

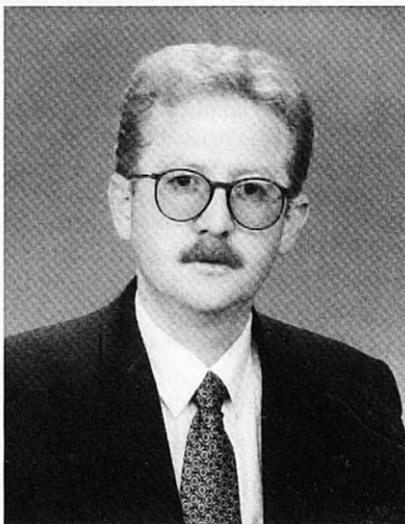
Reading and Library Usage Habits of Students Whose Mother Tongue is Turkish in Vienna, Austria

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Introduction

Many developed countries have serious problems based on their multicultural structure. In particular, they are all trying to solve the



cultural adaptation problems of the various ethnic communities for them be able to live together. All these efforts to solve cultural adaptation problems should be multi-dimensional and long term. Reading and library usage habits can be thought of as factors that have important roles in fulfilling the multicultural structure in a country. The effects of these habits on the cultural adaptation of children are usually seen through the agency of their educational achievements and language development. Education and language are the main parts of a culture. In other words, culture is a product of education and language.

An immigrant child's identity must be plotted on a number of axes – poor/rich, primitive rural/megalopolis urban, nonliterate oral/multilevel academic. The child may come from a country ... whose values and attitudes are at total variance and whose language is completely unknown in the new land. (Wertheimer and Foy 1980: 336)

Learning to live in a multicultural society is a basic part of every child's education. (Campbell 1980: 208). According to Stadler (1980: 330)

reading potentially enlarges a child's vocabulary, gives a base of grammatical competence, enhances the ability to handle schoolwork, and advances thinking in both languages.

Reading is important for both children of the host society and foreign children:

Reading books written for children of the host society can help the foreign child to understand the behavior standards and ideals of the native children. Reading books written for his own nationality, the child learns to understand his cultural traditions so that a possible reintegration is made easier, and so that the child feels reassured in his first cultural identity. (Stadler 1980:331)

In brief, reading

- will develop children's vocabulary, both in their mother tongue and in the language of their country of residence
- will provide a base (background) for the grammatical efficiency of the children in both languages
- will contribute to the thinking in both languages
- will raise the level of communication in both languages
- will help the children to learn the rules of behaviour and the life-style of the country they live in.

It can be seen that all of these points mean direct or indirect contributions to the cultural adaptation of the children.

Library usage can have these functions in cultural adaptation:

- to develop intercultural understanding and relationships
- to facilitate the sharing of cultures
- to increase cultural diversity
- to provide social integration
- to give educational support to language development. (Mylopoulos 1985:23-24).

Library usage can also help the children to transform their marginality into a positive experience (Simsova 1980:247; 1980a) because libraries are the most appropriate agents of innovation and socialization (Fest 1980:202). In other words, the library has the duty to help newcomers reduce linguistic and cultural barriers and to facilitate their acculturation and integration (Albert 1984:120).

The reading and library usage habits of the children of ethnic groups in multicultural societies must be seen as the main parts of the national education and cultural policy in connection with these contributions.

The outcome of our research stresses the importance of reading and library usage habits in the cultural adaptation of children.

Aims and Scope of the Research

The main aims of the research, which was carried out in 1999, were:

- to find out about the reading and public library usage habits of students of Turkish ethnic origin in seven primary schools in Vienna
- to identify in detail any problems related to these habits
- to determine the effects of these habits on their language development, educational achievement and consequently their cultural adaptation
- to develop suggestions for solutions to is any problems which may be identified.

