Professional paper

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN GAINING LANGUAGE SKILLS IN TURKISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND SOLUTION SUGGESTIONS

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Abstract

Language acquisition is acquired after certain processes. Language acquisition takes place in similar stages in each language. A baby who comes into the world continues his mother tongue learning by speaking, which starts with listening. Listening and speaking skills are skills acquired in family and close circles. For this reason, a child learns whatever language is spoken in the family environment in which he or she grew up. The mother tongue, which is acquired unplanned and irregularly until school age, takes a planned, regular, and regular form during the school period. For this reason, the importance of the school and the mother tongue teacher is great in mother tongue education. The child, who learns to read and write at school, develops the vocabulary and the world of thought by learning the features and rules of his language. However, education and training at school for a certain period is not enough for effective mother tongue acquisition. The knowledge and skills taught in school should be supported and developed through activities outside the school and in the family environment. Otherwise, it becomes difficult to complete the development of language and, accordingly, thought. Therefore, the school, family, and education system should be in harmony and cooperation. This study aims to reveal the main problems faced by Turkish (mother tongue) teachers who attend primary school 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th-grade Turkish classes in the acquisition of four basic language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), and to present the causes and solution suggestions of these problems. For this purpose, teachers' opinions were taken, a semi-structured interview form was presented to the students and the problems encountered in the acquisition of four language skills were tried to be determined. At the root of the difficulties experienced in listening skills, it was seen that the lack of other basic language skills also adversely affected the listening ability. It was concluded that the vocabulary of the students was not sufficiently developed at the point of speaking skills and this situation brought about the problem of not being able to express himself. Lack of interest in reading skills, lack of role models difficulties in recognizing words, and the excess of foreign words in the texts came to the fore as problems. At the beginning of the problems experienced in writing skills, it was seen that the writing was not written in a plan, but in the form of writing the first thing that came to mind randomly. Problems such as not paying attention to spelling and punctuation in the article, difficulty in transferring students' feelings and thoughts to paper, and the use of local language came to the fore.

Keywords: Mother tongue, listening, speaking, reading, writing.

Introduction

Mother tongue teaching is a process that starts with informal learning in the preschool period and progresses in a planned and systematic way with formal learning in school age. Language development in the child begins through hearing as he begins to hear the language spoken in the family environment into which he is born. Speaking skills, which develop in parallel with hearing, are the basic language skills acquired in the preschool period. Of these skills, listening is based on comprehension and speaking is language skills based on telling. Language skills acquired through random acculturation in preschool enter a systematic process through intentional acculturation during the school period.

The language skills acquired during the school period are reading and writing skills, respectively. Of these skills, reading, and comprehension-based writing are narrative-based language skills. Thus, the process of learning and reinforcing the four basic language skills begins. With advancing grade and age levels, the skills to use the mother tongue also vary. At first, listening and speaking are widely used skills, then with the acquisition of the habit of reading, written expression begins to be used with the enrichment of vocabulary. Among these basic language skills, the last and most hard-earned language skill is the ability to write. Writing is a high-level language skill that is acquired as you write.

Turkish language teaching in the curriculum is structured on four basic skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing. To gain these skills, it is aimed to teach the mother tongue effectively with the help of achievements and activities prepared according to grade levels. In the process of education and teaching Turkish, the acquisition and development of 4 basic language skills at the desired level is one of the pioneering objectives (Mert, 2004). These basic skills are interrelated, and a deficiency in any of them reflects negatively on other skills. For this reason, starting from the first year of primary education, it is imperative to develop basic language skills in a balanced and continuous manner at all education levels (Güzel and Karatay, 2013).

Listening

The first language skill that an individual gains in his life and uses the most for the rest of his life is listening. The listening skill, which forms the basis of comprehension, is the first basic language skill area used by the individual. Although a healthy person uses his eyes the most of his sensory organs after coming into the world, in a sense, since he notices his surroundings with his ears in the mother's womb, in a sense, man opens his ears to the world, not his eyes. (Emiroğlu, 2013).

