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# Examination of The Perceptions of Students Learning Arabic Language through Drawings

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## Abstract

The Arabic language is one of the essential and lively communication languages of today's world, making it inevitable to benefit from new methods that will develop four basic language skills in an equal and balanced way in Arabic teaching. However, it is essential to determine how effective and appropriate this teaching is in terms of feedback. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the perceptions of 5th and 6th-grade students towards Arabic through the pictures they drew. Participants in the study were determined using the criterion sampling strategy. The research data consists of pictures drawn by 168 students about the Arabic language. The content analysis technique was used to analyze the obtained data. Student drawings were examined in five categories: theme, environment, human characters, tools and motifs, and expressions and symbols that reflect emotions. As a result of the evaluations, most students associate Arabic with foreign language and religious phenomena. At the same time, in light of the data obtained, it is concluded that the students have a favorable view of Arabic.

**Keywords:** Arabic, Arabic Teaching, Student Drawings, Content Analysis

## 1. Introduction

In today's world, learning one or more foreign languages is necessary. Accordingly, it is no longer possible to establish social and cultural communication with only the mother tongue in this period. Every individual now tends to learn a foreign language to establish an international level of communication in cultural, political, economic, and commercial aspects. In education institutions in Turkey, at least one foreign language education is given starting from primary school and even recently from kindergartens, and this education process continues until the university education ends. In this process, foreign language teaching studies are carried out by researchers for more permanent and effective teaching of a foreign language, and the problems in language teaching are eliminated. Foreign language education is given faster and higher quality day by day.

A language is a thinking tool and a communication system. In every society, civilization and culture are hidden in language. Language and culture walk together on the same road. Therefore, it is impossible to talk about human civilization without linguistic development. The Arabic language is one of the oldest living languages globally, associated with faith. This language has been living and spoken for more than ten new centuries. The Arabic

language is learned as a foreign language for various purposes. One of the dimensions of learning Arabic is the dimension of religion. Since Arabic is the language of the Qur'an, which is the primary source of Islam, it has a special place in the eyes of Muslim societies. So much so that, after the Turks became Muslims, they regarded Arabic as a sacred language and taught this language as a tool for Islamic sciences in madrasahs (Kervankaya, 2014: 126).

At the same time, Arabic is used as one of the communication languages used internationally in today's world. It is generally spoken as a mother tongue in the Middle East and Africa. The Arabic language has the feature of being a religious language because it is also the language of the holy book of Islam, the Qur'an. For this reason, Arabic can be seen as both a language and a religious element for both native speakers and those who speak Arabic as a foreign language.

It is possible to say that many factors influence learning a foreign language. The factors in question are students' age, gender, profession, desire to learn, language ability, language experience, interest, ethnic origin, cultural level, and personality (Can, 2018: 66). Arabic language problems should be handled in all aspects, and the current difficulties and problems encountered in Arabic teaching should be given importance. Furthermore, as a result, all problems should be classified as problems related to students, teachers, the courses given, and teaching methods, and necessary evaluations should be made for their solution (Kahyaoğlu, 2008, s. 130). For this reason, it is essential to evaluate the Arabic as a foreign language lesson given in schools in terms of educational quality and to evaluate the students' thoughts and background information about foreign language lessons to identify and solve the problems experienced in Arabic teaching.

Various methods and techniques are used in the field of education for the detection and solution of such problems. One of these methods and techniques is picture drawing. This method is frequently used to determine the thoughts and perspectives of especially young children. The interest and importance in the activity of drawing pictures, which is thought to be an analytical tool for revealing a child's subconscious emotions and thoughts, has increased since 1940 (Thomas & Silk, 1990). Freud observed that repressed impulses could be brought to the surface through dreams or pictures and confirmed his observations with studies on this subject (Dilci, 2014). The main reason for the emergence of the method of drawing and evaluating pictures and the delay in developing this method was that this method was not scientific in the 1900s and was applied based on intuitive and subjective interpretations (Yavuzer, 1997). However, it is seen that studies on the evaluation of students' thoughts about scientific concepts in various disciplines, especially in the fields of psychology and education, have been increasing and gaining importance in recent years (Turgut and Turgut, 2020; Yaman, 2018; Latham and Ewing, 2018; Einarsdottir, Dockett, & Perry, 2009).

