

Ideal Classroom Setting for English Language Teaching Through the Views of English Language Teachers (A Sample from Turkey)

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Abstract

English is the most common foreign language given as a class in Turkey. Although English language education has been given for many years, it is seen that there is not a desired result yet. There are many factors that affect this situation such as language, program, method, language education policies, teacher, and student. One of the factors affecting language education is the physical classroom setting. Within this context, it is searched for ideal classroom setting in language education at high schools. 22 English language teachers from 9 different high schools participated in the study. Views of teachers were reported to Word and analyzed through content analysis. In the context of the current research, it is stated that there are some technological problems, the areas where foreign language materials are exhibited in the classroom environment are limited, and the classrooms do not allow different seating arrangements. According to English language teachers, it was stated that there should be technological equipment and hardware in an ideal language learning setting, there should be sufficient areas for displaying visual materials, furniture should be flexible and classroom population should be at an ideal level.

Keywords: English language education, problems in foreign language education, ideal classroom setting, ELT teachers

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduce the Problem

Since the Tanzimat era, there have been massive endeavors for foreign language teaching in Turkey. Özcan Demirel (2003) stated that students faced significant problems in foreign language education from their primary schooling through university education. As the reasons for this have been discussed from various aspects, the problems and discussions regarding foreign language education thus continue to be relevant. Haznedar (2010) attributed the reasons for the problems experienced by students to the language policy and practice fields and argued that although teachers were not included in the relevant decision-making processes, they were still held responsible for the problems.

In his article in *Journal of Language and Linguistics Studies*, Işık (2008) illustrated the history of foreign language teaching in relation to schools and teachers and blamed the foreign language teaching education system, the resulting administrative faults, and the shortcomings in language planning for the failures despite all the efforts. According to him, another issue was the teaching material. Moreover, as the central countries are the producers and exporters of all the methods, techniques, and materials related to foreign language education, the satellite countries adopt these as they are, thereby causing problems in language teaching. As a result, foreign language teachers heavily depended on the central countries and were mere consumers of the methods, techniques, and materials provided by them (Işık, 2008). However, several studies on language teaching indicated that different teaching methods are essential for students of different ages (Colpaert, 2010; Enkenberg, 2001). It was proposed that one of these methods was technology-assisted computer-based method (Dörnyei, 2014). Moreover, in addition to computer-based teaching methods, the usage of assistant robots in language education led to more effective results (Wen-Chi et al., 2015). Furthermore, individuals' self-oriented use of technology-based programs not only in classroom settings but also in out-of-class settings made significant contributions to language education (Lai, 2019).

Another issue in language education is the discussions on the age of learning a language. Some linguists argue

that native-like proficiency in a foreign language is only possible if learning begins before adolescence emphasizing that adolescence is a critical period within the language learning process (Çetintaş, 2001). However, Yule (2006) argued that language acquisition is the most efficient between the ages of 10 and 16 years; moreover, as these ages encompass a period when the critical language acquisition process is not fully completed and as individuals possess the basic specific skills needed by then, these years are perceived to be very effective. With the implementation of 4+4+4 education reform in the 2012–2013 academic year in Turkey, the age to begin schooling was reduced to 5 years (primary school first grade) and the age to start learning a foreign language was reduced to 6 years (primary school second grade), thereby leading students to commence learning a foreign language from the second grade (Bayyurt, 2012). However, Suna and Durmuşçelebi (2013) indicated that because the number of foreign language classes was not as intensive as it was in preparatory classes, language education did not meet the required expectations.

Tosun (2012) argued that identifying the teaching method as the only culprit is not pertinent because this method is not the only element that affects teaching; therefore, other elements, such as target language, student, teacher, context, and method, should also be investigated. Moreover, several elements that are related to students are effective in language education; in addition, an individual's approach toward language learning was affected by various beliefs, expectations, and cultural perspectives, thereby affecting the in-class activities conducted by language teachers (Susilo et al., 2017; Farrell and Bennis, 2013). Parrish and Linder-VanBerschoot (2010) highlighted the cultural elements in learning and argued that cultural values direct behaviors and opinions, forming the basis of individual differences. These cultural beliefs and related learning/teaching traditions further form the bases and reference points for the construction of the beliefs about language learning (Gabillon, 2005). Hence, beliefs about language learning might prove to be a critical source of success or failure in language education. Buehl and Beck (2015) revealed that beliefs about language learning include various theories that frame individuals' learning-oriented cognitive filters, interpretations, tendencies to tasks or assignments, and learning behaviors. Therefore, they hinder or develop language learning processes and outcomes (Ellis, 2008).

