

English Language Teachers' Cognition in Handling Learners' Speaking Problems*

Sevgi GOKCE**
Ilknur KECIK***

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Abstract: This research was conducted at the Foreign Languages Department of Eskisehir Osmangazi University to explore English language teachers' cognition and actions in handling learners' speaking problems considering the background factors of schooling, professional coursework, context, and classroom practice. In line with this aim, a multiple case study was carried out. Data collection was implemented through open-ended questionnaires, observations, reflection reports, and interviews. Once overall perceptions of 28 teachers were gathered, in-depth data obtained from 5 teachers in the same group provided further insight. According to the questionnaire's findings, most teachers perceived speaking as an important skill and made suggestions on improving this skill. In-depth data revealed that one of the teachers, contrary to her suggestions, applied a teacher-centred approach indicating contextual constraints as a reason. In contrast, another one preferred a learner-centred approach and did not complain about the contextual factors.

Keywords: Teaching speaking, teacher cognition, teachers' perceptions, teachers' actions, background factors

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** Correspondence: Eskisehir Osmangazi University, Turkey, sevgigokce@ogu.edu.tr

*** Anadolu University, Turkey, ikecik@gmail.com

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Introduction

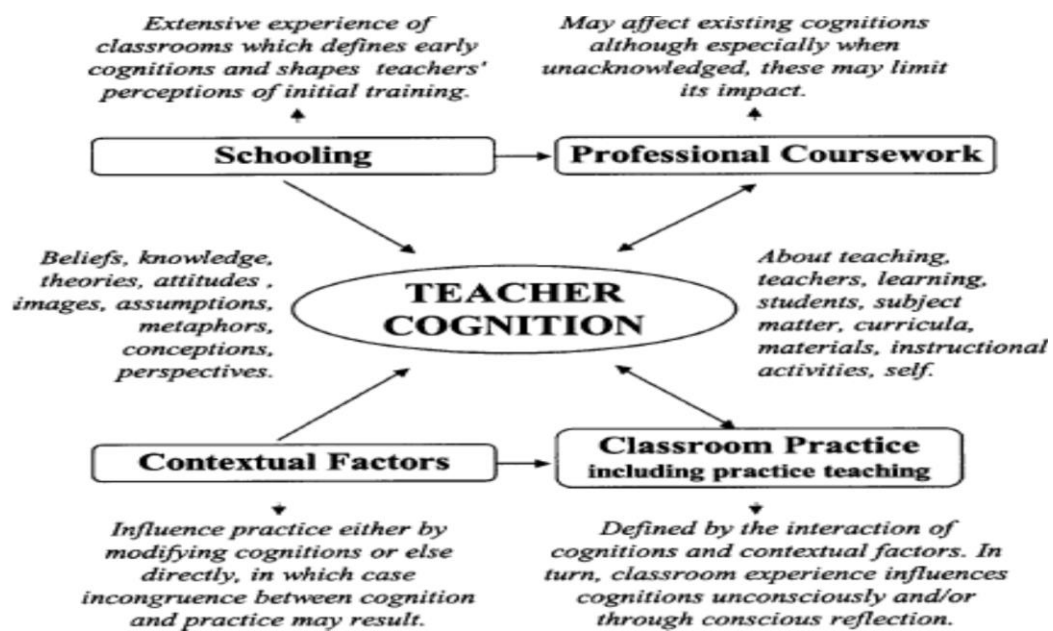
Due to the current status of English as a lingua franca, using English as the medium of instruction has gained momentum at most universities in Turkey. Accordingly, a need for pre-departmental compulsory language education has arisen. Although Turkish students receive foreign language education from early ages and have approximately 1000 lesson hours until they graduate from high schools (Nas Ozen, Bilgic Alpaslan, Cagli, Ozdogan, Sancak, Dizman & Sokmen, 2014), most of them enter university with no or little use of language because of serious school problems directed by the Ministry of Education (Akdogan, 2010; Sahin, 2013). This situation necessitates compulsory language education (preparatory programs) at universities. However, it creates new problems since a one-year intensive education is expected to solve all language learning problems students have that have not been handled for years.

Preparatory program problems at Turkish universities exist in a wide range of areas, but one problem which is frequently found in studies is related to “learning and/or teaching speaking” (Bayram, 2011; Dincer & Yesilyurt, 2013; Esin, 2012; Gomleksiz & Ozkaya, 2012; Guney, 2010; Kayrak, 2010; Ozkanal, 2009; Zeytin, 2006). These studies indicate that universities are full of students who study English but cannot speak it. Similar problems were also observed in the Department of Foreign Languages at Eskisehir Osmangazi University, where this research was conducted.

While students grapple with learning to speak, getting informed about “teacher cognition” and actions can open up new horizons on the road to solving teaching speaking problems. The notion of teacher cognition is briefly described as “teachers’ mental lives”, and “Teacher cognition research is concerned with understanding what teachers think, know and believe” (Borg, 2009, p. 1). It has brought the perspective that teachers are more than practitioners of pre-determined curricula, and teaching is “viewed as a much more complex cognitively-driven process affected by the classroom context, the teachers’ general and specific instructional goals, the learners’ motivations and reactions to the lesson, the teacher’s management of critical moments during a lesson” (Richards, 2008, p. 167). Therefore, teacher cognition encompasses observable and unobservable factors influencing their practices from teachers’ perspectives. Observable and unobservable aspects of teacher cognition can be seen in the “schematic conceptualisation of teaching within which teacher cognition plays a pivotal role in teachers’ lives” (Borg, 2003, p. 81). Figure 1 below displays this schematic conceptualisation of the four factors affected by and/or affecting teacher cognition.

Figure 1.

Four Factors Interacting With Teacher Cognition (Borg, 2003, P. 82)



Schooling is defined as "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975, cited in Bailey, Bergthold, Braunstein, Fleischman, Holbrook, Tuman, Waissbluth & Zambo, 1996); it is related to language teachers' prior knowledge and beliefs derived from observing their teachers. It covers the period before a student starts to get professional teacher training, and its effects are considered to be ingrained and arising naturally (Bailey et al., 1996).

Schooling is followed by **professional coursework**, which includes teacher training programs. Borg (2003) points out variability in the impact of teacher education on teacher cognition. In other words, every trainee is affected by an educational program in their own way. Unless trainees' cognition before teacher education is considered, the expected influence of education programs may lessen. As shown in the figure above, there is a mutual relationship between teacher cognition and professional coursework. While professional coursework is intended to affect and even change trainees' prior cognition, resistant beliefs formed through schooling can delimit the effect of educational processes.

