

A Study on the Development of Reading Skills of the Students Having Difficulty in Reading: Enrichment Reading Program¹

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to improve the reading skills of the students having difficulty in reading through an enrichment reading program. The current study was conducted by means of one-subject research technique and between-subjects multiple-baseline levels model belonging to this technique. The study was carried out with three participants from fifth grade. In order to collect data for the study, word recognition test, reading texts, Ekwall and Shanker reading inventory and reading comprehension test were employed. In line with the purposes of the study, the collected data were analyzed through qualitative and quantitative tests and the results were explained as qualitative and quantitative. At the end of the study, it was found that some developments occurred on the participants' word recognition skills and aloud reading skills. It was concluded that for the development of the reading skills of the students having reading difficulty, construction of appropriate reading environment and implementation of enrichment reading programs can be effective.

Keywords: Reading Skills, Reading Disability, Enrichment Reading Program.

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Introduction

As the literacy level of an individual directly affects his/her recruitment and working life, increasing it may enhance the person's quality of life (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2008). Hence, one of the most important goals for today's educators should be to train individuals with good literacy who can comprehend and question what they read, because there is a close relationship between literacy and academic achievement (Grove & Hauptfleisch, 1982; Moreillan, 2007). Even if they are as intelligent as their peers, those having difficulties in reading cannot improve their reading skills as much as their peers and they cannot perform as well as them. The research shows that almost 30-35% of students in America and England experience difficulties in reading (Blanton, Wood &Taylor, 2007; Exley, 2007; National Council on Teacher Quality, 2006). When the magnitude of this figure is considered, it becomes very important to identify children with reading difficulties, to develop learning environments suitable for these children and to prepare enhancement programs for them. There is no comprehensive study in Turkey determining the number of students having reading difficulties. However, some studies conducted in Turkey (Akyol & Yıldız, 2010; Baydık, 2011; Yangın & Sidekli, 2006) reveal the importance of determining the level of problems faced by the students who are having reading difficulties and providing support programs for these students to improve their reading skills.

As none of the students fail in elementary education, the students having reading difficulties pass their classes; yet, they cannot perform reading at the level expected of their grade; hence, they experience various problems such as anxiety and depression throughout their schooling. They are usually tagged as unsuccessful students throughout their education. Moreover, they cannot get the help needed to resolve their problems and they experience adaptation problems in their classes (Bender, 2012). However, they can be relieved of their problems through a suitable reading environment, teaching program and family support. The important question to be answered at that point is what form the environment, program and support should take. The reading environments to be constructed to eliminate the reading difficulties of students should make students feel relaxed and willing to express themselves. Students should not feel anxious due to the difficulties they experience. In addition to this, students should be supported with materials matching their interests and abilities. While developing reading programs, the teacher and the family should be involved in the process. The program developed should be a long-term program and be based on strategic teaching. The expectations about the reading performance of students should be kept low at first and be increased over time. The teacher and family should always be supportive. The research proves the effectiveness of informing students about the difficulties they experience and strategy-based programs conducted with the cooperation of the teacher and family (Baydık, 2011; Torgesen, 2000; Pikulski, 1997; Westwood, 2008).

The present study is constructed on three bases: reading; reading difficulties; and the use of enrichment reading programs to eliminate these reading difficulties.

Reading and Reading Difficulty

Reading is an interactive process consisting of inferring, knowing correct sounds and comprehension (Kamhi & Catts, 2008). The effective use of these skills in a reading environment enables the reader to comprehend the text. The success of the reading process is determined by variables such as reading attitude, reading purpose, prior knowledge about the text, textual structure, vocabulary knowledge; comprehension is determined by the interaction of the reader with the text (Yıldırım, 2010).

Good readers have automaticity in word recognition and discrimination (Garrod & Pickering, 1999; Pilten, 2009). It can be argued that readers having difficulty with word recognition and discrimination may lose the meaning of the text. Poor readers having reading difficulties as a result of a lack of skills such as perceiving the unity of meaning, using strategies and connecting prior knowledge to new information; hence, they experience reading difficulties (Bonds & Bonds, 1992; Jitendra, Hoppes & Xin, 2000; Moddy, Kennedy & Brady, 1997).

