



EXAMINING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE: A RESEARCH ON BALKAN STUDENTS

ULUSLARARASI ÖĞRENCİLERİN İLETİŞİM YETERLİLİĞİNİN İNCELENMESİ: BALKAN ÖĞRENCİLERİ ÜZERİNE BİR ARAŞTIRMA

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Abstract

Communication basically enables people to connect with each other and share information. Both verbal and nonverbal communication is established in the communication process. In this process, correct coding and decoding of the message to be conveyed ensures successful communication. At this point, it is very important for people to have communication competence in the globalizing world. Language is of great importance for communication competence. In addition, concepts such as empathy, social and behavioral comfort, harmony, sensitivity, and listening to the other person support communication competence. People need to have communication competence in order to carry out the communication process comfortably. It is especially important for students who go to a country different from their own country for education to gain communication competence. For this reason, this study was conducted to investigate the communication competence of Balkan students who came to our country for education and continue their education at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University. In the study conducted with the quantitative data analysis method, purposeful sampling technique, one of the non-probability sampling types, was used. An online survey was applied to 462 students who were reached. Descriptive statistics analysis technique was used. Data was processed using the statistics program and the result was reached. One of the important results that emerged in the study is that the general communication competence of female students is higher than that of male students. In addition, it is an important finding that the human relations dimension of communication competence sub-dimensions differs significantly according to the students' educational status and age, and the sensitivity competence dimension differs significantly according to the students' grade levels.

Keywords: Communication, Communication Process, Communication Competence, Intercultural Communication, Balkan Students.

Öz

İletişim temelde insanların birbirleriyle bağlantı kurmasını ve bilgi paylaşmasını sağlamaktadır. İletişim sürecinde hem sözlü hem de sözsüz iletişim kurulmaktadır. Bu süreçte aktarılmak istenen mesajın doğru kodlanması ve çözümlenmesi başarılı bir iletişim için gereklidir. Bu noktada insanların iletişim yeterliliğine sahip olması globelleşen dünyada çok önem taşımaktadır. Dil, iletişim yeterliliği için büyük bir öneme sahiptir. Bunun yanı sıra empati, sosyal ve davranışsal rahatlık, uyum, duyarlı olma, karşındakini dinleme gibi kavramlar da iletişim yeterliliğini desteklemektedir. İnsanların iletişim sürecini rahat bir şekilde gerçekleştirebilmesi için iletişim yeterliliğine sahip olmaları gerekmektedir. Özellikle kendi ülkelerinden farklı bir ülkeye eğitim öğretim için giden öğrencilerin iletişim yeterliliği kazanmaları önem taşımaktadır. Bu sebeple bu çalışma ülkemize eğitim için gelmiş ve Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesinde öğrenimine devam eden Balkanlı öğrencilerin iletişim yeterliliklerinin araştırılması üzerine gerçekleştirilmiştir. Nicel veri analiz yöntemi ile gerçekleştirilen çalışmada olasılık dışı örnekleme türlerinden biri olan amaçlı örnekleme tekniği kullanılmıştır. Ulaşılan 462 öğrenciye çevrimiçi anket uygulanmıştır. Verilerin derinlemesine incelenmesi için ise betimsel istatistik analiz tekniğinden yararlanılmıştır. İstatistik programı kullanılarak veriler işlenmiş ve sonuca ulaşılmıştır. Araştırmada ortaya çıkan önemli sonuçlardan biri kadın öğrencilerin genel iletişim yeterliliğinin erkek öğrencilere göre daha yüksek olduğudur. Ayrıca iletişim yeterliliği alt boyutlarından insan ilişkileri boyutunun öğrencilerin öğrenim durumlarına ve yaşlarına göre anlamlı şekilde, duyarlılık yeterliliği boyutunun ise öğrencilerin sınıf düzeylerine göre anlamlı şekilde farklılaştığı elde edilen önemli bulgulardandır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İletişim, İletişim Süreci, İletişim Yeterliliği, Kültürlerarası İletişim, Balkanlı Öğrenciler.



INTRODUCTION

Non-verbal communication, which we frequently use in our daily lives, contributes to the communication process with people. Thanks to cultural and genetic transmission, people communicate non-verbally. Non-verbal communication includes the meanings of face and body (Cangil, 2004, p. 70). Especially in people's communication with each other, the gestures, facial expressions and movements they make while speaking support non-verbal communication. As a result of the studies, it has been revealed that people use gestures and facial expressions only when speaking. Because people not only talk, but also support this with their gestures and facial expressions. It is thought that these movements guide people and make speech more understandable. Therefore, it seems that there is a close connection between verbal and non-verbal communication (Kimura, 1976; Çalışkan & Yeşil, 2005, p. 204).

Various models have been encountered since the early days when nonverbal communication was researched. As time passed, the concept of nonverbal communication began to be explained more systematically. In addition, people make the communication process most efficient by supporting the sounds and symbols they use through non-verbal communication.

