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Comparison of Speaking Activities in the Coursebooks New Hitit Turkish Language for Foreigners 1 and İstanbul Turkish A1 for Foreigners

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Abstract

Teaching Turkish as a foreign language has been becoming an increasingly important field. The number of foreigners who want to learn Turkish is increasing day by day. In foreign language teaching, four basic language skills are emphasized and teachers implement various strategies in their lessons to improve their students' basic language skills. Textbooks are among the resources used in foreign language teaching. Activities prepared in accordance with the principles of each level can speed up students' language learning processes. In addition, the use of various visuals in the activities in the textbooks can intensify students' attention, making it easier for them to understand abstract concepts. Speech, one of the four basic language skills, is a skill that is an integral part of every moment of human life. While learning a foreign language, as in their mother tongue, people communicate by using their speaking skills. Students who improve their speaking skills can express themselves more effectively, increase their self-confidence, and communicate comfortably with others. In this study, the speaking activities of the Turkish textbook 1 for New Hitit Foreigners and the Turkish A1 textbook for İstanbul Foreigners were compared. Whether the visuals in them were used in the speech activities was examined, and whether their activities developed other skills of students was analyzed. In addition, the appropriateness of the activities to those measured for the A1 level speech assessment in the European Common Reference for Languages text was examined. It is hoped that the suggestions made based on the findings reached by comparing the speech activities in both books will contribute to developing new speaking activities.

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Keywords: Turkish for foreigners, speech activities, comparison, İstanbul, New Hitit, Textbook.

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Introduction

Speaking is the verbal expression of our emotions, thoughts, plans and wishes. In other words, it is, after designing an issue in our mind, conveying it verbally to the others. Speaking is a reflector of mental development, personality, and social relations (Sever, 2015: 21-22). According to Yılmaz and Taşkaya (2018: 4), speaking is a skill acquired from the immediate environment, family being in the first place. However, there are a number of factors affecting speaking. Children can easily learn how to speak by picking it up from their social environment without having any education at all. Repetition and imitation have an important role here.

According to Güneş (2014: 105), speaking is defined, in general, as transfer of feelings and thoughts verbally. Speaking is believed to be the most efficient way of forming relationship with others. In this way, views, emotions, thoughts and problems are communicated to and shared with others. Within this process, language, thoughts, emotions, voice, brain and speaking organs are all involved and a set of complex operations is performed.

With a direct influence on human life, speaking is a skill that helps people to start a healthy communication with others, distinguishes humans from all other species, and makes them outstanding. Speaking skill, besides shaping individuals' lives, helping individuals to socialize and get a place within the society, has a great impact on their career, education and private life (Boylu and Çangal, 2015: 350).

Speaking is a unique skill only granted to human beings amongst all creatures. Thanks to this skill, we are able to convey our feelings and thoughts and communicate with others. A healthy communication, on the other hand, is only possible by correct, effective and good use of language. Acquisition of this skill, which we acquire from our family first, and then our environment and school, is a long process. Therefore, the speaking skill has a significant part in learning our mother tongue as well as learning a foreign language (Şen and Boylu, 2015: 14).

In today's world, second/foreign language has gained even more importance. In whatever sector people work in, they need to learn one or even two foreign languages. Today, speaking a foreign language is far from being a privilege but a qualification that every individual needs to have; accordingly, foreign language teaching has gained much prominence (Göçer, 2009: 28).

In today's world, a rapid change and transformation appears in education, like in every sphere of life. As a natural consequence of that, individuals find themselves in a global communication network which brings up the need for learning a foreign language. The languages of the nations that are active within this global interaction, naturally come to the fore. As such, the increasing importance of Turkey and Turkish reveals the increasing value of teaching Turkish as a foreign language (Göçer and Moğul, 2011: 798). It could be said that Turkish TV serials, films artistic and cultural activities play an important role in the increasing interest in Turkey and language, as well. Foreigners naturally want to know about the Turkish culture and wish to learn and communicate in Turkish language. Accordingly, the speaking skill should be given due attention and importance besides other language skills when teaching Turkish as a foreign language and learners' speaking skills should be improved.

