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AN ACTION RESEARCH ON DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS' AWARENESS OF GLOBAL ISSUES THROUGH THEME-BASED ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Research article

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AN ACTION RESEARCH ON DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS' AWARENESS OF GLOBAL ISSUES THROUGH THEME-BASED ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING[1]

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate how to improve higher education students' awareness of global issues with English teaching within the scope of the theme-based model of content-based language teaching (CBLT) approach and how to overcome problems that may be encountered during the implementation. Designed as an action research, the study was conducted in the spring term of the 2015-2016 academic year, with sophomores of a state university's vocational school. G*ender equality* theme was addressed within the scope of the study. The research data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation, student journals, researcher journal and student products. The findings of the study revealed that while the concept of gender equality was generally limited to gender equality under the law prior to application, the scope of this concept was expanded to encompass not only law but also home, work, family and social life in many ways after the implementation. As a result of the research, it was concluded that theme-based activities contributed to awareness raising about the theme and increased the students' motivation towards the course, to learn the language, take steps on the solution of global problems and research on global issues.

Keywords: Content-based language teaching approach, theme-based model, global issues in language teaching

1. Introduction

In recent years, important social changes and transformations have been experienced all over the world as a result of rapid and big developments in transportation, communication and informational technologies. This process, which is called globalization and still in progress, has led to an increasing interdependence in world societies (İçli, 2001; Lindahl, 2013). Güven (1999) points out the conflicts, dilemmas and problems that have arisen both at the global and societal level caused by globalization because global problems are real problems and by their nature they affect every human being on earth. For instance, concepts such as human rights, environmental protection and global warming have transcended the boundaries of nations and become current issues concerning the whole world (Kan, 2009) and require transnational or global intervention as they involve problems that exceed the individual capacities of the governments of countries (Hosack, 2011). Under these

[1] This study was produced from the first author's doctoral thesis titled "An action research on development of students' language skills and awareness of global issues through theme-based English teaching", which was completed and accepted under the supervision of the second author.

circumstances, these issues are considered to be the matters that should attract the attention of all cosmopolitan citizens. In this context, it is important that societies and individuals have the competence to take measures against the possible consequences and benefit from the changes that will be caused by globalization (Akçay, 2003). Young people need to be informed about the world they live in and equipped with skills to enable them to become active citizens and understand how they can shape their own future and make a difference (Osler, 2002). The main way to achieve this is education because it is a means not only for adapting to globalization, but also for overcoming the problems created by it (Akçay, 2003). Therefore, the education system and schools are expected to raise responsible citizens with global awareness.

In this sense, it is seen that global education tendency has gained importance in education systems around the world (Brunell, 2013; Cates, 2002; Focho, 2010; Kirkwood, 2001; Lindahl, 2013; Osler, 2002; Yakovchuk, 2004). Cates (2002) argued that global education aims to empower students with the knowledge, skills, and commitment needed by the citizens of the world for the solution of global issues. Focho (2010) stated that one of the aims of global education is the intercultural awareness and sensitivity. In this context, if a society needs to raise global citizens with high awareness of global issues, curricula and syllabi should be designed in parallel with these expectations as the curricula determine the characteristics of the people to be raised (Gültekin, 2013).

In the context of global education, instead of filling curricula with more content, it is recommended to address issues such as human rights, environment, gender, minorities, discrimination, poverty, war, conflict, violence etc. as they involve universal elements and have potential to be integrated with other subject areas. In doing so, an interdisciplinary approach is important to the realization of student learning. In order to raise awareness of individuals on global issues, it should be noted that limited coverage of global issues in specific courses will not result in meaningful and effective learning; therefore, it is considered to be more effective to integrate them into all curricula. Concordantly, it can be said that one of the areas where global education can be applied effectively is foreign language curricula. Indeed, in recent years, many educators in the field of English language teaching (ELT) have addressed the importance of global education for learning English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Arıkan, 2009; Cates, 1997, 2000, 2002; Chowdhury, 2013; Dyer and Bushell, 1996; Erfani, 2012; Focho, 2010; Gürsoy, 2010; Gürsoy and Salı, 2014; Jacobs and Cates, 1999; Jacobs and Goatly 2000; Kruger, 2012; Omidvar and Sukumar, 2013; Sağlam and Gürsoy, 2010; Salı and Gürsoy, 2014; Serrano, 2008; Yakovchuk, 2004; Yamashiro and McLaughlin, 1999). Chowdhury (2013) argued that teaching of English language cannot be isolated from major global issues. Byram (2003) claimed that the main task of language educators was not only teaching language; rather, teaching young people the experience of thinking, valuing and acting in other ways. In this context, Rivers (1976, p. 96; as cited in Jacobs and Cates, 1999) expressed his thoughts as follows: '*As language teachers we are the most fortunate of teachers—all subjects are ours. Whatever the students want to communicate about, whatever they want to read about is our subject matter*.' Similarly, Hosack (2012) stated that there were very few restrictions on the kinds of topics that language teachers could work with, and this made it possible for teachers to connect with a wide range of important social and cultural issues in the classroom. Jacobs and Cates (1999) pointed out that language teachers could play a role in making the world a better place while developing language competencies of students.

As seen above, the literature underlines the importance of integrating global issues into language courses. Many researchers advocate content-based teaching in foreign language teaching methodology, particularly in relation to teaching global issues (Cates, 1997, 2000;

Crandal, 1993; Gürsoy, 2010; Met, 1991; Prodromou, 1992; Serrano, 2008; Swenson and Cline, 1993). Content-based teaching is organized around themes and topics instead of grammar, functions or situations. Content educators such as Brinton, Snow and Wesche (1989) and Mohan (1986) emphasized that language was a tool for learning the world and they suggested benefitting from motivating themes and authentic materials in classroom teaching.

In this study, it was considered that integrating the global issues into the foreign language course in line with the theme-based model of content-based language teaching (CBLT) approach would be more effective. The focal point is foreign language in the theme-based model which is designed for educational environments where English is learned as a foreign language; however, foreign language courses are shaped within the context of a particular subject or theme so that all skills are taught. The main purpose of the theme-based model is to help students develop foreign language proficiency within specific subject areas (Brinton et al., 1989). In this regard, the theme-based model provides appropriate conditions for the integration of global issues into foreign language teaching. In this way, students not only improve their language skills, but also use language to communicate meaningfully with contexts derived from global issues. This kind of approach also helps students develop awareness, skills and positive attitudes towards these issues (Gürsoy and Salı, 2014).

Although the global education approach in language education has been the subject of many studies (Bushell and Dyer, 1994; Cates; 1997, 2000, 2002; Chowdhury, 2013; Crandal, 1993; Dyer and Bushell 1996; Erfani, 2012; Focho, 2010; Jacobs and Cates, 1999; Jacobs and Goatly 2000; Kruger, 2012; Omidvar and Sukumar, 2013; Prodromou, 1992; Serrano, 2008; Swenson and Cline, 1993; Yakovchuk, 2004; Yamashiro and McLaughlin, 1999) research intended to the integration of global issues into language courses is rather limited in the literature in Turkey (Arıkan, 2009; Gürsoy, 2010; Gürsoy and Salı, 2014; Gürsoy and Sağlam, 2011; Sağlam and Gürsoy, 2010; Salı and Gürsoy, 2014). To exemplify, in the study of Gürsoy and Salı (2014), it was determined that pre-service teachers developed positive attitudes towards a lesson designed to increase foreign language pre-service teachers' awareness on global issues. In the study of Sağlam and Gürsoy (2010), it was found out that English teacher candidates developed awareness about environmental problems. When the literature is examined, no research conducted for the awareness development on gender equality by the method of action research and theme-based language teaching approach in the context of global issues has been encountered. Therefore, it is thought that this study will contribute to filling the gap in the related literature and be an important source for awareness raising about global issues in foreign language teaching as well as curriculum development studies to be handled with a theme-based model. It is also hoped that this research will provide detailed information on the arrangements for the development of awareness on gender equality and about the problems to be encountered and possible solutions in this process. In this context, a foreign language course program based on the theme-based model of CBLT was prepared in order to raise awareness of global issues in higher education students. To collect detailed information, however, in line with the limitations of the research and the interests and needs of the students, the focus was on the theme of *gender equality* rather than all global issues. In this study, it was researched to what extent English language teaching based on the theme-based model within the framework of global issues supported the awareness raising on gender equality in higher education students. Accordingly, the general aim of this study is to investigate how to improve higher education students' awareness of global issues with English language teaching based on the theme-based model of the CBLT approach and how to overcome problems that may be encountered during the implementation. In this direction, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. How does English language teaching through theme-based model contribute to the awareness development on gender equality in higher education students?
2. What are the problems encountered in the process of awareness raising about gender equality within the scope of English language teaching based on theme-based model?
3. What are the students' views on the action research process based on the theme-based model?

