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AN ANALYSIS OF THE MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES THEORY IN COURSEBOOKS OF TEACHING TURKISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the activities and tasks in teaching Turkish as a foreign language coursebooks in the light of the multiple intelligences theory. The theory has attracted considerable attention among language teachers and has been implemented in education since it was proposed by Gardner in 1983. The coursebook still remains the primary material used to teach and learn a language; however, it cannot address the needs of all students. Therefore, the high dependency on coursebooks entails the adaptation of activities and tasks to involve all learners who possess a different blend of intelligences. A qualitative research design was adopted to analyse the content through a descriptive method. Four coursebooks prepared by state institutions in Turkey were examined and the dominant intelligence type was determined for each activity and task. The findings of this study suggest that the coursebooks include activities and tasks dominant in the linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences.

Keywords: multiple intelligences theory, teaching Turkish as a foreign language, Turkish coursebooks as a foreign language

YABANCI DİL OLARAK TÜRKÇE ÖĞRETİMİ DERS KİTAPLARINDA ÇOKLU ZEKA TEORİSİNİN İNCELENMESİ

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı yabancı dil olarak Türkçe öğretimi ders kitaplarında bulunan etkinlikleri çoklu zekâ teorisi ışığında incelemektir. Bu teori, Howard Gardner tarafından 1983 yılında ortaya atıldığından beri eğitimciler tarafından benimsenmiş ve özellikle yabancı dil öğretiminde ilgi görmüştür. Ders kitabı, dil öğretme ve öğrenmede hala en temel materyal olarak yerini korumaktadır; fakat bir ders kitabı tüm öğrencilerin ihtiyacını karşılamakta yetersiz kalmaktadır. Bu nedenle, farklı zekâ türlerine sahip olan öğrencilere hitap edebilmek için ders kitaplarındaki etkinliklerin bu doğrultuda uyarlanması gerekmektedir. Bu çalışmada nitel araştırma deseni kullanılmıştır. Betimleyici yöntem kullanılarak içerik analizi yapılmıştır. Türkiye’de bulunan devlet kurumları tarafından hazırlanmış olan dört farklı ders kitabı incelenmiş ve baskın oldukları zekâ türleri açısından değerlendirilmiştir. Araştırmanın sonucunda dört ders kitabında da sözel-dilsel ve mantıksal-matematiksel zekâ türlerine yönelik etkinliklerin baskın olduğu ortaya konulmuştur.

Anahtar kelimeler: çoklu zekâ teorisi, yabancı dil olarak Türkçe öğretimi, yabancı dil olarak Türkçe ders kitapları

1. Introduction

In today’s world, living in a global society requires educators to adjust their teaching to the needs of their students with various cognitive competence and backgrounds. Especially the early years of the 21st century have witnessed a perceptible shift towards individualisation in educational settings, especially in the area of language instruction (Arabski and Wojtaszek, 2011).

The variation in language attainment of foreign language learners has indicated that there must be an impact of individual differences. Therefore, it is of crucial importance for the teacher to plan the learning process by taking these individual differences into consideration.

Howard Gardner, who proposed the multiple intelligences (MI) theory, claims that each individual possesses a unique blend of intelligences (1983, 1999). As Armstrong (2018, s. 12) points out MI theory is “not a “type theory for determining the one intelligence that fits each person”. The theory attempts to explain a person’s mental abilities namely cognitive functioning. According to this theory, people possess a capacity in all eight intelligences. Gardner rejects the traditional view of intelligence and defines it as “a biopsychological potential to process information that can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture” (1999, s. 33). The MI theory has been largely applied in the field of education and especially in language teaching to address all intelligences of students which concurrently increases the motivation level of learners.

One of the challenges teachers face in classrooms is that they apply a fixed curriculum to all students who have vastly different needs and learning styles. The theory of multiple

intelligences provides a guidance for teachers to develop innovative teaching strategies. As highlighted by Armstrong (2018) MI theory suggests that there is no teaching strategy that works perfectly for all students at all times since “children have different proclivities in the eight intelligences”. Applying standardized tests that are dominant in evaluating the logic and verbal intelligence prevents to embrace all students; whereas MI is a student-centred model that allows students to use their strengths to demonstrate what they have learnt.

