

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36719/2706-6185/37/14-20>

Mihriban Tuztaş

Kırıkkale University

master student

mihriban.tuztas@gmail.com

Sezer Yılmaz

Kırıkkale University

Associate Professor

sezylmz@outlook.com

PEER BULLYING AMONG SYRIAN CHILDREN UNDER TEMPORARY PROTECTION: THE LANGUAGE ELEMENT

Abstract

Migration has existed since ancient times and continues to this day. Since Turkey is a strategic and border country, it serves as a bridge to our country and other countries. Approximately more than one million of the Syrian refugee children under temporary protection who had to leave their home country and took refuge in our country are of school age. Starting school before learning the language of the country they immigrate to can cause various problems. It is seen that the language factor is one of the most common problems that cause peer bullying among Syrian refugee children. In this study, the language problems experienced by Syrian refugee students whose native language is Arabic during the language acquisition process were determined, the similarities and differences of the Arabic-Turkish language pair were emphasized, and opinions and solution suggestions regarding these problems were presented. For Syrian refugee students whose native language is Arabic, although there are similarities between both languages, differences in cultural and grammatical structure lead to various difficulties in learning. As a result of the research, it was determined that the main problems arising from the differences in languages stem from issues such as alphabet, pronunciation, sound and grammar rules, and various solution suggestions are offered.

Keywords: *immigration, temporary protection, peer bullying, language problem, Turkish, Arabic*

Mihriban Tuztaş

Kırıkkale Üniversitesi

magistrant

mihriban.tuztas@gmail.com

Sezer Yılmaz

Kırıkkale Üniversitesi

Associate Professor

sezylmz@outlook.com

Suriyalı uşaqların müvəqqəti qorunması altında olan həmyaşıdların zorakılığı: dil elementi

Xülasə

Miqrasiya qədim zamanlardan mövcud olub və bu gün də davam edir. Türkiyə strateji və sərhəd ölkəsi olduğu üçün ölkəmizə və digər ölkələrə körpü rolunu oynayır. Vətəni tərk etmək məcburiyyətində qalan və ölkəmizə sığınan müvəqqəti qoruma altında olan suriyalı qaçqın uşaqların təxminən bir milyondan çoxu məktəb yaşındadır. Mühacirət etdikləri ölkənin dilini öyrənməmiş məktəbə başlamaları müxtəlif problemlər yarada bilər. Suriyalı qaçqın uşaqlar arasında həmyaşid zorakılığına səbəb olan ən çox rast gəlinən problemlərdən biri də dil faktoru olduğu görülür. Bu araşdırmada ana dili ərəb dili olan suriyalı qaçqın tələbələrin dil mənimsəmə prosesində yaşadıkları

dil problemləri müəyyən edilmiş, ərəb-türk dil cütliyünün oxşar və fərqli cəhətləri vurğulanmış, bu problemlərlə bağlı fikirlər və həll təklifləri təqdim edilmişdir. Ana dili ərəb dili olan Suriyalı qaçqın tələbələr üçün hər iki dil arasında oxşarlıq olsa da, mədəni və qrammatik quruluşdakı fərqlər öyrənmədə müxtəlif çətinliklərə səbəb olur. Tədqiqat nəticəsində müəyyən edilib ki, dillərdəki fərqlərdən irəli gələn əsas problemlərin əlifba, tələffüz, səs və qrammatika qaydaları kimi məsələlərdən qaynaqlanır və müxtəlif həll yolları təklif edilir.

