



## Evaluation Criteria for Using Interactive Notebooks in Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language

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**Abstract:** Different institutions and organizations teach Turkish to foreigners with different approaches and methods. While making learning more effective and exciting during the flow of the course, these different approaches and methods also strive to free students from the boredom of plain lectures in traditional teaching methods. Placing the student at the center and keeping individual learning at the forefront, use of interactive notebooks enables colorful and rich products to emerge from the combination of students' knowledge and imagination. For teachers to evaluate these products independently, new evaluation criteria should be introduced. Document analysis and qualitative research methods were used in this study. It has been determined that the current evaluation criteria are insufficient in using interactive notebooks. It was attempted to define new evaluation criteria and present examples to teachers.

**Key Words:** *Evaluation Criteria; Interactive Notebook; Teaching Methods; Project Based Teaching; Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language.*

### Introduction

In line with the innovations and developments borne by the 21st century, Turkey's geographical location has proved gainful and prominent. Political and international relations have increased the interest and incentive in Turkish, the official language of Turkey. Teaching Turkish as a foreign language has been undertaken at an academic level since the 1990s. To date, studies related to Turkish language teaching have remained discrete. Until the 1980s, a few studies existed in teaching Turkish to foreigners (Göçer, 2013, p. 171). Studies emerged as a result of individual efforts under corporate identities after 1990. The first initiative based on a corporate identity in this field was the *Türkçe Öğretim Merkezi* (Turkish Teaching Center) at the Ankara University. Following this, institutional configurations within undergraduate and graduate higher education institutions rapidly opened.

These developments within Turkey have manifested in different ways abroad. The wish and motivation to learn Turkish abroad has become more accessible with

Turkish-made drama serials, courses, movies, TV shows and private Turkish schools. Teaching Turkish as a foreign language has become widespread with such initiatives and state-supported institutions, besides the institutions founded by private enterprises. Turkology departments, institutes, chairs founded under Eastern Languages departments at universities abroad, corporate and non-governmental institutions and organizations supported by business community such as private schools, foundations, cultural centers and tutoring centers also helped promote the overseas teaching of Turkish.

Teaching of Turkish in public and private institutions at home and abroad are appraised within the framework of the European Union Common Language Criteria program. The certificates issued under this program bears international recognition. This official declaration serves as the basis of the techniques and methods applied in teaching Turkish. The European Union Common Language Criteria bind language teaching to certain criteria and divide language proficiency into four main skills i.e., speaking,

reading-comprehension, writing and grammar for foreign language learners. In addition, the EUCL sets level criteria for foreign language learners and assesses the extent the learners know languages. For the foreigners learning Turkish, this assessment is officially made by the Turkish Teaching Centers (TÖMER) under Turkish state universities.

Instructors in each institution teach Turkish with their own methods and approaches. As there is no one-size-fits-for-all teaching method, materials used in teaching differ. The materials used in teaching Turkish has manifested diversity recently. The reason for this can be attributed to the increase in the frequency of academic studies and the proliferation of the state-supported education institutions. Teaching materials developed by the TÖMER are used in several institutions. There are also more advanced and various materials produced by private enterprises. While these new resources handled teaching of Turkish holistically at first, recently developed materials have been created with a focus on speaking, writing, reading-comprehension and grammar components.

### **Purpose and Method**

This study aimed to develop distinct evaluation criteria from the traditional system in the usage of interactive notebooks, a new teaching approach. The good and negative aspects of these parameters have been attempted to be defined. It has been discovered that the Use of Interactive Notebooks in Teaching Turkish to Foreigners, which was not found in our literature analysis, does not exist in practice. The approaches of teaching with the interactive notebook incorporated in project-based learning were examined in this study. Students' activities and learning processes in the

classroom were observed in their natural setting in Turkish courses, and the points noted throughout the practice were itemized. An attempt was made to generate new criteria for evaluation, and it was intended to define examples for teachers. The primary documents obtained were sorted and presented. The primary data outlines how kids, during their one year of schooling, will be graded based on their interactions with other students, activities, and learning processes within the triangle of teacher, family, and parent. Independent evaluation criteria were used to grade the students' work. In the appendix, some examples used during the practice are provided.

