want to write, does not like. He writes more quickly and creates illegible, absurd, unclear*

*lines. But he likes math lesson, he is not bored. His favorite lesson is math. He does not like to read, does not like Turkish."*

**P-4** *stated that "The most obvious difficulties are that students laugh when they read incorrectly in the classroom. For example, the student is reading. When a better student reacts, the student says I don't want to read. He has an introversion problem socially. Another self-confidence in terms of writing; I always write wrong, I read wrong I will not write; there is reluctance. There are problems with both self-confidence and willingness in the student's perspective "*

Under the theme of family-related problems, there are codes that the family is unawareness (67%) and the family does not spare time (33%). An example of the opinions of these participants is given below;

**P-2** *"His mother just doesn't have influence on him. His mother goes for cleaning. She doesn't have time; she can't take care of him. There is also some problem with the father. He is not aware"*

In the part of the problems caused by the teacher, it will be seen that the codes are the desire of teacher to teach literacy as soon as possible (50%) and the teacher's negative attitude (50%). Views of teachers on these codes are given below;

**P-1** *"The sharing of pictures and names of the first reader and the next readers puts children and families who cannot read in a rush and stress. Families engage in letter teaching without knowledge. This leads to erroneous learning in the teaching, combination or pronunciation of some letters."*

**P-1** *"When the attitude of teacher is motivating, his efficiency increases. If he/she gets angry, the student makes more mistakes with fear"*

Under the theme of problems caused by physical conditions, it will be seen that the codes included are time shortage (50%), working environment (25%) and crowded classes (25%). Views of teachers on these codes are as follows;

**P-5** *"Time is very limited. Which one should I deal with? After all, I cannot dedicate myself to them... "*

**P-1** *"If the working environment is not suitable, it can be distracting"*

**P-6** *"Other schools being crowded, recently increasing immigration ..."*

Finally, under the theme of problems caused by other students in the classroom, the codes included are immigrant children (33.3%), boredom of other students (33.3%) and negative interventions of other students (33.3%). Some of the opinions of teachers regarding these codes are listed below;

**P-2** *"We are waiting for him for two hours to read a passage. Children got bored."*

**P-4** *stated that "The most obvious difficulties are that students laugh when they read incorrectly in the classroom. For example, the student is reading. When a better student reacts, the student says I don't want to read."*

Some of the observation data obtained on this subject are given below:

*"The teacher entered the classroom with the question "What are the features that distinguish us from other people?". Each student gave any answer, but Kerim never raised a finger and continued to deal with other things in the classroom. He plays with his notebook or book etc. It caught the attention of the teacher and he/she warned the student. However, Kerim continued to be interested in other things despite these warnings. Later, the teacher directed one of the questions he/she asked the classroom to Kerim. He/she asked him to stand up. The student answered the question correctly. But when the teacher gets angry with him or gets angry and says something, his classmates starts laughing. The student answered the questions of the teacher (3 out of 4) correctly. He expresses himself well. There is no speech disorder, word swallowing, speechlessness etc. But he is as if he was brought to class and held there by force.*

*There are students with very different levels in the classroom. Some of them answer the questions exactly, some incompletely and some cannot answer at all. Also, there are students who speak Turkish at different levels and who cannot speak at all. The teacher makes effort to make up for other students, but has a problem with sparing time. The teacher has trouble dealing with both Kerim and other students."*

In the study, it was emphasized that students can progress when cooperation with the family is provided, one-to-one studies are carried out and the students fulfill their duties regularly. In addition, it is among the findings that students are unwilling to read and write, avoid working, are careless, have low motivation, and do not do homework on time. On the other hand, introversion, low motivation or low self-confidence are other important problems encountered in these students. In addition to these problems, some problems caused by family, teacher, physical conditions and other students in the classroom are other problems experienced while working with these students.