Especially the role of nonverbal communication in supporting communication is very important. When communicating verbally, people use sounds and symbols (Shi & Fan, 2010, p. 113). Language allows people to express themselves while communicating verbally. The concept of communication competence is explained as the state of interaction of language with these two concepts, competence and performance. Having communication competence primarily means mastering the spoken language (Hymes, 1972, p. 281). One of the most important factors in communication competence is language. Language is a physiological element. However, language is formed within a system of abstract rules and people produce and convey their thoughts and expressions thanks to language (Chomsky, 2001, p. 173). Communication competence is discussed under many headings. These are expressed as social comfort, empathy, behavioral flexibility, communication competence support, interaction management skills. As a matter of fact, these headings, which deal with the concept of communication competence one by one, are actually necessary for a person to communicate effectively (Wiemann, 1977, p. 197) In other words, the correct use of both theoretical and cognitive and social abilities indicates that people are comfortable in the communication process and keep this process under control without worrying. A person's ability to think, to be active and competent in the face of an event or a situation, and that person's assertiveness and activity show that he is open to improving his communication skills. In short, communication competence enables people to carry out their communication processes comfortably. Therefore, communication competence helps people to easily come together with people from different cultures, to communicate with them easily and comfortably, and to develop a sense of understanding and empathy towards people from different cultures (Medsker & Fry, 1997, p. 212; Kim, 1999, p. 63). As a matter of fact, this study is unique because it was carried out on Balkan students studying at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, which is a specific sample group, and offers a certain cultural perspective.

Communication and Communication Process

The concept of communication is understood in two ways. The first of these is that communication is a process. For the communication process to occur, the parties must interact with each other. This situation is called the process approach. The process approach is defined as the behavior of people from different cultures or the same culture in the process of communicating with each other. During the communication process, people cannot always convey their feelings and thoughts to the other party correctly. Therefore, people convey to the other party with their tone of voice, movements, facial expressions and expressions and support the communication process. During this communication process, in some cases people misunderstand each other. As a matter of fact, it can be seen that this situation can occur intentionally or unintentionally. In this unintentional communication process, people unknowingly cause individuals to misunderstand them with the actions they make or the words they say. At the same time, they face the reaction of the other party and try to correct the situation they expressed incorrectly (Kartarı, 2014, pp. 10-11).

It is seen that communication is in constant development and transformation and at the same time improves itself (Keyton, 2011, p. 12). Communication has a dynamic structure. The communication

process, which constantly transforms, revises and never stands still, undergoes innovations and changes day by day. Therefore, this situation shows that the changes and transformations of communication are open. At the same time, it is understood through these situations that communication is in a process. One of the most important features of communication is the exchange of information with people. In this process, which is constantly making progress, it is also important that people's communication proficiency levels are high (Lazar, 2001, p. 49; Yalçın & Şengül, 2007, p. 749).

The second approach put forward to explain communication, which is in constant development, is stated as the meaning creation approach. In the meaning creation approach, perception and codes are required for verbal and non-verbal symbols to create meaning together. For example, when people read a book, hear a conversation, or watch a movie, a perception state is created in their minds. Thanks to these perceptions and codes formed in the mind, people create meaning in the communication process (Kartarı, 2014, pp. 10-11). In every communication exchange, there are two elements, the sender and the receiver (Lunenburg, 2010, p. 2). At the same time, there must be three elements in order for the communication to be carried out correctly. These elements are divided into three as source or sender, message and receiver. Communication takes place within the framework of these channels (Usluata, 1994, p. 14).

The whole world is experiencing the communication process. In order for this process to occur, which consists of many elements, what the elements contain and what properties they have, respectively, have been the subject of many studies. In this regard, it has been revealed that source, message, coding-decoding, receiver, channel, feedback and noise are the elements necessary to ensure the communication process (Küçük, et al., 2012, p. 7). However, noise negatively affects the communication process. For example, in a very noisy environment, the elements encoded by the source may not be transmitted correctly when reaching the receiver. Therefore, an unhealthy communication process occurs due to noise (Yüksel, 1989, p. 17).

In other words, the communication process is the first process of transforming a message into a signal by information or an event received from the source. Then, it is sent to the target person or audience using any tool or channel. In addition, the person or audience to whom it is sent understands a code. It is then defined as transmitting this code to the source or sender via feedback (Usluata, 1994, p. 14). According to Cheney and others, the process of communication can be simply defined as conveying information to others (2010, p. 5).

The communication process, which is divided into two as verbal and non-verbal communication, has been put into various molds by people. The meanings of verbal and non-verbal communication do not change and are stereotyped. These two concepts, which enable communication between people, also include events and situations. All people in the world know the spoken language of the society they live in. At the same time, they adopt the language spoken in the society, which they see as their own spoken language. These people, who communicate with each other verbally, do not only use language when explaining anything. As a matter of fact, they support communication processes by using various body language movements such as gestures, facial expressions and behaviors, which are important parts of non-verbal communication. There are many societies in the world. It is known that these societies have verbal and non-verbal rules they use when communicating. Therefore, considering that every society has verbal and non-verbal rules, it is important to know these rules in order to ensure intercultural interaction and establish good communication (Kocabaş, 2007, p. 48; Öğüt, 2018, p. 81). According to Erdoğan, verbal communication enables the establishment of interpersonal relationships. Verbal communication is based on voice and ear. At the same time, verbal communication refers to the communication process established by expressing written symbols or any words (2011, p. 285).

Another of the processes of communicating is non-verbal communication. One of the most distinctive features of non-verbal communication is that it has the feature of supporting the spoken words. Gestures and facial expressions, the rise or fall of people's voices while talking to each other, the state of contact with each other, and the meanings of colors are given as examples of nonverbal communication. While people communicate verbally with each other, the gestures and facial expressions they make with their

hands, arms and faces at the same time greatly affect the communication process at that moment (Özürçün, 2013, p. 73). The channel, which is a part of the communication process, is considered as the path through which the message travels to the receiver. In the channel situation, people use their gestures, facial expressions and sensory organs to support their communication (Yağcı & Uçar, 2018, p. 145).

