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A Text Comprehension Activity Based on the Standards of Textuality for Turkish Courses*

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of text comprehension activities based on the standards of textuality on reading skill, reading comprehension, and reading habit. To reach necessary competence in skill areas in a proper process, the child needs to be provided with sufficient activities starting from early ages. It is evident that the students who fail to acquire reading skills are not motivated enough. To overcome this negativity, students should be guided with the right activities. In this respect, many studies suggest that the data contributed by text linguistics should be used especially in the selection of texts and activities related with the texts. In this way, the student will be able to understand the context, purpose, intention, situation, and cause-effect relationships much better. The standards of textuality are as important as strategies, methods, and techniques in the enhancement of reading comprehension skills. The texts that meet these standards are considered to be sufficient texts in terms of improving reading skill. In this study, an activity for 6th grade students has been developed for these purposes. The correspondence of the activity with the standards of textuality was evaluated by two field experts and two Turkish teachers. In the light of their opinions, the activity was given its final form. It is believed that this activity will contribute to the studies in the field and will be helpful for Turkish teachers.

Keywords: 6th Grade Students, Turkish Course, Reading Skill, The Standards Of Textuality, Text Comprehension Activities

Introduction

Reading is defined as a precise process involving “exact, detailed, sequential perception and identification of letters, words, spelling patterns and larger language units” (Goodman, 1967: 126). Besides being a significant

* This study is based on the doctoral dissertation titled “Mother Tongue Teaching in Turkey and the USA: Comparing the Texts in Mother Tongue Textbooks at the 6th Grade” which was completed by the first author with the supervision of the second author in 2012 at Marmara University Graduate School of Education

field that feeds all skill areas, reading, as stated by Sever (1990: 721), is a mental activity that feeds, shapes, and develops thoughts. The act of reading, which starts with the basic reading skill and develops into a habit and into critical reading, is at the same time the ability to make inferences about the letter, word, text, and text body on paper.

When the social structure is examined, it is apparent that there are many problems concerning reading skills; and these problems are observed to be the problems concerning reading comprehension or reading habit (Ülper, 2011a: 941). If there are communication problems related to linguistic incompetence in a society with a common language, this situation stems from misunderstanding or not fully understanding the messages transferred in reading, listening/watching activities (Sever, 1998: 53) or is due to the fact that skill areas could not reach the necessary competence in a proper process starting from early ages.

Individual's competence in communication skills determines the success of the individual in social life. Considering that a skill area exists affecting another skill area, it is thought that all the activities for skill areas will increase student's reading and writing skills. For example, in a study which examined the relationship between children's book reading frequency in the 1st grade and word recognition skills in the 2nd grade (Morgan & Fuchs, 2007: 165), it was observed that word recognition skills of the students who read a lot of books in the previous year increased in the following year. In addition, there are also studies which hypothesised that there is a two-way causal relationship between reading skill and motivation (Aunola, Leskinen, Onatsu-Arvilommi & Nurmi, 2002; Chapman, Tunmer & Prochnow, 2000). These studies show that student's reading skill increases if the student is motivated to read, and it becomes easier for the student to be motivated to read the text if the student has developed reading skill. Researchers indicated that the children who constantly fail to acquire necessary skills also lose their reading motivation in time. In this context, Stanovich (1986: 360) assumes that these reading difficulties result in behavioural, cognitive, and motivational side effects or negative Matthew effects.

School is the most important environment to acquire skills and competencies. For this reason, starting from preschool, particular emphasis should be put on reading and all kinds of activities concerning reading because the ability provided by this effort will transform into reading habit. Morgan and Fuchs (2007: 166) suggest that the students who constantly fail to acquire reading skills should focus on eliminating skill deficiencies in the first place if they are not motivated enough; and early intervention should be provided if this poor motivation results from different factors (for example, a parent's own opinions concerning reading) because in this case there might be both skill and motivation deficiencies.

Since reading comprehension has a dominant significance in the development of reading skills, children should gain this skill during the education process (Ateş & Yıldırım, 2014: 237). The mental schemes that develop in time can lead the student step by step to a more excessive search for meaning and consequently, the student advances to the level of critical reading. Thus, critical thinking skills start to develop, which is related to "learning and innovation skills among the 21st century student outcomes" ([P21]).

Turkish courses and the textbooks used in these courses are the most suitable environment where the author's effort to tell and the reader's effort to understand can be actualised. The guiding materials of Turkish courses are the reading texts. The texts included in Turkish textbooks have an important role in fulfilling the objectives of Turkish courses (Solak & Yaylı, 2009: 445). Considering Turkish courses, which are universally mother tongue courses, merely as informative courses means ignoring the love, interest, aesthetic pleasure, and cognitive and affective skills that will develop in the context of this course. Most particularly the activities which skip all these steps; which are produced from the previous activity; which are imitated; which keep on repeating themselves will prevent the student from gaining these skills. In this sense, a text is not merely the sentences that make up a body with a single topic and convey a certain idea but an extension of language that can be understood in a coherent language area and context whose borders are widened with visuals (picture, photograph, graphics, figures, etc.).

Barton and Lee (2013: 3) indicate that text is a construction that refers to the content rather than the form, and the information related with and given together with the text (author's name, publisher, date of publication, etc.) is a part of the text and this is called the paratext. In the changing world, digital materials (emojis, symbols, etc.) are also included in the concept of text and the meaning of text has expanded. Thus, the concept of text is not stable. Accordingly, in their study, Barton and Lee (2013: 3) state that texts have become more fluid and interactive with the changing media and add that intertextuality is common in online environments. For instance, a news story in a newspaper may contain references to an online article and provide a link to that source. Hence, as the socio-cultural environment changes, it becomes difficult to explain the concept of text (Nordquist, 2019).