According to Öz (2011: 193), speaking is an important skill because it is of vital value and also it forms the base of teaching Turkish. Speaking is a way of

understanding one another and it occupies an important place in our lives. In addition, it is considered as the starting point for various other language competencies such as reading, writing and grammar. According to Güzel and Barın (2013: 279), speaking is the most important skill in foreign language teaching. That is because language is the base for communication, and communication starts with speaking. Most foreign language learners build up a psychological wall around themselves and make themselves frightened of not being able to learn that language well enough and not being able to express themselves in that language without confronting any difficulty. Getting over this feeling in a short while is possible by improving the speaking skill and using the language whenever and wherever needed and never being worried about making mistakes.

When improving the speaking skill, literary works such as jokes, anecdotes, proverbs, and idioms must often be used. However, these must be selected with great care so as not to disturb, hurt or humiliate the listeners. Additionally, speaking should be supported with audio-visuales, real objects, or resource persons (Yılmaz and Taşkaya, 2018: 50). In teaching Turkish as a foreign language, course books are often referred to. Course books might be of help and guide the learners and language teachers are offered speaking activities in most course books and supplementary materials that they can take to the classroom (Durmuş, 2013: 163).

Speaking ensures the student to get into a mental interaction. Therefore, to improve students' speaking skills, they must be encouraged to express their thoughts clearly and the way they respond to an idea must be supported. Teachers must examine students' speaking skills and observe their way of expressing themselves naturally in the classroom setting (Güneş, 2014: 107). A successful foreign language learner participates in the classroom activities actively and takes responsibility for his/her language learning process as well. Language is presented in a meaningful context to the student as a whole together with its other components like grammar, vocabulary, four skills, and culture. Real life settings are created in the classroom, giving students a chance to improve their oral and written language skills (Akcan, 2014: 210).

Speaking in language teaching is an important skill in respect of learning and using the target language because in general communication model, the primary element is the speaker himself and speaking that starts and maintains the communication plays the source role and changes the source (Arı, 2018: 277).

Unlike developing the writing skill, improving the speaking skill cannot be achieved by memorizing some certain rules; ample practice, listening to and modelling good speakers are the best ways to improve this skill (Kurudayıoğlu, 2003: 291).

Method

Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to examine the course books *Turkish 1 New Hitit for Foreigners* and *Turkish A1 İstanbul for Foreigners* in terms of speaking activities and to compare both course books for the following purposes:

- Are the speaking activities backed up with visuals in these course books?
- Are the speaking activities prepared in accordance with the criteria set out in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages for reference level A1 in these course books?

- Do the speaking activities satisfactorily enhance the other basic language skills (listening, writing and reading)?

Method of Study

This study was carried out using the document review method. Document review method is the analysis of the material that contains all the relevant information about the subject matter regarding a research question. Such material might be in written form (books, journals, gazettes magazines, archives, letters, diaries, official publications and statistics, etc.) and also in the form of films, videos or photographs (Metin, 2015: 363). At the beginning of the study, the relevant documents were read and the collected data were presented in tables. The tables were interpreted and the results were discussed.

Books reviewed during the study

The course books, *Turkish 1 New Hitit Turkish Language for Foreigners* and *Turkish A1 for Foreigners İstanbul* were taken as the samples and reviewed.

Limitations to the study

Our study was limited to examining and comparing the speaking activities in the first three units of the course books, *Turkish 1 New Hitit Turkish Language for Foreigners* and *Turkish A1 for Foreigners İstanbul*.

Findings

In this part, the speaking activities given in the first three units of the course books, *Turkish 1 New Hitit Turkish Language for Foreigners* and *Turkish A1 for Foreigners İstanbul* were examined for the specified purposes and listed in the given tables below. The findings obtained were also given below the related tables.

First, the speaking activities in the first units of the textbooks were examined. The units, chapter titles, and contents of speaking activities are shown in the table below.

