READING AND WRITING IN FOCUS:
ANALYZING THE 9TH GRADE ENGLISH COURSEBOOK IN TÜRKİYE WITH THE WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH

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Özet

UNESCO, dünya çapında okuryazarlığı geliştirmek için titiz adımlar atarak son 50 yılda okuryazarlık oranlarının artmasını sağlamıştır. Ancak halen dünya genelinde 754 milyon okuma yazma bilmeyen yetişkin bulunmaktadır ve bunların çoğu kadındır. Bu sorunu ele almak için, eğitimcilerin ve öğretim uygulayıcılarının günlük yaşamda okuryazarlığı geliştirmek için yenilikçi yaklaşımlar benimsemeleri gerekmektedir. Okuryazarlık becerileri kişisel, sosyal ve ekonomik gelişim için temeldir, etkili iletişim ve bilinçli karar verme için temel oluşturur. Bireyleri yaşam boyu öğrenmeye teşvik eder, eleştirel düşünme ve problem çözme yeteneklerini geliştirir. Eğitim bağlamında, güçlü okuryazarlık becerileri derslerde başarı için çok önemlidir, ileri düzeyde öğrenmeyi ve daha iyi akademik performansı kolaylaştırır. Goodman'ın "Tüm Dil Yaklaşımı"na ilişkin görüşlerini okuryazarlığı geliştirmeye yönelik küresel çabalarla birleştirerek, okuryazarlık eğitimini teşvik etmede ve süregelen zorlukları ele almada yenilikçi, araştırmaya dayalı stratejilerin önemini daha iyi anlayabiliriz. Bu çalışma, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı tarafından hazırlanan 9. sınıf İngilizce ders kitabında yer alan "Yurtdışında Eğitim" ünitesini "Tüm Dil Yaklaşımı bağlamında analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Veriler, nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden doküman analizi tekniği kullanılarak toplanmıştır. UNESCO İstatistik Enstitüsü'nün (UIS) güncel verilerinin de gösterdiği gibi, 2030 yılına kadar yetişkinlerin ve gençlerin gerekli okuryazarlık ve aritmetik becerilerine ulaşmalarını sağlamak için çabalarımızı sürdürmeliyiz. Bu çalışma kapsamında ders kitabının içeriği, başta okuma ve yazma alıştırmaları olmak üzere, Goodman'ın Tüm Dil Yaklaşımı temel alınarak analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar, bu ders kitabının dili gerçek hayatta ve çeşitli sosyal bağlamlarda uygulamakla uyumlu çeşitli etkinlikler içerdiğini göstermektedir. Bununla birlikte, ders kitabını daha ilgi çekici, uyarlanabilir ve öğrencilerin ihtiyaçlarına cevap verebilir hale getirmek için iyileştirme önerileri bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İngilizce Ders Kitabı, Tüm Dil Yaklaşımı, Eğitim Programları

Abstract

UNESCO has taken rigorous steps to improve literacy worldwide, resulting in increased literacy rates over the past 50 years. However, there are still 754 million illiterate adults globally, most of whom are women. To address this issue, educators and teaching practitioners need to adopt innovative approaches to enhance literacy in daily life. Literacy skills are fundamental for personal, social, and economic development, serving as the foundation for effective communication and informed decision-making. They empower individuals to engage in lifelong learning, enhancing critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. In educational contexts, strong literacy skills are crucial for success across subjects, facilitating advanced learning and better academic performance. By combining Goodman's insights on the whole language approach with global efforts to improve literacy, we can better understand the importance of innovative, research-based strategies in promoting literacy education and addressing ongoing challenges. This study aims to analyze the "Studying Abroad" unit in the 9th-

grade English textbook prepared by the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Türkiye within the context of Whole Language Approach. The data were collected using the document analysis technique, which is a qualitative research method. As current data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) indicate, we must continue our efforts to ensure that adults and young people achieve the necessary literacy and numeracy skills by 2030. Within the scope of this study, the content of the textbook, primarily reading and writing exercises, was analyzed based on Goodman's Whole Language Approach. The results show that this textbook contains several activities that align well with applying language in real-life and various social contexts. However, there are suggestions for improvements to make the coursebook more engaging, adaptive, and responsive to learners' needs.
Anahtar Kelimeler: English Coursebook, Whole Language Approach, Curriculum

Introduction

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2024), despite the steady rise in literacy rates over the past 50 years, the stark reality remains that 754 million adults worldwide are still illiterate, with the majority being women. This alarming statistic serves as a powerful reminder of the significant challenges that lie ahead in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, Target 4.6 emphasizes the necessity for all youth and most adults to attain essential literacy and numeracy skills by 2030 (UNESCO, 2017). Key findings from the Global Education Monitoring Report by UNESCO (2017b) reveal critical trends and obstacles in global literacy. Between 2000 and 2015, the worldwide adult literacy rate rose from 81.5% to 86%, yet it remains under 60% in low-income nations. Moreover, while the number of youth without literacy skills has decreased by 27% since 2000, over 100 million young individuals are still unable to read, with more than one in four residing in sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2017b).