Aktaş (2015: 15) defines text as the tool used for telling and agreeing which is constructed for the purpose of communicating and realised in different levels. Since texts are used to improve students' comprehension and narration skills within the framework of a theme, as expressed by Arı (2011), the basic instrument for the Turkish course is the book, and the most important element of the book is the texts. Texts also serve as the mortar in the construction of the activities. Sevindik (2019: 1) has pointed out that a text-oriented education is carried out in Turkish courses for the development of language skills and cognitive skills related to language. For texts to serve the purpose and to function properly, he has suggested that the data contributed by text linguistics should be used particularly in the selection of texts. He has also emphasised that the selected texts should meet the standards of textuality.

For the text to meet its goal and to be a text, it needs to meet the standards such as cohesion, coherence, intentionality, situationality, informativity, intertextuality and acceptability (Dilidüzgün, 2017). In the enhancement of reading comprehension skills, the standards of textuality are as important as strategies, methods and techniques. The texts which meet these standards can be considered as sufficient texts for the development of reading skills. While defining text competence, Dilidüzgün (2020: 33) talks about distinguishing sufficient texts from others and explains the process of producing texts based on these standards and states that "The fundamental criterion of textuality is including a communicational purpose" (Dilidüzgün, 2020: 34). In short, the function of language elements together with the information concerning the discourse and the context serves this purpose. As explained by Dilidüzgün (2020: 34), text construction standards are classified as text-oriented standards and context-oriented standards as the information concerning the discourse are obtained while the text is being analysed. Therefore, the textuality of a text is identified not only with text-oriented standards such as cohesion and coherence, but also with context-oriented standards such as intentionality, acceptability, situationality, intertextuality, and informativity (Beaugrande, 1991: 48 as cited in Dilidüzgün, 2020: 34). It is believed that including the texts and text activities having these standards in Turkish textbooks will also involve the stages of "finding the meaning, understanding the meaning, interpreting the meaning" (Güneş, 2004; 61-62) in the process of reading comprehension.

Reading and Reading Skill

Reading is knowing the meaning of what is written, producing meanings from what is written or the ability to understand what is written. According to Sever (2004: 12), reading is "a mental activity based on making sense of, comprehending and interpreting words perceived by the sense organs." In his study, Özdemir (2007: 18) highlights the importance of reading by stating that a reading person is a free person and indicates that reading is a power that can defeat obsessions such as ignorance and blind faith.

One of the most fundamental needs of the human is the need to know. In the process of fulfilling this need, one of the most important personal actions is to read. For this purpose, the human needs to learn reading. Here, to learn reading means to know well how and for what purpose the written thing can be used. As Binyazar and Özdemir (2006: 156) quote from Goethe, "to learn reading is the hardest of all art" because reading is not merely articulating a printed letter. As the person reads, the signs the person sees on a surface will be perceived consciously and unite/become homogeneous with the experiences from former readings and will transform into a new concept and meaning. This manner of the reader during the act of reading will constitute an attitude that is based completely on the unique experience and free will of the reader.

Just as the author uses a unique style while constructing the text, after the construction of the text, the author leaves the position to the reader and the reader will discover his/her own reading style. In fact, the act of reading is a problem of style for both sides (the author and the reader). For instance, students start to understand how the text they have read was written or the author's personal way of narrating at a certain age (10-14 years/5th-8th grades). The basic structure that reveals this concept starts to be shaped at primary and secondary school level. The students in the position of the reader in lower class levels (1st-4th grades) mostly read the texts to have fun and pleasure. Then, aesthetic needs change depending on the development steps and students read not only to have fun but also to know (deep knowledge). As the need to read and to know increases, the concept of reading habit is involved. Henceforth, reading starts to make sense for students and this is a conscious move towards reading. The most fundamental course for a conscious act of reading to occur is the mother tongue (Turkish) course.

Besides being one of the most important learning areas in providing the individual's cognitive and affective development, reading skill has a significant impact on the individual's learning life (Epçaçan, 2018: 618). At the same time, academically, and socially, reading skill contributes to the development of comprehending and narrating skills which are the two most significant dimensions of mother tongue education process. As indicated by Epçaçan (2018: 620-623), for reading skill which is the process of making sense of and constructing the shapes and symbols in a text in the mind, the eyes and the brain work together and reading skill is a construction that constitutes the basis for other language skills. Reading comprehension skill which is achieved in primary school years affects the student's all learnings in a positive or a negative way lifelong. This effect reflects positively in the courses of the individuals who have developed reading comprehension skills; whereas in the courses of the individuals with poor reading comprehension skills, it is reflected in a negative way (Epçaçan, 2018: 624).

Activities for Reading Skill

Words and sentences go through various cognitive operations in the mind and the information obtained by reading is made sense of and constructed in the mind. By means of reading learning area, the mind continuously stores information, and this information integrates with the previously learnt and new information is formed. Thus, reading learning area has an important role in the development of the mind and on the basis of all other academic learnings (Epçaçan, 2018: 620).

In order to develop critical language skills, activities for improving thinking skill should be carried out in mother tongue education. Mother tongue courses should be based on thinking skills; and students' being able to think critically and creatively, solve problems, communicate, use Turkish effectively and accurately should be accepted as basic learning principles in designing the activities with the objectives and outcomes of language skills (Karadüz, 2010: 1572). Karadüz (2010: 1574) indicates that Turkish courses should be constructed using application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation steps in all the activities in class or out of class and adds that the concept learning activities with such an approach will have a positive effect on mental development. According to Karadüz (2010: 1579), one of the most important tools of language education activities is the texts and these texts related to language education are included in Turkish textbooks.

In order to improve reading skill which is a versatile skill area, it is necessary to design multi-dimensional activities and make the student comprehend the information, thought, purpose, culture, aesthetics "from word to sentence, from sentence to paragraph, from paragraph to text" (Karadüz, 2010: 1581). These activities can be considered as a mutual expression of opinions between the student and the text. When the activities that will be included in the learning environments for language skills are constructed considering critical thinking steps as the basic principle, they can be supported by methods such as text completion, text analysis and interpretation.