Table 1

Speaking Activities in Unit 1 in both Turkish 1 New Hitit for Foreigners and Turkish A1 for Foreigners İstanbul

Speaking Activities in Unit 1 in Turkish 1 New Hitit for Foreigners	Speaking Activities in Unit 1 in Turkish A1 for Foreigners İstanbul
Unit 1	Unit 1
A) Getting to know each other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Primarily, students are supposed to fill in the blanks in the dialogue with appropriate words. Then they are expected to act out the dialogue. ➤ Students are supposed to complete the 6 different dialogues with appropriate words and then to act out the dialogues. ➤ Based on the previous activity, students are required to fill in the blanks with the names and nationalities of the persons given in the listening text and then to act out the dialogues. 	A) Getting to know each other, Greeting, Wishes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Students are supposed to ask the questions given in the previous writing activity, while books are closed. The questions are asking one's name, country, etc.

<p>B) What? Who? Where?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Students are required to answer 10 different questions given in the activity and read them aloud. ➤ Students are required to fill in the blanks in 3 different dialogues with appropriate words and then to act them out. 	<p>B) Alphabet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Students are required to write down the letters of their names and spell them aloud. A pronunciation activity is done.
<p>C) What is there? What isn't there?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No speaking activity is given in this part. 	<p>C) What is this? Who is that?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Students are asked to look around the classroom first. Then they are supposed to ask and answer the given questions in pairs.

According to the table above, it is seen that the speaking activities in the Istanbul textbook take place equally in each section of the unit. However, there is no speaking activity in the C part of the New Hitit textbook. Also, the speech activity numbers in the other sections are not set to be equal.

Speaking activities in the first units of the textbooks were examined in line with the specified purposes and the findings obtained are given in the table below.

Findings and comments on Unit 1 in both course books

Findings gathered for the first purpose of the study

It is observed that among the speaking activities in Unit One Turkish 1 New Hitit, only one of them makes use of visuals. In this activity where the pictures of persons take place, students are required to write down the names and nationalities of the persons in the pictures. When the speaking activities in Unit One of the *Turkish A1 for Foreigners İstanbul* were examined, it was observed that no visual was used. Visuals are important elements as they draw the students' attention to the subject matter and the activities. Therefore, such speaking activities without visuals might be enlivened by adding appropriate visuals.

Findings gathered for the second purpose of the study

When the speaking activities in both course books were examined in reference to the criteria set out in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, it was concluded that the content and the vocabulary items used in the activities were appropriate to the level. The vocabulary items used in the activities are mostly about introducing oneself or someone, asking questions and asking about someone's health.

Findings gathered for the third purpose of the study

When the speaking activity in part "Getting to know each other, Greeting, Wishes" in *Turkish A1 for Foreigners İstanbul* was examined, it was seen that the previous writing activity was used here. So, students are supposed to complete the writing activity first and then go on with the speaking activity. Similarly, asking students to write and then read their names support writing-speaking skills. In *Turkish 1 New Hitit*, students are also asked to listen to the given text first and then go on with a speaking activity which is about the listening text. Accordingly, here as well there is a link between listening and speaking skills. Filling the blanks in the given dialogues and explaining them orally also support the writing and speaking skills.

It was concluded that the speaking activities in both textbooks were prepared in accordance with the beginning level speaking skills of CEFR. However, it was observed that the use of visuals was included to a lesser extent in the speaking

activities in the 1st unit. Visuals were used in only one activity in the New Hitit textbook. In the Istanbul textbook, there were no visuals in any of the speaking activities. Information about the speaking activities, chapter titles and content of the activities in the second units of the determined textbooks are given in the table below.

