



## Pre-service teachers' use of reading strategies in their own readings and future classrooms

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### ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to determine pre-service teachers' use of reading strategies in their own readings. In addition, pre-service teachers' use of these strategies in their future teaching practices was also investigated. The subjects for this study were 505 pre-service teachers enrolled in one of the major universities in Ankara. The results of the study revealed that pre-service teachers employed 28 out of 38 reading strategies most of the time, but interview results illustrated that they reported using very limited scope of reading strategies. An interesting finding in this study was that all subjects accepted the responsibility to teach and improve their future students' reading skills.

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### 1. Introduction

Teachers should be good reading models for their students, and show good and effective reading strategies in their classrooms. Pre-service teachers should also develop a good reading habit because their reading habits and attitudes may affect their future practices as teachers. One hypothesis is that teachers must be readers and writers to be effective teachers of literacy. This hypothesis indicates that students are more likely to become successful and engaged readers and writers if they learn from teachers who show the same features (Brooks, 2007).

Teacher training programs assume that beginning teachers need to be taught some certain skills and knowledge, but research shows that they are not completely open to such instruction (Gupta & Saravanan, 1995). In addition, teacher education programs usually assume that those choosing to major in education possess adequate reading skills to deal with the on-the-job requirements of teaching (Conaway, Saxon, & Woods, 2003). Kanopak, Readence, and Wilson's (1994) study showed a lack of unity in pre-service teachers' orientations toward a reading model and an instructional approach. On the other hand, in-service teachers showed more consistency due to their experience and background.

Literature shows that pre-service teachers themselves have some important reading problems. Gupta and Saravanan (1995) found that

their teacher trainees "rarely read, could not cope with their academic readings, and were unaware of effective strategies to manage their own reading" (p. 354). In Cunningham, Perry, Stanovich, and Stanovich's (2004) study, the majority of teachers evaluated their knowledge levels quite positive, but they demonstrated limited knowledge of children's literature, phoneme awareness, and phonics. In addition, the results showed that teachers are often unaware of what they know and do not know. Mather, Bos, and Babur's (2001) study also showed that both pre-service and in-service teachers had insufficient knowledge about the concepts of English language structure.

Teachers' early reading experiences may affect their reading habits and their future students. O'Callaghan's (2001) study showed that pre-service teachers' instructional strategies for reading were rooted in their early home and school influences. In a pilot study designed to focus on reading habits and attitudes of pre-service teachers, 54.3% of the 195 participants were classified as unenthusiastic about reading. In addition, study results suggested that early negative reading experiences can have harmful effects on children (Applegate & Applegate, 2004). In Lesley, Watson, and Elliot's (2007) study, pre-service teachers rarely made text to world connections and they relied on text to self prior knowledge connections. The researchers discovered deeply rooted negative attitudes toward the act of reading. In this study, most of the students relied on a limited scope of metacognitive strategies, and many of them had the characteristics of struggling readers.

In Hall's (2005) study, five out of 19 studies showed that pre and in-service teachers might believe that they are not qualified to teach reading. Hall's review revealed that content area reading

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courses help pre-service teachers develop positive attitudes and beliefs toward teaching reading in their subject areas. Moats (1994), and Bos, Mather, Dickson, Podhajski, and Chard's (2001) studies revealed that many teachers have limited skills to teach reading to struggling readers. Encouraging, modeling, and scaffolding the development of the reading attitudes and practices of pre-service teachers are the responsibility of teacher educators (Lassonde, Stearns, & Dengler, 2005). Teachers with a rich vocabulary, strong comprehension skill, and an above average reading rate could focus on their students' achievement and lesson preparation instead of trying to understand the textbook content (Conaway et al., 2003). Modeling literacy strategies with pre-service teachers is one way to familiarize them with how and why the strategies can be used (Sheridan-Thomas, 2007). Preparing teachers to be good teachers of reading is very important because they are expected to select suitable strategies for the needs of their classrooms and transfer them to future teaching contexts (Bean, 1997). Determining which reading strategies pre-service teachers use in their own readings may give a chance to learn these teachers' reading habits and give teacher educators important clues to improve their teacher education programs.

