

Teaching Prepositions and Connectors in the 6th Grade Turkish Language Workbooks (Structural Analysis)

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Abstract

In this work, preposition and conjunction teaching in 6th grade Turkish workbook at secondary school is discussed. Students, who cannot learn prepositions and conjunctions basically, can have difficulty in understanding the types of words in secondary education. Preposition and conjunction teaching in workbook has been scrutinized structurally in terms of meeting the gains in Turkish Education Program and some suggestions have been made in the conclusion. In this way we have tried to take further steps in preposition and conjunction teaching at secondary school.

Keywords: Turkish lesson workbooks, preposition, conjunction

Introduction

Prepositions

The words that do not make sense alone and gain meaning only within a sentence are called prepositions. At the same time, they are stereotyped language expressions. These words are the habits of our language being used for centuries. They are words laden not so much with meanings as with tasks. "Prepositions are the words that do not have meanings, but only have grammatical duties. They do not correspond to any object or action. But, they only perform a grammatical function by being used with meaningful sentences and providing them support. For this reason, we can also consider prepositions to be words charged with duty in addition to nouns and verbs that are meaningful words (ile, için, gibi, kadar, göre, dolayı, ötürü, ait, üzere, beri, önce, evvel, sonra, geri, karşı, doğru, yana, taraf, başka, dair, rağmen, değin, fakat, lakin, ancak, çünkü, mademki, halbuki, gerçi, eđer, yoksa, ah, vah, eyvah, ay, vay, of, hop, haydi, and gibi" (Ergin, 2012:348).

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Linguistic experts expressed the following views on the definition of prepositions:

E. Gelalmaz made a broad definition with the following statement: "Prepositions, when discussed alone with this state of theirs, are the words which indicate neither an entity nor an existence or action. Their presence in language is only for their tasks. In a sense, since they establish relations between words (noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, and adverb) that indicate entities, process or movements, the tasks of some of them resemble to those of affixes used in the inflections of nouns in accordance with the case. However, they can be separate words or sometimes be in word groups, some of them can be brought after the words they are related through case suffixes, and others function as connectors and are located between word or groups that they will connect or in the beginning of the sentence or at the end of them" (1995:298).

H. Ediskun, using the term "preposition" instead of "inflected prepositions", defined it as "words that do not possess any meaning alone, but establish various inferential references when they are linked to meaningful words, sets and word groups or get into a sentence and thereby whose meanings are perceived" (1988:357). Here, Ediskun drew attention to the semantic acquisition of prepositions in sentences.

M. Kaya Bilgegil classified prepositions as "words that do not become a target of provision alone due to the lack of their meanings or against whom provisions cannot be given and that can only appear after the words of noun origin they follow in the meaning basically trapped in themselves" (1982:220). From this aspect, he mostly puts the emphasis on prepositions of having noun origin.

Tahsin Banguoğlu collected prepositions under the term "postposition" and considered them as words that come after nouns and establish their relations with other elements in the sentence (1986:333).

Vardar et al. put emphasis on the functional structures of prepositions with the definition in which he explained them as "functional morphemes used in various languages for establishing relations between the units that came in before or after and another unit or the rest of the sentence and whose meaning becomes clear with other units in the same context (e.g. ile, göre, üzere, gibi, dolayı and için, etc.). The definition and scope of prepositions has caused various views to be suggested" (Vardar et al. 1998:126).

Adalı stated that prepositions provided integrity with the structure of the sentence by saying that "prepositions are functional antecedents that come after nouns and create unity with nouns directly or through certain noun cases. They are units that create unity. They cannot be a member of the sentence alone" (Adalı, 2004:40)

According to these definitions, prepositions are quite versatile in Turkish linguistics and prepositions can be seen to perform many tasks in a sentence. They serve in various structures in types of words and also create phrases. Prepositions in Turkish language can likely be divided into three groups in terms of their tasks:

1. Exclamatory Prepositions

- a) Exclamations
 - b) Prepositions of address
 - c) Interrogative Prepositions
 - d) Demonstrative Prepositions
 - e) Prepositions of Response
2. Prepositions of Connection
 - a) Prepositions of Order
 - b) Prepositions of Equalization
 - c) Prepositions of Comparison
 - d) Front-sentence prepositions
 - e) End-sentence prepositions
 - f) Prepositions of Reinforcement
 3. Final Inflectional Prepositions

Conjunctions

It is necessary to look first at the smallest structural units that constitute a language in order to understand that language. Conjunctions also carry out important tasks in this regard. They are the words that connect sentences or words to one another, are used for establishing semantic relations between them and do not have any meaning when they are used alone. In Turkish grammar, this word, which was described as preposition of conjunction or conjunction by the experts in this field, was defined by experts as such:

Tahir Nejat Gencan (1971:482) defined conjunctions as "the words used for connecting significantly related sentences, clauses or peer elements.

Kaya Bilgegil (1982:227) defined conjunctions as "wordings used for establishing liaison between sentences, demonstrative groups and words."

