

The Problems Encountered by the Foreign Primary School Students from the Perspectives of Classroom Teachers (Bilecik Sampling)

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Abstract

Millions of people all over the world today leave or have to leave their countries and move to other countries as immigrants, refugees, asylums, etc. due to various reasons. According to a report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), about 60 million people were forced to leave their homes and worldwide displacement due to wars, conflicts and persecutions is at the highest level. Turkey is one of the most important countries which has been following a policy of opening its doors to those who have had to leave their countries due to such problems as war, economic problems, political problems, etc. in their own countries. Today, there are millions of people from other countries in the country, which also means that there are thousands of foreign students in many primary schools in the country. However, this situation has brought many problems for the foreign students, Turkish students, teachers and school administrators. The aim of this study is to identify the general and educational problems encountered by the foreign primary school students from the perspectives of the classroom teachers in Bilecik. As the study aims at examining the problems in detail depending on the views of the teachers and to bring about recommendations within the scope of those views, phenomenological research design in quantitative approaches was adopted. The data of the study were gathered from 33 classroom teachers in four primary schools in the province with semi-structured interviews. For the analysis of the data, content analysis was conducted. As a result of the interview with the classroom teachers, the findings were categorized under seven themes and sub-themes related to the main ones. According to the findings of the study, the foreign students encounter language, cultural, economic, politic, social, physiological problems and the problems in teaching-learning process.

Keywords: foreign students, primary schools, classroom teachers, problems

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Sınıf Öğretmenlerinin Bakış Açısından Yabancı Uyruklu İlkokul Öğrencilerinin Yaşadığı Sorunlar (Bilecik İli Örneği)

Öz

Bugün dünyada milyonlarca insan ülkelerini terkederek veya terk etmek zorunda kalarak diğer ülkelere göçmen, mülteci, sığınmacı vb. olarak yerleşmektedir. Birleşmiş Milletler Mülteciler Yüksek Komiserliği'nin hazırlamış olduğu bir rapora göre, yaklaşık 60 milyon insan evlerini terk etmek zorunda kalmış ve ülkelerindeki savaş, çatışma gibi sebeplerden dolayı başka yerlere gitmek zorunda kalmışlardır. Savaş, ekonomik problemler, prolitik problemler gibi sebeplerden dolayı ülkelerini terk edenler için kapılarını açan en önemli ülkelerden biri Türkiye'dir. Bugün ülkemizde farklı ülkelerden gelen milyonlarca insan bulunmaktadır. Bu durum ülkemizde bulunan ilkokullarda binlerce yabancı uyruklu ilkokul öğrencisi bulunduğu anlamına da gelmektedir. Fakat bu durum gerek yabancı uyruklu öğrenciler, gerek Türk öğrenciler ve gerekse sınıf öğretmenleri ve okul yöneticileri için birçok sorunu beraberinde getirmiştir. Bu araştırmanın amacı, Bilecik ilindeki ilkokullarda öğrenim gören yabancı uyruklu öğrencilerin başta eğitim-öğretim süreci olmak üzere ülkemizde bulunurken her alanda yaşadıkları sorunları sınıflarında yabancı uyruklu ilkokul öğrencisi bulunan sınıf öğretmenlerinin görüşleri doğrultusunda ortaya koymaktır. Araştırmada; yabancı uyruklu öğrencilerinin yaşadıkları sorunları sınıf öğretmenlerinin algılarına göre ve onların gözünden derinlemesine irdelenmesi ve araştırma kapsamında çözüm önerileri geliştirilmesi hedeflendiği için nitel araştırma yaklaşımlarımdan olgubilim modeli seçilmiştir. Araştırma verileri Bilecik il merkezinde yabancı uyruklu ilkokul öğrencilerinin bulunduğu dört ilkokuldaki toplam otuz üç sınıf öğretmeni ile yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerden elde edilmiştir. Araştırma verileri, içerik analizi tekniği kullanılarak çözümlenmiştir. Sınıf öğretmenleri ile yapılan görüşmelerden elde edilen bulgular sonucunda yabancı uyruklu öğrencilerin yaşadıkları sorunlar yedi ana temada ve bu ana temalara bağlı alt temalarda toplanmıştır. Araştırma bulgularına göre yabancı uyruklu öğrencilerin dilsel, kültürel, ekonomik, politik, sosyal, psikolojik ve eğitim-öğretim sorunları yaşadıkları tespit edilmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: yabancı uyruklu öğrenciler, ilkokul, sınıf öğretmenleri, sorunlar