According to Erdoğan, in nonverbal communication, the codes that people perceive and understand direct the nonverbal communication process. Many behaviors and actions of people, such as their facial expressions and gestures, the hardness or softness of their gaze, are expressed as non-verbal communication. What these gestures mean is known to most people, and these gestures express people's feelings during the communication process. Knowing the gestures, facial expressions, behaviors and movements made is also important for both a person and the society. These movements are encrypted and coded by society. These codes are important parts of nonverbal communication. If the movements and behaviors are not coded by the society, non-verbal communication does not continue properly. If these common codes of the society are known, non-verbal communication occurs without any problems. For example, most people move their heads forward and back when we give consent. Since this movement is coded by society in a common way, people know what it means in the non-verbal communication process. Therefore, for this reason, both individuals and society understand the non-verbal communication process and a smooth communication process continues (2011, p. 288).

Functions of Communication

Communication has two important functions. These functions are divided into two, both psychological and social. The psychological functions of communication are expressed as people feeling that they belong to a community, connecting with other people, feeling that they belong to an environment and a culture, and establishing a relationship with that environment. Every society has its own characteristics. Because people in that community feel like they belong to a community because they spend time together and are constantly connected to each other both culturally and socially. In this society, they communicate with each other in both good and bad ways. For example, they can affect each other's psychology, sometimes in a good way and sometimes in a bad way. Therefore, it can be said that people's personalities develop through the communication they establish with their environment. It is seen that the more a person establishes a healthy and reliable relationship with his environment, the better his psychology is. The psychological function of communication is seen as people communicating well with each other, sharing their feelings and thoughts through this communication, and affecting them positively. For example, a person who shares that a good or bad day has been through communication with the people around him also gets psychological relief. In addition, communication contributes to the socialization of people by meeting their needs such as providing information, informing, obtaining information, and establishing environments such as discussion or information exchange (Kaya, 2012, pp. 12-13).

People are sociological and psychological beings. For this reason, they want to understand their environment and be understood by other people. The communication established must meet the various communication needs of people (Erol & Erol, 2015, p. 89). Communication has four basic functions. Its first function is stated as providing information or information. This function is the case of giving information to people when they communicate with each other. The second function of communication is to influence social relations. This function, on the other hand, emphasizes that communicating with people affects social relations. The third function of communication is defined as the utilitarian function. People who interact with each other can transfer feelings and thoughts from each other thanks to the communication they establish. The fourth function of communication is stated as the subjective and emotional function. The subjective and emotional function, which is related to the emotional and spiritual state of people, is defined as the influence of people on each other's emotions in the process of communication (Kartarı, 2014, pp. 13-14).

Communication Competency

Many disciplines have tried to explain the concept of competence. In the early periods when the concept of competence was tried to be explained, this concept was explained by researchers as the situation in which a living thing interacts with its environment. When this concept is explained to people, it refers

to a subject or a situation that they have gained as a result of a long learning process. From the point of view of psychoanalysis, it is also explained as the state in which people learn something and at the end of what they learn, pleasure and anxiety decrease. In other words, the fact that people have information about a subject or situation causes them to enjoy while obtaining and presenting information. Therefore, this situation reduces the anxiety level of people. The concept of competence is studied both cognitively and in the form of special education. The concept of cognitive competence is the process by which people achieve competence by using their skills such as knowing, analyzing, and synthesizing (Gudykunst & Kim, 1996, p. 15; Sun & Lau, 2006, p. 401; Haider & Kaukab, 2022, p. 3).

The concept of communication competence is the process of people communicating with each other through the most appropriate means of communication. The concept of communication competence also includes intercultural communication competence. Intercultural communication competence is defined as the ability of people from different cultures to interact with each other. However, these interactions are created by people choosing the most appropriate communication method and having high empathy skills (Wiemann, 1977, p. 198). At this point, it seems that intercultural communication and having intercultural competence are very important. Because people's ability to communicate correctly with people from different cultures other than their own and to attach importance to the other culture shows that they have intercultural communication competence. Therefore, having intercultural communication competence, both behaviorally, cognitively and emotionally, is important in the context of this subject (Chen & Starosta, 1996, pp. 356-359). According to Erdoğan the main point of communication competence is to understand the people we are dealing with, to think like them to see things from their eyes. At the same time, empathizing with people from different cultures, respecting their cultural differences, trying to solve problems when they have them, listening to them, and strengthening human relations with them are seen as behaviors to increase intercultural communication competence (2022, p. 91).

Research Method, Application and Sampling

An application was made to Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University Graduate Education Institute with the project number 2023-YÖNP-0898. The Ethics Committee found the study ethically appropriate with the decision dated 07/12/2023 and numbered 15/27. In the study carried out with the quantitative data analysis method, purposive sampling technique, which is one of the non-probability sampling types, was used. This method was used because participants were selected based on a specific purpose or criteria. Furthermore, it was deemed appropriate to achieve the specific objectives of the research. An online questionnaire was applied to 462 Balkan students who continue their education at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University. While selecting the sample, Yazıcıoğlu and Erdoğan's sample size calculation method was used (2014). The first part of the survey questions directed to the students includes questions to learn about the demographic status and educational background of the students. The second part of the survey consists of questions in the communication competence scale. After collecting the survey responses, descriptive statistical analysis technique was used and the data of the responses were processed with the statistical program.

