An (Distinctive) Example of Strengtening a Validity: Self-evaluation of the School Based Action Research

Geçerliği Güçlendirme Örneği: Okul Temelli Eylem Araştırması Projesinin Öz Değerlendirmesi

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To cite this article/ Atıf için:

Abstract. It is important to evaluate any research effort in order to see if it is scientifically based research. It is much easier to analyze someone else's work. As action researchers, the researchers are insiders of their research efforts. On the other hand, self-evaluation of one's own research effort would strengthen the research process and provide strong basis for the future research efforts. The author has focused on the self-evaluation of the action research directed by herself. Utilizing the evaluation schema offered by Malone (2014) she aims to prompt enhanced understanding about the evaluation of action research project. In conclusion, it could be approved that the schema offered by Malone is comprehensive and valid tool for evaluation action research projects. In the light of this schema the analyzed action research project is considered as scientifically based research. The author recommends the other researchers utilize this schema to evaluate their action research project.

Keywords: Self-evaluation, school based implementation, action research.

Öz. Herhangi bir araştırma projesinin bilimsel temelli olup olmadığını anlamak için değerlendirmek önemlidir. Bir başkasının araştırmasını analiz etmek çok daha kolaydır. Eylem araştırmacıları kendi araştırmalarının içinde yer alır. Öte yandan, kişinin kendi araştırma gayretlerinin öz değerlendirmesini yapması araştırma sürecini güçlendirir ve ileri araştırmalar için kuvvetli temel sağlar. Yazar kendi yönettiği bir eylem araştırmasının öz değerlendirmesine odaklanmıştır. Malone (2014) tarafından önerilen değerlendirme şemasını kullanarak eylem araştırması projelerinin değerlendirmesi için gelişmiş bir anlayış oluşturmaya çalışmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, Malone tarafından önerilen şemanın kapsamlı ve geçerli bir araç olduğu kabul edilebilir. Bu şemanın ışığında analiz edilen eylem araştırmasının bilimsel temelli bir araştırma olduğu görülmüştür. Araştırmacı diğer araştırmacılara eylem araştırmalarını değerlendirmeleri için bu şemayı kullanmalarını önermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Öz değerlendirme, okul temelli uygulama, eylem araştırması.

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Introduction

When conducting and/or analyzing research projects as researchers, the first issue we should consider is the meaning of scientifically based research. The National Research Council describes scientifically based research as being defined by a set of principles not by research methods (Eisenhart & Towne, 2003). The specific research standards based on these principles are as follows: We must post significant questions that can be investigated empirically; link research to relevant theory; use methods that permit direct investigation of the question; provide a coherent and explicit chain of reasoning; replicate and generalize across studies and disclose research to encourage professional scrutiny and critique. These are at the core of evaluating any type of research in education (Eisenhart & Towne, 2003). In other words it is important to evaluate any research effort in order to see if the research method is scientifically based whether or not you would be a consumer of the results of any research project or conduct your own research. Furthermore; self-evaluation of one's own research effort would strengthen the research process and provide strong basis for the future research efforts. It is much easier to make the connections between culture and action research when analyzing someone else's work. However, as action researchers, we are insiders of our research efforts (Altrichter, 1999; Malone, 2014; Meyer, 2000). In this paper, I will focus on self-evaluation of the action research project directed by myself between the school years of 2005 and 2009. This paper will prompt enhanced understanding about the evaluation of action research projects.

Before analyzing our research project I would like to briefly introduce our action research project. It was published at the journal, entitled Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice under the title of "An Examination of Balanced Literacy Instructional Model Implemented to Youths with Hearing Loss" (Uzuner, et al, 2011). Our main object was to create a balanced literacy environment, and through the use of action research methodology describe the impacts of this environment on literacy development of the students with hearing loss. We were eight researchers; I was the project director, five of us were the instructors, two of us acted as the project advisors. We have presented our research efforts at national and international congress during and after the project.

Table 1.
The List of International Conferences

Uzuner, Y., Girgin, U., Kaya, Z., Karasu, G., Girgin, M. C., Cavkaytar,S., Tanrıdiler, A. and B. Erdiken. "A Balanced Literacy Instruction Model Applied To Hearing Impaired Youths: A School Base Action Research". 2nd ınternational Congress on Deafness: Communication and Learning. Advances in the Oral Modality. Barcelona, Spain, 03/06/2010.

Karasu, G., Girgin, U., **Uzuner, Y.** and Z. Kaya. "Vocabulary Development Strategies Applied To Hearing Impaired Youths During Project Base Instruction". 2nd International Congress on Deafness: Communication and Learning. Advances in the Oral Modality. Barcelona, Spain, 03/06/2010.

Kaya, Z., Girgin, U., **Uzuner**, Y. and Karasu, G. "An Examination of Strategies Applied to Hearing Impaired During The Page Design Course", 2nd International Congress on Deafness. Communication and Learning. Advances in the Oral Modality. Barcelona, Spain, 03/06/2010.

Uzuner, Y., Girgin, U., Girgin, M. C., Karasu,G., Kaya, Z., Erdiken, B., Cavkaytar, S. ve A. Tanrıdiler. "A School Based Action Research: Obstacle, Attempts and Improvements: Balanced Literacy Instruction to Hearing Impaired Youths". The 10th Advances in Qualitative Methods. Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, 2009.

