

**THE IMPACT OF ACTIVE LEARNING APPROACH ON IMPROVING THE  
READING SKILLS IN NATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING**

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**Abstract**

In this research, the effectiveness of active learning approach in native language education has been emphasized. This research is an experimental one that is used by Turkish Teaching organized by active learning approach for determining learning levels of the students concerning their reading comprehension skills. Data have been obtained by utilizing “Turkish Reading Comprehension Skill Test”. The research was conducted at fifth class level in Şehit Tuncer and Geçitkale primary schools by getting permission from Ministry of Education and it lasted for fourteen weeks in the second term of 2005-2006 education semester. In Turkish teaching, there is a meaningful difference in favor of the active learning group between the experiment group’s (that active learning approach is applied to) and control group’s (that traditional method is applied to) average of the reading comprehension skill points. The results of the study indicated that the active learning approach is more effective than the traditional approach.

**Keywords:** Silberman, Active Learning, Native Language Teaching, Reading Skill

**Özet**

Bu araştırmada, anadili eğitiminde etkin öğrenme yaklaşımının etkililiği üzerinde durulmuştur. Etkin öğrenme yaklaşımına göre düzenlenen Türkçe öğretiminin, öğrencilerin okuduğunu anlama becerisine ilişkin öğrenme düzeylerini nasıl etkilediğini belirlemek hedeflenmiştir. Araştırmada deneysel desen kullanılmıştır. Veriler, “Türkçe Okuduğunu Anlama Becerisi Testi” ile elde edilmiştir. Araştırma, 2005-2006 öğretim yılının ikinci yarısında on dört haftalık bir dönem boyunca KKTC’de Şehit Tuncer İlkokulu ve Geçitkale İlkokulu’nun 5. sınıf düzeyinde, Milli Eğitim Bakanlığınca verilen izinle yürütülmüştür.

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Türkçe öğretiminde, etkin öğrenme yaklaşımı kullanılarak öğretim yapılan grubun okuduğunu anlama gücü erişme puanları ile geleneksel yöntemle öğretim yapılan grubun puanları karşılaştırıldığında, etkin öğrenme grubunun lehine anlamlı fark bulunmuştur. Araştırma sonuçları etkin öğrenme yaklaşımının geleneksel yaklaşıma oranla daha etkili olduğunu göstermiştir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Silberman, Etkin Öğrenme, Anadili Eğitimi, Okuma Becerisi

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Native language is defined as, “the language that an individual acquires in his family, then improves in his surroundings -other people who he has relations with- and leads him to establish the strongest connection to his community (Aksan, 2000:51). Adalı (1983:31) and Kavcar (1988:12) have stated that in our schools -from primary school to university- the accomplishments are not at the desired level in native language education that is being done under the roof of Turkish and Turkish Language and Literature. In our country, there are many important problematic aspects in native language education. Native Language teaching has to be freed from information eclecticism and it has to be directed to the new applications which lead the students to overcome comprehension and explication obstacles (Sever, 2004:32)

At our present day, educationists are mostly interested in learning which occurs in accordance with contemporary education approaches. The most important thing that a teacher must think about is to elicit learning. It is more suitable for the teacher to ask himself the question “How can my students learn in the best way?” before the question “How can I teach?”

Learning concept has been explained in different ways by scientists since old ages. Psychologists, anthropologists, linguists, philosophers, neurophysiologists etc. are still trying to find out how the brain works and how people learn (Philips and Soltis, 2005:1). However a teacher masters his field, has got a high teaching desire and loves the children very much, it would be very difficult for him to be successful unless he takes the students’ learning process into account (Saban, 2004:1). Many researches have been conducted concerning learning until the present day and it has been defined under different classifications. Jung (1971), French (1977), Dunn ve Dunn (1978), Honey ve Mumford (1982), Scmeck (1983), Kolb (1984), Canfield (1988) ve Davies (1994) (Demirel, 2003:138). A teacher who knows about the ways

in which students can learn better will be more efficient in the planning and application of teaching and he will lead the students to be successful.

