Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

ScienceDirect

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 174 (2015) 2259 – 2264

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

INTE 2014

First grade teachers teach reading with songs

Derya Arslan[a]*

[a]Mehmet Akif Ersoy Education Faculty, Department of Educational Sciences, Burdur, 15100,Turkey

Abstract

In Turkey in reading instruction a kind of phonetic method is used which is called sound based sentences method. In this method, the reading instruction is initiated by sounds. Instead of letters name, letters' sound is taught. Teaching sounds are performed in compliance with the six sound groups. In teaching process for phonetic awareness during sound teaching, songs are one of the activities teachers instruct. The purpose of this study is to investigate how first class teachers teach reading with songs. The qualitative research method was used in this research. A interview form was developed which was applied ten first grade teachers in 2012-2013 education year. Descriptive analyze was used while analyzing data.

© 2015 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).
Peer-review under responsibility of the Sakarya University

Keywords: First grade; teaching reading; songs.

1. Introduction

Reading is one of the academic skills which is not learnt by birth contrary to speaking and listening but is taught at first class. For Akyol (2009) reading is an interpretation process when prior knowledge is used, which is based on effective communication between author and reader and carried out in an organized environment in accordance with suitable method and purpose. Reading learning process begins by birth. According to Emergent literacy, various activities which are experienced from birth have great effects on reading learning (Akyol, 2009). Phonological awareness is an important part of emergent literacy (Zygouris-Coe, 2001). Phonological awareness involves the ability to notice, think about, or manipulate the individual sounds in words (Torgesen & Mathes, 1999).

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +90-248-2134038; fax: +90-248-213416.
E-mail address: deryaarslan@mehmetakif.edu.tr, aderya@hotmail.com

1877-0428 © 2015 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).
Peer-review under responsibility of the Sakarya University
doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.01.884

Phonological awareness is defined as sensitivity to phonological structure of the words (Torgesen, Wagner, & Rashotte, 1994). To aware and interfere in phonological segments of spoken language is a significant factor of alphabetical writing system. Such a phonological awareness is an effective predictor of reading skill in English and other language and students who are sensitive to sound compounds of words have more chance to become successful in reading (Peynircioğlu, Durgunoğlu & Öney-Küsefoğlu, 2002).

One of the activities performed in order to increase phonological awareness is to sing a song (Zygouris-Coe, 2001). Songs are one of the significant tools used in education, especially in language teaching. They are frequently used in foreign language teaching (Batdi, Semerci, 2012; Şevik, 2012; Şevik, 2011). Listening skills of children are benefited not only for language teaching but also for reading instruction through songs. During first reading writing instruction, activities are made by benefiting from music, drama etc. that prepare students for reading before reading instruction and support reading instruction during reading teaching. Activities made before reading instruction can be thought within the scope of phonological awareness.

Since the starting age for primary school was determined as 66 months in 2012, preparatory studies for reading and writing have been focused rather than teaching of reading and writing instruction in the first term of the first year. Temur Doğan, Özyeğit, Divrengi, Özkara, & Ayyıldız (2012) specify that it is more important to provide education with harmonized activities rather than to begin with reading and writing studies in the first class of primary school for the purpose of ensuring a reliable beginning in such teaching fields. Harmonized activities are composed of painting, music, cut and paste activities in class. With these activities it is aimed to improve skills such as fine and gross motor skills, eye hand coordination, entertainment, recognizing sounds and rhythms, thumping out etc.

In Turkey reading and writing is taught with sound based method. Instead of letters name, letters' sound is taught. Teaching sounds are performed in compliance with the eight sound groups formed (Primary School Turkish Lesson Curriculum and Guide, 2009). Sounds are taught in three stages such as preparation for first reading-writing, beginning to reading-writing and improving it and becoming literate. The stage of beginning to first reading-writing and improving it is composed of four steps that are feeling and recognizing the sound, reading and writing sound, forming syllables from sounds, words from syllables, sentences from words and lastly writing a text (Primary School Turkish Lesson Curriculum and Guide, 2009). At the stage of feeling and recognizing sounds, mental preparation of the student is ensured by drawing attention to the sound to be taught, preparing student's mind and ear for the sound (Güneş, 2007). During reading instruction process, students are taught sounds beginning from prior knowledge, benefiting from songs and drama activities at the stage of first beginning of reading-writing – second stage of the method – and the stage of feeling sound and improving – first stage of developing (Primary School Turkish Lesson Curriculum and Guide, 2009).

According to the studies about the program and reading instruction, sounds are used before and during reading instruction. There are some studies regarding the effect of music programs (Bolduc, 2009), songs on phonological awareness of the students. The aim of this study is to determine how class teachers benefit from songs during reading instruction at the first class when reading is taught.

