

A study on the comparative analysis of writing skills activities in Japanese and Turkish textbooks[#]

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Accepted 27 October, 2022

ABSTRACT

Writing is the result of our desire to express our feelings, thoughts, dreams, and ourselves. In today's education, with the penetration of technology into our lives, what we express not only on paper but also on the screen is within the scope of writing skills. Writing is a language skill that requires high-level mental skills such as producing a new product, questioning, evaluating, and analyzing-synthesizing. A country's reading literacy success in PISA provides information about that country's native language education policy. Therefore, depending on the reading literacy learning outcome of Turkey and Japan in PISA and since writing is the last language skill to be acquired, it was aimed to comparatively examine the activities on writing skills in Turkish textbooks (fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grades) and the writing activities in the (seventh, eighth, and ninth grades) Japanese textbooks to reveal similarities and differences in these textbooks. Case study method one of the qualitative research methods was used in this study, and it was carried out with the limitation of writing skills in Turkish textbooks published in 2018 and Japanese textbooks published in 2015 and 2016. It was seen that writing activities in Turkish textbooks have a ratio of 20% (f = 267), and writing activities in Japanese textbooks have an 11% (f = 36) ratio. Although there are too many repetitive activities in Turkish textbooks, it has been observed that some of the learning outcomes were not exemplified by any activity. On the contrary, content for writing skills, which was addressed with more general expressions, was reflected in every activity in Japanese textbooks.

Keywords: Language education, curriculum, PISA, textbooks, learning outcomes.

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[#]This study is an extended version of our paper presented at the 3rd International Conference on Innovative Studies of Contemporary Sciences.

INTRODUCTION

Language is the only tool that enables us to understand and to be understood. People are social beings living in a social environment. For this reason, they need a communication tool to survive and socialize in this social environment. Effective communication requires the effective, efficient, and correct use of this tool (Doğan, 2012; Coşkun, 2014). This tool is language, and through language, we understand what is happening around us and express ourselves in the best way. We can transfer our feelings and thoughts in various ways. Language is the most frequently preferred way to express oneself. Without language, it is impossible to communicate and survive in society. Language, which has a significant place in processes such as communicating, expressing

feelings and thoughts, interacting, integrating with the outside world, and transferring culture, contains the skills that enable us to maintain our lives and existence in society (Güneş, 2011). The individual's communicative competence is related to the interconnected development of these skills because the improvement of one skill affects the improvement of the other skills (Mert, 2014). These skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening and speaking are necessary actions in daily life. Although reading and writing are part of formal education, they have become a part of daily life, just like listening and speaking. The importance of language education has increased even more in today's understanding of education, where reading is not done only on printed

materials and writing is not done only on paper. To sum up, reading and writing require different qualities. In today's information age, where lifelong learning occupies an important place, skills that require many mental processes such as perception, understanding, interpretation, thinking, and problem-solving do not discuss without language. The reason is that language affects features such as developing the individual's capacity, solving complex problems, thinking scientifically, having various values, and forming an extended perspective (Güneş, 2011). Therefore, language does not learn at a definite time, continues for a lifetime (Doğan, 2012; Sever, 2004), and gains more importance due to these functions.

Healthy communication is a necessity in every moment of our lives and requires using comprehension and expression skills well. To communicate well in social, professional, and personal areas, we need to be good at reading, writing, listening, and speaking. People transfer their impressions, thoughts, and feelings through listening and reading. This transfer is an instinctive behaviour as a result of being human because people want to understand, interpret, and explain. In this way, they become a part of the world they live. The most common device for transferring feelings and thoughts is speaking and writing. Although writing is less preferred among these language skills, writing is significant in developing other language skills because it supports other skills and is supported by other skills. Writing is the expression of an individual's feelings, thoughts, wishes, and events with various symbols following definite rules. Also, writing is a channel where we transfer our feelings and thoughts in an orderly manner with minimum error. As writing is the last language skill to be acquired, it requires high-level mental skills such as producing, creating a new product, thinking, questioning, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing.

