

MACRO-STRUCTURE ANALYSIS OF READING COMPREHENSION PARAGRAPHS OF KPDS AND YDS EXAMS WITHIN YEARS 2003-2013

Gülay KIRAY*

ABSTRACT

YDS, formerly known as KPDS, is a standardized multiple-choice exam used to assess the foreign language proficiency of state employees and academics in Turkey. Given its high-stakes nature in general and the particular significance of the assessment of reading skills within the test, the selection and use of appropriate and well-structured texts for the reading comprehension questions becomes acutely salient. Against this backdrop, this study analyzes the reading texts of KPDS and YDS tests between the years 2003 and 2013 in terms of their macro-structures with a particular focus on the existence of identifying macro-structures, the number and variety of macro-structures and text difficulty in relation to the difficulty of macro-structures. The findings reveal that about half of the reading texts do not have any identifying macro structure while the other half is centered on one of the four main macro-structures, which has significant implications not only for text difficulty but also for the appropriateness of texts for the accurate assessment of reading skills.

Key Words: Macro Structures of Texts, Textual Analysis, Language Proficiency Tests, Reading-Comprehension.

2003-2013 YILLARI ARASINDA YAPILAN KPDS VE YDS SINAVLARININ OKUMA-ANLAMA METİNLERİNİN MAKRO YAPI ANALİZİ

ÖZ

Önceden KPDS sınavı olarak bilinen YDS sınavı, Türkiye’de kamu personelinin ve akademisyenlerin yabancı dil yeterliliğini ölçmek için kullanılan standardize edilmiş, çoktan-seçmeli bir sınavdır. Genelde, sınava giren adaylar için başarılı/başarısız olmaları halinde önemli sonuçlar yaratıyor olması ve özelden de sınav içinde okuma becerilerinin önemi göz önüne alındığında, okuma-anlama sorularının hazırlanmasında iyi-yapılandırılmış ve uygun metinlerin seçilmesi ve kullanılması ciddi bir biçimde önem kazanmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma 2003 ve 2013 yılları arasındaki KPDS ve YDS sınavlarının okuma metinlerini makro metin yapıları açısından incelemektedir. Metin analizinde, sınavlarda kullanılan okuma metinlerinde belirleyici bir makro metin yapısı olup olmadığına, makro metin yapılarının sayısı ve türlerine ve makro metin yapılarının zorluğuna bağlı olarak metin zorluğuna odaklanılmaktadır. Çalışmanın bulguları, okuma metinlerinin yaklaşık yarısının herhangi bir belirleyici makro metin yapısına sahip olmadığını ve diğer yarısında da dört ana makro metin yapısından sadece birine yoğunlaştığını göstermektedir ki bu durum da seçilen metinlerin hem okuma becerilerini doğru bir biçimde ölçmesi açısından uygunluğuna hem de metin zorluğuna ilişkin önemli çıkarımlar barındırmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Makro Metin Yapıları, Metin Analizi, Dil Yeterlilik Sınavları, Okuma-Anlama.

* Dr., İstanbul University, Hasan Ali Yücel Education Faculty, İstanbul- Turkey, gkiray@istanbul.edu.tr

1. INTRODUCTION

YDS, known as KPDS until 2013, stands for the main standardized multiple-choice exam to examine the foreign language proficiency of state employees and academics in Turkey. Before 2013, another test called UDS was used to assess the foreign language proficiency of academics or the ones who want to become academics while KPDS was used to evaluate the foreign language skills, especially of governmental employees. However, since then, the foreign language proficiency of both academics and state employees started to be examined with YDS test. The test is held twice in a year, one in Spring Semester and one in Fall Semester, which is compatible with the academic semesters in Turkey.

These two tests were started to be called as YDS; however, the structure and content of each in general has not changed through time. Both foreign language proficiency tests have assessed language proficiency in mainly five different categories of foreign language knowledge as follows: structure, vocabulary, cloze text, spoken language and reading comprehension. Reading can be considered as the only language skill assessed in these tests, excluding the spoken language part of the test since the spoken language is not assessed in spoken form. Each test includes 5 reading paragraphs and 5 questions for each paragraph. The number of questions was reduced to 4 after the year 2010 as the total number of questions was reduced to 80 instead of 100. Reading comprehension questions can be grouped as reading a paragraph and answering comprehension questions, finding the sentence completing the necessary part of the paragraph and lastly finding the irrelevant sentence of the paragraph.¹

YDS can be seen as a high-stake test in Turkey in the sense that it is necessary to be qualified as candidates for postgraduate degrees and to receive extra salary for state employees. Given that it is the only language skill assessed, reading in particular requires due attention and diligence. Furthermore, since the literacy skills are usually perceived to be of much importance to academic arena, how reading skills in such tests are assessed calls for a close scrutiny and analysis. In this regard, as text selection is a major step of test preparation process, whether these texts are good samples could be one of the determining factors of correctly assessing the reading skills of test takers.

