



EXAMINATION OF ATTITUDES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TOWARDS TURKISH COURSE ACTIVITIES

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Abstract:

In this study, it was aimed to determine the attitudes of secondary school students towards Turkish course activities according to various variables. In order to determine the sample of the study, deviant case sampling, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used. With the mentioned sampling method, the sample of the study consists of three middle schools which are located in the city center of Erzurum and 2018 TEOG success ranking of which are the high grade, middle and low grade. 400 students participated in total. Of these, 96 were 5th graders, 88 were 6th graders, 105 were 7th graders and 111 were 8th graders. The screening model was used in the study. In order to determine the attitudes of the students, who compose the sample of the study, towards Turkish lesson activities, "Attitude Scale towards Activities of Turkish Course" developed by Çerçi and Derman (2016) was used. Obtained data were analyzed by SPSS 22.0 package program. As a result of the study, it was determined that secondary school students' attitudes towards Turkish course did not differ according to school level, it significantly differentiated according to the class level, the grade point average of the 5th grade students was higher than the average of the upper grade students, there was a significant difference in favor of the students who had higher grade point average compared to the Turkish course average, The grade point average of the students with high Turkish course average was higher than those with a lower grade point average and according to the gender, the difference between girl and boy students was significant in favor of girls. The results of the study were discussed with the studies in the field literature which examine the attitudes of secondary schools students towards Turkish course, reading, speaking and writing skills and suggestions were made.

Keywords: Turkish course activities, activity, attitude, activity attitudes of secondary school students

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1. Introduction

One of the most important elements that determine the basic approach in language teaching is the way in which language is perceived. Traditional understanding of language teaching regards language as a whole of behaviours and rules. Güneş (2012, p. 32) stated that in the behavioral approach, which accepts the language as a behavior, language teaching is considered in the context of stimulus-response as other behaviours and realized through various repetitions, mimics and memorizations. The constructivist approach, which sees human as a social being and language as a unit of social interaction, does not reduce language, and thus language teaching to the stack of rules. To know a language requires not to memorize a pile of rules, but to understand the functions of language, to produce thoughts in that language, and to be able to express one's own completely verbally and in writing. In this context, Börekçi (2015, p. 360-368) emphasized that language teaching should serve the purposes such as *“being functional, producing utilizable knowledge and contributing to gaining/providing basic language skills, determining the function/meaning transferred by the form by understanding the relation among the parts forming the whole, exploring the creativity of the language by evaluating designs with very different analysis processes and being for providing the ability to make different syntheses”*.

Constructivism, a learner-centered approach, requires a process in which students relate to their previous knowledge and construct new knowledge. Lea et al. stated that student-centered learning encouraged active learning, provided deep learning, and increased the senses of responsibility and autonomy of the learners, unity between student and teacher and mutual respect (Narrated from 2003 by Lochana and Deb). *“Constructivism is a cognitive-based learning approach that occurs as a result of an individual's “mental structuring”. Receiving and hearing information is not synonymous with mental configuration of information. The basic element of the constructivist learning environment is the learner. Learners interact with the learning content to interpret parts of the whole and form meaningful information from parts. It is important how and why the learner will learn more than what he/she will learn. It is important to study less information in-depth rather than loading a lot of information in a short time”* (Erdem and Demirel, 2002).

The change in the consideration of language and thus the language teaching has also changed the understanding of language teaching in our country and constructivism has been accepted as the basic approach of language teaching together with the 2006 Turkish Course Curriculum. In this context, the basic principle of 2006 TCC was stated as *“the students' building new knowledge on their accumulations, providing alternative and creative solutions for the problems they encounter, reaching the awareness and courage to work together in a group, participating in production and discussion activities, using different research methods and techniques, understanding the events and situations correctly departing from their own experiences, gaining an interdisciplinary point of view”* (MEB, 2006, p. 2).