Writing skill is not only a complex process but also an expression of thought (Karadağ and Maden, 2014). This expression or the process of putting the structured information into writing (Güneş, 2013) takes part as a result of coding the meanings to be transferred with symbols called letters (Karadağ and Maden, 2014). Native language is an area where reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills cannot be considered independent. They are like parts of a whole that are connected and support each other. We need some skills to understand and express ourselves, and it is essential to learn these skills gradually in a definite order. For this reason, to get desired skills in the native language, an individual needs to be in a planned education. This situation brings the native language curricula to the fore.

National and international exams are the ways to measure the success of the curricula. International exams are needed to determine the level of education in the universal framework. Many countries can see the success order in global education through these exams.

In the framework of the results obtained from these exams, they take the necessary measures to improve their situation in education and try to eliminate the deficiencies and solve the problems. PISA is one of these exams, which measures the efficiency of the education system, as in many other countries. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is one of the world's supreme educational research organized by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (MEB, 2011). Students in the age group of 15 are included in this exam. Turkey participated in PISA for the first time in 2003, which started to be implemented in 2000. Turkey had success below the OECD average from 2003 to 2018. Turkey scored 441 in 2003, 447 in 2006, 464 in 2009, 475 in 2012, 428 in 2015, below the average, and 466 points in PISA 2018, above the average for the first time (OECD, 2005; OECD, 2007; MEB, 2011; MEB, 2013; Şirin and Vatanartıran, 2014; MEB, 2015, MEB, 2016; MEB, 2019). The countries in the top five in PISA exams are generally the same (such as Finland, Hong Kong, Korea, Ireland, and Canada). Educational policies of accomplished countries can follow, and these policies can be taken as an example to achieve success. For this purpose, the curricula of accomplished countries in native language education and mathematics and science education are examined comparatively.

Since the Turkish Lesson Curriculum and the other countries' curricula with achievements above average in PISA comparatively examined in the recent studies, the curricula of Japan, which also had a successful process in PISA, and Turkey, which had an achievement below average, decided to examine. Japan has always performed above the OECD average with 522 points in 2000, 498 points in 2003, 498 points in 2006, 520 points in 2009, 538 points in 2012, 516 points in 2015, and 504 points in 2018 (OECD, 2001; OECD, 2005; OECD, 2009; OECD, 2010b; OECD, 2010c; OECD, 2010d; OECD, 2014; OECD, 2015; OECD, 2018; OECD, 2019b). Although these scores show the success of the countries in reading literacy, the study is limited to writing skills since language skills are related and support each other. Because the development of writing skills will also contribute to the development of reading, listening, and speaking skills. Therefore it aimed to comparatively examine the writing activities in Turkish and Japanese textbooks and the learning outcomes of writing skills in the Turkish Lesson Curriculum and content for the writing skill in the Japanese National Curriculum to reveal similarities and differences in this study. In this manner, it will be a beneficial study to make various arrangements by having an idea about the native language education policies of countries that are successful in international exams, such as PISA.

As writing is a substantial part of expressing ourselves, it is included in the Turkish Lesson Curriculum in detail. Activities such as creating new informative, narrative, and short texts, applying various writing strategies, and

using multiple graphics, tables, and schemes while explaining opinions are mentioned frequently in writing skills' learning outcomes in the Turkish Lesson Curriculum. As writing is the transfer of feelings, thoughts, and dreams through certain symbols, expressing oneself in a writing topic effectively and understandably has been the most emphasized subject in both the Japanese National Curriculum and Turkish Lesson Curriculum (MEB, 2018; MEXT, 2011).

METHODS

Research design

The design of this study was a case study, one of the qualitative research designs. Case studies are methods in which one or more events, environments, curricula, social groups, or other interconnected systems are examined in depth (Büyükoztürk et al., 2012; Creswell, 2014). The case study method consists of a series of processes that include creating a case study design, collecting the data of the study, analyzing the data, presenting, and reporting the results (Yin, 2017). In case studies, data analysis is done through comparative analyses, descriptions, and examples. Techniques such as interviews, focus groups, and document analysis are used as data collection techniques (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013).

