



A comparative evaluation on silent and read-aloud revisions of written drafts

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the effect of silent and read-aloud revision methods on revising the written drafts of students. In the study, 50 fourth-grade university students took part as the participants of the research. The participant students were asked to write two different drafts with 250-300 words each during data collection process. Consequently, they were asked to revise the first text silently and the second one aloud. The drafts written were copied and reviewed by two different experts, and deviations to be corrected or improved were marked on the papers and annotations were added where necessary. Marks and annotations provided by the two experts were recorded on the “form for identifying and classifying the deviations in written texts” previously developed by the researchers. The participants’ self-evaluations of their own texts were recorded on the same form. The data noted on the form were transferred to the statistical program to analyze. Frequency, percentage, mean scores, paired samples t-test were utilized in the data analysis, and $p \leq 0.05$ was set to be the significance level in the interpretation of the results. The result of the data analysis illustrated that the participants had moderate revision skills; their read-aloud revision as a surface evaluation and their silent revision as a semantic evaluation were found more functional.

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1. Introduction

Writers employ a repetitive creation process involving the stages of planning, writing, revision, and editing to construct their thoughts and create rhetorical and linguistic structures to express them (Çetinkaya, Bayat & Alaca, 2016). “Revision and editing consist of two sub-processes: reading and editing that are implemented by writers respectively. In the reading sub-process, writer detects their errors and evaluates compliance of the written text with communicational purposes which have been specified in the planning process. The editing sub-process refers to the analysis of problems in line

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with production principles” (Alamargot & Chanquoy, 2001). These two sub-processes are functional in the maturation of a text.

Evaluations made on the text during revision are addressed in two categories of surface and semantic (Chanquoy, 1997; Faigley & Witte, 1981; Sommers, 1980; Monahan, 1984). Chanquoy (1997) classifies revision activities in two groups of Surface Changes and Semantic Changes: (1) Changes such as completing punctuation (adding punctuation), rewriting an unreadable word or piece of text, correcting misspellings, grammatical spell check (subject-verb agreement, tense, etc.) are called Surface Changes while (2) processes that lead to change in the meaning of text through processes of adding, deleting, replacing, substituting and transforming word, phrase, proposition, sentence, or longer pieces are called Deep or Semantic Changes.

Studies indicate that a quality revision enhances the quality of draft (Yoder, 1993; Faigley & Witte, 1981). If revision of draft is not of good quality, editing will not be of good quality, either. Research on explaining cognitive process in revision and editing has suggested models that clarify the processes of evaluating the draft and describing the existing problems. The most known and recognized suggestions include “Cognitive Process Model” by Flower, Hayes, Carey, Schriver and Straman (1986) that defines and classifies revision-editing processes and “Process Model of Revision” by Butterfield, Hacker and Albertson (1996).

According to the model suggested by Flower et al. (1986), revision starts when writer reads their draft to evaluate it in accordance with the purpose, criteria and limitation of the text and plan. Writer detects and defines the problems during reading. Next, writer employ processes for improving the text within the scope of the problems they have detected and defined.

Butterfield, Hacker and Albertson (1996) emphasize the importance and role of Long-Term Memory and Working Memory in the Model of Procedural Revision. Writer reads the draft with their working memory to comprehend and describe it. Meanwhile, they evaluate the draft by employing strategies such as selecting, qualifying and creating and describe the rhetorical problems in the text. Information stored in the long-term memory is essential for operating the sub processes of revision. Actions to choose the strategies such as definition of the task, evaluation of text, identification and correction of errors are in constant interaction between grammar and contextual information during revision. Working memory makes constant interaction possible. Therefore, working memory is highly loaded.

There are two main steps of revising a written text as seen in the above mentioned models. The first one is detecting and defining the problems, and the second one is organizing the text based on the defined problems. The fact that reading for revision is a performance in which comprehension and evaluation are conducted simultaneously increases the load of working memory significantly.

Reading for revising a text and reading for comprehending it are different actions. Reading for comprehension is the process of combining several sources of information (e.g. phrases, grammatical constructs, factual information, and beliefs about writer's intention) to create a representation of text's meaning. Readers do not pay attention to errors in the text when reading for comprehension. If any existing problem affects their comprehension, they solve the problem of comprehension and keep reading the text (Roussey & Piolat, 2008). However, when reading for comprehension, individuals read not only to construct a representation of text's meaning but also to detect the rhetorical goals of writer or the problems that might affect reader's comprehension of the text.