2. Method

2.1. Research Model

This study was designed as an action research which is one of the qualitative research models. Taylor (2002, p. 7) described action research as *a form of applied research that helps with changes in teaching and learning practices, examination of a social situation in order to improve the quality of the action within it*. According to Johnson (2014), the purposes of action research are figuring out how something works, solving the problem, evaluating, coming up with new ideas, and understanding how they work. This type of research is also called *teacher research* as the teacher takes the role of the researcher in the research process (Köklü, 2001).

The process in action research does not progress linearly, as is the case with traditional research, and generally the stages of planning, implementation, reflection/evaluation and action are pursued. In this study, there is a group of students who were found to have a lack of awareness about global issues. The fact that the researcher had a solution proposal for sorting out of this problem and wanted to make changes in the educational environment by applying and developing this proposal necessitated the study to be carried out with an action research approach in which the researcher is also a practitioner. In addition, the desire to focus on the effectiveness of the English language teaching process designed in line with the theme-based model and the fact that the action research includes the researcher in the procedure was effective in the preference of the action research model in the study because action research allows to make in-depth studies on the subject and to analyse the developments in the process in detail. In this respect, planning, implementation, evaluation/reflection and action phases should be carried out cyclically throughout the research process in order to raise awareness of gender equality among vocational school students with an English program based on global issues. Accordingly, the steps below were followed in this research:

1. The problem, the purpose of the research and the research questions were clarified.
2. The study group was determined.
3. Global issues to be addressed in the study were determined. For this purpose, interest and needs surveys were applied to the students and global issues that they needed to learn most were determined. Accordingly, *respecting differences, global warming* (these issues are not included in this article) and *gender equality* themes were identified as themes to be addressed within the scope of foreign language course.
4. The current situation of students' awareness of these themes was examined with preliminary semi-structured interviews and problems in students' awareness levels were determined.

5. In order to overcome these problems, foreign language courses were organized in line with the theme-based model and lesson plans with the theme of global issues and related measurement tools were prepared.
6. The implementation and the evaluation of the solution were carried out simultaneously. While the action plan was being implemented, data from interviews, observation, student journals, researcher journal and student products were collected and analysed. In the implementation phase, English lesson plans, which were designed in line with the theme-based model of the CBLT approach, were applied at 22 course hours in a period of 11 weeks. However, the theme of *gender equality*, which was addressed for three weeks, was presented in this study.
7. At the end of the application, all data were reviewed in a holistic way and a final analysis and evaluation was performed.

2.2.Participants of the Study

The participants of the study consisted of 24 college students determined by criterion sampling method, the researcher who designed and implemented English language teaching in line with theme-based model and validity committee consisting of two people for the purpose of monitoring and evaluating the practices in the research process.

2.2.1. Students

Criteria taken into consideration for determining the students were having the required English proficiency level for the implementation, volunteering to participate in the research and having difficulties related to the research problem in the classroom environment. Paying regard to these criteria, second grade students studying at Tourism and Travel Management Program of a Vocational School of a university in Turkey were included in the study. The students took six hours of English courses per week during the first year and in the fall semester of the second year and two hours in the spring semester of the second year. As a result of these courses, they were expected to have CEFR-B1 level English proficiency. Nine of the students were female and 15 of them were male. The majority of the participants (f: 18) were in the 19-25 age range. In order to measure awareness of gender equality, 12 students were selected based on volunteerism for the purpose of collecting in-depth data and semi-structured interviews were conducted before the actions started and after the theme (gender equality) was addressed.

2.2.2. Researcher-practitioner

During the process, the researcher-practitioner continuously planned, implemented and evaluated the learning experiences. Based on the results of the evaluation, she decided to move to a new stage or develop a different action plan by looking at what kinds of changes were needed to solve the problems. During the implementation process, she collected data through observations, interviews, student journals and student products. In addition, she undertook the task of being a data source by filling the researcher's journal forms, thus evaluating the process in a reflective way at the end of each course.

2.2.3. Validity committee

Two experts who received PhD education in *Curriculum and Instruction* and *English Language Teaching* departments constituted the validity committee of the research. Communication was maintained with the committee throughout the process in order to check the collected data, see the positive and problematic aspects of the process from the outside and put forward different perspectives in the study.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

2.3.1. Needs survey

Before starting the action process, it was decided to prepare a needs survey to identify the issues where students' knowledge was inadequate and they needed to learn most. As a result of literature review (Mark, 1993; Swenson and Cline, 1993; Yoshimura, 1993, as cited in, Yakovchuk, 2004), a total of 27 themes were determined under the headings of *environment, peace education, human rights, intercultural communication, socio-economic* and *health issues*.

2.3.2. Interest survey

In the interest survey, there are 11 themes that received the lowest score from the Needs Survey. In this survey, the students were asked to mark the item (global issue) they wanted to see as a theme in the English course and write their reasons. According to the scores taken from the interest survey, the themes to be included in the course were determined as *respect for diversities, gender equality* and *global warming* (only the findings related to gender equality were presented in this study).

2.3.3. Semi-structured interview form

The questions in the semi-structured interview form were aimed at measuring students' awareness of gender equality. The draft pattern prepared by the researchers was submitted to the opinions of the experts in the validity committee in order to determine the content validity and it took its final form after the arrangements. The semi-structured interview form was applied twice, before and after the implementation of the action plans. The first implementation was carried out to determine the students' awareness level of gender equality and the second application was implemented at the end of the theme in order to measure whether awareness raising occurred or not.

2.3.4. Student journals

Apart from reflecting students' feelings, thoughts and experiences regarding the implementation, student journals are also important in terms of ensuring data triangulation. Within the scope of this research, journal forms were distributed to students at the end of the cycle and they were asked to complete them until the next course. In these forms, students were required to describe and evaluate the application process and express the problems they encountered.

2.3.5. Researcher journal

During the research process, the researcher recorded his evaluations about pre-course preparations, course practices, problems in the process and solutions, whether the plans related to the process were reflected in the course or not and important decisions taken during the meetings with the validity committee with a reflective approach.

2.3.6. Observation (Camera records)

All practices were recorded with a camera during the action research process. Thus, it was possible to examine the problems occurred during the practices and the information obtained from the analysis of these observations contributed to the revision and improvement of the action plans**.**

2.3.7. Student products

During the research process, worksheets, assessment sheets, students' writings, individual assignments and group assignments were used as student products. Students were asked to

submit their products on a regular basis every week and these products were examined and analysed by the researcher after the practices. Verbal or written feedback was given to the student products and they were examined in the validity committee meetings when necessary.

2.4. Data Analysis

A three-step analysis method was followed before, during and after the implementation to look at the relationship and consistency of the data. Content analysis method was used in this process. The stages of content analysis are coding of the data, finding the themes, editing the codes and themes, and describing and interpreting the findings (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011, pp.227-228).

In this context, the data collected during the action process were formed into a written document and a data set was created. The data set was examined line by line and subjected to content analysis. Information obtained as a result of the analyses carried out at the end of each application was used as a guideline for planning and correcting the next phase. After the implementation process of the program was completed, all the data sets were revised, the categories, themes and the relations between them were revealed and the results were reached.

