

Viewing Geography through History via Cross-Disciplinary Perspective*

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Abstract

This study examined how to employ the cross-disciplinary approach, a form of interdisciplinary research that allows one discipline to be explored through the perspective of another. A review of the existing literature reveals that students wish to acquire geography knowledge that is practical and applicable to daily life. It is believed that specific objectives in the Geography Curriculum, such as “Gaining geographical knowledge, perspective, and skills through human-nature interaction,” “Questioning Türkiye’s regional and global relations from a geographical perspective,” and “Assimilating the role of geographical knowledge, perspective, and skills in fostering homeland consciousness and national identity,” along with skills and learning outcomes like “GEO.10.1.1: Ability to associate sample events, phenomena, and/or places with the basic concepts of geography” and “GEO.10.3.5: Ability to question the interaction between landforms and human activities in their immediate surroundings,” can be achieved more effectively through cross-disciplinary approaches that link events to real life. After all, every historical event occurs in a specific place, and societies that understand and utilize their geographical features can turn this awareness into a strategic advantage. The study demonstrates that geographical knowledge and the ability to leverage geographical features were crucial in winning the wars analyzed. It is also suggested that presenting information in this manner will help students develop a more dynamic and multidimensional approach to geography.

Keywords: Cross discipline, Geography education, History education, Case study

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Geographical education is essential as it helps individuals understand and interpret the world and the environment in which they live. Through geography education, students develop an awareness of the systems, processes, and interactions of nature and humanity, from their immediate surroundings to a global scale, enabling them to perceive, understand, and evaluate the world (Ministry of National Education (MoNE), 2005). MoNE revised the Geography Curriculum in 2018 to place greater emphasis on integrating information and communication technologies—now a fundamental part of daily life—into teaching geography. The revisions also strengthened the connection between learning outcomes and real-life applications (MoNE, 2018).

Geographical location undeniably influences various aspects of life, ranging from economic conditions to social dynamics and health, even shaping sociological and psychological environments. Therefore, understanding and defining a place play a critical role in utilizing its features effectively and in comprehending its strategic significance. Many countries develop spatial strategies not only by analyzing their own geographical characteristics but also by studying those of other regions. The significance of this becomes even more apparent when historical events are linked to the geographical spaces where they occurred. Reinterpreting historical events in conjunction with their geographical context can offer a fresh perspective, highlighting the interconnectedness of disciplines.

Geography is one of the most suitable sciences for defining discipline (Paget, 1972), as it is a specialized form of knowledge with its own history, methods, and content. The knowledge accumulated within geography as a discipline is shaped by integrating information from various other fields. Due to its broad field of study, geography is a science characterized by strong interdisciplinary connections. Many geographical studies synthesize knowledge from disciplines such as geology, climatology, anthropology, and history, employing an interdisciplinary approach to draw conclusions. The interdisciplinary approach highlights the richness of various academic fields and their interconnectedness. It is now widely accepted that real-life problems and their solutions cannot be fully understood through a single discipline alone. Cross-disciplinary study, a subset of interdisciplinary studies, involves examining one discipline from the perspective of another. Incorporating this interdisciplinary approach, which has evolved significantly in the last century, into the Turkish education system would be highly beneficial. Creating interdisciplinary teaching-learning environments is crucial for diversifying educational methods and enhancing students' skills. As a result, the use of various approaches in learning environments will positively impact learning outcomes.

A teaching-learning environment that incorporates a cross-disciplinary approach and links historical events with geography will encourage students to develop positive attitudes towards the subject. Students' attitudes towards a course, and the way these attitudes shape, are key factors in determining course achievement. Although attitudes cannot be directly observed, they represent tendencies that influence certain behaviors (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2005). While attitudes themselves are not visible, one can infer an individual's attitude towards a subject by observing their behaviors. If the attitude towards a topic is positive, the related decisions are likely to be positive; conversely, if the attitude is negative, the decisions are likely to be negative (Ülgen, 1995).

