



**PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' VIEWPOINTS ON READING
COMPREHENSION DIFFICULTIES OF 3RD AND 4TH GRADE
PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTSⁱ**

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Abstract:

The purpose of the present study is to determine the viewpoints of primary school teachers on difficulties experienced by 3rd and 4th grade primary school students in reading comprehension. The study was planned in Phenomenology Design, which is one of the Qualitative Research Methods. The study group consisted of 25 primary school teachers working at 7 primary schools in the city center of Bayburt. The sampling of the study was determined with the Criterion Sampling Method, which is one of the Purposeful Sampling Methods. Semi-structured Interview Forms were used for data collection. The Descriptive Analysis Methods were used in the analysis of the data. As a result of the study, it was concluded that difficulties in reading comprehension appeared in the form of difficulties in answering questions after reading a text; the cause of the difficulty in reading was students' not focusing on the meaning; and teachers conducted plenty of activities suitable for the levels of students to overcome the difficulties in reading.

Keywords: primary school teachers, reading, reading comprehension

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1. Introduction

One of the most important conditions of modernization in our present day is following the developments in all fields closely, and keeping pace with them. Although there are many ways to obtain information, it is believed that the most valid of these is "reading" (Özyılmaz, 2010: 4). In addition, reading is also considered as the most basic element of learning-teaching processes, and as these processes proceed, reading becomes one of the most important basic skills contributing to the access to information and independent learning of it by students (Leppanen et al., 2008: 551). However, a quality reading activity is only meaningful when it ends up with comprehension. As a matter of fact, Nation (2005) claimed that the ultimate goal of reading was comprehension. Comprehension may be defined as obtaining information from sounds, words, or narrations, making inferences from the material that is read, and receiving the message intended to be conveyed (Calp, 2010: 73). For this reason, reading and comprehension concepts are closely related to each other.

Demirel (2003) described this relation as "*humans read to understand and want to understand what they read*". Ünal and Köksal (2007) emphasized that reading achieved its goal when it ended up with comprehension. In this way, a good reading process is only possible when the message intended to be conveyed in the material is understood in an accurate manner (Luma, 2002: 9).

1.1. Reading and Comprehension

Humans have always tried to understand, explain or interpret the existence of beings, the life and the events happening in the universe since the very first day of their existence on earth. The struggle to explain and interpret, which exists on the basis of scientific research, increases the importance of reading and comprehension activity with each passing day.

Reading activity is a process that increases the information capacity of the individual, ensures that ideas and beliefs are formed, and the individual gains a unique personality. This process may be defined as an intellectual activity which has the *comprehension* concept in its very center and in which the psychological, biological and physiological properties of the individual work in integrity (Epçaçan, 2008: 16). Many definitions have been made on reading and comprehension activities. Some of these are as follows; "*Reading is the process of establishing meaning performed in a regular environment based on an efficient interaction between the author and the reader; and the pre-information of the reader is used in it for a suitable purpose by using a proper method*"(Akyol, 2005: 1). "*Reading is defined as the activity in which the individual makes inferences from written*

symbols by employing cognitive behaviors and psychomotor skills" (Demirel, 2003: 77). Reading is *"seeing the symbols of the words as a result of the jumping of the eye between lines, and comprehension and articulating of these symbols"* (Öz, 2006: 211). In other words, reading is *"a psycho-motor skill which has a high perceptual aspect and a low motor aspect, and is an activity that involves recognizing the symbols in a text and making sense of them"* (Yangın, 1999: 68). Smith (1984) defined reading as a complex process in which cognitive and perceptual skills played roles (not as an activity consisting of sudden and single stage occurring in the brain), and claimed that it consisted of different components like seeing, perceiving, articulating, remembering, association, comprehension and interpreting. Reading is not only the articulation of written letters but also the understanding of the statements read. As a matter of fact, a reading which does not end up with understanding may be defined as an activity in vain (Duran and Ertuğrul, 2012: 348).

