Analysis of the Levels of Teacher Candidates' Reading Comprehension and Use of Reading Strategies (Example of Van)

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Abstract

In this study, the levels of teacher candidates in reading comprehension and use of reading strategies are researched. The problem sentence in this study includes "relation between the success of teacher candidates in reading comprehension and the level of use of reading strategies." As it is seen in the problem sentence, the study tries to determine whether the levels of teacher candidates in reading comprehension and use of reading strategies differ in terms of department, gender and academic success points. 300 senior students in the departments of Turkish Language, Science Teaching in Primary Education, Primary School Teaching, Social Science Teaching and Biology Teaching during 2013-2014 teaching period are identified as the study group.

In this research, relational screening model is used. Data is collected by using reading comprehension tests and reading strategies scale. Frequency, percentage, arithmetic average, correlation, ANOVA and t-test are used for the analysis of the data. Turkish Language teacher candidates take the first place among all departments in reading comprehension and use of reading strategies. Both in terms of reading comprehension and use of reading strategies, the study reveals a significant difference between genders in favour of female teacher candidates.

Keywords: Reading, reading comprehension, reading strategies

1. State of Problem

Reading is a physical and mental process involving the articulation, comprehension, grasping and interpretation of written texts. In this definition, physical and mental process particularly draws attention, because the physical process represents articulation while the mental process symbolizes comprehension. Moreover, in reading, the articulation is related to theadability of the text while comprehension pertains to intelligibility. Reading is an important means of acquiring knowledge. Along with reading, listening and observation are also prominent ways to acquire knowledge. The efforts to improve students' reading and comprehension skills are usually made through activities designed in the classroom environment and activities on texts in the textbooks. Most of these activities are superficial endeavours far from enabling the in-depth comprehension of the text and bringing critical perspective. It brings neither reading habit nor comprehension skills.

The purpose of the reading activity is to comprehend what is read. If a person is capable of analyzing and synthesizing the text they read, of interpreting and restating it with their own sentences, it shows that they comprehend what they read. Reading is an activity that stimulates sub-cognitive and supercognitive skills. Students need to perform four actions at least so that they could understand what they read: to know the words, grasp the meaning, show the most suitable reaction to the ideas expressed in the text, and use and implement the ideas acquired from the text (Çiftçi and Temizyürek: 2009, 111).

Another indicator of the reading comprehension is to identify problems stated in the text and bring different solutions to these problems. Reading and reading comprehension are a process. "This process involves such elements as assessment, reasoning, problem solving and imagination (Akyol, 2005: 3)."

Although reading and comprehension are two distinct efforts, they share a single goal: to comprehend what is read. "In this context, reading comprehension is an effective process, that involves both information in the text and reader's interpretation, and the messages intended to be given by the author are logically structured (Radoyevic, 2006)". According to Güneş (2004), while the reading comprehension is about finding the meaning of the text, considering about it, looking for reasons, drawing conclusions and evaluating, it also includes mental activities such as analyzing, making choices, reaching decisions, transforming, interpreting, translating, analyze-synthesis and evaluation. "The development of reading skills and the habit of reading in students occur at primary school level in particular. By improving students' reading ability at primary school, it is aimed to make them readers who are capable of thinking, comprehending, criticizing, discussing, establishing relationship between their previous knowledge and what they read, and finding new meanings (Çiftçi and Temizyürek, 2009)." However, certain reading strategies are needed to achieve this aim.

Reading and reading comprehension is subject to a certain process. This process consists of previous knowledge (reader's knowledge), the purpose of reading, expectation, content of the text, physical and mental

activities. Reading comprehension strategies are defined as cognitive tools that could improve student's academic performance when they experience difficulty in comprehension (Piloneita, 2006: 27).

Students need to perform four actions at least so that they could understand what they read: to know the words, grasp the meaning, show the most suitable reaction to the ideas expressed in the text, and use and implement the ideas acquired from the text (Çiftçi and Temizyürek: 2009, 111).

The aim of reading strategies is to achieve comprehension at the highest level in the shortest time and help the reader to solve problems in the case of comprehension failures (Temizkan, 2007, p.6).

Conscious readers try to achieve comprehension with the help of pre-reading, reading and post-reading strategies. Such strategies contribute to conscious reading.

