

Full Length Research Paper

Turkish language student teachers' use of instructional materials in teaching Turkishⁱ

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The aim of the present study is to identify which materials Turkish student teachers use in teaching practicum and the usage characteristics of these materials. This is a descriptive study using survey model. The participants of the study were 75 final year students, 35 females and 40 males, studying at the Turkish Language Teaching Department of Mehmet Akif Ersoy University's Education Faculty in the 2012-2013 academic year. An observation form titled "The Use of Turkish Teaching Materials" developed by the researcher was used as the data gathering material. The literature was reviewed for the content validity of the observation form and expert's opinion was consulted with regard to its face validity. In terms of data analysis, frequencies and percentages were used. As a result of the study, it was found that the student teachers mostly employed visual materials in the teaching practicum, but never used audial materials. Besides, the student teachers were observed to use the materials they preferred in a suitable way for their aims.

Key words: Turkish teaching, student teachers, teaching materials, teaching environment.

INTRODUCTION

The teaching-learning process is composed of the interaction between teacher, student, social environment and the acquired information. In ensuring successful interaction in this process, the importance of materials used in teaching environment cannot be underestimated.

Teaching materials should not be taken as being independent from other elements involved in the learning-teaching process. Using materials in teaching creates opportunities such as presenting the topic more effectively, enhancing learning, increasing observation and addressing the different senses of students simultaneously (Senemoğlu, 2009). In addition, it is known that materials save time for learning, individualize

it, increase its quality, and make teaching more efficient and enjoyable (Yaman, 2010). Besides, using material not only facilitates learning but also provides permanent learning (Cameron and Bennett, 2010). In this sense, today, the variety of teaching materials has increased as a result of technological developments. The researches in this area have revealed that the use of teaching technologies as materials during lessons helps students learn and develop critical thinking skills; contributes to cooperative and interactive learning; increases students' achievement at every level of education and encourages students to learn (Sivin-Kachala and Bialo, 2000; Jan, 2005).

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The function of materials used in the teaching-learning process is not to teach on behalf of the teacher, but to contribute to more effective and concrete learning by facilitating the interaction between the learners and what is being learnt. In other words, materials are teaching-learning helpers that can be functionalized only with teacher and his/her assistance. Briefly, teachers' use of materials in the teaching-learning process is important in terms of forming effective and permanent student learning.

Materials that can be used in the teaching-learning process can be categorized into four groups. These are: Visual materials; books –course book, teachers' book, workbook, reference books; text and visualization boards -blackboards, multi-purpose boards, copy boards, hanger boards, magnetic boards, file boards, bulletin boards; images-raw images, drawing images, flashcards, figurines, wallpapers, plates, posters, graphs, sketches, maps, caricatures; real objects and models - overhead projector, slide projector, film projector, opaque caricatures, video projectors, data shows, conference projectors; audio materials; radios, tapes, recordings, CD, DVD, record players and recorders; audio-visual materials; film projectors and animated films, closed-circuit televisions, videos, puppets, theatres, educational trips; technology-supported materials; teletex and videotext applications, computer video players, computer laser disc players, communication satellites, online classes (Demirel et al., 2003).

As can be seen, teaching materials vary regarding their power of addressing to different senses of learners. The selection of materials and their effective use to suit teaching-learning objectives is quite important (Ornstein and Lasley, 2000). The reason is that if a material is not used effectively, although it was prepared in accordance with the latest technology, its efficiency will not reach the desired level. There are many factors affecting the choice of materials for teaching. These factors include teaching-learning objectives, teaching-learning management, students characteristics (visual-audial preferences, learning levels etc.), teaching environment, (size, suitability for materials), material characteristics, teacher' attitudes, skills, cost, time and availability (Çelik, 2010). In addition, the dominant factor in the choice of teaching-learning materials is their suitability in terms of the student outcomes in the teaching programme. Different materials should be chosen and used for different outcomes in the learning areas. At the same time, materials chosen should increase students' interests, meet their needs and be suitable in terms of the subject to be taught.

