

A Study of Primary Fourth Grade Students' Reading Comprehension Achievement Levels and Attitudes Towards Reading



Education

KEYWORDS : reading comprehension, attitude toward reading, rural areas, urban areas

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate primary school 4th grade students' reading comprehension achievement levels and their attitudes towards reading. The study is a descriptive survey model and it was conducted on 193 students selected randomly from 4th grade students. Reading attitude scales towards and reading comprehension test were used as data collection tools. As a results of the research it was found out that 4th grade of primary school students' reading comprehension achievement level is high and their attitudes towards reading is good; it was also concluded that reading comprehension achievement levels differentiate in favor of the students living in the urban rather than living in rural areas. However, the results also show that attitudes towards reading do not differ according to the place of residence.

INTRODUCTION

In literature, (Blaha&Bennett,1993; Harris&Spay; 1990; Akyol, 2005; Güneş, 1997; Çelenk, 2003) considering the definition of reading, common point of reading is not only the perception of written symbols or voicing them, but also an intellectual process; therefore, it is also emphasized that reading is based on understanding, interpretation, inference. Reading, is a complex process with physiological, psychological, mental and social aspects and this process requires specialization in various sub-skills. Reading requires some basic skills such as summarizing, finding the main idea of the text, vocabulary, word of decrypting and word recognition. (Small&Arnone, 2011, as cited in Erdo an, 2013).

In Turkey, when Turkish Language Teaching Program (MNE, 2013) is examined, it is obvious that reading comprehension and explanation skills are emphasized following the acquisitions of reading rules practices. Some achievements can be listed for developing a variety of cognitive skills such as using preliminary data, utilizing visuals, animation in mind, making comparisons, making cause-effect relationships, classification, evaluation, summarizing.

Reading comprehension success is a factor that profoundly affects the academic achievement of the students. It can be said to be cognitive entrance behaviour for all subjects. A student who can't comprehend what he reads is not supposed to be expected to be successful in other subjects as well as Turkish Language Lesson. There are many probabilities which decrease the reading comprehension level. Reading speed, grammar and lack of vocabulary, lack of prior knowledge about texts, inability to concentrate on texts and attitudes to reading may be considered among these factors.

Reading is not a doctrine that happens at one time, but rather, it is a skill that should be sustained, developed and become habit. The main purpose here is not to make individuals get reading habits but to ensure them to love this habit and maintain lifelong. Children with a positive attitude towards reading are willing to read, enjoy reading and maintain this habit lifelong. (Calkins, 2001; Lazarus&Callahan, 2000; Stanavich, 2000; Gül, 2008, Başaran &Ateş, 2009).

There are many factors affecting reading attitudes. (Black & Young 2005; McCarty et al., 2001). Temple and others list some of them as family illiteracy, emphasis on the success in the family, availability of reading materials and reading to children in the family (as cited in Başaran ve Ateş, 2009: 77-78). Then it may be thought that environment of the child will affect the reading attitude and reading achievement. Depending on this idea, it is aimed to investigate the 4th grade primary school students' reading comprehension achievement levels and their attitudes towards reading according to their settlements. Therefore, we are seeking

for answers for the following questions.

For the 4th grade students:

1. What is the achievement level of reading comprehension?
2. In which level do they have attitudes towards reading?
3. Are there significant differences among students reading comprehension achievement levels according to their settlements?
4. Are there significant differences between students reading attitudes and their settlements?

METHOD

The model of the research is "depictive, descriptive scanning model". In 2014-2015 Education and Teaching year, the study was conducted on 193 4th grade students who were selected randomly in Ordu. Reading comprehension test was developed in order to assess the success level of reading comprehension for the survey. During development stage of the test, 50 questions were prepared through examining Turkish Language Curriculum and literature. These questions were arranged according to the views of 3 classroom teaching domain experts, 1 Turkish Language teacher and 2 classroom teachers. These questions were implemented on 105 students outside the research group. Reliability of the test was calculated by the formula KR-20. $KR-20 = .90$ was obtained. According to the reliability value obtained with KR-20, the test can be said to be reliable. When item analysis was calculated for reading comprehension test, 20 questions were eliminated.

Data of item analysis are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Data of item analysis

item	p	d	item	p	d
1	.54	.55	16	.86	.54
2	.50	.61	17	.54	.45
3	.39	.73	18	.54	.63
4	.46	.76	19	.50	.60
5	.39	.73	20	.68	.63
6	.57	.64	21	.72	.54
7	.46	.55	22	.68	.63
8	.64	.64	23	.64	.50
9	.60	.66	24	.64	.57
10	.78	.57	25	.46	.70
11	.50	.43	26	.32	.41
12	.39	.52	27	.68	.59
13	.57	.60	28	.36	.46
14	.42	.42	29	.54	.73
15	.43	.68	30	.39	.52

While item difficulty values of 30 questions in the test changes between .32 with .86, item discrimination values change between .41 with .76. This 30 question achievement test is graded as: 30-25= very good, 24-20=good, 19-15= medium, 14-10= bad, 9-0=

very bad.

