Analyzing the Types of Discrimination in Turkish for Foreigners Books

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Abstract   Textbooks might be one of the main resources of teachers even today however there have been many changes in education media and Technologies. Especially language course books used in foreign language teaching can be the basic source of learning when the target language is not spoken in the country where the language is thought. Thus, it can be mentioned that the resources used in education, indirectly play an important role in shaping the historical, cultural and social perception of the learners. By the way, as textbooks especially language textbooks should be considered as one of the important items in the textbooks and they should be designed as free of stereotypical and ideological sources, discriminative expression and offer objective information. However, It is an indisputable fact that the cultural heritage of the textbooks and its contribution to transfer the values to the future generations, It is argued that the explicit or implicit messages in text books may lead to social polarization and the formation of societal mental boundaries and the stereotypical beliefs in society. 1. Are there discriminatory expressions in written and vocalized texts? 2. Are there elements of discrimination in the visuals (graphics, pictures)?

1. Introduction

Textbooks are one of the main resources of teachers even today however there have been many changes in education media and technologies for years. According to Kucukkahmet (2014) textbooks are vital for both teachers and learners as they present the knowledge systematically and give a chance of repetition independent of time and place. Especially language course books used in foreign language teaching can be the basic source of learning when the target language is not spoken in the country where the language is thought. Thus, it can be mentioned that the resources used in education, indirectly play an important role in shaping the historical, cultural and social perception of the learners. Pingel (2010) states that textbooks contain fictional texts, books and stories with a lot of information, reality, and numerical data, so there are clear signs that the textbooks contain behavioral patterns, norms and rules that adults want to convey to future generations. In addition, Apple (1993) defines textbooks as "official knowledge of the communities" that set international boundaries. Furthermore, Touraine (2000) notes that textbooks are one of the most important elements reflecting the dynamics and structure of the society. By the way, as textbooks especially language textbooks should be considered as one of the important items in education, and they should be designed as free of stereotypical and ideological sources, discriminative expression and offer objective information. It is an indisputable fact that textbooks are the main sources to protect cultural heritage and their contribution to transfer the values to the future generations cannot be denied. It is argued that the explicit or implicit messages in textbooks may lead to social polarization and the formation of societal mental boundaries and the stereotypical beliefs in society. Altbach (2010) notes that the social conflicts and struggles in textbooks are one of the most important issues nowadays the educational practice, as the reflections
of national identity are included in educational texts. Herglson (2010) points out that the authors are criticized to be a spokesman of the pressure groups as a result of economic, political and social concerns of publishing houses. The idea of objective, unbiased information in textbooks could be an illusion. Fleming (1990) argues that it is more crucial to provide objective knowledge and basic skills in the course materials, such as improving writing and reading and gaining critical thinking ability by using ethical systems rather than pomping ethnocentrism.

As main resources, textbooks might have some discriminative parts such as pictures or sentences. Although discrimination is a concept that has been studied frequently by educational studies researches (Akar, & Gomlekisiz,2010; Inan, 2012; Gokce, 2013, 2015; Babaoglan, 2015; Papaoikonomou, 2017) in recent years, the researches on discrimination in textbooks (Banks,1969; Porreca, 1984; Titus, 1993; Ferre & Hall,1996; Shaver et al., 2010) is limited to race, colour, and sexism. So the aim of this research is to give theoretical background of discrimination and analyze the Turkish Language Textbooks according to the discrimination types. The types of discrimination is declared in European Non Discrimination Law by European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights as age, race, ethnicity, disability, colour, sexism, sexual orientation, property, religion, belief, language, addiction, social class, differentiation, occupation, pregnancy, individual differences, and marital status.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Discrimination

Discrimination occurs when people are treated less favorably than other people are in a comparable situation only because they belong, or are perceived to belong to a certain group or category of people. People may be discriminated against because of their age, disability, ethnicity, origin, political belief, race, religion, sex or gender, sexual orientation, language, culture and on many other grounds (European Council, 2017). It is often the result of prejudices people hold, and can make people powerless. Discrimination may have direct consequences on those people and groups being discriminated against, but it has also indirect and deep consequences on society as a whole. A society where discrimination is allowed or tolerated is a society where people are deprived from freely exercising their full potential for themselves and for society.