As is the case in all other courses, in teaching Turkish, using multi-faceted material would enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the course. As is well known, language is learnt automatically with all its rules during experiential situations. Children acquire the language by listening to models, imitating these models, receiving

feedback, and sharing their experiences and ideas. They, then, model the individuals they interact with in their social environment and at school. In this learning situation, an enriched language environment, as well as the individuals involved in the process is a supportive factor in their acquisition of the language and their ability to use it creatively (Sever, 2008). For contemporary Turkish teaching, a multi-source and multi-stimulant approach should be employed instead of sticking to only the course book.

The materials recommended for use in teaching Turkish at primary and secondary school levels can be listed as follows (Sever, 2008): Visual materials: Books and printed sources; blackboard; costumes and accessories for demos; audio materials: Radio; cassette/CD/MP3 player; visual-audial materials: Computer-projector system; television; video/DVD/VCD.

As can be seen, there is a variety of materials that can be used in teaching Turkish. While in the past teaching Turkish used to be based on printed sources, nowadays visual-audial materials and computer technologies help teachers and students as a result of technological development.

Another aspect associated with the effective use of teaching materials in the teaching-learning process is the teacher factor. In addition to using teaching-learning methods and techniques appropriate to students' developmental and learning stages, ages and abilities, the ability to choose suitable materials and employ the latest technologies in class are also among the skills that teachers should have (McNair and Galanouli, 2002). The awareness of Turkish student teachers as well as Turkish teachers, in this respect, would help them organize the teaching environment, and make the teaching of Turkish more effective and efficient in their future professional lives. However, there is nothing in the relevant literature focusing on materials Turkish student teachers use in teaching environments and the usage characteristics of these materials. Such a study would be informative in terms of the materials Turkish student teachers use in Turkish classes during the teaching practicum, and the usage characteristics of these materials. This information can be evaluated as feedback in teaching Turkish process, and contribute to a more effective and efficient Turkish teacher training process.

The aim of the study

This study aims to identify the materials Turkish student teachers use in the teaching practicum and the usage characteristics of the materials.

METHOD

Research design

This is a descriptive study using a survey model. Survey models

aim to describe a case that existed in the past or still exists. The attempt is made to define the case under investigation within its own context in an objective way (Karasar, 2009).

Study group

The participants of the study were 75 senior students, 35 females and 40 males, studying at the Turkish Language Teaching Department in Education Faculty at Mehmet Akif Ersoy University in the academic year 2012-2013.

Data collection tools

The data for this study were gathered using an observation form entitled "The Use of Turkish Teaching Materials" developed by the researcher following a literature review and after asking experts' opinions; the experts who work as faculty members in Turkish language teaching departments at different universities. The literature was reviewed for the content validity of the observation form and the expert opinion was consulted in terms of its face validity. The items included in the observation form were examined by three experts, and the ones thought to be suitable were included in the form. To enhance the reliability of the measurement material, each student teacher was observed at three different times during the teaching practicum and the consistency of observation results was examined. The observation form included the materials used in teaching Turkish, and the evaluation for each item was done as the options "Using"; "Level of Use if Using" (Suitable for the aim; Somewhat Suitable for the aim; Not Suitable for the aim).

Twenty seven Turkish teachers, working in 9 secondary schools where our study group went for teaching practicum, participated in the study as observers. At the beginning of the study, a knowledge-sharing meeting was held with the Turkish teachers regarding the materials used in teaching Turkish, their selection and usage. The questions that emerged were discussed, and an agreement was reached.

The observation form developed for the study was introduced to the teachers, and the necessary information and training was provided through a sample implementation. The teachers were asked to observe each student at least three times (i.e. in three different Turkish lessons) and the information gathered was then combined.

Data analysis

To identify which materials the student teachers used and the usage characteristics of the materials frequency and percentage technique was used.

RESULTS

In this section, the findings obtained from the observation form will be presented. The percentage and frequency distribution of the materials student teachers use and the level of use can be seen in Table 1. All 75 student teachers who participated in the study used the Turkish course book as the teaching material in all of their practices within the Turkish course. It was observed that 81.33% of these candidates used the course book in a way that was suitable for the aim, while 18.67% used it in a way that was not suitable.