The data concerning the questionnaires distributed to various groups

Groups	Questionnaires		
	Distributed	Returned	Response rate (%)
Students	140	108	77.1
Parents	140	94	67.1
Class teachers	20	17	85.0
Turkish (lesson) teachers	7	7	100.0
School directors	7	7	100.0
Public librarians	12	12	100.0
School librarians	1	1	100.0
Total	327	246	75.2

Table 1. Response ratio of the questionnaires

and the response ratios is provided in Table 1.

Data were collected through questionnaires in seven primary schools in Vienna. Questionnaires were completed by 108 students (in 4th class - 9/10 years old), 94 parents, seventeen class teachers, seven Turkish (lesson) teachers of Turkish nationality, seven school directors, twelve public librarians and one school librarian. At the time of the survey there were 5,333 Turkish primary school students in the 1st-4th classes in Vienna, of whom 1,300 were in the 4th class. (ÖSTAT 1998; www.statistik.gv.at)

The population of Vienna is 1,611,425, accounting for nearly 20 percent of the total population of Austria, which is 8,121,345. Non-Austrians account for 9.4 percent of Austria's population and 17.8 percent of that of Vienna. Of these, people of Turkish ethnic origin account for 17.6 percent of all non-Austrians in the country and for 15.3 percent of those in Vienna. People of Turkish origin account for 1.6 percent of the total population and 2.7 percent of the population of Vienna. There are 3,711 Turkish children of 9-10 years of age in Austria as a whole, and 1,300 in Vienna. (www.statistik.gv.at. 12 Feb. 2002)

Reading Habits of Turkish Primary Students

Reading frequency is the most useful criterion for measuring reading habits. We used frequencies very

similar to those used by the American Library Association (ALA 1978) as criteria to measure the reading and library usage habits of the students in this research. These are:

- Heavy reader: reads 24 books or more per year (two books or more per month)
- Moderate reader: reads 7-23 books per year (one book per month)
- Rare reader: reads 1-6 books per year (one book or less per two months)
- Non-reader: does not read.
- Heavy user: uses the library 24 times or more per year (twice a month or more)
- Moderate user: uses the library 7-23 times or more per year (once a month)
- Rare user: uses the library 1-6 times or more per year (once every two months or less)
- Non-user: does not use the library.

Data on the reading levels of the students in our research is shown in Table 2.

It is clear from these figures that most of the students do not have

Frequency	%
Non-reader	42.6
One book or less per two months	35.2
One book per month	15.7
Two books or more per month	6.5
Total	100.0

Table 2. Reading frequency of students

Language	N	%
Only German	30	48.4
Both German and Turkish	28	45.2
Only Turkish	3	4.8
Other	1	1.6
Total	62	100.0

Table 3. Language in which students prefer to read

well developed reading habits. Non-readers and those who read only rarely together account for 80 percent of the total. The heavy readers account for the smallest proportion. The teachers' opinions about the reading levels of the students support these data; 70.6 percent of the class teachers and 85.7 percent of the Turkish lesson teachers considered that the majority of the students are non-readers and not heavy readers.

The data concerning the languages in which students prefer to read are shown in Table 3.

It can be seen that about half of the students who have the reading habit prefer to read only German books. Only three students prefer to read only Turkish books. Less than half (45.2 percent) of the students like to read in both languages. Reading in both languages is a positive attitude for their cultural adaptation. Interviews with the students and their teachers, revealed that there are no difficulties in finding German books, but Turkish students generally have a problem finding Turkish books to read. Also, it must be considered that these figures indicate not only what the students prefer, but also the languages in which they are in fact able to read.

Data related to the place where the students prefer to find books to read shows the role of the public library in encouraging reading habits, as shown in Table 4.

It is possible to say that the most important single source of books is the public library. The second is through buying books. Only one of the seven schools studied in this

Where ?	N	%
Public library	26	41.9
Buying	17	27.4
From friends	8	12.9
School library	3	4.8
Class library	3	4.8
Present	3	4.8
Other	2	3.2
Total	62	99.8

Table 4. Where do the students find the books to read?

research has a library. The school or class library is thus not a serious alternative as a place for the students to find books to read. The Turkish lesson teachers said that they usually bring Turkish books to the students from their own libraries.