Burns and Knox (2005) developed the typology of the factors affecting in-class activities in language teaching, stating these were affected by several institutional, pedagogical, personal, and physical factors.

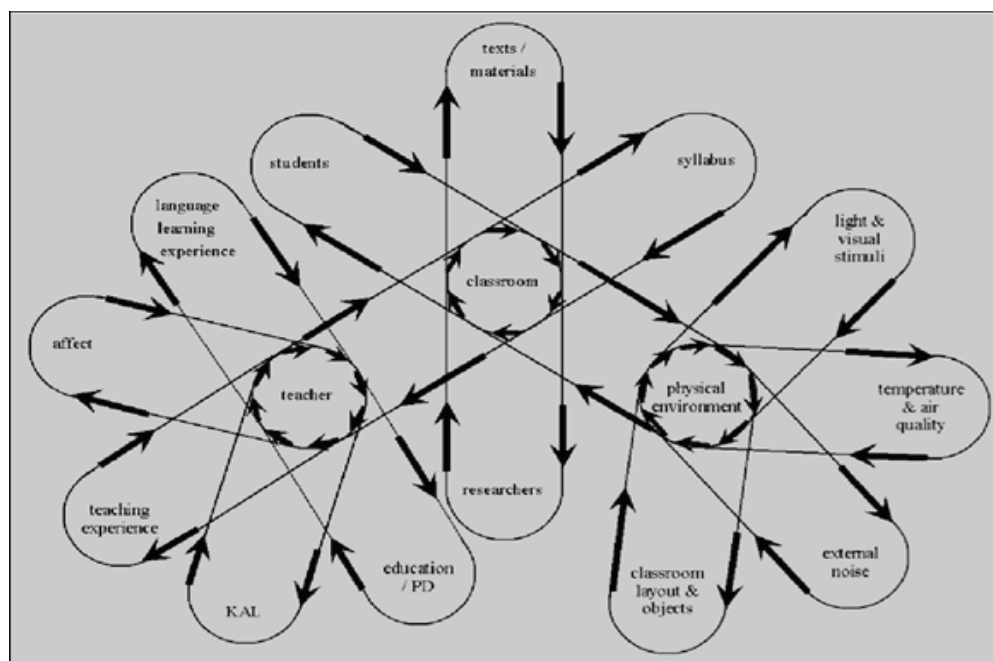


Figure 1. Classroom as a complex adaptive system (Burns and Knox, 2011)

Figure 1 presents the model developed by Burns and Knox (2011); in this model, the classroom environment was seen neither as space nor as a field of practice, but it was more of an area where many essential elements are combined in a multifaceted, dynamic, and content-dependent manner. Therefore, approaching the classroom environment in only one aspect may not help us fully understand it. As a matter of fact, a study showed that the physical environment of a classroom could yield its benefits only in combination with pedagogical approaches (Beichner et al., 2007). In addition, another study determined the positive and negative elements that affect success in language teaching in Turkey and revealed that the factors that influence learning English negatively

included teacher behaviors, student behaviors, factors related to teaching in the class, factors related to the education system, and environmental factors (Özer and Korkmaz, 2016). Saritaş and Arı (2014) observed similar problems, such as poor-quality curriculum, teaching lessons with a focus on grammar, ignoring basic language skills, crowded classrooms, physical inadequacies, and insufficient course hours, in the case of university students. This study deals with the role of physical factors in language teaching as a part of this complex classroom environment.

1.2 Purpose of the Research

Active student participation within the learning process depends on an adequate classroom environment and the skills of the teacher. Furthermore, teachers should create a supportive and encouraging learning setting and continuously improve their skills to promote the efficiency of the approaches they employ in this process (Güneş, 2008). One of the critical factors in enhancing the efficiency of teaching is the arrangement of the learning setting. Therefore, teachers' active role in creating the learning settings highlights the importance of their participation. Moreover, this study revealed the opinions of English language teachers about the characteristics of the ideal language teaching setting. For this primary purpose, answers to the following questions were recorded.

