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## **Cultural Literacy in Mother Tongue Education: An Action Research**

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# **Cultural Literacy in Mother Tongue Education: an Action Research**

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## **Abstract**

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The aim of the research is to relate the middle school students' literacy skills to their basic language skills. The study was designed as an action research. The participants of the study are middle school students. The data collection tool consists of semi-structured interview form, semi-structured observation form, log form and activity files. The research process was carried out in three stages: cultural awareness, cultural diversity and cultural literacy. It was observed that participants cultural literacy skills developed at each stage. In addition, while performing basic language skills, they were found to be more effective at every stage. Based on the results of the study, it is concluded that the mother language education lesson can be associated with the learning outcome of cultural literacy skills and basic language skills.

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**Keywords:** mother tongue education, cultural literacy, middle school students

# **La Alfabetización Cultural en la Educación de la Lengua Materna: una Investigación-Acción**

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## **Resumen**

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El objetivo de la investigación es relacionar las habilidades de alfabetización de los estudiantes de secundaria con sus habilidades básicas de lenguaje. El estudio fue diseñado como una investigación-acción. Los participantes del estudio son estudiantes de secundaria. La herramienta de recopilación de datos consta de un formulario de entrevista semiestructurada, un formulario de observación semiestructurada, un formulario de registro y archivos de actividades. El proceso de investigación se llevó a cabo en tres etapas: conciencia cultural, diversidad cultural y alfabetización cultural. Se observó que los participantes desarrollaron habilidades de alfabetización cultural en cada etapa. Además, al realizar las habilidades básicas del lenguaje, se encontró que eran más efectivas en cada etapa. Sobre la base de los resultados del estudio, se concluye que la lección de educación de la lengua materna se puede asociar con el resultado de aprendizaje de las habilidades de alfabetización cultural y las habilidades básicas del idioma.

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**Palabras clave:** educación en lengua materna, alfabetización cultural, estudiantes de secundaria

Cultural literacy, in terms of meaning, evokes the relation to society. Cultural literacy was first noticed with the book named *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* written by Eric Donald Hirsch in 1987 (Thomas, 2009). According to him, cultural literacy is a set of knowledge and skills necessary to understand complex situations that make up the cultural structure of people (Hirsch, 1987 as cited in Hui, 2014). After Hirsch, many people made an explanation for cultural literacy. In studies, cultural literacy is discussed as the context of cultural awareness (Dean, 2017; Liu, 2017; Moncada Linares, 2016; Schaefer & Lynch, 2017; Shulsky, Baker, Chvala, & Willis, 2017), cultural pluralism (Albrecht, 2016; Patel & Meyer, 2011), program development (Maxim, Hoyng, Lancaster, Schaumann, & Aue, 2013; Modiba & Van Rensburg, 2009; Shulsky et al.; Ziegahn, & Ton, 2011), critical thinking (Mkandawire & Walubita, 2015; Smith, 2010), racism (Albrecht, 2016; Demerath & Mattheis, 2012; Ohana & Mash, 2015; Varghese, 2016) and sociology (Dockery, 2014; Lizardo, 2017). As it is understood from the studies, cultural literacy is explained with a nationalistic perspective. Although it was first considered as a concept corresponding to nationalism, it turned into a skill to understand different cultures (Johnson, 2014). Therefore, it has been examined in relation to many subjects of human interest.

Education is one of these areas where cultural literacy is the subject of research. Cultural literacy has been used for the development of multiple perspectives in the teaching process (Li, 2017; Machado, Vaughan, Coppola, & Woodard, 2017; Mason & Giovanelli, 2017; Reygan & Steyn, 2017). The same perspective comes to the fore in studies related to, education. In the cultural sense, multiple perspectives have been tried to be transferred to the teaching process with certain skills in line with the objectives of mother tongue education. In the cultural sense, multiple perspectives have been tried to be transferred to the teaching process with certain skills in line with the objectives of mother tongue education. Especially studies associated with writing (Lusk, 2008) and cultural literacy and studies associated with reading (Kiefer, 2014; Suzuki, 2005) and cultural literacy come to the fore. This may be due to the attempt of cultural literacy to be realized through texts. Because, in order to understand a text, cultural literacy provides the necessary background to understand the similarities and differences between the individual's own culture and the customs, values and beliefs of different

cultures (Naqeeb, 2012). Mother tongue education is based on four basic language skills; but there is no research that integrates the four basic language skills of middle school students with cultural literacy. Cultural literacy is important for Turkish Language Curriculum (2018). It, unlike the previous program, included social and citizenship and cultural awareness and expression competencies for the first time. These skills are among the competences that form the basis of the Turkish Language Curriculum. In spite of this, they are not clearly defined neither in the Turkish Language Curriculum (2018) learning outcomes, nor in the textbooks or in the activities (Bal, 2018a). However, cultural literacy is one of the basic skills on which the program is based on.