2.5. Validity and Reliability of Research

In terms of validity and reliability studies, the points mentioned in the literature (Johnson, 2014; Lincoln and Guba, 1985) were taken into consideration and in order to ensure the validity and reliability of the research:

- in-depth data were collected by spending a long time in the research environment,
- data were collected from five different data collection tools: semi-structured interviews, observations, student journals, researcher journal and student products,
- while interviews were recorded by a voice recorder, observations were recorded via a video camera to prevent data loss,
- meetings were held with the validity committee and detailed information was given about the role of the researcher, the participants, and the implementation process in the context of expert review,
- direct quotations were included in data from semi-structured interviews, student journals and researcher journal without adding comments to the reader,
- while codes were used in semi-structured interviews and student journals, pseudonyms were utilised in the researcher's journals instead of the students' names.
- sample images from student products were presented,
- developing data collection tools, data collection and analysis stages were examined by the researchers and the experts in the validity committee in terms of consistency,
- the findings were shared with the interviewed students and participant confirmation was obtained,
- the reliability formula proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994, p.64) [Reliability = Agreement / Agreement + Disagreement X 100] was applied between the codings of the researchers throughout and after the application process to ensure the reliability of data analysis results. Accordingly, the agreement rate between the coders was found to be 0.92.

3. Findings

The research findings are presented under two headings as *findings for the awareness development regarding gender equality theme* and *findings for the effectiveness of the action research process.*

3.1. Findings for the Awareness Development regarding Gender Equality Theme

Observation records, researcher journal and student products were analyzed after each application to determine the problems experienced during the implementation of English course based on theme-based model and to reflect the solution suggestions to the next plan. Afterwards, pre and post interview findings of the semi-structured interviews applied on the theme of gender equality were presented together and the awareness development of the issue was revealed. The problems identified related to awareness raising and the development of awareness regarding this issue are presented below.

3.1.1. Gender equality cycle

According to the results of the needs and interest surveys applied to the students before the action research process started, one of the cycles in the English course, which was conducted with a theme-based model, was directed towards the theme of gender equality. The findings of the pre- interviews held before the implementation of the action plans confirmed the lack of awareness on this issue. In line with this result, two different lesson plans were applied for the theme of gender equality. These lesson plans, which were prepared by reflecting the problems identified in the pre-interview findings and the experiences in the previous application, were designed in the context of sub-themes of *gender roles and stereotyping* and *gender-based discrimination and violence* respectively. While preparing the first lesson plan for gender equality theme, the problems identified in the preliminary interviews were taken into consideration. These problems are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Problems determined by pre-interviews on gender equality theme*

Theme	Code
Lack of knowledge	Reducing the gender equality to 'equality between women and men before the law'
Negative attitude towards gender equality	Defending female-male balance
	Defending the superiority of men

Two types of problems were emerged for the theme of gender equality, namely, lack of knowledge and negative attitude towards gender equality. The lack of knowledge theme included the problem of reducing the gender equality to equality between women and men before the law. It was found out that some students deemed this concept as equality of women and men under the law in general. However, when students were asked to give examples that were in contradiction with the principle of gender equality, it was determined that especially female students could give the right examples of inequalities from their own lives or social life, not only limiting the issue with equality before the law. This situation made the researchers think that students did not have clear ideas about gender equality and necessitated that activities should be designed in such a way as to provide students with this clarity. For this purpose, activities were prepared to enable students to understand the social roles ascribed to both women and men and to understand the disadvantages of these roles not only for women but also for both sexes. The following is a sample of an activity in the first lesson plan for this purpose:

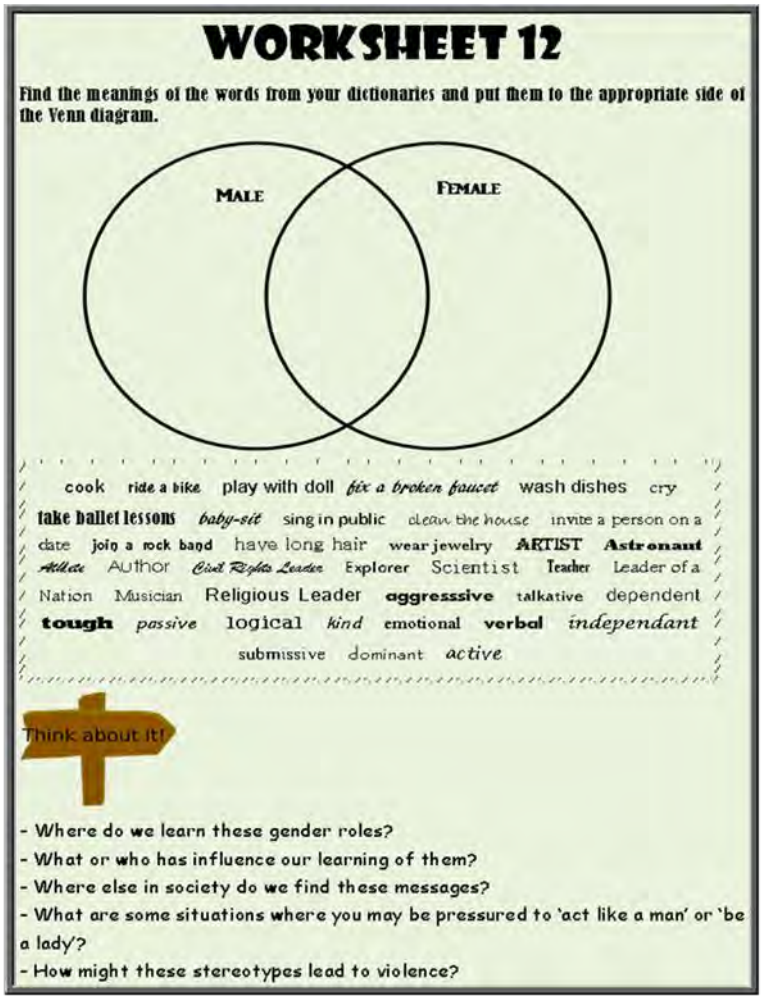
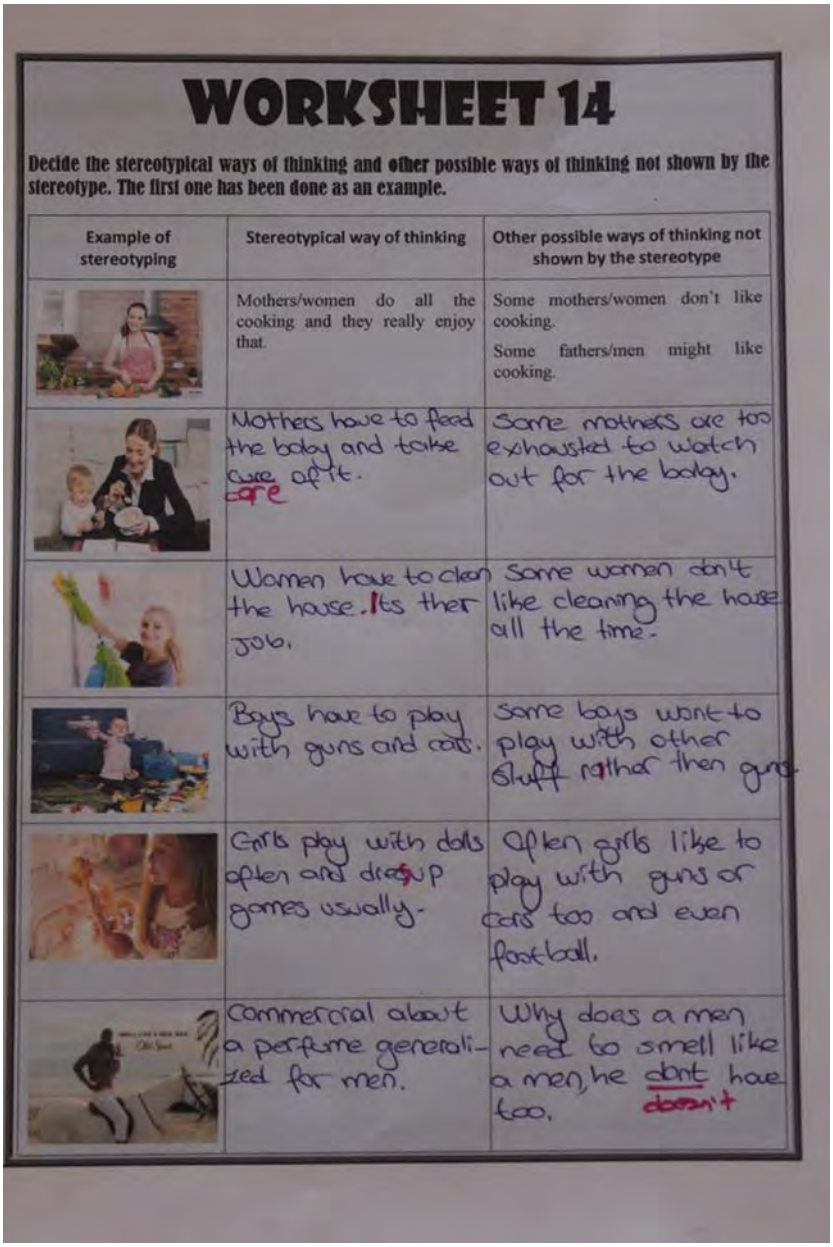