Contextual factors may cover a spectrum of social, economic, political, and educational components of wider contexts of the contemporary world, the country being lived in, and then narrower educational institutions. As shown in figure 1 above, contextual factors affect both teacher cognition and classroom practice which interacts with teacher cognition. Thus, contextual factors influence teacher cognition directly and

indirectly. For this study's purposes, contextual conditions are limited to school conditions and student conditions.

The interrelationship between **classroom practice** and teacher cognition displays itself in teachers' actions and the impact of teaching experience. Teacher cognition may inform teachers' instructional decisions in classrooms and give clues about their acts' rationales.

Regarding these factors above, Johnson's (2006) argument for the significance of research in teacher cognition becomes more meaningful: "This research has helped capture the complexities of who teachers are, what they know and believe, how they learn to teach, and how they carry out their work in diverse contexts throughout their careers" (p. 236). Borg's (2003) schematic representation may provide the necessary framework to deal with teacher cognition and actions with possible background aspects to capture this complexity. Based on this line of thinking, this study aims to reveal how English language teachers approach teaching speaking cognitively and practically at the junction of the factors of schooling, professional coursework, teaching context, and classroom practice. Furthermore, considering the problems of teaching speaking in Turkey as found in the studies mentioned above, there is an emerging need to research teaching speaking within the teacher cognition paradigm. In this respect, the research may fill a gap in the literature which was also noted by some researchers (Baleghizadeh & Shahri, 2014; Borg, 2009; Farrell & Yang, 2019).

Methodology

This research was designed as a case study to explore English language teachers' perceptions, actions, correspondence of perceptions with actions, and the background factors concerning teaching speaking. Research questions of the study are as follows:

1. What are English language teachers' perceptions of teaching speaking?
2. What are their actions in teaching speaking?
3. Do their perceptions and actions match?
4. How may the factors of schooling, professional coursework, classroom practice, and context affect their perceptions and actions?

The study participants were 28 English language teachers working at the Department of Foreign Languages at Eskisehir Osmangazi University. All of the participants were native Turkish speakers, and they had their education in the Turkish educational context. From 28 participants, a Turkish questionnaire gathered overall information about teachers' perceptions and practices related to teaching speaking. The questionnaire involved answering 13 open-ended questions about the ideal place of

speaking in the program, the participants' opinions about the speaking activities conducted at school, their students' levels and needs in terms of speaking, problems which the participants encounter, and their suggestions. 5[♦] of the respondents volunteered as cases for in-depth analysis. The volunteering teachers' classes were observed and video-recorded weekly for a month and they were also requested to write reflection reports on the observed sessions. Lastly, they were interviewed in Turkish and asked their language learning experiences, educational background, teaching practice, and contextual conditions. Their answers were audio recorded. All audio recordings were transcribed verbatim by the researcher at the end of the research process to get information about the four background factors in Borg's (2003) framework.

Since the study is a qualitative one, all the data were analysed within the qualitative data analysis interpretive paradigm (Creswell, 2005, pp. 231-255). Although qualitative research, by its very nature, is open to various interpretations depending on researchers' perspectives, for minimising subjectivity and ensuring utmost accuracy of findings and interpretations suggested by Creswell (2005), data triangulation, member checking, and check-coding procedures were completed. For data triangulation, four different data collection instruments were used for confirming interpretations. For member checking, the researcher's field notes during observation were shared with each participant to check their accuracy. All participants confirmed the accuracy of the notes and added their comments. Finally, an independent researcher with a doctoral degree in English Language Teaching coded 10% of the data collected through the questionnaire, reflection reports, and interview, which is an advisable percentage for subsamples (Lombard, Snyder-Duch & Bracken, 2004; Neuendorf, 2002). Inter-coder reliability was calculated based on the following formula (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 64): "reliability = number of agreements / total number of agreements + disagreements". The reliability was found as 0.87 (87%), indicating a high level of agreement between coders. Another independent researcher working as a teacher trainer with a doctoral degree in English Language Teaching watched 10% of the videotaped observation data and compared her observation with the researcher's observational notes to check their objectivity. The correspondence between the two was found as 0.89 (89%).

Findings

The research findings are presented in two parts. In response to the first research question concerning English language teachers' perceptions of teaching speaking, questionnaire data obtained from 28 instructors are analysed. After that, two

♦ In-depth analyses of 2 cases are given for the scope of this article.

instructors' perceptions, actions, correspondence between the two, and background factors are presented in response to the remaining research questions.

Teachers' Overall Perceptions of Teaching Speaking

In response to the first research question about teachers' perceptions of teaching speaking, 28 teachers' replies to the questionnaire were analysed, and the themes derived from the data came out as follows:

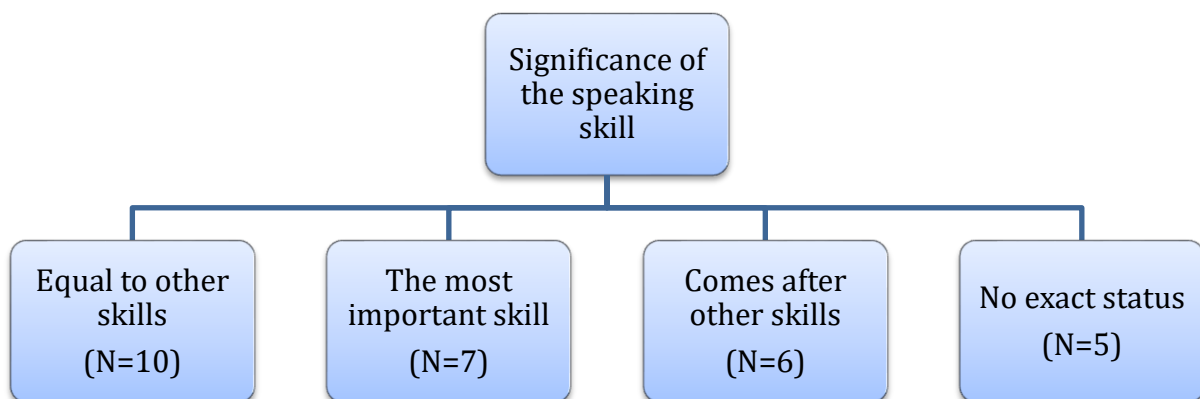
- I. Teachers' perceptions of
 - a) significance of the speaking skill in the research context
 - b) contextual concerns
 - c) their actual teaching practice

II. Teachers' suggestions about teaching speaking

Teachers' perceptions of the *significance of the speaking skill in the research context* can be seen in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2.