Table 2

Speaking Activities in Unit 2 in both Turkish 1 New Hitit Turkish Language for Foreigners and Turkish A1 for Foreigners İstanbul

Speaking Activities in Unit 2 in Turkish 1 New Hitit	Speaking Activities in Unit 2 in Turkish A1 for Foreigners İstanbul
Unit 2	Unit 2
A) What are you doing? ➤ Students are required to answer orally the questions about how they spend a day, parts of the day and weekends.	A) At school ➤ Students are asked to talk about what kind of furniture/goods/personal belongings they have in their rooms.
B) From where to where? ➤ Students are expected to tick the boxes where there can find words related to hobbies given before in the reading activity and to talk about them later. ➤ Students are required to ask the given questions to one of their classmates and then report it to the class orally.	B) Numbers ➤ This activity is supposed to be done in a group not individually. Students are asked to say 3 different numbers to their peers and the listener is asked to write down the number. Later, the accuracy of the numbers is checked together.
C) Telling the time ➤ Students are supposed to pick up the right words from the given vocabulary pool and fill in the blanks and then read aloud.	C) In the city ➤ Students are asked to introduce their best friends orally following the given questions.

Our review revealed that speaking activities were included in all sections in both textbooks. There is an equal number of speaking activities in the sections of the second unit of the Istanbul textbook. However, it was concluded that the number of speaking activities in the second unit of the New Hitit textbook was not equal.

SPEAKING

11 Let's introduce our best friend.

- **Who's s/he?**
- **How old is s/he?**
- **What does s/he do?**
- **What kind of person is s/he?**

(İstanbul A1 Course Book, page 33)

18 Let's learn and talk

My Classmate

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. How old are you? | 5. What kind of music do you like? |
| 2. Do you work or study? | 6. What food do you like? |
| 3. Where do you work/study? | 7. Do you do sports? |
| 4. What are your hobbies | 8. What sports do you do? |

Name:

Age:

Occupation:

Job:
 Work Place:
 School:
 Hobbies:

(*Turkish 1 New Hitit Turkish Language*, page 27)

The speaking activities in the second units of the textbooks were examined in line with the specified purposes and the findings obtained are given in the table below.

Findings and comments on Unit 2 in both course books

Findings gathered for the first purpose of the study

When the speaking activities in Unit Two Turkish 1 New Hitit were examined, it was seen that the activity about “telling time” was supported and reinforced with several visuals. This helps students learn and comprehend the lesson more easily. Other speaking activities in this course book and speaking activities in Unit Two Turkish A1 for Foreigners İstanbul do not make use of any sort of visuals. It is recommended that relevant visuals be added to overcome such deficiencies.

Findings gathered for the second purpose of the study

Examining the speaking activities in both course books in reference to the criteria set out in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, it was concluded that the content and the vocabulary items used in the activities were appropriate to the level. The vocabulary items used in the activities are numbers, times, personal belongings, hobbies and description of someone at a simple level.

Findings gathered for the third purpose of the study

When the speaking activity in the “At School” section in Foreigners İstanbul was examined, it was seen that it was prepared as a follow up activity after the listening activity. So, there is a link between listening and speaking skills. In New Hitit, on the other hand, students are asked to tick their hobbies given in the reading activity and to talk about their hobbies at a simple level. Accordingly, there is a link between reading and speaking skills here.

Based on the table above, it was seen that some of the speaking activities in both textbooks were prepared in a way to improve other language skills. Visuals were not used in the speaking activities in the second unit of the Istanbul textbook.

Information about the speaking activities, chapter titles and content of the activities in the third units of the determined textbooks are given in the table below.

Table 3

Speaking Activities in Unit 3 in both Turkish 1 New Hitit and Turkish A1 for Foreigners İstanbul

<i>Speaking Activities in Unit 3 in Turkish 1 New Hitit</i>	<i>Speaking Activities in Unit 3 in Turkish A1 for Foreigners İstanbul</i>
Unit 3	Unit 3
A) My Family and My Friends <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Students are asked to fill in the blanks given in the family tree and then read them aloud. ➤ Students are asked to fill in the blanks with the possessive “-s” and 	A) My Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Students are required to ask their peers 5 questions given in the activity about another friend and then talk about them.

read them aloud.

B) Our House and Neighbourhood

- Students are supposed to ask questions and find the objects given in the visual.
- In the speaking activity "Where Do I want to live?" students are expected to talk about whether they want to live in a city or a village and explain why.

C) Cities

- In this part no speaking activity is found.

