

Turkish Teachers' Assessment Situations: A Study on Exam Papers

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine Turkish exam papers of the students, who study in the secondary school of 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th classes. The exam papers have been examined from various aspects, including the number and type of questions, the language expression and distribution of the questions, the cognitive level (according to the Bloom's taxonomy), the type of texts used, and the visuals use. The samples of the study were selected using convenience sampling method from 17 secondary schools located in the center of Ağrı Province in Turkey and the exam papers prepared by 36 Turkish teachers who worked at these schools. The tests which were examined included 2633 questions in 161 exam papers. We also developed "the Exam Paper Examination Form" for collecting more data which we analyzed and interpreted by using the document analysis model. According to the results obtained, it has been found that the teachers mostly prefer to use the multiple-choice question type in the Turkish exam papers; the questions are mostly related to grammar and reading; the teachers do not prefer to ask questions on speaking and listening; and except for spelling errors no deficiency is detected in the language of the exam papers. In addition, according to Bloom's taxonomy, the questions are mostly at the comprehension level whereas questions related to the analyzing, evaluating and creating levels that require high level thinking skills are rarely used. Based on the results, suggestions have been presented for Turkish teachers to prepare exams.

Key words: Assessment, Exam Papers, Turkish Language, Turkish Teachers

INTRODUCTION

Social, economic and technological changes in the world have a direct effect on educational services. In parallel with the changes in education, teachers are expected to adapt to the process of change and to accommodate themselves to the new perspectives (Buyruk, 2014). Teachers follow the changes in advancing technology and research, and apply the students' different needs in addition to the changing strategies, methods and techniques that is a need for them to adapt and develop professionally. In addition, increasing the educational quality and student success is directly proportionate to the teacher quality.

Assessment and evaluation in education is a process that requires close attention and professional practice. Many activities made in order to enable for the students to achieve certain aims in the learning process should be applied systematically. Assessment and evaluation procedure, that provides an opportunity to follow this system in a certain plan and to guide the relevant process, is one of the main elements of education (Göçer, 2019). In addition, a reliable and valid assessment procedure can be possible only with the implementation of an assessment tool prepared for the aim. For this reason, it is necessary to prepare proper exam

questions to ensure their reliability and validity. In addition to the compatibility of the exam questions to the student level and cognitive level, it is also important to determine the deficiencies and mistakes in the program (Büyükalın Filiz & Delal Turan, 2018).

The assessment and evaluation procedure has various functions such as planning and managing the educational process, intervening in and controlling unexpected situations, evaluating the teaching activities, and keeping the students' attention and interests at a high level (Göçer, 2019; Öz, 2011). Assessment is significant because if conducted properly, it can motivate the students to learn, facilitate their learning process, and activate their thoughts (Çalışkan, 2011). It is very important to provide feedback in order to achieve the aims in the assessment procedure as the most important and ignored part of the assessment and evaluation process is the feedback. The teachers try to provide the students with skills such as comprehension, analysis and correction by giving feedback to them in written, verbally and/or by body language. In addition, assessment and evaluation procedures are needed to control whether the learning aims are successful in the intended direction. Following the assessment procedures, it is required to provide the students with feedback on the data acquired for evaluation of the

learning process (Göçer, 2019). Furthermore, information on the students' development levels should be provided through the feedback given to them (Güneş, 2007).

The questions prepared by the teachers in accordance with the students' cognitive levels, and the different test types used regardless of a standardized test type will prepare the ground for more reliable evaluations. The fundamental objective of most teaching programs is to train students who are able to process and interpret information and use their high level thinking skills. It is necessary to prepare the exam questions in accordance with this understanding in achieving the targets and evaluating the learning process. Thus, the teachers should develop their skills on asking questions properly and follow the changing educational paradigm (Çalışkan, 2011).

There are many different classifications developed to determine level of exam paper questions. The most commonly used approach is Benjamin Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy. The taxonomy consists of knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation levels. The first three components, knowledge, comprehension and application are considered cognitive activities that require low level mental skills while the last three, analysis, synthesis and evaluation require high level mental skills. There are various behaviors that should be acquired in each level, and for this purpose, the behaviors in the previous level should be acquired (Arı, 2011). The taxonomy has revised versions, one of which was proposed by Anderson and Krathwohl (2010) who divide the cognitive domains into the six levels of remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating.