Teachers' Perceptions of the Significance of Speaking



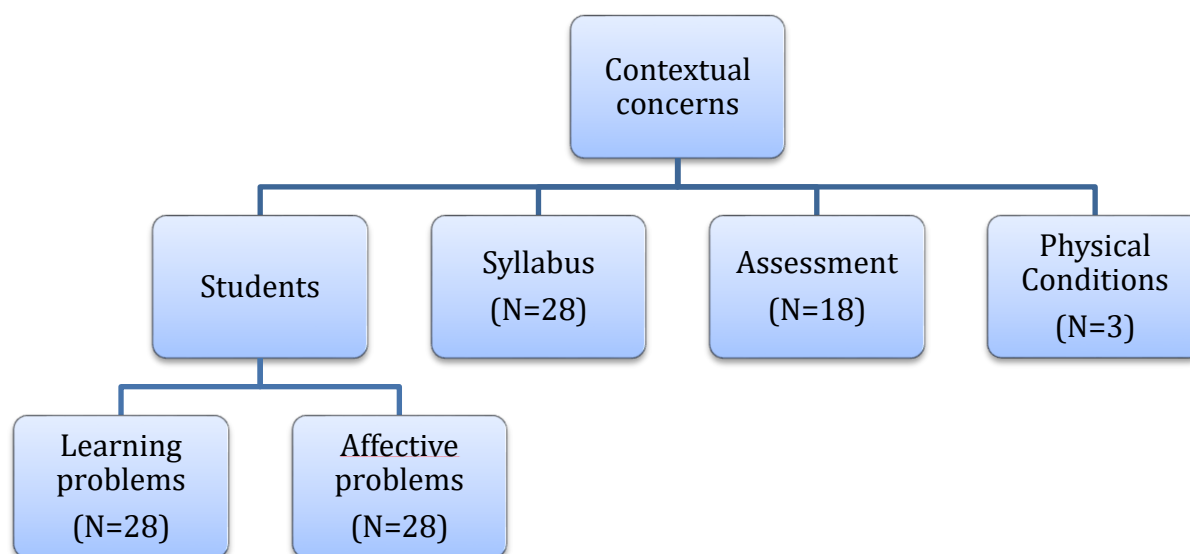
10 out of the 28 teachers argued that teaching speaking was as important as teaching other areas and skills. In other words, for these teachers, all language skills were of equal importance, and none of them could be sacrificed for the sake of another. On the other hand, 7 teachers gave priority to teaching speaking in comparison to the other skills. However, 6 teachers thought that speaking should only be taught after the other skills (specifically reading and writing) were properly taught. Especially 3 teachers in this group pointed out that faculty departments gave weight to reading

comprehension and writing much more than speaking. The remaining 5 teachers did not specify an exact place for speaking.

Teachers touched upon **contextual concerns** affecting their teaching of speaking, which can be seen in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3.

Teachers' Perceptions of the Contextual Concerns



About the subtheme of students, teachers mentioned students' learning and affective problems. Learning problems were related to low oral proficiency, linguistic problems, and students' lack of practical knowledge about improving their speaking skills. Students' affective problems were demotivation, reluctance, stress, anxiety, and fear for making mistakes and losing face. Secondly, in the teachers' opinion, insufficient importance was given to speaking in the syllabus. They stated that because the syllabus is loaded with grammatical structures and lists of lexical items, they could not find enough time to do coursebook activities at ease, to check students' pair/group work performances, to give students chances to utter the "hard" grammatical and lexical items they learned, to teach pronunciation, to bring extra speaking activities, and to feel enthusiasm for teaching.

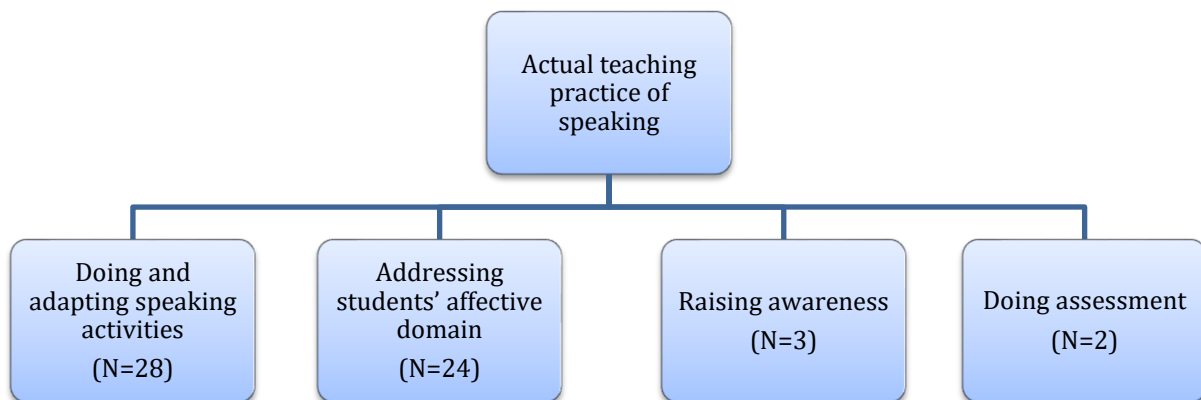
Additionally, 21 out of the 28 teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with the speaking activities in the syllabus. 7 teachers approached the syllabus more positively, though. From the teachers' perspective, as long as teachers adapted speaking activities to the country's realities and the class, gave these activities a sufficient amount of time, and prompted inhibited students, the activities became beneficial. In terms of assessment, the teachers stated that speaking was not included in midterm assessments and final examinations; instead, grammar and vocabulary items dominated assessments.

Finally, 3 teachers noted that the lack of technical equipment (i.e. computers and internet connection) and narrow and crowded classrooms made the physical context an unfavourable environment for teaching speaking.

The teachers detailed their *perceptions of their actual teaching practice of speaking*, and four subthemes emerged from their accounts, as shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4.

