ACADEMIA
Accelerating the world's research.

Cultural Components Used by Learners of Turkish as a Foreign Language for Reading Comprehension

Hilmi Demiral

The Anthropologist

Cite this paper

Downloaded from Academia.edu

Get the citation in MLA, APA, or Chicago styles

Related papers

Download a PDF Pack of the best related papers



Memory and Identity Construction in Turkish and Tatar Communities in Dobruja (Romania), du...
Adriana Cupcea

ADES-IV_Proceedings-s.pdf
Manisha Choudhary

Military Domination by Donations. In M. Aymes, B. Gourisse, E. Massicard (eds.), Order and Compromis...
Anouck Corte-real

© Kamla-Raj 2013 Anthropologist, 16(3): 561-573 (2013)

Cultural Components Used by Learners of Turkish as a Foreign Language for Reading Comprehension

Hilmi Demiral

Eskisehir Osmangazi University, Faculty of Education, Eskisehir, 26100, Turkey
E-mail: hilmidemiral@gmail.com

KEYWORDS Turkish. Foreign Language. Reading Comprehension. Cultural Items

ABSTRACT Turkey has been in intensive communication with the outside world since 2000s and has increased its relations with the people living in different regions and countries as well as kin and relatives communities having common cultural and historical heritage. As a reflection of this, all of the scholarships have been combined under the name of Turkey Scholarships. By giving importance to Turkish teaching to foreigners abroad and in the country, Turkey provides teaching Turkish language and culture from the right source. Turkish language institutions named as *TOMER* and established under universities allow teaching Turkish academically. The most striking point in teaching Turkish to foreigners is the students' perception process of Turkish culture items during learning Turkish as a second language. It is a value to determine how the students, coming from Turkic Republics closed to the Turkish culture, from African and Middle East countries having common religious values of Islam religion and from other countries having different religious values learn items of Turkish culture while learning Turkish and how they use their cultures while giving senses to these items. In this study it has been tried to determine the cultural items used in reading comprehension process of foreign students who are students at Eskisehir Osmangazi University and take Turkish preparation for a year. To do so, which cultural items used by six undergraduate students learning Turkish at B1 level at *ESOGU TOMER* during comprehending a 1419-word text written about *Kurban Bayrami* have been determined by a case study. Religious perception and beliefs and prior knowledge about religious festivals in Turkish culture of students have been identified vie document analysis. The findings were interpreted under heading of religious and cultural items. According to the findings, students coming from countries which are related communities have comprehended religious and cultural items of the text better than the other students. One of these students whose religious is different has comprehended the religious item less. One of the students having different religious has comprehended cultural items of the text well because she has better knowledge about Turkish culture, but she comprehended religious items less. Students who have different religious and do not have enough knowledge about Turkish culture have not comprehended both religious and cultural items.

INTRODUCTION

Language is an important mean at formation of people agglomerations and establishing of civilizations and transferring it to the next generations. The language spoken between people within the same society allows also creating a common culture and transferring it to the future generations. The culture created by the society differs significantly from other cultures such as astern culture, Western culture, Turkish culture, European culture, Japanese culture… These differences show themselves in the field of social life, economic life and political area as well as language and literature fields; the same issues of different cultures in literary texts can be stated in different aspects.

Kramsch, who thinks that language, is the one of the main means which provides social life, states that when it is used in the context of communication it has a complex association with culture (Kramsch 2009). According to Kramsch words used by the people are related with their experiences. People express events, facts and ideas which have a value to communicate vie language. Also, words reflect behaviors, beliefs and perspectives of the users and the other people. In both cases the language exposes the cultural reality. In addition, members of a social society express with language not only experiences, but also they create their experiences though it (Kramsch 2009).

Language is an element which people use most in their social life. Although culture created by people who perform his existence vie language and transmit it to future generations has relation within itself, it can be divided into different sub-elements. Guvenc collects these subelements under eight headings:

Address for correspondence:
Dr. Hilmi Demiral,
Eskisehir Osmangazi University
Egitim Fakultesi (26100)
Eskisehir, Turkey
Telephone: +90 (222) 239 37 50
Fax: +90 (222) 229 31 24
E-mail: hilmidemiral@gmail.com

1. Customs, resources
2. Family, relative relationship
3. Knowledge (science, art, philosophy)
4. Settlements (rural, urban)
5. Production and consumption
6. Religion, government, law (management)
7. Human, language and communication
8. The natural environment

Also Guvenc gives the table consist of 88 concepts of these elements (Guvenc 2002). Each element in this classification has an important role at social life of a human. For example, a human directs his life trough law rules also he must take into consideration culture and custom-traditions. Besides, the rules of the religion he believes take an importance in this life. Therefore, law, religion and customs and traditions regulate the social life together.

The scientist questioning the relationship between language and thought, language and culture and language and religion, have expressed different points of these relations. According to Hamann, our thoughts pass through language, brightness with language, occur in language. Thought and language are the same (Akarsu 1984). According to Herder culture is "life style of a community or a society". For Tylor culture is "a whole including beliefs of a society, art, morals, laws, customs and habits and tendencies of the individuals in that culture" (Aksan 2011). From these definitions it can be said that every kind of equipment, applicable techniques used for obtaining basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter; ideas, knowledge, religions; traditional, religious, social and political organizations and institutions; thinking, feeling, attitude and behavior are culture (Ornek 1971 cited in Aksan 2011).

Humboldt expresses that languages were not born in their own right and free; they developed according to their characteristics of their cultural environments connected and together with these characteristics. According to him all of the features and characters of nations emerged in the languages; it can be possible to find world views of nations trough these languages. He thinks that although words in many languages show the same concepts on the whole, in fact they cannot be synonymous. He place the language in history by connecting it to the development of human culture, he sees it as a changing and growing historical process with each step in the development of a human. The culture put forward by humans who speak the same language separates it from other cultures and creates its own identity. Humboldt expresses this situation as; "Individuals of the same nation shows national sameness/partnership which separates them from other nations. This sameness expresses the character of the nation. The character of the language arises from this national character, national sameness" (Akarsu 1984).