The coursebook is still the dominant material used in language teaching classrooms. As pointed out by Nunan (1991), materials either teacher developed or commercially produced are the tangible and visible aspects of the curriculum. The syllabus in coursebooks provides continuity and direction for teachers and learners. Çetin (2012) highlights the importance of coursebooks by defining them as the backbone of the curriculum. Therefore, to appeal to all learners and maximise the value of coursebooks, teachers should adapt them by reducing, adding, omitting, modifying and supplementing.

Previous research has indicated the benefits of multiple intelligences theory in education. Campbell and Campbell (1999) reported that classes where the MI theory was used showed a significant increase in student achievement. Researchers investigated six case studies which consisted of six diverse public schools that applied MI for at least five years and found that using MI developed basic skills at all grade levels. According to the findings of the meta-analysis research conducted by researchers, it was found that the multiple intelligences theory influences academic success positively (Yurt and Polat, 2015; Batdı, 2017; Aydın, 2019). Haley (2004, s. 171) stated that studies conducted to investigate teachers practices of MI theory in foreign and second language classrooms revealed that students in experimental groups outperformed those in control groups. Students in the experimental group expressed a high degree of satisfaction and positive attitude toward the content. Hamurlu (2007) found that multiple intelligences based instruction promoted students’ achievement in English lessons and had positive impact on students’ attitudes towards the language.

A considerable amount of literature has been established on multiple intelligences theory. However, in teaching Turkish as a foreign language, there are a few researches investigating this theory in terms of materials. As Turkish has become a preferred language by foreigners in recent years, this study aims to offer some important insights into the field. According to Eberhard et al. (2020) Turkish is spoken by 85.197.130 people as a first and second language. However, considering the wide geography where Turkish is spoken, it is estimated that the total number is about 250 million (Boylu and Başer, 2018). The main reason for learning Turkish is business, travel and education. Besides, the rapid increase in the immigrant population in Turkey has raised the need for learning Turkish.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. The Multiple Intelligences Theory

Initially, as a psychologist, Howard Gardner did not consider the multiple intelligences theory as an educational theory in his book *Frames of Mind* (1983). However, after his work was published, it was embraced by educators and especially by language teachers. The reason for the attention was that “it validates educators’ everyday experience; students thinking and learning in many different ways” (Gardner, 2006, s. 11). Gardner points out that the theory has enabled educators to form a conceptual framework to organize and reflect on the curriculum, assessment and pedagogical practices. Consequently, this led them to develop new approaches

that met the needs of the learners in the classroom (Kornhaber as cited in Gardner, 2006). However, as *Frames of Mind* (1983) did not demonstrate how to apply the theory, different understandings of the concept have emerged.

Traditionally, intelligence has been considered as quantifiable. Alfred Binet and his colleague Simon developed a scientific method of psychometry that involved a set of questions producing marks on a scale of intelligence in order to describe the level of development reached by children at a certain age (Malabou, 2019). This was the ancestor of the well-known IQ test. The aim was to help children struggling at school. Nevertheless, Howard Gardner (1983) introduced a new perspective to the definition of intelligence. Gardner (2006) claimed that these tests only measure the logic and language of people. However, the extent of being successful depends on the use of other intelligences as well. Therefore, Gardner (1999, s. 33) defined intelligence as “the ability to solve problems or to create products that are valued within one or more cultural settings”.

In 1983, Gardner originally proposed the existence of seven human intelligences. He suggested that intelligence is not all the same as a language style. He clarified intelligence as a capacity whereas style as the approach to tasks. In view of education, Gardner pointed out that intelligence in the ‘individual difference’ sense involves judgment about the potentials of individuals and how each might be taught in the most effective manner.

Gardner (1999) and Armstrong (2018) define the initial seven intelligences as follows:

The linguistic intelligence can be defined as a sensitivity to both verbal and written language. It is the ability to learn languages. By using language effectively such as manipulating syntax, phonology, semantics and pragmatics certain goals can be achieved. Logical-mathematical intelligence, on the other hand, is the capacity of reasoning. It is the ability to perform mathematical operations and investigate issues scientifically. Musical intelligence encompasses the capacity to perceive, express, transform and distinguish musical patterns. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence features the potential of using one’s whole body or parts of the body to solve problems or express ideas and feelings. Spatial intelligence involves the capacity to perceive patterns of wide space and perform transformation. The personal intelligences embrace the interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences. The first one denotes a person’s potential to understand the intentions, motivations, and desires of other people and work effectively with others. Intrapersonal intelligence can be defined as the ability of self-knowledge. Whether a person can reflect on one’s own knowledge and possesses the ability for self-discipline, self-understanding and self-esteem. It is an awareness of a person’s own desires, motivations, intentions and moods.