In accordance with the aim of the study, sub-problems stated below will be studied:

Of the first class teachers,

1. What are the preparatory studies for the song before beginning to teach with songs?
2. How is the process of teaching with songs?
3. How is the assessment of reading instruction with songs?

2. Method

2.1. Research model

In order to determine how the first class teachers benefit from songs during reading instruction, phenomenology, one of the patterns of qualitative research, will be used. Phenomenology pattern focuses on facts that individuals are aware but do not have deep and detail knowledge (Yıldırım, Şimşek, 2005). In Sound Based Sentence Method, songs are used during preparation period before reading instruction and during reading instruction at the stage of

making sound felt. In this study teachers are asked for their opinions about benefiting from songs only at the stage of making the sounds felt.

2.2. Participants

Working group of the study is composed of first class teachers. Homogeneous sampling is used in the study. These are first class teachers and are selected among those who are new at their working life and educate first class for the first time. The reason of selecting teachers who are new at their working life is that they have just completed their undergraduate education and they have received education about reading-writing instruction with sound based sentence method. 10 teachers (6 of them are women and 4 of them are men) working in Şırnak participated in the study. Four of the teachers have been working for 1 year, four of them have been working for 2 years, one of them has been working for 3 years and one of them has been working for 5 years. All of the teachers educate first class for the first time of their working life.

2.3. Data Collection Tool

In the study participants' opinions were taken in writing. While the questions were being prepared, firstly field research was made and then a question pool was constituted. Questions were prepared in accordance with the opinions of an expert working in Turkish teaching and then were implemented on two class teachers. Revision was made in accordance with class teachers' opinions. Later, actual implementation was carried out. Interview form is composed of 11 open-ended questions. Form is composed of 2 questions measuring preparation period of teaching, 3 questions measuring teaching period and 5 questions measuring assessment part. Teachers were asked to write their own opinions at the end of the form if they wished to add.

2.4. Data Collection

Interview forms were sent to class teachers working in Şırnak via internet. Participants printed questions and filled themselves. Then they sent them to the researcher by cargo.

2.5. Data Analysis

Interview forms were analyzed with descriptive analysis. Data were summarized and interpreted according to subjects specified before. In this study, data were edited according to subjects specified with the questions (Yıldırım, Şimşek, 2005). First of all answers of each questions were written on a word document separately. Then answers were classified according to subject and categories. Detail description was given at validity stage and intentional sampling was used (Yıldırım, Şimşek, 2005). Afterwards analysis results were examined for confirmation in order to compare with raw data. Frequency was also used in analysis. Quotations of the participants of research were quoted.

3. Results

3.1. Preparatory studies made by first class teachers regarding songs

Teachers have explained how they select songs they use during reading instruction at the stage of sound feeling under the subjects of "what the songs are about and where they are from". Class teachers define features of songs under the subject of "what the songs are about". According to the sounds taught, songs (n=3), nursery rhymes (n=2), popular songs that the students know (n=1), songs about the words that are learnt on the relevant day (n=1), songs suitable for the students' readiness level (n=1) and songs that the students sing easily (n=1), animated songs (n=1) are selected by teachers. Teachers are required to select songs according to the features specified. First class teachers have also explained "from where" they obtained the songs. It is determined that teachers obtain songs from source books prepared by Ministry of National Education (MEB) (n=2), websites (n=2), various sources (n=1) and by making researches (n=1) that they use for reading instruction. For instance while one of the first class teachers states

(s)he selects "songs suitable for students' readiness level and songs that the students sing easily. (Teacher:1)" other teacher states (s)he selects "songs from source books prepared by MEB".

First class teachers have been asked how they prepare music activities. Teachers state that they prepare music activities by improvising (n=7), making plans (n=2). One of the teachers state "I make research about songs on sounds that I will teach and then I prepare a plan accordingly (Teacher:4)." Besides it is seen that "improvisational (Teacher:8)" music activity is used.

3.2. Findings about reading instruction process with songs

First class teachers explained activities before teaching songs. Teachers do activities such as breathing exercises (n=3), reading rhyme/text regarding sounds (n=1), rhythm (n=1), informing the target (n=1), drawing attention (n=1), giving instruction about listening (n=1), ensuring the sound to be felt (n=1). One of the teachers state that "I do activities such as ensuring the sound to be felt and breathing exercises (Teacher:4)"

First class teachers state different explanations about how they teach songs. Teachers explain the states of song teaching process as follows:

- I sing – repeat a few times.- I sing together with students.
- Part to whole.
- Whole- repetition a few times-Part by part.
- I teach some specific parts (if the song is long).
- I make the students listen to songs from Cd –I sing with CD - We sing together and repeat.
- I make the students listen to songs from Mp3 player – make them repeat constantly.
- I play with flute – I also sing.
- I make the students listen to songs from computer – I also sing.
- I sing and they repeat.
- I make the students listen to songs from computer – repeat within a group – make the students who have learnt the song sing and other students sing with them –thumping out with maraca.