### **Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching**

A method is putting an approach into practice. The theorists who developed the method form a model vis-à-vis activity types, teacher and student roles, materials to be used and creating a curriculum (Harmer, 2007, Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The methods and approaches followed by teachers are generally based on teacher-centered teaching strategies, through which teachers guide students and control the lesson flow. These methods encourage relaying information to students through teachers. Various approaches and methods intend to break up the monotony of teaching, keep delivery of lessons fresh, and prevent students from the boredom instilled by the traditional method. As opposed to the traditional system, which depends on students' own study and learning by processing raw information, teachers must use student-centered teaching approaches for students who endeavor to gain knowledge.

Teaching a language has been diversified with different methods developed. This primarily bears the

objective of presenting information to students quickly and reliably. It also has the motive to address the deficiencies of the methods used in the variation of the methods throughout the teaching history and process, or the parts considered as inadequate. Yet, there is still no method or approach that can be said to have attained perfection today. To use and determine the methods effectively for the students in the education-training process, it is incumbent to know the main features, limitations, deficiencies and effective aspects of the methods. The fact a good method needs improvement and renewal based on the constant change and renewal of the needs of individuals in today's world always urges to question how the methods in foreign language teaching should be. The diversity of methods in foreign language teaching brings with itself the question of which methods are more effective in language teaching. A method likely effective for one may not be equally successful for another or may fail completely (Tarcan, 2004, p. 6). Until today, different methods and approaches have been emphasized. We can list the foreign language teaching methods prescribed by the Council of Europe's Department of Modern Languages and frequently used by instructors as follows:

Grammar-Translation Method

Direct Method

Natural Method

Audio-Lingual Method

Cognitive-Code Method

Communicative Method

Eclectic Method

Suggestopedia

Community Language Learning

The Silent Way

Total Physical Response

Audio-Visual Method

Task-Based Method

Content-Based Method (Memiş and Erdem, 2013).

The interactive notebook in this study is another application of the personal development files, diverging in a few aspects. Having found itself a new area for development, use of interactive notebooks creates easily applicable activities for teachers by the interdisciplinary effect.

### **Task-Based Method**

“This method considers it a 'task' for students to reach a conclusion in a thought process with the information given and for teachers to demonstrate the procedures essential to control and regulate this process” (Prabhu, 1987). It is a modern method emerged recently and aims to foster the equal development of four basic language skills taken as a basis in foreign language teaching. The focus is not on the outcome of the teaching; the basic element is the way to be followed in the education-training process and the rapport to be established with the students. It aims what extent the language used in daily life can be acquired by students. This method places the student in the center, actively uses interactive learning and ensures the tasks given to the students are fulfilled; thus, fulfils foreign language teaching.

The language teaching method in this approach, which has similar features with communicative language teaching, is based on communicative activities and consists of various tasks students have to complete in a learning environment where interaction between individuals occurs at a high level (Selim, 2015). The tasks are listed and generated for educational purpose, associating them with real life settings for students to complete. Jane Willis names six types of tasks through

which every topic can be covered: Listing, arrangement-ordering, comparison, problem solving, sharing personal experience, project and production (Doğan, 2012, p. 391). Teachers explain to students the words they will use in line with their tasks, the task descriptions, how they are to fulfil them, and how long it will take them to complete the tasks. Teachers are at the center of teaching throughout the process. While students complete their tasks, teachers assume the position of direction and observation. They enable learners to focus on language learning and acquire skills with the tasks they perform.

### **Project-Based Learning**

A method implemented in studies to get in-depth information on determined topics, Project-Based Learning is a comprehensive learning approach that enables students to conduct research on a subject or problem individually or in groups in or out of school, resulting in various outcomes (Sünbül, 2007, p. 186). As per another definition, project-based learning is an active learning method in which students investigate some real-life problems and events and share the results in oral presentations or written reports to learn knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and scientific concepts (Krajcik, 2008). Czerniak and Berger, 1999, pp. 8-9; Thomas, 2000). Both definitions underline project-based learning as a teaching strategy, making teacher's guidance mandatory for determining students' individual learning skills. In addition, students who attempt to solve the problems they encounter during the teaching process in collaboration with their friends and teachers focus on improving their personal skills. The activities undertaken by the students consist of individual or group-based project studies on a chosen topic. Project-based learning environment is a technology-supported learning

setting in which real life is brought into the classroom, where students can identify and direct their own learning, develop their creativity and skills in solving the problems they encounter while in collaboration, and take eventual decision on their success (Erdem, 2002). It is a method in which students provide one-to-one learning by processing and structuring the information they plan to acquire on the chosen topic progressively and associating it with real life. Project-based learning:

- is intended for the student.
- is related to the real life.
- can acquire information from various sources.
- is based on research.
- is as one with knowledge and skills.
- is conducted within a specified period.
- results in obtaining a product (Diffily, 2002).

Different phases are involved in attaining knowledge during project-based learning. Practices in various stages exist in academic studies. In their study, Korkmaz and Kaptan (2001) identified these as six steps. They explained the roles of the teacher and the student in the process of the teacher's and the student's obtaining knowledge separately. These six steps are:

1. Identifying the topic and subtopics, organizing groups within themselves,
2. Forming project plans in groups,
3. Organizing group members in implementing the project, analyzing data and information,
4. Planning the presentation; group members highlight key points in their presentations,
5. Delivering the presentation,
6. Evaluation.

In their study, Katz and Chard adopted a universal perspective and reduced these steps to three. First

Phase (Onset): Students define and choose the topic to be researched, prepare for the questions to be asked, and share personal experiences and knowledge with one another. The teacher assumes the role of a guide at this phase, giving directions by specifying how students should carry out the project and ensuring the students remain interested in the project.

Second Phase (Fieldwork): Students try to find answers to the questions they defined in the first phase. They organize studies and trips related to the chosen project.

Third Phase (Project Conclusion): In this last phase, students share and evaluate with their classmates and teachers the information and findings they obtained during the project work. With their findings report, they deliver a presentation of the project.

In project-based learning, each student participates in the one-on-one learning process. The knowledge to be obtained in language learning is of continuous nature throughout the teaching process. Language learning that develops in its own natural environment provides students with an easy learning environment and time-saving. This cycle in the natural environment ensures the negativities experienced in the language teaching of the student are experienced at a minimum level. It can be assumed the knowledge gained by students in a natural environment with their peers is permanent. (2000, pp. 105-134).

Students form the studies on their own, construct the knowledge by themselves and obtain the factual information when the project ends. While this method can be implemented separately, it is also aimed to reach information in small groups in student-centered

learning through connection with other disciplines. Students mainly engage in activities such as thinking, problem solving, and creativity, access to information, processing, re-blending, questioning, and reconciliation. They allocate time for both individual and team work in lesson scenarios aimed at solving real problems. (Demirel, 2005).

In the project-based learning method, teachers and students have different task definitions independent of each other. Teachers follow and control the project as guides. Guide teachers provide the essential support while the students prepare their projects. Teachers keep the environment i.e., the classroom ready for the students. While deciding about listening and learning by responding to students' requests and suggestions, teachers can use strategies of reflection, thinking and leading to thinking to guide students (Diffily & Sassman, 2002, pp. 29). Guide teachers assist students to develop original and engaging projects independent of one another and intertwined with life. Teachers ensure that students take seriously the work to be followed throughout the project, produce quality work and help one another. Teachers have high expectations from students throughout the project they work upon and strive to achieve. Within the framework of well-defined behaviors, students are expected to decide on topics and take responsibility throughout the project.

Education and training methods have been developed at different points and enriched with various materials. Although each student's abilities and learning skills differ throughout the learning process, they are all evaluated at the same level. Yet, each student has different abilities, experience, intelligence, environment and family setting. Hence, it is essential to evaluate students as per their individual potentials

and characteristics without comparing them with one another.

### **Interactive Notebooks**

Interactive notebooks help students establish realistic connections with their environment by associating the knowledge they attained from their education with the knowledge they have just learned, review their feelings and thoughts in this context and acquire an effective learning tool to last throughout their lives. Interactive notebooks also aim to yield individuals who can produce independent and unique ideas and express them freely.

