A Qualitative Analysis of Language Textbooks from Students' Perspectives

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Abstract
The aim of this study is to examine the Turkish language textbook in terms of students' perspectives in a holistic approach. The participants consisted of 25 fifth-grade students who were selected according to the maximum diversity sampling method. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with students by an interview form. During the semi-structured interviews, instead of focusing on specific characteristics of the textbook, both design-related and content-related characteristics of the Turkish language textbook are investigated holistically. An inductive approach with a content analysis method was used to analyze the data. According to the results obtained in the study, it was determined that students are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the textbook and how it affects their educational process. In the discussion section, the findings obtained from students' opinions about the language textbook and its reflections on their educational processes are discussed in detail in terms of the basic features found in a textbook.
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Textbooks are one of the most important tools for the promotion of effective teaching. They are defined as the basic written resource prepared for organizing and developing systems to teach a course, containing certain criteria (Valverde, et al., 2002). They have a major influence on teaching practice and seem a vital ingredient of successful learning. Because of this feature, they are intended as mediators between the educational goals of a specific curriculum and the instruction activities in classrooms. Research generally reached a consensus of two key aims of textbooks, such as assisting teachers in offering many systematical teaching process and giving students a chance to repeat and follow what they have learned (Cunningsworth, 1995; Graves, 2003; Gelfman, et al, 2004; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Valverde et al., 2002). This reality provided them a significant role in shaping teachers' and students' perspectives of school subjects (Ravitch, 2003).

Although the role of textbooks varies according to educators' perspectives, Gelfman, et al., (2004) suggested a basic outline for the intermediary role of the textbook as (a) to teach and encourage students to construct new knowledge, (b) to balance detail and precision of the information, (c) to provide students with active, creative, many-sided information (d) to create a consistent work schedule. Researchers strongly indicated that textbooks are not only a booklet with written texts but also an active participant in the educational processes of students (Harmer, 2007; McGrath, 2013) and have an impact directly on students' learning (Robitaille & Travers, 1992). In most classrooms, they are the basic educational tools acted as a bridge between teaching and learning.

They help and motivate students to learn (Mikk, 2000) and allow them to follow the course, repeat the topics and evaluate themselves in a productive manner (Ceyhan & Yiğit, 2005; Cunningsworth, 1995; Demirel & Kıroğlu, 2008; Graves, 2003; Kılıç & Seven 2011; Ur, 1996). In conjunction with is a key role in the classroom, textbooks also carry the responsibility for the role of a link between intended and implemented curriculum (Robitaille & Travers, 1992). This responsibility obliges them to have a certain quality in terms of value forming aspects, motivational elements, accessibility, illustrations etc. and they must encourage students for learning (O'Keeffe, 2013).

One of the courses where textbooks are used most intensively is language teaching (Tomlinson, 2011). When considering the teaching process of language courses in Turkey, it is stated that the most preferred resource by teachers is textbooks and teachers plan almost all of their teaching through them (Ceyhan & Yiğit, 2005; Yalınkılıç, 2010). However, it is frequently emphasized in the literature that because of providing the one-way flow of information, it is not enough to use textbooks as a single source/ material of Turkish language lessons (Aslan, 2016, 2017; Aslan & Doğu, 2015; Baş & İnan-Yıldız, 2015; Dilidüzgün, 2012; İşeri, 2010; Karadağ, 2013; Kolaç, 2009; Özbay, 2006; Sever, 2019). This situation is a serious matter of discussion in terms of Turkish language lessons in Turkey. Both the criticism of the lower literary quality of the books and day by day the fact that they have become an important material in the teaching process keeps the versatile analysis of Turkish language textbooks up-to-date. The presence of this problem constitutes the main rationale of the current research.

In this study, characteristics of language textbooks are addressed into two categories: design-related characteristics and content-related characteristics (Tosunoğlu, et al., 2001). Design-related characteristics include external structure elements of the book (such as cover, paper quality, binding quality, and page layout), which are about the durability of the book (Arı, 2010). Also, visuals on the cover and inside the book are related to design features that should be interesting for students and support the content (Aslan, 2010; Çalık, 2001; İşeri,

2010; Sever, 2013; Tosunoğlu, et al., 2001). At this point, regarding design-related characteristics, it will be important to refer to the visuals in the textbooks. Research indicates that visuals have the largest share among design features and that effective use of them is especially important in terms of concretizing the subject to be addressed in the course and increasing its comprehensibility and permanence by students (Ametller & Pinto, 2002; Aslan, 2010, 2016; Hill, 1990, 2003; Romney & Bell, 2012; Sever, 2015; Tomlinson, 2005; Wright & Haleem, 1991). On the other hand, content-related characteristics refer to texts, questions, and activities covered in the book. Given that one of the major goals of language education is to improve students' linguistic skills, the quality of texts, questions, and activities in textbooks is very critical. In other words, content features should meet the needs of students, be proper for their developmental characteristics, and improve students' linguistic and cognitive skills in terms of language, expressions, and content (Aslan, 2017; Sever, 2019).

