The Opinions of Turkish Instructors on Out-of-class Education

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Abstract

Continuing foreign language teaching outside the classroom in a natural and realistic environment is an important factor for effective language learning. This study aims to determine views of the instructors, teaching Turkish as a foreign language, towards learning language out of the classroom. Quantitative case study design was used in the study. The participants of the study consisted of 11 instructors who teach Turkish as a foreign language in Turkish Teaching Centers (TTCs) of Nevşehir Haci Bektas Veli University and Inonu University in Turkey. The data were collected through semi-structured interview form, and analyzed with descriptive analysis. Based on the findings, it was concluded that the instructors had positive attitudes towards teaching Turkish as a foreign language with out-of-class education and arranged learning activities outside the classroom as a part of their lesson plans.

Keywords: *Turkish instructors, out-of-class activities, out-of-class education, teaching Turkish as a foreign language*

1. Introduction

The rich cultural and linguistic diversity in Europe is undoubtedly considered as one of its important and valuable characteristics (Demirel, 2007). Extreme nationalism is the most significant obstacle to the harmony in Europe having different languages and cultures. The Council of Europe has put extreme nationalism on its agenda as a threat to the harmony of multicultural and multilingual Europe and provided financial support for projects aiming to suggest solutions to the problem. The primary goal of the projects is to promote modern language teaching methods in accordance with democratic citizenship. Committee of ministers of the Council of Europe emphasized strategies to facilitate the learning of foreign languages to promote multilingualism in Europe in line with this goal (TELC GMBH, 2013: 13). Common European Framework for Languages was prepared to guide language learners, teachers, programmer developers and coursebook authors. In the framework, 'language learners' are regarded as social actors that undertake communicative tasks and in general an action-oriented approach has been accepted (TELC GMBH, 2013: 18). In action-oriented approach, it is important for individuals to learn through experiences in the process and be constantly active. It is particularly emphasized in the framework that individuals are able to communicate in the target language to meet their basic needs. Communicational task can be defined as any type of goal-oriented action necessary for individuals to achieve a specific outcome. This can be a problem required to be solved or a goal determined by the individual (TELC GMBH, 2013: 19). Individuals should continue to learn the target language, the communicative aspect, outside the classroom in order to learn it effectively. The framework also emphasized that individuals should learn the language with their own actions and experiences, which is the basis of constructivism, commonly accepted view in the education world today. Constructivism is an approach based on linking new information with the background knowledge and moving to construct new learning based on this newly formed knowledge (Arslan, 2007). According to this approach, students should construct and apply the new information that they constructed on their previous knowledge, to new situations. In the learning process of target language, the individuals set out towards the discovery of a new language by starting from their mother tongue. This discovery occurs through comparing the old information with the new one and structuring and implementing it to a new situation. Therefore, language learning cannot be considered as learning the rules and the intricacies of the target language only but is based on the application of these into new situations. In constructivist approach, it is important for an individual to take action and to live his own experiences. Information is the end-product of experience

that the individuals find meaningful. It can be stated that constructivism, representing today's educational approach, and the action-oriented approach, which Common European Framework for Languages is based on, support each other. Constructivism also underlines the importance of life-long learning, autonomy and entrepreneurship which are in line with the framework emphasizing the action oriented approach to communicate in the target language. When considered constructivism and Common European Framework together, limiting target language learning and teaching to the classroom would negatively affect the learning of the target language.

Out-of-class education is a multi-dimensional learning process allowing the individuals to study in a natural environment with the structured learning activities and to learn events, facts and cases by experiences and/or discovery (Cengelci 2013; Priest, 1986). Cengelci (2013: 1824), lists the basic features of the out-of-class education as depending on the experiences, providing opportunities to learn through doing, requiring the use of all senses, focusing on interdisciplinary topics and choosing subjects on the relationship between human and the natural environment. In foreign language teaching, language problems of students in daily life can be solved through the use out-of-class activities. Since both the language framework and constructivism accept the importance of developing an experience-based content, teaching target languages with out-of-class education, in this case teaching Turkish as a foreign language, is necessary for an effective language education. Therefore, planning out-of-class activities for teaching Turkish as foreign language is considered important.

Many studies have been conducted on the out-of-class activities in the literature (Bunting, 2006; Carrier, 2009; Cengelci, 2013; Dillon et al, 2006; Ford, 1986; Gilbertson et al, 2006; Gokkaya and Yesilbursa, 2009; O'Brien, 2009; Richardson, and Simmons, 1996). The importance of out-of-class education stated in the pre-mentioned studies and not finding out-of-class studies on the subject of teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language was the most important motive to conduct the current study. In foreign language teaching, providing students with the opportunities to apply what they learned to real situations and guiding them is of great importance. This study aims to investigate the views of the instructors teaching Turkish as a foreign language towards the out-of-class education and to put forward suggestions for effective out-of-class education.

