

Visual Representation of Sports Activities in Secondary School English and Turkish Coursebooks¹

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Abstract

Along with language teaching purposes, coursebooks also convey different kinds of cultural and social messages through both written texts and visualization. Therefore, studying coursebooks in terms of such qualities is necessary in foreign language education. In the learning process, visualization plays a pivotal role since visuals cater for concrete sensory stimuli and thus is an indispensable part in all coursebooks. The aim of this study is to comparatively investigate how sports, including recreational activities, are portrayed in secondary school English and Turkish coursebooks prepared according to the new education system in relation to such variables as which sports are particularly shown, and sex of persons doing sports and/or recreational activities. A total number of eight coursebooks (four English and four Turkish) are studied and the findings are also compared with similar studies. The results showed the problems associated with these coursebooks.

Key Words: secondary school, English coursebooks, Turkish coursebooks, visual representation, sports

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1. Introduction

Recreation is defined as social, cultural and sportive activities that individuals willingly and enjoyably take part in so as to get rid of the monotony of daily life (Bucher, 1972). This term, however, is too broad and almost each kind of activity such as playing cards or hanging out with friends can be regarded as recreation. In this study the term recreation refers to the activities that require or involve physical activity as it is also argued that recreation mainly consists of sports and non-competitive physical activities with leisure purposes (Zorba, 2002; Zorba, 2011). English and Turkish coursebooks are appropriate for leaving room for sports and recreational activities because the nature of these courses is inclined to involve social, cultural and life-like situations compared to other courses. Research on coursebooks carried out in the last decade has revealed that sports are one of the most popular and preferred topics apparent in English language coursebooks (Kırmızı, 2007; Öztürk, 2007; Arıkan, 2008).

Richards (2005) states that coursebooks are a key instrument and are still regarded as the most significant instructional materials. Similarly, they are also considered as sources of knowledge on different kinds of phenomena (Arıkan, 2008). Therefore, topics of coursebooks play a vital role as they need to be pedagogical and attractive. Cunningsworth (1995) claims that one of the functions of coursebooks is directly or indirectly to convey cultural and social values, which is called the hidden curriculum and defined as “the unstated the norms, values, and beliefs that are transmitted to students” (Giroux, 1988; p.23) through all aspects of school life. Besides, local or regional coursebooks are characterized by inclusion of local content and familiar settings as their works are supervised and approved by the authorities (Skliar, 2007; Bacha & others, 2008). Thus, coursebook writers in Turkey intentionally or unintentionally convey their cultural, social and ideological assumptions in the content they prepare.

In addition to instructional and value-based functions, coursebooks also include meaningful visuals that are fundamental to the learning process as they promote concrete sensory stimuli and precise contextualization (Croft & Burton, 1994). Zorba and Arıkan (2012) studied English coursebooks (6th, 7th, and 8th grades) taught at secondary schools. Their findings revealed that reading texts and sample sentences representing sports are not accompanied with visual materials except for a few cases, and thus visuals used in these coursebooks are not strong enough to support language learning process.

Language not only reflects but creates social structures and political ideologies as well; coursebooks are the media for transmitting the cultural heritage including the values, and political ideologies (Wharton, 2005). Although ostensibly pedagogical, the coursebooks of the Ministry of National Education (hereafter MONE) reflects the current ideologies and therefore what is inherent in them directly affects how students construct their actions and perspectives (Söylemez, 2010) in a way to shape learners' schemata.

In relation to this concise review of the literature, the aim of this study is to comparatively investigate how sports and recreational activities are represented in secondary school English and Turkish coursebooks prepared according to the new education system. It is hypothesized that by focusing on how sports and recreational activities are represented in coursebooks, values about sports can be identified and suggestions about how education works in shaping beliefs about sports and recreational activities can be provided. The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

1. How many different sports are visually represented in English and Turkish coursebooks?
2. How frequently are sports represented in these coursebooks?