Considering the features presented above, since the textbook is an important element of language teaching lessons, evaluating its suitability and effectiveness is a priority (McGrath, 2013). Although many checklists that can be used in the evaluation process of textbooks have been developed, it has been stated that examining students' views can be an important source in terms of accessing data from the primary user in and out of the classroom (Hedge, 2003; Tomlinson, 2005). In this context, it is important to examine the perceptions of the students towards textbooks. Due to this importance, both the changes in educational approaches in the world and the differentiation of student needs accordingly make it necessary to make up-to-date studies on how textbooks perceive by students' perspectives. Also, given that students' perceptions towards the language courses are significantly affected by the textbooks used in the teaching process, the quality of the textbooks becomes more important in the process of improving children's attitudes towards reading, their reading habits, and in the process of bringing their reading comprehension to the desired levels that affect their academic performance in all other fields. In line with this importance, it is clear that the initial step can be examining whether the Turkish

language lesson textbook meets the student's needs. Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the Turkish language textbook in terms of students' perspectives in a holistic approach. In this study, instead of focusing on specific characteristics, both design-related and content-related characteristics of Turkish language textbooks are investigated. It is thought that the data gathered from this study may guide the authorities in developing effective textbooks that address the students' interests.

Method
Participants
Participants were chosen using maximum variation sampling which part of the purposive sampling technique. In maximum variation sampling, relatively fewer numbers of samples are used to capture a wide range of perspectives relating to the topic to be analyzed (Creswell, 2015; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). Therefore, the views were collected from students with distinct characteristics. The participants were students from three different socio-economic statuses - SES (lower, middle, and high). The goal was to develop suggestions, which are relevant for the students from each of these SES.

The determination process of the participants was based on three criteria; a) SES of the schools of students, b) the total income of parents, and c) the academic achievement level of students in Turkish course. This process was carried out as follows. Firstly, schools in different socioeconomic levels were determined. For this purpose, the principal and vice-principals were interviewed and they were asked what socio-economic level they are in when they consider the population of their school. The categorization of the schools was made based on both the views and general characteristics of the regions where schools are located - considering the regions where the schools are located. The characteristics of their population, it is thought that the schools where the study was carried out adequately reflected the SES differences that were tried to be controlled in the study. After the determination of the schools, the selection of students was started. Accordingly, information about students' family and their achievement in Turkish language courses was collected through guidance teachers at schools.

The category of high SES students included the students whose parents are university graduates, are employed and have a minimum income of 10.000 TL. The category of middle SES students included the students whose parents are high school graduates or university or two-year higher education graduates. They are employed and have a minimum income of 5.000 TL. The category of lower SES students included the students whose one of parents is employed and has a minimum income of 3.000 or less. To avoid negative or positive views about the textbooks, only students whose Turkish language course grades were at the class average participated in the study. After this procedure, the number of participants is 25 fifth-grade students who voluntarily involved in the sample. Considering the demographic characteristics of the participants, it was seen that 15 of them were females, 10 of them were males, and 10 of them came from the lower SES, 8 from the middle and 7 from the upper SES.

Data Collection
Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. All interviews were done in a quiet room assigned by school administrations at the schools where the students attended (empty classrooms, room of school principal, room of guidance teachers, etc.). All interviews were done individually by the author. Each interview generally lasted for twenty-five minutes. During the interviews, the participants were asked pre-determined items.

Development of Interview Form
The form used in interviews was developed following certain steps. First, the related studies were reviewed, focusing on the data collection tools employed and their findings. Based on this review, a pool of items was developed and a draft list was produced. Then the items in the list were categorized in terms of its' content and types. After this step, a draft interview form was created and sent to field experts to get expert opinions. In this step, this form was reviewed by a specialist in measurement and evaluation, three specialists in the field of Turkish language education, and three Turkish language teachers in terms of being proper for the aim of the study. Then, in line with the recommendations of the

experts, the form was finalized and made ready for the pilot study.