Since it is the most used skill in daily life, listening training is the first of the language skills that should be given importance. The misconception that listening skills are self-generated has delayed the reflection of this basic language skill in inadequate basic education programs. However, like other basic language skills, listening skills are the basic language skills that should be taught. According to Özbay (2009:48), listening should be a conscious process that requires effort, and the sounds that sound should be understood.

Some negative experiences in listening skills gained in uneducated ways in preschool age prevent them from acquiring effective listening habits during the school period. Of the four basic language skills, perhaps the greatest misfortune of listening and speaking is that these skills are acquired by children at a certain level before they start school (Anderson, 1960; quoted in the article Doğan 2013).

Speaking

Speaking skills are the second language skills acquired after listening (hearing) skills. For speech to take place, there must first be a hearing. Children who are not born with hearing ability cannot learn to speak. Hearing is at the core of speech skills. This situation brings listening skills to the fore and results in the fact that the symbols and expressions required for the speech are first heard, coded in the brain, and then expressed with language.

So it is possible to say that the way to speak well is to be a good listener, to hear and pronounce sounds correctly. In the pre-school period, children learn to speak by imitating the sounds they hear from their families and close circles. At this time, they start to speak in the same way as the dialect feature used in the environment where they are raised. Among the factors affecting speech are physiological and psychological variables. Children with a physiological disorder experience muffling and articulation problems in making sounds correctly in speech. Some children are also afraid to speak in public because they are shy and shy.

Children who learn languages with these parameters and start school have speech difficulties while learning the correct use of their mother tongue. If students acquire the habit of speaking with prepared and unprepared

speaking activities to be carried out in the classroom and outside the school, it is necessary to carry out studies such as breath training, voice training, and diction to eliminate voice and pronunciation errors. The ability to speak, which is one of the four basic language skills, constitutes the field of telling together with writing. Speech is a communication event that takes place with language (Güzel and Karatay, 2013).

Reading

Reading is a cognitive action based on understanding the signs and symbols (letters) that make up writing and structuring in the mind. A language based on comprehension brings with it literacy, which is skillful. In other words, just as listening and hearing are related to speech; reading and writing are two related language skills. Teaching reading and writing is carried out together. Children who start school should write what they read and should be able to read what they write.

Reading, which is one of the basic language skills, is also a prerequisite for comprehension. Many definitions have been made about reading ability, but no definition has been determined. In the formation of this situation, the ability to read consists of many processes both mentally and physically. According to Akyol (1997), reading is "Written and unwritten sources are the process of establishing meaning as a result of the interaction of the reader and the environment." This shows the fact that many factors are effective in reading.

When we look at the developed countries, it is seen that they have a population with a generally developed reading culture. Reading has assumed a fundamental role in the upbringing of cultured generations and is an indicator of modernity. Reading and writing has been an important issue in every age and culture. One of the indicators of the level of development of societies today, which is especially characterized by the information and communication age, is literacy rates and values such as the number of books, newspapers, and magazines per capita (Koç, 2012).

Like other basic language skills, reading skills are the basic language skills included in the curriculum. Although there are at least 5-6 reading texts in each theme in the textbooks, it is observed that students encounter great problems in reading and reading comprehension when looking at primary and secondary education.

Writing

Writing is the last and most difficult to develop skill among the basic language skills. Writing skills, which are skills based on telling, are one of the means of expressing feelings and thoughts. Learning to write requires me to use the signs that make up the writing correctly and appropriately, as well as to know the grammatical features of the one used. For this reason, explaining a thought through writing is a process that takes a long time and requires a lot of practice. Writing is the most recently learned language skill that is more complex than other basic language skills. In this respect, writing skills are language skills such as speaking and listening skills, which do not have the opportunity to learn in the preschool period but are learned and laid at school age. Every person born in a healthy language environment naturally acquires the ability to listen and speak, while reading and writing skills are acquired through education. The skill of writing is necessarily acquired with the help of another, either naturally or through formal education. (Güzel and Karatay, 2013).

Writing skills start from the first grade of primary school and reach maturity at the high school and university level (Aydın: 2014: 165). The ability to write requires a good knowledge of the semantic and grammatical features of the language that develops as you write, supported by reading and using and knowing the rules of writing and punctuation. For this reason, it is necessary to have students do a lot of written expression work in schools.