The presence of discriminatory statements and expressions in textbooks has been seen as a barrier to achieve international peace and social reconciliation around the world. The reports of the United Nations and the European Commission frequently highlight the necessity of bias that exist in textbooks. The first steps on the prevention of bias and discrimination in textbooks began after World War I with the foundation of a committee by the League of Nations, in 1925. This committee assessed the textbooks comparatively which was a movement that favored first by the neighboring countries. The commission, which was re-assembled in 1932, has now set international benchmarks for textbooks. As a result, many authors accepted the idea that battles and conflicts which existed in textbooks. Thus, analyzing and examining the course book contents, has gained a national dimension in each country (Giardino, 2002). In 1946, UNESCO Conference on International Understanding of Improvement through Textbooks and the Improvement of Educational Materials were organized to share and analyze the experiences gained at the end of the two world wars and re-interpreted the previously developed principles about textbooks. UNESCO Textbooks and International Understanding through the Improvement of Educational Materials Booklet were published in 1949. The importance of analyzing comparative textbooks was emphasized and the idea of identifying basic freedoms in education, values of human rights and peace, solidarity and international understanding was stated at UNESCO General Conference in 1974. UNESCO International Textbooks Research Network was established UNESCO in 1992 (Pingel, 2010).

The name of the program, which was responsible for the analysis and examination of the textbooks at European Union, was Against Bias and Prejudice. In this program, there were held conferences and meetings about History Curriculum and Text Books around Europe between the years of 1950 and 1993. And in the meetings held around Europe of including Istanbul and Ankara 900 of the 2000 textbooks were being studied in member states were examined. It has been argued that history shouldn’t be used to make propaganda of the European Integrity and it’s also underlined that the history books content must be purified by historical errors and bias prejudices (European Commission, 2017). In 1999 the problems about immigration, immigrants, collective integration, and gender, sexual orientation, age, race, ethnicity, beliefs and disability discrimination in European Community took place on legal basis for the first time. The 2000 Lisbon Strategies emphasized the need to support education in disadvantaged groups such as the handicapped, elderly, minorities and children who could benefit from social inclusion and educational opportunities which could ensure equal opportunities in society (CERN, 2017). Despite all the arrangements, it has been pointed out in the reports and statistics published by the Council of Europe and Eurostat that today there is still discriminative expressions in the content of the school curriculum and materials and media and need to be improved.

According to the Discrimination Survey in the European Union Member States, implemented by Eurostat in 28 countries in 2015, a large part of the respondents says that there is discrimination in text books especially related to
ethnic origin (81%), religion or belief (80%), sexual orientation (67%), and sexual identity (67%). And The Report of Overview of Youth Discrimination in the European Union states that the course materials, text books which are used in classes may cause to the alienation and exclusion of the individual. While respecting to the materials, it is thought that these materials do not appeal to different groups of the society. For example in math problems there are just traditional family figure with just including mother and father and children and by excluding the single parent families or gay couples and there are mainly White European pictures which promotes the whiteness of society. This situation can lead to the idea that migrants or other nations may not have much role in the development of a country. The disappearance of individuals with different sexual orientations and individuals, with different ethnic origins in the prepared contents and textbooks causes the decrease in the visibility of these groups in society which can ultimately encourage distrust and discrimination by others towards to them (European Commission, 2017). The Report of Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Europe which is prepared according to the research conducted by NGOs declares that the books and teaching materials tend to present missing or incorrect information by rejecting homosexuality due to existing prejudices or bias in society (European Commission, 2017).