RESULTS

Data of the first sub-problem is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Data of reading comprehension level

Reading Comprehension Achievement Level	n	\bar{X}	ss
	193	21.23	.57

As shown in table 2, 4th grade students' reading comprehension level according to the points obtained from reading comprehension achievement test is $\bar{X} = 21.23$. 4th grade students' reading comprehension level can be said to be good.

Data of second sub-problem is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Data of attitude points towards reading

Attitudes Towards Reading	n	\bar{X}	ss
	193	4.66	.41

As seen in table 3, according to the points obtained from attitude scale for reading, 4th grade students' reading attitudes is $\bar{X} = 4.66$. Their reading attitudes level can be said to be high.

Data of the third sub-problem is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Data of reading comprehension achievement level according to the place of residence

Place of Residence	n	\bar{X}	ss	sd	t	P
Rural Region	105	17.51	6.69	191	9.7	.00
Urban Region	88	25.65	4.52			

P value of the t test is ".000". Because of $p < 0.05$ value, there is an important difference between 4th grade students' settlements and reading comprehension achievement level. When the averages are examined, it is clear that the students living in the rural with an average of " $\bar{X} = 17.51$ " have a moderate level whereas the students living in the urban with an average of " $\bar{X} = 25.65$ " have a rather high reading comprehension level. According to this result, settlement of the students is a variable that can create a difference on the reading comprehension achievement level. On the other hand, it was determined that calculated effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.41$) is at high level.

Data of the fourth sub-problem is presented in table 5.

Table 5. Data of attitude points for reading according to the place of residence

Place of Residence	n	\bar{X}	ss	sd	t	P
Rural Region	105	4.68	.37	191	1.01	.072
Urban Region	88	4.62	.46			

P value of the t test is ".072". Because of $p < 0.05$ value, there is not an important difference between 4th grade students' settlements and reading attitudes. When the averages are examined, it can be said that the students living in the rural with an average of " $\bar{X} = 4.68$ " and the students living in the urban with an average of " $\bar{X} = 4.62$ " have high reading attitudes points.

In order to examine the students' attitudes towards reading, 32 item-five point-Likert-type scale for reading which was developed by Suzar Kırmızı (2008) was used. KMO value of scale is .81. The items of the scale gathered in 6 factors. According to 5 items of the first factor the lowest self-worth factor is .46 and the highest is .68 (Cronbach's Alpha .52). According to 8 items of the second factor the lowest self-worth factor is .40 and the highest is .65 (Cronbach's Alpha .70). According to 5 items of the

third factor, the lowest self-worth factor is .47 and the highest is .62 (Cronbach's Alpha .62). According to 7 items of the fourth factor, the lowest self-worth factor is .43 and the highest is 0.68 (Cronbach's Alpha .58). According to 4 items of the fifth factor, the lowest self-worth factor is .55 and the highest is 0.81 (Cronbach's Alpha .77). According to 3 items of the sixth factor, the lowest self-worth factor is .47 and the highest is .66 (Cronbach's Alpha .53). There are 32 items in the latest form of the scale. Taking into consideration the whole scale, two semi-reliability coefficients are .77 while Cronbach's Alpha .83. As a result of seven week-survey conduction, Cronbach's Alpha was determined as .79. 32 item-attitude scale was graded as: 5.00-4.20=totally appropriate, 4.19-3.40=rather appropriate, 3.39-2.60=partially appropriate, 2.59-1.80=little appropriate, 1.79-1.00=never appropriate.

During the process of data analysis, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, t-test analyzes applied to independent groups were performed.

CONCLUSIONS

In this study which was conducted in order to examine Primary School 4th grade students' reading comprehension achievement levels and their attitudes towards reading, it was concluded that students' reading comprehension achievement level is high and their attitudes are positive. When the results are examined according to students' settlements, it is determined that achievement level of the students living in the urban is much higher than those living in the rural. In Turkey, it is possible to say that socio-economic conditions of the families living in the rural are lower than living in the urban. In literature, there are studies comparing students' academic success according to both socio-economic conditions and their settlements. Studies by (Erdoğan&Çağlar Özteke, 2010; Kolcu, 2011; Baştuğ, 2012; Sabak-Kaldan,2007; Başaran&Ateş, 2009; Gündemir,2002) support the results of this research concluding that academic success of the students living in the rural with low socio-economic conditions are lower than living in the urban with high socio-economic conditions.

Also, one of the results obtained from the research is that there is not a significant difference in the attitudes of students towards reading according to the students settlements. Whereas reading success of the students living in urban is higher than students living in rural, it is concluded that the attitudes towards reading do not differentiate much. Although some theorists speculate that positive reading attitudes produce students with increased reading achievement (Bettelheim&Zelan, 1981), others contend that the causal relationship occurs in the opposite direction: from achievement to attitude (Schofield, 1980). Not all poor readers simultaneously have poor attitudes toward reading; many maintain optimistic reading attitudes despite underdeveloped skills and increasing frustration (Russ, 1989, as cited in Kush et al.,2005).

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Footnote

- A part of this study is presented as oral presentations at the Congresses of Educational Researches and Publications Association (ERPA)