In international exams such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the questions consist of a combination of multiple choice items and open-ended items (PISA, 2015). The most preferred assessment type in Turkey is written exams. With the questions asked in written exams, the students are expected to remember, comprehend, analyze, apply and reinterpret the knowledge. The question types in written exams are classified as open-ended questions, short-answer questions, multiple-choice questions, true-false questions, and matching questions (Tekin, 2000). In addition, written exams provide an opportunity to assess various skills such as comparing different opinions and explaining the relationships between concepts (Çetin, 2014). The type of question, that requires the students to use their high level thinking skills and includes different answers, is called an open-ended question, and the type of question, that can be answered with a few words and that is at the level of remembering, is called a short-answer question. The type of exam where the correct answer consists of the choices in the question and that evaluates various skills and behaviors in a short time and can be scored and applied easily is called multiple-choice questions. The type of question in which each question has a correct or false possibility and that is easy to write is called true-false type questions. And the questions where explanations and answers take place in the same two groups and that are associated with each other are defined as matched questions (Atılgan, 2009; Doğan, 2009; Gültekin, 2008; Nitko, 2004).

Language teaching is based on listening, speaking, reading and writing activities considered as main language skills. The relationship between language skills and the individual's learning such skills according to the mental process are the basis of other courses regardless of content, method and technique because language teaching is a prerequisite for learning other courses. For this reason, it is necessary to apply assessment tools and evaluation procedure properly in order to determine the level reached by the activities and targets in Turkish course practices. Therefore, the students' learning environments are arranged in accordance with their interests and requests, and an opportunity to compare the results and expectations is achieved (Belet & Girmen, 2007; Üstünel & Şengül, 2004). In addition, assessment and evaluation used in language teaching determine the students' levels, skills and needs, and provide information on strategies, methods, techniques and practices used in the learning process (Güneş, 2016).

A process-driven approach has been shown to assessment and evaluation in the Turkish course teaching program. The examination of the students' performance and development levels in the process and the evaluation made according to the examination in the end of the process are called process evaluation (Göçer, 2018). An assessment-evaluation approach has been adopted to provide feedback continuously in order to follow and guide the students, to determine and resolve their difficulties in learning, and to support their meaningful and permanent learning process as the individuals' characteristics such as interest, attitude, value and success on assessment and evaluation can change in time. For this reason, it is essential to use assessment tools that consider the changes in the process instead of assessment of the relevant characteristics in a single time. In the program, interview, observation, student product files, self-assessment, peer assessment, performance and project papers in addition to written and verbal exams are determined as assessment tools which can be used (MEB, 2018). With constructivism and changing educational approaches, Turkish teachers use two approaches in performance evaluation of the students. These approaches are the process evaluation, in which methods and assessment tools such as check list, performance tasks, project studies, interview and observation forms, and supplementary evaluation focused on the students' performance in the process are used, and the result evaluation, in which the assessment tool consists of written examination and that focuses on a final evaluation in the end of the process (Göçer, 2016).

Multiple evaluations should be made instead of written exams in assessment and evaluation of language skills in Turkish teaching, and it is possible with observations to be made during the process. Different assessment techniques should be used in each skill. Assessment procedures based on activities and practices should be performed in listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Furthermore, it is necessary to perform process-based assessment procedure that consists of self-evaluation, scales, forms and product files, instead of product-based assessment procedure (Güneş, 2016). Özbay (2002) states that the quality of a good

question is to check, compare and examine the knowledge on the relevant subject and all known cases, and emphasizes that such questions should provide the students with an opportunity to interpret, explain and criticize the finding, to relate the causes, to follow the results, to use imagination, and to put the evaluation process into operation.