B) My leisure time

- Students are asked to read the given sentences aloud and to mark the sentences with "YES" or "NO" according to their preference and later to let their peers read the same sentences and mark with "YES" or "NO" according to their preference.

C) I'm touring around İstanbul.

- Students are asked to talk about their plans by answering the 3 questions given in this activity

12 Soralım, bulalım

Hangisi Acaba?



(New Hitit 1, page 36)

Ask and Find. Which one is it?**2 Yerleştirelim**

anne • baba • hala • teyze • amca • dayı • ağabey • abla
 anneanne (nane) • babaanne (nane) • dede (büyük baba)

**3 Tamamlayalım, söyleyelim**

Merhaba ben Özgür.

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Leyla benim <u>annem</u> | 5. Oğuz benim | 9. Suna benim |
| 2. Selçuk benim | 6. Ahmet benim | 10. Sedat benim |
| 3. Mine benim | 7. Meral benim | 11. Ali benim |
| 4. Ozan benim | 8. Ayten benim | 12. Sevim benim |

(New Hitit 1 Course Book, page 33)

3 Let's complete and say (mother, father, aunt, uncle, brother, sister, grandmother, grandfather)

Hi, I'm Özgür.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Leyla is my mother . | 5. Oğuz is my.... . | 9. Suna is my..... . |
| 2. Selçuk is my..... . | 6. Ahmet is my.... . | 10. Sedat is my..... . |
| 3. Mine is my..... . | 7. Meral is my.... . | 11. Ali is my.... . |
| 4. Ozan is my..... . | 8. Ayten is my.... | 12. Sevim is my.... . |

According to table 3, no speaking activities were included in section C of the New Hitit 1 textbook. There are speaking activities in all sections of the Istanbul textbook.

Speaking activities in the third units of the textbooks were examined in line with the specified purposes and the findings obtained are given in the table below.

Findings and comments on Unit 3 in both course books

Findings gathered for the first purpose of the study

Upon analyzing the speaking activities in Unit 3 *New Hitit*, it was found that a family tree with the pictures of the family members was given and students were asked to complete the blanks with the vocabulary about family members. In the part titled “Our House and Our Neighbourhood”, on the other hand, a visual leading to the speaking activity is given. Here students are required to ask and answer about the objects in the room. This helps students to learn and comprehend the subject more easily. Other activities in this book and speaking activities in *Foreigners İstanbul* Unit 3 are not supported with visuals. Some relevant visuals might improve the activity.

Findings gathered for the first purpose of the study

When the speaking activities in both course books were examined in reference to the criteria set out in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, it was concluded that the content and the vocabulary items used in the activities were appropriate to the level. The vocabulary items used in the activities are about family members, objects in a room at a simple level and talking about them in a simple way.

Findings gathered for the third purpose of the study

In *New Hitit*, the section titled “Where do you want to live?” requires students to complete the exercise and then talk about it. Accordingly, a connection between writing and speaking skills can be observed. In *Foreigners İstanbul*, the activity reinforces the writing skill.

Based on the table, it was seen that the speaking activities in both textbooks were prepared in line with the CEFR basic level speaking skill acquisitions. Istanbul textbook did not include visuals in its speaking activities.

Results, Discussion and Implications

The speaking skill is in interaction with other skills. Foreign language learners gain self-confidence as they improve their speaking skills and as a result, their anxiety, or their negative attitudes towards the target language diminish and they become less biased towards the target language. As long as students improve their speaking skills they can express themselves more clearly and accurately and they do not avoid communicating with somebody in the target language. In this sense, in foreign language teaching, some speaking activities given in the course books might be used. Students, in this way, both actively participate in the lesson and improve their speaking skills. According to Sallabaş (2012: 2201), speaking skill requires rich vocabulary as other language skills do. The richer vocabulary one possesses and the more actively one can use this treasure, the better s/he comprehends what he listens to or what s/he reads and the better s/he expresses herself/himself by speaking or writing.