As stated by Yıldız, Okur, Arı and Yılmaz (2006: 46), mother tongue education is a programmed and planned activity that a nation starts in the family and brings to the learning environments. The objective, purpose, outcome, method and programme are important in mother tongue education as it is based on reading and understanding what is written accurately; writing or narrating what is heard accurately; and applying the rules of

Turkish grammar accurately. Two significant concepts lie at the heart of developing and implementing these skills: perception and understanding. In other words, linguistic communication will not occur if the student does not perceive and understand the object of the course (listening or reading text). The reading text does no good to a student who cannot find the answers to the questions of ‘what are the suitable language elements for the situation?’ and ‘how are they used?’

Students develop their perception worlds in primary school years (1st-8th grades) especially in Turkish courses; they start to see the texts they hear or read as a whole. The texts in Turkish textbooks for every class level contribute to reading skills, and the activities in the books are important in terms of improving students’ skill areas and increasing their capacities to understand. In his study concerning class teachers, Ateş (2011) has analysed teacher’s practices for reading comprehension skills. In this learning-teaching process, he particularly has looked for the answers to questions such as: 1) How much time do the teachers spend on teaching comprehension? 2) What type of meaning construction activities do the teachers carry out? 3) What strategies do they use in interpreting the text? 4) What is the level of the questions about the text? etc. In the same study, Ateş has also focused on the strategies to improve comprehension skills.

Activities become a significant part of education processes when they are carried out in a planned and programmed way. Furthermore, the reading activities in which the students can make inferences, improve their mental and critical skills, build a bridge between former knowledge and new information will improve students’ reading skills and will bring the student from the present reading situation to a more interactive environment. This change in the environment means the mind concretises the abstract information, schematises after processing it in a systematic way and makes it more permanent. For the individual to understand what he/she reads, he/she needs to construct it completely in his/her mind after the text is gone through a series of processes. Before reading, during reading and after reading steps known as the stages of reading are designed for the student to understand the text well. The stage of understanding cannot only consist of reading and analysing the text. With the reading activities in each of these stages, the purpose, information, thought, feeling, etc. that the text wants to give will be conveyed easily by the text.

This type of activities makes it easier for the student to perceive and interpret the text. The text comprehension activities that we have designed for the present study consist of three parts: *Before-text* (summary, visual summary, inference, planning), *text comprehension* (reading follow up/strategy) and *text interpretation* (genre analysis) tasks. It is assumed that the type, language and expression features, and the vocabulary of the text along with the ideational and emotional development in the text will easily be understood through these activities.

The Development Process of Text Comprehension Activity

Theoretical information is not enough to make the students like their mother tongue. For this reason, Turkish courses should be saved from being courses loading information and should be based on application for creating an environment in which the student can present his/her characteristics in all aspects (Solak & Yaylı, 2009: 446). The 2019 Turkish course curriculum was based on thematic approach and the reading outcomes were constructed to provide meaning construction by means of in-text, non-text, and intertextual reading (MEB, 2019: 8). In the Turkish course curriculum, which is prepared in accordance with the constructivist approach, one of the most significant objectives concerning reading outcomes is to make the student *read accurately, understand completely, and interpret* the text. Considering the purpose of the study, 6th grade reading outcomes in the 2019 curriculum which are in accordance with textuality are shown below:

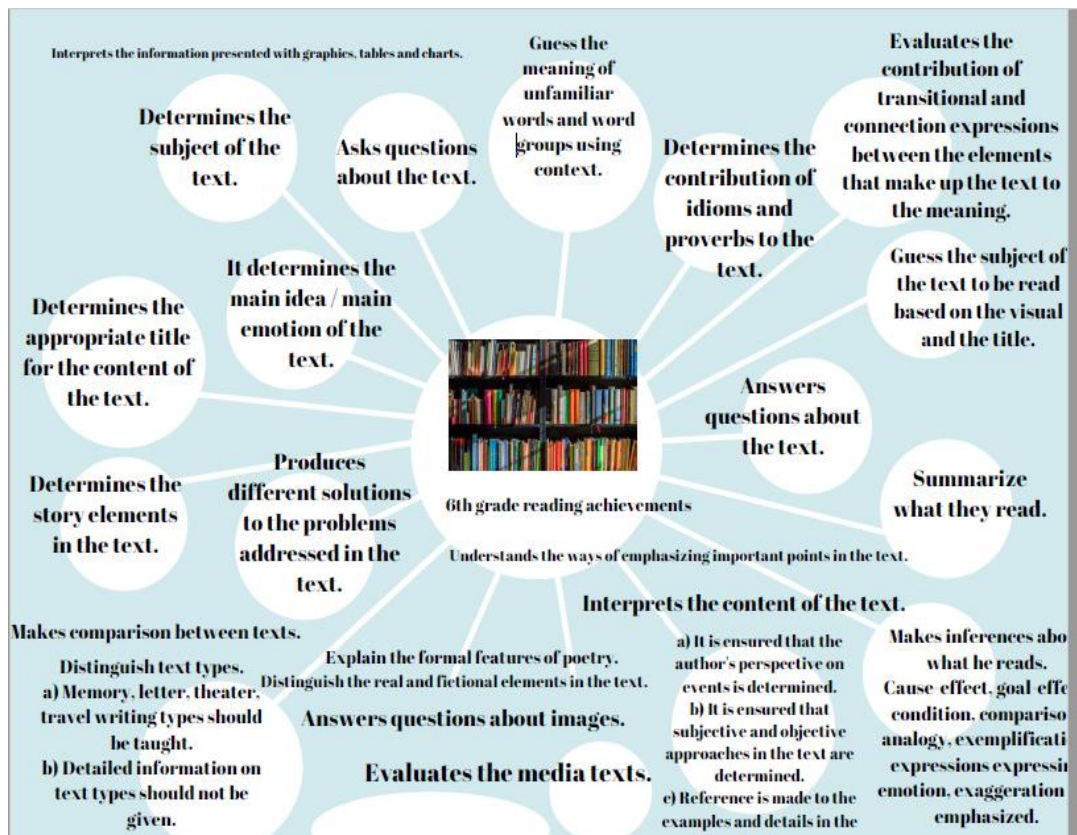


Figure 1: 6th grade reading outcomes in the 2019 Turkish curriculum

In order to meet the objective of the text comprehension activity we have developed, students should be supported with *text comprehension activities* after reading the texts in Turkish courses. In this way, the students can establish a link based on meaning between their former knowledge and the new as the information on the activity has been designed to associate each other. Generally, in all education systems, the main purpose after reading a text is to get the message of the text. Therefore, activities are very important for all courses but particularly for language courses. This is a kind of *evaluation* activity. Text comprehension activities, which we can consider as an evaluation, are the gathering of the elements that make up the text after reading.