After Akarsu (1984) transferring the views of linguists representing the relation between language and culture, he expresses his views about foreign language learners as "No human being can enter fully into world view of the foreign language; because he is under pressure of its own language. The world view of his own language dominates him, gives him a specific direction".

Between the linguists the impact of geography they live and their beliefs on language has been questioned in the relation of religious and culture. According to T.S. Eliot religion and culture are different elements; but there is strong relation between them. Eliot thinks that religion is a source which feeds the culture but excesses it; the shape of religion of a society can be stated as culture. He states that cultural and artistic activities arising from these beliefs and worships can be different although beliefs and worships of each religion can be different. The only reason for these differences is not a religion; at the same time geographic place of the religious, previous religious, traditions, customs and life styles (Kaplan 1993). Erich Pothacker draws attention to a similar situation. For him, forces that shape the history may seem as state but in fact it is nation. The culture shaped by nation consists of language, religion, tradition and customs, laws, ceremonies, production and consumption (Kaplan 1993).

Jalifilifar and Assi (2008) and Bayat (2011) have studied the relation between language and culture which also are emphasized by linguistics. They conducted a study named "The Role of Cultural Nativization in Comprehension of Short Stories in EFL Reading Contexts" to explore the role of cultural nativization in reading comprehension of target language short stories in Iranian EFL learners. The results illustrated that cultural nativization had a facilitative effect on comprehension of the stories. Surprisingly, this effect was not only at the literal but also at

the inferential level of comprehension (Jalilifar and Assi 2008; Bayat 2011).

Another study named "Is Listening Comprehension Influenced by the Cultural Knowledge of the Learners? A Case Study of Iranian EFL Pre-intermediate Learners" was done by Bakhtiarvand and Adinevand (2011). They examined the effects of cultural knowledge of the learners on listening comprehension. The aim study was to investigate the effect of cultural knowledge on improving Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension. The results suggested that the participants performed differently on the post-test indicating that familiarity with culturally-oriented language material promotes the Iranian EFL learners' listening proficiency.

As the studies have been examined it is seen that similar findings have been found. Accordingly, it can inferred that learners learning foreign language have difficulty in comprehending the text which is written in culture of native language, but when they connected it with their own culture they can comprehend it easily.

Turkey's Contents

Teaching Turkish to foreigners can be seen as a new field of teaching language and literature in Turkey. The first important literary works on this subject was *Divanu Lugat' it-Turk* written by *Kasgarli Mahmut* in 1072. It was aimed to teach Turkish to the Arabs in this work. The Ottomon Empire as well as the Republic of Turkey made attempts to teach Turkish to foreigners from this date until 19th century. However, it cannot be said that foreigners in Turkey learned Turkish systematically because these activities were not done in a systematic way. Teaching Turkish to foreigners, which began in the 1980s and its importance increasing day by day in recent years, is given to scholars who are determined by Department of Turks Abroad and Related Communities connected to Prime Ministry and to students come to Turkey through his own means. These students learn Turkish for a year before they attend at undergraduate or graduate programs. Students, who complete courses and take the required exam score receive Turkish certificate of Proficiency and entitle to the relevant department.

One of the most important steps in teaching Turkish to foreigners is Ankara University *TOMER* established in 1984. Ankara *TOMER* pursuing Turkish preparatory courses for foreign students who came to Turkey has opened Turkish Preparatory courses at the other universities because of not meeting increasing students demanding. Some of them are Hacettepe University, Gazi University, Istanbul University, Fatih University. *TOMER* was encouraged to be opened at other university in the meeting held by Department of Turks Abroad and Related Communities connected to Prime Ministry in 2012, in this respect Turkish Teaching Center was established at Osmangazi University to give Turkish Preparatory course for foreign students in Eskisehir and surrounding provinces.

Teaching Turkish to foreigners accelerated with more qualified researches after 2000s. In recent years teaching Turkish as a foreign language and a native language requires a separate area of expertise have taken an important place accordingly examining Turkish in the context of language, culture and beliefs has been a source of new researches. Some of these researches are about how students who speak Turkish engage their culture and the opposite culture while they learn foreign language, the effect of cultural items on learners whose native language is Turkish at comprehending foreign text, the nativization of a text written at foreign language and different culture and effects of this at comprehending a text apart from teaching Turkish as a foreign language.

Alptekin (2006) and Demirbulak (2012) conducted a study to explore the role of culturally familiar background knowledge in inferential and literal comprehension in L2 reading. Ninety-eight Turkish EFL (English as a Foreign Language) university students were divided into two groups of equivalent English proficiency and they read either the original of an American short story or a 'nativized' version, textually and contextually modified to reflect the learner's own culture. They then answered multiple-choice comprehension questions aimed at checking inferential and literal comprehension independently across the two versions of the story. The results demonstrate that the nativization of a short story from the target language culture facilitates L2 readers' inferential comprehension significantly, yet does not affect their literal understanding. As such, the results point to a non-interface between inferential comprehension and literal understanding, contrary to the commonly held assumption that an interface exists (Alptekin 2006; Demirbulak 2012).

Another study was done by Erten and Razi. In their study called "The effects of cultural familiarity on reading comprehension", Erten and Razi (2009) investigated whether cultural familiarity influences comprehension of short stories and whether nativizing the story or using reading activities can compensate for the lack of such familiarity. The analysis of variance indicated a better comprehension of the nativized story. The activities contributed to the comprehension of the original story, but the difference caused by nativization remained intact, indicating a powerful impact of cultural schema on comprehension (Erten and Razi 2009)

Gurkan (2012) and Rohaan et al. (2011) conducted a study to examine whether cultural familiarity has an influence on reading comprehension and whether using a set of reading activities compensate for the absence of cultural familiarity. The results revealed that the nativized version of a short story from the target language culture contributes to comprehension of L2 readers' significantly and the use of activities facilitated for better literal understanding of the original text. It also emphasizes a strong influence of cultural schema on comprehension (Gurkan 2012; Rohaan et al. 2011).