Public Library Usage by Turkish Primary Students

One of the main aims of our research was to find out about the public library usage of the students. This is as important as their reading habits.

It can be seen that about two-thirds of the students do not use the public library. The proportion of non-users together with rare users amounts to 77 percent of the total. Again, the smallest group is the heavy users. This information was supported by the class teachers, Turkish lesson teachers and public librarians who were interviewed in the research. Because the proportion of non-users is higher than that of non-readers, it can be said that the problem of library usage is bigger than the problem of the reading habits of

Usage frequency	N	%
Twice a month or more	5	4.6
Once a month	20	18.5
Once in 2 months or less	14	13.0
Non-user	69	63.9
Total	108	100.0

Table 6. Purposes of library usage of the students

Usage frequency	N	%
Twice a month or more	5	4.6
Once a month	20	18.5
Once in 2 months or less	14	13.0
Non-user	69	63.9
Total	108	100.0

Table 5. Level of public library usage of the students

the students. The data in Table 5 shows that public libraries are the most important source of materials for students. It means that public libraries play a very important role in improving the reading habits of students. Insufficient use of public libraries therefore appears to be one of the main causes of insufficient reading habits among students.

The students' priorities in using the library for different purposes reflect the current role of the libraries.

Table 6 shows that students usually use the public libraries with the aim of borrowing books. Borrowing CDs and cassettes is not as common as borrowing books. One of the most important reasons why students use public libraries as places to study is because they lack a personal room in their homes. Students may use the public library for more than one purpose on the same occasion, but we tried to determine the primary purpose.

It was also considered important to assess the sufficiency of the libraries concerning the provision of Turkish reading materials.

Turkish materials found?	N	%
None	9	23.1
Very rare	22	56.4
Mostly	6	15.4
All	2	5.1
Total	39	100.0

Table 7. Sufficiency of the libraries concerning Turkish reading materials

Table 7 shows that more than half of the students say they can rarely find Turkish reading materials in public libraries, while nearly a quarter say they cannot find any at all. Those students who can mostly or always find such materials account for slightly more than 20 percent of the total. Other data in our research has proved that the public libraries in Vienna do have enough books in Turkish according to IFLA standards, but the problem is related to the kinds of books provided. Students said that they could not find the kinds of books in which they are interested. In other words, it is seen that there are not enough Turkish books suitable for the students in this age group.

Reading Frequency According to Geographical Origin

Whether the students' family has a geographical background from a rural area (village) or from an urban area (metropolis) has a great impact on the student's cultural structure. In other words, geographical origin also means cultural background.

Analysis of the data in Table 8 shows that more than 82 percent of the students' families came from villages and small towns and less than 18 percent from large cities. Geographical origin appears to be closely related to the students' reading habits; more than half the students whose families are from villages do not read at all, and only 2 percent of them have a strong reading habit, whereas those whose families are from large cities read much more.

The educational level of their parents is another socio-economic factor that can affect the students' reading habits. The research showed that some 10 percent of the mothers and somewhat less than 5 percent of the fathers were illiterate, while 69 percent of mothers and 48 percent of fathers had graduated from primary school and 21 percent of mothers and 48 percent of fathers had graduated from high

Reading Frequency	Geographical Background					
	Rural		Small Town		Large City	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Non-reader	25	51.0	14	35.0	7	36.8
One book or less in 2 months	20	40.8	14	35.0	4	21.1
One book per month	3	6.1	8	20.0	6	31.6
2 books or more per month	1	2.0	4	10.0	2	10.5
Total	49	99.9	40	100.0	19	100.0

Table 8. Reading frequency of the students according to geographical backgrounds of their families

Who encourages?	To Read Book		To Use Library	
	N	%	N	%
Parents	20	18.5	11	10.2
Brother-Sister	1	0.9	7	6.5
Friends	1	0.9	2	1.9
Teachers	23	21.3	17	15.7
Other	20	18.5	9	8.3
Nobody	43	39.8	62	57.4
Total	108	99.9	108	100.0

Table 9. Who encourages students to read and to use libraries?