In 1994-1995, Gardner considered whether there is convincing evidence for the existence of new intelligences proposed by numerous scholars (Gardner, 2006). In his book *Intelligence Reframed* (1999) Gardner discusses the existence of naturalist intelligence, spiritual intelligence, and existential intelligence. He points out that when investigated in terms of the eight criteria proposed in *Frames of Mind*, the naturalist’s intelligence proves as firmly entrenched as the other intelligences (Gardner, 1999, s. 49). The naturalis intelligence can be defined as “the ability to make consequential distinctions among organisms and entities in the natural world” (Gardner, 2011, xiv). It is the expertise to recognize and classify different species. Besides, it involves the sensitivity to natural phenomena (Armstrong, 2018).

Armstrong (2018), on the other hand, developed a terminology to define the intelligences with the aim of serving for more practical applications. The terms he proposed for the eight types of intelligences are respectively word smart, number/logic smart, picture smart, body smart, music smart, people smart, self-smart and nature smart.

2.2. Language Teaching Coursebooks

Teaching materials have a considerable impact on what teachers teach and how they teach it (Cunningsworth, 1995). A coursebook, especially, is one of the fundamental components of a language learning environment. Coursebooks which are supported by various teaching resources constitute the material basis for teaching and learning in classrooms worldwide (Curd-Christiansen and Weninger, 2015). Hutchinson and Torres (1994) point out that coursebooks provide a structure that is essential for the learning process. Both teachers and learners make use of coursebooks as they provide a ready-made syllabus that can be followed. It saves time and energy for teachers and curriculum designers. Besides, it serves as a clear-cut guide for learners. With the rapid advance in technology, coursebooks have evolved as well. Commercial packages of coursebooks often include a hardback coursebook, a website for students, a website for teachers, audio tracks and videos, a paperback or internet-based workbook and other print materials or software (Allen, 2008). However, Allen points out that despite these improvements in the surface of the coursebook, the content remains mostly the same.

In Turkey, teaching Turkish as a foreign language materials are prepared and published mainly by state and private institutions. Most of the publications are made by pioneering education centers within the body of state universities. However, Mutlu and Ayrancı (2017) claim that there is still a lack in a standard curriculum, a new method designed for teaching Turkish, content and materials.

One of the drawbacks of coursebooks is that they are prepared for all language learners. However, the same coursebook may not be appropriate for a specific group as learning styles and needs differ significantly. Tomlinson (2008) argues that coursebooks that teach English language focus more on teaching rather than learning which contributes to the failure of many learners who cannot attain even basic competence.

2.3. Problem and Research Questions

The coursebook is one of the primary materials used in language teaching classrooms. Therefore, the main focus of private and state institutions in Turkey is to develop a coursebook integrating the four skills. However, Uzun (2012) mentions that compared with other coursebooks that teach languages, the books prepared to teach Turkish language need improvement. Despite the work of pioneering universities, coursebooks still have some deficiencies in terms of quality.

Therefore, the current study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What are the most and least dominant intelligences in the coursebooks?
- 2) What is the distribution of the eight intelligence types in the coursebooks?

3. Methodology

3.1. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to find out whether all eight multiple intelligence types are present in teaching Turkish as a foreign language coursebooks and to what extent each was represented. Therefore, frequency calculation for each intelligence type in each coursebook was conducted. It aimed to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the coursebooks in terms of the multiple intelligences theory in order to propose adaptations that can be made by teachers, curriculum designers and school administrations.