Research made in Turkey show that cultural component of their native language affects positively reading comprehension of students learning foreign language. The same is true for students learning Turkish as a foreign language, because literary text may not have the same cultural impacts and the meanings in written language on the students learning language as a foreign language. Readers of native language and learners who learn it as a foreign language can comprehend different meaning from the text because of different geography, affected language and religions. Looking from this respect the effects of cultural components used by learners of Turkish as a foreign language for reading comprehension in Turkish can be a remarkable study.

The aim of this study in the context of the research outlined above is to investigate the process of reading comprehension in Turkish of university students who learn Turkish as a foreign language come from different countries taking their religious beliefs into consideration. To achieve this aim the answers for the question below have been sought:

1. How do the religious beliefs of learners who learn Turkish as a foreign language affect the process of comprehending Turkish texts?
2. How does cultural component used at the process of comprehending Turkish texts by learners who learn Turkish as a foreign language differentiate in accordance with their religious beliefs?

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Model

This study was designed as a qualitative research study. The aim of qualitative research is to reveal the perceptions and event naturally and realistically with data collection method such as observations, interviews and documents (Bogdan and Biklen 1998; Yildirim and Simsek 2005). A case study, a method of qualitative research, was used in this study, because it allows gathering a wide range of data by means of documents and interviews by focusing on a person, group, social setting or a community (Berg 1998; Yin 2003; Yildirim and Simsek 2005).

Participants

The study group of the research consisted of six foreign students. These students were placed at Eskisehir Osmangazi University undergraduate programs within Turkey Scholarship in 2012-2013 teaching year. The demographic information of these students who are studying Turkish B1 level at *ESOGU TOMER* (Eskisehir Osmangazi University Turkish Teaching Institution) are given at Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic information of the study group

	Mah	*Tim*	*Yul*	*Pas*	*Ush*	*Nam*
Gender	Male	Male	Female	Female	Male	Female
Nationality	East Turkestan	Kirghizstan	Uzbekistan	Moldova	Mongolia	Mongolia
Department	Faculty of Medicine	Mechanical Engineering	Political Science	Political Science	Civil Engineering	Tourism and Hotel Manag.
Religion	Muslim	Muslim	Muslim	Christian	Buddhist	Atheist

A seen in Table 1 three of the participants were male and three were female. The students born in 1994 can be divided into three separate groups. Three of the students are both from Turkish origin and Muslim, one of the students is from Turkish origin but Christian, two of the students are not either from Turkish origin nor Muslim. This classification has been done because it has been thought that students' knowledge about Turkish culture and religion will be effective on comprehending the text. Coming for the first time to Turkey, they attended to Turkish schools in their countries at different times. So, they have some knowledge about Turkish culture, but in the individual interview made before text processing it has been found that they have shallow knowledge about religious festivals in Turkey.

Students from five different countries have four different religious believes. Open-ended questions about students' religion were asked before the study, because the religious beliefs hold an important place in this study. These questions were analyzed vie document data analysis and data were tried to obtained to support research findings. Five of open-ended questions are about their religious beliefs (Matoti and Shumba 2012; Coskun 2011).

Nine different religious names were written for question "Which religious do you know?" The frequencies of these names are shown below in parentheses.

-Islam (5), -Christian (5),
- Buddhism (5), -Shamanism (4)
-Judaism (2), -Catholic (1),
-Atheism (1), -Seism (1)

The answers for question "What do you think of religion?" are given below. One student has left the answer blank.

- I think religion is a belief. (Mah)
- I think religion is a contact to set up an access a person with God, because I think religious should be in the heart of every person. (Tim)
- Religion, person believes, something. (Yul)
- I think religion is the meaning of life. Religion is important; because a person believes, his life is not empty. Religion saves lives. (Pas)
- There are very kinds of religions; but I think religion is just something. Every religion is God. People are finding the way in different places. Because of this there are very kinds of religions. People are afraid of many things, so they began to believe in religion. Only he believes to be brave, began to comfort him. (Nam)

It is understood that students confuse "belief" concept with religion when students' responses have been analyzed. Only one student described religion concept with "contact" concept.

The answers for "How much are you religious?" are given below.

- I am a believer person (*ehli mumin*) Muslim insallah. I am not only Muslim theoretically but also 80% practically. I am doing things that Quraan orders. That is I am doing *namaz*, going to mosque; but sometimes the devil begins the wrong way. I am fasting; I want to go on pilgrimage. (Mah)
- In practice %60 I am religious, I am going *Cuma*, reading books; but now I do not do. Formerly I took *salavat*, was reading my Prophet's life book. (Tim)
- I believe in my religion, I know very much; but I do not do *namaz*. Also, my family does *namaz*, they are fasting. I also do these things with my family, but only I do not do *namaz*. (Yul)
- I think I am not a deep religious. But, I really want to be religious. (Pas)
- A little, approximately 30%. (Ush)
- I am not religious. (Nam)

It can be said that Mah, Tim and Pas are more faithful to their religion than other students when looking students' answers and authors' observations. It is possible to understand this from the percentage they gave. Nam does not believe in any religion and she thinks that people choose a religion because they are afraid.

The answers given to the question "Which religious festivals do you have in your country?" are below.

