



Vocabulary Development and Use of Cultural Language Elements in Fourth Grade Elementary School Students*

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Article Information	ABSTRACT
Received: 20.12.2025	One of the important aims of education is to transmit culture and values. This study aims to examine the vocabulary, use of cultural language elements, and narrative styles of fourth-grade primary school pupils. Among the general objectives of Turkish national education is to foster a sense of national identity and instill Turkish culture, with the aim of raising citizens who embrace, preserve, and develop cultural values and love their country and nation. This study examined and determined the extent to which this objective was achieved among fourth-grade primary school students. Cultural language activities encompass the Turkish way of life, associated ideas and national values. Therefore, including cultural language activities in the teaching and learning process is expected to contribute positively to students' internalization of the structure of the Turkish language and their development of national identity. This study utilized qualitative research methods. The research design was a basic qualitative design. Semi-structured interview forms and compositions were used in this study. The study group consisted of 58 pupils attending the fourth grade of primary school. It can be said that the implementation of cultural language activity education contributed to the pupils' use of cultural language elements and the formation of national identity awareness. It was determined that students used epic narrative forms when describing their love for the flag and literary art when describing their love for their homeland. This research makes recommendations regarding the inclusion of in-class and out-of-class activities that will foster cultural acceptance and national identity awareness in line with learning outcomes. Keywords: Turkish language teaching, national identity, cultural language elements, vocabulary, forms of expression
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1. INTRODUCTION

Education has a duty to transmit culture and values. In our changing and evolving world, one of the most significant challenges of our time is the effective transmission of cultural values and national consciousness to students; it could also be said that there are some issues regarding the acquisition of Turkish language skills. The Turkish language is one of the most important tools for preserving and promoting our culture. To meet the expectations of our young people and children in a modernising world, one of our objectives must be to update, promote and preserve our culture whilst remaining faithful to its roots. The importance of the Turkish language in the preservation, transmission and dissemination of culture is clear (Yaman, 2021). Education enables individuals to recognise the values of their nation, be in harmony with the national interests of their society, be willing to take on responsibilities, and rise to high positions. As Atatürk said, 'Education keeps a nation free, independent, honourable, and living as a high society' (Kocatürk, 1999). Turkish national education also pursues this goal. The books and lessons in schools are tools for this purpose. Basic education is the first stage of education and training and is therefore the fundamental stage in which individuals acquire a sense of national identity. Accordingly, the formation of civic awareness, the learning of rights and responsibilities, the development of democratic understanding and attitudes, and the acquisition of basic knowledge and skills are among the most important tasks of basic education. The goal of finding the national identity of society and self-awareness is possible by attaching importance to the values that keep the national spirit of that nation alive, such as language,

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history, and culture (Özlü, 2011). All the feelings and thoughts required for national consciousness and national identity are found in language. The most important way to preserve Turkish identity is to preserve our language, Turkish (Çınar, 2021). The unconscious search for identity among individuals is one of the problems of our age. Consequently, societies are affected by this problem. They want to lose their identity and become the same under the guise of differentiation. Based on Atatürk's words, 'The Turkish nation's national language and national identity will remain dominant and fundamental throughout its entire existence,' it can be said that protecting our language and culture is important for our national identity and that we must preserve our culture by remaining true to ourselves (Çelikkollu, 2020). Language makes individuals part of their society, while also distinguishing that society from other societies and turning it into a nation. The most fundamental element that constitutes a nation is language (Ercilasun, 2005).

Cultural language elements are the most fundamental tools for the transmission of culture and values. Cultural language elements can also be defined as cultural elements belonging to language. They include proverbs, idioms, aphorisms, set phrases, antitheses, dialectal features, and figurative expressions (Güfta and Kan, 2011). It can be said that recognising and preserving our culture protects our national identity. National identity consists of the characteristics that distinguish one nation from others and the characteristics that demonstrate an individual's belonging to the culture of their nation. National identity is the treasure of our culture (Çınar, 2021). Culture is the harmonious whole of a nation's moral, religious and linguistic life (Gökalp, 1975). Proverbs, which are characteristic of the Turkish nation's memory, are a cultural linguistic element that extends to the roots of Turkish identity. Studies show that proverbs reflect the perspective and linguistic richness of the culture to which they belong (Stanek, 2016). Proverbs enable the recognition, transmission, and preservation of culture. They can contribute to children learning about the elements of society and acquiring and embracing its values (Batur and Yavaşca, 2018). It is said that when students learn proverbs, they realise that they carry cultural traces. Consequently, students see the relationship between language and culture (Tüm, 2010). Proverbs also reflect the value judgements of a nation. Proverbs, which embody centuries of experience, also reflect the nation's way of thinking and lifestyle (Çotuksöken, 1983). It can be said that riddles contribute to the more fluent use of Turkish. It is known that riddles, which have been around since ancient times, are a type of speech that preserves the codes of Turkish society. Their presence in every geographical region of the Republic of Turkey, and even in different countries and regions where Turkish is spoken, is explained by cultural and linguistic unity. Consequently, it can be said that they ensure the preservation and promotion of culture (Türkyılmaz, 2007).

The definition of lexical wealth is most succinctly expressed by the metaphor of it being a mirror of culture. The lifestyle, values, beliefs, and thought patterns of a nation can be understood by examining its lexical wealth. Lexical wealth encompasses words, proverbs, idioms, and verbal patterns (Ergüzel and Kirik, 2012). Lexical wealth provides insight not only into the traditions and customs of a nation, but also into its past and the changing meanings of its experiences from the past to the present. Lexical wealth is the identity of a language. Establishing successful communication and strong relationships also depends on the richness of vocabulary (Türkben, 2012). The most important factor influencing the vocabulary of a language is the cultural structure of society. While language facilitates the transmission of culture through communication, culture also contributes to vocabulary (Özkan and Gündoğdu, 2011). Just as vocabulary is described as a mirror of culture, language is also likened to a mirror of culture. By looking at a nation's language, one can gain insight into that nation's culture. It can be said that researching the vocabulary of a language provides insight into the culture of the nation that speaks that language (Aksan, 2004). Set phrases are anonymous cultural elements. Proverbs, idioms, poems, and rhymes fall under the category of set phrases. They are the verbal expression of a society's experiences passed down from the past. They are important indicators of culture. Due to their ease of memorisation and memorability, they should be included in language teaching. Set phrases such as proverbs, idioms, rhymes, and poems should be included in textbooks, which are the basic teaching material, in order of complexity from simple to complex (İlhan, 2017).