Grounded in such an understanding, the present study examines the paragraphs accompanying the reading comprehension questions with a two-fold aim: to identify whether these paragraphs have a specific macro-structure which is of value to make a whole text and facilitate comprehension and to identify the variety in macro-structures since the types of macro-structures is one of the factors complicating or easing comprehension. To this end, this study analyses the reading texts of KPDS and YDS tests between the years 2003 and 2013. What follows is an overview of the literature that serves as a theoretical background to the study, introduction to the database and data analysis procedures alongside the significance of the study, and finally the presentation of the findings.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

2.1. What is Reading?

Reading could be defined with the term ‘comprehension’ as Alderson and Urquhart (1984) discuss it in relation to various levels of understanding. Naturally, comprehending language

¹ For sample tests see <http://www.osym.gov.tr/belge/1-12673/gecmis-yillara-ait-sinav-soru-ve-cevaplari.html>

structures is part of reading comprehension; however, reading comprehension is a much broader term that cannot be confined to the sentence structure understanding. Robinett (1979, in Steffenson and Joag-Dev: 1984) defines reading with three general levels of understanding: the topic of the text, directly stated or implied cultural information and language structure. Goodman (1988) broadens the definition by naming it as a ‘guessing game’ (p. 12) As to make correct guesses, the reader is required to understand the text with three main knowledge areas: knowledge of language structures, knowledge of the context and knowledge of the background or world knowledge of the reader (Widdowson, 1983; Nuttal, 1996). Grabe (1991), on the other hand, adds to these knowledge areas ‘synthesis and evaluation skills/ strategies’, ‘metacognitive knowledge’ and ‘skills monitoring’ to complete the reading comprehension process. The place of macro-structure knowledge and comprehension among the components of reading process summarized above is of significance since it is not only an element of readers’ background knowledge but also one of the factors influential in the ease and difficulty of language input as Anderson and Lynch (1988) state.

2.2 What Makes a Whole Text?

Any piece of writing could be named as a text provided that it is a communicative act (Brown and Yule, 1983; Halliday and Hasan, 1985). Yet, as Wallace (1992:8) states, “[t]here are also agreed ways in which chunks of language longer than words or phrases connect in order to create unified pieces of language rather than mere strings of sentences.” Accordingly, Wallace (1992) categorises the features of whole text under the headings of ‘formal features’, ‘propositional meaning’ and ‘communicative function’. Text structure or in other words macro-structures or discourse patterns are related to formal features of the text and realized with the cohesive devices of the language; they are also related with ‘discourse relations’, as Hoey calls them (in Tribble, 1996: 33). The larger structures of texts support the coherence of the text and coherence is one of the key elements of constructing a whole text. The importance of macro-structures to the comprehension of texts are explained by Grabe (1997:6) as follows:

When students are made aware of that texts are composed of these organizational formats and patterns, they will be able to understand better the coherence and logic of the information being presented, and they will be able to locate the main ideas and distinguish them from less important information. Such knowledge structures also indicate the intent of the author and the purpose of the text.

From what Grabe (1997) indicates, it is also clear that macro-structures are not only the elements of comprehension but also features of a whole-text since these structures support the general idea and communicative purpose of the text and make the sets of sentences unified to construct a central idea. As Huckin (1997: 81) notes, readers don’t just pick up a text and start deciphering it word by word”, but they rather “begin by recognizing that the text belongs to a **genre** (text type) that manifests a characteristic set of formal features serving a characteristic purpose (emphasis original)”. The importance of text structure could be also supported with the conclusions of the study by Zarati et al. (2014:543) as follows:

First it enables the reader to see a text as a whole with connected parts (this is particularly done by transitions and endophoric markers). Second, these features enable the reader to interact with the author behind the text who tries to facilitate the process of reading through a well-organized text.

When the elements of the whole text such as coherence, cohesion, and discourse pattern are not in harmony and the sentences of the unit are disconnected and shift from one central point to another, the comprehension process is reduced to sentence level. This, in turn, results in not being able to activate the schemas or the background knowledge of the reader. That is to say, “reading materials should be written according to the structure conventions so that reading comprehension can be facilitated” (Chang, 2002: 46).

2.3. Macro-Structures: Types and Difficulty

Although the types of macro-structures could vary depending on the field of study, which is beyond the scope of the present study, four main types of macro-structures have been identified for the purposes of this study: expository, narrative, argumentative and problem-solution (Langan, 1993; Marinak et al., 1997; Reid, 2000; Wyrick, 1999). Although argumentation and problem-solution can be considered as part of information-giving expository macro-structures, they are taken as separate macro-structures in this study due to the reasons explained below.