Açar sözlər: *immigrasiya, müvəqqəti müdafiə, həmyaşıdların zorakılığı, dil problemi, türk dili, ərəb dili*

Introduction

The phenomenon of migration, which is as old as human history, continues to be a phenomenon that still affects societies today, along with globalization. Migrations are an important phenomenon that opens an era and closes another. It plays an effective role in the establishment and destruction of civilizations. The phenomenon of migration continues to exist with changing factors from human history until today. As for the definition of the concept of migration; "Migration is the geographical displacement movement of human communities by settling from one settlement unit to another in order to spend all or part of their lives due to religious, economic, political, social and other reasons" (Akkayan, 1979: 21). According to another definition, migration; It is defined as "the act of individuals or groups moving from one country to another, from one settlement to another, for economic, social or political reasons, moving, migration, migration". From ancient times to the present day, people have left their homelands behind and migrated to other countries they have never known. The main factors that cause them to go to other countries are; There have been many reasons that harm human dignity, such as drought, war, famine, security problems, military coups, violation of human rights, and economic difficulties (Gurbuzer, 2021: 1). Based on this, it can be said that in Aghir and Sezik's statements, factors such as people living a more comfortable life, access to natural resources and climate play a role in the factors that cause migration (Aghir & Sezik, 2015: 95). As seen in the definitions of migration, the fact that many factors that have continued since human history and can cause migration still exist today indicates that they may have the potential to continue in the future.

The history of immigration in our country dates back to ancient times. Turkey has experienced centuries-long migration activity due to its geographical and strategic location. It has hosted many societies and civilizations and has been a frequent destination of these societies. Turkey internal migration and external migration; labor migrations, refugee and asylum seeker migrations, seasonal migrations and war-related migrations, etc. lived (Unal, 2008: 3). According to Altıntaş, Turkey is in the middle of the migration wave between countries due to its location and the political and economic problems experienced in the border regions, and plays an important role by acting as a bridge on the transition route between countries. Although Turkey, which is a logistics country for refugees, appears to be a temporary stopping place, it is also seen that there is a permanent refugee population (Altıntaş, 2014: 254).

As a matter of fact, as Imamoglu and Chalishkan stated, Turkey has been a country that has encountered waves of forced mass migration and become the target of irregular migration (Imamoglu & Chalishkan, 2017: 531). When we look at the mass migration wave in our country, it is seen that people migrate from neighboring countries with regular or collective asylum requests in accordance with international agreements. When the data of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is examined, it is seen that there has been a high increase in the number of people seeking asylum in recent years (7).

As of 2024, Syrian citizens whose number exceeds 3 million have requested asylum in our country under temporary protection. As of January 2024, of the total 3,194,185 registered Syrians, 1,667,639 are male and 1,526,546 are female. When the statistics of the General Directorate of Migration Management are examined, the approximate population rate of Syrian children between

the ages of 0-18 is 1,147,391 million. At this point, a significant portion of the population, corresponding to almost one-third, consists of school-age children (DGMM, 2024).

Syrian Students Under Temporary Protection and Their Integration

“Temporary protection is a form of protection developed to find urgent solutions in mass influx events. “It is a practical and complementary solution that can be applied to people who arrive at the country's borders in masses within the framework of states' non-refoulement obligations, without wasting time with individual status determination procedures” (GIGM, 2024). The legal basis for Syrian refugees to gain temporary status was created by the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (YUKK) No. 6458, which came into force in 2014.

According to the General Directorate of Migration Management; “It is a voluntary-based policy that aims to contribute to the socio-cultural and economic development of both the foreigner and the host society, is not assimilationist, aims to ensure that the host society adapts to immigrants and that foreigners realize their talents in all areas of life, including economic, social and cultural areas.” (GIGM, 2024). In this context, for harmony; It can be said as individuals with different cultures and social backgrounds realizing themselves in a new environment and adapting to society and culture. When this process is viewed from the perspective of Syrian students; This can occur depending on factors such as the development of the child's language and communication skills, establishing new friendships, interacting with the local society, and understanding and accepting cultural differences.

According to the statistics given, the number of school-age Syrian children who have taken refuge in our country under temporary protection is approximately 1,147,397 million. All school-age children have the right to education, regardless of the reason. As a matter of fact, as Gurban stated, the importance of Syrian refugee children's right to education should be emphasized and they should participate in the education system of the host society (Gurban, 2021: 1085). In this context, it is seen that their quick adaptation to the host society depends on education.

