



## Causes of Problems Students Face While Learning Turkish as a Foreign Language: The Case of Kazakhstan

Cemal Ozdemir

Suleyman Demirel University, Kazakhstan

**Abstract:** This study is designed to determine the causes of the problems that Kazakh students face when learning Turkish as a foreign language. The study group consists of 40 students at A2 level who studied Turkish at a private university in Kazakhstan during the 2016-2017 academic year. A Likert-type questionnaire consisting of 27 items was used to collect the data. The survey, which was organized in four parts; reading, speaking, listening and writing, included expressions regarding the causes of problems students are experiencing. The obtained data was analyzed by MS Excel and SPSS programs. Students' opinions about the causes of the problems in learning Turkish language were presented as graphs and t-test analysis was conducted to reveal gender differences. As a result, it has been seen that the students definitely participated in some of the expressions which were determined as the cause of problems they encounter and they did not participate in some of the identified causes. However, it has emerged that students are often neutral against the identified problems. On the other hand, while boys and girls have similar opinions about the causes of problems in reading and speaking, it has been determined that girls statistically agreed more than boys about the identified causes of problems in listening and writing.

**Keywords:** Teaching Turkish Language; Teaching Turkish to Foreigners; Turkish Language Skills, Problems in Teaching Turkish

### Introduction

#### Language Concept and Language Teaching

Language, the indispensable tool of education and training, comes by preserving its time and its daily value from ancient times. According to Chomsky (2001), language is a system of voices in which people communicate with each other. The way in which the sound system is put into writing by means of a number of symbols is realized through a common use, namely writing.

The need to language learning is more than ever in such a time when communication is increasing, the human beings are beginning to learn about the events in the world very easily, and the closed systems are beginning to collapse. It has become compulsory that people, especially the nations that are planning to develop and open up, have to be now in contact with other countries and their languages. Recognizing and understanding a nation with its full meaning comes by knowing the language of that nation. Because language contains all the features of culture, history

and social accumulation. (Bolukbas & Keskin, 2010). Now the great states and great people do the same; they are in communication with other countries and are keeping information constantly flow from outside to inside and vice versa. Turkey and Turkish people, who are struggling to keep pace with these developments and the requirements are also doing activities needed for the language instruction within the country and abroad. Many institutions and organizations have also been opened in order to realize language teaching activities and are continually in the process of opening. Particularly as a result of political changes, language education has taken a different place in the Turkic Republics, which achieved their independence with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In that period, Republic of Turkey began to develop rapidly the state of relations in all fields with brother and relative countries. The language was the most important factor in communication. For this reason, activities such as mutual exchange of students, opening schools and establishing joint commissions have started quickly. These developments have brought Turkish language to an agenda to teach it to the relative communities

with the Turkish background. It is difficult to say that for that period, the Republic of Turkey was fully prepared on this issue. Despite the fact that almost all Turkish dialects are Turkish in origin, there are some differences. Differences are especially in vocabulary, syntax and phonetics, even morphology. The two languages: Kazakh language and Turkish language, have been influenced by different languages and cultures for a long time because of separation and they alienate each other. It has become obligatory for Turkey to teach Turkish language by foreign language teaching approach to the relative Turkic communities (Cetin & Polat, 2011). The need for research on language teaching has also begun to increase rapidly as the Turkic people begin to gain a respectable position in the world starting in the nineties. The way to follow in the mutual teaching of close languages should be to emphasize more differences and encountered problems than similarities. Through a trial and error, an unplanned and not-programmed teaching approach can cause the individual to have a negative reaction to learning a language, and to get a false impression of the language and the society and country related to a language being taught (Senemoglu, 1983).

One of the concepts that the countries have emphasized before opening to the outside world in education systems is its mother tongue teaching. With this teaching, it is aimed to develop the language skills that individuals use in thought and communication (Tekin, 1980). Children make a comparison between the two languages by transferring the information they learn on the main floor to the second language and transferring the information they learn on the second floor to the main language. For example, after learning the functions of an object in the first language, they pass on this knowledge to the second language they are beginning to learn, and then try to learn how to name this object only in the second language (Cummins, 2000). This is the root knowledge of the mother tongue, which

provides the flow of information transfer. For this reason, it is possible to name and interpret the concepts in the second language as much as the number of words known on the mother tongue (Arslan & Sasmaz, 2016).

### **Teaching Turkish**

Individuals should learn the skills of reading, listening, speaking and writing in the target language in the most perfect way in order to be able to get along with different groups and people (Sahin, 2007). The reason is: "the result of listening, speaking, reading and writing activities makes up the system of understanding of the individual" (Server, 2000). Just like native language education, foreign language education also constitutes the basic functions of the language of reading, listening, comprehension and writing; it can be said that the skill of writing among these basic language skills is a more difficult and advanced skill because it involves interpretation, analysis, synthesis and accumulation, covering all other basic language skills. (Tuncel, 2013) For this reason, these four basic language skills should be taken as a basis for teaching languages as mother tongue or as a foreign language. In teaching Turkish as a foreign language, the skills of the language as in mother tongue education should be perceived in connection with and complementary to each other (Gogus, 1978).