One of the requirements of this study is the social conditions in Turkey. Especially in recent years, due to political events experienced in the Turkey's border neighbor countries, millions of people from other countries have migrated to Turkey. This situation has made multicultural educational environment in Turkey; but at the same time this new situation has brought many problems. For example, immigrant students are not accepted by Turkish students due to cultural differences (Aktaş, Tepe, & Persson, 2018; Güven & İşleyen, 2018). Thus, these adverse conditions can create a negative classroom environment for both Turkish students, immigrants and teachers.

In this research, Turkish language teaching and cultural literacy skills were tried to be correlated. The lack of tolerance towards cultural differences and people from different cultures has been tried to be overcome with the development of cultural literacy skills. Cultural literacy competencies are intended to be associated concretely. In this context, the aim of the research is to develop the cultural literacy skills of middle school students by associating them with the basic language skills. For this purpose, an action plan has been developed which links the four basic language skills with cultural literacy skills. This action plan was applied to middle school students. Research has sought answers to the following questions:

How the action plan was realized for linking middle school students' mother tongue education and cultural literacy skills?

What are the views of the students on how the action plan for linking the mother language education lesson with the cultural literacy skill affects the views towards the Turkish language lesson?

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

This study was designed with action research. This action research was used to make Turkish language lessons more effective. Because action research is a pattern based on intervention by producing solutions to problems related to education (Greenwood & Levin, 2011; Johnson, 2005). Action research imposes responsibility on teachers to make a curriculum more effective (Carr & Kemmis, 2003; Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2015; Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014). The problem of the Turkish Language Curriculum (2018) that led to action research is the skills that make up the main competencies of the program and which are used to develop cultural literacy skills. How to transfer these skills in the program is not clearly defined. This situation is thought to cause problems in the implementation process of the program; because Turkish teachers stated that they were not even informed about cultural literacy skills and could not transfer them. As a reason, they showed the curriculum (Bal, 2018b). When the program is examined, it is clear that the reasons of Turkish teachers are correct. There is no cultural literacy acquires in the content of the program (Bal, 2018b). In this study, an intervention program has been applied to determine how middle school students' cultural literacy skills can be related to Turkish language lesson.

### **Participants**

The study group was selected by the criterion sampling technique which is one of the purposive sampling method. The presence of students from different cultures and voluntary participation were determined as criteria. There are 23 students in this study. 3 of these students are Arabic and one of them is Russian and the rest are Turkish students. Arabic students' grew up with Arabic culture until school age. The Russian student's also grew up in Russian culture until the school age. However students who come with immigration are at a close level with Turkish students on Turkish language skills. 11 of the participants were male and 12 were female. The Turkish language teacher stated that there were conflicts in the classroom due to

cultural discord between Turkish students and other students. The teacher stated that he could not integrate Arab students with the classroom, and he reported that he had problems in Turkish language lesson. Therefore, this class has been chosen and cultural literacy skills of the students have been developed in order to improve the negative classroom environment. In the research process, some participants provided regular data, some of them were involved in the process, but they did not provide any data. Therefore, the data of 14 participants were used in the report of the study. The participants were given nicknames.

### **Data Collection Tools**

In this study, four different data collection tools were used. These tools and their development process are as follows:

**Semi-structured interview form:** It was developed for students. The purpose of the development of the tool is to determine the views of the participants about the Turkish language lesson associated with cultural literacy. For the data collection tool, the literature on cultural literacy was examined and questions were prepared considering the purpose of the research. Ten questions were prepared and the questions were presented to three different field experts. According to the opinions of experts, the number of questions dropped to seven. Then the pilot application was made. The questions of the interview form aims to determine; the function of the activities, the necessity of the lesson, the purpose of the products put forward, the information acquired in the lesson, the relationship between the teaching process and diary life. 14 interview forms were obtained during the research process.

**Semi-structured observation form:** The source of this data collection tool is the researchers. The observation form was developed in order to determine the lesson process associated with cultural literacy and the students' behavior towards the lesson. 4 different semi-structured questions were determined. These questions focus on the process of acquiring information, interest in the lesson, sense of belonging towards the lesson, and the ability to create a permanent behavior change. Three different field experts were consulted about the form. During the research period, 12 observation forms were collected.

Diary form: This form has been prepared to collect diary data for the teaching process in relation to cultural literacy. Students were asked six questions at the end of each lesson. Thus, students made the evaluation of each lesson in itself. The aim of the diary questions is to determine the information obtained in the lesson, the necessity of the lesson, how the lesson is meaningful to the student. During the period, 126 diary form was obtained.

Documents about the activities: This data collection tool consists of activities developed for the implementation process. The activities were carried out in three stages. In the first stage three; in the second stage three; in the last stage three activities were conducted. Activities were filled by students. Each activity was carried out individually. In the final stage, the texts which were considered to be obtained in the whole process were included in the process.