Many factors should be considered when evaluating children's drawings. It is possible to examine the drawings from the following aspects: the colors used, the use of the drawing paper, the lines that reflect the emotions, the size of the drawn figures, the positioning of the figures on the paper, an object in the drawing with which a figure is associated. In addition, human drawings can be analyzed in many ways. These aspects of the investigation are clearly illustrated in the table below:

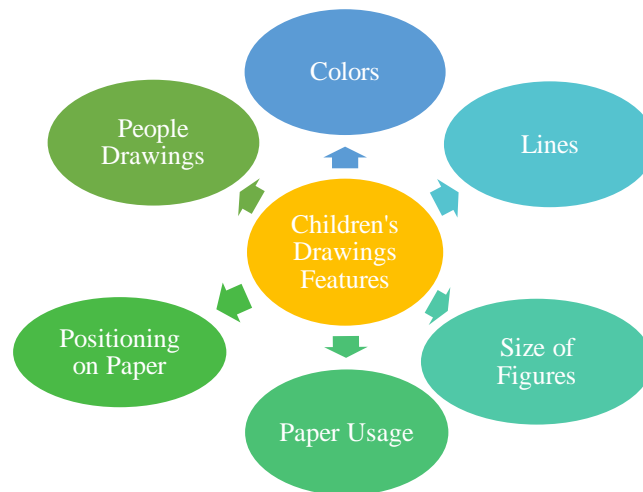


Figure 1: Children's Drawings Features

Interest in children's painting intensified between 1885 and 1920. During this period, studies in many countries evaluate children's drawings according to different dimensions (Doğru, Turcan, Arslan, & Doğru, 2006: 224). Children's thoughts, ideas, and knowledge are reflected in their drawings. Therefore, their inner world and social structures can be reflected and evaluated in such drawings. The development of children's drawing is discussed in five stages:

1. Scribble period (2-4 years)
2. Pre-schema period (4-9 years)
3. Schematic period (7-9 years old)
4. Realism (grouping) period (9-12 years old)
5. Naturalism period (12-14 years)

In these stages, children start with primitive lines and eventually get rid of the weak state of lines, and they tend to conform to some criteria of the culture and society they live in (Yavuzer, 1997, p.31). In order to evaluate the child's picture, we need to go down to his mental level and make our judgments accordingly. We should not seek a regulatory power in children or conformity with specific aesthetic rules determined by adults. The child always draws childish pictures. Undoubtedly, every drawing of the child is not an artist's drawing, but it is natural creativity in terms of its purity (San, 2019, 24). For this reason, the study group in this study was chosen from students in the realism period (9-12 years old) since it is a period when lines become original and thought comes back as a form of expression.

Determining the perceptions of secondary school students learning Arabic as a foreign language reveals the students' perspectives on Arabic and helps the teachers who prepare the curriculum and attend the classes to increase the quality of teaching by making use of the results obtained from the research, and to enable students to use Arabic as a foreign language in daily life and the future. It is thought that it will shed light on teachers and researchers about providing an awareness.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. The Aim of The Study

In this study, the phenomenological design was used as a method. Phenomenological studies are an inquiry strategy applied to reveal the researcher's human experiences about a phenomenon defined by the participants (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenology, one of the qualitative research methods, is a method that focuses on evaluating lived experience (Jasper, 1994; Miller, 2003). There are some reasons for using the phenomenological design in the research. All of the students participating in the research consisted of students studying in the 5th and 6th grades of Imam Hatip Secondary School and taking Arabic lessons. Since Arabic is taught as a foreign language, it is targeted to examine the students' perspectives on Arabic in schools where teachers graduated from the Department

of Arabic Language Education. In addition, students experience Arabic both in their classes and in their religious subjects. Therefore, it can be said that these features provide the essential qualities required by phenomenological research. This study aims to determine students' thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors about Arabic with student drawings and to reveal the deficiencies in this subject.