The teachers aim to reach the achievements in the teaching programs through the exams prepared. However, it is known that the teachers ignore the criteria such as the students' levels, question diversity and cognitive process in the exam preparation process, and do not apply some assessment and evaluation principles (Balci & Tekkaya, 2000). In addition, Çalışkan (2011) emphasizes the importance of examination of questions, and states, "it is very important to analyze the questions asked by the teachers in exams in order to understand the students' mental processes and to determine their learning levels, and analysis of the questions is significant also in order to determine the teachers' levels of asking questions." Great importance of the assessment and evaluation process makes the examination of assessment tools essential. In the study, it has been aimed to examine the exam papers prepared by the Turkish teachers from various aspects. In this regard, the research questions of the study are as follows:

1. What is the average number of questions and type of questions in exams prepared by the Turkish teachers?
2. What are the aspects of language skills focused by the Turkish teachers in the exam questions?
3. What is the cognitive level of the Turkish teachers' exam questions according to Bloom's revised taxonomy?
4. How are the exams prepared by the Turkish teachers in terms of language and expression?
5. Are visuals used in the exams prepared by the Turkish teachers?
6. What are the types of text included in the exams prepared by the Turkish teachers?
7. What kind of questions do the Turkish teachers prepare for reading and writing skills?

METHOD

Research Model

In this study, Turkish course exam questions at secondary school level have been examined from various aspects. This study has been conducted in accordance with the document analysis model following a qualitative method. Qualitative researches ensure that the data obtained are examined, and that the results based on certain codes and categories are achieved (Merriam, 1998). The document analysis model is the examination of written and visual materials that include information on the facts and cases to be researched (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006).

Data Source

The researchers conveniently selected 2633 questions in 161 exam papers prepared by 36 Turkish teachers who worked in these schools between the academic years of 2017-2018 and

2018-2019. The teachers came from 17 secondary schools located in the center of Ağrı Province.

Data Collection Tool

In the study, "Exam Paper Examination Form" developed by the researchers has been used as a data collection tool. The form includes the number, type and the aspect of language skills addressed by the questions in the exam papers, cognitive level determined according to Bloom's revised taxonomy, language expression, use of text, type of text used, visual use, and examination of the techniques used for assessment of reading and writing skills. Three relevant specialists were consulted in developing the form which was revised in accordance with their suggestions in order to improve its validity. This form was given to the Turkish teachers whose responses to this form constituted the data of the present study. The distribution of the exam questions prepared for the students who study in the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th classes is as shown in Table 1.

First, the written questions have been examined by the researchers for the reliability of the study. Then, two relevant specialists have been consulted. The reliability formula suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) has been used for the reliability calculation of the study. This formula is as follows: Reliability – Consensus/(Consensus + Disagreement). In the end of calculation, reliability of the study has been found as 89%. A minimum reliability value of 80% is considered as acceptable (Baltacı, 2017).

Data Analysis

Analysis of the data acquired has been made through content analysis as a type of qualitative data analysis method. The procedure conducted in the content analysis is to gather information in a certain framework and to interpret such information in a way that the readers can understand (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006). The results are reported descriptively using frequency (f) and percentage (%) values.

FINDINGS

The findings of this study that examined the tests prepared by the Turkish teachers are presented below according to the research questions.

Table 1. Distribution of the questions in the exam papers examined in the study

Academic year	Class level	Number of questions
2017-2018	5	270
2017-2018	6	285
2017-2018	7	533
2017-2018	8	291
2018-2019	5	207
2018-2019	6	317
2018-2019	7	416
2018-2019	8	314
Total		2633

Number of Questions in the Exam Papers

The findings regarding the number of questions asked by the Turkish teachers in the exams prepared for the students in the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th classes have been shown in Table 2.

According to Table 2, the number of questions has been found minimum in the 5th class and the number of questions has been found maximum in the 8th class in the average number of questions prepared by the Turkish teachers in the written exams.

Type of Questions in the Exam Papers

We determined the types of questions asked by the Turkish teachers in the exams. Figure 1 shows the distribution of the types of questions asked by the Turkish teachers in the exam papers.

According to Figure 1, the Turkish teachers mostly prefer to use multiple-choice questions in the exams. On average, 62% of the questions asked in the exams consist of multiple-choice questions followed by open-ended questions which account for 18% of the whole questions. In addition, it has been found that the Turkish teachers rarely prefer to use true-false questions. The rate of true-false questions has been determined as 2.5%. The distribution of the type of questions in the exams examined according to the classes has been shown in the Figure 2.

When Figure 2 is examined, it is found that the type of questions asked in the exams made for the students in the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th classes shows parallelism with the distribution of the general type of questions in Figure 1. In this regard, the most frequently asked questions are multiple-choice and open-ended questions at each class level. On the other hand, open-ended questions are frequently seen in the 7th classes and rarely seen in the 8th classes.