Demirkaya and Arıbaş (2004) emphasized the following: “Although geography is one of the most important courses that students need to learn, many students are indifferent to geography courses.” Similarly, Alım (2008) and Tekinarslan (2006) reached the conclusion that students' attitudes toward geography are influenced by the method used to teach the course. Akınoğlu (2005) also identified that students' inability to connect geography with real life is one of the challenges in geography education. In this context, an approach that combines the realism of historical events with the impact of geographical features on these events will play a crucial role in improving students' attitudes and achievement in the subject.

This study aimed to highlight the importance of understanding geography through interdisciplinary approaches, which have gained prominence in the last century within the history of science and geography education.

In order to emphasize the importance of learning geography, this study aimed to make students comprehend the necessity of geography and establish a relationship with real life by including historical events and the place that affects their course in the geography course. From this perspective, the research question guiding the study is: *How should geography be viewed through history using a cross-disciplinary approach?* The study is designed as an adaptation of a method aimed at answering this question.

Method

This study was designed using a qualitative research method. The primary focus of the study is to provide an example of the necessary arguments for planning activities that incorporate a cross-disciplinary approach in geography teaching. The document analysis method was used as the data collection tool. Document analysis, commonly employed in various social sciences, involves examining materials that contain information about the phenomena to be investigated (Karasar, 2011; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). The study focuses on key historical events such as the Battle of Myriocephalon, one of the most significant turning points in Turkish history, fought between Kılıçarslan II and Manuel Komnenos in 1076, representing the taking of the deed of Anatolia by the Turks. It also considers the Gallipoli Campaign of 1915, which had a profound impact on Anatolia remaining as a homeland, the Eskişehir-Kütahya War during the Turkish War of Independence, the subsequent victory at Sakarya, and the Korean War in which Turkish soldiers participated. Since the goal is to gather the geographical elements associated with these events, document analysis was determined to be the most suitable method for this purpose. The data related to these historical events and their geographical locations were described accordingly. Based on the collected data, efforts were made to connect the findings on how geographical knowledge influences the course of wars in history with relevant topics in the geography curriculum.

Findings

Geographical Overview of the Battle of Myriocephalon

The military structure of the Byzantine Empire began to evolve following the defeat at the Battle of Malazgirt. In the aftermath of the war, the central army and the Thema Forces, which had become obsolete, were disbanded, and a new military system was introduced. Under the Komnenos dynasty, various strategies were developed in response to the conditions of the time. These strategies helped the state's economy recover by securing new territories,

enabling the empire to better contend with the Seljuks of Anatolia (Ayönü, 2009). Interestingly, Byzantine troops did not use the Dorylaion (now Şarhöyük) - Eskişehir route, which was the most direct path to Konya. The reason for this was the presence of the Turkmen population along the route. The Turkmens were attacking the Byzantine borders, employing hit-and-run tactics. They were aware that if the Byzantines chose this route, their army would suffer significant casualties. As a result, they opted for a different route (Ramsay, 1961). To date, various battlefields have been identified in areas such as Düzbel, Kûfi Gorge, Akçay Valley, Çardak Pass, the northern and eastern parts of Lake Eğirdir, Karamık Beli, Kumdanlı Plain, Gelendost Plain, the vicinity of Akdağ village, and the Bagirsak Gorge between Konya and Beyşehir (Map 1). The outcome was largely determined by the rugged geographical terrain, which restricted the mobility of the Byzantine army. Kılıçarslan II, who was familiar with the region, used this knowledge strategically. He avoided direct confrontation with the well-equipped Byzantine army, which had undergone thorough preparation, either in the open field or through city defense in Konya. Instead, he chose to fight on a high hill and in a narrow passage, which gave his forces a significant advantage and led to a decisive victory (Bakır, 2014). The clever use of the region's rugged geography by Kılıçarslan II, along with the Byzantine army's confinement in a narrow area due to the terrain, played a crucial role in securing the victory.