The students having reading difficulties are observed to distract their attention and feel anxious during reading. The main goal of reading is comprehension. As reading difficulties increase the anxiety of individuals, they make reading comprehension more difficult; hence, such have more limited reading experience and this hinders the development of vocabulary knowledge and information accumulation (Lyon, Shywitz & Shywitz, 2003).

The Enrichment Reading Program to Eliminate Reading Difficulties

Correct perception, sound recognition, word recognition, word discrimination, semantics, syntax, linguistic processes and comprehension are basic requirements needed for the acquisition of effective reading skills and healthy reading. Establishing reading environments with respect to these requirements may be effective in overcoming reading difficulties. Teaching through appropriate methods and considering the individual differences in individuals may contribute to the reduction of these difficulties. In addition to this, the early detection of students with reading difficulties and the application of intervention programs for reading difficulties are of great importance. Enrichment reading programs can be a good means of such an intervention.

The enrichment reading program is based on Renzulli's (1976) "Enhanced Triple Model". This model emphasizes that students should be provided with a range of learning strategies and environments complying with their interests and skills so that they can acquire valuable experiences. Enrichment reading programs and applications can be used for gifted children or children having learning difficulties. Through such programs, students are provided with comprehensive reading education, taking their areas of interest and motivation into consideration.

Recent research has proved that enrichment reading programs are one of the applications positively affecting reading, reading comprehension, reading awareness and expression skills (Goodman, 2007; Schreiber, 2003). In this research, the importance of enhancing reading with pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities is emphasized. Throughout the reading process, the transfer of prior information into the reading environment, working with different texts and textual structures, making predictions and inferences, setting goals and using strategies are all considered to enhance the reading environment and reading comprehension. The enrichment reading program is an important strategy in improving reading comprehension, writing skills, textual analysis, creativity skills and overcoming reading difficulties. Meanwhile Alexander, Carr and Schwaneflugel (1995) give important information about students with reading difficulties and also point out the efficiency of enrichment reading programs in the elimination of reading difficulties.

In light of the above-given information, the main purpose of the present study is to improve the reading skills of students having reading difficulties through an enrichment reading program.

Method

The present study employed a single-subject research method and the between-subject multiple baseline model associated with this method. The study was conducted with three participants. The cause and effect relationship between dependent and independent variables was analyzed separately for each participant without making comparison between the participants. In the between-subjects multiple baseline model, the effectiveness of a method on the target behavior is investigated through the participation of more than one participant (Tekin-İftar & Kırcaali-İftar, 2006). Multiple-baseline models consist of two phases: starting level and application level. At the beginning of the study, the reading levels of the students were determined and then the enrichment reading program was implemented. Throughout the application, the students' word recognition and reading out loud performances were compared with their initial performances.

Study Group

The study was conducted with three fifth-grade elementary school students who were having reading difficulties. The participants were selected by means of the purposeful sampling method. While selecting the participants, two criteria were used. The first is that students should not have auditory, visual and mental disorders and the second is that during reading difficulty determination work, their reading level should be determined at the apprehension level. The participants were informed about the study and they participated on a voluntary basis. The required permissions were granted from the participants' families and school authorities. The real names of the participants were not used for ethical reasons. Student 1, Student 2 and Student 3 are children of families of low socio-economic status. Their academic notes for the Turkish Language course are 3, 2 and 3, respectively. As a result of reading difficulty determination work, it was found that:

- Student 1 follows with finger; he skips, makes additions and reads erroneously.
- Student 2 makes additions, reads erroneously and slowly,
- Student 3 follows with finger, does not sound the words correctly and makes additions.