Figure 1. A sample activity for gender roles and stereotyping sub-theme

In the activity in Figure 1, the students were asked to place various nouns, adjectives and verbs in the venn diagram in the slot of women, men or the common slot of both, focusing on prejudiced and stereotyped thoughts about gender-based roles. Then with the follow-up questions, they were asked to think about where they learned these thoughts and how these thoughts could lead to gender-based violence over time.

It was identified that the problem of reducing the gender equality to 'equality between women and men before the law' was solved in the process through the activities carried out, majority of male and female students did not limit this issue to equality before the law, and touched on the roles attributed to women and men and disadvantages of these roles not only for women but also for both sexes. A sample student product regarding this issue is given in Figure 2.



WORKSHEET 14

Decide the stereotypical ways of thinking and other possible ways of thinking not shown by the stereotype. The first one has been done as an example.

Example of stereotyping	Stereotypical way of thinking	Other possible ways of thinking not shown by the stereotype
	Mothers/women do all the cooking and they really enjoy that.	Some mothers/women don't like cooking. Some fathers/men might like cooking.
	Mothers have to feed the baby and take cure of it. care	Some mothers are too exhausted to watch out for the baby.
	Women have to clean the house. Its ther job.	Some women don't like cleaning the house all the time.
	Boys have to play with guns and cars.	Some boys want to play with other stuff rather then guns
	Girls play with dolls often and dress up games usually.	Often girls like to play with guns or cars too and even football.
	Commercial about a perfume generalized for men.	Why does a men need to smell like a men, he dont have too. doesn't

Figure 2. A sample student product for gender roles and stereotyping sub-theme (Partly retrieved from https://gentext.blogs.uv.es/files/2011/05/GV_lesson_plan_SC.pdf)

The problem of negative attitude towards gender equality manifested itself in the preliminary interviews, in the form of *defending the balance between men and women* and *defending the superiority of men,* not equality. It was observed that the student, who defended the balance between men and women, stated that "*females have innate superiorities and weaknesses over males and males over females and they complement each other*". It was witnessed that the student defending the superiority of the male asserted that "*there is no such thing as equality between men and women, woman was created from the man's rib and should take a backseat*". These problems disappeared in parallel with the solution of the problem of reducing the gender equality to equality between women and men before the law. The following statements are included in the journal of the researcher:

> *I also notice breaks in the thoughts of two students who have negative attitudes towards gender equality. They come to understand that the issue is not a biological claim of equality or a matter of superiority or inferiority, but*

also more than equality before the law. I don't expect a drastic change in their attitude, but they have softening. I even care a lot for the moment that they reached this awareness.

As it is seen, with the first lesson plan prepared on the theme of gender equality, it was tried to ensure that the students gained meaning not only legally or biologically, but also about the social dimension, and thus, the deficiencies and problems identified in the pre-interviews were tried to be eliminated. It can be said that the activities carried out in this context were effective in understanding the theme in the context of social roles and prejudices. However, when it was tried to establish a connection between gender-based prejudices and stereotypes and violence, it was observed that all students' perceptions of violence were only limited to physical violence. This problem was reflected in the research journal with the following notes:

In the activity, various nouns, adjectives and verbs were required to be placed in the slots of female, male or common area of both. The students were more careful this time. For example, almost all of them placed the phrases "clean the house" or "scientist" in the common slot of both sexes. In the follow-up questions of the activity, we talked about matters such as where we learned these gender roles and some situations where we might be pressured to 'act like a man' or 'be a lady'. It was clear from the students' answers that they clarified this issue. However, their answers to the last question of 'How might these stereotypes lead to violence?' showed that their perceptions of violence were only limited to physical violence. All their examples were related to physical violence.

The researcher prepared and implemented an action plan for the next lesson plan in order to eliminate the problem of reducing violence to only physical violence. The steps the researcher took in relation to this action plan are presented in Figure 3.

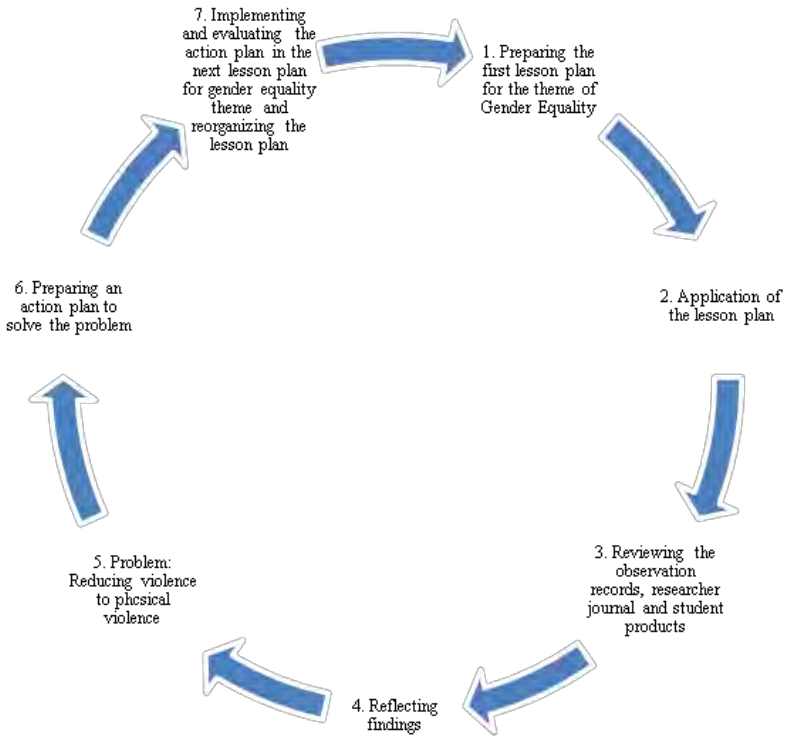
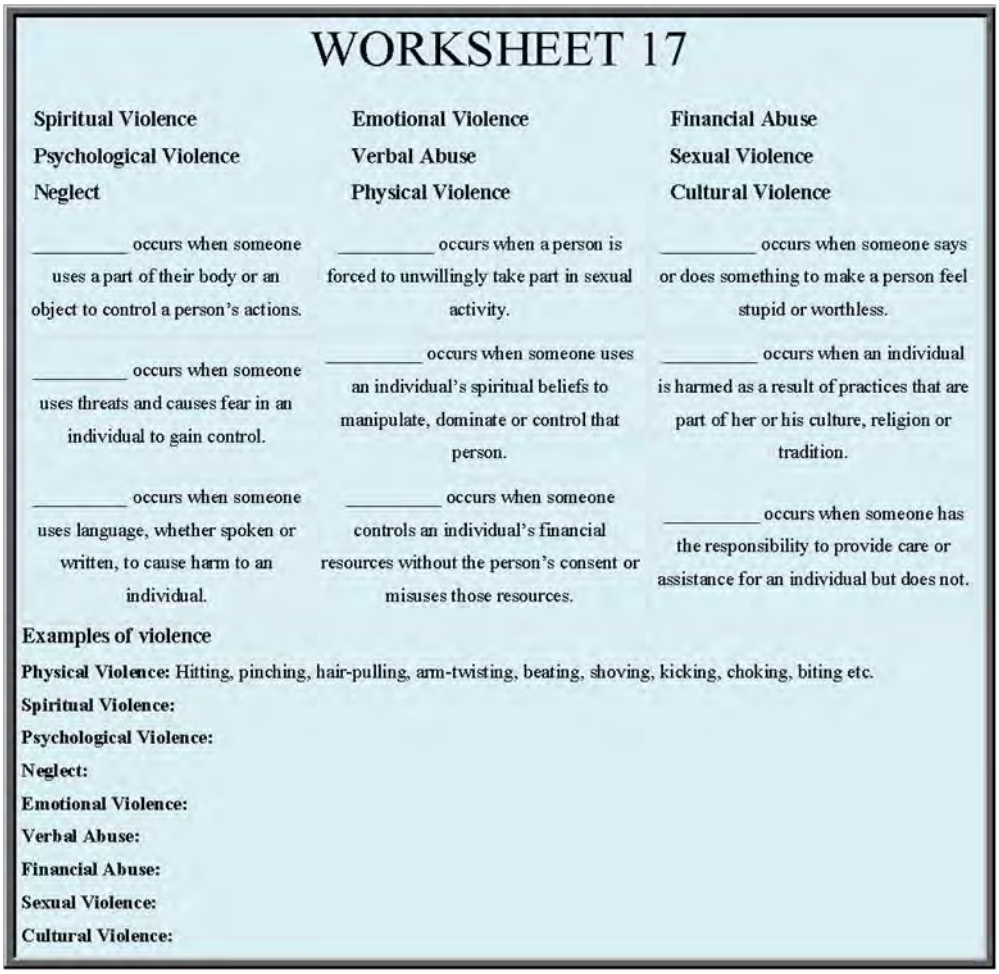


