

English Teachers' Problems Encountered in Teaching Four Basic Language Skills

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Received: November 15, 2018

Accepted: December 29, 2018

Online Published: March 20, 2019

doi:10.5539/ies.v12n4p118

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v12n4p118>

Abstract

It is a common goal to try to educate students as natural users of language, as emphasized by the studies on learning English today and the recently renewed 2017- 2018 curriculum in Turkey. In this respect, the learning of language based on four basic skills is considered to bring the importance of these skills is emerging. This study is a qualitative study that determines the teachers' opinions on the problems they encounter in the process of teaching four basic skills. At this qualitative study in the 2017-2018 academic year, teachers were chosen by the criterion sampling method, face-to-face interviews were conducted with eight English teachers working in a city of Turkey. The research was conducted in a case study design in a holistic multi-state pattern. Semi-structured interview form was used as data collection tool. Data was analyzed by content analysis method. Teachers' opinions on the subject were discussed according to sub-problems and comments and suggestions were made.

Keywords: English teacher, listening skill, reading skill, speaking skill, writing skill

1. Introduction

English, as an international language, of the 4000 to 5000 living languages, is by far the most widely used. In a second language situation, is the language of the mass media: newspapers, radio and television are largely English media. It is also the language of official institutions—of law courts, local and central government— and of education, the language of large commercial and industrial organisations. Clearly, a good command of this language in a second language situation is the passport to social and economic advancement, and the successful user of the appropriate variety of English identifies himself as a successful, integrated member of that language community (Broughton, Brumfit, Flavell, Hill, & Pincas, 1980). According to Crystal (1997), English is being used as official or semi-official language in more than 60 countries around the world and that two thirds of scientific studies are written in English. Interest in teaching English to young learners has been steadily growing in recent years. English is offered in primary and also in pre-school education. There are number of reasons for teaching this language. But one of these is, learning languages improve children's memory, thinking, perception and imagination (Stakanova & Tolstikhina, 2014). Foreign language teaching contains the instruction of four basic skills and the training of individuals who use these skills effectively. The concept of communicative competence in a foreign language is a frequently mentioned concept. This concept involves the adequate development of four basic skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) and their inclusion in the language teaching process (Akuzel, 2006). The importance of foreign language teaching has been emphasized from the past to the present and a wide range of programs, studies and arrangements have been made. According to the changes in Turkey in 2012, compulsory education increased to twelve years and the instruction process consisted of three stages. First stage is primary school (1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th graders/7-10 years), second stage is secondary school (5th, 6th, 7th and 8th graders/11-14 years) and the third stage is organized as high school (9th, 10th, 11th and 12th graders/15-18 years). Developments and changes in English language curriculum states that it includes the basic skills as themes and the principles and descriptors of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) were closely followed (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2018). CEFR particularly stresses the need for students to put their learning into real-life practice in order to support fluency, proficiency and language retention; accordingly, the new curricular model emphasizes language use in an authentic communicative environment (Council of Europe [CoE], 2001). Also 2018 year English language curriculum strives to foster an enjoyable and motivating learning environment where young learners/users of English feel comfortable and