The adoption of constructivism as the basic approach of language teaching has highlighted the effectiveness approach. It is among the targets of the curriculum that students develop their language skills through learning outcomes and activities and

they acquire language awareness and love. The activity approach is closely related to the constructivist approach and has been shaped by the important features that should be included in the activities which are important tools used in the teaching process. This approach consists of concepts such as sociality, individual, responsibility, process, mental structuring and experience. In this approach, the learner is active in the learning process. He/she develops language skills with social and mental variables. (Baş, Turhan and Karaca, 2017, s. 720). In the activity approach, the concept of task gains importance. According to Güneş (2011, p. 143), *“language tasks and activities are various studies conducted to improve the linguistic skills of the student. These are used effectively in language learning processes such as language acquisition, comprehension, production, interaction with others.”*

Nunan (2001) describes the concept of activity in language teaching as an activity or action as a result of processing or understanding of language, an effort structured for language learning with a certain target, appropriate content. The activities to be used in language teaching should have certain characteristics. Ellis (2003) mentioned that activities are a working plan and stated their characteristics as follows:

1. The activity is an activity which primarily requires meaning-oriented language use.
2. It includes language use processes in the real world.
3. It may include any of the four basic language skills.
4. It interacts with cognitive processes.
5. Activities have a consequence regarding the communicative aspect of language.

One of the most important benefits of the activity approach to the student is that the student is active in the process and has the opportunity to work on the language skills he/she uses in real life. In the activity-based language teaching process, not the form but the content characteristics of the student productions are important. Instead of using the language one way by answering the questions, students are able to produce questions about the subject they are working on, reach the answers to the questions and use the language multi-directionally in this process. In this context, Nation (1990, p. 53) stated that the activities provided the opportunity for students to focus on a part of what they needed to learn instead of thinking about and focusing on different subjects at the same time and also the activities created an opportunity for students to consider each other as a source of learning.

In the teaching of Turkish language, the importance of activities is great for the students to take responsibility and to use their language multi-directionally and to use their comprehension and narration skills in a holistic way. Narration is the activity of transforming the abstract thought into concrete language structure and understanding is the activity of reaching the abstract thought based on the concrete language structure. In this context, in the teaching process of Turkish language, activities should be included to enable students produce thoughts, materialize the thoughts they produce using language and reach the abstract thought based on the concrete language structure. Çer (2016, pp. 1,2) stated that conducting Turkish lessons based on activity is

necessary for perceiving the development of linguistic skills as a requirement, testing of messages of visual, auditory and linguistic stimuli, taking responsibility for dreaming and thinking under the guidance of these stimuli, establishing a life awareness for research, investigation and inquiry, having a place in the process of reading culture through regular and continuous reading.

Çerçi (2016, p. 1987) specifies the features that should be included in the language activities used in Turkish course as follows: These are educational studies which;

- 1) Are based on students' comprehension and narrative skills to achieve set goals,
- 2) Require active participation of student by interacting with learning tools, equipment and materials,
- 3) Can be adapted to situations which are new and related to real life,
- 4) Can evaluate new products,
- 5) Require a communicative process and teacher guidance.

In teaching Turkish, activities are used to achieve the desired goals. However, the quality of the activities comes to the fore in achieving the determined objectives. The importance of quality activities in the development of students' positive attitudes towards Turkish course activities cannot be denied. Demirel (2012) defines the attitude as *"the learned tendency that leads the individual to show certain behaviors in the face of certain people, objects and situations."* Bloom (1979, pp. 31,32) states that the student's attitudes towards the course and his/her perceptions of self-affect the success significantly. According to Bloom, the achievements of the student in a learning unit or course and perceptions about these achievements accumulate and gain stability over time. This will increase the student's self-confidence towards later learning units of same type and course (Narrated by: Bölükbaş, 2010, p. 901). In this respect, it can be said that developing positive attitudes towards lesson activities will contribute to learning.

In the literature, there are several studies that reveal the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the activities in Turkish textbooks, examine the activities in accordance with the opinions of teachers, and reveal the activity generating criteria theoretically (Gündoğdu, 2012; Durukan and Demir, 2017; Tosunoğlu and Demir, 2014; Güneş, 2017; Güneş, 2012; Özkana and Bayrak, 2016; Sevim and Kaya 2016; Aykaç, 2007; Çerçi 2016; Baş, Turhan and Karaca, 2017; Göçer and Tabak, 2012; Aktaş, 2010; Çevik and Güneş, 2017; Akcan, 2014; Gün, 2012; Yaylı and Solak, 2014; Güfta and Özçakmak, 2013). However, no studies have been found that determine the attitudes of secondary school students towards Turkish course activities. However, in the process of the preparation of activities, the implementation of the prepared activities and evaluation, to know the attitude of the student towards activities is very important in the development and implementation of activities which are appropriate for targets (Çerçi and Derman, 2016, p. 463). In this context, the attitudes of secondary school students towards Turkish course activities should be taken into consideration in the process of creating and implementing activities. The aim of this study is to determine the attitudes of secondary school students towards Turkish course activities. The study sought answers to the following questions:

Do the attitudes of secondary schools' students (5th, 6th, 7th and 8th graders) towards Turkish course activities;

1. Differ according to the school level?
2. Differ according to the grade?
3. Differ according to the grade point average?
4. Differ according to the gender?

