



# JER

Osmangazi Journal of Educational Research

Volume 9(1), Spring 2022

RESEARCH

Open Access

**Suggested Citation:** Çam, E., & Baştuğ, M. (2022). An investigation of the reading comprehension problems of fourth grade students. *Osmangazi Journal of Educational Research*, 9(1), 159-178.

**Submitted:** 14/04/2022 **Revised:** 23/06/2022 **Accepted:** 30/06/2022

## An Investigation of the Reading Comprehension Problems of Fourth Grade Students

\*Ertuğrul Çam , \*\*Muhammet Baştuğ 

**Abstract.** The aim of this study is to examine the causes of reading comprehension problems of fourth grade students who have reading comprehension problems. Eight parents of fourth grade students participated in the research. The research was carried out in the case study method, one of the qualitative research designs. The data for the research were collected through semi-structured interview. According to the course of the interview, it was tried to reach detailed data with the probe questions. The data were analyzed by descriptive analysis method and codes, categories and themes were obtained. The analyzes were examined under four themes: early childhood reading, literacy learning process, family reading status, and the child's access to books. According to the results of the research: Parents did not have their children do early literacy studies in the pre-school period. Interactive reading activities with children are insufficient. Their children did not show letter-sound and word awareness in the preschool period. Children's listening comprehension indicators are positive. There were no serious problems in the literacy learning process. No problem was observed in word recognition skills. The students' vocabulary is at a good level. It has been determined that the family's level of reading at home is very low for different reasons. It has been determined that the children do not have their own libraries at home. Students reach books by school library. In this context, the results obtained from the research were discussed within the framework of the relevant literature.

**Keywords.** Reading comprehension, fluent reading, family literacy, early literacy.

\* (Responsible Author) Ph.D. Student, Istanbul University-Cerrahpasa, Institute of Graduate Studies, Istanbul, Türkiye

e-mail: [ertgrcam@gmail.com](mailto:ertgrcam@gmail.com)

\*\* Prof. Dr., Istanbul University-Cerrahpasa, Hasan Ali Yücel Faculty of Education Istanbul, Türkiye

e-mail: [mbastug33@gmail.com](mailto:mbastug33@gmail.com)

**Note:** This study was presented as an oral presentation in USOS 2021 in Türkiye.

Many researchers state that the main purpose of learning and teaching reading is to comprehend what is read. Akyol (2020, p. 1) defines reading as “the process of establishing meaning based on the interaction between the author and the reader, using background information, in a regular environment in line with an appropriate method and purpose.” Reading is described as a “developmental process” (Özdemir & Baş, 2020, p. 29). Therefore, all components of the developmental process for reading competently are particularly important. Making meaning that begins with word recognition in the reading process expands with the meaning that the reader imposes on the words. Thus, the word recognition skill of the reader plays an essential role during the reading process. When word recognition does not reach the level of automaticity, comprehension problems occur because the meaning unity of the sentences does not manifest during reading. Word recognition is a concept considered within the scope of fluent reading skills. According to National Reading Panel (2000), fluent reading is defined as “the ability to read a text rapidly, accurately, and with appropriate expression.” The main requirement for reading fast, accurately, and with appropriate expression is automaticity. When the reader reads the word he sees automatically and effortlessly, establishing meaning in the reader's mind also gains speed. Research in this direction also shows that fluent reading has an impact on reading comprehension (Aktaş & Çankal, 2019; Başaran, 2013; Baştuğ & Akyol, 2012; Daane, Campbell, Grigg, Googdman, & Oranje, 2005, p. 5; Kim, 2015; Kim, Wagner & Lopez, 2012, p. 94; Lee & Chen, 2019; Roehrig, Petscher, Nettles, Hudson, & Torgesen, 2008).

When the school-age approaches, the decision of whether children should start school is made according to their readiness to read. Many educators believed that children should not be explicitly introduced to literacy-related activities until a certain level of maturation occurred, and they were considered cognitively ready to learn (Cabell, Justice, Kaderavek, Pence, & Breit-Smith, 2008, p. 3). However, studies have demonstrated that children develop some skills related to reading and writing during preschool periods. These skills are examined in the literature under the concept of early literacy. Early literacy skills involve print awareness about writing (writing layout, left to right, reverse-straight, etc.), knowledge of script (knowledge of alphabet and early decoding), reading readiness (vocabulary knowledge, memory, and phonological knowledge), verbal language skills (understanding spoken language, knowledge of vocabulary and grammar), and visual skills (distinguishing and matching visual symbols) (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008).

While studies on how reading occurs in the brain continue, reading problems are frequently seen in students who have no mental disabilities. The primary school years, when the literacy learning process begins, are critical periods in terms of reading and reading comprehension problems.