Figure 3. Steps in the gender equality cycle

3.1.1.1. Implementing and monitoring the action plan

Figure 4 shows a sample activity of the lesson plan.



WORKSHEET 17

Spiritual Violence	Emotional Violence	Financial Abuse
Psychological Violence	Verbal Abuse	Sexual Violence
Neglect	Physical Violence	Cultural Violence

_____ occurs when someone uses a part of their body or an object to control a person's actions.	_____ occurs when a person is forced to unwillingly take part in sexual activity.	_____ occurs when someone says or does something to make a person feel stupid or worthless.
_____ occurs when someone uses threats and causes fear in an individual to gain control.	_____ occurs when someone uses an individual's spiritual beliefs to manipulate, dominate or control that person.	_____ occurs when an individual is harmed as a result of practices that are part of her or his culture, religion or tradition.
_____ occurs when someone uses language, whether spoken or written, to cause harm to an individual.	_____ occurs when someone controls an individual's financial resources without the person's consent or misuses those resources.	_____ occurs when someone has the responsibility to provide care or assistance for an individual but does not.

Examples of violence

Physical Violence: Hitting, pinching, hair-pulling, arm-twisting, beating, shoving, kicking, choking, biting etc.

Spiritual Violence:

Psychological Violence:

Neglect:

Emotional Violence:

Verbal Abuse:

Financial Abuse:

Sexual Violence:

Cultural Violence:

Figure 4. A sample of worksheet to eliminate the problem of reducing violence to physical violence-I

With the sample activity above, it was ensured that students were informed of various types of violence. Following the accurate examples of different kinds of violence they gave during the lesson, it was determined that the problem was solved. A sample of a student product is presented in Figure 5 for the activity where the question *"What should/must/should not/mustn't be done to stop violence against women?"* was asked.

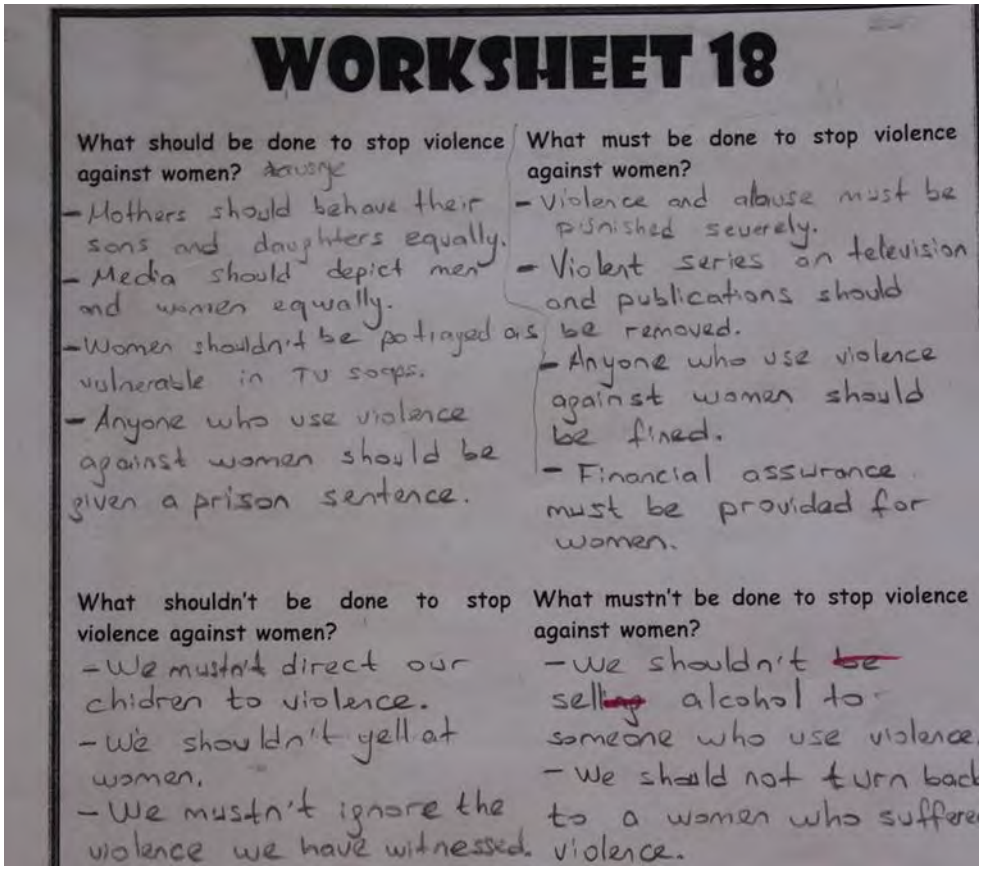


Figure 5. A sample student product to eliminate the problem of reducing violence to physical violence-II

In line with the student products, observation records and researcher notes, it was determined that the students made up for their lack of knowledge about violence, established the relationship between gender-based stereotyped thoughts and violence and provided satisfactory answers about what should be done and what should not be done to eliminate violence.

3.1.1.2. Findings on the development of gender equality awareness

The findings obtained from the pre and post interviews with the students before the beginning of the cycle and at the end of the practices are presented under this title in order to reveal the development of awareness on the theme more clearly. In the interviews conducted before and after the gender equality action process, students' awareness about positive and negative situations related to this theme was examined and the findings reached as a result of the analyses were classified under separate headings as situations that "comply" and "contradict" with gender equality.