2. Methodology

In this section, information is given about the research design of the study, participants, data collection and data analysis.

Research Design
Quantitative research design was used in order to investigate the views of instructors teaching Turkish as a foreign language towards out-of-class education. "Quantitative research design can be described as following a quantitative process in which quantitative data collection tools such as observation, interview and document analysis are used to investigate cases or events in a realistic and holistic way" (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008:39). Case study whose main feature is to research one or more events in depth was used in this study. In other words, investigated the factors (environment, individuals, events, processes et.) related to cases in a holistic manner and focused on how they are affected from or how they affect related cases (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008: 77). Case study was considered as the most appropriate research design for the current study since it was aimed to investigate views of the instructors related to the out-of-class education in detail.

Participants
The participants of the study (3 males, 8 females) consisted of instructors teaching Turkish for as a foreign language in Turkish Teaching Centers (TTCs) of Nevşehir Haci Bektas Veli University and Inonu University. Convenience sampling method was used for determining the participants of the study. Demographic information related to the participants can be seen in Table 1 below:

Table 1. The demographic features of the study group

	f	%
Gender		
Female	3	27,3
Male	8	72,7
Education		
Master	4	36,5
Doctorate	7	63,5
University		
Inonu University	4	36,5
Nevsehir Haci Bektas Veli University	7	63,5
Experience		
1-5 years	4	36,5
5-10 years	4	36,5
10-15 years	2	18
15-20 years	1	9
Total	***11***	***100***

Data Collection

Interview form, including 5 questions and developed by the researcher was used as the data collection tool to determine the views of instructors. In order to ensure content validity of the form, expert opinions were taken. The experts were from Turkish Education Department (n=2) and Curriculum and Instruction Department (n=1). After expert opinion and piloting the study, the interview form was finalized. To ensure the reliability of the study, experts' opinions were also taken for the determined categories and codes.

Data Analysis

In this study, content analysis method was used to analyze the data. Content analysis is a kind of analysis used to examine the content of any text or document and reveal the numerical or statistical analysis. While examining the document, categories are formed and numerical representations are shown (Ekiz, 2009). In this context, the views of instructors were coded and categorized in the content analysis. Findings were tabulated and described and excerpts from the views of instructors were added to exemplify the related views.

3. Findings

Based on the views of the instructors obtained from the interview forms, following categories were determined and codes were given to each category: Definitions related to out-of-class education, out-of-class activities, advantages of out-of-class education, problems with out-of-class education, and suggestions for out-of-class education.

When Table 2 is examined, it was seen that the instructors defined out-of-class education as all language activities outside the classroom, planned and unplanned activities, necessary and important activities, learning through experience and lifelong learning. These definitions show that instructors give importance to out-of-class education and are aware of the fact that this kind of education is in line with the constructivist learning approach. Examples of excerpts related to this category are as follows:

P10: *In fact, apart from the students' activities on Turkish in the classroom atmosphere, it is a very wide concept covering almost all activities outside the classroom except for and Turkish I believe.*
P6: *Learning outside the classroom is lifelong learning.*

Table 2. Definitions related to out-of-class education

Category	Definitions related to out-of-class activities	The opinions of the participants
Code	Any kind of language activities outside the classroom	P1, P2, P10
	Planned and unplanned activities	P8
	Necessary and Important activities	P3, P5, P7, P9, P10
	Learning through experience	P1, P2, P4, P6, P11
	Life-long learning	P4, P6

When table 3 is examined, 19 codes can be seen under the category of out-of-class activities: Local places, theaters, library, cinema, home visits, museum, sightseeing, social activities of the university, national and religious fest, wedding ceremony, direction simulation, grocery and shop, conference-seminar, language partnership, picnic, choirs, undergraduate courses, pen-pal, homework. The listed activities related to the out-of-class given by the instructors show that instructors are able to enrich out-of-class education by using a wide variety of activities. Participants stated that national and religious holidays are an important learning out-of-class activity and they use this activity as a part of learning outside the classroom. Example of excerpt related to this activity is as follows:

P3: *I took them to the Newroz celebrations. Students understand and reinforce much better there. Because there are Turkish-speaking people. They can reinforce listening comprehension. They get in contact with the*

