

Teachers' and Students' Opinions About Students' Attention Problems During the Lesson

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Abstract

This research which investigates teachers' and students' opinions about students' attention problems during the lesson is a descriptive study in the survey model. 432 teachers and 1023 students from secondary schools in the central districts of Adana voluntarily participated in the study. The research data were collected with a Written Interview Form developed by the researchers and a descriptive content analysis was used for data analysis. As a result of the research, it was observed that the teachers perceived the attention problems that the students experienced during the course mostly as a problem arising from the students themselves while the students associate this problem not only with themselves, but also with other students, teachers and the environment. According to the results, teachers as well as students easily noticed the psychological characteristics, the behaviors they exhibited and their low academic performance, but the teachers evaluate this situation more as disciplinary problems. The solution suggestions of the teachers who kept the attention problems of the students out of their own sphere and their teaching practices were that passing exams should be harder and discipline regulations should change to facilitate punishment. The students stated that teachers should show more interest towards the students, approach the students positively and use a variety of teaching methods in accordance with the students' level.

Keywords: attention, teaching-learning process, factors affecting attention, teacher, student

1. Introduction

Because it has a very important place in every step of life and it affects the quality of life, "to pay attention, be all ears, to take into consideration" are frequently used expressions in daily life. When not paying attention, there are problems in communication, a minor distraction can cause accidents, and a careless reading may result in misunderstanding. Attention is a state of mental alertness and a focusing activity (Posner & Peterson, 1990). When the individual gathers his attention on a particular stimulus, s/he realizes the fit for purpose features more easily, and a feature which is paid attention to is placed in the consciousness. Thus, it becomes easier to choose and learn the information, the mind does not engage in unnecessary details (Prakash, 2015). Therefore, attention is emphasized as a mechanism to initiate learning (Ainley & Luntley, 2007; Chen & Huang, 2014). However, it is impossible for an individual to be aware of and pay attention to everything at the same time. This is even more difficult in school life, especially when conscious learning takes place. Because, the speed of the presentation and the way of presenting the stimulus are different. This forces students to be careful about what should be considered (Smith & Kosslyn, 2014, pp. 105–115). Additionally, there are different stimulants that are necessary and not important for learning in the classroom and these distracting stimuli can easily cause students to shift their attention. In spite of this, students are asked to be able to keep their attention in the classroom phenomenally (Szpunar, Moulton & Schacter, 2013). The concept that stands out in this point is to focus attention on the right place. According to behavioral learning theory, it attracts attention when a behavior is reinforced. In classical conditioning, stimulus control is provided with caution, while operant conditioning requires significant stimulation. According to the theory of information processing, the process of processing information begins with attention. Information obtained from the outside world first reaches the sensory memory as the first element of the mental processing system. However, the sensory memory can hold information only for a very short time. For learning, information must be sent to the short-term memory and processed there. Attention is paid to the mechanism that

decides which information is sent to the short-term memory. The first condition in learning through observation is to pay attention to the model taken. The individual mimics the behavior s/he is paying attention to. Many characteristics related to the observer, model and the modeled behavior as well as reinforcements taken in the past play a role in the formation of attention. According to Gestalt theory, attention is related to shape and ground. Shape is what attention is focused on. According to this theory, when the attention changes, the shape and ground may change (Cüceloğlu, 1994; Feldman, 1997; Senemoğlu, 2013; Schultz & Schultz, 2002). Therefore, attention is involved in many types of learning and it is necessary for the individual to reach a level of arousal in order for any learning to occur.

The fact that attention can be focused on a certain point/work for a long time involves a high level of cognitive efforts (Solso, MacLin & MacLin, 2011). In this process, students should be able to prevent other stimulants that attract their attention but do not contribute to the learning process and make efforts to keep themselves in the activity. Performing the task of selectivity for a long time and concentration on the desired stimuli of attention depend on continuous stimulation (Cüceloğlu, 1994). When there is no change in the nature and severity of these arousals, since the individual got used to the stimulant, s/he starts not to react to the stimuli and the learning environment becomes meaningless (Uluğ, 1991). In other words, even if all factors are positive, learning does not occur when students cannot pay attention to the activities in the classroom environment, or when attention is shifted to an out-of-purpose stimulus. According to studies, errors increase, quality in the product decreases and the learning process fails (Eastwood, Frischen, Fenske & Smilek, 2012; Rosegard & Wilson, 2013). Accordingly, it is necessary to evaluate the failure situation in the school environment not only with regard to low intellectual skills or motivational levels of the students but also as a situation related to the gathering and maintenance of attention (Aydn, 1999).