The basic structures of knowledge that are listed under the title of expository text are exemplification, definition, description, sequence, process, listing and classification, compare and contrast, and cause and effect, all of which represent information giving structures (e.g. Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983; Taylor, 1992). Expository texts are called as information giving structures, which is of importance to academics. Compared with narratives, expository texts are considered as more complex units. Alderson (2000) relates this complexity to the greater variety of text relations and content. The types of expository texts can be categorised according to the series of relations the texts provide to present the information. The types of exemplification, listing and classification, process and sequence texts could be grouped as listing the information but with different organizations. In listing and classification and exemplification text structure, it does not matter what to say first. However, in other two types, the starting point is important and organization of the information is more or less follow a simple order of either time or steps of a process. Comparison and contrast, compared with the previously stated four discourse patterns, is more complicated since it includes both the listing of attributes of at least two items and either comparison or contrast of them. This characteristic of the text structure makes it a more complex one to process for the readers. On the other hand, while definition structure tries to answer the question of what x is, description is an answer to the question what x is like. Description is also a complementary component of narrative text. Cause and effect structure stands for the most complicated pattern of all since cause and effect relationship does not necessarily have to be the list of causes and effects but chain reaction or, as Grabe (1997) names and shows in his study, ‘cycle’.

Another macro-structure is narration, which is the subject of various studies and researches. Narrative texts are not necessarily a category to differentiate from the information giving expository texts but a unique macro genre with the characteristics as follows:

(a) animate beings as characters with goals and motives; (b) temporal and spatial placements usually presented at the beginning of the story; (c) a problem or goal faced by the main character that imitates a major goal; (d) plots or a series of episodes that eventually resolve the complication; (e) impacts upon the reader's emotions and arousal levels; and (f) points (e.g. justice, honesty, loyalty), morals, or themes. (Dickson et al., 1995:18)

Dickson et al. (1995) underline the components of narratives under the headings of a protagonist, a goal, a plot and an outcome and hierarchical relations of the narrative discourse components. Usually the macro-structure of narratives follows a sequence organization although there could be flashbacks, which complicates the structure and make it dynamic. Narrative is also called story grammar where the main components are characters, setting, plot, attempt, reactions, outcomes, and ending (Fitzgerald, 1989; Taylor, 1992).

Although problem- solution and argumentative texts are usually listed under the group of expository macro-structures, they significantly differ from others regarding the multiple relations among the units of the whole text. Problem-solution is a macro structure that “presents a problem and its solution(s); it includes all the organizational components of causation; in addition, there is overlap between the problem and the solution...one part of the solution must match an aspect of the problem” (Taylor, 1992; Raymond, 1993: 5). Accordingly, problem- solution text follows the following sub-units: Situation, the statement of problem, solution(s) and the evaluation as Hoey (1983) lists as the elements of general scheme.

The argumentative text structure differs from all the others since it is not only information-based but also opinion-based. Argumentative texts are “dialogic in nature” as Priti and Midgate (2014: 298) note. An argument serving as a whole should include claims of argument and counter-argument and the evidence to support and refute. Argumentative texts are of importance both for students and their studies and to understand life; however, argumentative text structure is not easy to comprehend as argued in the study of Priti and Midgate (2014). An argumentative text is similar to other expository genres but uses multiple macro-structures as strategies to discuss the main argument or to refute the counter one. Since it is much more opinion based, it becomes challenging for the readers to comprehend the text as a whole and interpret the text since reading process combines comprehension and interpretation. Considering the information above and the literature of research on discourse patterns, narrative discourse is easier since it is the most practised genre from the early years of education; on the other hand, some types of expository texts such as specifically cause and effect, problem- solution and argumentative ones could be more challenging than narratives when the complicated relations among the complimentary units of texts are taken into account although expository macro-structures are also the ones practised frequently during school years like narratives. However, argumentative texts triggering more interpretation and critical reading steps of processing reading texts due to the opinion- based feature of them are among the most challenging texts of all structures.

3. THE STUDY

The present study analyses the reading comprehension paragraphs of KPDS and YDS within the years 2003-2013 with reference to their macro-structures. For the scope of the

study, reading texts of KPDS during the years 2003 and 2012 and of the first YDS exam of the year 2013, which in total amounts to 105 paragraphs, were selected as the database of the study. The time period is limited with the years mentioned above as the YDS exam questions, including the paragraphs, and answers started not to be published by Evaluation Selection and Placement Centre (ÖSYM), the national body that is responsible for the administration of the test, since the Fall Semester of 2013.

3.1. Aim of the Study

The aim of the analysis of reading comprehension paragraphs in KPDS and YDS tests within the years 2003-2013 is to answer the following research questions:

- Do paragraphs have an identifying macro-structure?
- How many macro-structures are covered in paragraphs?
- How varied are the paragraphs in terms of their macro-structures?
- What is the difficulty of the paragraphs in connection with the difficulty of macro-structures to be comprehended?

