

Full Length Research Paper

Preschool children's Turkish language skills related to various variables (sample of Denizli)♦

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The purpose of this research is to study 5 - 6 years old preschool children's Turkish language skills related to various variables (socioeconomic status, profession of fathers, working of mothers, education levels of parents, numbers of siblings, age of children and gender of children) in Denizli. The sample of the research consisted of 223 (114 boys and 109 girls) preschool children of 5 - 6 years old attending preschools education in the central region of Denizli city. A personal information form and language development subscale of Marmara developmental scale was used to collect data. According to the results, the gender, age of the children and the parents' working status did not lead to any significant differences as a function of language usage skills of children. However, educational levels of the parents, profession of the fathers, numbers of the siblings and socioeconomic status did present significant differences as a function of language usage skills of children.

Key words: Language skills, preschool children, family variables, socioeconomic status, gender.

INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the distinctive features that differentiate a human being from other living things. The acquisition of language skills starts in the first years of life and they continue to develop in the following years. Language skills are one of the tools that enable individuals to express themselves, communicate with other people and meet their needs, particularly the social needs.

Although many definitions of language have been made, when the common points are taken into account, the following features are seen to be emphasized (Sari, 2001): language is an original system composed of the sounds.

Language is the most important social communication tool among the people. It is also an individually thinking tool. The common points in the definitions are striking as they emphasized the individual and social dimension of

the language. Moreover, language has been accepted as one the basic elements in the development of the individuals and communities (Önder, 2005).

The foundation of the language skills are laid in early childhood period. Language skills that are acquired in preschool period affect the mental, social and emotional development, especially the language development of the children in short and long term. The sounds that the child produces in his babyhood period turn into the meaningful words and sentences during the preschool period. The child asks frequently, various questions in this process and his vocabulary develops rapidly. He starts to learn the rules and use them in his speeches. Language makes learning and knowing the environment easier (Koçak, 2000; Oktay, 2001; Yavuzer, 2001; Yörükoğlu, 1993). Language acquisition that helps to learn and know the environment is a multi dimensional development area that is closely related to all developmental areas and includes social, personal, emotional and cognitive dimensions.

How children acquire the language skills has been explained by various theories in different ways. Behaviorist approach accepted language skills as learned behaviors (Skinner, 1971), while linguistics model and

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and biological maturation theory state that language skills are inborn and are closely related to inheritance. Interactionist approaches argue that language skills are acquired through the combination of many social, linguistic, biological and mental elements (Cüceloğlu, 1999; Düver, 2006). Besides these theories, pragmatic theory expresses that children learn the language in order to socialize, directing others' behaviors and regulating their own behaviors (Tulu, 2009). It can be claimed that as the language is a multi dimensional development area, different theories have been proposed in the explanation of the functions and structure of it. The views expressed by different theories draw attention to a different function and feature.

There are various factors that affect the language development. The main ones of these are variables related to heritage, age, gender, family (educational levels of the parents, the number of siblings, birth order, socio-economic situation and parents attitudes like encouraging to talk), child's being impaired or not, intelligence, learning and game (Düver, 2006; Gençay, 2007;

Özmermer, 2008; Ünal-Gürocak, 2007; Yıldırım, 2008).

It is better to mention the structure of Turkish language within the context of Turkish language skills which are taken into consideration in this study. Turkish language is an agglutinative language which is in the subgroup of Oghuz languages that are member of Ural-Altai language family. Since the Turkish language is a language that is agglutinative and has a harmony between the sounds and in which the words do not change according to the gender, it differentiate from other languages and is known for the variety of its morphology (Güven, 2009).

The purpose of this study is to determine 5 - 6 years old preschool children's Turkish language skills related to various variables. What is examined in this study is the children's utilization of general Turkish language skills. In other words, it is the skills that are related to the utilization of Turkish language in social settings by the children.