The construction of the meaning requires interaction with the texts that students can read and respond to using their previous knowledge, problem solving and estimating skills. Active readers are active in comprehending what they read and utilize their previous knowledge, different strategies and techniques to construct new meanings from the text they read (Pressley, 2001; Epçaçan, 2009: 213).

Students can apply different reading strategies for each reading topic or situation. It indicates that reading strategies are diversifiable and modifiable when required. It can be said that students competent at using diverse reading strategies and developing new reading strategies can achieve active reading on their own (Tuncer and Güven, 2007, p. 3).

A good reader has a purpose before starting to read. They look over the text, scan it and proposes hypothesis about what is written in the text. During the actual reading activity, they read the whole text. They sometimes can reread some parts, take notes about the text and check estimations they have made about the text before. They summarize the text, do research about the ideas suggested in the text, compare them with their own previous knowledge and criticize, analyze and interpret the author's and their own ideas (Epçaçan 2009).

The reading activity at university level is carried out to comprehend textbooks and learn about theoretical knowledge. University students who can read more complex texts both in their field of study and at general knowledge level can display a better performance in comprehension thanks to several strategies applied in reading. "Research on adult reading suggest that readers with lower competence use reading strategies that can improve their super-cognitive consciousness and these strategies can be taught by teachers" (Shelton, 2006; Çöğmen and Saracaloğlu, 2010)

Planning is reader's determination of reading purpose and reading with this awareness in mind. The determination of the purpose helps to discern necessary information from the unnecessary and focus on the knowledge preferred to be learned. Monitoring is reader's organization of the reading process and properly and timely deciding on use of strategy. A reader adopting a monitoring strategy tries to properly integrate their strategic knowledge in the reading process. In other words, this is conscious reading. Evaluation, on the other hand, is about overcoming deficiencies in the reading process and change of strategy if necessary. For instance, a reader who realizes that they have failed in comprehension and achieving the goal of reading could attempt to reread the text (Shelton, 2006; Çöğmen and Saracaloğlu, 2010).

While comprehension at primary and secondary education occurs at a simpler level, comprehension at undergraduate level is more comprehensive. This period requires the skill of "grasping ideas that are not expressed by the author but accompany what is written in the text; receiving both written and unwritten messages in the text" (Çiftçi, 2007: 2). In addition, reading activity at this level means "the ability to read between the lines and think critically" (Shelton, 2006; Çöğmen and Saracaloğlu, 2010).

Moreover, the comprehension and interpretation of the text occurs only to the extent that the reader's previous learning and experiences allow (Pressley, 2001; Epçaçan, 2009: 213).

It is no doubt that use of reading strategies and reading comprehension play a significant role in the teacher candidates' academic success. Therefore, this study examines whether the students have gained the skills of reading comprehension and use of reading strategies. In accordance with this goal, the basic problem of the study is stated as: what is the successslevels of the teacher candidates in reading comprehension and use of reading strategies? Within the scope of this basic problem, the study also tries to answer the following sub-problems:

1. What are the teacher candidates' average, standard deviation, lowest and highest points for reading comprehension by department?

2. Does the teacher candidates' success in reading comprehension differ by department?

3. Does the teacher candidates' success in reading comprehension differ by gender?

4. What are the average, standard deviation, lowest and highest points of the teacher candidates' success in use of reading strategies in all departments?

5. Does the teacher candidates' level of use of reading strategies differ by department?

6. Does the teacher candidates' level of use of reading strategies differ by gender?

2. Methodology
This chapter provides information about hypotheses, constrains, the model, population and sample of the study, data collection techniques and the analysis of collected data.

2.1. Research Model
The study uses screening model that aims to describe an existing situation as it is and define a case, individual or object that are the subject of a research in their own conditions as they are (Karasar 2005, 77). The screening model does not try to change or affect the case, individual or objects that are the subject of the research in any way. The important point is to observe and identify what is to be known (Karasar 2005, 77). The study applies relational screening model as it aims to identify teacher candidates' level of reading comprehension and use of reading strategies according to different variables and reveal if there is a significant difference between them. The relational screening model aims to find the existence and/or the degree of covariance between two or more variables. (Karasar 2005: 81).