Table 1. (continued)

Karasu,G., **Uzuner,Y.,** Girgin, U. and Kaya, Z. "Vocabulary Development Strategies Based on balanced Literacy Applied for Hearing Impaired Youths" EDUCARE, Porto, Portugal, 2009.
Karasu, G., Girgin, U., **Uzuner, Y.** and Kaya, Z.. "Factors Affecting Balanced Vocabulary Instruction to Hearing Impaired Youths:Action Research" The 10th Advances in Qualitative Methods. Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, 2009.
Cavkaytar, S., **Uzuner,Y.,** Girgin,U., Girgin,M.C., Erdiken,B., Karasu, G., Tanrıdiler, A. and Kaya, Z. "The Qualitative and Quantitative Impact of Balanced literacy Instruction to Hearing Impaired Youths'Literacy Development: An Action Research" EDUCARE, Porto Portugal, 2009.
Kaya, Z., **Uzuner, Y**., Girgin, U., Girgin,M. C., Erdiken, B., Cavkaytar, S., Karasu, G. and Tanrıdiler, A. "Page Design: Hearing Impaired Youths' Newspaper Publication Efforts via QuarkXPress" 2. Uluslararası Özel Eğitim Konferansı, Marmaris, Türkiye, 18/06/2008.
Uzuner, Y., Girgin, U., Girgin, M.C., Erdiken, B., Cavkaytar, S., Karasu, G., Tanrıdiler, A. and Kaya, Z. "Balanced Literacy Instruction Applied to Hearing Impaired College Students", Pennsylvania Ethnography Forum, Pennsylvania, USA, 2008.
İcden,G**., Uzuner,Y**., Girgin, U. and Kaya, Z. "Vocabulary developments efforts for youths hearing impairments during the newspaper publication procedures" Division of International Special Education and Services del Centro Ann Sullivan del Peru, CASP, Lima, Peru, 08/07/2007.

Table 2.

The List of National Conferences

Kaya, Z., Girgin, U., **Uzuner, Y**. ve Karasu, G. "İşitme Engelli Yüksekokul Öğrencilerine Mesleki Eğitim Sürecinde Bilgisayar Yazılımı Kullanımının Öğretilmesi: Eylem Araştırması", 22. Özel Eğitim Kongresi, 11-12 Exim, 2012.
Karasu, G., Girgin, U., **Uzuner, Y**. ve Kaya, Z. "İşitme Engelli Gensler Uygulanan Sözcük Dağarcığı Geliştirme Stratejilerinin İncelenmesi", 22. Ulusal Özel Eğitim Kongresi, Trabzon, 11-12 Exim, 2012.
Karasu, G., Girgin, U., **Uzuner,Y.** ve Kaya, Z. "İşitme Engelli Yüksekokul Öğrencilerinin Disiplinlerarası Çalışma ile Yürütülen Destek Dil Derslerinin İncelenmesi'. 20. Ulusal Özel Eğitim Kongresi, Gaziantep, 21/10/2010.
Kaya, Z., Girgin, U., **Uzuner,Y**. ve Karasu,G. "İşitme Engelli Yüksekokul Öğrencilerinin Disiplinlerarası Çalışma ile Yürütülen "Sayfa Tasarımı" ve "Grafik tasarım Meslek Dili I" Derslerinin İncelenmesi" 20. Ulusal Özel Eğitim Kongresi, Gaziantep, 21/10/2010.

Methodology

Recently a body of research has emerged that further enhanced our understanding of teacher education

– self-study research. Traditionally validated forms of research often do not allow researchers opportunities to closely examine their own work thus limiting its value for improving practice. Many teacher educators believe that studying their own practice is essential. As Samaras and Freese (2006)

note, "Improving one's practice benefits the larger broader purpose of the advancement of knowledge about teaching and the educational system". In order to self- evaluate our action project, I am to answer the following question "What are the criteria for evaluating action research?" To answer this question, we must have knowledge of validity qualities of component of the research process and know about the flaws and biases that the researchers have experienced (Malone, 2014). Examining various evaluative schema (Altrichter, 1999; Malone, 2014; Meyer, 2000), I have decided to utilize the one offered by Malone (2014).   For the reason that this schema consists of criteria reflecting research cycle and the related question to each step. The following questions reflecting the schema are intended to capture the essence of the multitude of evaluation criteria:

Area of Focus: Does the area of focus involve teaching and learning?

Research Questions: Does the researcher state questions that were answerable given the researcher's expertise, time and sources?

Locus of Control: Was the area of focus within the researcher's locus of control?

Data Collection: Did the researcher use appropriate data collection techniques (qualitative and quantitative) to answer the study's research questions?

Ethics: Did the research face any ethical challenges? If so how were they resolved?

Action: Did the outcomes of the study lead to action?

Action-Data Connection: How is the proposed action connected to the study's data analysis and interpretation?

Reflective Stance: In what ways has the action research effort contributed to the researcher's reflective stance on the ways teaching and learning viewed?

Findings and Discussion

Area of Focus - Does the area of focus involve teaching and learning?

It is expected that an action research study conducted by a teacher should have an area of focus that involves teaching and learning, is within the teacher's locus of control, and is something the teacher feels passionate about and would like to change or improve. Some of these characteristics are difficult to evaluate. The questions we are involved could search whether or not the teacher was passionate about the area of focus or it is something that she would like to change or improve upon. In order to evaluate the area of focus, one should consider the implementational, theoretical and methodological frameworks (Malone, 2014).

Implementational Framework: It is now known that spoken and written language development of children with hearing loss can be similar to that of normally hearing children, but often delayed. Individuals with hearing loss have more difficulties than their normally hearing peers in literacy learning (Kretschmer & Kretschmer, 1978; Schirmer, 2000). The results of the studies suggest that not only chronological age but also linguistic age, hearing loss level and past experiences are influential on literacy learning of the individuals with hearing loss (e.g., Cambra, 1994; Pakulsky & Kaderavek, 2001; Truax, 1978; Truax, 1985; Uzuner, Karasu & Kırcaali-İftar, 2005; Uzuner, Icden, Girgin, Beral

& Kırcaali-İftar; 2005). Because of these difficulties, we have to provide life long, effective literacy experiences for the hearing impaired individuals (Albertini & Schely, 2003). Like all individuals in the society, hearing impaired students should not only try to be successful at school but also show effort to apply their knowledge and skills to the rapidly developing society they belong to. As conscious citizens, they should become literate in order to contribute to the society, to have a job that satisfies them, to participate in and contribute to cultural activities and to achieve their goals and interests throughout their lives (Albertini & Schely, 2003).

