An Action Research to Enrich Teaching-Learning Processes in EFL Settings

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This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of enriched teaching-learning processes designed to address the objectives of the English as a foreign language curriculum. In this action research study, the teacher-researcher designed teaching-learning processes that meet the objectives of the 9th grade English curriculum to enhance students' learning levels. In line with the nature of action research, both qualitative and quantitative data were employed. Three classes of equal/similar nature in a high school were selected as two action research groups and one control group. While the quantitative data were analyzed using analysis of covariance, the qualitative data were analyzed using descriptive analysis. The results showed that there was a significant difference between the groups in the post-test in the skills of listening, speaking and writing in favor of the action research groups. There was no statistically significant difference between the groups in reading skills. The teacher journal indicated that the teaching-learning processes were mostly appropriate for teaching English in EFL environments. The results point to that the teaching-learning processes used in the study had a significant impact on students' academic self-concept and academic achievement levels, highlighting the importance of high-quality instruction. It also revealed that teachers should be aware of the level and needs of their students and align the teaching-learning processes with the curriculum by designing their own teaching-learning processes to overcome the limitations of textbooks.

Introduction

Textbooks or coursebooks have long been an important tool in foreign or second language teaching, as they contain structured lessons, grammatical rules and vocabulary lists that both teachers and learners can use as a guide. However, relying solely on textbooks for language teaching poses a number of challenges that can hinder effective language teaching. While textbooks provide a standardized and structured approach to teaching, they frequently fail to address the complexities and nuances of real-life language use and cannot take cultural and individual differences into account.

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Textbooks are prepared as supplementary materials for the classroom. However, in many classrooms around the world, textbooks not only serve as supplemental materials (Tomlinson, 2010) but often become the primary guide for instruction (Ghosn, 2001), even when there is a formal curriculum. While curricula are intended to provide a broad framework for educational objectives and outcomes, teachers often rely on textbooks as a more accessible, practical tool for daily lesson planning.

In highly centralized education systems, teachers are not given enough autonomy. In Türkiye in particular, not only the curricula but also the textbooks are prepared by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) and sent to schools to be used by teachers. This leads to a high level of textbook-fidelity among teachers. However, the textbooks are prepared according to one-size-fits-all approach, limiting teachers' flexibility to adapt lessons to the needs of their students or the local context (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2018). To ensure quality instruction, teachers should take responsibility for implementing the curriculum, adapting teaching-learning processes (TLPs) to students' demands and needs, creating instructional materials, and implementing appropriate assessment and evaluation tools and strategies to create a quality teaching-learning environment (UNESCO, 2017). However, field studies show that teachers implementing the curriculum in schools lack essential knowledge about it and do not use it as a guide (Tokgöz & Bümen, 2021). In addition, they have difficulties in implementing the curriculum and are unable to create an environment that is aligned with the curricular objectives of the curriculum and tend to use it only as an annual plan (Dursun et al., 2017). However, teachers working in countries with a highly centralized education system need to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of their students (Yazıcılar & Bümen, 2019).

In Türkiye, teachers depend heavily on textbooks (Onurkan Aliusta & Ozder, 2022), and once textbooks are put into practice, they are seen as equal to the curriculum (Erss, 2018). Consequently, teachers use the textbooks as a guide instead of the curriculum itself. However, the English course books prepared and sent by MoNE are reported to be inadequate in several respects (Çelik, 2011; Dursun et al., 2017; EARGED, 2008; ERG, 2018; Güven & Saracaloğlu, 2020; Özmat & Senemoğlu, 2021; Özer & Korkmaz, 2016). Moreover, the teacher's books that teachers relied on to teach were reported to be insufficient to guide teachers (Çelik, 2011; Güven & Saracaloğlu, 2020; EARGED, 2008). Teachers mostly use teachers' books to write the topic on the class register, which they must fill in (Dursun et al., 2017).

The shortcomings of the English textbooks mentioned in the literature can be summarized as follows. They do not have a connection with real-life situations and take into account the language used in everyday life (Tomlinson, 2008), and do not consider the cultural characteristics of the target language (Çelik, 2011). The exercises in the books are insufficient (Büyükduman, 2005), cannot promote critical, reflective, and creative thinking (Çelik, 2011). They are not in line with the objectives of the curriculum (Büyükduman, 2005). Moreover, the textbooks serve the ideologies of policy makers and provide limited opportunities to negotiate various issues in the classroom (Ordem, 2021). Their content changes according to the decisions of publishers (Özdemir, 2016) and they do not promote cultural diversity (Türkmen & Zehir Topkaya, 2024). Lastly, they satisfy neither teachers (Tomlinson, 2010) nor students because textbooks don't attract their interest (Masuhara et al., 2008).

Considering these shortcomings, teachers would prefer to use additional supplementary books. However, it is forbidden and both ethically and economically inappropriate to make students buy these additional sourcebooks. Therefore, teachers who are responsible for

teaching should select, organize, implement, and monitor external experiences according to the characteristics of students and the TLP (Senemoğlu, 2023). In other words, teachers should prepare their own TLPs (Botes et al., 2022). By using their own TLPs that are tailored to the unique requirements and features of their schools and students, and using appropriate teaching methods from the language literature, teachers can enhance their teaching efficacy while simultaneously freeing themselves from the constraints and deficiencies of teacher's manuals and course books. Furthermore, in a highly centralized education system where everything is decided centrally, language teachers can benefit from action research to improve the quality of instruction they provide (Kayaoglu, 2015). Action research is a beneficial tool for teachers to develop efficient lesson plans and TLPs (Stringer, 2007). It fills the gap between theory and practice and places the emphasis on practice and implementation (Stringer et al., 2010). Therefore, through action research, teachers could improve their teaching practices and enrich and design the TLPs according to levels and needs of their students.

