



**READABILITY OF THE PRIMARY EDUCATION 8TH GRADE CITIZENSHIP
AND DEMOCRACY EDUCATION TEXTBOOK AND ITS SUITABILITY FOR
TARGET AGE LEVEL**

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ABSTRACT

When the present day education and training activities are taken into consideration, that some subjects accepted to understand hard by students are able to read more fluently and clearly can be only achieved by the use of materials, which are suitable for students' target age levels. The aims of this study were to compare the readability levels of texts in the Primary Education 8th Grade Citizenship and Democracy Education Textbook, and to investigate whether these texts are appropriate for the target age level of the students. Within this context, it can be said that this investigation is a descriptive study. The application was carried out at four different secondary schools located in city center of the province Artvin during 2013-2014 school year spring semester. The data was obtained by means of CLOZE and FROG tests from the standart tests, which their validity and reliability were proven in the conducted international studies. It is concluded from the data obtained as a result of this study that while the readability of the Primary Education 8th Grade Citizenship and Democracy Education Textbook is partially high in terms of student level according to the CLOSE test, it is prepared in accordance with the student target age level according to the FOG test.

Key Words: Citizenship and Democracy Education, Textbook, Readability.

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ÖZET

Günümüzdeki eğitim ve öğretim faaliyetleri düşünüldüğünde öğrenciler tarafından anlaşılması zor olan bazı konuların daha anlaşılır ve akıcı bir şekilde okunabilmesi ancak öğrencilerin hedef ve yaş düzeylerine uygun olan materyalleri kullanmaları ile sağlanabilir. Bu çalışmada 8. sınıf Vatandaşlık ve Demokrasi Eğitimi ders kitabındaki metinlerin okunabilirlik düzeylerinin karşılaştırılması ve metinlerin öğrencilerin hedef ve yaş düzeyine uygun olup olmadığı araştırılmıştır. Bu bağlamda yapılan araştırmanın betisel bir çalışma olduğu söylenebilir. Uygulama 2013-2014 eğitim-öğretim yılı bahar döneminde Artvin il merkezinde yer alan dört farklı ortaokulda gerçekleştirilmiştir. Uygulama sonucunda elde edilen veriler, uluslararası alanda yapılan çalışmalarda geçerliliği ve güvenilirliği kanıtlanmış olan standart testlerden CLOZE ve FOG testleri aracılığıyla elde edilmiştir. Yapılan çalışma sonucunda elde edilen veriler 8. sınıf Vatandaşlık ve Demokrasi Eğitimi ders kitabının okunabilirliği CLOZE testine göre öğrenci seviyesine göre kısmen yüksek, FOG testine göre ise öğrenci hedef yaş düzeyine uygun bir şekilde hazırlandığı saptanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Vatandaşlık ve Demokrasi Eğitimi, Ders Kitabı, Okunabilirlik.

INTRODUCTION

As is known, humankind is not alone and is constantly needed an environment so-called community at every stage of one's history in order to be maintained one's life and naturally, one's generation. It is therefore be said that a social environment has an extremely important role in people. It can mention the presence of three important basic factors influenced humankind's own life lived in this social environment. These factors are physical environment, social environment and the state. It has been known that these factors also have an important place among the subjects of Citizenship Education (Duman et. al, 2005). In this context, the Citizenship Education no doubt have a great importance in which the individuals who are forced to live together in a social surrounding can synchronize with each other without any problem, can make sense of both the society in which they live, and the world, can fulfill the obligations to the government. Development of desired behaviors in an individual is realized in a systematic manner, especially since elementary education through the Citizenship and Democracy Education Course having an extremely important place in training the individuals who know what to do when faced with any situation.

The textbooks read are of vital importance in more effectively teaching Citizenship and Democracy Education Course to the elementary school children. Because it has been known that textbooks are the most widely used and indispensable visual materials during learning and teaching process (Demirel, 1999; Binbaşıoğlu, 1995). The textbooks have a bit more importance, especially during the elementary school in that it has been known that the

elementary school children acquire their first reading habits during this period. For this reason, the quality of having children prepared textbooks must be prepared, based on many important criteria (Kılıç et. al, 2001). In the light of all these situations, it has been known that well-prepared textbooks provide great benefits to both teachers and students, and these books are also a side of constructive guidance in education and training activities (Semerci, 2004). The textbooks, which are widely used among written materials and allow the students to study independently, are a material enabled to also repeat information many times (Ünsal and Güneş, 2003). The first and, probably, most important point needed to emphasize regarding the textbooks is that these books are written for a special group, namely students and/or children. That makes textbooks special is that they address to the students, not to the adults. This means that it is inevitable that age generation of its user and pedagogical expectations of this age generation throughout all processes from planning to writing and from publishing to using within a class are always taken into consideration (Kabapınar, 2005).