3.2. Significance of the Study

KPDS and now called YDS are two largely used language tests to assess the foreign language proficiency of both academics and state employees throughout Turkey. Every semester (Spring and Fall) many people take the test and their results become a determining factor in their academic studies and/or in their income as state employees are paid a sum of money each month changing according to the scores test takers receive from these tests. For instance, the second YDS exam of the year 2014 was taken by 139.602 people in different languages. The number of the test takers for the English exam was 134.055. As can be seen from the numbers, English as a foreign language is obviously the most preferred language among people taking the test.

Due to the reasons cited above and that these tests put an emphasis not only on language structure but also reading comprehension, the analysis of the reading parts is of value. Moreover, the selection of appropriate and well-structured texts for the multiple choice questions is the starting point of preparing questions properly assessing the reading comprehension skills of test-takers. As for the specific scope of analysis which is macro-structures of paragraphs, comprehending macro-structures of texts is one of the main steps of reading comprehension both for main points and details in the text as can be seen in the findings of the previous research reports (Anderson and Lynch, 1988). Moreover, having an identifying macro-structure is also of significance in making a whole cohesive text formed around a main idea and supporting details and easing comprehension as Alderson (2000) explains and lists the characteristics of tests paralleling with the scope of this study and supporting the interpretation of results.

3.3. The Procedure of the Analysis

With the aim of studying and identifying macro-structures of the reading paragraphs, the sample exams of the years 2003- 2013 were downloaded from the official website of ÖSYM and the ones before the year 2006 were downloaded from other websites of KPDS or YDS exams which could be accessible by searching with the names of exams via search engines

since those samples are not available in the archives of ÖSYM. Following the downloading step, the reading paragraphs of the previously stated exams were read to identify the macro-structure of each. As a third step, the data were categorized under the heading of the paragraphs including an identifying a macro-structure and the ones which could not be identified with a macro-structure. Then, the data were organized to see the variety of macro-structures, and the expository macro-structures as having the highest range among the others were listed to be interpreted for the difficulty of comprehension after reading them. Lastly, all the organised and analysed data were interpreted by juxtaposing the findings against the literature of the field.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following table (*Table 1*) shows the number as well as the types of macro-structures identified in the reading paragraphs. When the table is reviewed, it is clearly seen that expository ones significantly outnumber the other three- narrative, argumentative and problem-solution. Even though argumentative and problem- solution structures are counted under the heading of expository type, for the scope of this study, they were counted as separate structures since they are not one single expository structure but rather a combination of other structures, i.e. problem-solution as a combination of definition, cause-effect and listing or others.

Table 1: Macro-structure types of paragraphs of KPDS and YDS used in ‘Reading Comprehension’ part of tests within the years 2003-2013

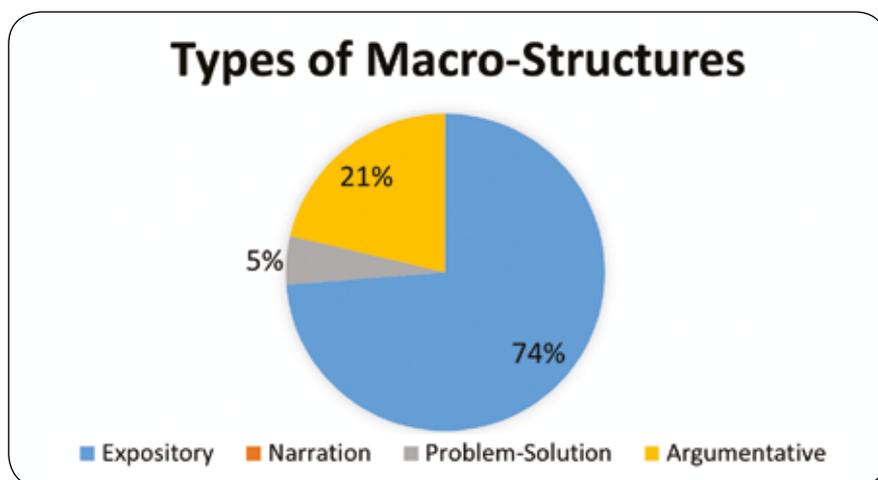
	Df; Dsc; E; S; L&C; P; C&C; C&E	Narrative	Problem- Solution	Argumentative
2003/1	1 (S) 1 (L&C)			
2003/2	2 (L&C) 1 (C&C)		2	
2004/1	1 (P) 1 (E) 1 (L&C)			
2004/2	1 (L&C)			
2005/1	2 (S)			2
2005/2	2 (L&C) 1 (C&C)			
2006/1	1 (C&C) 1 (Dsc)			1
2006/2	1 (Df) 1 (Dsc) 1 (S)			2
2007/1	1 (C&C) 1 (L&C)			
2007/2	1 (Dsc) 1 (E) 1 (L&C) 1 (S)			
2008/1	1 (E) 1 (S)			2
2008/2	1 (S) 2 (C&E)			
2009/1	1 (Df) 1 (S)			
2009/2	1 (S) 1 (P)		1	
2010/1	1 (L&C)			1
2010/2	1 (E) 1 (L&C)			
2011/1	2 (L&C)			1
2011/2	1 (L&C)			2
2012/1	1(L&C)			
2012/2	1 (S) 1 (L&C) 1 (Df)			1
2013/1	1 (L&C)			1