It is aimed to acquire basic language skills in Turkish teaching. However, there is a need to acquire and learn some preconditions in order to obtain these skills. One of these preconditions is the development of vocabulary knowledge (Budak, 2000). The vocabulary, which plays an important role in conveying meaning, emerges as the biggest obstacle in conveying meaning if it is incomplete. Vocabulary is an important task in the use of basic language skills (Kocaman & Kizilkaya Cumaoglu, 2014). Korkmaz (1992) define vocabulary as "All words of a language;

the sum of the words in a person's or a community's vocabulary." Enrichment of the four basic language skills: ability to read, write, speak and listen to, ability of the individual to use these skills actively; are closely related to acquired vocabulary (Karatay, 2004). Vocabulary; affects the various dimensions of life, including reading, listening, writing and speaking skills (Ilter, 2014). Effective use of basic language skills based on understanding and narration is enhanced by rich vocabulary (Karatay, 2007). There are many ways and means of teaching vocabulary by considering the level, interests and needs of students in vocabulary teaching (Ozbay & Melanlioglu, 2008).

### **Problems in Teaching Turkish**

Teaching Turkish to foreigners, on the one hand, has increased its speed from each year since the 1990s and on the other hand, has become more important. There have been many developments in this area. But it is necessary to be aware of the existence of the problems that arise along with the developments that take place. It is important to identify these problems so that they do not stop progressing. Many studies have been carried out in the area of teaching Turkish to Turkic natives especially in the area related to the problems and solutions of these problems. With these studies, many problems have been identified at the point of teaching Turkish language skills to Turkish nobility. One of the most comprehensive works on this issue was made by Er, Bicer and Bozkirli (2012). In their study, they examined 34 issues between 1989 and 2011 in terms of the issues faced in the course of teaching Turkish to foreigners and assessed the following problems under the following headings: Inadequacy of teaching and learning tools, Problems of instructors at undergraduate and graduate level, Inadequacy of teaching curriculum, the field of Turkish language education is not divided into different branches of master sciences, Problems

arising from language characteristics of Turkish language, Inadequacy of resources that can be used in teaching Turkish as a foreign language, Problems with institutions dealing with Turkish teaching, Inadequacies in the context of education and teaching environment, Problems arising from the methods and techniques used, Problems arising from alphabet and Lack of State Policy.

Learners who are starting to learn a foreign language other than mother tongue education can encounter different voices and language characters when they start to learn a new language. This situation can cause some uneasiness in the students who are using different alphabets. It will be useful to give the pronunciation of the voices in the alphabet primarily in the lessons that foreign students are taught as a foreign language to adapt to the new alphabet (Tuncel, 2013). As an example, a student who speaks the native language Kazakh pronounce differently sounds like c, e, ğ, h, y in Turkish. These students can say the word can in the form of san; et in the form of yet, and they can make some mistakes when writing these words. As Demirel (2003) points out, especially beginner-level lessons in foreign language teaching are usually taught with pronunciations, often by teaching sounds that are problematic between the mother tongue and the target language. In the development of speech and pronunciation skills; it is given students the opportunity to repeat what they hear and bring the language elements together. However, students should be given the opportunity to express themselves, especially by their own thoughts (Abdelmadjid, 1978). In the lessons of Turkish as a foreign language, it is of utmost importance to acquire Listening and Speaking skills, correct toning and correct extraction of voices before Reading and Writing skills (Demirel, 2003).

### **Causes of Problems Faced in Learning Turkish Language**

There are a number of factors that cause students to be successful or unsuccessful during the educational period. Achievement, in its general meaning means to reach any specified goal; failure can be expressed as failure to reach that goal. It is important for individuals to succeed to know by whom the goal is determined. If the targets are determined by the individual himself, internal motivation will emerge, so that the individual is more likely to succeed. The main source of intrinsic motivation is the curiosity, interest, competence, and developmental feelings that come from within the individual, which can be a learning need (Karip, 2007).

Among the variables affecting the achievement of students in foreign language teaching, the most important ones are: teacher, student, lecture processing, environment and education system, which is composed of five factors. (Ozer & Korkmaz, 2016). For this reason, individuals should be encouraged to become psychologically willing to learn foreign language before they are taught, and individuals need to feel a need for learning (Lightbown & Nina, 2004).

Just as in all areas of life, the reasons that cause the individual to fail in foreign language learning are; the individual sometimes can be categorized as the causes of his / her own, sometimes due to the causes originating from the environment, and sometimes also from the teachers of the foreign language. The high level of internal motivation of the individual in learning a foreign language is the most important element that will help the language learner to gain the desired goal in this area (Dornyei, 2005). It is always a matter to remember that learning a foreign language is a complex and problematic area. Littlewood (2001) finds that learning foreign languages is a complex and problematic phenomenon; and that the individual

differences of learners are also involved in the language learning process. In other words, success in learning foreign languages is closely and directly related to the individual characteristics of the students. Apart from the individual differences of the students, the fact that the families, friends, schools and the environment are different, affects the achievements in a foreign language of the students.