Aspects of Language Skills of the Questions in the Exam Papers

Turkish course is a language course that aims to teach the students on listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in addition to grammar. In this regard, the subject of the study has been determined as the language skills examined by the Turkish teachers in the exam papers and the percentage of such language skills focused by them. The relevant findings obtained in this study have been shown in Table 3.

According to Table 3, the most frequently asked questions are related to grammar. When each class level is examined, similar results are found. The aspect of grammar is followed by reading and writing, respectively. In addition, it has been found that the Turkish teachers do not ask any questions related to listening or speaking.

Cognitive Level of the Questions in the Exam Papers

Within the scope of the study, the level of skills assessed by the written exam questions asked by the Turkish teachers has been examined in accordance with Bloom's revised taxonomy. The distribution of exam questions classified in

Table 2. Average number of questions in the exams examined

Class level	Average number of questions
5	15
6	17
7	16
8	19

Table 3. Distribution of the questions in exams examined to the language skills

Language skills	Class Level			
	5 th class	6 th class	7 th class	8 th class
Listening	-	-	-	-
Speaking	-	-	-	-
Reading	180	244	320	200
Writing	14	16	59	14
Grammar	283	342	570	391

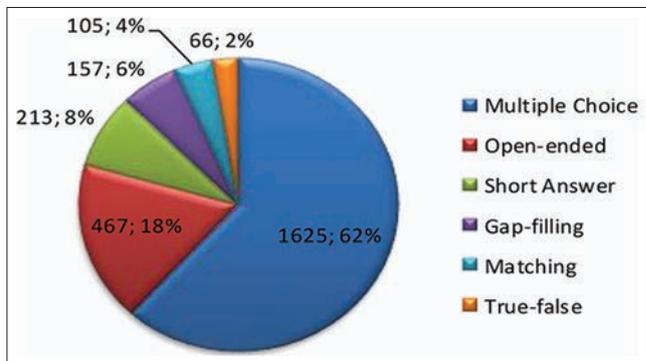


Figure 1. Distribution of the type of questions in the exams

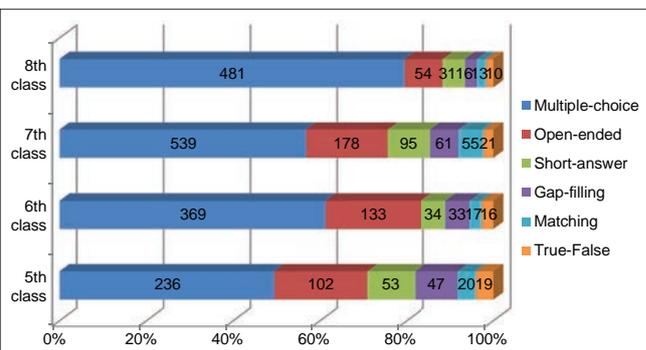


Figure 2. Distribution of the type of questions in the exams examined according to the classes

accordance with the levels of remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating has been shown in Table 4.

According to Table 4, it has been found that at all class levels the Turkish teachers mostly ask questions related to the cognitive levels of understanding and remembering. Analyzing, evaluating and creating levels, which demand high cognitive levels, are less frequently targeted by the exam questions. When all class levels are considered, it is

determined that the least frequent cognitive level addressed by the exam questions is evaluating.

Language and Expression in the Exam Papers

The accuracy of language and expression used in the questions, as one of the factors that determines the success of any assessment, have been considered in the study. The findings have been shown in the Table 5.

As Table 5 shows, no spelling or writing mistake is found in a majority (68%) of the exam questions prepared by the Turkish teachers. In addition, it has been determined that the mistakes made by the Turkish teachers in the exam papers is related to writing at 11%.

Use of Visual in the Exam Papers

The findings regarding the use of visuals by the Turkish teachers in the exam papers have been shown in Table 6.

According to Table 6, it has been found that a great majority of the Turkish teachers do not use any visuals in the exams. Only 22% of the exam papers include visuals.

Use of Texts in the Exam Papers

The findings regarding the use of texts by the Turkish teachers in the exam papers have been shown in Table 7.