supported throughout the learning process. At the 2nd and 3rd grade levels, speaking and listening are emphasized; while reading and writing are incorporated in higher grades as students become more advanced. Throughout each stage, developmentally appropriate learning tasks provide a continued focus on building the learner autonomy and problem-solving skills that are the basis for communicative competence (MoNE, 2018). Of course, teaching these skills is not enough. It is necessary to train individuals who use these skills effectively and who can convey their feelings and thoughts effectively in that language (Akuzel, 2006). Failure to comply with these requirements may have negative consequences. Because of this, foreign language teaching is one of the topics discussed over the years in Turkey. Despite the enormous labour and time spent and a wide range of work, programs and plans, it is difficult to say that we have achieved the desired success. They even need extra time to spend to reach the desired level of learning in English. Students who fail in English exams, cannot understand or speak, cannot write or don't have enough success seem to have never studied English. This naturally affects their motivation towards the English course and causes them to accept the failure and to develop negative attitudes towards the course (Erdem, 2016). Instead of traditional methods, the methods that enable students to use the language in daily life should be included in the education system (Isik, 2008). Authentic materials, drama and role play, and hands-on activities are implemented to stress the communicative nature of English (MoNE, 2018). According to CEFR and English language curriculum, these activities, learning strategies, in the class, reading-writing tasks will increase students' four basic skills. But when we consider the reasons for not achieving the desired level of success in language education, the studies have pointed to many reasons. According to Ates and Gunbayi (2017), a large number of studies have been conducted in our country on the problems experienced in language education since 2000, primarily due to changing educational system policies, on the causes of failure, and wrong methods and techniques used in language teaching (Acat & Demirel, 2002; Akyel, 2003; Aydemir, 2007; Buyukduman, 2005; Isik, 2008; Koksall, 2000; Koydemir, 2001; Sahin, 2009; Solak, 2013; Suna & Durmuscelebi, 2013; Topaloglu, 2012). According to the results of these studies, if there are problems still, what is mentioned in the curriculum and those applications may not overlap for some reasons. So the starting point of this research is whether teachers have problems in the process of acquiring four basic skills in teaching English. Informal interviews were conducted with teachers other than the participants of this study and they were asked whether they had any problem in the process of gaining four basic skills. Given the background, the present study was conducted to investigate English teachers' opinions on the problems they encounter in the process of teaching four basic language skills. Because these four basic skills -speaking, listening, reading and writing- are included in the curriculum, and the teachers aim to upskill to the students in English lessons. To this end, answers to the following sub-questions have been sought: What is your opinion on the problems that you encounter to gain?

- 1) Speaking skills?
- 2) Listening skills?
- 3) Reading skills?
- 4) Writing skills?

2. Method

This section includes subsections, model of the study, participant characteristics, data collection process and data analysis.

2.1 Model of the Study

In this study, English teachers' opinions on the problems that they encounter to gain speaking, listening, reading and writing skills were investigated. Qualitative research method was used in the research. This qualitative research is a case study based on the questions of "how" and "why." The "multiple case (holistic) design" was utilized in the study. According to Yildirim and Simsek (2016), "this pattern has more than one case that can be perceived as a whole on its own. Each case is considered as holistic and then compared to each other." The best sources for doing so are Yin's (1994) general text on case study research and Merriam's (1988) book on case studies in education. Both argue that case studies are special kinds of qualitative work that investigates a contextualized contemporary (as opposed to historical) phenomenon within specified boundaries (Hatch, 2002). In this study the main reason to name the qualitative design as case study is, teachers' instruction process is handled with as a case, problems that they encounter to gain four basic language skills in English lessons are handled with as all factors of the case.

2.2 Participant Characteristics

According to Patton (2014), it is important to provide richness in terms of knowledge in selected working groups and researchers can choose groups purposefully. Glesne (2012) states that there is no need to work with large

groups or to make generalizations which will make random selection meaningful in qualitative researches. The participants consisted of English teachers who work in secondary schools with 11-13 years old students in a city of Turkey at 2017-2018 academic year. A total of eight teachers working in the public schools which are affiliated to Ministry of National Education were selected by the criterion sampling method. The inclusion criteria were teaching experience of more or less than ten years and experiencing problems in teaching four basic language skills.

Descriptive characteristics of the teachers involved in the study are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Descriptive characteristics of the participants

Teacher Code	Gender	Seniority (year)	Department
T1	Male	14	English Language Education
T2	Male	12	English Language and Literature
T3	Female	12	American Culture and Literature
T4	Female	17	English Language Education
T5	Female	6	English Language Education
T6	Female	5	English Language Education
T7	Male	6	English Language and Literature
T8	Male	4	English Language Education

Furthermore, all of the teachers use books which were given from MoNE, so the books were the same, however it was not asked whether the teachers are familiar with CEFR descriptors or not.

