The determination of the in-class applications of visual literacy and problems faced during these applications with regard to the views of Turkish classroom teachers

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Abstract

Purposes of this study are determining in-class applications of visual reading and visual presentation and reveal the problems faced during these applications. Quantitative methodology was used. Data gathering was performed via written answers given to open-ended questions. The results show that teachers are mostly using the visuals related with the texts from their textbook and visual development activity. In addition, the problem that they mostly mentioned is students having difficulties on expressing themselves.

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Keywords: Visual literacy, Visual Reading, Visual Presentation, Visual Literacy in Turkey.

1. Introduction

In the age we live in, technology elements being very effective enlarged the meaning of literacy. Traditional literacy approach, which includes verbal communication, doesn’t meet the needs for adapting this age (Alpan, 2008; İşler, 2002). Therefore, in addition to the changes on traditional literacy perception, new literacy areas also emerged (Şahin and Kiran, 2011; Akpınar, 2006). Gee (2003) insists that meaning and information are not only conveyed via words, they can be expressed by different ways like picture, symbol, voices, etc. Within this framework, new literacy areas, like visual literacy, audio literacy, media literacy, cinema literacy, television literacy, information literacy, electronic literacy have been emerged (Kurudayoğlu and Tüzel, 2010; Parsa, 2007; Kellner, 2001). With the effect of innovations such as television, computer, internet, everyday life became so visualized and a visual world that was not seen at any time in history has been appeared (Akpınar, 2009; Bunmark, 2002). Every day, people are bombarded with visuals from television and computer, where visuals are intensively used, as well as street banners, billboards, multi-vision shows, books, magazines, newspapers etc (Bleed, 2005). We can say that, in such a visualized world, the literacy type that people mostly need is visual literacy. Messaris (1994) stated that visual literacy has been discussed since the 1950s and has an increased importance as the result of the efforts for understanding and explaining visual images continually faced by individuals. Wileman (1993) defined visual literacy as “the ability to ‘read,’ interpret, and understand information presented in pictorial or graphic images” whereas Heinich, Molenda, Russell, & Smaldino (1999) defined it as “the learned ability to interpret visual messages accurately and to create such messages”. Bamford (2003) definition is “Visual literacy is about interpreting images of present and past and producing images that effectively communicate the messages to an
audience”. According to these definitions, visual literacy is not limited with looking at the visuals or interpreting them, it also includes using their meanings, reaching new insights, evaluating achieved results and being able to generate new messages in the same way.

Visuality, which attained in a separate place with the rapidly developing science and technology, affects the daily life as well as education and learning experiences. Canning-Wilson (1999) stated that, according to the researches conducted, visuals facilitate learning, at the same time they are acting as an element that brings outside world to the classroom. Zambo (2009) mentioned that learning to read pictures, namely visual literacy, is as important as learning to read texts. In addition, the researches conducted revealed that the effects of the senses on learning level are as follows: visual 83%, audio 11%, smell 3.5%, touch 1.5 %, taste 1% (Ergin, 1995). Of course, in order to be able to communicate effectively, to define and interpret various images in a world where visuality is a necessity, individuals need to receive relevant visual literacy training (Özsevgeç, Akbulut and Cerrah Özsevgeç, 2010). Visual literacy, dealing with the usage and understanding of the visuals, became an important part of the education with the development of technology (Yılmaz, 2007; Ünal, 2006). Thus, modifying curriculums of schools accordingly became a necessity (Çam Aktaş, 2010). Visual literacy, which has acquired a considerable place on world literature, is a new concept in our curriculums. The first appearance of visual literacy occurred in the 2005 Turkish Course curriculum, as two different skills, namely “Visual Reading” and “Visual Presentation (TTKB, 2004). In this learning area, visual reading includes reading, understanding and interpreting visuals such as shape, symbol, picture, graphic, table, and body language, natural and social events. Whereas visual presentation is to establish a meaning and share this established meaning using the tools such as drawings, audios, motions, graphics, photos, puppets, electronic texts, videos, etc. (MEB, 2005; Akyol, 2006).