Study material and data collection

Data were obtained from various documents such as native language curricula and textbooks containing activities. Study materials were the Japanese National Curriculum, updated in 2011, the Turkish Lesson Curriculum, released in 2018, and Turkish [Fifth Grade Turkish Coursebook (Haykır et al., 2018), Sixth Grade Turkish Coursebook (Ceylan et al., 2018), Seventh Grade Turkish Coursebook (Kır et al., 2018), and Eighth Grade Turkish Coursebook (Mete et al., 2018)] and Japanese textbooks [Chugakko Kokugo 1 (Gakko Tosho Company, 2015a), Chugakko Kokugo 2 (Gakko Tosho Company, 2015b), Chugakko Kokugo 3 (Gakko Tosho Company, 2016)] with activities for language skills. Documents

(curricula) were obtained from the official web pages of the education ministries of the respective countries. Also, the study was limited to writing activities in Turkish textbooks (fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grades) published in 2018 and the writing activities in the (seventh, eighth, and ninth grades) Japanese textbooks published in 2015-2016. These books were included in the study since the secondary school level in Turkey consists of four grades (fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grades), and the secondary school level in Japan consists of three grades (seventh, eighth and ninth grades). Additionally, the study is limited to learning outcomes of writing skills in the curricula of both countries.

Data analysis

In the analysis of the data, a descriptive analysis was used, one of the qualitative data analysis methods. In this method, the data were summarized and described systematically, a cause-effect relationship was established, and some results were reached (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013).

RESULTS

The learning outcomes in writing skills in the Turkish Lesson Curriculum and the Japanese National Curriculum and writing activities in Turkish and Japanese textbooks were examined comparatively in this study. The results were presented in tables, and explanations were made.

Table 1 shows the distribution of the learning outcomes in the Turkish Lesson Curriculum according to grade levels and language skills. According to the table, it is seen that each skill has similar learning outcome numbers for grade levels. It is noteworthy that the least number of learning outcomes for each grade level is in speaking skills, and the highest number of learning outcomes is in reading skills. While the number of learning outcomes does not vary much according to the grade level, they are completely equal at some grade levels. For example, there is an equal number of learning outcomes at each grade level for speaking skills.

Table 1. Distribution of learning outcomes in the Turkish Lesson Curriculum by grade levels and language skills.

Grade levels	Language skills			
	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
5 th Grade	12	7	34	16
6 th Grade	12	7	35	14
7 th Grade	14	7	38	17
8 th Grade	14	7	35	20

Table 2 shows the distribution of contents in the Japanese National Curriculum according to grade levels and learning areas. Considering the distribution of contents in the curriculum, it is noteworthy that the contents for each grade level do not differ much in number. It is determined that the contents are mostly given under the headings of grammar learning and grammar thinking. Grammar areas are discussed under separate headings at each grade level, and explanations are included rather than activities in the ninth-grade grammar area. It is seen that the learning areas which are called different names at each grade level such as Kanjis in Detail, Words in Detail and Characters in Detail, had similar activities, and the history, development and formation of Japanese fonts are emphasized in these learning areas. And these areas also have an equal

number of contents. When the Japanese National Curriculum is examined, it is noted that some parts of the books are not included in the curriculum. For example, it is seen that there was no direct content about the "Exploratory Reading" section in the book. It is seen that there were no significant differences in contents according to grade level in speaking/listening, reading and writing areas.

When the tables are examined, it is seen that there were learning outcomes/content statements for separate learning areas/language skills in both curricula. There were more learning outcomes in the Turkish Lesson Curriculum compared to the Japanese National Curriculum, and the number of learning outcomes for each skill was higher in the Turkish Lesson Curriculum.

Table 2. Distribution of contents in the Japanese National Curriculum by grade levels and learning areas.

Learning areas	Grade levels		
	7 th grade	8 th grade	9 th grade
Speaking/listening	4	4	4
Reading	6	5	5
Writing	5	6	6
Kanji in details	4	-	-
Words in details	-	4	-
Characters in details	-	-	4
Grammar learning	6	7	7
Grammar thinking	6	7	7
Exploratory reading	-	-	-

