

**The Problems Related with the Reading Classes with a Special Reference to Düziçi
ÇEAŞ Anatolian High School**

Elif Leyla Toprak

Eyyup Serkan Öncel

Introduction

Proponents of language studies have shown that “Reading” has been a receptive skill in the written mode affecting the developments of the other skills such as oral receptive skill listening along with oral productive speaking skill as well as written productive writing skill (<http://www.sil.org/lingualinks/languagelearnin/OtherResources/GudlnsFrALnggAndCltrLrnngPrgrm/FourBasicLanguageSkills.htm>, 1999). In parallel to the mentioned classification of language skills, Grabe and Stoller (2002:9 cited in Razi, 2005) define reading as the ability to extract meaning from the printed page and interpret this knowledge correctly. Reading process is considered in five phases. In addition to that activities related to these five stages, more precisely Pre-pre-reading; pre-reading; while reading; post reading and home- reading activities are suggested to remedy the deficiencies found and displayed in the finding of the study.

Despite of the fact that there are synonyms used for these stages, the following terms will be used in this work. The first one is the pre-pre-reading phase. In this stage, students make short exercises or discuss interesting messages. These activities also help learners do some review of materials previously taught (Reis, 1993). The second one is the before reading (or warm-up /into/; before-reading activities) phase and its goal is to give or activate the background knowledge to the readers for comprehension of texts. The third one is the while-reading (in/during/through reading activities) phase. Strategy and skill practice, and linguistic development, as well as helping learners to understand the purpose of the writer, and the text structure and content are the main goals of this phase. The fourth one is the post-reading (beyond/follow-up/after reading activities) phase that helps the readers to relate the text to their own life, knowledge, and opinions. The fifth one is the home-reading that helps the readers to get some background knowledge before reading and during reading (Rivas, 1999:16-18).

The present study has been carried on at ÇEAŞ Anatolian high School which is situated in Düziçi, a town of Osmaniye in southern part of Turkey. In this study, the problems faced by teachers and students related with reading classes were investigated at Düziçi ÇEAŞ Anatolian High School in terms of the stages of reading activities such as Pre-pre-reading activities, Pre-reading activities, while-reading activities, post-reading activities, and home-reading activities. It was aimed at coming up with certain implications for the students, the teachers and the syllabus designers towards the betterment of reading classes.

Background of the Study

Matias (2005) investigated factors that influence the reading comprehension strategies which are used by four gifted, bilingual, females enrolled in an AP Spanish Literature class. Findings showed that the students understood and identified reading strategies including self-monitoring, looking for main ideas and themes, utilizing and making connections to prior knowledge, using the context to determine the meaning of unknown words; skipping parts or words; re-reading, questioning, thinking and explaining, and reading critically. This study provides teachers with information regarding the use of effective reading comprehension strategies in a foreign language classroom.

Park (2005) states that readers use their background knowledge to interpret texts. This background knowledge is termed as schemata. There are some pre-reading text adjuncts such as pictures, definition lists, or text structure information related with the texts to help students understand the reading passage.

Borka (2005) examined and described the conversational patterns of teachers and English language learners that occurred during 35 guided reading lessons. The findings suggest that increasing the speech opportunities of English language learners is partially dependent on teachers' awareness of and ability to establish effective instructional and conversational behaviours within the sociocultural environments of their classrooms.

Baker (2005) examined the effects of two types of reading instruction, namely teacher-directed reading instruction and plus a supplemental peer tutoring program upon the reading growth of first grade students.

Toprak (2004:1-9) deals with the problems of Turkish students faced with English Literature in the reading comprehension. She concluded that Turkish students at English Literature courses were captured in the decoding process and were not able to construct the meaning. The students also had problems with schema distortions and this affected the cognitive processes negatively and finally misunderstanding occurred.

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to analyse the opinions of instructors and students towards the problems related with the reading classes with a special reference to Düziçi ÇEAŞ Anatolian High School. There are four main hypotheses and forty-eight sub-hypotheses related to those hypotheses. By means of these hypotheses, students' and teachers' opinions were evaluated; the main hypotheses are as follow,

Main Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the opinions of instructors and students towards the problems related with the 'before-reading activities' in reading classes.

Main Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the opinions of instructors and students towards the problems related with the 'while-reading activities' in reading classes.

Main Hypothesis 3 and 4: There is no significant difference between the opinions of instructors and students towards the problems related with the 'post reading activities' and 'home reading activities' in reading classes.

