

The function of verse dictionaries and their applicability in teaching Turkish to foreigners

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ABSTRACT

Verse dictionaries, which first appeared in Arab geography and were written to ensure a correct understanding of the Holy Quran, began to be used over time in primary schools to teach words in a foreign language to children by taking advantage of the harmony and fluency of verse. These works, written primarily in Arabic, Persian and Turkish, but also in Greek, French, Albanian, Armenian, Bulgarian, German, and Bosnian, have attracted the attention of literary researchers in recent years. This is because they not only teach vocabulary but also shed light on the period in which they were written and reflect the culture of the relevant language. Despite being the product of practice in past centuries, these works have features that can meet today's language teachings needs. With the increasing immigration to Türkiye and exchange programs at universities, curricula are continuously being developed, relevant centers are opening, and employment opportunities are being provided for teachers to teach Turkish to both children and adults. In this context, the question of whether the verse dictionaries used for language teaching in the Ottoman Empire can be adapted to the present day as supplementary textbooks comes to mind. The prepared study, information about the emergence, function and content of the genre in question will be given, then the benefits it will provide in teaching Turkish to adult foreigners will be emphasized and suggestions will be made regarding its applicability.

Introduction

The tradition of writing a verse dictionary emerged to facilitate language learning for young children. These works basically contain both Turkish and Arabic/Persian words in the same verse and make the process of memorizing words easy and fun with the harmony of the poem.

Verse dictionaries, as the name suggests, are works created by giving the equivalents of words in one language in another foreign language through poetry. Unlike the prose dictionaries used today, these works are not sources used to learn the meaning of any word (Öz, 1997). Although they have such differences, it would not be wrong to claim that the source of verse dictionaries is prose dictionaries. Because the authors of verse dictionaries compiled words from prose dictionaries and used the words they chose before writing their works (Öz, 1996).

As seen in the source of many genres in literature, the starting point of verse dictionaries is based on Arab geography. The reason for this is the effort made to understand the expressions in the Holy Quran correctly (Kılıç, 2007). The Holy Quran is not a book that can be understood at first glance. and many of the beauties of expression that serve today's literature come from this source. Studies have been carried out meticulously to understand it, internalize it and explain it to other non-Arab societies. Therefore, Arabs have always carried out various dictionary studies to fully understand the holy book and hadiths (Gözitok, 2016). Dictionaries, which were first prepared from Arabic to Arabic for this purpose, continued their development over time from Arabic to Persian, from Persian to Turkish, from Arabic to Turkish. Over time, verse dictionaries were also written in Greek, French, Albanian, Armenian, Bulgarian, German, and Bosnian. The reason for this is that the Ottoman Empire was tolerant to people from different nations, schools were established where these nations could receive education in their own languages for education and training activities, and teachers were appointed to these schools (Yavuz, 2021). It is possible to evaluate the verse dictionaries written in languages other than Arabic and Persian as works written to enable the minorities living in the Ottoman lands to adapt to cultural life (Akçay, 2009). Since it is a genre based on the Holy Quran, the most frequently used languages are Arabic and Persian. and the most common dictionary method is the bilingual one. But sometimes it is possible to go beyond this. Although they are mostly bilingual, it is also known that there are verse dictionaries prepared in three languages and even five languages. So much so that, in the dictionaries that were mostly written bilingually, the authors inevitably benefited from a third language. That is, bilingual dictionaries do not literally consist of two languages; The author also makes use of words other than the main languages that he deems necessary (Duru & Eren, 2014).

The sources of the verse dictionaries that settled as a genre in Turkish literature in the early 16th century are the Persian-Arabic *Nisâbu's-sibyân* written by Ferâhî, *Nasîbu'l-Fityân* and *Nesîbü't-Tibyân* written by Abdülmü'min-i Hoyî as his counterparts. It is possible to list them as *Tuhfe-i Hüsâm*, which Hüsâm-ı Konevi wrote in a similar form but in Turkish-Persian, and *Tuhfe-i Şâhidî*, which Şâhidî prepared as a parallel to *Hüsâm* (Doğan Averbek, 2019). It is known that the number of verse dictionaries written in Anatolia, one of the languages of which is Turkish, is around fifty, and this number shows the demand for these works.