It is thought that the development of national identity and the formation of national consciousness in children can occur through their awareness of culture and certain values, which can be achieved through folk tales. One of the general objectives of Turkish national education is to 'raise citizens who embrace, protect and develop the national, moral, human, spiritual and cultural values of the Turkish nation and who love their homeland and nation'. In line with this objective, it can be said that activities contributing to Turkish identity, our national values, and the preservation of our culture should be included in the education and teaching process. When considered as a whole, it is thought that the inclusion of cultural language elements in education and teaching will contribute to the formation of national identity, increase the use of cultural language elements, and develop vocabulary. Baş (2012) conducted research on the vocabulary of Turkish fairy tales, analysed them using content analysis, and concluded that cultural language elements were used effectively to make the narration impactful and memorable. He concluded that oral culture is indispensable both in transmitting thousands of years of culture and in language teaching. Language and education are seen to play a very important role in cultural transmission. Cultural activities should be included in classroom activities in line with the learning outcomes. Textbooks, which are our main material in lessons, should contain cultural language elements such as proverbs, sayings, idioms and antitheses for cultural transmission (Güfta and Kan, 2011).

This study aims to examine the use of cultural language elements, vocabulary development, narrative styles, and love for the homeland and flag among fourth-grade primary school students. In line with this aim and research, answers to the following questions were sought.

1. What are the areas of cultural language elements used by students in relation to their love for the homeland and flag?

2. How often do pupils use cultural language elements related to their love for their country and flag, and what cultural language elements do they use?
3. What is the level of pupils' knowledge of cultural language elements?
4. Is there any improvement in pupils' knowledge of cultural language elements and vocabulary after the training?

This study examined students' level of knowledge regarding cultural language elements and the frequency with which they use them. It also aimed to investigate their attitudes towards patriotism and the national flag. Consequently, students were asked to write an essay on this topic. Whilst there are studies in the literature on cultural language elements, there is no research on the frequency of their use. The relationship between cultural language elements and vocabulary knowledge is another aspect that will contribute to the literature.

2. METHODOLOGY

This section covers the research model, data collection tools, study group, research implementation process, validity and reliability studies, and data analysis.

2.1. Research Design

This study, which aims to examine the use of cultural language elements and the development of vocabulary among fourth-grade primary school students in the context of love for their homeland and flag, employed a basic qualitative research design from among qualitative research methods. Qualitative research involves studies that use qualitative data collection tools such as interviews and observation. These are studies in which the participants' views are described in detail, consisting of verbal data, and a process is followed in which events are presented in a natural environment and in a holistic-complex manner (Şişman, 2013). Basic qualitative research studies can be seen in all disciplines and fields of application. These are the most common forms of qualitative research in education. Data is collected through interviews, document analysis, or observation (Merriam, 2015). In this study, data were collected through semi-structured interviews. During the semi-structured interviews, participants were asked to write an essay. The essay was recorded as a document prepared by the researcher. Consequently, data were also collected through document analysis.

2.2. Participants

The study group consisted of 58 pupils in the fourth grade at a state primary school affiliated with the Özalp District National Education Directorate in Van Province during the 2022-2023 academic year. When the genders of the study group were examined, it was determined that 48% were girls, 52% were boys, 50% were 10 years old, and 50% were 11 years old. It was found that 55% of the pupils had received pre-school education, while 45% had not. It was determined that 31% of the pupils in the study group used PCs, tablets or phones, while the majority (69%) did not. It can be said that this difference among the participants was due to socio-economic differences. It was determined that 74% of the students' mothers were illiterate, 21% were primary school graduates, and 5% were middle school or high school graduates. One of the reasons for this significant difference may be that women are excluded from education due to sociological factors in the region. It was determined that 26% of the students' fathers were illiterate, 45% were primary school graduates, and 29% were middle school or high school graduates. It can be said that this difference in the educational levels of the participants' fathers stems from the socio-economic conditions in the region. It was determined that all of the participants' mothers were housewives.

2.3. Data Collection Tool

In the study, data were collected using semi-structured interview forms and composition writing as qualitative data collection tools. First, a semi-structured interview form prepared with expert opinion was used to obtain information about students' knowledge of cultural language elements and their vocabulary levels. In addition, students were asked to write a composition on the topic of 'love for the homeland and the flag'. The suitability of the data collection tools for this study was verified by an expert. The process, which was planned in consultation with the expert, was also reviewed by other experts during the data analysis phase. Furthermore, the data was safeguarded throughout the composition writing process without any interference.

2.4. Implementation Steps of the Research

Prior to obtaining the data, an Ethics Committee Decision was obtained from Anadolu University and an application permit was obtained from the Van Provincial Directorate of National Education. The data collection process continued throughout the autumn term of the 2022-2023 academic year. The data for the research was collected face-to-face using a semi-structured interview form. In addition, participants wrote compositions on the topic of 'love of country and flag'. Throughout the term, participants were engaged in cultural language activities, taking into account the learning outcomes and values conveyed in each lesson's programme. In Turkish lessons, the learning outcomes 'understands the contribution of idioms and proverbs to the meaning of the text' were adapted and implemented. In music lessons, the learning outcomes 'sings the National Anthem correctly' and 'sings music appropriate to the meaning of specific days and weeks' were adapted and implemented. In Physical Education and Games, cultural language activities were planned, adapted, and implemented in line with learning outcomes such

as 'Plays children's games from our culture and other cultures' and 'Uses counting rhymes.' In Social Studies, activities were planned, adapted, and implemented in line with learning outcomes such as 'Understands the importance of the National Struggle based on the lives of its heroes.' The composition-writing practice began with an essay on the theme of love for one's country and flag. Throughout this process, the aim was to encourage the use of cultural language elements in lessons, supported by proverbs and idioms. The frequency of using cultural language elements in the compositions was also examined. The impact of the compositions on the development of vocabulary is also included in the study.

2.5. Analysis of Data

The data from the study were analysed using content analysis. In content analysis, the data are read in depth to first obtain codes, and themes are derived from these codes. Interpretations are made based on themes and codes. In content analysis, the meanings and relationships of specific words and concepts within the texts are determined. These relationships are analysed to draw conclusions about the text (Büyüköztürk et al., 2021). In the context of this research, while performing content analysis, the data were coded, themes were identified, codes and themes were organised in the context of the research and interview questions, and the findings were interpreted. The data processed in Microsoft Word were coded by the researcher. To determine coding reliability, Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula 'Agreement / (total agreement + disagreement) * 100 = reliability coefficient' was used. The work and procedures required to determine coding reliability were carried out with a doctoral student who was proficient in qualitative research and content analysis. To ensure coding reliability, 30% of the data, selected at random, was sent to the expert. According to the formula, $116 / (116 + 8) * 100 = 93.54$ was found. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), this ratio is expected to be at least 80%. An analysis of the data extracted from the compositions reveals that two main themes and twelve sub-themes were identified. The coding was carried out by reading the compositions repeatedly in succession. The coding was performed by referring to the coding guide throughout the reading process, taking the composition as a whole into account. The codes obtained were then brought together and grouped. These groups form the themes. The themes were reviewed and divided into sub-themes.