## **6. Opinions and recommendations of classroom teachers for students with reading and writing difficulties**

1. Teachers want to teach reading and writing as soon as possible without complying with the normal teaching schedule, and are hasty in this regard. Thus, some students have problems in learning to read and write since each student's learning speed is different. Also, teachers should check the letters written by each student in the reading and writing teaching process and correct them immediately if there is any mistake. Otherwise, incorrect learning may cause permanent learning problems and confusion of concepts.

2. As stated before, classroom teachers expressed the need for practical training. It was emphasized that by examining the students who had reading and writing difficulties during the education, the problems should be determined together, the study plan should be formed and all the stages should be done in a practical way.

3. Although most of the students with reading or writing difficulties study in regular classes, their academic performance is behind other students. However, the teaching of the lessons in the classroom continues normally in spite of it. In other words, course or activity books, worksheets, etc. are entirely for other students in the classroom. If a student with reading and writing difficulties cannot benefit from these resources, the teacher moves on to the next topic without much attention and the deficiencies of the students increase exponentially. For this reason, materials, worksheets, activity samples, appropriate texts, etc. should be prepared for students with reading and writing problems and teachers should be able to access them easily.

4. As mentioned above, when these students fail in the classroom, other students may laugh, make fun of, or even get angry with them. In order to deal with this situation, the classroom teacher can give information to the students about the behaviors that should and should not be done in the classroom in other lessons. Other students can be told that there are things that every person does well or has difficulty doing.

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the experiences and practices of classroom teachers with their students with reading and writing difficulties were examined based on opinions and observations of the teachers. The data obtained in the study and the results of different studies on this subject are listed below.

First of all, in the study, it was examined whether the classroom teachers received training on reading and writing difficulties. Two of the participants stated that they did not receive training. 3 participants stated that the training they received was generally related to the mentally disabled, autistic students, gifted students, and that the issues related to students with reading and writing difficulties were not emphasized much. In this case, the teachers have problems about how to determine and solve the reading and writing problem since they do not receive proper training. Similarly, the studies in the literature emphasized that teachers' knowledge of learning disabilities is inadequate and that they have conceptual misconceptions about the subject and the importance of increasing teachers' knowledge of the subject (Aladwani & Shaye, 2012; Altuntaş, 2010; Balcı, 2019; Başar & Göncü, 2018; Dapudong, 2013; Esen & Çiftçi, 2000; Schumm, Vaughn, Gordon & Rothlein, 1994). It is clear that qualified training on reading and writing difficulties will contribute to teachers academically. Teachers who progress academically can also feel competent professionally. Camadan (2012) stated that teachers are competent in preparing an individual education plan owing to in-service training and their self-efficacy perceptions have improved.

In the study, the methods of determining students with reading and writing difficulties were investigated. When classroom teachers identify students with writing difficulties, they refer to the methods such as misspelling, confusing letters, skipping, having trouble combining letters or syllables, not paying attention to spacing, confusing capital and small letters, remembering the order of letters when writing, not being able to distinguish letters, unreadable writing and when they identify students with reading difficulties, they refer to the methods such as misreading, adding, skipping, inability to distinguish letters, difficulty making sounds, combining letters or syllables, slow reading, swapping of letters/words. In their study, Can and Altuntaş-Yavuz (2017) found that the problems students face related to reading and writing are making letter errors while reading and writing, inverting, skipping, slow reading or writing, inability to focus, directional errors, unwillingness to read and write, having trouble following lines, wrong pencil holding. In his study, Kocaarslan (2013) found that students who had reading problems according to the opinions of classroom teachers had problems such as inability to establish cause-effect relationship, inability to understand what they read, inability to synthesize, not bringing the prior information to the reading environment, not being able to deduce and focus. Önder (2009), on the other hand, discovered in the study in which third-grade students wrote their writing problems that students had writing problems such as writing incorrect letters/suffixes, missing letters/syllables/words. When these results are examined, it can be said that they are in parallel with the results of our study. However, it would be more beneficial for teachers to evaluate and monitor reading and writing skills of students with standard tools rather than their own experiences and observations. Standard tests that can evaluate reading and writing skills of students will allow both to provide unity in practice and to compare different students (Kilmen, 2019).