Measurement Tools and Tests Used

The "Communication Competency Scale" developed and adapted by Koca and Erigüç was used in the study (2017). In the research where descriptive statistical analysis technique was used, the variables of the research were processed with a statistical program. Descriptive statistical methods were used when summarizing the data obtained. These methods are frequency, minimum, percentage, maximum, standard deviation and average. The internal reliability of the "Communication Competence Scale" was revealed by calculating Cronbach's Alpha value. Additionally, care was taken to keep the skewness and kurtosis values between ± 1.5 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). These values obtained in this research show that the scale and its sub-dimensions used are highly reliable within the scope of this research. Student's T-test was used for pairwise comparison of variables. ANOVA was used to compare more than two groups. In these group comparisons, when a significant difference was found, post-hoc tests LSD and Tamhane tests were used. Additionally, analyzes were carried out by setting the statistical significance level as 0.05.

Hypotheses of the Study

- 1- Balkan students do not mind meeting new people.
- 2- Balkan students are generally not good listeners.
- 3- Female students' general communication competencies are higher than male students.
- 4- The human relations dimension of Balkan students' communication competence varies significantly according to their age.
- 5- The sensitivity competence dimension regarding the communication competence of Balkan students does not differ significantly according to the students' grade level.

Findings and Interpretation

While presenting the findings of this study, which was conducted by consulting the opinions of 462 students in order to examine the communication competence of Balkan students, the distribution of the students according to their demographic and educational characteristics was first examined. Then, summary statistics of communication proficiency variables, which are research variables, and kurtosis and skewness values of normal distribution analyzes of the variables are presented. Finally, findings regarding the comparison of communication competencies of Balkan students according to their demographic characteristics are presented.

Reliability Values of Scale and Sub-Dimensions

	N	Cronbach's Alpha
Social Behavior Competence	4	0,871
Individual Aspects in Communication	6	0,901
Empathy Competence	4	0,926
Adaptation Competence	3	0,888
Sensitivity Competence	3	0,821
Competency to Promote Communication	4	0,827
Human Relations	3	0,819
Listening Competence	3	0,797
General Communication Competence	30	0,975

These values obtained in this study show that the scale and its sub-dimensions used are highly reliable within the scope of this study.

The distribution of Balkan students according to their demographic characteristics is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of balkan students according to demographic characteristics

		N	Percent (%)
Gender	Female	256	55,4
	Male	206	44,6
	<i>Total</i>	<i>462</i>	<i>100,0</i>
Age	18-19	114	24,7
	20-21	210	45,5
	22-23	104	22,5
	24-25	24	5,2
	25 +	10	2,2
	<i>Total</i>	<i>462</i>	<i>100,0</i>
Current Education Status	Associate Degree	36	7,8
	Bachelor	426	92,2
	<i>Total</i>	<i>462</i>	<i>100,0</i>
Grade	1 st Grade	154	33,3
	2 nd Grade	100	21,6
	3 rd Grade	136	29,4
	4 th Grade	72	15,6
	<i>Total</i>	<i>462</i>	<i>100,0</i>

When Table 1 is examined, 55.4% (N=256 people) of the Balkan students participating in the research are women, while 44.6% (N = 206 people) are men. In terms of age ranges, the majority of the students with 45.5% (N = 210 people) are between the ages of 20-21, and immediately after; 24.7% (N=114 people) are 18-19 years old, 22.5% (N=104 people) are 22-23 years old, 5.2% (N=24 people) are 24-25 years old. and finally 2.2% (N=10 people) are 25 years or older. While the majority of the students, 92.2% (N=426 people), have an undergraduate degree, the remaining 7.8% (N=36 people) have an associate degree. The distribution of the students according to the classes they attend is: 33.3% (N=154 people) are 1st year, 21.6% (N=100 people) are 2nd year, 29.4% (N=136 people) are students. people) are 3rd graders and 15.6% (N=72 people) are 4th graders.

Minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation values of the research variables are given in Table 2. Additionally, the skewness and kurtosis values calculated to test the suitability of the variables for normal distribution are included in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary statistics of research variables

	N	Min.	Max.	Average	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Social Behavior Competence	462	4,0	20,0	14,07	4,19	-,742	,121
Individual Aspects in Communication	462	6,0	30,0	21,52	5,72	-1,248	1,361
Empathy Competence	462	4,0	20,0	15,10	4,27	-1,219	1,051
Adaptation Competence	462	3,0	15,0	11,17	3,14	-1,163	1,062
Sensitivity Competence	462	3,0	15,0	11,06	3,16	-1,144	,833
Competency to Promote Communication	462	4,0	20,0	14,35	3,89	-,954	,869
Human Relations	462	3,0	15,0	10,65	3,18	-,604	-,047
Listening Competence	462	3,0	15,0	11,43	3,10	-1,123	,884
General Communication Competence	462	30,0	150,0	109,36	27,47	-1,431	1,880

When Table 2 is examined, the general scores of Balkan students regarding communication proficiency are minimum 30 and maximum 150 points, while the average score is 109.36 ± 27.47 . The scores obtained from the social behavior competence dimension are minimum 4 and maximum 20 points, while the average score is 14.07 ± 4.19 . While the scores obtained from the dimension of individual aspects in



communication are minimum 6 and maximum 30 points, the average score is 21.52 ± 5.72 . The scores obtained from the empathy competence dimension are minimum 4 and maximum 20 points, while the average score is 15.1 ± 4.27 . The scores obtained from the adaptation adequacy dimension are minimum 3 and maximum 15 points, while the average score is 11.17 ± 3.14 . The scores obtained from the sensitivity adequacy dimension are minimum 3 and maximum 15 points, while the average score is 11.06 ± 3.16 . The scores obtained from the communication incentive adequacy dimension are minimum 4 and maximum 20 points, while the average score is 14.35 ± 3.89 . The scores obtained from the human relations dimension are minimum 3 and maximum 15 points, while the average score is 10.65 ± 3.18 . The scores obtained from the listening proficiency dimension are minimum 3 and maximum 15 points, while the average score is 11.43 ± 3.1 .