In Turkey, most of the hearing impaired individuals do not benefit from appropriate and efficient education programs. Many of them cannot reach the college education. Those who gain the right to attend a university are observed to be in need of a language support for literacy skills due to a number of factors such as inadequate language, general and academic knowledge and experience. Regardless of their hearing status, the purpose of universities is to help students not only gain a profession but also develop themselves in social and cultural aspects. The current situation in Turkey requires well-trained and qualified human force. Today, there is a need for expert work force. In addition, those well-trained and qualified in the area are in front of others in their profession. University education provides students to learn to use contemporary technology of their professions, to take part in business environments and to compete with their colleagues.

The concept of vocational education generally refers to education which helps individuals acquire the necessary skills, knowledge and business habits related to a certain profession in business life and which results in the development of individuals in intellectual, emotional, social, financial and personal aspects. In order to achieve the basic goals of vocational education, it is necessary to develop the individual as a whole. It is also important to organize vocational education considering the issues in business life so that graduates can easily find a job. This situation helps education gain a functional quality as well as helps educated youths adapt themselves to the life. In order to classify an educational program with respect to profession, it should include applications that increase students' professional effectiveness. Effective professional education is only possible if it produces graduates that meet the expectations; if it is flexible enough to respond to the changes in technology and work-force; and if it constantly renovates itself (Alkan, Dogan & Sezgin, 2001).

The School for the Handicapped (SfH) where this research was conducted, located at Anadolu University, Eskişehir is the first and the only higher education institution that provides vocational education to hearing-impaired students in Turkey. The programs offered in the SfH since 1993, are Graphic Arts Bachelor's Degree Program, Ceramic Arts Bachelor's Degree Program in the Department of Applied Fine Art, Computer Operator Training Associate Degree Program in the Department of Administrative Vocations, and Architectural Drafting Associate Degree Program in the Department of Architecture. These programs have been reviewed and revised several times since the establishment of the School. When reexamining there appeared to be a strong need for further renovation of the programs.

Theoretical Framework: There are various literacy instruction approaches. Whereas two of them, Whole Language (Goodman, 1986) and Skilled Based approaches, (Asselin, 1999) are popular in the education of both hearing and hearing impaired individuals. Balanced Literacy Instruction Approach (BLIA) seems to be the combination of these approaches. The basic principles of the BLIA are as follows (Schirmer, 2000):

- All forms of expressive and receptive language work together. The balance should be provided in every aspects of literacy instruction.

Focus is on meaning of written language in authentic context. Learning occurs when it is meaningful, functional and purposeful.

- Classrooms are communities of learners in which literacy is acquired through use.

- Children are motivated when given choice and ownership. Environments that provide opportunities for the development of metacognitive skills are invaluable.

- Literacy development is part of an integrated curriculum. Interdisciplinary instructional efforts are important.

- Reading behaviors of skilled readers reveal what instruction should accomplish.

- Processes and products are equally important.

Reviewing our theoretical framework, we realized that literacy instruction carried out at the programs of the SfH did not have a specific theoretical framework. Moreover, it was hard to name the approaches by examining the instructional environments. Based on the research conducted with individuals with hearing loss, there appeared a need to combine these approaches addressing it as the

BLIA (Reutzel & Cooter, 1992; Pressley, Roehrig, Bogner, Raphael & Dolezal, 2002; Schirmer, 2000). So we decided to adapt the BLIA to our literacy instructions.

Methodological Framework: The process of development, application and evaluation of a comprehensive education program is complex and lengthy so that it requires intensive work force. While developing educational programs, the process and the products should be subjected to systematic and reflective analyses for revisions (Ferrance, 2000). This is also true for the vocational education programs that will be developed for hearing impaired individuals. In every phase, a number of obstacles are likely to occur. However, as educators, our major responsibility is to overcome such difficulties in the light of scientific principles. It could be thought that the education model which helps individuals become successful in coping with the problems experienced is likely to be a model for other educators.

The Application of Action Research: There are various ways to evaluate and revise a curriculum, students' achievements, taking students' perspective, peer review, focus group, action research etc. As required by action research, first of all, the course contents and implementations should be examined and provided with feedback. We designed our study as a school based action research project (Ferrance, 2000; Michele & Kretschmer, 1996) since the application of a comprehensive professional education program for hearing impaired students at the SfH was to be examined systematically. It was believed that an action research project, with its interrogative and reflective features, would provide evidence regarding the improvements of the program carried out at the school. The nature of the research methodology provided us to review and revise the problems, solution attempts, achievements and future plans (Ferrance, 2000; Michele & Kretschmer, 1996). Therefore, we developed a research project and submitted to the Commission of Scientific Research Projects of Anadolu University.

It was not our aim to derive cause and effect relationships among the variables in this study and to generalize the data to the whole population of individuals with hearing loss. However, the action research methodology provided us with critical information about learning and teaching attempts through critical reflection and inquiry (e.g., Johnson, 2002; Mills, 2003).

Research Questions: Does the researcher state questions that were answerable given the researcher's expertise, time and sources?

Research questions help us to focus on the action researcher's data collection plan. The questions should provide the researcher with a workable way to proceed with the research (Malone, 2014). Our research questions were as follows:

1. What was happening in the target classrooms?

2. What were the impacts of the utilized strategies and models on the literacy development of the hearing impaired students?

3. In what ways did the emerged literacy instruction model reflect the principles of BLIA model?

4. What were the characteristics and process of the components of the model emerged based on the principles BLIA model?

5. What were the qualitative and quantitative impacts of the emerged BLIA model on the literacy skills of the hearing impaired students?

6. What were the opinions of the (a) instructors and (b) students about the applied balanced literacy instructions?

7. What happened during the research process concerning the obstacles and solution attempts?

8. What achievements were accomplished?

9. What aspects are still needed to be changed?

These questions are clearly linked to the area of focus and strongly suggest sources of data needed to determine the effectiveness of an intervention.

