INTE 2014

Review of The Critical Reading Education in The Primary Schools*

Erol DURAN** - Esra YALÇINTAŞ***

Uşak University, The Institute of Social Science/ TURKEY

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to determine the 4th grade primary school students’ level of attaining critical reading gains in their Turkish lessons. In the study also it was aimed to reach opinions of the teachers about examining of the 4th grade primary students’ level of attaining critical reading skills. According to the results of the study, implementation of the available activities and critical reading gains can be said to that it provides contribute to critical reading skills of the students. However, when numeric datas are analyzed, critical reading attainment level averages of the students are seen to vary in between 32.75 and 72.94, and is observed to be critical reading skills an intermediate level of the students. It has further been concluded that, nearly total of the students could not have attained the gain “Determines, and questions the emotional and exaggerated elements in what he/she reads. (32.75)” at all. That have not still reached gains of some critical reading or that have possessed of a critical reading skills of intermediate level in the 4th grade of students should be interrogated when considering of the gains of critical reading taught from the 2nd grade. Expected that it provides contribute to the literature and applications with these aspects of the research.

Keywords: Reading; Comprehension; Critical Reading

1. Introduction

* This study was generated on the basis of the thesis which was prepared by Esra YALÇINTAŞ in consultation with Assoc. Prof. Erol DURAN.
** Assoc. Prof. Uşak University, Faculty of Education, erol.duran@usak.edu.tr
*** Master Students, Uşak University, The Institute of Social Science, esrayalcintas@hotmail.com

* Corresponding author. Tel.: 00-000-000-0000
E-mail address: erol.duran@usak.edu.tr
It is quite important for the individuals’ social and academic achievements to gain reading habit after learning how to read and write, and then to begin reading with a critical point of view (Gokturk, 1997). Therefore, critical reading is the key of productive thinking and most important part of the reading education (Cifci, 2006). Critical reading is not only limited in understand the text, also thinking on a text which read, determination of true and false in the text (Ozdemir, 1997, pp. 19), and the interpretation (Bagci & Sahbaz, 2012, pp. 2) and the assessment of the opinions or knowledge (Candan, 2003, pp. 105) is the process. Critical reading begins with the interpretation of the subject based on individual's own life, accumulation of knowledge, to his/her observations, to his/her views (Orhan, 2007, pp. 49). According to Ozdemir (2002), critical reading is a skill that should be used throughout life. Critical reading has been defined as the ability to make judgements and inferences, distinguish between fact and opinion, and recognize the author's purpose or points of view (Darch & Kameenui, 1987). In short, critical reading is to actually thinking about the subject, moving beyond what the text concluded to the point of how the author reached that conclusion and the degree to which that conclusion is accurate (Wheeler, 2007).

Critical reading has been defined as learning to evaluate, draw inferences and arrive at conclusions based on the evidence (Zintz and Maggart, 1984). Critical reading is like a key inquiring, questioning, researching, giving the consciousness of becoming intellectuals (Pirozzi, 2003, pp. 25). According to Yildiz (2008), determining whether the readers agree with what is told in the text, searching for answers to question in their mind, establishing a cause-effect relationship between emotions, thoughts and events, give the meaning based on your own experience what they read is required. According to Devoogd (2007, pp. 22), first, critical reader must be open to understanding the content and perspective presented. Secondly, instead of merely accepting the text and automatically adopting the author’s perspective, readers must consider which may be incomplete and inaccurate aspects of the text. The students not mustn't read looking only for information but also must read for different ways of thinking about the subject matter (Knott, 2013, pp. 1).

Critical reader, while reading the text is not content with what he/she want to give of the author. The critical reader evaluates from numerous angles including logical, rhetorical, historical, ethical, social, and personal perspectives, taking advantage of past experiences what he/she reads (Wheeler, 2007), and creates a new meaning according to himself/herself (Asilioglu, 2008, pp. 8). Thus, the reader may decide on the applicability and the suitability of ideas and opinions to own lives (Wheeler, 2007). In this way, also readers be conscious that it is essential the role of background knowledge and the student's ability on the critical reading/learning (Collins, 1993, pp. 3), and that requires the development continuously of critical reading skills (Leist, Woolwine & Bays, 2012, pp. 37).

The purpose of this research is to determine the 4th grade primary students’ level of attaining critical reading skills. Answers to the following questions were sought with this purpose:

- What is the level of critical reading skills of the 4th grade primary students?
- What are the opinions of teachers about levels of critical reading skills of the primary school 4th grade students?

2. Method

Screening model is applied in the research. The data obtained for the first sub-problem of the research by descriptive analysis, the data obtained for the second sub-problem of the research by content analysis are evaluated. The study also interview technique is used.

2.1. Study Group

The study group of the research is consisted of 109 fourth grade primary school students, who are studying in the primary schools located in the Centrum of the City of Kirikkale (Turkey) in the 2013-2014 academic year. While the study group is selected, random sample selection technique is used.