In a study of Nikolov (1999) for students who failed to learn a foreign language, the classroom practices of the teacher are shown as the main failure of the students. It is seen as the most basic requirement that those who teach foreign languages are able to express themselves in every situation and have linguistic competence that they can understand interlocutor (Cross, 1995). The motivation of the students in the foreign language teaching, the domination of the teacher, the activities performed in the class according to the teaching principles and methods, and the variety of applications they use are the most important variables affecting student achievement positively or negatively (Engin, 2006). In the survey conducted by Donitsa-Schmidt, Inbar, and Shohamy (2004) on the achievements of a group of learners in learning Arabic, the quality of the curriculum was identified as the most important factor affecting student achievement.

In teaching Turkish to foreigners, to reach the desired level in each basic skill of the language is directly related to the knowledge of the vocabulary. The reason is, the most needed knowledge in all of the basic skills is the vocabulary of the target language. Words are building blocks of a language. Students cannot use the target language fluently, as long as they do not have as much vocabulary as they can even though they master the grammar rules. The vocabulary learning of learners in teaching Turkish as a foreign language is a phenomenon occurring at every stage of learning process. Students should be encouraged to learn and use new words continuously

while learning foreign languages. From the simplest to all the most complex requests are described with the help of words. For this reason, vocabulary teaching is considered as the basis of language teaching (Dogan, 2014). As the teaching of words with such a preliminary teaching in Turkish language teaching is not done in a systematic way, newcomers to language learning fall into many flaws, are in a time-lag, and cannot learn enough words (Kuzeci, 2007).

It is undoubtedly a great importance the detection and the presentation of solutions of these problems emerged in the teaching process of Turkish language. Identification of problems encountered and increase of studies on solution will contribute greatly to teaching Turkish language skills as a foreign language more effectively and correctly. However, one of the points that should be emphasized in determining the problems that arise and suggesting solutions is the determination of the causes of these problems. Trying to find solutions to problems that cannot be detected for some reason may not be enough to reach the full result. In this respect, it is the greatest contribution to this field to bring out the problems experienced with the areas where the students are not successful in the acquisition of Turkish language skills as a foreign language and to investigate the reasons for not achieving the desired language skills. In this section, the causes of the problems are identified in a healthy way, and those who experience the problems are among the sources to be used first. Because problems can be solved with the help of the causes of problems determined in a consistent and realistic way. This study is important in terms of helping to solve the problems by finding out the reasons of the problems experienced during the acquisition of Turkish language skills as a foreign language in Kazakhstan and solving problems by following these reasons.

### **Aim and Scope of the Study**

Kazakhstan is also an important country among the countries where Turkish as a foreign language has been realized. Because it has been almost 30 years that Turkish is taught as a foreign language in this country. As a result of these activities which have been done so long, the problems experienced in this region in Turkish teaching and their causes have become more and more evident. However, since the years have progressed and some of the troubles have changed, researches have to be repeated at this point. The thoughts of students are to be identified and uncovered. The limitations of the researches aimed at the problems experienced in the teaching of Turkish language skills and their reasons should be expanded every passing day. Because language teaching is so important and variable that it cannot left to risks. There are great efforts of both people and states on this subject. Researchers and instructors have to do the necessary work to ensure that the expectations are not wasted. Foreigners need to investigate the necessities in teaching Turkish, the elements that cause the problems of the transaction to be done after the problems are identified. The data obtained as a result of the research conducted in a correct way necessitates taking steps to eliminate the causes of the problems experienced. Therefore, the difficulties do not end with reaching the causes of the problems. The steps to be taken in order to eliminate the problems experienced in Turkish language teaching to foreigners are to identify the problems, identify the causes of the problem and to develop and implement some suggestions for the solution of these problems. The aim of the work is to find the causes of the problems that constitute the second order within the steps of development. In the study, university students who learned Turkish as a foreign language in Kazakhstan tried to reveal the causes of the problems they experienced while acquiring Turkish language skills. While these reasons were determined, students'

own opinions were applied. The ratios of the factors that lead to the problems in the direction of the obtained data were evaluated and some ideas on these reasons were carried out.

For the aim of the study, we tried to find answers to the following questions:

- a. What are the causes of the problems experienced by Kazakhstani University students in learning Turkish language?
- b. Does the causes of the problems experienced by Kazakhstani University students in learning Turkish language differ according to gender groups?

### Method

In the study, quantitative research method was used to find answers for the research questions.

The data obtained through a questionnaire was analyzed, findings were derived and conclusions and discussions were made.

### Study Group

In this research, the study group was selected using the easy-to-reach case sampling method. Yildirim and Simsek (2011) defined this method as selecting a situation that is close and easy to access by the researcher. The research was conducted with 40 students with A2 language level who were studying Turkish at a private University in Kazakhstan in 2016-2017 academic year. 26 of the respondents were male, 14 were female students. Moreover, 95% of the participants were Kazakh students. In this study, the reason for the preference of A2 level students is that they have two years of experience in learning Turkish as a foreign language at the university level in Kazakhstan. That is why, their views about the problems in learning Turkish is of great importance.