Addressing the urgency and significance of literacy issues is crucial not only for empowering individuals but also for promoting social and economic development on a global scale (UNESCO, 2017a). To tackle these challenges effectively, education systems must prioritize innovative and research-driven teaching approaches that can adapt to diverse learning needs. Among these approaches, English teaching plays a pivotal role, as English is often a gateway to accessing global knowledge, opportunities, and cross-cultural communication within and beyond nations as a socially constructed skill (Norton, 2010). Teaching methodologies like the whole language approach, as discussed by Kenneth S. Goodman (1989), offer valuable insights into enhancing literacy instruction, particularly in English language classrooms. This approach places a strong emphasis on reading and writing as core components, aiming to

develop these skills in holistic, meaningful contexts. While its primary focus is on literacy, it can also include oral language activities such as storytelling and discussions, which serve to reinforce reading comprehension and written expression, complementing the overall learning experience. The idea is that these literacy skills develop naturally when learners engage with language in an integrated and authentic manner.

Perspectives on the Whole Language Approach

The Whole Language Approach, as described by Goodman (1989), builds on earlier concepts introduced in his 1986 book *What's Whole in Whole Language,* emphasizing a holistic, research-based approach to education. It combines psychological theories from Piaget and Vygotsky with Michael Halliday's linguistic research, concentrating on reading, writing, and engaging with texts. Rooted in humanistic traditions, this approach encourages teachers to become co-researchers, applying theory in innovative classroom settings and collaborating with researchers to explore literacy and cognitive development (Goodman, 1989). Furthermore, Edelsky (1993) highlights that the whole language approach is grounded in a vision of an equitable, democratic, and diverse society. It emphasizes the theoretical understanding of language and learning, viewing language as a means for creating meaning. Rather than focusing on isolated language components like words or sounds, whole language emphasizes understanding language as a system of social practices that both constrain and enable expression (Edelsky, 1993).

In her research paper titled "*Principles of Whole Language and Implications for ESL Learners*," Patzelt (1995) outlined several core principles that underpin the whole language approach, particularly in the context of English teaching. These principles emphasize the holistic nature of language learning and its application to English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. The key principles include:

Holistic View of Language: Language is regarded as a whole, and teaching it in fragmented skills limits learners' appreciation and comprehension.

Integrated Skills Instruction: In a whole language classroom, reading, writing, listening, and speaking are taught concurrently rather than in isolation.

Real-Life Context: Whole language learning emphasizes the use of authentic texts and real-life experiences, mirroring how babies naturally acquire language through usage.

Focus on Meaning and Comprehension: Both learners and teachers prioritize meaning and comprehension, with the expression of meaning as the primary goal of language activities.

Social Context of Language: Language is inherently social; it involves a sender and a receiver. Texts are crafted to convey meaning to others.

Learner-Centered Environment: The approach fosters a learner-centered environment that incorporates students' prior knowledge and strengths, making learning more relevant and personalized.

Figure 1: Core Principles of Whole Language in ESL Education: Insights from Patzelt (1995)

Materials and Methods

This study employed document analysis as its primary research method, which is a systematic approach for reviewing and evaluating documents. According to Ritchie et al. (2013), document analysis enables researchers to extract meaning and enhance understanding through a rigorous examination of existing materials, thereby developing empirical knowledge. Document analysis, as a qualitative method, allows for a thorough examination of written materials, offering significant insights into the context and enhancing the reliability of research outcomes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The scope of this research specifically focuses on the "Studying Abroad" unit in the 9th-grade English textbook prepared by the Turkish Ministry of National Education for the 2017-2023 curriculum. Using the Whole Language Approach as a framework, the analysis concentrated on evaluating this unit through the principles outlined in Patzelt's research, particularly regarding reading and writing activities as the main literacy skills. The interactive version of the textbook was obtained from the official website of the Ministry of National Education of Türkiye (OGM Materyal, 2024). The "Studying Abroad" unit comprises four main sections, each consisting of main activities and sub-activities, which are assessed according to the key components emphasized in the original textbook. Through this document analysis, the study systematically evaluates how the Whole Language Approach is integrated into the teaching

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  Congress on October 25-26, 2024.

materials, with particular emphasis on reading and writing as essential components of literacy development.