Introduction

Millions of people all over the world today leave or have to leave their countries and move to other countries as immigrants, refugees, asylums due to various reasons. According to a report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), about 60 million people were forced to leave their homes and worldwide displacement due to wars, conflicts and persecutions is at the highest level (UNHCR, 2015). The report also states that one in every 122 people is now either a refugee, internally displaced, or asylum seekers and that the displacement is seen in Europe (especially in Ukraine), Middle East and North Africa (Syria, Iraq, Libya), Sub-Saharan Africa (Central African Republic, South Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo), Asia (Afghanistan, Myanmar), Americas (Colombia, Venezuela) (UNHCR,2015).

Turkey, on the other hand, has been following a policy of opening its doors to those who have had to leave their countries due to such problems as war, economic problems, political problems, etc. in their own countries. According to the monthly statistics as of June 2016 by UNHCR, there are totally 22.965 registered refugees and asylum seekers between the age of 0-4, 39.891 between the ages of 5-11, 27.366 between the ages of 12-17, 175.185 between the ages of 18-59, 6.059 at and above 60 ages. The total number of the refugees and asylum seekers in June 2016 is 271466 and these people are from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Somalia and other countries (UNHCR, 2016a). Only the registered Syrian refugees in Turkey are 2,733,044 today (UNHCR, 2016b), which means that together with the number of immigrants, asylum seekers and other foreigners, the number is more. Considering all these numbers, it is possible to say that there has been a great increase in the number of the foreign students in Turkey in the recent years. Though Syrian students mostly are considered to be the foreign students, there many from other countries who have left and come to Turkey because of different reasons as immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers or children of diplomats. Now there are thousands of foreign students in many primary schools in the country.

However, this situation has brought many problems for the foreign students, Turkish students, teachers and school administrators. Considering the problems that the foreign students encounter in schools, studies have so far shown that there are various problems. One of the most important problems is the language problem, which means that these students do not know Turkish or know very little Turkish. This problem also leads to many other problems such as academic failure, communication problems with teachers and other students, difficulty in expressing themselves (Biçer, Çoban and Bakır, 2012; Güngör, 2015). Another problem encountered by these students arises from cultures, traditions and religions. Since these students come from very different cultures and traditions and since some of them have different religious beliefs, they have difficulty in adapting Turkish culture (Açık, 2008; Gürle, 2012; Kasdemir, 2010). Another problem is that most of these students and especially their families do not want to stay in Turkey for a long time and they want to move to other countries (Yol, 2011; Topçuoğlu, 2012; Güngör, 2015). These students and their families also have economic and accommodation

problems, which means that they are not able to buy educational materials and meet their daily needs (Güçlü, 1996; Çağlar, 1999; Özyürek, 2009; Kiroğlu, Kesten and Elma, 2010; Polat, 2012; Güngör, 2015)

The fact that there are foreign students in our country means that these students need to understand Turkish, express themselves and continue their education. For these students to meet such needs, they are to learn Turkish. In today's world where the physical, cultural, and technological situations of the societies and their fund of knowledge change day by day and the international relationship among the countries continuously progress. Such a situation makes it compulsory for the nations to learn each other's language. The factors which make it necessary for a country to teach its language to foreigners contain the political, economic, commercial and cultural policies of that country (Ungan, 2006).

