Study on the Use of Social Media and its Reflections on Turkish Regarding Language Teaching

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Abstract

The way of communication has developed on social media, an environment where informal education occurs, and the social media language or social media Turkish which has emerged as a result of this communication is an important subject which needs to be discussed in terms of Turkish teaching. The reflections of the use of social media on Turkish in today's information age and in light of scientific and technological developments are an undeniable fact. Therefore, it has been revealed that social media tools such as facebook, twitter, myspace, skype, youtube, blogs, search engines, electronic dictionaries and encyclopaedias, forums, dating sites and social communication and sharing platforms have an effect on the syntax and punctuation of Turkish and these effects damage the development of Turkish in terms of language and writing unity. Therefore, what should be done by both individuals and society in order to minimise the negative effects of social media has been determined and also use of language on social media and current problems of Turkish have been pointed out by making use of these remarks and some suggestions have been made. Finally, the aim of this study is to make contributions to Turkish and Turkish teaching.

Key Words: Social Media, Language, Turkish, Turkish Education

Introduction

Today, also known as the information age, the Internet has become an indispensable and a natural part of our daily life due to scientific and technological developments. Therefore, the areas where Internet has been used have increased. The Internet use offers new roles to the individuals and the individual's personality develops within the context of these roles. While the Internet makes individuals' life easier and brings positive values to their life and the society, it also has some negative effects on them. Social media which has been used especially in some social upheavals in recent years reminds of a battle field and these social media users act like warriors.

The Internet, an important means of communication and social media which provides services in this area and has become an essential element of daily communication include qualities which affect the individuals and the society deeply. As it is easy to have access to knowledge in information age, the people on social media use social media not only to reach scientific and cultural knowledge but also to make use of some options such as entertainment and games which appeal to their social sides. The social media platforms which especially provide the communication between the individuals such as *Facebook, Twitter* and some other mass media tools enable the communication between the individuals and also they a lifestyle. Because some mass media tools such as *Facebook, Twitter* used by people from all ages use written language intensively for communication, the use of language and style privately, in other words the use of Turkish, is important.

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As language is an important means which enable communication, it has always maintained its importance. Language which directly affects and shapes social and cultural values, and transfers them to the next generations is an important and indispensable value for the continuity of a government or a nation due to its functions.

"Language is a natural tool which fosters communication between the people and has a vital role in all of the learning activities. Language acquisition and education develops in a specific process. The individuals' natural tendency to learn and link what they have learned can be developed with suitable methods and techniques. Learning is shaped with the world of thought built by the human beings when they try to express themselves and tell the events in their own environment, concepts and the relationships between the concepts. Human beings socialize with the values of the concepts gained within language integrity and they are engaged in thinking and verbalising activities such as learning, application of what they learn, and interpretation with the help of a language. Learning Turkish consists of listening/monitoring, speaking, reading, and writing skills which enable the development of communication skills and grammar. Since these four skills interact with each other, they must be studied in unity"(MEB, 2006: 2).

"Language is both the indicator of cognitive development and also the tool of understanding. This definition clearly introduces that language has a very important place in the child's cognitive and social development. At the same time language is a tool and prerequisite for a child's acquiring social skills and using these skills. Communication, the main social skill, depends on the development of a language which will actualize it" (Özbay, M. ve Melanlıoğlu, D. (2008: 31).

Human beings are social beings and the most important qualities of them are their desire to be in communication and their quality of transferring cultural values which are the result of functions of a language which enable them to communicate. Turkish Language Association (TDK), the official regulatory body of Turkish language, must present an approach to protect, develop and maintain its existence. In Türkçe Sözlük the official Turkish dictionary by TDK, media is defined as "*communication environment and communicative tools*". While the lexical meanings of "*internet and public network*" occur   on the website of Turkish Language Association, the *"social media"* expression does not occur. Social media is the reality of our era because nobody can deny its existence, it grows faster, and it plays a very important role, good or bad, positive or negative, in political and regime changes, decision making by the individuals and expressing oneself. The individuals in social media find an opportunity to have access to the Internet via portable mobile gadgets such as laptops, telephones, and tablets and use social media. The individuals in social media are both active listeners and active speakers. Social media which has become a tool for individuals' expressing themselves in written form is particularly the new address of multifaceted communication, but not one way communication.