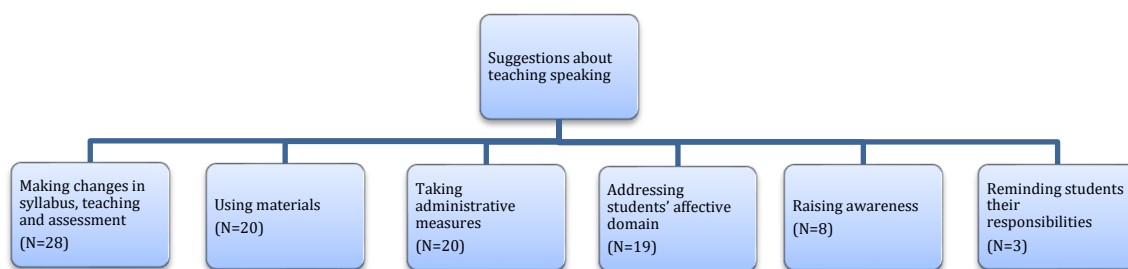
Teachers' Perceptions of Their Actual Teaching Practices



All the teachers stated that they did speaking activities in the coursebook and made adaptations following their students' profiles. Moreover, the teachers reported that they recognised and dealt with their students' affective problems. To handle affective problems, the teachers' stated ways of motivating students were verbal encouragement, modelling, completing activities that encourage speaking and treatment of errors by alleviating their pressure, ignoring errors, and recast. Teachers also raised students' awareness of the points they thought might help students learn to speak better (e.g. giving them a list of useful websites, advising them to watch TV series and to read books, drawing students' attention to how interlocutors say something, warning students not to use their mother tongue in pair/group work activities). Two teachers mentioned two different assessment methods: One of them stated that she prepared compulsory speaking quizzes. The other teacher assessed his students' group presentations even though making presentation did not exist in the program.

In addition to what they did, the teachers generated ideas about what should be done to improve learners' speaking skills, displayed in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5.

Teachers' Suggestions About Teaching Speaking

First, the teachers did not find the current syllabus conducive to teaching speaking. They suggested reducing the weight of grammar and vocabulary and giving priority to speaking or changing the syllabus. They wanted speaking to be treated as an inseparable part of language teaching and wished teaching to be planned following this perception. They also underlined their roles and responsibilities, such as minimising mother tongue use, allocating time to pre and post-activities, asking striking questions about topics, and nominating silent students more. As for assessments, they suggested increasing the frequency of speaking quizzes, rearranging the place of speaking in assessment, making oral examinations, evaluating students' speech seriously and meticulously, and giving class performance grades fairly.

Second, the teachers wanted books for extensive reading, audio-visual aids, and extra speaking materials for teaching speaking, which might come in the form of a speaking pack full of activities, games, and tasks ready to be used. Third, the teachers also expected the administration to support them and pave the way for teaching speaking by providing flexibility, organising workshops for continuous professional development, making institutional and curricular modifications, employing a native speaker, and opening a speaking club for students. Fourth, the teachers suggested addressing students' affective domain by motivating and encouraging students to speak in and out of the classroom, making speaking activities fun, ignoring errors, and helping students overcome their fear of making errors. Fifth, the teachers recommended that students should be convinced that mastering a language means speaking it, not memorising grammar rules. They also wanted their students to be informed about the significance of learning to speak. Lastly, the teachers made suggestions about reminding students of their responsibilities, such as studying English

out of class more, using newly learned structures, and consulting monolingual dictionaries.

Perceptions and Actions of Teachers and Background Factors

To explore the correspondence of language teachers' perceptions with their actions and delve into their background within the four factors, volunteering teachers' classes were observed. They were requested to reflect on their observed class hours and were finally interviewed. Analyses of the cases of two teachers (Arven and Umut as their pseudonyms) are given below.

Arven

Arven found teaching speaking to all students "utopian" as she had reservations concerning students' interest in speaking. She described interest as "*depending on the students, a personal thing*" and said that not everyone could be interested in speaking skills. Her perception was consistent with her nomination of students in lessons. She was observed doing speaking activities with participating students, but she did not address non-participating students. Furthermore, in her questionnaire, she referred to contextual problems related to students, syllabus, assessments, and physical conditions. Still, she was not observed to do something as an alternative to coursebook activities for the problems she mentioned. In response to student misbehaviours, she resorted to ignoring, warning, and hinting at students' grades.

Just as she wrote in her questionnaire responses, Arven was observed to cover coursebook activities as she was supposed to do so. She also stated that she did "discussion-like activities", but it was observed that what she mentioned as 'discussion' was rather teacher-student chats. As her suggestions about teaching speaking, she mentioned doing speaking activities frequently, giving importance to individual, pair, and group tasks, teachers' being interested in teaching speaking, and students' knowing their teachers' interest. However, her classes partially reflected what she had suggested. Classroom interactions took place between Arven and few participating students, as mentioned above. She did not use a lead-in technique to give students further opportunities to speak and activate their background information at the beginning of lessons. She changed some pair and group work activities into whole-class talks, which turned her lessons into teacher-dominated sessions. She stated that she attracted more students' attention by employing whole-class talks. However, it was observed that in whole-class talks, few students answered her questions. This low participation caused Arven's reaction: "*What's the matter with you? You're just a handful of people. We have no interaction. This is the last unit, so we should make the most of it. What couldn't you understand?*" (Observation week 4, translated from Turkish). Arven also used Turkish to give instructions, motivate students when they did not react, explain speaking activities and unfamiliar vocabulary items, and manage her class. In her reflection, she reported that casual Turkish chats in lessons were

necessary because they made the teacher-student relationship closer. Nonetheless, this situation resulted in decreasing target language use in class.

In her reflection reports, Arven wrote that she could not apply her teaching approach in lessons because she did not believe speaking could be taught in a few hours. In her view, speaking and phonology should be taught in an independent course. Since there are no independent speaking courses strengthened with phonological training, current circumstances like students' profile and loaded syllabus in Arven's cognition negatively affected her teaching. Thus, she listed "having lessons on Friday", "absence of the half of the classroom population", "anxiety to cover coursebook syllabus at beginner level", "absence of a specific area in the school building for teaching speaking", "upcoming end of the year which decreased teachers and students' motivation from the beginning of the term", and "spring fest week" as the factors affecting her teaching and explaining her students' lack of participation.

Hence, when Arven's questionnaire responses, her observed practices, and reflections were examined, mismatches were found between her perceptions and actions. While Arven suggested doing speaking activities frequently and giving importance to pair and group works, she changed some pair/group work activities into whole-class talks. Moreover, some of these whole-class talks Arven described as "discussion-like" were chats in Turkish and English between Arven and her students. She also underlined the importance of teachers' interest in teaching speaking, but her stated and observed demotivation created a conflict with her suggestion. Arven attributed the lack of correspondence between some of her perceptions and actions to contextual factors of the learner profile and anxiety to cover the syllabus. Upon data analysis of the interview with Arven, five factors (language learning experiences, pre-service education, teaching practice, professional development, and context) were found to affect her perceptions and actions.