Table 3 shows the distribution of activities for writing skills in Turkish textbooks according to the learning outcomes at grade levels. While the numerical expressions given in the table show how many activities exemplified the learning outcomes, the "X" expressions indicate that the learning outcomes are included at that grade but are not exemplified in any activities, and the "-" expression indicates that the learning outcomes are not included at that grade. Accordingly, although the lowest learning outcome for writing skills was in the sixth grade (Table 1), it is observed that the learning outcomes most exemplified in the activities were also in the sixth grade. The level where the learning outcomes were exemplified the least is the seventh grade. The ratio of writing activities in Turkish textbooks to all activities is 20% ($f = 267$). It is noteworthy that in the seventh grade, all the learning outcomes were exemplified by the activities, while in the other grades some learning outcomes were not exemplified with any exercises. As shown in Table 3, the sixteenth learning outcome in the fifth grade, twelfth learning outcome in the sixth grade, seventh, twelfth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and nineteenth learning outcomes in

the eighth grade were not exemplified. It is observed that the most exemplified outcome was "Performs writing strategies." The writing strategies used in the activities included writing by choosing from the pool of words and concepts, completing the text, creative writing, controlled writing, writing as a group, writing from the senses, rewriting the text with his/her own words, and free writing. The students were asked to write petitions, letters, memoirs, news texts, e-mails, diaries, and advertising texts and prepare slogans, posters, and brochures within the learning outcome of "Writes short texts." Additionally, seventh-grade students were asked to write an autobiography. In the sixth grade, where the learning outcomes were exemplified with the most activities, there were many examples of informative texts and narrative texts. It also has been noted that some learning outcomes were given only at certain grade levels such as fifth, eighth, and eleventh learning outcomes in the fifth grade. The twentieth learning outcome was given only in the seventh grade. Twenty-second, twenty-third, twenty-fourth, and twenty-fifth learning outcomes were given only in the eighth grade. It is seen that learning outcomes

especially for spelling, punctuation, and grammar were given gradually to grade levels. It is observed that the learning outcomes for using narrative forms in the writings and presenting the research results in written form were given only in the seventh and eighth grades, while the learning outcomes of using graphics, tables, and charts to support the writings were not given only in

the fifth grade. It has been observed that the learning outcomes in grammar increase as the grade level increases. For example, there are 19 activities for spelling, punctuation, and grammar in the fifth grade in the writing skill, and the ratio of this to the fifth-grade writing activities is 27%. This rate is found 17% (f=9) in the seventh grade and 41% (f=28) in the eighth grade.

Table 3. Distribution of activities for writing skills in Turkish textbooks by grade levels and learning outcomes.

No	Learning outcomes for writing skills	5 th grade	6 th grade	7 th grade	8 th grade
1	Writes poem.	5	5	4	4
2	Writes informative text.	7	11	5	9
3	Writes narrative text.	15	18	3	4
4	Performs writing strategies.	25	30	28	19
5	Uses capital letters and punctuations in appropriate places.	12	-	-	-
6	Writes the steps of any work.	6	-	-	-
7	Uses proverbs, idioms, and aphorisms to enrich the writings.	1	7	1	X
8	Writes numbers correctly.	1	-	-	-
9	Edits his/her own writing.	1	3	2	13
10	Shares what she/he wrote.	1	7	2	9
11	Uses the words with edge effects correctly in her/his writings.	7	-	-	-
12	Uses Turkish words instead of words that were taken from foreign languages in her/his writings.	1	X	1	X
13	Fills the forms in accordance with the instructions.	2	9	2	1
14	Writes short texts.	18	18	12	10
15	Writes the appropriate title for the content of the writing.	3	13	13	X
16	Uses appropriate transitional and linking expressions in her/his writings.	X	2	1	X
17	Writes any work according to the processing steps.	-	2	3	1
18	Uses graphs and tables to support the writings.	-	1	2	1
19	Uses the forms of expression in the writings.	-	-	3	X
20	Uses the complementary verb in accordance with its actual functions.	-	-	9	-
21	Presents the results of any research in a written way.	-	-	2	2
22	Uses humorous elements in the writings	-	-	-	1
23	Recognizes the elements of the sentence.	-	-	-	15
24	Recognizes the types of sentences.	-	-	-	9
25	Comprehends the voice of verbs' contribution to meaning.	-	-	-	5

Reference: MEB, 2018: 38-39, 42-43, 47, 51.