Insurmountable reading problems in elementary school years have irreparable consequences for the future of the student in subsequent education periods. Reading and reading comprehension, which are key skills to academic success, also directly affect the social life of the student. Students who have problems in reading may face the risks of academic failure and leaving school. Students who do not feel like they belong in the school can attempt to move away from school-education life at the earliest opportunity, and there may be a risk of being involved in crime. When studies examining the crime-school relationship are evaluated, factors such as academic achievement, attitudes towards school, level of success and grade status, and expulsion from school can be seen under the focus of research (Kızmaz, 2004). When these factors are considered, there is a possibility that reading problems may be at the root of these consequences because taking into account that the other academic skills of students with reading problems will also decrease, there is a possibility that they may drop out of education. As a result, reading comprehension influences an area that extends from the individual to social life.

According to Akyol (2020), reading is an extremely complex and special mental activity. For this reason, reading training requires professionalism and process monitoring. Comprehension is not just a re-expression of the information in the text when asked by keeping it in memory. One of the most important skills expected in comprehending what is read is the inference ability. While supported by the text itself that is read, inference is expressions that go beyond the information contained in the text (Oakhill, Cain, & Elbro, 2015, p. 38). Barret's Taxonomy is reported to include five categories of reading comprehension: Literal comprehension, reorganization, in-depth comprehension (inferential comprehension), evaluation, and appreciation (Akyol, Yıldırım, Ateş, & Çetinkaya, 2012, p. 46). In this respect, to achieve a sufficient level of reading comprehension, the focus should be on understanding besides gaining fluent reading skills in reading studies. Comprehension is a multidimensional component that includes background information and past lives. Knowledge acquired at the pre-school level and past lives significantly affect cognitive skills during school age (Phillips & Lonigan, 2005, p. 173).

Many factors cause reading comprehension problems. These, vocabulary knowledge, listening comprehension, story structure, knowledge of idioms, awareness of syntactic structure, and morphological awareness (Spencer & Wagner, 2018). However, decoding problems are the main obstacle to reading comprehension (Clarke et al., 2013). Disruptions in the learning process of reading (letter-syllable-word-sentence reading) prevent the students from capturing the meaning of the sentence they are reading. In the next step, whether the student who learns to read has acquired the

ability to read fluently should be evaluated because researchers say that students who cannot read fluently spend all their efforts on reading rather than understanding it. Hence, it becomes difficult for the student who cannot read correctly to capture the correct meaning of the text (Keskin and Akyol, 2014, p. 109). In addition to the cognitive factors that affect the child's understanding of what he is reading, the importance of sensory factors is also critical. One of the most important of these is reading motivation. Children's book experiences in their early childhood, their access to books in later periods, and most importantly, their family's reading status as the role model are important factors in the child's gaining motivation to read. This study focuses on children's reading comprehension problems in the framework of their book experiences in early childhood, their literacy learning process, the reading status of their family, and the children's access to the book.

According to the literature, there are many factors affecting reading comprehension. Among these, early literacy activities, home-family literacy, the process of learning how to read and write, fluent reading skills, vocabulary inventory, and reading environments are frequently encountered (Başaran, 2013; Moghadam et al., 2012; Suggate et al., 2018; Walczyk & Griffith-Ross, 2007). In this study, the factors that are the sources of reading comprehension problems of fourth graders are examined. In this context, the research aims to investigate in depth the factors that cause fluent reading and reading comprehension problems of fourth graders who have problems reading fluently and understanding what they are reading. With this purpose, the main problem of the study is the question, "What are the conditions of early literacy efforts, literacy learning process, family literacy, and the child's access to books in fourth grade children who have reading comprehension problems?"

## **Method**

### **Research Model**

This study was carried out in the case study model using a holistic single case design, one of the qualitative research patterns. Aydın (2021, p. 99) refers to a case study as a description of a situation whereby the researcher collects detailed information about current situations or situations at a specific time through multiple sources of information, or as a qualitative approach in which the situation themes are presented. Holistic single case design is important for bringing a particular previously unknown topic to light and guiding subsequent studies (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021, p. 313). In this study, situations that are the source of reading and reading comprehension problems were examined with a qualitative approach in line with the expressions of the parents of students who had problems in reading and comprehending what they were reading.

## Study Group

The study group of the research consists of the parents of eight fourth grade students who had reading comprehension problems in the 2020-2021 academic year at a public school in the Mamak district of Ankara province. Criterion sampling of the purposeful sampling methods was used to create the study group. The criteria determined were as follows:

- The student's reading speed in 60 seconds is 80 words or less.
- The student has a score of 50 points or less out of 100 points on reading comprehension tests.

### Descriptive characteristics of participants.

All participating parents of the students were mothers. The descriptive characteristics of the mothers and their children's levels of reading fluency and reading comprehension are presented in *Table 1*.

Table 1.