On this basis, the present study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the TLPs prepared to fulfil the objectives of the 9th grade English curriculum. This study does not propose a new language teaching method. Rather, it aims to show teachers around the world, who do not have a word on the textbooks they use to teach, that they don't have to stick to a textbook. Instead, they can prepare their own teaching-learning processes to teach language effectively. To this end, the following questions were addressed.

(1) Is there a significant difference between the action research groups on which enriched TLPs were implemented and the control group in terms of post-test results?
(2) Is there a significant difference between the action research and control groups in terms of academic self-concept?
(3) What are the advantages and disadvantages of the TLPs implemented in action research groups according to the reflective diary kept by the teacher-researcher?

Method

Research Design

This study employed action research method to investigate the effectiveness of the enriched TLPs developed for the 9th grade English Curriculum. Action research, also known as teacher research, is a systematic research method that examines how teachers teach and how students learn in teaching-learning environments (Mills & Gay, 2019). Action research aims to increase the effectiveness of TLPs by proposing solutions to problems that teachers face on a daily basis (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

In this study, we wanted to take an action as teacher-researchers to find solutions to the problems encountered in EFL classrooms. Therefore, we used action research to develop TLPs as action plans that can be used or adapted by other language teachers to enrich their own teaching. Another reason for using action research is that it bridges the gap between theory and practice by placing more emphasis on practice (Stringer, 2007). As the present study aims to investigate the effectiveness of teaching-learning processes in practice, the use of a method that emphasizes practice is appropriate.

Since qualitative and quantitative data collection tools can be used in action research studies (Creswell, 2012; Fee, 2012; Fraenkel et al., 2012; Johnson, 2012) and one of the quantitative

research designs that can be used in action research is the experimental design (Johnson, 2012), both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed. For the quantitative part of the study, an experimental study design with three groups, two action research groups and one control group, was chosen. The qualitative data was collected using a reflective teacher journal kept by the teacher-researcher during the implementation process.

In accordance with the nature of action research, the implementation is conducted by the researcher in one of the action research groups. To eliminate researcher bias, the implementation in the other action research group was conducted by an English teacher who worked at the same school, volunteered to participate in the study, and had 20 years of experience as an English teacher. Table 1 shows the processes carried out in the study.

Table 1. The Processes carried out in the action research and control groups

Groups	Data collection tools used before the implementation	Procedures employed in teaching-learning processes	Data collection tools used after the implementation
Action research groups	• Cognitive Entry behavior test • Summative assessment test • Academic self-concept scale	• Employing enriched teaching-learning processes • Keeping reflective journal	• Summative assessment test • Academic self-concept scale
Control group	• Cognitive Entry behavior test • Summative assessment test • Academic self-concept scale	• İmplementing traditional education	• Summative assessment test • Academic self-concept scale

Study Group

The study group was selected using a convenience sample. In the convenience sample method, researchers work with a group that they can easily reach and gather information from (Creswell, 2007; Fraenkel et al., 2012; Mills & Gay, 2019). Therefore, three equal 9th grade classes of a high school in the city center of Konya, Türkiye were selected to implement enriched TLPs. A cognitive entry behavior test prepared by the researchers was used to determine the groups. The result of the test is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Cognitive entry behavior test ANOVA results

		SS	df	MS	F	p	Sig. Difference
Listening	Between groups	101.261	4	25.315	2.674	.035	9A – 9/E
	Within groups	1154.849	122	9.466			
	Total	1256.110	126				
Reading	Between groups	254.807	4	63.702	4.527	.002	9/A –9/E
	Within groups	1716.627	122	14.071			9/B –9/E
	Total	1971.433	126				9/C –9/E
Speaking	Between groups	7.084	4	1.771	.138	.968	
	Within groups	1568.616	122	12.858			
	Total	1575.701	126				
Writing	Between groups	73.005	4	18.251	1.903	.114	
	Within groups	1170.333	122	9.593			
	Total	1243.339	126				

As seen in Table 1, significant differences were found between classes 9/A and 9/E in listening comprehension and between classes 9/E and 9/A, 9/B, 9/C in reading comprehension. No significant differences were found between the classes in the areas of speaking and writing. Based on these results, class 9/E was excluded from the study and three of the remaining four classes were randomly selected to conduct the study. Therefore, classes 9/A and 9/B were selected as the action research groups and class 9/C as the control group. There were 25 students in classes 9/A and 9/C and 27 students in 9/B.

To determine whether there was a significant difference between the groups in terms of the subjects to be taught, summative assessment tests were used as a pre-test. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Summative assessment pre-test results

		SS	df	MS	F	p
Listening	Between groups	3.971	2	1.986	.517	.598
	Within groups	284.107	74	3.839		
	Total	288.078	76			
Reading	Between groups	3.921	2	1.960	1.715	.187
	Within groups	84.599	74	1.43		
	Total	88.519	76			
Speaking	Between groups	7.330	2	3.665	.661	.519
	Within groups	410.203	74	5.543		
	Total	417.533	76			
Writing	Between groups	1.167	2	.834	.128	.880
	Within groups	480.773	74	6.497		
	Total	482.440	76			

As seen in Table 3, no differences were found between the action research groups and the control group in listening, reading, speaking and writing skills. This indicates that the groups were equal in terms of the skills to be taught in the study.