Worksheets were found to be the second most frequently-used teaching material by the student teachers. 73.33% of the 75 student teachers used worksheets. However, it was observed that 89% of these participants used these materials suitably while 7.27% of the participants used them partially suitably, and 3.65% of them did not use the materials suitably at all.

Blackboard was one of the materials preferred by the student teachers and was, in fact, the third most frequently used material. 72% of the participants used the blackboard. Among these participants, 83.33% used it in a way that was suitable to its aim, while the use on the part of 11.11% was partially suitable, and 5.56% was not suitable.

Turkish dictionary and other dictionaries, computers and projectors were the fourth most frequently-used materials by the student teachers. 53.33% of the participants used dictionaries as part of their teaching. The use by 92.5% was suitable for the aim, while 7.5% was partially suitable.

Projectors and computers had the same frequency with dictionary use in terms of the most frequently-used materials by the student teachers. 53.33% of the student teachers used projectors and computers. 82.5% of the student teachers used projectors suitable for the aim, while that of 12.5% was partially suitable and 5% was not suitable. Similarly, 90% of the candidates using computers used them in a way that was suitable for the aim, 5% was partially suitable and the remaining 5% was not suitable.

As for the spelling dictionary, it was the fifth most frequently-used material, as it was used by 26.66% of the student teachers who participated in the study. The use by 90% of these student teachers was suitable for the aim while 10 % was partially suitable.

Card games (e.g. story cards, concept cards.) and other printed sources (e.g. anthologies, magazines, newspapers, posters, photographs, pictures, etc.) were the sixth most frequently-used materials in terms of the student teachers' preferences. Of the 75 participants, 25.44% used these materials as part of their teaching. Among these candidates, 25.33% employed game cards, and the use by 89.47% of these participants was suitable for the aim, while 10.53% was partially suitable. Among the 25.33% employing the other printed sources (anthologies, magazines, newspapers, photographs, pictures, etc.), 84.21% used these materials in a way that was suitable for the aim, while 15.79% was partially suitable for the aim.

Children's books were the seventh most frequently-used materials. 17.33% of the student teachers participating in the study were observed to use children's books as a teaching material. All of the participants employing children's books used them in a way that was suitable for the aim.

Using costumes and accessories for demonstration purposes was the least preferred material on the part of

Table 1. Percentage and frequency distribution of the materials student teachers use and level of use.

Teaching materials	Using		Level of use if using					
			Suitable for the aim		Somewhat suitable for the aim		Not suitable for the aim	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Course book	75	100	61	81.33	14	18.67	-	-
Worksheets	55	73.33	49	89	4	7.27	2	3.65
Blackboard	54	72	45	83.33	6	11.11	3	5.56
Turkish dictionary and other dictionaries (e.g. idioms, proverbs and terminology dictionaries)	40	53.33	37	92.5	3	7.5	-	-
Projector	40	53.33	33	82.5	5	12.5	2	5
Computer	40	53.33	36	90	2	5	2	5
Spelling Dictionary	20	26.66	18	90	2	10	-	-
Card Games (e.g. Story cards, concept cards etc.)	19	25.33	17	89.47	2	10.53	-	-
Other printed sources (Anthology, Magazine, Newspaper, Photograph, Picture etc.)	19	25.33	16	84.21	3	15.79	-	-
Children's books	13	17.33	13	100	-	-	-	-
Costume and Accessories for Demonstration	3	4	3	100	-	-	-	-
Overhead Projector	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Radio	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cassette/CD/MP3 Player	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Television	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Video, DVD,VCD	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

the student teachers. Only 4% of the student teachers participating in the study used this material, which was also suitable for the aim.