3. FINDINGS

This section of the study presents the results of the content analysis of the data obtained from the compositions written. The data obtained are presented in the order of the questions answered.

3.1. Main theme: Ways of Expressing Love for One's Country

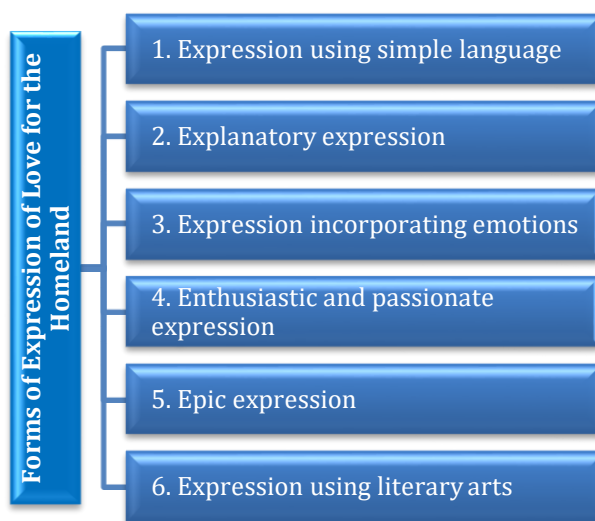


Figure 1. Forms of expression of love for the homeland

Upon examining Figure 1, it can be seen that after analysing the data obtained from the students using content analysis, six sub-themes emerged: the main theme of expressions of patriotism and expression using simple language, explanatory expression, expression incorporating emotions, enthusiastic and passionate expression, epic expression, and expression using literary arts.

3.1.1. Sub-theme: expression using simple language

The sub-theme of expression in simple language, one of the six sub-themes of the main theme of forms of expressing love for one's country, encompasses the codes "knowing the national anthem and poems, making use of legends, knowing epics, wanting to develop one's country, knowing the meaning of the İstiklal Marşı".

Table 1.

Expression using simple language

Codes	f
Knowing the national anthem and poems	9
Making use of legends	4
Knowing the epic	3
Wanting to develop our homeland	2
Knowing the meaning of the İstiklal Marşı (National Anthem)	1
Total	19

Table 1 shows that the sub-theme of expression in plain language encompasses the codes 'knowing the national anthem and poems, drawing on legends, knowing epics, wanting to develop one's homeland, and knowing the meaning of the Independence Anthem'. It was determined that the majority of participants who wrote in a simple language knew the national anthem and poems. For example, P16 stated, 'In the first line of our Independence Anthem, it says "do not be afraid..." and P17 stated, 'Flowers bloom on our mountains, like in the İzmir Anthem.' Examples of those who wrote using legends include P16, who wrote, 'With eyes as dark as Kara Fatma...' and P17, who wrote, 'Loves like Ferhat and Şirin...' Examples of those who wrote using epics include P24, who wrote, 'As in the Ergenekon epic...' and P25, who wrote, 'The Çanakkale epic...' Examples of those who wrote with the code of wanting to develop the homeland are P23, which states, 'We must bring our homeland to a very good place,' and P6, which states, 'We must work hard at our studies, learn a profession, and become worthy.' An example of someone who wrote with knowledge of the meaning of the Independence Anthem is P2, which states, 'This anthem tells of our liberation.'

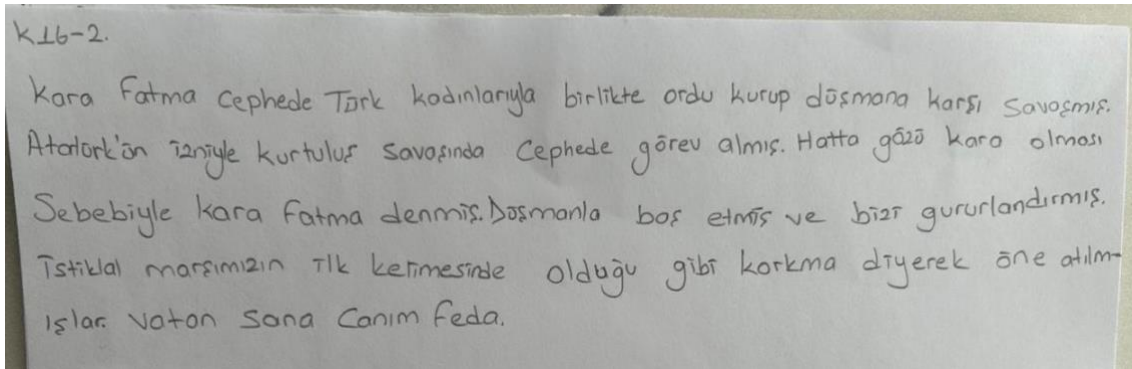


Figure 2. Sample from the research

3.1.2. Sub-theme: explanatory expression

The explanatory narrative sub-theme, one of the six sub-themes of the main theme of forms of expressing love for one's country, encompasses the codes of "getting to know our heroes, knowing our history, drawing conclusions, and wanting to develop our country".

Table 2.

Explanatory Expression

Codes	f
Getting to know our heroes	16
Knowing our history	13
Draw a conclusion	3
Wanting to develop our homeland	2
Total	34

Table 2 shows that the explanatory narrative sub-theme encompasses the codes 'getting to know our heroes, knowing their history, drawing conclusions, wanting to develop their homeland'. The majority of participants writing in an explanatory narrative style provided examples under the codes of getting to know our heroes and knowing their history. For example, examples of the code of recognising our heroes are P30, 'Seyit Onbaşı risked his life to lift the bullet,' and P26, 'I will hold the flag high like Ulubatlı Hasan.' Examples of the code of knowing their history are P18, 'Seven nations came together and attacked us,' and P19, 'Atatürk, they will leave as they came.' Examples of the inference code are P5, 'We can understand from this sentence how our nation defended its homeland against enemies who wanted to invade us,' and P13, 'Kürşat for independence...' Examples of the code for wanting to develop the homeland include P6, which states, 'We must also work hard at our studies and acquire professions so that we may be worthy descendants,' and P23, which states, 'We must bring our homeland to a very good place.'