Revision requires all skills of reading comprehension. Writer should remove themselves away from the draft and evaluate the text critically. For instance, writer should create the essence by focusing on the clarity problems to make changes in the text as a whole (MacArthur, 2019). Writer should read as a reader and evaluate whether the content is clear through logical inferences. An effective revision improves a draft both formally and semantically.

Research has shown that writers cannot revise their texts in a qualified fashion and mostly identify and correct deviations in spelling, punctuation, words in the surface structure (Bracewell, Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1978; Limpo, Alves & Fidalgo, 2013; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1983; Berninger et al., 1996; Parsons, 2001; Crowford, Lloyd & Knoth, 2008).

Writers are described in two groups of novices and experts in the literature (Alamargot & Chanquoy, 2001; Flower et al., 1986; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1986). The most distinct characteristic of novices is that they are incompetent at revising and evaluating their own texts as readers.

Researchers who have analyzed revision behaviors of novices have concluded that such individuals tend to make low-level changes in punctuation, spelling or grammar in their texts without making higher-level changes in organization or content (Bernhardt, 1988; Crawford, Lloyd & Knoth, 2008). Experts employ a more competent process in revising and editing a text. On the other hand, studies in the literature have found that student writers cannot maintain their texts competently. The most distinct behaviors among the weaknesses of student writers during revision include focusing on the surface structure of text, not caring about revision much and mostly revising the text just silently (Tseng, 2014).

It is difficult for a writer to revise their text on their own. Because, noticing and evaluating the problems in one's own text require more attention compared to an outside reader. Two different strategies of reading aloud and silently can be followed in reading for revision. In silent revision, writer reads their draft without using their speech organs. In read-aloud revision, writer reads their draft orally. The main reason why writers read their drafts aloud during revision is to see whether the written text "sounds right". The

decisions to choose any of these strategies depend on writer's competency or intuitive knowledge on the system of their mother tongue (Tseng, 2014). Hartwell (1997) states that reading aloud enables students to control both mechanic and rhetorical aspects of their texts in the presence of unconscious or intuitive knowledge on their language. Several studies have argued that read-aloud revision is a more functional strategy in identifying surface and semantic errors in a draft (Murray, 1982; Langan, 2011; Elbow, 2010).

While such studies emphasize that read-aloud revision is more functional, there are limited number of studies on the functionality rate of read-aloud and silent revision methods in the evaluation of deviations in a text.

Accordingly, this study aimed to scrutinize how loud and silent reading techniques differ in revising written drafts of students. To this end, the research questions of the study can be stated as follows:

1. To what extent do the participants notice the problems in a written draft during a read-aloud revision?
2. To what extent do the participants notice the problems in a written draft during a silent revision?
3. Is there any significant difference between the techniques of read-aloud and silent revision in terms of noticing problems in a written draft?

2. Method

2.1. Participants

In this descriptive research, the study group was composed of 50 tertiary level students attending the fourth grade of the Department of Turkish Education in a state university in Turkey.

2.2. Data Collection

The participants were asked to write two different drafts with 250-300 words each during the data collection process.

Then, they were asked to revise the first text silently and the second one aloud. Two procedures were performed on the same day and at the same class hour of two different weeks. Before revision, the following instruction was read to the participants about important points to consider:

This study aims to make a comparison regarding the effect of loud and silent reading techniques when revising a draft on how you detect errors in usage, editing, etc. in the text.

To that end, I would like you to mark the location of any error you see and add explanation where necessary as you revise.

2.3. Data Analysis

Based on the studies in the related literature (Chanquoy, 1997; Faigley & Witte, 1981; Sommers, 1980; Monahan, 1984), seven subheadings under two main categories of surface and semantic were come across to define and classify the deviations in undergraduates' written texts. Deviations were defined and classified under three headings of spelling, punctuation, and grammar in the surface category. In the semantic category, deviations were defined and classified under four headings of title, paragraph coherence, cohesion, and missing content. The template "form for identifying and classifying the deviations in written texts" was sent to four experts for content validity. The experts provided positive feedback on content validity.