As their age progresses, their control over attention increases and their attention span begins to grow. They develop awareness of what to focus on when performing a learning task (John & Flavell, 1985, as cited in Yaycı, 2007, p.50). However, there is no conclusive evidence of how long the attention can be focused (Bradbury, 2016). Likewise, studies show that attention cannot remain at the same intensity for a long time on the same work, decreases as a function of time, and that the duration of the focus and the focus itself are related to the age of the individual as well as the task and timing within a course (Bunce, Flens, & Neiles, 2010; Cummings Hlas, Neyers, & Molitor, 2017; Dörfler, 2004; Wilson & Korn, 2007). As a matter of fact, the condition that students are experiencing a lot of problems in concentrating and maintaining attention and that this problem is widely observed in all levels of education supports this view (Bunce, Flens, & Neiles, 2010; Cummings Hlas et al., 2017; Kaymak Özmen & Demir, 2012; Wang, 2015; Weimer, 2014). For this reason, one of the most important tasks of teachers during teaching is to help students to focus their attention on the right stimulators and to stay alert throughout the course in order to ensure that students get the most out of their learning opportunities (Öztürk & Kısaç, 2006). Attention helps to store the property or information correctly in the memory (Gathercole, Alloway, Kirkwood, Elliott, Holmes, & Hilton, 2008). When knowledge is learned with greater attention, it becomes more resistant to deterioration and forgetting (Prakash, 2015). Attention is necessary to see the center of a problem, to understand the problem and to generate ideas. One of the characteristics of people who can think creatively and critically is their high ability to focus on stimuli (Piaw, 2014). Attention is therefore the basis of thinking. Students who cannot pay attention have difficulties in following the instructions of the teacher, lose interest in the lesson quickly, discontinue their learning tasks, have problems in following the rules and behave in a harmful way to the classroom environment (Lauth & Naumann, 2009, as cited in Kaymak Özmen & Demir, 2012, p. 137). Therefore, attention is also a prerequisite for cognitive, social and emotional development during the childhood.

When the related literature is examined, it can be observed that studies which examine the relationship between the focus on the attention levels of students during the course, the factors negatively affecting the attention in the classroom environment, the distractibility of students and the teaching practices of the teachers were mostly conducted abroad (Abdullah, 2004; Ainley & Luntley, 2007; Amjah, 2014; Bunce, Flens, & Neiles, 2010; Clikeman, Nielsen, Clinton, Sylvester, Parle, & Conner, 1998; Cummings Hlas et al., 2017; Mehralizadeh, Ghorbani, Zolfaghari, Shahinfar, Nikkiah, & Pourazizi, 2013; Risko, Anderson, Sarwal, Engelhardt, & Kingstone, 2012; Rosegard & Wilson, 2013; Sáez, Sidler Folsom, Al Otaiba, & Schatschneider, 2012; Szpunar, Khan, & Schacter, 2013; Wang, 2015). The focus of these studies with teachers and students in diverse types and levels of education was to minimize the factors that negatively affect the educational environment and to increase the quality of learning and teaching. While examining international literature, it emerged that related studies are mostly in the field of medicine and psychology; diagnosing children with attention deficit disorder (Aslan, 2013; Camcıoğlu-Almacıoğlu, 2007; Şimşek, Yıldırım, & Bostan, 2015; Tufan & Yaluğ, 2009; Tuğlu & Şahin, 2010) and focused on developing skills of attention gathering (Akçınılı Yurdakul, Çamlıyer, Çamlıyer, Karabulut, &

Soytürk, 2012; Akcınlı, 2005; Asan, 2011; Bozan & Akay, 2012; Demirova, 2008; Gözalan, 2013; Karaduman, 2004a; 2004b; Kaymak, 1995; 2003; Sazak Pınar, 2015; Tunç, 2013; Uskan, 2011; Yayıcı, 2007). Only a limited number of studies examining the attention of students during courses was carried out at upper-secondary and tertiary educational levels and it was evaluated how the teachers attract attention of the students at the start of the course (Çağlar, 2009; Ergin, Battal, & Çardak, 1999; Eryılmaz, 2007; Karaduman, 2004; Karahan, 2008; Kaymak Özmen & Demir, 2012; Yayıcı, 2007). A study examining this issue with students and teachers in the primary education level (primary and middle schools) could not be detected. Understanding which stimulus distract the students' attention during the lesson and how they behave in such a situation is necessary to help students develop their ability to initiate and maintain the process of focussing attention. Knowing how teachers associate distraction with attention and how they perceive distracted students is important in terms of producing effective solutions against distractions during teaching. For these reasons, it was necessary to conduct research that examines the reasons of attention problems experienced by secondary school students during the lesson, the characteristics of students who are experiencing this problem, behavior types of teachers and students in situations where attention is distracted and the expectations from each other. The reason for performing this research in secondary schools is that it is a new education level where students meet different teachers after primary school and that they are at a critical age. The childhood ends during this age period, also known as the first adolescence and a development boom occurs. As the growth hormones enter the bloodstream, a rapid physical change commences (Gerrig & Zimbardo, 2012). Because of these physiological changes, the interest of adolescents is concentrated on their developing bodies (Muus, 1996). During this period, there are rapid changes in the social and emotional circumstances of children. The transition from primary to secondary school as well as a transition to a new school can be stressful for them (Leonard & Elias, 1993). The expectations of children from their parents and teachers change (Rice & Dolgin, 2008). Friends become more valuable than before. Adolescents who spend more time with their peers need similar apparel, speaking and behaving to be accepted by them (Adams, 1995; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Larson, Richards, Moneta, Holmbeck & Duckett, 1996). Anger, suspicion, frustration and jealousy are the dominant emotions of this age group (Fisher, 2006; Slavin, 2013). The interest of adolescents towards learning and academic studies decreases (Öztürk, 2003). Not being able to concentrate, not knowing how to study, an unwillingness to work, woolgathering and similar behaviors are observed more frequently in students in this age period (Muus, 1996; Yörükoğlu, 1986). Therefore, the importance of the efforts of teachers working in secondary schools to draw attention to the right point and to maintain this energy is getting more important for the students to benefit from education and training activities at the highest level.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This is a descriptive study examining the opinions of teachers and students about students' attention problems during the lesson.

