

# The Evaluation of Turkish Language and Literature Curriculum in Terms of Reading Types

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## Abstract

Reading is known to have its own varieties. It is important to teach the types of reading performed for specific purposes to the students in a meaningful way. This study, performed on the purpose of reading, examines the reading outcome in Turkish Language and Literature curriculum by two different perspectives suggested by Louise M. Rosenblatt. Also, the study aims to determine the opinions of teachers and students for the program. The case study in qualitative research method is designed for the study. The participants of the study are Turkish language and literature teachers and twelfth grade students. The data was collected by document review and semi-structured interview form for teachers and students. Descriptive analysis technique was carried out to analyse the data. A qualitative analysis program was adopted in the analysis of the data. As a conclusion, it is observed that text-centred perspective is dominant in both the curriculum and the practice of the curriculum. Moreover, the study revealed that the teachers and students have different opinions in terms of the purpose of reading.

**Keywords:** Louise M. Rosenblatt, Aesthetic Perspective, Turkish Language and Literature Teaching

## 1. Introduction

Literature is a representation of deep feelings evoked by emotions, thoughts and dreams by the way of the language in a pleasant, powerful, and particular shape. (Güzel, 2006). Learning literature is important for personal and social development. The important goals in these developments are to understand what you read and listen, to be able to use higher-order thinking skills, to be able to express yourself verbally and in writing, and to comprehend the language and literature as a national culture. (Cemiloğlu, 2013). By taking into consideration these purposes, a program may be successful when the three constituent components of the program serve to the same purpose.

These three components are firstly, education program itself, then the teachers who are the practitioner of an exact program, and finally the students who are the target audience of the program. Many studies have been performed on the evaluation of Turkish Language and Literature teaching the program. The program of Turkish language and literature courses which has been named as Turkish literature, Turkish language and literature, or Language and narration since 1924 has been revised according to the changing conditions in daily life, the changes and developments in education/ teaching field. These changes were made between the years of 1924-1991, 1995-2005, and 2005-2017. Turkish language and literature program where drastic change was made in 2005 started to employ genre-based teaching in 2017, as a result the program changed its chronological approach which was created in 1924. The practice of the revised program was started in 2016-2017 academic year. This program is being implemented gradually starting from 9th class. (MEB, 2017). The program formed in 2011 is still working in the upper classes.

With the implementation of the program, the authorities began to discuss and criticise the program. They underline that the program is remote from the practice (Kuduban and Aktekin, 2013), does not match with the expectations of students in real life (Ayyıldız and Bozkurt, 2006). Erdem (2013) also criticises that the processed texts in the program do not appeal to the students. Saraç (2009) underlines that teaching strategies of the program are insufficient.

The studies on Literature teaching curriculum and the practice process show that the program does not address to the interest of the students. The education system based on the constructivist approach and the teaching program which does not cater to the students can be thought as an important problem. This situation cannot be considered that it is not only related to the attraction of the selected texts for the interest of the students. Moreover, there are important variables such as the achievements of the program based on textual comprehension at the practice process and the perspective of teachers at this process. Because the reader role in the textual comprehension process should not be ignored and the reader is not a passive recipient in the process. The reader should be at the position in reproducing the meaning actively. (Varghese, 2012). It is believed that text-centred perspective should be omitted and the reader should be taken into the heart of the teaching literature.

## 2. Purpose of the Study

This study aims to examine the program of Turkish language and literature teaching, and the practice process of the program in the context of Reader-Response theory. Reader-response theory is introduced by Louise Rosenblatt. According to the reader-response theory, the reading process consists of many components such as,

individual characteristics, experiences, and physical conditions. These components ensure that each reader is unique in the reading process (Church, 1998). Therefore, it is not possible to mention a single meaning in the reading process; the more reader is the more meaning. (Holloway, 2004).

The researcher employed Rosenblatt's theory in this study because Rosenblatt, (1956) advocates to create a lifelong link between the book and the reader, and he has done specific studies on the practice of literature teaching. He reached his theory as a result of his practices. The other reason for employing this theory in the study is that the Ministry of National Education is in line with the approach taken in the preparation of the program.

In the direction of the research and reader-response theory, the following questions will try to be answered:

- What kind of characteristics can be seen on the achievements on textual comprehension in 9th- 12th Grades Turkish Literature Curriculum?
- What are the opinions of the teachers on the practice process on textual comprehension in 9th- 12th Grades Turkish Literature Curriculum?
- What are the opinions of the students towards the practice process on textual comprehension in 9th- 12th Grades Turkish Literature Curriculum?