- 1) Does your school have a foreign language classroom for language education?
- 2) If there is a foreign language classroom, is this classroom actively used?
- 3) Is the physical environment of the class(es) where you teach languages sufficient? If it is not sufficient, what are the aspects that they lack?
- 4) What are the problems concerning the physical environment in the current classrooms or the language classroom?
- 5) In your opinion, how should the physical environment of an ideal classroom setting for language education be? What materials should the classroom include? How would you expect the physical environment of the class to be?

1.3 Importance of the Study

This study has its importance from two factors. First, language learning is a long journey and learning a language like a native speaker requires exposure to the language intensely. Therefore, foreign language teachers pay attention to this and in order to achieve teaching a foreign language successfully, organizing the environment of a classroom in all aspects is important. By the help of foreign language teachers' views, the authorities could see the lacks of the physical environment and take the steps. On the other hand, motivation and being eager to learn a language brings success more easily, so an ideal classroom environment should trigger the students' motivation to learn a foreign language. In order to organize a friendly and motivated environment language learning, it is important to reveal the views of the language teachers.

2. Method

This study is a qualitative study that determined the opinions of English language teachers about the ideal learning setting for effective English teaching; by adopting a case study approach, this study focused on the current situation and described the opinions of teachers in detail. In case studies, the factors related to a case might be investigated through a holistic approach, and the focus might be on how they affect the case and how they are affected by a particular case (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

2.1 Participant Characteristics

The participants of the research were selected according to the purposeful sampling method. The participants of the study were 22 English language teachers working at nine high schools located in the central province of Muş. In all, 8 of the teachers participating in the study were males, whereas 15 were females. These teachers possessed teaching experiences between 7 months and 14 years. The names of the teachers were not included in the study to adhere to ethical values; however, they were assigned codes as T1–T22, and these codes were used throughout the study. Table 1 presents the distribution of the participants on the basis of gender, teaching subject, teaching experience, and the type of school where these participants taught.

Table 1. Distribution of the participants

<i>Teacher Code</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Teaching subject</i>	<i>Experience (years)</i>	<i>Type of school</i>
T1	Male	English	1 year	Science High School
T2	Male	English	5 years	Social Sciences High School
T3	Male	English	7 months	Social Sciences High School
T4	Male	English	3 years	Social Sciences High School
T5	Female	English	3 years	Social Sciences High School
T6	Male	English	14 years	Social Sciences High School
T7	Male	English	1 year	N. S. Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School
T8	Female	English	3 years	S. H. Vocational School for Girls
T9	Female	English	4 years	M. A. Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School
T10	Female	English	4 years	M. A. Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School
T11	Female	English	4 years	M. A. Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School
T12	Female	English	5 years	M. A. Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School
T13	Male	English	4 years	S. E. Anatolian Imam & Preacher Training High School
T14	Female	English	12 years	S. H. Vocational School for Girls
T15	Female	English	4 years	S. H. Vocational School for Girls
T16	Female	English	13 years	S. H. Vocational School for Girls
T17	Female	English	4 years	N. Anatolian Imam & Preacher Training High School for Girls
T18	Female	English	3 years	N. Anatolian Imam & Preacher Training High School for Girls
T19	Female	English	4 years	İ. S. Anatolian High School
T20	Female	English	1 year	İ. S. Anatolian High School
T21	Female	English	1 year	İ. S. Anatolian High School
T22	Female	English	1 year	IMKB Anatolian High School

Table 1 shows that most of the teachers were females ($f = 15$), and most of the teachers possessed teaching experience of less than five years ($f = 18$). The distribution of the participants on the basis of high schools was diversified to provide a balanced representation of the overall picture. The study's participants belonged to general high schools, imam and preacher training high schools, or vocational high schools.

2.2 Data Collection Tools

A semi-structured interview form was used to record the opinions of foreign language teachers regarding the characteristics that an efficient foreign language learning setting should possess. Interview forms were given to teachers so that they could fill them according to their convenience. With the interview forms, the teachers received five interrelated questions. A university professor was consulted for the validity and reliability of the interview questions. Moreover, to ensure validity and reliability, the data were presented in a detailed manner and introduced through direct excerpts.