Awareness Development on Situations Complying with Gender Equality

Interviews were conducted with the students before and after the implementation of the action plans prepared for the theme of gender equality, and the data obtained were subjected to content analysis. In line with the interviews, the findings about the students' awareness of the situations complying with the principle of gender equality are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Pre and post interview findings on students' awareness of situations complying with gender equality*

Theme	Code	Pre-Int.	Post-Int.
		f	F
Equality of status	Equality of men and women before the law	4	4
	Equality in private life	1	-
	Respect for women	1	-
	The existence of only a biological difference between men and women	1	-
	Women in a wage-earning employment	-	2
	Equal pay for the same job	-	1
	Equality in education	-	1
Equality in social life	Equality of rights, freedom and responsibility	3	10
	Equal participation and visibility in public and society	2	3
	Equal voice	1	-
	Participation of men and women together in social development	-	3
	Equal opportunities	-	2
Balance	Jigsaw puzzles (men and women complementing each other)	1	-
Emancipation from prejudices and stereotypes	Equality of men and women in terms of emotional status and personality traits	-	2
	Choice of profession independent from traditional gender roles	-	1
Equality of gender roles	Equality in traditional social roles	-	2
	Equal distribution of duties and responsibilities in family life	-	1
Total		14	32

According to Table 2, the findings obtained from the pre-interviews regarding the perception of gender equality were grouped under three themes: *equality of status, equality in social life* and *balance*. Students stated a total of 14 opinions in these three themes. An excerpt from the preliminary interviews is as follows:

> *Gender equality means having equal rights and freedoms of women and men living in the same society (S3).*

According to Table 2, the findings obtained from the post interviews regarding students' perceptions of gender equality were grouped under four themes namely; *equality of status, equality in social life, emancipation from stereotypes* and *equality of gender roles*. In these themes, the students spoke about 32 situations that comply with gender equality. Below are a few quotes from post interviews about situations complying with gender equality.

> *Gender equality is the case where both sexes are equal before the law and in the eye of the society. Women and men doing the same job, getting the same money, having equal value in society, it's the equality between women and men in terms of rights, freedom and responsibilities (S11). Both sexes, men and women, have the same rights and freedoms, even though they assume different*

roles in social life. Discrimination in this regard is primarily against human rights. Individuals should take equal roles in both public and private life and *act together in the development of society with equal opportunities. … In my opinion, gender equality is the participation of individuals in social development together, by using human rights arising only from being human and without being discriminated against, (S8).*

For gender roles, societies have stereotypes. For example, while it is not odd for women to be nurses, it is weird for men to have the same job. ... Stereotyped roles and traditions from the past limit people's lives and cause inequality (S3).

... Or, as my wife will also work, why should she do housework like cooking or washing alone? If we make money together, we should do the household chores together… (S8).

When the findings related to the development of students' perceptions of gender equality are summarized in general, it can be seen that the concept of gender equality, which was perceived as equality before the law in the pre-interviews, was mostly expressed as equality of rights, freedom and responsibility in the post interviews. In addition, codes that were not mentioned in the context of equality of status in the pre interviews such as *women in a wage-earning employment, equal pay for the same job* and *equality in education* were reached in the post-interviews. In addition, codes of *equality of men and women in terms of emotional status and personality traits* and *choice of profession independent from traditional gender roles* were expressed only in the post interviews under the theme of emancipation from prejudices and stereotypes. Similarly, the codes that were not included in the pre-interviews, but reached in the post interviews were *equality in traditional social roles* and *equal distribution of duties and responsibilities in family life*. Lastly, the expressions of belief in male superiority encountered in the pre interviews were not found in the post interviews.

Awareness Development on Situations Contradicting with Gender Equality

In the case of examples that contradict the principle of gender equality, a development was identified similar to gender equality awareness. In the interviews, students were asked to give examples of situations that contradicted the principle of gender equality, and the data obtained were subjected to content analysis. Table 3 presents examples given by the students about cases that contradict gender equality in the pre and post interviews.

Table 3. *Pre and post interview findings on students' awareness of situations contradicting with gender equality*

Theme	Code	Pre-Int.	Post-Int.
		f	f
Violence	Domestic violence	3	3
	Social psychological violence / social pressure	2	3
	Harassment / Rape cases	2	2
	Feminicide	3	1
	Forced marriages at a young age	-	1
	Traditions such as bride token	-	1
	Constant security anxiety	1	-
	Psychological violence from woman against man	1	-
Inequality in social life	Fear of walking alone on the street	2	-
	Inequality of rights, freedom and responsibility	-	4
Inequality in public sphere	The problem of women not being wanted in business life	1	-
	Men's rejection of women's success	1	-
Inequalities of status	Educational level inequalities	-	4
	Unequal pay for the same job	-	4
	Women not having a wage-earning employment	-	3
	Less roles and promotion opportunities for women in business life	-	2
	Inconvenient working / childcare conditions of women	-	2
Stereotypes	The stereotypical career choices	-	5
	Stereotypes about emotional status or personality traits	-	2
Traditional gender roles	Distribution of duties and responsibilities in family life	-	5
Total		16	42

According to Table 3, the themes of *violence, inequality in social life* and *inequality in the public sphere* were reached in line with the findings obtained from the examples given by the students in situations that contradict the principle of gender equality in the pre-interviews. Under these themes, the students mentioned a variety of inequalities 16 times in total. Below are the student views on this theme:

> *The greatest example of gender inequality is that women live with the fear that something will happen at any moment. In addition, violence against women by their spouses and feminicides are also examples of inequality (S1).*

> *Feminicides, common sexual harassments, rapes, violence against women* (S12).

Is it possible to talk about equality while our executives make statements such as "women should sit at home, they should not be in business as men can't find jobs"? (S2).

As seen in Table 3, five theme groups namely *status inequalities, violence, stereotypes, traditional gender roles* and *inequality in social life* were reached in line with the findings of the post-interviews. Within the framework of these themes, the students mentioned various situations that contradict the equality 42 times. Direct quotes about inequalities are shown below:

There should be equality in business as in all other fields, but I see that women are not as comfortable as men in business life. The conditions seem to be more severe for them. Women are exposed to prejudice such as they cannot manage to or are not capable of doing things. However, I think women are better at organization and responsibility (S7).

... In addition, it is women who are exposed to harassment and rape. Moreover, even in such cases, they are treated as if they are the guilty and deserve it because of their apparel. Politicians seem to influence people in this direction with their discourse (S10).

For example, if a man wants to be a ballet dancer, he is humiliated and ridiculed. If a girl earns her bread by taxi, she is humiliated or mocked. Why? It's a male profession. That's ridiculous ...! (S4).

Women have more responsibilities in our country, ..., working women take care of both their work and children, a woman's financial resources are cut off when she leaves work because of her child and they are persecuted from their husbands ... (S5).

... Women are also shamed for going out late at night and being in certain environments. I have never seen a man condemned for such a reason (S9).

When the findings related to the examples of gender inequality are examined, it is seen that 16 examples were given under three different themes in the pre-interviews while 42 samples were reached under five themes in the post-interviews. In the preliminary interviews, examples of violence were mostly given whereas examples of inequalities of status such as educational level inequalities, unequal pay for the same job, women not having a wage-earning employment, less roles and promotion opportunities for women in business life, inconvenient working / childcare conditions of women took place on the top in the last interviews. Similarly, examples of prejudices, stereotypes and traditional gender roles were not included in the preliminary interviews but expressed in the post interviews. In the post interviews, it was also revealed that students started to perceive gender inequality as a situation not only victimizing women but also men. As a result, it can be said that in the post-interview findings obtained after the implementation of the action plans, students' perceptions about the situations that contradict the principle of gender equality have improved and they have increased their examples in terms of variety, number and quality.