Figure 1

The Places Where the Battle of Myriocephalon was Allegedly Fought (Bakır, 2014).



Geographical Overview of Gallipoli Wars

Russia was facing a severe crisis before the outbreak of the First World War, which significantly weakened the tsarist regime during the conflict. The growing dissatisfaction of the Russian people with the government was evident, as their reactions against the authorities intensified. After suffering successive defeats at the hands of the German and Austrian armies, Russia's defensive capacity was severely diminished. It became crucial for the Entente to deliver aid to Russia as quickly as possible. However, the presence of the German navy in the Baltic Sea prevented the delivery of assistance through that route. As a result, the only viable

path for aid to reach Russia was through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits (Ataş, Ç., 2017). Defending these straits and preventing enemy passage proved to be an extremely difficult task.

The Effects of Mustafa Kemal's Knowledge of the Geography of War Zone

At that time, Albania and Macedonia in the Balkans were under the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire, yet all the Balkan states sought control over this region. In the struggle against Bulgaria during the Second Balkan War, Mustafa Kemal served as the Chief of Staff of the Bolayır Corps. The Bolayır Corps achieved significant success against Bulgaria, notably recapturing Edirne from the Bulgarians. Later that same year, Mustafa Kemal was appointed Military Attaché in Sofia. As a result of the Second Balkan War, the Istanbul Treaty was signed, establishing the Evros River as the new border. This allowed the Ottoman Empire to regain some of the territories it had lost during the First Balkan War (Kocahanoğlu, 2005). While fighting on the Bolayır Front during the Balkan Wars, Mustafa Kemal closely studied the geography of the region. He evaluated the physical geography in detail to prevent the Balkan states from passing through the Straits or reaching Anatolia via the Gallipoli Peninsula.

Figure 2

The location of the Bolayır Front and the Çanakkale Front (Bilgin, 2015)



Atatürk was the commander of the 19th Division on the Gallipoli Peninsula and had been ordered to move to the Anatolian coast. At that moment, the enemy had begun landing troops at various points on the peninsula and was also attempting to land on other coasts. The situation was so complicated that obtaining accurate information from all sides was nearly impossible, and none of the senior officials fully understood the situation. Opinions varied. Despite these challenging conditions, Atatürk analyzed the situation as follows: "Our coastal batteries, which had successfully prevented the enemy navy from passing through the Bosphorus, could not be neutralized from the sea. Therefore, the enemy's landing target on

the peninsula would be Koca Çimen and Artu Tepe. If either of these were captured, our coastal batteries would be vulnerable. The most critical of the two hills is Koca Çimen, as it is closer to our coastal batteries. We must send our divisions there without delay." Atatürk, always vigilant, anticipated that the enemy would eventually attempt a landing operation further north at Koca Çimen. However, the Commander-in-Chief had foreseen a landing on the Bolayır coast and placed two divisions around Bolayır as reserves. Atatürk argued that these reserve forces would not be able to reach Koca Çimen in time and should be sent further south, but this recommendation was not accepted. What he had predicted came to pass (Map 2), but his swift response prevented a major defeat (Kocahanoğlu, 2005). This account demonstrates that Mustafa Kemal, who was already familiar with the geography of the region when the Gallipoli Front opened, was able to turn this knowledge into a strategic advantage.