3. Methods

Research model, sample, data collection tools and data analysis sections are presented in this chapter.

3.1. Research Model

The screening model was used in the study. Screening models are research approaches that aim to describe a situation that existed in the past or already exists as it is (Karasar, 1999). In this study, the attitudes of secondary school students towards Turkish lesson activities are tried to be examined in terms of school level, grade level, gender and grade point averages.

3.2. Sample

In order to determine the sample of the study, deviant case sampling, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used. In this sampling method, it is assumed that the deviant (extreme) situations and examples existing related to the problem will allow the researcher to see the variability more clearly. It is an example of deviant sampling that a researcher, who tries to understand and explain the phenomenon of success and failure by examining the student performance in different dimensions, chooses his/her sample from the schools where student success is the highest and lowest in relation to his/her purpose (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz and Demirel, 2015, p. 90).

The sample of the study consists of three middle schools which are located in the city center of Erzurum and 2018 TEOG success ranking of which are the high grade, medium grade and low grade. 400 students participated in total. Of these, 96 were 5th graders, 88 were 6th graders, 105 were 7th graders and 111 were 8th graders.

3.3. Data Collection Tools

In order to determine the attitudes of the students, who compose the sample of the study, towards Turkish course activities, "Attitude Scale towards Activities of Turkish Course" developed by Çerçi and Derman (2016) was used. The scale consisted of 22 items in five-point Likert type. For the positive items in the scale, "completely agree" (5) and "agree" (4) statements were used and for the negative items, "completely disagree" (1) and "disagree" (2) statements were used. For items which doesn't include any positive and negative opinions, "indecisive" (3) statement was used. The scale consisted of three dimensions as "benefit, importance", "interest" and "reluctance, indifference".

Of the items in the scale, 17 included positive and 5 included negative judgments. As a result of the analyses conducted on the latest form of the scale, the lowest point that can be reached was 22, the highest point was 110. In the process of developing the scale, item pool was formed, expert opinion was consulted, pretesting stage, factor analysis stage (Exploratory Factor Analysis and Confirmatory Factor Analysis) and reliability calculation stage were followed respectively.

The KMO value of the scale was found to be .962. This can be interpreted as “perfect” because it is above 0.90. Bartlett Globality Test value was found to be $\chi^2=6987.170$; $df=496$, $p<.00$ significant. When both results are considered, it was seen that the data set was suitable for exploratory factor analysis. The Cronbach Alpha internal reliability coefficient for scale reliability was calculated as .947.

3.4. Data Analysis

Obtained data were analyzed by SPSS 22.0 package program. First of all, it was determined whether the data obtained from the attitude scale towards Turkish course activities showed normal distribution. Shapiro-Wilk test, arithmetic mean, mode and median values, stickiness and skewness coefficients, Histogram Chart, Normal QQ Graph, Gradient Normal QQ Graph, PP Graph, Box Graph and Trunk Leaf Diagram belonging to the data were examined and it was decided that some of the data did not show normal distribution. The nonparametric analysis technique Mann Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis Test were used to analyze the data that did not meet normality assumptions.

The Mann Whitney U Test is used to investigate whether there are any significant differences between the order of the measurement results of two groups that are not related to each other (Kilmen, 2015, p. 224). This test is the nonparametric equivalent of the t-Test for Independent Samples. The Mann Whitney U Test is generally used in experimental studies with low sample size (Seçer, 2015, p. 201). The Kruskal Wallis Test is used to determine whether there are significant differences between the measurements belonging to more than two groups that are not related to each other. The results obtained from the tests were tabulated and interpreted according to the significance level $p < 0.05$.

4. Findings

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test, in which the relationship between the students' attitudes towards Turkish course activities and the level of the school they are studying are presented in Table 1.

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Table 1: Kruskal Wallis test results of secondary school students' attitudes towards Turkish course according to school level variable

School Level	n	Order Average	sd	X ²	p
High Level	138	185.91	2	4.640	0.95
Medium Level	122	216.84			
Low Level	140	200.64			

According to the table, there is no significant difference between the attitudes of secondary school students towards Turkish course and school level ($X^2 = 4.640$, $p > .05$). Although there was no significant difference between school level and attitudes towards Turkish course activities, it is seen that the average of students whose school level is medium (216.84) is higher than those with high school level (185.91) and low school level (200.64).

