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**Hüsna Nur Gedikli
Serap Çakar
Handan Çelik**

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A needs analysis of high school students' English speaking and writing skills

Hüsna Nur Gedikli ✉ ORCID

Trabzon, Türkiye

Serap Çakar ✉ ORCID

Ahmet Uğur Turhan Science and Technology High School, Trabzon, Türkiye

***Handan Çelik** ✉ ORCID

Associate Professor, Department of Foreign Language Education, Fatih Faculty of Education, Trabzon University, Trabzon, Türkiye

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*Corresponding author

handanelik@gmail.com

Abstract

English language teaching maintains its importance in Türkiye, as in other countries where English is taught as a foreign language. Although changes have been made to the K-12 curricula over the years, they are required either due to the need to educate individuals who are competent to adjust to the necessities of the current era or as a response to underachievement in national and international tests. In this regard, needs analysis is a pivotal step in developing courses and curricula as it provides insight into what learners need to learn. However, majority of needs analysis studies in the Turkish context are conducted at the university level, leaving the language needs of high school students in the dark. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore English speaking and writing needs of the ninth graders studying at different school types. Employing a quantitative design through survey methodology, a needs analysis form was developed based on the thoughts and evaluations of 12 English language teachers (Çakar et al., 2023) teaching at the schools where the student surveys would be administered. Having validated the survey form through expert opinions and pilot-tested, data were collected from the participants (N=543). The results revealed that the students prioritized speaking needs over their writing needs. Moreover, students felt that their teachers' instruction of English was ineffective, and class hours, and learning environment were inadequate. The students' primary motives for learning to speak and write English included traveling or finding a good job.

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INTRODUCTION

From past to the present, developments in fields such as technology, commerce, tourism, and science have required using a common language to facilitate communication (Rao, 2019). In this regard, English which maintains its popularity and remains the most learned and taught language in the world (Kara et al., 2017) has been used as the world's lingua franca for many years at least for the last three decades (McKay, 2018). In Türkiye, as in many other EFL contexts, there is an increasing demand for English in both private and public sectors (Kara et al., 2017). English is predominantly employed within governmental and commercial contexts, particularly in written communication (Sönmez et al., 2022). Moreover, proficiency in English is seen as key to higher salaries, better career opportunities, and also for the social and economic development of the country (The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV) & British Council, 2013). Therefore, these expectations are reflected in educational policies and have given rise to some permanent changes over the years (MoNE, 2018).

Being skilled in a foreign language is considered significant by many countries worldwide, and Türkiye has never been an exception (Karakaş, 2013). Even though numerous decisions have been made in English language education, new and modern language teaching approaches have been introduced over time, and textbooks and curricula used have been improved (Solak & Bayar, 2015). In addition, altering the educational system to 4+4+4 in 2013 and beginning English instruction in the second grade indicate that the importance given to English teaching in educational policies (Gel & Kuyumcu Vardar, 2021). However, the data reported by Education First (EF) in 2023 shows that the current situation of foreign language education in Türkiye is not promising. According to the EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) report, which ranks countries as to their English skills, Türkiye ranks 66th out of 113 countries in the 'low proficiency' category. Similarly, Türkiye's performance in 2024 EF EPI places it 65th out of 116 countries/regions (EF, 2024). For this reason, investigation into the underlying causes of the problem, examination of the students' needs for learning English, and thus how to improve the teaching programs are required.

Despite the growing interest in teaching several other important elements such as cultural competence, intercultural communication skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, language education still requires comprehensive and quality teaching and practice of four basic skills: speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Furthermore, the curriculum prepared by the Ministry of National Education with regards to the principles of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) views the English language as a means of communication rather than a subject of study. It intends to establish a communicative, collaborative, productive, and dynamic learning environment where students are responsible for their learning (MoNE, 2018). Speaking and writing skills (i.e. productive skills) should be prioritized to establish the desired learning and teaching environment. However, studies revealed significant problems regarding these skills at various levels (e.g. university, adult, prospective teachers, high school). According to Tokoz-Goktepe (2014), language learners and educators widely regard speaking as the most challenging skill. There is also the "I understand, but I cannot speak" syndrome (Coşkun, 2016, p.1). Furthermore, Uztosun (2013) suggested that there is a major dilemma causing lack of competence in language skills. This dilemma is that while English teachers are expected to apply the communicative approach and enhance productive skills; however, their language assessment practices, at least until MoNE's (2023) new regulations on language assessment, have mostly covered language structure (grammar, vocabulary) and reading comprehension. Therefore, most pre-service and in-service ELT teachers indicate that learners have a major deficiency in productive skills as they have received an exam-oriented education focusing on testing such skills as grammar, reading, and vocabulary (Arslan, 2013). The students' lack of practice makes them feel insecure about making mistakes which can cause amotivation and reluctance to learn English. As reported by Ayaz et al. (2018), they feel incompetent in productive skills not only because of the pen-paper

tests that evaluate receptive skills but also overcrowded classrooms, inadequate class hours, and insufficient instructional materials.