According to Senemoğlu (2002:100), only one learning theory or hypothesis is not enough to explain all the learning types and explain the problems related to learning. Both behaviorist and also cognitive theorists have made important suggestions for improving and arraying teaching. However, there is a very important suggestion that two theorist groups agree on: “Student must be active in learning”

“Active learning is a learning process in which learner bears its responsibility, is given the opportunities to make self regulation and take decision about the different aspects of that process and is forced to use his mental skills during the learning by the agent of complicated instructional works ” (Açıkgoz, 2003:17). The biggest mistake of the traditional education is to assume that all the students need the same information at the same place and moment. To listen to a lecture is only of value to acoustic students. It must be known that learning levels will decrease, attention and interaction can not be maintained and most important, students’ thinking will be prevented in a class environment where there is one way information transfer (Silberman, 1996; Weimer 2002; Chance 2005).

The theoretical framework of the research has been formed by Silberman’s “101 principles for Active Learning”. Silberman’s Active Learning Approach is 3 stage and each stage has got its own steps: (Şahinel, 2003:30-34)

- A. Making Students Active From The Beginning (Forming Team Spirit, Evaluation at the Beginning of the Lecture, Urgent Participation to Lecture)
- B. Acquiring Information, Skill and Attitudes Actively (Whole Class Learning, Class Discussion, Preparing Questions, Cooperative Learning, Coequal Teaching, Independent Learning, Affective Learning, Skill Improvement)
- C. Making Learnings Permanent (Going Through, Evaluation Related To Essence, Future Planning, Closing Emotions)

### **Problem Statement**

In Turkish teaching, is there a significant difference in favor of the active learning group between the reading comprehension power points of the group that is taught by active

learning approach and the reading comprehension power points of the group that is taught by traditional approach.

### **Hypothesis**

- i.** In Turkish teaching, there is a significant difference in favor of the active learning group between the reading comprehension power –knowledge level- points of the group that is taught by active learning approach and the reading comprehension power difference points of the group that is taught by traditional approach.
- ii.** In Turkish teaching, there is a significant difference in favor of the active learning group between the reading comprehension power –above knowledge level- points of the group that is taught by active learning approach and the reading comprehension power difference points of the group that is taught by traditional approach.
- iii.** In Turkish teaching, there is a significant difference in favor of the active learning group between the reading comprehension power –total- points of the group that is taught by active learning approach and the reading comprehension power difference points of the group that is taught by traditional approach.

## **2. METHOD**

Experimental approach has been used to answer the basic problem and hypothesis set in the research. Dependent variant is “Reading Comprehension Skills” whereas independent variant is “ Teaching – Learning processes of Turkish teaching that is organized due to active learning approach”. In the research, “Pre-test-post-test control group experimental design” was used. “Pre-test- Post-test control group design is commonly used in social studies especially in education. The participants are measured before and after experimental operation for their relation to dependent variant . Nonetheless, this design is unrelated because of the comparison of the measurements of experiment and control groups formed by different subjects (Büyüköztürk, 2001:21).

### **Study Groups of The Research**

In this research, it is not passed from experimental pattern usage to population and sample assignation in order to support a theoretical learning approach. The research had been

executed after obtaining permission from the National Education Ministry in 2006 during a period of 14 weeks (March-June months) at the fifth class level of the Şehit Tuncer and Geçitkale Primary Schools in TRNC. Two groups were used in the research. Two forms of fifth class were found where there was no important difference in the two groups academic success marks in native language and they became research groups. Afterwards, one of the groups was chosen as an “experiment group” whereas the other, as “control group” by using random sampling. The sum of the students in the experiment and control groups was 39.

In order to find out whether experiment and control groups were equal or not as a matter of readiness; analysis was made concerning

- Reading comprehension pre-test marks
- Carnet Marks of Turkish lecture belonging to the first semester of the fifth class.

