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# Opinions of Turkish language teacher candidates on the statuses of teachers' usage of basic language skills and on the lessons in the curriculum

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research is to determine the opinions of the students of the Department of Turkish Language Teaching on the statuses of teachers' usage of basic language skills and on the lessons in the curriculum.

In this research opinions of 235 students, attending to the Department of Education of Turkish Language during 2009-2010 were taken and a survey form, consisting of four questions was used as a data collection instrument. The gathered data were analyzed by using the technique of descriptive analysis and the findings were presented numerically.

In light of the findings; we see that teacher candidates find teachers very sufficient in listening skill, insufficient in writing skill, that teachers use speaking skill most in the lessons; tell that the lessons in bachelor's degree program do not support basic language skills, and they emphasized that critical reading, creative writing, effective speaking lessons should be included in the program and their hours should be increased.

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## 1. Introduction

Turkish Language teaching has main purposes such as giving language skills that will provide a correct, open and efficient communication, improving and perfecting thinking skills, contributing to the processes of socializing (Sever, 2004, s. 5). In mother language education, where skills and habits are aimed to be given instead of knowledge, it is expected to give basic language skills and habits. Basic language skills are constructed on four skills; speaking, writing, reading and listening.

Since birth, an individual begins to listen, and then use, in other words speak the language of the society he/she joined in. The individual, when it is time to receive formal education, puts his/her efforts on reading and writing activities, showing that he/she begins to use this language in a more systematic way (Yangın, 2003). As the process progresses, the proficiency of the individual in the language he speaks increases and the basic language skills;

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listening, speaking, reading and writing skills continue to improve in this line. Protection, improvement and utilization of the mother tongue can only be possible by knowing all its aspects and working it with all its subtleties (Demirci and Yapıcı, 2007)

Speaking, which is the first element of the expression skills that cover speaking and writing skills; is the verbal expression a person's emotions and thoughts (Kavcar et al, 1997, p. 57). As the most important communication toll between individuals, we can say that speaking is of the most important factors for success or failure in school, business and social life (Sever, 2004, s. 22). Being the most used skill after listening; speaking is among the first language skills that children acquire.

The second element of expression skills, writing, is a skill acquired through writing. Writing is expressing emotions, thoughts and events through writing. Writing process should be perceived as a critical thought process, rather than mechanical (Demirel, 2002, p. 102). There is a clear relationship between writing and thinking. Teaching to write, in a way, means to teach to think. However, thinking is not writing. The conversion of thinking to writing starts with lining up the words that will meet the thoughts, and with their arrangement in a manner to communicate them (Özdemir, 1991, p. 27). The development of written language generally occurs after children start school (Power and Hubbard, 1996, p. 82).

Comprehension skills cover listening and reading skills. Listening is the first element of comprehension skills. It is an activity of the understanding the message of the speaking person completely and of the capability of making a reaction to the stimulator (Demirel, 2002, s. 70). At the first rank of mother tongue and comprehension activity, listening is the most basic way of communication and learning. Within the communication process, what is being transmitted by the "source" must be shared by the "receiver" in order to perform learning (Sever, 2004, s. 10). When we consider that, except for sleeping, there is communication 75% of the time and 45% of this is listening, the importance of listening in our lives is revealed much more clearly (Nas, 2001, s. 36).

The second ring of the comprehension skills, *reading*; is an activity of taking out meanings from written symbols as a result of the cooperation of behaviors and psychomotor skills, (Demirel, 2002, s. 77), and a process in which readers take out "meanings" from or make comments on written texts (Tompkins, 1997, s. 250). It is based on the perception of words by sense organs and loading meanings to them, and on their apprehension and interpretation (Sever, 2004, s. 12). Reading is an action that is learned, and that must be continued for a lifetime beginning from our first years. People gather knowledge in different ways. Knowledge acquired through seeing, living, listening and reading have an important role in the process of education.