In this regard, needs analysis is crucial to explore what learners perceive, need, lack, and want to learn. If needs are not addressed when designing language courses/programs, learning achievement is put at risk. Therefore, needs analysis is a must to ensure optimum levels of achievement. Considering these factors, there seems to be scant attention to the ninth-grade students' speaking and writing needs in Türkiye. Most studies are carried out with university-level learners (İlgör, 2019). Therefore, it is quite important to identify the needs of learners at high school level for these two vital and difficult-to-develop skills. To address this gap, the current study primarily examined English speaking and writing skills necessities, lacks, and wants of the ninth-grade students studying at high schools in Ortahisar district of Trabzon.

In this regard, answers to the following research questions are sought:

1. What are the English language writing and speaking needs of ninth-grade students?
2. What are the students' wants and motivations for learning English?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The need to set realistic goals when designing a language course (Haque, 2014) makes needs analysis a crucial step since it helps identify students' needs (Kayaoğlu & Akbaş, 2016), course goals, and the content (Macalister & Nation, 2020). Needs analysis, as one of the first few steps in course design, helps teachers and course designers to find out learners' needs, lacks, and also strengths which will help fill the gap in between what is already known and what needs to be known (Macalister & Nation, 2020). Thus, needs analysis (hereafter NA) facilitates the development of courses which are more likely to cater to learners' purposes (Fatihi, 2003). Thus, it ensures that course goals, content, teaching materials, teaching methods, and also assessment methods are compatible with each other (Haque, 2014). NA also includes wants analysis which attracts scholars' interest, despite an obvious lack of research yet. Studies examining students' wants regarding language learning highlight the role of instrumental and integrative motivation (Chemir & Kitila, 2022) and relatedness, competence, and autonomy (Xu & Qui, 2022).

Research on NA studies regarding the language skills of students at different educational levels from primary school to university level mostly highlights that learners have difficulty in acquiring language skills such as English speaking and writing skills. According to results of an NA survey conducted with 200 elementary school students, writing was the most challenging skill while speaking was the most desirable skill to learn (see Ahmetovic & Dubrovic, 2021). Similarly, the results of NA study of Mahbup (2018) which had a mixed-method research design and applied to the 32 vocational high school students and their teachers, showed that students basically needed to learn English to speak fluently and use grammar correctly. In line with the findings of Mahbup's study, in her review study related to the challenges and problems of learning English in Iranian secondary and high schools, Akbari (2015) reported that speaking fluently to express themselves in English was very difficult for Iranian learners. Overall, the results of the primary and secondary school NA studies, mostly via an NA questionnaire, are similar to each other; in this context it can be concluded that students are not at the adequate level in terms of their productive language skills.

Despite the scarcity of research examining high school students' English speaking needs in the Turkish context, those who did so reported that the students are not at the expected level in this skill. In this regard, Coşkun (2016) investigated why high school students understand English but cannot speak it. To discover the main reasons of this, he conducted a questionnaire about the potential reasons of this problem and open-ended questions to provide solutions to enhance high school students' speaking skills. Speaking anxiety, grammar-based education system, learning English through their mother tongue, and difficulties in finding a place to improve their speaking in Türkiye have been reported as some of the reasons (Coşkun, 2016). In addition, İlgör's (2019)

study showed that high school students agreed that their English proficiency, particularly in speaking, will affect their future professional decisions. The majority of NA studies shows that students are aware of the importance of speaking skills, especially in terms of their business lives. Apart from that, the paucity of studies in this area creates a gap that needs to be filled with new research.

At the university level, students' needs and desires in terms of speaking were also apparent. For instance, research showed that the skills that tourism students attached most importance in terms of their impact on their future careers were speaking and listening skills (see Aysu & Özcan, 2021). Similarly, Masdianti et al. (2024) reported that students prioritized speaking skills, with more than half expressing their desire to improve their language proficiency for professional advancement. Kayaoğlu and Akbaş (2016) also concluded that in the light of the results of the NA questionnaire that they applied to 169 university students, interacting with other people and getting high scores on their language tests were among the primary reasons for university students. Besides, speaking skills were accepted as the most crucial skills to acquire. In line with these studies' findings, the students studying in Health Sciences were found to want to be good at all four English language skills, focusing more on speaking and listening skills rather than reading and writing (Ayas & Kırkgöz, 2013). Thus, it is possible to say that the need for speaking skills is quite obvious at each grade.

In this regard, it is obvious that there is less research on writing skills than on speaking skills. However, it is significant to accept its value for developing all language skills. According to Jamoom (2021), students acknowledge the importance of writing skills for their academic work and future careers. Furthermore, Do (2023) examined the subjective and objective needs of undergraduate students in terms of their writing skills and reported that the students needed more teacher feedback and writing activities. After conducting his study with the help of an NA survey, writing test, and interviews, he suggested adding more writing tasks to the writing course could be beneficial for improving undergraduate students' writing abilities. Both Jamoom (2021) and Do (2023) emphasized that university students comprehended the value of writing abilities, but they suffered from inadequate writing assignments and teacher feedback. In this regard, Nusrat (2016) examined undergraduate students' writing needs and reported that their level was insufficient regarding writing practices. Similarly, Novariana et al. (2018) reported insufficient writing proficiency. The reasons for this were divided into internal and external factors. While low motivation for language learning and difficulty in forming words and sentences were mentioned as internal problems, external problems were the lack of sufficient feedback and insufficient writing practice (Novariana et al., 2018). Besides, quality, adequacy, suitability of writing activities and feedback given by the teacher also matters for writing skills (see Nusrat, 2016). Studies also report inadequate language proficiency levels. For instance, Beyhan and Aljaafil (2022) reported a distinct gap was detected between the target level and the current level of the learners studying at general English classes (Aljaafil & Beyhan, 2022).

