



The Effect of Comic Strips on Efl Learners' Reading Motivation Çizgi Romanların Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğrenen Öğrencilerin Okuma Motivasyonu Üzerindeki Etkisi

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Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye'deki İngilizce ders kitaplarında ihmal edilen bir tür olan çizgi romanların niteliğine ışık tutmak ve okuma materyali olarak çizgi roman kullanımının ortaokul seviyesinde İngilizce öğrenen Türk öğrencilerin üzerindeki muhtemel etkisini ortaya koymaktır. Bu araştırma için, ortaöğretim seviyesinde İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen Türk öğrencilerden iki grup seçildi. Bu iki grubun homojenliğini belirlemek için Nelson Seviye testi uygulandı. Deneysel gruptaki öğrencilerin okuma motivasyonlarının çizgi roman okuma ile yüksek oranda ilişkili olduğu bulunmuştur. Bu çalışmanın bulguları, dil derslerinde kullanılan okuma türleri ile öğrencilerin ders materyalini okuma konusundaki motivasyonu arasındaki ilişki üzerine yeni bir ışık tutabilir. Bu bulgular, eğlenceli okuma materyallerinin geliştirilip İngilizce ders kitaplarında kullanılması için melzeme geliştiricilere yeni bir bakış açısı sunması bakımından önemli öneriler içermektedir.

Abstract

The aim of this study is to shed light on the nature of comic strips - an ignored genre in English language textbooks in Turkey - and to assess the probable effect of using comics as reading materials on Turkish intermediate EFL learners' motivation to read. Two groups of Turkish teenage intermediate EFL learners were selected for this study. A Nelson Proficiency Test was administered in order to determine the homogeneity of the two groups. It was found that the experimental group students' reading motivation was highly correlated with reading comics. The findings of this study may shed new light on the relationship between the kind of reading genres used in language classes and the students' motivation to read the materials. These findings have important implications for offering new insights to material developers for the development and inclusion of enjoyable reading materials in English textbooks.

Anahtar Kelimeler

karikatür
çizgi roman
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okuduğunu anlama

Keywords

comics
comic strips
motivation
reading comprehension

1. Introduction

The term ‘motivation’ is often used by teachers and students alike to explain any success or failure in second language learning (Dornyei & Csizer, 1998). The social, and psychological perspectives have described “motivation as a composite of intensity and orientation” that correlates respectively with the expanded efforts and the learners’ aims (Belmechri & Hummel, 1998). As cited by Belmechri and Hummel motivation denotes to a union of the “learners’ attitude, aspiration, and effort” regard to learning the language”. Motivation can be evaluated by desire to learn a language, attitudes of learning a language, and the motivational intensity (Gardner, Day & MacIntyre, 1992).

In the comprehensive research about L2 motivation, as cited by Dornyei (2003), Gardner and Lambert (1959) considered second language as an effectuate factor in multicultural settings and between modified ethnolinguistic communities. They reviewed the motivation to learn the language of the other community to be a key force in charge of intensifying or hampering intercultural communication and integration.

Since the last decade, there has been a remarkable improvement on pedagogic attentiveness of second language (L2) motivation (Dornyei, 1998; Oxford, 2004). McIntosh and Noels recorded that a main skeleton, that has given birth to a lot of researches on L2 motivation is Gardner’s theory of motivation in second language acquisition (2004). It has proved that motivation has a direct act on L2 accomplishment and is itself allegedly effected by a number of other social-psychological variables. One of these variables that was subject to considerable heed in the L2 literature is the learners’ positioning or basis for learning the L2 (Gardner 1985, 1988; Gardner, Day, & MacIntyre 1992). Socio-Educational Model of SLA, examined motivation as envisaged interconnected variables, specifically, “the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning a language plus favorable attitudes toward learning a language” (Gardner, 1985).

Gardner, Smythe, and Clement (1979) managed substantial study on attitude and motivation and their correlation with the linguistic performance of the learners. They advocatd that students who are psychologically concieved for acquiring a different community’s symbolic elements and transferring pieces of that culture to their life style are more successful. In another study (Gardner 1985; Gardner, Tremblay, & Masgoret 1994) put in words that motivation is dissimilar to orientation since a student might reveal a specific orientation but not be highly motivated to reach that goal. Besides, despite using the same terminology (i.e. instrumental and integrative) for motivation as well as for orientation by researchers, motivation reflects the power to achieve the goal considered in the orientation (Belmerchi & Hummel, 1998).

In their comprehensive investigation of motivational multiplicity Guthrie, Hoa, Wigfield, Tonks, Humenick, Nicole and Littles (2007) enlarged the scope of last studies by involving “motivation constructs, text genres, specific versus general contexts, and the self-versus-other evidence sources” about motivation. They anticipated the effectiveness of this multiplicity on the recognition of predectors that show reading’s improvement. They procured “pre- and post-interviewed data, teacher ratings, motivation on self-reports, and reading comprehension scores” (2007). Interviews manifested semi-independtness of motivation constructs. Students’ reading motivation for narrative and information texts, self-reports and other motivation reports were not highly associated, but the situated and general reading motivations were correlated. As maintained by multiple regression analyses, interview-based coding of motivation, and the situated motivation for information books predicted general motivation growth.

