



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN READINESS AND READING AND WRITING PERFORMANCES

HAZIRBULUNUŞLUK İLE OKUMA VE YAZMA BAŞARIMLARI ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİ

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this study is to explore the possible relationships between the readiness and reading and writing performances of a group of children who are first graders in an elementary school in Turkey. The states of children in terms of school readiness, sound-letter relationships, and phonemic awareness were determined individually during the first week of school. In order to assess the children's reading and writing performances, some tests were conducted at three different times throughout the process of initial reading and writing instruction. To explore whether there is a relationship between these variables, multiple linear regression statistics were used. Results confirm that readiness, school readiness in particular, is a significant factor in students' reading and writing performances.

Keywords: performance, readiness, reading and writing.

ÖZET: Bu araştırmanın amacı, Türkiye'de ilköğretim okullarının birinci sınıfında okuyan bir grup çocuğun hazırbulunuşlukları ile okuma ve yazma başarımları arasında bir ilişki olup olmadığını belirlemektir. Okulun ilk haftasında çocukların okul olgunluğu, harf-ses ilişkisi ve ses farkındalığı (phonemic awareness) bakımından durumları bireysel olarak belirlenmiştir. Daha sonra, uygulanan ilkökuma-yazma öğretimi süreci içinde, çocukların okuma ve yazma başarımlarını belirlemek için üç farklı zamanda ölçüm yapılmıştır. Hazırbulunuşluk ile okuma ve yazma başarımları arasında bir ilişki olup olmadığını belirlemek amacıyla çoklu doğrusal regresyon istatistiği yapılmıştır. Bulgular, hazırbulunuşluğun, özellikle okul olgunluğunun okuma ve yazma başarımlarında belirleyici bir değişken olduğunu ortaya koymuştur.

Anahtar sözcükler: başarımlar, hazırbulunuşluk, okuma ve yazma.

1. INTRODUCTION

Performances can be defined as actions, processes or outcomes delivered making use of one's knowledge, abilities and skills that can be identified and measured and which involve an appropriate weighting among the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains for the purpose. The factors that are influential in children's academic performances can be listed as follows: children's developmental progress with respect to various domains, attitudes, interests, needs, characteristics of learning environment, whether their families are supportive of school learning, memory, attention, and motivation (Li, & Ferdinandi, 2007; Ziegler, Dresel, & Stoeger, 2008). One of these factors is readiness.

Readiness is the state of having the necessary characteristics to accomplish a task without encountering difficulties. Readiness includes at least five domains: health and physical development, emotional well-being and social competence, approaches to learning, communication skills and cognition and general knowledge ("*National Education Goals Panel*", 1992). The concept of readiness is a controversial issue. How much biological processes taking place during the growth of an individual versus his experiences with his environment -family, friends, and so on- are influential in determining the development and learning of an individual has been the issue of the debate. Some highlight the influence of internal development on learning claiming that the child is more or less enabled to benefit from formal instruction throughout the time passed during his growth. Some, on the other hand, emphasize the importance of experience and believe that both natural growth processes and experience play an important role in children's learning, as almost every individual has an inborn disposition to learn ("*The Concept of Readiness*", 2007).

The amount and rate of learning children demonstrate in the first few years of life are impressive. Long before children go to school learning takes place; and most children's being able to

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understand and speak the language they are exposed to at an age of three or four is just one example of this. Yet, there are some factors which affect what children learn, how they learn, and how much they learn. Some of the most significant of those factors are the child's physical well-being, and his emotional and cognitive relationships with his family or those who are around him ("The Concept of Readiness", 2007). Readiness to learn, generally, has been thought of as the level of development at which an individual (of any age) is ready to undertake the learning of specific materials (Kagan, 1990).

Two of the basic concepts of this study are reading and writing. Reading is one's identifying the letters he sees; his assigning a meaning to the words formed by the combination of letters, and to sentences, and the text as a whole; and his interpreting what he understands comparing it with his previous knowledge. Writing is one's specifying, in his mind, what he wants to express and what words he will use to convey it, his recalling the sounds that form these words and the letters that correspond to these sounds, and his illustrating these letters with symbols. Reading and writing are skills which involve cognitive, physical, psychomotor, affective, and social processes. Both reading and writing involve cognitive components and functions such as intelligence, attention, perception, memory, comparing and contrasting, differentiating, categorizing, analyzing, synthesizing, and creativity; physical characteristics such as growth, maturity, sight, hearing, speaking; psychomotor characteristics such as hand-eye and nerve-muscle coordination; affective traits such as motivation, trust, self-confidence, independence, and initiative; social components such as modeling, and being supported (Stone, Silliman, Ehren, & Apel, 2004). Some of these characteristics depend on inheritance, some depend on environment. Nevertheless, it should be noted that inherent and environmental characteristics affect each other in a positive or negative way.