- *Kurban Bayrami*, *Razu Bayrami*, *Cuma*. (Mah)
- *Ramazan*, *Kurban*, *Nooruz*. (Tim)
- *Kurban*, *Ramazan*. (Yul)
- There are a lot of festivals. The most important are 7 January and in spring Pascale. (Pas)
- The religious festivals in Mongolia are Tsagaan, Sar-White moon-, Buddha's birthday, Mumu day. (Nam)
- Tsagaa Sar. Very important festival. (Ush)

It can be expressed that students know their festivals when their answers have been ob-

served. Three Muslim students know *Kurban Bayrami*, two Mongolian students know White Moon Festival.

Three of the open-ended questions examined by using document analysis are about religious beliefs and religious festivals in Turkey. The answers given to question "Which religious beliefs exist in Turkey?" are given below.

- There are Islam and Christian religion in Turkey, also some people believe in wolf. (Mah)
- I saw very much Muslim in Turkey; there are a lot of mosques. (Tim)
- The most believing religion in Turkey is Islam. (Yul)
- People in Turkey are generally Muslim. They believe in Allah very much, they say Allah for everything, and they say that Allah creates everything in the world. I do not like this. (Nam)
- Muslim. (Ush)

The answers of "Which religious festivals exist in Turkey?" and "What do you know about religious festivals traditions in Turkey?" are given together below.

- There are *Kurban* and *Razu Bayram*. Religious festivals are celebrated on religious days by people who believe in this religious. There is Nervous Festival as a tradition; there is New Year and also birthday. (Mah)
- It is fasting in Ramadan, sheep are sacrificed at *Kurban* and a part of them are given to the poor people, self-sacrifice is made. (Tim)
- There are two festivals in Turkish culture. *Kurban* and *Ramazan*. Both small and large animals are sacrificed. (Yul)
- Festivals are very important. They eat meat in *Kurban Bayrami*. (Pas)
- *Ramazan*, *Kurban*. I know little about *Kurban Bayrami*. They sacrifice, eat meatball. They help people and eat a lot of meat. (Nam)
- I do not know. (Ush)

When considering students' responses, three Muslim students have knowledge about *Kurban Bayrami* but not in detail. Pas and Nam consider *Kurban Bayrami* as "eating meat". Although Nam is Atheist, she knows that poor people are helped at *Kurban Bayrami*. Here it is need to remind that Nam's Turkish is well and she learned Turkish in Turkish school in her country, also she has knowledge about Turkish culture.

When examining document analysis results it can be said that students do not know Turkish life culture items very much; however they did not mention much about what they know about their own religion items in this part. On the other hand Mah, Tim and Yul who are Muslim gave more detailed information about religious beliefs according to the other three students.

Data Sources

Three different data source were used in this study. Previously seven open ended question were asked to students before the study. The religious perception, religion, religious beliefs and festivals in Turkey of the students were determined through document analysis. To ensure the validity, reliability and usability of the form, Turkish, religion and assessment experts were asked to give their opinions and based on their feedbacks the form was rearranged.

The second data source of the study is a daily style 1419-word text containing the culture of *Kurban Bayrami* (Aid el Kebir or The Festival of Sacrifice) in one of the religious festivals in Turkey. The validity, reliability and usability of the draft text prepared by the author was provided by two Turkish, one measurement, one second language teaching and one religion experts. The necessary corrections were made in line with meaning, difficulty level of used words and suggestions given about Turkish culture after the control. The experience of 15-year-old Muslim child before and after *Kurban Bayrami* has been described at the text prepared as a daily style. How Muslim Turks perceive *Kurban Bayrami* and religious and cultural ground effective on formation of *Kurban Bayrami* were described from the mouth of the child. Elements of Islam religion and Turkish culture mainly take place in the text, some motifs likely to be in other religions have been distributed into the text and the students were expected to find motifs of their own religions. Also, some results have been revealed related to the process of comprehending the text in depth by interviewing students at the end of the course.

The third data source of the study is the camera record of individual interviews made with the students at the end of the course and 12-hour text processing. The camera records of text processing have been monitored separately by the author and two Turkish language experts through

the analysis of documents, common results related to using Turkish and cultural aspects of religious festivals have been tried to be determined. Also, individual interviews made with the students after the text processing have been monitored by the same experts trough the analysis of documents, common findings have been revealed.

Data Collection

Data were collected during a week in autumn semester of the 2012-2013 trough document analysis. Previously seven open ended question were given to students before the study in order to determine the religious perception, religion, religious beliefs in Turkey and religious festivals in Turkish culture of the students. The knowledge level of the students related to religious festivals in Turkey and *Kurban Bayrami* has been identified through the form completed at the end of the one course hour.



Fig. 1. Data collection means

The text about *Kurban Bayrami* was written by the author by doing field research and the suitability in terms of language and culture were checked by experts. The text consisting 1419 word was given to the students in the study group after corrections made in accordance with suggestion. Before moving to text processing, students were asked to understand the text trough silent reading. After reading they were asked to write what percentage of the text they understood. They were asked again what percentage of the text they understood at the end of the text processing.

The text was studied during 10-12 course hour; previously the comments of non-Muslim students were received during the process. Especially, the author did not interfere to the text comprehension processing in order to determine student' perception of religious and cultural concepts, thus students was provided to make their own interpretations. To determine the resources of students' interpretation, additional question were asked, if the response to their culture and religious beliefs exist was tried to be found. Students' reading comprehension process in the study group put forward without interfering, thus comprehension level of students who have different religious and cultural characteristics has been identified. Also, the variables efficient at reading comprehension and course process have been examined.

Individual interviews were conducted to reveal the unclear details of the students' comments after course process was finished. The author identified unclear issues of students' interpretations made during the course; drilling questions were directed to the students to help them in explaining these points at individual interview. These interviews were recorded with the camera (See Fig. 1).

Data Analysis

Content analysis was used as a data analysis technique, because it allows analysis of in-depth qualitative data and helps to evaluate social events and facts (Berg 1998; Patton 2002). The process basically done at content analysis is gathering similar data within certain concept and theme framework and interpreting these data by organizing them as being understood by the reader (Yildirim and Simsek 2005). Students' own name were not used in data analysis; but by giving the first three letters of students' name has provided remembering the comments to whom they belongs easily during the analysis process as well as giving students' clear identity has been prevented.