Comprehension, on the other hand, requires that the information in the text is remembered, the message intended to be conveyed in the text is revealed, the metacognition thinking skills are used, the mental picture of the text is formed, and the structure of the text is analyzed (Van den Broek and Kremer, 2000: 1). Güneş (2004) stated that comprehension was a process that revealed the activities like finding the meaning of a text, thinking on it, looking for its causes, revealing the outcomes, and evaluation. According to him, it consisted of mental abilities like investigating, interpreting, decision-making, translation, analyzing, synthesis and assessment. These mental abilities in the comprehension process are not independent from our previous experiences; on the contrary, they ensure that the text is made sense of by using previous experiences by associating it with previous experiences. As it may be understood from these statements, the process of comprehension is not independent of our previous information or our experiences. The understanding of students in a text, a paragraph or a statement may be directly related to their previous knowledge or experiences.

When the comprehension activity is considered as a construction process, it may be defined as reading a text by the student, selecting some pieces of information in the text in the light of previous information, making sense of this information by associating it with previous information, and constructing it on the mind (Güneş, 2007: 113). As it may be understood from the definitions given above, comprehension may be defined as the perception of a written text by the individual, a verbal statement or stimuli that consist of visual elements in sensory organs, construction of these elements by establishing associations with previous information, and using it as a new information in his/her life (Demir, 2010: 203).

1.2. Reading - Comprehension Relation

Reading comprehension is defined as a process in which reading and comprehension processes supplement each other with cause-effect relation, because a reading that is performed without making sense is not defined as a full reading activity. When the reading process ends up with comprehension, it has a real value (Kanmaz, 2012: 18). The basic aim of reading is to ensure comprehension, because the success of reading activity depends on the process ending up with comprehension (Luma, 2002: 9). Reading comprehension has many definitions made by various authors. It refers to a skill for inferring information from written texts and the use of this skill to infer information, or to the understanding of the information (Brasell and Rasinski, 2008: 17). Pardo (2004) defined reading comprehension as the “*construction of the meaning process*” by combining previous information and experiences with the contents of a text during the interaction between the student and the text. According to Yılmaz (2008), reading comprehension is analyzing the thoughts conveyed in a text by using previous information and associating meanings with them. In another definition, reading comprehension is identified as the perception of written texts, making sense of them and eventually understanding them (Çayır, 2011: 55).

Reading and comprehension skills are among the basic skills used in every field of human life (Yılmaz, 2011: 10). However, in order for these skills to show important effects in daily life, they must be made into a habit used in an efficient manner, and be converted into “*love for reading*”. A successful reading brings with it a good comprehension skill. In this way, an individual that has a good reading and comprehension skill does not refrain from speaking in front of public, and can express himself/herself in a comfortable manner (Karaarslan, 2015: 4).

With the increase in the number of written texts and the development of technology in recent years, access to information has become easier. In order to benefit from these information sources, it is necessary to acquire a reading habit. To acquire a reading habit by an individual and to use or interpret the sources in an efficient manner, the individual has to understand what s/he reads (Top, 2014: 4). Reading and comprehension contributes greatly to the formation of our educational and social lives. However, we also face serious problems in reading comprehension. In order to reduce these problems to the lowest level, efforts must be supported to develop the reading comprehension skills of students at primary school level. Students must be raised to become individuals who think, understand, criticize and establish connections between the texts they read (Ince, 2012: 3-4).

The foundations of reading comprehension skill are established in the early years of primary school as a critical element. For this reason, teachers must be aware of the

fact that reading comprehension process is very important in the lives of students, and develop them in this way. They must also plan the educational environment with activities that will facilitate the acquisition of this skill (Akyol, 2008: 29). However, it has been observed that students at primary school level experience problems in reading comprehension. It is even possible to claim that the number of students who say that they do not understand anything from the texts they read is not at a level that can be ignored (Yılmaz, 2008: 132).

Based on the consideration claiming that a good reading education must focus on the meaning after the students pass the level of acquiring reading skill, determining the viewpoints of teachers on reading comprehension difficulties and the practices in this field is extremely important in terms of defining the causes of the problems in reading comprehension, and to perform an efficient reading comprehension (Kocaarslan, 2013: 376-377). For this reason, the viewpoints of primary school teachers, who provide reading and comprehension education for the first time in the lives of students, constitutes the problem statement of the present study.

1.3. The Purpose of the Study

This study was conducted to determine the viewpoints and practices of primary school teachers on the reading comprehension difficulties of 3rd and 4th grade primary school students. In this context, the following questions were asked to the teachers:

1. Do you have any students who have difficulties in reading comprehension? If yes, how do these difficulties reveal themselves?
2. What are the causes of reading comprehension difficulties?
3. In order to eliminate reading comprehension difficulties;
 - a) What are your practices?
 - b) What are your recommendations?