What is readiness in terms of reading and writing? Reflecting upon their review of the research literature on reading and writing, Teale and Sulzby indicate that between the late 1800s and the 1920s, only the elementary school years were subject to research. It was not until the 1920s that educators began to take the early childhood and kindergarten years into consideration as a "period of preparation" for reading and writing. Then in 1925, the first explicit reference to the concept of reading readiness was made by the National Committee on Reading ("Understanding Literacy Development in Young Children", May, 2007).

With the introduction of this concept, two different lines of research on preparing children for reading emerged. Some thought maturation was the most important factor leading to reading readiness ("nature"), whereas others believed readiness could be accelerated by means of appropriate experiences ("nurture"). Between the late 1950s and 1960s there was a shift in the dominant theory from reading readiness as maturation toward readiness as the outcome of experience ("Understanding Literacy Development in Young Children", May, 2007).

Traditional reading readiness attitudes and practices began to be questioned in the 1970s.

"One of the pioneers in examining young children's reading and writing was Marie Clay. Clay first introduced the term emergent literacy to describe the behaviors used by young children with books and when reading and writing, even though the children could not actually read and write in the conventional sense. Whereas the concept of reading readiness suggested that there was a point in time when children were ready to learn to read and write, emergent literacy suggested that there were continuities in children's literacy development between early literacy behaviors and those displayed once children could read independently" ("Understanding Literacy Development in Young Children", May, 2007).

It has been found that in terms of literacy development during early childhood, the functions of literacy -such as being aware of that letters constitute words and that words have meaning- are as significant as the forms of literacy -such as identifying specific letters or words-. "Children have been found to learn about written language as they actively engage with adults in reading and writing situations; as they explore print on their own; and as they observe others around them engaged in literacy activities" ("Understanding Literacy Development in Young Children", May, 2007). Early

years are of great importance as they lay the foundation of literacy and school success. The skills and attitudes having a major role in success are developed during the early years of childhood. Their daily experiences provide children with the opportunity to build up their oral language skills, gain familiarity with the forms and functions of written language, practice their emerging literacy skills and improve their cognitive and social abilities. Acquisition of these skills and knowledge takes place in a variety of formal and informal settings, including the home (Purcell-Gates, 1996; Strickland & Taylor, 1989), child care programs (Bryant, Burchinal, Lau, & Sparling, 1994; Dickinson & Smith, 1994) and other community settings (Kuby & Aldridge, 2004). With regard to reading and writing the concept of readiness refers to the early childhood experiences that promote the child's learning to read and write. These experiences can be listed as follows: identifying the letters of the alphabet, sound-letter relationships, knowledge of word, knowledge of sentence, phonemic awareness, distinguishing between similarities and differences, and copying (Dubow & Ippolotio, 1994; Emig, Moore, & Scarupa, 2001; Aram & Biron, 2004; Boz, 2004; Karaman, 2006; Coyne & Harn, 2006; "Early School Readiness", 2007; Hempenstall, 2007; Neuman, 2007; Sensenbaugh, 2007).

1.1. Purpose of Study

The general aim of this study is to determine whether there is a relationship between readiness and reading and writing performances. The specific aim is to explore the possible relationships between the readiness and reading and writing performances of a group of children who are first graders in an elementary school in Turkey. In the study the concept of readiness refers to the reading and writing readiness. The scope of reading and writing readiness is restricted to school readiness, sound-letter relationships, and phonemic awareness.