Interactive notebooks contain materials in different variants, from the notes students keep in the classroom under the guidance of the teacher to the assignments given, word and sentence exercises, and the subject matter.

Using interactive notebooks develops diverse and motivating solutions to the excuses students put forth during their education. Interactive notebooks contain production and teaching activities students can use throughout their life to realize and develop their potential by collaborating with different disciplines. Interactive notebooks can be found as diverse as the student's abilities and skills. They are not limited to the materials to be used for a certain period and the projects decided and delivered. Since each student processes information differently, there is an interactive notebook meant for their lifetime continuous improvement.

Interactive notebooks can be used for any course the learner studies. The interactive notebook we use for teaching Turkish to foreigners aims to reach each

student by using the multiple intelligence approach in classrooms with mixed-ability students. Thanks to interactive notebooks, student motivation is preserved at the top with its visual and continuous updates in works and projects.

Interactive notebooks, with their non-result-focused structure, focus on developing students' ideas and their constantly active structure, help to increase the productivity of students. Providing a better understanding of the subjects in the targeted curriculum, interactive notebooks ensure diversity in the student's perspectives through placement of knowledge on solid foundations.

Offering a textbook specific to each student, a magazine created and constantly updated in collaboration with the class and an interactive notebook that offers a dynamic portfolio file, an interactive notebook contributes to developing the student's thinking and imagination.

### **Reasons to Use Interactive Notebooks**

Numerous studies on the activities of the human brain have been conducted in the developing world. It has been observed that the human brain consists of two main parts called the right and left lobes. Findings from brain research on learning are striking. It has been discovered that both parts of the brain form different learning modules and acquire and store information correspondingly. Recent studies have revealed that two distinct brain lobes control two distinct thinking styles.

Each person's learning style and process differs. One lobe of the brain has a greater effect on learning processes. Education and training carried out in

crowded classroom settings address the right or left side of our brain in the traditional system where teachers are predominant in education.

Placing the student at the center of instruction, interactive notebooks offer personalized instruction even in crowded classroom environments and can appeal to students with diverse abilities. Creating and using an interactive notebook should divide it into two main parts as right and left. This bifurcation is followed due to the different perception and learning conditions of the right and left lobes of the human brain. As generally preferred by those who use interactive notebooks, the right side of the notebook is where the information flow is recorded, and the left side is where the student's understanding of this information flow is reflected. In an interactive notebook, the studies related to the subject on the left for the student to process should be colored and legible.

The student's personal development moves through constant practice during the teaching process. The reflections of the student's perspective are observed in

**Table 1**

*Creating an interactive notebook*

<b>Left Lobe</b> <b>Student Contribution</b>	<b>Right Lobe</b> <b>Teacher Contribution</b>
Shapes	History
Pictures	Unit Title
Graphs	Lesson Number
Student's Self Notes	Key Words
Summaries and Outcomes	Lesson Content
Songs	Course Notes
Poems	Exercises
Assignments	Questions
Free expressions etc.	Concept Maps etc.

the resulting products. These products are also the synthesis of old and new information. The left part of the interactive notebook is where students realize their experiences and dreams throughout the education process. The motivation of the students provides the enrichment and originality of the visual products thanks to the comfort provided by the guiding teacher. Interactive notebooks are helpful resources students can always use for fun during the lessons or extracurricular times. They enable the development of activities that make learning the topic in the curriculum meaningful and permanent. They act as a wide reference source where detailed notes of the subject explained in the school under the guidance of the teacher are included besides in-class studies, subject revision tests and worksheets. In order for the subjects to be understood correctly and to ensure their permanence, thoughts should be transformed into products by taking time daily. This idea can take shape in student's own imagination and find its place on the left side of the notebook as original products with no boundaries.

**Two-Sided:** The products obtained during the academic year provide information for both the teacher and the student. They provide easy recall to the student as they provide the approach to the subject and the coding of information throughout the learning process. Students structure the information according to their individual abilities. During the whole process, teachers discover the development of their students, what information they obtain and how, and with which type of intelligence students comprehend information faster.