Textbooks taught at different stages of the educational institutions in our country have been prepared by Ministry of National Education Head Council of Education and Morality, by taking into account the specific criteria. In addition to this, Turkish Standards Institution (TSE, TSI) has revealed the standards needed to be present in textbooks with TS 10220 standard. Besides, many textbook evaluation scales are prepared within the scope of these standards (Tosunoğlu and Özlük, 2011; Çepni et. al,1999). But, the readability of subjects present in the books is not questioned through these evaluation scales. However, that subjects accepted to understand hard by students can be read fluently and clearly and the suitability for age group the book addresses, are the most characteristics needed to be found in a textbook (Tekbıyık, 2006). Educators have expressed that the textbooks are needed to be prepared in accordance with student level in order to struggle against difficulties encountered when students read written materials and textbooks (Ornstein and Lasley, 2000).

Taking into account all of these situations, it should be extremely paid attention that in-class or extracurricular materials are prepared by considering students' reading level as it has been known that the most basic criterion ensured to be liked and understood any material by students is certainly its readability.

Nowadays, it is possible to come across many different definitions about the readability. Göğüs (1978), for example, defines the readability as reading and understanding any reading text by a student group at a particular level. Besides, Ateşman (1997) defines the readability as the texts by the readers in a manner that is easy or difficult to understand

Authorities in reading field are divided the reading levels into three parts in the basic meaning. These reading levels are as follows (Naylor and Diem, 1987; Theodore, 1975; Dolgin, 1975; Quoted: Yazıcı and Yeşilbursa, 2007: 85):

1- Independent Reading Level: Materials in this level are ones that the students can accomplish by themselves without external help. In such materials, the students are familiar to the words and they easily understand many messages which the writer is desired to give through the book.

2- Instructional reading level: Materials in this level are ones that the students can only be understood with the help of teachers. In this level, the teacher should provide a general perspective for the students and make an in-class discussion related to the subject to enable the text to understand.

3- Frustration Reading Level: These materials in this level are so difficult for the students that they cause a disconnection between the students' skills and the message given by the writer. The students have great anxiety about understanding and recognizing the words within these materials. It has also been known that this situation will cause the comprehension of the text to reduce and to be ingored the next text by the students.

There are certain criteria determining readability and these criteria are listed as follows: the number of words in sentences, the number of syllables in words, the number of ideas highlighted in the sentences and these ideas' continuousness (Tekbiyık, 2006). It is seen clearly that nowadays it often no longer benefits from the formulas such as Cloze, FOG, Flesh, SMOG and FRY, also so as to measure the readability of any text (Wellington, 1994). In Cloze test, any word is removed from inside of the text from second sentence of the first paragraph of any reading text and each five or seven words are left blank in the same manner until it reaches the targeted number of blanks (Theodore1975; Helfeldt, Henk and Fotos, 1986; Torres and Roig, 2005; Alvermann and Phelps, 2005). It wants the students to fill these blanks without any help (Kobayashi, 2002). Two reading texts which, especially the students, have never previously encountered, are selected in text selection, and it is paid attention that these reading texts must not be a text, which often includes a name, date, location and also numbers (Theodore, 1975). In FOG test, it is selected a sample paragraph containing average 100 words and the average number of words in each sentence is calculated. It is averaged by calculating the percentage of four or more syllable words in the paragraphs used, and reading age may also be found by adding it to the class level. It may be averaged by applying similar processes to more than one paragraphs in order to more efficiently evaluate the material (Tekbiyık, 2006). In Flesh test, it is selected three paragraphs containing 100 words from the book to be examined. The average number of syllables in each sample containg 100 words is found. The mean length of sentences in each paragraph is calculated. It may get through to reading age by means of FGL (Flesh Grade Level) results by using RES results. Then, reading age may be found by adding 5 to the FGL values obtained. In SMOG test, it is selected three paragraphs with 10 sentences each, namely containing approximately 100 words, from the beginning, middle and end of textbook. Total numbers of three or more syllable words in the selected 30 sentences are calculated. It is taken the square root of the total. Reading age is found by adding 8 to the value obtained (Wellington, 1994).