The attitudes of the foreign students towards the language of another country where they live has gained significance and the ways of use of the language of the country where the foreign students reside have become the reflections of the foreign students' identity and adaptation perceptions (Yaylacı, 2012). As a communication tool, language is the most important agent in people's conveying their opinions and people's having new ideas and opinions depending on the mutual interaction. Language has very close relation with the society and culture. As all kinds of qualification of a country is reflected in its language, the living style and the culture of that country become one of the determinants of the use of its language (Ozyurek, 2009, Uyar, 2007). The use of language and having communications and interactions with others in the society are the most important milestones for people to gain an individual and social identity. People get the opportunity to share their ideas and opinions, for new ideas and opinions and to evaluate them by communicating with other people (Temizyürek, 2007).

The foreign students who do not know well-enough the language of the country where they live face many different problems. They have difficulty in having a communication with other people in the society, making friends and this situation has a negative effect on the social and cultural adaptation period of the foreign students. Besides, these students may be faced with discriminatory, exclusivist and racial behaviors, which influence the adaptation process and the mental health of the foreign students (SETA, 2012).

Though the foreign students can use their own language at home, they may have to use the language of the country in school and other places. When the foreign students in Turkey are taken into consideration, those especially in primary and secondary education begin to learn Turkish in the school settings. However, this leads to many problems and difficulties for the foreign students, the classroom teachers and for the Turkish students in the classrooms, as well.

Today many foreign students who have come to Turkey for different reasons live and have education in many cities, one of which is Bilecik, in the Marmara

Region. As this study is focused on the foreign students in primary schools, we have seen that there are many foreign students in primary schools, most of whom are refugees, asylum seekers or immigrants from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Ukraine. According to the information obtained from the Bilecik Provincial Directorate for National Education the number and the nationality of these students are given in Table 1.

Table 1

The Nationalities and Number of the Foreign Students in Primary Schools in Bilecik (June, 2016).

Grades	Syrian	Iraqi	Other*
1 st grade	7	16	22
2 nd grade	6	18	12
3 rd grade	2	18	12
4 th grade	15	4	9

* The foreign students from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Ukraine as refugees in terms of temporary protection and international protection.

The number of the foreign students in the primary schools in the province and the towns are given in Table 2.

Table 2

The Number of the Foreign Students in Primary Schools in the Province and the Towns

Grades	Schools	Number of Students
Province	Ertuğrul Gazi Primary School	10
	Atatürk Primary School	58
	Cumhuriyet Primary School	32
	Kozabirlik Primary School	11
Towns	Bozüyük	16
	Söğüt	2
	Osmaneli	5
	Gölpazarı	1
	Pazaryeri	2
	Yenipazar	4

As seen in Table 1 and Table 2, 141 foreign school students continue their education in the primary schools in both the province and the towns of Bilecik.

The aim of this study is to identify the problems encountered by the foreign students from the point of views of the classroom teachers. Within the scope of this aim, the following research questions were addressed in the study:

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1. What are the views of the classrooms teachers on the general problems that the foreign students experience?
2. What are the views of the classroom teacher on the problems that foreign students experience in educational settings?

Method

This study was conducted with phenomenological design, which is a qualitative research method. Phenomenological design is an effective approach which brings the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives to the forefront, and which challenges structural or normative assumptions. The data sources in phenomenological study are individuals or groups who have experienced the phenomenon on which the study is focused and who will be able to express this phenomenon (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). It is possible to use a variety of data collection methods in phenomenological design, such as interviews, action researches, participant observations, focus meetings and analysis of personal texts.

In this study phenomenological design was adopted since the study aims to determine and examine in detail the problems that foreign students in the primary schools in Bilecik encounter from the perspectives of classroom teachers.