The qualities of social media are classified into five headings:

1. Participation: Social media makes it easier for the people who are communicated with to give feedback and make necessary contributions. It weakens the line between the media and the viewers and gives patronage to the service of the user.
2. Clarity: It eliminates the obstacles for the access of content and use as far as possible. Its use is quite clear and easy.
3. Dialogues: Traditional media includes one way communication. Feedback is difficult and it takes time with classical mass communication tools. On the other hand, social media presents individuals two –way communication, easy and timely feedback.
4. Community: Social media lets the communities occur rapidly about the relevant people and the subject and therefore it allows an active and effective communication to be built.

5. Connectivity: Many social media is capable of connecting. It gives links to many sites, sources, and people due to its user friendliness, advertisement or any other reasons (Gürsakal, 2009: 23-24).

Social media which fulfils these functions is in the leading position of a different world. Everybody, either traditional or contemporary, uses social media in our day. This usage is the requirement of the information age, but what is found strange is not to benefit from the opportunities of social media but not to benefit them as required. Social media which serves in many fields is an indispensable world for individuals. "When social media is mentioned, such social networking sites as Facebook, Twitter come to people's mind. "However, any sites where ideas and information are shared and discussed such as forums, dictionaries, micro-blogs are involved in social media. Although it is not easy to classify social media platforms, it is possible to group them under eight main headings:

• Blogs,
• Microblogs (e.g.,Twitter)
• Internet forums (e.g.,Google Groups)
• Search and Evaluation sites (e.g.,Yelp)
• Social news and social and social pinning sites (e.g., Digg, StumpleUpon, Pinterest)
• Social networking sites (e.g.,Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+)
• Media sharing sites (e.g., YouTube, Flickr, Slideshare)
• Virtual worlds (e.g., Second Life)

However, there are platforms (Wikis and Podcasting tools and etc.) apart from the one mentioned above and new social media tools emerge every day. These tools and platforms are studied in detail in the fourth and the fifth units"(Tuncer, 2013: 15-16)

Internet has become widespread and an integral part of our daily life in the information age with social media which has communication and sharing channels. Social media with its functions is an equivalent of a term which facilitates communication and sharing. The individuals take part actively on social media, but also it is possible that they may be suppressed because there is a mutual communication and interaction between the individuals which causes them to be influenced from each other. Social sharing platforms and social communication and sharing platforms such as *facebook, twitter, myspace, skype, youtube, blogs, search engines, electronic dictionaries and encyclopaedias, forums, dating sites* are mass media tools. There is naturally a language used in these environments. This language has its own vocabulary and rules (traditions).

Social media or this new media has created radical changes in the life of individuals. Human beings have gone through many communication stages from past to present such as writing, drums, communication through smoke signals, using messenger pigeons, printing press, telegraph, telephone, radio, television, computer and internet, new media and reached to the new media period. "When it is examined what this new media presents to its users, first of all it is found that the media which is embraced individually has increased in number. New media causes the relationship between the public and private space to be reformulated.

One of the most radical changes is that one way mass communication has become a much more interactive communication between the means and the user. Moreover, this interaction leads to the construction process of media content at the same time. Interactive media has put active viewer concept at the very centre of both media design and media use. One of the most important results of new media technologies is that it transforms the viewer. "Viewers as users have been regarded more active (choosy, not consuming the contents but also producing them, individual oriented) and pluralistic (fragmental, multiple, diverse) (Livingstone, 1999: 3-5).

"The rapid developments with communication tools have caused the media to differentiate and this emergent non-traditional media is called "new media. The media has resulted in the formation of different definitions by placing many adjectives before it. The environments which were first diversified as traditional media and new media have been the subject of many different classifications. When the current situation is examined, the environments except the traditional media have been classified as online media, offline media, social media and interactive media" (Fırlar, 2010: 48).

"Another important difference between new media and traditional media is that new media does not present opportunities to reach information via only different channels, but also at the same time it connects the people with social bonds in the environments where they reach information. In other words, while the traditional media tools are only magazines, television, and newspaper, the mew media tools are the places which both function as magazines, television and newspaper and also which present the environments where these tools are used to the individuals. This characteristic of new media tools has attributed social meaning to them. One of the advantages of the Internet is that the users are not only content consumers or followers but also they meet the other users in these environments and become members of these environments where they can share information" (Polat, 2009: 32).