The communicative language teaching method has raised the value placed on writing skills (Weigle, 2002). Despite the need to understand if and to what extent students are competent in their writing skills and what they need to attain certain levels of proficiency in writing, studies examining writing language needs of students are quite limited. As stated, not many studies have been found in the literature on the English writing skills of high school students. This indicates that it is necessary to conduct more research on their English writing needs to explore their weaknesses and strengths.

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design and purpose

This study examined the speaking and writing skills needs of ninth-grade students studying at various types of high schools ($N=19$) in the Ortahisar district of Trabzon. The NA included a

closer investigation of necessities, wants, and lacks. To fulfil the research purpose, survey methodology was employed, as it is the most effective way to reach out to a greater number of respondents in a relatively shorter time and strengthen the validity of the results. Therefore, quantitative method was used to collect self-reported data. Acknowledging the potential methodological constraints such as self-report bias, survey methodology provided a valuable means of collecting information extensively and addressing the research questions. Before the data collection phase, the necessary permissions were obtained from Trabzon University's Board of Research and Publication Ethics (Report no: 2022-12/1.11). The participation was voluntary. Random sampling technique was used to gather the data. The students were also informed about the purpose of the study in advance. Any information which could identify the participants was not collected and data kept confidential by the researchers.

3.2. Instrumentation

The data for the study were collected through an NA questionnaire form. The questionnaire was developed as a result of semi-structured interviews with 12 English teachers working in different schools (Çakar et al., 2023). A semi-structured interview consisting of seven main questions was conducted with 12 experienced English teachers instructing ninth-grade classes in eight schools. It covered the students' wants, needs, lacks, and teachers' suggestions for improving students' English speaking and writing skills. In addition to the interviews, relevant literature and expert opinions were also born in mind during the NA development.

After developing the form, it was sent for expert opinion to four experienced teachers and researchers having NA studies experience. Accordingly, the form was revised and redefined the form. It was suggested to give "*prefer not to say*" as an option for gender. Upon suggestions, a question to find out whether students use digital tools/applications to learn English was also included. In addition, some items were added, such as grammar coursebooks, online platforms, self-study, and digital/artificial intelligence tools to the sections asking the respondents how they want to learn writing, speaking, grammar, and vocabulary.

A pilot test was conducted with 10 students who were given 20 minutes to complete the test. Subsequently, they stated that the items were generally clear and understandable. However, it was observed that students were confused about the definition of *need* while answering the questions. For this reason, sample statements were added to the sections where the needs for writing and speaking skills were identified. The option '*other*' into the survey's 'wants' section, to allow participants to provide additional the answers of their own was integrated into the survey. After the form was finalized, it was administered to the students via Google Docs. In this process, assistance of teachers and administrators was received to share survey links through WhatsApp groups and remind the students to complete them. Some schools permitted us to notify the participants in person, whereas others chose to manage the process internally. To ensure anonymity, the students were informed that their responses would be kept confidential and would not be shared with anyone other than the researchers involved in this study.

3.3. Participants and context

The data was collected from the students ($N=543$) studying at inner-city high schools ($N=19$). The research sample is the ninth-grade students studying at high schools in the Ortahisar district of Trabzon. The type of high schools chosen for this study were Anatolian high schools, Multi-program high schools, Social Science high school, Anatolian Imam Hatip high schools, Vocational and Technical Anatolian high schools.

Table 1. Schools' information

School type	School	Participants
	School A	60

Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School / Multi-program Anatolian High School	School B	33
	School C	30
	School D	30
	School E	9
	School F	9
	School G	8
	School H	8
	School I	1
Anatolian High School	School J	82
	School K	74
	School L	43
	School M	22
	School N	9
	School O	7
	School P	7
	School Q	1
Social Sciences High School	School R	98
Science High School	School S	12

The great majority of the students ($n = 98$) study at social sciences high school. The number of female students ($n = 340$) is higher than that of male students ($n = 189$). The ages of the participants ranged from 14 to 17 (see Table 2).

Table 2. Participants' information

Variable	Category	N
Gender	Female	340
	Male	189
	Prefer not to say	14
Age	14	140
	15	328
	16	68
	17	4
Duration of learning English	Kindergarten	35
	First Grade	70
	Second Grade	315
	Third Grade	70
	Fourth Grade	33
	Middle School	20
Foreign language education support outside of school	Yes	50
	No	493
Use of digital tools/applications to improve foreign language	Yes	252
	No	291

Besides the aforementioned issues, to further explore who the participants are, some other questions were asked to them such as how long they have been learning English which revealed that a great majority (58%) started learning English in the second grade. Besides, almost all, except for a small portion (9.2 %), indicated that they did not receive any extra foreign language education courses outside of school. Besides, more than half reported not to use any digital tools or applications to develop their language skills.