3. How is sex treated in coursebooks in relation to the persons doing sports in these coursebooks?

2. Method

To find answers to the research question cited above, document analysis method was employed to seek answers to the research questions set. Gay and others (2009) state that qualitative research intends to collect descriptive, narrative and visual non-numerical data to gain insights about a phenomenon. It tries to explain a phenomenon by means of analyzing such documents as books, articles, reports, plans, policy documents and journals (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

A total amount of eight coursebooks (four English and four Turkish), each from the 5th, the 6th, the 7th and the 8th grades were studied. Visuals in the coursebooks were studied thematically by focusing on the sports and recreational activities, and the sex of the persons doing sports and/or recreational activities. The visuals that include both female and male doers were coded as Together and those that do not include any persons were coded as ND (No Doer). A total amount of 117 visuals were analyzed by three raters, and then visuals in the coursebooks were analyzed and identified independently by two of the researchers. Except for a few cases, most of the visuals are clear and understandable, thus interrater reliability was measured and the raters' agreement was around 95%. The third rater is an expert on language coursebooks. Hence he had the final word on the remaining 5%. All visuals related to sports and recreational activities in the studied coursebooks are represented in frequency tables. In the thematic analysis, the focus was on which sports are disregarded and which ones come to the fore. Unlike the study that Zorba and Arıkan (2012) carried out, only visual representations in the coursebooks are studied and the workbooks are not taken into consideration due to the time limitation.

3. Findings

English Language Coursebooks

There are totally 29 different sport branches and recreational activities visually represented in all of the four English coursebooks which means that at the end of the four-year secondary school education student will have at least 29 different equivalent sports and recreational activities in their schemata.

Table 1 shows the leading sports and/or recreational activities when all the English coursebooks are taken into consideration. As can be seen the total percentages of the seven sport branches are more than half of the total sport branches visually represented in all of the four coursebooks studied. When compared with the results of the previous study carried out by Zorba and Arıkan (2012), it can be seen that new English coursebooks include more sport branches and recreational activities than the previous ones, which totally involve 20 different sports although written text and visuals are studied together in the former. Therefore, it can be inferred that there are more than 29 sport branches in these coursebooks. In addition, the visuals used in the new English coursebooks are not used for decorative purposes; instead they are intentionally used to support the context and text. However, Zorba and Arıkan (2012) state that there were visuals in the former English coursebooks that are just used for decoration.

Table 1. Overall Sports and Recreational Activities in English Coursebooks (5, 6, 7 and 8)

Sport Branches	<i>f</i>	%
Cycling	15	14.28
Football	13	12.38
Doing exercises	10	9.52
Basketball	7	6.66
Swimming	7	6.66
Jogging	6	5.71
Skiing	6	5.71
TOTAL	64/105	60.92/100

Table 2 reveals that the 5th grade English coursebook includes 21 different sport branches. Football (15.78%) is the leading sport followed by doing exercises (13.15%) and jogging (10.52%). Cycling (7.89%) and swimming (7.89%) are followed by skipping rope (5.26%) although it is not a branch of sport, but a recreational activity. Therefore, among the recreational activities skipping rope is the leading one. It is surprising that basketball (2.63%), tennis (2.63%), volleyball (2.63%) are some of the least represented sport branches in the 5th grade English coursebook with the same percentage although they are among the most popular sports not only in Turkey but also in Europe.

Table 2. Sports and Recreational Activities in the 5th Grade English Coursebook

Sport Branches	<i>f</i>	%
Football	6	15.78
Doing exercises	5	13.15
Jogging	4	10.52
Cycling	3	7.89
Swimming	3	7.89
Skipping rope	2	5.26
Baseball	1	2.63
Basketball	1	2.63
Dodge ball	1	2.63
Golf	1	2.63
Handball	1	2.63
Hide and seek	1	2.63
Hopscotch	1	2.63
Horse riding	1	2.63
Hula hoop	1	2.63
Skating	1	2.63
Tennis	1	2.63
Trekking	1	2.63
Volleyball	1	2.63
Weightlifting	1	2.63
Yoga	1	2.63
TOTAL	38	99.94

Table 3 reveals that the 6th grade English coursebook includes 21 different sport branches. Cycling (20%) is the leading sport the reason of which might be that it is not only a sport branch but it is also regarded as a kind recreational activity. Similarly, it can be considered as a preferred and enjoyable activity especially for the target age group. Basketball (8.88%) and skiing (8.88%) are followed by football (6.66%) and the blind man’s buff (5.26%) follows them. Table 3 also reveals that popular and well-known sports such as volleyball (4.44%), swimming (4.44%) and tennis (2.22%) are among the least represented sports. Although it is among the least represented ones, one foot high kick is visually represented in the coursebook, which is surprising because it is not a well-known sport branch.

