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TURN-TAKING IN THE TEACHING OF TURKISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop students' speaking skills in the field of Turkish as a foreign language, with a particular focus on social-pragmatic language functions such as active listening, maintaining conversations, and expressing thoughts. It is of vital importance to systematically teach foreign language learners the turn-taking function—which is naturally acquired in the native language through everyday life—in appropriate contexts. However, reviews of the literature and teaching materials indicate that current Turkish as a Foreign Language programs and textbooks address the stages of this complex and dynamic interaction skill (initiation, maintenance, and closure) and related language functions under the general umbrella of speaking skills without sufficient focus. This pedagogical gap limits learners' ability to engage in fluent communication in real-life situations outside of the controlled classroom environment. The primary objective of this study is to experimentally determine the effectiveness of a technology-supported application for turn-taking. To this end, a pre-test was first administered to learners in the experimental and control groups, who were studying Turkish as a foreign language at the B2 level. Next, the experimental group received training in turn-taking, and at the end of the training, a post-test was administered to both groups. During the experimental phase, the effect of interactive videos created using the Edpuzzle Web 2.0 tool on students' ability to initiate, maintain, and conclude conversations was measured through pre- and post-test administrations of the Conversation Completion Test developed by the researcher. The findings indicate that the training provided via Edpuzzle was successful for the students. The results support the need to give more comprehensive attention to turn-taking strategies in Turkish as a Foreign Language materials, in line with the requirements of the communicative approach.

Keywords: Teaching Turkish to foreigners, turn taking, language functions.

This study is derived from the ongoing doctoral dissertation prepared by Esma Yağmur Yelli under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Filiz Mete at Hacettepe University, Department of Turkish Education.

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INTRODUCTION

Communication among people is a fundamental necessity brought about by their nature as social beings, rather than a mere choice. As a social being, a person needs communication to meet their emotional, physical, and mental needs, to express themselves, and to interact with their environment. In this context, traditional methods in foreign language teaching that focused solely on grammar rules and vocabulary memorization for many years have been questioned for being inadequate (Taylor, 1983), leaving their place to the communicative approach, which advocates that language is a tool for social action. Diller İçin Avrupa Ortak Başvuru Metni (D-AOBM), which ensures the standardization of language teaching in European countries and serves as an important reference text, has also adopted this communicative approach by defining learners as social actors who perform actions in the target language (D-AOBM, 2020).

Success in language learning is generally measured in the context of speaking skills (Nunan, 1989; Florez, 1999). However, among the language skills consisting of comprehension and expression dimensions, speaking stands out as the skill that foreign language learners struggle with and feel anxious about the most due to its multifaceted, instantaneous, and complex structure (Engin, 2006; Karakoyun, 2014; Ladousse, 2002; Şen and Boylu, 2015; Horwitz et al., 1986; Koch and Terrell, 1991). Effective speaking is possible not only with the formal and grammatical correctness of the language, but also with knowing what to say, where, to whom, and how; that is, with pragmatic competence (Taşköprü, 2017). Çelik (2019) states that the speaker must first listen to the person they are communicating with, then respond immediately according to the course of the conversation, and that this time constraint makes speaking different from other skills.

The building block of this complex pragmatic competence and natural communication is the "söz sırası alma" (turn-taking) mechanism. Turn-taking, which enables participants in an interaction to skillfully switch their roles, consists of three basic stages: initiation, maintenance, and closure. According to Levinson (2016), turn-taking behavior is a natural process acquired spontaneously in daily life starting from infancy in the mother tongue. However, in foreign language teaching, the instantaneous, context-appropriate, and natural use of these functions requires direct and systematic instruction due to cultural and linguistic differences. Atar (2017) also emphasizes the critical importance of turn-taking for the success of an interaction. This is because turns are not random; they are connected to the preceding discourse and organize communication by shaping the subsequent discourse (Sert et al., 2015; Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974).

Despite this fundamental basis of the communicative approach and the critical role of turn-taking in interactional success, it is observed that the stages of this pragmatic skill (initiation, maintenance, closure) and the associated language functions are not systematically addressed in the current curricula and textbooks in the field of teaching Türkçe as a foreign language. When the relevant literature is reviewed, it is seen that the number of studies on language functions is small, and the existing research generally remains at the level of textbook analysis (Deniz and Çekici, 2019; Cerit, 2021; Çekici, 2021; Deniz and Demir, 2021; Polat, 2010). Even if there are studies offering strategy and activity suggestions related to speaking skills (Özmen, Güven and Dürer, 2017; Şenyiğit and Okur,

2019; Kocayanak, 2021), it has been determined that the "turn taking" mechanism in conversations has not been studied in detail and in its functional dimensions under a separate heading. In this study, which utilized Edpuzzle—a Web 2.0 tool—to teach turn-taking skills (Hauser 2009; Silverajah and Govindaraj, 2018; Yesyika, 2017; Ingram and Elliot, 2014), an increase in student achievement was observed in subjects such as foreign languages and mathematics.

