

Dictation Activities in Reading and Writing Instruction

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Abstract

In the study, it is aimed to determine the views of primary school teachers on dictation activities which are used for reading and writing instruction. The participants of the study, which has adopted qualitative research approach, include the teachers who taught the first grade students at the primary schools in the city center of Eskişehir in 2011-2012 school year. The qualitative data which were collected through open-ended questions have been analyzed by using descriptive analysis technique. In line with the obtained findings, it is determined that the teachers define dictation differently and concluded that it is an educatory activity which brings pupils in various skills such as correct learning of alphabet sounds, letters and words; and notebook use. Moreover, some suggestions on the activities and difficulties which teachers do and experience during dictation are made.

Keywords: *Dictation, reading and writing instruction, primary school teachers*

SUMMARY

Dictation is an important activity which enables individuals to gain language skills which will be required throughout life. Dictation, which is defined as transferring the articulated into writing, supports the development of writing and listening skills.

Purpose

The main purpose of the study is to determine the views of school teachers on dictation activities in reading and writing instruction. Following questions are answered based on this general purpose:

- What is dictation according to school teachers?
- Why do school teachers benefit from dictation activities in reading and writing instruction?
- What are the dictation activities teachers conduct in reading and writing instruction?
- What kinds of difficulties do school teachers encounter during dictation activities in reading and writing instruction?

METHOD

This study has been designed based on qualitative research approach. Within the framework of this design, views of school teachers on dictation activities in reading and writing instruction have been received through open ended questions. The study was performed with the classroom teachers who taught the first grade students in the spring term of 2011-2012 school year. The participants were determined based on criterion sampling method. The classroom teachers who served at the predetermined primary schools; had at least ten years professional experience and were teaching the first grades at the time of research participated in the study. The qualitative data which were obtained through open ended questions were analyzed based on descriptive analysis technique. Views of 75 classroom teachers were included in the scope of analysis. Validity and reliability of the research data were performed on the qualitative research basis.

FINDINGS

Based on the findings obtained from the research; classroom teachers, predominantly, regard dictation as an important and necessary activity and define it as a useful activity. Examining the purposes of dictation use, classroom teachers state that they mostly use dictation to reinforce sounds, letters and syllables. The classroom teachers emphasize the writing and writing by obeying spelling rules in terms of the skills in which dictation brings. Among the activities which classroom teachers do most frequently are demonstrating notebook use and how to write letters as well as composing letters, words and sentences. In addition, they suggest that short texts which are included in dictation activities be given together with games. The most frequently experienced problems by the classroom teachers include incorrect and incomplete spelling of letters and syllables. Regarding dictation activities, classroom teachers advise that the words and sentences which are suitable for students' level be composed and dictation activities be conducted systematically.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Based on the results obtained from the research; it is revealed that dictation activities in reading and writing instruction are defined important and useful. In addition to these definition, it is stated that they are the activities which indicate to what extent literacy is taught and help to determine the errors in literacy and check to what extent sounds are learnt. Reviewing the studies in the literature, it is observed that teachers utilize dictation as an evaluation method (Coşkun, Taşkaya & Bal, 2013; Baydık, Ergül & Bahap Kudret, 2012; Demirel & Şahinel, 2006). Within this context, it can be suggested that the teachers' statements concerning dictation activities show consistency with the literature.

Making students notice their pronunciation mistakes and write obeying spelling and punctuation rules are among the purposes of classroom teachers to use dictation. Similar purposes are included in the skills which dictation enables students to gain. This result obtained from the research tally with Yangın (2002) and Tekşan's (2010) dictation definition as an activity which brings students in the skill of writing according

to spelling and punctuation rules. Furthermore, this result also supports the result obtained from the study conducted by Şıklar Çelik (2004) that dictation is used to determine the spelling errors of the students through reading a text aloud. This can be explained by the fact that the teachers use dictation to enable students to gain skills in writing and language. In other words, it can be suggested that the teachers consider the supportive aspect of the dictation rather than teaching process while utilizing dictation activities.