One of the teachers stated that "Firstly I make the students listen from computer, then ask them to repeat with computer constantly, call the students to the blackboard who have learnt the song and all other students sing with them, make them thump out with maraca (Teacher:3)".

First class teachers have explained what they do after they teach the song. Teachers make activities such as singing individually (n=3), singing all together (whole class) (n=3), word finding activity regarding sound (n=3), singing within a group (n=1), painting visual items on coloring books about sounds (n=1), drawing the said materials and objects on board (n=1), trying to find taught sounds in students' names (n=1), repeating songs by relating some other lessons later (n=1), teaching song as a game, performing (n=1). While one of the teachers says that "I make activities such as word finding activity regarding sound, painting visual items on coloring books about sounds (Teacher:9)"; other teacher says "I ask the students to feel the sounds with song and then ask them to tell materials and objects about the sound they feel and then draw them on board and lastly I tell the names of the students ask them whether their names have the sound we have learnt or not (Teacher:10)."

3.3. Evaluation findings of first class teachers on reading instruction with song

Teachers have explained contributions of music activities to reading instruction process. Teachers state that thanks to music activities they can ensure permanent learning (n=3), positivism (n=2), to calm, to make happy, willingly and determined learning, assimilation, to be the basis of sound teaching for first classes, to be the keystone of reading-writing instruction, to be the basis of teaching of Turkish, to be able to pronounce sounds better, to feel the sounds, to draw attention, to entertain, and to define the sound better. While one of the teachers states "I believe that music calms students and makes them happy therefore they are more willing and determined while trying to learn (Teacher:1)", other teacher explains "I think since especially in Southeast Region students have a language problem, music is one of the keystones of teaching Turkish and reading-writing (Teacher:10)."

First class teachers have explained feelings of the students about reading after music activities. Teachers state that students are happy (n=6), enjoy so much (n=2), are enthusiastic (n=2), are not bored (n=1), are willing to learn (n=1), exited (n=1), love lessons (n=1). While one of the teachers says "during these activities they experience the most happy hours (Teacher:6)", other teacher says "Music makes them more enthusiastic. They are more willing to learn (Teacher:2)."

First class teachers have evaluated their education about benefitting from music activities for reading instruction. Teachers have explained education about benefitting from music activities for reading instruction as insufficient (n=5), not sufficient (n=3), sufficient (n=2), insufficient instruments (n=1). While one of the teachers said that "Internship we underwent is beneficial. However I believe that reading-writing teaching should be focused more at universities (Teacher:7)", other teacher "it cannot be said that it is sufficient. We took lessons about reading-writing teaching and music teaching; but practice is so different from theory (Teacher:9)."

First class teachers have explained materials concerning music activities on reading instruction and how they use these materials. Teachers have stated they have sources (n=6), they couldn't find sources (n=3), they have difficulty in finding sources (n=1). Sources they benefit from are CD (n=3), internet (n=2), computer (n=1), magazine-book (n=1). While one of the teachers states that "internet enables enough possibilities (Teacher:2)", other teacher says "No. We are trying to benefit whenever the circumstances allow (Teacher:10)".

The first class teachers were asked whether they wanted to add something else about the subject and two teachers made an explanation. Seventh teacher said "I believe that music activities for reading - writing teaching should be focused on more". Ninth teacher added "Education we received during university is perfectionist. We have difficulty in practice now. It should be taught what can be done at underprivileged schools."

4. Conclusion

First reading & writing education starts with sounds while using the Sound Based Sentence method. Songs are used at the stage of feeling the sound and it is expected that students can distinguish sounds with songs (Güneş, 2007; Primary School Turkish Lesson Curriculum and Guide, 2009. How the first class teachers organize and guide this process is a significant research subject. Therefore the aim of this study is to determine how the first class teachers teach sounds with songs. At the stage of feeling the sound during reading instruction, teachers define the features of songs under the subject of "What the song is about" and they select the songs accordingly. According to the sounds taught, songs, nursery rhyme, popular songs that the students know, songs about the words that are learnt on the relevant day, songs suitable for the students' readiness level and songs that the students sing easily, animated songs are selected by teachers. It is determined that teachers obtain songs from source books prepared by MEB, websites, various sources and by making researches that they use for reading instruction. First class teachers explain activities before teaching songs. Teachers do activities such as breathing exercises, reading rhyme/text regarding sounds, rhythm, informing the target, drawing attention, giving instruction about listening, ensuring the sound to be felt.

