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## The Effect of Teaching with Games on Academic Success in Primary School Language Courses

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the effect of teaching with games in language instruction on academic achievement in primary school. The importance of the study is that children can concretize abstract concepts through games and achieve permanent and meaningful learning because they enjoy playing. This study is important in revealing the difference between teaching with games and following traditional education methods in language lessons on student achievement. The study universe was 4<sup>th</sup>-grade students in primary schools in Şanlıurfa; the sample was 60 students from 2 classes in which language instruction was carried out, one forming the experimental group and the other the control group. The method used in the study is a pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design with a control group. The personal information form and student questionnaire were used as data collection tools. The data obtained from the field are given under the following headings: what is the game, the characteristics of the game, the contribution of the game to the development of the child, games types, and learning with games in language instruction. Regarding pre-test scores, no significant difference was observed in students' academic achievements according to gender, age, preschool education, parents' education, and working status. On the other hand, the post-test scores of the groups significantly differed in favor of the experimental group. This study is expected to shed light on future research.

**Keywords:** Language Teaching, Traditional Games, Modern Games, Teaching with Games, Games

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## **İlkokul Türkçe Dersinde Oyunla Öğretim Yönteminin Akademik Başarıya Etkisi**

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### **ÖZET**

### **MAKALE TÜRÜ**

Bu araştırma ile ilkokulda Türkçe öğretiminde oyunla öğretim yönteminin akademik başarıya etkisinin belirlenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Araştırmanın önemi ise çocuklar oyun sayesinde soyut olan kavramları somutlaştırabilmekte, severek oynadıkları için de kalıcı ve anlamlı öğrenme sağlayabilmektedirler. Bu araştırma Türkçe dersinin eğitsel oyun içerikli öğretim yöntemi ile geleneksel eğitim yönteminin öğrenci başarısı üzerindeki anlamlı farklılığı ortaya koyma açısından son derece önemlidir. Araştırmanın evrenini Şanlıurfa ilindeki ilkokul 4. sınıf öğrencileri oluştururken, örneklemini ise bu evrendeki Türkçe öğretimi gerçekleştirilen 1 deney 1 kontrol grubu olmak üzere 2 sınıfta okuyan toplam 60 öğrenciyle sınırlıdır.

Yapılan araştırmada nicel boyutta, ön test ve son test kontrol gruplu yarı deneysel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmış olup veri toplama aracı olarak kişisel bilgiler formu ve öğrenci anketi kullanılmıştır. Alan taramasıyla elde edilen bilgiler, oyun nedir, oyunun özellikleri, oyunun çocuğun gelişimine katkıları, oyun türleri, Türkçe öğretiminde oyunla öğrenme, başlıkları altında verilmiştir.

Araştırma sonucunda elde edilen bulgular sonucunda; öğrencilerin cinsiyeti, yaşı, okul öncesi eğitimi alıp almaması, anne babalarının eğitim ve çalışma durumları yönünden akademik başarıları üzerinde anlamlı farklılık olmadığı sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Oyunla Türkçe öğretimi yöntemi uygulandıktan sonra derlenen test puanları incelendiğinde de deney ve kontrol grupları arasındaki puan farkının istatistiksel olarak anlamlı olduğu görülmektedir. Yapılan bu araştırmanın daha sonra yapılacak araştırmalara ışık tutması amaçlanmıştır.

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**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türkçe Öğretimi, Geleneksel Oyun, Modern Oyun, Oyunla Öğretim, Oyun

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## Introduction

Games are activities with their own mechanisms and rules. They contribute to the child's physical, mental, social and emotional development (Bay & Bay, 2019). They enable children to learn while having fun. The game-based learning method is giving the gains to be taught to the student through games (Ertem, 2016). Thanks to games, children can easily prepare themselves for life and experience life by playing. Teaching with games is the best and most effective way to do this (Tuğrul, 2010; Kayar, 2008). In today's education system, learning by doing, in which both students and teachers are active and share responsibility, is widely used and adopted. With this understanding, teaching with games has become an essential part of education since children take an active role in games. Teaching with games can be easily implemented both in and out of the classroom. The features of game-based teaching, i.e., being fun, providing intrinsic motivation, enabling learning by doing and experiencing, and increasing social interaction, will increase the quality and permanence of education and training. Game-based teaching prepares children for life by developing various skills, including hand-eye coordination, creative thinking, cooperation, crisis management, adaptation to the social environment and focusing. Games create an environment where children feel free and learn while having fun. In addition, they include activities that support physical, mental, social and emotional development, increasing their importance. Children can easily acquire and develop essential skills such as cooperation, helping, losing, winning, problem-solving, socialization, and mutual communication through games (Esen, 2008; Keskin, 2009; Sümbüllü & Altınışık, 2016). Children have fun while playing games and can repeat what they enjoy doing without getting bored.