In Turkey, there has been a rapid improvement to avoid discrimination in educational context in the last decade. The enforcement of all forms of discrimination was prohibited in 2005, in accordance with Act 3 and 122 of the Criminal Code. Similarly, Act 10 in Civil Servants Code, states the punishments clearly in case of any discriminative action performed by civil servants. There have been also crucial legal regulations to prevent discrimination in text books and school materials. The first regulation by the Ministry of National Education was Textbooks and Educational Tools Act which promotes diversities in text books and school materials, published in the Official Gazette in 1995. In 2007 in order to protect social consensus and international peace and diversities, the phrase of “Textbooks must contribute to democracy, human rights and cultural and universal values.” was added to the act (MEB, 2017). For the first time with the expressions in this Act, the existence of discrimination problem has gained a formal basis in Turkey (MEB, 2017). However there haven’t been many academic researches examining the existing discrimination in text books. After being a candidate country for European Union, there have been conducted some projects by NGOs and Universities to present the discrimination and bias in text book in Turkey. With the partnership of Turkish History Foundation, a private university in Istanbul has carried out Human Rights III Project in Textbooks with financial support of EU Delegation. Totally 245 textbooks for primary and secondary education were examined by 25 academicians in this project. The results revealed that there have been discriminative expressions or visuals in published materials (SECBIR, 2017). This study has been prepared entirely for academic purposes, and the findings and examinations made are only based on academic guidelines. In this context, the aim is not to impersonate or detract from any person, institution or organization. As academicians, we only want to present a scientific problem that exists. Thus, authors of foreign language education books can prepare more objective books by considering them. The aim of this research to analyze the Turkish Language Textbooks for Foreigners to answer the questions stated below by using a content analyzing scale according to the types of discrimination.

1. Are there discriminatory expressions in written and vocalized texts?
2. Are there elements of discrimination in the visuals (graphics, pictures)?

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Model and Analysis

The study’s design is document analysis, one of the qualitative research techniques. The data were analyzed using content analysis technique. The purpose of content analysis is to reach the concepts and relationships that will describe the collected data. The target population of the study is composed of Turkish Language Text Books for Foreigners which were published at six levels starting from A1 to C2 according to the European Framework of Europe. The research is limited to analysis of the Turkish textbooks which were studied by a group adult students coming from different counties around the world in 2016-2017 education year. An observation scale was prepared according to the discrimination types as declared in European Non Discrimination Law by European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and used as data collection tool to generate the codes and the theme. The textbooks as a basis for research were reached through samples which were given as samples by the firm. In the phase of the data analysis, the textbooks were skimmed and scanned beforehand to generate theme and categories and basic elements were noted down. Then, the books were read a second time within the frame of these basic elements stated at the research form. The data analysis was carried out in four phases: 1. Coding the data, 2. Identifying the themes of coded data, 3. Arranging the codes and themes and 4. Identifying and interpreting the findings. Basic points to reflect the discrimination types were determined and these points were supported using direct quotes from the dialogues and text in the vocal records, texts and visuals in the text.
4. Findings


1. The results related to the Gender Discrimination Properties in textbooks

When the Turkish for Foreigner Textbooks are examined from the perspective of gender discrimination however there are positive examples which promote gender equality. In addition, there are quite number of examples presenting men and women in a traditional patriarchal unequal distribution of social roles where the distribution of roles within the family can be seen as mother and daughters doing the housework and responsible of child care. The pattern that represents women carrying out house hold tasks and child care can be found in all level of Turkish for Foreigners Textbooks. The examples below represent the unequal gender roles are unquestioningly represented as the norm:

“When I wake up I directly go to the bathroom to have a shower. Before having breakfast I shave my face and get dressed meanwhile my wife prepares breakfast and after I have breakfast I go to my work by walking.”

“My mother did housework all day.”

“Her mother was preparing the breakfast for Ahmet but he didn’t want to have it.

“When their husbands go to work the women in the apartment visit each other and drink coffee then they start doing housework.”

“Nihal: I can’t believe it there is a lot of washing up to do.”

“Faith: You know my dear. We don’t have enough money to buy a dishwasher at the moment.”

“Nihal: I know but if we had washing machine I wouldn’t spend my all time by doing washing up.”

The patriarchal family model can be one of the institutions that teach and perpetuate sexist role models and the unequal social role played by women. In such a model the woman is placed in the role of the servant and father is the leader of the family. Moreover women are expected to represent fixed traditional roles and if necessary sacrifice themselves for her husband, and children. The example below may be representing the unequal social roles as the woman leaves school as she gets married at an early age and devotes herself to her family. She has been happy for a while but then she decides to go back to school as she gets bored with doing shopping and travelling.