2.3 Data Collection Process

Semi-structured interview forms were used to collect data. Structured interviews have a rigid structure with a predetermined set of questions, while unstructured interviews are flexible. So, these two methods take place at both ends (Karasar, 2006, Yildirim & Simsek, 2016). Semi-structured interview technique is located between these two ends. This technique was preferred because it sets the researcher a particular path based on specific questions, while at the same time providing flexibility to obtain more information. In line with the sub-problems of the study, the related literature was searched, and the questions to be asked in the interviews were determined. Four questions were included in the draft interview form. To evaluate these items in terms of purpose, scope, and meaning, a pilot implementation was conducted with four teachers outside the participants. Qualitative research area experts, trainers, and experts in the field did not recommend any correction. The form was finalized in light of the information obtained after these stages. All interviews with the teachers were carried out in the most appropriate time periods taking necessary permissions. Interviews were conducted with the teachers in the schools between 1 and 15 May 2018. During the interviews, necessary preliminary information was given to increase reliability. Teachers were informed that the recorder would be used to prevent data loss. They were also told that after the interviews, the voice recordings would be played and presented to their approvals. It was also emphasized that privacy would be protected. It was stated that the names of the teachers would not be mentioned in the research. In short, it was aimed to make the participants feel more comfortable and secure and to ensure that they answer the questions with all sincerity. The interviews lasted for approximately 12 to 15 minutes.

2.4 Data Analysis

Content analysis technique was used in the analysis of data. The data is coded as the first step of the content analysis. By analyzing the information obtained at this point, meaningful sections are formed and conceptually expressed meanings are defined by a sentence or paragraph, ie they are coded. As a second step, the codes are categorized by examining the common points. In the third step codes and themes are organized and the final stage is the interpretation of the findings (Yildirim & Simsek, 2016). In this study the breakdown of the interviews was transferred to computer and a total of 18 page interview breakdown was obtained firstly. Then texts were read sentence by sentence and content analysis was done. Codes generated from data, similar codes occurred the themes according to codes' common points.

According to validity and reliability studies, the interview record of two teachers was examined and re-coded by the other researcher. Percentage of compatibility between two encoders was calculated as

$$P = [Na/Na + Nd] \times 100 \quad (1)$$

according to Miles and Huberman (1994).

Table 2. Reliability between two encoders

Data Set	Compatibility amount (Na)	Noncompatibility amount(Nd)	Compatibility Percentage (P)
Interview breakdown of T2	26	6	81
Interview breakdown of T6	24	4	85

During the confirmation process, different interview breakdowns were re-coded 2 weeks later by the researcher and the compliance was examined.

Table 3. Inter-coding reliability

Data Set	Compatibility amount (Na)	Noncompatibility amount (Nd)	Compatibility Percentage (P)
Interview breakdown of T3	20	6	77
Interview breakdown of T7	16	5	76

For credibility, among the methods mentioned by Creswell (1998) rich and detailed description - ensuring that the reader is included in the research context is necessary. Detailed description - presenting the data in accordance with the concepts and themes without reinterpreting the data is important (cited in: Glesne, 2012). In this study to carry out these steps, detailed description about the case was done and the direct citations from the teachers' opinions were presented.

3. Results

The opinions of the teachers about the problems they encounter in teaching four basic language skills are presented below.

3.1 Findings Related to the First Sub-Problem

To define the first sub-problem, the teachers were asked: "Can you give examples of the problems you encounter during your activities to teach speaking skills to your students?" The participants' opinions are presented as follows.