### Instrument, Data Collection and Data Analysis

A survey of 27 items and consisting four sections was asked to identify the causes of problems students face when learning Turkish as a foreign language. The four parts of the survey were related to reading, speaking, listening and writing skills of students in learning Turkish. The problems associated to each of these sections were analyzed separately. The Likert Type instrument had five options; Strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree. Where ‘1’ was assigned to strongly disagree and ‘5’ was assigned to strongly agree. The reading, speaking, listening and writing sections of the instrument consist of 7, 6, 7 and 7 items respectively. The data collection tool was prepared by examining the related literature. Besides some of the items were developed by taking the opinions of teachers working for many years in teaching Turkish to foreigners.

In order to prevent any problems in understanding the items, their Kazakh translations were also presented in the questionnaire. The research was conducted on a voluntary basis. It was stated that the identity of the students who wanted to participate in the survey would be kept confidential and it was stated that it was not necessary to specify their names. The questionnaire was prepared as a Google Document and data was collected electronically.

The collected data was initially transferred to an Excel sheet and then graphs were generated to present students' views regarding each subsection (reading, speaking, listening and writing) of the survey. Independent sample t-tests were performed to search for any gender differences in four groups of the problems.

## Findings

To determine causes of the problems regarding students' reading in Turkish seven questions were

asked. Figure 1 indicates the percentages of students' responses for the reasons of problems related to reading comprehension.

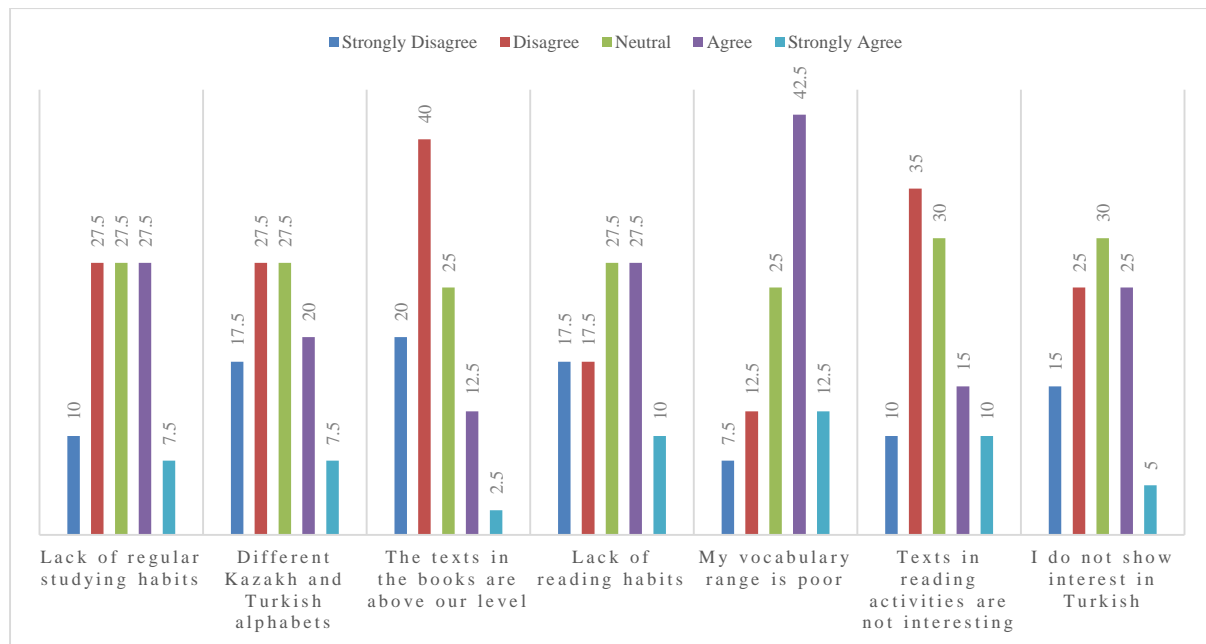


Figure 1. The causes and percentages of responses that students experience about reading comprehension

Seven questions were asked to get students' opinions about the reasons for the problems related to reading comprehension. Figure 1 shows that students generally do not strongly agree about the identified reasons. For example, only 2.5% of students think that the texts in the books are above their level (3rd item) and only 5% expressed that they do not show interest in Turkish language (7th item). On the other hand, sufficiently enough students agree that the identified causes are their sources of problems about the reading comprehension. For instance, 27.5% of the participants believe that one of the causes of their problems is the lack of regular studying habits (1st item).

However, Figure 1 shows that students generally do not have any idea about their problems with reading comprehension. In all seven identified causes,

approximately 30% of the students are neutral about the reasons why they encounter with problems in reading comprehension. It is remarkable that many students either disagree or strongly disagree with the statements about the causes of the problems they face with in reading comprehension. For example, 35% of them disagree that texts in the reading activities are not interesting (6th item). Similarly, 17.5% of them strongly disagree that difference in the Kazakh and Turkish alphabets is a cause for reading comprehension (2nd item).