“I dropped out schooling after high school. I fell in love and got married in a year. Then I gave birth three times in fifteen years. I got everything what I desired. A good husband, a home and three children……..”

Language is a context that reflects the unequal role distribution between the genders and which enables this inequality to continue as a word in a language can be sometimes used in a way that symbolizes certain gender significance. For example; in Turkish the words for scientist “bilim adamı” (science man) or the executive “iş adamı” (work man) that makes a direct link between men kind of management or science. By the way, the social image is shaped according to it. In another example, the form of “bayan”, “kız” or “hanım” (miss, girl, lady) is chosen rather than to use the word of woman which represent the individual’s gender. In the examples below there are many expressions that develop this pattern at different grades.

“Space men find a new planet.”

“Science men explained that the climate had changed because of the global warming”

“According to the science men we learn by living.”

“He’s one of the ten most successful businessmen.”

“I’m Meryem. I’m 25 years old girl with wavy hair and blue eyes…….”

“My name is Nesrin. I’m 35 years old lady………….”

In another example below the word of “reis” (skipper) is used to symbolize the authority in the family and it says that father is seen as the authority in the Turkish family model. But such an approach by presenting sexist messages normalizes the inequality between men and women.

“Mr Mehmet is a decent family skipper.”

2. The Results Related to Martial Status Discrimination Properties in Textbooks

When family is mentioned in the Turkish for Foreigner Textbooks, what is meant or portrayed in general, “the modern nuclear family” consisting of mother father and children and “extended family” consisting grand parents and relatives. The expressions and visuals in the texts give the impression that single parent families or childless couples are ignored. In the reading text below while presenting the nuclear and extended family types as norm models, the typical image of family is underestimated in a generalized form which is depending on the sociocultural values or beliefs and religion or law. This point of view also isolates the other family kinds if they don’t take base these sociocultural parameters. But we believe that each family is a micro social structure which is having its own dynamics and bonds with the society. The definition of the family is the “fundamental of the culture” might create the perception of family has a tenacious linkage with the society however it’s clear that the roles, relationships, values and belief can be switchable and family may not be as linked as to the society at all. The text also ascribes a meaning to marriage the only way of being an individual as
it says that the first time you leave your home and parents when you get married.

“In Turkish Society Family is a precious structure and reflects the society’s language, religion and other values. Family is the smallest unit of the society. The importance of the family is promoted at Turkish Constitution, item 41. When we consider family the first thing we remember can be mother, father and the children. Social scientists describe family in two ways: nuclear families and extended families. In Turkey, when people get married they leave their parents and start to live in another home........”

It seems that marriage is shown as the only way to live as an adult in society is to get married and start a family being in in Turkish for Foreigner Textbooks. In addition, living as a single might be a problematic and challenging situation as staying single might be seen against the norms and values of the society.

For example in the speaking exercise below there are various ads about some flats and students are expected to talk on them. In one of them it says “the houses can be given to students and singles”. This kind of expression gives the impression that you can rent this flat even you are a student or single. In another example it says “This flat is for families” which means that if you are single, it’s not possible for you to rent it.

In the reading exercise below which is a post speaking exercise there is a dialogue between the estate agent and Gizem (a woman). In this dialogue the woman wants to rent a flat the estate agent asks her who she is going to live with. And he states that I’m asking this question because some land owners does not want to rent their flats to singles as below:

“Mehmet Ali: Gizem Hanım, are you going to live alone or with your family or with a friend? I’m asking this question because flat owners do not want to rent their flat for singles.

“Gizem: I’ll live alone.”

…..

3. The results Related to Physical Appearance
Discrimination Properties in Textbooks

In the reading text below the description of personality and character are given in a context that physical appearance is related to character. The author explains the character types by giving place to the views of Erzurumlu Hakki Ibrahim who is a scientist and a sufi. He believes that you can analyze the people’s characters according to their physical appearance. By being discriminative as categorizing people according to their physical appearance it is also problematic as dogmatic information is given like a scientific fact.