Participants

Criterion sampling, a purposive sampling type, was used in the study. In this sampling, the researcher focuses on cases or individuals meeting certain criterion like people having a certain disease or having a certain life experience (Palys, 2008). In this study, the criterion is that teachers to participate in the study should have foreign students in their classes. For this criterion, the researchers made interviews with 33 teachers in whose classes there are foreign students with different numbers. The teachers were determined from four primary schools in the province. The primary schools in the towns of Bilecik were not included in the study. The details and personal information about the 33 participants are given in Table 3.

As seen in Table 3, thirty three teachers participated in the study. While nineteen of the participants were females, fourteen were males. Time in service of the teachers ranges from eight years to forty years. There is a teacher who has had foreign students in her class for just one month, while there is one who has had foreign students in her classes for six years.

Table 3

The Personal Information about the Teachers.

Code	Gender	Education Background	Grade	Time in Service (Year)	The Period of Teaching Foreign Students (Year)
T1	F	Agricultural Faculty	4	20	3
T2	F	Open Education Faculty	1	26	1
T3	F	Faculty of Economics and	1	20	1
T4	E	Open Education Faculty	2	27	2
T5	F	Faculty of Economics and	4	19	3
T6	F	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	2	21	2
T7	F	Education Faculty	3	20	2
T8	F	Education Faculty	1	10	1
T9	E	Education Faculty	2	20	1
T10	F	Education Faculty	1	37	5
T11	M	Engineering Faculty	3	20	3
T12	F	Faculty of Health Sciences	1	20	5
T13	M	Open Education Faculty	1	27	1
T14	M	Open Education Faculty	2	29	2
T15	F	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	4	19	1
T16	F	Education Faculty	4	10	1
T17	F	Education Faculty	1	18	1 (month)
T18	F	Open Education Faculty	3	24	2
T19	F	Institute of Education Sciences	3	30	3
T20	F	Education Faculty	2	18	1
T21	M	Open Education Faculty	3	40	1
T22	M	Education Faculty	3	25	3
T23	M	Education Faculty	4	13	2
T24	F	Education Faculty	4	8	3
T25	F	Engineering Faculty	1	19	1
T26	F	Faculty of Economics and	4	20	6
T27	M	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	4	19	1
T28	M	Institute of Education Sciences	1	10	2
T29	M	Faculty of Mines	3	20	2
T30	M	Education Faculty	4	10	2
T31	F	Education Faculty	2	27	1
T32	M	Education Faculty	1	14	1
T33	M	Education High School	1	27	2 (months)

Collection, Analysis and Interpretation of Data

In order to collect data for the study, the researchers first made some negotiations with the experts in the Provincial Directorate for National Education to find out in which primary schools there are foreign students. Later, necessary official permission was obtained for the study and the researchers developed a Teacher Information Form and Interview Form as data collection tools. In the Teacher Information Form, there were questions about the gender, the name of the faculty they graduated from, which grade they are teaching in the present academic year, how long they have been teaching and how long they have had foreign students in their classes. In the semi-structured interview form, the researchers developed questions to find out what general problems the foreign students experience and what problems they experience in the school environment. The questions were submitted to two experts in the field in Bilecik Seyh Edebali University and Anadolu University. After making necessary revisions and corrections with the interview questions, the interviews with thirty three teachers in four primary schools in the province were conducted by the researchers between May 30th and June 6th, 2016. All the interviews were recorded by using a recorder.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in phenomenological studies aims to put forward the experiences and meaning of the experiences. To reach such an aim, content analysis is conducted to conceptualize data and to reveal themes which are capable of describing the phenomenon. The findings obtained from this analysis are presented with a descriptive explanation and for the presentation of the findings the researcher often utilizes from direct quotations from the interviews. Besides, the findings which are obtained from the themes and the patterns are explained and interpreted (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). For this reason, content analysis was conducted in this study. All the interviews were recorded by a recorder and they were transcribed and transcriptions were transferred to computerized interview transcription forms on the computers. The researchers conducted this process independently. In order to avoid data loss during the transcriptions, the recordings of three interviews which were determined randomly were given to an expert for examination in order to find out whether there were any differences between the recordings and their transcriptions.