Syrian refugee students, numbering in the hundreds of thousands, naturally experience the most language problems. In addition, these students also have socio-cultural and economic problems other than education (Imamoglu & Chalishkan 2017: 532). Educational process of Syrian refugee students; It is full of challenges such as adjusting to a new country, dealing with language barriers and understanding cultural differences. Therefore, these students are often offered language support programs and orientation programs. Although language support programs are offered for children, the alphabet, sentence structure and grammar of the Arabic and Turkish language pair, etc. The differences in the rules create difficulties in learning Turkish. It is seen that this situation negatively affects Syrian refugee children, especially in their classes. Refugee children with incomplete language acquisition experience problems such as reading, writing, not being able to understand lessons, not being able to pronounce letters and words, not being able to communicate well with their friends, and cultural differences, and these problems may cause peer bullying among students. This situation causes refugee children to adapt to society later and become reluctant to go to school.

Peer bullying is an imbalance of power between school-age children; It is a type of violence that includes repetitive behaviors such as name-calling, mocking, insulting and threatening, excluding each other and causing physical harm. It emerged in scientific sources in the 1970s with the studies of Dan Olweus. It is possible to encounter this situation in many countries today. The frequency with which a school- age child is exposed to this condition varies depending on age, gender, region and country (Sipahi & Karababa 2017: 223). This can leave various and negative traces on the future lives of children who are exposed to bullying. It is seen that peer bullying is very common in our country, both in Turkish children and Syrian refugee children. According to Tamer; Syrian refugee children in the education system in Turkey face many different problems throughout their education and training processes, starting from their enrollment in school, communication problems due to Syrian children not knowing enough Turkish, public schools other than Temporary Education Centers not having a curriculum suitable for Syrian students, local schools, etc. The main problems are that students and their parents do not want Syrian children to enroll in school and that teachers

are inadequate in the face of this bullying and negative attitudes (Tamer, 2017: 125-126). As mentioned above, the communication problem caused by not knowing Turkish is seen as one of the main problems. Language is a means of communication, and adapting quickly to a society requires learning the language of that society.

Language is one of the cornerstones of human communication. It is not just a combination of words and sentences, but also an expression of emotions, thoughts and cultural heritage. It goes beyond being a mere tool of intellectual and social explanation and opens the door to a deep philosophical field shaped and influenced by humanity (Almawas, 2022: 383). Language reflects the identity of a society and enables people to interact with each other. Thanks to language, it is possible for people to exchange feelings, thoughts and information, to understand each other and to build a common meaning. For this reason, language is one of the most important tools of humanity, and each language symbolizes the richness and diversity in the world with its own unique features. Language, consisting of letters and symbols, is seen as a means of communication. Each letter or symbol represents a sound, and these sounds come together to form meaningful words. By combining these words, meaningful sentences can be communicated. Humanity has been paying attention to the language it speaks for many years; It strives to establish healthy communication and to transmit and teach it from generation to generation. They attach importance to learning and teaching both their own language and a foreign language in order to communicate with people who speak different languages. It seems that language has a great impact on integrating into a new culture and achieving academic success. The problems that immigrant children experience in learning the language of the host society are the main reasons for educational problems. As a matter of fact, as stated by Yilmaz, it seems that the language acquisition of immigrant children in adapting to our society depends on the children's success in classes. Lack of participation in classes and lack of access to resources due to the language barrier cause them to fail in exams, but it is observed that immigrant children who have learned the language of the host society are successful in their classes and adapt to the environment more quickly (Yilmaz, 2023: 3). In this context, immigrants need to adapt to the language and culture of the host society in order to integrate more quickly into the countries they come from.