Six questions were asked to participants to determine the reasons for the problems in speaking skills. Figure 1 was generated with collected data to visualize students' responses.

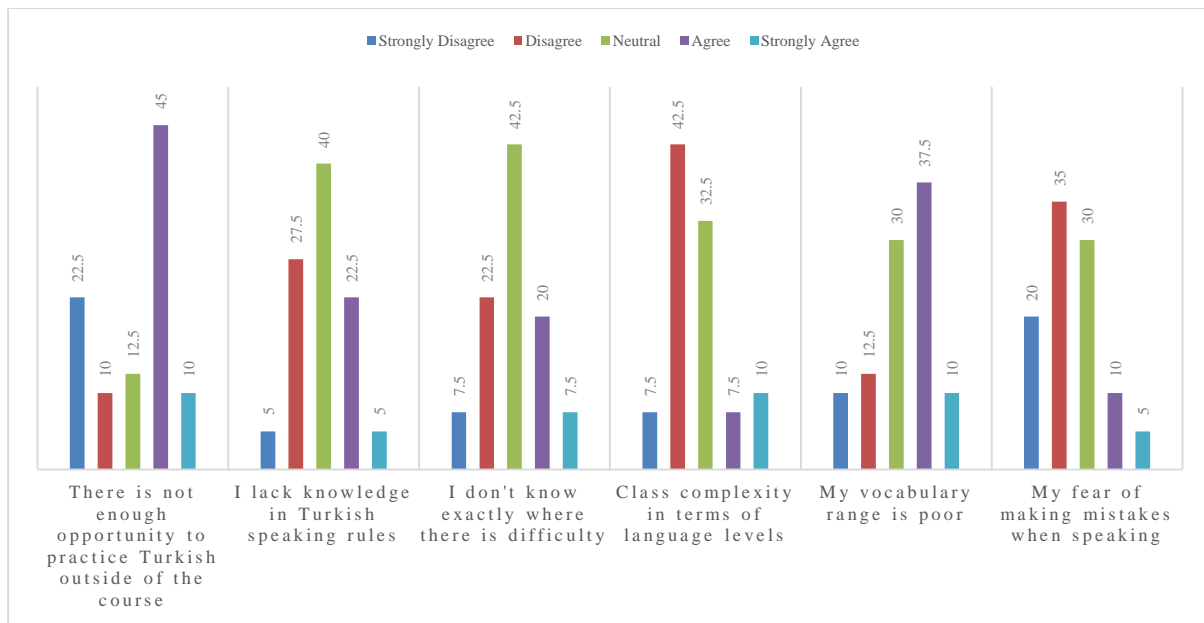


Figure 2. The causes and percentages of responses that students experience about speaking in Turkish

Figure 2 shows that students do not have extreme thoughts about the causes they see for the problems in developing their speaking skills. For example, only 5% of the students strongly disagree that they lack knowledge in Turkish speaking rules and also 5% of them strongly agree for the same cause (2nd item). Similarly, while 7.5% of students strongly disagree that complexity of the class in terms of the language levels is a cause of the problem, 10% strongly agree about the same cause. On the other hand, it is striking that 45% of the participants agree that there is not enough opportunity to practice Turkish outside the course (1st item) and 37.5% of them agree that their

Turkish vocabulary is not sufficient (5th item). It is also noteworthy to state that the rate of neutral responses is high. For instance, for the second and third items respectively 40% and 42.5% of the students stated neutral views. Finally, it is remarkable that for the fourth item 42.5% of the students disagree that their class is complex in term of language level.

Seven items were given to students to determine the causes of the problems associated with listening in Turkish. Figure 3 was constructed to present students' responses on listening skills.