2.2 Population and Sample

The population of the study consists of teachers working in secondary schools in the central districts of Adana and students attending these schools during the academic year 2014/2015. For determining the schools where the study will be carried out, a cluster sample was used and 20% of the schools in each district (Seyhan = 14, Çukurova = 6, Sariçam = 8, Yüreğir = 12, 40 schools in total) were randomly selected. All the teachers in the selected schools were contacted, and for the students' determinations, the class levels and branches were randomly determined. A total of 432 teachers and 1023 students voluntarily participated in the study. 61.34% of the teachers were female and 38.66% were male. 17.13% of the teachers who are married are 21–30 years old, 48.61% are 31–40 years old, 24.31% are between 41–50 years old and 9.95% are over 51 years old. Of the teachers, 74.07% graduated from Faculties of Education, 16.66% from Faculties of Science and Literature and 9.27% from other faculties. The teachers whose occupational experience vary from 1–10 years (38.66%), 11–20 years (39.81%) and 21 years and more (16.66%) give lessons to 6th (16.67%), 7th (26.16%) and 8th (25%) grade students. 56.71% of the teachers perceive the level of attention of the students as medium, 15.28% of them perceive it as low and 28.01% of them perceive it as high. Of the students who were 52.88% female and 47.12% male; 23.26% were in 5th, 34.50% in 6th, 26.49% in 7th and 15.75% in 8th grade. More than half of the students (51.71%) stated that they usually are able to gather attention, while 32.75% of the students sometimes, 29.33% of them rarely, 10.65% of them usually and 2.54% of them always have difficulties in gathering attention. The percentage of students who stated that they did not have difficulties in collecting their attention during the course was 24.73%. The students were able to focus their attention more easily on the subjects of Turkish (36.36%), Mathematics (35.39%), Science (27.95%) and Social Sciences (23.06%).

2.3 Data Collection Tools

In order to collect the data of the research, a Written Interview Form developed by the researchers for teachers and similar for students was used. During the study, three open-ended questions were asked in the questionnaire of the teachers: the factors affecting the attention of the students, the characteristics of the students who could not pay attention and suggestions/expectations for increasing the attention of the students. In addition to these questions, the questionnaire of the students included five questions in total; two questions about how they and their teachers behave when they are distracted or cannot collect attention during the course.

2.4 Data Analysis

The descriptive content analysis technique was used for the analysis of the research data. Firstly, the teachers and students' answers were evaluated in terms of readability and there was no transfer to a computer environment since there was no problem. Subsequently, the raw data texts were read by the researchers together and meaningful sections were underlined and the code was written. In order to test the reliability of the coding, a third encoder was used in 40 randomly selected forms (20 teachers and 20 students). The accuracy rate between encoders was calculated as being .95 in teacher forms and .92 in student forms with the Miles and Huberman (1994) formula. In the next stage, the researchers formed themes according to similarities and differences between the codes and the data was arranged in tables to allow comparison (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). During the depiction, direct quotations from the participants' descriptions were frequently mentioned, and numbers and letters indicating the rank, gender and class level were written for the teachers and students to express their opinions. [For example T1M6 indicates the first male teacher and that teacher gives lesson in the 6th grade; Stu43F8 indicates the 43th female student and this student studies at the 8th grade.]

3. Findings

The findings of the research are presented below within two main headings: Findings from teachers and students.

3.1 Findings from Teachers

3.1.1 Situations Affecting the Attention of Students During the Lesson

414 teachers answered the first question about the factors that negatively affected the students' attention during the lesson and the themes and codes obtained from their explanations are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Factors affecting the attention of students

Themes	Codes	f	N
Student	<i>Academic</i> (low level of readiness, learning disability, getting to school without preparation, inadequate study, aimlessness etc.)	109	259
	<i>Personal</i> (puberty problems, different perception levels, attention deficit, hyperactive, differences in areas of interest, having special problems, etc.)	68	
	<i>Psychological</i> (disliking the course, indifference towards the course, aimlessness, low motivation, etc.)	59	
	<i>Physical</i> (coming to school hungry, sleepless and tired, health problems, etc.)	23	
School/Classroom Environment	Noise (internal and externals)	84	231
	Negative physical properties of class	66	
	Someone gets into class	29	
	Lack of training materials	25	
	Classes are crowded	24	
	Inclusion students	3	
Social Factors	Extracurricular talking among students	70	110
	Affected by friends/taking someone as a model	40	
Teacher	The way of the course/teaching methods	54	65
	Failure to determine or apply class rules	6	
	Distracted attention	2	
	Failure to refer students correctly to appropriate person	2	
	Negative attitude or posture	1	
Education Policies and Practices	Length of course	6	26
	Education program being disconnected from life	4	
	Lack of disciplinary penalties	3	
	Insufficient breathing time	3	
	The lack of interest in textbooks	3	
	Difficulty of the course subjects	3	
	Problems in education system	3	
	Frequent change of teachers	1	
Parents	Problems in the family	18	21
	Parents do not spend time with the children	2	
	Economic problems	1	
Technology	Use of mobile phone, tablet, internet, social media etc.	7	7