Fig. 2. Data analysis means

In the first stage of the study, open ended questions given to the students were described gathered under three main headings. These are information about the concept of religion and religions in the world, believed religions and festivals related to these religions, knowledge of religious beliefs and religious festivals in Turkey. Students' answers were coded under these three grouping, these grouping were checked by Turkish teaching and assessment and evaluation experts (Aypay 2011; Belet and Guven 2011).

In the second stage, the camera records of 12-hour text handling process were subjected to content analysis. Cultural items used by the stu-

dents during comprehension process of 1419-word text about *Kurban Bayrami* were determined one by one. During writing process comprehending process related to religious and Turkish culture life items have been handled and interpreted separately. It was tried to reach to common themes by coding these items in the context of the students' own religion and culture as well as Turkish culture and Islamic religion. The content analysis of the camera records were checked by Turkish teaching and assessment and evaluation expert apart from the author (Sreejisha and Devarapalli 2012).

In the final stage, the missing points in the process of text processing were evaluated by content analysis by interviewing students individually. In this process, especially whether the provisions for concepts related to *Kurban Bayrami* existed or not in students' own language and culture tried to be determined. Emerging concepts were placed into appropriate themes (See Fig. 2).

FINDINGS

The results of this study which aims to identify cultural items used by six undergraduate students learning Turkish at B1 level at ESOGU TOMER during reading comprehension process have been collected under two sub-themes. These are Turkish life culture and religious items used by students during reading comprehension. The results of the study are discussed under these two main headings.

The Findings on Religious Items

Religious items in the text themed as *Kurban Bayrami* are terms in Islam religious, ritual and related applications to sacrificing. Six students in the study group have four different religious beliefs. These are Islam, Christian, Buddhism and Atheism. In this part, religious items used in the process of comprehending the text themed as *Kurban Bayrami* have been discussed separately for each student.

Mah is a Muslim student from Eastern Turkistan. He is one of the two students in the group who has lots of knowledge about Islam and *Kurban Bayrami*. He expressed that he understood 90% of the text during silent reading. It was observed that he did not understand Turkish forms of religious items in the text. For example he knows "*arife gunu*" (the day before the religious festivals) but he uses "*harpa gunu*" instead of it in his language. Also, he uses "*tenri*" and "*calap*" instead of "Allah", "payci" instead of "*hissedar*" (shareholder) and "*soz*" instead of "*adak*" (oblation). There were not any concepts that he did not understand in the part of the story where it was mentioned about the story of *Kurban Bayrami* and Hz. (Prophet) Ibrahim and his son. He understood religious concepts such as *"bayramlasma, sabah namazi, kurbanlýk, imam, cami, hutbe, mihrap, kabir, vefat etmek, mezarlik"*. He expressed that he understood 98% of the processing text at the end of the process. Mah uses forgotten words in Turkish after the adoption of Islam in Turkey, so sometimes he has difficulty in understanding Turkish words. For example, "*calap*" word existing in old Turkish was replaced with "Allah" in Turkish society with the adoption of Islam. However, this problem has been eliminated after explaining the concept meet the word. The reason for this may be East Turkistan, where Mah lives, taking place in the region where Turks emerged first and the communication with Turkey in language context being at minimum level.

Tim is a Muslim student from Kyrgyzstan. Tim studying at Turkish schools in Kyrgyzstan stated that he understood 99% of the text related to *Kurban Bayrami* at first reading. It was not understood by Tim at the point of the pronunciation of words during text processing. Kyrgyz is a language close to Turkish, this situation has helped to understand the text. However, the cultural change arising after the adoption of Islam has shown its impact here. Tim uses Islamic words such as "*arefe*", "*bayramlik*", "imam", "*cemaat*", which are used also in Turkey, in his native language; but he uses some words such as "*ikram*", "*kabir*", "*vefat*" Russian counterparts or by changing the letters. As he expresses:

"My father and my grandfather know these words but I do not know and use these words because we are taking Russian education in schools."

Tim expressed that he understood all of the text at the end of the study.

Yul is a Muslim student from Uzbekistan. She stated that while she understood 90% of the text at first reading, she understood 99% at the end of the process. Her native language being closes to Turkish and as well as being Muslim is effective in her high level of comprehension as it

goes for the other two students. She did not have a problem in understanding when the exact counterpart in her language of the religious items in the text was said. For example, he uses "*abdest*" concept as "*taharat*" in her language. This word is like "*taharet*" in Turkish and it is used as "cleaning made after the toilet". Likewise, when "*ikindi*" concept that she could not understand at first was explained understanding problem was eliminated as it exists in her language as the third *namaz* (prayer). Similarly, the word "*Kible*" is used as "*Gibla*" in her language; she understood "*Hac*", "*vekalet*" and "*Tekbir*" concept with their counterparts in her language. Yul understood religious items in the text in general, but he did not understand some Arabic word because of their different pronunciations.

Pas is a Christian and Gagauz Turks student from Moldova. These features have been effective in the process of understanding the text. She expressed that she understood 70% of text at first reading, her understanding level increased with the explanations made during text processing and she said that she understood 85% of the text after text processing process. Pas is the most noticeable student in the study group. She is Christian and on the other hand she a member of nationality which is relative of Turks. The most striking results in the group were Pas's interpretations. The first of them was that she did not understand the times of the "*namaz*" in Islam, but she said that she uses "*sabah*" (morning), "*ögle*" (noon), "*aksam*" (evening) and "*yatsi*" (midnight) words in her language. For example, she uses "*saba*" instead of "*sabah*" concept. Similarly she uses "*Hederles*" instead of "*Hidirellez*" and "*Alla'm*" instead of "*Allah'im*" and in the same meaning. It can be said that Gagauz Turks took these words under the influence of Islam. Although Pas is a member of a different religious, she expressed that they also do "*bayram temizligi*" (doing cleaning before festivals) in their religious festivals. "*Cenaze* and "imam" words from the text attracted attention of Pas; she said that she did not know the full meaning of these words but she heard of them from her father and grandfather. Also she expressed that she knew the "*kurban*" (sacrificing) story about Hz. Ibrahim and Hz. Ismail and it was explained in the Bible like this, only the pronunciations of some proper name such as Ibrahim, Adem, Havva.