When they enter school, children already have a wide range of knowledge and skills –physical, social, emotional, linguistic, and cognitive-. The children who enter school at a disadvantage because of the fact that they do not have as much knowledge and skills as their classmates do encounter greater challenges throughout their school life if they fail to catch up (Entwisle & Alexander, 1993). Cognitive development and early literacy are significant factors for children's school readiness and early success in school. However, other areas of development, such as health, social development, enthusiasm, and so on may be of equal or greater importance, as school readiness involves much more than cognitive and literacy skills ("*Special Early Childhood Report*", 1997). The findings of the research carried out by Good, Simmons, & Smith (1998) confirm that the children who start school without having the necessary reading and writing readiness skills experience low academic success. Beller (1983) also emphasizes that the children who have gone to kindergarten and prepared for school are more successful in first grade language courses at elementary school compared to those who have not received pre-school education.

Letter identification is believed to promote reading and writing. Some educators think that including early, explicit, and intensive instruction of sound-letter relationships in the instruction in conventional literacy is of crucial importance to develop children's comprehension and decoding skills ("*Critical Issue: Addressing the Literacy Needs of Emergent and Early Readers*", 2007). Similarly, according to Arnol (2007), letter identification is an early literacy skill that shows a strong relationship to future reading achievement. How much a child knows about alphabet letters when he enters kindergarten is a strong predictor of reading ability in the 10th grade.

Phonemic awareness is an important factor that influences reading and writing performances (Aktan, 1996). This concept comprises some skills, such as identifying sounds, distinguishing between the same and different sounds, knowing the new word which is formed by adding a new sound to the word or removing a sound from it, noticing the sounds of words (the first, middle, the last, etc. sound). Phonological awareness – awareness of the sounds and parts of language – can be crucial in predicting later literacy learning as well (Bryant, Maclean, Bradley, & Crossland, 1990; Maclean, Bryant, & Bradley 1987). On the basis of the research carried out, Cunningham (1990) also indicates that the children receiving phonics instruction have better reading ability than those who do not. Grossen (1997) stresses that it is necessary to enable children to develop phonemic awareness prior to reading instruction.

2. METHODS

2.1. Participants and Procedures

In this study descriptive method is used. 90 first-graders starting school in four different classes of an elementary school constitute the study population. Out of 90 students, who took the first test initially, 13 were excluded from the population, as they did not take at least one of the tests conducted until the end of the process, thus leaving the study population a total of 77 students. In order to determine whether there is a relationship between readiness and reading and writing performances the following procedures were carried out:

All the students received pre-school education for a year. The pre-school program included cognitive, affective, social, and psychomotor activities that promoted the students' readiness. During the first week of school, before starting formal initial reading and writing instruction, the states of children in terms of school readiness, sound-letter relationships, and phonemic awareness were determined individually. In order to assess these, three means of measurement were applied.

2.2. Instruments

To predict school readiness of the children Metropolitan Readiness Test (Form R) was used. The test, developed by Hildreth, Griffiths and Mc Gauvran, was translated into Turkish by Oktay and the items that do not comply with the Turkish culture were altered. It was ensured that the test had criterion validity and construct validity (Öner, 2006, p.235-237). The test applied is composed of six components: word comprehension, sentence comprehension, general knowledge, matching, copying, and numbers. "Numbers" component of the test was not included in the application of this study. The test was administered beforehand to a different group of 80 students with similar characteristics to those in the study group. The reliability of the test was found to be .75. 1 point was assigned for each correct answer to the items in the test, and the total score constituted school readiness score (maximum value of 76). This study was done in groups of six students, and three examiners conducted the study in each group.

To examine sound-letter relationships, 29 letters of the Turkish alphabet written in Times New Roman, 20-point font were shown to students one by one, and the students were asked to utter the sound corresponding to it. 1 point was assigned for each correct answer, and the sum of the points constituted the sound-letter relationships score (maximum value of 29). Each child responded to the items in this study individually.

To assess phonemic awareness, a test adapted from Yopp-Singer Test (Yoop, 1995) was applied. To this end, three two-phoneme words and three three-phoneme words were selected. The words were read aloud to the students one by one, and they were asked to say the beginning and ending sounds of two-phoneme words and the beginning, middle, and ending sounds of three-phoneme words. The reliability of the test was found to be .78. 1 point was assigned for each correct answer, and the sum of the points constituted the phonemic awareness score (maximum value of 15). Each child responded to the items in this study individually.

The students began to receive formal instruction in reading and writing at school. Phonics-based sentence method was applied in initial reading and writing instruction. Beginning with the introduction of the sounds, reading and writing exercises were carried out in a balanced way. The same initial reading and writing instruction method was applied in the four classes. The class teachers planned the instruction process together, and they constantly collaborated with each other throughout the implementation of the plan as well.