The data gathered from the interview recordings were first conceptualized and the concepts obtained were designed to obtain themes. The data were analyzed in four stages: coding the data, determining the themes, arranging the codes and themes, describing and interpreting the data. The data analysis processes were independently conducted by the researchers first and then they conducted the analysis again together. The codes which the researchers obtained revised and the codes were arranged under the themes. The interview questions were taken into consideration while determining the themes. As a result of the analyses, the opinions of the participants on the aim of the study were arranged under six themes.

Findings and Interpretations

According to the findings of the study, the problems faced by foreign students from the teachers’ perspectives were classified under seven main themes. The themes are given in Figure 1.

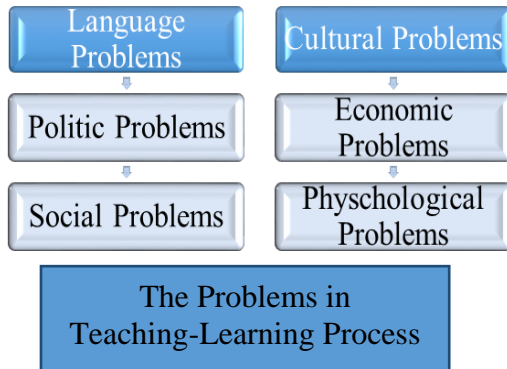


Figure 1

The Main Themes

As seen in Figure 1, the problems experienced by the foreign students in primary schools from perspectives of the classroom teachers are language, cultural, politic, economic, social problems and the problems in teaching-learning process.

Language Problems

It was found in the analysis of the data gathered from interviews with the classroom teachers that there are four sub-themes under the language problems theme. The sub-themes are presented in Figure 2.

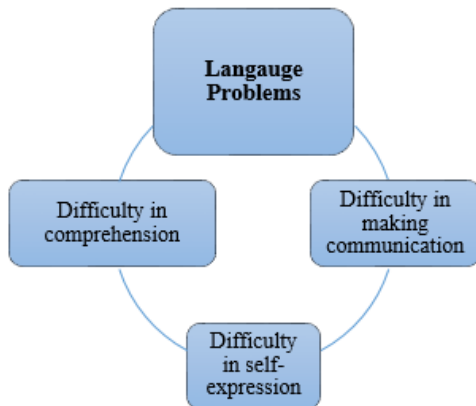


Figure 2.

Language Problems

As seen in Figure 2, the findings related to language problems are “*difficulty in making communication, difficulty in self-expression, negative peer relationships, and difficulty in comprehension*”.

Difficulty in communication

According to the findings obtained from the interviews with the teachers, one of the problems related to language is that the foreign students are not able to communicate with the teachers and the other students in the classroom or school.

Teacher 13 expressed his opinions as follows:

“They cannot make communications with their friends and they cannot play with the other students. In fact, they are trying to communicate with the others, but because of the language problem, they cannot do so. This leads the foreign students to keep themselves away from the other students and therefore, the socialization period becomes difficult.”

Teacher 20 said the following about the problems in communication:

“The foreign students cannot make communications with their friends that much. They play with the other foreign students during the breaks.”

It can be said that the foreign students have communication problems because they cannot speak Turkish. The language problem prevents them from having communications with the other students even though some of them try to establish communication. However, apart from the language problem, the foreign students are unwilling to establish communications with the Turkish students and they play with other foreign students.

Difficulty in self expression

Another sub-theme obtained from the findings related to language problems is that the foreign students have difficulty in expressing themselves.

Teacher 4 who has had to foreign students in his class for a year said the following opinions about the problem:

“In general, these students have communication problems. Since they do not know Turkish, they are not able to express themselves appropriately and they cannot understand what the teacher teaches and explains in the lessons.”