The following questions were asked for this purpose:

- Do the Turkish language skills of 5 - 6 aged children differ according to their genders?
- Do the Turkish language skills of 5 - 6 aged children differ according to their ages?
- Do the Turkish language skills of 5 - 6 aged children differ according to the educational levels of their mothers?
- Do the Turkish language skills of 5 - 6 aged children differ according to the educational levels of their fathers?
- Do the Turkish language skills of 5 - 6 aged children differ according to the working status of their mothers?
- Do the Turkish language skills of 5 - 6 aged children differ according to the profession of their fathers?
- Do the Turkish language skills of 5 - 6 aged children

children differ according to children's having siblings?

- Do the Turkish language skills of 5 - 6 aged children differ according to the socio-economic levels of the families?

The rapid development observed in language development during the preschool period and a great number of variables that affect this developmental area are increasing the importance of these studies on this topic.

METHOD

The research model

The survey method was used in the study in which 5 - 6 years old preschool children's Turkish language skills related to various variables were examined.

Participants

Sample group of the research was selected by using random sampling method. The sample of the study consisted of 223 preschool children of 5 - 6 years old attending preschool education in the central region of Denizli city. There were 109 (48.9%) girls and 114 (51.1%) boys in the sample group. The mean age of the children was 5 years, 6 months, 10 days (minimum of 4 years, 5 months, 15 days; maximum of 6 years, 10 months, 7 days).

Instruments

In the study, a personal information form and language development subscale of Marmara developmental scale was used. Turkish language skills of the children participating in the study were limited to this scale.

Personal information form was developed by the researchers. There were questions related to age, gender, the educational levels of the parents, the working status of the mother, the profession of the father, the number of siblings and socio-economic level in the form. Marmara developmental scale which was used to measure the language skills of the children participating in the study was developed by Ayla Oktay and Hülya Bilgin Aydın in 2002 in order to reveal the skills according to the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional and physical development areas. The internal validity (reliability) of language development subscale was determined to be 0.97. The 76 items in the subscale were scored from 1 to 5 as "never does", "rarely does", "sometimes does", "frequently does" and "always does". The total score obtained from the scale revealed the children's Turkish language using skills observed in school setting by the teachers.

Procedure

Data collection tools were filled out by the teachers of preschool education who were at the schools children enrolled in. Teachers were informed about the study and measurement tools before the data collection procedure. As for the socio-economic level variable in the study, information on the basis of parents' professions was gathered from school administrators and teachers.

Data analysis

The data of the study were analyzed by means of SPSS 15.0. One-

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of Turkish language scores of the 5 - 6 aged children according to their genders.

Gender	N	$\bar{\chi}$	S
Female	109	292.9083	52.6360
Male	114	291.8509	52.5639
Total	223	292.3677	52.4832

Table 2. ANOVA results indicating Turkish language scores of 5 - 6 aged children according to their genders.

Source of variance	Sum of square	SD	Mean square	F	p
Between groups	62.300	1	62.300	.023	.881
Within groups	611433.5	221	2766.668		
Total	611495.8	222			

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of Turkish language scores of the children according to their ages.

Age	N	$\bar{\chi}$	S
5 years old	112	289.7500	48.2500
6 years old	111	295.0090	56.5315
Total	223	292.3677	52.4832

Table 4. ANOVA results indicating Turkish language scores of the children according to their ages.

Source of variance	Sum of square	sd	Mean square	F	p
Between groups	1541.857	1	1541.857	0.559	0.456
Within groups	609954.0	221	2759.973		
Total	611495.8	222			

way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to evaluate children's Turkish language skills in the sampling group in terms of their genders, ages, educational levels of their parents, the working status of the mother, the profession of the father, their having siblings and their socio-economic levels. In order to determine which group caused the difference in socio-economic level variable, Scheffe test which was one of the post hoc analysis techniques was utilized.

RESULTS

In Table 1, the study shows a descriptive statistics of Turkish language scores of the 5 - 6 aged children according to their genders, while in Table 2, ANOVA results indicating Turkish language scores of the 5 - 6 aged children according to their genders were shown. When Table 2 was examined at the end of the one-way

ANOVA about the Turkish language scores according to gender, no significant difference [$F(1,221) = 0.023$; $p > 0.05$] was observed among the Turkish language scores of the children according to their gender.

In Table 3, a descriptive statistics of Turkish language scores of the children according to their ages was shown, while in Table 4, ANOVA results indicating Turkish language scores of the children according to their ages were shown.