3.1.3. Sub-theme: expression incorporating emotions

The sub-theme of expression, which incorporates emotions as one of the six sub-themes of the main theme of expressions of love for the homeland, encompasses the codes of 'respecting and being grateful to our ancestors, loving one's homeland, appreciating one's homeland, being willing to make sacrifices for one's homeland, wanting to develop one's homeland, respect and love for the İstiklal Marşı, love for Atatürk, pride in history, celebrating ceremonies with enthusiasm, and protecting one's homeland.'

Table 3.

Expression incorporating emotions

Codes	f
Respect and gratitude towards our ancestors	7
Love our homeland	7
To like our homeland	3
Willingness to make sacrifices for our homeland	3
Wanting to develop our homeland	1
Respect for İstiklal Marşı (National Anthem)	1
Love for Atatürk	1
Boasting about our history	1
Celebrating our ceremonies with enthusiasm	1
Protecting our homeland	1
Total	26

Table 3 shows that the sub-theme of emotional expression encompasses the codes of "respecting and being grateful to our ancestors, loving one's homeland, appreciating one's homeland, being willing to make sacrifices for one's homeland, wanting to develop one's homeland, respect for the National Anthem, love for Atatürk, pride in history, celebrating ceremonies with enthusiasm, and protecting one's homeland." Most of those who wrote in an emotional narrative style appear to have written about the codes of respect and gratitude towards our ancestors and love for one's homeland. As examples of the code of respect and gratitude towards our ancestors, P4 stated, '...we exist thanks to them,' and P31 stated, 'Our ancestors sacrificed their lives so that our flag could fly and our lands would not be lost.' Examples of the code of loving one's homeland are P3, 'I love my country, my flag,' and P24, 'The homeland is sacred to us.' Examples of the code of appreciating one's homeland are P17, 'All for this beautiful homeland,' and P1, 'This beautiful homeland of ours would have belonged to others.' Examples of the code for wanting to make sacrifices for the homeland are P20, which states, 'We must all be willing to risk our lives without fear when the time comes,' and P27, which states, 'If necessary, we can risk our lives and face danger for our homeland.' As an example of the code of wanting to develop the homeland, P6 states, 'We must also work hard at our studies and acquire professions so that we may be worthy descendants,' and P23 states, 'We must bring our homeland to great heights.' An example of the code of respecting the National Anthem is P18, which states, 'I read our National Anthem with pride and respect at ceremonies.' An example of the code of loving Atatürk is P25, which states, 'I love all our heroic soldiers, especially Atatürk.' As an example of the code for taking pride in history, P18 stated, 'Even if we have lost many martyrs, one dies and a thousand are reborn.' As an example of the code for celebrating ceremonies with enthusiasm, P26 wrote, 'The 23rd of April, which we celebrate with enthusiasm, is in the air. I am counting down the days until it arrives.' As an example of the code for protecting the homeland, P27 wrote, 'We cannot allow anyone to look askance at our homeland and our flag.'

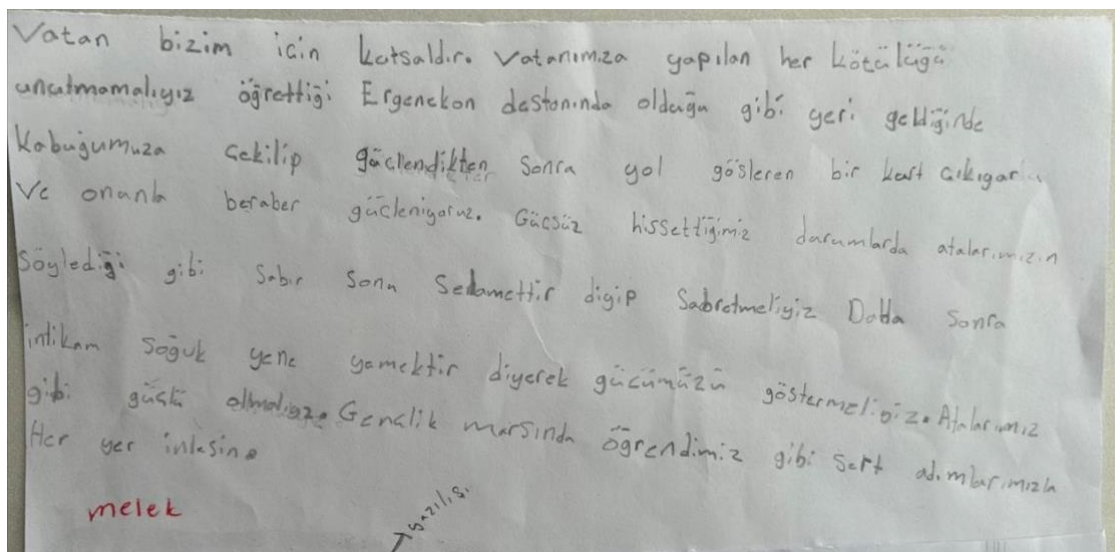


Figure 3. Sample from the research

3.1.4. Sub-theme: enthusiastic and passionate expression

The sub-theme of enthusiastic, passionate expression, one of the six sub-themes of the main theme of expressions of patriotism, encompasses the codes of “reading poetry, writing slogans and celebrating ceremonies with enthusiasm”.

Table 4.

Enthusiastic and passionate expression

Codes	<i>f</i>
Poetry reading	7
Slogan writing	7
Celebrating the ceremonies with	1
Total	15

Table 4 shows that the sub-theme of enthusiastic, passionate narration encompasses the codes ‘reading poetry, writing slogans and celebrating ceremonies with enthusiasm’. It appears that the majority of participants who wrote in an enthusiastic, passionate style wrote poetry and slogans. As examples of the poetry reading code, P20 stated, ‘May my existence be a gift to the Turkish nation,’ and P26 stated, ‘Flowers bloom on the mountains of Izmir. The golden sun showers us with rays.’ Examples of the slogan writing code include P25, which states, ‘Çanakkale is impassable,’ and P27, which states, ‘Turkish forward.’ An example of the celebrating the ceremonies with enthusiasm code is P26, which states, ‘The 23rd of April, which we celebrate with enthusiasm, is in the air. I am counting down the days until it arrives.’

3.1.5. Sub-theme: epic expression

The sub-theme of expression, which is one of the six sub-themes of the main theme of forms of expressing love for one's country, encompasses the codes “use of proverbs, use of idioms, use of similes, use of set phrases, use of figurative meanings, use of riddles”.

Table 5.