Geographical Effects While Nusret Mine Ship Was Laying the Mine Lines

Figure 3

Distribution of Enemy Air Forces on the Gallipoli Front (adapted from Çağlar, 2009)



Enemy air forces were stationed on Bozcaada and Gökçeada, using Gökçeada as an air base. From there, they were able to detect and mark the Turkish minefields laid perpendicular to the shore in the Dardanelles on their maps. However, they were unable to detect the minefields laid parallel to the shore by the Nusret (Map 4). The pilots did not recognize these

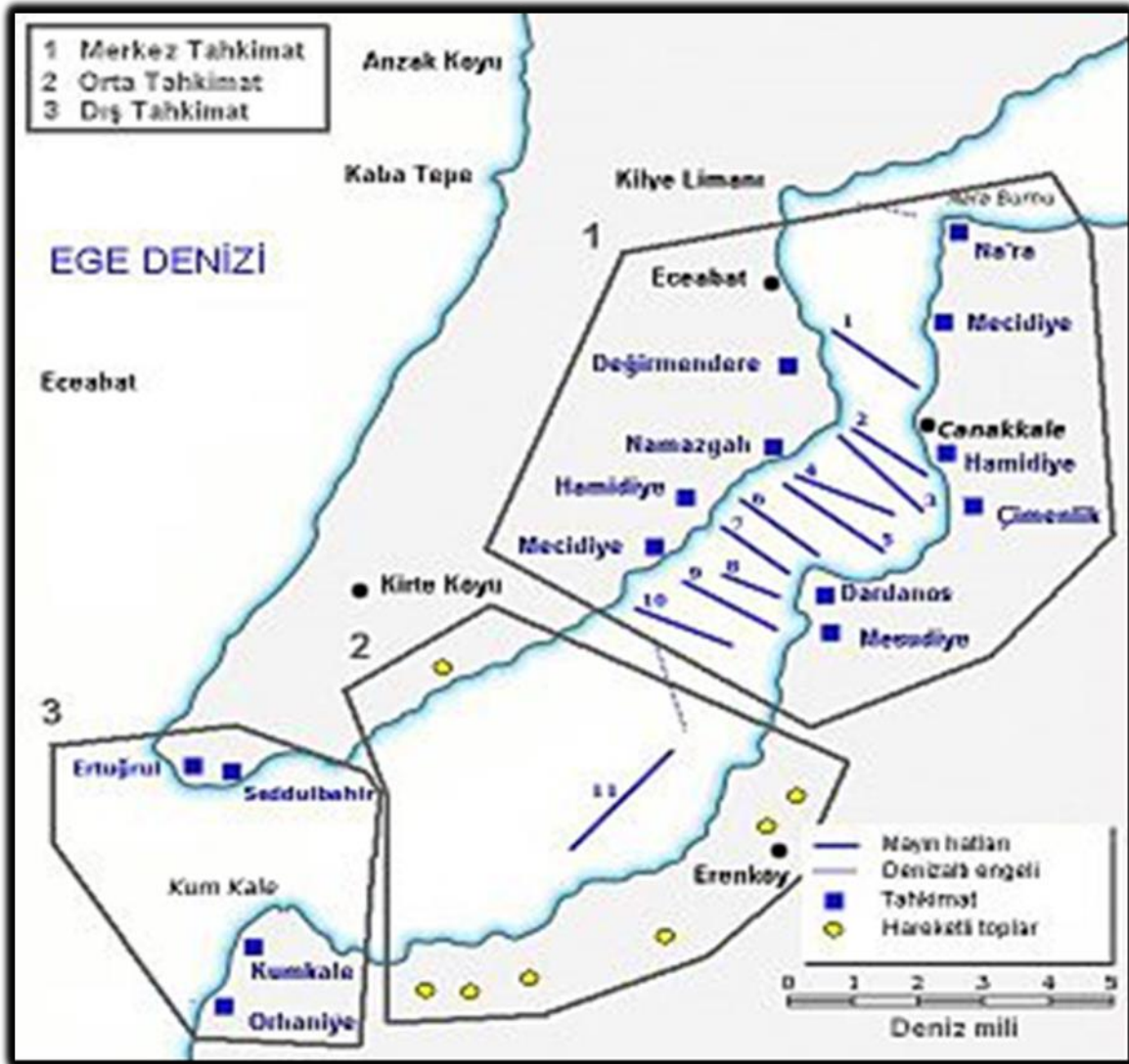
minefields because the area did not exhibit the suspicious conditions found in other areas, nor did it show any signs of natural terrain changes that might indicate an artificial arrangement.