This theoretical and pedagogical gap causes foreign language learners to remain limited to formal competence and lack the skills to communicate fluently, naturally, and culturally appropriately in real-life contexts outside the controlled classroom environment. For these stated reasons, it is important to analyze how the turn-taking stages are represented in B2-level textbooks. After this situational assessment, revealing the effect of experimental applications supported by interactive technology tools like Web 2.0 (Edpuzzle, etc.) to develop learners' speaking and pragmatic competencies is deemed necessary to address this significant deficiency in the literature.

This study, which was designed to address a gap in the literature, sought to answer the following questions.

1. What are the overall performance levels of the experimental group on the Speech Completion Test in the pre-test and post-test?
2. What are the performance levels of the experimental group on the Speech Completion Test during the speech initiation phase in the pre-test and post-test?
3. What are the pre-test and post-test performance levels of the experimental group on the Speech Completion Test during the speech initiation phase?
4. What are the pre-test and post-test performance levels of the experimental group on the Speech Completion Test during the speech maintenance phase?
5. What are the overall pre-test and post-test success levels of the control group on the Speech Completion Test?
6. What are the pre-test and post-test success levels of the control group on the Speech Completion Test during the conversation initiation phase?
7. What are the pre-test and post-test performance levels of the control group on the Speech Completion Test during the speech continuation phase?
8. What are the pre-test and post-test performance levels of the control group on the Speech Completion Test during the speech termination phase?
9. Is there a significant difference between the scores obtained by the experimental and control groups on the pre-test and post-test of the Speech Completion Test?

METHOD

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of interactive videos created using the Edpuzzle Web 2.0 tool on learners' turn-taking in Turkish as a foreign language instruction.

This study was designed as a quantitative study. The use of quantitative methods in research offers certain advantages. The most significant advantages of quantitative methods are the measurability, generalizability, reproducibility, and objectivity of the research data.

Experimental studies are those that reveal the cause-and-effect relationship between variables Ertuğrul, 2003). (In the pre-test-post-test experimental design with a control group, there are at least two groups: the first is the experimental group, and the second is the control group. According to Karasar (2010), while different practices are used in the experimental group during lessons, the process continues traditionally in the control group. Pre- and post-test measurements are conducted for both groups. Due to the use of existing classes and the lack of random assignment of groups, this study was conducted using a “quasi-experimental design” (pre-test-post-test control group design).

Study Group

The study group consists of an experimental and a control group comprising learners studying Turkish as a foreign language at the B2 level at language teaching centers such as TÖMER and DİLMER in state universities in the province of Ankara, as well as faculty members teaching Turkish as a foreign language in the same province. Table 1 presents the gender distribution of the experimental and control groups. Since the criteria for forming the study groups involved being a student or an instructor at university-affiliated language centers at the B2 level, a purposive sampling method was used.

Table 1. Study Group

Gender	Experimental Group	Control Group	Total
Female	23	21	44
Male	12	13	25
Total	35	34	69

A total of 69 participants learning Turkish as a foreign language were included in this study. 50.72% of the participants (n = 35) were in the experimental group, and 49.28% (n = 34) were in the control group. Of the participants, 43 were female (62.3%) and 26 were male (37.7%). When examining the age distribution, 42 participants were in the 18–21 age range (60.9%), 15 participants were in the 21–25 age range (21.7%), 8 participants were in the 25–28 age range (11.6%), and 4 participants were 28 years of age or older (5.8%). When evaluated in terms of length of residence in Turkey, it was determined that 62 participants had lived in Turkey for less than one year (89.9%), 5 had resided there for 1–3 years (7.2%), and 2 had been in Turkey for more than 3 years (2.9%).

The experimental group of the study consists of 23 female (65.71%) and 12 male (34.29%) students. The control group consists of 21 female (61.76%) and 13 male (38.24%) students.

Data Collection Process

The data collection process for this study, which aims to determine and improve the performance of learners of Turkish as a foreign language in using language functions during the initiation, maintenance, and termination phases of conversations in various contexts, is described in detail below.