Epic expression

Codes	<i>f</i>
Use of proverbs	19
Use of idioms	16
Make a analogy	11
To use clichés	9
Use of figurative meanings	8
Use of riddles	1
Total	64

Table 5 shows that the sub-theme of narration using literary arts encompasses the codes ‘use of proverbs, use of idioms, use of similes, use of set phrases, use of figurative meanings, and use of riddles’. As examples of the proverb usage code, P22 stated, ‘Our ancestors did not say “where there is unity, there is harmony” for nothing,’ and P19 stated, ‘the water jug broke on the waterway.’ As examples of the idiom usage code, P10 stated, ‘they chose black over white,’ and P9 stated, ‘his mouth reaches his ears.’ P28, which uses similes, is expressed as ‘Just like jackals trying to surround a lone grey wolf’ and P31 as ‘The thing we call home is our homeland’. P26, which uses set phrases, is expressed as ‘we embraced’ and P19 as ‘made clear’. P17, who used figurative meanings, expressed it as ‘every stone and grain of soil is gold’ and P9 as ‘tears have been shed’. P15, who used a riddle, wrote ‘They plucked the moon and stars from the sky and placed them in our blood. What is the answer to this riddle? The flag’, it was determined.

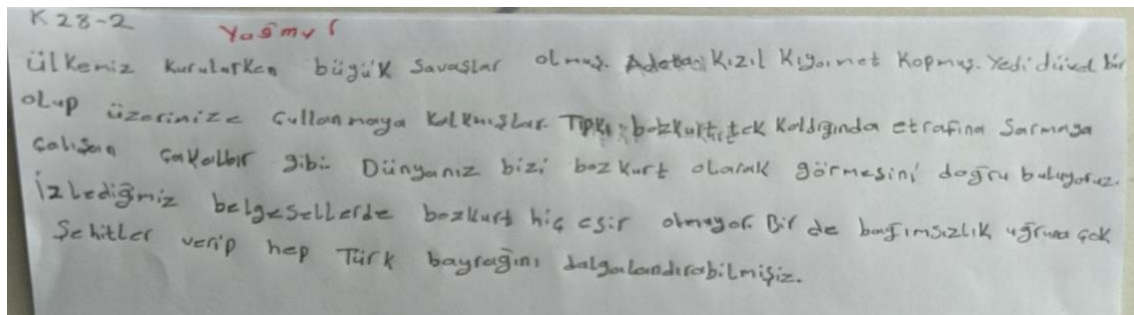


Figure 4. Sample from the research

3.1.6. Sub-theme: expression using literary arts

The epic narrative sub-theme, one of the six sub-themes of the main theme of forms of expressing love for one's homeland, encompasses the codes of "getting to know our heroes, respecting and being grateful to our ancestors, drawing on legends, knowing epics, wanting to make sacrifices for one's homeland, and protecting one's homeland".

Table 6.

Expression using literary arts

Codes	f
Getting to know our heroes	16
Respect and gratitude towards our ancestors	7
Making use of legendary tales	4
Knowing the epics	3
Willingness to make sacrifices for one's country	3
Protecting our homeland	1
Total	34

Table 6 shows that the epic narrative sub-theme encompasses the codes of 'getting to know our heroes, respecting and being grateful to our ancestors, drawing on legends, knowing epics, wanting to make sacrifices for one's country, and protecting one's country'. Examples of the code of recognising our heroes are P30, 'Seyit Onbaşı risked his life to lift the shell,' and P26, 'I will hold the flag high like Ulubatlı Hasan.' Examples of the code of respecting and being grateful to our ancestors are P4 '... we exist thanks to them' and P31 'Our ancestors sacrificed their lives so that our flag would fly and we would not lose our land.' Examples of those who wrote using legends include P16, who wrote, 'With eyes as dark as Kara Fatma's...' and P17, who wrote, 'Loves like Ferhat and Şirin...' Examples of those who wrote using epics include P24, who wrote, 'As in the Ergenekon epic...' and P25, who wrote, 'The Çanakkale epic...' As examples of the code of making sacrifices for the homeland, P20 wrote, 'We must all be prepared to risk our lives without fear when the time comes,' and P27 wrote, 'If necessary, we can risk our lives and face danger for our homeland.' As an example of the code of protecting the homeland, P27 states, 'We cannot allow anyone to look askance at our homeland and our flag. This homeland is entrusted to us.'

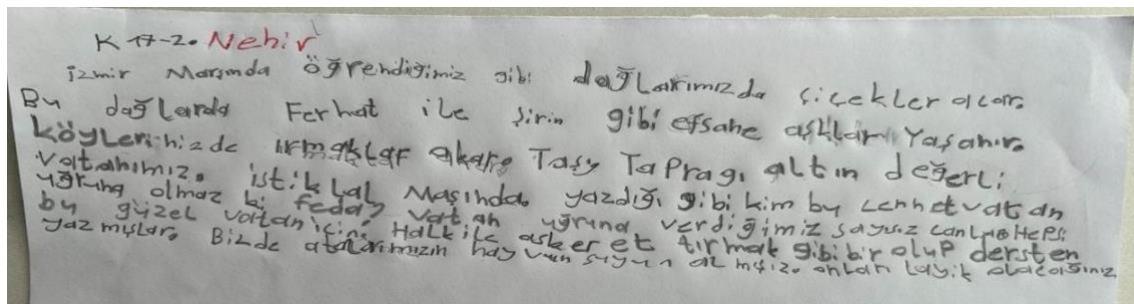


Figure 5. Sample from the research

3.2. Main theme: Ways of Expressing Love for the Flag

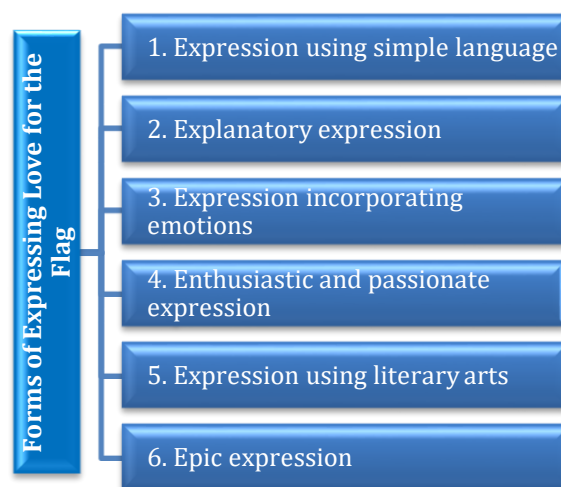


Figure 6. Forms of expressing love for the flag

Upon examining Figure 2, it can be seen that after analysing the data obtained from the students using content analysis, six sub-themes emerged: the main theme of expressions of love for the flag and expression using simple language, explanatory expression, expression incorporating emotions, enthusiastic and excited expression, epic expression, and expression using literary arts.

3.2.1. Sub-theme: expression using simple language

The sub-theme of expression in simple language, one of the six sub-themes of the main theme of ways of expressing love for the flag, encompasses the codes of “knowing its history, knowing the national anthem and poems”.

