THE INFLUENCE OF COMPREHENSION OF THE READ TEXT ON GENERAL SUCCESS OF PUPILS IN CLASS TEACHING

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Abstract

Reading is a complex psychological activity which enables receiving the information in written form and its comprehension. The perception of signs has a major importance in the beginning of reading, but, as the child improves, it relies more on the content of reading.

Enabling pupils in elementary school to realize and understand the facts in the text and the whole text, and to develop individual comprehension of the text, can significantly improve their school success, and , generally life success.

It is of great importance for elementary school pupils to overcome all levels of reading, starting with remembering the shape of letters, connecting the letters and the sounds, recognizing the letters and their bonding in one unity, connecting words into sentences, learning the basic reading techniques, speed reading and reading to oneself with full comprehension of the read text.

The aim of this paper is to explore the connection between understanding the read text and the general success of pupils. The survey includes 196 pupils of the fifth grade in Elementary schools „Huso Hodžić", „1.mart" and "9.septembar".

In this paper, several methods were used, such as theoretical analysis and descriptive method. Besides the research methods, two research techniques were used: testing and interviewing. Within the testing technique, the test of knowledge was used, so called „test of understanding the read text".

Considering the distribution of frequency and percentage in the contingency table, as well as the chi square value and the contingency coefficient, we can make a conclusion that there is a statistical connection between understanding the read text and school success at the end of the fourth grade.

Keywords: Reading, Pupil, Understanding the text, School success.

1 INTRODUCTION

We live in the modern age in which only a literate and educated man can participate in the society and culture, and as such can develop as an individual. It is very important to present the basic literacy in an interesting and complete way, and to present it in accordance with the challenges of the modern age. We adopt the information directly, by hearing and looking, and indirectly by reading.

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2. THEORETICAL APPROACH TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The role of reading and understanding the read text in general class teaching. In psychological sense, reading represents observation, comprehension and connection of any symbols or system of symbols, and understanding their message.

In general sense, the term means the understanding of tactile signs which have language meaning, visual perception of moving lips or understanding some common signals. The term usually means the perceptive process of recognizing the written letter signs, their connection in a word, as well as the understanding the message of sentences and the composition of sentences. In pedagogic sense, this process consists of „understanding the meaning of written words, which has a purpose to make pupils to understand the thoughts presented in words".

Reading is a connection of written or printed and oral speech and their meaning (Pedagogic encyclopedia, 1989, pg.214). A major impact on school success is the ability of pupils to understand the details in the text, as well as the author's intention to create a model of text that can be understood as a whole text. Understanding the text is a complex problem in education, which has a great importance. The first steps are the most difficult, but also the most important. A teacher has to use methods which evoke child's awareness, it's concentration and which will expand child's interest and strong will.

A textual method is used in teaching, which represents a direct access of teacher and pupil to the text. „Using texts, a teacher shows pupils new information, expands their knowledge, illustrates its interpretations, fulfills its opinion in a dialogue or discussion and what is most important, systematically reveals the most rational approach to various texts which pupils may encounter in education and life." (Prodanović, 1996., pg327). Understanding the texts is an integral part of pupils reading literacy which represents its ability to understand the written texts so to achieve personal goals (aims, development of personal knowledge and active participation in society).

To understand a text, it is necessary to create a connected structure of ideas in a textual basis, to get to the basis of text and to create a mental or situational model of text. This kind of model a pupil can create only if making conclusions, which are not based only on preferences in sentences, but, as well as on prior knowledge.

2.1 The school success as an indicator of understanding the read text

Based on the implementation of curriculum for specific subjects, classes and teachers opinion who check pupils knowledge, pupils success at school is established.

There are various definitions of this term. According to Encyclopedic pedagogic dictionary „success in class is an accomplished level of realization of material, formal, educational aims of teaching that are specified by curriculum, that is, a level in which pupils have permanently adopted knowledge, skills and habits; hence, developed their psycho-physiological abilities and formed a moral cognition, will and performance."(Encyclopedic Pedagogic dictionary, 1997,pg.43).