After the research problem was identified and a review of the relevant literature was conducted, an application was submitted to the Ethics Committee of the Institute of Educational Sciences at Hacettepe University, and ethical approval (Appendix A) was obtained via letter No. E-51944218-050-00003907677 dated November 27, 2024. Subsequently, discussions were held with the universities where the pilot and main studies would be conducted, and official permissions were obtained.

Data Collection Tools

For this study, which investigated the language functions students use to take turns during conversation, a literature review, the D-AOBM, the Turkish as a Foreign Language Teaching Program, and an analysis of textbooks were conducted. As a result, the Pre-Test Speech Completion Test, prepared for the pilot study, was administered to both the experimental and control groups.

Following the pre-test, students in the experimental group were shown 8 turn-taking videos—at least one video per week for 4 weeks—via the Edpuzzle Web 2.0 program, and they were asked questions related to the videos and the topic.

The reason for using the Edpuzzle Web 2.0 tool for interactive videos is that it provides free content in an interactive manner—rather than a one-way format—for both teachers and students; it is a tool capable of incorporating various question types, such as multiple-choice, short-answer, and true-false questions, by pausing the video. The videos shown via Edpuzzle were prepared using clips from films recommended by MEB for teachers and prospective teachers, such as “Yerdeki Yıldızlar ” and “Hababam Sınıfı Sınıfta Kaldı”.

In addition, learners were asked to create dialogues with different content within the same contexts. Learners engaged in interactive conversation through activities such as “whisper down the line” using dialogue texts created by adding one sentence to each of the learners’ statements, “impromptu role-play and dramatization” using role cards with written tasks that learners selected at random, “answering with the last letter of the question asked by the other person and asking a new question.” In the control group, however, lessons continued as usual. At the end of the intervention, a final test was administered to both groups. Based on the results of the implementation and tests, the items were analyzed, and it was decided to remove inappropriate items from the tests. Draft forms were also administered to students and instructors, and it was decided to remove inappropriate questions from the forms. Finally, the finalized tests and forms were administered to the experimental and control groups for the main implementation.

Data Analysis

In the experimental section of the study, the data were prepared for analysis before the research hypotheses were tested. To conduct the normality test, missing and incomplete data were first identified and removed. The assumption of normality was verified using skewness and kurtosis coefficients; since the values for all variables fell within the range of +2 to -2, the distribution was considered normal. Outliers were checked using the z-standard score, and the dependent samples t-test, independent samples t-test, and one-way ANOVA were used in the analysis of the research questions. The IBM SPSS 26 statistical software was used for data analysis.

FINDINGS

Table 2. Comparison of Pre-test Means for the Experimental and Control Groups

Measurement	Group	Median	Standard deviation	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
Pre-Test	Experimental group	9.37	4.05	.26	.39
	Control group	9.68	4.10		

An examination of Table 2 reveals that no significant difference was found between the groups in the pretest ($p > .05$). This is the desired outcome in the research design used in this study. In other words, the absence of a statistical difference between the groups in the pretest indicates that the groups are equivalent.

Table 3. Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores for the Experimental Group

Group	Measurement	Median	Standart deviation	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
Experimental group	Pre-Test	9.37	3.97	2.48	.01
	Post-Test	11.96	4.10		

An examination of Table 3 reveals that, according to the results of the paired t-test, there is a significant difference between the mean scores on the pretest and the mean scores on the posttest for the experimental group ($p < .05$). When comparing the pretest and posttest means for the groups, this significant difference favors the posttest.

Table 4. Pre-test and Post-test Achievement Levels of the Experimental Group at the Initial Stage

Group	Measurement	Median	Standart deviation	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
Experimantal group	Pre-Test	3.56	1.26	1.83	.01
	Post-Test	5.01	1.45		

* $p < .05$

An examination of Table 4 reveals that, according to the results of the paired t-test for the experimental group, there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores in the initiation phase—one of the stages of turn-taking. When comparing the group's pre-test and post-test means, this significant difference favors the post-test.

Table 5. Pre-test and Post-test Achievement Levels of the Experimental Group During the Maintenance Phase

Group	Measurement	Median	Standart deviation	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
Experimental Group	Pre-Test	2.89	1.50	.98	.000
	Post-Test	4.18	1.14		

**p*<.05

An examination of Table 5 reveals that, according to the results of the paired t-test for the experimental group, there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores in the initiation phase—one of the stages of turn-taking. When comparing the group's pre-test and post-test means, this significant difference favors the post-test.