Table 7.

Expression using simple language

Codes	f
knowing our history	13
knowing our national anthem and poems	9
Total	22

Table 7 shows that the sub-theme of expression in plain language encompasses the codes ‘knowing history and knowing national anthem poems’. For example, P28 states, ‘We have sacrificed many martyrs for independence and have always been able to fly the Turkish flag,’ and P31 states, ‘Our ancestors sacrificed their lives so that our flag could fly and we would not lose our land,’ as examples of the code of knowing history. Examples of the code for knowing the national anthem and poems include P20, ‘May my existence be a gift to the Turkish nation,’ and P29, ‘We have emerged victorious from dozens of wars with our hero Atatürk, respected by the whole world. We have covered every corner of our homeland with nets.’

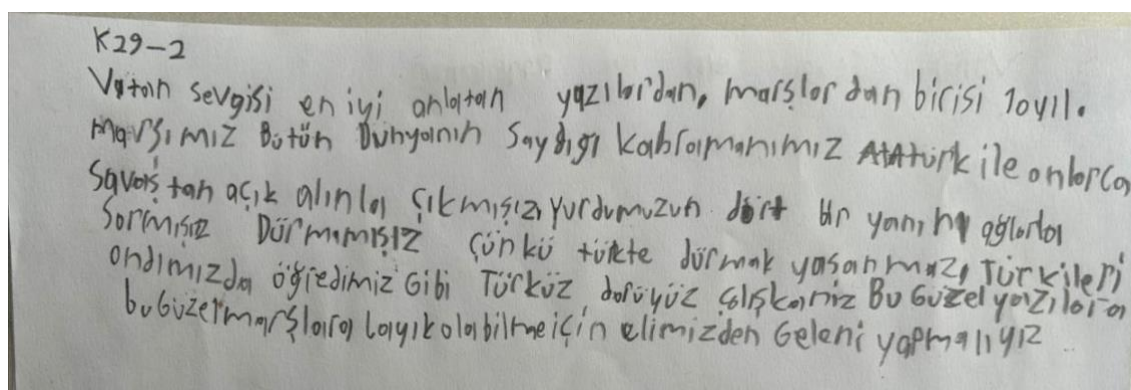


Figure 7. Sample from the research

3.2.2. Sub-theme: explanatory expression

The explanatory narrative sub-theme, one of the six sub-themes of the main theme of ways of expressing love for the flag, encompasses the codes of “knowing its history and understanding the meaning of the flag”.

Table 8.

Explanatory Expression

Codes	f
knowing our history	13
knowing the meaning of our flag	4
Total	17

Table 8 shows that the explanatory narrative sub-theme encompasses the codes ‘knowing the history’ and ‘knowing the meaning of the flag’. The vast majority of participants who wrote in the explanatory narrative form wrote under the code ‘knowing the history’. For example, P28 stated, ‘We have sacrificed many martyrs for independence and have always been able to fly the Turkish flag,’ and P31 stated, ‘Our ancestors sacrificed their lives so that our flag could fly and we would not lose our land,’ as examples of the code of knowing its history. Examples of the code of knowing the meaning of the flag include P4, who wrote, ‘Our teacher said that the red colour of our flag comes from the blood of our martyrs,’ and P31, who wrote, ‘If the flag falls to the ground, the independence of our homeland also falls.’

K4-2.
Öğretmenimiz bayrağımızın kırmızı renginin şehitlerimizin kanından geldiğini söyledi. Atalarımızın bu bayrak için canlarını vermişler. Duyunca çok üzülüyordum. Demek ki ülkemizi canlarından çok sevmişler. Hem bence eşlerine, çocuklarına, annelerine, babalarına bir şey olmasın diye de savaşmışlardır. Yani biz de onlar sayesinde varız.

Figure 8. Sample from the research

3.2.3. Sub-theme: expression incorporating emotions

The sub-theme of expression, which incorporates emotions as one of the six sub-themes of the main theme of ways of expressing love for the flag, encompasses the codes “loving one's flag, protecting one's flag, taking pride in one's flag”.

Table 9.

Expression incorporating emotions

Codes	f
loving our flag	2
protecting our flag	2
to take pride in our flag	1
Total	5

Table 9 shows that the sub-theme of expressing emotions encompasses the codes ‘loving the flag, protecting the flag, and taking pride in the flag’. For example, P31 expresses the code of loving the flag as follows: ‘The Turkish flag, constantly waving in the sky, ensures that we live peacefully in our homes.’ P3 expresses the same sentiment as follows: ‘Like them, I love my country and my flag.’ As an example of the code of protecting the flag, P27 states, ‘We cannot allow anyone to look askance at our homeland and our flag.’ As an example of the code of taking pride in the flag, P25 states, ‘If we can wave the Turkish flag with pride, we owe this pride to all our heroic soldiers, especially Atatürk.’

Ganakkale savaşında birçok düşman devlet birlik olmuşlar. Tencere kapağını bulmuş. Vatanımıza göz dikenleri Türk askeri hepsine gerekli cevabı vererek Ganakkale seğirmiş sloganı tüm dünyaya duyurmuş. Türk bayrağını gururla sallayabiliyorsak bu gururun başta Atatürk olmak üzere bütün kahraman askerimize borçluyuz. Savaşların hepsinde destanlar yazmışız, öğretmenimiz Kulu Fatma, şehit olanları, bunlardan birisi. Onlar kıktıları gibi ölünden öte köydeyiz.

Figure 9. Sample from the research

3.2.4. Sub-theme: enthusiastic and passionate expression

The sub-theme of enthusiastic, passionate expression, one of the six sub-themes of the main theme of ways of expressing love for the flag, encompasses the codes of “reading poetry, celebrating ceremonies with enthusiasm, protecting the flag, taking pride in the flag”.

Table 10.

Enthusiastic and passionate expression

Codes	f
Poetry reading	7
Celebrating the ceremonies with enthusiasm	1
Protecting our flag	1
To take pride in our flag	1
Total	10

Table 10 shows that the sub-theme of enthusiastic, passionate expression encompasses the codes 'reading poetry, celebrating ceremonies with enthusiasm, protecting the flag and taking pride in the flag'. The majority of participants who wrote in an enthusiastic, passionate style wrote poetry. For example, P20 expressed the code of writing poetry as 'May my existence be a gift to the Turkish nation' and P26 as 'Flowers bloom on the mountains of Izmir. The golden sun showers us with secrets'. As an example of the code for celebrating ceremonies with enthusiasm, P26 wrote, 'The 23rd of April, which we celebrate with enthusiasm, is in the air. I am counting down the days until it arrives.' As an example of the code for protecting the flag, P27 wrote, 'We cannot allow anyone to look askance at our homeland and our flag.' As an example of the code for taking pride in the flag, P25 states: 'If we can wave the Turkish flag with pride, we owe this pride to all our heroic soldiers, foremost among them Atatürk.'