Research conducted after the war revealed the reasons why enemy aircraft could not detect the mines. In the shallow waters of Erenköy Bay, the frequency of the waves increased, causing the wave tops to hump, which obstructed the view of the seabed. As a result, enemy pilots were unable to detect and report the mines. Unlike other minelayers, the Nusret minelayers placed their mines parallel to the shore, rather than perpendicular, to position them at strategic maneuvering points where enemy ships were required to pass.

In this process, the fact that Turkish officers had a deep knowledge of the geography in which they were fighting played a crucial role in securing victory (Çağlar, 2009).

Figure 4

Mine Lines in the Bosphorus (Çağlar, 2009)



The Impact of Geographical Knowledge on the Utilization of Water Resources

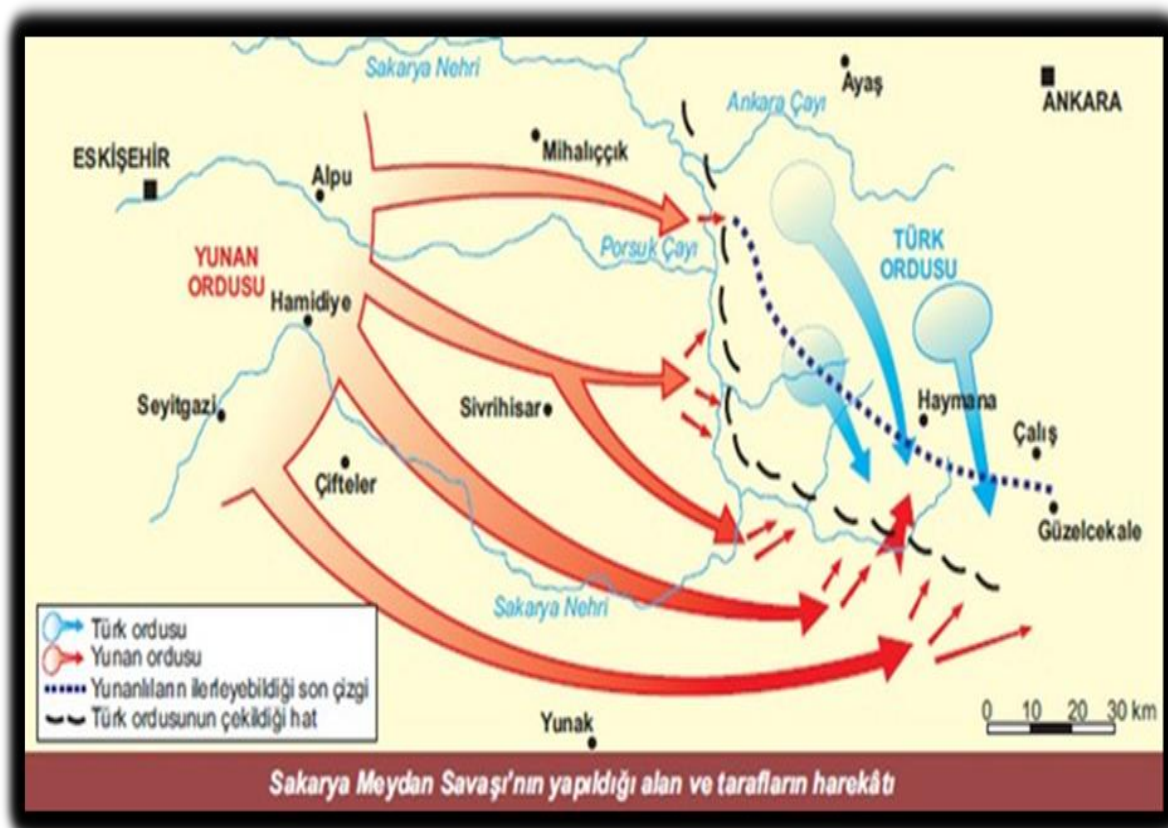
The natural features of the Gallipoli Peninsula posed significant challenges for the enemy, both tactically and in terms of water supply. The enemy, initially relying on a small number of local water sources, later managed to provide water to their troops through transported supplies and technical equipment. However, the quality of this water was questionable. In contrast, the Turkish forces had a clear advantage in terms of water, thanks to the geographical conditions of the peninsula since it was relatively easy to access water from wells, springs, and villages. Moreover, medical and engineering units worked meticulously on water sources, inspecting water along the routes the soldiers would take and assessing its quality in advance. To meet the increased demand for water in kitchens, hospitals, and for bandages, wells were dug and used under the command of Lieutenant Şerif Efendi. Thanks to the health measures taken and the sufficient water supply, there were no major epidemics on the Çanakkale front (Bilgin, 2015).