Table 4. Academic self-concept scale pre-test results

	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between groups	1754.409	2	877.204	2.092	0.131
Within groups	31032.267	74	419.355		
Total	32786.675	76			

As seen in Table 4, there was no significant difference between the action research group and the control group in terms of their academic self-concept toward English. These results showed that the groups were equal in terms of their academic self-concept toward English. Consequently, it can be concluded that the groups were equal in terms of the skills to be taught in the study.

Data Collection Tools

This study used quantitative and qualitative data collection tools to collect data. For the quantitative part of the study, cognitive entry behavior tests, summative assessment tests, and academic self-concept scale were used. A reflective teacher diary was used for the qualitative part of the study.

Cognitive Entry Behavior Test

A cognitive entry behavior test was prepared to assess students' readiness for the 9th grade English course. To determine the extent to which the objectives of 9th grade English curriculum were achieved, the primary school curriculum objectives that are prerequisites for the 9th grade English course were identified and questions were prepared accordingly. The test was prepared separately for listening, reading, speaking and writing skills. Expert opinions were collected, and necessary changes were made prior to pilot implementation. The developed test was administered to 54 eighth graders and the test items were reviewed in terms of item difficulty and item discrimination. As a result, the items that were to be excluded from the test were removed and the items that were to be rewritten were adjusted. The Cronbach's alpha for the listening and reading sections of the test was found .89 and .81, respectively. The speaking and writing tests were scored by three experts and the Kendall's Concordance results for the speaking and writing sections were found .82 and .88, respectively. Consequently, the test was found to be suitable for the study.

Summative Assessment Test

In order to determine the students' achievement levels, a summative assessment test was developed by the researcher to assess the objectives for the first four units of the 9th grade English curriculum. The test was used as a pre-test and post-test for the study. The development process of this test was similar to that of the Cognitive Entry Behavior Test. The Cronbach's alpha values for the listening and reading sections of the test were found .80 and .71, respectively, and the Kendall's Concordance values for speaking and writing were found .89 and .86, respectively. Consequently, the test was found to be a valid and reliable instrument to be used in the study.

Academic Self-Concept Scale

To determine the effect of TLPs on students' academic self-concept, researchers developed the Academic Self-Concept Scale. In developing the scale, 42 items were created

by reviewing the literature. These items were reviewed by academics who are experts in the fields of curriculum and instruction, and assessment and evaluation. After the initial review, three items were excluded and some of the items were rewritten. The first draft of the questionnaire with 39 items was implemented on 345 high school students. After implementation, an exploratory and a confirmatory factor analysis were conducted. These analyses revealed that the scale comprises 24 items in two factors, positive academic self-concept, and negative academic self-concept. The McDonald's Omega was .97, .90 and .95 for the positive and negative self-concept subscales and for the overall scale, respectively.

Teaching-learning Processes Evaluation Rubric

To determine whether the TLPs prepared for the study were sufficient to achieve the objectives of the 9th grade English curriculum and whether they were prepared in accordance with the principles of TLP development, a teaching-learning processes evaluation rubric (appendix 1) developed by the researchers was used. By establishing standards for the TLPs, we aimed to ensure the reliability, validity, and credibility of the study. The 19-item rubric was sent to the curriculum and instruction experts along with the prepared TLPs. After reviewing the TLPs, the experts rated the process by answering "yes", "no" and "partially" to the items. 0 points were given for the answer "no", 1 point for the answer "partially" and 2 points for the answer "yes". Each TLP was evaluated by at least 3 experts. The maximum score for the rubric is 38 and the minimum score is 0. The rubric also includes a section asking the experts for their opinion on what can be done to improve the quality of the TLP.

Writing and Speaking Rubrics

The speaking (appendix 1) and writing (appendix 2) rubrics were prepared to ensure consistency among graders and to increase the validity, reliability, and credibility of the research. To create these rubrics, the relevant literature was reviewed and international examinations such as TOEFL and IELTS were examined. The first drafts of the rubrics were sent to the experts in English language teaching and curriculum to get their opinions. After receiving the experts' opinions, the necessary adjustments were made. The rubrics were used in the pilot study of the summative assessment tests and proved to be useful.

Reflective Teacher Journal

To collect the qualitative data of the study, the teacher-researcher kept a reflective teacher journal. To monitor their teaching and eventually to become better teachers, teachers should learn from their teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2012). The best way to learn from their teaching is to be a reflective teacher (Snowman et al., 2012). Teachers should constantly prepare, observe, and reflect on how closely their instructional practices relate to theory (Heath, 2002). In the present study the teacher-researcher, who has fifteen years of experience in teaching English and has a PhD degree in Curriculum and instruction, kept a reflective teacher journal to monitor his own teaching and report it to guide his teaching and give an example to other teachers who want to improve their way of teaching.