Many studies on the role and importance of games in child development concluded that cultural games have positive effects on children's development (see Aksoy, 2014; Alabay & Yağan Güder, 2018; Bay, 2021; Bay, 2022; Bazaz, Hasankala, Shojaee, Unesi, 2018; Esen, 2008; Gökşen, 2014; Kovačević & Opić, 2014; Sulistyaningtyas & Fauziah, 2018; Taheri & Chahian 2015). Traditional games are very important in the child's development, but they have started to fall out of fashion as cultural games fail to adapt to urbanization and technological developments. Today, games are predominantly played indoors. The unlimited number of modern games and toys offered to children has also accelerated the dwindling and fading of cultural games (Arslan, 2017; Artar, Onur, & Çelen, 2004; Bay & Bay, 2019a; Bay & Bay, 2019b; Bay & Bay, 2020; Bay, 2022; Esen, 2008; Kovačević & Opić, 2014; Öz Pektaş, 2017; Öz Pektaş, 2017; Özden Gürbüz, 2016; Taheri & Chahian 2015; Toksoy, 2010; Tören, 2011; Tuğrul, Ertürk, Özen, Altınkaynak, Güneş, 2015). Cultural children's games, an essential part of Turkish culture, should be brought to educational environments (Bay, 2018; Bay & Bay, 2020, Bay, 2021; Bay, 2022). Social awareness should be increased, and measures should be taken to ensure these games are played (Bay & Bay, 2022). Cultural games, nursery rhymes, poems and concepts in the games are crucial in language instruction (Bay & Bay, 2022).

Using the game method in language lessons will enhance children's enjoyment and permanent learning. At this point, determining the games that students and their families know, i.e., the most played or known games, will constitute a resource for language teaching. Teaching with games has many benefits, including supporting language development,

developing problem-solving skills, increasing social skills, and developing logical thinking; therefore, it will create data on using game-based teaching in language instruction.

This study is extremely important in revealing the difference between teaching with games and following traditional education methods in language lessons on student achievement. Games are frequently used in language teaching; with them, children can quickly learn the structure of their mother tongue. In our country, mother tongue education is given through language lessons from first to eighth grade. Children enter into mutual communication and interaction while playing games. They talk about the game or listen to what is being said. So, they find the opportunity to improve their vocabulary (Ersoy, 2021). Games support the development of communication skills and reading, speaking, writing and listening skills in language teaching. Student motivation increases in game-supported language teaching environments, and permanent learning occurs. One of the reasons for this permanence is that the game makes the learning environment fun. In addition, games provide great convenience to teachers in language teaching. The game-based teaching method also contributes to these skills. Considering these features, using the teaching with-games method in language teaching is essential in realizing permanent learning in children.

Game is a versatile tool that enables children to learn by having fun. Children develop and grow by playing from the moment they are born. Playing games is one of a child's basic needs in primary school. Restraining this need will hinder children's healthy development. Children learn about life and gain new experiences through games. These experiences help them develop appropriate behaviors for real life at an early age (Çoban & Nacar, 2006). Game significantly impacts child development because children learn about themselves through games. The skills and emotions of the children develop as they learn about themselves through games. Their belief in themselves for accomplishing something increases. A game is an environment in which the child creates things. Playing is an activity where the child can learn subjects with their own experiences that no one can teach them (Emin, 2019). For example, through games, children can foresee the problems they may face in the future and learn how to cope with unexpected problems through their own experiences. Many rules that children need to learn in daily life can be easily taught to them through games. Game is a versatile tool that affects the child's physical, mental, social, and emotional development.

### **Objective and Sub-objectives**

This study aims to determine the effect of teaching with games in language instruction on academic achievement in primary school. For this purpose, the following questions were addressed:

1. Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of experimental group students?
2. Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of control group students?
3. Is there a significant difference between the academic achievement of experimental group students according to demographic variables?