"New media has made some changes for the production, dissemination and use of the information. According to these changes, new media has some characteristics such as being digital, interactive, hyper-textual, networked, virtual and simulated" (Lister and et al.,2009: 13)
 Social media where communication is actualized at the highest level is also a cultural environment where intercultural communication is achieved.

"The Internet has become quite an individualized information medium in time where the viewers have been able to form the media which they have been exposed to according to their needs and wishes. This transformation has become possible with Web applications which enable user generated content and can assemble the pieces of information and also it has become an indicator of consumer centred media except for the publisher centred media " (Daughtery vd., 2008: 17).

Social Media and Use of Turkish

According to TNS Digital Life Research carried out in 2011, 1.938.059.098 people are online and they have become part of this digital process. Turkey ranked eighth in the research. The desire to express something rapidly and feelings enthusiastically on the Internet in such a medium caused the words we use in our language to become stereotyped and this condition affects Turkish negatively.

"According to the research, internet penetration in Turkey is 44 %. However, numeric growth index is high in Turkey. Turkey ranks tenth among some of the Southwest Asian and the former Soviet Union countries. 71% of internet users in Turkey go online every day. The most important motivation is "entertainment". Nine out of ten Internet users have used the Internet for doing research and getting information about the trademarks. This ratio is over the world average. 22% of the Internet users go online with their cell phones in Turkey. Before they go to bed, they check their Facebook or Twitter accounts in order to discover what is happening. While the number of our average friends last year was 191, it has risen to 219 this year and Turkey ranks eighth in the digital world. Turkish citizens frequently go online on social sharing sites such as Facebook. 36% of the Internet users surf the social sharing sites every day." – See (http://www.telekominternet.com/tns-digital-life-arastirmasi-turkler-interneti-eglenmek-icinkullaniyor#sthash.Vj3z74py.dp). Actually the frequent use of social media may create an opportunity for language teaching; however, a certain infrastructure should be constructed. But Turkey is not at the desired level at this point. It is a grim reality that cultural imperialism has brought our language under control.

Social media in our country and the globalizing world has become the voice, eye, ear, heart, and memory of the individuals. Social media presents various options to the individuals in terms of time, place and subject. It has aspects which strengthen, weaken and include communication between the individuals and also it provides convenience for time and place.   However, because it reduces face-to-face communication between the individuals, it is an undeniable fact that it has negative effects. In this sense social media is a medium where the personality of the individuals takes shape and language development is actualized significantly. Words which enable communication between the individuals and the sentence structure depending on words and the language are used effectively in social media. Some negative points such as social media's affecting the reading rates, decreasing the number of people going to the library and reading habit, low level vocabulary, and using particular words and phrases for communication have been considered as threats for language unity.

Language is like a ship which floats the soul of the society and our soul (Sinanoğlu, 2000: 147)
"As alienation is seen in the issue of language nowadays, any mistakes made by the media are reflected on us as the mirror of the society. Unfortunately, the language has been corrupted due to the lack of inspection of the presenters and programs. Although the use of language should guide the public and require examples, intellectual explanations using words which are uttered indistinctly and not included in the language lead the young to imitation. Therefore, the media which interacts with the public at any time must be careful about the language it uses; otherwise won't the efforts of the linguists who have carried out research on language be in vain? " (*Medya Dili ve Dilbilime Uygunluğu Tartışması (A Discussion on Media Language and its Linguistic Appropriateness), Hanifi SEVER, Gülden Neslihan KESİCİ*. Retrieved June, 29 2013, from http://www.caginpolisi.com.tr/26/51-52.htm)

The purpose of language education is to develop the language and communication skills of the individuals. In this sense Turkish is not a knowledge transfer course, but a course where skills are obtained. In parallel with Turkish education curriculum, the goals and objectives of Turkish course for the grades 1-5 the individuals state that they should be aware of Turkish language, build communication and use mass media tools.

According to the purpose of Turkish education which is in accordance with the general purposes and the fundamentals of Turkish National Education, the students will be able to

1. like Turkish and to use it accurately, fluently and effectively.
2. question whatever is conveyed through mass media tools.
3. develop themselves personally, culturally and socially.
4. give importance to national, spiritual, moral, historical, cultural, social, aesthetic and artistic values and strengthen their national feelings and thoughts (MEB, 2005).