2.2. Data Collection Process

Data collection process of the research is consisted of five phases. First of all, the required permits are received. Then, what kind gains of critical reading education to be able to determine, Curriculum of the Turkish Lesson of
the Primary Schools (4th grade) (MEB, Ministry of National Education, 2013) is examined and thirteen gains are
identified. At the third phase, fifteen worksheets by critical reading activities in the MEB (Ministry of National
Education) Fourth Grade Textbook and Workbook is formed and this worksheets are applied to students. At the
fourth phase, worksheets are assessed by the researchers, together with an expert. In the evaluation, the
arithmetical means of the points obtained to from activites for each gain of the students is recorded to be the
point earned by the students per each gain. Finally, semi-structured "Interview Form" composed of four
questions, developed by the researchers and an expert in order to learn the opinions of teachers about levels of
critical reading skills of the primary school 4th grade students are applied to twenty-eight classroom teachers.

2.3. Data Analysis

The data obtained for the first sub-problem of the research are evaluated by descriptive analysis. Each created
worksheet is "100 points". The scoring of the questions in the pages are different from each other and a student
can take from any worksheet the highest "100 points" and the lowest "0 points". The points received from the
worksheet of the students are entered into SPSS statistical program and the arithmetical means of this points are
taken. In addition, “minimum” and “maximum” points of the students are calculated in order to determine the
effectiveness of the gains. The datas are examined to looking at the arithmetical mean points of the students. The
data collected through the interview form for the second sub-problem of the research are evaluated by content
analysis.

3. Findings and Comments

Findings addressing to the sub-problems of the research, and the comments addressing to these findings are lined
up upon taking the order of the sub-problems into consideration.

3.1. Findings and Comments Regarding the First Sub-Problem

The data collected for the answer of the question of “What is the level of critical reading skills of the 4th grade
primary students?”, namely the first sub-problem of the research, are shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions the knowledge, news, and opinions, being transmitted via mass media (newspaper, magazine, TV).</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>95.00</td>
<td>65.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticizes the text – visual relationship.</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>95.00</td>
<td>57.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorts out the problems put forth in the text, and derives various solutions thereto.</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>97.00</td>
<td>66.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorts out the similarities and differences between the opinions in the text and his/her own opinions.</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>62.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads the interrogator.</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>55.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determines, and questions the emotional and exaggerated elements in what he/she reads.</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>92.00</td>
<td>32.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticizes the headline – content relationship.</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>95.00</td>
<td>59.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorts out the language, expression, and information mistakes out of what he/she reads.</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>96.00</td>
<td>62.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinguishes what is real, and what is imaginary out of what he/she reads.</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>96.00</td>
<td>69.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinguishes the objective and subjective conclusions from the text he/she reads.</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>66.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assesses his/her reading, content of the text he/she reads, and the reading environment. 109 20.00 100.00 69.66
Determines the purpose of the writer. 109 20.00 100.00 72.94
Determines, incomplete and unrelated information in what he/she reads. 109 6.00 100.00 64.57

In consideration of the data given in Table 1, critical reading attainment level averages of the participant students of the research are seen to vary in between 32.75 and 72.94. Out of the critical reading gains of the students, they seem to have attained the gain of “Determines the purpose of the writer. (72.94)” at well level and nearly all of the students have not attained the gain of “Determines, and questions the emotional and exaggerated elements in what he/she reads. (32.75)” at all.

3.1. Findings and Comments Regarding the Second Sub-Problem

The themes and codes emerged in the results of interview for the answer of the question of “What are the opinions of teachers about levels of critical reading skills of the primary school 4th grade students?”, namely the second sub-problem of the research is presented in detail in Table 2.

Table 2. Emerging themes from content analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Sample Explanations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Reading Activities</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>• Yes, can be given. These activities are adequate. (n = 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>• Activities too much, some of them are unnecessary. To obtain the critical reading skills should be read in other books and comparisons should be made. Activities should be least, adequate, rational and from daily life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>• If there is activity of the critical reading skills can be gained. However, there is no adequate activity. We are faced with this issue in the “Individual and Society Theme”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>• Activities are not enough. More detailed and more different activities may be included.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Reading Gains</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>• Yes, adequate and appropriate. (n = 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>• The gains are adequate. The important thing is to realize the gains and is to obtain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>• Not appropriate. Because level of children is not enough in terms of critical thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>• The gains of critical reading skills are incompatible with the application books. So it does not show development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Challenges of Development of Critical Reading Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td>• First, the concept of &quot;criticism&quot; is required perception as good in the society. It is difficult to give the critical reading for we saw as criticism to say only negative things. The acquisition of critical skills will facilitate learning to find solutions our children instead complaining.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• The time of lesson hours is not enough. (n = 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reading habits of students is inadequate. (n = 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• In the education system should be made changes concerning this issue. (n = 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Applications are not compatible with each other for gains. Therefore, the teachers are forced in the practice. (n = 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• The difficulties encountered in attaining critical reading skills;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1) During the reading to be passive. 2) To accepting without discussion that contains text. 3) Not benefiting from past experience while reading.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1) The people who were respected to their thoughts will have the critical reading and critical thinking skills. 2) Encountering with people's reactions weakens the critical reading.