### **Data Collection Process**

There is a need for an action plan associated with cultural literacy skills, based on the problem situation. For this purpose, learning outcomes have been determined in line with American (<http://www.corestandards.org>), Canadian (<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/>), Australian (<http://www.australia.gov.au>), Singapore (<https://www.moe.gov.sg>) and Hong Kong (<https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/>) language teaching programs and with academic studies on cultural literacy (Albrecht, 2016; Barrette & Paesani, 2018; Colombi, 2015; Dean, 2017; Gordon, 2018; Halbert & Chigeza, 2015; Hui, 2014; Johnson, 2014; Kiefer, 2014; Lawrence, 2007; Liu, 2017; Lusk, 2008; Machado et al., 2017; Mkandawire & Walubita, 2015; Mason & Giovanelli, 2017; Moncada Linares, 2016; Merzliakova, Linchenko, & Ovchinnikova, 2016; Naqeeb, 2012; Patel & Meyer, 2011; Perveen, 2014; Renau & Pesudo, 2016; Reygan & Steyn, 2017; Schaefer & Lynch, 2017; Shulsky et al., 2017; Smith, 2010) and with the needs of Turkish language teachers for cultural literacy (Bal, 2018b). These learning outcomes were determined by taking into account the dimensions of cultural literacy and the process of development. In Table 1, cultural literacy learning outcomes and Turkish language lesson learning outcomes are given:



Table 1.

*Turkish language lesson action plan associated with cultural literacy learning outcomes*

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Cultural Learning outcome</b>	<b>Literacy Learning outcome</b>	<b>Turkish Language Learning outcome</b>	<b>Lesson</b>
First Stage: Cultural Awareness	First activity	Explains the concept of other through it's self.			Makes a prepared speech. Applies speech strategies. Uses body language effectively in his speeches.
	Second activity	Explain the effect of cultural characteristics on the individual. Explain the structure of society through its self and personality. Explains the concept of normal and abnormal according to the society.			Uses the words according to their meanings. Uses appropriate transition and link statements in their speeches. In his speeches, he uses the Turkish language of words not yet settled in our language. Uses appropriate transitional and link expressions. Regulates his writing. He shares his writings. Fills the forms according to the instructions. Writes short texts.
	Third activity	Knows the cultural characteristics of the society in which he lives. Knows behavior patterns specific to their culture.			
Second Stage: Cultural Difference	First activity	Knows what the concept of normal means. Knows what the abnormal concept means. Explains how normal and abnormal concepts are determined. Explains the changes of normal and abnormal concepts.			He reads aloud and silent by paying attention to the punctuation marks. Reads the text in accordance with the characteristics of the genre. Uses reading strategies. Estimates the meaning of words and phrases that they do not know by using context. Use information sources effectively. Make inferences about what they read. Use information sources effectively. Question the reliability of information resources. Writes informative text. Determines the title appropriate to the content of the writing. Uses appropriate transitional and link expressions. Fills the forms according to the instructions.
	Second activity	Explains behaviors that are considered normal in their culture, unlike other cultures. Explains behaviors that are considered abnormal in their culture, unlike other cultures			

continue

Table 1.

*Turkish language lesson action plan associated with cultural literacy learning outcomes (continuation)*

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Cultural Learning outcome</b>	<b>Literacy Learning outcome</b>	<b>Turkish Learning outcome</b>	<b>Language Learning outcome</b>	<b>Lesson Learning outcome</b>
	Third activity	Explain the behaviors that are considered normal in other cultures. Explain abnormal behaviors in other cultures. Distinguish the elements that make cultures different from each other.				
Third Stage: Cultural Literacy	First activity	He realizes that he sees the events or situations different that other cultures accept as normal because he is under the influence of his own culture.		Estimates the development and outcome about the events when listening/viewing. Summarizes what listening/ viewing. Answers the questions about what listening/ viewing. It determines the subject of what what listening/ viewing.		
	Second activity	He realizes that he sees the events or situations different that other cultures accept as abnormal because he is under the influence of his own culture.		Determines the main idea/main sense of what listening/viewing. Understands the non-verbal messages of the speaker. Evaluates the content of what listening/viewing. Reports the opinions about what listening/viewing. Uses listening strategies. Reads aloud and silent by paying attention to the punctuation marks. Asks questions about the text. Evaluates media texts. Makes inferences about what they read. Writes a narrative text. Uses writing strategies. Writes an action according to the process steps. Determines the title appropriate to the content of the writing. Makes appropriate transitions and links in his writings. Uses the Turkish language of words instead of words in a foreign language in his writings.		
	Third activity	Evaluates the events or situations as normal or abnormal according to the culture they belong to, does not evaluate according to his own culture.				

As seen in Table 1, the stages are based on the sub-dimensions of cultural literacy. In the first stage, speaking and writing; in the second stage, reading and writing; In the third stage, activities that provide listening and writing skills are included. The research process was carried out two hours per week. The implementation process is 13 weeks in total. One week (two lesson hours) is reserved for each activity in Table 1. Activities were completed in 9 weeks. In the remaining 3 weeks, students were asked to rewrite the listening/viewing text using cultural literacy skills. Interviews were held at the end of the study.

