Effects of Some Variables on 4th Year Students’ Attitudes towards Turkish Course

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Summary

Language educators commonly agree that the individual learns his/her mother tongue initially in the family which is seen as the smallest unit of the society and later in the immediate environment. Natural learning experiences in the family are followed by intentional acculturation in schools.

Turkish education program in use at schools “aims to raise assertive individuals who are able to use Turkish accurately, efficiently and well and who are able to think critically and can use and produce knowledge and attach importance to personal and social values (MNE, 2005).

In its Decision No 172, taken on 22nd September, 1981, the Council of Education and Morality described the aims of Turkish by noting that “the role of a quality mother tongue education in intellectual and spiritual development of students is so critical that it cannot be compared and contrasted with any other lessons.”

Attitudes are tendencies of person towards a concrete object or an abstract notion that make itself clear in the form of being for or against the object or notion and they are learnt properties that direct that person’s ideas or emotions. Ülgen (1994: 79) defines an attitude as a notion that cannot be observed but results in observable behavior and that directs behavior and results in subjectivity in decision-making processes. Demirel (2001: 93) defines it as “the learnedness that causes a person exhibit certain behaviors towards various people, objects and situations.” On the other hand, Bloom (1979) stressed that students’ attitudes might change depending on their level of devotion to the lesson. Bloom also stated that during the learning process learners’ accumulated knowledge might shape their world of perception in the future.

Language acquisition in children largely depends on their positive relations with the immediate environment. It is wise to provide learners with enough experiences in terms of language acquisition and to make schools as a cultural center in terms of reinforcing their language development. Families exist in every phase of education. In this respect, the bases of children’s language skills are formed in the family. A child encounters with the attitudes and behaviors of the family, particularly his/her mother, beginning with its life in the womb. The personal development process that starts when the child comes into the world is closely related with the characteristics of the family. The years in which individual acquisitions take place are apparent in the family. In terms of speech, the developments that emerge in the meaning universe of the child are related with the language used in the family. The development of Turkish language skills at this point is directly affected by the socio-cultural structure of the family.

Such a situation promotes self-confidence in students, and it helps them develop informed attitudes. Bölükbaş (cited in Atkinson, 1999) stated that when attitudes are related with behaviors, behaviors develop as well in the same direction.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

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The purpose of the present study is to investigate elementary school students’ attitudes towards Turkish lessons in terms of certain variables. In line with this aim, the answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What are the attitudes of elementary school students towards Turkish lessons?
2. Do the attitudes of elementary school students towards Turkish lessons differ across genders?
3. Do the attitudes of elementary school students towards Turkish lessons differ according to the educational background of their parents?

**METHOD**

**Research Design**

The present study was a mixed-mode one with both qualitative and quantitative characteristics. In this respect, since the study focused on the causation between dependent and independent variables, “casual comparative research model” was used.

In the qualitative part of the study, and attitude scale was administered to 192 students to identify their attitudes towards Turkish lessons. The collected data were examined using SPSS 17.

In addition, for the variable of parents’ educational background, a semi-structured interview with two items was used to find out the views of 20 elementary schoolteachers working in the province of Sivas. Content analysis, in which the situation is truly depicted and shown, was carried out to analyze the responses collected, and the results are given in the table. The teachers in the study sample were given a number between 1 and 20 (K1, K2, K3…K20).

**Study Sample**

The sample of the study was composed of 190 students (109 females and 83 males) and 20 elementary school teachers whose views were taken.

**Data Collection Tools**

The data in this study were collected using Attitude Scale for Turkish Lessons and a semi-structured interview form with 2 open ended questions directed to teachers.

**Data Analysis**

The data collected in this study were analyzed using “SPSS 17.0.” In the analysis of the data, the following statistical techniques were used: frequency calculations, correlation, one-way ANOVA and factorial ANOVA. Content analysis was carried out to analyze qualitative data.

**Some of the findings of the study are as follows:**

- It was found that out of 192 people there were 2 literate mothers, 7 literate mothers, 83 elementary school graduates, 38 secondary school graduates, 34 high school graduates, 6 vocational high school graduates, 5 imam hatip high school graduates, 16 college graduates, and 1 person with a graduate degree.
- It was observed that out of 192 people there were 6 literate fathers, 41 elementary school graduates, 27 secondary school graduates, 56 high school graduates, 11 vocational high school graduates, 10 imam hatip high school graduates, 40 college graduates, and 1 person with a graduate degree.
- In this question, the impact of parents’ educational level on Turkish lessons was investigated. Out of 20 elementary school teachers, 95% (N:19) said “Yes,” and 5%
said “Partially.” No teachers said that parents’ educational level doesn’t have an impact on the lesson, and this indicates that the parents’ educational level has significant impact on Turkish lessons.

- For this question, 20 elementary school teachers were interviewed to find out what the child’s interest in Turkish lesson was related with. 12% of elementary school teachers attributed the child’s interest in Turkish lessons to the factor of “teacher.”

RESULTS

- According to the data collected from the students, it was found that most of the mothers were elementary school graduates. This was followed by secondary school graduates and high school graduates; it was found that only one mother had a graduate degree.
- The learners’ attitudes were examined across genders, and it was concluded that the attitude scores of boys and girls differed from each other.
- When the mean attitude scores of boys and girls are examined, it is seen that the scores differed significantly in favor of the girls.
- When the effect size of the difference between the attitude scores of girls and boys is examined, it is seen that it has a moderate impact on the attitudes towards Turkish lessons.
- The attitude scores were examined to find out whether there is a difference between the scores according to the variable of the mother’s educational level; it was found that there was a significant difference between the learners’ scores in terms of their mother’s educational background.
- It was concluded that the positive support of educated mothers to their children’s intellectual and physical development was irreplaceable.
- It was also found that the educational background of fathers had no impact on children’s attitude scores in Turkish lessons.
- There is a weak and insignificant positive correlation between fathers’ education level and learners’ attitude scores in Turkish lessons.
- Based on the two open-ended questions directed to 20 elementary school teachers, it was found that variables of family and teacher were the most significant variables that had a deep impact on children’s attitudes towards Turkish lessons.
- It was concluded that educated parents greatly contributed to children’s love for Turkish lessons, and accordingly they helped children develop more positive attitudes towards this lesson.
- The impact of parents’ educational level on children in terms of Turkish lessons concerned culture, reading, self-confidence, friendship relations, sociability, success in lessons, oral and written expression, active participation in lessons, using imagination power, developing vocabulary, speaking accurately and fluently, speaking by paying attention to stress and intonation and speaking in line with the effect of punctuation on oral language.
- The impact of families on children in terms of Turkish lessons concerned speaking, cultural level, reading, communication within the family, being a model, education, using Turkish accurately and helping children love Turkish.

Based on research findings the following suggestions can be made:

1. Necessary precautions should be taken to improve the attitudes of male students.
2. In line with the findings, necessary precautions should be taken to increase the educational levels of mothers. Knowledgeable children should be raised with educated parents.

3. It should be ensured that the educational level of fathers, most of whom are high school graduates maintained and their educational level should be increased.

4. Fathers, most of whom are civil servants or tradesmen, should be provided with in-service training to help them have an impact upon their children’s attitudes towards Turkish lessons.

5. Certain activities should be carried out and necessary precautions should be taken to help people understand the importance of communication and interaction within the family.

**Keywords:** Attitudes towards Turkish Course, achievement, gender, parents’ educational level