2.2. Study Group
The study group of the research consists of a total of 300 senior students in the departments of Turkish Language Teaching, Science Teaching in Primary Education, Primary School Teaching, Social Science Teaching and Biology Teaching at the Faculty of Education of Yüzüncü Yıl University during the academic year 2013-2014. Of the teacher candidates joining the study group, 132 are female while 168 of them are male. The distribution of the study group by department is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Participants by Gender

Department	N	Percentage
Turkish Language Teaching	55	18
Science Teaching in Primary Education	60	20
Primary School Teaching	80	27
Social Science Teaching	50	17
Biology Teaching	55	18
Total	**300**	**100**

2.3. Data Collection
To collect data for the study, "Reading Strategies Scale" developed by Karatay (2007) and "Reading Comprehension Scale" developed by the researcher was used. In the Reading Strategies Scale, options range between 1 (never), 2 (rarely), 3 (sometimes), 4 (usually) and 5 (always). The Reading Comprehension Test consists of 50 questions. In the test, the correct answer of each question gives 1 point while incorrect answers gives 0 point, and the total points and averages are calculated on a scale of 100. The reliability co-efficient of the Reading Strategies Scale was determined as .84 by Karatay (2007), and the reliability co-efficient of the Reading Comprehension Scale was determined as .78 by the researcher as result of the analyses conducted.
The Reading Comprehension Scale was applied in two separate sessions (40+40). The application of the Reading Strategies Scale took 15 minutes.

2.4. Data Analysis
To analyze data obtained from the research, frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean, correlation, ANOVA and t-test were performed. For these, SPSS-21 statistics program was used. Percentage and frequency was calculated to determine the participants' reading comprehension points and levels of use of reading strategies while t-test was performed to indicate if the points obtained by the teacher candidates vary by gender and department. To determine which groups use reading comprehension and reading strategies, LSD Multiple Comparison Test was performed.

3. Findings and Comments
Table 2: Average, Standard Deviation, Lowest and Highest Points for Reading Comprehension by Department

Department	N	X	S	Lowest Point	Highest Point
Turkish Language Teaching	55	43.2909	2.78	37	49
Science Teaching in Primary Education	60	37.1500	4.94	27	45
Primary School Teaching	80	41.2875	3.02	29	46
Social Science Teaching	50	40.4400	3.78	30	46
Biology Teaching	55	39.4000	3.48	27	45
Total	300	40.3400	4.15	27	49

In the above table, for reading comprehension, the average, standard deviation, lowest and highest

points of the teacher candidates studying at different departments are given. The ranking according to the average points are: 43,29 for the Turkish Language teacher candidates; 41,28 for the Primary School teacher candidates; 40,44 for the Social Science teacher candidates; 39,40 for the Biology teacher candidates and 37,15 for the Science teacher candidates. As can be seen from the results, the Turkish Language teacher candidates have the highest average while the Science teacher candidates have the lowest average. The Turkish Language teacher candidates, Primary School teacher candidates and Social Science teacher candidates are above the general average while the Science teacher candidates and the Biology teacher candidates scored points below the general average. When the standard deviations are examined, it is found that the Turkish Language teacher candidates and the Primary School teacher candidates' points are distributed in a narrower range compared to the points of the teacher candidates in other departments. Except for the Turkish Language teacher candidates, *the lowest* and *highest* points do not differ greatly in other departments. Turkish Language Teaching department is more successful in both categories.

Table 3: ANOVA Results for Reading Comprehension Success by Department

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	(sd)	Average of Squares	F	P	Significant Difference
Intergroup	1210.417	4	302.604			1-2, 1-3,1-4, 1-5,
Intragroup	3944.903	295	13.373	22.629	.000	3-2, 4-2, 5-2
Total	5155.320	299				

The table analyzes whether or not there is a significant difference in reading comprehension success by department. As is seen, there is a significant difference between the Turkish Language teacher candidates and other teacher candidates in favour of the Turkish Language teacher candidates. It is also seen that teacher candidates in the departments of Primary School Teaching, Social Science Teaching and Biology Teaching are successful enough to make a significant difference in reading comprehension in comparison with the Science teacher candidates. However, there is no significant difference in terms of reading comprehension success between teacher candidates in the departments of Primary School Teaching, Social Science Teaching and Biology Teaching.

Table 4: T-Test Results for Reading Comprehension Success by Gender

Gender	N	X	S	sd	T	P
Female	132	41.5000	3.30741	298	4.420	.000
Male	168	39.4286	4.51554			

The table analyzes whether or not there is a significant difference in reading comprehension success by gender. According to the t-test results, female teacher candidates scored 41,50 points on average while male teacher candidates scored 39,42 points on average, which indicates that reading comprehension success displays a significance in favour of the female teacher candidates ($p<.05$).