### **Data Analysis**

Two different data analysis techniques were used in this study. The first is the descriptive analysis technique, which is used to present the research process gradually. Students' diary forms, semi-structured observation forms, activity forms were analyzed with descriptive analysis. The other data analysis technique is content analysis. Content analysis was used to present students' views on the research process in detail.

The diaries, activity forms and observation forms collected diary during the application process were analyzed simultaneously. Before the analysis, all data were converted into written form. Approval from a field expert was obtained to check whether the manuscripts were correctly transmitted. The field expert has carefully re-examined the writings and confirmed their accuracy. Then, the action plan is presented in a progressive descriptive analysis technique. The research question was taken as a theme in descriptive analysis. The semi-structured interview form has also been written in the same way and it has been approved by a field expert that the manuscripts are correctly transmitted. Then, coding was done by content analysis. Total 5 codes; 20 categories have been reached. The result is given in Table 2:

Table 2.  
*Analysis of interview questions*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>f</b>	
Cultural literacy in mother tongue education	Purpose of the scenario	Difference and similarity	5	
		Cultural interaction	4	
		Respect	2	
		Empathy	2	
		Tolerance	1	
	Effect of research on out-of-school	Solidarity	1	
		Tolerance	5	
		Contribution to literacy knowledge	3	
		Behavior change against different cultures	3	
		No effect	2	
	The necessity of research	Awareness of different cultures	1	
		Necessary	14	
	Activities	Acquired information	Funny	9
			Imagination Developer	2
			Contribution to writing skills	1
			Destruction of prejudice	1
			Tolerance	5
		Contribution to writing skills	3	
		Linking Turkish language lesson to cultural literacy	3	
		Turkish language lesson content	2	

These analyzes were performed with the help of a different field expert for the reliability of the research. The field expert first examined the descriptive analysis of the implementation process of the action plan. It has confirmed that there is no inconsistency. Then he analyzed the semi-structured interview form data. The coding reliability between the two experts (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 64) was determined to be 80%. In order to increase the reliability of the research, the data obtained from the study group were presented without any changes. The action plan for the validity of the study was designed as a long process (13 weeks) especially. The participants felt comfortable because they had spent a long time with the them. thus, they shared their views about the process realistically and clearly. If there are any explanations which may not be understood in the diary and activity forms, they were asked to the participants. In this way, internal validity was increased. For the external validity of the study, the problem

state, purpose, research questions, the method of design, data collection tools, data analysis technique are clearly stated. From these data collection tools, the diaries and the interview form provided insights into the action plan, while the forms of activity attempted to demonstrate how much they could fulfill the purpose of the action plan. With the activity forms, existing or non-existent situations were also revealed. In addition, observations were made by the researcher. Participants' status in the implementation process was transferred to the observation form by another person. These different data sources are presented in relation to each other in the report of the study.

## **Results**

In this part of the research, participant's opinions about the implementation process of the action plan and the implementation process are given. The results for each stage are presented separately.

### **Cultural Awareness Stage**

The first activity was carried out to determine the participants' awareness of their own self. With this activity, it was tried to determine what “the other” concept means for them, to whom and why they address “other”, what is the difference between “other” as they called and them. Participants were asked to give a prepared speech for this event. The participants made the following speeches related to the “other” concept with using the body language effectively:

It may differ from me in character or may show physical awareness; so we can call him ‘the other’. (Fuat, first stage, first activity).

As it is understood from the opinion of Fuat, most of the participants prefer to use “the other” word because they are different in terms of physical and personality. Unlike this view, Gogo has a sociological meaning to the word “other”:

People called “other” are either better than us or worse than us. Therefore the word “other” is used to marginalize. (Gogo, first stage, first activity).

Each of the participants imposes a different meaning to this concept but, most of the meanings are based on the idea that “others” are different because they think that they are at the center. Unlike the answers during the lessons the following statements reflected in the Fuat's diary form:

I thought I didn't care about myself, but that wasn't right. I think I really care about myself. However, I learned that I have different feelings, external appearance and thoughts from people. (Fuat, first stage, first activity, diary form).

It is seen that the opinions of the participants, who reflect their thoughts in their diaries, have changed as Fuat. Gogo stated in his diary as follows:

I have learned what my friends think about the differences between people. Besides, I've learned my own thoughts about this subject, because I've never thought about it before. (Gogo, first stage, first activity, diary form).

In the second activity, the relation of the self of the participants with the society was discussed. Participants were asked to write a short text about it. The participants, who made their texts, edited their texts and shared it with their friends in the classroom. All participants stated that they were effective on the characters of the society. Adile stated how this effect is as follows:

Society affects every person as well as me. However, it is impossible not to interact in the place where people are located. For instance, the society I am in shapes me like others. (Adile, first stage, second activity).