Functionally, verse dictionaries appear as works that aim to improve the vocabulary of children by teaching them in primary schools and to teach words ranging from one thousand to three thousand, which are frequently used in the Arabic-Persian languages included in Ottoman Turkish. Although primary schools do not have a formal education program, it is undeniable that they have a traditional approach to education. Accordingly, the training given to students in schools; to teach reading and writing, the Holy Quran, basic Islamic principles and the four operations; These can be listed as making people memorize surahs, giving basic Islamic teaching information, and having them read verse dictionaries that have become classics (İhsanoğlu, 1998). From this perspective, it becomes possible to count verse dictionaries among the indispensable textbooks of the Ottoman education system (Bayak, 2020). At this point, it would be appropriate to give the following information: It was found that in the work titled *Nazm-ı Bedi'* written by Çelebizade Ali İlmî, there are rarely used Arabic and Persian phrases, and there are many rarely used synonyms in addition to the common Persian equivalent of a Turkish word (Gözitok, 2016). This means that some verse dictionaries do not have features specific to children. Therefore, these works can be evaluated in two different groups, children, and adults, depending on their content. It should be noted here that these works were also used in lodges and dervish lodges.

The main reason why verse dictionaries were written is undoubtedly that metered and rhymed words are easier and quicker to learn than prose works. The emergence of the mentioned genre

and its rapid spread is due to the fact that poetry has an important place in the lands where Islam reigns, that the subjects written in prose and which can barely fit into volumes of books when the commentaries are included can be written in a concise and collective manner, and in the poems written about the language, the subjects are exemplified with couplets and thus made more clear in the mind. Elements such as ensuring it has a permanent place play an important role (Abdülhadioğlu, 2013). In this respect, verse dictionaries have important duties in language teaching. These; learning words with their equivalents, making language learning easier and shortening the relevant process (Bayak, 2020). Linguistic scholar Câhiz expresses this fact as follows: Memorizing poetry is more pleasing to the soul, and once a poem is memorized, it becomes more permanent (Yıldırım, 2009).

Verse dictionaries were written by professors, poets and people from the public with high knowledge of dictionaries. Knowing that these works proliferated through verse and included aruz and literary arts brings poets to the fore in this regard. While teachers generally played an active role in annotating verse dictionaries, other people who knew dictionaries also contributed to creating a souvenir for their children or grandchildren who started school. In addition to the contents listed above, verse dictionaries are cultural and seen as a heritage in that they contain information such as words mentioned in the Holy Quran and called gharib, words with similar and antonyms, proverbs, idioms, archaic words, names of tools used in the period in which they were written, and place names. For this reason, verse dictionaries, one of which is Turkish, began to be published and published by the Turkish Language Association, as they serve the vocabulary.

It is possible to list the contents and formal features of the mentioned works in general terms as follows - knowing that there are exceptions:

- They start with the introduction section called muqaddime or dibâce. Here the names and attributes of Allah are mentioned. After salawat to the Prophet and prayers to his companions, some religious concepts are emphasized, and students are given information about the benefits of learning a language.
- In the second section, the dictionary, each section consists of stanzas ranging from approximately 4 to 20 couplets. The titles of the stanza can be in Arabic and Persian.
- In the dictionary section, figurative meanings are taught by giving proverbs, sayings and idioms as well as words.
- Couples written in the same bahir and vezin are separated from each other by titles containing the term "stanza".
- The arrangement of the stanza is different. Most of the time, their order is irregular, but there are also rare works in which rhymes and redifs are taken into consideration and they follow the alphabetical order from the letter alif to the letter ye (order of the arabic alphabet).
- In most of these works, emphasis is placed on the words mentioned in the Holy Quran.
- In the couplets, attention was paid to writing the foreign word first, then its Turkish equivalent, and the continuity of this method, but there were also cases where this order was not followed (Alkan, 2008).
- Words such as "dinur, genius, was, what is" etc., they are connected to each other with prepositions and conjunctions (Güler, 2016).