Table 4 shows the distribution of content for writing skills in the Japanese National Curriculum according to grade levels. These contents were not many just like in other skills, and the contents in the eighth and ninth grades were exactly the same. The ratio of writing activities in Japanese textbooks to all activities is 11% (f = 36). Writing skills focus on especially being able to express oneself. According to the table, some skills were often mentioned such as the ability of the student to express himself/herself correctly, the ability to find the mistakes in both spelling and content by reading the sentences written by the student, and the ability to correct these

mistakes. The abilities to write compositions with high persuasive power and to use expressions suitable for the text types were also mentioned in the curriculum. Especially in the seventh grade, skills such as summarizing their feelings and thoughts, transferring their feelings and thoughts to the other side, and forming easy-to-understand sentences were given intensively. In the eighth and ninth grades, skills such as designing logical situations while expressing their feelings and thoughts, writing articles with high persuasiveness, and arranging a certain logic by re-reading were given. Activities for writing skills are given immediately after the texts to

support reading skills, as well as under a separate heading after all texts are finished. The contents were exemplified in the activities most in the ninth and the least in the seventh grades. According to the table, the content exemplified in the highest number in the seventh grade is the first one. It is noteworthy that fifth content belonging to the seventh grade is frequently exemplified in the activities in the eighth grade. In the ninth grade, seventh content exemplified in more activities than

others. It has been determined that some activities in the eighth and ninth grades are exemplified in the seventh grade's contents as seventh, fourth, and fifth. The least exemplified content through the activities in the seventh-grade level is the fifth one. In the eighth and ninth grades, the least exemplified content expression is the tenth one. It is an important detail that all of the contents, which are few, are exemplified in the activities.

Table 4. Distribution of content for writing skills in the Japanese National Curriculum by grade levels.

No	Content	7 th grade	8 th grade	9 th grade
1	Summarizing their own thoughts by finding topics from familiar experiences and collecting materials.	7	-	-
2	Clarifying the facts, topics, problems, one's own feelings and thoughts that are wanted to be transferred.	4	1	-
3	Choosing appropriate materials in order to express their own feelings and thoughts clearly.	4	-	-
4	Making sentences easy to understand and read by re-reading the sentences and supporting the topics such as the use of spelling and definitions.	4	-	1
5	Reading the written sentences to each other and explaining the points such as understanding the subject and collecting the materials in their own words.	2	6	-
6	Finding a topic from a broad perspective, collecting necessary materials and deepening personal ideas and opinions.	-	3	4
7	Clarifying the facts that she/he can express, her/his own opinion and situations.	-	3	11
8	Finding expressions suitable for the form of composition.	-	4	5
9	Explaining reliable sources and designing and writing logical situations to transfer the point of view to the other person effectively.	-	5	6
10	Creating a composition with high persuasive power by reading the composition over and over again and editing the sentence and composition.	-	1	3
11	Reading aloud the essay and correcting the statements about things like reasoning and the usefulness of the expressions.	-	2	5

Reference: MEXT, 2011: 7, 10, 12-13.

DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to compare the native language education policies of Turkey and Japan within the framework of PISA achievements. Depending on this aim, the Japanese National Curriculum and the Turkish Lesson Curriculum were analyzed comparatively within writing skills. In this analysis, Turkish and Japanese textbooks were also used. As all the language skills are related and support each other, the reading literacy results of PISA show the language education performance of the countries. Japan has always performed above the average in the PISA exams. PISA has had a huge impact on the direction of Japanese education. After the PISA in 2000, Japan's score

decreased, and in their self-assessments, Japan considered this decline (eighth in 2000, fourteenth in 2003, fifteenth in 2006, eighth in 2009, fourth in 2012, eighth in 2015, and fifteenth in 2018) as a crisis (OECD, 2004; OECD, 2007, OECD, 2010a, OECD, 2012; OECD, 2019a), and has done the necessary work in this regard. The fact that Japan ranked first in reading skills among OECD countries in 2012 indicates that the studies within the framework of PISA results had reflections on education (Nakayasu, 2016).