In line with this objective, the research hypothesis was set as follows:

***H<sub>0</sub>: Teaching with games in language instruction in primary school is not effective on students' academic achievement (H<sub>0</sub>: μ<sub>(pre-test)</sub> = μ<sub>(post-test)</sub>)***

In addition, the demographic information collected from the questionnaires were used to investigate statistically significant differences between experimental and control groups' students' academic achievement scores according to gender, age, preschool education, parents' education and working status.

The Turks, who have spread to three continents in a broad geography, have preserved their cultural existence, a product of thousands of years of accumulation in the historical process, until today. This cultural heritage, preserved like a pearl and brought from the past to the present, must be transferred to future generations (Bay & Bay, 2020). Raising generations with superior human qualities, blended with the universal values of humanity, working not only for themselves but also for the future of all humanity, based on the cultural codes of Turkish society that has a history of thousands of years can only be possible with a comprehensive and authentic education model (Bay & Turan, 2021). Utilizing cultural language activities and traditional and modern games within this model is vital in constructing national identity and contributing to students' personality and identity development.

In the national and cultural primary education model, the relationship between education and culture should be built on a more planned, programmed and applicable basis. It is necessary to define the human and technical characteristics that individuals should have in the future for national education and cultural policy. This definition will be essential in answering the questions "What kind of future? What kind of individual?". Figure 1 shows some skills and characteristics individuals should possess (Bay & Turan, 2021). It is suggested to include national language activities and traditional children's games, the essential components of the cultural ethics model, in educational activities in primary education,

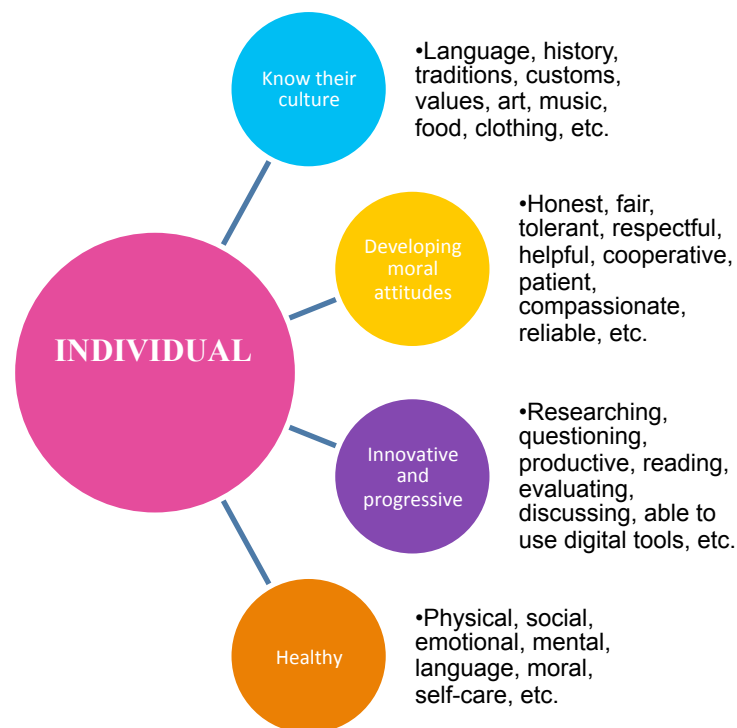


Figure 2: Basic skills that an individual should have (Bay & Turan, 2021).

Regarding the basic skills that the individual should have, identified by Bay and Turan, culture has an important place. Accordingly, the "Children and Education in Turkish Culture Course" has been included in the Faculties of Education curriculum. This course comprehensively conveys the relationship between education and culture to preservice teachers (Bay & Bay, 2022).

This study aims to determine the effect of teaching with games in language instruction on academic achievement in primary school. In addition, students' academic achievement was evaluated according to gender, age, preschool education, parents' education and working status, receiving traditional education or teaching with games in language teaching and tested for significant differences. This study is important in revealing the difference between teaching with games and following traditional education methods in language lessons on student achievement.

## Method

### Model

In this study, which aims to investigate the effect of teaching with games in language instruction on primary school 4<sup>th</sup>-graders' academic achievement, a pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design with a control group was used. The quantitative method objectifies facts and events and presents them as measurable, objective and algebraic outcomes (Karasar, 2005). The designs in which random assignment is not made but matching is involved are quasi-experimental. The paired quasi-experimental design compares two ready-made groups according to certain variables (Sönmez & Alacapınar, 2013).