Teaching-Learning Processes

Teaching-learning processes constitute the core of this study, so they were prepared by analyzing the relevant literature in detail. While developing TLPs, because no teaching method alone could produce the expected results in student learning (Ertürk, 2017/1972; Tyler, 1969; Senemoğlu, 2023), different teaching methods were used together in harmony to

ensure learning. The main aim of learning a foreign language is to communicate in the target language (Nunan, 1999). Therefore, it was especially considered that the TLPs prepared for this research include the daily usage of language and enable students to use language for communication (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013). According to Dewey (1997), TLPs should not teach undesired behaviors, should not be fun but not effective, and should not be disconnected. Apart from these, a TLP should improve thinking skills, help students learn, and develop social attitudes and interests (Tyler, 1969), teach the behavior that it aims to achieve, be appropriate for student level, and create a sense of fulfillment in the student (Ertürk, 2017/1972).

By considering these factors, TLPs were prepared to achieve the objectives stated in the 9th grade English curriculum. 19 TLPs were developed for the 36 objectives in the first four units of the curriculum before the beginning of the education year. All the TLPs were sent to curriculum and instruction experts to get their opinions about them with the TLP evaluation rubric. The TLPs get scores between 32 and 38 points from the experts. By considering their points and the opinions they wrote in the open-ended section of the rubric, necessary changes were made to improve the quality of TLPs. All the TLPs were prepared, evaluated, and improved before starting the implementation process.

Data Collection Process

The data were collected during the first term of the 2021-2022 education year. First of all, data collection tools and TLPs were developed and prepared for the study. During the first week of the school year, students and their parents were informed about the study, and they filled in a consent form. During the second week of the study, the cognitive entry behaviors test was implemented to select the study groups, and the summative assessment test and academic self-concept scale were implemented as pre-tests to only action research and control groups. In the third week, the TLPs were applied to both action research groups, and this continued for 13 weeks, five hours a week. In this 13-week process, 19 TLPs were implemented. The teacher-researcher kept a reflective journal during this 13-week implementation period. The students in the control group receive their typical education by following the coursebook sent by the MoNE. After the implementations were completed, the summative assessment test and academic self-concept scale were implemented as the post-tests. The study lasted for 17 weeks, thirteen of which were implementation process and four of which were used for the tests.

Data Analysis

This action research study used qualitative and quantitative data together. The qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed separately but discussed together. To analyze the data SPSS 23.0 software was used. The summative assessment test and academic self-concept scale post-test results were analyzed using ANCOVA. This analysis method is used to increase the sensitivity of the tests (Tabachnick & Fidell 2007). All the assumptions to conduct ANCOVA analysis were checked, and it was seen that the data were suitable. The skewness and kurtosis results for the summative assessment tests were found between +1,5 and -1,5. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), these results were acceptable for the normal distribution of the data. The Levene Test result for the homogeneity of the variances was found 0.700 and it was assumed that variances were homogenous, and it was seen that no significant difference was found between linear regression curves.

The reflective teacher journal kept by the teacher-researcher during the implementation

process was analyzed through descriptive analysis. In order to present data systematically, the findings were presented under the headings of student level (Bloom, 1982; Ertürk, 2017/1972; Özçelik, 2014), attracting student interest, quality of instruction (Bloom, 1982), instruction time and others.

Reliability, Validity and Credibility

First, ethics commission approval was received from Hacettepe University with the approval no: E-35853172-300-00001708813. With this approval, necessary permission from the Ministry of National Education was obtained to implement the TLPs. Before starting to collect data, all participants and parents were informed about the research and signed a consent form.

The data collection tools, tests, scales, and rubrics were prepared by strictly following scientific procedures. Prior to the development of the data collection tools, literature reviews were conducted and the items for the scales and tests were written accordingly. The tools were sent to experts to obtain their opinions. The instruments were then read aloud by five students to check their comprehensibility. Finally, all instruments were subjected to a pilot study. They were conducted with the students who did not participate in the study. After the pilot implementations, the necessary changes were made, and the data collection tools were ready to be used in the study. All these procedures contribute to the reliability, validity and credibility of the study.

Results

The Results Regarding Post-Test Scores of Action Research and Control Groups

To reveal whether there is a significant difference between the post-test results of students in action research and control groups, the post-test results of groups were analyzed separately for listening, reading, speaking and writing. Table 5 shows the results of listening skills post-test scores of action research and control groups.

Table 5. Listening skills post-test scores of action research and control groups.

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	η^2_p
Pre-Test	0.014	1	0.014	0.006	.938	
Group	94.801	2	47.400	21.028	.000	0.366
Error	164.549	73	2.254			
Total	5629.000	76				

As seen in Table 5, the post-test scores, which are corrected according to pre-test scores, revealed significant differences between groups [$F_{(2-73)=}$ 47.400, p<.01]. As a result of the multiple comparison analysis, it was found that the achievement attained through TLPs in the action group is higher than that of students in the control group. With the calculated effect size, it can be stated that the difference has practical significance and that the difference can be interpreted independently of the sample size. No significant differences were found between the two action research groups. In other words, the TLPs were effective on students' listening skills achievement levels.

The results of reading skills post-test scores of the action research and control groups are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Reading skills post-test scores of action research and control groups.