To obtain more about who they are, some items were given on an agree-disagree likert and asked them to tell us more about their language-learning selves. Table 3 presents the details.

Table 3. Students' perceptions about learning English

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. I can easily express my thoughts in Turkish in written form.	4.10	0.91
2. I can easily express my thoughts orally in Turkish.	3.97	1.01
3. I have knowledge of Turkish grammar (tenses, conjunctions, etc.).	3.62	0.94
4. I am confident in learning English.	3.59	1.10
5. I think that what I learned in primary and secondary school benefited me.	3.32	1.30
6. I think that the topics covered in the English classes are interesting.	2.98	1.17
7. I think that English class hours per week are enough to improve my English writing skills.	2.90	1.14
8. I think that English class hours per week are enough to improve my English speaking skills.	2.83	1.19
9. I think English is a difficult language.	2.68	1.12

As learners' native language competence, in particular grammar knowledge, impacts their acquisition and proficiency in a foreign language, two items were included, regarding Turkish which revealed higher mean values. For instance, the students agreed that they easily express their thoughts using their mother tongue in written form ($M = 4.10$) and spoken form ($M = 3.97$). However, they seemed to be unsure of having knowledge of Turkish grammar. Besides, they were neutral regarding if they were interested in improving their English-speaking skills ($M = 3.64$) which was revealed to be stronger in terms of writing skills ($M = 3.48$). Additionally, the students were also neutral regarding learning English ($M = 3.59$). On the other hand, majority seemed to disagree with the idea that English is a difficult language to learn ($M = 2.68$).

Lastly, they were asked if they were interested in developing their speaking and writing skills. As for the writing skills, a great majority was either partially interested ($n = 165$) or interested ($n = 166$). As for the speaking skills, similar number of students ($n = 169$) were interested in developing their speaking skills, while a small portion ($n = 29$) stated they were not interested at all.

3.4. Data analysis

The data obtained from the NA questionnaire was analyzed using SPSS. Means, standard deviations, and frequencies were calculated for descriptive analysis. Inferential statistics were employed to see if there is any significant difference between the respondents' needs, wants, and lacks in speaking and writing skills.

FINDINGS

The ninth-grade students' English language needs of writing and speaking skills

The study aimed to examine the needs of the ninth-grade students for English speaking and writing skills. The first part of the questionnaire included 15 items to explore speaking skills needs. The Likert ranged from "I always need" to "I don't need at all". The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The Students' perceptions regarding their English speaking skills needs

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Choosing appropriate words while speaking English...	3.54	1.15

2.	Teachers who can provide learning environments where I can acquire and improve my speaking skills...	3.46	1.31
3.	Thinking in Turkish before speaking in English...	3.37	1.11
4.	A classroom environment where I can comfortably express myself (no laughing at mistakes etc.)...	3.35	1.44
5.	Pronouncing words correctly while speaking English...	3.30	1.23
6.	Being able to talk sufficiently while travel abroad (communicating easily at the airport, asking for directions, using transportation vehicles, etc.)...	3.29	1.42
7.	Choosing the appropriate grammatical structure while speaking English.	3.24	1.18
8.	To verbally express my opinions on current issues...	3.12	1.25
9.	Doing speaking activities in English classes...	3.12	1.24
10.	Using what I learned in English class in everyday life (communicating with foreign friends or people in English)...	3.12	1.33
11.	Pronouncing English sounds (like 'w' and 'v') correctly...	2.99	1.39
12.	To participate in activities that require me to speak English...	2.94	1.24
13.	To orally explain important topics related to the local culture (describing the food, explaining about the touristic places, etc.)...	2.85	1.25
14.	Introducing myself comfortably in English...	2.68	1.12
15.	To introduce my school to a foreigner who comes to my school (with Erasmus etc. exchange programs)...	2.53	1.34
Total		3.13	79

The overall mean value of their speaking skills indicates that they occasionally needed to speak English, but their needs were stronger with regard to choosing appropriate words ($M = 3.54$). Besides, a similarly perceived need was for encouraging teachers who could provide a classroom environment where the students acquire and improve their speaking skills ($M = 3.46$). Another reflection of that situation can be seen in item 8 which showed that the students almost equally ($M = 3.35$) needed a comfortable classroom environment. They also needed to think in Turkish before speaking English ($M = 3.37$). Similarly, the students are also occasionally required to introduce themselves confidently in English. Their speaking skills needs regarding pronouncing words correctly while speaking English ($M = 3.30$), being able to talk sufficiently while traveling abroad ($M = 3.29$), and choosing appropriate grammatical structures while speaking English ($M = 3.24$) were also moderately felt.

On the other hand, the students hold relatively weaker needs perceptions regarding explaining important topics related to local culture ($M = 2.85$), pronouncing English sounds like *w* and *v* correctly ($M = 2.99$), or introducing their school to a foreign (exchange) visitor ($M = 2.53$).