TABLE 1.1

Findings Concerning Reading Comprehension Skill Pre-Test Marks of Experiment and Control Groups

GROUPS	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	t
Experiment	20	13.3	4.24	0.286
Control	19	13.73	5.25	

p>.05

As it is seen in Table 1.1, as a result of analysis, observed “t” value 0.286 wasn’t found meaningful at the .05 p level.

TABLE 1.2

Findings Concerning Carnet Marks of Experiment and Control Groups belonging to the first semester of the fifth class.

GROUPS	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	t
Experiment	20	9.1	1.37	1.465
Control	19	8.15	2.06	

p>.05

As it is seen in Table 1.2, as a result of analysis, observed “t” value 1.465 was not found meaningful at the .05 p level. It could be said that the average of fifth class first semester marks of two groups were equal to each other.

Students taking place in the groups were informed that they were a part of an experiment but they were not told whether they were in the experiment or control group. In the experiment group, active learning approach was applied in Turkish teaching whereas in the control group, traditional Turkish teaching was in progress. The researcher himself attended to learning teaching activities in Turkish teaching continued by active learning approach in order to improve reading skills of the students in the experiment group.

### **The Preparation of Learning Situations**

#### *i. Determination of the Objectives*

The proper period (15 February – 15 June 2006) was firstly set in TRNC<sup>2</sup> National Education Ministry Primary Education fifth class Turkish lesson program in order to form learning-teaching conditions which take active learning approach into center. Four basic language skills prepared appropriate to the students’ level belonging to the period stated in the program and behavioral objectives concerning linguistic (grammar) field were taken in the extent of the research.

#### *ii. The Selection of the Texts*

The following stages were realized while selecting the texts that were used in forming education conditions appropriate to active learning approach.

1. The books that were analysed by Prof. Dr. Sedat Sever (2003) under the titles “Language Development, Cognitive Development, Personality Development, Communal Development” in his book “Child and Literature” were taken in the extent of the research. The books were determined by taking care of the development period (age 10) of the group which the application was exercised to. In the context of Language Development, Yalvaç Ural’s book ‘Müzik Satan Çocuklar’; in the context of Cognitive Development, Gülten Dayıoğlu’s book ‘Okyanuslar Ötesine Yolculuk’; in the context of Personality Development, Aysel Gürmen’s book ‘Benim Adım Selen’ and in the context of Communal Development, Ayla

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Çınaroğlu's book 'Mavi Boya' were selected. In addition, Sevim Ak's book, 'Kuşlar Kralı Nikola'; Sulhi Dölek's 'Kestane Şekeri' ve Aytül Akal-Mavisel Yener's , 'Kuş Uçtu Şiir Kaldı' were taken in the context of the research.

2. The researcher determined the texts that he would use in learning situations by selecting a tale from each book.

3. The texts were analyzed as a matter of basic elements (internal structure – external structure) of child literature

4. The opinions of three<sup>3</sup> experts (2 prof. from Ankara University, one prof. from Hacettepe University) were taken about the texts that would be used (whether to take them in the extent of the research or not)

### *iii. The preparation of the activities*

The activities in the research were prepared according to the steps in Silberman's Active Learning Approach. The learning situations were set in a way to develop four basic language skills and grammar subject field as integrated.

### *iv. Evaluation Process*

In active learning, evaluation is supporting and continuous. Teachers are interested in success and suggestions rather than corrections and mistakes. The main role of the teachers is not to show the students their deficiencies and errors but to lead students trust themselves on the way to success. Students feel proud when they realize their abilities and do something for achieving success. Evaluations have to be done very often and they have to be confidential and objective.

The formed education conditions were applied by the researcher in another group (Eastern Mediterranean Primary School 4 and 5. class students) outside the study group of the thesis during 6 weeks period ( September – October 2005) before the experimental research period. After the application, the deficient points of the learning situations were determined and in the light of the evaluations, some activities were taken out and education conditions were rearranged.