### 3. Method

This part includes research design, participants, data collection tools, and analysis of data.

#### 3.1 Research Design

This researcher employs the case study research design. The case study methodology maintains deep connections to core values and intentions and is particularistic, descriptive and heuristic (Hyett et al.2014, Merriam 2013). Yin (2009) identifies case study research design as an in-depth practical investigation of a current event in the actual context. The research is limited by a single curriculum (Turkish Language and Literature Curriculum) and a single theory (Reader Response Theory).

#### 3.2 Participants

The participants are the teachers of Turkish Language and Literature and the students of these teachers. The criterion sampling technique was used to select the participants. Two schools which were rated as the lowest, middle and the highest base scores according to the TEOG examination were selected in Antalya. There are 30 Turkish language and literature teachers and 120 students from 6 different schools for the study. Five teachers were selected from each school. Two female and two male students who were known by these teachers were selected. The information about the teachers who are member of working group is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Information About Teachers

Teacher	Sex	Age	Working Experience	School Degree
T1	Male	60	35	Low Grade
T2	Male	37	15	Low Grade
T3	Male	54	30	Low Grade
T4	Male	46	24	Low Grade
T5	Male	50	23	Low Grade
T6	Male	26	23	Intermediate Grade
T7	Male	54	30	Intermediate Grade
T8	Male	51	27	Intermediate Grade
T9	Male	40	18	Intermediate Grade
T10	Male	58	30	Intermediate Grade
T11	Male	56	32	High Grade
T12	Male	56	35	High Grade
T13	Male	32	10	High Grade
T14	Male	40	18	High Grade
T15	Male	43	19	High Grade
T16	Female	28	7	Low Grade
T17	Female	36	16	Low Grade
T18	Female	29	5	Low Grade
T19	Female	34	12	Low Grade
T20	Female	38	18	Low Grade
T21	Female	39	16	Intermediate Grade
T22	Female	34	12	Intermediate Grade
T23	Female	45	24	Intermediate Grade
T24	Female	53	31	Intermediate Grade
T25	Female	46	21	Intermediate Grade
T26	Female	50	28	Low Grade
T27	Female	51	28	Low Grade
T28	Female	41	20	Low Grade
T29	Female	32	7	Low Grade
T30	Female	42	18	Low Grade

As seen in Table 1, there are 15 female teachers and 15 male teachers in the study. Their ages are among 28 and 60. They have different working experiences such as 5 or 35 years. Table 2 gives information about the students in the study.

Table 2. The Information about the Students

Sex	Low Grade Schools	Intermediate Grade Schools	High Grade Schools
Female	20	20	20
Male	20	20	20

As it is understood in Table 2, 20 students were selected due to TEOG exam score from each school. As it is seen, there are 60 female and 60 male students as total.

### 3.3 Data Collection Tools

This study collected the data with document review and semi-structured interview form. Table 3 shows the distribution of research questions and data collection tools.

Table 3. Distribution of Data Collection Tools to Research Questions

Research Question	Data Collection Tool
What kind of characteristics can be seen on the achievements on textual comprehension in 9 <sup>th</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup> Grades Turkish Literature Curriculum?	Document Review
What are the opinions of the teachers on the practice process on textual comprehension in 9 <sup>th</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup> Grades Turkish Literature Curriculum?	Semi-structured interview form
What are the opinions of the students towards the practice process on textual comprehension in 9 <sup>th</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup> Grades Turkish Literature Curriculum?	Semi-structured interview form

As seen in Table 3, two different semi-structured interview forms were used for teachers and students.

Semi-structured interview form for teachers: The development of the interview form was carried out by taking into account the content of the study (Merriam, 2013). The questions were prepared away from the usual style depending on the Reader Response Theory for the purposes of the research (Glesne, 2013). After the development of the questions, an expert evaluated the suitability of the questions to the purpose and theory. According to the evaluation of the expert, the researcher did the necessary corrections. The researcher carried out piloting on five of the randomly selected teachers from the working group (Glesne, 2013) to serve for determining the understandability of the target group (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). With this practice, the researcher finalized the semi-structured interview form. The interview form consists of six questions for the purpose of the study. The last question asks whether there are ideas that the participants would like to add.

Semi-structured interview form for students: The development period of the semi-structured interview form for the students is similar to the development period of the semi-structured interview form for teachers. The form was applied the students to determine the comprehension of the interview form. Because the students were the target group. This form was finalized after the necessary correction. There are five questions and one extra question to ask whether there are different thoughts that the students want to add. The questions were created properly for the purpose of the study in both the teacher and the student semi-structured interview forms.