It seems that the language skills of refugee children should not be neglected in terms of adaptation to the new environment, acculturation and academic success. In research on the subject of language teaching; While the host society is given language education, the fact that refugee children with different mother tongues fail in their classes reveals the importance of not letting their mother tongue remain in the background in acquiring a second language. In the context of language teaching, it is thought that the presence of thousands of Arabic words in Turkish will provide a great advantage and contribution to students whose native language is Arabic (Kachar, 2012: 25). Accordingly, the widespread use of Arabic words in Turkish can be an important source of motivation for Arab students. However, it can be seen that these two languages have some different aspects that are not similar to each other.

According to Inan and Ozturk's research, most native Arabic speakers who learn Turkish define Turkish as medium or difficult according to its difficulty level. Turkish belongs to the Ural-Altaic language family and Arabic belongs to the Hami-Semitic language family. It seems that these two languages, which are not very similar to each other in terms of grammatical rules, have some contradictory features, which is one of the important factors why students whose native language is Arabic see Turkish as a difficult language. In particular, the presence of the predicate at the end in the Turkish sentence structure is complicated for students whose native language is Arabic, and therefore they see English as closer to them (Inan & Ozturk, 2015: 383). Among the problems encountered due to this is the pronunciation problem. In Arab countries, children learning English at a young age and the fact that both languages use the Latin alphabet may cause them to read words and letters as if they were English (Inan & Ozturk, 2015: 384). In this context, it can be seen that learning Turkish causes serious communication problems and semantic shifts, especially in the pronunciation of words.

The number of letters in Turkish and Arabic is different from each other. There are sounds that exist in both languages but are pronounced and articulated differently (Demirchi, 2015: 345). It is seen that students whose native language is Arabic sometimes use the vowels of the Latin alphabet interchangeably and sometimes do not use them at all, and the differences in pronunciation and usage of sounds such as "o, ö, ü, ş, ç, ı, ğ, p", which are found in Turkish but not in their own language, creates difficulty (Shengul, 2014: 330). Likewise, it is seen that some sounds in the Arabic alphabet, such as "ث, خ, ض, ع, غ", do not exist in Turkish. Correct pronunciation, which has an important place in foreign language acquisition, is the basis of communication. Learning the sounds correctly makes the student feel more confident. Therefore, voice and pronunciation training should be given importance, especially in the initial stages. Incorrect pronunciation can negatively affect the student's communication skills and cause lack of self-confidence. For this reason, developing pronunciation skills correctly increases students' success in the language learning process and can reduce the feeling of foreignness in their environment. It is seen that the reason why native Arabic students cannot understand and pronounce vowels in terms of thickness and thinness is due to the fact that they use these sounds with vowels (أ – إ – ع) in their own language. Since the voicing method found in Arabic does not exist in Turkish, it seems to negatively affect their language development. Arabic is written from right to left, Turkish is written from left to right, and while words are divided into syllables at the end of a line in Turkish, this is not the case in Arabic. The difference between these two languages poses a problem in language acquisition and teaching.

There are some basic principles in foreign language teaching. Language; It consists of the functional integrity of four basic skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. The aims of foreign language teaching include the equal development of these four skills and the acquisition of the language (Yilmaz & Jeylan, 2022: 404). Turkish is an agglutinative language, and the roots of the words are not changed and new meaning units are created only with suffixes. This feature allows many new words to be obtained from one root. However, this structure may be unfamiliar to students who use an inflected language such as Arabic, and they may experience problems, especially with case suffixes. This may be due to the fact that students are under the influence of their native language. Similarly, problems such as subject-verb harmony and incompatibilities between elements can be frequently encountered in Turkish sentence structure. These differences arise from the structural differences of languages such as Turkish and Arabic. However, such language learning difficulties are a natural process not only for Turkish but for many foreign languages (Yilmaz & Jeylan, 2022: 408). There are different verb structures, conjugations, adjectives and prepositions between Turkish and Arabic languages. Especially the masculine-feminine (muzekker-muennes) pattern that exists in Arabic does not exist in Turkish. These differences may cause a shift or change in meaning at the word level. For example, homophones with the same spelling have different meanings, which can create difficulties for students whose native language is Arabic. Irab, available in Arabic; Letter and vowel changes at the ends of words, ensuring verb-perpetrator harmony, and adding the suffixes -dır, -dir to the ends of noun sentences can create difficulties. For this reason, a tendency to make mistakes in Turkish sentence construction and the ordering of elements is observed, causing sentences to be constructed in an inverted structure, often bringing the verb and the subject side by side.