Table 5. The students' wants regarding how to learn to speak in English

		<i>f</i>	%
a.	By talking with my foreign friends	258	47,5
b.	With question and answer activities	257	47,3
c.	With online games and activities	244	44,9
d.	With group speaking activities	234	43,1
e.	Studying by myself	198	36,5
f.	Making presentations on topics of my choice	175	32,2
g.	With pair work activities	169	31,1
h.	With drama activities	163	30
i.	With extracurricular activities	158	29,1
j.	Through digital/artificial intelligence tools (Chatgpt, ai voices, etc.)	141	26
k.	Online platforms (Cambly, Busuu, etc.)	130	23,9
l.	Making presentations on topics of my teacher's choice	129	23,8
m.	Using source books	129	23,8
n.	Other	17	3,1

The students' responses to the options regarding how they wanted to learn to speak revealed that almost half were interested in talking to their friends from other countries (47.5%). Moreover, they stated that they wanted to learn to speak via question-and-answer activities (47.3%). As digital natives, they desired to use online games and activities as a part of the speaking learning process (44.9%). They also considered group speaking activities as good ways to practice their speaking skills (43.1%). However, a relatively small sample perceived making presentations on topics of their teachers' choice and using sourcebooks (23.8%) less favorable for learning to speak English. In addition, digital teaching resources such as Cambly and Busuu were not preferred for learning speaking skills (23.9%). This can be due to inadequate knowledge about such platforms. The use of digital/artificial intelligence tools was also among those relatively less favorable ones. Those choosing *other* noted that they wanted to learn to speak English through TV series and mirror technique (3.1%).

Student topic selection for speaking, as presented in Table 6, showed that music, their personal lives, social media, sport, technology, and video games were most frequently preferred. History, their local culture, the culture of foreign countries, and dance were among relatively less favorable ones. Those selecting *other* preferred to speak about movies, series, books and hobbies.

Table 6. The topics students want to speak about

		<i>f</i>	%
a.	Music	291	53,6
b.	My life	264	48,6
c.	Social Media	253	46,6
d.	Sport	236	43,5
e.	Technology	197	36,3
f.	Video Games	197	36,3
g.	History	158	29,1
h.	My local culture	152	28
i.	The culture of foreign countries	150	27,6
j.	Dance	132	24,3
k.	Other	12	2,2

Additionally, their perceptions regarding writing skills were found out through a 13-item sub-section ranging from a 5-point Likert of “I always need” to “I don't need at all”. The students were found to hold quite similar writing skills needs ($M = 3.14$) perceptions indicating they occasionally needed writing skills.

Table 7. The students’ perceptions regarding their English writing skills needs

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Using appropriate words while writing in English...	3.49	1.16
2. Teachers who can provide learning environments where I can acquire and improve my writing skills...	3.38	1.31
3. Using appropriate grammatical structure while writing in English	3.34	1.21
4. Writing the words accurately...	3.31	1.28
5. To coherently connect what I express by writing...	3.21	1.22
6. To form an English sentence accurately and fully with all its elements (SVO/Subject, verb, object)...	3.20	1.22
7. Using my creativity while writing in English...	3.17	1.22
8. To a sample text when writing something in English...	3.10	1.22
9. Brainstorming before writing a text in English...	3.08	1.26
10. To prepare a draft according to the text type I will write...	3.02	1.26
11. To write about the important topics related to the local culture (describing the food, explaining about the touristic places, etc.)...	2.87	1.22
12. To express my ideas on current issues (sports, art, news, etc.) in writing...	2.87	1.25
13. Writing a paragraph to introduce myself...	2.78	1.20
Total	3.14	83

Most of them needed to use appropriate words while writing in English ($M = 3.49$). Moreover, they need a teacher who can create learning environments where they can acquire and improve their writing skills ($M=3.38$). Using appropriate grammatical structures while writing ($M=3.34$) was also occasionally needed. Correct use of words ($M = 3.31$) and being able to coherently connect their ideas while writing ($M = 3.31$) were almost equally perceived as a need.

However, the students held slightly weaker needs perceptions regarding writing about topics related to local culture and expressing their ideas on current issues ($M = 2.87$ for both) and writing a paragraph introducing themselves ($M = 2.78$).

Apart from their writing needs, they were also asked how they wanted to write. They were provided with various options among which they would choose as many as possible. Table 8 presents the results.

Table 8. The students’ wants regarding how to learn to write in English

	<i>f</i>	%
a. By using sample texts	298	54,9
b. With individual writing activities	256	47,1
c. With creative writing activities	251	46,2
d. By receiving feedback from my teachers about my writings	232	42,7
e. With online games and activities	226	41,6
f. With group writing activities	226	41,6
g. Through writing activities supported by images	218	40,1
h. By choosing the topics I will write about	195	35,9
i. Studying by myself	185	34,1
i. With pair work activities	162	29,8
j. By writing about the topics assigned by the teachers	152	28
k. By receiving feedback from my classmates about my writings	149	27,4
l. By using grammar coursebooks	149	27,4
m. Online platforms (Cambly, Busuu, etc.)	134	24,7
n. Through digital/artificial intelligence tools (Chatgpt, ai voices, etc.)	110	20,3
o. Other	31	5,7

As the table shows, more than half wanted to learn to write in English using sample texts (54.9%). Individual writing activities (47.1%), creative writing activities (46.2%), receiving feedback from their teacher (42.7%) and online games and activities, and group writing activities (41.6% for both) were among the most favourable ones. These results showed that the students mostly preferred guided and modelled writing because more than half of them stated they needed a sample text to start writing in English. Moreover, it can be concluded that students wanted to write more creative articles rather than classical ones. They also attached great importance to the feedback they receive from the teacher regarding writing. On the other hand, using digital/artificial intelligence tools (20.3%) and online platforms such as Cambly and Busuu (24.7%), and grammar coursebooks (27.4%) were among the relatively less favourable ones.