### 3.4 Analysis of Data

The researcher used the content analysis technique to analyse the data based on three research questions. The analysis of each research question was carried out within itself. These analyses were not combined with other research questionnaire data.

## 4. Findings and Comments

This section includes findings from data analysis and the comments on findings. This section was formed under three headings, taking into consideration the research questions.

### 4.1 Findings and Comments on textual comprehension in 9th- 12th Grades Turkish Literature Curriculum

The Secondary Turkish Literature Teaching Program (MEB, 2011), was formed hierarchically from the ninth grade to the twelfth grade. The achievements were limited at the twelve-grade depending on the research objective. It is thought that twelve-grade students are generally expected to have increased awareness of themselves in secondary education. Table 4 shows the content analysis for 12th grade achievements on textual comprehension in the Secondary Turkish Literature Teaching Program.

Table 4. Content analysis of 12th Grade achievements

Theme	Category	Code	f
Textual comprehension	Text-centred	Social direction	9
		Intertextual comprehension	8
		Different text types	4
		Language and expression	2
		Aim	1
		Mentality	1
		Related to culture	1
		Structure	1
		Rhythm	1
		Main theme	1
	Memorization	1	
	Text and reader-centred	Individuality	5
		Interpretation	2
		Text and author-centred	The author literary features
	Author and society		1

As shown in Table 4, There are three dimensions of content analysis on the 12th grade achievements on textual comprehension. These dimensions are text-centred ( $f = 30$ ), text and reader-centred ( $f = 7$ ), and text and author centred ( $f = 5$ ). It is seen that the highest frequency value is text-centred category among these dimensions. The frequency value of the text centred categories is more than twice as high as the sum of the "text and literacy centred" and "text and author centred" categories. The high frequency value reveals the perspectives of the teachers and students for the program. This shows that the general comprehension in general is more important than the perspective of the student. Nevertheless, it seems that it is not given the necessary attribution to the writer and text relationship which is believed to play an important role in the meaning-making process.

The codes with the highest frequency value in the text-centred perspective are the social direction ( $f = 9$ ), and intertextual comparison ( $f = 8$ ). It is thought that the comprehension process which is carried out by emphasizing these perspectives cannot reach its right purpose. Because it is difficult to realize these achievements with only a text-centred view by disabling the author and the reader of the text. In the reader-centred perspective, only the individuality ( $f = 5$ ) and interpretation ( $f = 2$ ) achievements were handled. The position of the reader about individuality and interpretation is not presented clearly in the individual achievements related to the program. The reading process based on the reader's point of view were given in a restricted way. The author-centred perspective consists of two subcomponents: The author literary features ( $f = 4$ ) and author and society ( $f = 1$ ). In these components, it is understood that the relation of text, author and comprehension cannot be clear enough. The author's emotional world plays an important role in the comprehension of the text therefore it should not be ignored.

#### 4.2 Findings and Comments on Teacher Opinions on The Practice Process on Textual Comprehension in 12th Grade Turkish Literature Curriculum

In this part, the researcher tried to find out the opinions about the practice process on textual comprehension in Secondary Turkish Literature course. Table 5 shows the content analysis of teacher opinions.

Tablo 5. Teacher Opinions on Textual Comprehension

Theme	Category	Code	f
Teacher Opinions	The purpose of program	To comprehend	15
		Learning text types	3
		To gain national identity	2
		To improve interpreting skill	2
		Recognition of literary periods	2
		To accelerate the reading speed	2
		Culture transfer	1
		To analyse	1
		A source	1
		Interest in Language	1
		Aesthetic and pleasure	1
		To strengthen the topic	1
		Obeys the rules of Turkish language	1
		Value transfer	1
		Sampling the topic	1
		Stress and Intonation	1
		To improve empathy ability	1
		socialization	1
		Introducing significant literary works	1
		Reading ability	1
	Diction	1	
	What the teacher pays attention in the reading process	Comprehension Questions	28
		Stress and intonation	6
		Language and expression	5
		Correcting errors	4
		Linking to everyday life	2
		Summarising	2
		Text type	2
		Relation between the text and author	2
		I don't care	1
		Providing to focus to the text	1
		reading from slow to fast	1
		Unknown words	1
		Literary period	1
	Successful fulfillment of the reading process	Interpretation	1
		Comprehension	11
		Interpretation	4
		To describe the text	3
		Reading habit	3
		Asking questions by using the text	2
		Reading motivation	2
		Being eager	1
		Gaining positive behavior	1
Using Turkish in a right way		1	
Recognition of literary periods	1		
To inform	1		
Saving cultural values	1		
Desire for expression	1		
Be able to answer questions about text	1		