Adile based her relationship with society on interaction. She stated that this interaction caused a forced change and adaptation. Participants presented similar views. Sema's view is an example of how this effect occurs:

I think society can affect our character positively or negatively. Because society gives us something. We're going to keep up with that community. (Sema, first stage, second activity).

Participants with similar views made interesting comments in their diaries. It is reflected in Mehmet's diary that he has created a new awareness among the society and his personality:

I understood that we acted according to society, not our own. (Mehmet, first stage, second activity, diary form).

Mehmet's ideas are explained as a necessary change by Emine:

Changing society changes the lesson of our lives without noticing. I think it's very interesting, because we can't resist this effect. (Emine, first stage, second activity, diary form).

Emine expressed the change unconsciously. Interpretations of the modifying effect of society are supported by observation data as follows:

On the basis of their own characters, the students became aware of the common aspects of their society or their changing habits to keep up with the society. A student said that the classroom environment resulted from examples. (Researcher, first stage, semi-structured observation form).

Ayşenur rejects the relationship between society and personality but, what she rejected is the inherent characteristics of the individual. Because, according to her, society is affecting behavior. It is noteworthy that both the answers given to the activities and the diaries made sensible expressions. The last activity of this phase was carried out to determine the information about the characteristics of their culture. The topic was discussed and all participants stated that this activity was necessary. According to Gogo, it is also an obligation besides a responsibility to fully convey the cultural characteristics to the next generation. This sensation is included in the Çağrı's diary form as follows:

I thought about how great the Turks were when I was going out of class and my feelings of nationalism were amazed. (Çağrı, first stage, third activity, diary form).

Çağrı perceived the event from a nationalist point of view and stated that he was proud of his own culture. At this stage, it is understood that the participants have integrated their perspectives with the society, both in writing and verbally.

### **Cultural Differences Stage**

The first of the three activities of this phase was developed to discuss “normal” and “abnormal” concepts. The participants created an informative text and then changed their texts with each other. The texts were first read silently and then read aloud. While reading the texts, the participants were asked to pay attention to the punctuation marks and convey the information appropriately. Participants agree that the perception of the concept of normal and abnormal can vary according to society. The opinions of the participants can be cited by Tülay's sentences as follows:

The behavior may sound normal according to a society but, that behavior may seem abnormal according to the other community. This may vary according to each community. (Tülay, second stage, first activity).

There are different ideas about the relationship between normal and abnormal acceptance and understanding people without judging. Only Sema, Mehmet, Fuat, Demir have a consistent sense of the concept of normal and abnormal. The other participants' ideas are inconsistent. Ayşenur's idea illustrates this inconsistency as follows:

Nobody can understand someone without judging. It is our idea to accept abnormal or normal, and this is not a prejudice. A person can think that you can make movements that is abnormal, because he is different. You'd consider him abnormal. (Ayşenur, second stage, first activity).



As it is seen, although Ayşenur argues that the concept of normal and abnormal can change according to society, she has an opposite opinion when it comes to evaluating a person as normal and abnormal. She limited the concept of normal and abnormal to her own thoughts. At the end of the day, there was no idea changed in any of the diary forms. In the second activity it was discussed with participants that behaviors considered normal or abnormal in Turkish culture and in other cultures. Then they were asked to conduct a research on behaviors that were considered normal according to Turkish culture but abnormal according to another culture. The most striking point is that they present the data obtained from information sources based on their diary life experiences. For example, Ruhan said that:

For example, in most countries some behaviors of Turks can be considered abnormal. Some of them are; to remove the shoes when enter the house, to drink tea for breakfast, to put salt to ayran, to bargain at all kinds of shopping, to ask for discounts, to hang large blue beads to the houses, etc. (Ruhan, second stage, second activity).

Perspectives on the cultural dimension of the concepts of normal and abnormal are stated in the observation forms as follows:

In terms of comparing Turkish culture with other cultures, the students presented a perspective that considers Turkish culture as superior. In this respect, it can be said that the participants are based on ethnic centrism. (Researcher, second stage, semi-structured observation form).

In the last activity of this phase, each student was given the name of a country such as Italy, Russia, India, France, Germany, Iran, England, Greece, Japan, etc. and they were asked to research the cultural characteristics of the countries. There is an example to participants' comments as follows:

Yes, I have learned about many countries. If I go to one of those countries one day, this information will be useful. (Çağrı, second stage, third activity, diary form).

The participants' evaluations of the activity are in agreement with the aim of improving the effectiveness. Çağrı has similarly stated why this activity is necessary in his diary form and how it can be used, but Demir has made a different comment for the activity:

Yes, without such a lesson, most people would not do something to improve their cultural knowledge. (Demir, second stage, third activity, diary form).

According to Demir, without this activity, nobody would feel the shortcomings and would not research the cultures specifically. This is supported by the data obtained from the observation form as follows:

The students learned something new. In the Italian culture, there were jokes about the act of like food, and this suggests that meaningful learning took place. There was a nice discussion and an effective brainstorming about the fact that we should not be tipped to waiters like Japanese ones in the class. (Researcher, second stage, semi-structured observation form).