Locations not visible to the enemy were strategically chosen for the war hospitals, known as dressing stations. At the same time, proximity to water resources was a key factor in the selection. As a result, areas near the Kereviz, Tenger, Soğanlı, Havuzlar, Kuruca, Matik, and Ağa streams were used for these purposes (Yurdakul, 2015).

The dressing stations set up to treat the wounds of Turkish soldiers were located along riverbanks to avoid the danger posed by enemy forces and to ensure a reliable water supply. This demonstrates that the Turkish army thoroughly understood and analyzed the region, selecting locations with favorable geographical conditions.

Geographical Overview of the Eskişehir Kütahya Wars

The Turkish forces on the Western Front were organized into four groups along the İnönü - Kütahya - Döğel line. It was decided to purchase supplies from Italy to meet the demand for arms and ammunition. At this point, on July 10, the Greek army launched an attack, targeting both the center and left flanks of the Turkish forces. First, Afyon was occupied on 13 July 1921, followed by Kütahya on 17 July 1921. The Turkish army was forced to retreat to the Eskişehir - Seyitgazi line (Map 5). On 18 July, Mustafa Kemal arrived at the front headquarters in Karacahisar. After carefully assessing the situation, he gave the following general instructions to İsmet Pasha: "After concentrating our forces to the north and south of Eskişehir, we must retreat to create a wide gap between us and the enemy. This will allow us to regroup, reorganize, and reinforce. For this purpose, you may retreat as far east as Sakarya. If the enemy advances without stopping, we will have to withdraw further from our fortresses and re-establish our support structure (our line of fire). In any case, we will face unforeseen difficulties. On the other hand, this withdrawal will allow us to concentrate our forces and position them more favorably. The main disadvantage of this withdrawal is the internal shock it will cause in public opinion due to the loss of such an important location as Eskişehir and the large amount of territory to the enemy. However, if this strategy succeeds in the short term, these drawbacks will dissipate on their own." (Atatürk Research Centre Journal, 1992)

Figure 5*The Battle of Sakarya (Ataç, 2017)*

By retreating to the east of Sakarya, the Turkish army gained a significant military advantage. This maneuver not only protected the army from the enemy's advancing attacks but also strengthened its defensive capabilities through reorganization east of Sakarya. Meanwhile, the Greek troops tried expanding their positions through difficult terrain with challenging transport conditions and had to do a lot of resupplying.

Geographical Overview of the Korean War

The North Korean army, with its knowledge of the region's dominant vegetation and geographical features, exploited these advantages effectively. Capitalizing on the terrain and climatic conditions, North Korean Communist guerrillas engaged in what was defined as unorganized warfare.

Despite these advantages for North Korea and the Chinese People's Army, UN forces entered the war as regular forces. While this mode of participation was suitable for intervention under normal circumstances, it proved less effective against the so-called guerrilla tactics. To mitigate the impact of these tactics, the UN forces had to allocate a portion of their troops to protect supply lines. This allocation, however, was disadvantageous given the limited number of troops already deployed. Furthermore, the rugged terrain of the Korean peninsula made it exceptionally difficult for large units to maneuver in groups (Map 6). This situation was seen as a disadvantage for the soldiers sent to assist, and in fact, it was observed to have a negative impact on the soldiers during the intervention (Yaltaş, 2005).