It was observed that the student teachers never used aural and visual-audial materials such as overhead projector, radio, cassette/CD/MP3 player, television and video/DVD/VCD.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study revealed that the most frequently used instructional material by the student teachers was the Turkish course book and its use was suitable for the aim. Course books are primary sources that cover the topics in the program in a consistent way, equip students with knowledge, skills and habits, and are easy to use. For this reason, they should be prepared with great care (Güneş, 2002; Özbay, 2003). Similarly, in teaching Turkish, course books are used as an essential instructional material in learning and teaching language skills. However, it is not possible to engage in language teaching by sticking to the course book only. The reason is that course books are prepared based on the objectives of the program and the topics to be covered, rather than considering the students' interests, abilities and learning rates. A multi-source and multi-stimulant approach should be preferred when it comes to developing different

perceptions and thinking skills in students, and enhancing their comprehension and expression skills. The reason for the student teachers' using this material so frequently could be their practicum teachers' identifying the teaching subjects based on the course book.

The findings of the study also showed that the second most frequently-used instructional materials on the part of the student teachers were worksheets. Worksheets are important instructional materials when teaching a subject, ensuring reinforcement or identifying students' level of learning (Göçer, 2012). It is good to know that worksheets that should be used in learning-teaching processes to turn acquired knowledge into skills are used by Turkish student teachers.

The traditional blackboard was among the materials most frequently used by the student teachers. Why the blackboard is used frequently can be explained by the fact that they are available in every classroom, easy to access, and do not need any preparation. The most important advantage of using the blackboard is the ability to produce instant materials during the lesson. The blackboard is of great help in presenting points instantly, emphasizing the main points, summarizing, providing visual richness, and particularly for receiving feedback and revision. However, that teachers turn their back to the class and lose eye contact with the students while using the blackboard can cut them off from communication with the students and may lead to classroom

discipline problems. It is necessary to use instructional materials addressing more than one sense to enable high level of participation and learning (Aydemir, 2012).

In the research findings, it was found that a Turkish dictionary and other dictionaries (e.g. idioms, proverbs and terminology dictionaries), projectors and computers were used by the same number of student teachers. The importance of dictionaries in teaching vocabulary cannot be underestimated. However, students should be taught to use dictionaries before they are taught words. Teachers coming to the class with a dictionary and using it can be a good model for students. On the other hand, demonstrating the effect of using dictionaries with regard to gaining knowledge is also important in terms of making students use reference books and guiding them (Göçer, 2009). 53.33% of the Turkish student teachers brought Turkish and other dictionaries to the classroom and used them in accordance with the aim of the lesson. This is important for guiding students to use dictionaries and making it a habit in the process of teaching vocabulary.

Computer and projector systems can be used as instructional media to make the visuals attractive in all courses and at all levels. In the literature on teaching technologies, it is stated that the projects that developed based on the use of computer and communication technologies yielded positive results (Benson et al., 2004). The use of technology provides student teachers with positive learning experiences as well as improving their communication, and affects their study life besides their teaching practices (Hokanson, 2001). 53.33% of the student teachers who participated in the study used projectors and computers, and the level of use was found to be suitable for the aim of the lessons (projectors, 82.5%; computers, 90%). This finding is important in the sense that Turkish language student teachers use teaching technologies for effective lesson delivery. Yaman's (2007) study revealing that Turkish student teachers have positive views on teaching technologies and material design supports this finding.

However, the fact that materials such as radios, CD/MP3 players, televisions, videos and DVDs were not used by the student teachers despite the availability of internet access at the schools involved shows that computers and projectors were not employed in a multipurpose way, but only in the electronic presentation format. The observing teachers also stated similar views on the observation form. The use of computers and projectors was suitable to the lesson aims and was evaluated in the context of electronic presentation. These presentations are surely important in terms of creating visual stimuli. However, today, using teaching technologies only in electronic presentations is an obstacle to the use of these materials as required. At the same time it is useful to have students gain skills to benefit from the information universe provided by technologies.

There are many studies in different countries focusing on the use of teaching technologies. For example, in teachers mostly use electronic presentations and the

internet in teaching environments. On the other hand, in a study on student teachers, Angeli (2004) demonstrated that student teachers are not competent in using technology-supported teaching strategies and combining them with computer practices. In their studies, Hu et al. (2003) stated that computer technologies are not sufficiently emphasized in teacher training programs, and Wedman and Diggs (2001) asserted that one of the primary reasons limiting the use of technology in teacher education is the lack of knowledge of technology.

