

SPEED-READING TECHNIQUES AND THE IMPLEMENTABILITY IN TURKISH

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ABSTRACT

The beginning of the action of reading extends as old as the beginning of the history. Being able to read efficiently, making reading work, depends on the consciousness and technical knowledge about reading. Most of the literate have wrong reading habits like reading word by word and reading aloud inside that prevent efficiency in reading. These bad habits about reading weaken the comprehension as well as the reading rate. We can increase the reading rate and the comprehension by having a conscious reader profile. The studies in this field resulted in the concept of speed-reading after the World War II, and a series of technical methods were developed to make reading faster and more comprehensible. These technical methods, which are basically based on increasing the coordination of the eyes and the brain, are implemented in the same way in all languages when the operation of the eyes and the brain is considered; due to the fact that these methods are based on the visualization and the making sense of the visualization in all languages. Speed-reading process naturally starts by reading. There are three phases of the process: A Regular Reading Habit, Having a Conscious Reader Profile, and Increasing the Reading Rate. All these phases can be carried out very efficiently and easily when the structural and semantic features of Turkish are considered. In this study, the implementability and efficiency of speed-reading techniques and methods in terms of Turkish will be tried to be put forward.

Key Words: *Speed-reading techniques, Turkish, reading habit.*

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ÖZET

Hızlı Okuma Teknikleri ve Türkçeye Uygulanabilirliği

Okuma davranışının başlangıcı insanlık tarihinin başlangıcına kadar götürülebilir. Okumanın verimli bir şekilde, okumaya iş gördürerek, yapılabilmesi, okuma konusundaki bilince ve teknik bilgiye dayalıdır. Okuryazarların büyük bir kısmında kelime kelime okuma ve içten seslendirme gibi verimli okumayı engelleyen kötü okuma alışkanlıkları bulunmaktadır. Okumayla ilgili bu kötü alışkanlıklar okuma hızıyla birlikte kavramayı da zayıflatır. Bilinçli bir okuyucu profili oluşturarak hem hız hem de kavrama artırılabilir. Bu konuda yapılan çalışmalar II. Dünya Savaşından sonra hızlı okuma kavramını ortaya çıkarmış, okumanın daha hızlı ve daha anlaşılır olabilmesi için bir dizi teknik yöntem geliştirilmiştir. Temelde göz ve beyin arasındaki koordinasyonun artırılmasına bağlı olan bu teknik yöntemler, göz ve beyin işleyiş sistemi düşünüldüğünde tüm dillerde görüntülemeye ve bu görüntülerin anlamlandırılmasına dayalı bir süreç olduğundan aynı tekniklerle uygulanmıştır. Hızlı okuma süreci doğal olarak önce okumayla başlar. Bu sürecin üç aşaması vardır: Düzenli Bir Okuma Alışkanlığı, Bilinçli Bir Okuyucu Profili Oluşturma ve Okuma Hızını Arttırma. Bu aşamaların her biri Türkçenin yapısal ve anlamsal özellikleri düşünüldüğünde son derece verimli ve kolayca gerçekleştirilebilir. Bu çalışmada hızlı okuma teknik ve yöntemlerinin Türkçe açısından uygulanabilirliği ve verimliliği ortaya konmaya çalışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hızlı okuma teknikleri, Türkçe, okuma alışkanlığı.

The effort of writing and reading that started primitively has never lost importance from the times of the cave walls to the antelope skin and the papyrus to the computer screen for hundreds of years although technology and science developed each day.

Reading has always been a key of the doors of science to the human brain and virtue to the human heart. In our world of information age, people are in the race of becoming an information society. This race makes people live in a pile of information day by day. So reading, the most common way of obtaining information, is gaining importance every day (Güneş 1993: 11). It is today inevitable to increase the reading rate, to read more and to access more information. Not the people who know but the ones who know more are appreciated.

The concept of reading alone surely is not sufficient to refer to the expectations for the contemporary human. To read doesn't mean to be literate. The concept of reading has its full meaning with gaining a consciousness of reading in all aspects.

Everyone who makes effort in developing the ability to read can improve it and can also enjoy reading.