"... although some language problems which are the sources of the authors' studies (e.g., English signboards in Turkey, English originated words without Turkish equivalents, but if equivalents are found, it is difficult to adopt them, high percentage of vocabulary transfer, pronunciation and spelling mistakes which occur on mass media where the language must be used very carefully) have not been designated correctly, they refer to some problems related to the language. Some of the reasons for this condition are that standard Turkish does not have enough prestige within the framework of language planning and students are not taught correct pronunciation or use of circumflex (^).These problems will probably be solved if the linguists participate in the popular discussions and the subject matters are discussed in scientific platforms in the light of the scientific data. "(Duman, 2013: 170-171)

It is continuously stated in Basic Law of National Education numbered 1739 and Turkish education programs that Turkish, which enables national unity and integrity, must be protected in moderation and without corrupting its characteristics in the schools and outside the school.

(*The purposes of national education are tried to be actualized not only in formal and private education institutions but also at homes, at work and at anywhere and at any opportunity*). The following points are mentioned in the general purposes of Turkish course teaching curriculum for grades 6-8 :

In accordance with Turkish Course Teaching Curriculum and the general purposes of Turkish National Education, the students will

1. adopt that our language is one of the basic elements of national unity and integrity.
2. express their feelings, ideas, and dreams effectively and clearly in written and spoken language.
3. use Turkish consciously, accurately and carefully according to speaking and writing rules.
4. develop understanding, sequencing, relating, classifying, questioning, criticising, predicting, analysing, synthesising, interpreting, and evaluating skills.
5. read the literary works suitable to their levels, gain the habit and pleasure of choosing, listening, and watching scientific, cultural and art activities;
6. enrich their vocabulary based on what he reads, listens and watches and gain language taste and awareness; develop their feelings, thoughts and imaginary world.
7. learn constructive, creative, rational, critical and correct ways of thinking and turn them into habits.
8. use mass media means to gain information and acquire critical view points towards the messages conveyed with these means and be highly selective. .
9. recognize national and universal values via works of art belonging to Turkish and world culture and art.
10. be indulgent, respectful to human rights and sensitive towards the national and universal problems and generate solutions.
11. give importance to national, spiritual and moral values and strengthen their feelings and ideas about these values. (MEB, 2006).

Although using Turkish effectively and clearly, caring and protecting Turkish, having Turkish language awareness, approaching Turkish with national conscience, and using Turkish accurately and fluently with its rules and such principles are stated clearly in the general purposes of Turkish teaching curriculum and national education, it has been revealed by the scientific studies that the number of students and teachers or the other individuals of the society who adopted and internalised the following framework from primary school to university is rather few in number and this condition occurs both in formal and informal education environment.

Şükrü Halûk Akalın, the former director of Turkish Language Association, indicated the following points during the opening of the 3rd International Turkish Dialect Research Workshop held in Culture and Congress Center in Sakarya University (SAÜ): "Naming businesses with foreign words foreign words has reached its peak and made us ask the following question " Are we in Turkey?". There are problems such as writing words with letters which are not involved in Turkish alphabet or writing Turkish words like American or English, alienation in business names due to foreign words in every area, tuckshop (börekçi) becoming a "centre"… There are such spellings that they are neither Turkish nor English. Besides the Turkish spelling mistakes, there are English spelling mistakes. Another important problem is related to spelling of foreign words" (http://www.haberler.com/3-uluslararasi-turkiye-turkcesi-agiz-arastirmalari-2260353-haberi/)

Although the individuals who use Turkish in social media feel themselves free, they have to be careful about their writing styles and language as the environment has its own laws and rules and due to the groups they address, what they say and write involves many people.

Therefore, some careless approaches used while speaking Turkish or writing in Turkish pave the way for the language corruption (e.g; change in words or deviation from the standard language), a decrease in the number of the words used in daily communication as well as its quality, making it defective and violation of the language. Unfortunately, enough measures are not taken about this condition on social media. These problems which rise due to the usage of Turkish on social media are not problems which can be resolved with only measures. One of our most important complaints about Turkish language awareness is indifference, in other words, negligence. The most important factors which have negative effects on the usage of Turkish in social media from primary school period to university are incomplete awareness of language, admiration for foreign languages and education language being in foreign language.