In terms of language learning experiences, Arven pointed out that she did not receive much speaking education at secondary school because her teachers gave weight to grammar and reading. However, at high school, her teachers tried to provide more English exposure through audio-visual aids (i.e. songs and movies). Especially at preparatory classes, they did speaking, but as the hours of English and speaking dropped, Arven made up for this decrease by speaking with her friends. She was keen on speaking and desired to impress people when she spoke. Her priority was to learn to speak fluently, and the repercussions of her keenness can be seen in the details of her pre-service education.

During pre-service education, Arven took great pleasure in making presentations and tried to better her pronunciation. Her pleasure increased when her teachers gave positive feedback and her classmates applauded at the end of her presentations. Two instructors influenced her as they were native speakers of English. With her teaching experience and command of languages like French and Turkish, her British instructor

fascinated her. By sitting at a front desk, Arven attentively observed her teacher's pronunciation. Although she found the university environment sufficient for teaching her to speak English, she did not find it sufficient to train teacher candidates to teach speaking. She did not remember anything specific to teaching speaking apart from making several presentations.

As for her teaching practicum, she stated that she felt "the power" and "the control of the whole class", and she noted that she felt the same way in her current teaching. Additionally, she was interested in teaching listening and speaking most because how learners pronounced sounds, what kinds of fillers they used, and their manner in front of listeners caught her interest. Furthermore, she was fond of listening to her classmates' presentations in her MA studies. She did not see herself fit for teaching speaking due to the institutional context. Her students' demotivation also demotivated her. She expressed that she tried to be a good role model for speaking and gave students opportunities to practice. When she saw that her students needed phonological training, she gave them brief information about phonetics and the phonetic alphabet for two years. After seeing students' demotivation, she gave up. She thought that students could only improve their oral skills if they were interested in speaking. In her opinion, they also needed to have an ear for listening and pronunciation.

Arven stated that she did not participate in in-service training because programs directly related to teaching did not attract her interest. She participated in a TESOL program just for examining its content and getting closer to native speakers. Therefore, she indicated that she could not recall what she learned from it. She was also an MA candidate in ELT when the research was conducted, and she emphasised the "big difference" between the content of the articles she read in her MA classes and her learners' profiles. Therefore, Arven did not find institutional context and student profiles appropriate for applying the new pedagogical knowledge she gained. She did not think favourably about the physical context, either. She also found her workload excessive, which comprised 22 teaching hours per week and an additional duty at the testing office. Because of her responsibilities for examinations at the testing office, she felt too exhausted to think and save energy for teaching.

Umut

Concerning the significance of speaking skills among other language skills, speaking did not have a superior status since skills were of equal importance, in Umut's opinion. Therefore, he suggested giving weight to teaching basic speaking skills without outweighing other language skills because he stated that students had communicative inadequacies due to the teaching techniques used in their previous educational environments. He did not think that they had fully acquired year-end language competencies. He perceived their need to develop colloquial and academic speaking skills. Following his perception, he was observed to add the preparation of a

presentation for academic speaking to the coursebook activities of daily-life speaking skills.

Furthermore, he observed “fossilisation” and “reluctance to do restructuring” in some of his students who found their limited repertoire of structures sufficient and did not bother to vary them. Yet, Umut viewed his students’ current level much better than their level at the beginning of the semester. He expressed his happiness at their courage to speak and to make errors. Umut also expressed satisfaction with the design and the number of speaking activities in the coursebook compared to his colleagues, who expressed their dissatisfaction.

In terms of his actual teaching practice, Umut noted that he resorted to elicitation to provide “input” for promoting learner “output”, doing coursebook activities and extra communicative activities, covering pronunciation sections swiftly or skipping them, and assessing group presentations. When Umut’s lessons were observed, his perceptions of his teaching corresponded with his actual practices. Moreover, he increased student-student interactions through pair/group work activities and rarely spoke Turkish.

Finally, Umut based his teaching on Thornbury’s (2005) stepwise teaching speaking framework: *Awareness, Appropriation, Autonomy*, and he found them consistent with coursebook activities. Consequently, it can be assumed that the methodological foundation of Umut’s teaching of speaking was guided by the notions of input, output, and developmental steps.

Upon data analysis of the interview with Umut, five factors (which were the same as those in Arven’s case) were found to affect his perceptions and actions. First of all, Umut’s past experiences as a language learner went back to his high school preparatory class where English was intensively taught 24 hours per week. His teachers’ continuous use of English, their efforts to equip students with autonomous study skills, non-threatening and a fun learning atmosphere (full of exposure to the culture of the target language), skill-based productive examinations and assignments, and motivated classmates helped Umut enjoy learning English and led him to choose a career in English language teaching.

Umut found his pre-service education very efficient in terms of theory and practice. He particularly liked the course “language acquisition” and its instructor. He thought that the course made a major contribution to his teaching because he learned to observe his students and their learning based on acquisitional theories. He also stated that he used the theories in his child-rearing; Vygotsky was especially his idol. Therefore, he was against the idea that did not give credit to theories as he asserted that a language teacher’s theoretical background should be firm. Umut thought that rather than despairing of theories that “It does not happen in the way books say”, teachers should digest and analyse research findings because “It happens in the way books say”. As for the practical side of learning to teach, Umut found pre-service demo teaching

sessions very beneficial in understanding mechanical methods and techniques' failure. He also liked teaching practicum, which included making observations in the 2nd year and practising microteaching in the 4th year. In contrast to other teacher trainees he observed, he felt comfortable being at school because his parents were teachers, and he had already been accustomed to that environment.

Along with positive learning experiences, Umut had negative experiences in his pre-service education. He mostly resented unfair assessments and some instructors' favouring certain students. Moreover, Umut thought pre-service education lacked practice for training pre-service teachers to teach speaking. Thus, when he started teaching, he went to the university library, and he picked books offering speaking activities to photocopy. Although he remembered being taught the importance of different speaking activities (e.g. information-gap activities) for students, he stated that pre-service education did not present a wide range of role-plays, games, or pair/group work activities. Thus, Umut completed this gap with his efforts.

His efforts to complete the pedagogical gap in teaching speaking may be said to pay off because Umut thought he effectively motivated students to speak and overcome their barriers by bringing challenging information-gap activities to the classroom. His successful interaction with students can also be attributed to his devotion to continuous professional development. Umut's professional development continued in three tracks: active participation in several in-service training sessions, writing a doctoral dissertation about teacher education, and frequently revisiting reference books and articles as he found the "theoretical schema" important.