First class teachers state different explanations about how they teach songs. Teachers explain the states of song teaching process as: I sing – repeat a few times.- I sing together with students, part to whole, whole- repetition a few times -Part by part, I teach some specific parts (if the song is long), listening from Cd – I sing with CD - We sing together and repeat, make the students listen to songs from Mp3 player – make them repeat constantly, Play with flute – I also sing, make the students listen to songs from computer – I also sing, I sing and they repeat, I make the students listen to songs from computer – repeat within a group – make the students who have learnt the song sing and other students sing with them –thumping out with maraca. As it is seen, all of the teachers teach songs according to their own distinctive methods. There is not any education union that all or many of the teachers follow.

First class teachers have explained what they do after they teach the song. Teachers make activities such as singing individually, singing all together (whole class), word finding activity regarding sounds, singing within a group, painting visual items on coloring books about sounds, drawing the said materials and objects on board, trying to find sounds taught in students' names, repeating songs by relating some other lessons later, teaching song as a

game, and performing. After sound is felt by song during the first reading instruction activities, sound activities continue. Here it is seen that some teachers continue song activities.

Teachers have explained contributions of music activities to reading instruction process. Teachers state that thanks to music activities they can ensure permanent learning, to be positive, to calm, to make happy, to learn willingly and determined, assimilation, to be the basis of sound teaching for first classes, to be the keystone of reading-writing teaching, to be the basis of teaching of Turkish, to be able to pronounce sounds better, to feel the sounds, to draw attention, to entertain, to define the sound better. It is seen that teachers generally believe using songs in reading instruction is important. Besides that positive effect of songs on learning is another reason of teachers for their belief that songs are beneficial. First class teachers state that students are happy, enjoy so much, are enthusiastic, are not bored, are willing to learn, exited, love lessons.

According to first class teachers, their education about benefitting from music activities for reading instruction is not sufficient. During undergraduate cycle, Class Teachers take Music Teaching lesson besides First reading-writing instruction. There can be so many reasons why teachers think that their education is insufficient – some of the reasons can be that as one of the teachers state music activities are so limited for reading writing activities or as another teacher state they have problems in practice when they face with harder conditions. It is understood that teachers usually find sources for reading instruction with songs. Erkul & Erdoğan (2009) find out that teachers have no problem related with the instruments and materials.

When the ages of the students learning reading for the first time are considered, students can learn easier when lesson is given entertainingly. Teachers offered some proposals like singing songs for overcoming the problems encountered during the feeling and recognizing sounds (Erkul & Erdoğan, 2009). With this point of view that teachers are aware of, studies given at First Reading Writing and Music Teaching lessons can be increased for Class Teacher Undergraduate program. Although first reading program has been changed since 2005, it is seen that studies on sound teaching have still deficiencies. More enriched activities on this subject can be planned and applied. Experimental or action researches different from this study can be made.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to to the class teachers who attend this study.

References

Akyol, H.(2009). *Türkçe ilk okuma yazma öğretimi* (8. Baskı). Ankara:PegemA yayıncılık.

Batdi, V., & Semerci, Ç. (2012).Students' views towards effectiveness of songs in developing foreign language skills. *Journal of Research in Education and Teaching*, 1 (4), 126-133.

Bolduc, J. (2009). Effects of a music programme on kindergartners' phonological awareness. International Journal of Music Education, 27 (37), 37-47.

Erkul, Ö., & Erdoğan, T. (2009). The problems and suggestions encountered during the implementation of sound based sentence method. Procedia Social and Beha vioral Sciences 1, 2294-2300.

Güneş, F. (2007). *Ses temelli cümle yöntemi ve zihinsel yapılandırma*. Ankara: Nobel Yayın Dağıtım.

Primary School Turkish Lesson Curriculum and Guide (1-5. Sınıflar). (2009). Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu Başkanlığı. Ankara:Devlet Kitapları Basım Evi.

Peynircioğlu, Z. F, Durgunoğlu, Y. A., & Öney-Küsefoğlu, B. (2002). Phonological awareness and musical aptitude. Journal of Research in Reading, 25 (1), 68-80.

Şevik, M. (2012). First step to effective listening: "Listen and show" songs. International Journal of English and Education, 1 (1), 9-18.

Şevik, M. (2011). Teacher views about using songs in teaching English to young learners. Educational Research and Reviews, 6 (21), 1027-1035.

Temur Doğan, Ö., Özyeğit, D., Divrengi, M., Özkara, M. & Ayyıldız, Y. (2012). Uyum ve hazırlık çalışmaları öğretmen kitabı:İlkokul 1. Sınıf (Ed. Turan Temur). Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı.

Torgesen, J. K. & Mathes, P. G. (1999). *Assessment and instruction in phonological awareness*. Florida Department of Education Division of Public Schools and Community Education Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services.

Torgesen, J. K., Wagner, R. K., & Rashotte, C. A. (1994). Longitudinal studies of phonological processing and reading. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 27 (5), 276-286.

Zygouris-Coe, V. (2001). *Emergent literacy.* University of Florida:Florida Literacy and Reading Excelllence (FLaRE).