There are many cultural and historical common aspects and features between Turkish and Arabic. As a result of the interaction of these two languages, many words passed from Arabic to Turkish. It is seen that the majority of words starting with the letter M in Turkish are of Arabic origin. Words such as Engineer (مُهَنْدِس), Origin (مَنْشَأ) and Meşakkat (مَشَقَّة) are actively used in Turkish. In Turkish, there are also words of Arabic origin, such as mentioning (بَحْث), rejecting (رَدَّ) and embroidering (نَقْش), which are used with the auxiliary verb "to" (Jacob, 2021: 304). This can be seen as an advantage for students whose native language is Arabic in learning Turkish. However, it is known that some words that have passed from Arabic to Turkish have experienced a semantic shift.

Irregular plurals transferred from Arabic to Turkish have the same meaning in both languages, but while they indicate plurality in Arabic, they are used in the singular sense in Turkish. In Arabic, plurals are divided into three; regular masculine plurals, regular feminine plurals and irregular plurals. In Turkish, nouns are regularly made plural with the suffix -ler/-lar. In addition, there is duality (Deuteronomy) in Arabic, but this does not exist in Turkish. Some irregular plurals transferred from Arabic to Turkish; news- news (خَوَادِثٌ - حَدِيثٌ), poor- poor people (فُقَرَاءٌ - فَقِيرٌ) and dress- dresses (لِبَاسٌ - أَلْبِسَةٌ) (Jacob, 2021: 305). When we look at the examples given, it can be seen that there is a plural use of Arabic words in Turkish.

There are words of Arabic origin that are the same in terms of pronunciation but have shifted in meaning linguistically and historically. While the word (مُسَافِرٌ) in Arabic means passenger, it is used as a guest in Turkish, while the word (أَبْطَلٌ) means brave, heroes in Turkish as stupid, mentally retarded, and the word (اِنْتِظَارٌ) means waiting and is used as a curse in Turkish (Jacob, 2021: 306). In this context, although the pronunciations of Arabic words that have been transferred to Turkish are the same, it is seen that there are differences in meaning in terms of language and culture.

Conclusion

The article focuses on the difficulties Syrian refugee students face in the Turkish language acquisition process and the similarities and differences of the Arabic-Turkish language pair. Undoubtedly, the fact that Syrian refugee students in our country start school without learning Turkish and cannot communicate properly with their circle of friends has led to peer bullying, which is the power imbalance between children. In this context, the culture, adaptation and academic achievements of school-age Syrian refugee students were examined in terms of language acquisition. In the study, it was determined that the similarities arising from the historical and cultural interaction between Arabic and Turkish, especially the prevalence of Arabic-origin words in Turkish, constitute a source of motivation for Arabic-speaking students to adapt to Turkish more easily. On the other hand, it has been stated that the fact that both languages belong to different language families and have different sound systems causes significant difficulties in the language learning process. On the other hand, it has been stated that issues such as differences in the alphabets of Arabic and Turkish, the absence of certain sounds and the use of vowel sounds cause Arabic-speaking students to have difficulty in comprehending and pronouncing Turkish. Since it is not included in, it has been concluded that these topics create confusion among students. To overcome these difficulties, taking into account differences in the language teaching process, simplifying grammar topics, using visual aids and various language teaching materials have been considered as an important step towards solving the problem. In addition, it has been concluded that teaching the subjects step by step and providing students with plenty of practice opportunities can facilitate the language acquisition process and that these approaches can help Arabic-speaking students learn Turkish more effectively and efficiently.

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Received: 22.05.2024

Accepted: 03.07.2024