Nam is atheist student from Mongolia. She stated that while she understood 85% of the text at first reading, she understood 95% at the end of the process. Although she is atheist she has a vast knowledge about Islam religious and culture and knows Turkish well, this features distinguishes her from the group. These features provide comprehending of the text predominant with religious concepts. She wrote the meanings of the concepts and terms related to Islam religion in Mongolian, she did not understand concepts such as "*kurban, hac, dua, tekbir, vekalet, vefat, kabir, cemaat, mezarlik, namaz, adak, peygamber, hutbe, saf tutmak"* although they existed in her language. Nam took advantages of doing researches on Islam religion and knowing Turkish well in comprehending the text about *Kurban Bayrami*. Her comprehension of the text at the desired level is remarkable although she does not live in the culture of this religion.

Ush is a Buddhist student from Mongolia. He is a student whose Turkish is the poorest in the group. Also he has not got enough knowledge about Islam religion and Turkish culture. He stated that while she understood 60% of the text at first reading, she understood 75% at the end of the process. Ush is a student who uses the dictionary mostly in the group. He often used Mongolian-Turkish dictionary during text processing. He had difficulty in understanding religious words such as "*kurban, hac, dua, tekbir, vekâlet, vefat, kabir, cemaat, mezarlik, namaz, adak, peygamber, hutbe, saf tutmak"* and it had been necessary to explain the text in detail. It was seen that he did not understand these concepts in the individual interview made at the end of text processing process. Ush showed lower success than the other five students in text comprehension process because his Turkish is the poorest and has not got enough knowledge about Islam religion.

The Findings on Cultural Items

Four of the students in the study group are from Turkic Republics named as related communities. Mah is Uyghur Turks, Tim is Kyrgyz, Yul is Uzbek and Pas is Gagauz Turks. Pas expressed that she did not consider herself as a Turk, but only as relative; Mah, Tim and Yul said that they were from Turkish origin. Nam from the two Mongolian students has knowledge about Turkish culture but Ush has a little knowledge.

Items of Turkish life culture in text about *Kurban Bayrami* are collected under daily life, relations among relatives, visiting, food, clothing and dress, visiting graves and proverbs idioms headings. Visiting graves in Turkish culture, unlike the religion of Islam is discussed in this part.

Uyghur Turks Mah is one of the two students who understand cultural items as well as religious items well. Mah uses old Turkish words but not used too much in Turkish instead of Arabic words. He used "*sonunda*" instead of "*nihayet*" (finally), "*baya*" instead of "*epey*" (fairly), "*eli ayagina dolasti*" instead of "*telas sardi*" (fluster), "*faydalanmak*" instead of "*firsattan istifade*" (take advantage of), "*koy tarnasi*" instead of "*tarhana corbasi*" (tarhana soup), "*mutluluk*" instead of "*nese*" (happiness), "*vazgecirmek*" instead of "*caydirmak*" (dissuade) and "*alin*" instead of "*sakak*" (forehead) in the text. The words used by Mah are also used in Turkey; especially they are used frequently in the villages. However, he pronounces the word "*bayagi*" in Turkish as "*baya*" and the word "*tarhana*" as "*tarna*". This situation does not prevent the comprehension of the text. He has said that he did not hear "*kolonya*" concept which has an important place in Turkish culture and they do not use it in his language. Relative and food names show similarity. He understood proverbs and idioms in the text, he used synonyms of them.

Kyrgyz Turks Tim did not have a problem in comprehending the cultural items in the text. At the beginning of 2012 academic year he did not pass Turkish Proficiency Test because of two points lack and for this reason he did not give too much attention in the course, but he only answered the questions. He stated that he understood Turkish cultural items in the text, but he has used Russian words instead of some of these words in his native language. He also expressed that his family warned her about the usage of Russian words instead of Turkish one, but he said that he did not use the words that was not popular among young people. Tim understood idioms and proverbs; he stated that he has known the "*kolonya*" concept but they have not used it. Also, he stated that there were some similarities with grave visiting but they did not do some rituals.

Uzbek Turks Yul understood words and concepts in the text when the counterparts in her language of the words were given. For example she used "*pista*" instead of "*cekirdek*" (seed), "*cigneyir*" instead of "*gevis getirmek*" (chew the cud), "*argadan*" instead of "*ardindan*" (after), "*mutluluk*" instead of "*nese*" (happiness), "*hemen*" instead of "*bir an*" (as soon as possible), "*vazgecmek*" instead of "*caydirmak*" (dissuade), "*kurban*" instead of "*koc*" (ram), "*tenka*" instead of "*duve*" (heifer), "*akrabalar*" instead of "*sulale*" (relatives), "*heyecamlak*" instead of "*telas*" (flurry), "*her sey var*" instead of "*kus sutu eksik*" (bird's milk is missing), "*aceleyle beklemek*" instead of "*iple cekmek*" (look forward to) and "*inek*" instead of "*dana*" (calf). These examples show that there are similar words in both languages, but there are differences in usage. Yul did not have any problems in understanding idioms and proverbs in the text and she understood the concepts about daily life and visiting after these words were explained. However she stated that she did not hear the word "*kolonya*" and not know what it was used for.