Aim

This study aims to determine the deficiencies of secondary school students, who are in the second level of secondary primary education, in the fields of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which are the basic language skills.

Methods

The method of the study is a semi-structured interview technique from qualitative data collection tools. In this technique, which is more flexible than the structured interview technique, the researcher prepares a form of questions to ask in advance. On the other hand, the researcher may ask different questions depending on the status of the interview. (Kuzu 2013).

To obtain data for the study, a semi-structured test was applied to teachers who teach their mother tongue (Turkish) in 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. In this context, open-ended questions were asked about the problems experienced by the students in basic language skills, and the obtained data were sized and evaluated in the findings and interpretation section.

Findings and interpretation

Listening

In this section, the opinions of teachers about four basic language skills are listed. A 5-question interview form on listening skills was presented to 5 Turkish teachers who attended the second level of primary education and the following answers were obtained:

Question 1: What can you say about your students' listening skills?

Answers:

- 1- Students lack listening skills.
- 2- Students have difficulty understanding what they are listening to.
- 3- They do not understand the course content, which causes the lessons to be inefficient.
- 4- Classroom discipline is disrupted because they do not understand the course content.
- 5- They are not able to pronounce words correctly during speech, as they cannot distinguish the sounds that makeup words.

Question 2: What do you think is the reason for the problems that students experience in the field of listening?

Answers:

- 1- There are family causes of the problem of focusing on listening. The first reason is that listening and speaking in the family environment are not given importance during the language acquisition stages.
- 2- There are environmental causes. They don't have the habit of listening to each other in a friendly environment.
- 3- Students don't know or can't practice listening techniques and strategies.

- 4- Lack of attention, they can't focus on a topic for a long time.
- 5- They don't participate much in extracurricular listening activities. Since there is no interest in activities such as concerts, conferences, theater, and cinema outside the school, the habit of listening does not occur.
- 6- Some reasons stem from the curriculum. The texts selected for Listen events are not interesting.
- 7- The fact that the number of words in the listening texts that the students do not know the meaning of is high affects listening negatively.

Question 3: What are the physical factors that negatively affect listening?

- 1- Lack of a suitable classroom environment for listening lessons.
- 2- The lack of usefulness of the technological tools used at the time of listening adversely affects the acquisition of an effective listening skill.
- 3- In online listening activities, the interruption of the internet network or the lack of an internet network in some schools reduces the efficiency of listening activities.

Question 4: Do you think that variables such as gender, class, age, socioeconomic level, etc. affect students' listening skills?

Answers:

- 1- Listening may vary depending on the type of text.
- 2- In general, girls try to listen more carefully.
- 3- Children of families with high education levels and income levels have more listening habits.
- 4- Students who have acquired the habit of reading can listen more effectively and for a longer time.

Question 5: Do students take notes while listening?

Answers:

- 1- Students who have a high motivation to read and learn prefer to take notes.
- 2- Students with shorter attention spans also take notes to answer questions after listening, so as not to forget.
- 3- They take notes in order not to forget the event heroes, and place names and numbers and figures in the texts.

Speaking

Teachers made the following determinations based on their observations about the problems experienced by the students related to the speech area.

- 1- Since speech is a language skill that develops due to listening, students make speech disorders and pronunciation errors depending on local pronunciations.
- 2- One of the factors that will improve the ability to speak is the richness of words to be obtained through reading. Since the reading habit of the students is not developed, their vocabulary is insufficient and therefore they cannot express their feelings and thoughts properly.
- 3- They are afraid to speak in public because they do not have confidence in themselves.

- 4- Teachers complain that some students do not have the right to speak and do not attend the lesson adequately even though they know the subject.
- 5- When they ask for prepared or unprepared conversations on any topic, they get excited.
- 6- During the conversation, they often pause and make sounds such as "eeee, iiiii, şeyyy". The reason for this is that thinking takes place during speech, but they have difficulty finding the right words to express this thought and converting them into sentences.
- 7- Some students also avoid speaking out of the way by showing shyness or timidity.
- 8- Students are hesitant to speak in front of the public because they are in the full adolescent cycle at the middle school level due to the thickening and bifurcation of their voices.