## 2.2. Population and Sample of the Research

Criterion sampling, one of the purposive sampling strategies, was used to determine the participants. In phenomenological studies, criterion sampling is the most appropriate method for determining the participants (Çilesiz, 2011). Criterion sampling is the study of situations that meet a predetermined set of criteria. The criterion or criteria can be created by the researcher (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). The two criteria for determining the research participants are that the students take Arabic lessons and study in the 5th or 6th grade secondary school. The research participants were 5th and 6th grade students of 4 Imam Hatip Secondary Schools in Yozgat city and 1 Imam Hatip Secondary School in Bartın city in the 2021-2022 academic year. The research was carried out with the participation of 168 students. The personal characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Personal Characteristics of the Participants

Specifications	f	%
Gender		
Girl	72	42,85
Boy	96	57,14
Grade		
5th grade	78	46,42
6th grade	91	54,16

42.85% of the students participating in the research are girls, and 57.14% are boys. 46.42% of the participants are in 5th grade, and 54.16% are 6th grade students.

## 2.3. Data Collection Tool and Process

In this study, student drawings were used as a data collection tool. Children's verbal explanations about what they will draw and what they draw are generally similar and also show the relationship between language ability and drawing abilities (Brittain & Chien, 1983). Students were asked to draw on the subject of "What comes to mind when I say Arabic." The teacher asked the students to draw a picture reflecting their feelings and thoughts about the Arabic language by the instruction on the A4 paper he handed out. Students were asked to draw pictures using pencils and paints, and no direct restrictions were placed on the material to be used. While explaining what to do to the participants, care was taken not to use any guiding expressions to reflect their thoughts. Students were given 15-20 minutes to draw their pictures reflecting their thoughts on the subject. The application was carried out in the Arabic course given in Imam Hatip Secondary Schools.

## 2.4. Analysis of Data

The data collected in the research were analyzed by the content analysis method. Content analysis is the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the presented communication content (Berelson 1952: 17). According to another definition, content analysis is a research technique used to draw reproducible and valid conclusions from data about its content (Krippendorff 1980: 25). In addition, although there are different definitions for content analysis, two critical issues that they all emphasize are that the method should be "systematic" and "impartial" (Koçak and Özgür, 2006: 22). While the data were analyzed by content analysis, the drawings were evaluated independently. The data were examined repeatedly during the analysis process, and the similarities and differences between the drawings were revealed. In this context, information about the students' perspectives on Arabic and the themes that Arabic reminds them of are presented.

### 3. Findings

The data obtained from the research were analyzed with interpretive content analysis, and the codes and themes obtained are included in the findings section. While the findings were exemplified, the students' personal information was not included, and the pictures were given as examples. The data obtained were analyzed under five main headings: theme, environment, people, tools and motifs, and expressions and symbols that reflect emotions.

#### 3.1. Themes in Student Drawings

The number and percentage distribution of the students' drawings in 5 subcategories of the themes reflected in their drawings are presented in Table 2:

Themes	f	%
Arabic language	36	21,30
Religion (Islam)	98	57,98
Education	8	4,73
Arabic Teaching	23	13,60
Life in the Arab Country	4	2,36

Table 2. When examined, the drawings made by the students to explain their thoughts on Arabic were divided into five categories: Arabic Language, Religion (Islam), Education, Teaching Arabic, and Life in an Arab Country. Among these categories, most drawings (98, 57.98%) were related to "Religion (Islam)," followed by "Arabic Language" with 21.30%. It is seen that the least number of drawings (4, 2.36%) are those belonging to the category of "Life in the Arab country."



Figure 1: Sample Drawings of Themes Included in Student Drawings

When we look at the drawings in Figure 1 regarding the themes in the student drawings, there are various drawings with letters related to the Arabic language and world-shaped drawings about the awareness that Arabic is a foreign

language. In addition, the religious dimension of Arabic is also included in the drawings. As an example, there are The Kaa'ba and mosque drawings. In addition to this, drawings on education and teaching of Arabic also appeared in students' minds, teaching Arabic in the classroom and the classroom environment. It is noteworthy that some of the pictures in which the classroom environment is drawn include the expressions "I love Arabic" "أحبّ العربية" in Turkish and Arabic. Finally, there are drawings of the Arabic characters with a minor percentage. Therefore, the themes related to this category, such as the fact that Arabic is a foreign language, its religious dimension, and its reflections on education and Arabic culture, are among the main subjects discussed in the drawings.