As Gormley and Ruhl (2007) stated, "one cannot assume that because teachers are themselves proficient readers they are naturally "highly qualified" to teach reading" (p. 83). Literature showed that teachers focused so strongly on content and reading was neglected (Durkin, 1978). Generally, content area teachers did not view themselves as reading teachers (Bryant, Linan-Thompson, Ugel, Hamff, & Hougen, 2001). In addition, resistance to teaching reading across the content areas is well documented (Mallette, Henk, Waggoner, & DeLaney, 2005).

Spor and Schneider's (2001) research showed that many beginning teachers were not familiar with surveyed reading strategies. In addition, less than half of the teachers who were familiar with these strategies actually used them. About 70% of the beginning teachers reported that they were familiar with reading strategies due to university courses in reading/language arts. Spor and Schneider's (1999) study also revealed that teachers neither knew nor widely used the content reading strategies, but they were receptive to learning these strategies.

In Turkey, after a centralized entrance exam, teacher candidates enroll the Faculties of Education, which are the undergraduate level schools that give instruction to teacher candidates. Faculties of Education train teacher candidates for elementary schools by considering two stages. Stage-I includes grades from 1 to 5. In this stage, classroom teachers are responsible for teaching. Stage-II includes grades from 6 to 8, and content area teachers are responsible for teaching all of the courses. Both stage-I and II pre-service teachers receive a four-year-long theoretical and practical undergraduate education from the Faculty of Education. Students who graduate from some departments of the Arts and Science Faculties can also have a chance to become teachers in the elementary schools after completing a three-semester long pedagogical formation course.

In all subject areas, a major part of the Turkish elementary teacher training curriculum is allocated for content area courses. General culture and pedagogical formation courses have nearly equal places in all subject areas of the teacher training curricula. After graduating, teacher candidates receive another centralized exam to be an in-service teacher. Literature review results did not reveal research about Turkish pre-service teachers' use of reading strategies and their perceptions about the use of reading strategies in their future content area classrooms. Due to this reason, Turkish pre-service teachers' use of reading strategies and their perceptions about the possible use of these strategies in their future classrooms should be adequately searched.

## 2. Purpose

The main purpose of this study was to determine the pre-service teachers' use of reading strategies in their own readings. In addition, the pre-service teachers' use of these strategies in their future teaching practices was also investigated. The following seven questions were investigated in this study:

- 1) How much time do the pre-service teachers spend for their daily reading?
- 2) What kinds of books do the pre-service teachers like reading?
- 3) Which factors do have negative effects on the pre-service teachers' readings?
- 4) How often do the pre-service teachers use reading strategies in their own readings?
- 5) Are there any differences between male and female pre-service teachers' use of reading strategies?
- 6) Are there any differences among the pre-service teachers' use of reading strategies in terms of majors?
- 7) What are the pre-service teachers' perceptions regarding the use of reading strategies in their own readings and future content area courses?

## 3. Method

### 3.1. Research design

In this study, one of the major mixed methods designs named "Concurrent Triangulation Design" (Creswell, 2003; Creswell, Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003) was used. In this design, qualitative and quantitative data collections are concurrent and their status are equal (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). As Creswell et al. indicated, integration of the results of these two methods happens at the interpretation phase. Quantitative section of this present study includes reading strategies survey. Semi-structured interviews were the main data collection technique in the qualitative section of the study. The results of the quantitative and qualitative methods were integrated and discussed in the conclusion section of the study.

### 3.2. Sample

The subjects for this study were 505 pre-service teachers enrolled in one of the major universities in Ankara. All the pre-service teachers were in their last semester to graduate. Approximately 68% of the pre-service teachers were female and 32% of them were male. The sample was not ethnically diverse. All the participants were Turkish. There were 40 early childhood majors, 87 social studies majors, 90 science majors, 60 classroom teacher majors, 118 Turkish Language majors, and 110 mathematics majors. Subjects completed the survey voluntarily at their tables without any consultation among themselves. In the second part of the study, two voluntary pre-service teachers (1 male and 1 female) from the six majors were interviewed.

### 3.3. Instrumentation

The Reading Strategies Survey was used to learn the pre-service teachers' use of reading strategies in their own readings. The following steps were used to develop the survey: a) Little (1999), and Forget's (2004) studies, and content area reading textbooks were reviewed, b) a pool with 150-item was established, c) the repetitions were deleted, d) the authors discussed each item and reduced the number of items, e) experts' opinions were obtained to see the content validity of the survey (Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Vogt, 2007). Three experts who have knowledge about reading and

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