In this respect, it is possible to say that they do not need to research but when they are associated with the teaching process, they experience what they need. As can be seen from the observation forms, this experience gave them meaningful learning opportunities. Besides, acquires about reading and writing skills were also fulfilled.

### **Cultural Literacy Stage**

In this stage, the 12th episode of the cartoons called the Mysterious Town was selected as the listening/viewing text. The reason for choosing this cartoon is that it is the most watched cartoon. The reason for choosing the 12th part of the cartoon is that it has a cultural feature. This section discusses Halloween. First, the first 10 minutes of the cartoons were shown and the participants were asked about what could be the rest of the cartoon. Then the cartoon was watched for the second time. The students were asked to take notes on the activity sheet about the similar situations in Turkish culture. Examples of the activity forms are as follows:

Hospitality is very important in Halloween and this is an important feature for Turks, too. (Gogo, third stage, first activity).

There are monsters according to their legends. There are similar legends in Turkish culture. (Mehmet, third stage, first activity).

Wear feast special outfits, collect candy and we wear special and new clothes at our feast. (Çağrı, third stage, first activity).

The similarity of intangible things that the students point out are hospitality, helpfulness and faith and concrete things that the students point out are special clothes and collecting candy. After comments about the similarities, the cartoon was watched again and, participants were asked to identify behaviors that could be considered abnormal by Turkish culture. Abnormal behaviors are reflected in Adile's activity form as follows:

They say, “trick or treat” in Halloween. But, we say different things. More good wishes especially during the feasts. (Adile, third stage, second activity).

Only Adile pointed to an intangible difference, unlike the others. Then the participants talked about Halloween. At the end of the activity teacher gave some more information and missing information has been completed about Halloween. At the last event, participants were asked to create a narrative text based on cartoon. While writing this text, guided writing technique was used and the participants were asked not to change the characters in the cartoon and Halloween. But, they have been asked to re-create the text by adding elements from the Turkish culture to the script. At the end of this activity, students created their own scenarios. As it is not possible to give all the texts, the text of Tülay below is presented as an example:

**BAYRAM KARŞILAŞMASI**

Mabel ve Dipper yay tatil için Sıan Amcaforum yanına gideceklerdir. Deniz ve Melisa'da aynı amaçta Sibel Teyzesinin yanına gelmişlerdir.

**Sibel:**

Melisa: Amca, yaradığı çekere unanmıştırm, sen verir misin?

Sıan: Tabii, Al bakalım. Kee, çocuklar siz burda yeni misiniz?

Deniz: Sayılır. Teyzenin yanına geldik.

Sıan: Sıan neyiniz kim?

Sibel: Benim, mabel Sıan?

Sıan: İyiymi Sibel. Sıan mabel Sibel?

Sibel: Ben de iyiyim. Mabel ve Dipper necezdür?

Sıan: Dipper ve Mabel Cadılar Bayramı için alışveriş yapıyorlar, diğer teyzeler. Onlar sizden sorunda, ben de çekelerden soruyorum.

Sibel: Biz de Ramazan Bayramı için çeker alıyoruz.

Sıan: Sıan usun zamanlar götüştünüz. Akşam yemeğine çocukları alıp gel, hem Dipper ve Mabel ile de konuşabiliriz.

**Sibel:** Otar. Akşam yemeğinde görüşürüz.

**Sibel:** Otar.

Melisa: Teyze!

Sibel: Efendim.

Melisa: Duşandaki bu süslemeler ne böyle?

Sibel: Cadılar Bayramı süslemeleri.

Melisa: Cadılar Bayramı mı?

Deniz: Herkesin korkunç kostümler giydiği, çocukları kapı kapı dolaşarak çekere ya da defnet yapıp çekir topladıkları bir bayramdır. Gençler bu bayram kutlamak için parti verirler.

Melisa: İyi oyubak ptklandırılmı bakkabakları da bu bayrama mı doğ?

Deniz: Evet.

Sibel: Tamam. Sobbeniz bittiyse ve harmanu çıkalmı arık. Yoksa gür kabacık.

**Sibel:** Otar.

Mabel: Sıan Amca misafirleriniz ne zaman gelecek?

Dipper: Misafirlerimizi mi gelecek? Ben de neken böyle giydiniz diydunuz. Peki, misafirleriniz kim?

Mabel: Bilimsen. Sormadan.

Sıan: Bir alakamın. Adı, Sibel. Bu mahallede oturuyor. Yelgenleri onu ziyarete gelmiş. Onlar da sizin gibi kız. İyi anlaşılıyor.

(Gülme)

Sıan: Bakın geldiler.

(Mabel Yemekler gider ve kapıyı açar. Herkes birbirine selamlaşırken sonra mabelye gelirler.)

Melisa: Yemekler çok güzel olmuş.

Mabel: Öyle... Sıan Amcam harika bir aşçıdır. İncezime yemekten sonra çekere ziyelim. Mahim, bel bel çeker var.