Reading Frequency of Students	How much do your parents read books?							
	Don't read		Rarely		Often		Don't know	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Non-reader	33	60.0	6	16.7	-	-	7	50.0
One book or less per two months	16	29.1	18	50.0	-	-	4	28.6
One book per month	5	9.1	9	25.0	2	66.7	1	7.1
Two books or more per month	1	1.8	3	8.3	1	33.3	2	14.3
Total	55	100.0	36	100.0	3	100.0	14	100.0

Table 10. Effect of the parents' reading habits on students' reading level

school. Only one student's parents (an uncle) had graduated from university. The research showed that nearly 70 percent of the students whose parents had graduated from primary school did not have a reading habit, and more than two-thirds did not have library usage habits, the one student whose uncle had graduated from university had both these habits.

read and to use libraries. The proportions of students who do not receive any support from parents and teachers are very high. Both parents and teachers give less encouragement to students to use libraries than to read books. Also, it can be said that the majority of the students do not receive motivational support from anybody to read and to use the library.

Who Encourages Students to Read and to Use Libraries?

The data showing who encourages the students to read books and use libraries is shown in Table 9.

It can be seen that neither parents nor teachers give sufficient encouragement to the students to

Reading Level of the Families and its Effect on Students

According to the research data, more than 84 percent of parents either do not read books at all, or do so only rarely. The effects of this on the students are shown in Table 10, which shows that 60 percent of the students whose parents

Have you ever failed at school?				
Reading frequency of students	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Non-reader	16	72.7	30	34.9
One book or less per two months	6	27.3	32	37.2
One book per month	-	-	17	19.8
Two books or more per month	-	-	7	8.1
Total	22	100.0	86	100.0

Table 11. Frequency of reading and failure in education

German lesson marks of the students								
Reading Frequency of students	Very Good		Good		Medium		Fail	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Non-reader	-	-	12	25.5	31	63.3	3	75.0
One book or less per two months	2	25.0	20	42.6	15	30.6	1	25.0
One book per month	3	37.5	12	25.5	2	4.1	-	-
Two books or more per month	3	37.5	3	6.4	1	2.0	-	-
Total	8	100.0	47	100.0	49	100.0	4	100.0

Table 12. German lesson marks and reading frequency of the students

German lesson marks of the students								
Library Usage Frequency	Very Good		Good		Medium		Fail	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Non-user	3	37.5	29	61.7	34	69.4	3	75.0
Once or less per two months	-	-	8	17.0	6	12.2	1	25.0
Once per month	2	25.0	9	19.1	8	16.3	-	-
Twice or more per month	3	37.5	1	2.1	1	2.0	-	-
Total	8	100.0	47	99.9	49	99.9	4	100.0

Table 13. German marks and library usage frequency of the students.

do not read books at all are non-readers. In other words, if their parents read they read; if not, they do not. It is clear that the reading habits of their families affect the students' levels of reading.

Reading Habits and Educational Achievement

The reading habit is not the only factor that affects the educational achievements of the students, but the data shows that it can be one of the important factors in educational achievement.

Table 11 shows that, while nearly 73 percent of students who have failed at school are non-readers,

none of the students who read one book a month or more have failed. About two-thirds of the students who never failed are readers at some level. That a good reader is a good student is the classic finding in reading research. (Bamberger 1990:3)

Reading Habit and Language Development

There is a well known relationship between reading habit and language development.

As seen in Table 12, having a reading habit has a positive correlation with the students' marks in German. There is nobody whose

German mark is 'very good' among the non-readers, whereas the students who read two books or more per month account for nearly 38 percent of those who received such a mark. All the students who failed in German are either non-readers or read one book or less per month, while more than 63 percent of those students who received a 'medium' mark in German are non-readers and only 2 percent of them are heavy readers.