Table 6. Pre-test and Post-test Achievement Levels of the Experimental Group at the Final Stage

Group	Measurement	Median	Standart deviation	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
Experimantal group	Pre-Test	3.40	1.94	1.78	.08
	Post-Test	4.03	1.30		

**p*>.05

An examination of Table 6 reveals that, according to the results of the paired t-test for the experimental group, there is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores in the initiation phase—one of the stages of turn-taking.

Table 7. Comparison of the Control Group's Mean Scores Using a Paired t-Test

Group	Measurement	Median	Standart deviation	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
Control	Pre-Test	11.96	4.05	.26	.39
	Post-Test	11.78	2.98		

**p*>.05

An examination of Table 7 reveals that, according to the results of the paired t-test for the control group, there is no significant difference between the mean scores on the pre-test and the mean scores on the post-test.

Table 8. Pre-test and Post-test Achievement Levels in the Control Group During the Initial Phase

Group	Measurement	Median	Standart deviation	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
Control	Pre-Test	2.76	1.57	4.14	.01*
	Post-Test	4.11	1.62		

**p*<.05

An examination of Table 8 reveals that, according to the results of the paired t-test for the control group, there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores in the initiation phase—one of the stages of turn-taking. When comparing the group's pre-test and post-test means, this significant difference favors the post-test.

Table 9. Pre-test and Post-test Achievement Levels in the Maintenance Phase of the Control Group

Group	Measurement	Median	Standart deviation	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
Control group	Pre-Test	4.35	1.47	1.87	.07
	Post-Test	3.58	1.39		

**p*>.05

An examination of Table 9 reveals that, according to the results of the paired t-test for the control group, there is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test measurements in the maintenance phase—one of the stages of turn-taking.

Table 10. Pre-test and Post-test Achievement Levels of the Control Group at the Final Stage

Group	Measurement	Median	Standart deviaton	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
Control group	Pre-Test	3.23	1.85	.46	.64
	Post-Test	3.05	1.68		

* $p > .05$

An examination of Table 10 reveals that, according to the results of the paired t-test for the control group, there is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test measurements in the maintenance phase—one of the stages of turn-taking.

Table 11. Comparison of the Pre-test and Post-test Means of the Experimental and Control Groups

Group	Measurement	Median	Standart deviaton	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
Pre-Test	Exp. Group	9.37	4.05	.26	.39
	Cont. Group	9.68	4.10		
Post-Test	Exp. Group	11.96	2.97	2.72	.01*
	Cont. Group	9.89	3.97		

An examination of Table 10 reveals that no significant difference was found between the groups in the pretest ($p > .05$). This is the desired outcome in the research design used in this study. In other words, the absence of a statistical difference between the groups in the pretest indicates that the groups are equivalent.

However, a significant difference was observed between the groups in the post-test ($p < .05$). The results showed that the mean scores of the experimental group were higher than those of the control group.

CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION

In this section, the findings of an experimental study aimed at developing turn-taking strategies among B2-level students in Turkish as a Foreign Language instruction are discussed within the framework of the relevant literature and the principles of the communicative approach, and the study's main conclusions are presented.

Communication is an essential process that people rely on to meet their social, emotional, and cognitive needs. For learners of a foreign language to communicate fluently and naturally in the target language—just as they do in their native language—depends largely on their ability to develop social and pragmatic skills. However, reviews of the existing literature and materials indicate that Turkish as a Foreign Language textbooks do not sufficiently address the complex stages of speaking skills—such as initiating, maintaining, and concluding a conversation—in a systematic manner, a situation that challenges students in real-life contexts outside the classroom.

Designed to address this pedagogical gap, this study examined the effect of interactive videos created using the Edpuzzle Web 2.0 tool on the turn-taking skills of B2-level students using a “pre-test-post-test controlled group quasi-experimental design.” The data obtained from the study unequivocally demonstrated that technology-

supported and interactive applications contribute directly and positively to students' pragmatic development in foreign language instruction.

The Impact of Edpuzzle and Interactive Applications on Overall Achievement

One of the most striking findings of the study was observed in terms of overall sentence completion success. While no significant difference was found between the pre-test (Mean: 11.96) and post-test (Mean: 11.78) scores of the control group, which continued to use traditional teaching methods ($p > .05$) the experimental group, which received instruction for four weeks using clips from films such as "Stars on the Ground" and "Hababam Class Failed," which provide a cultural context via Edpuzzle, showed a significant and substantial increase in post-test scores (Mean: 11.96) compared to the pre-test (Mean: 9.37) ($p < .05$). When comparing the groups' final test averages, it was found that the experimental group's performance was statistically significantly higher than that of the control group.