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## Research Tool

In the research, the data which were essential for testing basic problem and hypothesis was obtained by “Turkish Reading Comprehension Test” which its validity-reliability study was done and prepared by Prof. Dr. Sedat Sever in his research (2004) called “Turkish Teaching and Mastery Learning”. As a matter of pre-test and last-test, at the beginning and end of the experimental operation, measurement tool was applied to the students two times.

### The Test of Turkish Reading Comprehension Skill

In Turkish teaching, this test was used to determine whether or not there was a meaningful difference of the achievement level averages of the reading comprehension skill between the group in which active learning approach was used and the group in which traditional method was used. The Reading Comprehension Test contained 30 questions. Questions of 14, 24 and 26 were to measure knowledge whereas the rest of them were to measure the behaviors above knowledge level. As a result of statistical operations concerning the test, K:30,  $\bar{X}$ : 17.37,  $S_x$ : 6.87, P: .58, KR-20: .89, KR-21: .87 was determined.

### Analysis of the Data

t” statistics was used to show the equivalence of the groups and answer the hypothesis of the research. “t test for independent groups” was used to test the significance of average points between groups.

## 3. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

In this part, the data obtained as a result of experimental process was analyzed by using appropriate statistical methods.

Table II.1

“Reading Comprehension Skill” Knowledge Achievement Levels of Experiment and Control Groups

GRUPLAR	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	t
Experiment	20	1	1.12	2.044
Control	19	0.37	0.76	

\*P<.01

According to table II.I, the achievement average of the reading comprehension skill knowledge level of the experiment group, in which active learning approach was used, is 1 whereas the average of knowledge level of the control group , in which traditional approach was used, is 37. Independent t test was used to examine whether or not there was a meaningful difference between the achievement averages of experiment and control groups. The observed difference was found meaningful at .01 level. According to these data, it could be said that active learning approach is more effective than traditional approach in leading students to get the behaviors at the reading comprehension skill knowledge level.

Table II.2  
“Reading Comprehension Skill” Above Knowledge Achievement Levels of Experiment and Control Groups

GRUPLAR	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	t
Experiment	20	1.5	2.19	2.293
Control	19	0.16	1.34	

\*P<.01

According to table II.2, the achievement average of the reading comprehension skill above knowledge level of the experiment group, in which active learning approach was used, is 1.5 whereas the average of above knowledge level of the control group, in which traditional approach was used, is .16. Independent t test was used to examine whether or not there was a meaningful difference between the achievement level averages of experiment and control groups. The observed difference was found meaningful at .01 level. According to these data, it could be said that active learning approach is more effective than traditional approach in leading students to get the behaviors at the reading comprehension skill above data level.

Table II.3  
 “Reading Comprehension Skill” Total Achievement Levels of Experiment and Control  
 Groups

GRUPLAR	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	t
Experiment	20	2.45	2.16	3.509
Control	19	0.53	1.12	

\*P<.01

According to table II.3, the total achievement level average of the reading comprehension skill of the experiment group, in which active learning approach was used, is 2.45 whereas the total achievement level average of the control group, in which traditional approach was used, is .53. Independent t test was used to examine whether or not there was a meaningful difference between the achievement level averages of experiment and control groups. The observed difference was found meaningful at .01 level. According to these data, it could be said that active learning approach is more effective than traditional approach in leading students to get the reading comprehension skill behaviors.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

In this part, evaluations have been done concerning the findings and results of the research, relation established with the previous researches concerning the subject and suggestions have been stated.

The academic success level of the experiment group, in which active learning approach was applied, increased. In the control group which traditional approach was applied, the students' points in their last tests increased, but when it is compared to the experiment group, mentioned point increase is not meaningful.