### 3.2. Environments in Student Drawings

The number and percentage distribution of the students' drawings in the form of 9 subcategories of environments and spaces reflected in their drawings is presented in Table 3:

Table 3: Environments in Student Drawings

Environment and Space	f	%
The Cave of Hira (غار حراء)	3	2,91
Mosque	56	54,36
School	7	6,79
Quran course	4	3,88
The Kaa'ba (الكعبة)	10	9,70
World	3	2,91
Class	13	12,62
Nature	3	3,91
Arab Country	4	3,88

When Table 3 is examined, the category of environment and spaces in the students' drawings is divided into nine subcategories: The Cave of Hira, Mosque, School, Qur'an Course, The Kaa'ba, World, Classroom, Nature, and Arab Country. Among these categories, the most drawings are 56 drawings, 54.36% are mosque drawings, the most diminutive drawings are three drawings each, and The Cave of Hira and world drawings with 2.91%. In addition to the mosque drawings, it is seen that 13 drawings with a ratio of 12,62% are related to the "classroom environment," and ten drawings with a ratio of 9.70% are related to the "The Kaa'ba."



Figure 2: Sample Drawings of Spaces in Student Drawings

When the sample drawings given in Figure 2 regarding the spaces in the student drawings are examined, a The Cave of Hira drawing and information describing The Cave of Hira in the lower and upper parts of the drawing, a mosque drawing with a tree in its garden, The Kaa'ba, school, world, a nature with Arabic dialogue, a palm or a tree. Various drawings include an Arab country with a date palm and a classroom environment where Arabic is taught. Although such drawings are very diverse, it is noteworthy that especially mosque drawings are in the majority, and it is seen that students associate Arabic more with religion. At the same time, the high rate of drawings related to the classroom environment and teaching of Arabic can be deduced that the students see Arabic in both religious and Arabic learning dimensions.

### 3.3. Human Characters in Student Drawings

The number and percentage distribution of the human characters reflected in their drawings by the students in 6 subcategories are presented in Table 4:

Table 4: Human Characters in Student Drawings

Characters	f	%
Girl	12	21,42
Boy	12	21,42
People Praying	5	8,92
Student	13	23,21
Teacher	11	19,64
Arabs	3	5,35

When Table 4 is examined, the category of people in student drawings is divided into six subcategories: girls and boys, praying people, students, teachers, and Arabic characters. Among these categories, the most drawings are 13 drawings and students with 23.21%, 12 drawings each and girls and boys with a total rate of 42.84%, 11 drawings and teacher drawings with a rate of 19.64%. The lowest rate is five drawings and 8.92% for praying people, three drawings, and 5.35% for Arabic character drawings. Although the students deal with Arabic in



different themes and environments, it is seen that the student-teacher profile does not go beyond the category of human drawings.



Figure 3: Examples of Human Drawings in Student Drawings

When the sample drawings given in Figure 3 regarding the drawing of human characters in the student drawings are examined, it is seen that the drawings of the characters are generally compatible with their age groups. Most of the drawn characters are in student profiles, boys and girls. It is understood that the drawings of students learning Arabic and Arabic teachers connect Arabic with education, and most students try to express their inner world in their drawings. In the pictures above, mostly the materials, letters, words, and possible teaching methods applied by the teachers in the lessons of Arabic teaching are drawn. For example, in the above pictures, it can be inferred that the teacher teaches the seasons with shapes, the subject of teaching fruits is taught, and it is taught by writing on the board. At the same time, not only the students teaching Arabic but also the characters who read the Qur'an and the possible Arab characters living in the Arab culture are drawn.