Moldovan and Gagauz Turks Pas is the most striking student in the group. Significant results were obtained about Turkish life culture as it was in religious item part. Although Pas is Christian, she uses many concepts of Turkish culture in her life. Similarities can be seen in the words such as names of relatives, local food, food names, and clothing. These words are "*sarma, sulale, hediye, emin, mahalle, gomlek, selam, corba, kayin, kuzu, hamur*". Another important issue is that most of the Arabic words which entered into Turkish language after adoption of Islam religion take place in Pas' native language. "*Sabah, ikram, emin, selam*" are examples for these concepts. "*Kavurma*", the most important meal eaten at *Kurban Bayrami*, attracted the attention of Pas. She made the recipe of the meal and stated that it was the important meal with sarma made at important days. She expressed that she did not know the concept "*kolonya*"; she thought that it was used for hand cleaning and hygiene, she did not thought the cultural dimension of the word. In addition, she stated that they have used some Russian words because of their education.

Nam from Mongolia has an interest on Islam religious and Turkish culture although she is Atheist. She understood the items of Turkish life culture because she has Turkish friends and she has learned Turkish in Mongolia. She sometimes asked the author and used dictionary when she had a problem in comprehending the text. Although Nam has knowledge about Turkish

culture, she has understood 85% of the text because she does not live in this culture. She comprehended the words in meal culture after the author explained them, understood concepts related to relatives and visiting because of having Turkish friends and idioms and proverbs by using a dictionary. She expressed that she did not understand the rituals of grave visiting. Also she stated that she knew the concept "*kolonya*", the most important finding of the study, learned from her friends, but she did not want to use it.

Ush from Mongolia is a student who has the least knowledge about Turkish culture and whose Turkish is the poorest of the group. He did not understand exactly items of Turkish life culture in the text about *Kurban Bayrami*. He tried to comprehend the text by using Mongolian-Turkish dictionary during the explanations made by the author. He did not write any Turkish words on the paper used during text processing process, he wrote the Mongolian meanings of the words. However he understood kinship names and visiting concepts better than food, clothing and dress, visiting graves and proverbs idioms concepts. He expressed at individual interview that he did not have any friends who owned such kind of culture in his country and previously did not have any knowledge about this culture because of not having interest of it. It was seen that he had much issues that he could not understand although he said that he understood 75% of the text at the end of the text processing process.

DISCUSSION

In this research determining cultural items used by learners of Turkish as a second language during the reading comprehension process, six students of the study group showed different features from each other during the text processing. In the process of text comprehension told of the *Kurban Bayrami* of the Islamic Feasts, each student connected their own religious and cultural features. With document analyse their religious perceptions and knowledge levels about Turkish culture diagnosed have been identified, which cultural items they used have been categorised by using content analysis.

The students of study groups gave different reaction to text according to their religious and cultural features. Three students of East Turkestan, Kirghizia, Uzbekistani named as Turkic Republic comprehended the religious concepts in the text easier than the other students. This finding supported the one of Alptekin (2006) and Kilimci (2010) "the more they have past information about subject as cultural the more they can comment and make inferences about text." These students cannot have understood some Arabic words using in Turkish at the first reading. Similarly, these three students had also comprehended contents with Turkish living culture easier than the other students. This finding is familiar with finding of Jalilifar and Assi (2008), "nativization texts contribute to reading comprehension". In the understanding of text easily by students, origin similarity influences between Turkish culture and Relative culture. Another point in the research attracted attention is that these three students do not realize they have common culture with Turkish culture. Another result of this research is that Turkish words have been replaced by Russian and Chinese words used by these three students in their own language. Turkish culture and Kyrgyz, Uzbek and East Turkestan culture moved away from each other due to the effect of geography and in time religious and cultural components in Turkish were forgotten; Russian and Chinese words took their places. As a result, the processes of reading comprehension become more difficult. Some words used by three students come from relative communities are used in the villages in Turkey. "*Sabah/saba, vakit/vakit, evvel/evel, hamur/hamir, bayaði/baya*" words are a few examples of this case. However, it has not got a negative effect on the process of reading comprehension.

Mongolian Nam and Ush are the students who are the most remote students in the group to the Islam as well as Turkish culture. It was expected by these students to comprehend the religious and cultural component at low level during the process of comprehending *Kurban Bayrami* text. However, Nam did not have any difficulty in comprehending the text after the unknown words at first reading were explained. This finding shows similarity with the findings of Bakhtiarvand and Adinevand (2011). She understood components of Turkish culture easily because she has Turkish friends and knows Turkish well. He understood the parts related to food, clothing, family and kinship. However Ush could not comprehend the text at the desired level and often used dictionary because his Turkish is lower than the other students and he does not have

enough knowledge about Islam and Turkish culture. This shows that not having knowledge about cultural and religious component affects negatively the process of reading comprehension (Ying-Xiu and Shu-Rong 2011).

Moldovan Pas is the most different student in the group at the process of text processing about *Kurban Bayrami*. Pas is no stranger to the Turkish culture due to historical past; however as being Christian he has a difficulty in understanding religious component. The more important fact has been emerged when these components were explained during the process of text processing. Being Gagauz Turks Pas, realized that the Islamic words have been used in everyday language because of relationships of his ancestors with Islam. The most important of these words is "*Alla'm*". Using "Allah" word, which is a religious term in Islam, with a different pronunciation, can be shown as an importance of cultural components at the process of reading comprehension. Although he knows the Islamic words, some points at the process of reading comprehension remain incomplete because he does not know the term meaning of these words in Islam. Finally, it is also noteworthy that he does not know using of "*kolonya*" which takes place an important place in Turkish culture.

CONCLUSION

The cultural components used in the process of reading comprehension by six students who learn Turkish as a foreign language can be evaluated as follows:

Three students who are relatives with Turks and Muslim have understood religious components during the process of text comprehension generally.

One student who is not Muslim but has knowledge about Turkish and Turkish culture has understood religious components in the text but not as much as the other students.