In the present study, two questionnaires, one addressing to the students while the other corresponding to the students' questionnaire were given to the instructors used as a data collection tool to find out the opinions of teachers and students. Subjects of the study were the students and English instructors of ÇEAŞ Anatolian High School. The school involved in the survey has one year of intensive English where four skills of language are studied but with a special emphasis on grammar and English as the medium of instruction for maths and science in the first and second grades. 90 students of first year classes, 70 students of second year classes and 8 English instructors answered the questionnaire. There were 48 questions which search for the problems related with reading activities applied in reading classes. Answer slots were composed of three options: never, sometimes, and always. Frequencies, means, standard deviations and percentages were calculated for the items in the questionnaire. The results were obtained by using SPSS 9.01 version. The scores were obtained by using the chi-square

value for the probability level of $p=0.5$. From this score, it is understood that we are willing to accept a less restrictive 95% probability of non-chance results. All the results of the hypotheses were interpreted using the value of chi-square given in the standard χ^2 table. To accept the hypothesis, the calculated χ^2 was supposed to be found as below the chi-square value accepted in the standard table ($\chi^2_{\text{calculated}} < \chi^2_{\text{table}}$).

Findings and Conclusions

The results reached in the end of the present research revealed some positive points which were a relief in terms of reading skill in the above mentioned school as well as English language teaching in Turkey.

In the light of results found, it can be said that some of the pre-reading activities are applied in the classroom situations. Evaluation of the questions related with pre-reading activities indicate that students are introduced reading passages through some warm-up activities. The pre-reading activities applied in the actual classroom situation are giving the background knowledge about the subject and the cultural aspects of the work or knowledge on the linguistic/stylistic features of the work.

Evaluation of the questions related with during reading activities in the questionnaire shows that students are taught through some activities related with while-reading activities for example, giving unknown vocabulary through picture drawing/miming, grasping the meaning of the unknown vocabulary from the context, or using the opposites and synonyms of the words are the techniques used in Düziçi ÇEAŞ Anatolian High School.

Findings concerning the questions related with home reading activities and after reading activities show that students are given some writing activities and some worksheets to have a review of the reading passage. Because of the time and space limitations, it is almost impossible to teach everything in the class, home-reading activities with extra materials can be a useful way of reaching a successful teaching-learning process.

More importantly, there are rejected hypotheses which should be taken into consideration for the betterment of the English language training in general, reading skill in particular. The rejected hypotheses and their statistical analysis are listed in the following. To ease the understanding of the reader, rejected hypotheses will be analysed in the subsequent sections.

Remedial Attempts for Before Reading Stage

Two of the hypotheses related with before reading activities are rejected. These rejected hypotheses are “Before reading the instructor gives information about the subject of the work using some related pictures”(table 1) and “Before reading the instructor gives background knowledge about the period in which the work was written.”(table 2)

Table 1 The Frequencies and Percentages of the Students' and Instructors' Responses to the Statement "Before Reading the Instructor Gives Information about the Subject of the Work Using Some Related Pictures.”

ANSWERS	Students		Teachers		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Never	42	28,0	1	12,5	43	27,2
Sometimes	84	56,0	5	62,5	89	56,3
Always	24	16,0	2	25,0	25	16,5
TOTAL	150	100	8	100	158	100

Df=2 p=0.05 x^2 calculated=8,445 x^2 table=5,991

As can be seen in **table 1**, there is statistically significant difference between the opinions of instructors and students. x^2 calculated=8,445 was found higher than x^2 table=5,991. Thus, this hypothesis is rejected by chi square test. As the result indicates, the students' opinions and the instructors' opinions differ from each other. 62,5% of the instructors point out that they sometimes give information about the subject of the work using some related pictures before reading. On the contrary, 28% of the students state that they never use this activity.

Table 2 The Frequencies and Percentages of the Students' and Instructors' Responses to the Statement "Before Reading the Instructor Gives Background Knowledge about the Period in which the Work was Written.”

ANSWERS	Students		Teachers		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Never	77	61,3	3	37,5	80	50,6
Sometimes	58	38,7	4	50,0	62	39,2
Always	15	10,0	1	12,5	16	10,2
TOTAL	150	100	8	100	158	100

Df= 2 p=0.05 x^2 calculated=6,340 x^2 table= 5,991

Analysis of **table 2** shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the opinions of instructors since the value of χ^2 calculated=6,340 is higher than the χ^2 table=5,991. Thus, this hypothesis is rejected by chi square test. This means that the instructors and the students did not agree with each other. 61,3% of the students state that they never do this activity. On the other hand, 50% of the instructors claim that they sometimes give background knowledge about the period in which the work was written before reading.