#### 3.4. Tools and Motifs in Student Drawings

The tools and objects in the students' drawings are divided into ten subcategories. The number and percentage distributions of these drawings are presented in Table 5:

Table 5: Tools and Motifs in Student Drawings

Tools	f	%
Arabic Letters	33	38,37
The Qur'an	6	6,97
Prayer rug	7	8,13
Arabic Book	4	4,65
Rosary	2	2,32
School Supplies	4	4,65
Arabic Words	13	15,11
Arabic Numbers	1	1,16
Flower	5	5,81
Tree	11	12,79

It is seen that the category of tools and motifs in student drawings is divided into ten categories, as seen in Table 5. Arabic letters are divided into various subcategories such as the Qur'an, prayer rug, Arabic Books, tasbih, school equipment, Arabic words, Arabic numbers, flowers, and trees. Among these categories, 33 drawings and Arabic letters with 38.37%, Arabic words with 13 drawings and 15.11% with Arabic words, and 11 drawings and tree drawings with 12.79% constitute the most drawings. The most diminutive drawings are one drawing and Arabic numbers with 1.16%, two drawings and 2.32% with rosary drawings, four drawings, and 4.65% with school equipment and Arabic book categories.



Figure 4: Sample Drawings of Tools and Motifs in Student Drawings

Sample drawings of tools and motifs in student drawings are given in Figure 4. When the pictures above are examined, it is seen that the students generally deal with the letters in Arabic. Although rare, Arabic words and Arabic numbers are used, students generally go on a more straightforward path in Arabic, and it draws attention that drawings are made about the teaching of letters, which are the first stage of a language, considering their education level. In addition, the students' Arabic language, Arabic teaching, and other than religious subjects, flowers, hearts, etc., appear to have been drawn. It can be said that such drawings leave a positive connotation in the minds of the students when Arabic is mentioned.

### 3.5. Expressions and Symbols that Reflect Emotions in Student Drawings

Expressions and Symbols that reflect emotions in student drawings The number and percentage distribution of drawings in 2 subcategories are presented in Table 6:

Table 6: Expressions and Symbols Reflecting Emotions in Student Drawings

Emotional Expressions	f	%
Positive Symbols and Expressions	35	94,59
Negative Symbols and Expressions	2	5,40

The categories of expressions and symbols that reflect emotions in student drawings are divided into "positive symbols and expressions" and "negative symbols and expressions," as seen in Table 6. In this category, it is seen that most drawings were made in the "positive symbols and expressions" category with a rate of 94.59%, and most miniature drawings were made in the "negative symbols and expressions" category. This category is essential in

terms of evaluating students' perspectives on Arabic. Because most of the students "What comes to mind when I say Arabic?" They answered the question with cheerful symbols and expressions. However, very few students used negative symbols or expressions related to this question in their drawings.



Figure 5: Sample Drawings of Emotional Expressions and Symbols in Student Drawings

Example drawings of emotional expressions and symbols in student drawings are given in Figure 5. When the percentages and drawings above are examined, it is seen that most of the students have a positive attitude towards Arabic. The smiling faces in the mutual dialogues of the students and the smiling faces in the teacher characters were considered positive expressions. In addition, there is a smiling face in the drawn world picture. In addition, the expressions "أحب العربية" in some of the drawings are also considered a positive expression of Arabic. In addition, flower and tree pictures were drawn in some drawings, as mentioned in Table 5. All these can be interpreted as positive expressions in student drawings. In addition, it is seen that daily expressions such as "مرحبا", "عليكم السلام", "صباح الخير", "صباح النور", "السلام عليكم", "أحب العربية" are included in the dialogues in the student drawings. This shows that teachers attach importance to using daily language and Arabic in practice. However, it is possible to interpret the angry teacher in the drawing of 2 students as a situation arising from the teacher-student relationship. In short, it is understood that the majority of the students gave positive reactions to the Arabic language and teaching Arabic.