In order to assess the children's reading and writing performances, after the formal initial reading and writing instruction began to be given, some tests were conducted at three different times throughout the instruction process. To determine students' reading performance, three different tests adapted from Reading Performance Test (Lerikkanen, Rasku-Puttonen, Aunola, & Nurmi, 2004, p. 146) were used. Reading performance was tested through measures of word reading and reading comprehension. The contents of the reading performance tests were designed considering the letters

that the students had already learned. The first test comprised 23 discrete words and a short, two-sentence text. The reliability of the test was found to be .92. The students were asked to read the words and the sentences aloud, and 1 point was assigned for each word or sentence read accurately. The text was constructed in a way that included the answers to the five questions starting with, “Who?”, “What?”, “How?”, and “Why?”. The students were asked to read the text and answer the questions orally in the order that the questions were asked. 1 point was assigned for each correct answer to the questions. The sum of the points constituted the reading performance score (maximum value of 30). This study was carried out with students individually.

The second test was composed of 20 discrete words, matching sentences with pictures, and drawing pictures following a written four-sentence instruction. The reliability of the test was found to be .92. First, the students were asked to read each discrete word aloud. 1 point was assigned for each word that the student read accurately. Then, the students were asked to match 9 sentences written in one column on the page with 6 pictures in jumbled order in the second column. 1 point was assigned for each correct matching. Finally, the students were given a text of instructions composed of 4 sentences. Each sentence described a feature that the students were required to include in their drawing after reading the instructions. 1 point was assigned for each correct drawing whose feature was described in the instructions. The sum of the points constituted the reading performance score (maximum value of 30). This study was carried out with students individually.

The third test consisted of a text and 14 multiple choice questions about the text. In order to determine whether the text was appropriate in terms of the students’ level, six field specialists were consulted; and they stated that the text was appropriate for first graders’ level. The multiple choice test was administered to another group consisting of 64 first graders, and the reliability of the test was found to be .73. 1 point was assigned for each correct answer to the questions (maximum value of 14). This study was done in groups of twenty students, and three examiners administered the test in each group. The sum of the points obtained from the reading tests, which were conducted at three different times throughout the process of initial reading and writing instruction, constituted the reading performance score (maximum value of 74).

To determine the students’ writing performance, three different dictation tasks were used at three different times throughout the process of initial reading and writing instruction. The first dictation text was composed of 12 discrete words. The words were read aloud one after another at an appropriate pace and the students were asked to write them. 1 point was assigned for each word that the students wrote accurately (maximum value of 12). This study was carried out with students individually. The second dictation text was composed of 20 discrete words. The words were read aloud one by one at an appropriate pace and the students were asked to write them. 1 point was assigned for each accurately written word (maximum value of 20). This study was carried out with students individually. The third dictation text was composed of a 50-word short story. The text was read aloud at an appropriate pace and the students were asked to write it. 1 point was assigned for each word that the students wrote accurately (maximum value of 50). This study was carried out with groups of 20 students. The sum of the points obtained from the dictation activities, which were carried out at three different times throughout the process of initial reading and writing instruction, constituted the writing performance score (maximum value of 82).

2.3. Analysis

SPSS 11,5 package program was used to analyze the data. To explore whether there is a relationship between reading and writing performances and school readiness, sound-letter relationships, and phonemic awareness, multiple linear regression statistics were used.

3. RESULTS

To assess the relationship between the students' readiness and reading and writing performances, multiple regression analysis was applied. Before studying the results of the multiple regression analysis, whether the correlation between the predictor variables and the dependent variable was linear and whether the scores follow a normal distribution were investigated. The correlation was found to be linear and the scores proved to be normally distributed.