2. Material and Methods

The model of the present study, the study group, the data collection and the analysis are explained in this part.

2.1 The Model of the Study

This study was conducted using the Phenomenological Method, which is one of the qualitative research methods. The Phenomenology Design focuses on the phenomena that are noticed but not known in detail (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013: 78). The Semi-Structured Interview Form, which is used in qualitative studies, was made use of in

collecting the data. The aim in this practice is to determine the experiences, opinions, attitudes, ideas, intentions and reactions of the participants during interviews (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013: 148).

2.2. The Study Group

The study group consisted of 25 primary school teachers who worked at 7 primary schools in the city center of Bayburt. The Purposeful Sampling Method was used in determining the participants of the study. The Purposeful Sampling Method enables detailed investigation of situations which are considered to include vast information (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013: 135). The Criterion Sampling Method, which is one of the Purposeful Sampling Methods, was used in the study that was conducted with only the class teachers of 3rd and 4th Grade students. Pre-interviews were made with the teachers working at primary schools. Information was given to the teachers about how the study would be conducted, and pre-interviews were made with the teachers who were volunteers to participate in the study and who worked at the schools when they had suitable time. The information on the participants is given in Table 1.

Table 1: The Study Group

	Number of the Participants (f)
Gender	
Male	12
Female	13
Education Level	
Undergraduate	23
Postgraduate	2
Professional experience	
1-5 years	4
6-10 years	4
11-15 years	8
16-20 years	6
20 years and over	3
Class Taught	
3 rd Grade	11
4 th Grade	14

Eleven of the teachers who participated in the study were teaching 3rd Grades, and 14 were teaching 4th Grades. Four of the teachers had professional experience between 1-5 years, 4 had a professional experience of 6-10 years, 8 had 11-15 years' experience, 6 had 16-20 years and 3 had 20 years and over experience. When the educational status of the

teachers was analyzed, it was determined that 23 had undergraduate degrees and 2 had postgraduate degrees. 13 of the teachers who participated in the study were female, and 12 were male.

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The semi-structured interview forms, which were prepared by the researchers themselves, were used in the study as the data collection tool. The interview questions were prepared with a literature review on the topic of the study. Then, the viewpoints of 3 academicians and 2 teachers were received about the interview form, and the form was given its latest shape after the necessary corrections were made.

The interviews were conducted in classrooms or in teachers' rooms when the teachers were not working between December 19, 2016 and January 20, 2017. The participants were informed that the interviews would be recorded with an audio recorder; however, the participants rejected this due to various reasons. As a result, the interviews were recorded with the notes taken by the researcher. In order to prevent loss of data, the participants were asked to repeat their statements in certain conditions. Each interview took 20-25 minutes. The respondents were asked to check the interview notes in order to ensure accuracy.

The data obtained from the participants were analyzed by using the Descriptive Analysis Method. Descriptive Analysis is the analysis of the data obtained with the interview forms or similar documents by taking the questions in the interview form as the basis. The analysis is conducted by directly quoting from the data (Ekiz, 2009: 75). The findings were supported by direct quotations taken from the statements of the participants in the interview form. The participants were signified as T1, T2, T3, ...

3. Findings

The findings of the analyses of the data obtained in the interviews conducted with the teachers on the difficulties in reading comprehension are given in this part of the article. Direct quotations from the statements of the teachers are also included in this section to support the findings.

3.1. Findings on Reading Comprehension Difficulty Symptoms

The viewpoints of the teachers on the symptoms of reading comprehension difficulty of the students are given in Table 2.

Table 2: The viewpoints of the Primary school 3rd and 4th Grade class teachers on reading comprehension difficulty symptoms of the students

	Participants	f	%
When the students have difficulty in responding to the reading comprehension questions about the text	1,2,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,18,19,20,21,22,24	21	84
When the students have difficulty in expressing themselves	1,2,3,6,8,10,11,23,24	9	36
When the students cannot understand the written problem in mathematics	3,4,5,8,12,13,14,16	8	32
Reading problems (slow reading, spelling reading, incorrect reading)	2,3,9,15,19,20,22	7	16
Indifference in classes	9,11,15,17	4	16
When the student has difficulty in establishing communication in the classroom	1,4,10	3	12
Incompetence in visual reading	2,25	2	8
Not being able to summarize what is read	2,8	2	8
Incompetence in story completion activities	23	1	4