In addition to this, expression level determination work was conducted to gain detailed information about the participants. During the application, it was found that the students did not write the words correctly and during the dictation work, it was found that they had difficulties in organizing their opinions. During dialogues, on the other hand, it was found that they could not organize their opinions and they had difficulties in explaining the stages of opinion organization.

Data Collection Instruments

In order to collect data in the present study, word recognition tests, reading texts, the Ekwall and Shanker Reading Inventory and reading comprehension tests were used.

Word Recognition List. This is a list of 120 words of different syllable numbers; it was developed based on the fifth-grade vocabulary list prepared by Temur (2006).

Ekwall ve Shanker Reading Inventory: In order to determine text reading mistakes and reading aloud levels, the table developed by Ekwal and Shanker (1998) and adapted to Turkish by Akyol (2010) was used. This table enables us to evaluate the students' reading performances and monitor reading aloud processes.

Reading Comprehension Test. This reading comprehension test was developed by the researchers based on Akyol (2010). The test developed to evaluate the reading

comprehension level includes five questions ranging from simple comprehension questions to complex comprehension questions. The test was used to determine the reading comprehension level of the participants.

Reading Texts. In order to determine reading speed, the text called "Anatolian Rugs" was selected. Narrative texts were selected from the books recommended by the Turkish Education Board to be used for the activities developed for the enrichment reading program and to collect data. The texts and activities based on these texts used during the study are presented in Table 1. Activities used with the texts were developed based on the vocabulary level of the enrichment reading program, pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading.

Table.1 Texts and activities used during the application across the weeks

Weeks	Grade Level	Reading text	Activity		
1 st week	5 th grade	Anatolian Rugs	Level determination activity		
2 nd week	State determ	nation activity	Expression skills determination activity		
3 rd week	1 st grade	Pigeon and ant	Fluency in reading		
4 th week	1 st grade	If the dreams of grandfathers were true	Enriching vocabulary reservoir, summarizing, activating prior knowledge		
5 th week	1 st grade	Love for Atatürk and Country	Summarizing, using visuals, text structures		
6 th week	3 rd grade	Traffic	Working on concepts, activating prior knowledge, concept maps		
7 th week	3 rd grade	Shopping	Concept maps, working on unknown words		
8 th week	3 rd grade	Advertisements	Pair reading, use of meaning organizers improving vocabulary reservoir		
9 th week	3 rd grade	Respected man	Comprehension monitoring, question asking, main idea summarization		
10 th week	3 rd grade	Stars and picture on the sky	Comprehension monitoring, use of meaning organizers, improving vocabulary reservoir, reading fluently, summarizing main idea		
11 th week	5 th grade	Anatolian rugs	Level determination activity		

Enrichment Reading Program. After determining the students' reading levels, an enrichment reading program was developed by considering the individual differences of the students and reviewing the related literature. This program was developed to improve the students' reading aloud skills (Lanford, 2009; Scheiber, 2003). The enrichment reading program can be explained under four headings as pre-reading, while-reading, post-reading and vocabulary level. Pre-reading includes activities such as activating prior knowledge, title reading, scanning the text, making predictions about

the associated pictures, determining goals and the desire to learn, generating questions about the text and determining of the way of reading. While-reading includes activities such as paired reading, checking predictions, answering the questions asked during pre-reading and asking new questions, using monitoring strategies, reading by considering the predictions made in relation to the title and pictures and making visualizations in the mind. Post-reading includes activities such as determining whether the words predicted before reading are in the text or not, summarizing the main idea, talking about the text, making use of the summary, using story maps and concept maps and making use of thinking aloud strategies. On the word level, activities such as word recognition and sound recognition were used. In order to establish content validity, expert opinions were sought. A pilot was conducted to determine the functioning of the reading program. The pilot was carried out with two fifth-grade students from an elementary school in Aksaray. In light of the data collected from the piloting, required adjustments were performed and the final form of the reading program was decided.

Procedures. The present study was conducted in 2011. Within the study, an 11-week enrichment reading program was administered to improve the participants' reading skills.