As for the topics they wanted to write about, music (51.2%), writing about their own lives (47.7%), social media (42.9%) and sports (40.5%) emerged as the most prevalent choices. Moreover, they also desired to share something about their lives through writing in English. On the other hand, history (28%), dance (22.1%), and local culture (26.7%) were relatively less favored topics. Others who choose *other* stated that they wanted to write about social problems, video games, movies, TV series, motivation, discipline, etc.

Table 9. The topics students like to write about

	<i>f</i>	%
a. Music	278	51,2
b. My life	259	47,7
c. Social Media	233	42,9
d. Sport	220	40,5
e. Video Games	201	37
f. The culture of foreign countries	176	32,4
g. Technology	174	32
h. History	152	28

i.	My local culture	145	26,7
j.	Dance	120	22,1
k.	Other	78	14,4

The students' wants and motivations for learning English

The students' wants about learning English were also analyzed. Five items on a 5-point Likert of strongly agree to strongly disagree were given to them. The students agreed that they were willing to learn English ($M = 3.80$) despite hesitation to express themselves in English classes ($M = 2.90$). They did not consider that they were biased towards learning English and did not seem to consider that being judged by their friends when they made mistakes affected them negatively (see Table 10).

Table 10. The students' wants and motivations regarding learning English

		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1.	I am willing to learn English.	3.80	1.28
2.	I hesitate to express myself in English classes.	2.90	1.34
3.	Being judged (by my friends, etc.) for my mistakes in English class affects me negatively.	2.85	1.47
4.	I get bored in English lessons.	2.66	1.27
5.	I am biased towards learning English.	1.96	1.15

As for their reasons for learning English (see Table 11), 9-items ranging on a 5-point Likert of strongly agree to strongly disagree were given. The results showed that they agreed to use English in their professional careers ($M = 4.07$) and thought that they would need English in their academic lives ($M = 3.97$). In addition, they wanted to learn English to understand English songs and movies ($M = 3.86$) and to communicate with foreigners ($M = 3.85$). Understanding games more easily ($M = 3.61$) and going abroad ($M = 3.75$) were among some other reasons why the students wanted to learn English.

Table 11. The students' reasons for learning English

		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1.	To use in my professional career.	4.07	1.20
2.	As I think I will need it in my academic life (university etc.).	3.97	1.22
3.	To understand English songs and movies.	3.86	1.28
4.	To communicate with foreigners	3.85	1.24
5.	To go abroad.	3.75	1.29
6.	To understand English games more easily.	3.61	1.33
7.	To keep up with the current issues in the world	3.50	1.36
8.	To read books in English.	3.39	1.41
9.	To pass the English language exams at school.	3.30	1.37

As the two core skills for proficient and competent use of speaking and writing skills, the students were asked how they wanted to learn vocabulary and grammar.

Table 12. The students' wants regarding vocabulary learning

	f	%
a. With TV series and movie clips	402	74
b. Through social media	354	65,2
c. With online games and activities	311	57,3
d. By learning words with their English meanings	260	47,9
e. Through reading texts (stories, newspaper and magazine, etc.)	258	47,5
f. Through listening texts (songs, etc.)	222	40,9
g. Using word lists	212	39
h. Studying by myself	206	37,9
i. With presentations supported by images	190	35
j. By using word cards	165	30,4
k. With the help of Web 2 tools (kahoot, quizizz, wordwall, etc.)	159	29,3
l. Online platforms (Cambly, Busuu etc.)	158	29,1
m. Through digital/artificial intelligence tools (Chatgpt, ai voices, etc.)	149	27,4
n. By using grammar coursebooks	132	24,3
o. With activities organized in the form of competitions	129	23,8
p. Other: with songs, mirror technique, and video games ect.	8	1,5

As seen, a great majority of the students wanted to learn vocabulary via TV series and movie clips (74%), which is followed by social media (65.2%), online games and activities (57.3%). Results suggest that students are highly influenced by the digital age they live in and popular activities that dominate this age, such as playing online games, using social media, and watching TV series. Along with these activities, the students were also willing to learn English by learning words with their English meanings (47.9%) and with the help of the reading texts (47.5%). When it comes to the least favoured activities, competition activities (23.8%) and grammar coursebooks (24.3%) were the answers with the lowest percentages. The results also demonstrated that competition activities aiming to teach vocabulary did not attract their attention.