Haydar Ediskun (1988:302) described conjunctions as "words that do not have any meaning in themselves, but connect sentences, peer words or word groups both morphologically and semantically."

Zeynep Korkmaz (2007:1091) wrote of conjunctions as "grammatical elements that connect words, word groups, sentences and sometimes paragraphs in terms of form and meaning and establish various semantic relationships between the words that they linked with functions they undertook."

Necmettin Hacıeminoğlu (1992:112) defined connecting prepositions in his work called *Türk Dilinde Edatlar* (Prepositions in Turkish Language) as "words that connect sentences or words and word groups to one another in a sentence in terms of meaning or form."

Leylâ Karahan (2004:30) used the term “connecting group” and emphasized on conjunctions’ function of establishing reference as “word groups that are created by two or more noun elements interconnected with connecting prepositions.

As can be understood from the definitions mentioned above, conjunctions or connecting prepositions are words that facilitate words and sentences to be related to one another in terms of meaning and tasks. Even if they are termed as out of sentence elements, these words have significant functions in establishing semantic references within the sentence.

Defined as one of the word groups in Turkish and generally termed as connecting groups, the word group is assessed by some linguists as such:

Ergin (2012:477-478) stated the following about connecting group: “connecting group is a word group created by sequencing connecting prepositions. Today, sequencing prepositions are “ve”, “ile” and “ilâ” (...from.... Up to) indicating distance. Of these, “ilâ” can be included only among numbers since it indicates amount. “ile” and “ilâ” generally connect two noun elements and connect all kinds of word and word groups as well as finite verbs and sentences”.

Banguoğlu (1986:510-511) made the following statement: “conjunctions create connecting phrases by connecting two or more words with the same functions in addition to their function of connecting phrases of decree.”

Methodology

This research is a study of screening model focusing on teaching prepositions and conjunctions in 6th Grade Student Workbooks taught in secondary schools, examining the appropriateness of the activities for teaching prepositions and conjunctions to the learning outcomes of Turkish Language curriculum from structural perspective. Screening model is a research approach which aims to describe a situation that existed in the past or still exists in a way it is there. An event, individual or object, which becomes the subject of a study, is attempted to be defined within its own conditions and as it is (Karasar, 2008: 77). General screening models are screening arrangements conducted on the whole of the population or a group taken from it, a sample or sampling with the aim of reaching an overall judgment about the population in a population consisting of lots of numbers (Karasar, 2008: 79).

Document review was used in the identification of activities for teaching prepositions and conjunctions in student workbooks. It is the general name for written or visual materials containing information about a phenomenon, event or situation being studied (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006). The sampling selection was resorted in the structural analysis of prepositions and conjunctions in student workbooks. Student workbooks, examined within the context of the study, are shown below:

1. Commission. (2014b). *İlköğretim Türkçe 6 Çalışma Kitabı* (Primary Turkish 6 Workbook). Ankara: MEB State Books.
2. Şükran Kaplan & Gülay Yıldırım Şen. (2014). *İlköğretim Türkçe 6 Çalışma Kitabı* (Primary Turkish 6 Workbook), Ankara: Gizem Yayıncılık.
3. Fatma Karabiyik. (2011). *İlköğretim Türkçe 6 Çalışma Kitabı* (Primary Turkish 6 Workbook), Ankara: Evren Publications.
4. Commission. (2014 a). *6 Sınıf Türkçe Çalışma Kitabı* (6th Grade Turkish Workbook). İzmir: Coşku Publications.
5. Hatice Biyikli –Yaşar Öztaş. (2012). *İlköğretim Türkçe Çalışma Kitabı 6* (Primary Turkish Workbook 6). Ankara: Doku Publications

Findings and Comments

The frequency of application of a number of prepositions and conjunctions was calculated in the workbooks, to see whether enough attention has been paid to the application of the corresponding prepositions. Theoretical information about prepositions and conjunctions, their examples and activities for teaching them (if any) were also scrutinized. The findings are given below.

MEB publications structural analysis of prepositions

A total of nine prepositions were used and examples were provided in the sentence related to these prepositions. "İçin and gibi" prepositions were used three times, and "bile", "ile", and "mi" prepositions - once. Other prepositions were provided as words. All of these prepositions are of Turkish origin.

MEB publications structural analysis of conjunctions

A total of five conjunctions were used. Of them, while "de" preposition was seen to be used three times, "ve", and "ama" conjunctions were used once. All of these conjunctions were written separately and were used in the form of a word. "Ve" conjunction is of Arabic origin. Other conjunctions are of Turkish origins.

Evren publications structural analysis of prepositions

A total of thirteen prepositions were used within sentences. Three of them consisted of only one affix and one word. Eight prepositions were used as words. Two cases of "ile" prepositions were attached to a word. Twelve of prepositions are of Turkish origin and only "kadar" is of Arabic origin.