The drafts written by the undergraduates were copied and reviewed by two different experts, and constructs including word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, etc. to be corrected or improved were marked on the papers and annotations were added if necessary. Marks and annotations provided by the two experts were recorded on the "form for identifying and classifying the deviations in written texts" previously developed by the researchers. Undergraduates' own revision evaluations of their texts were recorded on the same form. Data recorded on the form were transferred to the statistics program to be analyzed.

Frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean, paired samples t-test were used in data analysis, and $p \leq .05$ was set to be the significance level in the interpretation of results.

3. Results

This section focuses on the analysis of the data obtained from the participants within the scope of research questions.

3.1. To what extent do the participants notice the problems in a written draft during a read-aloud revision?

The data on participants' read-aloud revision of their drafts are given Table 1.

Table 1. To what extent the participants noticed the problems in the draft during read-aloud revision

Components	Expert frequency	Participant frequency	%
Spelling	540.00	316.00	58.52
Punctuation	920.00	528.00	57.39
Grammar	657.00	410.00	62.40
Surface	2117.00	1254.00	59.23
Title	28.00	16.00	57.14
Paragraph coherence	324.00	126.00	38.89
Cohesion	224.00	88.00	39.29
Missing content	293.00	101.00	34.47
Semantic	869.00	331.00	38.09
Total	5972.00	3170.00	53.08

According to Table 1, the participants orally revised their drafts at success rates of 59.23% and 38.09% in the *surface* and *semantic* categories, respectively. Success rate of the participants were found to be 53.08% for all categories.

As for the surface components, the participants orally revised their drafts at success rates of 58.52%, 57.39%, and 62.40% in the components of *spelling*, *punctuation*, and *grammar*, respectively. On the other hand, regarding the semantic components, the participants orally revised their drafts at success rates of 57.14%, 38.89%, 39.29%, and 34.47% in the components of *title*, *paragraph coherence*, *cohesion*, and *missing content*, respectively.

3.2. To what extent do the participants notice the problems in a written draft during a silent revision?

Data on participants' silent revision of their drafts were examined, and the findings are given in Table 2.

Table 2. To what extent the participants noticed the problems in the draft during silent revision

Components	Expert frequency	Participant frequency	%
Spelling	533.00	235.00	44.09
Punctuation	898.00	404.00	44.99
Grammar	676.00	326.00	48.22
Surface	2107.00	965.00	45.80
Title	26.00	18.00	69.23
Paragraph coherence	304.00	150.00	49.34
Cohesion	222.00	115.00	51.80
Missing content	291.00	116.00	39.86
Semantic	843.00	399.00	47.33
Total	5900.00	2728.00	46.24

As seen in Table 2, the participants silently revised their drafts at success rates of 45.80% and 47.33% in the *surface* and *semantic* categories, respectively. Success rate of the participants were found to be 53.08% for all categories.

Regarding the surface components, the participants silently revised their drafts at success rates of 44.09%, 44.99%, and 48.22% in the components of *spelling*, *punctuation*, and *grammar*, respectively. As for the semantic components, the participants silently revised their drafts at success rates of 69.23%, 49.34%, 51.80%, and 49.34% in the components of *title*, *paragraph coherence*, *cohesion*, and *missing content*, respectively.

3.3. Is there any significant difference between the techniques of read-aloud and silent revision in terms of noticing problems in a written draft?

Findings of the paired samples t-test performed to see whether there was a difference between read-aloud and silent revision methods in terms of noticing the deviations in participants' drafts are presented in Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5.

Results of the paired samples t-test between the read-aloud and silent revision scores in regard to the surface components are given in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Results of paired samples t-test between the read-aloud and silent revision scores in regard to the surface components

Components	N	Arith. Mean	SD	r	t	sd	p
Read-aloud spelling	50	60.06	14.74	.173	6.224*	49	.000
Silent spelling	50	44.77	12.08				
Read-aloud punctuation	50	59.16	13.98	-.069	5.932*	49	.000
Silent punctuation	50	45.01	8.49				
Read-aloud grammar	50	63.49	15.32	.172	5.782*	49	.000
Silent grammar	50	48.33	13.38				
Read-aloud surface	50	60.15	8.25	-.117	9.837*	49	.000
Silent surface	50	45.57	5.57				

*Significant at $p < .05$

According to Table 3, the paired sample t-test performed between read-aloud and silent revision scores concluded a significant difference in favor of read-aloud revision in the surface components of *spelling* ($t=6.224$, $p<.05$), *punctuation* ($t=5.932$, $p<.05$), and *grammar* ($t=5.782$, $p<.05$) and the total *surface* category ($t=9.837$, $p<.05$).