Umut did not find the physical conditions of preparatory school sufficient in terms of context. He criticised the school's testing policy, which did not measure speaking; however, these unfavourable conditions did not prevent him from working at his office. He stated that he increased his workload himself for professional development.

Discussion

In response to the first research question, 28 teachers' overall perceptions of teaching speaking were analysed. Most of the participants were found to accept the significance of speaking; they saw it either as the most important skill to teach or as equal to the other language skills. Hughes (2002) maintains that speaking overlaps several areas and disciplines, such as having linguistic knowledge, developing productive skills, and being aware of socio-linguistic or pragmatic points. Thus, the participating teachers' perception of speaking as an important skill and other skills and areas deserves attention. Due to English's international use in a globalised world, the need for teaching speaking in coordination with sociopragmatic skills (e.g., social status, distance, linguistic register, appropriacy, etc.) has become important. Richards (2003)

highlights the significance of cross-cultural communication, cultural awareness, communicative syllabus, and pair/group activities in teaching speaking.

Regarding contextual concerns, which the teachers thought affected their teaching, they mostly pointed out students' low oral proficiency, affective problems, and limited consciousness and world knowledge. In teachers' views, these problems were the result of institutional factors. They underlined the impact of syllabus and assessment, prioritising grammar and vocabulary. Even though speaking components were equally distributed in all units of the coursebook, students and some teachers tended to give less importance to speaking because students had to choose the correct alternatives in a multiple-choice test of proficiency instead of speaking. Therefore, students pragmatically concentrated on language skills and areas taught intensively for measuring proficiency in exams. In a language learning environment where teachers are supposed to "teach the test", Harmer (2001) reminds the risk of compromising general English improvement at the expense of exam preparation. Despite this risk, both teachers and students prefer to follow that way, according to the results of this study.

Although the teachers participating in this study mentioned contextual constraints which demotivated students and teachers during teaching speaking, another point should also be considered. Since most language learners come from traditional learning environments mostly focusing on mechanical teaching of grammar by discarding speaking (Akdogan, 2010; Paker, 2012), learners might have formed deep-seated educational habits which may discourage them from speaking. Ocaklı (2008) conducted a study about teaching speaking through a communicative approach at the preparatory school of a Turkish university and found that 70% of language teachers complained about their students' avoidance of speaking tasks and their preference for passively listening to the teacher. In other words, these learners tended to prefer teacher talk more than student talk as the ones in Cohen and Fass (2001). Ocaklı also found a mismatch between teachers' expectations and students' behaviours because they were reported to be unaware of their responsibility to participate in student-student interactions.

Similarly, the teachers in our study expect their students to speak; however, the teachers are confronted with learner demotivation and reluctance, which may be attributed to contextual concerns and stem from language learners' previous language learning experiences at primary and secondary levels. This finding shows that foreign language teaching at all educational levels is connected like chains; if one part of the system is broken, the other parts cannot be exempt from this breakdown. Therefore, the responsibility for teaching speaking within a learner-centred paradigm should not only fall on preparatory schools at universities; speaking should take place at all levels of education.

Teachers also mention what they did in class in terms of speaking. Almost all the teachers were responsive to students' affective domain by motivating them in different forms. However, none of the teachers stated that they trained students to cope with their affective problems. Thus, training teachers about affective strategies (Oxford, 2003) and introducing them into classrooms can bring better results than verbally motivating students. Moreover, in a study by Zeytin (2006), students expressed their comfort in playing games; thus, communicative games can be another option to overcome learner anxiety and motivate them for speaking.

All the participants stated that they did the coursebook's speaking activities, adding that they either stuck to the activities or made adaptations when they did not find the content appropriate for their students. While most participants expressed their discontent with coursebook activities, some teachers noted that they turned their negative feelings into an opportunity by adapting the activities to make them more challenging and fun. As Gabrielatos (2004) indicates, language teachers may take a coursebook as a holy resource, crutch, a necessary evil, or a burden, but it can be flexibly used as a helpful tool when combined with other resources.

The participants also made some suggestions about teaching speaking. Some participants, however, placed more responsibility on administration than on themselves for improving teaching speaking. For instance, they wanted extra speaking materials; however, only two teachers stated that they photocopied and distributed extra communicative activities and games located at the back of the Teacher's book. Rather than waiting for the administration to close every learning environment gap, creative and time-saving tactics can be shared among colleagues, as exemplified in those two teachers. Offering teacher-based suggestions and discussing them with colleagues can be much more fruitful than laying responsibility on administration. As Richards (2013) asserts, being a creative teacher brings non-conformism. He points out that creative teaching lies in adapting and modifying lessons to match learner needs rather than simply presenting lessons from textbooks.

It becomes evident by this research that while some participating teachers displayed their creativity in solving problems, a larger group of teachers perceived contextual conditions, whether it be students or physical limitations, as a serious constraint on their teaching of speaking. The difference between the two groups of teachers might be attributed to psychological factors such as burnout (Friedman, 2000), educational factors such as lack of sufficient pre-service and in-service training, and professional factors such as insufficient teaching experiences. Such factors should be carefully handled by policymakers, administrators, and teachers in the long run. In the short run, teachers should be familiar with the concept of teacher autonomy, which may lead them to focus on their initiative as a teacher instead of blaming contextual constraints on other partners. Little (1995) defines teacher autonomy by describing successful teachers as autonomous ones having responsibility, reflection, control, and freedom. Teacher autonomy can be put into practice through the concept of "space".

Lamb (2000) argues that “teachers need to understand the constraints upon their practice but, rather than feeling disempowered, they need to empower themselves by finding the **spaces and opportunities for manoeuvre**” (p. 127, emphasis added). Benson (2010) investigated such “spaces” in which teachers employ their autonomy through interpreting, manipulating, or ignoring the tasks specified by the curriculum. Similarly, Umut, in this research, was found to create such spaces in his lessons.

In addition to creating spaces, keeping reflective journals to analyse one’s teaching is another good starting point for exercising teacher autonomy (Genc, 2010). Most of the study participants focused on the disadvantages of contextual constraints, whereas they might be blindfolded by negative feelings such as learned helplessness (Maier & Seligman, 1976). However, keeping reflection in a calm frame of mind can help teachers analyse threats and opportunities by drawing lessons from day-to-day teaching practices.