Readability formulas are tools that help to estimate to be based countable elements such as degree of difficulty of the text in the book, word and sentence lengths in the text, etc. on numerical data (Chatman and Goetz,1985). While these formulas assist in determining whether the written material is appropriate for the reading level of the students, they can not provide absolute certainty in terms of their results. They, however, provide a significant benefit by establishing a connection between written materials and the reading levels of the students (Yazıcı and Yeşilbursa, 2007).

Aim of Study

This study was conducted to investigate the readability of texts found in Primary Education 8th Grade Citizenship and Democracy Education Textbook, which has been decided to be taught in primary education by Ministry of National Education Head Council of Education and Morality, and its suitability for target age level.

METHOD

Research Design

This study conducted in order to determine the readability level of Primary Education 8th Grade Citizenship and Democracy Education Textbook is regarded as a descriptive study. The investigations are conducted to illuminate a past or existing situation, to evaluate in accordance with standards, and to uncover possible relationships between the events, without making any change in the environment investigated in the descriptive studies (Çepni, 2009; Karasar, 2006).

Sample

Random sampling method was used in this study. The sample of investigation consists of 4 secondary schools located in Artvin city center. Application was conducted out in the spring semester of the 2013-2014 school year, and carried out on a total of 87 students who continue their education at 8th grade.

Data Collection Tools

The data was collected in two ways for the the purposes of readability formulas by means of CLOZE and FROG tests from the standart tests, which their validity and reliability were proven in the conducted international studies. Firstly, texts which each contains approximately 270 to 280 words were selected for CLOZE test from Secondary School 8th Grade Citizenship and Democracy Education Textbook published by Ministry of National Education Head Council of Education and Morality. First sentences were left the same in these texts. A blank text was formed by means of removing randomly each from 5 to 6 words from the second sentence. The students want these blanks to correctly fill. In the second stage of the research, it was selected different paragraphs by means of FOG test from various sections of the same books to be used for FLESH and SMOG formulas. Paragraphs were evaluated with Turkish versions of test and formulas specified by us. From these tests and formulas, FLESH

formula, and SMOG formula and FOG test were developed, respectively, by Ateşman (1997) and Çepni, Gökdere and Taş (2001) in accordance with the Turkish language structure, and they were used in many national studies, as stated in the literature search section also. In this way, it was tried to reveal the readability degrees of texts in the books and its suitability for target student age level.

Analysis of Data

The data were analyzed according to tests CLOZE and FOG, and the procedures of the formulas FLESH and SMOG. The readability of Citizenship and Democracy Education Textbook through answers given by students in different types of schools was determined by means of CLOZE test. Again while trying to determine the readability degrees of books by means of FLESH formula, the readability of paragraphs in books and its suitability for student age level were examined also by means of FOG test and SMOG formulas.

FINDINGS

3.1. Readability of 8th Grade Citizenship and Democracy Education Textbooks Test by CLOZE

Test prepared according to CLOZE procedure for evaluating the readability of Citizenship Textbooks was applied to a total of 87 students. Evaluation data were shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Evaluation results of 8th Grade Citizenship and Democracy Education Textbooks by CLOZE Test

	Correct number	The number of students who answer correctly	Percentage in the sample %
Students who score 40 and less	0	Ö25	0
	1	Ö72	2,6
	2	Ö41	5,2
	3	Ö40	7,8
	4	Ö30, Ö48, Ö85	10,5
	5	Ö36, Ö73	13,1
	6	Ö8, Ö31, Ö66, Ö69	15,7
	7	Ö28, Ö32, Ö46	18,4
	8	Ö2, Ö3, Ö9, Ö22, Ö26, Ö44, Ö76, Ö78	20
	9	Ö1, Ö6, Ö23, Ö75	23,6
	10	Ö5, Ö7, Ö24, Ö29, Ö35, Ö47, Ö61, Ö67, Ö71	26,3
	11	Ö38, Ö54, Ö55, Ö83	28,9
12	Ö13, Ö17, Ö19, Ö20, Ö27, Ö34, Ö37, Ö45, Ö51, Ö70	31,5	