The interview form was used in a pilot study on a sample of three students who had similar characteristics to the study participants. The findings of the pilot study showed that some items in the form should be revised due to their hard-to-understand content and style for the fifth-grade students. For this reason, a linguistic simplification has been made in some questions, provided that the content remains the same.

As stated earlier, the items in the form did not focus on only one dimension of textbooks. Instead, the items are about nearly all characteristics of textbooks to have information about how students perceived them in a holistic manner. Thus, it would be possible to identify the major characteristics of the textbook from the students' perspective.

Characteristics of the Researcher

Given that all interviews were carried out by the author, she was an active participant in the research. She has been a research assistant and in a doctorate program in the field of Turkish language education. She has extensive working experience in this field. She published various articles, papers, and book chapters in the fields of both children's literature and Turkish language education. Also, She worked as a researcher in different projects on these subjects.

Environment

As mentioned above, all interviews were conducted in appropriate places within the students' schools (empty classrooms, room of school principal, room of guidance teachers, etc.). All rooms used for interviews had similar characteristics. The participants and the interviewer sat at table in a face-to-face manner and tape recorder was conveniently positioned on table during each interview.

Interviews

For the interviews to proceed by the purpose of the study, to monitor the topics that were planned to be addressed during the interviews in a certain order and to get in-depth information about these issues, an interview form was used by the author, and all interviews were carried out by following this form.

Before the interviews, certain procedures were carried out. First, necessary permissions were taken from the schools where interviews were conducted. The author met with the school administrators both to give information to them about the study and to obtain necessary permissions. In this process, nine different secondary schools, which were thought to have different characteristics in terms of socio-economic level, were contacted, but only four of them accepted the request. Then the author met with the school administrators of these schools to give information to them about the study and the interviews. The administrators of four schools stated that they were willing to participate in the study if the students had their parents' consent. Then, a pilot study was carried out in one of the selected schools and the main study was carried out in the other three.

The second step followed for conducting interviews was to invite the students and to ensure their participation voluntarily. In this process, firstly, the parents were asked for their children's participation by school administrators. Afterward, individual interviews were conducted with students whose families were approved to participate and inform them about the aims, coverage, and procedure of the study. They were also informed that the participation should be voluntary and that if they did not want to participate in the study, they might be excluded. After all, only those students who were volunteer to take part in the study were included in the sample.

The third stage was the interview process. As stated earlier, the day, time, and environment of the interviews were left directly to the school administrators and were arranged in a way that would not affect the education-training process of the students. The interviews were carried out first in the schools serving the students from high SES, then in the schools serving the students from middle SES, and finally in the schools serving the students from lower SES. Before starting the interview, the author first gave information to the students about herself and the study. Then, the participants were informed that they could give sincere and detailed answers to the questions during the interview process, that their answers would only be used within the study's scope, and that the name of the person or school would

not be included in the study. The interview process was initiated after the students were informed that the voice recorder would be used to avoid any data loss during the interview. Then, in the beginning, each student was asked to introduce himself first and a comforting environment was created. Next, each item in the interview form was asked to the participants orderly. In case of insufficient answers were given during the interviews, the researcher tried to expand their answers through extra items to obtain detailed information, paying attention to the fact that the additional items to be asked did not contain any guiding expressions. Also, if the answer to an item was the repetition of a previous statement, any other similar item was not asked the participants.

Reliability and Validity

It is known that qualitative and quantitative research have different terminology. In qualitative research, the frequent terms for the reliability and validity of the study are transferability, credibility, and consistency (Creswell, 2015; Merriam, 2013). Given that these terms are explained as follows:

Transferability. Transferability is related to the level of generalization of the findings to other situations (Merriam, 2013). It is stated that the most important way to ensure transferability is the use of purposive sampling techniques and detailed descriptions (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). Therefore, the research group in the study was determined using the maximum variation sampling, which is one of the purposive sampling types. Also, all procedures in the study were explained in detail. In this process, the purpose of choosing the participants and how they were interviewed were presented step by step. Then, the development of data collection tools, each step of the data collection process, the position of the researcher in this process, and finally, the information about the data analysis were all explained comprehensively.