Finally, the teachers drew attention to reminding students of their responsibilities for learning to speak, as mentioned in the Findings section. However, these teachers did not clarify whether they helped students take on responsibilities. Designing and adapting materials for encouraging autonomy (Nunan, 1997), using resources beyond the classroom (Ryan, 1997), learner training, giving assignments, training to keep journals, introducing self-access centres, and staying in touch with students after the course (Harmer, 2001) can be useful for developing learner autonomy. For supporting autonomous out-of-class learning to speak, learners can be guided on pronunciation software, message exchanges, corpora and concordance programs, the Internet, and language teaching web sites (Bailey, 2004).

In response to the second research question, Arven and Umut were found to do coursebook activities with minor changes; however, Arven tended to change student-student interaction activities to whole-class activities. Harmer (2001) asserts that whole-class teaching emphasises the transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the student instead of students’ discoveries and research. However, through group work, students find more opportunities to practice speaking, practice a wider range of language functions, receive more corrective feedback from their peers, and engage in more negotiation of meaning than they do in whole-class teaching (Long & Porter, 1985). Despite the disadvantages of whole-class activities, teachers’ perception of them being more timesaving and motivating than pair/group work may stem from their experiential knowledge shaped by their classroom practice and contextual conditions, as they did not justify it on methodological grounds (Borg & Burns, 2008). Furthermore, they may want to preserve their hierarchical image of the teacher on stage (Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005). As Wubbels and Brekelmans (2005) report, whole-class teaching is important for establishing the teacher’s image perceived by the students; Arven might have found whole-class activities in conformity with her image as a teacher governing her students as she underlined her feeling of power during teaching in her interview.

At the beginning of his classes, Umut did lead-in social chat activities and reviews to provide students with further opportunities to speak. In contrast, Arven was not observed to do so. Nonetheless, Hird (2013) notes that warmers, fillers, and lead-in activities are not a requirement at the beginning of the lessons. Still, they have several advantages: waking and energising students, changing the pace, generating interest, and activating learner schema. Thus, their role in motivating and preparing students for the lesson, especially in classroom contexts where students display reticence like those in this research, is undeniable. Teachers like Arven, who expressed students' lack of interest in speaking, could use lead-in to raise their interest at the beginning of lessons.

Arven was also observed to switch to her mother tongue for several purposes, but Umut did not do so. In Arven's lessons, both the teacher and students were observed to do code-switching. The moments of code-switching deprived students of exposure to the target language. Arven found informal Turkish chats useful in terms of building a closer relationship with students. A similar rationale for using the mother tongue was also put forward by the teachers participating in a study by Samar and Moradkhani (2014), who looked into teacher cognition about code-switching. Among the teachers' reasons for code-switching, "students' emotional well-being" took place. The teachers in that study used code-switching to reduce stress and strengthen solidarity in stressful situations of language learning. For instance, a teacher in that study used Persian to encourage an anxious student to try to answer a question. However, Arven's and her students' L1 use was observed to go beyond mere affective purposes. The use of L1 is particularly detrimental to the development of oral skills. As Carless (2008) notes, despite its use as a humanistic and learner-centred strategy, switching to mother tongue has the risk of failing to encourage target language practice and communication.

Concerning pronunciation, Arven gave utmost importance to accuracy; therefore, she drew students' attention to the pronunciation of new lexical items and made students repeat target words in the pronunciation part of the coursebook units. In contrast, Umut found his speaking sufficient for providing input; thus, he either quickly did or skipped pronunciation parts in the coursebook. Thus, Umut and Arven are two opposite poles. Arven admired native-like pronunciation and accent, so she might have identified native speakers as the rightful owners of English (Sifakis & Sougari, 2005). In highlighting pronunciation for teaching speaking purposes, Arven might have fallen into the illusion that the university-level teachers and the administrators fell in Karagedik's (2013) research: They thought that a teacher's pronunciation was the most important qualification for teaching speaking. Likewise, the teachers participating in a study by Cohen and Fass (2001) emphasised accuracy and pronunciation to assess their students' oral production. However, Thornbury (2005) criticises this thinking as dealing with teaching speaking "at the level of pronunciation" (p. 28). Hence, teaching speaking at the level of pronunciation may limit teaching other dimensions of speaking. Arven's concentration on pronunciation and native-like

accent may be rooted in her language learning experiences of practising speaking out of school, desiring to impress people by her speech and admiring native speakers. On the other hand, Umut considered explicit teaching of pronunciation unnecessary, which could also be questioned. Language teachers' role in teaching phonology can be redefined as "speech coach" who monitors students' speech and encourages their self-monitoring; therefore, their skills in integrating pronunciation into teaching speaking should be developed (Macdonald, 2002).

Both teachers had students reluctant to participate in speaking activities. Moreover, students' misbehaviours of chatting, using mobile phones, and not listening to their classmates' speech were observed to variable extents. It was observed that when the teachers were confronted with off-task behaviours, they learned to ignore or warn them as a "reactive" measure of classroom management based on the perception that students were responsible for their own learning and motivation. However, teachers should have a wide repertoire of "proactive" strategies to lessen the likelihood of student misbehaviours before they happen, such as setting rules, providing nurturance and support, instructing students in coping skills, etc., because proactive strategies make classroom management much more efficient. In contrast, reactive strategies increase teacher stress and off-task behaviours (Clunies-Ross, Little & Kienhuis, 2008). At any rate, the best proactive strategy for handling student misbehaviours can be engaging students with meaningful tasks (Ng, Nicholas & Williams, 2010).

In response to the third research question, Umut's perceptions of his teaching were found in conformity with his practices. However, some of Arven's perceptions and actions were in mismatch, which can be summarised in her statement that "*I cannot apply my teaching approach*". She attributed this dissonance to contextual conditions related to the syllabus, learner profile, and physical inadequacies. Similarly, in Basturkmen (2012), the teachers who had limited correspondence between their beliefs and practices reported that time and curriculum constraints affected their practices. On the other hand, Lee (2009), who studied mismatches between teachers' beliefs and practices, expressed doubt over teachers' setting out contextual constraints as reasons for their practices: "While teachers in the study tend to attribute their practices to constraints imposed by institutional context and values, like exam pressure and a school policy that highly values error feedback, it is not certain whether these are real explanations for the mismatches or mere excuses that teachers use to justify their practices" (p. 19).

In this study, whether teachers' explanations have reasonable grounds or making excuses could be understood by comparing them during pair/group work activities. Both seemed to favour student-student interactions, but in practice, Arven preferred teacher-student interactions based on increasing students' participation and saving time. This result conforms with the finding of a study by Xiang and Borg (2014), who investigated college English teachers' beliefs about effective language teaching. They found statistically significant differences between teachers' beliefs about an effective

teacher's ideal and actual classroom behaviours. Moreover, just like our research finding, one of the sources of mismatches between their ideal and actual behaviours was related to "using communicative activities". The participants in Xiang and Borg's research attributed the mismatch between their ideal and actual teaching to "student factors", "institutional factors", and "teacher factors" (i.e. limitations in professional training). Likewise, in our research, Arven suggested doing communicative activities, but she articulated learner profile and institutional factors as constraints on her teaching.