*The descriptive characteristics of the parents who participated in the study*

Parent	Age	Level of Education	Reading Fluency Level of the Child	Comprehension Score of the Child (Narrative Text)	Comprehension Score of the Child (Informative Text)
P1	33	High school	69	20	30
P2	38	Elementary school	74	25	40
P3	40	Secondary school	68	45	30
P4	36	Secondary school	71	45	45
P5	31	High school	79	50	30
P6	31	University	80	30	15
P7	41	Secondary school	69	40	25
P8	35	Elementary school	50	10	10

According to Table 1, the ages of the participants varied between 31 and 41. One of the mothers who participated in the study declared that she was a university graduate, two were high school graduates, three were secondary school graduates, and two were elementary school graduates. During the interview, a mother who stated that she graduated from elementary school said she learned to read

and write in 2019. As demonstrated in Table 1, the reading fluency levels of the students were in the range of 50-80. Regarding reading comprehension, the students' scores were between 10-50 in the narrative text type and between 10-45 in the informative text type.

### **Data Collection**

A series of tests were carried out to determine the reading fluency and reading comprehension skills of the students (n=23) who were in the fourth grade at the school where the study was conducted. In this context, the reading fluency levels of the students were determined by the number of words the students read in one minute. In addition, students were given two different types of texts, informative and narrative, and the level of understanding of what students read was revealed with questions based on the text. Reading comprehension texts consist of two texts titled “five boiled eggs” and “buzz” with multiple choice and open-ended questions. The parents of students who met the criteria mentioned above based on the collected data were invited for the interview. A researcher conducted the interviews in one of the school's administrative rooms. The parents who participated in the interview were informed about the status of their students. They were also explained that the data obtained would be used in a scientific study, and the personal information of collected from them and their children would be kept confidential. In addition, their explicit consent was obtained.

### **Data Analysis**

The data collected during the research process were examined through descriptive analysis. According to Yıldırım & Şimşek, (2021) in descriptive analysis, data can be organized according to the themes revealed by the research questions and the questions or dimensions used in the interview process. The themes and sub-themes were determined before the research. The codes obtained from the interviews were placed under these themes. The interviews were voice-recorded, and they were transcribed in written form. The data collected were grouped under the appropriate categories and themes in the form of codes. The participants were coded as “P1, P2, ...” referring to the word “parent.” Since all participants were mothers, no expression of distinction was used to indicate gender. The coding and themes were examined independently by two researchers, and consistent results were obtained. The direct quotation method was used in the data analysis to clearly reflect the participatory opinions in the findings section. Information on coding and themes is provided in *Table 2*.

Table 2.

*Information on Codes, Categories, and Themes*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Category (Sub-theme)</b>	<b>Theme</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Picture book</li> <li>•Word reading</li> <li>•Story telling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introducing the book</li> <li>• Letter/sound-word recognition</li> <li>• Listening comprehension</li> </ul>	Early Childhood Reading
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combining letters/syllables</li> <li>• Reading by spelling out</li> <li>• Matching words-pictures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter/syllable recognition</li> <li>• Word recognition</li> <li>• Vocabulary inventory</li> </ul>	Literacy Learning Process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading hour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading parents</li> </ul>	Reading Status of Family
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Book collection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home library</li> <li>• School library</li> <li>• Library</li> </ul>	Child's Access to Books

As demonstrated in Table 2, the theme of 'early childhood reading' included the sub-themes of introducing the book, letter-sound-word recognition, and listening comprehension; the theme 'literacy learning process' comprised the letter-syllable recognition, word recognition, and vocabulary inventory sub-themes; the 'reading status of the family' theme consisted of the sub-theme of reading parents; and in the theme of the 'child's access to books,' home library, school library, library sub-themes were identified.

### **Validity and Reliability**

In qualitative research, proximity to the research area, face-to-face interviews, being able to go back to the field for data confirmation, explaining the data in detail, making direct quotations increase the validity (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). For the internal validity of the research, the discourses of the researchers were directly quoted. In addition, the fact that the researcher has known children and mothers for a long time and being close to the research area increases the credibility of the data obtained.

### **Results**

In this section, the findings obtained from interviews with parents of students who have problems in understanding what they are reading are included. The research findings are organized under the headings of "early childhood reading, literacy learning process, the reading status of family, and the child's access to books."

## Early Childhood Reading

In the interviews, parents were asked the question, "Did you read books, picture books, or something like that before your child started the first grade?" This question was further detailed with probe questions such as "What did you read? How many books did you read? Did you ask questions, and were you able to get answers about what you read? What was his/her reaction when he/she did not understand? Did he/she ask you the meaning of unknown words?" depending on the flow of the interview. The details regarding the answer are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.