With the activity developed for this study, it was hypothesised that following outcomes would be achieved at the end of the activities done after text reading in Turkish courses:

- Use former knowledge to make sense of what is read
- Develop different thoughts concerning the topic of the text
- Make inferences more easily
- Distinguish reality from fiction
- Identify similarities and differences between the text types

To actualise the above-mentioned outcomes and the reading outcomes stated in the 2019 Turkish course curriculum, it is believed that text comprehension activities based on the standards of textuality should be carried out. The standards of textuality are the criteria used in the semantic and grammatical analysis of a text. Since the standards of textuality consist of both text-based and reader-based criteria, the necessity of both a linguistic processing and an individual cognitive and affective processing peculiar to the person emerges in the construction process of the text (Ülper, 2011b: 851).

In this study, *text comprehension activities* are based on the standards of textuality; and in the interpretation process after reading the text, these activities include tasks to improve abilities such as guessing, analysing, establishing links, generating ideas, and taking lessons. The activities are grouped under three parts: *before-text tasks*, *text comprehension tasks* and *text interpretation tasks*. While preparing the activities, the standards of

textuality which correspond to the reading comprehension skills mentioned in the 2019 Turkish course curriculum were taken into consideration. For this reason, the 2019 curriculum was analysed in terms of 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grade reading skills outcomes, and questions were produced based on the information obtained from these outcomes. Although the activity developed in the study is prepared for the 6th grade level, the reading outcomes for other class levels (5th, 7th, and 8th grades) were also taken into consideration. Then, a table was formed showing which standard of textuality the questions correspond to. So as to clarify this match, opinions of two field experts and of two Turkish teachers were sought, and after revisions, Table 1 was created.

Table 1: Questions concerning reading skills associated with the standards of textuality

Coherence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you tell the topic of the text? • What is the main idea of the text? • What are the supporting ideas in the text? • Can you make guesses about the text? • Can you see the semantic relationships between the words? • Can you make a list of the new words you have learnt?
Cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you make up stories related to before/after the text? • Can you see the chronological order? • Can you summarise the text? • Can you make the plan of the text? • What can you say about the language and expression features of the text?
Intentionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you find the cause-effect relationships in the text? • Can you find the purpose-result relationships in the text?
Situationality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you determine the point of view of the text? • Do you know the features of the text type? • Can you find different titles for the text?
Informativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know anything about the author or the poet? • Can you make up sentences with the words, idioms, and proverbs in the text? • Do you know the words in the text?
Acceptability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there differences or similarities between the events, characters, feelings, information, and thoughts in the text? (making comparisons) • Can you pretend to be the characters in the text and interpret the events, feelings, thoughts, and dreams from your own point of view? • Can you find different solutions to the problems addressed in the text?
Intertextuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you compare the things you have read with your own life or daily life? • Can you interpret the visuals related to the text? • Can you identify the relationship between the title of the text and the text content?

When Table 1 is observed, it is seen that appropriate questions for each standard of textuality can be found for the 6th class level which is the focus of the study. In addition, the activities consist of questions which consider the text unity and the semantic and grammatical relations in the text; which foreground characters, setting, and events; and which underline the main idea. By the help of these activities, in general, the student achieves the following outcomes:

1. Comprehend the lexical area of the text and create a small dictionary
2. Determine the topic of the text
3. Determine the main idea of the text
4. Comprehend the plan of the text
5. Determine the supporting ideas in the text
6. Make guesses about the text by the help of the clues in the activity
7. Evaluate the text in terms of content
8. Identify the semantic relations between the words
9. Make up stories related to before and after the text (establish relations between characters, events, or situations)
10. Determine the chronology of the events in the text
11. Summarise the text
12. Have an idea about the language and expression features of the text
13. Find the cause-effect relationships in the text
14. Find the purpose-result relationships in the text
15. Determine the point of view of the text
16. Know the features of the text type
17. Find different titles for the text.
18. Want to learn about the author or the poet.
19. Make up sentences with the words, idioms, and proverbs in the text.
20. Make comparison of the elements in the text.
21. Pretend to be the characters in the text and interpret the events, feelings, thoughts, and dreams from his/her own point of view
22. Find different solutions to the problems addressed in the text
23. Compare the things he/she has read with his/her own life or daily life
24. Interpret the visuals related to the text
25. Identify the relationship between the title of the text and the text content

Considering the above-mentioned outcomes, text comprehension activities based on the standards of textuality for improving reading skills in Turkish courses will improve reading skills. A 6th grade student should know that the text does not only consist of words, sentences, and paragraphs; it is a semantic and grammatical whole. This is a requirement for the interpretation of the text. Doing sufficient text comprehension activities, the student will start to find out the meanings of the text and the references in the text to other texts. There are some ways of perceiving and evaluating a text. “When the reader comes across a text, he/she evokes the former knowledge and prejudices in his/her head and has an expectation; and his/her interpretation is created accordingly. Evaluating a text is in a way related to our former knowledge about the author or the genre; that is, to our background knowledge” (Erkman-Akerson, 2010: 30).

In the summary and visual summary parts in before-text tasks which is the *first part* of the activities, the student gets a general idea of the text and learns the basic definitions used in the text. The review part helps the student comprehend the event happening in the text. Thus, the student is directed to the reference aimed by the author.