As a result of the fact that the skewness and kurtosis values calculated to test the suitability of the research variables for normal distribution were within the range of ± 1.5 for all variables, it was accepted that the variables conformed to normal distribution.

The minimum, maximum, average and standard deviation values of the answers given by Balkan students to the "Communication Competency Scale" questions are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Balkan students' responses to communication proficiency scale questions summary statistics

	Min.	Max.	Mean. $\pm$ Std. Deviation
Social Behaviour Competence			
1. Meeting new people doesn't bother me.	1	5	3,74 $\pm$ 1,23
2. I'm comfortable talking to someone I've just met.	1	5	3,41 $\pm$ 1,23
3. I like social situations where I can meet new people.	1	5	3,5 $\pm$ 1,22
4. I don't mind talking to the authorities.	1	5	3,42 $\pm$ 1,25
Individual Aspects in Communication			
5. I am a loved person.	1	5	3,52 $\pm$ 1,14
6. I am flexible.	1	5	3,22 $\pm$ 1,12
7. People can come to me when they have problems.	1	5	3,77 $\pm$ 1,18
8. I usually say the right thing at the right time.	1	5	3,57 $\pm$ 1,2
9. I like to use my voice and body language effectively.	1	5	3,67 $\pm$ 1,2
10. I am sensitive to the immediate needs of others.	1	5	3,77 $\pm$ 1,16
Empathy Competence			
11. I can usually understand what other people are feeling.	1	5	3,81 $\pm$ 1,18
12. I let others know that I understand them.	1	5	3,73 $\pm$ 1,2
13. I understand other people.	1	5	3,82 $\pm$ 1,16
14. I can easily put myself in other people's shoes.	1	5	3,74 $\pm$ 1,19
Adaptation Competence			
15. I get along well with people.	1	5	3,71 $\pm$ 1,16
16. I can adapt to changing situations.	1	5	3,58 $\pm$ 1,17
17. I treat people as individuals.	1	5	3,89 $\pm$ 1,15
Sensitivity Competence			
18. I usually know where and how to behave.	1	5	3,87 $\pm$ 1,22
19. I generally do not make unexpected requests from my friends.	1	5	3,79 $\pm$ 1,21
20. I am an effective speaker.	1	5	3,41 $\pm$ 1,25
Competency to Promote Communication			
21. I encourage people to talk	1	5	3,35 $\pm$ 1,25
22. I pay attention to what is said during the conversation.	1	5	3,79 $\pm$ 1,15

23. I am interested in what others say	1	5	3,61±1,18
24. I cannot follow what is said very well.	1	5	3,61±1,22
Human Relations			
25. My personal relationships are cold and distant	1	5	3,55±1,28
26. I am a person with whom people can talk comfortably	1	5	3,69±1,24
27. I like to be close and interested in people.	1	5	3,42±1,19
Listening Competence			
28. When others are talking, I interrupt them a lot.	1	5	3,85±1,25
29. I am a good listener	1	5	3,96±1,17
30. The way I talk to others is not calm.	1	5	3,61±1,26

When Table 3 is examined, the highest score given by the students in the social behavior competency dimension regarding communication competencies with an average of 3.74 is "1." "I don't mind meeting new people." belongs to the article. According to this result, it can be seen that the first hypothesis of the study has been concluded. The lowest score given in this dimension with an average of 3.41 is "2." "I feel comfortable talking to someone I just met." belongs to the article. Wiemann states in his study that a skilled communicator and individuals with communication competence are comfortable during interaction. He argues that displaying comfortable attitudes and attitudes in any situation arises from having communication competence (1977, p. 195).

The highest score given by the students in the dimension of individual aspects of communication with an average of 3.77 was "7". "People can come to me when they have problems." belongs to the article. The lowest score given in this dimension with an average of 3.22 is "6". "I am flexible." belongs to the article.

In the empathy competence dimension, the highest score given by the students with an average of 3.82 was "13. I understand other people." The lowest score given in this dimension with an average of 3.73 is "12. I make it clear to them that I understand others."

The highest score given by the students in the adaptation adequacy dimension with an average of 3.89 was "17". "I treat people as individuals." belongs to the article. The lowest score given in this dimension with an average of 3.58 is "16". "I can adapt to changing situations." belongs to the article.

The highest score given by the students in the sensitivity competence dimension with an average of 3.87 was "18". "I usually know where and how to act." belongs to the article. The lowest score given in this dimension with an average of 3.41 is "20". "I am an effective speaker." belongs to the article.

In the dimension of communication encouragement proficiency, the highest score given by the students with an average of 3.79 is "22. I pay attention to what is said during the conversation." The lowest score given in this dimension with an average of 3.35 belongs to the item "21. I encourage people to talk."

The highest score given by the students in the human relations dimension with an average of 3.69 was "26". "I am a person people can talk to easily." belongs to the article. The lowest score given in this dimension with an average of 3.42 is "27". "I like to be close and interested in people." belongs to the article.

In the listening proficiency dimension, the highest score given by the students with an average of 3.96 was "29. I am a good listener." It belongs to the article. This result shows that the second hypothesis of the study has not been confirmed. The lowest score given in this dimension with an average of 3.61 is "30. The way I talk to others is not calm." It belongs to the article.

