

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Friendly and hostility perception of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students about countries

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Received 29 January, 2015; Accepted 19<sup>th</sup> June, 2015

The course contents taught in social sciences, revolution history and Kemalism at different stages of primary schools in Turkey form in learners political, social and economical behavioural pattern towards their neighbouring countries. The students try to form friendly or hostile behaviour against other countries. The study aims to determine what are the factors that influence the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students' either hostile or friendly perception of their neighbouring countries In Kadiköy District of İstanbul, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 60 8<sup>th</sup> grade students studying in a primary school. The students were asked to provide answers to a set of predetermined questions in the interview form. The findings were transferred into text document, comparatively analyzed and combined with the defined criteria within the framework of common discourse. In the light of the findings obtained, it was observed that friendly and hostile perceptions were already developed in the students' consciousness. It was concluded that in the formation of this consciousness, political events, national, cultural or religious issues are effective. In addition, the media and internet also play an influential role in the formation of students' friendly or hostile perception. While creating students' knowledge, it was determined that contemporary issues adversely affected them.

**Key words:** Teaching of history, friendship, hostility, primary education.

## INTRODUCTION

Turkey is located in a geographic area, where problems from neighboring countries are intense. These new and current issues plus the past problems from Turkey's neighbouring countries cause further problems in the interstate. That Turkey is close to countries located in the Middle East and the Balkans, and that there are a number of political, cultural and religious ties between these countries from the past make Turkey directly involved in the problems. This situation is a result of the advantages and disadvantages of being in a geography

area, which experiences rapid social and political changes rapid. Both problems of the past and now affect the perceptions of friendship and hostility of new generations of Turkey, positively or negatively.

In particular, international organizations such as the United Nations, UNESCO and EU have started working on revising the content of hostility in history textbooks in order to prevent the students from becoming hostile after their graduation (Tekeli, 1998). Although the desired results cannot be taken from the work initiated as a part

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of peace education, the reduction of the concept containing hostilities in textbooks is provided. Peace education aims to develop respect towards others and resolute conflict (Harris, 2002). Terms unflattering other nations in the textbooks in Turkey have been removed. Within the framework of peace education, the content of developing students' listening skills, solving problems and finding solutions to conflict, is given in the course programs. Thus, in peace education, students aim to develop listening and problem solving skills, to produce solutions to conflicts.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The number of studies on students' friendly and hostile perceptions is very few in Turkey, especially studies on the perceptions of secondary school students. The present studies were mostly carried out with older age group children or with university students. This study is important because it presents the kind of perception students nurse towards other countries as they grow up. The results of such studies reveal how students' views change based on what they study, either improvement or regression (Zevin and Corbin, 1998).

To correct the students' misperceptions, it is important to know their friendly and hostile sensations and to determine how these perceptions are developed. Within this scope, the study will contribute to peace education approach in correcting students' misperceptions. The results of the study will be able to contribute to the education programs that will be developed in countries.

Though peace education studies are being carried out in Turkey and the contents of hostility have been removed from their coursebooks, the researchers prove that the students' hostile perceptions towards other countries increase continually (Yılmaz and Kaya, 2010). The study presents that the students' perceptions are not formed only by coursebooks or teachers. A lot of political and social problems happening between governments affect these perceptions (Demir 2011; Ersoy, 2013; Tuncel, 2002).

National and international studies on peace education have focused on the analysis of conflict intensively. Demirtas (1991), Ulusavaş (2000), Tapan (2006) and Iron (2011) have determined in their work that peace education allows students to develop conflict resolution skills. Harris (1996) has reviewed the peace education projects in state schools in the United States. The program is thought to develop problem-solving skills to conflicts. Fuerverg (1997), Kupermintz and Salaman (2005) have reached the conclusion that the implementation of peace education program between Israel and the Palestinians reduces the