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test, which examines the difference between the attitudes of the students towards Turkish course activities and their grade levels, are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Kruskal Wallis test results of secondary school students' attitudes towards Turkish course according to grade level variable

Grade Level	n	Order Average	sd	X ²	p
5	96	247,31	3	23,476	.000
6	88	170,85			
7	105	198,57			
8	111	185,35			

According to Table 2, it is seen that the difference between the attitudes of the students towards Turkish course activities and the grade levels is significant ($X^2 = 23.476$, $p < .05$). The average of 5th grade students (247.31) is higher than the average of upper class students. It can be said that students in 5th grade are more interested in Turkish course activities.

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test, which examines the difference between the students' attitudes towards Turkish course activities and Turkish course grade point averages, are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Kruskal Wallis test results of the attitudes of secondary school students towards Turkish course according to the average variable

Average	n	Order Average	sd	X ²	p
0-44	25	119,20	4	24.149	.000
45-54	45	182,14			
55-69	82	188,05			
70-84	109	197,34			
85-100	139	230,89			

Table 3 shows that there is a significant relationship between the attitudes of secondary school students towards Turkish course and the averages of Turkish course ($X^2 = 24.146$,

$p < .05$). The point average of the students whose Turkish course grade point averages are between 85-100 (230.89) is higher than those whose Turkish course grade point averages are lower. At the same time, it is observed that the average score of the students increases as the grade point average increases.

The results of the Mann Whitney U test, which examines the difference between the attitudes of the students towards Turkish course activities and gender variable, are given in Table 4.

Table 4: Mann Whitney U test results of the attitudes of secondary school students towards Turkish course according to the gender variable

Gender	n	\bar{X}	SD	U	p
Female	181	226,21	40943,50	15166,500	.000
Male	219	179,25	39256,50		

According to Table 4, arithmetic average of the scores indicating attitudes towards Turkish course is 226,21 for girls and 179,25 for boys. In this case, it can be said that the difference between the attitudes of girls and boys towards Turkish course activities is meaningful in favor of female students ($U=15166,500$, $p < .05$).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

In this section, the results regarding the attitudes of secondary school students towards Turkish course activities will be discussed according to the variables of school level, grade level, grade point average and gender. In the literature, there were no studies examining the attitudes of secondary school students towards Turkish course activities. Turkish course activities aim to improve the basic language skills of the students during the teaching process. In this context, it is thought that the attitudes of students towards basic language skills will affect their attitudes towards Turkish course activities.

It was concluded that the attitudes of secondary school students towards Turkish lesson activities did not show a significant difference according to the school level but the average score of the medium level school was higher.

It was determined that the attitudes of the secondary school students towards Turkish course activities showed a significant difference in favor of the 5th grade students according to the grade level variable. Based on this result, it can be said that students exhibited a more positive attitude towards Turkish course activities at the beginning of secondary school. Similar results have been found in studies investigating the relationship between class level and language skills in the literature. İşeri (2010a) concluded that the reading attitudes of 6th grade students were higher than the 7th and 8th grade students in his study examining the reading attitudes of secondary school students. Meece and Miller (1999), Yıldız (2013), Kurnaz and Yıldız (2015) found in their study examining the reading motivations of the students that students' reading motivations decreased as their class level increased. Yılmaz (2011) stated that the writing skills of secondary school students decreased as the grade level increased.

Çeçen and Deniz (2015) stated that the high school students' perceptions of writing tendency decreased as the grade level increased. Yıldız and Kaman (2016) reached the conclusion in their study examining the reading and writing attitudes of primary and secondary school students that the reading attitudes of 2nd and 3rd grade students in primary school were higher than 5th and 6th grade students and writing attitudes of 2nd, 3rd and 4th grade students were higher than 5th and 6th grade students. Deniz and Tuna (2006), Zorbaz and Habeş (2015) found in their study on the attitudes of secondary school students towards Turkish course that the 5th grade students' attitudes towards Turkish course were higher than that of 6th, 7th and 8th grade students. One of the most important functions of Turkish course, which is a skill course, is to improve students' understanding and narrative skills. It is expected that understanding and narrative skills will show more development as students' ages and grade levels increase. However, it is seen that attitudes towards Turkish courses and reading / writing skills decrease as the grade level increases. Activities included in the textbooks are intended to improve language skills. The importance attached by the students to developing their language skills and their attitude towards language skills will affect their attitudes towards Turkish course activities. In this context, it can be stated that it is an expected result that the attitudes of students towards Turkish course activities decrease as the grade level increases. It can be said that the facts that the activities included in Turkish course books are designed in same or similar quality in every grade level and thus are not interesting for the student, many of activities consist of open-end questions and they don't make the student active affects the attitudes of students in higher grade levels towards Turkish course activities negatively.