Locus of Control: Was the area of focus within the researcher's locus of control?

An action research area of focus as well as the research questions must be answerable and in the teacher researcher's locus of control. A poor quality action research article would include an area of focus and research questions that are outside of teacher researcher's locus of control. It is a common pitfall for a teacher researcher to overly broaden the scope of the research to include data sources that are outside of the teacher's locus of control (Malone, 2014).

The Classrooms and Laboratories: Although most of the classrooms and facilities in the building of SfH were available for the research effort, a classroom designated for the language lessons, a computer laboratory, and a reading room were mostly utilized for obtaining the valid data. Acomputer with internet connection, an overhead projector, a television, a projector, a video recorder, and a bookcase were placed in the classroom. Some preventions were taken for the sound isolation. A reading room containing bookcases with many books was gradually developed as a library during the course of the research effort. A computer based library system was developed so that the loans could be traced easily by the research team. The computer laboratory contained computers for each student and the instructor. In addition, an electronic board and a printer were placed in the laboratory. Various preventions were taken for possible interruptions during the lessons.

The Focused Groups and the Lessons: The focused groups and lessons were determined in order for obtaining trustworthy data. The number of focused groups and the lessons gradually increased during the research process. The title of the courses were as follows: Written and Verbal Discourse, Turkish Grammar I, Occupational Language and Ceramics Technology.

Participants

The Students: The students starting the SfH by the year 2005 have been followed up for two school years during the language, graphic and software lessons. The number of the students gradually increased. Most students had bilateral profound sensory-neural hearing loss. Except three students with cochlear implant, they all wore ear level hearing aids. The age range was 18 to 22 years. Verbal interactions occurred during the lessons.

The Researchers: As it was mentioned above we conducted our research at SfH. During the research efforts the school administration consisted of a principal and two vice principals. The total number of the faculty members was 21. While 12 of them were teaching occupational courses, four of them taught language related courses. There were three external faculty members and two other instructors, one for mathematics and the other for history courses. The core team including eight faculty members who were responsible for the language courses had a similar conceptual basis for the education of hearing impaired students. In the process, some of the faculty members applying the vocational courses at the School became members of the literate culture.

Data Collection: Did the researcher use appropriate data collection techniques (qualitative and quantitative) to answer the study's research questions?

In reviewing an action research project, one should carefully consider the appropriateness of the data sources. The following question is to be answered: "Will these data sources provide the teacher researcher with the information necessary to answer the research questions? The questions also answered by various sources via the application of triangulation (Malone, 2014).

We have compiled the data through the video recordings of the actual interactions in the target classrooms, audio recordings of the reflection meetings, writing lesson plans and reflective journal entries, data evaluation charts, students' portfolios, criterion referenced tests utilized for pre and post, archival data and surveys. The instructional materials have become more authentic, attractive to the students' attentions, appropriate to the students' academic and age levels, functional and purposeful.

Therefore, it was assumed that meaningful materials had been utilized throughout the research effort. Concerning the questions emerged for improving the school program we could say that we used appropriate qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques to answer our research questions.

Analysis: The data were analyzed during and at the end of the research project by applying the pre and posttests, reviewing the data systematically, writing and reviewing the reflective evaluations of each lesson, sharing the data with the project team, reviewing the lesson plans and classroom instructions via control lists, summarizing the data, comparing the data continuously and repetitively, reviewing and revising the answer keys and conducting micro analysis of the students' portfolios and the selected master tapes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2005; Maxwell, 2005; Yildirim & Simsek, 2006; Yin, 2003).

Trustworthiness of this action research was ensured taking the following precautions (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach & Richardson, 2005; Creswell, 2005; Maxwell, 2005; Yıldırım & Simsek, 2006; Yin, 2003): The primary members of the Trustworthiness Committee were experienced faculty members in the area of education of individuals with hearing loss. In addition, the Project Evaluation Committee at Anadolu University, the other faculty members working at the SfH and various conference attendances enhanced the quality of the project with their invaluable critiques.

Table 3.

Triangulation of Data

	Data Collection Techniques			
Research Questions	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
(1)What was happening in the target classrooms?	Lesson plans and reflective journal entries	Video recordings the target classrooms	Data evaluation charts	Literature review
(2)What were the impacts of the utilized strategies and models on the literacy development of the hearing impaired students?	Lesson plans and reflective journal entries	Video recordings the target classrooms	Data evaluation charts	Students' portfolios, Criterion referenced pre and post tests
(3) In what ways did the emerged literacy instruction model reflect the principles of BLIA model?	Data evaluation charts	Video recordings the target classrooms	Lesson plans and reflective journal entries	Audio recordings of the reflection meetings
(4)What were the characteristics and process of the components of the model emerged based on the principles BLIA model?	The data evaluation charts	Audio recordings of the reflection meetings	Lesson plans and reflective journal entries	Video recordings the target classrooms
(5)What were the qualitative and quantitative impacts of the emerged BLIA model on the literacy skills of the hearing impaired students?	Lesson plans and reflective journal entries	Audio recordings of the reflection meetings,	Students' portfolios	Criterion referenced tests
(6)What were the opinions of a- the instructors about the applied balanced literacy instructions?	Surveys	Video recordings the target classrooms	Students' portfolios	
(7)What were the opinions of the (a) instructors and (b) students about the applied balanced literacy instructions?	Video recordings the target classrooms	Lesson plans and reflective journal entries,	Archival data	Literature review
(8)What achievements were accomplished?	Lesson plans and reflective journal entries	Video recordings the target classrooms	Audio recordings of the reflection meetings	Literature review
(9)What aspects are still needed to be changed?	Surveys	Archival data	Audio recordings of the reflection meetings	Literature review

Ethics: Did the research face any ethical challenges? If so how were they resolved?

Ethical issues such as honesty, confidentiality, responsibility and fair share should be carefully considered when reviewing an action research project (Dobert, 1984; Eisner & Peshkin, 1990; Ferrance, 2000). From the beginning of the study, we took certain preventions based on these issues.