Nonetheless, unlike the participants in Xiang and Borg's study, Arven did not mention teacher factors as a constraint. In other words, she did not express a need for backing her professional knowledge for doing speaking activities. In contrast, Umut reported the need for continuous professional development. Hence, the major distinction between the two teacher profiles lies in their engagement in professional development.

Finally, in response to the fourth research question, schooling was an important factor in the teachers' cognition. The teachers modelled their language teachers' teaching approaches, bore influences of language learning environment, and reflected their language learning experiences on their perceptions and actions. Therefore, pre-service education should take teacher trainees' pre-existing perceptions and beliefs rooted in schooling into account. Unless they are handled and replaced with pedagogically refined ones employing reflection and professional support, they may remain stable (Kunt & Ozdemir, 2010).

Professional coursework, namely, pre-service education, influenced the teachers more differently than schooling. Its effect on Arven was limited, but Umut showed its positive and deeper impact. The variable impact of pre-service education deserves attention. Uysal and Bardakcı (2014) found that pre-service education had the least influence on (3%) language teachers' practices. The reasons behind these findings may firstly be found out by analysing the efficiency of pre-service education. Demir (2015) conducted a study with student teachers and teacher trainers at a state university about the strengths and weaknesses of the ELT program, and both sides found the program irrelevant and far from meeting pre-service teachers' needs concerning teaching performance and language proficiency. In another study, novice teachers in their first years of teaching pointed out that more emphasis was put on theories than teacher education practice. They reported their need for more explicit guidance about teaching skills and language proficiency (Akcan, 2016).

Additionally, Arven and Umut highlighted the gaps related to training pre-service teachers in terms of teaching speaking. Parallel to this finding, Gungor (2013) put forth a few problem areas peculiar to training teacher candidates to teach speaking. Although he found that pre-service English teachers felt ready to teach speaking, some of them had concerns over designing speaking activities for English for specific purposes; designing out-of-class activities, developing self-assessment tools for

speaking skills, teaching how to use suprasegmental phonemes of English (e.g. stress and intonation), teaching how to express oneself fluently, and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. For this reason, teaching speaking components of language teacher education programs can be reviewed and revised by considering pre-service teachers' needs. Pre-service teachers can also be given chances to evaluate and adapt existing speaking activities. Most importantly, they can be trained to develop and design speaking activities and to put them into practice in their microteaching.

Even though professional development does not occur in the model on which this research is based, it was found to influence teachers following pre-service education. Professional development is composed of in-service education, postgraduate studies, and ELT-based readings. For Arven, it may be described as "the weakest ring" since she did not detail her professional development efforts, explain her teaching practices on methodological grounds, use professional language, and make references to ELT resources. In contrast, Umut's use of professional terminology, his references to authors and books, and his detailed accounts of his involvement in in-service training sessions and postgraduate studies showed his professional development efforts.

Both teachers mentioned negative influences of the context on them, but their views related to it changed. Arven mentioned unfavourable contextual conditions more than Umut. Although Umut mentioned negative aspects of the context, he reflected on them for improving his practices. Thus, it can be concluded that there is an inverse relationship between the impact of professional knowledge and context. The more the teachers referred to context to justify their perceptions and actions, the less they referred to the professional knowledge base or vice versa.

Classroom practice also informed the cognition of the teachers. Starting from teaching practicum, the teachers built their teaching on their classroom experiences. Arven, for whom the effect of professional coursework and development was weaker, tended to explain her teaching more experientially without referring to methodology. Especially negative classroom experiences influenced and shaped Arven's perceptions and actions related to teaching speaking. This finding is in line with the study by Borg and Burns (2008), who found that language teachers rarely referred to theory or methodological principles to explain their views about grammar teaching and that their "sources of evidence cited were overwhelmingly practical and experiential in nature... There was a striking absence of evidence drawn from formal theory and received knowledge (e.g. SLA research)" (p. 478). However, being more attentive to professional development, Umut harmoniously combined his theoretical knowledge with his experiential knowledge to act and explain his actions, which could be seen in his use of professional language and his references to the relevant literature.

Nevertheless, Arven's accounts were short of theoretical perspectives due to "the absence of technical knowledge" (p. 479), as Borg and Burns (2008) stated. The researchers do not conclude that those teachers were unaware of theories, but the

researchers question the reliability of teachers' judgments about their experiential knowledge base's effectiveness. Thus, in this study, the reliability of Umut's perceptions can be said to be strengthened by the theoretical and methodological knowledge base.

Conclusion

In this study, the two English language teachers' perceptions, actions, match between the two and the background factors concerning teaching speaking were investigated. Acknowledging the importance of teaching speaking to a certain extent, the teachers brought their idiosyncratic perceptions and actions to classrooms. Such idiosyncrasies were shaped by four factors (Borg, 2003). In addition to these factors, in this research, professional development was found to influence teacher cognition and create considerable differences between teachers. Taking these factors and teacher cognition into consideration may yield desired results for improving foreign language teaching and teacher education programs.

One of the study's limitations is its limited educational setting where the research was conducted. Therefore, making generalisations about all English language teachers from the teachers' perceptions and actions participating in this research may yield misleading assumptions as it was clearly understood in this research that every teacher surrounded with distinctive background factors in various teaching contexts brings their own cognition and actions. Additionally, the necessity of collecting data in a limited time may have restricted comprehending English language teachers with all their peculiarities. Lastly, since the research participants were confined to teachers, obtaining data from learners and administrators may provide valuable insight into understanding teacher cognition and actions together with all parties. For this reason, further longitudinal studies conducted in different educational contexts, including teachers, learners, and administrators, may help in elaborating teacher cognition better.

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Authors**Contact**

Dr. Sevgi GOKCE is an instructor at School of Foreign Languages at Eskisehir Osmangazi University. Her research interests include English language teacher cognition, teaching speaking, learner motivation, and affective aspects of language learning.

sevgigokce@ogu.edu.tr

Prof. Dr. Ilknur KECİK works at the department of English Language Teaching at Education Faculty of Anadolu University. Her research interests include second language acquisition, foreign language teacher education, discourse analysis and text linguistics.

ikecik@gmail.com