The participating teachers generally mentioned problems that can be gathered under the themes of "lack of self-confidence in speaking," "the use of knowledge" and "the acquisition of knowledge" during activities aimed at speaking in the classroom. They first mentioned the internal and external factors that affected students' self-confidence (sub-theme of the first theme). The emotions such as anxiety, fear, shame, insecurity, shyness, excitement and unwillingness, and making fun of and friend attitudes codes are discussed under these two sub-themes. In this context, two of the answers with similar content are as follows:

The feeling of embarrassment, the thought of being laughed at if they make mistakes while speaking, the anxiety and fear stemming from this thought and reluctance to speak. They feel worried about making mistakes when talking. (T1)

I have to convince the students about the necessity of speaking English. This is because they're reluctant at first. In the second stage, on the other hand, students who have difficulty in pronouncing words do not want to speak because they think that their friends will laugh at them. Unfortunately, the children are cruel to each other. Even if I warn the students who are laughing, the student who has difficulty in pronunciation feels demotivated... (T6)

On the other hand, the theme of "the use of knowledge" includes the following sub-themes: "knowledge of grammar", "active use", "vocabulary", "general culture" and "pronunciation". The problems that the teachers expressed related to these sub-themes are as follows: lack of knowledge of sentence structures, lack of knowledge of sufficient vocabulary, the problem of recalling words, the difficulty in pronunciation, the difficulty in memorizing the words, and limited use of English in daily life. Moreover, the teachers stressed that even if the students have sufficient vocabulary, for them to express their feelings and thoughts on a subject, they must first have a certain level of knowledge on that subject, that is, they must have a certain level of general culture. In this context, they expressed their opinions as follows:

...these activities also require children to have knowledge of general culture as well as English. Those who do not have information on this subject do not want to talk about it. (T1).

...they need to have some information on the subject to be able to talk... (T3).

Besides, the “acquisition of knowledge” theme is an important element for the speaking activities to be carried out efficiently and effectively. Many factors are effective in teaching speaking skills to students. Regarding the sub-themes of “teacher,” “textbooks” and “time,” the teachers expressed problems such as insufficient class hours, insufficient activities in textbooks, and the pronunciation problems teachers experience as they are not native speakers.

The number of English classes is not sufficient... (T2).

Even if I try to solve this problem, even if I find a native speaker, the problem is not solved. (T3)

Children participating in the speaking activities try to put verbs at the end of English sentences as in Turkish. The lack of vocabulary is an obstacle to their speaking English. (T4)

3.2 Findings Related to the Second Sub-Problem

To identify the second sub-problem, the teachers were asked: “Can you give examples of the problems you encounter during your activities to teach listening skills to your students?” The participants’ opinions are presented as follows.

The participating teachers generally mentioned problems that can be gathered under the themes of “listening practices, time, individual differences in listening skills, classroom environment, acquisition of knowledge.” As in the first question, one of the problems encountered in teaching the ability to speak is the lack of class hours and therefore the inability to perform adequate listening practices. Highlighting the individual differences of students, the teachers frequently referred to codes such as “lack of concentration, apathy, anxiety, lack of knowledge, prejudice, inattention,” which can be collected under the sub-theme of internal factors. The participants also underlined that, as in all other courses, the appropriate classroom environment is necessary to ensure adequate motivation in students in English classes and that classrooms should not contain any elements that might distract students. Of course, when it comes to listening activities, it is essential that classrooms are away from the noise and do not contain any elements that distract students so that listening practices are performed effectively. The teachers stated that if students hear any external noises during the listening activity, they fail to follow the listening text and lose interest; therefore they have difficulty understanding the text. This problem was included in the external factors sub-theme. Also, the importance of the quality of listening activities was emphasized by teachers. Therefore, in accordance with the “speed, individual differences, and understanding” sub-themes, the teachers expressed problems such as different accents in every text, lack of standards in the speed of speech, the fact that individual differences are disregarded, and the fact that listening practices in books are not in the appropriate levels. Finally, the teachers expressed codes such as excessive length of listening texts, complicated contents, and lack of visuals that will help students understand the listening texts, which can be collected under the theme of “acquisition of knowledge.” Some of the teachers’ opinions on this topic are as follows:

For listening skills, the classroom environment must first be silent. Besides, students think that listening texts are very fast. They have difficulty in gathering their attention, and after a while, they lose interest. Listening texts are not standard, and students have difficulty understanding native speakers. The speed of listening texts is a significant problem. The number of dialogs in grade 5 textbooks is insufficient; this leads to the inadequacy of listening activities. Students are uninterested in listening activities and do not want to do it. (T5)

I do listening. Students listen and try to answer questions. But people speak so fast in listening activities that students cannot understand; they should speak slower. Besides, students do not understand the accent. If the English-speaking person is Turkish, the students can understand better. The difference between the accent of teachers and accent in listening texts creates problems for children. Listening texts are not at a constant speed and do not consider individual differences. Some texts are pretty fast. They need to be slow. (T8)

3.3 Findings Related to the Third Sub-Problem

To identify the third sub-problem, the teachers were asked: “Can you give examples of the problems you encounter during your activities to teach reading skills to your students?” Teachers’ opinions are presented as follows.

When compared to the other three basic language skills, the reading skill is usually achieved more efficiently by students. Concordantly, the teachers stated that their students are more interested in reading activities. So much so that, despite they highlighted motivation-related problems with regards to the other language skills, they did not mention such problems among the problems they encounter when teaching the reading skill. In order to identify the problems encountered in relation to this skill, the teachers frequently referred to codes such as “the fact that the reading texts are about themes that do not interest the students”, “the fact that they are about other cultures”, “the

fact that they are too long”, and “the fact that they contain too many unknown words”, all of which can be collected under the “reading texts” theme. Teachers also mentioned the problems related to the deficiencies in the textbooks. They also underlined the fact that students are not provided with storybooks like textbooks, which constitutes another problem in the development of the reading skill. These views are covered under the theme of “reading materials.” Based on the “grammar knowledge, knowledge of vocabulary, and knowledge of meaning” sub-themes that make up the “acquisition of knowledge” theme, the “lack of vocabulary, lack of grammar knowledge and inability to attribute meaning to texts” codes were created in line with the opinions of the teachers. The teachers also underlined the lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge- related problems that they encounter in teaching the reading skill to their students. Some of the teachers’ opinions on the problems that they encounter when teaching the reading skill to their students are as follows:

Participation is more in reading activities. Reading texts are simple for students to read because unfortunately, they do not pay attention to the pronunciation. So, they read just for the sake of reading. (T4)

While reading English texts, students do not pay attention to the pronunciation as if they are reading Turkish texts. They do not notice or care that there is a difference between the spelling and pronunciation of words. They constantly need feedbacks; also, when they encounter new words, they do not think about the meaning or pronunciation of the words; they just read them. So, they do not make sense of the reading texts; they read just for the sake of reading. If the reading texts are too long, they lose their interest. Textbooks should contain more reading texts and topics should be interesting. Texts should enable students to practice. The activities should be directed towards using the language. The textbooks usually contain grammar exercises. (T5)

All skills are interdependent. So, when children are reading, they have problems in the pronunciation of words. But even if the students misread the words, they don't care and want to read. So the main problem is pronunciation, we may say. (T7)

3.4 Findings Related to the Fourth Sub-Problem

To identify the fourth sub-problem, the teachers were asked: “Can you give examples of the problems you encounter during your activities to teach writing skills to your students?” Teachers’ opinions are presented as follows.