In pedagogic dictionary, success is defined as „an accomplishment which corresponds to the level of aspiration of a person, or, it even exceeds it".(Gojkov,1997,pg.42).

Some authors think that the success is a result of educational process, that is, teamwork, devotion and effort of pupils in learning, and other authors think that it is a product, result effect of work.

School achievement includes a level of adopting of the skills, knowledge and habits, as well as the level of specific personal abilities. School success, not only represents the teaching product and reproduction of teaching content, but, also development of many pupils personal characteristics which are direct or indirect product of teaching activities.

2.2 Comprehensive reading as an interactive process

Reading is an interactive process in which readers are in an internal dialogue with the text. This dialogue helps them to understand and elaborate what is being read. Zimmermann and Hutchins have established strategies to improve comprehensive reading.

Readers also include prior knowledge: skilled readers use their prior knowledge before, during and after reading, for better understanding of the text. Skilled readers ask questions before, during and after reading, to clarify the meaning, they also make assumptions and focus on what is important. They use their prior knowledge and information from what they have read in order to make assumptions; they explore answers, make conclusions and make interpretations which expand their comprehension.

While reading, they establish important ideas or themes, and they can distinguish relevant from irrelevant, they also write down thoughts that appear during reading, in order to understand their meaning. They are well aware when they understand something. When they have problems with understanding specific words and phrases, they use a series of strategies for solving the problem, including further reading, re-reading, asking questions, using dictionaries and reading outload.

Stimulation and development of ability to distinguish relevant form irrelevant in the text. One of the most important tasks that a teacher has is to help pupils to develop the ability to distinguish the relevant from irrelevant. Knowing the aim of reading is an important part in determining what is important.

Observing the characteristics of the text helps us to use only important information, such as: framed information, ideas written in bolded letters, pictures etc. When determining what is relevant, we consciously range information, in order to determine what is more or less important.

Reading to enrich our knowledge, directs our search for important information, which begins with questions of what interests us, and what we want to find.

Determining the aim of reading or main reason why we read something, represents the first step in the process of distinguishing the relevant from irrelevant.

This process includes several steps before reading:
- Determine why we read something
- Consciously search new facts
- Make specific questions
- The form of the text provides important information

   Pupils should be familiar with these steps before reading texts, in order to make it easier for them to distinguish the relevant from the irrelevant. Development of reading methods and techniques for better comprehension of the text a teacher can assess the progress in reading based on how well a pupil can recognize the voices, words and sentences.

To assess the level of progress, a teacher asks a pupil to read a specific text, and then to paraphrase it. In this phase, pupils can encounter difficulties.

A teacher should lead pupils to consciously read a specific text, to recognize the difficulties (problems) and to be able to use some of the techniques to solve the problem. Pupils should be encouraged to read the text again, and in that way the meaning of the text may be revealed.

A pupil should be able to recognize its difficulties, whether it is a word, a sentence or the content. If it is the word that is the problem, pupils should continue with reading because later in the text the meaning of the word should be revealed; or pupils should remember the read text and try to guess the meaning of the word.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 *Topic, importance and the aim of the research*

The topic of our research is the connection between the comprehension of the read text and school achievement.

Establishing the connection between the two variables has a science importance, as well as the practical. The science importance reflects in the synthesis and critical reflection of theoretical aspect of theme, as well as the enrichment of the scientific cognition with new empirical facts.

On the other side, resolving the complex connection between the comprehension of the read text and school success could have practical importance in sense of improving educational work with pupils. The aim of the research is to establish the connection between the comprehension of the read text and school success of the fourth grade pupils.

3.2 Hypothesis of the research

It is assumed that there is a statistically relevant connection between the comprehension of the read text and school success of the fourth grade pupils.

3.3 Methods, techniques and instruments of research

Considering the topic and the aim of the research, we have chosen two research methods: method of theoretical analysis and a descriptive method.