Table 5: Average Points and Standard Deviations for Use of Reading Strategies by Department

Department	N	X	S
Turkish Language Teaching	55	3,27	,77445
Science Teaching in Primary Education	60	2,83	,77449
Primary School Teaching	80	3,16	,82685
Social Science Teaching	50	2,79	1,15891
Biology Teaching	55	2,74	1,04502
Total	300	2,98	,41197

In the table, the average points and standard deviations of teacher candidates in different departments for use of reading strategies are given. According to the results, the average point score for use of reading strategies is 3,27 for the Turkish Language teacher candidates; 2,83 for the Science teacher candidates; 3,16 for the Primary School teacher candidates; 2,79 for the Social Science teacher candidates and 2,74 for the Biology teacher candidates. The total average score is 2,98. Accordingly, the Turkish language teacher candidates have the highest average while the Biology teacher candidates have the lowest average. While the Turkish teacher candidates, Science teacher candidates and Primary School teacher candidates are above the average, the Social Science and Biology teacher candidates are below the average.

According to the average score (2,98), the teacher candidates have achieved a "medium" level in use of reading strategies.

Table 6: ANOVA Results for the Level of Use of Reading Strategies by Department

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	sd	Average of Squares	F	P	Significant Difference
Intergroup	13801,892	4	3450.604			1-2, 1-4, 1-5,
Intragroup	18180.545	295	61.629	55.988	.000	2-3, 3-4, 3-5,
Total	31982.437	299				

The table analyzes whether or not there is a significant difference in the teacher candidates' level of use of reading strategies by department. It is found that the Turkish language teacher candidates apply reading

strategies more. Compared to the Science teacher candidates, Social Science teacher candidates and Biology teacher candidates, there is a significant difference in the level of use of reading strategies in favour of the Turkish Language teacher candidates. There is also a significant difference in favour of the Science teacher candidates compared to the Primary School teacher candidates, and in favour of the Primary School teacher candidates compared to the Social Science teacher candidates. Finally, there is a significant difference in favour of the Primary School teacher candidates compared to the Biology teacher candidates.

Table 7: T-Test Results for the Level of Use of Reading Strategies by Gender

Gender	N	X	S	sd	T	P
Female	132	98.3495	9.24640	298	4.555	.000
Male	168	93.0417	10.58207			

The table analyzes whether or not the teacher candidates' level of use of reading strategies differs significantly by gender. According to the data, the female teacher candidates' level of use of reading strategies is measured as 98,34 while the male teacher candidates' level of use of reading strategies is measured as 93,04. It indicates that there is no significant difference between the female teacher candidates and male teacher candidates.

4. Conclusion and Discussion
The results of the study can be assessed as follows:
It can be said that the teacher candidates are not so successful in reading comprehension, because the most successful are the Turkish Language teacher candidates and their average success point is only 43,29. The total average success point of all teacher candidates is 40,34. The Turkish Language teacher candidates', Primary School teacher candidates' and Social Science teacher candidates' score is above the general average while the Science teacher candidates' and Biology teacher candidates' score is below the general average.

There is a significant difference in reading comprehension between the Turkish Language teacher candidates and other teacher candidates in favour of the Turkish language teacher candidates. Similarly, the Primary School teacher candidates, Social Science teacher candidates and Biology teacher candidates are more successful in reading comprehension to make a significant difference compared to the Science teacher candidates.

According to both average success in reading comprehension and ANOVA results, it is found that the Turkish Language teacher candidates are more successful. Despite the fact that the Turkish Language teacher candidates and Primary School teacher candidates are more successful than other candidates, their score is not considered so high. The teacher candidates and Turkish Language teacher candidates in particular should have been more successful. Moreover, that *the highest point* is 49 at the most is another indicator of failure. *The average point, highest point and lowest point achieved by the teacher candidates* displays the teacher candidates' failure in reading comprehension.

One of the main reasons for teacher candidates' failure is that they do not read books outside their field of study or do not read much. In addition, not giving due importance to reading and not considering it as a necessity may have caused the non-development of reading comprehension skills.

It also might be stemming from the fact that the Turkish Language teacher candidates spare much time for reading because of their interest and courses in their departmental programme. Thus, it is not unusual if it is acknowledged that the Turkish Language teacher candidates' leisure time reading habits are more improved compared to the students in other departments.