Expository- Definition (Df); Description (Dsc); Exemplification (E); Sequence (S); Listing & Classification (L&C); Process (P); Compare & Contrast (C&C); Cause & Effect (C&E)

It is not surprising that narrative structure is not a preferred structure while choosing the paragraphs as this macro-structure is accepted as a less challenging one because of being the one practised more in childhood while learning mother-tongue literacy skills during primary school education, and Alderson (2000) discusses whether the strategy of using the information of macro-structures is transferrable referring to the literature of researches and draws the conclusion that it is providing the necessary threshold level of language knowledge. On the other hand, it could be really difficult to limit the narrative structure within

the scope of a single paragraph when the characteristics of the narrative text explained in the literature review are considered.

As can clearly be observed with the following graph (*Graph 1*), the rate of the structures of argumentative and problem-solution is significantly low compared with other expository structures, which is about only one third of others. However, including such a small number of argumentative and problem-solution types of paragraphs could bring some questions about the credibility of the tests as these tests are to correctly test the language proficiency and reading comprehension skills of the candidates, and reading comprehension skill could be named as the most survival skill of academics to follow the literature in their fields in a foreign language. Although what is stated for the narrative structure as a challenge to create the structure within a paragraph level is also a challenge for the argumentative and problem-solution texts, still not including such texts could not be the best solution. Then, the paragraph level of the tests could also be questioned.



Graph1: The rate of each type of macro-structure in KPDS and YDS paragraphs used in ‘Reading Comprehension’ part of tests within the years 2003-2013

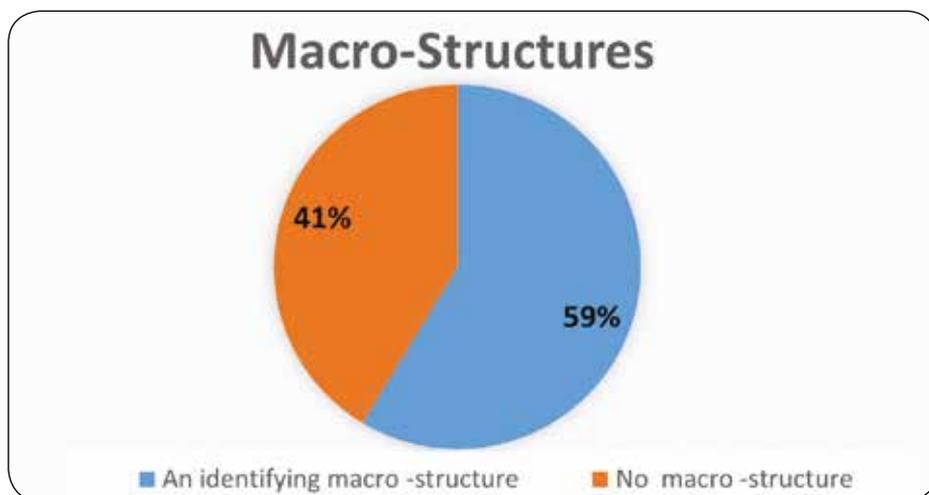
Unless the text characteristics of structures are taken into account while choosing them, the paragraphs start to be not a unified whole text, but the test-takers to comprehend them start to be assessed in terms of their skills of understanding and interpreting the sentence level meanings rather than interpreting the whole text in the necessary context. However, such kind of sentence level comprehension is a better way of assessing language structure proficiency rather than reading comprehension proficiency irrespective of what questions are asked. To exemplify this, one text taken from KPDS 2008/1 will be interpreted below with the characteristics of argumentative macro-structure.