As a theoretical basis of the research we will use the method of theoretical analysis. However, the crucial method of the research is the descriptive method. Using this method we can realize what is the topic of descriptive research.

Besides the research methods, we used two research techniques: testing and interweaving. Within the testing techniques, we have a test named test of comprehending the read text.

This research instrument consists of three parts: test of interpreting the facts (IF), test of information comprehension(IC) and test of precessing the information (PI). The correlations between the subtests imply that it is a valid measuring instrument. The first subtest consists of seven items, the second of five items and the third of three items.

Table 1. Correlation between subtests in the test

Subtests	IF	IC	PI	SCORE_CRT
IF				
IC	. 370*			
PI	. 180*	. 195**		
SKOR_RPT	. 646**	. 754**	. 704**	

** meaningful at level 0, 01
* meaningful at level 0, 05

Out of 100 points on the test, the first and the second subtests are marked by 35, and the third by 30 points. Within the interwieving technique, we used a questionnaire as a research instrument.

The questionnaire is very simple and it consists of several questions on socio-pedagogical characteristics of pupils (school success, gender, place of living, mother's education, father's education).

4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The researches variables
In our research, we used the following variables:

1. The pupil's success on the test of comprehending the read text
2. The school success of pupils
3. General socio-demographic information about pupils

We stated pupils success on the tests in levels/categories instead of scores. The scores on the test were labeled into three categories: below-average, average and above-average (see Table 2).

We chose this approach because we wanted to have a complete insight into the nature of the connection between the variables through the analysis of contingency tables.

The average pupils are those whose test score is within the border ± 1 deviation from the arithmetic mean. Pupils whose score was under the border of -1 of deviation were categorized as below average pupils. The pupils whose score was above the border of +1 deviation were categorized as above average pupils.

Table 2. Criteria for categorization and distribution of results by categories

Category CRT	Score	Criteria	f	%
Below-average	17 - 57	below -1z	31	15, 8
Average	58 – 85	between -1 z i +1 z	140	71, 4
Above average	86 - 100	above +1 z	25	12, 8

The second variable used in the research is the school success of pupils. The measures for school success that we included are: The general success at the end of the fourth grade

The third variable is based on several common socio-demographic characteristics of pupils: gender, place of living (village, town), mother's and father's education.

4.2 A sample of the examinee

The research was conducted on 196 pupils of the fifth grade, out of which 80 pupils were from the Elementary school „Huso Hodžić, Tešanj", 77 pupils from Elementary school „1.mart, Jelah", and 39 pupils from the Elementary school „9.septembar, Medakovo", Municipality of Tešanj, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

4.3 Statistical analysis of the data

During the statistical analysis of the data, we used the statistic software SPSS Statistics 20 for Windows. The graphic illustration was done in Microsoft Excel 2017.

The following statistic data were used:
- The analysis of frequency and percentage;
- The Pearson coefficient of correlation (r);
- Chi square test ($\chi 2$);
- The contingency coefficient (C).

The main statistic data for the hypothesis research are the chi square test and the contingency coefficient. While analysing the contingency charts with crossed variables, we based the statistical connection on these two tests. Considering the type of variables, the usage of these two non-parametric procedures are justified.

The contingency charts for chi square and the contingency coefficient had three rows(three categories of CRT test success) and two to five columns(school success, gender, place of living and parent's education).

The basic use of chi square test is to determine the correspondence, meaning and the difference in frequency of the variables. The contingency coefficient showed us the level, strenght or intensity of the connection between the crossed variables. We derived conclusions based on the data analysis in the contingency chart. The Pearson correlation coefficient(r) was not used in the hypothesis test, in order to make an opinion on the importance of comprehending the read text.

4.4 The research results

The connection between the comprehension of the read text and school success at the end of the fourth grade is shown. The first hypothesis is based on the assumption that there is a statistically important connection between the comprehension of the read text and school success at the end of the fourth grade. We arranged the data in a contingency table.