Table 3. Sports & Recreational Activities in the 6th Grade English Coursebook

Sport Branches	<i>f</i>	%
Cycling	9	20
Basketball	4	8.88
Skiing	4	8.88
Football	3	6.66
Blind man’s buff	2	4.44
Doing exercises	2	4.44
Hopscotch	2	4.44
Horse riding	2	4.44
Jogging	2	4.44
Skipping rope	2	4.44
Volleyball	2	4.44
Swimming	2	4.44
Hide and seek	1	2.22
One foot high kick	1	2.22
Skateboarding	1	2.22
Skating	1	2.22
Table tennis	1	2.22
Tennis	1	2.22
Trekking	1	2.22
Weightlifting	1	2.22
Yoga	1	2.22
TOTAL	45	99.92

Table 4 reveals that the 7th grade English coursebook includes 9 different sport branches. Cycling (21.42%) is the leading sport followed by football (14.28%), swimming (14.28%) and tennis (14.28%). Basketball (7.14%), camping (7.14%), doing exercises (7.14%), ice-skating (7.14%), and skiing (7.14%) are the least represented ones in the coursebook. When compared with the 7th grade English coursebook, there is a great reduction in range and

frequency of visual representation of sport and recreational activities. Besides, there are some sports in the 7th grade English coursebook such as windsurfing, canoeing and karate that are not visually supported. This might be resulted from the topics, themes and contexts aimed to be taught in the coursebook or the age group of students.

Table 4. Sports and Recreational Activities in the 7th Grade English Coursebook

Sport Branches	<i>f</i>	%
Cycling	3	21.42
Football	2	14.28
Swimming	2	14.28
Tennis	2	14.28
Basketball	1	7.14
Camping	1	7.14
Doing exercises	1	7.14
Ice-skating	1	7.14
Skiing	1	7.14
TOTAL	14	99.96

Table 5 reveals that the 8th grade English coursebook includes five different sport branches and recreational activities. It is obvious that, like in the 7th grade English coursebook, there is a sharp decrease in range and frequency of visual representation of sport and recreational activities in this one as well due to the topics and themes. The reason for that the total number of visual materials used in this coursebook is less than the 5th, the 6th and the 7th grades' coursebooks. Zorba and Arıkan (2012) similarly found that the 6th grade English coursebooks include more sport branches than the 7th grade coursebooks whereas the 7th grade English coursebooks include more sport branches than the 8th grade English coursebooks.

Table 5. Sports and Recreational Activities in the 8th Grade English Coursebook

Sport Branches	<i>f</i>	%
Football	2	25
Doing exercises	2	25
Rafting	2	25
Basketball	1	12.5
Skiing	1	12.5
TOTAL	8	100

Turkish Language Coursebooks

There are totally 12 different sport branches and recreational activities visually represented in all the four Turkish coursebooks. Considering the themes and topics of the all coursebooks, this is not a satisfactory number because the themes and topics in the Turkish coursebooks and the nature of Turkish language as course content are suitable enough to involve sports and recreational activities. As mentioned above, sports and recreational activities are one of the most preferred and important topics that attract students' attentions.

Table 6 shows the leading sports and/or recreational activities when all the Turkish coursebooks are taken into consideration. As can be seen the total percentages of the two sport branches are less than half of the total sport branches visually represented in all of the four coursebooks studied. Besides, most of the visuals relating to sports and recreational activities are used for decoration. When compared with the results of the four English coursebooks, it is hard to say that Turkish coursebooks are at a satisfactory level in terms of representation of sports and recreational activities.

Table 6. Overall Sports and Recreational Activities in Turkish Coursebooks (5, 6, 7 and 8)

Sport Branches	<i>f</i>	%
Football	3	25
Basketball	2	16.66
TOTAL	5/12	41.66/100

Table 7 reveals that the 5th grade Turkish coursebook includes only five different sport branches and no recreational activities. Besides, these branches are only represented for once in the coursebook. It is surprising that oil wrestling, considered as one of the important Turkish national sports, is represented in the coursebook. However, it is not supported with written text and just used for decoration.