Findings

Goodman (1989) emphasizes that whole-language classrooms incorporate traditional components such as spelling, handwriting, grammar, and usage into meaningful language experiences. This approach fosters the interconnectedness of reading, writing, speaking, and listening, rather than treating these skills as isolated entities, thus creating a more holistic learning environment. However, it is important to note that the English coursebook primarily features activities focused on one dominant skill at a time. Given the significance of literacy skills discussed in the introduction, it is essential to analyze the reading and writing activities within the framework of the Whole Language Approach. The following findings are based on the Core Principles of Whole Language in ESL Education, as outlined by Patzelt (1995):

Table 1: Components of the Reading Activity in the "Studying Abroad" Units

	Holistic View of Language	Integrated Skills Instruction	Real-Life Context	Focus on Meaning and Comprehension	Social Context of Language	Learner Centered Environment
Sub- activity A						
Sub-activity B	✓		✓	✓		
Sub-activity C			✓	✓		
Sub-activity D			✓	✓		
Sub-activity E			✓	✓		
Sub-activity F	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Sub-activity A: Matching Countries and Nationalities

The activity of matching countries to their respective nationalities primarily emphasizes vocabulary recognition, reflecting a fragmented skill approach that lacks a holistic view of language. It primarily targets reading and writing while neglecting listening and speaking components, which limits students' engagement with the activity. The connection to real-life experiences is minimal, as the activity relies on textbook imagery rather than authentic scenarios, which could be enhanced by encouraging students to share personal cultural

experiences. Furthermore, the focus remains on recalling and matching information, preventing deeper comprehension and expression of meaning. The lack of social interaction within the activity misses opportunities for meaningful communication, while a shift towards open-ended tasks could better incorporate students' prior knowledge and interests, resulting in a more learner-centered environment.

Sub-activity B: Scanning Text for Names

In this activity, scanning a text to identify names fosters a more holistic engagement with language, as it involves reading and understanding relationships between characters. However, the task of matching names to photos remains somewhat limited in promoting a broader appreciation of language. While it includes reading and writing, the activity could be enhanced by integrating speaking and listening elements, such as group discussions about the characters. The realistic context of a multicultural environment aligns well with the whole language approach, though students would benefit from sharing their own experiences related to cultural exchange. Although the task supports comprehension, it could encourage deeper understanding by prompting discussions about the significance of the characters in Defne's experience. Additionally, a lack of direct interaction between students limits the social aspect of language learning, which could be improved through follow-up discussions while incorporating opportunities for students to share their reflections would create a more learner-centered environment.

Sub-activity C: Matching Vocabulary to Definitions

This vocabulary matching activity emphasizes isolated comprehension and lacks a holistic view of language, but the follow-up of creating sentences promotes integrated language use. The task combines reading and writing, with further integration possible through pair discussions. The vocabulary is drawn from a text about studying abroad, offering real-life relevance, and encouraging students to relate these words to personal experiences would enhance this connection. While sentence creation encourages consideration of meaning, it remains individual-focused; sharing sentences could foster social interaction. Making the task learner-centered by prompting students to reflect their experiences would increase its relevance.

Sub-activity D: Completing the Chart

This activity focuses on extracting information from a text, which feels fragmented; a more holistic approach would include discussions or writings about the gathered information. It involves reading and writing but could be enriched by partner discussions or presentations. The chart is based on real experiences, aligning with real-life contexts; encouraging personal additions would enhance relevance. The task emphasizes comprehension but could encourage deeper reflection on characters' experiences. Incorporating discussions would foster social exchange, and relating chart information to students' own lives would create a more learner-centered approach.

Sub-activity E: Answering Comprehension Questions

This activity emphasizes retrieving information but mainly focuses on isolated comprehension questions. A holistic approach would relate the content to broader themes or personal experiences. While it involves reading and writing, adding discussions in pairs could integrate speaking and listening skills. The questions reflect real-life experiences related to studying abroad, and sharing personal thoughts could enhance engagement. Although they promote comprehension, the questions are factual; incorporating open-ended questions would encourage deeper thinking. Group discussions would enhance social interaction, and connecting the text to students' experiences would make it more learner-centered.