2.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis began with the transcription of the responses of the foreign language teachers during the interviews. The codes were created upon reading the transcript from each interview several times. After coding, another researcher from the Educational Sciences Department coded the same data. Next, the codes of both researchers were compared, and disagreements and agreements were identified. The reliability of the coding was analyzed using the formula of Number of Agreements / (Number of Agreements + Number of Disagreements) (Miles and Huberman, 1994), and the reliability coefficient was found to be high at 0.80. The themes were identified by creating a list of codes and were based on the similarities across these codes. Thus, the raw data obtained from interviews were analyzed and interpreted through content analysis.

3. Results

The opinions of foreign language teachers about the arrangement of an efficient foreign language learning setting were collected by asking them what was needed to identify a learning setting as ideal in language teaching and what their opinions were after comparing their current learning settings with the ideal. Tables 2 and 3 present the opinions regarding the current situation on the basis of the analysis of the opinions collected, while Table 4 presents findings related to the characteristics that an ideal foreign language learning setting should possess.

Table 2 shows the findings that concerned the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd sub-objectives of the study, which were related to the foreign language classroom. Positive statements (i.e., present/active/sufficient) were denoted with a green tick mark; expressions stating partial sufficiency were denoted with an orange tick mark; and negative statements (i.e., absent/not active/insufficient) were denoted with a black tick mark to enhance comprehensibility.

Table 2. Opinions regarding the sufficiency of the current learning setting in foreign language education

<i>Foreign Language Classroom</i>	<i>Present</i>	<i>Absent</i>	<i>Active</i>	<i>Inactive</i>	<i>Sufficient</i>	<i>Partially Sufficient</i>	<i>Insufficient</i>	<i>High Schools</i>
T1	✓		✓		✓			Science High School
T2		✓			✓			Social Sciences High School
T3		✓				✓		Social Sciences High School
T4		✓					✓	Social Sciences High School
T5		✓			✓			Social Sciences High School
T6		✓			✓			Social Sciences High School
T7	✓		✓			✓		N. S. Voc. and Tech Ana High
T8		✓				✓		S. H. Voc. School for Girls
T9		✓				✓		M. A. Voc. and Tech Ana High
T10		✓					✓	M. A. Voc. and Tech Ana High
T11		✓				✓		M. A. Voc. and Tech Ana High

T12	✓		✓		M. A. Voc. and Tech Ana High
T13	✓			✓	S. E. Ana. Imam & Preacher
T14	✓			✓	S. H. Voc. School for Girls
T15	✓			✓	S. H. Voc. School for Girls
T16	✓			✓	S. H. Voc. School for Girls
T17	✓			✓	N. Ana. Imam & Preacher
T18	✓			✓	N. Anatolian Imam & Preacher
T19	✓			✓	İ. S. Anatolian High School
T20	✓		✓		İ. S. Anatolian High School
T21	✓		✓		İ. S. Anatolian High School
T22	✓	✓		✓	IMKB Anatolian High School

The teachers received questions about the sufficiency of their current classrooms. It was found that four high schools had a foreign language classroom, while the others (five high schools) did not have a foreign language classroom. A notable finding here was that foreign language teachers teaching at the same schools expressed different opinions about the sufficiency of the current classroom setting. While four of the teachers (T2, T5, T6, T12) believed that the physical setting of their current classrooms was sufficient for language education despite not having a foreign language classroom, seven (T3, T8, T9, T11, T14, T18, T19) found them partially sufficient, and the others (T4, T10, T13, T15, T16, T17) found them insufficient. Another noteworthy finding of the study was that although one school had a foreign language classroom, it was not used actively (I. S. Anatolian High School); in this school, some teachers (T20 and T21) stated that there was a foreign language classroom, but it was not actively used; however, another teacher (T19) stated that there was no foreign language classroom in the school. Therefore, it can be concluded that this teacher (T19) thought that there was no foreign language classroom in the school because it was not actively used. On the contrary, it was remarkable that the foreign language classroom was found to be sufficient in two high schools (Science High School and IMKB Anatolian High School) but partially sufficient in the other two high schools (İ. S. Anatolian High School, N. S. Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School).