The distinction between “journalism” and “literature” is quite futile, unless we are drawing such a violent contrast as that between Gibbon’s History and today’s paper; and such a contrast itself is too violent to have meaning. You cannot, that is, draw any useful

distinction between journalism and literature merely on a scale of literary values, as a difference between the well-written and the supremely well written: a second-rate novel is not journalism, but it certainly is not literature. The term "journalism" has deteriorated, so let us try to recall it to its more permanent sense. To my thinking, the most accurate as well as most comprehensive definition of the term is to be obtained through considering the type of mind, concerned with writing what all would concede to be the best journalism. There's a type of mind, and I have a very close sympathy with it, which can only turn to writing, or only produce its best writing, under the pressure of an immediate occasion; and it is this type of mind which I propose to treat as the journalist's. The underlying causes may differ: the cause may be an ardent preoccupation with affairs of the day, or it may be (as with myself) laziness requiring an immediate stimulus, or a habit formed by early necessity of earning small sums quickly. It is not so much that the journalist works on different material from that of other writers, as that he works from a different, no less and often more honourable, motive.

(KPDS 2008/1)

In the previous paragraph, the idea that '*the distinction between journalism and literature is futile*' is discussed with only one reason which is giving a definition of journalism to prove the argument of the writer. The other argumentative paragraphs of KPDS and YDS exams do the same, which is discussing the main argument with one single technique such as telling an anecdote, exemplifying, listing or so. However, reading comprehension does not only include the understanding sentential meanings of sentences, but also the interpretation of what is read in sentence level with the other processes of meaning making such as combining what is written with schematic, discoursal and contextual meaning then interpreting and evaluating the material and its credibility. As to do so, first the text should provide the necessary meaning making tools such as sufficient information and reasons to support the main argument and even the counter argument with its refutations unlike the example paragraph given above. Otherwise, it could be difficult to assess correctly the skill of interpreting and evaluation of the readers. The case of not including a whole argument becomes also more complicated for readers of test paragraphs considering the impromptu condition of candidates to activate their schematic knowledge because of being subject to 5 different paragraphs thus 5 different topics and even fields of information sometimes in each exam. Furthermore, deciding not to test the interpretation and evaluation steps of the reading process could bear the question whether reading skill or only the structural sentence level knowledge is tested.



Graph2: The rate of paragraphs having an identifying macro-structure to paragraphs with no macro-structure in KPDS and YDS paragraphs used in ‘Reading Comprehension’ part of tests within the years 2003-2013

Another point to be interpreted from *Table 1* is that about half of the total number of paragraphs do not include an identifying macro-structure. This is not because the paragraphs not identified with a specific structure could be identified with more academic genre texts. There is only one instance where such an academic genre was preferred instead of expository texts reporting the results of a research in summary (see Text 5 of 2011/ 1 exam starting as *Women seem to be...*). Such kind of discourse pattern use is of benefit since the academics who are one of the main body of test candidates of KPDS and YDS are expected to be exposed to such discourse structure texts more than the others during their academic career.

Unlike the paragraph structure interpreted above, other no macro-structure paragraphs are either like a news report, or they cannot be identified with a specific macro genre because the central idea of the paragraph or the strongest structure of the text changes from the beginning of the paragraph through the end. What these two group of paragraphs share is that they both cannot provide textual level, yet they only include sentence and clause level relations. Thus, it could make it difficult to differentiate this part of KPDS and YDS exams (Reading Comprehension) from the other structure parts of the exams such as ‘Finding the Option Paraphrasing the Sentence’ or ‘Finding the Option Correctly Completing the Sentence’.

The following two paragraphs are exemplifying both of these no macro-structure ones. The former is an example of paragraphs which is like a news report and the latter is the one which is not organized around a central idea. The first sentence of the first paragraph is about *new technologies* and creates an expectation that the following part will be about the effects categorized within the first sentence. However, the topic changes into *second industrial revolution*. Although the sentence refers it with the reference word *this*, this

reference word does not match with a direct referent in the previous sentence. In spite of the fact that this time the second sentence informs about the *three key areas of innovation* and provides an expectation that the paragraph will inform about these three key areas, the projector on the text shifts to the topic *steel, iron and history of the steel*. It is possible to think that the paragraph is about *one of the key areas of innovation: steel*, still when the paragraph is read as a whole, it is clearly sensed that breaking the rule of given-new principle of textuality makes the paragraph lacking a central idea to organize the information around. The second paragraph, on the other hand, announces that *a new meteorite- Tissint- has been started to be studied*. Although all the sentences except the last two ones give information about the meteorite, this amount of information cannot be centred on a single proposition. Thus, the readers are to process the text at sentence level rather than textual level.

In the last third of the 19th century, new technologies transformed the face of manufacturing in Europe, leading to new levels of economic growth and complex realignments among industry, labour and national governments. Like Europe's first industrial revolution, which began in the late 18th century and centred on coal, steam and iron, this "second" industrial revolution relied on innovation in three key areas: steel, electricity, and chemicals. For instance, steel, which was harder, stronger and more malleable than iron, had long been used as a construction material. But until the mid-nineteenth century, producing steel cheaply and in large quantities was impossible. That changed between the 1850s and 1870s, as new and different processes for refining and mass-producing alloy steel revolutionized the metallurgical industry. Although iron did not disappear overnight, it was soon eclipsed by soaring steel production. So, steel began to be used for various purposes. In Britain, for example, shipbuilders made a quick and profitable switch to steel construction, and thus kept their lead in the industry. Germany and the US, however, dominated the rest of the steel industry. By 1901, Germany was producing almost half as much steel as Britain and was able to build a massive national and industrial infrastructure.