In Teaching Turkish as a foreign language, the first thing to do is to build a bridge between the known and unknown language. The best way to do this would be explaining the differences and similarities between the native language and the target language (Köksal ve Pestil, 2014: 305-306). Therefore, the teacher should learn the nationalities and native languages of the students and take it into consideration.

According to Littlewood (1984:58-59), classroom setting where a foreign language is taught in a superficial atmosphere, makes students feel anxious. They think that they would be criticized, corrected by their teacher or they might be mocked by their classmates if they cannot express themselves with a good pronunciation. Language learners feeling uneasy and insecure may shut themselves off to communication psychologically and when this gets worse it might hinder their language learning (Cited in: Doğan, 2008: 50).

Foreign language learners listen at the first stage of the learning process as in the case of learning their mother tongues, perceive and then start to speak to express themselves. That is the reason why the speaking skill is one of the most important skills to be improved in foreign language teaching as it is in teaching mother tongue (İşci, 2012: 18). Certain activities are designed and performed for foreign learners of Turkish in order to help them acquire the speaking skill and use it efficiently. These activities performed within the frame of foreign language teaching methods and techniques aim to enable the target group to acquire the speaking skill, to help them use Turkish efficiently at least during their daily activities, and to aid them communicate without needing anyone (Göçer, 2015: 23). Therefore, the speaking activities in their course books need to be prepared as appropriate to their level.

When the studies related to speaking activities in the literature were examined, it was found that Tanju (2019) reviewed *İstanbul* and *Seven Climates* A1-A2 course books in terms of the frequency of speaking activities and their communicative value. He concluded that speaking activities prepared in accordance with the communicative language teaching principles were inadequate. Tanju (2019) designed and presented 55 different speaking activities based on communicative language teaching in his study.

Another study by Hattatioğlu (2019) reviewed the elementary level (B1) of speaking activities in *Seven Climates*, *New Headway* and *Menschen* Course Books. He examined the ways of improving speaking skill, to what extent these course books complied with the course outcomes set out in the European Common Framework of Reference for Languages and made some conclusions. Reviewing a total of 100 speaking activities, Hattatioğlu concluded that *Seven Climates* complied with the outcomes the most.

As for the current study, it differs from other studies since it examines whether visuals are used or not in speaking activities in the *New Hitit* and *İstanbul for Foreigners* course books, which are used in teaching Turkish as a foreign language. Oğuzkan (2001, 365), indicates that visuals in course books play an efficient role in drawing students' attention and explaining abstract and complex concepts in addition to their explanatory and illustrative use.

Based on our analysis of the speaking activities in the first three units of the *New Hitit* and *İstanbul for Foreigners* course books, the following findings and recommendations can be reported:

- The speaking activities examined here are woven around the topics that we are familiar with in our daily lives such as getting to know each other, telling the time, asking how someone is, telling the names of

objects, etc. In this sense, the speaking activities in both course books are prepared appropriate to the criteria for A1 given in the European Common Framework of Reference for Languages.

- It was found out that in some parts of the units examined in *New Hitit* (in 2 parts) there are no speaking activities. This creates a deficiency for the book. Therefore, some speaking activities designed according to the criteria for A1 given in the European Common Framework of Reference for Languages might be added. *İstanbul A1* offers speaking activities in all parts reviewed. The distribution number of *New Hitit* speaking activities displays an irregular pattern whereas it follows a regular pattern in *İstanbul for Foreigners*.
- Use of appropriate and sufficient visuals in speaking activities is an important issue. Thus, the number of speaking activities supported with visuals in *New Hitit* is inadequate. In *İstanbul for Foreigners*, on the other hand, no visuals are used at all in the reviewed speaking activities. The speaking activities without visuals in both course books might be enriched with appropriate and quality visuals. Thus, students' attention can be drawn to the activity and the activities can be made more attractive.
- It is observed that some speaking activities reviewed in both course books were designed in a way to improve the listening, writing and reading skills as well. Some more such activities might be added to the relevant parts in the course books.

Ethics Committee Approval

The author(s) confirm(s) that the study does not need ethics committee approval according to the research integrity rules

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