Credibility. The concept of credibility is that the research findings obtained are related to reality in the world (Merriam, 2013). The diversification of the data sources, gaining expert reviews, and the participant consents, which are among the criteria used to increase the credibility of the study (Creswell, 2015; Merriam, 2013; Patton, 2014; Yıldırım &

Şimşek, 2018), were all employed in this study. First of all, the opinions of students who are active users of the Turkish language textbooks were consulted. In this context, it was ensured that students' perspectives were also taken into consideration. Therefore, the study was not limited to the teachers' views, whose opinions were frequently analyzed in the previous studies on textbooks. Also, to improve the credibility of the study, expert views were taken in every process of the study. The views of an expert were used in the development of the interview form, choosing the participants and developing the codes / sub-categories, categories and themes from the data obtained following the interviews. Lastly, regarding ensuring credibility, participants' consent was taken.

Consistency. In qualitative research, consistency is used instead of the concept of reliability in quantitative studies, and it refers to what extent the results obtained are consistent with the data obtained and what extent similar results can be reached if the same study is repeated (Merriam, 2013; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). In this context, an expert experienced in qualitative research supervised every stage of the research. Also, support was received from two field experts to ensure the reliability of the data obtained in the study. For instance, 20% of the data obtained from interviews were chosen randomly and reviewed by two Turkish language teachers. In this process, the field experts listened to the audio recordings, read the data transcripts, and then created their codes, themes, and sub-themes. The codes, themes, and sub-themes that the researchers and experts developed from the data were analyzed comparatively. In cases where consensus, no changes were made on the codes, themes, and sub-themes. However, in cases where mutual agreement could not be achieved, the texts were read again and a mutual agreement was reached & then, final arrangements made. Thus, following the data analysis, in writing findings section, the author's comments presented with direct quotations obtained from interviews and supported by the findings reported in similar studies. Therefore, internal comment & external comment criteria followed.

Ethical Considerations

In this study, which was conducted based on qualitative research methods, care was taken to comply with ethical rules. First of all, the necessary permissions were obtained from the Ministry of National Education to carry out the interviews at the schools. In the implementation process, the principle of volunteerism was prioritized during the determination of the participants. At the time of the interviews, the Informed Consent Form was first to read and the verbal confirmation of the participants was obtained to participate in the study. They were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. All interviews were conducted to carry out the study in a transparent manner, and the interviews were recorded with a voice recorder. In converting the audio recordings into written texts, all the statements by the participants were written as they were.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using an inductive approach with a content analysis method. Content analysis is a scientific approach that classifies the messages contained in verbal, written, and other materials objectively and systematically in terms of meaning, enabling inferences (Tavşancıl & Aslan, 2001). The data are classified based on codes, and themes and sub-themes are developed based on interrelations between categories (Patton, 2014).

The transcriptions of the interview data were developed with Microsoft Word. Each word produced by the participants and pauses, regardless of whether it was meaningful or not, were written down. The participants were coded as "S1, S2...". Then, the written data obtained were read by the author and then transformed into a single text to answer the items asked in the interview forms, and the data were analyzed. All the analyzed data are given with direct quotations with codes and discussed by the previous findings.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study are discussed two main themes obtained by analyzing students' views. While the first one is the strengths, the other is the weaknesses of the Turkish language textbook in terms of students' perspectives. Findings regarding both themes are presented with sample student responses below.

Strengths of Language Textbook

In this section, the views of the students about the strengths of the Turkish language textbook are presented in order based on the frequency of their opinions. When the findings are analyzed, it is pointed out that the majority of the students are glad to have visuals in the textbook. This finding indicates that the textbook attracts more attention because it is colorful and illustrated.

> S13: What I love is that it is colorful; it teaches us something. Looking at the pictures improves my dreaming without reading that text. I love this too, so I want pictures in the textbook.
> S15: I love that texts are illustrated and colorful.
> S19: I think it is a very good thing to have pictures in a textbook since we understand and perceive the topics well.

It is known that there are visuals accompanying the texts in the textbook due to the text-oriented structure of Turkish language lessons as the previous studies (Ametler & Pinto, 2002; Batur, 2010; Hill, 1990, 2003; Karadağ, 2013; Küçükaydın & İşcan, 2017; Romney & Bell, 2012; Sever, 2015; Tiemensma, 2009; Uzuner, et al., 2010; Wright & Haleem, 1991) visuals should support children's understanding of texts better and enable them to stimulate their creativity and imagination. It is emphasized that only visuals with such features can be effective in structuring topics. At the same time, it is known that the visuals used have a supportive role in attracting the attention of the students to text/topics in the course. Therefore, it is seen that the students' responses are in line with those stated by the field experts, and they are satisfied with the presence of visuals in the textbook and the presentation of the texts in color/picture format.