Özışık (1997), in his research called “Developing Text Understanding By Using New Methods in Turkish Teaching of Primary Education 6. Class”, stated that there is a meaningful difference of reading comprehension skill between the experiment group, in which new teaching methods are applied and the group that is taught by traditional approach. Şahinel (2002) also realized a research to test the effectiveness of active learning approach in

foreign language education. In his study called “The Impact of the Teaching Shared Active Learning Model on Developing Integrated English Language Skills”, Şahinel discovered that the students in the experiment group got high marks in achievement tests. He observed a meaningful difference between the success levels of experiment and control group.

Sever (2005), in his study “Turkish Teaching Conception in 2004 Teaching Program”, stated that National Education Ministry had tried to take constructivism approach as a basis of lesson programs. He stated that teaching in the program only deal with knowledge dimension. Turkish teaching is perceived as a discipline in which knowledge is investigated, found, commented and analyzed. It is not taken into consideration that Turkish education is an artistic education process which allows the learners to gain sensitivity and its responsibility of creating reader and leading people to gain reading habit has been neglected.

In pedagogy, it is necessary to benefit from the expert opinion (field expert, program development and measurement expert, psychologist, sociologist etc..) when new approaches are taken in lesson programs. The initiatives done to go with the newness could bring harm rather than benefit .As it is stated above, it is thought provoking to perceive native language education as a knowledge lesson in 2004 program .In this study, when native language education is taken into account, the importance is given to have learners gain above knowledge level objectives rather than knowledge level objectives.

### **Suggestions**

The behaviors, that are aimed to have learners gain in native language education, are not only related to Turkish or literature lessons. The individual has to use his native language in other lessons as well. It could be said that the skills such as problem resolution, discussion, taking note etc. can be acquired by native language education. The individuals who have good command of native language can be successful not only in school life but in their daily lives. It could be said that they will successfully realize the vital performances such as communication, speaking in front of a community, searching, thinking and learning. For this reason, all the countries need to feature native language education. The institutions, academics, teachers and politicians have to take necessary precautions for an efficient native language education.

#### a) Suggestions Concerning Research

The results of the research indicated that active learning approach is more efficient than the traditional approach. In native language education, the principles of the active learning approach could be taken as basis and in leading learners gain reading skill, applications could be realized similar to the activities in education conditions prepared by the researcher. In the present case, the following suggestions could be enhanced in the light of the obtained findings.

1. As the reading comprehension skills are handled, active learning approach is more effective than traditional method in leading students gain the behaviors at knowledge level. The activities; such as having students make the description, having them find the rule, expressing with their own statements, establishing relations with daily life, have to be continued instead of the behaviors such as memorization, teaching rules, having students write and transferring the information.

2. It was observed that traditional approach is inefficient in having students gain above knowledge level behaviors (cognition, application...) of reading comprehension skills. Permanent behavior change, that is to say, learning wasn't realized. It was observed that high level cognitive behaviors have been gained by having active learning activities. Therefore, native language educators have to be careful in organizing the activities which will provide true understanding of a text. Such learning methods and techniques have to be used that will have the reader establish a bond between his own life and the text and develop his thinking, criticism and induction skills and also push him into writing, creation and reinterpretation behaviors. In short, those methods and techniques must make the reader an efficient participant of the lecture.

#### b) Suggestions Concerning New Researches

1. Experimental Studies could be done for other education levels (high school and university) appropriate to active learning approach.
2. Active learning approach could be tested by experimental studies in other lectures.
3. In native language education, the impact of active learning approach on listening, speaking and writing skills could be tested by experimental researches.

4. In the studies concerning active learning approach , qualitative data ( teacher’s views, course book evaluation, lesson program analysis...) could be evaluated during the process.
5. Experimental studies could be carried on more extensive groups
6. In native language education, the impact of active learning approach on the development of the reading skills (outside achievement) could be evaluated on permanence and attitude dimension.
7. Long term (forming annual education program) and comprehensive (language skills, grammar, literature, writing) researches could be done for determining the impact of the active learning approach on Turkish education.

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