One of the main correspondents in learners’ reading success is the amount that they enjoy in school and while reading (Cox & Guthrie, 2001). As a result, identifying the factors that predict the amount of reading is important. According to literature review motivation, is one of the factors that may be awaited to predict reading success (Cox & Guthrie, 2001).

As stated by Worthy, Moorman and Turner (1999) research about the importance of interest in learning suggests that students who have access to materials of interest are more likely to read and thus to improve their reading achievement and attitudes. Latha (1999) also believes that since persuading children to read may be a major problem, teachers need to use every available resource for motivating young readers. He notes that building a schedule for a reading program may start with an informal classroom atmosphere. In the same line, Dornyei and Csizer (1998) believed that motivation is one of the most important factors that determine the rate and success of L2 achievement. They note that it provides the primary impetus to initiate learning the L2 and later as the driving force sustains the long and often odious learning process. Latha (1999) also mentions that one of the most difficult tasks of a language teacher is to foster a positive attitude toward reading. Unfortunately, due to time limits and other constraints, teachers are often unable to activity encourage children to seek entertainment and information in reading materials (Latha, 1999). Baker and Wigfield (1999) in their comprehensive study on reading motivation conclude that reading motivation is multidimensional and should be regarded as seen in research and practice. Hong-Yun and Ping (2007) as part of their suggestion to English teachers

emphasize that “teachers should help to strengthen the students’ reading motivation with an emphasize on how reading comprehension may well lead to future professional success” (Hong-Yun & Ping, 2007, p.19).

Çelik (2004) investigated the role of humor on the students of Hacettepe University to examine ways of overcoming negative effects (i.e. anxiety, boredom). Razi (2005) also, investigated the influence of cultural schema and reading activities on reading comprehension. According to Wright (1979), students enjoy reading comics and comic strips have a potential motivational value. He states that since students already have the motivation to use cartoon materials, they should not be ignored as a potential aid in the classroom (Wright, 1979). In the same line, reading surveys conducted by Davis and Brember (1993); and Worthy, Moorman and Turner (1999) revealed that comics are among the top three choices of reading materials for primary aged students. Accordingly, Hong-Yun and Ping (2007) in their interesting study attempted to identify the major factors influencing EFL reading comprehension. The findings of their study indicated that reading comprehension is composed of a number major components. Among the major components of reading comprehension, the four factors of “textual schema”, “vocabulary guessing”, “vocabulary noticing” and “*motivation*” are significantly correlated with reading comprehension” (Hong-Yun & Ping, 2007, p.14).

Therefore, comic strips with their funny nature and pictorial narrative design motivate students to read. So, motivation plays a paramount role in the students’ educational life Generally, when teachers provide students with the materials and topics that are of their interest, they will be more motivated to read and learn.

Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study

Although reading is of such a paramount importance in second and foreign language teaching-learning process, the reading materials used in most of the present textbooks in Turkey are not interesting and motivating. Almost always most of the EFL learners complain about the never-ending task of reading long texts with a boring and tiring format (krashen, 2004). Therefore, our teachers and material-developers by considering approaches such as Pinsonneault (2002) in using authentic materials for motivating students to promote their reading should try to find and apply some new reading texts that appeal to students to motivate them for reading more. The suggestion is that since comics are often more interesting than ordinary and uninteresting textbooks, using them in language classes as a reading material, among other benefits, may also help to provide a low-stress environment that encourages and motivates learning.

Having the aforementioned points in mind, in the present study the researcher tried to thoroughly examine the effects of comic strips on Turkish EFL learners’ reading motivation. Therefore it is the aim of this study to argue that EFL/ESL teachers and material developers need to begin to use incorporating the genre of comic strips as an alternative multimodal form of text in EFL/ESL pedagogy.

Research Questions

This study was motivated by two research questions and tried to find answers to them:

- Is there any difference between EFL learners’ reading motivation in the pre- and post-test phases?
- Is there any relationship between the use of comic strips as reading materials and EFL learners’ motivation to read?

Null Hypotheses

H01: There is not any difference between EFL learners’ reading motivation in the pre- test and post-test phases.

H02: There is not any relationship between the use of comic strips as reading materials and EFL learners’ motivation to read.

2. Methodology

The participants of this study were two intact groups from a school in Turkey. They were 91 male and female students in fifth and sixth grade between the ages of 11-12. They were from the same English backgrounds since they had the same teachers, textbooks, and the same educational settings. To ensure the homogeneity of the participants, the students were selected based on the results of a proficiency test (Flower & Coe, 1976) and assigned into two groups as the experimental and the control groups. In this way experimental group were exposed to the comic strips as the reading material, and control group only read the same texts without the comics. All of students in the classess had to participate in the study. Applying comic strips to reading text as a motivation tool considered as the treatment of this study.

A questionnaire was administered at the beginning and at the end of the treatment as a pre-test and post-test. In this way the researcher was able to measure and compare the experimental and control group students’ motivation to read in

a foreign language and also compare the change of their motivation level in the first session with that of the last session. The data for the study was obtained from the Motivational Questionnaire developed by Mori (2002).

