

Analysis of the Activities in 7th Grade Turkish Language Course Books for Elementary School According to the Basic Skills

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IJMER

Volume. 9, Issue. 1

March, 2026

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This study aims to determine the level of appearance of the activities directed to the basic skills (proper, good and effective use of Turkish language, critical thinking, creativity thinking, establishing communication, problem solving, researching, decision making, using information technology, entrepreneurship) and to make synchronic (in one year) and diachronic (in eight years) comparison of these skills, which should be available in Turkish Language course books prepared according to curriculum. A qualitative method, document survey method, is used in this study and data are tabulated quantitatively after conversion. Finally, these qualitative results are used to develop suggestions.

Keywords: Turkish Language Instruction, Turkish Language Course Book, Activity, Basic Skills.

1. Introduction

Language, indispensable for both man and society, requires to be taught to survive. Teaching language, which conveys the culture and knowledge to the next generations, is one of the most important aims of all the educational systems. The source to be used to create and improve this teaching process is the language skills, basis of language itself. The teaching and flawless and efficient use of a language can be achieved by the improvement of the language skills. Improvement of language skills through education such as reading, listening, speaking, writing and grammar plays an important role not only in teaching but also in healthy thinking, making right judgments and form powerful social relations.

Language teaching, important both for society and individual, is expected to possess lots of elements. The main aim of language teaching is clearly stated in Turkish Education Curriculum (TEC) “students’, able to understand the language in different contexts, express themselves through the language, and enrich their affective, intellectual and imaginary worlds (2006, p. 2)”. It is aimed at the 8-year-long primary school to educate students to reach or create the knowledge by improving their reading, listening, speaking and writing skills. Therefore, such cognitive and metacognitive processes have become significant such as comprehension, arrangement, classification, association, criticism, guessing, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, knowledge transfer, discovery, interpretation, cognitive reconstruction, self-expression, communication, collaboration, discussion, problem-solving, decision-making and assertiveness (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 13). The reason is that these are basic skills that individual can resort to in educational, professional and private life.

The new TEC, prepared in a constructivist way, (Ministry of Education, 2006) regards knowledge acquisition as a productive approach rather than solely a memorization process. Accordingly, it is aimed in the Turkish course to educate students, using Turkish correctly and efficiently, expressing him/herself, communicating, collaborating, solving problems, thinking scientifically, comprehending, researching, analyzing, criticizing, questioning, interpreting, knowing his/her rights and responsibilities, adapting to the surrounding medium, eager to read and learn, using information technology, producing and steering the future. Thus, it was aimed with this program to create a country composed of such individuals in the future (Özatalay, 2007, p. 13). It is the educational programs in which the way and context to realize these aims and skills should be determined. Therefore, 2006 primary education program is a product of such a mind work. It is aimed in this program, where some overall aims, specific aims, basic skills and activities are available, to enable students to learn some specific attitudes and skills horizontally in a year and vertically during

the 8-year-long education. In TEC, they are defined as “students will use these basic skills during their entire lives which they will acquire horizontally till the end of one education year and vertically after 8 years at primary school (2006, p. 5).” These skills are as follows;

- Correct and Efficient use of Turkish
- Critical thinking
- Creative Thinking
- Communication
- Problem-solving
- Researching
- Decision-making
- Use of information technology
- Assertiveness

What is expected from the individual of the 21st century is to understand correctly what he listens to, think critically and creatively, do research, question and make it accessible for everyone by adapting the knowledge to social and academic life.

As is seen, actually the skills in the program are the basic ones expected from the successful individuals who have to improve these skills to the top proficiency in mother tongue to achieve a social harmony and to educate successful individuals. The individual can correctly express him/herself and understand the people through language. S/he can improve his/her assertiveness skill by means of a healthy communication. S/he should never avoid social and individualistic roles. Thus, S/he can carry out her/his responsibility for both her/himself and the society. Hence, these skills support and improve each other, contribute to the individual and are interwoven into each other.

The 6th, 7th and 8th years constitute the second level of the primary school. The skills should be taught during this period. Therefore, the fundamental aim of the TEC is to educate “students’ being able to add on what they already know, find out alternative and creative solutions, acquire the consciousness and assertiveness to work in a team, participate in production and discussion activities, use different research methods and techniques, approach the events from their experiential point of view and have an interdisciplinary stance (Ministry of Education, 2006).

The course books prepared in accord with the new TEC consist of the course book where the texts are available, the work book for activities and the teacher’s guide book as a helper. The primary concern of this paper is to determine how much the basic skills” in the program are reflected in the course books.