Two participants mentioned about language partnership as an activity for out-of-class education. Example of excerpt related to this activity is as follows:

P6: *I can say based on my experiences the best example of language learning outside the classroom is obviously the language partnership that is; body system. I included the students in such a program. Since language partnership started the confidence of students for speaking Turkish increased.*

Another out-of-class activity home-visits. Example of excerpt related to this activity is as follows:

P7: *For example, I welcome my students at my home many times out of courses and classroom. I performed such an activity a few times to teach the acts related to our traditional family structure, to speak Turkish as much as possible, to show the application of how is the Turkish hospitality, how the Turks spend an evening, how they welcome their guests, what they speak while during the talks, what they serve for them, what they say while catering, how to see of while the guests are leaving.*

One participant noted that weddings are an important out-of-class activity. Example of excerpt related to this activity is as follows:

P8: *Weddings provide a very good learning activity for students outside the classroom. Being in a continuous communication and witnessing to the culture of the language they are learning makes it more effective for them.*

Three participants stated that they benefitted from social events held at the university as an out-of-class activity. Example of excerpt related to this activity is as follows:

P9: *We benefit from concert or cultural activities and spring feasts prepared by the university. Students here are more exposed to Turkish compared to the class.*

Table 3. Out-of-class activities

Category	Out-of-class activities	The opinions of the participants
	Local places	P1, P5, P6
	Theaters	P2, P4, P5, P7, P8, P9, P10
	Library	P2, P4, P5
	Cinema	P2, P5, P6, P7
	Home visits	P7
	Museum	P2
	Sightseeing	P2, P6, P8, P9, P10
	Social activities of the university	P3, P6, P9
	National and religious fest	P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P9
Code	Wedding ceremony	P8
	Direction simulation	P1
	Grocery and shop	P1, P4, P10
	Conference-seminar	P3, P7, P8
	Language partnership	P3, P5, P6, P9, P10
	Picnic	P2, P5, P6, P11
	Choirs	P9
	Undergraduate courses	P3, P7, P9
	Pen-pal	P10
	Homework	P4

When table 4 is examined, 7 codes were determined under the category of advantages of out-of-class education: Reinforcement of the learning, supplying the stability, activation of the student, being a life-long learning structure, being more effective than the classroom learning, supplying a learning in a short time, supplying a learning through experiences.

Three participants stated that out-of-class education leads students to learn through experiences which can be considered an advantage for language learning. Example of excerpt related to this code is as follows:

P4: *We need to use the method of learning by experience and it is lasting. Therefore I use outside the classroom learning activities.*

Two of the participants stated that out-of-class activities can help the students to learn in a shorter period of time. Example of excerpt related to this code is as follows:

P7: *We can really observe our students engaged in learning activities outside the classroom to speak Turkish perfectly and learn in a very short time. But we can see that the students who couldn't create such an environment outside are unfortunately having difficulty.*

There were participants who think that out-of-class activities are more effective than in-class activities. Example of excerpt related to this code is as follows:

P11: *Because learning through experiences outside the classroom style is better than teaching during the class.*

Table 4. Advantages of out-of-class education

Category	The advantages of out-of-class education	The opinions of the participants
	Reinforcement of the learning	P3, P11
	Supplying the stability	P1, P4, P10
	Activation of the student	P2, P8, P9
Code	Being a life-long learning structure	P1, P7, P10
	Being more effective than the classroom learning	P3, P5, P11
	Supplying a learning in a short time	P3, P6,P7,
	Supplying a learning through experiences	P1, P4, P11

When table 5 is examined, 11 codes were determined under the category of problems with out-of-class education: Lack of support from authorities, being a high number of students, grouping of the students, exclusion, problems arising from cultural differences, having more external intervention, being shy in the out-of-class activities, the inability of the students to adapt, health problems, financial problems, and unable to provide motivation. 4 participants stated that they didn't experience problems related to out-of-class education. Examples of excerpts related to this category are as follows:

P1: *and then, you request something from the authorities and they can't meet it. Since they can't meet that, we are let down.*

P5: *The number of students in my class is really high and it is sometimes difficult for me to plan effective out-of-class activities.*

P7: *shy students may sometimes experience problems when I give then out-of-class activities. So I try to talk to these students.*

P9: *We are sometimes having difficulties on cooperating of the students. I believe the biggest problem is living together of the ones coming from the same country.*