Table 1 and 2 reveal that audio-visual materials such pictures are not commonly used in order to support comprehension process of the visual learners (see Toprak, 2004:34). Some of the useful and recommended reading activities for the remedy of the rejected hypotheses are illustration (see Dutta, 1994:40), using visual aids (see Hill, 1992:56-57), exchanges-visual appeal and textual richness (see Carter and Long, 1991:54), giving background knowledge (see Kayısoğlu-Korkmaz, 2000:74), guessing at missing information (see Collie and Slater, 1990:26) and previewing (see Toprak, 2004:92-93) in addition to these activities, Couston and Rocka, who became participants in a teacher research project that focused on applying MI theory to their adult education practices, suggest that an MI-informed reading lesson may begin with typical pre-reading activities such as , reviewing earlier material, predicting what will happen next (cited in Toprak,2004:34).

To activate, give or build the necessary background knowledge about the work which is assigned to be studied is a must at the pre-reading stage. Many researchers emphasised the importance of intermingling the learners already known knowledge to the new knowledge (Peshkin,1992; Protheroe and Barsdate, 1992 ; Lee,1992 cited in <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/students/learnin/lrlccc.htm>,2006). Through the activities namely, The think sheet is used to relate the concept to background knowledge and experience as well as to current, real-world situations (http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/teaching_techniques/ellis_relate.html, 2006) and PreP (Langer,1981;1982 cited in Toprak, 2004:91) old knowledge of the reader/student in which the new incoming information may be comprehended will be established or activated. An Inquiry method by Mavrogenes (1993) and a similar method “group inquiry” suggested by Spiegel and Fitzgerald (1986 cited in Ibid:95-96)) constitute valuable activities to activate the background of the learners.

Remedial Attempts for the While Reading Stage

Table 3 The Frequencies and Percentages of the Students' and Instructors' Responses to the Statement "The Students do not See the Unknown Words as 'Problem' While Reading. They Try to Understand the Main Idea."

ANSWERS	Students		Teachers		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Never	33	22,0	3	37,5	36	8,8
Sometimes	79	52,7	3	37,5	82	49,4
Always	38	25,3	2	25,0	40	41,8
TOTAL	150	100	8	100	158	100

Df=2 p=0.05 x^2 calculated=7,455 x^2 table=5,991

There is statistically significant difference between the opinions of instructors and students since the value of x^2 calculated=7,455 is higher than the value of x^2 table=5,991. Thus, this hypothesis is rejected by chi square test. As a result, the opinions of the instructors and the students about this statement differ from each other. Although 52,7% of the students state that they sometimes see the unknown words as problem while reading, 37,5% of the instructors point out that students never see them as problems at this stage. Moreover, 37,5% of the instructors give the answer as "sometimes" (See table 3).

Table 4 The Frequencies and Percentages of the Students' and Instructors' Responses to the Statement "The Instructor Gives the Meaning of Unknown Words by Using Mimes."

ANSWERS	Students		Teachers		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Never	44	29,3	0	0	44	27,8
Sometimes	83	55,3	7	87,5	90	56,9
Always	23	15,3	1	12,5	24	15,3
TOTAL	150	100	8	100	158	100

Df=2 p=0.05 x^2 calculated=5,998 x^2 table=5,991

There is statistically significant difference between the opinions of instructors and students since the value of x^2 calculated=5,998 is higher than the value of x^2 table=5,991. Thus, this hypothesis is rejected by chi square test. This means that, the opinions of the students and the instructors differ from each other. 55,3% of the students point out that the instructor sometimes gives the meaning of unknown words by using mimes. Most of the instructors (87,5%) give the answer as "sometimes". Moreover, 15,3% of the students and 12,5% of the instructors state that this technique is always

used in reading classes. 29,3% of the students give the answer as "never". However, there are no instructors who answer as "never".

Table 3 and 4 display the hypotheses related with while reading stage which are rejected. These hypotheses are “The students do not see the unknown words as problem. They try to understand the main idea.” and “The instructor gives the meaning of unknown words by using mimes”. The interpretation of this result is that the body language is not commonly used by the instructors to express the meaning of the unknown vocabulary items during the reading process. Studies) have shown that reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge are strongly correlated “Without which grammar, very little can be conveyed, but without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” (<http://www.epsbooks.com/flat/newsletter/vol05/vol05iss01/vocabulary-Development.pdf>)

To remedy deficiencies in the realm of “during reading process activities” among the others which are not mentioned, the following activities are advised namely dictionary exercise (see Murdoch,1986:11), vocabulary map (see Abdullah, 1993:12) and word listing (see Toprak, 2004:110). Lazar (1993:85) advises that students should be given the definitions of some certain words and required to ask to match these words with their supplied meaning.