1.1. Aim of the Study

The aim of the study is to determine how much such skills as correct and efficient use of Turkish, critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, problem-solving, researching, decision-making, use of information technology and assertiveness, which students should learn till the end of year in a horizontal way and till the end of the 8-year period in a vertical way, are reflected in the activities of the course books prepared in accord with the program as stated in TEC (2006, p. 5), to compare the books in terms of aforesaid skills and to make some suggestions as a result of the findings.

2. Method

2.1. The Population of the Study

Population of the study is composed of 7th Grade Turkish Books agreed upon by the Council of Education of Ministry of Education in the Notification Journal (2008, p. 212) This set contains 6 course books (course book, work book and teacher’s book) in total prepared by different publishers.

2.2. Sampling

The sampling consists of two books chosen by random sampling method out of 7th Grade Turkish Books. One was chosen from the population of private publishers and the other from that of Ministry of Education’s Press. The book by private publishers was chosen through random sampling. The books are 7th Grade Turkish Book by Ministry of Education’s Press (Ministry of Education Turkish 7) and 7th Grade Turkish Book by Pasifik Publishing (Pasifik Turkish 7). Evaluated activities were obtained from the work books of the sets by the aforesaid publishers.

2.3. Assumptions and Limitations

It is assumed that the sampling represents the population of the study and the books chosen for the study possess the same properties as the other 7th Grade Turkish Books. The study was limited to the 7th Grade Turkish Books of the secondary level of the primary education.

2.4. Methodology of the Study

Out of descriptive research methods, document survey method was chosen for the study. The activities in two course books in the sampling group were reviewed and were compared in terms of the number of the activities, the number of the activities related with the basic skills in the TEC, distribution of these activities according to the subjects and books in the sampling. Document survey method requires the analysis of informative materials concerning the research subject(s) (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2006, p. 187). This will be the way to analyze the data.

3. Findings and Discussions

3.1. Findings and Discussions Concerning Subjects and Texts in the Course Books

Distribution of the activities in the Ministry of Education Turkish 7 according to subjects and texts is given Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of the activities according to subjects in Ministry of Education Turkish 7

Subjects	Number of Activities	theNumber of the Texts	Average Activities
Communication	35	4	8.75
Kemalism	48	5	9.6
Concepts and Association	34	4	8.5
National Culture	39	4	9.75
Nature and Universal	35	4	8.75
Social Life	42	4	10.5
TOTAL	233	25	9,32

As seen from Table 1, Ministry of Education Turkish 7 covers 6 subjects including Communication, Kemalism, Concepts and Association, National Culture, Nature and Universe and Social Life. There are 4 texts about all the subjects other than Kemalism, only which covers 5 texts, 25 texts in total. There are 233 activities, 48 for Kemalism, 42 for Social life, 39 for National Culture, 35 for Communication, 35 for Nature and Universe and 34 for Concepts and Associations.

Distribution of the activities in the Pasifik Turkish 7 according to subjects and texts is given in Table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of the activities according to subjects in Pasifik Turkish 7

Subjects	Activities	Texts	Average Activities
Rights and Freedoms	40	4	10
Kemalism	27	4	6.75
Nature and Universe	34	4	8.5
Emotions and Dreams	34	4	8.5
Habits	37	4	9.25
National Culture	39	4	9,75
TOTAL	211	24	8,79

As seen in Table 2, there are Rights and Freedoms, Kemalism, Nature and Universe, Emotions and Dreams, Habits and National Culture in Pasifik Turkish 7. There are 24 texts in the book, 4 texts per each subject, and activities for every subject. There are 211 activities; 40 activities for Rights and Freedoms, 39 for National Culture, 37 for Habits, 34 for Nature and Universe, 34 for Emotions and Dreams, 27 for Kemalism. When compared in terms of activities they include, Ministry of Education Turkish 7 and Pasifik Turkish 7 are drastically different from each other, but it can be realized that distribution of activities to the subjects in Ministry of Education Turkish 7 is more

proportional because while the number of the activities is 40 for Rights and Freedoms, it is 27 for Kemalism in Pasifik Turkish 7.

3.2. Findings and Discussions Concerning Activities and Basic Skills in the Course Books

While Ministry of Education Turkish 7 includes basic skills repeated for 604 times in 233 activities, the repetition is 620 in 211 activities of Pasifik Turkish 7. In this section of the study, percentages were calculated and if an activity dealt with more than one basic skill, another calculation was made for every individual basic skill in that particular activity, but while the percentages were calculated, the number of the activities was taken into account.