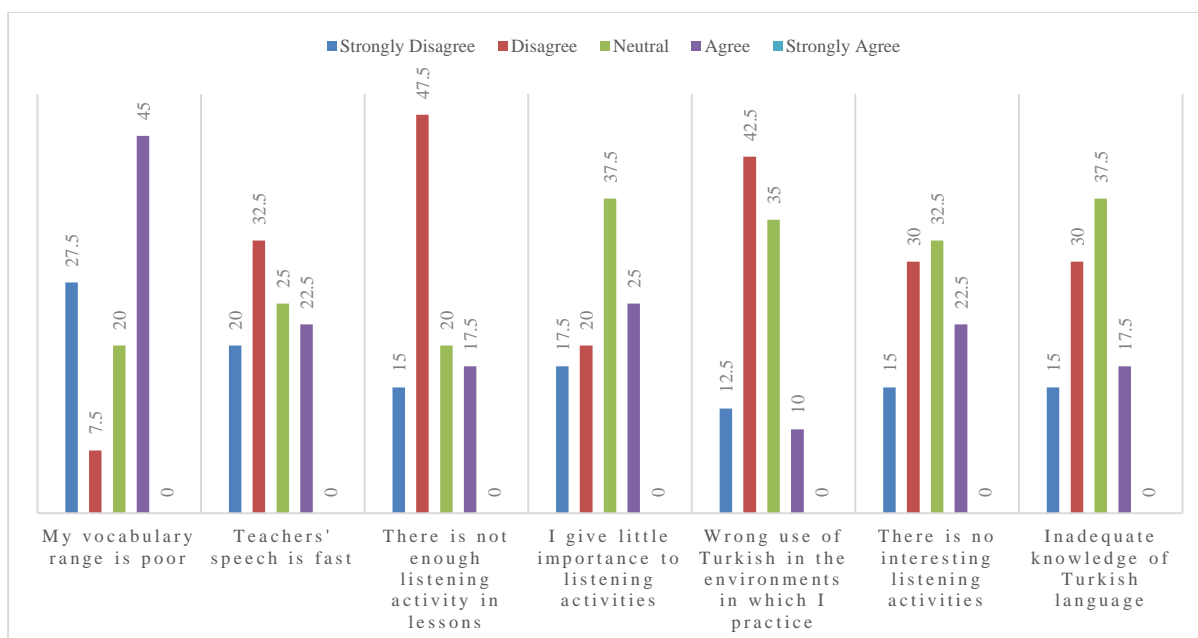


Figure 3. The causes and percentages of responses that students experience about listening in Turkish

As it is seen from Figure 3, when compared to reading and speaking, students' ideas about listening has more variability. First of all, it is striking that they do not have any strongly agree responses for any of the seven questions asked to determine the causes of listening skills. Second, the highest response for the agree option appear in the first item where 45% of students agree that their vocabulary capacity is low. Third, in second, third, fifth, sixth and seventh items students disagree that teachers speak fast during the lessons (32.5%), disagree that there is not enough listening activities during the lessons (47.5%), disagree that Turkish is wrongly used in the environment where they live (42.5%), disagree that there is no interesting listening activities (30%), and

disagree that they have inadequate knowledge of Turkish language (30%). Fourth, again the rate is high for the neutral responses. For example, it is 37.5%, 35%, and 37.5% respectively for fourth, fifth and seventh items. Finally, in the first and second items students strongly disagree that their vocabulary range in poor (27.5) and teachers speak fast (20%).

To determine the causes of the problems that students face in developing their writing skills seven questions were asked. Figure 4 is considered to reveal students' responses on their ideas about the causes of problems regarding their writing skills.

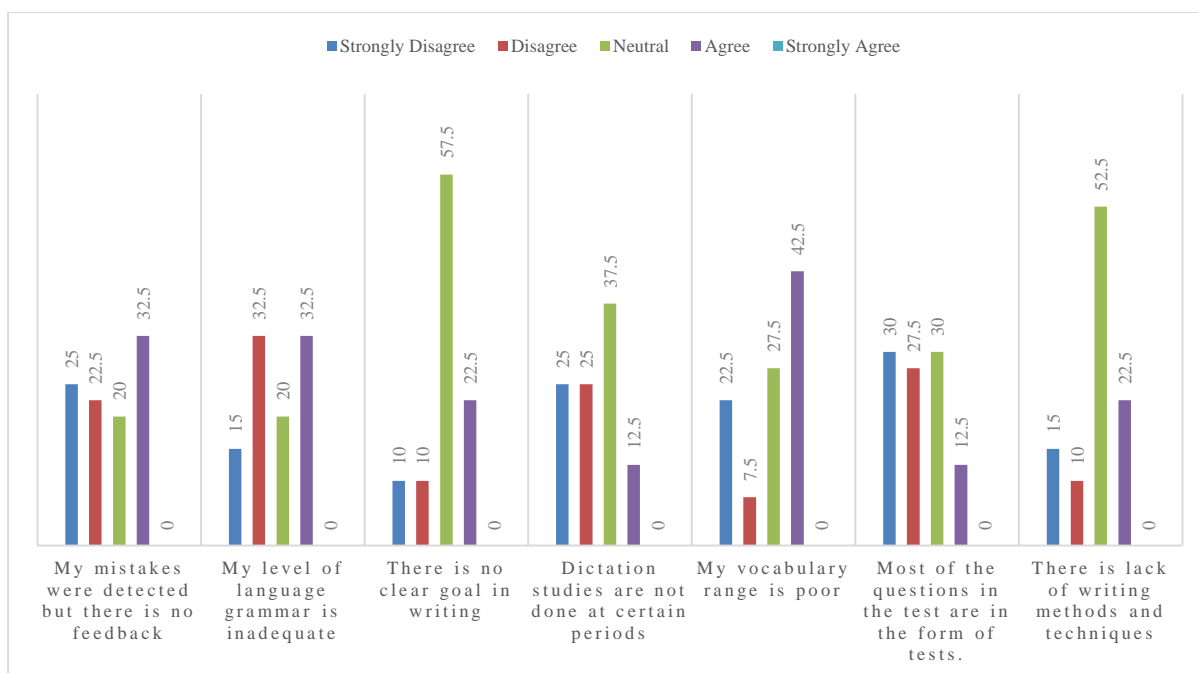


Figure 4. The causes and percentages of responses that students experience about writing in Turkish

When compared to reading, speaking, and listening, students' views regarding the causes of problems associated with writing do not vary so much. For example, for the first question the percentages for strongly disagree, disagree and neutral are 25%, 22.5% and 20% respectively. Similarly, for the sixth question percentages are 30%, 27.5%, and 30%. The biggest variation appears in the third, and the seventh questions. While 57.5% of the participants are neutral about the unclear goal of writing, only 20 percent strongly disagree and disagree to this source of problem (3rd item). Similarly, in the seventh item, while 52.5% are neutral, 22.5% agree that there is

lack of writing methods and techniques. It is also notable that in the fifth question, 42.5% of the students agree that their vocabulary capacity is insufficient.