One student who is not Muslim and does not have knowledge about Turkish and Turkish culture has not understood religious components in the text.

One student who is not Muslim but relatives with Turks has not understood religious components in the text at first. The missing points at religious components have been corrected during the process of the text processing.

Three students who are relatives with Turks and Muslim have understood cultural components related to Turkish life during the process of text comprehension generally. However, they have some problems in understanding words which come to Turkish from Arabic because they use their old Turkish version.

One of the Mongolian students has understood components of Turkish culture life because he knows Turkish and Turkish culture; the other student has not understood the text at the desired level because he does not have enough knowledge about Turkish life culture.

The Christian student who is relative to Turks has understood components related to Turkish culture during the processing of text comprehension as much as Muslim students. It can be said that he is more successful at clothing and food culture components.

REFERENCES

Aksan D 2011. *Turkceye yansiyan Turk kulturu*. Ankara: Bilgi Press.

Akarsu B 1984. *Wilhelm von Humboldt'ta dil-kultur baglantisi*. Istanbul: Remzi Bookstore.

Alptekin C 2002. The Effects of Cultural Knowledge on EFL Reading Comprehension. *International Balkan ELT Conference*. Edirne: Trakya University.

Alptekin C 2003. The Role of Cultural Nativization in L2 Reading: The Case of Inferential and Literal Comprehension. *The Third International ELT Research Conference-Languages for Life*. Canakkale: Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University

Alptekin C 2006. Cultural Familiarity in Inferential and Literal Comprehension in L2 Reading. SYSTEM, 34: 494-508. From <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii> (Retrieved on January 18, 2013).

Aypay A 2011. The adaptation of the teaching—earning conceptions questionnaire and its relationships with epistemological beliefs. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 11(1): 21-29.

Bakhtiarvand M, Adinevand S 2011. Is Listening Comprehension Influenced by the Cultural Knowledge of the Learners? A Case Study of Iranian EFL Pre-intermediate Learners. RELC Journal, 42: 111-125 From <http://rel.sagepub.com/content/42/2/111>.

Bayat O 2011. The relationship between autonomy perception and the reading comprehension achievement of English language learners. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 42: 154-170.

Berg BL 1998. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Belet D, Guven M 2011. Meta-cognitive strategy usage and epistemological beliefs of primary school teacher trainees. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 11(1): 51-57.

Bogdan R, Biklen D 1998. *Qualitative Research in Education: An Introduction to Theory and Method*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Coskun E 2011. Cohesion in compositions of Turkish and immigrant students. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 11(2): 892-899.

Demirbulak D 2012. Fostering propensities for reflective practice at undergraduate methodology and practicum courses. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 48: 162-179.

Erten IH, Razi S 2009. The Effects of Cultural Familiarity on reading comprehension. Reading in a Foreign Language, 21: 60-77 From <http://nflrc .hawaii. edu/rfl/April2009/articles/erten.pdf> (Retrieved on January 18, 2013).

Gurkan S 2012. The effects of cultural familiarity and Reading Activities on L2 Reading Comprehension. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 55: 1196-1206.

Jalilifar AR, Assi R 2008. The Role of Cultural Nativization in Comprehension of Short Stories in EFL Reading Contexts. The Ýnternational journal of language society and culture, 26: 62-79 From <http://www. aaref. com.au/en/publications/journal/journal-articles/issue-26-2008> (Retrieved on January 18, 2013).

Johnson P 1981. Effects on reading comprehension of language complexity and cultural backround of a text. *TESOL Quarterly*, 15(2): 169-181.

Kaplan M 1993. *Kultur ve dil*. Istanbul: Dergâh Press.

Kramsch C 2009. *Language and Culture*. Oxford: University Press.

Kilimci S 2010. Comparative analysis of students' perceptions on integration and discrimination policy in Sweden. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 41: 133-149.

Matoti S, Shumba A 2012. Assessing the writing efficacy of undergraduate students at a South African University of technology. Anthropologist, 14(2): 131-139. From <http://www.krepublishers.com/02-Journals/T-Anth/Anth-14-0-000-12-Web/Anth-14-2-000-2012-Abst-PDF/Anth-14-2-131-12-740-Matoti-S-N/Anth-14-2-131-12-740-Matoti-S-N-Tx[5].pdf> (Retrieved January 18, 2013)

Ornek SV 1971. *Anadolu folklorunda olum*. Ankara: Ankara University Dil Tarih Cografya Faculty Publ.

Patton MQ 2002. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Rohaan EJ, Taconis R, Jochems MG 2011. Exploring the underlying components of primary school teachers' pedagogical content knowledge for technology *Education EURASIA Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education*, 7(4): 293-304.

Sreejisha VP, Devarapalli J 2012. Socio-psychological Reflection of Religious mobility: A Case of Thachanadan Moopan. Anthropologist, 14(2): 155-166 From <http://www.krepublishers.com/02-Journals/T-Anth/Anth-14-0-000-12-Web/Anth-14-2-000-2012-Abst-PDF/Anth- 14-2-155-12-699-Sreejisha-V-P/Anth-14-2-155-12-699-Sreejisha-V-P-Tx[8].pdf> (Retrieved on January 18, 2013).

Yildirim A, Simsek H 2005. *Sosyal bilimlerde nitel arastirma yontemleri*. Ankara: Seckin Press.

Yin RK 2003. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Ying-Xiu Z, Shu-Rong W 2011. Geographic variation of stature in Chinese youth of age 18+. Anthropologist,13(2):103-106. From <http://www. krepublishers. com/02-Journals/T-Anth/Anth-13-0-000-11-Web/Anth-13-2-000-11-Abst-Pdf/Anth-13-2-103-11-631-Ying-Xiu-Z/Anth-13-2-103-11-631-Ying-Xiu-Z-Tt.pdf> (Retrieved on January 18, 2013)