Table 4. Cognitive levels of the questions in the exams

Cognitive level	Class level							
	5 th class		6 th class		7 th class		8 th class	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Remembering	140	29	163	27	252	27	115	19
Understanding	181	38	274	46	424	45	274	45
Applying	98	21	95	15	128	13	124	21
Analyzing	26	5	41	7	89	9	62	10
Evaluating	4	1	2	1	26	3	17	3
Creating	28	6	27	4	30	3	13	2

Table 5. Language and expression conditions of the exams examined

Language and expression condition examined	f	%
Not all questions in the exam paper are clear	13	8
There is a spelling mistake in the exam paper	14	9
There is an expression mistake in the exam paper	6	4
There is a writing mistake in the exam paper	18	11
There is not any language and expression mistake in the exam paper	110	68
Total	161	100

Table 6. Use of visuals in the exam papers

Use of Visuals	f	%
There are visuals in the exam paper	35	22
There is not any visual in the exam paper	126	78
Total	161	100

According to Table 7, it has been found that a great majority (89%) of the Turkish teachers benefit from texts while preparing exam papers.

Types of Texts in the Exam Papers

Total number of texts in the exam papers prepared by the Turkish teachers has been determined as 241. The findings regarding the types of texts in the exam papers prepared by the Turkish teachers have been shown in Table 8.

According to Table 8, it has been found that the type of text used by a great majority (51%) of the Turkish teachers in the exam papers is narrative.

Types of Questions on Reading Skill in the Exam Papers

The types of reading skill of the Turkish teachers have been determined based on the question classification category by Akyol (1997). The findings regarding the types of reading skill questions in the exam papers have been shown in Table 9.

According to Table 9, most (43%) of the questions on reading skill in the exam papers prepared by the Turkish teachers consist of referential questions. Also, none of Turkish teachers use intertextual questions in the exam papers.

Types of Questions on Writing Skill in the Exam Papers

The findings regarding the types of writing skill questions in the exam papers have been shown in Table 10.

According to Table 10, it has been found that a majority (44%) of the questions on writing skill in the exam papers prepared by the Turkish teachers are related to creation of

Table 7. Use of texts in the exam papers

Use of Texts	f	%
There are texts in the exam paper	144	89
There is not any text in the exam paper	17	11
Total	161	100

Table 8. The types of texts in the exam papers

Type of text	f	%
Narrative	123	51
Informative	96	40
Poem	22	9
Total	241	100

Table 9. The types of reading skill questions

Type of reading skill question	f	%
Referential questions	403	43
Inferential questions	285	30
Main Idea questions	256	27
Intertextual questions	-	-
Total	944	100

Table 10. The types of writing skill questions

Type of Question on Writing Skill	f	%
Proverb/idioms explanation	8	8
Completion of the beginning of a text	9	9
Completion of the end of a text	18	17
Writing based on the visual	14	13
Writing by choosing from the word-concept pool	9	9
Completion of a dialogue	-	-
Creation of a text in the type given	Poem	8 45 44
	Informative	28
	Narrative	9
Total	103	100

a text in the type given. Creation of a text in the type given has been followed by completion of the end of a text with the rate of 17%. Completion of a dialogue has not been preferred by the Turkish teachers as a question on writing skill.

DISCUSSION

In this study, 161 Turkish exam papers for the students who study in the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th classes, have been examined in accordance with the number and type of questions, the distribution of the questions in language skills, the examination at cognitive level according to the Bloom's taxonomy, the language expression, the use of text, the type of texts used, and the use of visuals.

It has been concluded that the commonly used question type in the exam papers is the type of multiple-choice question, followed respectively by open-ended questions, short-answer questions, gap-filling questions, matching questions, and true-false questions. Yıldırım (2018), and Karatay and Dilekçi (2019) also found that the Turkish teachers mostly prefer to use the multiple-choice question type in the exam papers. Deniz and Keray Dinçel (2015) and Aydın (2019) reported that multiple-choice and open-ended questions are generally used in Turkish course exams. Though the main reason for such common use of test type is that the application duration is short and the scoring and evaluation processes are objective, this assessment type has a negative effect on the teaching process (Güneş, 2016). It is known that the use of these assessment tools only in the assessment procedure causes the students not to adapt to other assessment tools (Deniz & Keray Dinçel, 2015). Karadüz (2009) emphasizes that the students are faced with various negativities regarding the education process due to success tests, and Üstünel and Şengül (2004) state that the type of multiple-choice test, which cannot assess high level cognitive skills, should not be used in teaching Turkish.