This finding is highly consistent with the nature of the communicative approach emphasized by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Foreign language learners internalize language functions much more effectively not merely by knowing grammar rules, but when they encounter opportunities for two-way interaction—such as pausing videos to ask questions or actively participating in conversation through multiple-choice or open-ended prompts. Furthermore, it has been concluded that supplementary activities such as whispering games, impromptu role-playing, and dramatization help shift students' speaking practice from a mechanical structure to a natural flow.

Discussion of Findings by Turn-Taking Stages

In-depth analyses of the study reveal that different dynamics are at play in the three core components of turn-taking strategy—"initiation, maintenance, and termination".

1. Initiation Stage: According to the research findings, a significant difference in favor of the post-test was observed between the pre-test and post-test scores of both the experimental group and the control group during the initiation stage. The fact that improvement was also observed in the control group during this stage suggests that basic initiation functions—such as "greeting, joining the conversation, and asking about well-being," which are part of the B2-level Turkish curriculum—can be acquired to some extent even within the traditional classroom flow. Through routine dialogue practices in the classroom setting, students are able to achieve a basic level of pragmatic awareness regarding how to initiate a conversation. However, the technology-supported process used by the experimental group has bolstered this momentum of success at this stage.

2. Maintenance Phase: This phase represented the most critical threshold distinguishing the control and experimental groups in the study. No significant improvement ($p > .05$) was observed in the control group, which continued with traditional education, in terms of conversation maintenance. In contrast, the experimental group,

which received interactive video instruction, showed a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) in favor of the post-test in this phase. Maintaining a conversation requires high-level cognitive and social skills such as active listening, not interrupting the other person, staying on topic, and providing appropriate feedback. While traditional textbooks tend to encourage simply reading through the text, in the experimental group, pausing videos using Edpuzzle and engaging in dialogue-sustaining activities—such as students “responding with the last letter of the question asked by the other person and then asking a new question”—helped students grasp this challenging interaction skill. This finding supports the literature’s critique that traditional methods (control group) fall short in developing students’ capacity for immediate response and sustaining a conversation.

3. Termination Phase: One of the most striking findings of the study is that, during the termination phase, no significant difference emerged between the experimental group ($p > .05$) and the control group ($p > .05$). The fact that success did not increase in either group is a point the author/researcher should carefully consider. There may be several underlying reasons for this: Ending a conversation in accordance with appropriate social norms and cultural etiquette is one of the most challenging pragmatic processes for foreign language learners. Expressions for “saying goodbye” or “wrapping up the conversation” in a foreign language represent one of the final stages in achieving the natural fluency of native speakers. Additionally, it is thought that in the total of 8 videos shown over 4 weeks and in the activities conducted, the focus was heavily concentrated on initiating and maintaining a conversation, and insufficient emphasis may have been placed on strategies for gracefully concluding a conversation (such as using time constraints as an excuse or parting with good wishes). This finding demonstrates that the conclusion phase of turn-taking requires much more specialized training.

In summary, an interactive learning process supported by Web 2.0 tools such as Edpuzzle has significantly improved the overall speaking performance of B2-level learners of Turkish as a foreign language—particularly their strategies for initiating and sustaining conversations—compared to students in traditional classroom settings. However, improving the speech-closing phase requires interventions based on more sustained and specific strategies.

SUGGESTIONS

In light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been developed for educators, instructional designers, and future researchers in this field:

- 1) This study was limited to students at the B2 level. Longitudinal studies could be conducted to examine how turn-taking skills develop starting from the basic level (A1–A2) and how they are applied at advanced levels (C1–C2) through the use of idioms and proverbs.
- 2) In a study conducted by Yelli et al. (2025), it was found that the “initiation, maintenance, and termination” stages are only briefly covered under the heading of “speaking skills” in current textbooks. The speaking sections

of Turkish language teaching materials for levels B2 and above should be restructured with due consideration for pragmatic language functions and turn-taking rules.

3) When teaching speaking skills in the classroom, the focus should not be limited to grammar or vocabulary. Topics such as “how to start a conversation,” “how to interject without interrupting,” and “how to keep a conversation going” should be taught as explicit strategies—not implicit ones—in line with the communicative approach.

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