Researches conducted in our country reveals that application and development infrastructure of visual literacy is quite narrow (Sanalan, Sülün and Çoban, 2007). At this point, this study designed to determine the relevant activities that teachers performs in the classroom and the problems that they encounter during these activities, is quite important for its contribution to this area. Purpose of the study is to determine classroom activities performed by class teachers about visual reading and visual presentation and the problems that they encounters during these activities from the point of view of the teachers. The following sub-problems were investigated in order to fulfill this purpose:

1. What kinds of activities teachers perform for visual reading skill in the classroom?
2. What kinds of activities teachers perform for visual presentation skill in the classroom?
3. What are the problems teachers encounter while applying in-class activities related with visual reading and visual presentation areas?

2. Methodology
This research is a quantitative research study. Researcher has prepared a data gathering tool by consulting to the views of the experts. This tool consists of three open ended questions, two of them are about in-class activities related with visual reading and visual presentation areas, whereas one is about the problems that they encounter during these activities. Data is based on the written answers of the teachers. Descriptive analysis, which is one of the quantitative research methods, were applied to the answers of the teachers. In descriptive analyze, datas are summarized and interpreted according to preset themes (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). Then, answers are classified, evaluated and tables formed using frequencies.

Sample of the study consists of 42 classroom teachers working in Eskisehir. Maximum variation sampling was used in order to have the views of the teachers form different social environments. Maximum variation sampling, allow in depth study of the situations with extensive knowledge. While determining the participants, classroom teachers from different socio-economic levels who are willing to take role have been selected.

3. Findings and Interpretation
In this part, findings of the research are shown in tables within the frame of preset themes determined according to the views of the teachers who were participated the study.

Table 1 In-class activities related with Visual Reading Skill

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In-class activities</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commenting about the visuals in the textbook</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
27 teachers stated that they are using the visuals belonging to the texts in the Turkish textbooks for making comments, 12 of them mentioned that they perform predicting activity, forecasting the subject of the text from the visuals in the textbook. Teacher-4 stated that: “I’m using the illustrations of Turkish textbook. We are conducting an activity by examining the pictures and forecasting the content, before reading the text. 9 teachers stated that they are conducting the activity of sequencing mixed pictures according to the order of occurrence. There are also 9 teachers who are performing text development activity, asking students to form text, story or poems from the visuals. In addition 8 teachers said that they are using visuals containing pictures, etc. 3 teachers mentioned that they are performing activities about questioning the relationship between the visual and text.

The majority of the teachers who were participated the research are using the visuals from Turkish textbooks. Also, the ratio of the teachers mentioning that they are questioning the texts and the appropriateness of the visuals given for these texts is at minimum level.

Table 2 In-class activities related with Visual Presentation Skill

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In-class activities</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevant visual (picture, display, posters, etc..) creation</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching relevant presentation, video and cartoon</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make visually oriented relevant presentations (presentation, drama, puppet) in the classroom</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9 of the teachers who answered the question about visual presentation area stated that they are performing visual (picture, display, posters, etc...) creation activities. Teacher-42 said that “we are making activities by letting them draw their feelings and thoughts about the subject given in the classroom”. 7 of them told that they show relevant presentation, video and cartoon. 6 teachers mentioned that they make visually oriented relevant presentations (presentation, drama, and puppet) in the classroom. Teacher-12 told that: “Students are forming the visual of a subject or poem. We’re making activities, such as poster, display preparation. In addition we’re doing visual presentations for other courses as well.”