When Table 1 is examined, it can be seen that the teachers perceive the attention problem of students during the lesson as a problem caused by the students themselves (f: 259). The characteristics of the school/classroom environment (f: 231) and social factors (f: 110) were further factors, and only 65 of the teachers stated that they might cause this problem with their own behavior. According to the teachers, a low level of readiness of the students, learning difficulties, being in adolescence, having a lack of interest to the lesson, aimlessness and no motivation as well as coming to school without sleep, hungry and tired makes it difficult for them to collect their attention in the classroom. For example, a teacher said with regard to readiness: “*students whose background is weak have difficulty in learning a new subject and can not collect the attention*” (T304M8), while a teacher who emphasized disinterestedness toward the course said: “*If students don’t want to learn, you can not reach them whatever you do*” (T165F7). Another teacher who emphasized that students suffer from purposelessness said: “*Most students come to the school for the purpose of having breathing time, empty lessons, for chatting with their friends and playing games*” (T196M8). The most prominent feature for the school/classroom environment was internal and external noise (f: 84) and negative physical characteristics of the class (f: 66), followed by someone coming into the classroom during the course (f: 29), a lack of educational materials (f: 25) and finally crowded classes (f: 24). T316F8 said about the classroom environment: “*students who do not listen to the lesson make noise, the class is too hot or cold, or it is very dirty, various disturbing sounds coming from outside to the classroom affect the attention negatively*”, while T316F8 said: “*coming into classroom for some reasons such as being late, being given an announcement by the hall monitor and signing*”. Students unnecessarily talking were mentioned as the most prominent social factor (f:70) as well as taking someone as a model/influenced by each other (f:40) and the teachers emphasized that the method of teaching/way of teaching (f: 54) was effective related to themselves. T88M5, for example, stated: “*If the teacher approaches the classroom as a routine, doesn’t combine subjects, or people and subjects related to the course with harmony, and doesn’t exhibit interesting behaviors, as well as doesn’t help students to construct the information, they cannot collect the attention of the students*”. T316F8 said that: “*students’ attention was determined according to the attitude, manner and behavior of the teacher towards the students*”.

As seen in Table 1, education policies and practices (f: 29), family issues (f: 21) and technology (f: 7) are further factors that distract students during the lesson. While it was highlighted with regard to education policies that the duration of courses and the education program are too long and that the education program is detached from life, problems in family life, lack of interest towards their children and mobile phones were the most prominent characteristics of the family and technology themes. Below are examples of teachers’ statements.

“*...The lesson starts in the early hours, students come to school at 06.30 am so they are sleepless , they come without breakfast in the morning, textbooks to motivate the student during the course are not used, there is no computer, smart board, projector and air condition to make the course more enjoyable. This situation also reduces the teacher’s motivation and distracts the teacher from the course.*” (T16F8)

“*...Students do not like the lesson, have family problems, they do not care about lessons and their life. Failing a class is not possible, so they say ‘forget about it’.*” (T363F8)

“*...Students with different characteristics are present in the same environment, and those who are not interested in the lesson are behaving disturbedly so other students lose their attentions.*” (T374M8)

3.1.2 Characteristics of Students Who Are Not Able to Concentrate

The opinions of 402 teachers who answered the second question about the characteristics of the students who are not able to concentrate/with attention problems during the course are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of students who are not able to concentrate

Theme	Code	N
Psychological characteristics	Excessive anxiety, getting bored, distraction, disinterestedness, irritability, lack of purpose, introversion, silence, forgetfulness, etc.	223
Behavioral forms	Continuous speaking, negative attitudes and behaviors towards the teacher (opposing, not listening to warnings), engaging with mobile phones, playing games, lack of equipment, being in the back row, sleeping in class, not attending the class, etc.	130
Academic features	Low grades, not learning during lessons, lack of interest towards the course, coming to classroom late, learning disabilities, lack of preliminary information, coming to classroom without studying, etc.	118
Personality characteristics	Irresponsible, hyperactive, careless, non-compliant, etc.	94
Social characteristics	Family problems, lack of social skills, failure to fulfill their responsibilities, disguise in clothing, etc.	94
Physical characteristics	Sleepless, tired, hungry, health problems, etc.	39

In Table 2, it can be seen that teachers defined the students who cannot gather their attentions by their psychological characteristics (f: 223) and their negative behavior (f: 130) in the classroom, as well as by academic (f: 118), social (f: 94) and physical characteristics (f: 39). The common psychological characteristics observed by the teachers in these students are excessive anxiety, getting bored, distraction, disinterestedness, irritability, lack of purpose, introversion, silence, forgetfulness, etc. For example, one teacher said: “*Students are in a dream world. Technological advances such as computers, internet, games and smartphones affect children in a wrong way*” (T147M5), while another teacher said: “*I observed that students are forgetful, don’t do their homework, ask questions about something that has yet to be spoken, don’t show continuity of the tempo of work, make many mistakes, and cannot work continuously on a task*” (T216F7). As seen in Table 2, continuous speaking, negative attitudes and behaviors towards the teacher, engaging with mobile phones, playing games, sleeping in class, not attending the class, etc. are negative behaviors observed of students who cannot concentrate. For example, in this regard, T368F5 explained: “*They behave in class, like walking, laughing, asking irrelevant questions*” and T74F6 stated that: “*They deal with other things, they try to make friends to chat and they want to go to the toilet*”. The main academic feature observed from students who cannot attract their attentions by teachers is low grades. In addition to this, they stated that they do not study, they are indifferent to the lesson, they are late for class, they have learning difficulties, they lack pre knowledge and they are unprepared for the lesson. It was stated that there were shortcomings in the students’ social skills such as communication, living together, propriety, failing to fulfill their responsibilities and not having all one’s marbles (f: 94). It was also stated that they come to school physically sleepless, tired and hungry (f: 39). Below are examples of teachers’ explanations:

“*Students see some of the lessons as unnecessary. Their family stated that students should study the basic courses including Turkish, Mathematics, Science, English and Religion. So, students give their attention to these courses.*” (T146F5)