According to Table 2, the viewpoints of the teachers on the symptoms of reading comprehension difficulties in 3rd and 4th grade students were determined as follows; 84% of the teachers said “students have difficulties in answering the reading comprehension questions about texts they read”. Nine of the teachers stated that the problems occurred “when the students had difficulty in expressing themselves”, 8 stated that “when the student could not understand the written problem in mathematics classes”, 7 stated “when the student had reading problems”, 4 stated that the problems emerged “when the student was indifferent in the class”, 3 stated that “when the student had difficulty in establishing communication in the class”, 2 stated that the problems appeared “when students were incompetent in visual reading”, 2 stated that “when questions that were irrelevant with the reading passage were asked”, 2 stated that “when the students were unable to summarize the reading passage or the text they read”, 1 stated that “when the students were incompetent in story completion activities”.

The teacher viewpoints in the relevant fields are as follows:

“When we assign students with short reading texts and ask questions about it, students have difficulty in answering these questions” (T1).

“Students give irrelevant answers to the questions we ask about the reading passages in Turkish language classes” (T10).

“I see that students who have difficulty in expressing themselves also have difficulties in reading comprehension” (T11).

“When students do not understand the problems we solve in mathematics classes, they do not know which four operations to use” (T4).

“A student who is a slow reader has difficulty in reading comprehension because s/he forgets what s/he read at the beginning of a sentence or a paragraph when s/he finishes reading” (T19).

“Although my students are 4th graders, there are still some students who read by spelling, and since they spell, they cannot understand what they read” (T9).

“If a student reads incorrectly, s/he also has difficulty in reading comprehension as well” (T22).

“Not only in Turkish classes, but in any class, if the interest and motivation of students is low, the things that are taught do not attract their interests; and naturally, they do not understand anything from what they read” (T15).

“If a student is incompetent in visual reading, s/he also has difficulty in reading comprehension” (T25).

“When I ask students to ask questions to their friends or to me after they finish reading in a class about a certain topic, I see that they ask questions that are not relevant to the topic of the reading” (T24).

“When we assign students with a reading comprehension activity that requires them to complete an unfinished story consisting of 5-6 sentences, we see that the students have difficulty in this task. We even see that they answer by using statements that are irrelevant to the 5-6 sentences given to them” (T23).

“When I asked students to summarize what they understood from a reading passage, I saw that they had difficulty in reading comprehension, and for this reason, they were incompetent in summarizing, and some of them could not make a summary at all” (T8).

3.2. Findings on the Causes of Reading Comprehension Difficulties

The viewpoints of the teachers on the causes of reading comprehension difficulties of students are given in Table 3.

Table 3: The viewpoints of 3rd and 4th grade primary school teachers on the causes of reading comprehension difficulties of students

	Participants	f	%
Lack of ability in focusing on comprehension	3,4,6,8,9,10,11,12,14,15,16,17,18,21,22,23,24	17	68
Inadequate motivation	2, 3,6,7,9,14,16,17,18,20,22,23	12	48
Inadequate vocabulary	1,2,3,4,5,6,8,9,17,24	10	40
Environmental factors	2,3,5,6,7,9,10,16,19,25	10	40
Genetic factors	6,12,13,14,22	5	20
Lack of attention in punctuation	1,3,8,9,11	5	20
Not having learnt how to read and write	3,7,19,24	4	16
Inadequate reading activities	4,5,6	3	12
Inadequate reading comprehension activities in the 1 st Grade	4,8	2	8

When Table 3 is analyzed in terms of the causes for reading comprehension difficulties, it is observed that 17 teachers said that the causes were related to “*Lack of ability in focusing on comprehension*”, 12 teachers said “*inadequate motivation*”, 10 teachers said “*inadequate vocabulary*”, 10 teachers said “*environmental factors*”, 5 teachers said “*genetic factors*”, 5 teachers said “*Lack of attention in punctuation*”, 4 teachers said “*Not learning how to read and write*”, 3 teachers said “*less reading activities*” and 2 teachers said “*Inadequate reading comprehension activities in the 1st Grade*”. Some of the statements of the teachers on the difficulties in reading comprehension are as follows:

“Students have difficulty in focusing during reading, and when they are distracted, they move away from the reading passage in Turkish classes if they are reading a text. If they are in mathematics classes, they have difficulties in understanding which mathematical operations to use” (T15).