Table 2 Problems encountered during in-class activities related with Visual Reading and Visual Presentation Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems encountered during in-class activities</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t encounter any problem</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students cannot express themselves properly</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students cannot interpret visuals properly</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are not properly prepared (lack of confidence, insufficient visual usage, short sentences, superficial explanations)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students have difficulties during visual preparation activities (getting away from the originality and creativity, boredom)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students have difficulties in establishing text-visual relationship</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of technologic equipment (computer, projection, etc.)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crowded classrooms</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not having enough time for the activity</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visuals in the textbooks don’t fit students’ life</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students have difficulties in writing text related with the visual</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 teachers stated that they don’t have any problem about visual presentation skill. Teacher-7 expressed his views: “I don’t encounter any problem while performing the activities at this area. The participation to these activities is quite high because visuals are very enjoyable for children”. Number of teachers who mentioned that students cannot express themselves properly while making presentations is also 7. Teacher-32 said that: “Some students cannot express themselves sufficiently, which poses a problem to me. Not using a rich vocabulary and not supporting presentations with enough visuals may be boring for the class. Teacher-9: “Students sometimes think too simple. They are unable to comprehend the main idea of the visuals. Sometimes they get stuck on a visual and get away from the text. Thus they have difficulties on expressing themselves”. 4 teachers said that students cannot interpret given visuals sufficiently. 3 teachers told that students were not properly prepared for the presentation that they
would perform in the classroom. Also 3 teachers mentioned that students had difficulties in preparing visuals such as drawing, picture, and poster. As can be seen from table 3, four problems are mentioned by 2 teachers. These are; students having difficulties in establishing text-visual relationship, lack of technologic equipment (such as computer, projection, etc.) in the classroom, crowded classes and not having enough time for the activity. Although teachers who have time problems have concerns about not being able to complete activities, teacher-38 stated, “All students were willing to participate to this activity, that’s why I’m suppressed about time”. In addition students having difficulties in writing a text related with the visual and visuals in the textbooks don’t fit student’s life were mentioned by one teacher. Teacher-11 expressed his view about this subject as: “I see some visuals that are not present in their life, even they have never seen or encountered”.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Visual reading and visual presentation learning areas, which was covered within 2005 Turkish Language Curriculum, don’t have a long history in Turkey. Therefore, providing teachers’ proficiency and eliminates their problems about this learning area is very important to fulfill the purpose of Turkish course. The following results were obtained from this study, which was conducted for determining in-class applications of visual reading and visual presentation and reveal the problems faced during these applications among the class teachers working in Eskişehir city centre:

27 class teachers related with visual reading are using visuals belonging to the texts in the Turkish textbooks, 12 of them mentioned that they are using visuals from different sources such as newspapers, internet, storybooks, etc. At this point, the activity performed by the majority of the teachers is commenting about the visual. 9 class teachers are performing text development activity, asking students to form text, story or poems from the visuals. 9 class teachers are performing text development activity, asking students to form text, story or poems from the visuals. 3 teachers mentioned that they are performing activities about questioning the relationship between the visual and text.

Majority of the teachers who answered the question about visual presentation skill stated that they are performing visual (picture, display, posters, etc...) creation activities. Kuru’s results (2008) support this finding. 7 teachers told that they show relevant presentation, video and cartoon; whereas 6 of them mentioned that they make visually oriented relevant presentations (presentation, drama, and puppet) in the classroom. Considering these findings about visual presentation skill, the most important point is the application of three different activities.

For the third part of the study, 7 teachers stated that they don’t have any problem. Some teachers mentioned lack of time to perform activities. This finding is in line with the studies of Kaya (2011), Kuru (2008), Balun (2008) and Şahin & Kiran (2011). In addition, lack of technologic equipment, crowded classes and misfit between visuals and student’s life are matching with the results of Balun’s study (2008). Some teachers stated lack of technologic equipment such as computer, projection, etc. This finding is supported by the studies of Akpınar (2009) and Balun (2008). Also, solving shortfalls in material is important to reach achievements in this learning area as well as Turkish education. 7 teachers mentioned that students cannot express themselves properly. Limited vocabulary of the students can be shown as one of the causes. Özbay and Melanhoğlu (2008) draw attention to the importance of vocabulary that an individual possess in expressing him/herself. 2 teachers mentioned that they have difficulties on performing visual reading and visual presentation activities because their classes are crowded. This finding is also matching with the results of Kaya’s study (2011).

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are developed:

- Teachers should enrich learning environment using different materials and activities to enhance visual reading and visual presentation skills.
- In order to improve visual reading and visual presentation skills, applied in-job training programs should be organized for the teachers.
- Teachers should bring various visual to the classrooms, in addition to the textbook.
- Material needs should be fulfilled.
- Since visual presentation activities take time, class size should be reduced.
References