“*The student is uninterested to the lesson and is confused about why they have to learn this lesson. They are also uninterested to the foreign language because they believe that they will not use language in their life.*” (T152F7)

“*...These children have low academic success, they are aimless, they have behavior disorders, are irrelevant to the course.*” (T73F8)

3.1.3 Suggestions/Expectations for Increasing the Students’ Attention to the Course

The suggestions and expectations of the teachers (N= 127) on how to increase the students’ attention towards the course are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Suggestions/expectations of teachers

Theme	Code	f	N
Education Politics and Applications	Regulations for advancing to a higher grade must be changed	12	38
	Disciplinary regulation and penalties should be applied	5	
	Exam system should change	5	
	Physical conditions of schools should be improved	4	
	Teacher training institutions and programs should be rearranged	4	
	Training programs should be appropriate to life and level	3	
	Teachers should be given more authority	2	
	Holidays should be regulated in climatic conditions	1	
	Vocational guidance should be done at an early age	1	
	Special training should be given to students who have attention deficits and are hyperactive	1	
School Management	It should be ensured that the guidance services of schools are more functional (adolescence period, self-confidence, self-esteem, goal setting studies should be done)	6	36
	Trainings should be organized to raise awareness of parents	5	
	School and classroom rules should be taught to students	5	
	Children should be given various responsibilities within the school	5	
	Organizing of conferences and seminars to raise awareness among students and teachers	3	
	Improving the physical properties of classes	3	
	Student level groups must be created	2	
	Managers should be more relevant and consistent to teachers and students	2	
	Reducing the number of students in classes	2	
	Visual materials should be increased in class	1	
Family	Academic support should be provided (course, study, etc.)	1	30
	Ensuring school/family cooperation	1	
	Role models for computer, internet, phone usage	6	
	Value, morality and character education should be done	5	
	Gaining reading habits	5	
	Preventing children from experiencing bad events	3	
	Emotional aspects of children should be strengthened	3	
	Collaboration with the school, be educated by the child	3	
	Family problems should not be reflected in children	2	
	Children should be directed to social activities	1	
Teacher	Children should be given responsibility	1	22
	Children's nutrition and sleeping patterns should be observed	1	
	Giving responsibility to students	5	
	Giving the idea and feeling of success	5	
	Enabling discipline in the classroom	4	
	Making lessons interesting	2	
	Sincerity, correctness and fairness towards students	2	
	Cooperation with guidance counselors for students with behavioral disorders	2	
	Students should be taught according to their level	1	
	Should be relevant and willing to the profession	1	
Respecting individual and cultural differences	1		

As can be seen in Table 3, teachers stated that to increase students' attention, the system of advancing, the disciplinary regulations and the examination system should be changed. For example, one teacher said: *"the importance of the value of the teacher, the class and the school should increase as before. This can only be solved by passing the course or failing the course (elementary schools or high schools). In a system where all students pass the course without doing anything, if I were a student, I would not listen to the courses or study either."* (T396F8). One of the teachers who emphasized a change in disciplinary regulations stated that: *"disincentive measures should be taken. The student should know that s/he will get a penalty when s/he does something wrong. The students and parents feel free to do anything. In this way the student exhibits more careful behavior in the classroom"* (T1M8). Regarding vocational guidance, one teacher stated that: *"students should be sent to vocational schools at an early age. Not every student is able to perceive and learn Turkish, math, etc. very well and students should be sent to schools and departments in accordance with their character, skills and interests."* (T431F7). The expectations of the teachers from the school management were to make the guidance services more functional (f: 6), to organize trainings to raise awareness of the parents (f: 5), to make educational activities for the students about school and classroom rules (f: 5) and to give the children various responsibilities within the school (f: 5). Three examples of teachers' explanations on this dimension are as following:

"...schools should consider students' success. Students want to be cared for. Class size is important for this. If the school population in regions where families are more problematic is reduced with regard to class size and

the guidance service is used actively for these regions, we can save our students.” (T88M5)

“...We’re doing something, but it doesn’t work. We can’t get results. Because we do not support education with technology. They have terrible English books. We are not able to make listening activities.” (T279F8)

“...I would like to give guidance to teachers in schools, to organize trainings to renew ourselves, and to give opportunities to use technology during lessons.” (T272F7)

“...Different, interesting activities in the school will make students happy about the school, the teachers and the lesson and success will increase as well.” (T224M6)

When Table 3 is examined, it can be seen that the teachers’ suggestions for families are to be role models for their children in terms of computer, internet, phone use (f: 6), trying to give their children the habit of reading (f: 5), and focusing on the provision of moral values. The 22 teachers talking about the behavior of teachers mostly focused on giving responsibility to students (f: 5), making sense of achievement (f: 5), providing discipline in the classroom and making lessons interesting (f: 4). Here are some explanations of teachers who stated the following:

“...Our children, who are restless at home and constantly humiliated, come to school by choosing failure. So, to escape from the house and social environment, they come to school. There is no success goal for them.” (T31F8).

“No matter how much you talk, it’s just that what people understand. Students’ levels should be known, concept maps should be used, it should be indicated at the beginning of the course what the teacher teaches and why the information that students learn will be useful in daily life.” (T372F6)

“There are different learning methods for each student, and teaching is the ability to process them.” (T12F8)

3.2 Findings from Students

3.2.1 Conditions Affecting Attention During the Course

The themes and codes obtained from the students’ explanations about the factors that affect their attention during the course (N = 1023) are given in Table 4.