Faults and insufficiencies found in every age group in using the mother tongue, is an indication of serious problems in the teaching of mother tongue (Kavcar, 1998, s.143).

The skill of using the mother language consciously must be acquired during primary school. Including Turkish Language teachers, all teachers have important roles for the acquisition of these skills. Based on the idea that "it is only possible to transfer an existing awareness and knowledge", it is a subject that must be carefully investigated whether teachers gain this awareness and knowledge background during their university years. Evaluation of teacher candidates on the existence of this awareness and knowledge is very closely related to the level of responsibility and awareness of the new generation towards Turkish Language.

In this regard, the institutions that bring up teachers have great duties. First of all, the quality of Turkish Language education, given in the institutions that bring up teachers, must be increased. In this context, bachelor's degree programs of education faculties have to be reviewed (Kolaç, 2008).

### *1.1. Purpose of the Research*

The main purpose of this research is to determine the opinions of the students of the Department of Turkish Language Teaching on the statuses of teachers' usage of basic language skills and on the lessons in the curriculum.

In this view, the answers to the following questions were sought:

How do the students evaluate the statuses of using four basic language skills of the teachers attending their lessons?

How do the students evaluate the frequency of using four basic language skills of the teachers attending their lessons?

According to teacher candidates, what should be the frequency of using four basic language skills of the teachers attending their lessons?

Do teacher candidates see the basic language skills in the curriculum improving and supportive?

Which lessons do teacher candidates want to be in the curriculum, for supporting basic language skills?

### 1.2. Limitations

The research is limited to the answers given by 235 students studying at the Faculty of Education's Turkish Language Education Department during 2009-2010 spring semester, to the five question survey.

## 2. METHOD

In this research, which aims to determine the opinions of the students of the Department of Turkish Language Teaching on the statuses of teachers' usage of basic language skills and on the lessons in the curriculum, scanning model is used. The opinions of the students are gathered by a survey, consisting of five questions, and the assessments were made, based on these data.

### 2.1. Participants

The participants of the research are the students studying at the Faculty of Education's Turkish Language Education Department during 2009-2010 spring semester. Personal information of the students are gathered and presented in Table 1 and 2, under the sections of gender and department.

**Table 1. Distribution According to Gender**

Sex	f	%
Female	110	46,80
Male	125	53,20
Total	235	100,00

As seen in Table 1, when we look at the distribution of the students, who participated in the research, according to gender; it is seen that 110 of the participants (46.80%) are girls, and 125 of them (53.20%) are boys.

**Table 2. Distribution According to Grade**

Levels	f	%
1 <sup>st</sup> grade	64	27,20
2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	51	21,70
3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	68	28,90
4 <sup>th</sup> grade	52	22,10
Total	235	100,00

As seen in Table 2, when we look at the distribution of the students, who participated in the research, according to grade levels; it is seen that 64 of the participants (27.20%) are in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, 51 of the participants (21.70%) are in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 68 of the participants (28,90%) are in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and 52 of them (22.10%) are in 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

### 2.2. Gathering Data

In the research, a survey, developed by Kolaç, consisting of five questions was used in order to gather data. The survey form, which was developed as an information gathering tool, is formed of two sections. In the first section, there are two questions related to the personal information of the students. In the first section, following five questions were included in order to define the ideas, suggestions and expectations of the students on the subject of “Basic Language Skills”:

How do you evaluate the statuses of using four basic language skills of the teachers attending your lessons?

How do you evaluate the frequency of using four basic language skills of the teachers attending your lessons?

What do you think should be the frequency of using four basic language skills of the teachers attending your lessons?

Do you consider the basic language skills in the curriculum improving and supportive?

Which lessons would you like to have in the curriculum, for supporting basic language skills?

Expert views were taken in order to determine the validity of the survey forms and they were rearranged and improved in accordance with the received criticisms. The improved survey was subjected to a trial by being applied to 80 students before being implemented. The survey, which was improved and which took its final form according to expert views and preliminary trial results, has been readied for application.