Secondly, it determined that the students consider Turkish language textbook a useful resource to study.

> S9: The textbook is very useful to us.
> S8: I love textbooks. Textbooks help us to study further; it is their favorite side for me.
> S10: I love textbooks and use them as a resource

whenever a project of any kind or another activity should be done.

S11: When it comes to textbooks, my books increase even more, and for example, I can learn information from the textbook that is not given in one book. It makes it easier for me to learn more.

This finding is also consistent with previous findings (Ceyhan & Yiğit, 2005; Demirel & Kıroğlu, 2008; Kılıç & Seven, 2011), which report that textbooks are among the frequently used resources by students. It is reported in the studies that the textbooks are the primary source used in the Turkish language lessons teaching process. In this context, it was found that the students also had the same opinion.

Thirdly, the participants argued that textbooks have the feature of presenting new information.

S1: I love textbooks. Because it presents new information for us.

S17: There are informative texts in textbooks that I like.

S2: I love textbooks that introduce us to the culture of our society.

S3: Textbooks teach me to look at the Turkish language from different perspectives.

The students reported that they gained new information and got to know their culture and that there existed informative texts in textbooks, which gave them a different perspective on the Turkish language which they considered strengths. Consistent with the previous category, the students argued that the textbook provides them more information and employs textbooks as a sourcebook. It is thought that this situation may arise because textbooks are used only with the concept of presenting new information. However, Turkish language courses should be structured aimed to provide students with different sensitivities about life through literary texts and to improve their linguistic skills without focusing on the purpose of providing information only (Aslan, 2016; Dilidüzgün, 2012; Kolaç, 2009; Lüle-Mert, 2014; Özbay, 2006; Sever, et al., 2011). For this reason, the texts in the textbook are of great importance. However, when the findings obtained from the interviews were examined, only one student's view is found stating that long stories were liked by him:

S18: The most desired feature of textbooks for me is that Turkish language textbook contains long stories.

The research suggested that texts in the books should be appropriate for students' age and developmental characteristics (Aslan, 2017; Dilidüzgün, 2012; İşeri, 2010; Kolaç, 2009; Sever, 2019). Therefore, it is also important that texts are of appropriate length. In addition to the student opinion mentioned above, it was observed that the long stories in the textbook were criticized in the different student views that will be presented in the following categories. For this reason, it can be re-emphasized that the texts in the textbook should be appropriate to the understanding levels and developmental stages of children.

In other categories obtained from the students' responses, it is seen that the perception towards the textbook is also shaped by the activities in the book. In this context, the student perspectives stating that they like the activities and preparatory work in the textbook are given below:

S7: I love textbooks; I like the activities contained in the book.

S20: It is very nice that textbooks provide preparatory work before moving on to the other courses.

S21: For example, I think the preparation for the next lesson is very good.

In addition to the fact that activities in the textbooks should be appropriate for students' age and developmental characteristics, it should aim their curiosity and improve their creativity (Aslan, 2011; Dilidüzgün & Cihan-Uz, 2003; Maden & Önal, 2020; Sever, 2019; Sever, et al., 2011). It is important to include questions and activities in textbooks that are suitable for children's dynamic structure and that they can develop their thinking skills while having fun, and that allows them to do effective practice towards the subject.

To sum up, considering the students' views on the strengths of the books in general, it is seen that they mainly emphasized three features; a) attractiveness of visuals, b) a basic teaching tool function, c) containing useful activities.

Weaknesses of Language Textbook

In this section, students' opinions about the weaknesses of the textbooks are presented in order based on the frequency of their opinions. When the student responses are examined, it is seen that the majority of the students emphasize that there are shortened/edited texts in the textbook and this is the weakest point.

S13: The way the texts in the textbook were edited and shortened is not desired for me. I do not think it should be shortened because it should be longer, allowing us to learn the main idea of texts.

S15: I do not like the shortened texts. We are curious about some of them. It should be a little longer or a little understandable, but we cannot find more details because there is not enough information in texts.

S17: I dislike shortened texts in the textbook, and we need to research because the texts are shortened. Some people do not have the internet at home. Since there is no internet, they cannot search, and the story is left unfinished.