When the writing skills in both languages were compared, it was observed that writing skills included activities in the form of creating different types of texts in textbooks of both languages that provide students with high-level skills such as producing, creating a new

product, thinking, questioning, evaluating, analyzing and synthesizing. Also, it is noteworthy that the writing activities in Japanese textbooks are under separate headings in the questions, both given after the texts and at the end of the themes. Although the writing activities after the texts are related to the text, the writing activities at the end of the theme are created independently from the text. In Turkish textbooks, the activities are not independent of the text. As a result of the analysis, from a quantitative perspective, it has been determined that Turkish textbooks' writing skill activities are more than Japanese writing skills. Likewise, the learning outcomes given under the writing skill in the Turkish Lesson Curriculum are more in numbers and more diverse than those in the Japanese National Curriculum. For this reason, it is possible to say that the number of activities is higher in Turkish textbooks. However, it should be noted that writing activities in Japanese textbooks are given gradually and consist of more than one intertwined activity. It is not possible to see repetitive writing activities in Japanese textbooks. While in one grade writing a story and poetry are focused on, and in the other grade writing ideas, interviews, and news texts are focused on. It is seen that the same type of activities is repeated frequently in Turkish textbooks. For example, at least four activities are given in each grade for the learning outcome of "Writes a narrative text." Even while there are more than eight activities for the same learning outcome in the fifth and sixth grades. Also, in the study by Çevik and Güneş (2017), in which they examined the activities in fifth and sixth-grade Turkish textbooks, it found that most of the activities were similar and repeated. Similarly, in the study by Karacaoğlu et al. (2021), it is stated that some activities in Turkish textbooks are frequently repetitive. In addition to repetitive activities, grammar learning outcomes given under the writing skills affected the number of activities in Turkish textbooks and the number of writing learning outcomes in the Turkish Lesson Curriculum. Because both the grammar activities in the Japanese textbooks and the grammar contents in the Japanese National Curriculum are given under different headings apart from the writing skills. Since grammar is considered a separate field in Japanese textbooks, there are no activities for grammar under the writing skills. Another negative aspect of including grammar activities underwriting skills is that writing activities expected to contribute to the development of high-level skills are aimed at low-level skills. In Yıldırım (2020)'s study, the writing activities in the eighth-grade textbook were examined. According to Bloom's taxonomy, it was revealed that 61% of the activities were at a low level according to the cognitive steps, and most of the activities at the low level were grammar activities. And the rest of the writing activities (writing a narrative text and writing an informative text) repeat each other in Turkish textbooks.

One of the similar points in the activities for writing

skills in both languages is that Japanese textbooks focus on writing criticism in the ninth grade, and the only activity for critical writing in Turkish textbooks is in the eighth grade. It is noteworthy that critical writing skills in both languages are given in the senior year of secondary school. In the Turkish Lesson Curriculum, what learning outcomes the students would achieve at each grade level are noted in detail, but the competence that the students would reach is expressed more generally in the Japanese National Curriculum. For this reason, it determined that these contents are reflected in almost every activity in the Japanese textbooks, but the learning outcome-activity match is not given clearly in the Japanese textbooks. In other words, it is possible to say that the activities in the Japanese textbooks are not clear enough about which content they belong to, unlike the activities in Turkish textbooks. For this reason, while making the evaluation, it should not be ignore that the Japanese National Curriculum does not have a quality that directly reflects the textbooks, as in the Turkish Lesson Curriculum. It is challenging to say that the content for the writing skill generally given in the Japanese National Curriculum is directed at only one activity. They are more likely related to multiple activities. It is possible to say that contents given as more general and spread over every activity. All activities for learning areas are aimed at gaining a skill step by step rather than giving a quantitative value because several steps are included under the main activity for a learning area in Japanese textbooks. Contrary to the Turkish textbooks, the content of writing skills is handled with more general expressions in the Japanese National Curriculum and reflected in every activity in Japanese textbooks. The reason behind this, the curriculum in Japan establishes a minimum standard to ensure equal opportunity in education. In this context, the Japanese National Curriculum is a draft of language teaching and what is taught varies according to schools and provinces (Komatsu, 2002; Sarkar Arani, 2008; OECD, 2012). In Turkey, contrary to the Japanese system, the existence of a strict central structure has resulted in the concentration of authority and responsibility in one center (İncekara, 2006). In recent years, it has been seen that the countries with more adjustable curricula are more successful in the international area. As a matter of fact, in the study by Sefer (2015), it was stated that the general curriculum was not in a detailed structure since schools and municipalities in Finland have the right to write their curriculum. Çobanoğlu and Kasapoğlu (2010) also stated that one of the reasons behind Finland's success in PISA was to provide equality of opportunity in education, and the lack of equality of opportunity in education shown as the biggest reason for Turkey's failure in multinational exams. Erdem (2007)'s study, comparing the Turkish Lesson Curriculum and the Irish Native Language Curriculum, revealed that Ireland also attached more importance to teacher autonomy and student individuality