The results of the multiple regression analysis for the prediction of reading performance in relation to school readiness, sound-letter relationships and phonemic awareness are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis for The Prediction of Reading Performance

Variable	B	Std. Error	β	t	p	Zero-order	Partial
Constant	-12.509	13.269	—	-0.943	0.349	—	—
School readiness	0.785	0.233	0.346	3.367	0.001	0.494	0.367
Sound-letter	0.371	0.199	0.207	1.869	0.066	0.415	0.214
Phonemic awareness	1.002	0.513	0.234	1.953	0.055	0.497	0.223
R= 0.611	$R^2= 0.373$						
F_(3, 73)= 14.504	$p= .000$						

When the partial correlation between predictor variables (school readiness, sound-letter relationships and phonemic awareness) and the dependent variable (reading performance) is analyzed, it is observed that there is a positive and moderate correlation ($r= 0.49$) between school readiness and reading performance. The partial correlation between the two variables is computed as $r= 0.37$ when the other variables are controlled; there is a positive and moderate correlation ($r= 0.42$) between sound-letter relationships and reading performance. But the partial correlation between the two variables is $r= 0.21$ when the other variables are controlled; and there is a positive and moderate correlation ($r= 0.50$) between phonemic awareness and reading performance. But the partial correlation between the two variables is computed as $r= 0.22$ when the other variables are controlled.

There is a moderate and significant correlation between school readiness, sound-letter relationships and phonemic awareness variables altogether and the students' reading performance scores ($R= 0.61$, $R^2= 0.37$, $p<.01$). School readiness, sound-letter relationships and phonemic awareness variables altogether account for 37% of the variation of students' reading performance. According to standardized regression coefficient (β), predictor variables have the following relative order of significance on reading performance: school readiness, phonemic awareness and sound-letter relationships. The results of the t-test on the significance of regression coefficients indicate that only school readiness variable ($p= 0.001$) is a significant predictor of reading performance; and sound-letter relationships ($p= 0.066$) and phonemic awareness ($p= 0.055$) variables are not significant predictors of reading performance.

The results of the multiple regression analysis for the prediction of writing performance in relation to school readiness, sound-letter relationships and phonemic awareness are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Results of the Multiple Regression Analysis for the Prediction of Writing Performance

Variable	B	Std. Error	β	t	p	Zero-order	Partial
Constant	-4.423	13.817	—	-0.320	0.750	—	—
School readiness	0.985	0.243	0.426	4.057	0.000	0.518	0.429
Sound-letter	0.427	0.207	0.234	2.065	0.042	0.380	0.380
Phonemic awareness	0.381	0.534	0.087	0.714	0.478	0.400	0.083
R= 0.587	$R^2= 0.345$						
F_(3, 73)= 12.797	$p= .000$						

When the partial correlation between predictor variables (school readiness, sound-letter relationships and phonemic awareness) and the dependent variable (writing performance) is analyzed, it is observed that there is a positive and moderate correlation ($r= 0.52$) between school readiness and

writing performance. The partial correlation between the two variables is computed as $r = 0.43$ when the other variables are controlled; there is a positive and moderate correlation ($r = 0.38$) between sound-letter relationships and writing performance. But the partial correlation between the two variables is found to be $r = 0.24$ when the other variables are controlled; and there is a positive and moderate correlation ($r = 0.40$) between phonemic awareness and writing performance. But the partial correlation between the two variables is computed as $r = 0.08$ when the other variables are controlled.

There is a moderate and significant correlation between school readiness, sound-letter relationships and phonemic awareness variables taken together and the students' writing performance scores ($R = 0.59$, $R^2 = 0.35$, $p < .01$). School readiness, sound-letter relationships and phonemic awareness variables altogether account for 35% of the variation of students' writing performance. According to standardized regression coefficient (β), predictor variables have the following relative order of significance on writing performance: school readiness, sound-letter relationships, and phonemic awareness. The results of the t-test on the significance of regression coefficients indicate that school readiness variable ($p = 0.000$) is a significant predictor of writing performance; and sound-letter relationships ($p = 0.042$) and phonemic awareness ($p = 0.478$) variables are not significant predictors of writing performance.

In summary, obtaining a high total score for school readiness, sound-letter relationships and phonemic awareness increases the students' reading performance scores and writing performance scores. However, these linear correlations are of moderate degree. These independent variables altogether account for 37% of the variation of students' reading performances and for 35% of the variation of students' writing performances. When the independent variables are analyzed separately it is observed that school readiness alone is a significant predictor of the students' writing performances. Sound-letter relationships and phonemic awareness are not significant predictors of the students' reading performances and writing performances. The correlation between school readiness and reading performance and writing performance quite decreases when the other variables are controlled, but they are still significant. However, when sound-letter relationships and phonemic awareness' correlations with reading performance and writing performance are computed separately in the case that the other variables are controlled, a considerable decrease is observed.