Honesty: Both the researchers and students voluntarily participated in the study and signed the consent letters. Based on the cultural and personal differences, the time of informing the participants varied accordingly. The main issue we had to overcome at the beginning was "trusting each other". Although the topics discussed at the monitoring meetings guided the research team in building trust to each other, it took time for them to rely on each other. There were opportunities which helped the researchers adopt the principles of the BLIA and metacognitively evaluate themselves and their teaching. In addition, the nature of the meetings was more conversational in which individuals felt themselves comfortable. The examination of the data at the monitoring meetings allowed students' ongoing evaluations. The instructions, video-recordings, students' products and teachers' plans were revised at the meetings held by the whole research team on a weekly basis. An expert of education of hearing impairment regularly revised the research process and the data collected and shared their views sometimes individually and sometimes with the research team in the study.

Confidentiality: Although each student signed the consent letter that notified video recordings, some students did not want to be recorded. We tried to persuade them. Some of them accepted but some did not. So we did not videotaped the ones who not willing to. Their verbal attendances were counted as data. We have not shared their visual data anywhere.

Responsibility: This was a long-term project so various ethical problems occurred mainly because of some negative reactions coming from some faculty members, exhaustion, tiredness etc.

Negative Reactions Coming from Some Faculty Members: Some of the faculty members had negative views about one of the research products at the end of the first academic year. In addition, these faculty members told their negative views to the students, and the students reported these negative views to the faculty members giving the language courses.

One of the important goals of the project was to inform not only the students but also all the individuals interacting with them, including the faculty members, about the principles of the BLIA. The reason was that it was more likely for the faculty members working in harmony with each other to develop the culture of literacy in the educational environment they prepared. The principles of the BLIA are very consistent in this issue. Therefore, with the attempts of the research team, trying to listen to and understand the message in mutual communication decreased all these negative views to great extent (deVito, 1989). The faculty members who held negative views at the beginning were informed about the interdisciplinary cooperation regarding the goals of the research project in the following academic Terms. In this way, it was seen that all disciplines would be able to support each other without losing their souls (Ramsey & Conway, 1995).

Exhaustion and Revival: The research project was approved on the 20th of March in 2006. This was a pleasing situation. However, exhaustion might have happened in longitudinal studies was observed in especially some members of the research team who had been collecting data for a year. It was thought that this situation might have been caused by the so called "insufficient" monitoring of the data in the first Term. With a new start, a session was organized which emphasized the importance of the project carried out, the importance of the efforts of the whole research team executing the project and the requirements of action research methodology.

At the beginning of the study, there were problems in providing systematic and reflective feedback following the implementation of the course contents as well as the detailed examination of the teaching plans. The reasons for these problems were multidimensional. Some of the major problems encountered as the faculty members' lack of mastery of the techniques necessary for data collection, their communicational abilities to criticize others and to tolerate being criticized as well as students' getting accustomed to the courses. The absence of the students and their failure to do their homework were observed prevalently in the course evaluations of the faculty members. In addition, it took a certain amount of time for the faculty members to get accustomed to the video-recording technology and to do video-recording appropriate to the purpose.

Fair share: The benefits of the educational efforts took some time to appear so the students did not realize how they were improving in their language and professional knowledge at the beginning.

Consequently, the students apparently rejected the efforts of the research team. So various negotiations and discussions occurred between the research team and the students. In the long run they all found suitable jobs and finally understood us! Actually it is a two way station. We have learned a lot, improved in many skills such as conducting and teaching research. As we were teaching we were learning as well.

Action: Did the outcomes of the study lead to action ?

An action research study should lead to action by the teacher researcher. In our action research we developed many actions. We had action plans concerning the research methodology and educational programs. Some of them were accomplished creating themes for naming each term. We called 2005 spring term as preparation for the actions and the 2005- Summer and Fall Terms as Transition since many transitions in terms of methodology and school program were in transition. The 2005 Fall Term was our Turning Point since the ideas emerged for newspaper publication. 2006 Spring Term was named as The Official Start since the project was admitted by the research Committee. The following 2006 Summer Term was called as Preparation to the New School Year. During the Fall Term in 2006, there were more collaboration among the participants so we called that term as "More Collaboration". 2007 Spring Term was titles as Establishing the Literate Culture because of the growing cultural values and activities.

The actions we applied based on the principles of action research strengthened each other and provided us many accomplishments: *a) Dynamic Instructional Cycle- 2005 Spring Term, b) Establishing the Common Literacy Goal for the School, Newspaper publication, c) The Emerged BLIA Model*
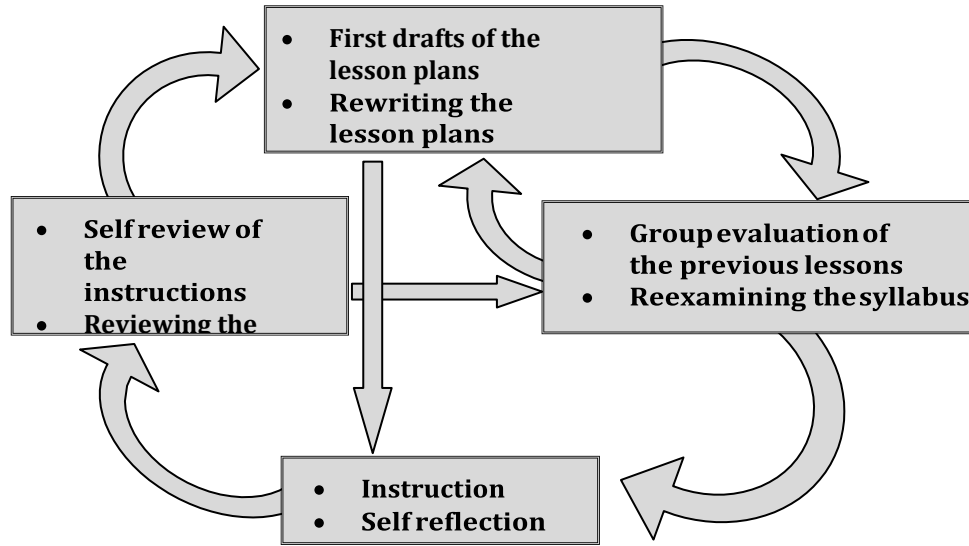
Figure1. (a) Dynamic Instructional Cycle- 2005 Spring Term