Results of the paired samples t-test between the read-aloud and silent revision scores in regard to the semantic components are provided in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Results of paired samples t-test between the read-aloud and silent revision scores in regard to the semantic components

Components	N	Arith. Mean	SD	r	t	sd	p
Read-aloud title	50	76.00	43.14	.125	-1,999	49	.051
Silent title	50	90.00	30.30				
Read-aloud paragraph coherence	50	38.61	16.10	.196	-4.031*	49	.000
Silent paragraph coherence	50	50.01	15.42				
Read-aloud cohesion	50	39.30	21.05	-.044	-3.286*	49	.002
Silent cohesion	50	52.68	18.75				
Read-aloud missing content	50	34.68	13.91	.002	-1,971	49	.054
Silent missing content	50	39.86	12.31				
Read-aloud semantic	50	38.13	9.92	.357	-6.364*	49	.000
Silent semantic	50	47.30	7.77				

According to Table 4, the paired sample t-test performed between read-aloud and silent revision scores concluded a significant difference in favor of silent revision in the semantic components of *paragraph coherence* ($t=-4.031$, $p<.05$), *cohesion* ($t=-3.286$, $p<.05$), and the total *semantic* category ($t=-6.364$, $p<.05$). No significant difference was found in

the components of *title* and *missing content* at the significance level of .05. Nevertheless, it was observed that arithmetic means were high in favor of silent revision.

Results of the paired samples t-test between the read-aloud and silent revision scores in regard to all components are provided in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Paired samples t-test results between the read-aloud and silent revision scores in regard to all components

Components	N	Arith. Mean	SD	r	T	sd	p
Read-aloud Total	50	53.43	6.34	.138	6.904*	49	.000
Silent Total	50	46.09	5.00				

It can be seen in Table 5 that the paired samples t-test between read-aloud and silent revision scores in regard to all components concluded a significant difference in favor of read-aloud revision ($t=-6.904$, $p<.05$).

4. Discussion

Studies indicate student writers have poor revision skills (Limpo, Alves & Fidalgo, 2013; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1983; Beal, 1990; Berninger et al., 1996). As concluded by Parsons (2001:10), the simplest and most commonly chosen focus within activities is word, and the most difficult and rarely preferred focus is thought. According to Parsons, students of all grades revise their written products unwillingly in a narrow and restricted manner. Working concept of revision is usually word replacement. Given the participants' rates of detecting deviations in their drafts within the first research question, it was found that they succeeded in detecting 53.08% of surface and semantic deviations in read-aloud revision and 46.24% of these deviations in silent revision. This performance of the undergraduates can be evaluated as moderate. Considering that the participants were seniors and prospective teachers, one can argue that this level of skill is not adequate.

Findings on whether there was a significant difference between read-aloud and silent revision methods in terms of noticing the problems in drafts within the second research question showed a statistical difference in favor of read-aloud revision method in terms of spelling, punctuation, and grammar components and the whole surface category. Hartwell (1997) argues that writers can essentially correct the errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation by reading the texts aloud. Findings of this research coincide with this argument. Our mouth usually works slower than our brain; therefore, oral reading forces the brain to slow down and examine the piece of text more carefully and from a different perspective. Reading aloud allows us to focus on types of errors which

are ignored when reading a text silently, especially the grammatical errors in the surface structure. When you read aloud, multiple senses come into play. For instance, seeing and hearing at the same time can help you capture the errors which you might have missed when only one of your senses was active (Elbow, 2010). This might be one of the reasons why read-aloud revision was more functional in being able to detect the deviations in the surface dimension of a text.

According to the findings on the semantic category within the second research question, a significant difference was found in favor of silent revision in the components of paragraph coherence, cohesion, and the whole category. Yet, no significant difference was found in the components of title and missing content at the significance level of .05. It was nevertheless observed that arithmetic means were high in favor of silent revision.