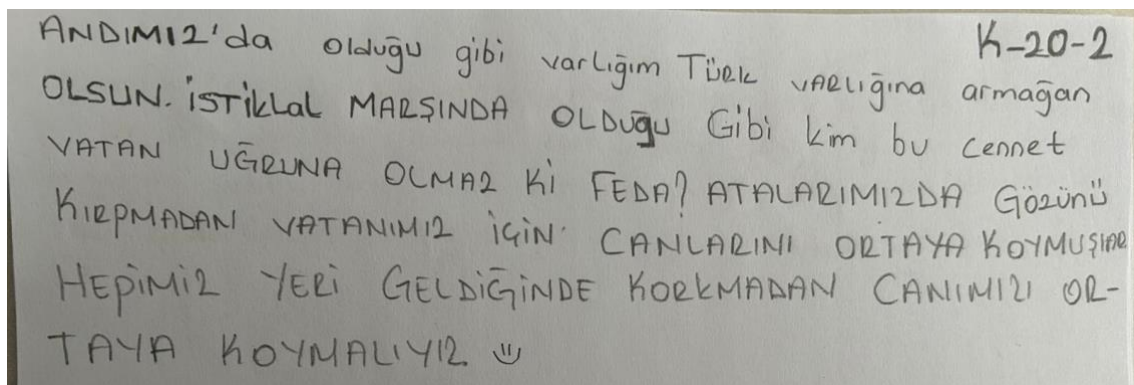


Figure 10. Sample from the research

3.2.5. Sub-theme: expression using literary arts

The sub-theme of expression, which is one of the six sub-themes of the main theme of ways of expressing love for the flag, encompasses the codes "use of set phrases, use of figurative meanings, use of riddles".

Table 11.

Expression using literary arts

Codes	f
Use of clichés	9
Use of figurative meanings	8
Use of riddles	1
Total	18

Table 11 shows that the sub-theme of expression using literary arts encompasses the codes 'use of set phrases and use of figurative meanings'. For example, P9, who uses set phrases, states, 'Our forefathers fought as one for our flag without hesitation,' and P11 states, '...the square was like a family gathering'. As examples of the code for use of figurative meanings, P19 wrote, 'The enemies united and attacked the flag' and 'I will hold the flag high like Ulubatlı Hasan.' P15, who used riddles, wrote, 'They plucked the moon and stars from the sky and placed them in our blood. What is the answer to this riddle? The flag.'

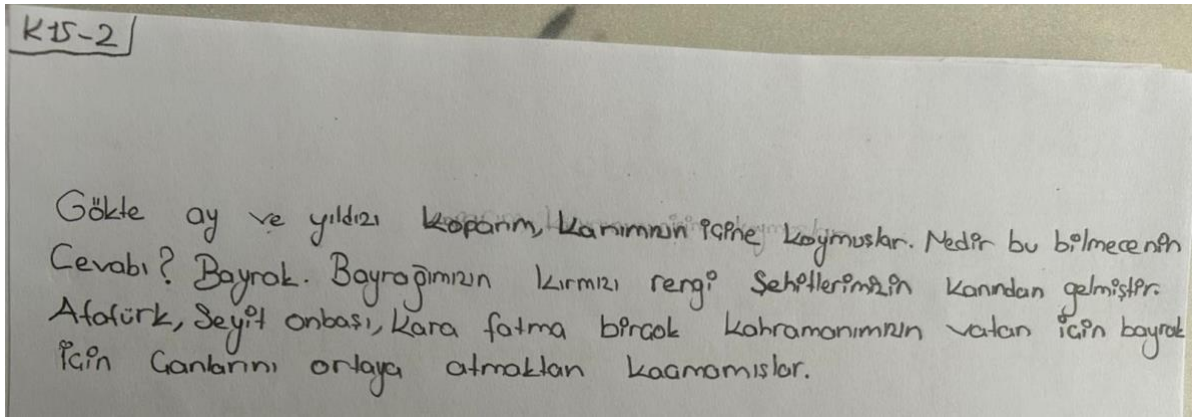


Figure 11. Sample from the research

3.2.6. Sub-theme: epic expression

The epic narrative sub-theme, one of the six sub-themes of the main theme of ways of expressing love for the flag, encompasses the codes of "getting to know our heroes, drawing on legends, knowing epics".

Table 12.

Epic expression

Codes	f
Knowing our heroes	16
Drawing on legends	4
Epic knowledge	3
Total	23

Table 12 shows that the epic narrative sub-theme encompasses the codes 'getting to know our heroes, drawing on legends, and knowing epics'. The vast majority of participants who wrote in the epic narrative form mentioned our heroes. For example, P30 stated, 'As we have seen in the heroes we have watched and brought to life, our heroes sacrificed their lives without hesitation for the love of their country and flag. Kürşat stormed the palace with only a few men,' and P26 stated, 'I will hold the flag high like Ulubatlı Hasan.' As examples of the code of utilising legends, P16 wrote, 'Kara Fatma formed an army with Turkish women on the front line and fought against the enemy,' and P18 wrote, 'Nene Hatun thought more about her homeland and flag than her baby in the cradle.' Examples of epics include P24, which states, 'In the Ergenekon epic taught by our teacher...' and P25, which states, 'If we can proclaim the slogan "Çanakkale is impassable" to the whole world and proudly wave the Turkish flag, we owe this pride to all our heroic soldiers, especially Atatürk.'