We live in surrounding world of information; newspapers, books, magazines, school bulletins, detailed work reports, instructions. In short, thousands of sources of information with different content and complexity. Reading and evaluating these fast increases our efficiency, saves our time, improves our communicational skills and enlarges and changes our perspective of working.

Today the new reading profile that is obtained using the speed reading and comprehending techniques slowly replaces the traditional reading style. Traditional reading style includes in many bad habits about reading. These bad habits are not noticed well just because that they are very common among readers and writers in the society. If a classification is carried out according to the frequency observed, it won't be any difficult to understand these habits surround our concept of reading as a poisonous ivy. The roots of the ivy starts from the first reading studies, develops during the primary education and exists throughout people's lives. The main wrong habits of traditional reading are 'reading word by word' and 'reading aloud inside'. The ordinary and slow reading habit forces us to use our strength of muscles while reading. While modern reading profile includes in only the eyes and the brain, the classic reading profile includes in not only the eyes but also the mouth, tongue, lips, palate and the throat; so it causes a process that makes reading difficult. Because that the strength of the muscles is used in this process, it causes getting tired straightaway while reading.

The readers who have insufficient knowledge about speed-reading think that they will read faster by having the old reading profiles and forcing themselves to read fast. However, speed-reading aims at changing the old reading profile completely and replacing it with a new and modern one. We can improve our reading rate and comprehension percentage with the scientific techniques and methods that are used in all developed countries of the world.

In this study we are going to try to open a window to speed-reading with technical approaches and also focus on the suitability of speed-reading studies to Turkish by having a relation between the speed-reading techniques and the systematic structure of Turkish.

The first scientific methods about the technical aspect of the speed-reading were systematically carried out in Sorbonne University in Paris by Emil Javal, the director of the laboratory of the medicine of the eye (Ercan 2003: 1). At the end of these studies, the eye was found out not to decode a word letter by letter but to give a meaning to the shape of a group of letters

and then to the next group and to make these transitions with jumps. So that the movement style of the eye about reading was understood and we had some results about the ways of improvements in the quality of reading and the disciplined movement style. These results will be explained in detail in the following parts of this study.

Speed-reading techniques, which are considered to be an important activity that completes personal development, are defined as a brain exercise that empowers the coordination between the eyes and the brain (Öztahtalı 2007: 14). The action of reading is completed after the brain's giving a meaning to the images that the eyes take as photos. Speed-reading techniques also have a power to increase the span and the quality of the attention.

Here are the phases of the speed-reading process:

1.The Profile of the Regular Reader: 'First reading, then speed-reading.' People first learn to read, then they read to learn. Reading is a purposeful learning process. In this phase, the basic idea is to have the effort to become a regular reader. To speed-read and to start this process, the reader should have a regular reading period and should accept that he needs to read considering reading as a basic need.

The first condition of efficient reading is the reader's motivating himself/herself about reading. He/She makes himself/herself want to read by thinking about what reading will gain him/her. To make the reading environment physically the most convenient, the heat, light and the oxygen must be at the optimum level and the silence is also important for the concentration (Buzan 2001:1). The periods of regular reading will, in a short time, make this repeated action a habit. The reader who now has the reading habit is one step closer to the speed-reading.

2.The Concious Reader Profile: The question of 'How do you read?' is a vague one for unconcious readers. The reading texts in our daily lives are formed with different purposes and in different styles. The concious reader starts the reading time considering the reading purpose. The concious reader profile means being a reader who knows about the way and the speed of reading. The reading purpose may require previewing, analytical reading, synthetical reading or selective reading. The reader implements one or several of them according to the reading purpose. The purpose of speed-reading is not only to increase the speed of reading but also the speed and the quality of comprehension. One of the factors that provides this is the concious reader profile.

3.Increasing the Reading Rate: After the first two phases, it is now to increase the reading rate. The process of reading has two phases:

visualization and sense-making. Speed-reading techniques make the process of visualization faster, so accelerate the processes of perception and comprehension.

In our country most of the readers have two wrong reading habits: Reading word by word and reading aloud inside.