Table 13. The students' wants regarding grammar learning

	f	%
a. With TV series and movie clips	364	67
b. Through social media	312	57,5
c. With presentations supported by images	261	48,1
d. With online games and activities	260	47,9
e. Through listening texts (songs, etc.)	258	47,5
f. Through reading texts (stories, newspaper and magazine, etc.)	245	45,1
g. Studying by myself	202	37,2
h. Through worksheets	191	35,2
i. By learning the rules directly	184	33,9
j. By using grammar coursebooks	154	28,4
k. Online platforms (Cambly, Busuu etc.)	144	26,5
l. With the help of Web 2 tools (kahoot, quizizz, wordwall, etc.)	142	26,2
m. Through digital/artificial intelligence tools (Chatgpt, ai voices, etc.)	132	24,3

n.	With activities organized in the form of competitions	127	23,4
o.	Other	35	6,4

The findings regarding how the students wanted to learn grammar showed that TV series and movie clips have the highest percentages (67%). While social media is the second most favoured option (57.5%), learning grammar through online games (47.9%) and listening texts (47.5%) are other popular answers. Thus, it can be said that the preferences of the students are similar to each other in terms of learning grammar and vocabulary. However, one of the least preferred items is the use of artificial intelligence in grammar learning (24.3%). Although artificial intelligence is quite popular nowadays, the students may not have enough knowledge about using artificial intelligence.

DISCUSSION

The current NA study aimed to identify the necessities, lacks, and wants of ninth-grade students. A further rationale for conducting the study was lack of research investigating speaking and writing skills needs of high school students within the Turkish education context. As the EF report suggests, although many changes have been made in the English course program over the years, it can be observed that the success of English courses in Türkiye is still not at the desired level. To effectively address this issue, students should be involved in the curriculum design process. Upon this, Civriz and Burakgazi's (2021) study provides valuable insights into the expectations of the ninth-grade students. Their findings suggest a significant desire for a more communicative and interactive approach to learning, with a particular emphasis on English language acquisition. Based on the findings of previous studies, it is evident that students encounter challenges in acquiring all four language skills, particularly in speaking. Despite these difficulties, it is shown that there is a strong tendency among students to improve their speaking skills. The primary objective of the present study is to examine the students' needs, wants and lacks in the context of two productive skills: speaking and writing.

The results of the current research reveal that students almost equally need both speaking and writing skills. The related body of research also has findings in the same direction. For instance, Mahbup's study (2018) with vocational high school students discovered that their main motivation for learning English was to speak fluently. Furthermore, İlğör's study (2019) with Anatolian high school students found that speaking was viewed as the most essential skill to learn. The findings align with those of previous research which consistently identified English speaking skills as the most essential competency among students (Ahmetovic & Dubravac, 2021; Aljaafil & Beyhan, 2022; Ayas & Kırkgöz, 2013; Aysu & Özcan, 2021; Kayaoğlu & Akbaş, 2016; Qui & Xu, 2022). On the other hand, students thought that English class hours in schools were insufficient. Considering the students agreed upon this point, increasing class hours may be a solution which can contribute to the development of students' language skills. Additionally, the item results regarding their native language skills indicated that students believe they can express themselves properly using their native language.

The findings also highlight the necessity for teachers to provide their students with an effective learning environment to improve their speaking skills. The problems related to the learning environments are also indicated by other studies in Türkiye and other countries (Coşkun, 2016; Göktepe-Tokoz, 2014; Qui & Xu, 2022). On the other hand, students' reported needs for correct word use in both writing and speaking skills. Similar to the results of Göktepe-Tokoz's study, students expressed a common need for guidance in word selection for speaking English. The guidance of language teachers plays a vital role in students' learning and development. For instance, a teacher should be a model and guide to develop their language skills. Creating a

supportive classroom climate and addressing individual needs can be a solution for previously discussed problems.

The results of the study are also compatible with some other studies in the literature concerning students' writing skills. Similar to the study conducted by Novarian et al. (2018), the students have difficulty in forming words and sentences correctly. Therefore, the importance of teacher feedback and making writing practices organized and systematic were also pointed out in the research of Novarian et al. (2018). Besides, the students expressed a need to choose proper grammatical structures. Another factor that can be noted is that the majority of students were willing to learn English and had great motivation. Students were also aware that they needed English for their professional and academic careers. This case can be the reason behind their motivation to learn English. Furthermore, it is possible to say that students wanted to learn English especially to understand movies and songs, to communicate with foreigners, and to go abroad. This may be attributed to the influence of popular culture and social media. It appears that they are intrinsically motivated to engage in language learning, which facilitates the development of self-directed learners.

The present study reveals that the students' principal motive for learning English, when their wants and motivations are taken into account, is for future career and professional purposes. While some prior studies emphasized test scores and social interaction with foreigners as primary motivators for language learning, the current study shows their willingness to become competent in English for their future academic pursuits rather than just passing tests at school. Similarly, research previously mentioned showed that students from different school levels thought English as a cornerstone for their professional lives and career paths (İlgör, 2019; Jamoom, 2021; Kayaoğlu & Akbaş, 2016). It was emphasized that they were aware of the importance of being proficient in productive skills. Moreover, majority of the students stated that they were eager to learn English without any prejudices against it. Additionally, they also had self-confidence as most of them were not hesitant to express themselves during English classes. However, research reports that high school students lack confidence in their writing skills and are unwilling to improve their English proficiency (see Öztürk, 2010). Furthermore, another significant finding was the students' desire to interact with people from diverse cultures worldwide by using both speaking and writing skills, primarily motivated to go abroad. They were also eager to learn English to understand songs, movies, and games without subtitles.