Table 3. The comprehension of the read text and school success (χ^2= 26,57; df = 6; C = 0,35; p = 0,00*).*

Categories CRT		School success at the end of the fourth grade				Total
		Very bad	Good	Very good	Excellent	
Below-average	f	2	13	13	3	31
	%	6. 5	41. 9	41. 9	9. 7	100. 0
Average	f	2	21	49	68	140
	%	1. 4	15. 0	35. 0	48. 6	100. 0
Above average	f	0	4	5	16	25
	%	0	16. 0	20. 0	64. 0	100. 0
Total	f	4	38	67	87	196
	%	2. 0	19. 4	34. 2	44. 4	100. 0

In the table 3, we can notice that the distribution of marks by categories(below.average, average and above average) differ, so as statisticly meaningful at the level of 0,01 (χ2= 26,57; df = 6).

Table 4. The comprehension of the read text and school success from Native language (χ^2*= 23,55; df = 6; C = 0,33; p = 0,01).*

Categories CRT		School success from Native language at the first period of the fifth grade				Total
		Very bad	Good	Very Good	Excellent	
Below-average	f	8	14	6	3	31
	%	25.8	45.2	19.4	9.7	100.0
Average	f	12	29	51	48	140
	%	8.6	20.7	36.4	34.3	100.0
Above average	f	2	4	7	12	25
	%	8.0	16.0	28.0	48.0	100.0
Total	f	22	47	64	63	196
	%	11.2	24.0	32.7	32.1	100.0

Also, the correlation between the variables expressed as the contingency coefficient (C) is statisticly meaningfull at level 0,01.

Table 5. The comprehension of the read text and school success from Mathematics (χ^2*= 14,96; df = 8; C = 0,27; p = 0,06).*

Categories CRT		School success from Mathematics at the first period of the fifth grade					Total
		Very bad	Bad	Good	Very Good	Excellent	
Below-average	f	1	9	12	6	3	31
	%	3.2	29.0	38.7	19.4	9.7	100.0
Average	f	1	21	34	38	46	140
	%	0.7	15.0	24.3	27.1	32.9	100.0
Above average	f	0	2	6	6	11	25
	%	0	8.0	24.0	24.0	44.0	100.0
Total	f	2	32	52	50	60	196
	%	1.0	16.3	26.5	25.5	30.6	100.0

The level of contingency coefficient (C=0,35) shows that it is a connection of low to medium intensity. This coefficient shows us only the intensity of the connection, but, not the direction. We can interpret the direction of the connection based on the data analysis from the table. Besides the tables, we also have a graphic illustration of the results (Fig. 1) to simplify the connection of the variables.

Below average pupils have mostly good (41,9%) or very good(41,9%) success at the end of the fourth grade. There are fewer below average pupils who have very bad(6,5%) and excellent(9,7%) success.

This result may seem unusual and illogical, especially because of high percentage of very good pupils. However, it is important to say that the school success is a success of all school subjects.

Table 6. *The comprehension of the read text and school success from My Environment (*χ^2*= 26,74; df = 6; C = 0,35; p = 0,00)*

Categories CRT		School success from My Environment at the first period of the fifth grade				Total
		Very bad	Good	Very Good	Excellent	
Below-average	f	13	10	5	3	31
	%	41.9	32.3	16.1	9.7	100.0
Average	f	16	33	36	55	140
	%	11.4	23.6	25.7	39.3	100.0
Above average	f	1	6	8	10	25
	%	4.0	24.0	32.0	40.0	100.0
Total	f	30	49	49	68	196
	%	15.3	25.0	25.0	34.7	100.0

A specific number of pupils have high school success despite low marks from Native language, Science and other subjects that require text comprehension; because they have high marks in subjects that do not require text comprehension. Such subjects are PE, Art and Music.