As seen in Table 5, the analysis of the teachers' opinions on the practice process on textual comprehension in the 12th grade in Secondary Turkish Literature course consists of three components. These components were what the teacher pays attention in the reading process (f = 57), purpose of the program (f = 41), and successful fulfillment of the reading process (f = 33) according to the frequency value. The category "What the teacher pays attention in the reading process" with the highest frequency has 14 components. Among these 14 components, comprehension questions (f = 28) are the most repeated one. This code becomes more prominent than the others. The teachers underline that the most important point in the reading process is the comprehension questions. It was determined that these questions were at the end of the text in the textbook. The other repeated codes are:

stress and intonation ( $f = 6$ ), language and expression ( $f = 5$ ), and correcting errors ( $f = 4$ ). The common feature of these codes is that they are purely text centred.

It is found that the teachers pay less importance to the author ( $f = 2$ ) and the reader ( $f = 1$ ) in the textual comprehension. These opinions are almost at the bottom of the frequency value. There are 21 different codes in “The purpose of the program” category. Among these codes, the most noticeable one is “to comprehend” ( $f = 15$ ). The teacher’s opinions show that the comprehension code is directly related to the text. It is also a kind of reading and understanding by taking the text to center. Although the low frequency value, it is suggested that there are different purposes of the program such as the diction ( $f = 1$ ), or learning text types ( $f = 3$ ).

The category with the lowest frequency, "successful fulfilment of the reading process" consists of 14 components. According to teachers, “to comprehend” ( $f = 11$ ) was the most repetitive perspective in terms of reading process. However, “interpretation” ( $f = 4$ ), “to describe the text” ( $f = 3$ ), and “reading habit” ( $f = 3$ ) are the other most repetitive codes. These codes show that the teachers take the reader to the centre for the success of the reading process.

#### 4.3 Findings and Comments on Students Opinions on the Practice Process on Textual Comprehension in 12th Grade Turkish Literature Curriculum

In this section, the 120 students who constituted the working group indicated their opinions on the Practice Process on Textual Comprehension in 12th Grade Turkish Literature Course. Table 6 shows the content analysis of students’ opinions.

Table 6. Student Opinions on Textual Comprehension

Theme	Category	Code	f	
Student opinions	What the teacher pays attention in the reading process	Questions for comprehension	91	
		Questions about the author's intent	5	
		Questions for feelings	5	
		Written period	4	
		Interpretation questions	4	
		Unknown words	2	
		Nothing	2	
		Preliminary information	1	
		Language and expression	1	
		Summarising	1	
		Reading rules	1	
		The purpose of program	To comprehend	30
			To inform	18
			To strengthen the topic	17
	To improve reading ability		7	
	To improve interpreting skill		5	
	Enriching imagination power		5	
	Improving communication skills		4	
	Literature history		4	
	It doesn't work		4	
	To guide		2	
	What the students pay attention in the reading process	Preparation to the exams	2	
		To enrich culture	1	
		Based on memorization	1	
		Enriching the word knowledge	1	
		Enrichment of emotions and thoughts	1	
		To gain different perspectives	1	
		Reading ability	1	
		There should be no limit	1	
		Comprehension	25	
		Punctuation	15	
	Words	8		
	the author's Intention	6		
	Highlighted points	4		
Written period	3			
The text topic	1			
Sentence meaning	1			
Diction	1			

	Language and expression	1
	End of text	1
	Keep a note	1
Successful fulfillment of the reading process	To comprehend	24
	Reinterpreting with readers' point of view	10
	To read properly in Turkish language rules	7
	To inform	3
	To find a solution by using the text	3
	To be able to answer the questions about the course	3
	Aesthetic feeling	2
	To understand quickly	2
	Text summarization	1
	Pass the exam	1
	Productivity	1
	Willingness to read	1
	To know the author	1
	Having information about the written period	1
	Listen carefully	1
	To be able to discuss the text	1
	Comply with the program and teachers	1
	To visualize with imagination	1

Table 6 shows that there are four categories about student opinions for the practice process on textual comprehension: what the teacher pays attention in the reading process (f = 117), the purpose of program (f = 105), what the students pay attention in the reading process (f = 67), and successful fulfillment of the reading process (f = 64). "What the teacher pays attention in the reading process" category consists of 11 codes.