In the literature, it is frequently emphasized that the texts presented to children should be suitable for their developmental characteristics and interests (Aslan & Doğu, 2015; Dilidüzgün, 2018; İşeri, 2010; Okur, 2010; Sever, 2019). The inclusion of such texts in textbooks allows students to both read these texts and participate in Turkish language courses actively. To this end, Turkish language instruction should be planned through literary texts that will enable students to read with curiosity. However, it is indicated in the literature that the shortening of the texts in the textbooks should not be the preferred issue in the language teaching courses. It is emphasized that such shortened texts may not have integrity, and their meaning may not be transferred which may reduce the curiosity element in the fiction. Therefore, the message cannot be given to readers. It is an important finding that the majority of the students also express similar views and that the shortened texts are considered to be a weak part of the Turkish language textbooks.

Although the students emphasized the importance of including activities in the textbook, many of them stated that these activities were difficult, meaningless and long for them. Examples of common responses regarding this view are presented below.

S1: Some activities ask us to write a journal, I have difficulty in such activities.

S2: What I dislike about textbooks is that these books have some difficult operations.

S5: Some topics, such as textual activities, are ridiculous since they are irrelevant.

S6: But some activities are nonsense, they are too long, I do not like such activities very much.

S8: I get bored when the texts are very, very long, I do not like them.

S14: I dislike longer activities. I do not like to write longer answers, too.

The research emphasized that the presence of suitable activities in Turkish language textbooks are one of the important issues for the teaching function of the textbook (Çiçek & Alcellat, 2014; Güneş, 2015, 2017; Maden & Önal, 2020). In line with this view, it should be noted that including activities with a level of difficulty appropriate for the class level is essential for students to learn new subjects, to repeat previous learning and to increase their motivation towards the lesson. Another important issue regarding the activities is the suitability of the offered activity to the age level. The activities in the textbook should be of appropriate length for the age and developmental characteristics of the students and at the same time, of a nature related to the subject/ text. With the use of activities that take these features into account, students' motivation for the lesson will increase. As a result, their participation and continuity behaviors for the lesson will rise. Also, it is thought that teachers should inform students about what are the contributions of activities. If the students know the gains from the activities and understand the concrete contribution of the activities to them, they will not define the activities as "long and absurd or irrelevant," as exemplified above. This situation is extremely critical to increase their active participation in the teaching process and to ensure their voluntary participation in the activities, although it may be difficult.

Regarding the activities in the language textbook, another criticism reported by the students is about the existence of numerous projects, repetitions of the activities and including subjects of other lessons. Sample statements regarding this issue are presented below.

S3: What I do not like is that Turkish language textbooks always have project assignments at the end of each unit or in the preparation part for a new text.

S4: I do not like textbooks in general terms because these books focus too much on some subjects.

S16: There is a writing activity in the textbook stating, "Write this down in your notebook.", we write the same thing in notebook, I do not like it.

S10: In the Turkish language textbook, there are many other topics from other courses. I cannot understand the relevance of these topics.

As stated above, the activities in the textbook should be of a quality that can attract the attention of students. Well-structured activities are extremely important for students' learning. However, frequent repetition of similar tasks to better understand the subjects is one of the biggest mistakes of teachers in the teaching process. As it is repeated repeatedly, although it is a well-structured activity, students' motivation towards the activity and their participation in the lesson will decrease. Therefore, it will be important to have various activity options for each subject in the textbooks. The research suggested that the activities in Turkish language textbooks should enable students to participate in the course actively (Aslan, 2011; Bozkurt, et al., 2015; Dilidüzgün, 2015, 2017; Güneş, 2015, 2017; Peköz, 2010, 2015, 2018; Ülper & Yalınkılıç, 2010). The inclusion of project activities in the textbooks is seen as an important example of this issue. It is therefore important that the projects ought to be at a level that children can handle, and appropriate assistance should be provided by teachers when necessary. It is emphasized that when the process is not designed in this way, projects aiming to support the multi-directional development of students will not reach their goals and will not make the expected contribution to the teaching process.

On the other hand, the inclusion of activities that require knowledge and skills for different lessons in Turkish textbooks is another issue criticized by students. The most striking example presented by students for this issue is the inclusion of activities related to texts containing history subjects in Turkish language textbooks. All these criticisms of the students are thought to have arisen because the texts, questions, and activities that can address their interests and needs are not prioritized in the textbook. It is thought that these criticisms of the students can be eliminated if the texts that students read with interest, the activities organized taking into consideration their linguistic and intellectual skills allowing them to develop their creativity and express themselves freely, are included in textbooks.