Gizem publications structural analysis of prepositions

A total of twenty-seven prepositions were used. Of these prepositions, fourteen of them consisted of only one word. The other twelve were used as words. Only "ile" preposition was written attached to the word that came

before it. It was added to the word as "la" undergoing the vowel harmony. "Kadar" preposition is of Arabic origin. It was used in three sentences in the table. The other twenty-four prepositions are of Turkish origin.

Gizem publications structural analysis of conjunctions

A total of nineteen conjunctions were used. Of these conjunctions, fourteen were used in order to connect two sentences to one another. Others linked words to one another. Of these prepositions, two are of Persian origin ("hem ... hem"), and two - of Arabic origin ("fakat" and "ve"). Fifteen prepositions used are of Turkish origin. "İle" and "ancak" conjunctions were used three times, "hem ...hem" and "ama" conjunctions - twice and others: "ne...ne, ya da, bu yüzden, çünkü, fakat, lakin, ve, ile, and de" once.

Coşku publications structural analysis of prepositions

A total of fourteen prepositions were used. "İle", "gibi", and "kadar" prepositions were used three times, "için" and "e doğru" prepositions - twice and other prepositions - once. It was seen that of these prepositions, ten were used as words, three - as one affix and one word and one of them - only as an affix. Of these prepositions, three are of Arabic origin ("kadar") and other eleven prepositions are of Turkish origin.

Coşku publications structural analysis of conjunctions

A total of eight conjunctions were used. Of these conjunctions, three of them were used for linking two sentences to one another. Other conjunctions connected words to one another. While "ile" conjunction was used twice, other conjunctions were used once. Of these conjunctions, two of them are of Arabic origin ("ve" and "fakat") and six - of Turkish origin.

Doku publications structural analysis of prepositions

Four prepositions were used in total. Examples were provided with regard to "ile" preposition completely. Two of these prepositions were used as a word and two of them as an affix. All of the prepositions are of Turkish origin. No examples were given for other prepositions.

Doku publications structural analysis of conjunctions

Nine conjunctions were used in total and all of them were in the form of words. 3 examples were given for "fakat" preposition, 2 each for "oysa" conjunction and one example for other conjunctions. Four conjunctions used are of Arabic origin ("ve" and "fakat") and five of them - of Turkish origin.

Thus, five books were examined concerning the teaching of prepositions and conjunctions. These books were Turkish language workbooks. Each of these books belonged to different publishers. It was found that prepositions and conjunctions were explained with a very limited number of examples in Turkish language workbooks of MEB. As for prepositions, most examples were provided on the same prepositions ("gibi", "ve", and "için"), but no emphasis was given to other prepositions. Especially, no or almost no examples on widely used prepositions were

provided. As for conjunctions, most of the examples were provided for the conjunction "de". No examples were given with regard to many conjunctions.

Common words, both used as prepositions and conjunctions, were also mentioned in the books. The inadequacy of examples was in the nature of causing difficulties in the perception of subjects. However, both preposition and conjunction examples were at the level that students would be able to understand.

Only the topic of prepositions was mentioned in the Turkish language workbook of Evren publications. Only this aspect of the topic was discussed. As for prepositions, many example sentences were provided. Examples were at the level of attracting students' attention. No examples were provided for conjunctions. The topic came short with this aspect. Students will experience difficulties in distinguishing some different and similar aspects between prepositions and conjunctions.

The topic was discussed in detail in the workbook of Gizem publications and examples were given by taking students' perception levels into consideration. An adequate number of work activities is offered by the book with regard to prepositions and conjunctions. Students' active participation to the class was intended by the preparation of sentences in accordance with student-centered approach. Examples on most of the prepositions and conjunctions were provided in this regard. In addition, prepositions and conjunctions were used in semantically different sentences.

Sentence examples in Cosku publications were not at the level to challenge students' level of perception. Examples were given mostly in the preposition section of the topic. Many examples on prepositions at simple and clear level were selected. Examples were given to some of prepositions and no examples were given yet to some of them. Mostly the contrastive meanings of conjunctions were being emphasized. The topic was discussed by providing a limited number of examples.

Prepositions were explained by a limited number of examples in the workbook of Doku publications. No examples were given to most of the prepositions. Conjunctions were discussed on a broader plane, but mostly the contrastive meanings of conjunctions were being emphasized.

Conclusion

Prepositions and conjunctions in any language, including Turkish, are very important to provide a comprehensible flow of utterances instead of unlinked pieces of information which are difficult or even impossible to understand. Having no meaning without the words they link, their meaning is quite abstract, so, if no adequate teaching is provided, students will make many errors and their speech will not be characterized by cohesion.

On the whole, unfortunately, the teaching of prepositions and conjunctions is not done very relevantly. Among the analyzed books only one deals with many prepositions, offers theoretical information together with various

adequate activities. The other analyzed books (as well as the majority of those that were not involved in this research, but which are similar to these) have to be improved in several directions:

- More prepositions (especially, the high-frequency ones) have to be emphasized in the workbooks.
- More examples (desirably from fiction, where the quality of language is high) should be provided.
- Clear theoretical explanations should be provided.
- Activities should be more various.

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