### 3.6. Evaluation of Student Drawings in the Scope of the Curriculum

The themes of the 5th and 6th grade Arabic lessons in the Primary Education Arabic Language Teaching Program of the General Directorate of Religious Education of the Ministry of National Education are given in Table 7 (DOP, 2016, p.17-18):

Table 7: 5th and 6th Grade Arabic Lesson Themes

5th Grade Arabic Lesson Themes	6th Grade Arabic Lesson Themes
Sounds and Letters	Daily life
I'm Reading and Writing	Food and drinks
Greetings and Meetups	Health
My Family and My Home	clothes
My school and My Friends	Sacred Sites
Values	Transportation

When the student drawings were compared with the themes in the Primary Education Arabic Lesson Curriculum, it was determined that the students reflected the subjects they learned in their drawings. Examples of this are given below:



Figure 6: Examples of Drawings Compatible with Curriculum Themes

There are 12 different themes in the 5th and 6th grade Arabic lesson program of the Ministry of National Education. When these themes are compared with student drawings, it is seen that basic greeting expressions such as "There are sounds, letters" and Arabic letters related to the theme of "greeting and meeting" are written as speech expressions in the drawings concerning the theme of "my school and my friends," the school and classroom environment, students and students, etc. Drawings describe the school environment. We see pictures of "cherries, apples, watermelon" related to the theme of "food and drinks" in the drawings. "An ambulance was drawn in a drawing related to the health theme, and its Arabic equivalent was stated on the drawing paper as "سيارة الإسعاف." Finally, there are the Kaa'ba, Mosque, and the Cave of Hira related to the "Sacred Places" theme and "car" drawings related to the "Transportation" theme. Therefore, based on this information, it can be said that the teachers are teaching within the program's framework determined by the Ministry of National Education and that the students remember the relevant themes and visualize them in their minds.

#### 4. Result and Discussion

This research aims to determine the thoughts and perspectives of Imam Hatip Secondary School students about Arabic. In this context, drawings about Arabic were made for 168 students assigned to study in these schools in the 5th and 6th grades to evaluate them with content analysis. The evaluations were analyzed into six categories. When the data obtained from the students were analyzed in the study, the following results were obtained:

Most of the 5th and 6th-grade students of Imam Hatip Secondary School remember religious themes when Arabic is mentioned. It can be said that the religious lessons given in addition to the Arabic lesson during the education process are effective in remembering the Arabic in this direction. In addition, students see Arabic as a foreign language simultaneously. When evaluated in terms of environment and space category, the students considered religious places in their drawings. From this point of view, we see that students use Arabic in religious places by reading the Qur'an and praying. In terms of human characters, students mainly included student and teacher characters. The educational aspect of Arabic comes to the fore in these drawings.

When the data obtained are examined in terms of tools and motifs, it is prominent that the students included Arabic letters and words in their drawings. They actively used the Arabic language in their drawings. Also, when it is analyzed emotionally, it can be said that students like Arabic *أحب العربية* or heart, flower, tree etc. It is seen that the drawings exhibit a positive perspective on Arabic. After all these examinations, the themes discussed in the drawings are compatible with the themes in the 5th and 6th grade Arabic curriculum of the Ministry of National Education General Directorate of Religious Education. Arabic is taught as a foreign language in secondary education institutions, and the subjects within the program's scope are covered. Students reinforce the Arabic language practically and with dialogues about daily life.

In addition, Kervankaya (2014), in one of the open-ended questions he directed to students in his research, "Why did you choose to study at Imam Hatip High School?" he asked. According to the data obtained, 52% of the students answered that they should acquire Islamic knowledge in addition to positive sciences, 27% answered that Imam Hatip High School has a calmer and more respectable environment compared to other high schools, and 21% responded as a family request. As can be understood from the answers, most students prefer Imam Hatip High School to acquire Islamic knowledge. Therefore, the information obtained in our drawing analysis research is in parallel with the research in question, and we conclude that the students see Arabic as related to their religious knowledge. Temel (2015) mentioned that Arabic should be popular with students and should be taught as a foreign language in his research. In this direction, when the student drawings are examined, it is possible to conclude that the students like Arabic and learning Arabic and that this problem has been solved.

As a result, it is seen that the students who learn Arabic as a foreign language in the 5th and 6th grades of Imam Hatip Secondary Schools have a positive approach to Arabic within the scope of the Primary Education Arabic lesson curriculum, and it is seen that importance is given to gaining listening-understanding, speaking, reading and writing skills. The student's ability to use Arabic for their purposes is reflected in their drawings.

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