than Turkey. As it seems countries such as Finland, Hong Kong, Ireland, and Japan, where schools have the autonomy to prepare curriculum and students are allowed to individualize education according to their needs, (Sefer, 2015; Çobanoğlu and Kasapoğlu, 2010; Komatsu, 2002; Erdem, 2007) tend to be more successful. Ballı and İnke (2017) also concluded in their study that countries with equal opportunity in education are more successful in PISA.

Although there are few activities for writing skills in Japanese textbooks, different activities (such as writing a review article, writing a news article, and writing a poem) are included each time. Although the learning outcomes were discussed in detail in Turkish textbooks, it was seen that the activities were more general. It determined that writing activities in Japanese textbooks generally aimed directly at learning a type of text. The activities are done step by step, examples are given, and then the students are asked to perform the task for a purpose. From this point of view, it is possible to say that Japanese textbooks are more effective than Turkish textbooks in guiding students even at the activity level. Although Turkish textbooks have many activities in PISA standards, Türkiye fell behind Japan in every PISA. The study conducted by Sefer (2015) stated that the learning outcomes and activities in the curricula and textbooks of the countries that ranked in the top five in the PISA were not so many, but they were superior in terms of quality.

The striking point in the Japanese and Turkish activities is that writing activities do not handle independently from other skills. For example, speaking/listening skills are included in an interview preparation activity. Before writing a text, another text needs to be read.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, Japan National Curriculum and Turkish Lesson Curriculum, and also Japanese and Turkish textbooks are comparatively examined. As a result of this review, although the learning outcomes belonging to writing skills in the Turkish Lesson Curriculum are more in numbers than the contents in the Japanese National Curriculum, it has been determined that the learning outcomes in the Turkish Lesson Curriculum repeat one another at many grades. For example, the “He/She writes poetry” learning outcome appears in the same way at all grade levels starting from the second grade. However, it is not clear enough at what level students are expected to write poetry. What exactly is expected from students for each grade should state in clearer terms. Directed to the learning outcome of She/He writes poetry, students may write two lines in the second grade and a quatrain in the fourth grade. To increase success in PISA, which has been computer-based since 2015, texts should be created in the digital media, activities related to digital media should be organized, and students should reach the stage where they can read, understand, question,

and apply these texts. While preparing the textbooks, book writers and editors should pay attention to creating examples that will provide qualified and deep learning. To avoid the constant repetition of the same activities, it should be ensured that the activities are given gradually, as in Japanese textbooks. In the preparation of the books, teacher-academician cooperation should be provided by consulting experts in the field. Since grammar learning outcomes given under reading and writing skills are at low levels in the cognitive skill levels, these activities should be reviewed and re-prepared to develop high-level skills. Turkish Lesson Curriculum or Turkish textbooks should be rearranged by reviewing the learning outcome-activity relationship. Because some activities do not meet some learning outcomes in Turkish textbooks, and also, some activities do not address any learning outcomes. In addition, it observed that countries which attach importance to individualized education and equal opportunities in education have a high success rate in PISA (Erdem, 2007; Çobanoğlu and Kasapoğlu, 2010; Sefer, 2015). In this regard, the preparation of more flexible and applicable curricula for countries with low success rates in international exams, and the granting of autonomy to schools in developing curricula, can make a difference in global educational achievement.

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Citation: Yıldırım, Ö. K., and Özdemir, M. (2022). A study on the comparative analysis of writing skills activities in Japanese and Turkish textbooks. African Educational Research Journal, 10(4): 410-418.