4. DISCUSSION

It can be stated that readiness is an important factor in the students' reading and writing performances. Nevertheless, the scope of readiness, which has a positive impact on reading and writing performances, might need to be questioned. The findings of this study suggest that school readiness should exist, but sound-letter relationships and phonemic awareness should not be included in the scope of readiness referred here.

What components should be included in school readiness? To answer this question, the components of the Metropolitan Readiness Test, which was used to assess the students' school readiness in this study, might be analyzed. The Metropolitan Readiness Test is composed of word comprehension, sentence comprehension, general knowledge, matching, and copying components. None of these components directly form the foundation of any initial reading and writing method. They are the skills based on cognitive and language development in general. The students' performances of these skills have a linear effect on their reading and writing performances. Entwisle and Alexander (1993) report that children enter school with different levels of cognitive and linguistic knowledge and skills, and the children who are far behind their peers in terms of cognitive and linguistic knowledge and skills start school at a disadvantage. Unless they can catch up, they encounter greater difficulties throughout their school life. At the "*Special Early Childhood Report*" (1997), the following opinions were presented: School readiness covers much more than cognitive and literacy skills. Cognitive development and early literacy are significant factors for children to develop school readiness and to be successful at the beginning of school. Nevertheless, it should not be ignored that other areas of development, such as health, social development, enthusiasm, and so on might be of equal or greater importance. Beller (1983) also reports that the children who have gone to kindergarten

and developed school readiness are more successful in first grade language courses at elementary school compared to those who have not received any pre-school education. These views support the results of these study.

It can be stated that children's awareness of sound-letter relationships before they receive formal reading and writing instruction does not have a significant impact on their reading and writing performances. Some educators, on the other hand, believe that letter identification promotes reading and writing. They think that early, explicit, and intensive instruction in sound-letter relationships should form the basis of the instruction in conventional literacy to develop children's comprehension and decoding skills ("Critical Issue: Addressing the Literacy Needs of Emergent and Early Readers", 2007). In addition, according to Arnol (2007), letter identification is a significant early literacy skill that predicts future reading achievement. The results these study do not support these views.

It can be stated that children's having gained adequate phonemic awareness skills before they receive formal reading and writing instruction does not have a significant effect on their reading and writing performances. Based on her research on the effect of phonemic awareness training on the phonemic awareness and reading ability of low -and middle- achieving first graders, Weiner (1994) indicates that training proved to be generally ineffective for low readers, although it provided the children with a conceptual connection between phonemic skills and reading. She concludes that low - and middle- achieving beginning readers may not necessarily benefit from phonemic awareness training. The results Weiner obtained support the results of these study.

Two factors, which are believed to be highly explanatory for the last two findings of the study, need to be noted here. The first one is the characteristics of the phonics-based sentence method which is followed in initial reading and writing instruction in Turkey. Through this method, initial reading and writing instruction already starts with activities that promote the skills of phonemic awareness and sound-letter relationships. Even though students are poor in terms of these skills initially, they improve their skills during the process of learning reading and writing. Therefore, it should not be considered strange that these skills did not emerge as essential factors estimating the reading and writing performances of elementary level students. The second factor is that in terms of sound-letter relationships, Turkish is a regular language in which one sound corresponds to one letter. Wimmer and Goswami (1994) and Wimmer and Mayringer (2002) questioned the central role of phonemic awareness in their study on regular orthographies. Ehri (1989) and Torgesen, Wagner, & Rashotte (1994) also suggested that phonemic awareness will develop strongly once reading instruction has begun. Furthermore, in their similar research, Lerkkanen, Puttonen, Aunola, & Nurmi (2004) came to the conclusion that at the very initial stages of reading acquisition, it was reading performance that contributed to phonemic skills rather than vice versa. In their study specific to the Finnish language, which is a regular language like Turkish, Poskiparta, Niemi, & Vauras (1999) showed that by itself, a lack of phonemic awareness did not necessarily cause problems in learning to read words. These views support the results of this study.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Readiness, school readiness in particular, is a significant factor in students' reading and writing performances. It is integral to assure the school readiness of students before they start a process of formal initial reading and writing instruction. This readiness should involve the development of cognitive and linguistic skills in general rather than the technical aspects of reading and writing instruction, such as sound-letter relationships and phonemic awareness. Therefore, such a process of readiness should include the activities that are likely to affect students' future reading and writing performances in a positive way. These are the kind of activities that promote the development of skills for comprehension of concepts and verbal statements; the expansion of general knowledge; and the development of skills, such as comparing and contrasting, distinguishing between similarities and differences, matching, categorizing, and copying.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Gelişim özellikleri, tutum, ilgi, ihtiyaçlar, öğrenme çevresinin özellikleri, aile çevresinin okul öğrenmelerini destekleyip desteklemediği, bellek, dikkat ve güdülenme çocukların akademik başarımlarında etkili olan etkenlerdir. Bu etkenlerden biri de hazırbulunuşluktur. Hazırbulunuşluk, bireyin bir görevi zorlukla karşılaşmadan gerçekleştirebilmesi için gerekli olan özelliklere sahip olmasıdır.