Table 5. Problems with out-of-class education

Category	Faced Problems	The opinions of the participants
	Lack of support from the authorities	P1, P5, P8
	Being a high number of students	P6,
	Grouping of students	P6, P9, P10
	Exclusion	P8, P9
	Problems arising from cultural differences	P7, P8
Code	Having an outer interruption	P2
	Students' being shy during out-of-class activities	P7
	Not conducting the adaptation	P2
	Healthy problems	P10
	Financial problems	P1, P2, P5, P6, P8
	Not providing motivation	P5

When Table 6 is examined, 8 codes were determined under the category of suggestions for out-of-class education: Creating an environment for conducting cultural transmission, preparation of out-of-class activities that activate the students, using language partnership, supporting students financially, creation of professional atmosphere, developing a specific programme preparing extra sources appropriate for the target group, directing to the academic courses. Examples of excerpts related to this category are as follows:

P2: *Perhaps, scholarships may be provided for the students.*

P5: *Language learning is also a cultural transfer. The cultural environment must be prepared for the conduction of cultural transmission.*

P7: *I think that students in our classes should also be accepted to other academic courses. This can ease the process of their adaptation to the school and the environment.*

P10: *Firstly, it's useful to make it in a planned way.*

Table 6. Suggestions for out-of-class education

Category	Suggestions for out-of-class education	The opinions of the participants
Code	Creating an environment for conducting cultural transmission	P5, P11
	Preparation of out-of-class activities that activate the students	P4
	Using Language partnership	P3, P6
	Supporting students financially	P1, P2, P4, P6, P10
	Creation of professional atmosphere.	P1
	Developing a specific programme	P6, P7, P8, P9, P10
	Preparing extra sources appropriate for the target group	P5
	Directing to the academic courses	P5, P7

4. Discussion

Due to the lack of established criteria for the employment of instructors teaching Turkish as a foreign language, the investigation of tendencies, attitudes and competences of the current instructors is of crucial for the identification and solutions of the problems. This study sought to determine the views of the instructors teaching Turkish as a foreign language towards out-of-class education. Instructors defined out-of-class activities as learning through experiences and indicated its importance for teaching a foreign language, in this case, teaching Turkish as a foreign language. This kind of education places certain responsibilities on the students for their own learning which is in line with the contemporary approaches of language learning. The importance given by instructors to out-of-class education shows that they are aware of the benefits of learning a foreign language by combining learning in-class and out-of-class, making foreign language learning a multi-dimensional task.

As the nature of language, the instructors emphasized that language teaching cannot be sustained apart from the natural environment, daily rituals and natural flow of life. They also pointed out that the activities attracting students' interest such as cinema, theater, weddings and home-visits particularly affect the learning process positively. One of the most basic features of out-of-class learning is the development of communication skills (Stan & Humberstone, 2011), which is the ultimate goal of learning a foreign language. Instructors stated that students can learn the subject that can take hours to learn in the classroom, at a shorter time, more readily and in a more amusing way with well-planned activities outside the classroom, reducing also the anxiety of the students. In this respect, out-of-class education is more advantageous than in-class, since the students can find opportunities to enrich their experiences. When both modes are combined, the effect can be a perfect blend for learning a foreign language However, in order to conduct out-of-class education, organization of the environment and requirement of financial and institutional support are the primary problems for the teachers planning to add out-of-class activities for their students, showing that preparing out-of-class activities cannot be achieved properly independent from authorities and institutions. Such a need lengthens the preparation of the activities. The instructors stated that grouping of foreign students with the other students from their own country outside the

classroom also pose a considerable problem for out-of-class activities. In addition, the use of the mother tongue by the students in out-of-class activities probably results in failure.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

For teaching Turkish effectively with the use of out-of-class education, the activities should not be independent of in-class activities. Therefore, randomly given out-of-class activities can reduce the possible positive effects and students cannot benefit from real life experiences. Planning is what may bring success to out-of-class education in teaching a foreign language.

The following suggestions may be put forward based on the results of the current study:

- The students should be provided to enter courses in the departments apart from the course in Turkish education centers in order to adapt to Turkey and Turkish culture and the dominating academic language: Turkish.

- With the support of the departments of Turkish language education and Turkish language and literature, language partnership programs should be initiated for the foreign students who are learning Turkish. Language partnership programs may help foreign students to develop their verbal communication skills in a natural and realistic environment as a part of out-of-class education.

- Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language centers should be aware of the benefits of out-of-class education for teaching Turkish more effectively and provide the necessary financial and institutional support.

- Out-of-class education should be monitored by the instructors and necessary precautions are taken in the face of problems.

- The instructors should share their experiences about out-of-class education with their colleagues.

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