Table 3: Basic Skills in Ministry of Education Turkish 7

Subjects	Basic Skills Correct and efficient use of Turkish	Critical Thinking	Creative Thinking	Communi- cation	Problem- Solving	Research- ing	Decision- making	Use of Informati- on Technolo- gy	Assertive- ness
Communication	26	11	27	2	14	3	14	0	0
Kemalism	37	18	33	1	18	2	17	1	0
Concepts and Associations	27	14	27	0	17	3	15	0	0
National Culture	27	10	27	1	11	7	8	0	0
Nature and Universe	27	13	20	0	9	3	13	0	0
Social Life	34	12	30	0	10	3	12	0	0
TOTAL	178	78	164	4	79	21	79	1	0
Percentages	76,39	33,47	70,38	1,71	33,9	9,01	33,9	0,42	0,0

When findings concerning the basic skills placed in Ministry of Education Turkish 7 in Table 3 are examined, such data related to 233 activities in the book can be obtained; There are 178 (76,39%) activities for correct and efficient use of Turkish, 164 (70,38%) for creative thinking, 79 (33,80%) for problem-solving, 79 (33,80%) for decision-making, 78 (33,47%) for critical thinking, 21 (9,01%) for researching, 4 (1,71%) for communication, 1 (0,42%) for use of information technology and no activities for assertiveness.

Table 4: Basic Skills in Pasifik Turkish 7

Subjects	Basic Skills Correct and Efficient use of Turkish	Critical Thinking	Creative Thinking	Communi- cation	Problem- Solving	Research- ing	Decision- Making	Technolo- gy Use of Informati- on	Assertive- ness
Rights and Freedoms	30	19	21	6	9	3	17	1	6
Kemalism	22	15	13	5	9	5	11	0	5
Nature and Information	26	14	17	6	8	9	12	2	6
Emotions and Dreams	28	14	19	5	8	3	13	1	5
Habits	24	15	26	5	8	4	17	1	5
National Culture	31	17	29	7	10	5	15	0	8
TOTAL	161	94	125	34	52	29	85	5	35
Percentages	76,3	44,5	59,2	16	24,6	13	40	2,3	16,5

When Table 4 concerning the basic skills in Pasifik Turkish 7 is examined, it can be realized that there are 161 (76,30%) activities for correct and efficient use of Turkish, 125 (59,24%) for creative thinking, 94 (44,54%) for critical thinking, 85 (40,28%) for decision-making, 52 (24,64%) for problem-solving, 35 (16,58%) for assertiveness, 34 (16,11) for communication, 29 (13,74%) for researching and 5 (2,36%) for use of information technologies.

While the percentage for the activities related with the correct and efficient use of Turkish is 178 (76,39%) for Ministry of Education Turkish 7, it is 161 (76,30%) for Pasifik Turkish 7.

There are 164 (70,38%) activities for creative thinking in Ministry of Education Turkish 7, whereas there are 125 (59,24%) in Pasifik Turkish 7.

There are 78 (33,47%) activities for critical thinking in Ministry of Education Turkish 7; on the other

hand, there are 94 (44,54%) in Pasifik Turkish 7. It has been realized that activities dealing with critical thinking skill are more in Pasifik Turkish 7.

85 (40,28%) activities concerning decision-making skill were found in Pasifik Turkish 7. The number is 79 (33,90%) for Ministry of Education Turkish 7.

Although 79 (33,90%) activities are available for problem-solving in Ministry of Education Turkish 7, the number of the activities in Pasifik Turkish 7 is 52 (24,62%).

There are 34 (16,11%) activities for communication skill in Pasifik Turkish 7. On the other side, the number is 4 (1,71%) in Ministry of Education Turkish 7.

The number of the activities for researching skill was counted to be 29 (13,74%) in Pasifik Turkish 7, whereas it was 21 (9,01%) in Ministry of Education Turkish 7.

While there are 35 (16,58%) activities for assertiveness in Pasifik Turkish 7, there are none in Ministry of Education Turkish 7.

Use of information technology, only present in 6 (1,35%) of the overall 444 activities, were counted to be 5 (2,36%) in Pasifik Turkish 7, while Ministry of Education Turkish 7 has only one (0,42%) of them.

4. Conclusion and Discussions

In the study, the frequency and percentages of the basic skills (available in the TEC) in the activities of Ministry of Education Turkish 7 and Pasifik Turkish 7, and following conclusion and suggestions were projected from these data. The new TEC brought with itself a task-based approach in Turkish lessons. Through the activities, students can understand and internalize what they read and listen. Both the overall and specific aims of the course are achieved by the activities. The reason why the program is task-based is the rationale by which the TEC was prepared. Basic skills in the TEC (2006, p. 5) are complementary and consistent. Therefore, no basic skill is more important than the other because these basic skills are what man of the 21st century has to possess.