### *Introducing the Book*

Reading Status	f	Number of Books Read	Sample Quotations
Read	3	P1: 3-4, P5: 7, P6: 20	<p>P1: <i>Yes, I did read. But it didn't attract much of his attention. He listened well at first, but then he was always distracted. He didn't even look. So, I quit. ... I mean, I read three or four, but then I didn't read them anymore.</i></p> <p>P6: <i>Yes, I read. I always used to read before sleeping at home. She wanted it, too. In fact, thankfully, our teacher E. always read in kindergarten. She would also want us to read, and when we asked questions, she would answer them. [My child] still loves picture books... we must have read 20 books together with what our kindergarten teacher read.</i></p>
Not read	5	-	<p>P2: <i>No, how was that possible? ... We never had picture books like that. His father came tired already from work. He had an older brother who went to school, and he looked at his books sometimes...</i></p> <p>P8: <i>No, we didn't read. I learnt how to read only last year. I was illiterate. If I had known, I would have read.</i></p>

According to the findings, three parents read books to their children during their early childhood period, while five of them did not. One parent who read to her child (P1) stated that it did not attract the child's interest. When the reason for the child's boredom and not wanting to be read was asked, the causes of "wrong timing" to read and "not being able to get into the child's field of interest" emerged. About this issue, P1 was asked the question, "In what time frame did you read the book?" and it was concluded that the reading time chosen was when the child was physically active and that child's game was interrupted. P1's statements about this problem were: "*I usually tried to take care*



of him after I finished the housework. ... Yes, generally, the children in our neighborhood were playing games at those hours.” Apart from this, when the parent was asked the question, “What was the content of the book about? What was it telling?” she replied “... I don’t remember, but it simply didn’t attract his attention ...” On the other hand, another parent (P5) who read books to her child in early childhood said that her child liked to be read to her, gave correct answers to questions about the books read, and she read the books they had alternately. It is expected that reading books that children will like at an early age will improve their listening comprehension skills and prepare them to understand what they read.

Table 4.

*Early Childhood Period Reading (Letter/sound-word recognition)*

<b>State of Recognition</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Sample Quotations</b>
Yes	2	Word	P5: ... <i>Her sister used to write our names in her notebook, and she learned them when she was playing with her. When I asked her her name and her sister's name, she would show them to me...</i>
No	6	-	P8: ... <i>no, she learned them all at school. We did not teach anything about reading and writing...</i>

According to the findings of the study, two parents answered ‘yes’ about letter/sound-word recognition during the early childhood period. On the other hand, the remaining six parents did not provide any statements indicating some evidence of word recognition in the periods before their children went to school. P5 said that her child could distinguish names, while P6 maintained that her child always knew the name of the grocery store they were shopping at, and when she walked past there, she said “... grocery store.” Children's reading of written words at an early age is considered readiness to read. For this reason, word recognition is included in the scope of print awareness in the preschool period.

Table 5.

*Listening Comprehension*

<b>Listening Comprehension</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Sample Quotations</b>
Yes	8	<p>P3: <i>Yes, he would understand what he/she heard... He wouldn't forget something we told him about someone, and he used to say, 'That person did this and this.'</i></p> <p>P5: <i>I used to tell her fairy tales most of the time. She would understand them... I would make her re-tell the story to see if she understood.</i></p> <p>P6: <i>Yes, she would understand. When I asked questions about the books I read, she would give correct answers.</i></p>
No	0	-

The findings aimed at exploring the children's listening comprehension in early childhood suggest that the students under the focus of the study understood what they were listening to. However, it is understood that not many activities concentrating on listening comprehension were made with the students. This is also supported by the state of reading to the child in early childhood (3/8). It was determined that the parents told their children a limited number of stories. At the point of listening comprehension, it was observed that the parents' interpretation of "my child understands what he/she is listening to" was based on daily dialogues rather than systematic listening comprehension activities. Listening comprehension skill is within the scope of linguistic skills. Reading comprehension is similar to listening comprehension in terms of linguistic skills.

**Literacy Learning Process**

During the interview, the question "Did your child encounter any difficulties during the reading-writing learning process in Grade 1?" was directed to the parents. Concerning this question, the details about the reading-writing process were explored with further questions such as "Did your child fall behind his/her friends while learning to read and write? Did he/she have any difficulties while learning the letters? Did the child have any difficulties in combining letters/syllables? Was he/she able to read fluently after finishing the letter groups? Did he/she know the meaning of the words he/she was reading? ..." The findings in this framework are presented below.

Table 6.

*Letter, Syllable Recognition*

<b>Literacy Learning Process</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Sample Quotations</b>
Problems were encountered.	1	P2: <i>He had some difficulties in Grade 1. His teacher told us to take care of him and make him do his homework. However, since I was illiterate, there was nothing I could do about it. Thankfully, our teacher paid special attention to him and helped him learn how to read.</i>
No problems were encountered.	7	-

In the interviews, it was determined that only one of the students had problems with the literacy process. It was stated that this student had trouble merging the letters, and this problem disappeared later with the special attention of the teacher. One parent said her child initially read by spelling and fabricated picture-word matchings, but the teacher said it was not a problem. Other parents stated that there were no problems and that the literacy process functioned normally. Success in the literacy learning process is seen as a critical period for the development of literacy skills in upper grades.