“Some students are indifferent or unwilling to read, and some of them have low motivations, which are among the most important problems” (T23).

“If the number of the unknown words is high in the passage read by students, we cannot expect anything from the student in the reading passage. For example, if the student faces

5-6 unknown words in a reading passage, s/he moves away from the meaning of the passage and focuses on the meanings of the unknown words" (T17).

"Families set their children free at home and do not make them do any reading activities, or some families do not ask their children to tell what a story says and do not listen to their children. Some families do not take part in reading comprehension activities or do not provide any support, which contributes to the emergence of difficulties" (T25).

"I think that students with low IQ have difficulties in reading comprehension activities" (T22).

"I think one of the most important causes of difficulties in reading comprehension is the lack of attention to punctuation, and ignoring them. In fact, punctuation may change the meaning of the sentence, and for this reason, students who do not pay attention to punctuation experience difficulties in reading comprehension" (T1).

"We have some students who can't read and write even in the schools in the city center of Bayburt. First of all, we try to teach such students how to read and write" (T24).

"If reading activities are performed less in classes or at homes, and if the due importance is not given to reading, we see that serious problems emerge in the reading comprehension and in expressing oneself" (T6).

"In my opinion, one of the most important causes of the difficulties experienced in reading comprehension is that adequate importance is not given to reading comprehension as of 1st grade. In general, we mainly focus on teaching how to read and write, and underestimate the students' reading comprehension skills." (T8).

3.3. Applications and Recommendations of the Teachers to Overcome the Difficulties Experienced in Reading Comprehension

The applications the class teachers use in order to overcome reading comprehension difficulties are given in Table 4.

Table 4: The applications used by the class teachers to overcome the difficulties experienced in reading comprehension in 1st and 3rd grade students

		Participants		
		f	%	
Activities	Conducting a reading activity that is suitable for the level of the student	3,4,5,6,8,9,10,12,13,14,15,16,17,19,20,22,23,24	18	72
	Reading stories and asking questions about the story	1,4,12,16,18,19,20,21,23,25	10	40
	Visual reading activity	1,2,6,13,23,24	6	24
	Concretization of the problems in mathematics classes	3,5,10,11,16,21,	6	24
	Motivating students for reading comprehension	2,7,9,12,21,24	6	24
	Ensuring that the family is involved in reading process	6,11,19,20,22,23,	6	24
	Making the student tell the story after reading	1,6,10,11,	4	16
	Abstracting activity	4,8,15	3	12
	Giving keywords and asking students to write short texts	4,5,	2	8
	Making story maps	4,5,	2	8
	Illustration activity for the story	5,23,	2	8
	Wh- Questions activity	8,11	2	8
	Drama activities	13,23	2	8
	Preparing questions about the reading text	5,11	2	8

According to Table 4 more than half of the teachers participating in the study (f=18) stated that they tried to eliminate the difficulties by conducting reading activities that were suitable for the level of the students. Ten of the teachers said that they used "Reading stories and asking questions about the story" technique, 6 of them said that they used "visual reading" technique, 6 teachers said they used "concretizing the problems in mathematics classes" technique, 6 said they used "motivating students to understand what is read" technique, 6 said that they used "ensuring that the family is involved in the reading process", 4 said that they used "making the students tell the story after reading" technique, 3 said that they used the "abstracting activity", 2 said that they used "Giving keywords and asking students to write short texts" technique, 2 said that they used "making story maps" technique, 2 said that they used "illustrating activity for the story", 2 said that they used "Wh- questions activity", 2 said that they used the "drama activities", and 2 said that they used "making questions about the study" technique. The viewpoints of some of the

teachers participating in the study on their applications to overcome the difficulties in reading comprehension are as follows:

"Since the level of each student is different, I see that we experience fewer difficulties when we conduct reading activities suitable for the levels of the students. And I use such activities" (T17).

"I make my students read stories in reading hours we define within a week. I want the students tell the story before the class after they finish it, and I want other students to ask questions" (T25).

"I make students look at some pictures before we start reading about a topic, and I want them to talk about these pictures. In this way, students make sense of the text while they are reading, and understand better" (T6).

"Making up a story out of a problem in maths class with the names of the students, I ensure both student participation and comprehension." (T5).