Table 4. The reasons why students cannot collect their attention during the course

Themes	Codes	f	N
Features related to the student	Academic (not being prepared for the lesson, not listening to the lesson, learning disabilities, not working in class, not attending class, dealing with other things, etc.)	302	592
	Psychological (Dislike of the course, negative attitude towards the teacher, a lack of interest for the course, the stress of examinations, lack of self-confidence, etc.)	214	
	Personal (distractibility, mobility, private life, etc.)	42	
	Physical (coming to school late, insomnia, fatigue, etc.)	34	
	Other students in the class	Other students behave in a distracting manner during lectures (conversations, laughter, etc.)	
	Influence from others/taking someone as an example	62	
	Disputes between students	49	
Teacher	The way of teaching/teaching methods (monotony, unnecessary writing, tablet, smart board use, etc.)	105	169
	Negative behaviors (getting tough with the class, using cell phones in class, turning back to students, etc.)	57	
	Making a distinction between students	4	
	Not giving necessary warnings	3	
	School/Classroom Environment	Noise	
	The seating arrangement of the class	13	
	Distractions in the classroom	6	
	Lack of tools related to the course	4	
	Physical deficiencies of the class (temperature, coldness, cleanliness, etc.)	4	
Education Policies and Practices	The class is crowded	2	35
	Long course duration	12	
	Education is disconnected from real life	9	
	Difficult/abstract/complicated issues	7	
	Disciplinary rules not functioning	3	
	Weekly course schedule is very intensive	2	
	Teaching of similar subjects in different courses	1	
Family	Not caring about some courses such as Music, painting, physical education	1	14
	Problems in the family	14	

When examining Table 4, it can be seen that the students also relate their attention problems to themselves (f: 592), then the other students in the class (f: 446) and the teacher's behavior (f: 169). Students who mostly highlighted low academic efforts such as coming to school without studying, not listening to the lesson, not studying, or not attending the class (f: 302) emphasized psychological characteristics such as dislike of the lesson, negative attitude towards the teacher and indifference towards the lesson. For example, one student said: "students have their minds on other thing, there are materials to distract in front of them, they do not want to listen to the lesson" (Stu836F6), while another student said: "not liking the lesson and our teachers teach the lesson boring" (Stu8F6). Laughter and jokes were mostly turnoffs from the other students in the class (f: 335); As for the teachers, the way of teaching the course (f: 95) and negative attitude and behavior towards the students (f: 44) are stated. About the school and classroom environment, students who put forward noise (f: 48) and class seating arrangement (f: 13) stated, related to education policy and practice, that the duration of courses are long (f: 12), education is detached from real life (f: 9) and subjects are complex/difficult (f: 7). According to the students, problems in the family are not among the important variables affecting the attention level in the classroom environment (f: 14). Below are examples of students' explanations:

"According to me, some factors such as continuous lectures and lack of some interesting things including drama cause students to lose their concentration." (Stu102M7)

"...In the classroom there are many lazy and yapper students as well as too naughty ones." (Stu406F7)

"...Our attention depends on whether the teacher teaches the lesson well or not." (Stu219M7)

"...The teacher's cell phones receive messages, are ringing and teachers are called and get on the line. So, the course is interrupted." (Stu858F6)

3.2.2 Characteristics of Students Who Cannot Concentrate

The opinions of 1023 students who answered the question about the characteristics of the students who are not able to pay attention/have attention problems are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Characteristics of students who cannot concentrate

Themes	Codes	N
Behavioral forms	Continuous speaking, prevention of course flow, influenced by friends, being on the phone, disrespect towards teachers, scattered, eating and drinking during class	354
Personality characteristics	Irresponsible, spoiled child	288
Psychological characteristics	Lack of interest towards the lessons and the teachers, dislike of the school, dislike of the lesson, fear of failure, bored in class, etc.	286
Academic features	Failure, not studying, not reading books, not listening to the course, getting involved with unnecessary things	278
Physical characteristics	Sleepless, tired, starvation, health problems, etc.	20
Social characteristics	Having problems with family members and friends	20

As can be seen in Table 5, the students mostly identified students who had attention problems during the course based on their behavior during the lesson (f: 354). Sauciness (f: 228); a dislike of the school, a dislike of the lesson, the fear of failing (f: 286) not studying, not listening to the course (f: 278) were other characteristics which are stated by the students. Exemplary quotations are given below:

"...They're on our right, on our left, in front of us, babbling behind us." (Stu309F7)

"Students are troubled, have no curiosity or interest. Students always have question marks in their minds." (Stu 75F7)

"They don't study, they're drowsy, they get bad grades in the exam, they don't do homework, they daydream, they see themselves as superior, and they don't lift their fingers when the teacher asks questions." (Stu 318M5)

"Students scribble, they cannot pay attention because they cannot focus on the lesson. A part of this situation stems from the teachers. Teachers gave up hope and showed no more interest." (Stu 210F7)

3.2.3 Behavior of Students and Their Teachers When Losing Attention/Not Gathering Attention

Another open-ended question directed to the students was related to how they and their teachers behave when they were unable to focus their attention/gather attention. The explanations of 1023 students are presented in Table 6 with two themes: positive and negative behavior.