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Pre-Test	0.256	1	0.256	0.330	.567
Group	2.641	2	1.321	1.702	.189
Error	56.636	73	0.776		
Total	1292.000	76			

As seen in Table 6, no significant difference was found between the action research and control groups [$F_{(2-73)}$= 1.321, p<.01]. This result showed that there was no statistically significant difference in terms of reading skills between the action research groups in which TLPs prepared to improve reading comprehension skills were implemented and the control group.

The results of speaking skills post-test scores of the action research and control groups are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Speaking skills post-test scores of action research and control groups

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	η^2_p
Pre-Test	32.283	1	32.283	3.066	.084	
Group	346.356	2	173.178	16.449	.000	0.311
Error	768.573	73	10.528			
Total	9503.889	76				

As seen in Table 7, the post-test scores, corrected according to pre-test scores, revealed significant differences between action research and control groups [$F_{(2-73)}$= 173.178, p<.01]. As a result of the multiple comparison analysis conducted to find out the source of difference, it was found that the achievement attained through TLPs in the action group is higher than the achievement of students in the control group. With the calculated effect size, it can be stated that the difference has practical significance and that the difference can be interpreted independently of the sample size. No significant differences were found between the two action research groups. In other words, the TLPs were effective on students' speaking skills achievement levels.

To determine the effectiveness of TLPs on writing skills of students, the writing skills summative assessment test was used as a post-test. The data were analyzed through ANCOVA. The results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Writing skills post-test scores of action research and control groups

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	η^2_p
Pre-Test	12.515	1	12.515	1.683	.199	
Group	397.695	2	198.848	26.733	.000	0.423
Error	542.994	73	7.438			
Total	9474.333	76				

As seen in Table 8, the post-test scores, corrected according to pre-test scores, revealed significant differences between action research and control groups [$F_{(2-73)}$= 198.848, p<.01]. As a result of the multiple comparison analysis conducted to find out the source of difference, it was found that the achievement attained through TLPs in the action group is higher than the

achievement of students in the control group. With the calculated effect size, it can be stated that the difference has practical significance and that the difference can be interpreted independently of the sample size. No significant differences were found between the two action research groups. In other words, the TLPs were effective on students' writing skills achievement levels.

The Effect of TLPs on Students' Academic Self-Concept towards English

To find out the effect of TPLs on students' academic self-concept towards English, the academic self-concept scale was applied as a post-test and the results were analyzed through ANCOVA. Table 5 shows the results of the students' academic self-concept towards English course.

Table 9. Academic self-concept test scores of action research and control groups

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	η^2_p
Pre-Test	50.698	1	50.698	0.256	.614	
Group	9400.483	2	4700.241	23.779	.000	0.394
Error	14429.643	73	197.666			
Total	519310.000	76				

As is seen in Table 9, the post-test scores, corrected according to pre-test scores, revealed significant differences between action research and control groups [$F_{(2-73)}= 4700.241$, p<.01]. As a result of the multiple comparison analysis conducted to find out the source of the difference, it was found that the academic self-concept scores of students in the action groups were higher than those of students in the control group. With the calculated effect size, it can be stated that the difference has practical significance. No significant differences were found between the two action research groups. In other words, the TLPs had a positive effect on students' academic self-concept towards English.

The Advantages and Limitations of TLPs According to the Reflective Teacher Journal

A reflective teacher journal was kept by the teacher-researcher so as to determine the advantages and limitations of the TLPs implemented in action research groups. The results are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. The results regarding the reflective journal

Advantages and limitations		Frequency (f)
Student level	Below	3
	appropriate	10
	above	6
Attracting interest	Entry activities	9
	Videos	5
	Listening materials containing daily spoken language	6
	Reading texts	4
	Group activities	3
Quality of instruction	Cues	7
	Reinforcement	13
	Participation	10
	Feedback and Correctives	12
Time	Shorter than planned	2
	Not sufficient time	4

	Making real-life connections	3
	The relationship between TLPs	6
Others	The relationship between skills	3
	Native language usage	4
	Uninteresting activities	3
	Inefficient activities	2

As seen in Table 10, when the situations encountered by the teacher were evaluated according to their appropriateness to the student level, it was found that three TLPs were under the student level, 6 were above the student level, and 10 were suitable for the student level. The TLPs in which students had difficulty were the ones designed to teach writing, speaking, and listening. Some notes regarding this issue are given below.

> *"...it was seen that they have difficulty arranging paragraphs, especially transitions from one paragraph to another. More examples were given regarding how they can link their ideas..."*

> *"...the comparison video which was shown at the beginning of the lesson was above their level. They have difficulty understanding it. Therefore, it was paused multiple times, and they were informed about what they should consider, and they weren't expected to understand every detail in the video. This reduced their anxiety levels and most of the students realized that they could understand it..."*

As for the attracting interest section, the activities which drew the most attention were the entry activities. The videos and other materials used at the beginning of the lessons motivated students and made them aware of the objectives. The listening materials, including daily spoken natural language and authentic reading materials, attracted students' interest as well. Some notes about attracting student interest are presented below:

> *"...the video used as an entry activity was quite interesting. Students listened carefully to learn new phrases..."*

> *"...the authentic reading materials written by the experienced native speakers arouse student interest and enable them to learn more new words..."*

> *"...the dialogue that includes the two friends trying to choose a film to watch attracted so much interest. They tried to repeat the phrases with their intonation even after the lesson..."*