Figure 6*Topography Map of the Korean Peninsula***Conclusion and Discussion**

Analyses of the studies on geography education and students' attitudes toward the geography course in Türkiye have clearly pointed out the various challenges related to geography education and students' moderately positive attitude toward the subject (Ahm, 2008; Tekinaslan, 2006).

The inability to emphasize the importance of geography education to students, the challenge of helping students connect information to daily life, and the focus on memorizing facts remain persistent issues in geography education (Akınoğlu, 2005; Ahm, 2008). Making geography education more engaging and relevant by incorporating real-life events can help improve students' attitudes toward the subject.

Aydın, Coşkun, and Kaya (2010) found that 74.4% of students developed a positive attitude toward the geography course, and 66.9% believed that what they learned in geography

was highly useful in their daily lives. However, this result suggests that the connection between geography education and real-life application is still insufficient.

Improving student attitudes can lead to increased achievement. To enhance student attitudes, it is crucial to create learning environments that enable students to relate to real-life situations. Cross-disciplinary studies with the history curriculum, for instance, can be a valuable approach to fostering this connection.

All historical events occur in specific geographical locations, and societies that understand their geography can turn this knowledge into an advantage. Geographical knowledge and the ability to utilize geographical features have played a significant role in securing victories in many wars throughout history.

The impact of geographical knowledge on the outcomes of the four major wars discussed in this study is clear. In the Battle of Myriocephalon, Kılıçslan II defeated the Byzantine army in a narrow pass, thanks to his understanding of the geographical conditions. While the exact location of the battle is still debated, historians universally agree that it took place in a pass. In this context, Bakır reached similar conclusions regarding the outcome and location of the battle in his 2014 study.

In the Battles of Gallipoli, geographical knowledge played a crucial role in key aspects such as predicting where the enemy would land, determining how the strait would be defended, and managing the water resources. In his 2015 study, Bilgin highlighted the strategic wisdom of selecting the areas for the dressing stations close to riverbeds, which provided both access to clean water and concealment in the valley regions.

In the Eskişehir-Kütahya Battles, the decision to retreat east of Sakarya ultimately led to the Sakarya Victory. A common factor in all these events was the strategic use of geographical features. However, during the Korean War, the lack of geographical knowledge among foreign soldiers created significant disadvantages, leading to a prolonged conflict that lasted for three years. In this case, North Korea's deep understanding of the terrain proved to be a decisive advantage.

Suggestions

Suggestions for Teachers

An interdisciplinary perspective is crucial for emphasizing the importance of understanding geography. Increasing cross-disciplinary studies between geography and history would be beneficial.

The results of such studies can be applied to the introductory phase of the 5E lesson plan, particularly in capturing students' attention (engage) and deepening their understanding (elaborate). Additionally, an activity can be developed based on these findings and presented to students.

It would be valuable to teach history and geography in an integrated manner within the Social Studies curriculum, where students first encounter geography.

History and Geography teachers should work together to establish the connections between the two subjects in their lessons.

During events commemorating historical victories, it is important to highlight how the battles were won and how the strategic decisions based on geographical knowledge affected the outcomes. Panels can be organized to discuss these topics in detail.

To enhance positive attitudes toward geography, field trips should be organized to help students explore their immediate surroundings. During these trips, it should be emphasized that understanding their environment can even contribute to winning a war.

Suggestions for Decision Makers

In-service training programs for geography teachers, focusing on interdisciplinary approaches, would be beneficial in helping them establish and communicate the connections between real life and geography lessons.

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Conflict of Interest

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Ethical Standards

No ethics committee approval was required, as this study did not involve human subjects.