The program implemented in the present study was developed by reviewing enrichment reading program applications (Schrebeir, 2003; Slavin; 1995). Throughout the study, lasting for 11 weeks (75 class hours), the students worked on different texts. Each class hour was 40 minutes long.

During the applications, the students were presented with worksheets for each text. These worksheets contained activities relating to a given text and they were designed so that students could summarize, take notes and answer text-based questions. During the process, the researchers provided guidance for the students about what they would do and what they would pay attention to. The application was conducted in the multipurpose salon of the school where students were studying.

The processes followed during the study are presented below:

Level Determination Activity. The researchers made the students read the whole text aloud. One of the researchers marked the point to which students came after one minute. While students were reading, the places which they read wrongly were highlighted in the text. In addition to this, the students were asked to read the words aloud which were in the word recognition test. The words read wrongly were marked by the researcher on his copy of the word recognition test. A level determination activity was performed before and after the application.

State Determination Activity. The students were directed to work on words and morphemes. The students were asked to talk about one of their days to determine their expression skills. A short text was left in the middle and the students were asked to predict what should come next. Then the students were asked to frame the opinions they shared or use them to create a story map. A state determination activity was performed before the application to generate detailed information about the students.

Following the state determination activity, students were given reading and reading comprehension activities to improve their vocabulary reservoir, summarizing skills and strategy use within the context of the enrichment reading program. Throughout the program, the students' reading performance was recorded.

Data Analysis

The data collected in the study were analyzed through both qualitative and quantitative methods and the results were explained both qualitatively and quantitatively. The

mistakes committed by the participants during reading were identified, their responses to the reading comprehension questions were evaluated and their reading skills were analyzed throughout the process.

Reliability of the Application

During the application, a setting where the students could express themselves comfortably was established. While students were performing reading aloud, they were video recorded and this made the analysis more reliable. Moreover, field notes were taken and observation results were written up. During the data analysis process, the data collected from the participants were analyzed by the researcher and an independent related field expert. In order to establish their reliability, the data were analyzed in different time periods.

Results

At the end of the study, it was found that the enrichment reading program applied in the present study to improve reading skills contributed to the development of word recognition skills and reading aloud skills of the students having reading difficulties. The findings of the study are presented under two headings: the findings relating to word recognition skills and the findings relating to reading aloud skills.

The word recognition test contains 120 words having different syllable numbers. The students were asked to pronounce the words in the test and the mistakes committed during the pronunciation and the number of pronunciations are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The number of mistakes and reading speed before and after the application of the program

	Student 1		Student 2		Student 3	
	Number of mistakes (120/-)	Reading speed (min.)	Number of mistakes (120/-)	Reading speed (min.)	Number of mistakes (120/-)	Reading speed (min.)
Word recognition before the program	78	5. 38	55	3.42	47	4.47
Word recognition after the program	36	3.40	20	2.32	22	2.38

It can be seen that before the application of the program Student 1 could not recognize 78 words, Student 2 could not recognize 55 words and Student 3 could not recognize 47 words, out of the 120 words in the word recognition test. In relation to reading speed, it was found that for Student 1 it was five minutes and 38 seconds; for Student 2, it was three minutes and 42 seconds and for Student Three, it was four minutes and 47 seconds. After the application of the program, it was found that Student 1 could not recognize 36 words, Student 2 could not recognize 20 words and Student 3 could not recognize 22 words. In terms of their reading speed, it was found that for Student 1 it was three minutes and 40 seconds, for Student 2 it is two minutes and 32 seconds and for Student 3 it is two minutes and 38 seconds. As a result of the program, the number of mistakes committed by the students decreased and the time for completing the word recognition test improved. In the word recognition test, there are words which have different numbers of syllables. Before the application of the program, it was observed that with an increase in the number of syllables, more

difficulties were experienced by the students. When the time for completing the word recognition test is considered, it can be argued that the students did not display the performance expected of a fifth-grade student. In addition to this, it can be said that as the student compared the spelling of some words to that of the words they knew before, they showed an inclination to use the words they knew before. Some examples are given below to explain this situation.