As it can be seen in Table 4, at the end of the one-way ANOVA about the Turkish language scores according to age, no significant difference [$F(1,221) = 0.559$; $p > 0.05$] was observed among the Turkish language scores of the children according to their age.

In Table 5, descriptive statistics findings of Turkish language scores of the 5 - 6 aged children according to the educational levels of their mothers were shown, while

Table 5. Descriptive statistics findings of Turkish language scores of the 5 - 6 aged children according to the educational levels of their mothers.

Educational level of the mother	N	$\bar{\chi}$	S
Literate – Primary/secondary school graduate	120	280.4583	51.2463
High school – University or post-graduate program graduate	103	306.2427	50.6943
Total	223	292.3677	52.4832

Table 6. ANOVA results indicating Turkish language scores of 5 - 6 aged children according to the educational levels of their mothers.

Source of variance	Sum of square	sd	Mean square	F	p
Between groups	36849.124	1	36849.124	14.172	.000
Within groups	574646.7	221	2600.211		
Total	611495.8	222			

Table 7. Descriptive statistics findings of Turkish language scores of the 5 - 6 aged children according to the educational levels of their fathers.

Educational levels of fathers	N	$\bar{\chi}$	S
Literate – Primary/secondary school graduate	102	271.1863	53.8961
High school – University or post-graduate program graduate	121	310.2231	44.1374
Total	223	292.3677	52.4832

Table 8. ANOVA results indicating Turkish language scores of 5 - 6 aged children according to the educational levels of their fathers.

Source of variance	Sum of square	sd	Mean square	F	p
Between groups	84339.412	1	84339.412	35.358	0.000
Within groups	527156.4	221	2385.323		
Total		222			

in Table 6, ANOVA results indicating Turkish language scores of the 5 - 6 aged children according to the educational levels of their mothers were shown.

In Table 6, at the end of the one-way ANOVA about the Turkish language scores according to the educational levels of the mothers, significant difference [$F(1,221) = 14.172$; $p < 0.001$] was observed among the Turkish language scores of the children according to the educational levels of their mothers. As such, Turkish language skills of the children differed significantly according to the educational levels of their mothers.

In Table 7, descriptive statistics findings of Turkish language scores of the 5 - 6 aged children according to the educational levels of their fathers were shown, while in Table 8, ANOVA results indicating Turkish language scores of the 5 - 6 aged children according to the educational levels of their fathers were shown. When the table was examined, at the end of the one-way ANOVA

about the Turkish language scores according to the educational levels of the fathers, significant difference [$F(1,221) = 35.358$; $p < 0.001$] was observed among the Turkish language scores of the children according to the educational levels of their fathers. As such, Turkish language skills of the children differed significantly according to the educational levels of their fathers.

In Table 9, descriptive statistics findings of Turkish language scores of the 5 - 6 aged children according to the working status of the mothers were shown, while in Table 10, ANOVA results indicating Turkish language scores of the 5 - 6 aged children according to the working status of their mothers were shown.

As it can be seen in Table 10, at the end of the one-way ANOVA about the Turkish language scores according to working status of the mothers, no significant difference [$F(1,221) = 1.412$; $p > 0.05$] was observed among the Turkish language scores of the children ac-

Table 9. Descriptive statistics findings of Turkish language scores of the 5 - 6 aged children according to the working status of the mothers.

Working status of the mother	N	$\bar{\chi}$	S
Housewife mothers	147	289.3673	51.2104
Working mothers	76	298.1711	54.7390
Total	223	292.3677	52.4832

Table 10. ANOVA results indicating Turkish language scores of 5 - 6 aged children according to the working status of the mothers.

Source of variance	Sum of square	sd	Mean square	F	p
Between groups	3882.908	1	3882.908	1.412	0.236
Within groups	607612.9	221	2749.380		
Total	611495.8	222			

Table 11. Descriptive statistics findings of Turkish language scores of the 5 - 6 aged children according to the professions of their fathers.

Profession of the father	N	$\bar{\chi}$	S
Unemployed - Retired	22	255.2727	57.1282
Clerk – Worker - Self employer	201	296.4279	50.4665
Total	223	292.3677	52.4832

Table 12. ANOVA results indicating Turkish language scores of 5 - 6 aged children according to the professions of their fathers.