- The difficulties of attaining critical reading skills have been increasing as the age small. Expressing their thoughts is experiencing more distress via writing and orally. The visual and practical activities and examples will reduce these problems to be more than.

- The children often find everything ready. They do not use too much things like thinking, analyzing, questioning. They do not read very carefully what they read. They only see as stack of word what they read. They do not form connections, do not need to struggle, do not pay attention to parts of the introduction, development and conclusion in the text. The awareness of students is very important.

- The gains in critical reading skills is crucial to the student's permanent information.

- The students find boring the attaining of critical reading skills that questioned the imaginations and thoughts while reading.

- I do not encounter with any difficulties in the attaining to critical reading skills. (n = 2)

- My thoughts, if done more reading and oral expression to students, there is no problem.

- If activities be short and applicable and dramatized, the students can attain the critical reading skills. We must learn and teach to act with cases and we must teach. We need to read understandable and observe good. While we conclusions reached, we need to determine the reasons correctly and explain. We need to understand the subject good. we just need to talk about subjects. If we do not know, we should prefer to remain silent.

- The images and sentences are compatible very few with each other. Subjects and content very much. Also the terms and words must be prepared in accordance to nowadays.

- The relevant studies and activities having to visuality are required for small classes. When they reached to gains, the benefits of critical reading in the students are immediately noticeable.

- The concept maps should be included at the end of each text. Because all of the critical reading gains are not at the end of each text.

- If the physical conditions appropriate to implement all activities difficult. In the absence of appropriate physical conditions are harder to implement all the activities. The levels of grade also are forcing us to perform activities.

- The gains of critical reading skills are adequate. Commencing to critical reading at the smaller grades will make it easier to overcoming the challenges.

- The reading studies done in a proper manner to punctuation marks, use punctuation marks, obey the writing rules is important very much.

10 (35.7%) out of total 28 teachers from stating their views think that is "adequate" of the activities in the Turkish books. 4 (14.2%) teachers find "partially adequate" the activities. This teachers remark that it is above the class level of some part of the activities and that more time should be allocated to activities directed to be able to look critical to events of the students. The remaining 14 (50.0%) teachers think that is "inadequate" of the activities.

16 (% 57.1) out of the teachers stated their opinions find adequate and appropriate the gains about whether it is appropriate of the critical reading gains stated. This teachers express which to be realized the gains and the importance of considering the differences between students. In consideration of the results addressing to the
previous question, it is understood that have nothing to do with gains of finding inadequate of activities the teachers. Because the existing gains are found suitable for attaining skills of critical reading by most of the teachers. 7 (% 25.0) out of the teachers stated that are not appropriate of the gains. To this case the teachers demonstrated reasons as that it is not enough level of students, that are incompatible with the application books of the gains, that it should be remarkable the activities and the texts.

26 teachers have expressed their thoughts about the difficulties of attaining critical reading skills. Most of the interviewed teachers stated that they are reachable the purpose of attaining the critical reading skills, that but they have difficulty in reaching these aims in the students. Their opinions usually states being long of the activites and the short duration of the lessons (the shortage of time), deficiencies in the skills of understanding, questioning and critical thinking for that it is not the habit of reading.

4. Conclusion

This Research has been conducted so as to determine the 4th grade primary school students’ level of attaining critical reading gains in their Turkish lessons. In the study also it was aimed to reach opinions of the teachers about examining of the 4th grade primary students’ level of attaining critical reading skills. In consideration of the findings addressing to the first sub-problem of the research, critical reading attainment level averages of the participant students of the research are seen to vary in between 32.75 and 72.94. In that case, the 4th grade primary school students seem to have attained the critical reading skills either at well level (72.94) and medium level (in between the points of 55.87-69.98), or having not attained such skills at all. It has further been concluded that, nearly total of the students could not have attained the gain “Determines, and questions the emotional and exaggerated elements in what he/she reads. (32.75)” at all. The reason of not reaching this gain of the students may be activity deficiency of this gain in textbooks. In order to give further of gains may be not prepared an alternative activity might be.

In consideration of the findings addressing to the second sub-problem of the research, 57.1% out of the teachers who were received their opinions that the critical reading gains find adequate and appropriate, and 25% out of the teachers who were received their opinions that find inadequate is concluded. The teachers who find inadequate the gains stated reasons as that it is not enough level of students, and that are incompatible with the application books of the gains, and that they are hard to understand. The critical reading is a skill which requiring process and settling over time. Therefore, in an instant, to be critical reader of students can't be expected. In consideration that should be given throughout an academic year to students of gains, assessment immediately after being given the gain the students of the teachers would not be appropriate to draw a conclusion.

Finding inadequate the activities 50% out of teachers stating their opinions about whether adequate of the activities, which makes think, whether it is the effective of this case in lack of critical reading skills in our students. The teachers stated reasons as being the long of the activites and the shortage of time, deficiencies in the skills of understanding, questioning and critical thinking about the difficulties of attaining to critical reading skills.

References