Table 3. Emerging themes on the basis of the problems regarding the physical setting in the current classrooms

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Frequency (Participants)</i>	<i>Codes</i>
Noise	1 (T1)	Noise from the vehicles
Technological infrastructure and equipment	13 (T3, T7, T8, T9, T10, T11, T13, T15, T17, T18, T19, T20, T21)	Lack of equipment, problems with the sound system, dysfunctional smart board, lack of communication tools, lack of headphones, dysfunctional electrical devices, lack of interactive boards, problems with the smart board, and lack of a personal computer system in the classroom
Flexible desk order	7 (T3, T4, T7, T15, T16, T17, T21)	Lack of a proper seating order, broken desks, fixed desk order, flawed table–desk order, and unsuitable for different desk orders (individual/group)
Classroom population	3 (T4, T8, T15)	High student population in the classroom and crowded classroom
Foreign language classroom	5 (T5, T8, T9, T10, T11, T13)	Problems in listening activities, lack of an interactive study setting, lack of a foreign language classroom, and inactive language classroom
Visual material and exhibition areas	6 (T6, T17, T18, T19, T20, T21)	Insufficient boards; lack of visual posters, maps, etc.; lack of materials; classroom walls are not decorated with materials; lack of teaching materials; boards and walls are not suitable for displaying the materials; and lack of an exhibition area
Language awareness	2 (T8, T14)	Having a low opinion about language education and indifferent attitude toward the course
Internet connections	6 (T13, T14, T16, T17, T19, T20)	lack of internet facilities/connections, no accessibility to websites on the Internet, and inadequate internet accessibility
Storage area	2 (T19, T21)	No space to store the materials at hand and lack of closets

The participants received questions about the problems they have with their current classroom setting. Their results were coded, and each code was unified under a theme, and hence, nine such themes were identified. On the basis of Table 3, the most frequent theme that was highlighted was related to technological infrastructure and hardware ($f = 13$). Thus, it was concluded that the problems teachers experienced most commonly in foreign language education were related to technological equipment. As a matter of fact, it can be said that within the codes presented in Table 3, teachers usually complained about the dysfunctional smart boards. Therefore, notably, the complaints stemmed from the fact that the existing equipment was problematic in general.

Problems with technological infrastructure and hardware were followed by flexible desk order ($f = 7$), internet connections ($f = 6$), and visual materials and exhibition areas ($f = 6$). Therefore, when technological problems are evaluated together with internet connections, it can be said that both the equipment and problems related to internet connections turned into critical problems in foreign language education. At the same time, lack of visual materials and exhibition areas also became a critical issue in language acquisition. However, according to the teachers, another important problem was related to the order of the desks. Fixed desk orders restrict utilization of other teaching techniques in the classroom setting apart from lecturing with presentations, thereby leading to a failure in creating an interactive setting; moreover, desks should be mobile to make arrangements that aid in performing different activities, and the classroom population should be suitable for this purpose. Hence, the restrictions on interaction, one of the principal elements in foreign language education, become a significant problem.

Another notable finding of the study was that only one participant mentioned noise ($f = 1$). It was stated that classrooms near the road were affected by passing vehicles and their honking, which interrupted the communication in the class. Therefore, it can be concluded that such noises can undermine learning in the foreign language teaching classroom environment.

Some of the striking opinions of teachers regarding the problems they experienced about the physical setting of the classroom in foreign language education were as follows.

“In our school, there is no problem with the physical environment. There are problems only with the location of

the school. Car noises sometimes lead to the loss of course time, as it becomes necessary to repeat the listening activities.” (T1)

“A suitable seating order so that students can feel more comfortable is missing, and the technological equipment with which they can use the language actively is not adequate.” (T3)

“The high population in the classroom and the resulting inability to arrange the ideal seating order are the most critical problems.” (T4)

“Because we do not have a language classroom, there might be problems associated with listening activities. There is a smart board, but students sitting in the back rows cannot hear it.” (T5)

“The board is insufficient; we have to hang students’ works on the walls. We don’t have any visual posters, maps, etc.” (T6)

“Lack of sufficient communication and development tools, negligence of language education by those around and the resulting lack of awareness among the students.” (T8)

“We have a language classroom, but it is not actively used. Visuals are important to learn English, but because we do not have an internet connection at our school, we cannot use the smart boards effectively.” (T13)

“Lack of internet connection for utilizing the smart boards, and some of them are dysfunctional. The boards and walls are not suitable for the use of visual materials, and we do not have enough space to store the materials that we have.” (T19)

An analysis of the teachers’ responses reveals that the most frequent problem is related to smart boards and the internet connection. An internet connection, headphones or speakers, presenting visuals through smart boards or boards, and a seating order suitable for speaking/listening activities are necessary to develop the four basic skills of language teaching, namely, listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Therefore, it was identified that teachers could not get the necessary physical support for these basic skills.