"They understand better when we analyze the problems like 'what is given, what is asked and what is the result' in mathematics classes" (T21).

"When we explain the purpose of reading to the students and when we motivate them to read and understand, they become more willing" (T24).

"The family has important tasks right at this point. If the family cares about the reading and comprehension activities, the student faces less problems in reading comprehension; and if the family does not care about reading, the student experiences more problems" (T19).

"We make students tell a reading passage before the class and understand the importance of reading and comprehension, and meanwhile, we, as teachers, also understand whether they have really read the story or not" (T10).

"The students who initially have problems and difficulties in abstracting stories, finish their abstracts in a shorter time in further activities when compared with the previous reading activities and their works are more meaningful" (T15).

"We give students keywords about the text and conduct short writing activities to make them understand the text and state what they understand from it in a written form" (T4).

"After reading activity, we conduct a simple story mapping activity about the story" (T5).

"I make my students draw pictures about the story they read in art classes or sometimes we try to illustrate the cover of the story. This situation may take some time, but it is enjoyable for students" (T23).

"Giving short reading texts and conducting Wh- questions activity ensures that students make sense of the text in an easier way" (T8).

"I tell my students that they will change the names of the heroes in the story with their own names and will act them out. In this way, students care about the text more and become more interested, which facilitates the comprehension" (T13).

"At first, students did not like making questions about the text they read; however, they got used to it in time; and when I asked them to make up 5 questions about the text, some students said 'I made up 7 questions', 'I made up 8 questions'. I think that this is important in reading and comprehension" (T11).

The recommendations of the class teachers in eliminating the difficulties of students in reading comprehension are given in Table 5.

Table 5: The recommendations of the class teachers of 3rd and 4th grades for eliminating the difficulties of students in reading comprehension

Recommendation		Participants	f	%
	Reading comprehension activity with peers	1,5,8,16	4	12
	Caring for comprehension activities as well as reading activities as of 1 st Grade	3,6,14,17	4	12
	Rewarding system must be used more	11,12,19,22	4	12
	Keeping diaries	2,10,18	3	8
	Reading comprehension process must be emphasized rather than speed reading	4,13,25	3	8
	Ensuring that students have bookshelves at homes	11,23,24	3	8
	Organizing the physical environment	9,15,21	3	8
	Evaluation with multiple choice and open-ended questions	7,20	2	4

According to Table 5, when the recommendations of class teachers participating in the study on eliminating the difficulties in reading comprehension are analyzed, it is observed that 4 teachers said “*reading comprehension activities with peers*”, 4 of them said “*Caring for comprehension activities as well as reading activities as of 1st Grade*”, 4 said “*Rewarding system must be used more*”, 3 said “*Keeping diaries*”, 3 said “*Reading comprehension process must be emphasized rather than speed reading*”, 3 said “*Ensuring that students have bookshelves at homes*”, 3 said “*Organizing the physical environment*”, 2 said “*Evaluation with multiple choice and open-ended questions*”. Some of the teachers participating in the study mentioned this situation as follows:

“It will be useful if we make all our students purchase a common set of books, define a common reading hour in classroom, make them read the same story, ask questions to each other about the stories they read in the reading hour, and make them tell the story to each other” (T8).

“In my opinion, one of the reasons why students have difficulties in reading and comprehension is that teachers have not cared much for reading activities since the 1st grade. For this reason, such activities must be cared more from the early years of education” (T14).

“I think we can reward our students when they succeed in reading and comprehension activities, which is the case in other classes. We can ensure that they care more about such activities” (T12).

“We can make our students keep diaries” (T2).

"It must be accepted that only reading activities is not adequate in all grades of the primary education, we must make our students adopt this, and we must focus on such activities. In addition, I think that we must avoid reading contests in which people measure how many words a student reads in a few minutes" (T13).

"A bookshelf that belongs to students must be formed and the books they read must be kept in this bookshelf. In this way, we can make students have a desire for reading" (T11).

"Since noise, temperature and lighting in places where students read affect reading and comprehension, such issues must be cared much" (T15).

"Asking multiple-choice questions or open-ended questions may also be important in eliminating the difficulties in reading and comprehension" (T20).