Table 6. Behavior of students and their teachers when they lose their attentions

Themes	Codes	f	N
Types of behaviors of students	<i>Positive behavior</i>		809
	Trying to focus on the course	490	
	Trying to listen by making eye contact with the teacher	122	
	Telling the teacher when students are distracted	64	
	Warning students (when noise occurred)	62	
	Repeating the course	20	
	Removing unnecessary items	20	
	Asking teacher to repeat the subject	19	
	Changing seating position	9	
	Taking notes during lecture	3	
	<i>Negative behavior</i>		312
	Getting disconnected from the course	83	
	Dealing with other things	73	
	Sleeping	58	
	Conversation with friends	51	
	Thinking of other things	22	
	Not knowing what to do	10	
	Getting angry	9	
	Going out/Asking to go out	4	
Eating something	2		
Types of behaviors of Teachers	<i>Positive behaviors</i>		401
	Humor/jokes	207	
	Trying to involve students in the course	108	
	Asking questions about the subject	52	
	Changing tone of voice	26	
	Asking the cause of distractibility	8	
	<i>Negative behaviors</i>		746
	Warning loudly	460	
	Yelling/scolding	171	
	Doing nothing/ignoring	49	
	Applying violence	20	
	Threatening about passing the class	20	
	Getting out of the classroom	12	
	Using negative language (japing, humiliation, etc.)	11	
	Sending to administration	2	
Sending to guidance service	1		

As can be seen in Table 6, the majority of the students (f: 809) think that they are striving for recollection of attention when they are distracted during the lesson (making eye contact with the teacher, telling the teacher that they are distracted, warning the students in the classroom, etc.). For example, one student (Stu423F5) said: “*she tries to focus again on the lesson. First, I say to myself, ‘What am I doing?’ Then I try to get over it and listen to the lesson carefully*” while another student (Stu972F5) said: “*I look at the teacher, I watch him and I say “I say to myself don’t distract attention and return to class again.”* Removing unnecessary items from the school desk (f: 20), repeating the lesson (f: 20), making the teacher repeat the lesson (f: 19), changing the sitting order (f: 9) and taking notes during the class, are other behavior types towards recollecting the students’ distracted attention. When Table 6 is examined, here are some of the primary behaviors of students when they are distracted: getting disconnected from the course (f: 83), dealing with other things (f: 73), sleeping (f: 58) and speaking with each other (f: 51). For example, one of them said: “*I can’t do anything, I can’t get over it. That’s why I get low grades. I do not know how to remove distractibility*” (Stu464F7), while two of the students explained: “*I dream, I feel sleepy, I try to talk to my friends*” (Stu92F7) and “*I yell at friends*” (Stu233M6). The students’ perceptions about the behavior of their teachers were mostly negative (f: 746), the teachers warned aloud (f: 460), yelled and reprimanded (f: 171). For example, Stu367F8 said: “*The teacher first warns with his eye. Then verbally*”. Stu147F6 stated: “*Generally the teacher warns and then gets angry. The teacher throws this person out of the class. This situation occurs especially for some students. In other words, it is necessary for particular persons.*” The students who stated that teachers show positive attitudes towards attracting the students’ attentions, point out

that teachers make jokes (f: 207) and try to include the students in the course (f: 108). For example, one student (Stu123M8) said: “*After making a joke, making us laugh, the teacher starts to teach again,*” while some students expressed their opinions with the following words: “*They give examples from the future (Stu304F7)*” and “*They raise their voices while teaching lessons and make jokes*” (Stu756M7).

3.2.4 Suggestions/Expectations of the Students to Increase Their Attention in the Course

The last question asked to the students was how to help them to recollect their attention during the lesson. The explanations of 149 students who answered this question are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7. Suggestions and expectations of the students

Themes	Codes	f	N
Teacher	Dealing more with students	43	112
	Not exhibiting negative attitudes and behaviors (yelling, reprimands, violence, threatening with getting low grades, using phone in class, half-discriminating, etc.)	35	
	Using different teaching techniques appropriate to the students' level	24	
	Making lessons more fun/recovering from monotony (using materials, conducting out-of-school activities, etc.)	10	
School Management	Overcoming material deficiencies	18	
	Improving the physical condition of the classes	14	37
	Creation of classes according to student's achievement level	3	
	Raising awareness of the students about attention/learning	2	

When Table 7 is examined, it can be seen that student expectations are mostly related with teachers (f: 112). The students expressed that they wanted their teachers to be more interested in them (f: 43) and not to demonstrate negative attitudes and behaviors, not just to give lessons, not to discriminate among students, not to yell and not to use mobile phones during lessons. For example, one student (Stu651F6) explained her expectations as: “*I love my teachers, but I do not want violence, shouting and them giving low grades because we speak,*” while Stu742F7 said: “*I want teachers to turn off their phones during the lesson*”, Stu 558F8 stated: “*Please, I want our teachers not to shout us,*” and Stu 453F7 added: “*the teachers generally discriminate in favor of some students. Technological tools are not used*”. Three of the students who expressed their expectations about using different methods and techniques appropriate to the level and making the lessons more interesting stated: “*Let us have activities to entertain us; picnic, cinema, ice skating every week, something like this. We will pay*” (Stu 432F5); “*I would like our teachers to explain the lessons better and clearly*” (Stu 712F6) and “*Some teachers do not teach the lesson or teach above our level. This causes students to lose attention and so students do not like the lesson*” (Stu450F7). The expectation of a limited number of students from the school management is the elimination of the lack of materials in the classroom (f: 18) and the improvement of the physical conditions of the classes (f: 14). Additionally, Stu440M5 stated his expectation as: “*We want classes to be divided by good students and bad students because even one person can affect the classroom environment,*” while Stu748F7 explained her expectations from the school management saying: “*I think the students disrupt the lesson. They are not aware that this behavior will affect themselves and other students negatively. This consciousness must be given to them in some way*”.

4. Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

In this research it was observed that the teachers perceived the attention problems that the students experienced during the courses more as a problem arising from the students themselves. The students agreed with their teachers that their inability to fulfill their academic responsibilities negatively affected their attention, but also expressed characteristics related to other students and the teachers in the class as important factors. Caution is a complex structure affected by physical, emotional, social, psychological and environmental variables. Therefore, it is not realistic to say that the attention problems of the students in the educational environment are about the teachers and to expect the solution from them. However, the fact that attention problems are a common problem in every educational level (Bunce et al., 2010; Cummings Hlas et al., 2017; Wang, 2015; Weimer, 2014) requires teachers to look at themselves and to produce alternatives for this problem. Because the education environment includes variables that teachers can control (teaching method, material selection, activity choices, seating arrangement in the classroom etc.).

This research shows that the noise in the classroom environment was the most significant feature which affects students' attention. Related research shows that internal noise caused by students speaking with each other

without getting permission is a very common problem in the classroom (Boyacı, 2009; Carotenuto, 2011; Çankaya & Çanakçı, 2011; Saygılı & Gürşimşek, 2008). However, it is also known that noise is mostly caused by passive students and irregularities in the teaching process (Reeve, 2009). Additionally, it is known that these kinds of problems decrease in classes where student participation is achieved (Ariga & Lleras, 2011; Eryılmaz, 2007; Riskoetal., 2012; Wang, 2015; Wilson & Korn, 2007). In this regard, it should not be ignored that noise is not only a cause of distraction, but also a result of the students breaking off from the course. This opinion correlates with what the students who participated in the study stated about their teachers negatively influencing their attention by using monotonous lectures, using too many technological materials in their lessons or demonstrating negative attitudes and behaviors and therefore they became interested in other things. For teachers, it is difficult to keep students' attention at the same level with similar stimuli (Rinne, 1997, cited in Çelik, 2003, p.12); it is also difficult for students to keep themselves focused despite similar distracting factors during the teaching process. At this point, teachers need to make changes to the stimuli and the way they present, to redirect the students' attention to the right place, and if necessary, to reorient and apply different orientation strategies (Cummings Hlas et al., 2017).

The results show that teachers classified students who cannot collect/lose attention as mostly having psychological issues (extreme anxiety, getting bored, daydream, incuriousness, irritability, lack of purpose, etc.) and negative behavior (continuous speech, negative attitudes and behavior towards the teacher, sleeping in class, not attending the class, etc.). The students emphasized similarly and gave some examples of negative behaviors and negative personality and psychological characteristics of the students who were distracted during the course. In the related literature, a reduction in note-taking (Scerbo, Warm, Dember & Grasha, 1992), getting bored (Belton & Priyadharshini, 2007), distraction, not following the teacher or the material (Wilson & Korn, 2007), messaging among themselves, doing homework of other lessons (Bunce et al., 2010), giving wrong answers to questions, failure (Risko et al., 2012), not participating in the teaching process, leaving academic tasks incomplete and dealing with other things (Szpunar et al., 2013) are indicators of distractibility. These results show that students who are distracted during the course clearly reveal this situation. When the students were distracted, a majority of them stated that they did not abandon the lesson as the teachers thought, and instead of dealing with other things, they try to focus on the lesson, trying to make eye contact with their teachers and to tell their teachers that they were distracted. It is emphasized that the teachers' reaction to such situations often is to warn loudly, to yell, to reprehend, not to do anything and continue to teach the lesson. Feeling anxiety facilitates learning to some extent. However, it is difficult to control the thoughts and behavior of individuals in situations where anxiety level is high (Gündoğdu, 2013). Therefore, these results make the authors think that the psychologically and academically negative characteristics used to describe distracted students may result from negative reactions by teachers to distracted students. This opinion is supported by the fact that the students who participated in the research expect their teachers to be more interested in them, not to show negative behavior and to change the way of teaching the course. The focus of the teachers' attention on the behavior of the students who are distracted or behavior which affects the classroom environment and reacting by trying to stop these behaviors can be interpreted as perceiving this situation as a discipline problem. The lack of any changes in the teaching activities and the continuation as usual can be caused by the fact that they see themselves outside of this problem and burden students with the responsibility to pay attention to the lessons. As a matter of fact, the teachers believe that in order to ensure that students are more careful in the class, passing the class should be difficult, changes in disciplinary policies and the examination system are necessary, the school management should raise the awareness of families and children and therefore teachers focus less on what they can do. The above stated opinions support this view.

As a result, this research shows that the attention problems experienced during courses are perceived by the teachers as problems of the students and that concrete clues indicating that attention is distracted in the class environment are considered as disciplinary problems and the aim of interventions is to stop the students' behavior instead of recollecting the students' attentions again.

According to these results,

- the authors suggest that teachers should consider evidence that the students' attention is distracted as a clue to change the learning process.
- It is suggested that teachers should pay attention to their tasks/schedule plans during teaching and give small breaks to reduce the cognitive load during the course.
- It may be suggested that teachers should not forget that some students may need more support for self-regulation, focusing and maintaining their focus due to individual differences.

- It may be suggested for teachers to prevent the students from getting bored to encourage them to participate in the lesson and to spare more time for the appropriate teaching practices (educational games, puzzles, role playing, stories, drama, etc.).
- The authors suggest that teachers should improve their pedagogical knowledge about attention, factors affecting attention, attention getting and maintaining, and then apply the gained skills in their classroom environment.

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