From the days that we start reading on, we try to read starting from the first word and also visualizing each word respectively. So we have to spend time and effort for each word. Unfortunately this effort is to read each syllable for some readers and this makes reading a torture for them rather than an enjoyment. So we get tired in a short time. Reading turns out to be an activity we don't like doing and we get apart from the reading activity. Reading word by word or syllable by syllable affects the comprehension negatively as well as decreasing the reading rate. The centre of comprehension in the middle brain functions as a storage during the visualization processes. The total capacity of this store is only three poses of photos. When the person who reads word by word visualizes the third word, the store is full and the brain automatically tries to make sense of the general meaning of the sentence using only the three words; but the brain can't succeed this because there are not only three words in every sentence in Turkish. After this sense-making trouble, the reader tries to jump back and this causes the visualization of the already visualized words again and again. This decreases the reading rate by 40%.

Another wrong reading habit is the repetition of each visualized word by reading aloud inside. This is repeated by lips at primary school, by throat at secondary school and adults repeat it in the mind. This naturally limits the reading rate to the speed of speaking. This is 150 words per minute when the average speed of speaking considered. Thus the reading rate of the reader who reads word by word and aloud inside is just limited to 150 words per minute. This is far below our natural ability and capacity of reading. One of the aims of speed-reading techniques is to make the reader get rid of these wrong reading habits and use his/her natural reading ability and capacity.

An ordinary reader's potential of comprehending in the cognitive process differs from 500 to 800 words. A slow reader's reading rate is so lower than his/her natural potential that this reader tries to fill in the gap by repeating the already visualized words. S/he thinks that s/he will understand the text better if s/he repeats them aloud inside his/her mind. This is only a limited and deceptive result that is caused by the repetition. Reading slowly also causes the reader's not concentrating on the text sufficiently and distracting him/her from reading so the reader may not be paying attention not only the text but also the other things. This is the reason of not

remembering anything at the end of the text. Our minds are just like active and naughty children. It is difficult to make them focus on one thing for a long time. The dynamics of the human mind is in contrast with slowness. So slow readers have more trouble than efficient readers in the process of comprehension. The slower the visualization process of reading that the eyes convey to the brain, the less interested the mind is in text. Very fast operating brain starts to deal with some other things like daydreaming after finishing the evaluation of the slow input of the reading just because of the insufficient flow of the input. So when the slow reader is at the end of the text – if s/he is unable to fully concentrate on the text- s/he can't just recall many things although the reading process was in progress.

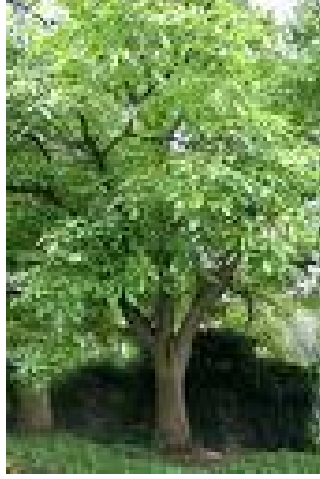
The way to get rid of the habits of reading word by word or syllable by syllable is to read in chunks, that is to try to visualize the words in meaningful groups of words and comprehend them in this way (Maviş 2000: 99). Preventing the reading aloud inside also depends on the practice of the former. When the reading rate reaches about 400 words per minute, this inside reading automatically lessens and then vanishes.

Speed-reading is based on two basic techniques in all languages:

a.Increasing the Speed of Visualization: The physiological structure of the eyes shows us that the visualization process is performed mechanically by muscles. This situation results in being able to make the visualization two times faster when the muscles around the eyes are regularly activated with some particular exercises. It is a necessity to do the exercises that provide this regularity to visualize more clearly and faster (Özsoy – Akçamete 1996: 15). This requires the eyes to have jumps on the lines periodically and in a disciplined way, thus the visualization gets faster, so does the reading. In this exercises, the quality of the visualization is provided by the focusing exercises. This disciplined practices will just make the eye gain a reflex of behaviour against its jumping-backs.

b.Enlarging the Eyesight: The active eyesight in daily life is about 160 degrees. When we learn to read, our eyesight narrows with our effort of reading word by word. This technical method aims at having more than one word in our active eyesight and making the reading process faster. Reading in chunks provides us the exercise to enlarge the eyesight. By reading in chunks, the comprehension troubles will be avoided as well. With the help of the focus point that was put between the lines, the active eyesight can be enlarged horizontally and vertically. While the reader is decoding the meaning of one line, s/he can also decode another line that is inside the active eyesight. This develops the ability of comprehension.