### Universe and Sample

The study universe consists of primary school 4<sup>th</sup>-grade students from Şanlıurfa province in the 2021-2022 academic year. The study sample consisted of 60 primary school 4<sup>th</sup>-grade students, 11-12-year-old, 33 girls and 27 boys, selected as experimental and control groups. The demographic characteristics of the students, including gender, age, preschool education, mother's education level, mother's working status, father's education level, and father's working status, are given in Table 1.

*Table 1. Students' demographic characteristics*

Variable	Category	N	%
Gender	Female	33	55.0
	Male	27	45.0
Age	10	45	75.0
	11	15	25.0
Preschool education	Yes	23	38.3
	No	37	61.7
Mother's working status	Working	10	16.7
	Not working	50	83.3
Mother's education level	Illiterate	13	21.7

	Primary school graduate	22	36.7
	Secondary or high school graduate	25	41.7
Father's working status	Working	55	91.7
	Not working	5	8.3
Father's education level	Primary school graduate	14	23.4
	Secondary school graduate	25	41.7
	High school graduate	21	35.0

Table 1. shows that 55% of the students were girls, 45% were boys; 75% were 10 years old, 25% were 11 years old; 38.3% had preschool education, and 61.7% did not. Regarding the parents' working status, 16.7% of the mothers were employed, while 83.3% were not, and 91.7% of the fathers were employed, while 8.3% were not. The parents' educational level showed that 21.7% of the mothers were illiterate, 36.7% were primary school graduates, 31.7% were secondary school graduates, and 10% were high school graduates. Regarding fathers, 21.7% were primary school graduates, 41.7% were secondary school graduates, and 35% were high school graduates.

An achievement test consisting of 20 multiple-choice items was developed by the researcher to collect data. Six learning outcomes from the 4<sup>th</sup>-grade language course "Virtues" and "National Culture" units were included. A question pool was created by scanning various sources in line with the learning outcomes. Expert opinion was taken to ensure that the selected questions measured the intended gain, and approved questions were included in the test. The Item Difficulty Index ( $p_j$ ) of the test developed by the researcher was calculated as 0.52, the Item Discrimination Power Index ( $r_{jx}$ ) as 0.36 and the Kuder-Richardson Formula (Kr-20) as 0.74 and it was concluded that the test was reliable. A pre-test was administered to determine participants' initial levels, and a post-test was administered at the end of the unit to collect the necessary data for the study. In addition, the "Games Played" questionnaire developed by the researcher was used as another data collection tool. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part includes students' personal information, and the second part includes open-ended questions about the games students know, the games they play outside, the games they play at home, the games they want to play at school, and the games their parents know.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

SPSS 28 was used to analyze the data. The data were transferred to SPSS for quantitative data analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean, and standard deviation were used in the analysis. Demographic variables were presented by percentage/frequency distribution tables. As the sample size was small ( $n \leq 30$ ), nonparametric tests were preferred in hypothesis testing (Pallant, J, 2020). While comparing means, the Mann-Whitney U test was used for two groups, and the Kruskal Wallis H test was used for more than two groups. The reliability level was set as 95% in all tests.

### **Findings**

The results of the Wilcoxon Rank Test for Dependent Samples on students' pre-test/post-test scores are given in Table 2 below:

**Table 2.** Wilcoxon Rank Test Results for Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Experimental and Control Group Students

<b>Experimental Group (n=30)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>	<b>Z<sub>cal</sub></b>	<b>p</b>
Pre-test score	68.20	11.678	-3.549	*<0.001
Posttest score	71.00	12.809		
<b>Control Group (n=30)</b>				
Pre-test score	62.40	12.422	-3.138	0.002*
Posttest score	66.43	11.884		

\*p<0.05

Table 2 shows that the hypothesis claiming that "the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the students subjected to teaching with games in language instruction is statistically insignificant" can be rejected with 95% reliability ( $Z=-3.549$   $p<0.05$ ). Therefore, it can be said that teaching with games in language instruction has a statistically significant effect on students' achievement scores. This significant difference was in favor of the post-test.