The questionnaire was a 20-item 7-point questionnaire on a Likert-type scale, measuring how foreign language students feel about reading. According to Mori (2002) the questionnaire is a reliable one. She calculated the internal consistency estimate of reliability for the questionnaire, and Cronbachs' coefficient Alpha was 0.93 which indicates that the questionnaire is satisfactorily reliable in terms of its internal consistency. The questionnaire was translated into Turkish by a translator and then was proof-read by the advisor in order to avoid possible ambiguity in understanding and guarantee a greater comprehension of the questions and more spontaneous responses.

Each item in this questionnaire described how students feel about reading in a foreign language. The students were to read each sentence and decide whether they agree or disagree. It is clear that there was no right or wrong answer. The main purpose underlying the questionnaire was that we only wanted to know how the students feel about reading. The students were asked to rate each reason on Likert -type 7-point scale anchored at one end by "strongly disagree" and at the other by "strongly agree". In this way the lowest score for each dimension was 1 and the highest score was 7.

Data Analysis

In order to check the difference between the experimental group students' performance on Motivational Questionnaire (MQ) (Mori, 2002) in the pre and post-test phases, at the pre-test session the questionnaire was administered to the students in both experimental and control group to assess how the students feel about reading in a foreign language. The researcher collected the data to measure the students' primary level of reading motivation before the treatment. At the end of the treatment and as a post-test, the students in both the experimental and the control groups were exposed to the same "Motivational Questionnaire" administered at the beginning of the study. In this way, two sets of scores on the motivational questionnaire were collected to compare the students' level of motivation and assess the probable changes of the participants' motivation during the course.

The collected raw data was fed into SPSS. The dependent variable (motivation) was measured repeatedly on the same participants in two different times (at the beginning and at the end of the study). Therefore, the use of a within-subjects design (also called a repeated measures design) was required. Following tables show the statistical description of the experimental groups' performances on the pre- and post-test motivation (Table 1, 2, 3, and 4).

Table 1. Between - Subjects Factors

	N
Without comic (.00)	47
With comic (1.00)	44

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics. Dependent Variable: Pre-test

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
.00	4.2396	.99523	47
1.00	4.9034	.89873	44
Total	4.5593	1.00211	91

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics. Dependent Variable: Post-test

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
.00	4.2596	1.06647	47
1.00	5.0875	.78866	44
Total	4.6599	1.02546	91

In the following table bold numbers are related to analysis:

Table 4. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects. Dependent Variable: post-test

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	82.785a	2	41.392	307.226	.000
Intercept	.894	1	.894	6.632	.012
Pretest	67.208	1	67.208	498.833	.000
group1	.963	1	.963	7.151	.009
Error	11.856	88	.135		
Total	2070.667	91			
Corrected Total	94.641	90			

a. *R Squared* = .875 (*Adjusted R Squared* = .872)

As the tables indicate there is a significant difference in the students' level of motivation to read at beginning and at the end of the study. This indicates that the mean motivation score on the post-test ($M= 5.0875$, $Std= 0.78866$) was significantly higher than that of the pre-test ($M= 4.9034$, $Std= 0.89873$). Consequently, the findings rejected the first null hypothesis stating "There is not any difference between EFL learners' reading motivation in the pre- and post-test phases".

Also, the finding of the study rejected the second null hypothesis stating "There is not any relationship between the use of comic strips as reading materials and EFL learners' motivation to read". Therefore, it can be concluded that reading comic strips has a positive relationship with L2 learners' motivation to read.

3. Findings

The results of statistical analyses indicated a rather strong correlation between reading by comic strips and students' motivation to read. The students who had worked with comic strips as their reading materials rated high levels of motivation while the same result was not reported for the students who had worked with texts without comic strips.

Krashens' Affective Filter Hypothesis states that a student learns best when he or she is not enduring a lot of stress (Krashen, 2004). According to Pinsonneault the authentic materials promote the reduction of stress through using materials that motivate and excite the students, thus lowering their affective filter. He states that while learning, instead of becoming afraid and stressed, the students became happy and animated. This is because the authentic materials method of L2 learning uses materials that promote learning through caricatures, cartoons, comics and children's texts, which make learning fun for the students. The class in turn becomes an enjoyable and stress-free environment for the young L2 learners (Pinsonneault, 2008).

The findings of this study shed light on the importance of using interesting, engaging and fun-to-use materials in English textbooks, especially reading materials. As mentioned before, English teachers are almost always on the lookout for new and interesting ways to stimulate their language learners, to increase their motivation to learn, and finally to enhance their learning.

Some of the most important pedagogical applications of comic strips touched during the study are as follow:

- The most basic effect that comic strips have on our classes is that with their funny nature, comics add an element of fun to our English language classes.
- Comic strips help to provide a low stress and fresh environment in the classroom which leads to more effective learning.
- Comic strips motivate students to read more and go along the story up to the last panel.
- While reading comic strips the students use pictures and images along with the texts to make a visual understanding of the story in their mind.
- Comics with their wide range of topics can be used to introduce and discuss different social, economic, or environmental problems facing the world today.

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