When some studies on communication competence are examined, it is seen that there are results that are both similar to this study and different from the study findings. Kazak, in his study examining the

relationship between teachers' communication competence, perceptions of school climate and loneliness at school, revealed that teachers' communication competence has a significant impact on their perceptions of school climate (2021, p. 733). Sarıkaya and Akçam, in their study on nurses within the scope of communication skills and trait anxiety levels, concluded that increasing students' communication competencies reduced their trait anxiety levels (2021, p. 463). According to Kızılcı Öz and others in a different study examining the relationship between internet addiction and communication competence levels, the sample group consisted of nurses. As a result of the research, it was determined that as the level of internet addiction of nurses increased, their communication competence decreased (2023, p. 46).

Student T-test results, which were applied to compare the communication competencies of Balkan students and the characteristics of these competencies according to their gender, are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Student-t test results for comparison of communication competencies of balkan students according to their gender

	Gender	N	Average.	Std. Deviation	t	p
Social Behaviour Competence	Female	256	14,35	3,82	1,561	0,119
	Male	206	13,73	4,60		
Individual Aspects in Communication	Female	256	22,43	5,25	3,848	0,000*
	Male	206	20,40	6,09		
Empathy Competence	Female	256	15,71	3,90	3,407	0,001*
	Male	206	14,34	4,60		
AdaptationCompetence	Female	256	11,40	2,83	1,687	0,092
	Male	206	10,89	3,47		
Sensitivity Competence	Female	256	11,48	2,76	3,065	0,002*
	Male	206	10,55	3,54		
Competence to Promote Communication	Female	256	14,80	3,45	2,730	0,007*
	Male	206	13,79	4,32		
Human Relations	Female	256	10,95	2,93	2,263	0,024*
	Male	206	10,27	3,43		
Listening Competence	Female	256	11,70	2,80	2,083	0,038*
	Male	206	11,09	3,42		
General Communication Competence	Female	256	112,82	24,06	2,968	0,003*
	Male	206	105,06	30,71		

* $p < 0,05$

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that the communication competencies of the students differ statistically significantly according to their gender ($t=2.968$, $p<0.05$). According to the results, the general communication proficiency of female students ($\bar{X}=112.82$) was higher than that of male students ($\bar{X}=105.06$). This result shows that the third hypothesis of the study has been confirmed. Among the sub-dimensions of communication competence, the characteristics of individual aspects in communication differ statistically significantly according to the gender of the students ($t=3.848$, $p<0.05$). As a result, the individual aspects of communication characteristics of female students ($\bar{X}=22.43$) were higher than male students ($\bar{X}=20.4$). Empathy competence differs significantly according to the gender of the students ($t=3.407$, $p<0.05$). As a result, the empathy competence of female students ($\bar{X}=15.71$) was higher than that of male students ($\bar{X}=14.34$). Sensitivity adequacy differed significantly according to the gender of the students ($t=3.065$, $p<0.05$). As a result, the sensitivity proficiency of female students ($\bar{X}=11.48$) was higher than that of male students ($\bar{X}=10.55$). The proficiency of encouraging communication differed significantly according to the gender of the students ($t=2.730$, $p<0.05$). As a result, female students' proficiency in encouraging communication ($\bar{X}=14.80$) is higher than that of male students ($\bar{X}=13.79$). Human relations differed significantly according to the gender of the students ($t=2.263$, $p<0.05$). As a result, female students' human relations ($\bar{X}=10.95$) were

higher than male students ($\bar{X} = 10.27$). Listening proficiency differed significantly according to the gender of the students ($t = 2.083$, $p < 0.05$). As a result, the listening proficiency of female students ($\bar{X} = 11.7$) was higher than that of male students ($\bar{X} = 11.09$). Saliş and Topçu Bulut examined the relationship between communication competence, self-esteem and internet addiction. As a result, it was concluded that listening proficiency and self-esteem had a significant effect on internet gaming disorder (2022, p. 196). There was no statistically significant difference between social behavior competence and adaptive competence characteristics of Balkan students according to their gender ($p > 0.05$).

ANOVA results applied to compare the communication competencies of Balkan students and the characteristics of these competencies according to their ages are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. ANOVA test results for comparison of communication competencies of balkan students by age

	Age	N	Average	Std. Deviation	F	P	Significant Difference
Social Behavior Competency	18-19	114	13,82	3,69	0,917	0,454	
	20-21	210	14,23	4,41			
	22-23	104	13,75	4,18			
	24-25	24	14,50	4,24			
	25 +	10	16,00	4,81			
	Total	462	14,07	4,19			
Individual Aspects in Communication	18-19	114	21,32	4,66	0,927	0,448	
	20-21	210	22,03	6,22			
	22-23	104	21,10	5,84			
	24-25	24	20,25	4,99			
	25 +	10	20,80	6,30			
	Total	462	21,52	5,72			
Empathy Competence	18-19	114	14,70	3,09	0,894	0,468	
	20-21	210	15,50	4,70			
	22-23	104	14,87	4,52			
	24-25	24	14,50	3,97			
	25 +	10	15,20	4,69			
	Total	462	15,10	4,27			
Adaptation Competence	18-19	114	11,19	2,24	0,713	0,584	
	20-21	210	11,39	3,39			
	22-23	104	10,81	3,35			
	24-25	24	10,75	3,39			
	25 +	10	11,20	3,68			
	Total	462	11,17	3,14			
Sensitivity Competence	18-19	114	10,89	2,44	0,425	0,790	
	20-21	210	11,27	3,49			
	22-23	104	10,85	3,19			
	24-25	24	11,00	3,12			
	25 +	10	11,20	3,49			
	Total	462	11,06	3,16			
Competence to Promote Communication	18-19	114	14,09	2,86	1,189	0,315	
	20-21	210	14,67	4,20			
	22-23	104	13,92	4,13			
	24-25	24	14,00	4,25			
	25 +	10	15,80	3,55			
	Total	462	14,35	3,89			