Tests were performed to "determine the differentiation of academic achievement of experimental group students according to the gender, age and preschool education," which is another objective of the research, and the results are given in the table below:

**Table 3.** Distribution of Experimental Group Students According to Demographic Variables

		<b>N=30</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Pre-test score	Female	18	70.00	11.902	0.391
		Male	12	65.50	11.286	
	Post-test score	Female	18	73.22	12.946	0.325
		Male	12	67.67	12.383	
<b>Age</b>	Pre-test score	10-year-old	23	70.00	11.037	0.158
		11-year-old	7	62.29	12.619	
	Post-test score	10-year-old	23	73.04	12.342	0.190
		11-year-old	7	64.29	12.880	
<b>Preschool Education</b>	Pre-test score	Yes	9	64.00	12.961	0.263
		No	21	70.00	10.918	
	Post-test score	Yes	9	66.22	13.544	0.164
		No	21	73.05	12.241	
<b>Mother's education level</b>	Pre-test score	Illiterate	7	71.14	9.651	0.545
		Primary school graduate	8	69.50	15.847	
		Secondary or high school graduate	15	66.23	11.24	
	Post-test score	Illiterate	7	73.43	10.502	0.589



		Primary school graduate	8	73.50	17.395	
		Secondary or high school graduate	15	67.89	12.310	
		Primary school graduate	9	74.22	10.791	
	Pre-test score	Secondary school graduate	11	62.55	11.210	0.083
		High school graduate	10	69.00	10.965	
<b>Father's education level</b>		Primary school graduate	9	78.00	12.884	
	Post-test score	Secondary school graduate	11	65.45	11.869	0.116
		High school graduate	10	70.80	11.745	

Table 3 shows that the pre-test and post-test scores do not show a statistically significant difference according to gender. Again, the Mann-Whitney U test conducted for the experimental group shows that the pre-test and post-test scores do not differ significantly according to age groups. Mann-Whitney U test results show that the pre-test and post-test scores do not show a statistically significant difference according to receiving preschool education. Kruskal-Wallis test performed for the experimental group found that the pre-test and post-test scores did not show a statistically significant difference according to the mother's and father's educational status. There is no statistically significant difference in post-test scores according to the mother's and father's working status.

## **Results and Discussion**

As a result of the study, a statistically significant difference was observed between the pre-test and post-test scores of the students subjected to teaching with games in language instruction. There was no statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores according to gender, age and receiving preschool education. Parents working status and education levels did not create a significant difference either. The lack of significant differences may be because the groups were similar in age, and the region's living conditions were alike. Akçay (2009), Aşçı (2019) and Boz (2018) stated that teaching with games in language teaching yielded positive results. Regarding the data of this study, using games in language teaching was effective. Teaching abstract subjects that students struggle to understand in language lessons would be easier with games (Aşçı, 2019).

Şahin (2015) found that teaching with games in language instruction created significant differences according to gender. In our study, teaching with games in language instruction did not cause a significant difference in student achievement according to gender.

According to the studies conducted by Güneş (2015) and Sümbüllü and Altınışik (2016), traditional education systems apply teacher-centered methods and techniques that do not involve the student in the educational activity. However, today's education system adopted an approach where students actively participate in educational works. One of these student-centered teaching methods is teaching with games. Using games in language teaching was shown to increase student achievement significantly. Statistical tests in our study showed that teaching with games significantly improved student achievement in language teaching.

In the studies of Karamustafaoğlu, O., & Aksoy, S. (2020), Dolunay & Karamustafaoğlu (2021), and Çakır & Karamustafaoğlu (2021), teachers stated that teaching with games was beneficial in improving all developmental areas of students.

Gökşen (2014) examined the contributions of traditional games to children's development. Traditional games were characterized as an auxiliary and developmental factor in teaching students. This study reached a similar conclusion

Dam (2008) concluded that the parent's working status and educational level significantly impacted the child's success. The current study found that the parents working status and educational level had no significant effect. This result may be because the students' families' educational level and working status were similar.

The results obtained from the study are as follows:

Regarding the academic achievement of the students who received teaching with games in language instruction, there was no significant difference according to gender, age and receiving preschool education. The parents working status and educational level did not create a significant difference either.

There was a significant positive difference in student achievement between the pre-test and post-test after being taught with games.

Statistical analyses showed a significant difference between traditional teaching and teaching with games.

There was no significant difference between the academic achievement of the students taught language with games according to the parent's working status.

### **Suggestions**

The following suggestions have been put forward based on the results of this study.

- ✓ Resources on teaching with games should be increased.
- ✓ Resources on traditional and modern games should be available both in written form and on the internet for teachers to access quickly.
- ✓ The effect of teaching with games can be examined for other courses besides language courses.
- ✓ The effect of modern and traditional games on language lessons can be researched for other grade levels.
- ✓ Activities involving children's games can be included more in the language textbook.
- ✓ Seminars, training and conferences can be given to classroom teachers about teaching with games in language instruction so that they can use games more effectively in their lessons.

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