b)Establishing the Common Literacy Goal for the School, Newspaper Publication: It was revealed at the monitoring meetings that purposeful, meaningful and functional applications of the principles of the BLIA were increasingly involved in the courses. However, according to the opinions of the faculty members, the negative responses of some of the students to the courses implied that carrying out applications based on the BLIA in each course was not sufficient. Taking all these issues into consideration, it was decided at the 8th monitoring meeting held on the 21st of October in 2005 that the language and literacy courses at the school should be executed in line with a common goal. Among various suggestions, publication at the school was discussed. With the help of publication at the school, students could carry out literacy activities including different text types and establish communication with each other, hold interviews, report their studies, make different designs, take photos and use them in their writings, use computer technology in line with their goals and learn computer software was used for publication purposes. Publication activities at school are important for students to develop their reading and writing skills (Simpson, 2003; Wang, 2008). The knowledge of hearing impaired university students about publishing and related computer software is likely to help them own a job following their graduation. Publication could have been made with the help of any product. As a result of the discussions, the suggestion to publish a school newspaper was accepted and announced to the students. It was decided that the faculty members in the research team would prepare a written text together with the students for this newspaper. It was believed that designing the composition and lay-out of the newspaper with the use of Desktop Publication in the computer environment would make the students more equipped in their jobs. In addition, with the help of interdisciplinary cooperation – which is among the BLIA principles -, the students would be able to transfer their knowledge. In line with these viewpoints it was believed that the participation of the faculty member responsible for the department of Computer Programming at the school in the research team would be beneficial. The faculty member accepted this suggestion and joined the research team with the approval of the Commission of Anadolu University Scientific Research Projects. In this way, she started working by activating the software necessary for the composition and lay-out of the newspaper. A popular computer program, QuarkXPress was chosen because it was thought that this software would influence

the professional development of the students positively. In addition, it was believed that it would also provide the students with opportunities to find a job.

The software was activated, but there was a problem. Since there were no students in the first grade of the Department of Computer Programming in the academic year of 2005-2006, the course of "Composition", in which the software mentioned above was taught, was not available. To solve this problem the computer program person organized a few sessions with each of the focused classes and taught the students the features and operation of the software of QuarkXPress. These activities were carried out on voluntary basis for the transition period. However, this was not enough. The optional course of "Page Design" was offered for the department of Graphics in the academic year of 2006-2007 during the reorganization of the courses in the Spring Term of the academic year of 2005-2006. In the academic year of 2006-2007, the precautions necessary for this course to be chosen by the students were taken.

By the end of the Fall Term of the academic year of 2005-2006, the newspaper had not been published, but its foundations were ready. The faculty members mentioned that the students' motivation increased but the students were still doubtful about the publication of the newspaper.

With all these uncertainties, the Fall Term of the academic year of 2005-2006 ended with the preparation and execution of the exams. The students' performances were measured with an exam whose scope was the same as that of the performance exam through which the starting data of the Fall Term were collected. At the meetings held during the winter break, the reliabilities of the exam results were determined; the Fall Term was evaluated; and preparations for the Spring Term were made.

Newspaper Publication: A reviewed and renewed newspaper was published at the end of the 2006 Spring Term. In the Spring Term of the academic year of 2005-2006, the courses were executed in a way to publish the school newspaper. The language courses included studies appropriate to the content of the newspaper. Thus, guided by the teachers, the students produced various written texts to publish in the newspaper. The name of the newspaper was determined by the students. All the students took part in the activities on determining the name of the newspaper. The names nominated were voted, and the newspaper was given a name, which was "Gunısıgı" (Sunshine).

After determining the name of the newspaper, a competition was organized to determine a logo. Following the competition, the winning logo was used in the newspaper. In addition, the winning students were presented with their plaques at the exhibition organized at the end of the academic year. It was necessary to gather the texts written for the newspaper. For this purpose, an e-mail account was activated. During the activities for publishing the newspaper, the news written down by the students during the lessons were chosen by their teachers and edited all together. The students sent the edited texts via e-mail. The faculty members sent the edited texts that they recommended to be published in the newspaper via e-mail too. After all the written texts were completed, the written texts to be published in the newspaper and their places in the newspaper were determined at the editors' meeting in which one student represented all the students.

During the preparation of the newspaper, the students were assigned a task regarding the pages that they would prepare for the newspaper. In the laboratory environment, all the classes participating in the project carried out the tasks regarding the composition and lay-out of the newspaper in line with their duties together with the faculty member teaching the course of "Page Design" and with all the other members of the project team. The project team collected and organized the composition and lay-out of the newspaper prepared by the students. The pages organized were printed in the laboratory of the

School. At the end of the Spring Term of the academic year of 2005-2006, the school newspaper was published as the product of the whole academic year. The school printed a hundred of this newspaper. The newspaper was presented to the visitors at the end-of-year exhibition at the school with a poster presentation showing the process and purpose of the newspaper. The newspaper was distributed with a questionnaire including such subjects as the name of the newspaper, its logo, content, page design and the number of its pages. According to the results of these questionnaires, the newspaper was generally favored in terms of content, page design and the number of pages. However, there were a limited number of readers who did not like the logo and name of the newspaper.

c) The Emerged BLIA Model: The data collected in the previous academic year were reviewed and revised in summer. The needs of the students and the goals achieved and those not achieved in the previous academic year were taken into consideration. In the later processes of the study, the newspaper was published as well. However, the experiences in the past required some precautions to be taken. A model based on the principles of the BLIA started to be developed.