Table 7. Sports and Recreational Activities in the 5th Grade Turkish Coursebook

Sport Branches	<i>f</i>	%
Horse riding	1	25
Basketball	1	25
Jogging	1	25
Oil wrestling	1	25
Total	4	100

Table 8 very shows that basketball is the only sport branch and is visually represented for decorative purposes just for once in the 6th grade Turkish coursebook. This means that the visual of basketball is not supported with written text. This might have been stemmed from the themes obliged by the MONE in the 6th grade Turkish curriculum. These themes are love, personal development, Atatürk, fine arts, emotions, and nature and universe. However, it should also be noted that students can connect the themes such as love, personal development and emotions with sports and recreational activities which can also help contextualizing the structures and the lexis in a meaningful manner.

Table 8. Sports and Recreational Activities in the 6th Grade Turkish Coursebook

Sport Branches	<i>f</i>	%
Basketball	1	100
Total	1	100

Table 9 reveals that football is the only sport branch and is visually represented as a decorative figure just for once in the 7th grade Turkish coursebook. In addition, it is also surprising that there is not any recreational activity visually represented in the coursebook. Although some of the themes in the coursebook such as habits, and national culture are suitable enough to include sports and recreational activities, the coursebook does not leave room for them. Yet, sport habits and our sports activities in the Ottoman Empire such as oil wrestling, the javelin, horse-riding, and archery could have been included in the coursebook.

Table 9. Sports and Recreational Activities in the 7th Grade Turkish Coursebook

Sport Branches	<i>f</i>	%
Football	2	100
Total		100

Table 10 reveals that the 8th grade Turkish coursebook includes four different sport branches and recreational activities. Compared with the other two Turkish coursebooks, it is seen that there is a sharp increase in visual representation of sports though not sufficient enough. However, the visuals does not support the written text and context but are used for decorative purposes.

Table 10. Sports and Recreational Activities in the 8th Grade Turkish Coursebook

Sport Branches	<i>f</i>	%
Skipping rope	2	40
Football	1	20
Hide and seek	1	20
Cricket	1	20
TOTAL	5	100

Sex of Persons Doing Sports and/or Recreational Activities

The visual representations of sports and recreational activities are also studied in terms of the sex of the persons doing the sports. Visuals are categorized as female doing sport, male doing sport, and together. Besides, there are also some visuals in which no one is portrayed while doing sport. Table 11 shows the overall results relating to sex of persons doing sports in all the four English coursebooks. It can be seen that in the all English coursebooks males are mostly represented while doing sports whereas in the 7th grade English coursebook females are represented only for once while doing sport and are not represented in the 8th grade English coursebook. Females are mostly represented while riding a horse, skipping rope, playing volleyball, and jogging whereas males are represented almost all of the sports and activities.

Table 11. Sex of Persons Doing Sports and Recreational Activities in English Coursebooks

	5th Gr.	5th Gr.	6th Gr.	6th Gr.	7th Gr.	7th Gr.	8th Gr.	8th Gr.
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Female	12	31.57	13	28.88	1	7.14	0	0
Male	18	47.36	20	44.44	6	42.85	5	62.5
Together	8	21.05	10	22.22	0	0	0	0
No doer	0	0	2	4.44	7	50	3	37.5
TOTAL	38	100	45	100	14	100	8	100

Table 12 shows the overall results relating to sex doing sports in all the four Turkish coursebooks. It can be seen that in the 5th, the 6th and the 7th grade Turkish coursebooks females are disregarded and are not represented while doing sports. However, in the 8th grade Turkish coursebook females are mostly portrayed while doing sports with males.