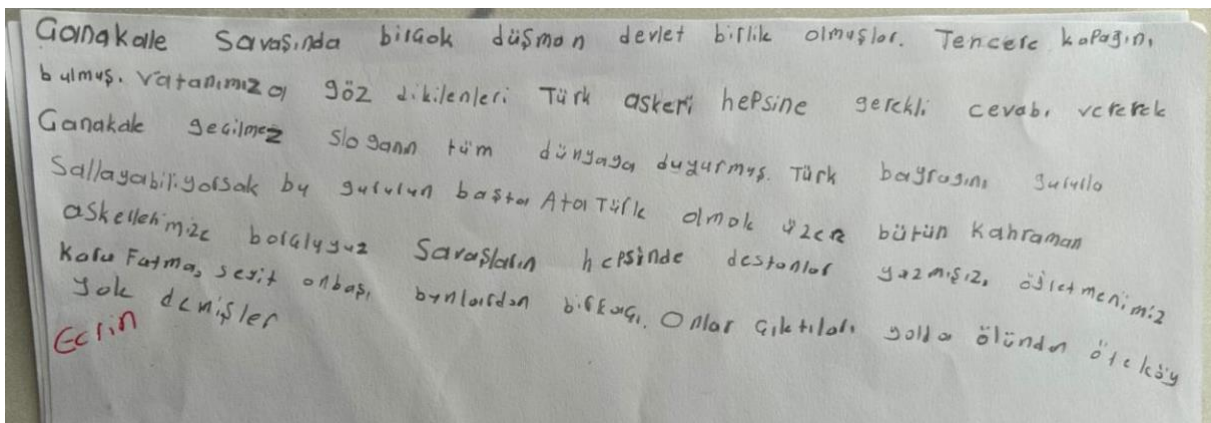


Figure 12. Sample from the research

4. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the findings of the research, discussions based on the analyses conducted, and recommendations for readers and researchers. The results are presented below, based on the data obtained within the scope of the sub-objectives of the research and categorised under the main themes that emerged.

In this study, which examined students' levels of knowledge regarding cultural language elements, the frequency with which they apply this knowledge to express their love for their homeland and flag, and the ways in which they express this love, data were collected from students through semi-structured interviews and essay writing. The data were analysed using content analysis to derive the results. Two main themes emerged: forms of expression regarding love for the homeland and forms of expression regarding love for the flag. The sub-themes of these were: expression using simple language, explanatory expression, expression incorporating emotions, enthusiastic and passionate expression, epic expression, and expression utilising literary arts. Whilst conveying their knowledge, the students used explanatory narration; however, when expressing their love for the homeland and the flag, they employed narrative styles that incorporated emotions, epic narration, and enthusiastic, passionate narration. It was also observed that they made use of proverbs and idioms when expressing their feelings. During this research, it was observed that as students worked on national topics, their sensitivity increased and they became more enthusiastic. It was noted that in the sentences they constructed in their compositions, whilst expressing their love for their country and flag, they demonstrated knowledge of the legendary stories in our country's history and took pride in them.

A review of the literature reveals that similar studies have not been conducted at primary school level. Given the lack of research on this topic at primary school level, this study is expected to fill a gap in the field. In their study, Güfta and Kan (2011) examined the frequency with which cultural language elements appear in Year 7 textbooks. They concluded that proverbs, which are cultural language elements, were used infrequently. Similarly, this study concludes that proverbs are rarely included in Year 4 textbooks, and consequently, pupils' knowledge of proverbs is low. On the other hand, Matan (2004) similarly concluded in his research that proverbs and idioms were insufficiently represented in 5th grade textbooks. Baş (2012) examined the vocabulary of Turkish fairy tales in his research. He concluded that cultural language elements are used effectively to ensure that the narrative is lasting and effective. Similarly, this study also found that students who use cultural language elements more frequently have more effective narratives in their compositions. Kiral and Dinçer (2018) aimed to determine the opinions of trainee primary school teachers regarding values education in their study. The responses given by trainee primary school teachers within the scope of values education revealed that love for the homeland and the flag came to the fore. However, it was concluded that almost all trainee primary school teachers stated that values education was necessary and insufficient. Similarly, this study also recommends that more emphasis should be placed on national values.

4.1. Forms of expression of love for one's country: results according to main theme

When examining the first and second compositions written by the students, it was observed that they used the following forms of expression to convey their love for their homeland: 'simple language, explanatory narration, narration incorporating emotions, enthusiastic and passionate narration, narration using literary arts, and epic (epic) narration.' By looking at the frequency of codes in the first composition, it can be said that they particularly used the form of expression incorporating their emotions, while in the second composition, due to the influence of the education they received, they used the form of expression using literary arts. It can be said that, particularly due to the influence of education, they frequently used proverbs and idioms.

4.2. Forms of expression of flag love: results according to main theme

When examining the first and second compositions written by the students, it was observed that they used the following forms of expression to convey their love for the flag: 'simple language, explanatory narration, narration incorporating emotions, enthusiastic and passionate narration, narration using literary arts, and epic (heroic) narration.' By looking at the frequency of codes in the first composition, it can be said that they particularly used the form of expression incorporating their emotions, while in the second composition, it can be said that they used the epic form of expression, partly due to the effect of the education they received. In particular, it can be said that they frequently used the stories, legends and epics of our heroes.

4.3. The use of cultural language elements and vocabulary development

An analysis of the data obtained from semi-structured interviews and written compositions reveals that, thanks to the cultural language activities carried out in lessons, students use cultural language elements more frequently. In particular, students have used proverbs and idioms to express themselves more meaningfully. Students cited the phrase "it sounds more aesthetic" as the reason for using cultural language elements. Another student stated, "I am able to express what I want to say better." It is also evident that the activities carried out have enhanced the students' vocabulary. When the two different compositions they wrote were analysed, a significant increase was also observed in the numerical data. During the interviews, it was also observed that they used different and new words when expressing themselves. In conclusion, when the compositions written before and after the training are analysed, it can be said that their level of knowledge regarding cultural language elements has developed alongside the training.

One limitation of this study is that the sample size could have been larger. A number of recommendations can be made based on this study. Considering the findings section, it has been observed that writing compositions enhances vocabulary; therefore, it is recommended that composition-writing activities appropriate to the students' levels be organised in every class. It has been observed that the use of cultural language elements, particularly proverbs and idioms, contributes to narrative styles; therefore, these should be incorporated into the topics in line with the lesson's objectives. It has been found that our heroes and epics increase students' interest in and attention to the subject; therefore, these should be utilised to focus and motivate students in

the lesson, in accordance with the programme's aims. From the very first year of education, teaching programmes should include games and music activities that will enable students to learn about and pass on culture in a manner appropriate to their level, thereby building national identity. Students should be encouraged to engage in frequent writing activities to develop their self-expression and communication skills. In particular, lessons in Turkish, Social Studies, Life Skills and Music should include in-class and out-of-class activities that are appropriate to the learning outcomes and will help students embrace their culture and contribute to the formation of a national identity. Competitions should be organised in schools or at the ministry level on a date that is meaningful for our country, with the aim of ensuring cultural unity and increasing national identity awareness, taking into account the opinions of academics. It can be suggested that more space be given to reading and writing activities in Turkish lessons to develop students' vocabulary.

Research and Publication Ethics Statement

This study complied with research and publication ethics. Approval was received from Anadolu University for his research. (Date:14.06.2022; Protocol No:330233).

Contribution Rates of Authors to the Article

This article had two authors and derived from the master's thesis conducted by the first author under the supervision of the second author.

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