It is revealed in the study that the classroom teachers benefit from dictation in order to reinforce reading and writing simultaneously. This result which shows parallelism with the result obtained in the study by Göçer (2009) that the teachers who teach Turkish as a foreign language use dictation in order to teach reading and writing in coordination, is supported by the result by Demir & Ersöz (2014) that dictation is a technique which is often used for teaching Turkish. In this context, it can be concluded that reading and writing are interrelated skills and dictation activities are preferred by the teachers in order to improve the said skills.

Teachers' using dictation in language teaching attends the study results on what are done within the scope of dictation. It is revealed in the study that the teachers attach more importance to notebook use, the direction in which letters are written, pencil holding and posture in preparation phase of writing. Furthermore, it is found out that they also include correcting errors, writing what is said or read, seeing and writing activities, writing without seeing activities, teaching spelling and punctuation rules, reading what is written, tutoring the students who have difficulty in writing. In a study performed by Tekşan (2010), among the activities which a teacher must do are teacher's control and enabling students to check themselves by writing correct text on the board. In this sense, it can be suggested that such activities as reading, rereading and writing without seeing which are done in writing activities must be conducted under the control of teacher in dictation activities and students improve their writing skills by the help of the feedback given in dictation activities.

It is included in the noteworthy points in dictation activities that the parents need to be informed. The importance of parental (family) support in reading and writing instruction is addressed in the study conducted by Rasinski, Bruneau and Ambrose (1990). According to this study, dictation activities which are done at home by parents reinforce the children's reading and writing skills. Given the importance of parents in literacy, notwithstanding, the teachers consider their indifference and ignorance as the obstacles which are encountered in practice. In this context, they suggest that they must be in league with parents. This can be explained by the fact that the teachers have awareness of importance of parental support and consensus.

In the study, teachers have reported that writing according to students' pronunciation is among the problems which are often experienced. This implies the problem of misspelling letters and words or writing them sketchily. Problems related to pronunciation revive teachers' and parents' pronunciation problems as well. In dictation, mispronunciation of the words or sentences to be dictated may lead the students to transfer the heard sounds into writing as they are heard or transfer them even incorrectly. In a study performed related to this issue (Baydık and Kudret, 2012), it shows similarity with the fact that in reading and writing instruction through Sound Based Sentence Method, students write the articulated words or sentences as they hear

them. Furthermore, in the study performed by Santos and Befi-Lopes (2013), it is revealed that dictation is utilized for correct articulation and spelling errors.

In the study, in line with a teacher's statement, it is revealed that existence of the students whose first languages are different is among the problems which are encountered. It can be argued that it is not likely for the students whose first languages are different to understand words, sentences and pronounce them correctly to write; in this sense, dictation activities become challenging for the students. With reference to the fact that parents of the students whose first languages are different also may have pronunciation problems, this requires the teachers to put more effort in reading and writing instruction efficiently and use various techniques.

In the study, incorrect and incomplete spelling of letters and syllables, incorrect spelling of letters and words, inattention to spelling and punctuation rules are included in the problems. These problems show parallelism with the study results by Yıldız and Ateş (2010). According to these results, it can be suggested that it is of vital importance that teachers check for the errors in dictation regularly and correct them immediately.

The classroom teachers have reported that they encounter some problems related to using Sound Based Sentence Method in dictation activities and suggested that the words and sentences which are suitable for students' level must be composed and dictation activities must be done regularly; visuals must be utilized; a dictation notebook must be used and errors must be corrected immediately writing the correct spelling on the board; pre-learned and new sounds must be mixed in dictation activities. In addition, they propose that dictation activities must be done along with games and students must be rewarded in order to improve their writing without seeing skills. They also have stated that the number of dictation activities must be increased by utilizing various sources in terms of course materials and a dictation booklet for the teachers must be available.

In addition to the proposals in consequence of the study which is limited to the written statements of the classroom teachers who taught the first graders at the schools in the central districts of Eskişehir in 2012-2013 school years and in line with them, it can be proposed that dictation activities must be utilized frequently particularly for the first grade students in order to bring them literacy skills and the related experiences must be shared among teachers. As a solution to the problems in dictation, in the scope of writing activities; it can be proposed that such tasks which reinforce students' writing skills such as short letters and diaries at home and school and which enable regular control of what they write must be assigned. By this way, it is predicted that students' written expression skills will improve, they will be able to use note taking and summarizing techniques and gain a writing style which is special to them.