“…..The Scientist and Sufi, Erzurumlu Ibrahim Hakki lived in 18th century analyzes people’s characters according to their physical appearance. According to him the tall people are clever and naive, the short ones are tricky. The ones with stiff hair have sharp mind. The ones with big heads are really clever. If the one has many wrinkles on his/her forehead this person is kind. If the one has a few wrinkles this person is generous. The ones with big ears are ignorant and lazy. If the people have middle size ears these people are honest. The people with blue eyes are smart; the ones with hazel eyes are good hearted. The ones with tall noses are unapt and the ones with short noses are coward. The people whose tips of noses are like a ball are joyful and the people with small mouth are beautiful but coward at the same time on the other hand the ones with big mouths are courageous.”

After the reading texts as a follow up activity the students are asked to describe people in the pictures according to the Erzurumlu Hakki Ibrahim’s character analysis. This activity might be designed to improve learners’ critical skills but as the knowledge presented in the text is normative and subjective which is depending on subjective point of view of the values and beliefs’ of Ismail Hakki.

In another listening exercise to teach clothing there are given some pictures and the learners are asked to match the pictures with the audio texts. The problem here is here that the pictures used as visuals are discriminative as the people presented mainly white race origin, young, skinny that fits the beauty norms of society. This exercise might develop negative body image at the learners when they comparing their own physical appearances.

In another reading text below there are given some colors and the men and women are characterized according to their choice of color as it’s categorizing people according to their color choice. Besides being discriminative as categorizing people according to the color choice, it’s also manipulating as it’s presenting subjective and non scientific knowledge as reality.

“White
If a man likes white color he is never coward. People like that are calm and introverted. They are unhurried and cautious. If a woman likes white color she is kind, caring, elegant and helpful. They are skillful and faithful.

Yellow
If a man likes yellow he is a bit coward but he never hesitates to tell his ideas. However he never hesitates to tell his feelings. His talking might be manipulating. If women like that color she likes gossip. They talk all the time and what they tell might be interesting……..”

4. The Results Related to the Age Discrimination
Properties in Textbooks

There are a few discriminative expressions about age in Turkish for Foreigner Books. However the effects of sociocultural values on language cannot be denied. For example in Turkish culture aging is a matter that can be respected and being older is associated with getting wiser. By the way, it also effects language even you are a stranger.
It’s normal that people call you “amca” (uncle) or “teyze” (aunt) as it’s a way of showing your respect.

In the example below there may be an indirect discrimination as stated that the children should kiss the hands of the older ones to show their respect and love. In this example however the behavior of hand kissing is a cultural feature it seems to be problematic as respect is something that bidirectional. Someone shouldn’t deserve to be behaved favorably or respectfully just as s/he is old and children or adolescences also deserve to be behaved respectfully.

“When we call someone as man or woman we prefer to use uncle/or aunt in Turkey. Another way to show respect and love in Turkey is hand kissing behavior. The younger ones kiss the hand of older ones and put it to his/her forehead after that…..”

In one example in a listening exercise in which students are asked to listen and fill in the texts might be discriminative as being old is associated with technophobia. This exercise is problematic as the old lady feels ashamed as she is not able to learn mobile phone use and she rejects using it. Although using technology is something challenging for old people to use technology, this example might be labeling the old people as bad technology users.

“…. My mother even doesn’t know how to switch on the mobile phone. She cannot find the names on contact list. She can’t us shortcuts. My mother says “don’t get angry with me as I’m old what can I do? I’m an old person.”

5. The Results Related to Religion and Ethnicity Discrimination

The role of text books as the narratives of the national identity cannot be denied. But we expect Foreign Language Books to be prepared that can be adapted intercultural and global context. But when the Istanbul Turkish for Foreigner Books has been examined the Turkish Citizenship identity seems to be singular one. In any of the textbooks there is no notion to promote the diversities. On the other hand, Turkish Citizens are diverse as they are coming from different ethnicities, socio-cultural backgrounds and having different religious beliefs. When the examples are examined, it has been seen that just the Sunni Islamic Turkish Ethnicity seems to be highlighted and privileged and diversity in Turkish citizenship is ignored in the visuals and skill exercise. Besides we expect language text books to have an intercultural and globalized content which attract people from all over the world. However, the examples below show that the books seem to lack of intercultural curriculum perspective. In the examples below there are given some morals related to time which are from world wild known authors or philosophers, politicians but also a moral from Mohammed who is the prohibit of Islam which might be evaluated as discriminative as the other religion or beliefs are not mentioned.