In text comprehension tasks which is the *second part* of the activities, previous experiences related to the topic are reviewed. By means of the reading follow up part in the same activity, the *lexical field* of the text becomes clear. In this way, the student realises which words are together with the words in the text. Text interpretation tasks which is the *third part* of the activities, is the part in which the *genre* is discussed, and text analysis is done. After comprehending the text, the student starts to interpret the text, and is no longer passive. The student can then synthesise the former knowledge brought to the 6th grade with the new information.

The most significant objective of the 2019 Turkish course curriculum is to make the student read and comprehend accurately. In this study, an activity based on the standards of textuality has been developed for understanding the texts that can be used in 6th grade Turkish courses. For this activity, a *fable* written by Yalvaç Ural titled “La Fontaine at the Forest Court” was taken as an example. The standards of textuality were matched with the questions used in the text comprehension activities. Then, a sample text comprehension activity was created from these questions. Oran and Temizyürek (2016: 43) indicated that the text titled “La Fontaine at the Forest Court” “is an important work which includes Turkish idioms and expressions. This is significant for children’s language development and contributes to Turkish education.”

The purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to develop a text comprehension activity based on the standards of textuality for improving 6th grade students’ reading skills in Turkish courses. The research question was determined as “Is it possible to develop an activity based on the standards of textuality for improving reading skills and a better understanding of the reading text?” Another purpose of this study is to determine “how this activity is perceived by the field experts and whether the activity meets the standards of textuality or not.” In order to meet these objectives, the study looks for the answers to the following questions:

1. How are the standards of textuality represented in this activity?
2. How do the participants (field experts) evaluate the text comprehension activity that is developed?
3. What do the participants think about the contribution of the standards of textuality to the activity?
4. In what direction does this activity change the participants’ perception of traditional activities?
5. How are the visuals and the text bodies in the visuals perceived by the participants?
6. Have the participants evaluated a text activity taking into consideration the standards of textuality before?

Method

Research Model

The main objective of the study is to find out how a text comprehension activity can be developed based on the standards of textuality to improve reading skills in 6th grade Turkish courses. A basic qualitative research design has been used in the study. Basic qualitative research design is among the most common qualitative research designs which can be seen in all disciplines and in application fields in practice. Basic qualitative research design is defined as a basic and interpretative type of study that is conducted without dealing with phenomenology, case study or grounded theory (Merriam, 2013: 22). For the present study, it was decided that opinions of experts should be sought for determining the level of relevancy of the text comprehension activities to the standards of textuality.

Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted for providing the students with a better understanding of reading texts and pleasure in 6th grade Turkish courses. A fable which had been included in 6th grade Turkish textbook in previous years was chosen as the reading passage. The researchers think that the basis for choosing fable as the genre for this study is well-grounded. That is to say, the role of children’s books in the development of child’s mother tongue skills is very important. By the help of these books, children can use their mother tongue in an effective way. Moreover, introducing right works that address to the child’s world and support the child’s development starting from early ages not only contributes to the child’s development in a multidimensional way, but also helps the child to catch the clues about his/her mother tongue and like his/her mother tongue (Otmar & Erdem, 2019: 8).

To make the child get especially the messages that are considered universal, literary works should be used. Literary texts provide the child with moral, cultural, universal, and individual sensitivity and help them exhibit good behaviour. Authors of children’s books generally construct their works with proper messages that will take

the children to the meaning of the text to make them achieve this development in real life. One of the most important factors that reveal the quality of author, illustrator, and child interaction and make the book a work of children's literature is the success in presenting the literary clues which provide the universal messages that will help children in their relationships in real life. Containing these features, fables are works of children's literature that give children reading pleasure. At the same time, the genre is very suitable for children to gain reading habit while having fun (Ungan, 2006). A short story that features animals and conveys a moral is called a fable (Oğuzkan, 1997).

The word fable is derived from the Latin "fabula" which means story. Morals are dominant in the inner structure of the text. It is a strong fiction designed with symbolic stories that make up a lesson from a short text. As characters are animals, personification is used in the genre. Thus, students are introduced to one of the figures of speech that they will learn at the high school level. In fables, which are quite didactic, lessons about life and universal messages (virtues) are conveyed symbolically. Fables that feature animals as characters help children to develop more interest in the story and focus their attention (Ungan, 2006). Oğuzkan (1997) divides fable into four parts:

Exposition: Events and characters are presented.

Conflict: Events become problematic.

Resolution: Problems are resolved.

Moral: The idea underlying the events is explained.

Ungan (2006) indicated in his study that the fable genre has positive effects on child education. The fable genre has a unique structure that scrutinises, criticises, ridicules, and implies the right way. The proverb at the end of resolution contributes to the language awareness of the child. "However, the students who could not complete language development will have hard times in understanding the metaphorical dimension of the proverb, but the proverbs given at the end of fables serve as a ground for an easier understanding of this genre through an application which is the mixture of theory and practice" (Ungan, 2006). It was believed that these characteristics of the fable genre would contribute to the student's language development and reading habit. For this reason, "La Fontaine at the Forest Court" which was written by Yalvaç Ural and was included in 6th grade Turkish textbooks in 2012 was chosen as the most suitable text for developing this activity. This is the first limitation of the study. Only one activity has been developed for this study. The participants were asked to focus on one text. This is another limitation of the study. Additionally, the study is limited to two field experts and two Turkish teachers who wanted to participate in the study voluntarily.

Data Gathering

In basic qualitative research, the data is gathered through observation, interviews, or document analysis (Merriam, 2013). The questions, the observation, and the documents are linked to theoretical framework (Merriam, 2013). In the present study, interview was used as the data gathering technique. The interviewer had prepared the interview questions before the interview, and was flexible during the interview with the participant. It is sometimes necessary to think of new questions depending on the development of the interview. That is why the researcher allows the participant to reconstruct or discuss the questions during the interview (Karasar, 2009). In the present study, it was aimed to gather the data by seeking the opinions of experts and teachers for the evaluation of a text comprehension activity based on the standards of textuality for improving reading skills.