1920'li yıllarda eğitimciler erken çocukluk ve okul öncesi yılları okuma ve yazmaya hazırlanma dönemi olarak görmeye başlamışlardır. Çocukta okur yazarlık, formal okuma ve yazma öğretimden önce gelişmeye başlamaktadır. Örneğim 2-3 yaşlarında çocuk bazı şekilleri ve sembolleri tanıyabilmektedir. Gerçek anlamda okur yazar hâle gelmeden önce tabelalar, markalar, gazeteler, dergiler ve kitaplarla karşılaşmakta; resimlerden anlam çıkarmakta; resim yapmakta ve çizgiler çizmekte; kelimelerin taşıdığı anlamı bilmektedir. Bunlar, çocuğun okuma ve yazma başarımını etkileyen önemli erken okur yazarlık davranışlarıdır.

Okuma-yazma söz konusu olduğunda hazırbulunuşluk kavramı, erken çocukluk yıllarında kazanılan deneyimlerden çocuğun okuma ve yazmayı öğrenmesini destekleyenleri içermektedir. Bu deneyimler şöyle sıralanabilir: alfabedeki harfleri tanıma, harf-ses ilişkisini fark etme, kelime bilgisi, cümle bilgisi, ses farkındalığı, benzerlikleri ve farklılıkları ayırt etme ve kopya etme.

Bu araştırmanın genel amacı, hazırbulunuşluk ile okuma ve yazma başarımları arasında bir ilişki olup olmadığını belirlemektir. Özel amacı ise Türkiye'de bir ilköğretim okulunun birinci sınıfındaki bir grup çocuğun hazırbulunuşlukları ile okuma ve yazma performansları arasındaki olası ilişkiyi ortaya koymaktır. Araştırmada hazırbulunuşluk kavramı okuma ve yazmaya hazırbulunuşluğu ifade etmektedir. Okuma ve yazmaya hazırbulunuşluğun kapsamı okula hazır oluş, harf-ses ilişkisi ve ses farkındalığı ile sınırlı tutulmuştur.

Bu araştırmada betimsel yöntem uygulanmıştır. Araştırmanın çalışma evrenini bir okulun birinci sınıfına başlayan 4 ayrı şubedeki 77 öğrenci oluşturmaktadır. Okulun ilk haftasında, formal ilkokuma-yazma öğretimine başlamadan önce öğrencilerin okula hazır oluş, harf-ses ilişkisi ve ses farkındalığı bakımından durumları bireysel olarak belirlenmiştir. Öğrencilerin okula hazır oluş durumunu belirlemek için Metropolitan Olgunluk Testi kullanılmıştır. Ses farkındalığını belirlemek için Yopp-Singer Test'ten uyarlanan bir test kullanılmıştır.

İlkokuma-yazma öğretimi için ses temelli cümle yöntemi uygulanmıştır. Dört sınıfta da aynı ilkokuma-yazma öğretimi yöntemi izlenmiştir. Sınıf öğretmenleri hem öğretim sürecini birlikte planlamışlar hem de planın uygulanmasında sürekli iş birliği yapmışlardır.

Öğrencilerin okuma ve yazma başarımlarını belirlemek için, formal ilkokuma-yazma öğretimi başladıktan sonra süreç içinde üç farklı zamanda ölçme yapılmıştır. Öğrencilerin okuma başarımlarını belirlemek için Okuma Performansı Testi'nden uyarlanan üç ayrı test kullanılmış; yazma başarımlarını belirlemek için de ilkokuma-yazma öğretimi sürecinde üç farklı zamanda üç farklı dikte etkinliği yaptırılmıştır.