3.2. Materials

Four coursebooks were selected through purposeful sampling. The first one is *İstanbul* prepared by instructors of İstanbul University Language Center and published in 2016. In total, 244 activities and tasks have been identified. The second book is *İzmir* prepared by Dokuz Eylül University Language Teaching and Research Center and published in 2015. *İzmir* consists of 333 activities and tasks. The third one *Yabancılar için Türkçe* was published in 2014 and prepared by Gazi University Turkish Language Learning Research and Application Center, involves 222 activities and tasks. The fourth coursebook is *Yeni Hitit* prepared by Ankara University Turkish Language Learning Research and Application Center and was published in 2013. In this book, 406 activities and tasks have been identified. B1 intermediate level coursebooks were selected in accordance with to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) due to the diversity and quantity of activities and tasks present. The reason for selecting these materials is that at the time of this research, these coursebooks were used extensively in language courses to teach Turkish as a foreign language.

3.3. Research Design

The qualitative method was implemented during the data gathering process to obtain the necessary data to achieve the findings of the study. Content analysis technique was employed to examine the four coursebooks which were prepared by pioneering higher education institutions located in Turkey. According to Ary et al. (2018) content analysis focuses on analysing and interpreting recorded material to learn about human behaviour. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005) qualitative content analysis is one of the several research methods adopted to analyse text data.

In the first part of the study, a multiple intelligences checklist was adapted and utilized to examine the coursebooks (Petrovic, 2013). As stated by Cunningsworth (1995) one of the criteria to evaluate a coursebook is drawing up on a checklist. According to Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) the checklist format makes data collection more systematic, enables verification, encourages comparability and even permits simple quantification when appropriate. The content which consisted of activities and tasks were analysed in the light of the eight multiple intelligences. Accordingly, the dominant intelligence type of each activity could be determined by the researcher. The findings of the study were presented in frequency and percentage in order to reflect on the results and make comparisons between the four coursebooks.

4. Findings

Table 1 illustrates the frequency distribution of the multiple intelligence types in the *İstanbul* B1 level coursebook.

Table 1: Frequency distribution of different types of multiple intelligences in the coursebook *İstanbul* level B1

Multiple Intelligences Type	Frequency Distribution <i>İstanbul</i> B1	
	N	%
Linguistic	106	(43.4)
Logical-Mathematical	87	(35.7)
Spatial	2	(0.8)
Musical	1	(0.4)
Bodily Kinesthetic	7	(2.9)
Interpersonal	8	(3.3)
Intrapersonal	32	(13.1)
Naturalist	1	(0.4)
Total	244	(100)

The total number of activities and tasks present in *İstanbul* B1 level coursebook are 244. As the table above suggests, the linguistic intelligence is the dominant type with 43.4 %. The second most frequent intelligence type is logical-mathematical with 35.7 %. 13.1 % of the activities and tasks are intrapersonal oriented. The fourth type is interpersonal with a ratio of 3.3 % followed by the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence with 2.9%. The spatial intelligence type is present with 0.8 %. The least frequent types are the musical and naturalist intelligences with a rate of 0.4 %.

Table 2 shows the frequency distribution of intelligence types in the coursebook *İzmir* B1 level.

Table 2: Frequency distribution of different types of multiple intelligences in the coursebook *İzmir* B1 level

Multiple Intelligences Type	Frequency Distribution <i>İzmir</i> B1	
	N	%
Linguistic	192	(57.7)
Logical-Mathematical	87	(26.1)
Spatial	13	(3.9)
Musical	4	(1.2)
Bodily Kinesthetic	1	(0.3)
Interpersonal	3	(0.9)
Intrapersonal	32	(9.6)
Naturalist	1	(0.3)
Total	333	(100)

The total number of activities and tasks present in *İzmir* B1 level coursebook are 333. As the table above suggests, the linguistic intelligence is the dominant type with 57.7 %. The second most frequent intelligence type is logical-mathematical with 26.1%. 9.6 % of the activities and tasks are intrapersonal oriented. The fourth type is spatial intelligence with a ratio

of 3.9% followed by the musical intelligence with 1.2%. The interpersonal intelligence type is present with 0.9%. The least frequent types are the bodily-kinesthetic and naturalist intelligences with a rate of 0.3 %.

Table 3 illustrates the frequency distribution of intelligence types in the coursebook *Yabancılar için Türkçe B1* level.