When the attitudes of the secondary school students towards the Turkish lesson activities were examined according to the grade point average, it was found that there was a significant difference in favor of the students with a high average. Similar results were obtained in the studies that examined the relationship between language skills and school achievement score. Yılmaz (2011) concluded that there was a significant relationship between the school achievement score and the writing skills of the secondary school students and the writing skills of the students with high school achievement scores improved. Güngör (2009) stated that there was a significant relationship between the students' reading habits and academic achievement, and the students' reading habits decreased as the grade point average decreased. Başaran and Ateş (2009) found a positive relationship between students' positive attitudes towards reading skills and Turkish course achievement scores. Özbay, Büyükkiz and Uyar (2011) concluded that the number of words that students used in writing while expressing themselves was significantly correlated with the previous term's grade point average. This relationship is in favor of students with higher grade point average. Research in the literature shows that students' grade point averages increase as their language skills improve. In this context, it can be stated that there is a direct correlation between grade point average and language skills.

It was concluded that the relationship between the attitudes of the secondary school students towards the activities in the Turkish textbook and gender showed a

significant difference in favor of female students. In the literature, studies that show the attitudes of the students towards language skills also support this result of the research. In these studies, it was concluded that female students' attitudes towards Turkish course were significantly higher than that of male students (Kaya, Arslantaş and Şimşek, 2009; Deniz and Tuna, 2006; Bölükbaş, 2010; Okur and Özsoy, 2013; Zorbaz and Habeş, 2015). In studies in which the reading attitudes, reading habits, motivations and self-efficacy of secondary school students were examined, it was concluded that female students develop higher level attitudes in comparison to the male students (Akkaya and Özdemir, 2013; Mete, 2012; Güngör, 2009; Balcı, 2009; Başaran and Ateş, 2009; İşeri, 2010a; Arslan, 2013; İnallı and Aydın, 2014; Suna, 2006; Byro, 2000; Hood, 2015; Gür Erdoğan and Demir, 2016). The fact that the attitudes of female students towards reading skill were higher can be related to the reasons that they read more outside of school, they take reading advices into consideration, they spend more time at home in comparison to male students and their cognitive awareness about reading is higher. A significant difference was found in favor of female students in the studies in which writing tendencies of secondary school students were examined (Baş and Şahin, 2013; Tüfekçioğlu, 2010; İşeri, 2010b; Yılmaz, 2011; Ünal, 2010; Uçgun 2014). At the same time, it was concluded that the level of applying punctuation and spelling rules by female students was higher than that of male students (Bağcı, 2011; Bayram and Erdemir, 2006). Özbay, Büyükkız and Uyar (2011) stated in their study in which they examined the written expressions of 7th grade students that the vocabulary of female students was broader than that of male students. These researches relate the facts that the writing tendencies and attitudes of female students towards writing skill are high and female students prefer written expression to express themselves to the reasons that their written expressions are affected by the fact that they read more compared to the male students and this increases their interest in writing. Bayraktar and Doğan (2015) have concluded that female students' speaking skills are better than that of male students. It is considered that the facts that female students' reading attitudes, reading habits, motivations, self-efficacies, writing tendencies, level of applying writing rules, vocabularies and attitudes towards Turkish course are higher affect their attitudes towards Turkish course activities.

6. Suggestions

1. Students' attitudes towards Turkish lesson activities decrease as their grade levels and ages increase. Turkish course activities aiming to develop basic language skills can be designed to attract students' attention according to grade level. The activities aimed at language skills should be formed by taking into consideration the cognitive and affective development of the students.
2. Students' attitudes towards activities increase as their grade point averages increase. In this case, students with low grade point averages should be actively involved in the activities and students should be encouraged to participate in activities for reading and writing skills outside the school.

3. Female students' attitudes towards activities are higher than that of male students. This is the result of many researches that demonstrate attitudes towards language skills. The low attitudes of male students towards language skills also affect their attitudes towards activities. Different methods to improve the language skills of male students can be tried and their low attitudes towards language skills can be investigated in depth.

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