Further, the teachers were asked about the characteristics an ideal learning setting should possess in language education. Table 4 presents the opinions of teachers regarding the ideal language learning setting, the frequency values under specific themes, and relevant codes.

Table 4. Opinions regarding the characteristics of an ideal learning setting for language education

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Participant (f)</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Codes</i>
Presence of areas where visual materials can be exhibited	14	T1, T4, T6, T7, T8, T10, T11, T13, T16, T18, T19, T20, T21, T22	Writing on walls and boards; vibrant and colorful visual materials; the presence of visual materials on boards, doors, walls, and windows, maps, globes, and other details should decorate the classroom; the presence of colorful posters; being decorated with materials suitable for drama and role play; a bookshelf with books in English; a closet for materials; and eye-catching signs on the walls
Being able to arrange various classroom seating orders	8	T3, T4, T7, T16, T17, T18, T21, T22	Decreasing the number of chairs in the classroom; arranging the ideal order; having desks suitable for U-shaped order; having a large space to move around easily; having suitable desk orders for group, pair, and individual work; there might be a play corner
Presence of technological equipment and hardware	19	T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10, T11, T12, T13, T14, T15, T17, T18, T19, T20, T21, T22	Having a personal computer, a tablet computer, headphones, etc., for each student; having a sound system; having smart boards; having headphones and microphones; having the opportunity to talk with “native speakers” via technology; opportunities should be provided to improve pronunciation through record-and-listen activities; internet connection; and a sound system
Creating a setting where students can feel the need to learn the language	5	T4, T12, T14, T17, T19	Classroom should reflect the culture and lifestyle of the target language. Students should feel as if they are studying abroad. There should be an English learning setting everywhere in the school such as school corridors with English labels. Students should be willing. A classroom where students can enjoy learning. There should be an English corner in the school.
Having a separate foreign language classroom	5	T5, T14, T15, T18, T19	There is no separate language classroom. There should be a special classroom for language acquisition, a classroom that students can use whenever they want.
Having an ideal classroom population	3	T8, T14, T22	The class population should be less; students should have a space where they can move easily, and the class population should not be more than 20 students.

An analysis of the opinions about the characteristics that an ideal classroom should possess in language education showed that most teachers responded by saying the classroom should “have technological equipment and hardware” ($f = 19$). With the development of technology, various online programs have become more common. It can be understood that teachers mostly use or try to use technology to accelerate students’ pace of language learning and make their learning permanent through seeing, hearing, living, and speaking. Therefore, it can be said that technological equipment and hardware are the most essential support for teachers in language teaching. In addition, it can be understood that the second characteristic teachers wanted most was “areas where visual materials can be exhibited” ($f = 14$). Therefore, it can be said that both technological equipment and visual materials have a significant role in accelerating language acquisition and its endurance.

Some of the opinions of the teachers regarding the ideal classroom setting were as follows:

“The classroom should have a certain number of writings on walls, boards, and themes that can enhance latent and visual learning processes. When we think about the four basic skills in language teaching, we can say that students learn more slowly and quickly, depending on the setting. Therefore, I believe that classrooms should be visually rich and colorful, regardless of the age range. The suitability of the physical setting is necessary for ensuring active participation of students while learning a language.” (T1)

“Each student should have a personal or tablet computer and headphones. I would like the seating orders to be arranged in an ideal way by reducing the number of chairs in the classroom. There should be visually appealing materials on walls, doors, windows, and boards. The classroom layout should be arranged in accordance with the culture and lifestyle of the target language. When students come to the classroom, they should feel as if they study abroad.” (T4)

“The population of the classroom should be less! It should have the necessary technological equipment (headphones, microphone, etc.). There should be free space and an area for movement in the classroom where students can express themselves comfortably. The classroom should have the necessary written and technological equipment.” (T8)

“First, the classroom should be equipped with a computer, and students should perform listening and speaking activities on the computer. The students should be in a classroom setting where they can improve their pronunciation by recording their voices and listening to them. In addition, I believe that a classroom setting that has materials suitable for drama and role-playing activities should be designed, and the walls should be decorated with visual/linguistic concepts that are periodically changed by utilizing the latent learning method. Moreover, students should be able to video chat with other students, especially with students abroad, through state-supported programs on both computers and smart boards. I believe that in this way, language learning will be simpler and more enjoyable for students.” (T10)