Considering the problems that the teachers stated with regards to the teaching of these four basic language skills, we can see that they experience the most problems when teaching the writing skill to the students. In fact, writing about a topic and expressing feelings and thoughts in an organized and correct way is something in which students have difficulties even in their mother tongues. That being the case, students feel stressed when they are given writing assignments by their teachers in any other course, which teachers from other branches also mention. This skill involves combining other skills and creating and presenting a product. Considering the problems that the teachers stated with regards to the writing skill, the teachers mostly underlined the “internal factors” sub-theme, which they referred to talk about the motivational factors. With regards to the problems that they encounter when teaching the writing skill to their students, the teachers most frequently referred to codes such as “lack of excitement, unwillingness, feeling apathy, inattention, feeling that writing assignments are unnecessary, the fact that students do not do preparation for the writing assignments, and the fact that they do not have enough knowledge about the topics of writing assignments.” They also underlined the negative reflections of situations such as insufficient grammar knowledge, the problems that the students have when using the correct word in the correct place in a sentence as words have more than one meaning, and insufficient vocabulary, which can be collected under the “use of knowledge” theme. Moreover, the teachers stressed the lack of theoretical knowledge about writing due to the lack of creative writing courses like the ones which prospective English teachers take at universities. They stated that such a course would prove useful in teaching the writing skill to the students. In this context, teachers underlined the lack of activities related to the development and acquisition of writing skills in textbooks, the lack of preparation for the application due to the fact that substructure is not theoretically supported, and the fact that existing writing activities are directed towards memorization and imitation, not creativity. In this context, the “development of writing skill” sub-theme of has been created. Finally, they noted the lack of creative thinking skills in students that lead to the problems related to the writing skills. In fact, creativity and free-thinking is a skill that will improve the writing skill of students in English courses as well as ensure that they are more successful and productive in other courses. Writing skills that will develop around these skills can be gained more easily and quickly by students who can reason, develop different perspectives, use mental processes correctly and think effectively. However, the teachers complained that students lack most of these skills, so, since they do not know what to write, they give up at the beginning of the writing activity. They also mentioned the problems related to the differences between the sentence structures of Turkish, the mother tongue of the students, and English, the

target language. Based on the opinions of the teachers who expressed this problem, the “thinking skills” sub-theme was created. Some of the opinions of the teachers with regards to these problems are as follows:

For a student to make a sentence, he/she needs to understand the order of the components in a sentence (subject-verb-object). This is the biggest problem that I have encountered for many years because the sentence structure in English is not like that in Turkish. Students usually think in Turkish, and try to translate their Turkish sentences into English literally (word-for-word translation). Even eight graders experience this problem. Sometimes I dictate sentences for them to write, and when the children don't know the pronunciation of the words, they write them wrong. I also need to underline the lack of general cultural knowledge because, as in speech activity, children need to have a basic knowledge of the field to write something. The science unit, for example. If the students do not have sufficient knowledge, they cannot write anything. For example, natural disasters. Because the student does not know the meaning of the word earthquake in Turkish, they do not understand the English meaning of this word. These are the usual problems. Also, the students have extra difficulty in the second term as the textbooks get harder and contain more unknown words. To teach these four skills to the students, the number of English classes should be increased, and separate courses should be designed for each language skill. (T1)

Students are still unable to think in English. They think in Turkish first and then do a word-for-word translation. They make English sentences with the structure of a Turkish sentence. They always need a sample sentence to build their articles on. I cannot give them a writing assignment (such as a story) because their writing ability does not go beyond making sentences. Also, there are differences among different grades. For example, the fifth graders are especially bored with writing. They even feel it unnecessary to take notes about the subject being taught. (T5)

4. Discussion

English is the language that satisfies the need for a common language of the people that have to be in a close relationship with each other in the economic, financial, social, cultural, and technological fields, in short, in every area of life, in the globalizing world. The present study was conducted to identify the problems encountered in the Turkish education system in teaching the four basic language skills to students, which has always constituted a significant problem. In this context, it is thought that this study will contribute to the literature. The interviews showed that teachers generally agreed on almost the same issues and the same problems related to these issues. It was also seen that the problems that the teachers encountered did not differ in terms of variables such as their experience in the teaching profession, sex, and the departments they graduated from. The answers to the interview questions showed similarities in terms of each skill. The inadequacy of class hours and the absence of separate courses for each skill, for example, were mentioned by all teachers. It seems quite challenging to provide the learning outcomes mentioned in the curriculum by developing four basic language skills of students. This opinion, which was expressed by secondary school teachers, is consistent with the results of the studies conducted by Akkus (2009), Ari (2013), Durgut (2010), Erguc (2014), Kabaharnup (2010), and Tok (2002).