Deniz: Ramazan Bayramı için mi? Siz Ramazan Bayramını kutlayıyor musunuz?

Dipper: Ramazan Bayramı mı? Hiç duymadım. Bunun Cadılar Bayramı için.

Melisa: Bilimsen. Deniz buluştunmu? Kostümler giyiyormusun, değil mi? Doğrusu biraz saçma. Daha önce kostümlerin giyildiği etkinliklerde bulduğumuz ama korkunç kostümlerle kapı kapı dolaşarak çekere.

Deniz: Hadi. Sıan'ın toplantı için kapı kapı dolaşması bir de Ramazan Bayramında yapayorum ama ya kutlamanı iyi çok saçma. Biz Ramazan Bayramında olacağız.

Mabel: El öpmek mi? Anıl bu çok saçma. Neden öpüyorsunuz ki?

Dipper: Ayrıca kostümler de çok saçma falan değil.

Deniz: Evet, saçma. Biz bayramda yeni kıyafetler alıp giyeriz ve akraba ziyaretlerine gideriz. Akraba ziyaretlerinde sarma ve baklava ikram edilir. Tüm bunların yanında sizin bayramınız çok saçma.

Melisa: Vee.

Sibel: Deniz, Melisa! Yemeyiz. Bakalım bayramlarıyla bu şekilde dalga geçemiyordunuz.

Sıan: Ayın şey sizin için de güzel, Dipper ve Mabel.

Melisa: İyi de Sibel Teyze. Yapılmak gereken çok saçma.

Sibel: Hayır. Değil. Leta vatan de Sıan size açıklasın. Açıklayabilir misin Sıan?

Sıan: Evet. Cadılar Bayramında yapılan şeylerin sebebi çok basit. Korkunç kostümlerin giyilmesinin sebebi buman ruhları korkutup kaçmasıdır insanları. Yani evden sebep budur. Şimdi siflenice için devam ettirilen bir gelenektir.

Mabel: Gözünüzün gibi bizim bayramımız saçma değil. Ama sizinki öyle.

Sıan: Mabel, Tamam, seni ben işare ederem. Sibel de bize Ramazan Bayramını açıklasın. Otar mı Sibel?

Sibel: Tabii. Ramazan Bayramını kutlamanın sebebi Ramazan Ayı'nın bitmesi. Bıyıldıkları ellerinin ipinmesini saygıdır. Akraba ziyaretlerinin sebebi de akrabalık bağlarımızı tekrar hatırlamak için.

Dipper: Saçma değilmiş gerçekten de. Öyle söylediğin için özer diletim.

Mabel: Ben de. Şu an biraz şaşkırdım.

Deniz: Biz de özer bir şeyler. Sizin bayramınıza da saçma değilmiş.

Melisa: Ben de özer diletim. O zaman biraz çekere ziyelim ve bu olayı tatlıya bağlayalım.

(Kırlar kırılır, diğer yer ve biraz daha sohbet edildikten sonra Sibel ve yelgenleri evlerine dönerler. Yokta gidenler Melisa konuşur.)

Melisa: Farklı kültürlerden birilerini tanımak çok güzeldir. Her ne kadar bazı maddelere karşıyay olsak da.

Deniz: Doğru. Farklı dillerden ve yazıdan insanlarda bizim gibi inandıkları ve gerekli gördükleri şeyleri yapıyorlarmış öğrenmek çok daha güzel!

Figure 1. Tülay's Scenario

As seen in Figure 1, Tülay wrote Halloween and Ramadan in her scenario. First, she explained the cultural characteristics of Halloween and Ramadan. Then she created a conflict situation by using the characters. Finally she has completed the text by writing that we should respect the different cultures. This process is reflected in the observation form as follows:

When creating their texts, participants asked questions to each other about normal and abnormal concepts. It was remarkable that one participant asked the question to his teacher: It's not a big problem to actually accept it. It's sad to make someone feel abnormal, isn't it, teacher? (Researcher, third stage, semi-structured observation form).

As it can be understood, the participants included their experiences in the text-making process. Tülay explained the purpose of creating the text as follows:

In my scenario, I aim to teach Turkish culture to others. Teaching other cultures to Turks. I aim for cultures to be respectful to each

other. In short, I aim to let cultures know each other. (Tülay, semi-structured interview form).

Tülay first tried to prove his cultural awareness and then created an awareness of another culture and finally, using the word “respect”, he referred to the last dimension of cultural literacy. Other participants are focused on empathy, respect for differences, tolerance, cultural interaction, sensibility concepts. Though the opinions of the participants about the research process are different from each other they are all positive. For example, Emine has stated as follows:

Everything we talked about in this class developed my ideas. For example, I am trying to be more tolerant. (Emine, semi-structured interview form).