feelings of hostility in students. In a study done by Shlengluo (2003a), it is stated that the university students in China have negative perceptions towards Russia. In a study which was done in the USA with the participation of adults, the opinions about England, Russia, Japan, Mexico, India and Venezuela were investigated. It was determined that although the participants' opinions towards developed countries are positive, their opinions towards underdeveloped countries are negative. Besides, it was also found out that the participants' views are affected by mass communication (Perry and Mc Nelly, 1988). Scott (1999) revealed that high school students' view towards the third world in the USA is that America is a superior country. Caulfield (2000) revealed that we need a peaceful society to create a society living in peace and for it we need to train for peaceful purposes in his research. Johnson and Johnson (2001) examined students' conflict-solving skills and at the end of study they found that students have developed their conflict resolution skills. Ediger (2003) worked on to explain the concepts of war and peace. He examined the issues of war and education and stressed the necessity of peace education in his work. Sarrıca and Contarello (2004) examined the perception of people with pro-peace and anti-war peace about peace and conflict. Perceptions of both groups determined that each of them is on equal level. Genç (2006) has worked on a peace education project between the Turkish and Greek students. He focused on improving mutual trust among students as a result of work. Gazioğlu (2008) has also studied conflict-resolution-skills of students in his research. He found that peace education develops conflict resolution skills of the students. Deveci et al. (2008) investigated the perceptions of teachers about peace education. Teacher candidates stated that peace education is necessary for classes in elementary school. Askerov (2010) focused on how peace education affects the resolution of conflicts in the study. It has been revealed that peace education work contributes to the resolution of conflicts. Karaman-Kepenekçi (2010) examined the views of students on national and international peace. The most significant obstacle to peace in the world as perceived among students is that states wish to use the world's resources for their own interests. Yılmaz and Yiğit (2010) examined perceptions of social studies candidate teachers about the neighboring countries of Europe, the Middle East and Turkey. At the end of the work, they determined that their perceptions are based on knowledge of political history and students' perception coming at the axis between friends and enemies. Ersoy (2013) investigated how Turkish students and teachers perceive international war and conflict events, and how teachers processed social studies courses and their influence on students. He discovered

that the teachers did not have sufficient knowledge in the teaching of international debate. Among the factors that influence students' perceptions such as textbooks and teachers, the media hold the most important place in a small number of research (Corbin and Zeven, 1997; Aktas, 2013).

Studies focus intensively on the subject of peace education, the perception of students about other countries and how the factors that affect these perceptions should be increased. It is also clear from the research that peace education affects the perception of other countries and conflict resolution skills of students. In this context, the revealing of the factors affecting the students' perceptions and how their perceptions about other countries are formed is of scientific importance. This work is important in revealing how to create Turkish students' perceptions of friendship and enmity.

### The aim of the research

The purpose of this study is to determine how friendly and enmity perception of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students towards other countries happens. For this purpose, it aims to answer the following questions:

1. Which countries do the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students perceive as enemies?
2. Why do the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students perceive some countries as enemies?
3. Which countries do the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students perceive as friends?
4. Why do 8<sup>th</sup> grade students perceive some countries as friends?
5. What are the factors that affect the formation of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students' friendly and enmity perception?

### METHOD

In this study, a qualitative research method is used to determine the friendly and enmity perceptions of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Detailed information was collected to determine the perception of the students. Thus, the scan pattern of the qualitative research method is preferred because it is consistent with the nature of the research. It investigates the data thoroughly to determine the current situation with the screening model. Scanning method determines existing perception and status, starting from individual perception and approach (Karasar, 2012: 77; Patton, 2002; Punch, 2009).

Study sample constitutes 60 elementary school students from two different classes (24 girls and 36 boys). They were chosen randomly at a secondary school in the Province of Istanbul Kadikoy District. Since the students were chosen randomly, their socio-economic situations were not involved in the study, as well as the differences between them. The school students who were investigated are from different regions of Turkey. That is, the students in the sample group are from different regions of the country and have different socio-

cultural backgrounds. Besides, the scanning method among the scanning qualitative research methods was determined since it is suitable for the aim of this study. That is to say, the study does not aim to compare any situation but to reveal the existing situation. Data in the research were collected through semi-structured interview form prepared by the researcher. Thus, during the interview in order to determine students' perceptions, detailed and necessary questions were directed to the students.

Interview was made entirely with students in the sample. Voice recorder was used during the call. 7 questions were prepared by examining the literature. Since reliability and validity cannot be stated with quantitative data in a qualitative research, an expertise is needed in order to increase their validity and reliability (Yıldırım et al., 2002; Silverman, 1993; Mason, 1996). In this study, by taking teachers' opinions, reliability and validity were ensured. Additionally, to increase the reliability and validity, a pilot study was applied to the students. Experts and academics were consulted to address two questions and they were checked by two branches of teachers. After taking the branch teachers' opinions, expert academics' opinions were sought. The questions were reorganized according to their opinions. The number of questions was reduced to five after experts' opinion, and the interview form was written. The shape of the front end of the interview form is given, making calls with three students.

Pilot study of the research was conducted in the second week of November 2012. After the necessary arrangements were made, semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher, and meetings were held with the 60 students during December and January. Interviews were recorded with voice recorder and then they were converted into text.

Data were tabulated using analysis method to provide understanding of the obtained data. In addition, in the findings section of the student discourse, discourse analysis methods are provided in the form of direct quotations.

### FINDINGS

19 students indicated Israel as the number one enemies of Turkey; 9 students, Britain; 7 students, France; 6 students, Armenia; 6 students, America; 5 students, Russia; 3 students, Greece 3; 3 students, Germany and 2 students, Libya (Table 1).