Table 3: Frequency distribution of different types of multiple intelligences in the coursebook *Yabancılar için Türkçe B1* level

Multiple Intelligences Type	Frequency Distribution
	Yabancılar için Türkçe B1
	N %
Linguistic	119 (53.6)
Logical-Mathematical	54 (24.3)
Spatial	4 (1.8)
Musical	0 (0)
Bodily Kinesthetic	6 (2.7)
Interpersonal	18 (8.1)
Intrapersonal	17 (7.7)
Naturalist	4 (1.8)
Total	222 (100)

The total number of activities and tasks present in the *Yabancılar için Türkçe B1* level coursebook are 222. As the table above demonstrates, the linguistic intelligence is the dominant type with 53.6 %. The second most frequent intelligence type is logical-mathematical with 24.3%. 8.1 % of the activities and tasks are interpersonal oriented. The fourth type is intrapersonal intelligence with a ratio of 7.7%. 2.7% of the total activities and tasks are addressing the bodily kinesthetic intelligence. It is followed by the spatial and naturalist intelligences with 1.8%. In the course of the analysis, no activity or task related to the musical intelligence could be determined.

Table 4 demonstrates the frequency distribution of intelligence types in the coursebook *Yeni Hitit B1* level.

Table 4: Frequency distribution of different types of multiple intelligences in the coursebook *Yeni Hitit B1* level

Multiple Intelligences Type	Frequency Distribution
	Yeni Hitit B1
	N %
Linguistic	240 (59.1)
Logical-Mathematical	143 (35.2)
Spatial	4 (1)
Musical	0 (0)
Bodily Kinesthetic	4 (1)
Interpersonal	3 (0.7)
Intrapersonal	10 (2.5)

Naturalist	2 (0.5)
Total	406 (100)

The total number of activities and tasks present in the *Yeni Hitit* coursebook are 406. As the table above demonstrates, the linguistic intelligence is the dominant type with 59.1 %. The second most frequent intelligence type is logical-mathematical with 35.2%. 2.5 % of the activities and tasks are intrapersonal oriented. 1% of the total activities and tasks are addressing the spatial and bodily-kinesthetic intelligences. The interpersonal intelligence has a ratio of 0.7%. It is followed by naturalist intelligence with 0.5%. In the course of the analysis, no activity or task related to the musical intelligence could be detected.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The following conclusions can be drawn from the present study. The first research question has revealed that the linguistic intelligence is dominant in all four coursebooks prepared by state institutions. The second most dominant intelligence type is logical-mathematical. The second research question deals with the distribution of all eight intelligences. It can be concluded that spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist intelligences are neglected in the coursebooks. The findings demonstrate that these six types are allocated little throughout the coursebooks. The most obvious finding to emerge from this study is that all four coursebooks were prepared with the traditional view to intelligence. The traditional perspective to intelligence views the linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence types as the distinctive ones. However, the MI theory promotes all eight intelligences equally.

Since the multiple intelligences theory was proposed almost four decades ago, it has attracted the attention of educators and has been applied widely in language education. However, teaching Turkish as a foreign language practices are relatively new compared to the advances in other dominant languages. Tomlinson (2015) discusses that teachers rely on coursebooks too much, even though they do not foster creativity which is possible to achieve with activities that require personal responses rather than closed ones. Therefore, the demand for appropriate materials that foster learning was the motive for the current study. Due to the fact that there is no commercial coursebook that fits perfectly for every learning group, adaptations to a coursebook have become a requirement for all teachers. As stated by Islam and Mares (2014) whether pre-planned or spontaneous, the modification of materials is an inevitable part of the success of any class as a coursebook can never completely satisfy the pedagogical requirements of an institution.

This study intends to make a noteworthy contribution to the adaptation of coursebooks as current materials neglect personal differences of learners. As mentioned above, present materials need to be re-evaluated and become standardized. This could be achieved by establishing an official supreme board that leads the process and identifies the standards (Mutlu & Ayrancı, 2017). Another recommendation is to organize workshops and trainings for teachers to introduce material adaptation strategies and enhance the current coursebooks they use. To cater all learning styles and address various intelligences, multimedia materials should be created that accompany teaching. Learning can be enhanced by multimedia integration as it provides an opportunity for learners to work on their own pace. Students can decide on their own needs and develop their weak skills. Due to the advance in technology, people grow up

with computers and already possess digital literacy. Therefore, the integration of multimedia in teaching and learning has become inevitable.

It must be kept in mind that this paper is not a critique of the coursebooks; rather it aims to contribute to the development of materials due to the increasing demand in the acquisition and learning of Turkish as a foreign language.

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