When we look at the content and formal features of the works, the vocabulary of individuals who were introduced to the relevant texts at an early age, grammatical features such as abjad calculation and date reduction, verb conjugation, month and year names, formulaic expressions, historical figures, metaphors, proverbs and idioms, culture-specific uses, together with their explanations. It seems that the aim is to provide students with access to information such as

syntax knowledge and basic language rules thanks to the given sentences (Doğan Averbek, 2018). In addition, it is seen that many literary arts that serve the science of rhetoric, especially the art of harmony, are used in verse dictionaries. In this way, children gain the ability to speak appropriately, properly and beautifully. The reason why the art of proportionality was mainly used was; Learning words that are compatible with each other in terms of meaning and related to the same field makes memorization easier. Accepting that it has become a tradition to start the main text with the names of Allah and the prophet in such works, the couplets in the verse dictionary called Tuhfe-i Rûmî, prepared for teaching the Greek language, can be cited as examples of the art of harmony:

İsm-i Hüda oldu bu dilde (te'os)
 Bunda ferişte demedir (angelos)
 Söylediler (profini) peygamber
 Hoca demektir dese (daskalos)
 (Harti) kağıt oldu (vivliya) kitap
 Bil anı insana dedi (antorepos)
 Poyraza (vorya) (ilyos) güneş
 Yel demedir derse (anemos)
 (Yanhan, 1874: 4)

It is seen that compatible words are used in the French-Turkish verse dictionary called Miftâh-ı Lisân:

Allah Diyö gökler siyö yer ter komanse ibtidâ
 (Dieu), (cieux), (terre), (commencer)
 Dâim tujur bâkî eternal enfini bî-intihâ
 (Toujours), (éternel), (infini)
 Peygamberin adı profet sâdık fidel gid reh-nümâ
 (Prophêt), (fidele), (guide)
 Hâtif oraklö mu'cize miraklö irsâl anvua
 (oracle), (miracle), (envoi)
 (Kırbıyık, 2002: 194)

Similarly, in the work called Nazm-ı Bedi', the entire 18th stanza is related to kinship names, and this provides an order within the couplet:

Peder baba birâder dâder ü âmücedir evder
 Anaya mâm de hâlû tayıdır hem yeğen ahder
 (Gözitok, 2016: 33).

How to benefit from verse dictionaries in teaching Turkish?

These works, which were used as course materials in the Ottoman education and training system, have some features that will meet today's needs. The intense immigration that Turkey has

received in recent years has brought the issue of immigrant children learning Turkish, especially at the primary school level, to a serious level. The positive steps of the state in this direction include basic steps such as appointing teachers to the relevant field by the Ministry of National Education and implementing the necessary orientation programs for children. It is necessary to make an important statement here, and that is; in this study, the situation of primary schools where verse dictionaries became course materials and the situation of children migrating to Turkey was mentioned. However, considering that offering suggestions to this age group based on relevant works would mean exceeding the limits of kindergarten and classroom teachers and pedagogues, the principles of practice will only cover adult foreign students studying in preparatory classes at universities.

The steps taken towards Turkish becoming a world language have received positive feedback and Turkey has become a frequently preferred country in student exchange programs held at universities. Therefore, a separate education is given to foreign students to continue their formal education in Turkish through Turkish preparatory classes. Most of the students who choose schools in Turkey come from Islamic countries, which allows young people to quickly get used to the culture of the country in certain respects, thanks to religious unity.

The cultural dimension is very important in language teaching. Since language is a living entity in which culture manifests itself, it can be stated that there is a meaningful relationship between mastery of language and mastery of culture (Başar, 2021). For this reason, in recent years, language teaching approaches that prioritize effective communication of the target audience in the target language have been seen in this education process. Language is one of the most basic means of transferring culture to the other party. In teaching Turkish, it is important to convey the elements of Turkish culture to students through works in terms of internalizing the dynamic in question and learning the metaphors in the language.

Nations should know how to benefit correctly and faithfully from the scientific blessings of the lands they live in and should be able to seek the needs of the age they live in from their deep-rooted history. A completely new language: It is not easy to learn the four main skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking, to recognize the culture to which the language belongs and to understand its national characteristics. How the language should be taught has been discussed for centuries, and new approaches and methods have been put forward in parallel with the language learning needs (Polat Seçkin and Dilidüzgün, 2015). For this reason, hundreds of courses are being opened and dozens of learning methods are being developed for language learning, both for exams and training, as well as for social and business life. At such a point, taking advantage of the past is much less troublesome than creating a new path/method. Seeking answers to today's needs in advance is another way of keeping our culture alive.