In the interview process, the group consisting of two field experts and two Turkish teachers who were thought to be experienced in activities was given an information note and a file of activities. Then, after discussing whether the activity meets the standards or not; the design of the activity; and the relationship between activity-visual and activity-text, an analysis was made to determine whether this text comprehension activity is for improving reading skills or not. The steps of the activity were associated with the dimensions of the standards of textuality. For this purpose, the experts and the teachers were asked to write in the file whether these activities meet the standards of textuality or not with reasons. Next, the steps of the activity which were prepared based on these standards were reconstructed according to the answers of the field experts and the teachers in the interview. Additionally, an in-depth investigation was made on the research topic by noting down the ideas,

recommendations, and experiences of the participants and observing their reactions concerning the activity. At the end of the evaluations of the experts, the activities were reconstructed considering the opinions of the participants. One month later, another interview was made with the participants to determine whether the activities meet the standards of textuality or not. As a result of this interview, the activities were given their final form.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the interview was organised, interpreted, and described in a logical and understandable structure and presented to the reader. Descriptions were interpreted, cause-effect relationships were scrutinised, and some results were achieved (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2005: 95). Notes were taken during the interview with each expert and teacher.

In the interviews for this study, information such as the time of the interview, the interviewee and his/her affiliation were noted. The researchers put together the interview data concerning the correspondence of the activity to the standards of textuality and checked whether there was an agreement between the four participants. Only one of the participants wanted changes in some of the questions. The other three participants indicated that the activity meets the standards of textuality. However, in the last interview with these four people, it was pointed out that the activity contributes to reading skills.

Findings

The main purpose of education systems is to raise individuals who read; who can understand what they read; who can tell what they think; who have discovered their learning methods and techniques; who can apply what they have learnt in a practical context (Epeçan, 2018: 619). In mother tongue education, the outcomes are achieved as a result of the activities in four basic skill areas (listening, speaking, writing, reading). The 2019 Turkish Course Curriculum aims to make the students gain certain behaviour concerning the skill areas. For this purpose, it is also aimed to reach a high level in skill areas in general through the activities suggested by the curriculum (MEB, 2019: 8-9-13-14-28).

Particularly in the activities for reading skill area, text is used as the basic material. "Every activity is prepared to achieve an outcome coherent with itself. If the author of the text has an objective and intention, the activities during text interpretation stage should have an objective and intention" (Şimşek, 2012: 271). With the help of the activities having these features, students can understand the purpose and intention of the text; author's attitude; and the narrative type of the text more easily.

"Actually, the knowledge the reader achieves while reading a literary text is not instant; it is the new stage of the accumulation developed throughout the reading process. The special thing about a literary text is that it can fill the text field with a lot of information, and at the same time, convey different information to different readers. Throughout the reading process, the text gives the reader both information and a language to evaluate the similar semantic data at the moments of reading the following sentences, parts" (Göktürk, 2010: 83). In this study, it was aimed to create different activities based on the standards of textuality for the student's reading process. The activities that are mentioned here can differ depending on the genre. Whatever the genre is, it is important to prepare appropriate text comprehension activities for the genre. In some cases, it might be difficult to find out the message of the text. In such a situation, the student should be supported with the activities.

Before-text tasks define the process before the student reads the text. A text without former information will be shallow for students at this class level, and the meaning of the text will be implicit. All the activities done before reading the text aim to direct the student to the text and make the student active. In higher class levels, this part can be shortened so as to make the student think harder. Text comprehension tasks are done after the text is read. A reading activity combined with former knowledge and later supported with activities will be more effective. Text interpretation tasks are the activities that go one step further than the text and provide the ground for other texts to be read later. Hence, the student starts to develop a style and point of view independent from the text.

After this stage, it will be much easier for the student to find the main idea, type, and message of the text. Text comprehension activities consist of before-text tasks (summary, visual summary, inference, plan), text comprehension tasks (reading follow up/strategy), and text interpretation tasks (from the whole text to the genre). It is hypothesised that the type, language and expression features, emotional and ideational development, and vocabulary of the text can easily be recognised; and it is believed that the students will perceive and interpret the texts more easily.

Application

The text comprehension activity concerning the fable “La Fontaine at the Forest Court” is as follows:

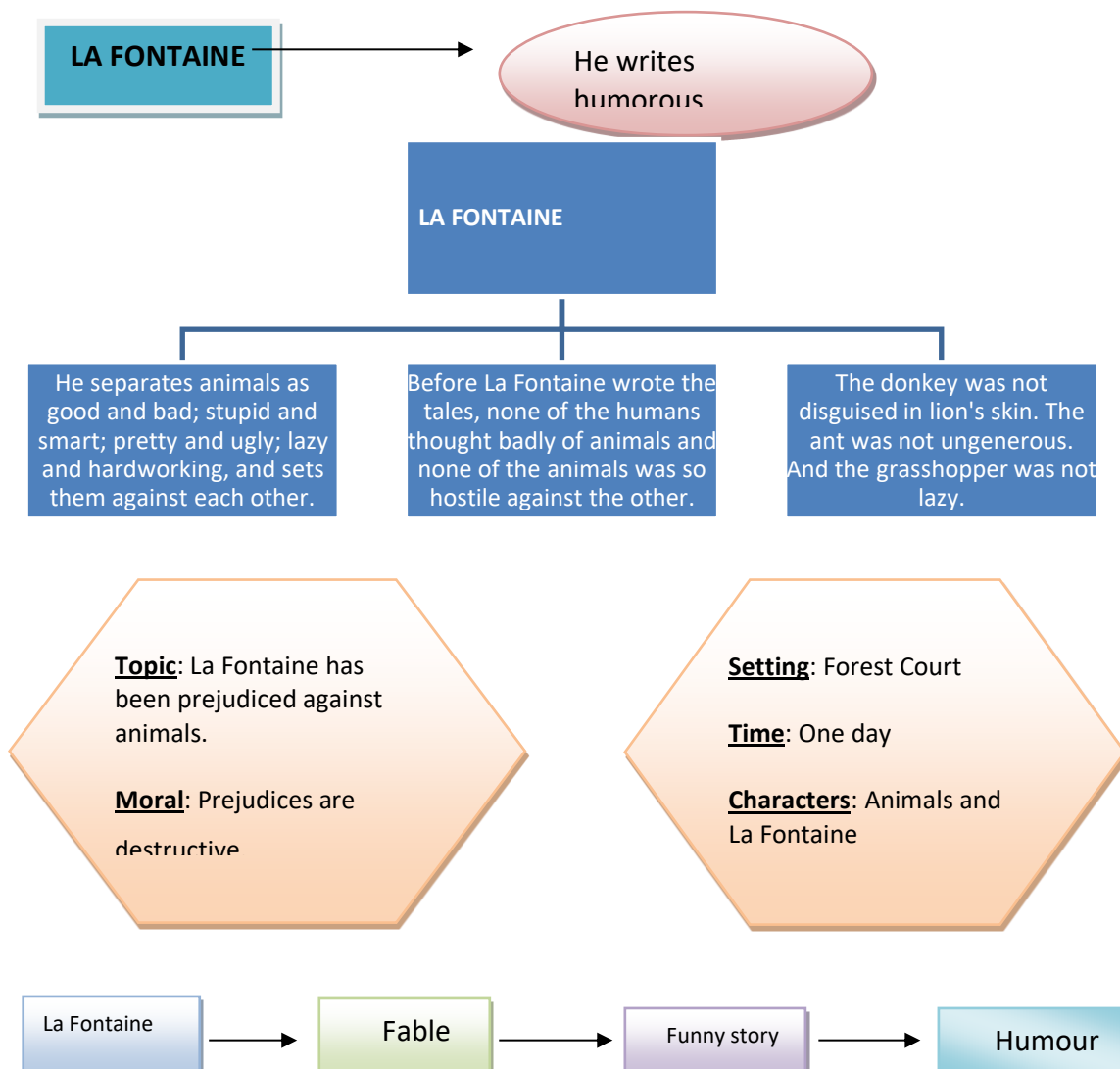
1. Before-text Tasks-Review

LA FONTAINE AT THE FOREST COURT

Summary

One day, famous fable writer La Fontaine is arrested by the animals and taken to the forest court because he has been prejudiced against animals and provoked the hospitality of humans against animals.

Visual Summary



2. Text Comprehension Tasks

Text Comprehension Tasks

Let's review our previous experiences!

- Have you ever heard the name La Fontaine?
If yes, WHERE?.....
- Have you ever read/listened to an animal tale?
If you read, WHERE?.....
If you listened to, FROM WHO?
- Why do you think the lion is the judge in this text?.....
- According to you,
WHAT is the duty of judges?.....

LET'S MATCH!

Judge	Humorous story
Fable	Court
Lazy	Grasshopper

You can find the characteristics of the animals below and write them in your notebooks☺

goat lion fox

ant grasshopper

king cunning

stubborn lazy

hardworking

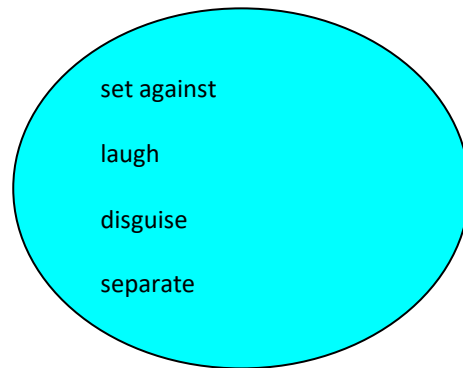


—————> **Target Text**
(What about taking a trip to the lexical field of the story and create a little dictionary?)

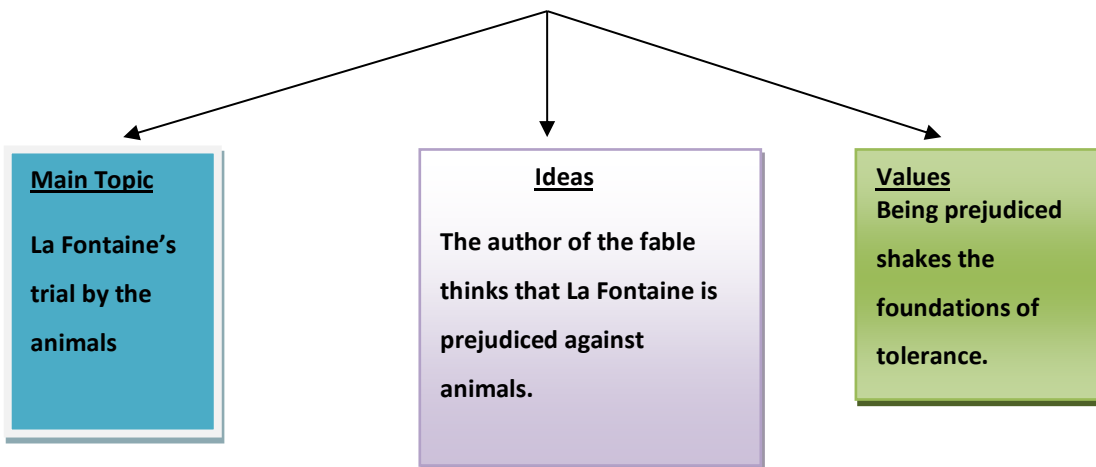
- Do you think each text you read can have a dictionary?.....
- Which words are included in this dictionary?.....

- Underline and highlight the words given below in the text. In this way, you will see the **lexical field** of the text.

Note for the teacher and the student☺
Lexical field: “It groups the words of a text related to the same concept, that is, it consists of lexical signs and the relations between them” (Günay, 2007: 89).
Reading Follow up: It refers to the process aiming at determining the lexical field words in the related text and reaching to the whole text from these words.