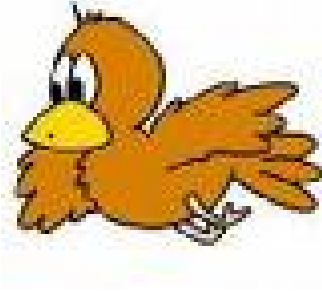
In the first picture, we see a reader's undisciplined eye movements; and in the second there is a reader profile with disciplined eye movements and with the activity of reading in chunks.



Picture 1. Ağaç



Picture 2. Ceviz



Picture 3. Kuş

Speed reading should be considered as a process and it shouldn't be forgotten this process requires a continuous effort. One should have a constant effort without retreating till reaching the aim.

Turkish is quite suitable to speed reading techniques and methods in terms of its structural and semantic qualities. The technical principles of speed reading are used in the same way all over the world. Because the physiological structure of the eyes and the brain of the human beings is the same. Turkish is dynamic in terms of the structure. The only way of analyzing the meaning of a word in Turkish is to do this based on the

sentence that the word is in. Polysemy prevents us from giving a meaning to the words by one by one in Turkish and having the general meaning of the sentence with this attitude. The words in Turkish have meaningful chunks in the sentence. The true meanings of the words emerge in this meaningful chunks. Trying to visualize and make sense word by word makes it difficult to comprehend the judgement of the sentence as a whole. However, the basic principles of speed reading - reading in chunks and enlarging the eyesight - are based on visualizing the words in meaningful chunks. The term of component in sentences also facilitates the activity of reading in chunks. The components of a sentence also form meaningful chunks. Phrases, idioms, proverbs and components form meaningful chunks. The reader's visualizing the words considering these meaningful chunks- that is to read in chunks or photographic reading – will increase the reading rate and make it easier to comprehend. For example:

These words' visualization and making sense do not form a composition in the mind. Because when the words in Turkish are interpreted one by one, the first meaning of the word is thought of as an image in the brain. A slow reader's or a word-by-word reader's movement on the line is just the same way. Interpretation gets difficult. In contrast, an efficient reader visualize the words in meaningful chunks and interprets the sentence more easily and faster. Now let's put the walnut (ceviz) on the tree (ağaç). We have'a walnut tree (ceviz ağacı)' anymore. Now let's make the bird (kuş) land on the branch of the tree. Here we a meaningful composition : 'The bird on the walnut tree (Ceviz ağacındaki kuş)'.

(Meriç and Yusuf greeted the bird on the walnut tree.)

Meriç ve Yusuf ceviz ağacındaki kuşa selam verdi.

In the sample sentence above, the slow reader will try to proceed by visualizing he words by one by and will have eight jumps then. After the third word, the slow reader will waste time and energy by having jumping-backs. On the other hand, the efficient reader will read in chunks by using the semantic and structural units of Turkish like the subject, coplement and the verb. Thus, the reader will decrease the number of the jumps saving energy, will also save time for each word and read faster, will gather the true meanings of the words in a chunk in one photo frame so that the reader will strengthen and accelerate the compehension.

(Meriç and Yusuf greeted the bird on the walnut tree.)

Meriç ve Yusuf | ceviz ağacındaki kuşa | selam verdi.

In conclusion, when the structural and semantic features of Turkish are analyzed, it is observed that the technical methods that are known as speed-reading all over the world give us positive results. It is observed that the reading rate is increased and the comprehension is facilitated when the reading in chunks, or photographic reading, which is the basis of the speed-reading, is applied to the phrases in Turkish. The reinforcement of the visualization by appropriate exercises will increase the reading rate. When reading is no longer an activity with difficulty and when reading is made to work, it will be an enjoyment for many readers and the reading rate in Turkey will get higher as well as the attitude towards reading will be more positive.

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