This model was based on the principles of the approach and the factors that allowed establishing the BLIA (Pearson, Raphael, Benson & Madda, 2007). According to the model, at the beginning of the Term the research team and the students evaluated the design and the content of the previously published newspapers during the target lessons. They all produced the texts during the language courses. After the editorial meeting they published the selected texts at the end of the Term.

In the early lessons of the Fall Term of the academic year of 2006-2007, the newspaper of Gunisigi was examined together with the faculty members teaching the courses of Page Design and Writing and Speaking and with the first grade Graphics students during the lessons. In the course of Writing and Speaking, the newspaper of Gunisigi was compared with a national newspaper published in our country. In this course, criteria related to the composition of the newspaper were developed. The students brought these criteria into the course of Page Design. The newspaper of Gunisigi was also revised in this course in the light of these criteria. In addition, its page design was compared with that of a newspaper published in China. Furthermore, the examination of the newspapers published in other countries was planned. In this period, first of all, the name of the newspaper was changed as Entegre Haber (The Entegre News). The third grade Graphics students carried out a study on the logo for the new name, which was used in the newspaper published later. According to the observations in and out of the courses, the students increased their habits of reading a newspaper. In addition, a workshop concerning creating the conversations about books was started on with the volunteering students. This workshop started on voluntary basis. Unfortunately, due to the work-loads of the teacher and students it had to be terminated in the middle of the academic Term. As a result of the yearly revision of the program, the course of "Book Discussion" was put as an optional course into the program for the following Spring Term. It was believed that in this way, book-related activities would be enriched with the students choosing this course in the Spring Term in 2008. At the monitoring meetings, the faculty members went on sharing their lesson plans before and after the courses via the internet. The course contents were revised cyclically.

At the end of the academic Term, the School Newspaper was published. In addition, there was an increase in the motivation of the students and of the faculty members regarding participation in the activities. The third issue published with the presentation of the poster showing the newspaper publication process was shared with the visitors in the end-of-year exhibition. In the same exhibition, a questionnaire was distributed, however, only a few questionnaires were returned.

All the research data were reviewed and revised during the monitoring meetings. The measurement and evaluation tools developed and applied were examined. The entrance exams for the new students to

attend the school were shaped. The preparation of this exam and its validity and reliability analyses were carried out with the cooperation and approval of the school director. The courses that the faculty members would teach were determined and so were the contents of the language courses. An interdisciplinary and metacognitive literacy model emerged in 2007.
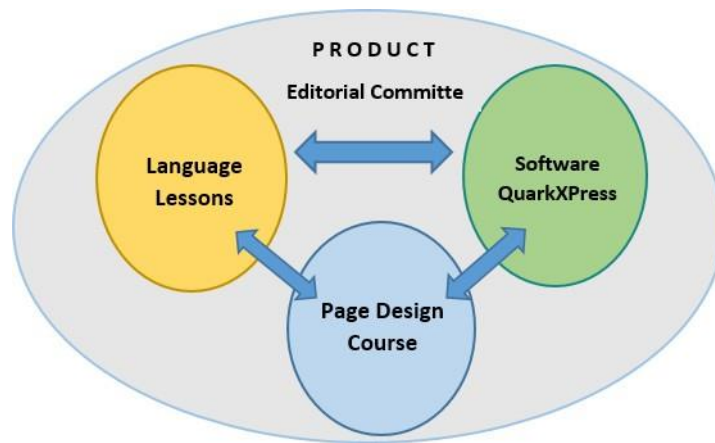

Figure 2. The Emerged Interdisciplinary and Metacognitive Literacy Model

Action-Data Connection: How is the proposed action connected to the study's data analysis and interpretation?

The following issues about data analysis and interpretation took time: Analyzing the videotaped classroom instruction–Self-evaluation and group evaluation; Getting more knowledgeable in terms of the principles of BLIA; Developing common understanding about the principles and instructional models and strategies of balanced literacy instruction; Adopting the instructional models of BLIA to hearing impaired college students. The research team believed that these problems could not be solved in a short time. Gradually, each faculty member observed that the activities carried out contributed both to their own professional and personal development and to the positive changes in the students.

The first step in developing the culture of the literate community at the School was to enable individuals in this core team to establish a literature culture. Achieving this requires a long time. Even though every faculty member had had acquired some of the basic qualities regarding the education of the hearing impaired before the project started, establishing the common language and the common goals required a certain amount of time, reflection and openness to being criticized. Probably, most importantly, individuals should perceive themselves as life-long learners and be everlastingly open to development. In order to create team spirit, regular meetings for monitoring in which the project members participated were held. In the present study, 90 monitoring meetings were regularly organized for different purposes starting from the 9th of March in 2005. The Project director and advisor, the faculty members executing the courses, and sometimes the school director participated as the project advisor in the monitoring meetings. The other advisor was constantly informed. The suggestions of the counselor shaped the meetings. In addition, the students' products and files in the application class were presented to the advisor. During these monitoring meetings, a check list which allowed controlling the BLIA was prepared. With the help of this check list, all faculty members saw

that they were objectively evaluated. At the initial meetings, activities were carried out to establish unity in the teaching plans of the courses. Sample plans were examined. A sample plan was developed on which the team members agreed. As the time passed, the core members of the research project team established the "Team Spirit".