Source of variance	Sum of square	SD	Mean square	F	p
Between groups	33586.280	1	33586.280	12.844	0.000
Within groups	577909.6	221	2614.975		
Total	611495.8	222			

according to the working status of their mothers.

In Table 11, descriptive statistics findings of Turkish language scores of the 5 - 6 aged children according to the professions of their fathers were shown, while in Table 12, ANOVA results indicating Turkish language scores of the 5 - 6 aged children according to the professions of their fathers were shown.

As it can be seen in Table 12, at the end of the one-way ANOVA about the Turkish language scores according to the professions of the fathers, significant difference [$F(1,221) = 12.844$; $p < 0.001$] was observed among the Turkish language scores of the children according to the professions of their fathers. As such, Turkish language skills of the children differed significantly according to the professions of their fathers.

In Table 13, descriptive statistics findings of Turkish language scores of the 5 - 6 aged children according to

their having siblings were shown, while in Table 14, ANOVA results indicating Turkish language scores of the 5 - 6 aged children according to their having siblings were shown.

When Table 14 was examined, at the end of the one-way ANOVA about the Turkish language scores according to their having siblings, significant difference [$F(1,221) = 8.171$; $p < 0.05$] was observed among the Turkish language scores of the children according to their having siblings. As a result, Turkish language skills of the children differed significantly according to their having siblings.

In Table 15, descriptive statistics findings of Turkish language scores of the 5 - 6 aged children according to the socio-economic levels of the families were shown, while in Table 16, ANOVA results indicating Turkish language scores of the 5 - 6 aged children according to

Table 13. Descriptive statistics findings of Turkish language scores of the 5 - 6 aged children according to their having siblings.

Sibling status	N	$\bar{\chi}$	S
No siblings	70	306.9857	48.6986
Having siblings	153	285.6797	52.9434
Total	223	292.3677	52.4832

Table 14. ANOVA results indicating Turkish language scores of 5 - 6 aged children according to their having siblings.

Source of variance	Sum of square	SD	Mean square	F	p
Between groups	21801.555	1	21801.555	8.171	0.005
Within groups	589694.3	221	2668.300		
Total		222			

Table 15. Descriptive statistics findings of Turkish language scores of the 5 - 6 aged children according to the socio-economic levels of their families.

Socio-economic levels	N	$\bar{\chi}$	S
Low	120	279.6083	46.0306
Middle	26	281.2692	68.2950
High	77	316.0000	48.2605
Total	223	292.3677	52.4832

the socio-economic levels of their families were shown.

In Table 17, post hoc Scheffe test results were conducted after ANOVA to determine between which sub-groups Turkish language scores differed according to the socio-economic levels of the families.

As it can be seen in Tables 16 and 17, at the end of the one-way ANOVA about the Turkish language scores according to the socio-economic levels of the families, significant difference [$F(1.221) = 13.251$; $p < 0.001$] was observed among the Turkish language scores of the children according to the socio-economic levels of their families. Turkish language skills of the children differed significantly according to the socio-economic levels of their families. According to the results of the Scheffe test which was carried out in order to determine which group caused the difference in the socio-economic level variable, Turkish language scores of the children whose families were at high socio-economic level ($\bar{\chi} = 36.3917$) were significantly higher than the Turkish language scores of the children whose families were at the middle socio-economic level ($\bar{\chi} = 34.7308$) and low socio-economic level ($\bar{\chi} = 1.6609$).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As a result of the study carried out on the Turkish language skills of 5 - 6 years old preschool children, there was no significant difference, according to various variables in Denizli, among the children in terms of their gender, ages and their mothers' working status. The studies on gender of the children indicated that the girls acquire language skills earlier and in a shorter period than the boys; however, environmental factors could remove the difference between the genders in time (Öztürk, 1995; Yıldırım, 2008). In various studies (Dereli, 2003; Erdoğan et al., 2005; Karacan, 2000; Temel, 2000) on the language development of preschool children, there was no significant difference between the genders which was in parallel with the findings of this study. In studies (Aydoğan and Koçak, 2003; Dereli, 2003) in which the effects of the age variable on the Turkish language skills were examined, it was found that there was a significant difference between the wider intervals of ages, while there was no significant difference between the closer ages. The finding that there was no difference between the 5 and 6 aged children in terms of Turkish language skills were in parallel with the aforementioned studies.