“People are like the time they live in more than their fathers.”
Hadisi Sherif

“If you love your life don’t spend it as time is the life itself.”
Benjamin Franklin

“You can’t have bath in the same river twice as the water is now the new one.”
Heracles

In another example below there is a reading text about Mehmet Akif Ersoy who is one of the leading poets and the writer of the national song. In this text it says that Mehmet Akif will remain of the unforgotten person in the history as he is mannered with the Quran Morals and lighten with the Quran.

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5. Conclusions and Discussion

The present study examined the types of the discrimination in Turkish for Foreigner Books as declared in European Non Discrimination Law by European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. According to analysis, five types of discrimination have been found out; gender, age, physical appearance, marital status, ethnicity and religion. In choosing discrimination as a content, the resource was built upon the previous studies by Akar & Gomleksiz (2010), Inan, (2012); Gokce (2013, 2015), Babaoglan (2015), Papaokonomou (2017). In choosing the resource was built upon the previous studies by Pingel (2010), Gumusoglu (2016).Choosing the research content as the discrimination types in textbooks the study is supposed to bring attention to sociocultural dimension of textbooks as they are the tools to culturally responsive education atmosphere which is also indicated by Gay (2010).Some scholars (Titus,1996; Ferre&Hall,1996) examined gender discrimination in textbooks in US while some (Banks,1969; Fleming,1990;Touraine, 2000) studied race and ethnicity in US and Europe. Therefore this research contributes literature related to age, marital status discrimination in textbooks in Turkey.

Majority of the authors were women the data indicated
that the presentation of men and women in the books was interpreted in the manner of traditional and patriarchal which was containing the unequal distribution of the social roles in the family and also the discourse of the books was compromising sexist language which supports the researches of Gumusoglu (2016). Language textbooks can be important resources which reflect the represented male and female roles in society through social experience as well as social norms and values. On the subject of gender, roles place women in an interior position compared to men are defined in a way that nurtures discrimination against women. This can be related with the fact that how women perceive and reflect the society, values and norms in Turkey. The results revealed that when family described it was meant or portrayed in general, “the modern nuclear family and “extended family” which indicated that single parent families or childless couples were ignored which could be related to the reflections of social norms and values in Turkey. Text books are important instruments for enabling learners to develop a positive body image as they present the practices of real life in sociocultural context. On the contrary when the Turkish for Foreigner Text Books are examined there can be seen some expressions and visuals consisting of discriminative messages which could result with negative body image at learners. Besides there were also some examples which could be revealing messages related to age discrimination. However the effects of sociocultural values and religious beliefs related to respecting old cannot be denied so the authors might be interpreting these norms and beliefs in the texts and examples unintentionally. Moreover there were also examples where you could see examples or visuals where the Sunni Islamic Ethnicity is promoted. On the other hand Turkey is a multicultural country and involves many people from different ethnicities and having various religious beliefs.

The foreign language text books are narratives of the culture which is being thought the text books should be written with a global and scientific perspective in order to address the 21st century’s learners. Moreover, they should be published away from subjective political concerns and prejudices and bias which means that there should be made revisions in textbooks to answer the needs of learners today as it can be found out from the examples there is a challenge for authors to cope with intercultural competence. It’s suggested to the teachers and authors to have a deeper training on intercultural competence. This research gives us a descriptive analysis of the types of the discrimination in textbooks so we suggest to other researchers to examine the quantitative results of the same books. Also there are just the reflections of the discriminative statements examined according to the scale developed by the researchers because of that another research which can find out the views of the students and teachers of Turkish for Foreigners.

Finally, the problem that we are talking about is not only unique to Turkey, but it can also be seen in any books on foreign language education around the world. In this context, we choose to examine the books on Turkish Language Education for Foreigners in our country as we have the opportunity to examine it. It is evidence that there are there is a need for textbook writers to have training about intercultural studies, discrimination or human rights. So it’s also suggested to the scholars that to analyze language textbooks according to the discrimination laws or human rights around the world.

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Journal of Social Education (4): 7-9