The students considered Israel to be Turkey's enemy because of the following reasons: 4 of the students said 'Turkey's aid to Palestine resulted in hostile grounds between Israel and Turkey'; 4 students said, 'we have different religious beliefs'; 2 students said 'the events in Davos between Israel's president and Turkey's prime minister'; 4 students said 'the attack on the Mavi Marmara ship by Israel'; 5 students said 'Israel demanding land from Turkey' (Table 2).

The students were hostile to United States because: 1, America's two-faced policy of monitoring Turkey, and supporting a terrorist incident while appearing to be friendly; 2, they have different religious beliefs.

Concerning France, the students stated that France does not respect the independence of Turkey, and fought with Turkey in the past to seize its earth.

The students considered Russia as an enemy because of Russia's wish to go to the hot sea, the war between

**Table 1.** Students' views about hostility toward countries.

Name of the country	f	%	n
Israel	19	31.67	60
England	9	15.00	
France	7	11.67	
Armenia	6	10.00	
America	6	10.00	
Russia	5	8.33	
Greece	3	5.00	
Germany	3	5.00	
Libya	2	3.33	

**Table 2.** The views of the students why they consider some countries as enemies.

Name of the country	Reason for enmity	f	%
Israel	Turkey helps Palestine	4	6.67
	Different religious beliefs	4	6.67
	The events with Turkey's prime minister in Davos	2	3.33
	They attack Mavi Marmara	4	6.67
	Demanding land in Turkey	5	8.33
America	Two-faced policy support of terrorist incident while appearing to be friendly	4	6.67
	Different religious beliefs	2	3.33
France	Not respect the independence of Turkey	3	5.00
	Fought with Turkey in the past to seize its earth	4	6.67
Russia	Wishes to go to the hot sea and panislavizm policy	4	1.16
	Fought Turkey in the past	1	1.16
England	Destroyed the Muslim and fought with Turkey in the past	6	10.00
Greece	Wants to take Turkey's land and fought with Turkey in the past	5	5.00
Armenia	Wants to take Turkey's land and the events during World War I	5	8.33
Libya	Things Gaddafi did against the Turkish people	1	1.16
	He killed the people	1	1.16
Germany	Negative attitudes towards Turkish	3	5.00

Russia, Russia's panislavizm policy of monitoring the Ottoman Empire in the past. Similarly, they see Britain as an enemy country because it fought with Turkey in the past and it attempted to destroy the Muslims.

They see Greece as enemy because it wants to take their land. During World War I Armenia wanted to take the lands of Turkey. This made the students to tag it as an enemy country.

The students consider Libya, a Muslim country as an enemy country because Gaddafi (former president of Libya) did evil thing to the Turkish people in Libya, and also killed them. Similarly, they are hostile towards Germany because its people exhibited negative attitudes towards the Turkish people living in Germany.

The students consider the following countries as friends

thus: 12 students consider Azerbaijan as friends, 10 students, Germany; 10 students, Japan; 8 students, Palestine; 4 students, United States; 8 students, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC); 2 students, Greece; 4 students, Turkmenistan and 2 students, Kazakhstan (Table 3).

The reasons the students consider the following countries as friends are thus: Azerbaijan is both Turkish and Muslim and it supports Turkey in Eurovision Competition. For Germany, many Turkish people live in Germany and it is beneficial to Turkey. Concerning Japan, it helps Turkey during earthquake and causes no damage to it. Palestine is also seen as friends. Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is seen as friends because it is Turkish state and has landship. For USA, it is in contact

**Table 3.** Friendship perceptions of country by the students.

Name of the country	f	%	n
Azerbaijan	12	20.00	60
Germany	10	16.67	
Japan	10	16.67	
Palestine	8	13.33	
America	4	6.67	
TRNC	8	13.33	
Greece	2	3.33	
Türkmenistan	4	6.67	
Kazakhstan	2	3.33	

**Table 4.** Students' views on the reasons why they countries as friends.

Name of the country	Reason for friendship	f	%
Azerbaijan	is Turkish	7	11.66
	is Muslim	4	6.67
	supports Turkey in Eurovision Competition	1	1.16
Germany	Many Turkish people live in Germany	8	13.33
	it has beneficial for Turkey	2	3.33
Japan	helps Turkey during earthquake	7	11.66
	it does not damage Turkey.	3	5.00
Palestine	is Muslim	5	8.33
	loves Turkey	3	5.00
TRNC	is Turkish	3	5.00
	is seen as landship	5	8.33
America	in contact with Turkey	2	3.33
	helps it about terrorism	2	3.33
Türkmenistan	is Turkish	4	6.67
Greece	sometimes helps Turkey	2	3.33
Kazakhstan	is Turkish	2	3.33

with Turkey and helps to tackle terrorism. Turkmenistan is Turkish state. Greece sometimes helps Turkey and Kazakhstan is Turkish state (Table 4).