Table 16. ANOVA results indicating Turkish language scores of 5 - 6 aged children according to the socio-economic levels of the families.

Source of variance	Sum of square	SD	Mean square	F	p
Between Groups	65742.140	1	32871.070	13.251	0.000
Within Groups	545753.7	221	2480.699		
Total	611495.8	222			

Table 17. Post hoc scheffe test results conducted after ANOVA to determine between which sub-groups Turkish language scores differed according to the socio-economic levels of the families.

Socio-economic levels (SEL)		$\bar{\chi}$	ss	p
Low SEL	Middle SEL	-1.6609	10.7742	0.988
	High SEL	-36.3917*	7.2725	0.000
Middle SEL	Low SEL	1.6609	10.7742	0.988
	High SEL	-34.7308*	11.2973	0.000
High SEL	Low SEL	36.3917*	7.2725	0.000
	Middle SEL	34.7308*	11.2973	0.010

* p < 0.05.

There was no significant difference between the students whose mothers were working and those whose mothers were not in terms of language skills. In another study (Özmermer, 2008) in which the differences between the children whose mothers were working and whose mothers were not was examined, no significant difference was observed between these groups in terms of their language skills. In the light of this, it could be claimed that the working status of the mothers does not have an effect on the language development of the children at these ages.

Significant differences were observed among the Turkish language skills of the children in terms of educational levels of the parents, the profession of the father, having siblings and socio-economic level, that is, the Turkish language skills of the children whose parents were graduates of a high school or a university were found to be higher than the language skills of the children whose parents were only literate and graduate of a primary school or a secondary school. It was also determined that the Turkish language skills of the children whose fathers were clerks, worker and self-employer were higher than the language skills of the children whose fathers were unemployed or retired. A significant difference was also found between the Turkish language skills of the children who had siblings and those who do not have in the favor of those who had siblings. There was also significant difference among the children in terms of their socio-economic levels. Among the children from high, middle and low levels, the group with the highest Turkish language skills was the group who were members of the high socio-economic level; and the group with the lowest Turkish language skills was the

group who were members of the low socio-economic level. It is also possible to come across the studies of which the results are in parallel, that is, in a study (Yıldırım, 2008) carried out with 300 preschool children in Konya city, Turkey, it was found that there were significant differences in language skills in terms of the educational levels of the parents, the number of siblings and the income level of the family. In several studies (Erkan, 1990; Temel, 1994), it was also determined that the children from the families in high socio-economic level had more language skills. High socio-economic level parents were thought to have given more importance to the good and accurate command of speaking and therefore the children were guided appropriately. While Serhatlıoğlu (2006), in the study she carried out with preschool children at the age of 5 - 6 and their parents in Elazığ region, found that the gender was not an important element in children's acquisition of Turkish language skills. She emphasized that the language skills of the children increased when their parents' educational levels and socio-economic levels increased. In another study (Ünal-Gürocak, 2007), in which the language and small muscle skills of 165 children at the age of 5 - 6 in a kindergarten in Bolu were examined, it was found that language skills changed in favor of the high socio-economic level when the issue is socio-economic levels. In addition to this, there was no significant difference in language skills in terms of age and gender.

As it can be seen, the findings of this study on the Turkish language skills of 5 - 6 aged preschool children in the region of Denizli are largely consistent with the studies carried out in different cities in Turkey on this topic.

In the light of the findings of the study, it can be said

that improving the educational levels of prospective parents may be important for the child development and education. Attention should be paid to language developments of the children who have no siblings and should be supported in different ways by the parents. Based on the effects of fathers on the general development and language skills of the children, fathers and prospective fathers should be informed about how they can support the development areas, especially language development of the children.

In addition to this, it is obvious that there is a need for applications both at homes and at schools for supporting Turkish language skills of the children who are members of low and middle socio-economic levels.

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