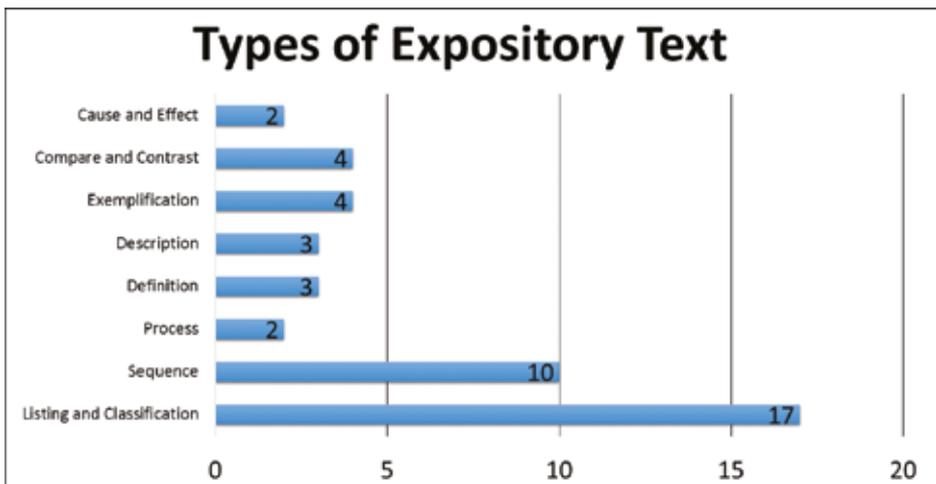
(KPDS 2009/1)

British scientists have begun studying a rare meteorite to reveal more about the history of Mars. The rock, named 'Tissint' after the Moroccan area where it crashed in July 2011, was recovered from the ground just five months later – not enough time to be too contaminated. "The Tissint sample is probably the most important meteorite to have landed on the Earth in the last 100 years," says Dr. Caroline Smith, curator of meteorites at the Natural History Museum in London. An analysis of the rock revealed its Martian origin. It would have been removed from Mars when an asteroid struck the planet, staying in space as debris before being attracted by the Earth's gravity. Of the 41,000 officially recognized meteorites, 61 come from Mars and the Tissint rock is only the fifth that was witnessed falling. Dr. Tony Irving of Washington University, who performed some initial analysis on the sample,

does not think there is much chance of finding fossilized life within it. But the British team could reveal whether minerals have been affected by water or contain elements such as carbon. Smith says “We’re not looking for microbes, but we’re looking for the chemical and environmental signatures to indicate whether Mars, at some point in its past, may have provided a suitable environment for life to exist.”

(KPDS 2012/2)

The last point to be discussed for the purposes of this study is about the variety of expository macro-structures covered in paragraphs and their capacity of assessing the reading processing skills of candidates.



Graph 3: The number of each type of expository paragraphs in KPDS and YDS paragraphs used in ‘Reading Comprehension’ part of tests within the years 2003-2013

The graph above shows the number of each expository macro-structure covered in exams except the ones- argumentative and problem-solution- analysed in the previous sections of the present study. The most assessed information getting macro-structures are listing and classification and sequence. The ones which necessitate more dialogical processing of the paragraph- cause and effect and compare and contrast, are the least covered. This result leads to the interpretation that the paragraphs used in KPDS and YDS tests could be evaluated as simple regarding the processing of macro-structure of texts which is one of the most important text processing skills of readers. Considering these tests are proficiency tests and they include paragraph level texts and each test includes 5 different paragraphs, tests’ validity could increase when there is a balance in the level of difficulty of macro-structures together with the level of language complexity.

5. CONCLUSION

The conclusions concerning the research questions of the study could be summarized as follows:

- Given the high-stakes nature of these tests and the particular significance of the assessment of reading skills, the selection of appropriate and well-structured texts for the preparation of reading comprehension questions becomes acutely salient. In this regard, depending on the steps of reading text processing and the importance of comprehending macro-structure of texts as an indispensable step, it could be advisable for ones who prepare the tests to choose better structured texts.
- The present study revealed that half of the paragraphs lack textual level because of not having an identifiable macro-structure, but the other half of them tests mostly simple expository structure processing skills rather than argumentative and problem-solution structures. This could be a result of these two structures' being rather challenging to be organized in paragraph level. One immediate implication of this finding would be that reading comprehension assessment be more valid if full texts rather than paragraphs are chosen for these questions. However, in order to reach such a conclusion, further studies analysing the paragraphs of the other two parts of the tests- finding the sentence completing the necessary part of the paragraph and finding the irrelevant sentence of the paragraph- and discussing their quality with the criteria regarding macro-structures and other textual features are needed.
- Lastly, the potential of paragraphs to test reading comprehension should be carefully considered while choosing them to prepare questions as about half of the paragraphs are lacking the textual feature; thus, the questions to be asked about them have the risk of assessing sentence structure knowledge but not the text processing skills and strategies. However, a proficiency test should be assessing language proficiency as a whole together with language skills since systemic knowledge constitutes only a part of foreign language proficiency when the modern language proficiency and literacy descriptions are reviewed.