Reading

Reading skills are a skill acquired by the teacher in the first grade of primary school. However, some students can come to school by learning to read in the family before they come to school. The habit of reading and reading speed develop as you read. For this reason, the attitude of the family and the close environment outside the school is also effective in the development of this skill. As a result of observing the students during the course and presenting a 10-question questionnaire prepared for the 6th grade to the students by selecting one class from the 6th and 7th grades, the following were determined as the main problems encountered in reading ability:

- 1- Students misread words and have difficulty recognizing words. The reason for this situation is that the vocabulary is not developed enough and the students do not understand at least 10-15 words in each text. Especially during reading hours, the student's ranking in lists of words that he does not know the meaning of almost every page he reads can be given as an example of this.
- 2- Not every school has a library and problems in accessing books.
- 3- Looking at the development of reading skills only as a problem of Turkish lessons.
- 4- Not doing enough activities in schools to encourage reading and make them love to read.
- 5- Academic achievement anxiety prevents reading skills from being included.
- 6- The habit of reading has not been acquired.

Apart from these, teachers have expressed the opinion that students prefer to spend time with electronic equipment rather than reading books.

Apart from these determinations, the students; "Do you read books at home? Does anyone else in your home read books other than you? Do you have a library at home? What kind of books do you read the most? Questions were asked and the answers given by the students were listed as follows:

- > To the question, "Do you like reading books?", almost all students said that they liked to read.
- > To the question "Is there anyone else at home who reads books other than you?", half of the students answered that there was no one in their immediate vicinity to be a role model for them.
- > To the question "Do you have a library in your house?", the majority of the students answered that they did not have a library in their homes, but they had books to read.
- There was no clear answer to the question "What kind of books do you read?" and it was found that the majority of students did not have enough information on this subject.

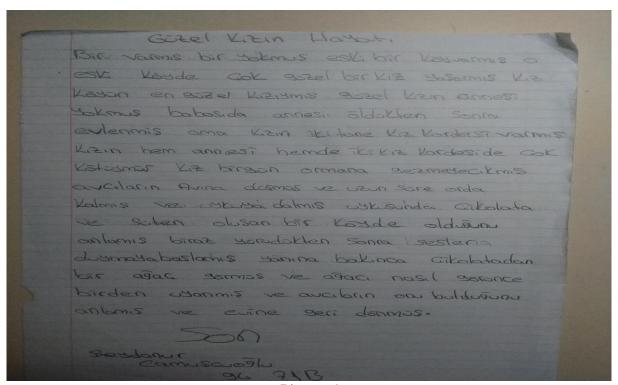
Writing

Writing is a high-level language skill acquired with reading. It is the last and hardest acquired skill among the four basic language skills. From the moment the child comes into the world, he begins to hear (listen). Today, it is known that babies can distinguish and listen to some sounds even from the mother's womb. With language development, children begin to make sound words from the 6th month and speak after 12 months of age. These two basic language skills acquired in preschool continue throughout life by being supported by reading and writing at school age. Among these skills, the most recently consulted language skill is writing. Because writing is an action that requires time and effort.

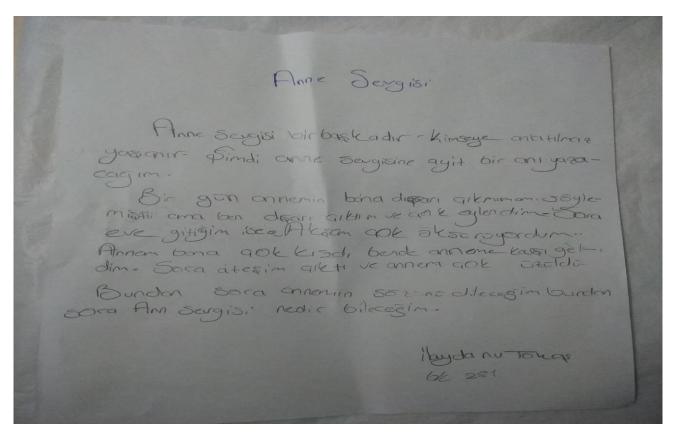
When primary school students are asked to express their feelings and thoughts in writing, teachers list the difficulties encountered as follows:

- ✓ Students do not know enough about writing essays.
- ✓ Lack of development of creative thinking skills in students.
- ✓ Due to the lack of complete reading habits, the words used in writing are taken from the spoken mouths outside the standard language.
- ✓ Children write as they speak.
- ✓ Especially the fact that spelling mistakes are quite frequent.
- ✓ The problem with handwriting is that his writing is illegible.
- ✓ The frequency of expression disorders in sentences because they do not know the syntax and semantic characteristics of their mother tongue.
- ✓ Failure to use or misuse punctuation.