According to the students, the teachers give more importance to the text-centred "comprehension questions" (f = 91) in the textual comprehension process. Then, the most frequently repeated codes are "questions about the author's intent (f = 5) and the "questions for feelings" (f = 5). According to the students, the teachers do not exclude the author and reader from comprehension process while they focus on the text-centred reading. The students' opinions for the "the purpose of program" consist of 18 different components. The most repetitive perspectives are "to comprehend" (f = 30), "to inform" (f = 18), and "to strengthen the topic" (f = 17). This shows that the students perceive the literature teaching program as text-centred. The frequency of repetition of student-centred perspective is lower than the others. The codes for "What the students pay attention in the reading process" are divided into 12 components. The frequency of repetition of students' opinions about "to comprehend" (f = 25) and "punctuation" (f = 15) is more than the total of other views. The students give importance to the author's intention (f = 6), on the other hand, there are no opinions on the readers and reader emotions. This shows that the students handle the reading process in the context of texts and authors. However, the perspective on the reading process is more text-centred. According to the student opinions, there are 18 different codes regarding the least frequently repeated category "Successful fulfillment of the reading process"

In the codes, there are number of repetitions related to text-centred comprehension process such as "reinterpreting with readers' point of view" (f = 10), "aesthetic feeling" (f = 2), "text summarization" (f = 1), "willingness to read" (f = 1), "to be able to discuss the text" (f = 1), and "to visualize with imagination" (f = 1). This point of view indicates that the students generally choose reader as criteria to be successful in textual comprehension. Although there are different opinions about taking reader to the centre, the most repeated one is "comprehension" (f = 24). The greatest number of repetitions "comprehension" indicates that the reason for being successful of the students is to have text-centred perspective in textual comprehension process.

## 5. Conclusion

This section includes conclusion, discussion, and suggestions related to the results of the research findings. The study, which was conducted with conclusions, was carried out in the context of the Reader Response Theory. The findings on the evaluation of the program show that the centre point of the literature program on textual comprehension is the text-centred perspective. There is not enough focusing on the relationship between author and the reader to comprehend the text. The teachers are the practitioners of the program. There is a similarity between teachers' opinions on the purpose of the program and the achievements of the program. According to teachers' opinions, the main aim of the program related to textual comprehension is text-centred. However, it is particularly important to establish the relation between the reader and the text in the context of textual comprehension (Flynn, 2007). What the teachers and students pay attention during the reading process is to take text-centred perspective as a priority. However, it is thought that the teachers and the students made mistakes in the practice process about the priorities according to the Reader Response Theory. Because, there are

two types of perspectives in the text reading process. These are the reading for knowledge (Stevenson, 1981), and Aesthetic reading (Pantaleo, 2013). Reading for knowledge is done by aiming what everyone understands in common while the reading process is perceived by taking the individual feelings forward in the aesthetic reading (Rosenblatt, 1998). According to Rosenblatt, although a text can be read both aesthetically and intellectually, the most appropriate perspective is aesthetic point of view (Dekay, 1996). Güzel (2015) also supports and expresses that the purpose of literature is to give aesthetic point of view in his work. For the teachers, it is important to know the age, the individual differences, and prior knowledge of their students (Çetin ve Eskimen, 2015). The teachers have text-centred perspective in the comprehension process. They generally take the readers to the centre for textual comprehension process to fulfil this process in a successful way. From this point of view, the expectation of the teachers does not overlap the purpose of the process in the end. The similar contradiction is also noticeable in the student opinions. In fact, the opinions expressed by teachers and students for successful textual comprehension are similar with the Reader-Response Theory. The experience is the main factor for the comprehension and interpretation of literary texts (Rosenblatt, 1991 cited by Holloway, 2004). This experience refers to physical, cultural, social and personal experiences. These are effective in different ways in the reader's life (Rosenblatt, 1982 cited by Sheton, 1994).

In this sense, personal experience has an important role in the comprehension and interpretation of literary texts. (Church, 1998). Therefore, teaching process should be constantly updated due to the life condition, needs, and expectations of the individual (Çetin ve Eskimen, 2015).

The suggestions based on the findings:

There are two types of relationship between the reader and text. Both the text and the reader mutually change each other in both situations. Teachers should be aware of these two interaction styles. They should prepare activities to comprehend the text for both styles.

Since, an individual-centred perspective is preferred over textual comprehension, the more students are the more meaning. In such a case, teachers should accept that each comment is valuable. They should give importance to any comment without exception.

Teachers should be aware of the distinction between "informational" and "aesthetic" reading while criticizing the students' comments.

Teachers should pay attention to two points in the course: The teacher should utter at the right time. They should avoid expressions such as right / wrong. The teacher should avoid evaluating the comments according to his/her own criteria and value.

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