**Original:** As the outcome of the student's own production and knowledge, the interactive notebook forms a year's work of the student. In the traditional system, exams and tests to measure success focus on the result and sort according to the mark obtained, without considering the development of the student. In the interactive notebook, student products are concretely shaped step by step in front of the teacher. During the learning process, developing the student should be evaluated in an original way.

**Personal:** It reflects the student's purely personal products. After the teacher makes the presentation of the subject, the left part of the interactive notebook is left for the student's own work. The world of dreams and the products of their own talents are included in this side. It is the place where the student's individual style, even their upbringing environment and outcomes of imagination, create his or her own style.

**Interactive:** Students share their work in their notebook with their teacher and classmates in class presentations and end-of-the-unit exhibitions. Their individual works set an example for classmates. By sharing the activities in teacher group studies with other teachers, they create exemplary projects for other schools as well. Students compare their work with that of one another.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

Assessment and evaluation approaches in education and training and the theories put forward to that end emerged with the influence of the behavioral approach. With the emergent and changing world after the 1990s, evaluation criteria have also diversified. One criterion is student development files (portfolios) and interactive notebook evaluations. Rubrics need to be prepared to facilitate and make the evaluation criteria independent. Marking directive is a marking guide that defines the characteristics (criteria) of performance at different levels in a subject and is used in deciding about performance (Goldsby, 2001).

Interactive notebooks are the products students reveal in line with their individual skills by sifting information from different sources through their filter of experience. After integrating myriad information and documents proving student performance in portfolios, criteria or sets of criteria are developed for evaluating the portfolio (Moya and O'Malley, 1994). From this viewpoint, it can be assumed that the same method is followed in the interactive notebooks. The evaluation criteria prepared by teachers as per performance changes in the topics chosen by the



cooperation of the teacher and the student include these aspects:

- Whether the content on the chosen topic is fully learned or not,
- The skill demonstrated by the student while preparing the file,
- The quality in the products resulting from the experience.

Therefore, the performances, set to a certain standard with prepared guidelines, are made equal for everyone. During the one-year academic span, the student will be supervised and subjected to an independent evaluation.

Evaluation of interactive notebook studies can be conducted through various criteria. Evaluation criteria may differ among teachers. Some implementations and schools have a marking system for the interactive notebook, corresponding to 25% of the overall grade. In some applications, it is observed the subject teacher uses the opinion grade or the marking from the interactive notebook as the project grade. The basis of such differences is failing to mark students in precise criteria. In addition, there is no central examination practice as in the traditional system. This makes it incumbent to follow different ways from the traditional system in evaluating student performance.

It has been observed that the daily lesson hours of teachers reach 5-6 lesson hours on average in schools. Considering the present student and class averages of the schools, the number of students differs significantly between private and public schools. While the class sizes of private schools vary between 25-30 students, it is seen this number increases up to 50-60 in public schools. The average number of

students of a teacher who teaches at the same school can vary between 150-200. The control and evaluation of the interactive notebook each student follows creates a hefty burden for the teacher. Since it will be difficult for teachers to cope with emerging workloads, it is necessary to create an easy-to-use format for assessment and marking. In addition, the control charts prepared by the teacher do not consider classes in holistic manner. Control days chosen by the teacher for each class not only reduce the workload, but also contribute to operating the system more efficiently. Weekly class assessments systematize marking. Explaining the assessment formats created by teachers in their respective subject groups to the students and parents accurately will ensure the further success of the learning process. In cases where information is not provided well at the beginning of the school year; it is inevitable teachers will encounter reaction from parents and students in the subsequent phases of the school year. The evaluation format criteria for the interactive notebook should be delivered to the parents in written form. During the one-year learning process, students and parents will see what criteria will be marked. Hence, the format in which the controls of the studies to be carried out will be explained according to definite and independent criteria.

Students and society are more accustomed to the marking system in the traditional system. The marks in this system offer the opportunity to compare progress years later. In interactive notebook evaluations, the results are expressed in words rather than numbers. Due to the marking system with which they have been accustomed, parents may not find this system, which evaluate students' performances, successful. They may feel the school does not teach or fulfils no responsibility. They think an objective

evaluation is not made when marking is not linked to certain criteria. It is necessary to ensure a meaningful consistency and a certain level of reliability between markers or evaluators (Novak, Herman, & Gearhart, 1996). Unlike the interactive notebook, in traditional tests, students must show the same performance under the same conditions.