We also looked for gender differences for the causes of the problems related to reading, speaking, listening and writing in Turkish. There were 40 participants of which 14 were female and 26 were male students. We conducted four pairs of t-tests to see gender differences associated with each section of the survey. Table 1 shows the group statistics.

Table 1  
*Group Statistics.*

	Gender	N	Mean	SD
Reading	Female	14	2.99	0.54
	Male	26	2.79	0.95
Speaking	Female	14	3.22	0.56
	Male	26	2.74	0.89
Listening	Female	14	2.93	0.31
	Male	26	2.39	0.80
Writing	Female	14	3.01	0.39
	Male	26	2.46	0.77
Total	Female	14	3.03	0.30
	Male	26	2.59	0.63

Students rated their opinions on the questions from 1 to 5 ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. As seen from Table 1 male and female averages are different for each of the reading, speaking, listening

and writing. To test if these differences are statistically significant, we conducted the t-test. Table 2 indicates independent samples test results.

Table 2.  
*Independent Samples Test*

	t	df	p	Mean Difference
Reading	.875	38	0.39	0.21
Speaking	1.819	38	0.08	0.48
Listening	3.048	38	<b>0.00</b>	0.54
Writing	2.492	38	<b>0.02</b>	0.55

As seen from Table 2 for two categories the differences between the female and male groups are statistically significant and for two categories in is not. The averages of females in all categories are higher than that of males (See Table 1). However, Table 2 shows that only for listening and writing the differences are statistically significant. This implies that there is no difference between the means of females and males regarding their views about the causes of problems in learning reading and speaking Turkish. However, for the causes of problems in learning listening and writing Turkish is significantly different for female and male students. In other words, female students are statistically in favor of the identified causes for listening and writing more than male students ( $t(38)=3.048$ ,  $p=0.00$ ;  $t(38)=2.492$ ,  $p=0.02$ ).

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

The reason for the problems encountered by cognate students who have studied Turkish at a private university in Kazakhstan is determined by this research. A student questionnaire was prepared for this purpose and data on the causes of the problems of the students in language skills were obtained. The data is collected under different headings according to four basic language skills of Turkish. Frequency distributions and percentages of students' views about the reasons for the problems related to language skills are presented as graphs.

The following results were emerged from the analyzes that were carried out. Students have definitely participated in some of the expressions about the reasons of the problems they have experienced in basic Turkish language skills (Weakness of vocabulary, lack of practicing Turkish outside the course, lack of reading habits). On the other hand, students have definitely did not participated in some of the expressions (questions were often in the form of multiple choice in exams, text books were above our level). As a result of the

graphs obtained, students were more abstained from the expressions about the causes of the problems in learning Turkish. This shows that students are indecisive towards the causes presented and show that they do not have a complete idea about the problems. In addition, the differences between the answers given by the male and female students were subjected to t-test analysis. While the reasons of the problems related to the reading and speaking skills were scored very close to each other by males and females, the other two skills, listening and writing, were found to be more strongly associated with females than males.

In this study, it was attempted to determine the causes of the problems in teaching Turkish language as a foreign language in Kazakhstan. Considering the problems encountered in the four basic language skills in teaching Turkish, the causes of these problems are tried to be revealed. In their studies named "Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language", Guzel and Barin (2016) emphasized that the importance has to be necessarily and equally be given to the four basic language skills in language teaching. If one or two of the language skills do not fully develop, students' self-expression skills and conceptual skills do not develop sufficiently (Guzel & Barin, 2016).

When the results obtained in the research are evaluated, an important reason for insufficient development of learning reading and understanding skills is the students' low vocabulary capacity.

According to Erkan (1999), not much importance is given to teaching vocabulary in Turkish education. Insufficient teaching of word distinguishing and recognition, and improving the vocabulary of the students is negatively effecting the reading instruction (Ozbay and Melanlioglu 2008). Enrichment of vocabulary must be provided so that students can express themselves better. For this reason, it is necessary to take care of the inadequacy of vocabulary in Turkish teaching.

According to Demirel (2010), the development of vocabulary is an important language feature that affects all language skills. The more developed the vocabulary in language learners, the clearer and more accurate it is to be read or listened. Increasing the number of active words used by the students depends on how they interact with the mother tongue. The development of vocabulary and increasing the number of active words used depends on the presence of effective communication, and the presence of effective communication depends on the effective use of the mother tongue (Tekin, 1980).