On the other hand, teacher 14 said:

“The problem of language is already a well-known problem. I have a student from Iraq and as this student has been attending our school since the 1st grade, he has learnt to read and write, but of course this is not

enough. He has great difficulty in expressing himself and when his friends in the classroom or I ask a question to him, he has difficulty in giving an answer even though he understands the question.”

Depending on the statements of the teachers, it can be said that because of the language problems, the foreign students cannot express themselves effectively.

Difficulty in comprehension

According to the findings obtained from the interviews with the teachers, another problem related to language is that the foreign students are not able to comprehend what they read or listen.

Teacher 6 said about this problem:

“The foreign students have learnt to read and write, but as they do not now our language, they cannot comprehend well what they read; therefore, they cannot answer reading comprehension questions. For instance, they have difficulty in matching the words with the objects. They cannot participate in the activities as in a desired manner.”

Similarly, teacher 20 said:

“My student’s mother was a music teacher in their own country. Therefore, the mother supported her son’s education at home and my student has become successful in reading, writing and mathematics. But she reads a text without understanding it and as there is not a meaning unity in what she reads, she may fail especially in reading comprehension activities. While she is able to do four operations in mathematics, she cannot answer the mathematic problems as she has not been able to comprehend the related subject in the lesson. In fact, foreign students are able to learn better at mathematics and English than our Turkish students. But as they do not know Turkish or cannot comprehend the meanings of the words, they fall behind their peers.”

It can be concluded from the findings under the theme of language problems that since the foreign students in primary schools do not know Turkish at all or not well-enough, they are not able to communicate with the teachers or other students and thus, their relationships with their teachers and the other students are weak. Another conclusion that may be reached because of the language problem is that the foreign students, due to lack of Turkish language knowledge, cannot express themselves and cannot comprehend what they read or what they listen or what they are asked by the teachers or the other students.

Cultural Problems

Depending on the data gathered from the analyses, the teachers mentioned about cultural problems that the foreign students encounter. Under the theme of the cultural problems, we have found out two themes, *the problems related to religious values* and *being unfamiliar with the Turkish customs and traditions* as presented in Figure 3.

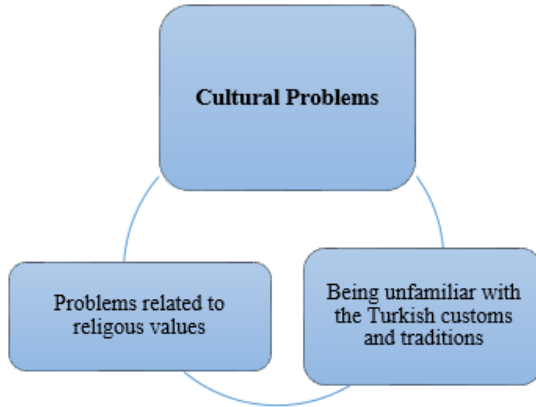


Figure 3

Cultural Problems

Problems related to religious values

According to the findings obtained from the interviews with the teachers, one of the cultural problems the foreign students encounter is related to the religious values.

Teacher 15 mentioned his opinions about this problem as follows:

“The foreign students would usually prefer to keep themselves away from the lessons related to our culture or religion. For example, the Iraqi student in my class is not Muslim, so he does not want to take Religious Culture course. Our prayers are, of course, unfamiliar for them. They get bored in Religious Culture lessons and they don’t want this course to be compulsory.”

Likewise, teacher 28 said:

There are many students from different religions in my class. For example, while the Iraqi student is a child of educated and enlightened parents, the Syrian student is insensitive and has a primitive family structure. The Afghan student, on the other hand, has unenlightened parents who apply religious pressure on their child. Unfortunately, I hesitate while I explain our religious values to the class in case non-Muslim Iraqi parents can complain about me. They make use of

complaint channels very well. I also abstain from my Afghan student's parents. Since the religious, cultural and traditional values of the refugee families are different from ours, they may misunderstand us."