Table 12. Sex of Persons Doing Sports and Recreational Activities in Turkish Coursebooks

	5 th Gr. <i>f</i>	5 th Gr. %	6 th Gr. <i>f</i>	6 th Gr. %	7 th Gr. <i>f</i>	7 th Gr. %	8 th Gr. <i>f</i>	8 th Gr. %
Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	20
Male	4	100	1	100	2	100	0	0
Together	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	80
No doer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	4	100	1	100	2	100	5	100

4. Discussion

In general, visuals representing sports and recreational activities in the studied English coursebooks are varied and frequently used whereas in the studied Turkish coursebooks the range and frequency of sports and recreational activities are comparatively low in number. In addition, visuals in the English coursebooks are used as aids with an attempt to represent the image of the action described in the teaching of some certain verbs or grammar structures whereas in the Turkish coursebooks they are mostly used for decoration. Yet, it should be noted that visual aids help students understand the meaning of words and context (Linse, 2005). English coursebooks leave no room for visuals representing Turkish national sports such as archery and the javelin although they include suitable themes and topics similar to the findings by Zorba and Arıkan (2012).

In the 5th grade Turkish coursebook, oil wrestling is visually represented, yet no description is provided about the sport and the visual is just used for decoration. Scholars have already accepted that primary and secondary schools students are known to go from concrete to abstract and from known to unknown. Therefore, when the importance of students' current knowledge of the world around them is considered, disregarding national and well known topics or activities in secondary school Turkish coursebooks seems to be a problem. On the other hand, the Turkish coursebooks provide extremely limited range and frequency in terms of visual representation of sports. The similar situation is also seen in the 7th and the 8th grades English coursebooks, yet the 5th and the 6th grade coursebooks provide sufficient visuals of sport and recreational activities.

As for the sex of the persons doing sports in the studied English and Turkish coursebooks, it is seen that in the Turkish coursebooks females are highly neglected and sports are associated to males. In the 8th Turkish coursebook females are mostly portrayed while doing sport with males. In the 7th and the 8th grade English coursebooks, on the other hand, females remain considerably in the background. Besides, none of the coursebooks include famous female sport figure while leaving room for male sport figures such as Messi, Arda Turan and some NBA players. Furthermore, in the English coursebooks females are represented doing some specific sports and recreational activities such as horse-riding, skipping rope, hopscotch and playing volleyball whereas males are represented doing majority of the sports. However, it is generally accepted that children learn about sex roles through coursebooks (Wharton, 2005). Therefore, it can be inferred that children are likely to associate these sports and recreational activities with females. Cunningsworth (1995) claims that coursebooks writers should take sexism seriously and detain from representing negative

stereotypes and these parameters should definitely be taken into account while evaluating coursebooks.

Recreation and sports play a prominent role in our health and well-being (Zorba, 2011). However, in all of the four Turkish coursebooks studied, sport branches and recreational activities are not associated with health and well-being except for some units of the English coursebooks in which the relationship between health and doing sports is specifically established. Therefore, it can be inferred that the hidden curriculum of the English coursebooks promotes doing sports, physical activities and their benefits for health. Except for a limited number of cases, none of the eight coursebooks make any emphasis on the Olympic Games although the MONE is a part of the teaching Olympic values project one of whose main aims is to integrate those values into various courses such as history, geography and language (IOC, 2007). Lastly, it can be inferred that the Turkish coursebooks do not promote sports and recreational activities and do not regard them as sex-free activities.

5. Implications

Education shapes our beliefs and assumptions because we spend most of our time at schools and in classrooms until we complete compulsory education process. Coursebooks are undoubtedly the most important instruments in this process, and have versatile functions from teaching the subjects and topics in the written curriculum to teaching social norms, beliefs, assumptions through the hidden curriculum. Sports and recreational activities are vehicles for health and well-being and they should refrain from being sexist in nature. Therefore, they should be taught and promoted throughout compulsory education without limiting these concepts only to physical education courses. To do so, they should be included in and supported by the hidden curriculum and coursebooks of such courses as English and Turkish since their natures involve social, cultural and life-like elements.

Coursebooks Studied

- Alacalı, O. (2013). *İlköğretim Türkçe ders kitabı 5*. Ankara: Ada Yayıncılık.
- Birincioğlu, E. (2010). *Unique 6: Student's book*. Ankara: Atlantik Yayınları.
- Ceyhan, N. G., & Özmen, P. (2013). *Ortaokul English 5 student's book*. Ankara: Yıldırım Yayınları.
- Durmaz, E. H. (2013). *Forward English 8: Student's Book*. Ankara: A Yayınları.
- İleri, E. (2013). *A step to English 7: Student's book*. Ankara: Bilge Türk Yayınları.
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