Thus, it is mandatory that all the skills the TEC expected and aimed at should be evenly distributed in the activities. After Özatalay (2007) states in the study that course books are the most frequently used material in education, he also remarks that the aims and skills in the program should be represented over 50%.

Ministry of Education Turkish 7 spared 178 (76,39%) activities for correct and efficient use of Turkish and Pasifik Turkish 7, whereas there are 161 (76,30) activities in Pasifik 7. As is seen, when they are compared, the percentages are very close and the books spared the largest place for this skill. Given the fact that Turkish lesson's main focal point is language and the Turkish lesson is a skill course, it can be considered that such high percentages are normal. All the publishers attach equal attention to this skill.

While the number of the activities for creative thinking is 164 (70,38%) in Ministry of Education Turkish 7, this number is 125 (59,24%) in Pasifik Turkish 7. It can be expressed by inferring from the numbers that the creative thinking is the second most significant skill in the books.

When we considered the cognitive development of a student and the importance of creativity which enable them to create original ideas by freeing them from emotional and intellectual boundaries (Seferoğlu, 2006), it was thought that the number of the activities is adequate in both books. But it is clear that Ministry of Education Turkish 7 spares more place than Pasifik Turkish 7 does.

As for the numbers of the activities requiring critical thinking skills, it is 94 (44,54%) for Pasifik Turkish 7 and 78 (33,47%) for Ministry of Education Turkish 7. Critical thinking has gained importance over the last century as the active stimuli over the individual have increased (Aybek, 2007). Because students are intensely exposed to the messages sent by such mass communication devices as internet and television, it is thought that 50% ratio for this skill will be healthy as it is for the others.

When results concerning decision-making skill in the activities of Ministry of Education Turkish 7 and Pasifik Turkish 7 are compared, it is obvious that the number is 79 (33,90%) for Ministry of Education Turkish 7, whereas it is 85 (40,28%) for Pasifik Turkish 7. There are more activities dealing with this particular skill in Pasifik Turkish 7 than in Ministry of Education Turkish 7. Considering the developmental characteristics of the age group, it is crucial for them to improve this skill as they get to step into the decision-making stage (Gömleksiz, 2007). It is thought that more

activities dealing with this skill should be placed in the books for this stage of primary school.

If the percentages related with the problem-solving skill in the activities are reviewed, it can be realized that the number of this skill is 79 (33,90%) for Ministry of Education Turkish 7 and 52 (24,64%) for Pasifik Turkish 7. The percentage of the skill, helpful in solving the problems faced both in academic and social life, is approximately 10% higher in Ministry of Education Turkish 7 than in Pasifik Turkish 7. Given the fact that the ultimate aim of education is to get the students ready for real life and they will frequently face social and personal problems, it was concluded that the activities in the books are not enough to improve this skill.

The number of the activities to improve researching skill is 21 (9,01%) for Ministry of Education Turkish 7 and 29 (13,74%) for Pasifik Turkish 7. It was found out that the amounts of the activities are inadequate and therefore they have to be increased because this skill plays a remarkable role in educating individuals who researches, questions, restructures the knowledge and who are active in the educational medium.

As to the data about the communication skill, there are 4 (1,71%) related activities in Ministry of Education Turkish 7 and 34 (16,11%) in Pasifik Turkish 7. The number of the activities about the communication skill is almost non-existent in Ministry of Education Turkish 7. Although there are 34 activities in Pasifik Turkish 7, the number is not at a desirable level. Hence, the student learns about the subtleties of her/his native language which is the most important medium to interact with the rest of the society and uses these subtleties to communicate with the society.

When data concerning assertiveness skill are reviewed, it can be realized that there are no activities in Ministry of Education Turkish 7. The aim in the Turkish course, in which the student learns the ways to express her/himself effectively, is to educate assertive students with self-confidence, who contributes to the social flow. Even though TEC (2006) lists assertiveness as one of the 9 basic skills, it is surprising that there are no activities in its own book. On the other hand, Pasifik Turkish 7 contains 35 (16,58%) related activities. It is considered that even this number is not sufficient to develop this skill horizontally till the end of the year and vertically till the end of the 8-year period.

It was observed that the use of information technologies has the lowest percentage with 1,35. While only one activity is associated with this skill in Ministry of Education Turkish 7, Pasifik Turkish 7 includes 5 (2,36%) activities. Because there are learning and teaching media highly dependent on information technologies like computer and internet and the students are very familiar with them, students' making the best of them is an inevitable necessity (Aktümen, 2003). Felten (2008) emphasizes in Visual Literacy that the 21st century is experiencing an upheaval of technology, and educational systems must keep up with it. Therefore, it is impossible to mistake the inadequacy of the activities to improve this skill for negligence.

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