Sub-activity F: Listening and Completing a Registration Form

This listening activity is holistic, involving interpreting spoken dialogue and transferring information to a written form, though filling out a form is somewhat limited. It integrates listening and writing, with potential for speaking through role-play. The realistic scenario mirrors real-life situations, aligning with the whole language approach. The focus on comprehension emphasizes listening for specific information; discussing what students learn could enhance the task. As an individual task, incorporating role-playing could promote interaction, and enabling students to create their own dialogues would enhance the activity's relevance and make it more learner-centered.

Table 2: Components of the Writing Activity in the "Studying Abroad" Unit

	Holistic View of Language	Integrated Skills Instruction	Real-Life Context	Focus on Meaning and Comprehension	Social Context of Language	Learner Centered Environment

Sub- activity A			✓			
Sub-activity B						
Sub-activity C				✓	✓	✓
Sub-activity D						
Sub-activity E			✓	✓	✓	✓
Sub-activity F			✓	✓	✓	✓
Sub-activity G			✓	✓	✓	✓

Sub-activity A: Skimming and Identifying the Topic

This task emphasizes vocabulary recognition and reinforces a fragmented skill approach. It focuses exclusively on reading, isolating it from other language skills like speaking, writing, and listening. There is minimal connection to real-life contexts, as students are simply identifying a topic from a controlled text. The activity does not engage social interaction or focus on meaning beyond basic identification, and it is not learner-centered, as it does not consider students' experiences or interests.

Sub-activity B: Scanning for Key Information

The scanning task similarly fragments language learning by focusing on specific detail extraction. It targets only reading skills without incorporating writing, listening, or speaking. The task is removed from real-life context, as students are retrieving information without meaningful engagement. This recall-based task limits true comprehension and lacks a social dimension or interaction. Additionally, it is not learner-centered, offering no scope for integrating the learners' prior knowledge or personal context.

Sub-activity C: Pair Work - Asking and Answering Questions

This activity begins to align with the Whole Language Approach by integrating reading with speaking through partner interaction. The pair work introduces a social context and promotes meaningful communication. However, listening and writing are still neglected. There is more focus on comprehension, as students need to understand and ask questions, yet the real-life application remains somewhat artificial. The activity is more learner-centered as it encourages students to ask questions based on their understanding, fostering engagement.

Sub-activity D: Identifying Stephen's Questions

This task follows a fragmented approach by focusing solely on reading and recall of information. It lacks integration with other skills and does not encourage a deeper understanding or connection to real-life scenarios. The activity remains individual, without social interaction or meaningful communication, and it is not learner-centered, as it does not consider the students' prior knowledge or context. The task reinforces limited comprehension and a focus on isolated details.

Sub-activity E: Pair work - Topics to Know before Going Abroad

This activity aligns better with the Whole Language Approach by encouraging students to think critically and engage in meaningful conversation about relevant real-life topics. While it still focuses mainly on speaking and reading, the social context introduced by pair work is an improvement. The task promotes comprehension through discussion but still lacks the integration of writing and listening. It becomes more learner-centered, allowing students to explore topics that interest them, making it a more engaging and relevant activity.

Sub-activity F: Writing an Email to a Partner Abroad

The writing task connects more strongly with real-life language use, simulating a practical communication scenario. It integrates reading and writing but still neglects speaking and listening. The focus on meaning and comprehension is stronger here, as students must structure their email clearly and ask relevant questions. The activity introduces a social context, as students imagine communicating with someone in another country, and it can be learner-centered if students are allowed to personalize their email.

Sub-activity G: Peer Review of Email

This peer review task moves closer to the principles of the Whole Language Approach by fostering interaction, collaboration, and real-life feedback. It focuses on reading and writing but still excludes listening and speaking. The task is more social, as students engage in meaningful communication by giving and receiving feedback, promoting comprehension of both form and content. The learner-centeredness of this activity is increased, as it encourages personalized feedback and reflection on the peers' work.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study emphasize the significance of language functionality. Halliday and Matthiessen (2013) underscore that language is fundamentally for human interaction.

Similarly, Goodman's Whole Language Approach (1989) adopts an interactional perspective, recognizing that language skills are socially constructed and shaped by learners' personal experiences. Patzelt (1995) highlights, "Research and real-life classrooms reveal this repeatedly. Whole language is unique." Improving the English coursebook in light of the Whole Language Approach can significantly benefit learners.

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