Another activity that attracted student interest was the activities they performed as a group. These activities increase the interaction among students and enable them to use the language after the lesson. Furthermore, in these activities, students found opportunities for peer learning and teaching. They helped each other learn and corrected their mistakes. This made them more confident and motivated towards the lesson and speaking English. Some notes regarding groupwork are given below:

> *"...groupworks made them study more efficiently. It increased the interaction among students. When I walked among them, I saw them helping each other, teaching each other and learning from each other..."*

Regarding the quality of instruction, the most mentioned ones were reinforcements, feedback-correctives, and participation. Especially, the feedback given for writing and speaking activities took an important place. The mistakes frequently made by students were written on the board and corrected together with the class by not mentioning the students who made

them. Therefore, the students who made or would make the same mistake learned the correct usage. Not only the mistakes but also the sentences that could be good examples were written to reinforce these behaviors. Moreover, it was seen that the implemented TLPs encouraged student participation. The subjects, such as films and climate change, aroused student interest and made them participate in the lesson more. However, subjects like asking for and giving directions did not attract their interest as much as the others and students were reluctant to participate in these activities. Another variable of the quality of instruction mentioned in the reflective journals was cues. The cues given before the lesson enabled them to comprehend the subject and increase their participation level. The notes taken regarding the quality of instruction are presented below:

> *"...even if their name is not given, the students whose mistake was written on the board have a short moment of embarrassment. Afterwards, they corrected their mistakes immediately. It was also noticed that some of the students checked their writings to find out whether they had made the same mistake. However, some students persistently continue to make the same mistakes..."*

> *"...the reading text on climate change attracted students' interest. The participation level was rather high. It was seen that they are highly willing to express their thoughts..."*

> *"...with the entry activities, it was noticed that the students learned the words and phrases they would use throughout the lesson. The vocabulary activities performed at the beginning of the lesson proved to be effective..."*

In the reflective journal kept by the teacher, it was observed that two TLPs were completed before the planned time and four TLPs could not be completed within the allocated time. It was observed that the TLPs that could not be completed in the allotted time were generally the ones prepared for teaching speaking and writing skills. In particular, in cases where vocabulary knowledge is incomplete and sentence structure knowledge is inadequate, it was realized that focusing on these structures and vocabulary caused the time assigned for the activities to be extended.

According to other findings regarding the TLPs, it was found that there is a relationship between TLPs designed to teach different skills and themes, that TLPs are related to real life, that there are relationships between skills, that some activities lead to the use of native language among students in the classroom, that some activities do not attract students' interest, and that some activities are ineffective in evaluating teaching in general, especially the activities involving speed-based games such as "Kahoot".

> *"...The expressions used in the reading passage were compatible with the words and structures given in the section on completing prerequisite learning. It was also observed that students used these structures in the writing activity..."*

> *"...During the group work, it was observed that students often left the target language and spoke in their native language. I approached the students and asked them 'how they were doing' and 'if they needed help' in English. This allowed the students to switch to English..."*

Discussion

According to the results of the listening skills test, the listening skills of students in the action groups on which the TLPs were implemented were found significantly higher than the

control group. This result reveals that if the TLPs designed to ensure students' active participation in the lesson are supported by materials which are interesting, level-appropriate, and suitable for the objectives of the lesson, students' learning levels could increase (Nunan, 1999; Richards & Rodgers, 2018).

The cognitive entry behaviors test listening section showed that the listening comprehension levels of students were low. Due to the high school entrance examination, almost all the students didn't have listening lessons for the past year and most of them hadn't had enough listening sessions in elementary school. This lack of practice caused anxiety among students. However, as they realized that they were able to understand the audio and video materials used in listening activities, their concerns decreased and disappeared. Krashen (1989; 1995), in his comprehensible input hypothesis, stated that the more students are exposed to comprehensible input, the lower their anxiety levels get and consequently, their affective filter level, which is one of the major obstacles in learning a language, decreases as well.

In the reflective teacher journal, the quality of the listening materials was repeatedly emphasized. The listening materials which were prepared in Türkiye by the MoNE lack the daily spoken language. The pronunciation and intonation of the speakers aren't well enough and understandable. However, with the authentic listening materials which were vocalized by native speakers, students started to understand the listening materials and enjoy the listening sessions. The studies regarding listening skills have revealed that if students deal with authentic materials, their listening comprehension skills improve significantly (Dewi, 2018; Miller, 2003; Morley, 2008; Putri et al., 2018; Sabet & Mahsefat, 2012; Woottipong, 2014). Moreover, ignoring authenticity leads to ignoring spontaneity (Ur, 1992), and since the lack of spontaneity causes a lack of interest, it becomes difficult to improve students' learning level. Furthermore, authenticity makes the students aware of the culture in which the language is spoken (Peck, 2008) and allows them to be exposed to the daily use of the target language (Peacock, 1997).

The results of the reading skills summative assessment test revealed that the TLPs designed to teach reading comprehension skills implemented in action research groups do not have a significant impact on students' learning levels. This could be partly due to their previous learning experiences. In elementary school, students were provided with reading-focused instruction because of the high school entrance examination. This improves their reading skills while decreasing others.