In contrast to the relationship between reading levels and success in German, the relationships between the level of library usage and the marks students get in German are weak and complex. Table 13 shows that there are no heavy or moderate library users among the students who failed in German, who all either did not use the library at all or used it very rarely. On the other hand, more than half the students whose German mark was 'good' or 'medium' were also non-users, while the proportions of non-users and heavy users among those receiving a 'very good' mark were the same. But we can say that there is a meaningful difference in public library usage among the students whose grades in German are high as compared with that of those who failed in German classes.

The Effect of Watching TV on Reading Habits

The effect of watching TV on the reading habit is a traditional subject for discussion in our literature. Table 14 shows the relationship between watching TV and reading books among the students covered by the research. It is clear that watching TV for long periods - three hours a day or more - is much more widespread among non-readers and those who read only one book or less every two months, than among students who read more than one book a month. This does not necessarily mean that watching TV makes the students into non-readers; it is equally likely, if not more so, that being a non-reader means that the student

watches more TV. Nevertheless, it seems possible that watching TV for long periods may be a factor which has a negative effect on the reading habit of the students.

Cultural Adaptation of the Students

To assess the students' level of cultural adaptation, we asked them where they would prefer to live; the best answer, in terms of positive cultural adaptation, was a preference for living both in Austria and in Turkey.

Table 15 shows that nearly 40 percent of the students wanted to live in both countries. While this is very positive in terms of the level of cultural adaptation, it should be noted that the combined total of those students who want to live either only in Turkey or only in Austria is greater than that of the students who want to live in both countries. Also, more students want to live only in Turkey than only in Austria.

In our research, we could not find any direct meaningful relationship between reading frequency and cultural adaptation. This was very natural, because cultural adaptation is very complex and the reading habit is not the only factor influencing it. However, the findings concerning the relationship between reading habits and educational achievements and language development can be accepted as showing an indirect relationship between reading habits and cultural adaptation, because, as noted above, education and language are the most important parts of culture.

Conclusion

The major results of the research are:

- The students do not have sufficient reading and library usage habits. In other words, they have serious problems regarding these habits.

Reading Frequency								
Time spent watching TV per day	Non-reader		One book or less per two months		One book per month		Two books a month or more	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1-2 hours	6	13.0	10	26.3	8	47.1	4	57.1
3-4 hours	22	47.8	17	44.7	5	29.4	2	28.6
5 hours or more	15	32.6	10	26.3	4	23.5	-	-
Non-audience	3	6.5	1	2.6	-	-	1	14.3
Total	46	99.9	38	99.9	17	100.0	7	100.0

Table 14. The relationship between watching TV and reading book.

- The students generally read German books. They have some difficulties in finding Turkish books.
- Most of the schools do not have a library.
- The students usually either borrow from libraries or buy the books they read.
- The students generally go to the public library to borrow books.
- The students cannot find most of the Turkish books suitable for their age group in the public libraries.
- The geographical background of their families affects the students' use of public libraries.
- The education level of the families is low and is another negative factor that affects the students' use of public libraries.
- Most of the students' parents do not read books and do not use public libraries. They do not set good examples for their children to develop these habits.
- Watching TV has a negative impact on the reading habits of the students.
- There is a significant relationship between these habits and the students' language development.
- Reading and library usage habits affect the educational achievements of the students positively.
- These habits have an indirect impact on the cultural adaptation of the students.

To generate the right solution for these problems:

- Cooperative efforts between families and teachers should be developed.

Where students want to live	N	%
In both Austria and Turkey	43	39.8
Only in Turkey	30	27.8
Only in Austria	20	18.5
Only in another country	15	13.9
Total	108	100.0

Table 15. Where do the students want to live?

- There should be increased cooperation in the libraries area between the Austrian and Turkish governments
- Establishing libraries in the schools must be a very important part of these efforts.
- This research must be supported and enriched with new research in other countries, and the results must be compared.

Note

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