**Word recognition.**

Table 7.

*Word Recognition*

<b>Word Recognition</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Sample Quotations</b>
Problems were encountered.	2	P2: <i>...he had difficulties while reading some words.</i> P3: <i>He would read long words slowly, getting stuck, but after passing that word, his reading would get better... he would make up some words while reading books.</i>
No problems were encountered.	6	-

From the responses given to the questions asked to determine whether there were problems with the students' vocabulary recognition skills, it was found that two students had problems, whereas six students were reported not to have faced any problems with this skill. P1 explained that her child had difficulty reading some words, tried to go back to the beginning several times and read them again, and eventually omitted that word. On the other hand, P3 said that her child made up some words. When an example was requested, no clear answer was obtained.

### Vocabulary inventory.

In the answers to the questions asked to determine the size of the vocabulary knowledge of the students, it was stated that the students did not have any problems. For instance, the parents stated that there were no problems in knowing the meanings of the words that students read and in using words in daily life, and that picture-word matching studies were successful. P5 expressed this as "*she does the word-picture matching studies without errors*", and P6 expressed it as "*she usually knows the meaning of the words she reads*".

### Reading Status of the Family

The question “Is there anyone who regularly reads at home?” was asked to the parents during the interviews. According to the flow of the interview, further questions of “Who reads? Does the father read? What is the reading status of the siblings attending school?” were directed to the parents. The results obtained for these questions are presented in Table 8.

Table 8.

*The Reading Status of the Family*

Reading Parents	f	Sample Quotations
Yes	1	P6: ... <i>I try to read, but the father comes home late and tired, so he cannot read... I usually read religious books...</i>
No	7	P5: ... <i>the teacher said, 'You should have a reading hour at home.' We tried it several times, but it didn't happen. Sometimes we couldn't pay attention, and sometimes when they ran away, we couldn't manage. We couldn't get organized....</i>

When the status of reading books in the family was considered, it was seen that only one in eight families read books. According to P6's statements, the reading activities at home seemed to be on an irregular basis, and the attention was generally on religious books. From the interviews of other parents, it was understood that there was no time to read on both the mothers' and fathers' agendas.

### The child's access to books.

To reveal the child's access to books, the question “Is there a bookcase in the household?” was asked to the parents during the interviews. Along with this question, “How is your child's access to books? Where do you get books from? Has the child ever been to a library? Do you use the school

library? Does your child choose the books himself/herself?” were asked as probe questions. The results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9.

*Home Library*

Home Library	f	Sample Quotations
Available	2	P5: ...she has a bookcase in her room, but it is not full to a great extent... there are test books... the teacher made us buy some book sets – they are there... P6: ...there is a bookcase in the living room... the lower shelves belong to the children, and the books the teacher made us buy are there mostly... if we buy any, we buy them ourselves, it is very rare for her to say ‘I want that book...’
Not available	6	P3: ...no, there is no bookcase at home... there are several books at home, and they are in a basket...

When the availability of books in the homes of the families was considered, it was seen that there were home libraries in two families, and they were not actively used. It was stated that the books owned by children were usually story sets that the teachers made the families buy.

Table 10.

*Use of School Library*

School Library	f	Sample Quotations
Yes	7	P1: ...yes, he borrows books regularly from the library... he reads most of them. His teacher makes them re-tell anyway to keep track of their reading... he selects the books by himself most of the time... P4: ...his teacher gives a book from the library... he doesn't read much at home... if the teacher asks them to write, he opens the notebook and writes something. Then, he says that he changes the book... the teacher is giving the books I suppose... P7: ...she borrows books regularly from the library... sometimes she reads them if she likes them. ...generally, she wants illustrated ones, and when the teacher lets her borrow, she looks at the pictures and reads them... the teacher chooses and gives the books...
No	1	P8: ...she is not quite willing to read... and the teacher does not give any [books] I guess...

In the answers to the questions asked about the use of the school library, seven parents stated that their children received books from the library, while one parent (P8) said that they did not receive books. Regarding the choice of books, three parents (P1, P5, P6) maintained that the students selected

the books themselves, and four parents (P2, P3, P4, P7) stated that the students did not choose the books, but they were given them by the teacher.