From the notes taken in the reflective teacher journal, it can be reported that the students in action research groups loved the reading texts more than students in the control group who were provided with reading materials prepared centrally by MoNE. The reading materials which were brought to the class were chosen to arouse students' interest and to improve their reading comprehension levels from the books specifically designed to teach reading. It has been found that original reading texts are more effective in improving reading comprehension skills than highly simplified texts (Beresova, 2015; Berardo, 2006; Guo, 2012). Moreover, original texts positively affect students' reading motivation (Taboada & Buehl, 2012). When the motivation for reading, especially reading in a foreign language increase, students' reading comprehension skills and vocabulary knowledge increase as well.

The speaking skills summative assessment test revealed that there is a significant difference between the speaking skills scores of action research groups and control group students in favor of action research groups. With this result, it could be stated that the TLPs designed to

improve students' speaking skills were effective. Oral communication forms the basis of language (Council of Europe, 2020). Mastery in a language could be measured with the ability to communicate in that language (Nunan, 1999), and the secondary education English curriculum clearly states that the program aims to teach the English language for communication and that priority should be given to the development of this skill in students (MoNE, 2018). However, studies revealed that students in Türkiye are way behind the level where they should be (British Council & TEPAV, 2013; Solak & Bayar, 2015; Demir-Ayaz et al., 2019). One of the reasons given for not being able to teach speaking and not achieving the desired results in this respect is the inadequacy of textbooks (Çelik, 2011; Demir-Ayaz et al., 2019; Dilekli, 2018; Dursun et al., 2017; EARGED, 2008; ERG, 2018; Güven & Saracaloğlu, 2020; Koru & Akesson, 2011; Özer & Korkmaz, 2016; Özmat & Senemoğlu, 2021). With materials prepared by the teacher according to the level and needs of the students, the teacher and the students overcome the limitations of the textbooks and become more motivated to learn and use the target language.

Another reason that makes students participate in speaking activities more confidently is that they know what is expected of them. Dörnyei (2014) expressed that if the achievement criteria are stated clearly and explicitly, students' feeling of achievement and thus their motivation increase. Moreover, predetermined criteria contribute to consistency, fairness, validity, and reliability in assessing speaking skills (Thornbury, 2005), and they draw the attention of teachers and students to the features to be assessed and enable them to focus on these features (Arter & McTighe, 2001). In this study, the speaking skills evaluation rubric prepared by the researchers was given to the students and teachers explained the criteria to be measured clearly. As a result, with clearly stated success criteria and level-appropriate TLPs, students' negative thoughts from their previous learning experiences were eliminated and they were motivated to learn and speak the target language.

In the reflective teacher journal, the groupworks, especially the presentations, were highlighted among the activities that motivated them to speak and increased their speaking skills. Of the various communicative methods used in the classroom, presentations are quite important in that they allow the students to talk about a subject they prepared and communicate in the target language in a natural environment (Brooks & Wilson, 2014; Thornbury, 2005). Moreover, a properly planned presentation activity requires students to read, write and listen in the target language (Brooks & Wilson, 2014). Therefore, presentations enable students to use all four skills and create an environment in which they can learn from each other.

Writing skills summative assessment test results revealed a significant difference between the action research groups and the control groups in favor of the action research groups. This result shows that if the necessary importance was given and appropriate situations were created students' writing skills could be improved.

According to the notes taken in the reflective teacher journal, students had difficulties at first, because they did almost no writing activities during their elementary school years. However, through feedback and correction process, they saw their mistakes and learned how to correct them. With this process, they became more experienced and confident in writing. Furthermore, the reading texts used to teach reading comprehension skills make good writing guides. According to Harmer (2015), reading texts provide an appropriate model for writing. Thus, students are encouraged to focus on issues such as vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation.

Writing is a neglected skill in most countries (Gilbert & Graham, 2010; Graham et al., 2013) including ours. This could be attributed to the exam-centered education they receive in the last year of elementary school and to the fact that writing is difficult to acquire in both their native tongue and target language (Richards & Renandya, 2002). However, with appropriate writing instruction, this skill could be improved as well (Tsiriotakis et al., 2020; Chen, 2002; Graham et al., 2013; Fidalgo & Torrance, 2017; Cer, 2019; Kim et al., 2021; Sasaki, 2002). Within the scope of the study writing instruction covering topics such as how they can write, what techniques they can use, and which phrases and expressions to use were provided for the students. Studies on writing instruction reveal that teaching the techniques used for writing improves writing skills (Chien, 2012; Plonsky, 2011; Silva & Graham, 2015). With the writing instruction provided to the students, they learned and practiced ways to better organize their thoughts and put them on paper. In addition, their language skills, which increased with the implementations, played an important role in the development of their writing skills.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aiming to investigate the effectiveness of TLPs designed to achieve the objectives of the 9th grade English curriculum found that the prepared TLPs were effective in improving students' language skills. It was revealed that the productive skills, speaking and writing, improved greatly. This improvement is believed to result from the fact that these skills were neglected during their previous learning experiences in elementary school. Regarding the receptive skills, reading and listening, students made greater progress in listening than in reading. This could be explained by the reading-focused instruction they were provided in elementary school. Students who participated in the study had an English course that addressed all four language skills for the first time. Despite the initial challenges they faced, they found the process of learning English quite enjoyable. Learning the target language for communication as a communication tool rather than as a subject that students are required to take to pass the class, increased students' satisfaction, and motivation to learn the target language.