6. REFERENCES

- Alderson, J. Charles. *Assessing Reading*. CUP.
- Alderson, J.C. and A. H. Urquhart (1984). 'Introduction: What is reading?', (pp. xv-xxviii) in Alderson, J.C. and A.H. Urquhart, *Reading in a Foreign Language*. Longman.
- Anderson, A. and T. Lynch (1988) *Listening*. OUP.
- Brown, G. and G. Yule (1983). *Discourse Analysis*. CUP.
- Carrell, P. L. and Eisterhold, J. C. (1983). Schema Theory and ESL Reading Pedagogy. *TESOL Quarterly*, 17(4), 553-573.
- Chang, C. (2002). *The Reader Effect (Instruction/Awareness of Text Structure) and Text Effect (Well-structured vs. Bad-structured Texts) on First and Second/Foreign Language Reading Comprehension and Recall-What Does Research Teach Us?*. U.S. Department of Education- Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)
- Dickson, S. V., D. C. Simmons and Kameenui, E. J., (1995). *Text Organization and Its Relation to Reading Comprehension: A Synthesis of the Research*. U.S. Department of Education- Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC).
- Fitzgerald, J. (1989). 'Research on Stories: Implications for Teachers' (pp.2-36) in Muth K.D. *Children's Comprehension of Text: Research into Practice*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

- Goodman, K. (1988). 'The reading Process', (pp. 11-26) in Carrell, P. L. *Interactive Approaches to Second Language Reading*. CUP.
- Grabe, W. (1991). Current developments in Second-Language Reading Research. *TESOL Quarterly* 25 (3), 375-406.
- Grabe, W. (1997). 'Discourse Analysis and Reading Instruction', (pp. 2-15) in Miller, T., *Functional Approaches to Written Text; Classroom Applications*. Washington, D.C.: English Language Programs United States Information Agency.
- Halliday, M. A. K. and R. Hasan (1985). *Language, Context and Text: Aspects of Language in a Socio-Semiotic Perspective*. OUP.
- Hoey, M. (1983). *On the Surface of Discourse*. London: George Allen and Unwin.
- Huckin, T. (1997). 'Critical Discourse Analysis'. (pp. 78- 92) in Miller, T., *Functional Approaches to Written Text; Classroom Applications*. Washington, D.C.: English Language Programs United States Information Agency.
- Langan, J. (1993). *Collage Writing Skills with Readings*. New York: McGraw- Hill.
- Marinak, B. A., J. C. Moore, Henk, W. A., and Keepers, M., (1997). *The Pennsylvania Assessment System- reading Instructional Handbook*. U.S. Department of Education- Educational resources Information Center (ERIC)
- Nuttall, C. (1996). *Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language*. Heinemann.
- Priti D. H. and E. Midgette (2014). A Genre-Specific Reading Comprehension Strategy to Enhance Struggling Fifth-Grade Readers' Ability to Critically Analyze Argumentative Text, *Reading & Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties*, 30:4, 297-327
- Raymond, P. M. (1993). The Effects of Structure Strategy Training on the Recall of Expository Prose for University Students Reading French as a Second Language. *Modern Language Journal*, 77(4), 445-458.
- Reid, J. M. (2000). *The Process of Composition*. Longman.
- Steffenson, M. S. and C. Joag-Dev (1984) 'Cultural Knowledge and Reading', (pp. 48-64) in Alderson, J.C. and A.H. Urquhart, *Reading in a Foreign Language*. Longman.
- Taylor, B. M. (1992). 'Text structure, comprehension, and recall'. (pp. 220-235) in Samuels, S. J. and A. E. Farstrup, *What Research has to Say about Reading Instruction*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Tribble, C. (1996). *Writing*. OUP.
- Wallace, C. (1992). *Reading*. OUP.
- Wyrick, J. (1999). *Steps to Writing Well*. Forth Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.
- Zarrati, Z., R. M. K. Nambiar, and Tengku Nor Rizan Tg Mohd Maasumb (2014). The Importance of Text Structure Awareness in Prompting Strategic Reading among EFL Readers. *Procedia- Social Behavior Sciences* 118, 537-544.