	13	Ö4, Ö12, Ö14, Ö49, Ö58, Ö63, Ö81, Ö82	34,2
	14	Ö16, Ö21, Ö33, Ö39, Ö52, Ö53, Ö56, Ö57, Ö60	36,8
	15	Ö18, Ö43, Ö62, Ö79, Ö84, Ö87	39,4
Students who score between	16	Ö10, Ö11, Ö64, Ö77	42,1
	17	Ö15, Ö50, Ö59, Ö68, Ö74	44,7
	18	Ö42, Ö65, Ö86	47,3
	19	Ö80	50

Table 2. Evaluation results of 8th Grade Citizenship and Democracy Education Textbooks by CLOZE Test

	NS	Percentage in Sample (%)
Students who score 60 and more	0	0
Students who score between 40 to 60	13	15
Students who score 40 and less	74	85

NS: Number of Student

When examined in Table 2, it is seen clearly that any student did not score 60 and more according to CLOZE test in 8th Classes. 13 students constituting the sample scored between 40 to 60. When the sample selected from public schools, it is seen that 74 students scored 40 and less. It is shown in more detail in Table 1 that an accumulation in the sample group is between 20% to 40%.

Readability of 8th Grade Citizenship and Democracy Education Textbooks by FOG test

Table 3. Paragraph 1 (Page 16) selected from the Ministry of National Education Publications 8th Grade Citizenship and Democracy Education Textbook for FOG test.

There are many values such as freedom, equality, fraternity, justice, respect, tolerance, friendship, and solidarity of what makes a man a man. Be human requires to carry these values, to exhibit them at our behaviours and to internalize them.

Behaviours such as giving her/him a seat when we see old someone on the bus, and showing respect for people's thoughts and decisions are values from what makes a man a man.

All of humanitarian values is important for a liveable society and world. Humanity exists with these values and develops with them. Harmony is disrupted in a society and/or world where there is no love, respect and tolerance. Conflicts between societies and individuals can occur.

You have come across violence, quarrels and conflicts between people in television channels and newspapers. Have you ever thought what the reason for this underlies?

If there is lack of love, people hurt each other.

Table 4. Paragraph 2 (Page 31) selected from the Ministry of National Education Publications 8th Grade Citizenship and Democracy Education Textbooks for FOG test.

There are jobs and tasks they can perform, depending on people's capabilities and characteristics. There, however, are also the jobs which people can not perform by themselves throughout their life. There are duties and responsibilities of individuals according to their abilities in different environments such as family, school, neighbourhood, etc. in which we live. It makes our life easier to be in cooperation and division of labor for them. The sense capable of working together results in the strengthening of our unity and solidarity. Consulting on the division of labor provides an opportunity to discover our talents and improve them.

Everyone in a society needs one another. Everyone does a work in accordance with her/his own abilities.

Division of labor in a society is provided with professions such as tailor, greengrocer, cook, teacher, doctor, engineer, etc. This understanding is important in terms of living together, cooperation, capable of coping with problems, makin a joint decision, being productive, etc.

Table 5. Paragraph 3 (Page 46) selected from the Ministry of National Education Publications 8th Grade Citizenship and Democracy Education Textbook for FOG test.

Protection, development and strengthening of people and humanity underlie the human rights. Crucial developments are taking place at both the extent of violation and the extent of improvement in the field of human rights. We are watching many events occuring related to violations from the written and visual media. It is possible that our rights know and enhance them to prevent these violations. We must be sensitive to follow the developments related to human rights. What can it be done to follow the developments related to human rights? It is important, on a voluntary basis, to participate in the institutions and organizations carried out the studies related to human rights. It is required that we have information about developments related to human rights in the region we live and all around the world, with written, audio and visual media. Following the developments related to human rights and participating voluntarily in the activities carried out are from the requirements of democratic citizenship.

Table 6. Paragraph 4 (Page 57) selected from the Ministry of National Education Publications 8th Grade Citizenship and Democracy Education Textbook for FOG test.