LA FONTAINE AT THE FOREST COURT



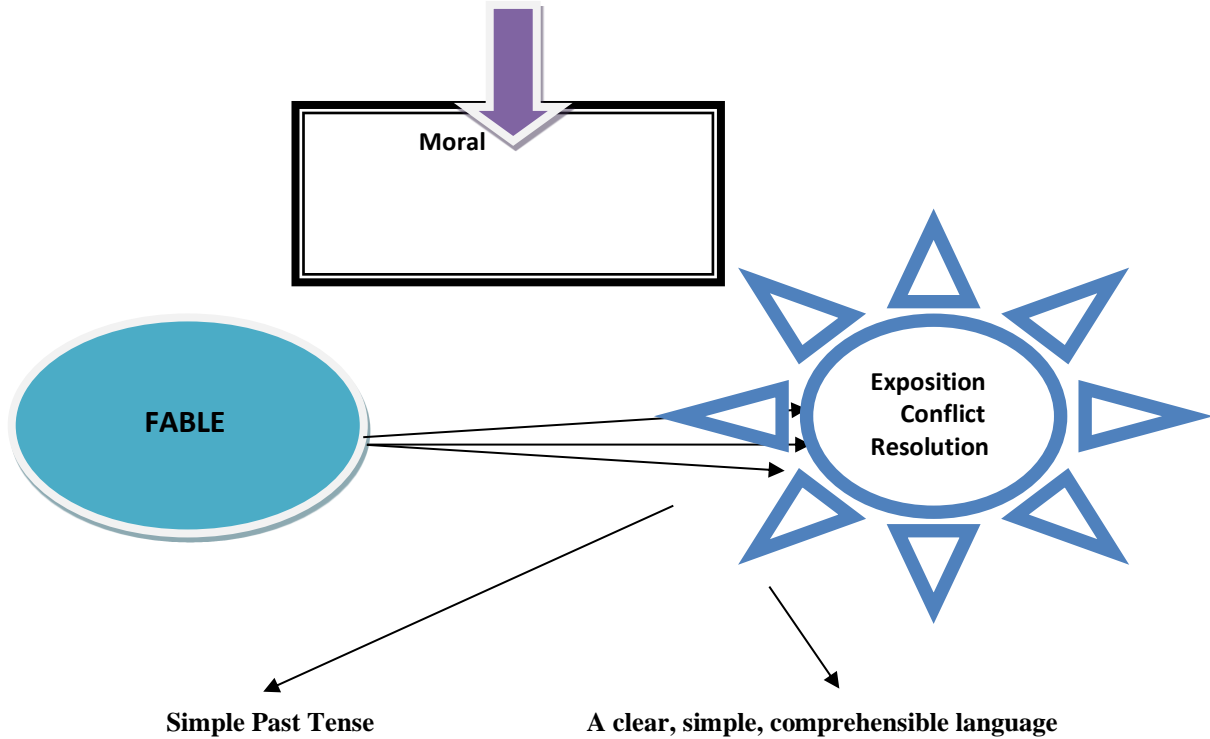
If you were the author of the fable, what else would you say about La Fontaine?

Does reading this text make you feel like writing a fable?

3. Text Interpretation Tasks

Text Interpretation Tasks

What can you say about the type of the text?.....



- What can you achieve from reading a fable?
- Can you underline the sentences that show the characteristics of this genre?
- If a text has exposition, conflict, and resolution parts, what other genres can we talk about?
- Have you read a similar text before?
- Have you read an animal tale before?

{ **Let's consider the possibility of experiencing the events in the text!** }

{ **Do you think such an event can be real?** }

Note: Fable means “tale, legend” in French. Fables are short stories featuring other living things than humans which convey a moral.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The *text comprehension activities* exemplified above is based on the standards of textuality. The student who reads a text given in the 6th grade Turkish textbook is in a passive situation as he/she has not seen this text before. A preliminary preparation is necessary for the student to understand and interpret the text. The tasks that we name as *Before-text* is a textual activity which foregrounds the student and in which former knowledge is expressed. This textual activity is expected to be actualised by means of *cohesive* and *coherent* activities. Therefore, every grammatical and semantic preliminary preparation will make it easier to read and understand the text. While the student is in this position, he/she will get the opportunity to analyse the relationship between himself/herself and the text. Learning to establish relations between the texts (*intertextuality*) by the help of the activities he/she does after each text he/she reads, the student will be able to associate his/her former experiences (*intentionality*) with the clues in the text he/she reads in the text comprehension stage. When the student puts himself/herself in the place of the author or a character from the text, it will show that the student accepts the text (*acceptability*). Again, in this part, the informative aspect of the text (*informativity*) will gain importance when the ideas and the values given in the text are brought to the foreground. In text interpretation tasks, the student will be able to realise whether the events in the text can occur in the real world or not (*situationality*).

When a text is read in the classroom environment, it is a whole shared by everybody; however, it will remain an incomplete whole as students' former knowledge and reading experiences are different and its impression on the ones who completely understand the text will be different. In order to eliminate this difference and constitute a common '*text language*,' *text comprehension activities* reinforced with *before-text tasks* should be done. In this way, each text that is read in the classroom will be a common text for the class. For instance, a student who has not heard of La Fontaine before will be ready for the text with the help of *before-text tasks* and will be able to get involved. In conclusion, rather than considering these activities as ordinary preparation activities, these activities should be prepared precisely by using text linguistics. Recommendations of the study are noted below:

1. Considering the class levels of students, the parts regarding reading skills in Turkish course curriculum should be reconstructed in the light of text linguistics.
2. The literature on reading should be reviewed, and alternative activities should be developed by commissions consisting of researchers, field experts and teachers.
3. Taking into consideration that reading is an important skill for every course and discipline, reading objectives and outcomes in the curriculum should be reconstructed.
4. "Text linguistic reading" should be considered as a type of reading.
5. "Text linguistic reading" activities should be included in the programme starting from the 4th grade.
6. The curriculum should be improved in terms of text comprehension activities and text comprehension activities should be included in Turkish textbooks.
7. New activities for other class levels can be developed by the researchers in this field.

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