Table 11.  
*Library Visit*

<b>Library Visit</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Sample Quotations</b>
Yes	1	P6: ... <i>in the past, our home was close to it. She went there several times with her father, but when we moved here, it became far. So, we cannot go there... once they went there as a class in the third grade...</i>
No	7	P8 ... <i>we cannot take her there. Her father is always at work. She is too young to go there alone, so how can we send him/her?...</i> P3: ... <i>last year, the teacher was going to take them there as a class, but before he could do it, the schools closed (pandemic). I don't know if he can do it this year – he hasn't said anything yet...</i>

Only one parent (P6) answered ‘yes’ to the questions posed about library visits. Other parents stated that they did not take their children to the library. P8 cited the father's work as the reason for not taking her child to the library. It was also understood that the activities of taking the children to the library were carried out by the classroom teacher (P6, P3).

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

In this section, the results obtained from the research were presented, they were discussed within the framework of the literature, and recommendations were developed.

It is suggested that literacy development begins from birth as an opinion against the maturation theory that advocates waiting for the appropriate time for literacy teaching. The view put forward by Marie Clay, a researcher from New Zealand, argues that any activity since the birth of the child contributes to literacy (Akyol, 2020, p. 13). In this respect, the findings obtained from the parents in this study demonstrate that families cannot organize a planned and systematic activity for their children. Nevertheless, it is stated that activities such as telling stories and fairy tales, using dialogues interacting with the child, doing dialogic readings, and doing interactive readings with picture books in the preschool period will contribute to students' language development, expansion of vocabulary inventory, grammar, and listening comprehension skills within the framework of early literacy (DeBaryshe & Gorecki, 2007; Elliott & Olliff, 2008, p. 555; Justice & Kaderavek, 2002; Kim & Riley, 2021). Concerning early literacy skills, letter, sound, and word recognition were seen in two

students in the form of distinguishing their own names from other names. These skills are shown among the reading readiness skills from a traditional perspective (NELP, 2008). On the other hand, in terms of the early literacy view, the child is aware that his name is written from left to right, that the writing is reversed or straight, and that the letters come together to form the writing. The findings of the students' ability to understand what they are listening to in the preschool period show that parents have dialogues with students around their own agenda and values. Furthermore, it is also determined that there were no planned listening comprehension studies. Considering that listening comprehension skills have positive effects on reading comprehension skills (Hogan, Adlof, & Alonzo, 2014; Karasakaloğlu & Bulut, 2018), it may be recommended to carry out planned listening comprehension studies to help the child gain the ability to understand what he is reading at an acceptable level in the primary school.

The literacy learning process plays a critical role on the student's attitude towards reading and writing (Boz & Ulusoy, 2020; Sallabaş, 2008), reading motivation (Kızgın & Baştuğ, 2020; Türkben, 2020; Yıldız, 2010), and thus, on reading comprehension skills. The child's unwillingness and lack of support during learning to read and write may hinder the continuity of the learning process (Black, 2006; Kikas et al., 2018). In addition, it may affect gaining reading habits. For these reasons, the literacy learning process was examined in this research. According to the study results, it is seen that only one of the students faced difficulty, and this problem was eliminated with the teacher's support. In this study, since not enough data has been obtained for the effect of the difficulties faced by students in the literacy learning process on reading comprehension, it may provide a guide for researchers to carry out studies to demonstrate this effect.

Children tend to learn by observing and modeling from infancy. The reading habit is one of these models. Seeing time spent with the book in his home, the child begins to imitate this reading behavior. The family and environment in which the child lives are among the factors that are effective in giving the child the habit of reading (Gül, 2007; Tanju, 2010). When the results of the present study are considered, the participating parents did not demonstrate reading habits that would set examples for the children in their homes and support them. However, it is stated that literacy in the family guides the child's literacy development (Hiçde & Baştuğ, 2021). There are also studies stating that the number of books at home is related to reading comprehension (Basmaz & Kutlu, 2021; Kutlu et al., 2011). Therefore, the importance of raising awareness about family literacy can be emphasized to contribute to children's ability to cope with reading comprehension problems at school age and in later periods.

When the studies in the literature are considered, it is seen that the success level of students is compared in terms of their socioeconomic level. The results generally indicate that children in families with low socioeconomic status have low levels of success. Hiğde, Baştuğ, & Cihan (2020) maintain that the reading levels of students with low socioeconomic status fall behind their classmates, and their literacy interests and participation in the courses are insufficient. The reason for the low level of success may be the family's inability to afford enough materials for the literacy of the child. When the results of the study were evaluated, it was revealed that the students' book collections were not sufficient. Most of them did not have books at home, and it was seen that even if some of them owned books, their number was relatively low. It was also observed that the existing books were story sets that the class teachers made them buy. There are many criteria to consider in selecting the books that children will read (Çetinkaya et al., 2020; Yükselen et al., 2016). The first of these criteria is the inclusion of the child in the book selection (Hsiao & Chang, 2015) because children may have difficulty reading a book that is not of interest to them. This strain can affect their attitude to reading books and their motivation to read. School and city libraries can be helpful for families with low socioeconomic levels who cannot provide books for their children. Children should be allowed to choose freely from libraries, and the appropriateness of the choices they make should be examined in accordance with the child's age characteristics by the family or teacher. Families should be guided, and their awareness should be raised about library visits. When this is not possible, disadvantaged students should be supported with periodic class trips.