“Students should have their computers, headphones, and internet connection in the classroom. The language classroom should have space to put up materials. There should be adequate boards to exhibit the materials prepared. Because reading is useful for students, there should be a bookshelf with books in English.” (T11)

“Foreign language learners should be genuinely willing. Therefore, this course should not be one of the compulsory courses, it should be an elective, and every school should have a language classroom. The language classroom should have technological equipment. The number of students should not exceed 20, and students should have their own tablet computers so that they can continue working on some of the activities outside the school.” (T14)

“The classroom setting should allow for an order in which students can work in groups, pairs, or individually. There should be equipment that addresses visual and schematic memory and ensures the permanence and continuity of learning. Most importantly, students should be taught in a classroom that feels different from the other classrooms where they have passive participation by listening quietly and taking notes. Teachers should be provided with tools that make the lesson interesting, informative, and enjoyable. Besides, because the frequency of exposure to language is a significant factor, this course should have sessions of longer hours.” (T17)

“I believe there should be a separate classroom for language education; in this way, the materials to be used will always be there together. Students’ attention can be drawn by notes on the walls that can arouse their interest. A sound system would be particularly good. There can be a play corner somewhere in the classroom where they can use certain skills and word groups, and the students can use this corner in their free time.” (T18)

“The classroom must have computer and internet access. There should be a closet for materials. The desks and chairs should be movable so that they can be arranged into a U-shape. There should be multiple boards on the walls to hang the visual materials (such as posters) in the classroom.” (T21)

A selection of the teachers’ opinions was presented above. Considering teachers’ opinions, it was noteworthy that the common ground was related to the technological infrastructure and visual materials. Besides, several expressions such as less classroom population, a play corner, an English bookshelf, a U-shaped seating arrangement, and different seating orders were distinct features.

4. Discussion

Aiming to reveal the opinions of foreign language teachers about the ideal language learning setting, this study found that there were several physical problems in the existing classrooms. It was obvious that the teachers at the schools in the study tried to access the visual and listening activities they needed via smart boards, but they faced several problems in some schools due to restricted internet access or dysfunctional smart boards. Therefore, it can be deduced that the smart boards could not be used efficiently at each school. Furthermore, a high population in the classroom and not being able to arrange the classroom according to the desired seating arrangement seem to prevent the teachers from creating a setting where they could ensure students’ active participation. As a matter of fact, Haznedar (2010) also mentioned similar problems and argued that despite all the efforts to improve the English curriculum in Turkey, the current situation is not very hopeful. She listed several factors such as crowded classrooms and lack of physical conditions as the underlying causes. Besides, the fact that language teachers did

not have enough space to exhibit visual materials came up as another significant problem. Therefore, the presence of a separate language classroom means private spaces to exhibit necessary visual materials. It is clear that having headphones in language classrooms would contribute significantly to active teaching through visual, listening, and speaking activities. There were several studies suggesting that the use of various online language learning programs might open up significant possibilities in language learning (Hampel, 2015; Dudeney et al., 2007; Walker and White, 2013; Yang, 2008). As it offers rich audio and visual content, technological equipment is used more commonly worldwide. Turkey was not indifferent to this advancement and exhibited its interest in e-learning and mobile learning by initiating the FATİH project (Kuşçu, 2019). Because technological infrastructure has positive effects that can enhance learning in foreign language education (Walker and White, 2013), educational institutions feel pressurized to make more investments in technological infrastructure. Therefore, school administrations should display the necessary consideration and sensitivity for the technologies used for pedagogical purposes.

In the study, the teachers indicated that the ideal language learning setting should have technological equipment, spaces where visual materials can be exhibited, a flexible classroom setting, less classroom population, an environment where a need for learning a language will be felt. From a general perspective, it is understood that foreign language classrooms should accommodate several abovementioned elements together. Justice (2004) argued that language learning settings should have a rich linguistic environment. Students should be exposed to high-quality and verbal input deliberately and continuously in a linguistically rich classroom environment. In this context, language settings should include the elements such as exposure, attentiveness, continuity, high-quality input, and responsiveness. The literature suggests that exhibiting visual materials in the classroom and a prominent level of exposure to a foreign language make essential contributions in terms of language acquisition (Jia et al., 2002; Birdsong, 2005). Therefore, foreign language teachers considered it essential to have various language-related visual materials and verbal input in the ideal language classroom setting. However, another study (Young, Young, and Beyer, 2017) showed that although the physical environment of the classroom affects learning, it was less effective than the teaching method, but it could have a stronger effect provided that several factors are altered together.