3.2. Findings on the Overall Effectiveness of the Action Research Process

Within the scope of the research, the findings related to determining the effectiveness of the action research process were obtained by analysing the data collected from student journals. These findings were confirmed by comparing them with the data obtained from the researcher journal records. Student views on the effectiveness of the action research process

in which theme-based English teaching was applied in the context of gender equality theme are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. *Student views on the effectiveness of action research process with theme-based English language teaching*

Theme	Code
Awareness acquisition	Being able to recognize the adverse effects of the media on spreading and disseminating gender inequality and critically evaluate those imposed by the media
	Recognizing and correcting their own mistakes about stereotyped thoughts based on gender
	Realizing that gender-based stereotypes can lead to gender-based violence over time
	Recognizing the adverse effects of family and school education on spreading and disseminating gender inequality
	Raising awareness about non-physical violence
	Recognizing that gender inequality is a problem that exists in many societies, including developed country societies
	Realizing that gender-based stereotypes lead to pressure not only on women but also on men
Motivation	for the English course based on theme-based model
	to learn a language
	to take steps to solve global issues
	to conduct research on global issues

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that the findings obtained from the students' opinions are grouped under two themes as *awareness acquisition* and *motivation*. For the first theme, it was observed that the students made explanations stating that they gained *awareness about gender equality*. Sample excerpts from the student journals regarding the awareness acquisitions mentioned in Table 4 are as follows:

> *I learned that our family, the education we got and the media were effective on our misconceptions. The way women and men are shown in movies, commercials and series is always the same. I've never found this strange for some reason. Compared to violence and persecution suffered by women, they may have remained mild. But I now know that it all starts from such misconceptions, which in the future can lead to greater inequalities, violence, oppression (S4).*

> *I have learned that some actions that I have not considered as violence until now are among psychological, emotional or different types of violence. For example, if someone asked me if I had ever suffered from violence I would say "no" before this course. But in this lesson, we saw different types of violence in an activity where we matched the titles and definitions, and I realized that I had been subjected to violence both from my family and my ex-boyfriend. … As a result, I saw how unconscious I was about this, and that is the most important thing I suppose (S5).*

> *I have learned that gender equality is problematic not only in our country, but also in developed countries. For example, I learned that there is violence against women even in developed countries, men and women tend to certain*

professions, men earn more even if they do the same job, and education is not effective on these inequalities (S6).

The notes confirming the issues expressed in the student journals regarding the awareness development on gender equality were also found in the researcher journal. A quote from the researcher's journal is:

While I was doing the activity in worksheet 12 today, I saw unexpected participation from some male students when exemplifying some situations that people may be exposed to pressure about 'acting like a man' or 'being like a lady'. Murat, for example, said he could not wear a pink shirt because of social pressure, and Koray said he wanted to wear an earring but he could not for the same reason. I see that students do not limit gender equality only to equality before the law, but they start to perceive it in terms of the roles assigned to women and men by society, and also as a situation that not only victimizes women but also men.

Motivation was identified as another theme obtained from the data in the student journals regarding the effectiveness of the action research process. In relation to this theme, the students wrote explanations in their journals stating that they were motivated to *the English course based on theme-based model*, *to learn a language*, *to take steps to solve global issues* and *to conduct research on global issues*. The motivation for the English course based on theme-based model was expressed as interesting and entertaining themes, increased self-confidence especially in improving speaking skill and increased participation. Sample records from the student journals on this subject are as follows:

... I can say that the English course based on theme-based model is more interesting. This approach makes lessons more enjoyable and more memorable (S5).

... English lessons should definitely be handled in this way. The English course I took this term was both more enjoyable and more effective than the English courses I have took during my entire education life (S7).

Similar statements that the theme-based English course increased motivation were also included in the researcher journal. One example of these statements is as follows:

Now everyone began to fulfil their responsibilities in pair works and group works. Moreover, I observe that they do this willingly and with pleasure.

The students who stated that the English courses which based on theme-based model increased their motivation towards the lesson, also affirmed that this motivation was reflected to language learning in general. An example of this is given below:

I have decided that learning a language is not difficult, and when it is desired and put on it, better results will be achieved. I intend to continue this decision. I stopped being silent and afraid of speaking in English classes…. I'm not afraid of learning a foreign language, on the contrary, I think it's fun (S10).

I decided to study more English but I don't know what will happen after this lesson. So far, no English teacher has taught this way. If I take an English course from somewhere else when the school is over, we'll go back to the previous system and this is boring (S12).

According to the findings obtained from the student journals, the theme-based English course in the context of various global issues, has increased the students' awareness of these

problems and motivated them to *take steps to solve global issues*. Examples of explanations for the motivation development on this subject are as follows:

> *It made me decide that I could start by warning those around me who intentionally or unintentionally act in ways that could lead to gender inequality… I used to think that I did not discriminate against gender, but I noticed that there were small details that I missed, and I decided not to do so. Sometimes I deemed it suitable to remain silent in front of those who did it and I intend not to remain silent in any way anymore. If not me, who? If not now, when? (S1)*

> *I always thought I was a conscious individual on this subject, but with this course I realized that I had very wrong thoughts. For example, occupations expected from women and men by society, I noticed that I used to think exactly like the general public in this regard. I've decided to stop being so confident about everything. I will now question more, including myself (S2).*

> *I intend to discuss with my friends and get ideas about what we can do. I wish we could prepare a video on this topic; I want it so much. Let us help society. Let's not just live for ourselves (S4).*

The increase in motivation of students to take steps to solve global issues throughout the action research process was also observed by the researcher and reflected in the researcher journal with the following statements:

> *Today we watched a video about violence against women in Australia in the course… The video extremely impressed the students and made them very curious. Almost all students wanted to express their thoughts after they watched it. Barış said, "Let's prepare a similar video describing the situation in Turkey, research, gather necessary data and upload to YouTube in English; let's be useful to society." ... The students had so much to say about it, I wanted to recognize all of them, and the 20-minute activity lasted for 45 minutes. This interest of the students motivated me too and it became one of the courses I enjoyed most. Along with this course, I can say that in addition to the development of awareness, I also observe attitude development.*

In the student journals, statements were identified about *enhancement of motivation to do research on global issues.* According to the findings, the motivation to do research has developed in relation to the issues addressed in the course as well as other global problems. Examples of expressions on this subject are presented below:

> *In the course, we watched a video concerning that gender inequality could lead to violence. When I went home, I did research and watched other videos on this topic and I was very impressed. (S4).*

> *I knew that the situation in the underdeveloped countries was desperate, but I never thought that there were problems in the developed countries in this regard. I start to watch foreign TV programs on the internet; I'm trying to discover to what extent they and we have prejudices and stereotypes (S6).*

The motivation development of students to do research on global issues is a finding expressed in the researcher journal. An example of the researcher notes relating to the matter is presented below:

> *… Nilüfer said that she had done research about the conditions of women in Turkey such as education, health, employment since the theme of gender equality had been addressed in the course…*

4. Discussion

In this study, the contribution of an English course organized within the framework of theme-based model of CBLT to the awareness development about gender equality in college students was examined. Designed as an action research, the study was carried out in the spring term of the 2015-2016 academic year with second grade students of a state university's vocational school. The research data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation, student journals, researcher journal and student products. Content analysis was used to analyse the data.

The findings of the study revealed the effectiveness of CBLT approach in English language teaching. In the literature, it has been found that this approach both supports language improvement and is also effective for the development of content related knowledge (Chapple and Curtis, 2000; Demirdirek, Özgirin and Salatacı, 2010; Hauptman et al., 1988; İlhan and Kayabaşı, 2014; Liaw, 2007; Rodgers, 2006; Sun, 2017; Yalçın 2007; Yang and Chen, 2015; Yılmaz et al., 2015). In addition, this model has been considered in the context of global education in recent years and has been advocated by researchers working on the subject as a model providing the appropriate conditions for integration of global issues into foreign language teaching (Cates; 1997, 2000; Crandal, 1993; Gürsoy, 2010; Hauschild et al., 2012; Met, 1991; Prodromou, 1992; Serrano, 2008; Swenson and Cline, 1993). In this context, Gürsoy and Salı (2014) argued that the use of global topics as content would improve students' awareness, skills and positive attitudes towards these issues as well as their language development. In this study, global issues were used as content and awareness raise was determined for the theme of gender equality. Similar findings have been observed in other studies using global issues as themes. For example, Arıkan (2009) conducted English courses within the scope of environmental peace education in order to increase the awareness of 10th grade students towards global issues and concluded that learning English within the scope of social responsibility was an effective strategy that could be used in language teaching. Omidvar and Sukumar (2013) integrated global issues into an intermediate English-speaking course where English was taught as a second language and found that the program they applied led to an increase in students' interest, participation, awareness of global issues and their skills to analyse problems and think critically. In the study of Yoshihara (2011), a theme-based model was used and English lessons were conducted within six themes such as domestic violence, children's rights, global warming. The findings of the research revealed that students had an intellectual curiosity about these topics and established a connection between their learning and personal development by showing awareness of these issues. Corzo and Lopera (2016) concluded that foreign language courses carried out with CBLT in the context of environmental issues contributed to the development of environmental awareness.