Besides negative judgments for shortened texts, students also criticized the existence of long texts in the language textbook. Sample statements on this issue are presented below.

S7: But when there are some short texts that we like, we make the activities better. But some texts are too long and one gets a little bored.

S10: I dislike longer texts.

The length of the texts was stated as an unpopular feature by some students, this supports the previous findings that the texts in the Turkish language book are not in a format to attract students' attention. However, it is thought that if the texts suitable for the students' interests and needs are prioritized in the textbooks, the criticisms exemplified above will be minimized.

Although visuals in the textbook are the most effective feature for students, it has been observed that students have different expectations for their variety, quantity, and quality. It was seen that the students suggested the use of more visuals and cartoons. The statements regarding this situation are presented below:

S9: And we would have more fun if it is not only in the form of writing but also in the form of cartoons or something. The more we attend the lesson, the more we love it.

S16: I would rather have a lot of pictures.

The existence of visuals and cartoons in texts and activities in the textbook is also considered important by the related studies in terms of attracting students' attention, allowing them to have fun, and thus enabling them to participate more eagerly (Aslan, 2010; Hayran, 2010; İşeri, 2010; Sever, 2019; Tiemensma, 2009). Students stated that by using more visuals in their textbooks, their interest in the lesson could increase. This expression can be stated as an important finding that concretely shows the effect of visuals on students' perspectives in the teaching process.

To sum up, considering the students' views on the weakness of the books in general, it is seen that they mainly emphasized three features; a) quality of texts, b) level of activities, c) variety of visuals. When all the findings are evaluated together, the fact that the views of the students who are the active and primary users of the textbook are mostly consistent with the literature shows how conscious they are. Therefore, it should be said that their opinions should be taken into account in the development of new language textbooks in the future.

Conclusion

In this section, general conclusions achieved in the light of the students' views towards the Turkish language textbook are presented. Primarily as the findings obtained from the study are examined, it can be seen that students mostly expressed their opinions about the visuals in the Turkish language textbook. While the Turkish language course is organized in a text-oriented manner, it is known that the texts are supported with pictures in the textbook. Based on this finding, it can be concluded that students stated the visuals as one of the most strength parts of the Turkish language textbook. Consistent with this conclusion, the research emphasizes that the visuals in the language textbooks are crucial in attracting the student's attention, allowing the student to make predictions about the content without reading the text, to stimulate their sense of curiosity, and to support their understanding (Ametler & Pinto, 2002; Ayhan, 2010; Çalık, 2001; Ertok-Atmaca, 2006; Hill, 1990, 2003; İnan-Yıldız ve Baş, 2015; İşcan ve Cımbız, 2018; Kayabekir, 2010; Kılıç, 2006; Romney & Bell, 2012; Uzuner, et al., 2010; Wright & Haleem, 1991).

Also, it should be said that besides the positive opinions, the students have some suggestions regarding the number and variety of the visuals in the Turkish language textbook. They stated that more visuals and different illustrations such as cartoons should be included in the textbook. If this happens, they emphasized that it will reflect positively on their interest, motivation and performance towards the language lessons. This conclusion is consistent with the previous literature (Sever, 2013, 2015), and the fact that this determination was made by students at the secondary school level is considered to be one of the most impressive findings revealed by the study. Unlike other courses, Turkish language courses provide an environment where a wide variety of stimuli suitable for the subject can be used. It is known that the more this environment is supported by various stimuli, the more the linguistic skills of the students can develop (Akın & Çeçen, 2015; Aslan, 2010; Hayran, 2010; Saltık, 2018; Sever, 2019; Sever, et al., 2011). One of the stimuli that can be used in this context is a cartoon, which allows students to think about the topics presented and interpret them. Cartoons suitable for the subject and the age level can be added to the teaching and learning process by teachers as additional stimuli. However, the contribution of various stimuli that can be added to the education process to improve the linguistic development of the student is so important that it cannot be only left to the choice of teachers. Therefore, it is thought that various visual and auditory stimuli, especially cartoons, should be included directly in Turkish language textbooks.

Another conclusion is that the participants described the textbook as the main source for direct teaching and learning. The main reason for this conclusion may be that Turkish language teachers use the textbook as the primary source of teaching and frequently direct students to textbooks in the teaching process. This comment is also consistent with the previous findings (Ceyhan & Yiğit, 2005; Demirel & Kıroğlu, 2008; Kılıç & Seven, 2011; Küçükahmet, 2004; Tor & Erden, 2004) suggesting that textbooks are among the teaching materials that offer further study opportunities, reinforce the learning, prepare students for exams and a source for doing homework.