Verse dictionaries taught in primary schools have the power to provide some benefits in today's Turkish teaching with a few changes. First of all, when looking at what kind of features of this type can be transferred to the present day, the most basic step is to understand the concept of poetry, which is the basis of the issue. Because the appropriate use of poetry is primarily linked to choosing the right poem. For this, first of all, the levels of students should be determined well (Polat Seçkin and Dilidüzgün, 2015).

Instead of knowledge of aruz - which is now among the specialties of relevant fields in universities - syllabic meter can be preferred, and in literary arts, basic poetry knowledge can be given by focusing on arts such as metaphor - used in daily speech - in literary arts. By preparing the content of the work carefully and with a complementary system, words/word groups can be preferred for the beginner level of adults, which will both make their educational life easier and familiarize them with Turkish culture. During the Ottoman period, when writing verse dictionaries,

masnavi was mainly used as a verse form, but today this should be replaced by stanzas. Although Turkish phrases do not change absolutely, their equivalents may change in Arabic, Persian, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Kazakh and similar languages. – At this point, it is necessary to clarify the last statement a little. While Turkish maintains its place as the intended language, the issue of which other language(s) will be preferred or not may parallel the nationalities from which foreign students predominantly come. After the declared course materials bring the expected success, the equivalents of Turkish words can be transferred to minority languages.

The list given above regarding the use of verse dictionaries as course materials, adapted to our day, could be as follows:

- In the introduction of the work, basic, understandable, simple, and clear information about the benefits of language learning and Turkish is given.
- In the 2nd section, the dictionary, poems containing words in the A1-A2 and especially B1-B2 level range, consisting of quatrains, are added and Turkish titles are given to the poems.
- In the continuation of the dictionary section, idioms and proverbs that are frequently used in daily life are given, thus metaphor information is conveyed.
- Words are connected with prepositions and conjunctions such as de/da, dahi, denir and, ile.
- The order of the stanzas is arranged according to the New Turkish Alphabet, and the rhyme order is ensured in this way.
- In the verses, Turkish words are given first, then foreign language words, and this order is maintained.
- After the dictionary part is completed, exercises that reinforce language learning such as spacing and matching are added.

This list is a list of suggestions that can be expanded. In this context, verse dictionaries can be adapted to the present day as a supplementary textbook to be taught within the Turkish teaching centers with an expert staff to be selected from fields such as classical Turkish literature, new Turkish literature, educational sciences, Turkish teaching, in printing houses that publish on Turkish teaching, and can be adapted to this process by facilitating word learning. can make it fun and permanent. The reference for this prediction is our past.

Results

This study claims that these works will contribute to language learning, and this idea is based on history of teaching Turkish as a foreign language. The relevant preparation will culminate with a much deeper research and analysis, and the meticulous efforts of a special team consisting of both classical and new Turkish literature and language experts. Verse dictionaries will be prepared in series, one-time, for Turkish teaching, and will be completed in printing and publishing, perhaps with the blessing of the state, and thus host a national system. In the study, the formal features of verse dictionaries were not mentioned unless necessary, because it was thought that the old formal features in new generation dictionaries would make the work difficult. Learning a new language through poetry enables the words of the target language to be easily entered into memory, to speak beautifully and appropriately, to become familiar with literary concepts, to learn the language in a short time, and to enable the student to express himself in a healthy style. In this way, the four main skills of reading, writing, and speaking are learned directly, and listening is learned indirectly through the harmony of poetry. The student, who can test himself with the vocabulary exercises at the end of the dictionaries, will have the confidence to feel ready for the B2 level and beyond by combining words without difficulty with the

grammatical rules he has seen and learned throughout the work. Students, who will have the opportunity to get to know the culture closely through the national usages, information about the current dynamics of the country, proverbs, and idioms throughout the work, will thus have taken the most basic step in language learning.

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