### **Recommendations**

In conclusion, in order not to encounter problems of reading comprehension in primary school and later periods and to deal with these problems when encountered, the following can be recommended:

*For children in the preschool (early childhood) period, activities aimed at:*

- Gaining phonological awareness,
- Gaining script awareness,
- Reading picture books (interactive reading),
- Introducing the book (raising awareness about facts such as the direction of the book and script, what scripts mean)
- Raising awareness about rhyme using materials such as nursery rhymes, poetry, songs,



- Developing listening skills (narrating fairy tales, stories, events, etc.),
- Doing vocabulary studies to increase the vocabulary knowledge,
- Introduction to the spelling of the child's name should be done.

*In the literacy learning process:*

- If support from the family is unavailable, special attention should be paid, and peer support should be provided.
- Strategies for improving reading fluency should be included to make it easier to gain fluent reading skills.

*Parents' reading status should be determined, and the family should be given planned guidance.*

*To increase the child's access to books:*

- As far as the family's socioeconomic level allows to afford, the creation of a home library should be ensured, and the student should be included in the selection of books.
- The children's interests should be determined, and books appealing to their interests and needs should be provided.
- Children should be encouraged to develop the habit of going to the library and choosing books.

### About Authors

---

**First Author:** Ertuğrul Çam is a PhD student at Istanbul University Cerrahpasa, Graduate Education Institute. He works as a primary school classroom teacher in the Ministry of National Education. He mainly works on reading teaching and reading comprehension.

**Second Author:** Muhammet Baştuğ is a member of Istanbul University Cerrahpasa. He works at the Hasan Ali Yücel Faculty of Education. He is currently working at the Basic Education Department. He completed his doctorate at Gazi University and his subject is on Fluent Reading. He mainly works in the fields of reading skills and reading comprehension.

### Conflict of Interest

It has been reported by the authors that there is no conflict of interest.

### Funding

No funding was received.

### Ethical Standards

The authors have carried out the research within the framework of the Helsinki Declaration.

### ORCID

*Ertuğrul Çam*  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4655-3810>

*Muhammet Baştuğ*  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5949-6966>

---

## References

- Akyol, H. (2020). *Türkçe İlk Okuma Yazma Öğretimi* (18th ed.). Pegem Akademi. <https://doi.org/10.14527/9786050370171>
- Başaran, M. (2013). Okuduğunu anlamamın bir göstergesi olarak akıcı okuma. *Kuram ve Uygulamada Eğitim Bilimleri*, 13(4), 2277–2290.
- Basmaz, I., & Kutlu, Ö. (2021). Eleştirel düşünme eğilimlerinin okuduğunu anlama, öğrenci, aile ve ev ortamı değişkenleri bağlamında incelenmesi. *Journal of Digital Measurement and Evaluation Research*, 1(2), 100–118.
- Black, A. L. (2006). *Attitudes to Reading : An Investigation Across the Primary Years* (Issue August) [Australian Catholic University]. <http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/digitaltheses/public/adt-acuvp136.17052007/02whole.pdf>
- Boz, İ., & Ulusoy, M. (2020). İlkokul 4. Sınıf Öğrencilerinin Okuma Tutumu ile Okuduğunu Anlama Düzeyi ve Rutin Olmayan Problem Çözme Başarısı Arasındaki İlişkinin İncelenmesi. *Anadolu Kültürel Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 4(1), 13–24. <https://doi.org/10.15659/ankad.v4i1.72>.
- Çetinkaya, F. Ç., Durmaz, M., & Öksüz, H. İ. (2020). Kitap satış Danışmanları ve okunabilir kitap. *Ana Dili Eğitimi Dergisi*, 8(2), 559–571.
- Clarke, P. J., Truelove, E., Hulme, C., & Snowling, M. J. (2013). Developing reading comprehension. In *Developing Reading Comprehension*. Wiley Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118606711>.
- DeBaryshe, B. D., & Gorecki, D. M. (2007). An experimental validation of a preschool emergent literacy curriculum. *Early Education and Development*, 18(1), 93–110.
- Elliott, E. M., & Olliff, C. B. (2008). Developmentally appropriate emergent literacy activities for young children: Adapting the early literacy and learning model. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 35(6), 551–556. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-007-0232-1>.
- Gül, G. (2007). Okuryazarlık sürecinde aile katılımının rolü. *Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Fakültesi Özel Eğitim Dergisi*, 8(1), 17–30.
- Hiğde, A. Y., & Baştuğ, M. (2021). Aile Okuryazarlığı Kavramına Kuramsal Bir Bakış. *İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 7(1), 89–109. <https://doi.org/10.17932/IAU.EFD.2015.013/efd>.
- Hiğde, A. Y., Baştuğ, M., & Cihan, H. (2020). Okul Öncesi Dönem Ebeveynlerinin Ev Okuryazarlığı Yaşantılarının İncelenmesi. *Ana Dili Eğitimi Dergisi*, 8(2), 628–645.
- Hogan, T. P., Adlof, S. M., & Alonzo, C. N. (2014). On the importance of listening comprehension. *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 16(3), 199–207.
- Hsiao, C.-Y., & Chang, Y.-M. (2015). A Study of the Use of Picture Books by Preschool Educators in Outlying Islands of Taiwan. *International Education Studies*, 9(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v9n1p1>.
- Justice, L. M., & Kaderavek, J. (2002). Using Shared Storybook Reading to Promote Emergent Literacy. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 34(4), 8–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004005990203400401>.
- Karasakaloğlu, N., & Bulut, B. (2018). Etkin Dinleme Eğitiminin Dinlediğini ve Okuduğunu Anlama Üzerine Etkisi. *Kastamonu Eğitim Dergisi*, 26(5), 1407–1417. <https://doi.org/10.24106/kefdergi.1923>.
- Kikas, E., Pakarinen, E., Soodla, P., Peets, K., & Lerkanen, M. K. (2018). Associations Between Reading Skills, Interest in Reading, and Teaching Practices in First Grade.

- Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 62(6), 832–849. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2017.1307272>.
- Kim, Y. Bin, & Riley, D. (2021). Accelerating Early Language and Literacy Skills Through a Preschool-Home Partnership Using Dialogic Reading: a Randomized Trial. *Child and Youth Care Forum*, 50(5), 901–924. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10566-021-09598-1>.
- Kızgın, A., & Baştuğ, M. (2020). Okuma Motivasyonu ve Okuduğunu Anlama Becerisinin Akademik Başarıyı Yordama Düzeyi. *Dil Eğitimi ve Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 6(October), 601–612. <https://doi.org/10.31464/jlere.767022>.
- Kutlu, Ö., Yıldırım, Ö., Bilican, S., & Kumandaş, H. (2011). İlköğretim 5. sınıf öğrencilerinin okuduğunu anlamada başarılı olup-olmama durumlarının kestrilmesinde etkili olan değişkenlerin incelenmesi. *Journal of Measurement and Evaluation in Education and Psychology*, 2(1), 132–139.
- Moghadam, S. H., Zainal, Z., & Ghaderpour, M. (2012). A review on the important role of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension performance. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 66, 555–563.
- NELP. (2008). Developing Early Literacy Report of the National early literacy panel. In *National Institute for Literacy* (Vol. 2, Issue 1). <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=2910925&tool=pmcentrez&rendertype=abstract>.
- Sallabaş, M. E. (2008). İlköğretim 8 Sınıf Öğrencilerinin Okumaya Yönelik Tutumları ve Okuduğunu Anlama Becerileri Arasındaki ilişki. *İnönü Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 9(16), 141–155.
- Spencer, M., & Wagner, R. K. (2018). The Comprehension Problems of Children With Poor Reading Comprehension Despite Adequate Decoding: A Meta-Analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 88(3), 366–400. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654317749187>.
- Suggate, S., Schaughency, E., McAnally, H., & Elaine Reese. (2018). From infancy to adolescence: The longitudinal links between vocabulary, early literacy skills, oral narrative, and reading comprehension. *Cognitive Development*, 47, 82–95. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cogdev.2018.04.005>.
- Tanju, E. H. (2010). Çocuklarda Kitap Okuma Alışkanlığı'na Genel Bir Bakış. *Sosyal Politika Çalışmaları Dergisi*, 21(21), 30–39. <https://doi.org/10.21560/spcd.43960>.
- Türkben, T. (2020). Ortaokul Öğrencilerinin Okuma Kaygıları, Motivasyon Düzeyleri ve Anlama Becerileri Arasındaki İlişkiler. *Dil Eğitimi ve Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 6(October), 657–677. <https://doi.org/10.31464/jlere.770661>.
- Walczyk, J. J., & Griffith-Ross, D. A. (2007). How important is reading skill fluency for comprehension? *The Reading Teacher*, 60(6), 560–569.
- Yıldırım, A., & Şimşek, H. (2021). *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri* (12th ed.). Seçkin Yayıncılık.
- Yıldız, M. (2010). *İlköğretim 5.Sınıf Öğrencilerinin Okuduğunu Anlama, Okuma Motivasyonu ve Okuma Alışkanlıkları Arasındaki İlişki*. Gazi Üniversitesi.
- Yükselen, A., Yumuş, M., & Işık, E. (2016). Çocuk kitabı seçme kriterlerine ilişkin okul öncesi eğitimcilerin görüşleri. *Başkent University Journal of Education*, 3(2), 161–168.