In the research findings, spelling dictionaries were the fifth most frequently-used material by the student teachers. 90% of the student teachers using this material used it in a way that was suitable to its aim. Spelling dictionaries are necessary in acquiring language skills and having a strong language background. In teaching Turkish, spelling dictionaries containing all the information related to writing and spelling have an important role. Spelling dictionaries are of significance when it comes to teaching the accurate spelling of words, making students get used to pronouncing words correctly through accurate writing, and teaching spelling rules. Teachers coming to the class with a spelling dictionary and using it during the lesson is a key factor in the process of students using these dictionaries and getting into the habit of using them.

Card games are important, particularly in teaching new concepts in Turkish education and comprehending a subject in different dimensions. Similarly, using printed materials such as anthologies, magazines, newspapers, posters and photographs is also important in creating a multi-stimulant teaching environment. It is good to know that the student teachers using both card games and various printed materials used them suitably in terms of their aims for the lessons. However, such student teachers' being low in number is engrossing a problem since it shows that these materials are used less frequently in teaching environments.

Children's books are the most important means of forming a reading habit - one of the primary aims of Turkish education. Suitable children's books provide children with a world other than the daily language that they speak. They give children the opportunity to get to know the limits of their language (Sever, 2008). The use of children's books in teaching Turkish is also important in terms of developing comprehension and expression skills. According to the research findings, children's books were among the least-used materials by the student teachers. The fact that children's books are not used as basic materials in developing a reading habit limits the teaching of Turkish to the texts and language used in the course-books.

This situation is a vital obstacle for forming skills in students such as creativity, problem solving, perception of different topics, thinking and awareness. This can be due to the insufficiencies in school and classroom libraries, and the difficulty of preparation for book selection.

Furthermore, the fact that the student teachers did not

have sufficient knowledge in this respect can be another factor.

Using costumes and accessories for demonstration purposes was the least-preferred material on the part of the student teachers. Making demonstration while stories and tales are being told, using dramatization and creative drama practices to develop students' language skills are important for the effectiveness of the Turkish course. That this material is used relatively infrequently may be an indicator that student teachers do not include these media in teaching.

The findings also revealed that the student teachers never used visual- audio materials such as cassette/ CD/MP3 players, televisions, and video/DVDs in their teaching processes. The use of computers and projectors can explain the reason why overhead projectors are not used. Besides, it is a significant lack that materials such as radios, cassette/CD/MP3 players, televisions, video/ DVDs (although there was computer equipment and internet access in the classrooms observed) are not used in teaching. Studies show that well-designed interactive video applications motivate students and that the use of CDs, cassettes and video clips developed by teachers can increase student achievement (Shea, 2000; Boster et al., 2002). The use of these materials has a significant role particularly in language teaching. Turkish courses could become a willingly made series of events for the students who are eager to explain the thoughts that a short movie gives rise to, or the things a picture, a caricature or a classical music associate -in a written way or orally. It is a major shortcoming that such materials are never used by student teachers.

As a result of the study, it was found that the teacher candidates mostly used visual materials (i.e. course-book and printed materials; blackboards) in their teaching practicum, but never used audial materials (i.e. radio; cassette/CD/MP3). Among the visual-audio materials, computer-projector systems were used only in the electronic presentation format, but television and Video/ DVD/VCD were never used. This case is a significant obstacle in creating a multi-stimulant teaching environment that is considered to be formed through using the materials addressing very different senses. Besides, the teacher candidates were found to use the materials they preferred in a way that was suitable for their aims. This finding shows that the student teachers did not use a variety of materials, but are able to use the ones that they preferred in an effective manner.

Based on the findings of the research, some suggestions can be made for the use of instructional media in teaching Turkish. Not only these materials should be presented but also teaching environment in which student teachers can use these materials should be created in the courses that student teachers take as part of their teacher training such as Teaching Technologies and Material Design; Teaching Methodology and subject area courses. Moreover, these materials should be used by course lecturers, and students be guided to

use them. Similarly, the attitudes of the Turkish teachers at the practicum schools are also important. These teachers are expected to act as models for student teacher in terms of professional guidance and be competent in the use of such materials.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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