Human Relations	18-19 ¹	114	10,18	2,34	3,820	0,005*	1-2
	20-21 ²	210	11,19	3,38			2-3
	22-23 ³	104	9,92	3,36			
	24-25 ⁴	24	11,00	3,04			
	25 + ⁵	10	11,40	3,69			
	Total	462	10,65	3,18			
Listening Competence	18-19	114	11,32	2,57	0,512	0,727	
	20-21	210	11,65	3,40			
	22-23	104	11,21	2,97			
	24-25	24	11,08	3,24			
	25 +	10	11,20	3,36			
	Total	462	11,43	3,10			
General Communication Competence	18-19	114	107,51	20,01	0,961	0,429	
	20-21	210	111,91	30,28			
	22-23	104	106,42	28,00			
	24-25	24	107,08	28,00			
	25 +	10	112,80	32,13			
	Total	462	109,36	27,47			

* $p < 0,05$

When Table 5 is examined, the human relations dimension of communication competence differs significantly according to the ages of the students ($F=3.820$, $p<0.05$). This result revealed the fourth hypothesis of the research. As a result, the human relations characteristics of communication competence of 20-21 year old students ($\bar{X}=11.19$) are at a higher level than 18-19 year old students ($\bar{X}=10.18$) and 22-23 year old students ($\bar{X}=9.92$). However, according to the age of the students, general communication competence and its sub-dimensions; Social behavior competence, individual aspects of communication, empathy competence, adaptation competence, sensitivity competence, communication encouragement competence and listening competence do not show a statistically significant difference ($p>0.05$). In a study examining the communication competencies of teachers, it was revealed that older teachers' views on communication skills were more experienced than younger teachers in terms of individual aspects of communication, sensitivity, human relations, general communication competence and social behavior dimensions (Topal, et al., 2023, p. 1109).

The results of the Student T-test, which was applied to compare the communication competencies of Balkan students and the characteristics of these competencies according to their current education status, are given in Table 6.

Table 6. Student-t test results for the comparison of communication competencies of balkan students according to their current education status

	Education Status	N	Ort.	Std. Sapma	t	p
Social Behavior Competence	Associate Degree	36	14,11	2,36	0,091	0,928
	Bachelor	426	14,07	4,31		
Individual Aspects in Communication	Associate Degree	36	22,39	4,54	1,163	0,251
	Bachelor	426	21,45	5,81		
Empathy Competence	Associate Degree	36	15,22	3,15	0,235	0,815
	Bachelor	426	15,09	4,36		
Adaptation Competence	Associate Degree	36	11,89	2,50	1,744	0,088
	Bachelor	426	11,11	3,18		

Sensitivity Competence	Associate Degree	36	10,94	2,45	-0,238	0,812
	Bachelor	426	11,08	3,22		
Competence to Promote Communication	Associate Degree	36	13,94	2,78	-0,870	0,389
	Bachelor	426	14,38	3,97		
Human Relations	Associate Degree	36	9,78	1,87	-2,708	0,009*
	Bachelor	426	10,72	3,25		
Listening Competence	Associate Degree	36	12,33	1,91	2,773	0,008*
	Bachelor	426	11,35	3,17		
General Communication Competence	Associate Degree	36	110,61	16,69	0,438	0,663
	Bachelor	426	109,25	28,20		

* $p < 0,05$

When Table 6 is examined, human relations differ significantly according to the educational status of the students from the sub-dimensions of communication competence ($t = -2.708$, $p < 0.05$). As a result, the human relations characteristic of undergraduate students ($\bar{X} = 10.72$) is at a higher level than that of associate degree students ($\bar{X} = 9.78$). Listening proficiency differs significantly according to the educational status of the students ($t = 2.773$, $p < 0.05$). As a result, the listening proficiency characteristics of associate degree students ($\bar{X} = 12.33$) are at a higher level than undergraduate students ($\bar{X} = 11.35$). However, in general, social behavior competence, individual aspects in communication, empathy competence, adaptation competence, sensitivity competence and communication incentive competence characteristics do not differ statistically significantly according to the educational status of the students ($p > 0.05$).

ANOVA results applied to compare the communication competencies of Balkan students and the characteristics of these competencies according to grade level are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. ANOVA test results for comparison of communication competencies of balkan students according to grade levels

	Grade Level	N	Average	Std. Deviation	F	p	Significant Difference
Social Behavior Competence	1 st Grade	154	14,51	3,90	2,373	0,070	
	2 nd Grade	100	13,12	4,27			
	3 rd Grade	136	14,19	4,45			
	4 th Grade	72	14,25	4,04			
	Total	462	14,07	4,19			
Individual Aspects in Communication	1 st Grade	154	21,47	5,15	1,565	0,197	
	2 nd Grade	100	20,56	6,20			
	3 rd Grade	136	21,90	6,36			
	4 th Grade	72	22,28	4,79			
	Total	462	21,52	5,72			
Empathy Competence	1 st Grade	154	14,91	3,71	1,178	0,317	
	2 nd Grade	100	14,66	4,77			
	3 rd Grade	136	15,26	4,62			
	4 th Grade	72	15,81	3,98			
	Total	462	15,10	4,27			
Adaptation Competence	1 st Grade	154	11,31	2,80	0,864	0,460	
	2 nd Grade	100	10,86	3,42			
	3 rd Grade	136	11,04	3,34			