Example:

Pronouncing the Word 'Corap' as 'corba'

Pronouncing the Word 'Kilim' as 'kimlik'

Pronouncing the Word 'Mareşal' as 'marş'

Pronouncing the Word 'Disiplin' as 'dispilin'

Within the state determination activity conducted before the program, the students were directed to work on words and phonemes while performing the word recognition activities. The students were told some words from the vocabulary list and they were asked to repeat these words. Then they were assigned some tasks relating to the words repeated. For instance, one of these tasks was to pronounce the word 'gösteri' without pronouncing –i. The findings relating to these tasks are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Findings relating to word recognition activity

	The word repeated by the students	Task	New word pronounced by the students
Student 1	Esas	Without pronouncing -e	Sas
	Gözlüksüz	Without pronouncing -lük	Göz
	Harp	Without pronouncing -p	На
	Hastalık	Without pronouncing -lık	Hasta
	Kanser	Without pronouncing -ser	Kan
Student 2	Gösteri	Without pronouncing -i	Götse
	Gözlüksüz	Without pronouncing -lük	Gözsüz
	Halsiz	Without pronouncing -siz	Hal
	Kapatmak	Without pronouncing -mak	Kapat
	Ekim	Without pronouncing -e	Kim
Student 3	Gösteri	Without pronouncing -i	Götse
	Gözlüksüz	Without pronouncing -lük	Gözlük
	Halsiz	Without pronouncing -siz	Hal
	Kapatmak	Without pronouncing -mak	Kapat
	Ekim	Without pronouncing -e	Kim

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that the students did not have difficulty while repeating the words; however, they had some difficulties while performing the tasks relating to the words. This may be because they could not visualize the words in their minds. During the application, as a result of the word recognition activities, it was observed that the students were unsuccessful in word discrimination activities. The current state of the students in terms of reading aloud before and after the application of the program is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Reading aloud levels

	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3
	Reading level	Reading level	Reading level
Before the program	Anxiety level	Anxiety level	Anxiety level
After the program	Teaching level	Free level	Free level

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that after the application of the program Students 2 and 3 reached the free level of fifth graders while Student 1 reached teaching level. It can be argued that significant progress was observed in the reading skills of Students 2 and 3. In Table 5, the students' reading speeds and the number of mistakes before and after the program are presented.

Table 5. Findings relating to text reading speed and the number of mistakes

	Student 1		Student 2		Student 3	
	Reading speed (min)	Number of mistakes	Reading speed (min)	Number of mistakes	Reading speed (min)	Number of mistakes
Before the program	10.35	56	5.35	38	7.20	64
After the program	10.32	22	3.40	12	4.32	17

When Table 5 is examined, it is possible to say that there is significant improvement in the reading speeds of Students 2 and 3. Though there is no change in the reading speed of Student 1, there is a decrease in the number of the wrongly-read words and this indicates an improvement in the reading level.

Table 6. Distribution of the mistakes committed in the texts read across the weeks of the program

Student	Weeks	Reading text	Mistakes committed	Number of mistakes (pre 100 words)	Reading speed (min)
Ofmale f	3 rd week	Pigeon and ant	Following with finger, self-correction, words given by the teacher, wrong reading	36	4.58
Student 1	4 th week	If the dreams of grandfathers were true	Following with finger, self-correction, words given by the teacher, wrong reading	23	4.55
	5 th week	Love for Atatürk and country	Following with finger, self- correction, words given by the teacher, wrong reading	20	5.30
	6 th week	Traffic	Following with finger, self- correction, words given by the teacher, wrong reading	24	4.46
	7 th week	Shopping	Following with finger, self- correction, words given by the teacher, wrong reading	22	4.32
	8 th week	Advertisements	Following with finger, self- correction, words given by the teacher, wrong reading	18	4.38
	9 th week	Respected man	Following with finger, self- correction, words given by the teacher, wrong reading	19	4.21
	10 th week	Stars and the picture on the sky	Self-correction, words given by the teacher, wrong reading	20	4.20
	3 rd week	Pigeon and ant	Adding, lack of attention on punctuation, self-correction, wrong reading	25	2.42
	4 th week	If the dreams of grandfathers were true	Self-correction, wrong reading	32	2.05
	5 th week	Love for Atatürk and country	Self-correction, wrong reading	17	3.50
Student 2	6 th week	Traffic	Self-correction, wrong reading	24	2.55