In order to render the research reliable, articles with “Unanimous Opinions” and “Split Opinions” set by having answers to open ended question examined by the researcher and two experts from the area. For the reliability of the research Miles and Huberman’s (1994) formula was used and as a result of the calculation  $P = 97$  value was found and the research was accepted as reliable. All of the 235 surveys (%100) are included in the assessment.

### 2.3. Analysis of the Data

Frequencies and percentages were used for analyzing the data to reveal the statuses of students, who are studying in the Faculty of Education’s Turkish Language Education Department, on “Basic Language Skills” and to state their opinions, and descriptive analysis technique was used from qualitative research methods.

## 3. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The findings of the research are presented as tables in this section and direct quotations were taken from students’ opinions.

### 3.1. How do you evaluate the statuses of using four basic language skills of the teachers attending your lessons?

Findings of the answers to this question are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Statuses of Using Four Basic Language Skills of the Teachers**

	Listening		Speaking		Reading		Writing	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Very sufficient	95	40,4	59	25,1	50	21,3	31	13,2
Sufficient	66	28,1	66	28,1	67	28,5	35	14,9
Mildly sufficient	41	17,4	57	24,3	80	34,0	57	24,3
Insufficient	33	14,0	53	22,6	38	16,2	112	47,7
Total	235	100,0	235	100,0	235	100,0	235	100,0

As seen in Table 3; 40.40% of the teacher candidates find their teachers *very sufficient* in *listening skill*, 28.10% find them *sufficient* in *speaking skill*, 34.00% find them *mildly sufficient* in *reading skill*, and 47.70% find them *insufficient* in *writing skill*.

Looking at the findings, we can see that teacher candidates have positive views on their teachers’ listening and speaking skills and have negative views on their reading and writing skills; and that almost half of the teacher candidates’ writing skills were evaluated as insufficient.

### 3.2. How do you evaluate the frequency of using four basic language skills of the teachers attending your lessons?

Findings of the answers to this question are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4. . Teachers' Frequency of Using Four Basic Language Skills in Their Lessons**

	Listening		Speaking		Reading		Writing	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Very often	33	14,0	166	70,6	20	8,5	15	6,4
Frequently	56	23,8	34	14,5	112	47,7	34	14,5
Sometimes	86	36,6	12	5,1	73	31,1	64	27,2
Almost never	60	25,5	22	9,4	30	12,8	122	51,9
Total	235	100,0	235	100,0	235	100,0	235	100,0

As seen in Table 4; according to teacher candidates, the teachers attending their lessons use speaking skill the most (70.60%). Reading skill is at medium frequency (47.70%), and listening skill is used sometime (%36.60). Writing skill is evaluated as a skill which is almost never used (%51.90).

3.3. *What do you think should be the frequency of using four basic language skills of the teachers attending your lessons?*

Findings of the answers to this question are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5. Ideal Usage Frequency According to Teacher Candidates**

	Listening		Speaking		Reading		Writing	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Very often	54	23,0	148	63,0	18	7,7	14	6,0
Frequently	97	41,3	52	22,1	46	19,6	38	16,2
Sometimes	40	17,0	20	8,5	106	45,1	70	29,8
Almost never	44	18,7	15	6,4	65	27,7	113	48,1
Total	235	100,0	235	100,0	235	100,0	235	100,0

As seen in Table 5; according to teacher candidates, speaking should take first (63.00%), reading should take second (45.10%), listening should take third (41.30%) and writing skill should take the last place (%48.10) in basic language skill usage of teachers. It is noteworthy that writing skill is defined as unimportant here, with the last ranking.

A difference is not found between the rankings of the observed frequencies and the frequencies that the teacher candidates desire (Table4 - Table 5). However, the closeness of listening and reading skills in the desired frequency ratings (Table 5) may be interpreted as an indication of teacher candidates' not being very sure about the rankings of these 2 skills.