These findings indicate that read-aloud or silent revision is an important variable in evaluating the surface and semantic deviations of written expression. Accordingly, read-aloud revision was found to be more functional in revising the surface dimension while silent revision was observed to be more effective in regard to the semantic dimension.

Explaining the reading process, bottom-up (Gough, 1972) and top-down (Goodman, 1969) models approach the reading performance in two groups. Both models consider reading a linear process. According to the bottom-up model, reading performance is a linear process that starts with letters and gradually progresses toward syllable, word, sentence, and text plane. On the other hand, top-down approach dictates that reader processes the existing construct on the surface of a text based on the high-level cognitive steps. Reader can make meaning of a given piece even though they do not know each word because readers predict the meaning of unknown words by using semantic and grammatical cues. Rather than reading for mastering the letters, letter/sound relations, and words, reading for meaning is the primary objective.

Silent reading usually takes place in reading for comprehension. Oral reading is more of a process that is employed to communicate the written text to others. In other words, the primary objective in oral reading is not comprehension. In oral reading, reader is pushed towards bottom-up reading as decoding and phonation are prioritized. The reason why the participants were more successful at identifying the deviations of spelling, punctuation and grammar in their drafts during read-aloud revision might be the fact that they employed the bottom-up reading process. Yet, silent reading allows for easier processing of the existing construct on the text surface based on high-level cognitive steps. Hence, this is why the participants might have succeeded more in detecting the deviations in paragraph coherence, cohesion, title, and missing content by rather employing the top-down process during silent revision.

The results of the analysis on whether there was a difference between read-aloud and silent revision methods in terms of all components indicated a statistically significant difference in favor of read-aloud revision. In other words, read-aloud revision was

observed to be more functional than silent revision. Evans (1988; as cited in Tseng, 2014) states that a writer can detect not only syntactic and morphological deviations but also whether communicational purpose and intention that they plan coincide with the text when revising their text orally. The results of this study are partly in parallel with the argument by Evans. Yes, the writer can also find out whether their communicational purpose and intention coincide with their text when revising the text orally; however, they do it more successfully when revising the text silently. Oral reading is not more effective than silent reading in detecting global problems.

The results achieved by Sommer (1980) indicate that novice writers perceive revision as an activity of putting it into words again. They do that as they perceive words as units of the written discourse. That is to say, they ignore the task of words within text and focus particularly on them. This indicates that they regard word changes as being more important than semantic changes in revision. Selfe (1984; as cited in Tseng, 2014) states that students with low writing anxiety use read-aloud revision more than students with high writing anxiety. The research argues that the ability to conduct read-aloud revision provides the writer with confidence and mitigates their writing anxiety.

It is important to perform a competent revision process for the quality of written text. The findings of this study imply that revision of a draft should be performed more than once and separately with read-aloud and silent revision methods.

Reading for revision and review require more effort because writers employ the processes of reading comprehension and problem detection, definition and problem solving simultaneously. Deviations in spelling, punctuation and grammar in the surface text may prevent writer from detecting the deviations in semantic aspect of the text. Thus, revising and reviewing a draft orally and correcting the surface deviations in the first place, and then revising the text silently to identify and define semantic deviations can ensure a more functional and efficient process. Furthermore, identifying and correcting the surface deviations firstly in the process of revision can mitigate the load on working memory in reviewing the semantic deviations through dividing the process into two steps.

5. Conclusion

Consequently, one can infer from the results that read-aloud and silent revision techniques are necessary for revising and reviewing a text both formally and semantically. Based on this inference, the revision and review processes are recommended to be bi-directional. One can call it "bi-directional revision and review model". Accordingly, it will be more functional to read aloud for identifying and defining the surface deviations in spelling, punctuation and grammar in a draft. Yet, it will be more functional to read silently for identifying and defining the semantic deviations in title, paragraph coherence, cohesion, and missing content.

Revision skills, as all other skills, improve in parallel with cognitive and linguistic development. For nourishing this development, it is important that students are introduced to required methods and strategies and teachers model these methods and strategies. Within this context, teachers can make significant contributions to students' acquisition of this skill by revising a draft read aloud first, and then silently in the classroom and providing a detailed outlook of the process.

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