Table 6 (Cont). Distribution of the mistakes committed in the texts read across the weeks of the program

Student	7 th week	Shopping	Self-correction, wrong reading, adding	14	2.18
2	8 th week	Advertisements	Self-correction, wrong reading, adding	12	2.10
	9 th week	Respected man	Self-correction	11	2.11
	10 th week	Starts and the picture of the sky	Self-correction	9	1.55
Student	3 rd week	Pigeon and ant	Adding, self-correction and wrong reading	21	2.12
3	4 th week	If the dreams of grandfathers were true	Adding, self-correction and wrong reading	12	2.10
	5 th week	Love for Atatürk and country	Adding, self-correction and wrong reading	22	1.55
	6 th week	Traffic	Adding, self-correction and wrong reading	22	1.54
	7 th week	Shopping	Adding, self-correction and wrong reading	17	1.48
	8 th week	Shopping	Adding, self-correction and wrong reading	16	1.52
	9 th week	Respected man	Adding, self-correction and wrong reading	15	2.00
	10 th week	Starts and the picture of the sky	Adding, self-correction and wrong reading	18	2.08
	week	Starts and the	wrong reading Adding, self-correction and		

In Table 6, the types of mistakes committed by the students in reading aloud activities throughout the application of the program can be seen. Student 2 made frequent additions and corrected himself while reading the text. Frequent self-correction makes comprehension and monitoring more difficult. However, Student 2 can be claimed to have made good progress during the program. This progress is clearly demonstrated by the decrease in the number of mistakes and increase in the reading speed. Given that the difficulty level of the texts increased, it can be argued that Student 2 benefited from the application. Though no significant change was observed in the reading speed of Student 1 throughout the reading program, a decrease was observed in the number of the words read wrongly. This student read by following with a finger and was directed to follow with a pencil. As of the sixth week, the student gave up following with a finger. This can explained by the improvement in word recognition skill. Moreover, Student 1 was observed to read with fewer mistakes, not to make any additions and not to skip lines towards the end of the program. Before starting the program, Student 3 was observed to read faster than the other two students. Yet, while

reading fast, he made additions, skipped lines and overlooked correct pronunciation of some words for the sake of reading fast. As a result of the program, it can be argued that mistakes in reading decreased, more attention was paid to pronunciation and to punctuation while reading.

When the findings of the present study are examined, it can be argued that the activities performed within the enrichment reading program are effective in improving word recognition and reading aloud skills of the students having reading difficulties. In the enrichment reading program activities performed with the study group, students were provided with an environment where they could recognize their reading mistakes, learn compensation strategies and share their comprehension experiences. This environment was created in compliance with the idea proposed by Paris and Winograd (2003) that reading programs enrichment with strategies can improve reading skills. It is thought that students discussing what they read, performing group work and sharing their text-related work with their group members contributed to the development of their reading skills.

In addition, it can be argued that the enrichment reading program enabled students to make use of metacognitive strategies such as monitoring and evaluating their reading performance.

The study group students demonstrated some improvements in terms of their reading skills. These students were hesitant about participating in classroom reading activities due to the difficulties they experienced. When appropriate environment and guidance are provided, students having reading difficulties may demonstrate similar performance to their peers (Christo, Davis & Brock, 2009; Lyon, Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2003; Vellutino, Fletcher, Snowling & Scanlon, 2004). Therefore, it is of great importance to provide the correct aids for students to overcome their reading difficulties.

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