As the TLPs developed by the teachers were proven effective based on the results of the quantitative data and the reflective journal, teachers can be advised to prepare their own TLPs to the needs and abilities of their students to ensure more effective foreign language teaching. The pre-test scores for speaking and writing were the lowest of the four basic skills. This suggests that speaking and writing skills were previously neglected in elementary education. It is, therefore, recommended that teachers should place more emphasis on these skills and give students opportunities to practice productive skills to promote balanced language development. The teacher journal highlighted that students find it enjoyable to learn all four skills at the same time in a balanced way. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers should prepare their TLPs to adopt an integrated approach to skill development and avoid isolated instruction of one skill. In the study, a reflective journal was kept throughout the teaching process and the teaching process was designed based on this journal. Therefore, teachers can be recommended to keep a reflective journal in order to recognize the advantages and limitations of their own teaching processes and adjust their teaching-learning processes accordingly.

Note

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Declarations

Funding: Authors declare that this study was not funded by any organization.
Ethics Statements: This study was conducted with the permission of …. University Ethics committee.
Conflict of Interest: Authors declare no conflict of interest.
Informed Consent: The participant families were informed about the study and both the parents and students filled in a consent form.
Data availability: The data set can be presented if requested.

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Appendix 1: Teaching-Learning Processes Evaluation Rubric

The teaching-learning processes…	Yes	Partially	No
are suitable for the CEFR A1/A2 level			
are consistent with the objective(s) it is employed to achieve.			
aim to achieve more than one objective.			
allow the student to perform the behaviour indicated by the objective.			
motivate the student to perform the behaviour indicated by the objective.			
satisfy the students.			
are suitable for the level/readiness level of the students			
attract students' attention.			
help students to develop a positive attitude towards learning.			
are free from undesirable and unintended by-products.			
are not intended to create undesired behaviour in students.			
are suitable to achieve the objective in sufficient time.			
worth the effort for the behaviour to be gained			
are economical.			
are positively related to other teaching-learning processes.			
contain necessary signs and clues.			
encourage student participation			
contains reinforcements to motivate learning.			
contain necessary feedback and corrections.			

Appendix 2: Speaking Rubric

	Fluency	Grammar	Vocabulary	Pronunciation
4 (Excellent)	Speaks fluently with natural pauses, rare repetitions and self-corrections quick flow of speech	Speaks accurately and uses variable grammatical structures.	Uses a variety of appropriate vocabulary. Uses lexical items accurately	Makes no errors. Uses intonations correctly. Can be understood very clearly.
3 (very good)	Speaks fluently with some hesitations, repetitions and self-corrections Occasional searching for words	Makes rare errors, Uses some complex sentences with reasonable errors.	Has enough vocabulary to talk about given topic. Makes rare errors in word choice. Uses collocations and idiomatic expressions.	Makes minor errors in pronunciation. Uses intonations mostly correctly.
2 (good)	Speaks relatively fluently but makes repetitions and self-corrections. Speaks slowly.	Makes some errors and self-corrects few of them. Tries to use few complex sentences	Has just sufficient vocabulary. Makes some errors in word choice.	Mispronounce the words at times. Can generally be understood by the listener.
1 (Poor)	Pauses and hesitates frequently Frequently searches for the right word. Couldn't convey the basic massage.	Uses incorrect sentence structures. Makes many errors (subject-verb agreement, verb form, and verb tense) Meaning is obscure	Has inadequate vocabulary. Makes frequent word choice errors.	Frequently mispronounce words. Mispronunciations makes it very difficult to understand.
0 (No mark)	Speaker doesn't respond or the response is unrelated to the topic			

Appendix 3: Writing Rubric

	Content and Organization	Cohesion and Coherence	Vocabulary and word choice	Grammar
4 (Excellent)	Writes well organized and developed paragraphs. Connects ideas using transitions. Addressed all part of the task effectively.	Displays unity and connects ideas perfectly. Writes sentences that are grammatically and lexically coherent.	Utilizes a wide range of vocabulary. Uses idiomatic expression well enough. Makes rare minor errors	Writes complex sentences without errors. Makes rare minor grammatical mistakes. Uses punctuations correctly.
3 (very good)	Writes generally well organized and developed paragraphs. Addresses the task and presents, extends and supports main ideas.	Displays unity and connects ideas well enough. Logically arranges information and ideas.	Chooses a variety of words and idioms that are adequate for the task. Makes some rare errors that do not obscure the meaning.	Writes simple and complex sentences together, but there may be some errors. Writes mostly error-free sentences. Uses punctuations with minor errors.
2 (Good)	Couldn't write adequately organized paragraphs but demonstrates an attempt to use organizational strategies. Partially addresses the given task.	Displays some unity but couldn't connect ideas well enough.	Chooses some words that are specific for the task. Utilizes limited range of vocabulary. Makes spelling mistakes that make it difficult to read.	Writes simple sentences correctly. Attempts to write complex sentences but they have some inaccuracies. makes frequent grammatical errors.
1 (Poor)	Writes disorganized and underdeveloped sentences without any transitions. Doesn't adequately address the task	Writes disconnected sentences. Writes sentences that do not display any kind of unity. Ideas are hard to follow.	Chooses the words so carelessly and inaccurately that they obscure the meaning. Utilizes very limited vocabulary and repeats words. Makes spelling mistakes that obscure the meaning.	Writes some sentences with frequent grammatical errors. Sentence structures aren't accurate.
0 (No mark)	Doesn't attempt to write. Copies the instruction. Writes meaningless words			