In the current study, the students were asked to share their thoughts on what they would like to learn in terms of grammar, vocabulary, speaking, and writing. Most students expressed their desire to acquire vocabulary and grammar via TV shows, movie clips, social media, online games and activities. This data suggests that the students favor informal and technology-based learning more. Therefore, teachers must incorporate these media into their lessons and design the materials according to students' preferences. Additionally, they prefer to learn English vocabulary by their English meanings rather than Turkish explanations. It can be said that there might be a shift away from translation-related methods. For that reason, various techniques that foster conceptual understanding through authentic, visualized materials and real-life scenarios should be integrated into the lessons. Reading texts such as stories, newspapers and magazines were considered an effective way to receive vocabulary knowledge by the majority. On the contrary, listening texts (e.g. songs) were preferable to reading texts for improving English grammar proficiency. On the other hand, they were not keen to participate in competitive activities to enhance their grammar and vocabulary skills. Besides, the use of digital/artificial intelligence (AI) tools, online platforms, and grammar coursebooks was not favoured to learn and study English. This situation might be attributed to their limited knowledge of these tools.

When the students were asked how they wanted to learn to write in English, they liked guided activities such as using sample texts rather than free writing activities. In addition, they preferred to work individually. As for speaking skills, interacting with other people from foreign countries was chosen by nearly half of the students which motivated them to learn English. Furthermore, the majority demonstrated a preference for question & answer sessions over drama activities where they could be creative and interact with their classmates. The results of students' wants regarding speaking and writing showed that they valued being autonomous during the topic selection process instead of following the teacher's suggested topics. Moreover, their topic selection for speaking and writing revealed a preference for sports, social media, music, and personal experiences.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The main purpose of the present study was to find out the speaking and writing skills needs of the ninth graders. In this regard, a 55-item questionnaire was developed via interviews conducted with the teachers in eight different schools. 543 students from 19 high schools responded to the questionnaire. The results revealed that although speaking and writing skills are addressed in language teaching, the students are not able to fully learn and develop them. The English instruction provided by their teachers, as well as class hours and learning environment, are deemed inadequate by the students. The reasons for this situation may be that teachers did not give the necessary importance to speaking and writing skills, and the course materials used were insufficient to improve these skills. It is evident from the students' responses that they have difficulty in finding out the correct word and using grammar correctly while speaking and writing in English. The primary cause of this might be that the students do not have the opportunity to practice their English outside of the classroom and enhance these skills within the current classroom setting.

Besides, the students need both skills almost equally, indicating the close link between oral and written communication. Furthermore, their primary reasons for acquiring English are to use the language for academic and professional purposes, besides traveling and communicating with foreigners. This situation shows that students are motivated to learn English and aware that they need English in every aspect of their lives. When students were asked how they wanted to learn English, they mostly preferred music, TV series and movie clips, social media, online games, and activities. In this respect, teachers should integrate these types of activities more into their lessons. It can both motivate them and enhance their participation. Apart from this, instead of using old teaching methods such as the grammar-translation method in lessons, teachers should include teaching methods that serve the students' needs, wants and motivations, such as the task-based teaching method. As can be seen from the results of the current research students do not prefer to learn grammar through coursebooks. It is also critical to note that the curriculum does not address the fact that students' needs differ as to their school types. Using the same curriculum for science high schools and vocational high schools can also be seen as another factor for inadequate achievement in these two skills. Lastly, implementing different curricula in schools with substantial level differences can positively affect this process.

The present study has some limitations. It mainly focuses on the ninth-grade students attending various types of high schools. Due to the limited geographic and demographic scope, it may not apply to other regions, educational levels and school types. Considering this specific district, demographic information of targeted participants and their families might be crucial factors affecting their language learning needs. Therefore, the unique socio-economic characteristics of Ortahisar may contribute to the study outcomes. Considering the data, few participants began English learning at an early age as kindergarten, and most did not get any support outside of the classroom. Additionally, restricted access to resources can potentially have a substantial impact on

the educational process. This can be attributed to socio-economic status of that community. For further research, it is recommended to address these factors and their influence on English learners' language needs. The current study mainly focuses on productive skills of the ninth-grade students. While it provides valuable insights into productive skills, it is necessary to acknowledge that excluding receptive skills (i.e. listening and reading) restricts a comprehensive view of the participants' language needs. Therefore, future studies should concentrate on receptive skills to investigate the interplay between the language skills, exploring how speaking and writing skills may affect the improvement of reading and listening abilities. As all four language skills complement one another, it is significant to consider them as a whole for effective language acquisition. Moreover, it is possible to recommend that there should be more participants and an equally distributed sample size to compare the differences between school types. Other than that, the impact of teachers' perspectives and the quality of instructional materials on students' speaking and writing skills have not been extensively investigated. It is crucial to mention these factors for more valid results. Last, but not least, it is possible to say that there is a need for more empirical studies with ninth-grade students to fully capture their actual needs, lacks, and motives. Even if employing surveys is a user-friendly technique for many researchers, interviews or focus group discussions should also be done for further studies to support quantitative data. This can enhance the reliability and validity of their research. All in all, the present study might guide policymakers, educators, and other educational stakeholders to create successful teaching environments by including the students in their learning process. Getting informed about the needs of a specific group before planning a course or a program can be vital to shape the design and reach the specific goals.

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