Lack of knowledge and *negative attitude* problems were encountered in the initial phase of the action research process, when awareness development had not yet been realized. This is not surprising, since these problems are thought to be related to the lack of awareness of the theme mentioned. As a matter of fact, the needs survey conducted to determine the themes to be studied in the courses before the applications started showed that there was lack of awareness of gender equality among the students in the study group. In the meantime, these problems are of great importance in terms of providing a starting point for the activities

designed within the scope of the action research process and they were solved in parallel with the increase in awareness.

It was determined that awareness development on gender equality was expressed in the student journals on issues such as *recognizing adverse effects of the media on spreading and sustaining gender inequality and being able to critically evaluate those imposed by the media, recognizing and correcting their own mistakes about stereotyped thoughts based on gender, recognizing the negative effects of education received in the family and school on spreading and sustaining gender inequality, realizing the fact that gender-based stereotypes lead to pressure not only on women but also on men*. These expressions can be interpreted as the contribution of CBLT to the development of critical thinking skills of students. Studies that prove the positive effects of language courses conducted with CBLT on students' critical thinking skills confirm these findings of the research (Bingül, 1999; Chapple and Curtis, 2000; Liaw, 2007; Omidvar and Sukumar, 2013; Tsai and Shang, 2010; Tseng, 2017).

As perceived by students, awareness-development on issues such as *recognizing that gender-based stereotypes can lead to gender-based violence over time, awareness-raising about various non-physical violence types, recognizing that gender inequality is a problem that exists in many societies, including developed country societies* also emerged in the context of the theme of gender equality. A similar awareness-development can be found in Yoshihara's (2011) study, which was implemented in the framework of a theme-based model and applied to university students in Japan. It was concluded that students became aware of their own misconceptions about gender equality in this study.

Within the scope of the study, it was concluded that the English courses based on the theme-based model of CBLT increased the motivation of the students to the course, to learn a language, to take steps to solve global issues and to do research on global issues. According to Krahnke (1987), CBLT contributes to increasing students' motivation by addressing their needs. Chapple and Curtis (2000) argued that content-based instruction often helps to improve language and permanence because of the frequent use of motivating materials, and that the content itself may be more intellectually stimulating and challenging for students than traditional language courses. Similarly, Butler (2005) defended that CBLT provides students with cognitively compelling content materials and tasks to develop high-level thinking skills and increase motivation. These arguments are supported by the findings of other studies in the literature revealing positive effects of CBLT on students such as motivation (Alptekin et al., 2007; Boivin and Razali, 2013; Can Vatandaş, 2006; Chau Ngan, 2011; Corrales and Maloof, 2011; Corzo and Lopera, 2016; Gaffield-Vile, 1996; Lasagabaster, 2011; Yang and Chen, 2015), increased attention and participation in classroom activities (Corzo and Lopera, 2016; Dimas and Castellanos, 2014; Heidari-Shahreza, 2014; Huang, 2011), developing positive attitude towards content-based course (Demirdirek et al., 2010; Korosidou and Griva, 2013; Lasagabaster and Sierra 2009; Omoto and Nyongesa, 2013), increased self-confidence (Sun, 2017) and personal development (Yoshihara, 2011). For example, Corrales and Maloof (2011) found that there was an interesting dynamics between meaningful learning, motivation and interest in their studies conducted with university students within the framework of CBLT and confirmed an increase in student motivation as the materials presented in the classroom were related to the students' study areas. Heidari-Shahreza's (2014) study with university sophomore students found that students in the content-based classroom were more attentive to tasks and activities than students in the language-based classroom, and showed greater participation and volunteering. In another study conducted with secondary school students from four different schools (Lasagabaster and Sierra, 2009), it was confirmed that courses in which content and language were integrated helped to develop positive attitudes towards language learning in general.

As a result, in this study it was determined that awareness of global issues could be improved among higher education students through the theme-based model of CBLT. CBLT is an approach to facilitate learning for ESL/EFL students and is based on the rationale that language should not be taught separated from a particular context (Boivin and Razali 2013). However, it cannot be right to assume that language acquisition occurs by chance as long as meaningful content is provided; there are a number of factors that determine the success of CBLT. Careful assessment and planning are necessary for the successful implementation of this approach in foreign language contexts. When developing a content-based curriculum in foreign language settings, it should be noted that the primary focus is on foreign language development. Teacher characteristics, student characteristics and availability of resources are among the other factors that affect the success of the curriculum (Butler, 2005). It should not be forgotten that the planned and effective establishment of content and language balance depending on the needs of students, the things that the environment provides and the curriculum greatly affects the success of the approach (Yalçın, 2007).

5. Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations

According to the results of the action research, the findings obtained from the semi-structured interviews conducted before the implementations revealed that the students generally limited the concept of gender equality to "gender equality before the law". After the action plans were realized, it was arisen that they addressed the issue in a wider way and in many contexts such as equality of rights, freedom and responsibility before law and in social life, roles attributed to women and men by society, distribution of family relationships, prejudices and stereotypes based on career choice and personal characteristics, and business life. While examples of gender inequality were mostly relevant with violent in the preliminary interviews, they were related to status inequalities such as educational level inequalities, unequal pay for the same job, not having a wage-earning employment, less roles and promotion opportunities for women in business life, inconvenient working / childcare conditions of women in the post interviews. The fact that gender inequality was started to be perceived as a situation victimizing not only women but also men during the post interviews was an important finding for the research. Similarly, it was concluded from the student journals that English-language courses based on theme-based model both contributed significantly to the development of gender awareness and increased students' motivation towards the course, language learning and doing research for the solution of global issues.

This study has following limitations:

1. The research is limited to the data collected from a group of 24 sophomores of a state university's vocational school in Turkey in the spring term of the 2015-2016 academic year.
2. The findings regarding the development in students' awareness of gender equality during the research process are limited to the data obtained during the implementation process.
3. Findings related to the problems experienced during the research process are limited to the data obtained during the implementation process.
4. The results obtained from the research are limited only to the study group participating in the research.

Based on the results and limitations, the following recommendations can be made for practitioners and researchers:

1. It can be said that the activities as part of the theme-based model contributed to the awareness raising on the subjects covered as themes. From this point of view, it may

be suggested that foreign language teachers and instructors should organize their courses in accordance with this approach.

2. The results of the study can be compared with the students attending different faculties and colleges by doing new researches at different grade levels. Studies can be carried out for the same purpose at different levels of education such as primary, secondary and high school.
3. In this study conducted with action research, the effectiveness of the theme-based model of CBLI was measured. Different qualitative and quantitative studies can be conducted to investigate the effectiveness of other language teaching approaches and compare the effects of them.
4. This research focuses on the awareness development about the theme addressed in the course. In-depth studies regarding the effect of theme-based model on the development of basic language skills and vocabulary can also be conducted.
5. Similar studies to be carried out with this approach may address other different global issues.
6. In this study, the researcher conducted the research as an "active observer", where she carried out the application and data collection. However, the experience and the degree of expertise of the teachers / instructors may differ from each other. In this context, similar studies conducted by different teachers / instructors other than the researcher can be carried out. Thus, different research results that examine the same subject can be discussed together and more general and objective judgments can be reached.

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