Above is an evaluation format prepared for secondary school preparatory and 7th graders. The same format can be used or the criteria can be developed with different items. It is essential to determine the evaluation criteria in the meetings between the teacher and the student. In that way, it can be determined which of the learning outcomes succeed and which ones need improvement. Grading only the result will not be an independent evaluation, as it will cause the student's performance and the learning process in the product to be ignored. Marking by looking at the product created by the student without determining the evaluation criteria will keep us away from being independent.

In the interactive notebook, on the other hand, the reflections, developments and situations of student performances on the notebook vary according to each student's ability and skills. The teacher's approach to the student also affects the student's performance. The support teachers provide to students, the time they give to students, the cultural structure of the family and the support of the parents directly affect the yield of products. It is impossible to measure and evaluate all these **with the classical test method**. The marking system in using interactive notebooks may differ among teachers. This leads the task of marking students' work to a dead end. For an independent evaluation, working groups should be formed and

marking/scoring criteria should be determined and developed. Hence will emerge independent and objective studies everyone can accept and use. Another negative factor observed in marking is to ensure consistency among teachers. For this, every teacher should be trained in line with this system and develop themselves with new teaching methods. Another disadvantage observed in the interactive notebook evaluation is that it cannot be marked with a single exam. For marking, the performance evaluation of each student work in the class should be fulfilled in a process. Since this proves challenging and time-consuming for teachers as compared to the evaluation conducted in the traditional/classical system, teachers go under additional workload.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Due to its substantial importance, the evaluation process has a vital place in education and training. Evaluation and marking are not a one-time event; rather, they should be treated as a process. It has been observed that the traditional criteria are insufficient in evaluating the use of interactive notebooks.

Throughout the learning process, student progress must be followed on personal basis. The traditional evaluation processes in schools are carried out in line with the criteria set by the teacher within the chosen curriculum, and the students are compared with one another by ranking. Here, what is expected and demanded from the student is to provide specific answers to the questions asked about any subject during assessment and/or evaluation. This evaluation criterion does not allow answers the student will give using his individual abilities and competence by reflecting his interpretation, suggestions and

viewpoints. Expected from individuals in the renewed and developing world is to make new products and inferences by using the knowledge they have acquired. This is possible by changing and improving the evaluation criteria and processes as classical education methods change and develop. Using interactive notebooks as a unique assessment approach can be fulfilling by considering the students' development process in a holistic sense. Hence, the resulting assessment demonstrates the necessity of changing and renewing the learning and teaching processes by observing and evaluating the changes, developments and progress of students holistically in each discipline. The interactive notebook does not evaluate the student occasionally during the period of education but, by providing continuity in evaluation, allows both the student and these processes to be observed and evaluated.

Although each student's skills and learning abilities differ throughout the learning process, they are all evaluated at the same level. However, each student has different abilities, experience, intelligence, environment and family structure. This is why, it is necessary to evaluate each student's individual potentials and characteristics without contrasting and comparing them with one another. Such an understanding ensures that the evaluation criteria are determined by an open communication outcome with

students and other stakeholders (family, society, teachers, colleagues, etc.) (Kan, 2003).

Teacher conducts interviews with their students' families during the student development and evaluates their learning process. The role of the family and the environment is crucial in this process for the student's learning. Sustaining this process with the teacher is also vital for the student to discover their talents and abilities early, and know their strengths and weaknesses for the profession they will choose. With the interactive notebooks, it is also possible for students to choose a discipline where they will succeed and content throughout their education and afterwards. We believe this study will serve as a source for further studies in the field.

### Negative Aspects in Evaluation Table 2

*Example of interactive notebook evaluation and marking criteria*

Evaluation and Marking Criteria	
Synthesis of lesson topics	%20
Visual appeal	%20
Encouraging learning	%20
Page setting	%15
Assessing written work	%10
Presence of dates and titles	%5
Originality	%10

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