According to the data obtained in the study, the female teacher candidates' average score is 41,50 while the male teacher candidates' average score is 39,42, which indicates a significance ($p<.05$) in reading comprehension success in favour of the female teacher candidates.

As this study, other studies also have found that the female teacher candidates are more successful in reading comprehension. It includes studies conducted by Tayşi (2007); Çam (2006); Şahiner (2005); Keleş (2006); İnan (2005); Suna (2006) Dökmen (1994), Karatay (2007) Topuzkanamış (2010); Brooks (1936); Sidekli (2006); Akçamete (1990); Anılan (1998); Akyol (2005) and Çiftçi (2007). The female students' relative success compared to the male students is attributed to different causes by the researchers. Topuzkanamış (2010) states that reading preferences and frequency, time and level of focusing on the text as well as long-term reading habits and background have an impact on this result. Çiftçi (2007) maintains that female students physically develop earlier than male students, which also brings along mental maturity and thereby rapid improvement in language skills. On the other hand, Sidekli (2006) attributes the reason for female students' relative success compared to male students to the fact that girls are more responsible and male students play mostly outdoors while female students spend most of their play time at home. Akçamete (1990) who suggest that female students are more advanced in language development than male students states that male students face more reading difficulties at primary school than the female students, but this discrepancy diminishes at college.

While Bügel and Buunk (1996) have found male students more successful than female students in reading comprehension; Brantmeier (2003) and Phakiti (2003) have concluded that there is no difference

between the genders (Topuzkanamış, 2010).

Contrary to the abovementioned claims, Akyol (2005) maintains that gender is not a determining factor in language development.

As for use of reading strategies, the Turkish Language teacher candidates have been found more successful. Their average score is 3,27. The total average score of all teacher candidates in use of reading strategies is 2,98, which indicates that all teacher candidates are of "medium" level in terms of using reading strategies.

The level of use of reading strategies displays a significant difference in favour of the Turkish Language teacher candidates compared to the Science teacher candidates, Social Science teacher candidates and Biology teacher candidates. It also displays significance in favour of the Science teacher candidates compared to the Primary School teacher candidates; in favour of the Primary School teacher candidates compared to the Social Science teacher candidates and in favour of the Primary School teacher candidates compared to the Biology teacher candidates.

In his study Turkish Language and Literature Teacher Candidates' Levels of Use of Reading Strategies, Erdem (2012) finds that the teacher candidates are of "medium" level in terms of use of reading strategies. Similarly, Topuzkanamış (2010) and Karatay (2007) have concluded in their studies that teacher candidates' level of use of reading strategies is medium.

In this study, the level of use of reading strategies displays significance in favour of the female teacher candidates. It is found that the female teacher candidates' level of use of reading strategies is 98,34 while the male teacher candidates' level of use of reading strategies is 93,04. It leads to a significant difference between the female teacher candidates and male teacher candidates.

Moreover, in the studies conducted by Gündemir (2002), Çöğmen (2008), Topuzkanamış (2009) and Muhtar, female teacher candidates' level of use of reading strategies are high enough to create a significant difference compared to male teacher candidates.

However, Erdem (2012) does not identify a significant difference with relation to the gender in use of pre-reading, reading and post-reading strategies.

On the other hand, Karatay's study (2007) reveals that male teacher candidates' cognitive awareness of the reading strategies is higher and more significant compared to female teacher candidates.

Finally, the findings of the study suggest that there is a parallel between reading comprehension and use of reading strategies skills.

5. Suggestions

According to the findings of the study, the following suggestions are made:

To improve the habit and skills of reading comprehension, the teacher candidates should be introduced to literary classics, encouraged to read and given assignments to prepare book reviews. The conditions of the university libraries should be improved and the teacher candidates' access to books should be facilitated in order to increase demand for reading. To make reading a part of the life, particular effort should be made at every level of education system. It should be encouraged that reading is not limited to the textbooks needed to pass a course and literary works should also be read to improve personal development and comprehension success. In addition, various reading activities should be organized at the university, faculty or departments to create a reading culture in teacher candidates.

The departments should focus on studies that allow teacher candidates to actively use reading strategies. Through reading strategies, teacher candidates should be supported to improve their cognitive and emotional knowledge and skills. The curricula should include the teaching and application of reading strategies. In intraclass practices, teacher candidates should be taught use of reading strategies with the help of model practices. Finally, the students should receive education on diverse reading strategies and be provided with settings to use such skills.

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