Classroom teachers declared that students with reading and writing difficulties should study in the same class as their peers, but they should receive additional support. In the study of Koç (2012), teachers stated that these students should be sent to special education classes. This result contradicts the results of our study. However, the need for additional studies with such students outside of school is among the findings of the same study. This finding is similar to the results of our study. Also, in the study of Balcı (2019), teachers were asked whether the education should be given to students with dyslexia through mainstreaming or support education. According to the findings, the majority of teachers (38%) support an education in which both will be implemented. This finding is similar to the results of our study. It has been determined that students who have reading and writing difficulties receiving education with their peers who show normal development (within the scope of mainstreaming education) contribute positively to students in many ways (Rea, McLaughlin, & Walther-Thomas, 2002). It is possible to say that healthy friendship relationships established in regular

classrooms will protect the self-concept of students with learning difficulties (Shany, Wiener, & Assido, 2012), improve their social skills (Türkmenoğlu & Baştuğ, 2017) and increase their academic success.

The studies conducted by classroom teachers with students who have reading and writing difficulties were determined as letter/syllable trinkets, gamification, letter cards, individual syllable work, memorization assignments, dictation work, story reading, drama, additional literacy exercises, and colored spelling. According to the findings of the study conducted by Altuntaş (2010), classroom teachers do not conduct a special study for students. Only revision is carried out, additional time is given and studies that students can do are given. In his study, Balcı (2019) asked teachers whether they applied a different program to students with reading problems than those applied to other students. According to the findings, all of the teachers stated that they do not know the educational methods for the educational needs of dyslexic students. When the opinions of the teachers in the content of the study are examined, it is seen that they do not apply different methods and there are many revisions and additional studies. Also, according to the findings of our study, classroom teachers stated as a result of their studies that they solved the problems of students who had difficulty in reading and writing, even if a little. When the related literature is examined, it will be seen that there are methods and techniques that have proven effective in minimizing reading and writing problems (Akyol & Kodan, 2016; Akyol & Sever, 2019; Aydın & Cavkaytar, 2018; Baydık, 2011; Dağ, 2010; Dinç, 2017; Ellis, 2009; Kodan, 2016; Kuşdemir, Kurban & Bulut, 2018; Roundy and Roundy, 2009; Therrien and Kubina, 2006; Yıldız, 2013; Yüksel, 2010). However, when the findings of the study are examined, it will be seen that the studies in the literature have no equivalent in the classroom, in other words, the theory is not reflected in practice. For this reason, the progress observed in students as a result of work of teachers is not at the desired level.

As the difficulties classroom teachers face when working with students who have reading and writing difficulties they stated problems caused by the student (students not wanting to study, unwilling to study, having a sense of failure, low self-confidence, being introverted, low motivation, being careless, etc.), problems caused by the family (family being unaware, family not sparing time etc.), problems caused by the teacher (desire of teacher to teach reading and writing as soon as possible, negative attitude of the teacher), problems caused by physical conditions (time constraints), problems caused by the working environment (crowded classes), and problems caused by other students in the classroom (immigrant children, boredom of other students, negative intervention of other students). In a similar study conducted by Ketenoğlu and Kayabaşı (2019), they divided the problems teachers experience while gaining reading skills to their students with reading difficulties and explained them under the headings of individual and environmental problems. Individual problems are absenteeism, motivational problems, indifference towards the lesson, inability to take responsibility, low tone of voice, slow reading, not knowing rules, forgetfulness, comprehension problems, talking too much, and belligerent attitude. Environmental problems are not getting family support and peer bullying. In a study conducted by Çoğaltay and Çetin (2020), according to the opinions of classroom teachers, the characteristics of students with special learning difficulties are low academic achievement, being backward in the academic field from their peers, late and difficult learning, remembering, perception, communication and motor skills. In addition, being careless and unwilling and low self-confidence are among the characteristics of these students. Finally, Avcıoğlu (2012) stated in his study that although family participation is important for students with reading and writing difficulties, different problems arise in family participation.

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