In the present study, the participating teachers delivered their opinions on the internal and external factors that affect the students' emotions; i.e., prejudice, concern, anxiety, fear, shyness, feelings of insecurity, feeling humiliated, unwillingness, and attitudes of their peers. Acat and Demiral (2002) underlined the importance of motivation for learning a foreign language. They stated that motivated students learn a foreign language best, and provided data to help foreign language teachers. From this perspective, the present study is consistent with the study by Acat and Demiral (2002) as the teachers who were included in this study also highlighted the importance of internal and external factors, the outcomes of adverse situations, and the problems that such adversities lead to.

The active use of language in daily life has an essential place in foreign language learning. One of the issues frequently expressed by the teachers in this study was the lack of opportunities for the students to use English in their daily lives. Catal (2015), Celik and Kocaman (2016) also reported similar findings: they underlined the adverse outcomes, effects, and disadvantages of limited class hours and limited opportunities to use English in daily life.

The primary source and guide of teachers and students, textbooks have a prominent place in the English course as in all courses. In this context, activities, units, and contents in the book are of paramount importance in teaching the four basic language skills to students. The English curriculum, which was renewed in 2018, set its primary goal as raising students who can use the English language actively in daily life. The curriculum was designed in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). In other words, targeted skills differed according to different age groups (MoNE, 2018). This is the determinant of organizing all aspects of the course. Teachers who participated in the study also stated that the contents of the textbooks were insufficient to provide skills. Similarly, Akkus (2009), Akuzel (2006), Cakir (2007), Catal (2015), and Dogan (2009) reported textbook-related problems in teaching the four basic language skills. Aktas (2004) stated that the strategy, practice,

and activities which contain the communicative competence required for the four basic language skills are not given enough place in textbooks. Moreover, Aktas (2004) underlined the importance of having social and cultural rules and information that constitute the content and context of communication and interaction in addition to the structure of languages to achieve the communicative competence. In this context, the findings of the present study are consistent with those of that study since the teachers who participated in this study noted the lack of knowledge of general culture as a problem that they encounter.

The participating teachers also stated that the students do not come to classes prepared. Therefore, they lack basic knowledge about language learning such as vocabulary and grammar knowledge, which is another major problem that prevents them from acquiring four basic language skills. Dogan (2009) also reported similar findings in this respect.

On the other hand, another problem that the teachers stated in the present study is the lack of functional materials. Akkus (2009), Ari (2013), Catal (2015), Erguc (2004), and Gokdemir (2005) emphasized the inadequacy of technological tools in their studies with students and teachers in various age groups.

The communicative competence that contemporary linguistics emphasizes involves students' expressing their feelings and thoughts freely. At this point, the student learns in an environment where he can develop his own personality traits such as taking responsibility, performing, working in cooperation and making decisions (Aktas, 2004). Successful communication allows people to transfer their feelings and thoughts and understand the feelings and opinions of others. It also provides the opportunity to understand and interpret the environment and everything that is happening in the world, and thus enables the development of students. In this context, thinking styles and thinking skills gain importance. The teachers who participated in the present study noted the adverse outcomes of the lack of necessary thinking skills which is present in most of the students.

New plans, programs, techniques and methods will be formed according to the opinions of the teachers. Platforms, workshops, seminars, and programs can be held to discuss the solution of all these problems. A high-level vision can be established for foreign language teaching. Similar studies can be conducted with other grades. In this study, it is not asked to the teachers whether they write diaries or not. Writing process is important and diaries can support this process. In other studies, diaries can be written by teachers and their student and writing skills can be observed and determined from the diaries. Results of the other studies can be compared. Moreover, future studies might aim at investigating the opinions of students as well as teachers. Finally, surveys can be performed to determine the solutions to the problems encountered in foreign language teaching.

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