	4 th Grade	72	11,56	3,04			
	Total	462	11,17	3,14			
Sensitivity Competence	1 st Grade	154	11,12	2,97	3,298	0,020*	1-2
	2 nd Grade	100	10,26	3,34			2-3
	3 rd Grade	136	11,28	3,41			2-4
	4 th Grade	72	11,67	2,62			
	Total	462	11,06	3,16			
Competence to Promote Communication	1 st Grade	154	14,30	3,50	0,111	0,954	
	2 nd Grade	100	14,20	4,10			
	3 rd Grade	136	14,43	4,25			
	4 th Grade	72	14,50	3,75			
	Total	462	14,35	3,89			
Human Relations	1 st Grade	154	10,83	2,73	0,945	0,419	
	2 nd Grade	100	10,24	3,27			
	3 rd Grade	136	10,59	3,61			
	4 th Grade	72	10,94	3,08			
	Total	462	10,65	3,18			
Listening Competence	1 st Grade	154	11,61	2,83	0,312	0,817	
	2 nd Grade	100	11,24	3,12			
	3 rd Grade	136	11,38	3,47			
	4 th Grade	72	11,39	2,94			
	Total	462	11,43	3,10			
General Communication Competence	1 st Grade	154	110,05	24,73	1,143	0,331	
	2 nd Grade	100	105,14	28,85			
	3 rd Grade	136	110,07	30,54			
	4 th Grade	72	112,39	24,73			
	Total	462	109,36	27,47			

* $p < 0,05$

When Table 7 is examined, sensitivity competence, one of the sub-dimensions of communication competence, differs significantly according to the grade levels of the students ($F=3.298$, $p<0.05$). According to this result, it was revealed that the fifth hypothesis of the research was not confirmed. According to the results, the sensitivity proficiency of 2nd grade students ($\bar{X}=10.26$) was higher than that of 1st grade ($\bar{X}=11.12$), 3rd grade ($\bar{X}=11.28$) and 4th grade ($\bar{X}=11.67$) students. is at a lower level than. On the other hand, overall communication competence and its sub-dimensions social behavior competence, individual aspects of communication, empathy competence, adaptation competence, communication encouragement competence, human relations and listening competence levels do not show a significant difference according to the grade level of the students ($p>0.05$).

CONCLUSION

In this study conducted to examine the communication competence of Balkan students, data on the communication competence of Balkan students were discussed. In the first part of the survey applied to the students, the demographic characteristics and educational background of the students were discussed. Then, findings regarding communication competencies were examined. In the social behavior competency dimension of communication competencies, most students stated that meeting new people did not bother them. However, it has also been revealed that they exhibit shy attitudes when talking to someone they have just met. For this reason, it is thought that some students need to practice more in terms of communicating when it comes to expressing themselves in social environments.

In terms of individual aspects, most of the students stated that when people have problems, they go to them and communicate with them. However, it is among the findings of the research that they are a little harsh on flexibility and understanding. In the empathy dimension, it was revealed that most of the

students understood other people. However, the students also stated that they had difficulty in expressing this situation. In the dimension of adaptability, it was concluded that although they stated that they treated people as individuals, they also had difficulty in adapting. In the dimension of sensitivity competence, it was revealed that most of the students generally knew where and how to behave. However, they seem to have less confidence in being an effective speaker. In this case, it is concluded that students' communication skills differ in different areas. In terms of encouraging communication, although most of the students state that they pay attention to what is spoken during the conversation, they may exhibit hesitant attitudes about directing people to talk and daring them to speak. In the dimension of human relations, as a result of the data obtained, it was concluded that most of the students were individuals with whom people could talk comfortably. However, it is seen that they have less level of being close and interested in people. In terms of listening proficiency, most students stated that they were good listeners, but it turned out that they were not calm when speaking to others.

As a result of the research, it was concluded that female students' general communication competencies, listening, human relations, communication encouragement, sensitivity, harmony, empathy, individual aspects in communication, and social behavior competencies were higher than male students. According to this result, it is thought that female students generally have better communication skills than male students. From a social and cultural perspective, this result suggests that female students are more encouraged to engage in social interactions than male students, given their upbringing and gender roles. It could also be argued that female students possess higher social intelligence and awareness than male students.

As seen in the research, the students' overall level of communication competence was high. This may indicate that they were successful in correctly coding and decoding messages. Students generally used body language effectively and paid attention to what was being said. This demonstrates that both verbal and nonverbal communication support each other in this context. Furthermore, students generally had a high average score for "I understand what other people are feeling," indicating their cognitive ability to empathize with others. Listening is a crucial aspect of communication competence. The results show that students' responses to listening questions varied. This suggests that students need to improve their listening skills. Furthermore, the data indicates that students are open to social situations. However, initial interactions can lead to feelings of discomfort and hesitation.

When we look at the human relations dimension of the communication competence of Balkan students, it has been revealed that the communication competence of students aged 20-21 is higher than that of students aged 18-19 and 22-23. Looking at this result, it can be said that increasing social experiences with age may have a positive impact on communication skills.

When we look at the sensitivity sub-dimension of communication competence, it is seen that the sensitivity competence of 2nd grade students is at a lower level than the 1st, 3rd and 4th grade students. In this case, it can be interpreted that sensitivity skills can actually develop over time and in different learning processes. Within the scope of the study, it was revealed that Balkan students generally have a good communication level. However, it is important for these students to improve themselves in some areas. Students need to show more development, especially in areas such as flexibility, encouraging people to talk, speaking effectively, and being close to people. In addition, in order to improve communication skills, it is recommended that students receive personal development training to understand their communication skills and improve themselves. In addition, it is recommended that international students, especially international students, be informed about respect for cultural differences and language skills and that courses and training be given to these students to increase their communication competencies.

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