It is not possible to consider the human independently of the society. Every person has different needs. It can not be expected these her/his needs from her/him to meet alone. A division of labor and solidarity is required meeting people's needs at home, at school and in social life and making life more livable. This only happens with a sense of responsibility. All the people sharing the world is responsible for each other. For example, a natural catastrophe encountered anywhere in the world is concerned all humanity. This means that a man who pollutes the nature irresponsibly is also negatively affected the life of all mankind. Or, an invention that makes human life easier affects all people. If so, we, in fact, do our duty to all mankind, by fulfilling its responsibilities towards our family, school and society.

Table 7. Readability Level of Citizenship and Democracy Education Textbook and Its Suitability for Target Age Level

Paragraphs	S+N	Class level US=0,6(S+N)	Reading age	Average Reading Age
Paragraph 1	10+3,1	US= 7.86	12.86	13
Paragraph 2	10.7+3.8	US= 8.7	13.7	14
Paragraph 3	11.7+4.7	US= 9.8	14.8	15
Paragraph 4	10.3+3	US= 7.9	12.9	13

Considering the findings with regard to the readability of texts in Citizenship and Democracy Education Textbook and its suitability for target age level in Table 7, it is seen obviously that while the average reading level was 13 in the first paragraph, the reading level of students formed the sample was 12.86, that while the average reading level was 14 in the paragraph 2, the reading level of students formed the sample was 13.7, that while the average reading level was 15 in the paragraph 3, the reading level of students formed the sample was 14.8, and that while the average reading level was 13 in the paragraph 4, the reading level of students formed the sample was 12.9.

CONCLUSION

It is known that computer-assisted activities, animations, literary works, educational animated cartoon, educational comic books, cartoons, and many different types of materials are used in different ways in the course process, able to be conducted educational activities more quickly and permanently, and carried out learning more effectively. It can be expressed that, as well as these modern teaching materials used, textbooks assisted the students substantially, especially in both the course process and extracurricular activities, also have a great importance in the process of learning activities. Considering certain standards, however, the necessity of preparing textbooks has gained much importance in recent years. It should pay attention not to select texts that is boring the reader and difficult to read in prepared textbooks in particular. Indeed, it can be said that numbers of syllables and words in the text have extremely important to determine the readability of textbooks.

Readability formulas used in researches is generally based on the language structure of the texts. Due to this reason, the data obtained by means of readability formulas are for the language structure of the texts. While not obtained the exact results about the levels of text by using these data (Yılmaz and Temiz, 2014), it should not be forgotten that the formulas used are only helpful in determining the degree of difficulty of the texts and their quantitative characteristics (Geçit, 2010).

As a result of this study, which 8th grade Citizenship and Democracy Education Textbooks was evaluated by means of CLOZE and FOG formulas having an international validity, the following findings were obtained:

Whereas it is seen that according to the results of CLOZE test, 74 students scored 40 and less, and 13 students scored between 40 to 60; it is determined that any student did not score 60 and more (Table 1). The findings indicate that the words used in texts found in textbooks are not known much by students. Thus, it is thought to have caused this situation that meanings of some concepts, especially abstract ones, such as citizenship, democracy, law or human rights failed to internalize in the strictest sense by students. CLOZE test is very advantageous since it is a procedure that is completely independent of the factors such as sentence length and syllable number and possible to apply to the students (Çepni et. al, 2001).

Considering the findings obtained as a result of FOG test (Table 7), it is seen clearly that while the average reading level was 13 in the paragraph 1, the reading level of students formed the sample was 12.86, that while the average reading level was 14 in the paragraph 2, the reading level of students formed the sample was 13.7, that while the average reading level was 15 in the paragraph 3, the reading level of students formed the sample was 14.8, and that while the average reading level was 13 in the paragraph 4, the reading level of students formed the sample was 12.9. Student group targeted by textbook is 8th Grade students whose age levels are 14 to 15. Therefore, according to the results found, it can be said that the textbook is appropriate for student age level it targets.

As a result of this study carried out, it was determined, in general, that whilst the readability level of 8th Grade Citizenship and Democracy Education is partly over the student level according to CLOZE test formula, the textbook examined is prepared in keeping with age level of the students according to FOG test.

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