The draft report of TBMM (Turkish Grand National Assembly) Research Committee in 2008 determined that corruption and alienation in Turkish reached to dangerous dimensions. The problems Turkish had were given as follows in the report: Desire to use foreign words, usage of obscene and indecent expressions, mispronunciations, idioms and compound verbs, stress and pausing mistakes, using words in their wrong meanings and style, incoherency, inadequacy of Turkish teaching, using Turkish carelessly, education language being in foreign language, Turkish not being preferred as scientific language, inadequacy of word and term formation, and not being able to promote language awareness and national language policy. (http://www.ortadogugazetesi.net/haber.php?id=6396 erişim tarihi: 29. 07. 2013).

Cemil Çiçek, TBMM (Turkish Grand National Assembly) president, sent a manuscript dated 30/06/2012 to the Prime Ministry about the problems of Turkish recently. In his manuscript he stated that the individual and social sensitivity were important in order to use Turkish correctly and state institutions and organizations should take leading roles. He also emphasized that the findings stated in the report of Parliamentary Research Committee were very important in order to do research about corruption and alienation of Turkish in the 23rd term in TBMM and determine the measures to be taken to protect and improve Turkish. "The problems encountered in Turkish have been listed as follows in the report prepared by the research committee set up in the 23rd legislative term: desire to use foreign words, usage of obscene and indecent expressions, mispronunciations, idioms and compound verbs, stress and pausing mistakes, use words in their wrong meanings and style, incoherency, inadequacy of Turkish teaching, use Turkish carelessly, education language being in foreign language, Turkish not being preferred as scientific language, inadequacy of word and term formation, and not being able to promote language awareness and national language policy.

It is expressed that Turkish should be taught effectively in all levels of National education, pre-school education, primary and secondary education and university education and added that foreign language teaching must be encouraged instead of teaching with foreign language. Although TBMM and all the state institutions and organizations have been informed about the problems of Turkish, unfortunately the expected progress both individually and socially towards the protection and development of Turkish has not been made yet. It is a national mission to generate solutions for the problems mentioned as soon as possible.
(http://baskanlik.tbmm.gov.tr/haber.aspx?h=122386.erişimtarihi:29.07.2013).

Turkish, one of the important languages in the world, has its share of changes due to globalisation. The main reasons of these changes can be explained as follows:

1. Language use in social media should be evaluated individually and accepted as declaration of freewill.
2. The celebrities in politics, art, sports and so on who are admired by the society become role models due to their inaccurate language use.

3. Paying no attention particularly to style and as a result it damages the use of slang and aesthetic structure of Turkish.
4. Not adopting, internalising and accepting the spelling rules and language rules of Turkish Language Association.
5. Lack of national conscience and language awareness.
6. Some points such as admiration for foreign languages, formation of negative cultural corruption as a result of cultural alienation and also social media, which plays an important role, are important factors which affect Turkish directly.

Results and Suggestions

Results

Because individuals hastily write something especially on social media platforms, they have to adapt the traditions and their understanding towards language of social networks. These behaviours have become a tradition and they have been accepted as correct in time. This condition has become dangerous for Turkey. Social media Turkish damages unity and integrity of Turkish.

Although social media is a platform where information transfer and share is carried out, it is a fact that it paves the way for some values to disappear. Still another fact is that the less Turkish is used, the weaker the language awareness becomes. It can be stated that the traditional language particularly used by the social media does not include language conscience at a desired or required level. "Language used in every area of our life is a tool which enables the written and verbal messages to be conveyed effectively. The impact of language can be seen in a wide array of areas from regulation of relationships to the transfer of ideas. Lack of attention to the language, misuse of the language and adoption of foreign words and phrases into our language have caused language corruption. The Internet is considered to be one of the reasons for language corruption" (Akkoyunlu and İsmailov, 2009)

It is observed that students use Turkish, broken Turkish, under the influence of social very much outside the school. This negative effect has become widespread via the Internet and mobile phones.

It was also revealed that the use of Internet and social media decreased reading habit. Therefore, Turkish vocabulary use shrinks and it is replaced with some foreign words used on the Internet. Social media has an effect on speaking Turkish too and it also causes shrinking vocabulary.