When the question types are examined according to the classes, it has been seen that the multiple-choice questions are mostly used in the 7th classes. This situation has been followed respectively by the 8th classes, 6th classes and 5th classes. On the other hand, open-ended questions are frequently seen in the 7th classes. And the 7th classes have been followed

by the 6th classes, 5th classes and 8th classes. It can be said that the infrequent use of open-ended questions in the 8th classes, and a frequent use of multiple-choice questions are related to the students' preparation process for the high school entrance exam. Though it has been concluded that the average in the number of questions in the Turkish exam papers varies by classes, it has been seen that there is not any significant difference between the classes. The highest average in the number of questions in the exams has been found in the 8th classes, and the average in the number of questions has been followed respectively by the 6th classes, 7th classes and 5th classes.

According to the results obtained, it has been found that the Turkish teachers do not distribute the questions properly in language skills, and that their questions in the exam papers do not address speaking or listening skills. The teachers mostly prefer to use the questions on grammar in the exam papers. The number of questions regarding grammar has been followed respectively by the language skills on reading and writing. With similar results, past studies (Aydın, 2019; Karatay & Dilekçi, 2019; Yıldırım, 2018) also conclude that the teachers do not distribute the questions related to language skills in a balanced way, and that they do not ask any question regarding the language skills on listening and speaking in the written exams. In addition, Hamzadayı and Dölek (2017) concluded that a great majority of the Turkish teachers do not carry out any evaluation related to speaking.

It has been concluded that the Turkish teachers mostly ask questions in the level of understanding at all class levels according to Bloom's revised taxonomy. Furthermore, it has been determined that the questions in the level of understanding are cognitively in the lowest level, and that the number of questions is low in the levels that require a high level cognitive skill such as analyzing, evaluating and creating. In this regard, similar results (Bekaroğlu, 2007; Büyükalın Filiz & Delal Turan, 2018; Eyüp, 2012; Gufta & Zorbaz, 2008; Karatay & Dilekçi, 2019; Kavruk & Çeçen, 2013; Şen & Beyaztaş, 2008; Yıldız, 2015) have been found. These researchers concluded that the majority of the questions asked by the Turkish teachers assess the low-level cognitive skills, and that the number of questions that require assessment of the high-level skills is insufficient. According to the findings obtained in the study, it has been concluded that the exam papers prepared by the Turkish teachers do not assess the students' high-level cognitive skills. Karatay and Dilekçi (2019) have found similar results, and concluded that the Turkish teachers are not competent in preparation of the exam papers. In another study, Göçer (2016) concluded that the number of comprehensive written exam papers prepared by the Turkish teachers is limited, and that the number of questions and exam papers that require revision is very high.

It has been seen that the Turkish teachers consider that the questions in the exam papers should be clear and understandable, and that spelling or writing mistakes should be avoided. Furthermore, it has been concluded that visuals are rarely used in the exam papers. The Turkish teachers used visuals only in 22% of the exam papers. It has been found that the Turkish teachers consider the use of texts important

in the exam papers. The teachers used the texts in a great majority (89%) of the exam papers, and they included narrative texts (%), informative texts (40%), and poems (9%) in the written exams, respectively. Yıldırım (2018) also reported similar results, and emphasized that the Turkish teachers use, respectively, narrative texts, informative texts and poems in the exams made for the students who study in the 4th classes of primary schools. The majority of the questions on reading skill consist of referential questions whose answers can be directly found in the text. On the other hand, inferential questions whose answers cannot be directly found in the texts are not used. Yıldırım (2018) found similar results in his study and encountered no questions on establishing an intertextual meaning.

CONCLUSION

As a result of this research, though the Turkish teachers consider the criteria on language expression and assessment and evaluation in the exam papers, it can be concluded that they need workshops and training on assessment and evaluation. The questions that they prepared tend to engage only low level cognitive skills, and they rarely construct questions that stimulate high-level thinking skills. They insist on the type of multiple-choice questions, and they fail to distribute the questions regarding the language skills evenly. As a result of this research, it is recommended that Turkish language teachers:

1. use all types of questions instead of multiple choice questions in their exams to measure high-level cognitive skills;
2. prepare questions about other language skills besides grammar;
3. prepare questions for analyzing, evaluating and creating levels by considering revised Bloom Taxonomy;
4. include visuals in their exams; and
5. prepare questions whose answers are not provided directly in the text.

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