The students consider the followings as factors affecting students' hostility and friendly perceptions thus: 22 students stated television; 18 students, history books; 8 students, internet; 8 students, newspapers and 4 students, teachers (Table 5).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As a result of this research, it was determined that 8th grade students have friendly and enmity perceptions. Similar results have been demonstrated by studies conducted among different age groups (Yılmaz and Yiğit, 2010). They state that students define enemy countries as

**Table 5.** The views of student's concerning the sources of perceptions of friendship and hostility.

Source	f	%	n
Television	22	36,67	60
History Books	18	30,00	
Internet	8	13,33	
Newspaper	8	13,33	
Teachers	4	6,67	

those having problems with Turkey in recent history. The students have negative attitude towards the countries that have international problems with Turkey. The problems are set off between states rather than geographical space to prevent creating students' hostile perception. In this

context, though the country shares no border with Israel, the students see Israel as an enemy of Turkey. When the reasons for this perception are examined, students express political events, religious belief, and historical information that are not included in the official program. This is because information of Israel belonging to a different religion and requesting for land in Turkey is not in history books. On the other hand, there is a negative perception towards countries such as the UK, United States, because they are effective in international politics. International problems not solved and complex methods pursued by the largest state in this issue lead to the formation of a hostile perception by students. The United States has been accused of hypocritical policy by Turkish people followed by the students. That some countries demanded their territory from the war and were against Turkey in the past causes hostility. The negative relationships in political, social or military issues that occurred in the past among states, the religious thoughts of the students and the information on history lessons taught in schools play an important role in the development of students' hostile perception. This result is supported by similar studies (Neuman, 2001; Hunsberger and Jackson, 2005; Rock, 2004).

How students perceive Turkey's friendly countries is understood from the study results. In doing so, they think about the historical past, common traditions, common understanding of the people and social benefits. A significant portion of the country indicated as friends is composed of Turkish and Muslim countries. This result is supported by similar research (Tuncel, 2002). In this context, countries inhabited densely by Turkish people are friendly countries. On the other hand, countries establishing good relations with Turkey, and situated next to it in its difficult period are friendly. Among these countries, Japan is in a different place. The visual aid given by Japan to Turkey makes the students see it as their friend. Recently, they perceived Greece as friendly due to the social events that they have had. Countries cooperating with Turkey and Muslim countries on international issues are adopted as friendly countries. It is seen that the discourse of religious ideas from the students takes an important place in the development of friendship perception.

Students prove that the knowledge obtained from television is the most important factor influencing the development of friendly and enmity perception. When students viewed their friendly and enmity perception of the country, this discourse is also seen. So in this case, students are clearer compared to the perception that they put out resources and affect their perception. Debate on Turkey's prime minister and president of Israel in Davos or in Azerbaijan's Eurovision Song Contest entrant to support the Turkish people are examples of this. It is understood

that media communication tools and equipment about the students contribute to the perception of friendship and enmity, negatively affecting the students. It is also understood as a starting point of the current problems existing in the formation of perceptions of hostility against Libya. In this context, students' academic knowledge in the formation of perceptions, rather than between states is clear from the findings of the study as a starting point of the current problems occurring. On the other hand, the information contained in textbooks is seen as the two factors influencing the perception of friendship and enmity. Students located within the discourse of reason, such as to 'demand for our land' and 'war against our country' are examples of this. The formation of the perception of the students is included in the Internet and newspapers. The information contained in these channels influences students positively or negatively. The students identified teachers as the least factor affecting their perception (Berry, 2003; Harrison, 1995; Figen, 2013).

In consideration of the study results, students develop sensibility towards the events happening around their country. Also, historical problems affecting the relationships between countries, the news appearing on media, existing politics have important role in students developing sensibility. In the studies both nationally and internationally, it is concluded that students develop friendly or hostile perceptions by being influenced by the media, political developments, and politicians (Yılmaz and Kaya, 2010; Zevin and Corbin, 1998, Ersoy, 2013). In the study that was done, the fact that teachers and course books are shown as the less effective factors influencing students' friendly or hostility perception results from the course book contents being corrected with peace education.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is not enough research in Turkey about this topic. Therefore, the examination of the different methods and construction of new research by providing participants of in-depth and different sizes are recommended.
2. For the students to acquire more in-depth information about different countries and their cultures, political, economic, social studies contents and materials related to cultural characteristics are suggested for use in the coursebooks.
3. For the occurrence of friendly or enmity perceptions between states, basic factors and other societal difference should be examined and included in the social studies book to judge the content (Braym, 1990; Scott, 1999).
4. More space should be given to the coursebooks on

current issues, thereby helping students to build on the solid foundation of historical view.

### Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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