Thus, it can be said that this lesson has changed her thoughts. More important point is that Emine expresses her own change. Most of the participants emphasized the importance of empathy and stated that they started to understand the underlying causes of the behavior of the people they had previously felt or ignored. This shows that they are moving away from cultural centralism.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

There hasn't been found a study that establishes a relationship between Turkish Language Curriculum (2018) and cultural literacy skills, yet. The aim of this research is to improve the cultural literacy skills of middle school students by associating them with basic language skills. Studies in cultural literacy (DeBruin-Parecki & Klein, 2003; Gaitan, 2012) in the literature have generally been done to create an effective classroom environment and studies on language education (Hicks, 2013; Li, 2005; Nachmani, 2015; Naqeeb, 2012; Ursa, 2018) were mostly related to foreign language education. This research directly integrates the cultural literacy with the mother tongue teaching program. A three-stage action plan is prepared at each stage associated with different basic language skills. In the first stage, cultural awareness has been associated with speaking and writing, in the second stage

cultural difference has been associated with reading and writing, and finally cultural literacy has been associated with listening and writing.

According to the results of the first stage, it was concluded that the cultural self-perception of the participants was high. It has been determined that they have a sense of belonging and an exalting responsibility towards their cultural identities. It was observed that participants were interested in speaking skills. Because cultural awareness activities allow students to attend classes more willingly (Talley & Hui-ling, 2014). Especially their attention to impromptu speech has attracted attention. This is thought to be due to the existence of a subject related to their cultural identity. Because cultural identity perception has a positive contribution to learning (Altugan, 2015; Davis, Ambrose, & Orand, 2017; Wortham, 2006). Participants are able to focus on the topic of their diary lives and therefore speaking plays an important role in the development of their speaking skills (Achmad & Yusuf, 2014; Alharbi, 2015). Associating cultural elements with language teaching also contributes to the development of communication skills (Genc & Bada, 2005). In their research Ali, Kazemian and Mahar (2015), they concluded that classroom activities associated with cultural awareness improved students vocabulary, grammar, and communication skills.

It was determined that the cultural awareness phase continued to be effective in the results of the cultural diversity stage. Participants focus on their own culture. However, the necessity of considering cultural differences in the teaching process is proved by studies (Parlindungan, Rifai, & Safrani, 2018; Rodriguez & Lamm, 2016). As a result of different cultures and classroom discussions, it was determined that participants rearranged their knowledge in the end-of-day evaluations. While rearranging their knowledge, it is determined that they focus on the lack of opinions in the activities and express themselves with views that take into account the awareness of cultural differences. At this stage, reading skill learning outcomes were also fulfilled. In addition, each participant emphasized that information should be reliable when investigating the characteristics of different cultures. It can be said that trying to provide the right information is a result of feeling responsibility for different cultures. Participants also read cultural texts sensitively. Thus, it is thought to have a positive effect on the development of reading skills. The positive relationship between cultural differences and reading skills is supported by the results of studies

(Alexander, 2018; Miller-Naudé, Naudé, Beelders, & Bergh, 2017) in the literature.

In the final stage, it was concluded that the participants were able to transfer the information they acquired in the previous two stages to a different text. They produced a different text from a text and it was found that they could fulfill all aspects of cultural literacy. At this stage, it was concluded that the participants adopted the concept of empathy, respect for differences, tolerance, cultural interaction and sensibility. The result of studies (Barrette & Paesani, 2018; Cue & Casey, 2017; Ma'as & Peni, 2019) on the use of cultural literacy in education supports the outcome of this research. Based on the results, it was concluded that the participants were away from cultural centralism. In order to achieve this result, listening activity is thought to be effective. Participants tried to understand, evaluated and made inferences while performing listening activity. Thus, it is concluded that cultural literacy skills develop, rather than just based on cultural centralization. Participants' information has also increased until they reach this final stage. Besides it was concluded that listening skills developed especially in terms of questioning the text. Barrette and Paesani (2018) support the outcome of this study by stating that cultural literacy has an important role in the development of basic language skills.

Based on the results of the study, it is concluded that contributing to the development of writing skills which are common to all stages of the action plan. It is thought that because the content of the action plan related to cultural literacy is based on diary life experiences without the pressure of writing learning outcomes, has a positive effect on participants' writing skill. They tried to express their knowledge in a natural way. It is thought that increasing the information at every stage provides the writing gains more effective. It was concluded that this situation increased the interest of the participants about writing. Kurniasih, Komariah and Rodiah (2017) have found similar results in their research that language teaching associated with cultural literacy contributes to writing skills. According to them, by writing activities associated with cultural literacy, students know the meaning of the terms of their language.

At the end of the study, it was seen that cultural literacy skills could be associated with basic language skills. In this study, all the learning outcomes in Turkish Language Curriculum (2018) were tried to be included while

developing the action plan. Instead, separate action plans can be developed for each of the basic language skills. In this way, more detailed examination of each skill can be done. Learning outcomes for cultural literacy were determined in the action plan of the study. These learning outcomes can be arranged according to class levels. When determining these learning outcomes, it is important to maintain the existence of key changes that do not change according to the classes.

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