Verilerin çözümlenmesinde SPSS 11,5 paket programından yararlanılmıştır. Okuma ve yazma performansları ile okula hazır oluş, harf-ses ilişkisi ve ses farkındalığı arasında bir ilişkinin olup olmadığını ortaya koymak için çoklu doğrusal regresyon (multiple linear regression) istatistiği yapılmıştır.

Okula hazır oluş, harf-ses ilişkisi ve ses duyarlılığı değişkenleri birlikte öğrencilerin okuma performansı puanları ile orta düzeyde ve anlamlı bir ilişki vermektedir ($R = 0.61$, $R^2 = 0.37$, $p < 0.01$). Bu değişkenler birlikte öğrencilerin okuma performanslarındaki varyansın %37'sini açıklamaktadır. Standardize edilmiş regresyon katsayısına (β) göre, yordayıcı değişkenlerin okuma performansı üzerindeki görece önem sırası okula hazır oluş, ses farkındalığı ve harf-ses ilişkisidir. Regresyon katsayılarının anlamlılığına ilişkin t-testi sonuçları incelendiğinde ise sadece okula hazır oluş değişkeninin ($p = 0.001$) okuma performansı üzerinde önemli bir yordayıcı olduğu; harf-ses ilişkisi ($p = 0.066$) ve ses farkındalığı ($p = 0.055$) değişkenlerinin ise okuma performansı üzerinde önemli birer yordayıcı olmadıkları görülmektedir.

Okula hazır oluş, harf-ses ilişkisi ve ses duyarlılığı değişkenleri birlikte öğrencilerin yazma performansı puanları ile orta düzeyde ve anlamlı bir ilişki vermektedir ($R = 0.59$, $R^2 = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$). Bu değişkenler birlikte öğrencilerin yazma performanslarındaki varyansın %35'ini açıklamaktadır. Standardize edilmiş regresyon katsayısına (β) göre, yordayıcı değişkenlerin yazma performansı üzerindeki görece önem sırası okula hazır oluş, harf-ses ilişkisi ve ses farkındalığıdır. Regresyon katsayılarının anlamlılığına ilişkin t-testi sonuçları incelendiğinde ise okula hazır oluş değişkeninin ($p = 0.000$) yazma performansı üzerinde önemli bir yordayıcı olduğu; harf-ses ilişkisi ($p = 0.042$) ve ses farkındalığı ($p = 0.478$) değişkenlerinin ise yazma performansı üzerinde önemli birer yordayıcı olmadıkları görülmektedir.

Öğrencilerin okuma ve yazma performanslarında hazırbulunuşluğun önemli bir etken olduğu söylenebilir. Öte yandan okuma ve yazma performansları üzerinde olumlu etkiye sahip olan hazırbulunuşluğun kapsamını sorgulamak gerekebilir. Araştırmanın bulguları bu hazırbulunuşluğun kapsamında okula hazır oluşa yer verilmesini desteklemekte ancak harf-ses ilişkisine ve ses duyarlılığına yer verilmesini desteklememektedir.

Öğrencilerin okuma ve yazma başarımlarında hazırbulunuşluk özellikle okula hazır oluş önemli bir etkidir. Formal bir ilkokuma-yazma öğretimi sürecine başlamadan önce öğrencilerin yeterince hazır duruma gelmelerine yardımcı olmak gerekmektedir. Bu hazırlık okuma ve yazma öğretiminin harf-ses ilişkisi ve ses duyarlılığı gibi teknik yönlerinden çok, genel olarak bilişsel ve dil becerilerinin gelişimini içermelidir. Böyle bir hazırlık sürecinde, öğrencilerin ilerideki okuma ve yazma başarımlarına olumlu yönde etki etmesi beklenen, kavramları ve sözlü ifadeleri anlama becerilerinin gelişimini; genel bilgilerinin artmasını; karşılaştırma, benzerlikleri ve farklılıkları ayırt etme, eşleştirme, sınıflama ve kopya etme gibi becerilerinin gelişimini destekleyecek etkinliklere yer verilmelidir.