4. Conclusion and Discussion

The class teachers participating in the study stated that they encountered reading and comprehension difficulties especially in the following situations; *"when students have difficulties in answering questions about reading and comprehension", "when they have problems in expressing themselves", "when they have problems in understanding written problems in mathematics", "when they have problems in reading", "when they are indifferent to classes", "when they have problems in establishing communications in classroom", "when they are inadequate in visual reading", "when they are unable to summarize a passage", and "when they have problems in completing a story"*. According to these findings, it has become clear that students had difficulties only when they could not answer the questions about the passage they read.

According to the viewpoints of the class teachers, when the causes of the reading comprehension difficulties are considered, it becomes clear that the following problems cause that students experience hardships in reading comprehension; *"not being able to focus in the meaning", "inadequate motivation", "insufficient vocabulary", "environmental factors", "genetic factors", "not paying attention to punctuation", "being unable to read and write", "inadequate reading activities", and "inadequate reading comprehension activities in the 1st grade"*. The great majority of the teachers who participated in the study mentioned that students had difficulties in reading comprehension due to factors like *"not being able to focus on meaning because of not paying attention", "inadequacies in motivation for reading and reading comprehension activities", and "the number of unknown words in a*

reading passage". Wang and Guthire (2004) mentioned that the decrease in the attention caused that the students could not "reach" the meaning, which is parallel to the findings of the present study. The lack of focusing on the text causes students to use inefficient strategies and make incorrect deductions from the text. Stahl and Nagy (2006) reported that reading comprehension was highly associated with vocabulary. Kocaarslan (2013) conducted a study, and reported that high number of unknown words in a text, low vocabulary capacity of students, not being able to focus on meaning, lack of motivation, and lack of family support in reading comprehension activities (which is an environmental factor), led to difficulties in reading comprehension. It was also reported in previous studies that the indifferent attitudes of families, less reading activities, and lack of attention led to difficulties in reading comprehension (Karaarslan, 2015: 96). It has been determined that these findings overlap with the results of the present study.

When we consider the activities conducted by teachers to eliminate the difficulties in reading comprehension, we see that the following activities are common; *"conducting reading activity that is suitable for the level of the students", "conducting story reading activity and asking questions about the story", "conducting visual reading", "concretizing the problems in mathematics classes", "motivating students for reading comprehension", "ensuring that families are involved in reading activities", "making students tell the story after reading", "writing abstracts after reading", "giving keywords and making students read short texts", "making short story maps", "illustrating the story after reading", "conducting Wh- questions activity", "drama activities", "making questions about the reading texts"*. In addition, more than half of the teachers who participated in the study mentioned that they conducted reading activities that were suitable for the levels of students, and nearly half of them stated that they made students ask questions about the passages after conducting a reading activity. The findings obtained in the present study show parallelism with the ones reported by Kocaarslan (2013) and Karaarslan (2015). In the study conducted by Kocaarslan (2013), it was reported that to overcome the difficulties in reading comprehension, the class teachers conducted activities like using reading passages that were suitable for the levels of students and that would attract their attention, making use of the visuals in the text, Wh- questions activity, asking questions about the reading text, and using story maps. Karaarslan (2015) reported that teachers used activities such as reading activity with students, making students tell the story after reading, asking questions about it, and reading activities with stories.

When we analyze the recommendations of the class teachers to overcome the problems in reading comprehension, we see that the following activities are

recommended by them; “reading comprehension activity with peers”, “caring for comprehension activities together with reading activities as of the 1st Grade”, “increasing reward system”, “keeping diaries”, “emphasizing comprehension process rather than speed reading”, “ensuring that students have bookshelves at home”, “organizing physical environment”, and “evaluating the reading passages with multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions”. The findings about the recommendations of the class teachers on eliminating the difficulties in reading comprehension are consistent with the findings of the study that was conducted by Karaarslan (2015). In the study that was conducted by Karaarslan (2015), teachers recommended activities like rewarding reading activities, ensuring that each student has a bookshelf at home, and making students keep diaries.

5. Recommendations

According to the findings of the present study;

1. Teachers may conduct additional activities to eliminate the difficulties experienced by students in reading comprehension when they face problems like slow reading and not being able to provide correct answers to comprehension questions after reading activities.
2. In order to overcome the difficulties in reading comprehension, teachers may be advised to organize activities to motivate students for reading and for increasing their vocabulary, and they may remove the elements that may distract them during classes.
3. Teachers may include comprehension activities in addition to reading and writing activities as of the 1st grade in primary education to help raise children who can understand what they read and who can express themselves.

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