3.4. *Do you consider the basic language skills in the curriculum improving and supportive?*

Findings of the answers to this question are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6. Opinions of Teacher Candidates on the Lessons in the Curriculum**

	f	%
Yes	92	39,15
No	107	45,54
Partially	36	15,31
Total	235	100,00

As seen in Table 6; 39.15% of the teacher candidates find the lessons in the curriculum improving and supportive of basic language skills, 45.54% disagree, and 15.31% partially find them to be so. In view of the findings, almost

half of the teacher candidates do not find the lessons in the curriculum improving and supportive of basic language skills.

### 3.5. Which lessons would you like to have in the curriculum, for supporting basic language skills?

Findings of the answers to this question are shown in Table 7.

**Table 7. Suggested Lessons**

Lessons	f
Lessons that support writing skill	98
Effective speaking	95
Diction lesson	80
Lessons that would improve interpretation ability	76
Critical reading	45
Creative writing	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>426</b>

As seen in Table 7; among the lesson suggestions of teacher candidates for supporting basic language skills “Lessons that support writing skill” has the first (98), “Effective speaking” has the second (95), “diction lesson” has the third (80), “Lessons that would improve interpretation ability” has the fourth (76), “Critical reading” has the fifth (45), and “Creative writing” has the last (32) place.

Looking at the findings, we see that the suggestions have a balanced distribution between speaking, writing and reading skills.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

### 4.1. Conclusions

In this section, conclusions and suggestions reached on the basis of the findings of the research are presented.

In this research, where it is aimed to determine the opinions of the students of the Department of Turkish Language Teaching in the Faculty of Education, on the statuses of teachers’ usage of basic language skills and on the lessons in the curriculum, the conclusions reached based on the findings can be summarized as below:

40.40% of the teacher candidates find their teachers *very sufficient* in *listening skill*, 28.10% find them *sufficient* in *speaking skill*, 34.00% find them *mildly sufficient* in *reading skill*, and 47.70% find them *insufficient* in *writing skill*.

According to teacher candidates, the teachers attending their lessons use speaking skill the most (70.60%). Reading skill is at medium frequency (47.70%), and listening skill is used sometime (%36.60). Writing skill is evaluated as a skill which is almost never used (%51.90).

According to the evaluation of teacher candidates on the lessons in the curriculum for improving and supporting basic language skills; 39.15% of the teacher candidates find the lessons in the curriculum improving and supportive of basic language skills, 45.54% disagree, and 15.31% partially find them to be so. In view of the findings, almost half of the teacher candidates do not find the lessons in the curriculum improving and supportive of basic language skills.

Looking at the answers on the lessons that teacher candidates would you like to have in the curriculum; among the lesson suggestions of teacher candidates for supporting basic language skills “Lessons that support writing skill” has the first (98), “Effective speaking” has the second (95), “diction lesson” has the third (80), “Lessons that would improve interpretation ability” has the fourth (76), “Critical reading” has the fifth (45), and “Creative writing” has the last (32) place.

### 4.2. Suggestions

These suggestions can be brought in line with the conclusions of the research as a result of assessing the findings:

For Turkish Language teacher candidates, it is a necessity to develop and support basic language skills as a whole. This issue must be paid special attention within the lessons in the curriculum.

Supporting writing skill, which is among the expression skills, in the lessons must be a priority, and the importance of this skill must be comprehended.

Lessons that would support the teacher candidates skills, such as comprehending, interpreting and criticizing what they read; it must be ensured that teacher candidates acquire, improve and support these skills; critical reading lesson must absolutely be included in the curriculum.

Improvement and support of fine, eloquent and effective speaking skills is of particular importance for Turkish Language teacher candidates. Based on this importance, basic and optional lessons must be included in the curriculum for improving and supporting these skills.

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