Foreign language teachers pointed out that the students' attitudes and stances toward language were a critical problem in language education and stated that a lower number of students could improve the learning settings. This is in line with the opinions of Buehl and Beck (2015) and Ellis (2008). The number of students in the classroom should be less so that teachers can communicate with each student sharing the same learning setting. Lai (2019) indicated that mutual interaction is necessary for language learning. Therefore, crowded classrooms might affect the process negatively by reducing the interaction in language learning. Lackney (2008) stated that the flexibility of the physical setting provides the teacher with a significant amount of comfort in the teaching process. At the same time, this gives the teacher undeniable confidence in discovering various opportunities in the physical setting (Frith, 2015). Therefore, foreign language teachers should be able to create settings where they can implement various approaches to language teaching comfortably and freely in the classroom. Even though the physical setting does not have a direct effect on learning outcomes, it might have indirect effects on learning, as it affects the attitudes toward and motivation in learning (Demir-Yıldız and Tatik, 2019). As foreign language teachers stated, a willingness to learn is a crucial factor in learning a language. A relevant study (Oroujlou and Vahedi, 2011) revealed that motivation and attitude significantly affected the effective participation of language learners. According to the study, a physical setting full of equipment and materials can attract students' interest and attention, and rearranging the seating order in such a setting makes it possible to implement various teaching techniques that arouse students' interest, thereby boosting their enthusiasm toward learning the language. It is clear that the equipment and technological hardware designed to support learning aid in making the learning setting more comfortable. However, it was understood that the technological problems, as mentioned in the present study, have adverse effects on the process of language teaching. In addition, less space where foreign language materials can be exhibited in the classroom setting and the lack of the opportunity to rearrange different seating orders in the classroom are among the other reasons that affect language teaching negatively.

To conclude, together with teachers, school administrators have the most significant role to play in developing physical opportunities and bringing them to a satisfactory level in foreign language education. Therefore, considering the findings of the study, the following recommendations can be drawn for the school administrators and foreign language teachers who are responsible for teaching and meeting the physical requirements:

- Considering that students' motivation in learning a language is a significant factor, it is essential to create a physical setting that can enhance their enthusiasm and interest in a foreign language and make them feel the need

to learn the language. Therefore, there should be separate foreign language classrooms in schools, and they should have the necessary equipment. Although the foreign language classrooms were initially designed as separate classrooms when the schools were constructed (Demir-Yıldız, 2016), it was stated that some of them were inactive and were used as regular classrooms out of necessity; however, the ones that were actively used lacked the necessary equipment. School administrators should be insistent on the active and regular use of foreign language classrooms and display leadership skills to obtain the necessary technological infrastructure and hardware by receiving the support of the parent–teacher associations. In this context, the use of several skills such as creating resources, developing positive relationships with those around, and utilizing persuasive skills is suggested.

- Enthusiasm in foreign language education and having positive attitudes toward foreign language learning are seen as vital factors in language acquisition. In this regard, students should not only feel the need to learn a language in the classroom and foreign language classes, but they should also feel the need to learn a foreign language at various places in the school premises. Therefore, at least one corridor in schools should be arranged as a language street and updated by foreign language teachers every month throughout the year using attractive visuals.
- Teachers should be able to design the classroom setting in a way that is appealing to students. In this context, they can create various spaces that can attract students' attention using various layers of visuals and configurations. They can use real-life materials such as pots and pans, various floor cushions, carpets, and mobile boards instead of artificial materials such as plastic. Besides, teachers' use of different and various seating orders (group seating, U-shaped, meeting order, etc.) that support cooperative learning approaches will help improve the speaking skill in language education.
- The crucial advancements in technology and active use of the Internet in language education should be considered, and the use of various language learning programs both in and out of school should be encouraged. In this context, it might be recommended that teachers seek efficient programs to enhance students' intensity of exposure to language using a remote tracking system to facilitate the language acquisition processes.

4.1. Limitation and Future Studies

This study has several limitations as it not covers all level of schools. The participants are limited to high schools and it is required to include the pre-primary, primary, middle schools and even universities to determine the ideal setting for language teaching and further the students' views for language learning.

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Endnotes

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