One of the results obtained in the research is that one of the expressions related to the reading skills (the texts in the books is above our level) is shown as the cause of the problem. As Durmuscelebi (2013) mentioned in his study, reading is a prerequisite for understanding. For this reason, the prepared texts should also be appropriate to the student level. In order to improve reading skills, the level of the text and the topic need to be in harmony with students' interests, needs, and expectations Simsek (2011). This finding is similar to the responses of students in the current study. Er (2005) states that the reader does not have enough knowledge about the cultural dimension of the target language, vocabulary and sentence structure. Reading is the activity of subtracting meaning from written symbols by the joint study of cognitive behaviors and psychomotor skills (Demirel, 2003). Other reasons for failure in reading comprehension skills are that students do not have reading habits and do not have regular course study habits. The lack of regular studying habits will cause the information from the student to be forgotten in a short time and the student will not be able to transfer his short-term knowledge to his long-term memory. On the other hand, lack of reading habits will make it difficult for one to understand what they are reading and not be able to help develop other language skills.

When the obtained data about speech skill is evaluated; with a participation rate of 55%, the students pointed out that "there is not enough Turkish practical ability outside the classroom" and stated that this situation is a problem for Turkish education. Karadag (2017) observed that, students made almost no activity or practice for their speech skills. He has found out that the students have never practiced what they have learned, because there are no opportunities to do so. As Polat (2002) has stated, one of the main difficulties faced in teaching Turkish as well as other languages as foreign languages is the development of speech skills. In order to eliminate the problems due to the preference of traditional methods, teachers should include both in-class and out-of-class activities to address students' problems with speaking.

According to Graham (2006), the lack of familiarity with the target language and the grammatical structure of the target language is a barrier to achieving the desired success of listening activities. Our results are consistent with Graham's findings. Our participants saw that lack of vocabulary as a problem of for understanding the listening activities. Another high-pitched expression in our findings was "No interesting activities related to listening". Patricia and Richard's (1988) finding is in consistent with ours: The foreign language tutor should ensure that the information that the learners get should be activated by guiding the students how to use the language outside classroom and by organizing different activities.

Our finding regarding the writing skills (lack of grammar) supports the following expression of Ozbay (1995): One of the elements that form the unity in the narratives and make expressions more successful is the rules of writing. The emphasis that people use in verbal expression is as important as tone of voice; the importance of writing rules in written

narration is exceedingly high. In his research, Stevenson (1984) stated that Chinese and Japanese children stated that those with reading disabilities made more mistakes than those without reading disabilities. Spelling errors, which are a problem of writing skills in individuals, are closely related to listening, speaking and reading from basic language skills. The reason for this is that it will be very difficult to write correctly the words that are misread, with unknown meaning or misunderstood meaning, and misunderstood when listening. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate not only the causes of spelling mistakes but also other language skills.

One of the factors that affect the language skills of the students is their knowledge of their native language. Students who have not learned their native language well have difficulty comprehending another language. Sometimes, the concepts of two languages are mixed and cause confusion of meaning. In his research, Celebi (2006) stated that in order to teach foreign language, politicians, administrator and teachers in Turkey should be well aware of their mother tongue by giving examples from the foreign words used in everyday life. With his work, Celebi demonstrated that trying to teach foreign languages without learning their native language corrupt them and their native languages. This is also the case for Kazakh students. Students who have not learned Kazakh as their mother tongue have difficulty in having Turkish language skills. In fact, in many Kazakh students, one of the reasons for the problems experienced in the language skills of Turkish is that their mother tongue level is insufficient.

The fact that there is not enough opportunity to practice Turkish other than the course, which is the most effective among the reasons given by the students regarding the speaking skills, shows that the students are trying to gain this skill only in class. Doughty and Long (2005) used the following statements: the existence and application areas of

languages are social circles. The environment in which foreign language learners live is also important in terms of the functionality of the language they learn. If students do not have the opportunity to use their language skills outside the classroom, language learning will only remain theoretical, and students' wishes for language learning will be weakened if they do not find a practical way to do what they have learned.

### **Recommendations**

When thinking that who know the problems in language learning best are the students, their thinking is very important for the solution of the problems that are experienced. In this regard, it is expected that the teachers who are teaching and who are going to teach Turkish to foreigners in Kazakhstan are expected to look at the results of this research. In this regard, new researches on different students should be continued in order to reveal the problems, causes and solutions in teaching Turkish. Here are some suggestions for the results of this study:

- More activities should be carried out to improve students' vocabulary capacity.
- Teachers should focus on speaking activities as much as possible inside and outside the classroom.
- Teaching Turkish should be in the form of practical training and students should actively involve in their learning.
- Activities should be carried out to create students' sense of study and language learning.
- The points that students often make mistakes should be identified and students should be assisted at these points.
- Problems arising in terms of language teaching should be determined in due course and great efforts should be made to ensure that the cause of problems are removed.

- Practices should be given to students to improve their four sections (reading, writing, listening and speaking) of language learning.

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#### Author Contact Information:

Cemal Özdemir  
 Faculty of Pedagogical and Humanitarian Sciences  
 Süleyman Demirel University, Kazakhstan  
 cemal.ozdemir@sdu.edu.kz

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