In the average and above average categories, we notice similar tendency, which reflects in lower percentage of pupils with very bad and good success, and higher percentage of pupils with good and excellent success. In the above average category two-thirds of pupils have excellent success.
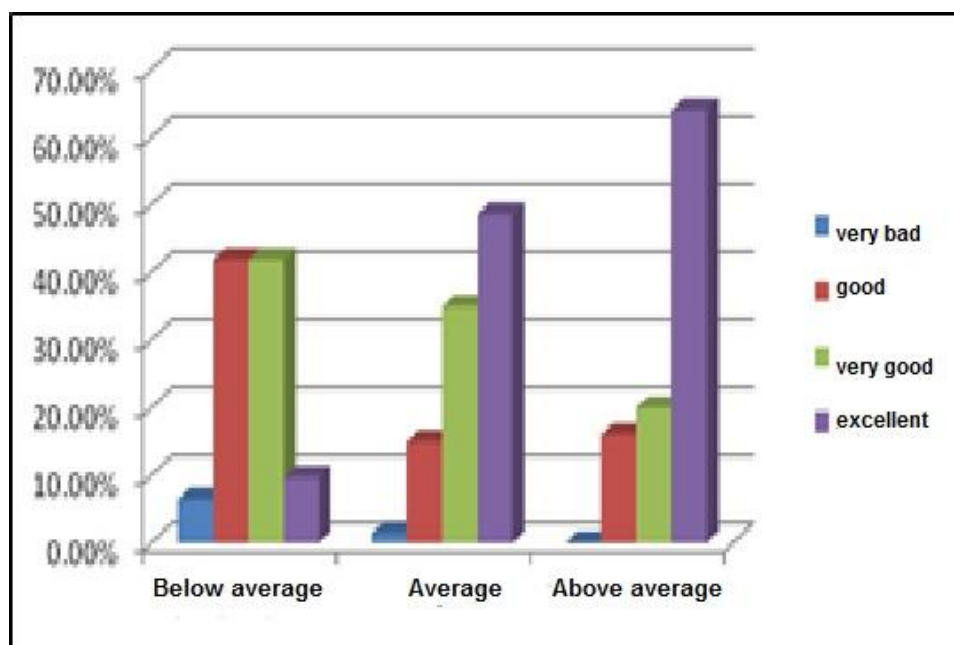

Figure 1 The research result.

Considering the specific results for the below average category, we could make a conclusion that the connection is positive. Considering the frequency distribution in the contingency table, as well as the chi square value and the contingency coefficient, we can make a conclusion that there is a statistically important connection between the comprehensive reading and school success at the end of the fourth grade.

5. CONCLUSION

At a very early age children encounter the written word. The comprehension of the written word is a process which begins at home, pre-school institution and schools, and it lasts the whole life.

By mastering the techniques for understanding a variety of written content, and specific techniques to monitor our reading, pupils gradually acquire the ability of independent reading and writing. Mastering the techniques which increase the level of comprehending the read text, it increases the individual motivation for reading more complex texts.

School supports this kind of motivation which leads pupils into the world of books they read, discuss about them and understand them better. One of the main tasks of every teacher in elementary school is to enable pupils to be in a permanent, interactive relation with the written material.

The general hypothesis in this research, which is an assumption that there is a connection between understanding the read text and school success of the fourth graders, is confirmed. Distributions of marks by categories below average, average and above average differ statistically, meaningful at level 0, 01 ($X2=26, 57; df=6$).

Also, the correlation between the question variables, which is expressed by the contingency coefficient (C) is statistically meaningful at the level 0,01. The level of contingency coefficient(C=0,35) shows that there is a connection of low to medium intensity.

This connection is positive and it reflects in tendency that the pupils with better marks were more successful in the test of comprehensive reading.

Based on the distribution of frequency and percentage in the contingency table, as well as the chi square values and the contingency coefficient, we can make a conclusion that there is a statistically relevant connection between the comprehension of the read text and school success at the end of the fourth grade.

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