Remedial Attempts for Home Reading Stage

Table 5 The Frequencies and Percentages of the Students’ and Instructors’ Responses to the Statement “The Students are Given Worksheets about the Period in which the Work was Written as Homework.”

ANSWERS	Students		Teachers		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Never	94	62,7	2	25,0	96	60,8
Sometimes	45	30,0	5	62,5	50	31,6
Always	11	7,3	1	12,5	12	7,6
TOTAL	150	100	8	100	158	100

Df=2 p=0.05 $x^2_{\text{calculated}}=14,628$ $x^2_{\text{table}}=5,991$

Table 5 shows that there is statistically significant difference between the opinions of instructors and students because the value of $x^2_{\text{calculated}}=14,628$ was found higher than the value of $x^2_{\text{table}}=5,991$. Thus, this hypothesis is rejected by chi square test. This means that, the opinions of instructors and students differ from each other. Although most of the students (62,7%) point out that they are never given worksheets

about the period in which the work was written as homework, 25% of the instructors give the answer as “never”. 62,5% of the instructors give the answer as “sometimes”. However, 30% of the students give the answer as “sometimes”.

Table 6 The Frequencies and Percentages of the Students’ and Instructors’ Responses to the Statement “The Students are Given Worksheets about Authors/Poets of the Work.”

ANSWERS	Students		Teachers		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Never	112	74,7	4	50,0	116	73,4
Sometimes	27	18,0	3	37,5	30	19,0
Always	11	7,3	1	12,5	12	7,6
TOTAL	150	100	8	100	158	100

Df=2 p=0.05 $x^2_{\text{calculated}}=7,194$ $x^2_{\text{table}}=5,991$

As clearly shown in **table 6** there is statistically significant difference between the opinions of instructors and students. The value of $x^2_{\text{calculated}}=7,194$ was found higher than the value of $x^2_{\text{table}}=5,991$. Thus, this hypothesis is rejected by chi square test. This means that the instructors and the students did not agree with each other. Most of the students (74,7%) say that they are never given worksheets about authors/poets of the work. Besides, 37,5% of the instructors claim that they sometimes do this activity and 12,5% of the instructors give the answer as “always.”

Table 7 The Frequencies and Percentages of the Students' and Instructors' Responses to the Statement "The Students are Given Worksheets as Homework with the Worksheets of the Vocabulary.”

ANSWERS	Students		Teachers		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Never	95	63,3	2	25,0	97	61,4
Sometimes	41	27,3	2	25,0	43	27,2
Always	14	9,3	4	50,0	18	11,4
TOTAL	150	100	8	100	158	100

Df=2 p=0.05 $x^2_{\text{calculated}}=7,525$ $x^2_{\text{table}}=5,991$

As can be seen in **table 7** there is statistically significant difference between the opinions of instructors and students since the value of $x^2_{\text{calculated}}=7,525$ was found higher than the value of $x^2_{\text{table}}=5,991$. Thus, this hypothesis was rejected by chi square test. As a result, the opinions of the instructors and students about this statement differ from each other. Most of the students (63,3%) point out that they are never given

worksheets as homework with the worksheets of the vocabulary. On the contrary, 50% of the instructors claim that they always do this activity. Moreover, 9,3% of the students give the answer as “always.”

Tables 5,6 and 7 display three hypotheses related with home reading stages are rejected. The first rejected hypothesis is “The students are given worksheets about the period in which the work was written as homework”, another hypothesis rejected is “The students are given worksheets about authors/poets of the work”, the third hypothesis rejected is “The students are given worksheets as homework with the worksheets of the vocabulary.”

As it has already been mentioned in section 4.1, the informants of the present study informed that they are not given any background information for the work to be studied. When students are not also supported by accompanying worksheet/s to enable them to understand the background of the work, they may end in comprehension breakdowns.

Lazar (1993:87-88) presents two lesson plans displaying all stages of reading class referring to various activities. Question and answer worksheets (see Collie and Slater, 1990:38-39), copy-delete strategy (see Toprak, 2004:113), and creating a bibliography (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/drama>) are some of the activities which may help/lead the students/learners when they study their home-assignments.

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Dr. Elif Leyla Toprak is currently working as an assistant professor at the department of ELL at Gaziantep University.

Eyyup Serkan Öncel has recently completed his MA study at Gaziantep University and is working as an English Language instructor at Elbistan Vocational School.