The regular and routine organization of the meetings led to positive effects on the research team. First of all, they had a voice in this routine. Therefore, the timing of the meetings was shaped according to the flow of the course program. In the Spring Term of the academic year of 2005-2006, the courses of the focused groups were executed on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Thus, the faculty members wrote down the evaluation part of their plans in a reflective manner following their courses. Later, examining their yearly programs and reviewing the related literature, the faculty members took the evaluation of the previous course into consideration again and prepared a lesson plan draft for the following course. The monitoring meetings were held on Monday and Tuesdays. As mentioned above, at these meetings, instructional elements such as materials, plans and video-records of the courses executed were developed by the research team based on the principles of the BLIA and were examined by the field experts with an evaluation tool whose validity was approved by the field experts. Each course was controlled with this tool. The plan drafts previously prepared by the faculty members were examined by the research team. These suggestions were enriched by the review of related sources. The group members were informed about the strategy or the models to be applied; or they renewed their current knowledge. The difficulties experienced in the previous lesson and the functioning strategies were mentioned. Suggestions were provided for solving the problems. It was decided that these issues could be taken into consideration in the following courses. The faculty members' sharing the successful examples helped others transfer these examples into their own implementations.

Each faculty member re-wrote the plans shaped with suggestions. Thus, they re-shaped the plans and carried out the application either by directly preparing the course materials or by re-consulting the research team. There were situations in which the faculty members stated their views about each other's plans without holding any meeting. The goal was to make the final versions of the plans appropriate to the principles of the BLIA. Despite the final changes, the faculty members executed their weekly courses and carried out their reflective evaluations.

The faculty members were guided to help manage the interactions in courses via direct or indirect strategies applied in a balanced way and via discussions. It was seen that some of the faculty members applied "direct instruction" throughout the lesson and that sometimes, they did not encourage active participation of the students. By evaluating these courses individually, the research director and the advisors explained each faculty member the functions, elements and conditions of class discussions in line with their needs. It was observed that hearing impaired students more and more actively listened to each other and to the faculty members during class discussions and talked about related issues.

Reflective Stance: In what ways has the action research effort contributed to the researcher's reflective stance on the ways teaching and learning viewed?

An action research study results in the researcher adopting a reflective stance on the ways teaching and learning are viewed (Malone, 2014). In our study we recognized that our school program was changing fulfilling the occupational, educational, personal , and language needs of our hearing impaired students. The quality of instructional materials we utilized and developed during the course of study gradually increased. They have become authentic, attractive for the students appropriate for the students' academic and developmental levels, functional, purposeful and meaningful. Therefore, it is assumed suitable materials were utilized which reflected the principles of BLIA.

Towards the end of the project effort concerning the instructions; there was a growing literate culture in the SfH. The students and we had started to share meanings to construct a culture. The purposeful, functional and meaningful learning instructions and situations seemed to create "the real learners".

The students and the other readers were reading our newspapers. The newspaper has been recognized by the National Statistics Institute. After the dissemination of each issue the readers filled out a survey form reflecting their opinions. The newspaper publication process has become a tradition of the school. The students were on their way to become a journalist and a reader. The research team members kept reflecting on the model and prepare a plan for the following terms. A new cycle were developed each term. The emerged model has been tested through doctoral dissertations and master thesis. The language art instructors have become more competent in their professions. We kept examining the instructional strategies. Interdisciplinary and metacognitive literacy model has been examined. We have developed a school library. The students and the instructors have been utilizing this library during and after the lessons. We have developed a data base for library loans. We have an informal evaluation system for language and literacy. We have developed a question bank so that we could rearrange various test formats. The literacy skills and language use of the students were measured and evaluated. These exams were reviewed and revised and updated regularly in the research process, which laid the foundations of the question bank (Turgut, 1983; Uzuner, 2008).

We observed that there was a growing literate culture in our school. However, prevailing the research effort to the whole school would take time. But it is worth to continue to attempt. New action research studies are in need. Because action research can be used to bridge the gap between education research and teaching practice. Teacher empowerment can be facilitated with action research. Action research can be used as a replacement for traditional in-services to enhance teachers' professional growth and development. In planning new action research projects we have to reconsider the current school climate and culture. We have to describe; the community, school (class, race, mission, values, urban/rural); participants; classrooms where the action research project will take place. We have to ask these questions: Given your description, do you think the majority of the community would support your action research topic and believe it is useful? Why or why not or do you not know? Give a reason for your response. Given your description, do you think those considered the minority in the community would support your action research topic and believe that it is useful? Why or why not or do you not know? Give a reason for your response. How is teaching, learning, and doing research supported or not supported by this context? Consider the school demographics as you have presented them. What do you suppose this faculty and the students want from their schools? (Carr & Kalmbach Phillips 2014). Today, unfortunately; the answers of these issues are mostly negative for the SfH context.

As we negotiate with ourselves about terminating or continuing the research efforts in the school, we have to reconsider these aspects. Creating the change was difficult but maintaining the change was more difficult as observed in many contexts in our country. The realities of developing countries have negative impacts on maintaining the improvements. Things change but it takes lots of effort and time. So one must act patiently and never loose his/her hope. Another aspect is administrative statue which has impact on these issues at our university. They have the power for creating changes easier than the regular faculty. If they don't give permission nothing could be done. This happened to us, we could not get the permission from the newly appointed principal of SfH to prevail the research effort to whole school programs. Therefore, unfortunately, we had to terminate our efforts. Fortunately, however, our accomplishments are still continued by few of the faculty members of SfH.

Conclusion

Sometimes I feel that I am getting tired of struggling with the authorities. But this feeling must not stay with me. I force myself to realize that as long as I am the citizen of this country and patriotic about the educational development. So instead of being frustrated with the overwhelming situations, I must work hard for the sake of new learners, our established scientific community and our country so on. In my opinion, in order to overcome the obstacles, one must be responsible, assertive, positive and modest, patient and hard worker. In short, one must focus on the target and never give up. This effort had a pioneering role in the establishment of many improvements. In this country, the prevalence and maintenance of the improvements are the serious issues that we have to give serious thoughts. This is a never ending story. As long as we are on the scene we have to keep going.

In conclusion, I would like to point out several issues. First, the schema for evaluation action research projects offered by Malone, (2014) is proved to be a comprehensive and valid tool for evaluation of any action research project. Second, based on this schema our action research project could be considered as scientifically based. Third, I would recommend the other researchers utilize the Malone's schema to evaluate their action research project from the beginning to the end of their research efforts.

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