In the sample texts below, the problems that students have in writing are shown.



Picture 1



Picture 2

The most important deficiency in the writing is the lack of attention to spelling and spelling rules. In addition, the successive giving of events revealed a semantic inconsistency. In particular, many deficiencies in the relativity elements of sentences, inadequate or incorrect use of references and pronouns, and unnecessary repetition of conjunctions are the main deficiencies.

The fact that students do not include enough descriptive explanations in their writings shows the difficulties they experience in putting their feelings and thoughts on paper. The fact that they move from one topic to another without completing it, jumping from topic to topic, shows this situation. We see that students form disjointed sentences with expressions that come to their minds with expressions that are far from context and integrity without forming a thought plan in their minds.

Conclusion and recommendations

Although there are many reasons for the difficulties experienced in the teaching of the four basic language skills, the view that the listening skill, which is the basis of other basic language skills, occurs spontaneously prevents the development of this skill. Variables such as the socioeconomic status of the students, the physical equipment deficiencies of the classes, the technological impossibilities, and the qualifications of the listening texts included in the Turkish textbooks adversely affect the development of listening skills.

At the basis of the difficulties experienced in speech education, the inadequacy of vocabulary comes to the forefront. In addition, the use of words belonging to regional mouth features has been shown to adversely affect speech ability. In particular, the problems experienced by students in emphasis intonation and articulation bring along the problems of shyness, timidity, and inability to express themselves sufficiently.

In the texts selected as the main problem experienced by gaining reading skills, problems such as the abundance of foreign words, literary quality, the intrigues of the texts, and the inability of the texts to be suitable for the level of children are encountered. Factors such as the scarcity of people who can be role models for students in reading and the lack of healthy functioning of school libraries are obstacles for Turkish teachers in the field of reading skills.

Writing skills are one of the basic language skills that should be taught at the primary school level. It becomes difficult for students who have not gained enough writing skills in the first level of primary education to gain this skill at the secondary school level. The inadequacy of students' vocabulary makes it difficult for them to transfer their feelings and thoughts to paper. Failure to select appropriate sentences and words in transitions between paragraphs adversely affects writing skills. The main reason for this situation is that students do not practice reading and writing enough.

Language skills are skills that support and develop each other. It would be wrong to separate one from the other. In this sense, when teaching basic skills, an appropriate order should be observed, first of all, listening skills, which are considered the basis of other language skills, and then speaking, reading, and writing. As a result of the research, we can list our suggestions for the development of basic language skills as follows.

- First of all, instead of giving theoretical information to the student in Turkish teaching, the course should be taught by taking the student to the center of the activities.
- ➤ Classroom activities should be supported by individual activities outside the school. For this reason, the families of the students should also be included in the educational process.
- ➤ When teaching grammar rules and punctuation marks related to the language, draft studies should be carried out by these rules.
- > Students' writing work should be checked and correct spelling and expression errors should be corrected and correct uses should be shown by giving feedback.
- > Since language skills are related to each other, they should be taught in a way that complements each other without neglecting any of the skills.
- > Curriculum achievements should be made flexible, and achievements should be created by considering local or regional needs, interests, and needs of students.
- > Since all four basic language skills affect each other, all of these basic skills should be given equal importance.
- ➤ In schools, the development of students' basic language skills should be monitored at certain periods, and different strategies and studies should be carried out by students who need special education or support.
- The number and quality of school and classroom libraries should be increased. Reading, writing, and speaking activities should be organized in schools to support students' abilities in these areas.
- > Students' families should be interviewed and encouraged to set up bookshelves of books for students to read at home.
- ➤ Parents should be informed to spend a certain amount of time reading with children every evening and to be a model for students in this regard.

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