On the other hand, another important conclusion that should be emphasized in this study is that the students have very limited awareness about the quality of the texts that they face during the teaching activities. It is known that Turkish language education is generally based on the texts that are handled in the course. In this respect, it is important that the texts to be used in the teaching process should be appropriate to the developmental characteristics of the students and has a certain literary quality that can attract student attention (Aslan, 2007, 2017; Baş & İnan-Yıldız, 2015; Dilidüzgün, 2012; Karadağ, 2013; Maden & Önal, 2020; Payza, 2015; Saltık, 2018; Sever, 2019). Only such texts can attract the attention of the student, ensure active participation in the lesson, and thus, improve their linguistic skills, which is the major aim of Turkish language teaching. Therefore, the texts to be included in the textbook should be selected carefully. Considering the results obtained based on the students' opinions, it is seen that the participants produced limited views about the texts contained in the textbook. Due to the Turkish language courses and the textbooks are shaped by texts that are suitable for the subject/theme, it was expected that students could have more opinions. However, when it comes to the texts, it has been observed that the students criticized the texts only for being long and shortened. This condition suggests that the texts do not have a dominant place in students' general perception of the textbook. It can be said that this may be because Turkish language textbooks do not contain texts that will meet the interests and needs of students. This comment is also consistent with previous studies (Arı, 2011; Aslan & Doğu, 2015; Çakır, 2013; Demir & Girmen, 2010; Karadağ & Kurudayıoğlu, 2010; Yılmaz & Korkmaz, 2017). Research indicated that texts in the Turkish language textbook are mostly not suitable for children and are criticized in terms of various features like being shortened, having lack of a rich language and not being suitable for the interest of the target age etc. (Demir & Girmen, 2010; Epçaçan & Okçu, 2010; Gün, 2012; Saltık, 2018). However, it is emphasized that the texts in the language textbooks should not be shortened to be by the developmental characteristics of the children to protect the semantic integrity of the text (Açık-Önkaş & Günay, 2015;

Güneş, 2013; Kolaç, 2009; Sever, Kaya & Aslan, 2011; Yücelşen, 2014). Also, it is a basic finding gathered from the previous studies that the rich language and expression features used in the texts have important effects on the linguistic development of children (Aslan, 2017; Çiçek & Alcellat, 2014, Solak & Yaylı, 2009; Sever, 2019). Considering this aspect, it should be stated that the texts in Turkish language textbooks should be re-examined in terms of these specified features, and especially their literary quality should be increased in line with the developmental characteristics of the students.

The last conclusion that needs to be emphasized in this study is that students have negative perspectives about the activities in the Turkish language textbook. It is seen that the activities in the textbook are criticized by the students for being difficult and not functional from a general point of view. Their criticisms are consistent with the previous findings and reveal the importance of questions and activities because they can attract their attention, contribute to the development of their linguistic and cognitive skills, and enable them to learn by doing and living (Aslan, 2017; Güneş, 2017; Dilidüzgün & Aydın-Gönül, 2017; Dilidüzgün, et al., 2016; Karadağ, 2019; Lüle-Mert, 2014). It is observed that some of the questions and activities in the Turkish language textbooks are not of the desired quality. In other words, such questions and activities are not answered by students with fondness, amusement, curiosity, and the reason for their existence are questioned by them. This situation caused students to think that these questions and activities could not contribute to their learning. However, while it is known that the permanence of skills acquired through practice is ensured, it is also important that questions and activities that allow students to take an active role in this process and fulfill their responsibilities and to use their linguistic and intellectual abilities may increase their interest in Turkish language courses as well as in reading and knowledge generation levels. For this reason, questions and activities of the specified nature should be included in the textbook and students' views should also be addressed in this context.

As a result, when all the conclusions obtained in the study are considered together, it is thought that they provide valuable information as a guide to the authorities in terms of the basic features that should be included in an effective textbook appropriate to the interests and needs of the students. For this reason, it is suggested that students' views should be taken into consideration to meet their expectations regarding the development process of new and effective language textbooks. In this way, it is thought that the desired level of success in language teaching can be achieved and language teaching lessons can meet the expectations of the students more efficiently.

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