The most tangible indicator of alienation toward our own values is that social media language or Turkish has become a part of our daily life. Businesses naming with foreign words are a tangible indicator of this situation. Akkoyunlu, B, soylu, M. S. (2011) conducted a study called *Social Communication Networks and A Qualitative Study on the Incorrect Use of Language* and they determined the following in their study:

"The results of the study revealed the following points determined by the students on social communication networks.

➢ Use of letters which are not included in Turkish (ewet, chok, yaw etc.)
➢ Repetition of letters for intonation to increase the effect of the saying (selaaaam)
➢ Reductions across future and present continuous suffixes (geliyom, biliyom etc.),
➢ Lack of punctuation marks in the sentences
➢ As well meaning too (-de) and the interrogative particle –mi written together and whatever meaning it has, "ki" particle is written separately or together.
➢ Use of English vocabulary in the sentences (away "uzakta", bye bye "hoşça kal", relax "rahat" konsorsiyum "birlik", thanks "teşekkürler")

> ➢ Using contractions which cause language corruption such as "mrb" in place of "merhaba " , "slm " in place of "selam"
> ➢ Write words without putting spaces between them or misspell them ("Doumgununu QutluyOrum beybi").

The main important point in Turkish education is that love for Turkish is not enough or awareness is not promoted. We can benefit from social media to develop language awareness and gain love for Turkish.

Social media directly affects the language development and communication. Social media needs to be paid attention as it is one of the most important platforms due to the population it addresses. Language, diction, style errors are made on the media and spelling rules are ignored. The excessive use of foreign words has led to shrinking of Turkish vocabulary use which serves to the aim of language imperialism.

"The tangible indicator of the question "Do we live in Turkey or in a foreign country?" is the names of the businesses, institutions, organizations, products, and streets which reflect cultural values. When they are used in Turkish, they will make contributions to social media in terms of using Turkish.

Suggestions

First of all, awareness of F-keyboard, suitable to the structure of Turkish, should be created by taking into consideration the information technologies.

A national attitude should be displayed about speaking and writing in Turkish effectively and accurately. Therefore, the sites on social media, at least the names of the Turkish ones, should be in Turkish or they should be encouraged.

Business names, institutions and organizations and some scientific terms should be given Turkish equivalents. As these places are advertised on social media, special attention must be paid in order to advertise them according to the structure of Turkish.

Programs should be developed to use some elements of *Face book* and *Twitter* in Turkish. Unfortunately, it can be stated that our people who are full of love towards animals and nature do not show the same sensitivity towards our language which provides continuance of the nation or the state. Every subject is important whether or not it is important, but a nation's language is the reason for their existence and its importance can not be compared to anything. Therefore, anybody with national consciousness and sensitivity should move with the following motto "*Turkish is a matter of motherland*" and "*if the point in question is Turkish, the rest must be details*".

The main wrong usages which draw attention on social media are mistakes in sentence formation, spelling and use of upper and lower cases, errors in the spelling of diphthongs and double consonants, spelling of compound words, lack of vowels between the words, not obeying the spelling rules, using slang and using words repeatedly in a sentence. These usages must be prevented.

As the use of the Internet and social media begins at a very early age in Turkey, necessary measures should be taken in order to prevent Turkish from being damaged and deformed in these environments and to protect it. Moreover, language awareness must be promoted with all the students beginning from primary education to university. Therefore, suitable environments must be created for the students to develop their vocabulary and to express themselves and also essay type exams should be given instead of multiple choice tests in the exams which assess the Turkish level of primary, secondary, high school and university students during teaching activities.

If TBMM, all the state institutions and organizations, private sector organizations and particularly all the organizations and institutions related to the information technologies and the Internet work cooperatively, corruption of Turkish and *"being Greek to"* Turkish or alienation of Turkish will be prevented and the awareness of using Turkish accurately will be promoted.

We must feel, internalise, and protect Turkish ,which makes us a nation, brings us together, form our identity, and becomes our voice flag not only on social media but in every field of life and we must speak it with national conscience.

[1] Note: This article "Abstract" section of the "Of Using Social Media in Terms of Turkish Education A Study on Turkish Reflections" 7 to 9 November 2013 with the name of the 2nd World Conference held in Antalya on Educational and Instructional Studies were presented as in-WCEIS.

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