By considering the views of the teachers, we can say that some of the foreign students are not Muslims. They have different religions. Therefore, such a difference may create a problem in classroom setting. As the teachers stressed, due to being members of different religions, neither these students nor their parents want religious culture course.

Being unfamiliar with the Turkish customs and traditions

According to the findings obtained from the interviews with the teachers, another cultural problem the foreign students encounter is that the foreign students are unfamiliar with the Turkish customs and traditions.

Teacher 4 said the following about this problem:

"Our traditional games like hide and seek and blind man's bluff do not make the foreign students happy and they do not want to participate in the games. They like playing universal plays like football. As a teacher, I have difficulty about how to behave as I do not know their cultures and customs. They feel like aliens against our customs and traditions"

Likewise, teacher 31 said:

"The foreign students in my class have different customs and behaviors different from ours in terms of greetings, participating in the activities, diets and cleaning. Therefore, both they and we have difficulty due to cultural differences."

Depending on the opinions of the teachers, it can be concluded that many cultural problems arise because of the cultural differences like different religious belief and different customs and traditions. It can be said that especially non-Muslim students are not satisfied with Religious Culture course, so they do not want to participate in this course and that as they are unfamiliar with the Turkish customs and traditions; they refrain from joining activities related to Turkish customs. It may also be concluded that as the religious values and cultural customs of the foreign students differ from the ones of Turkish students, teacher may sometimes face difficulties during the lessons and even sometimes they do not know how to behave in such situations.

Politic Problems

Depending on the data gathered from the analyses, the teachers mentioned about politic problems that the foreign students encounter. The sub-themes under this problem are feeling *insecure in the country, regarding Turkey as a crossing point and not being able to adapt to the education system* as presented in Figure 4.

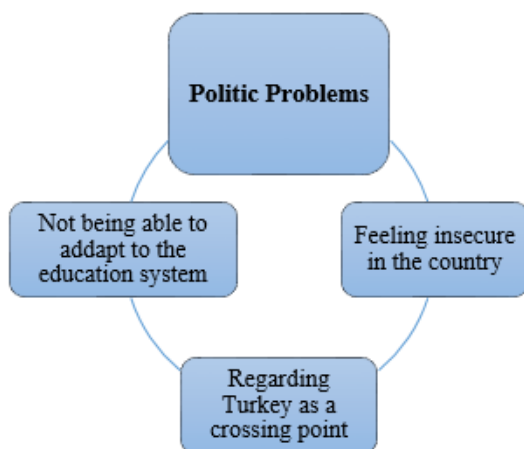


Figure 4

Politic Problems

Feeling insecure in the country

According to the findings obtained from the interviews with the teachers, one of the politic problems the foreign students encounter is that they have a confidence problem; that is, they do not feel secure in another country.

About this problem, teacher 15 students said the following:

“The foreign students exhibit all the expected behaviors like being shy, introvert and always attentive for being a completely foreign environment. Firstly, because they have come from a very different culture and country, they have adaptation problems. They feel insecure as they are in a totally different environment.”

Similarly, teacher 26 said:

“They have difficulty in making friends as they do not feel secure in our city and country. They initiate any communication with quarrels and they always feel as if they need to defend themselves. Once, I witness that the parents of these children warn their sons or daughters to defend themselves in this foreign country. They experience this problem until a certain amount of time passes and until they feel secure.”

Teacher 11 pointed out the chaos in the countries of the foreign countries and said:

“I have two students from Syria and Iraq. The families of both students flee from their countries because of the chaos and wars, bombings, etc .We can say that they preferred to run away from a place where they feel insecure and this place is their own countries. So it is very normal that these students feel insecure in another country and eve they and their families do not trust in us and our country.”

From the opinions of the teachers, it can be concluded that the foreign students, as most of them come from a chaotic environment with political problems, feel insecure in their new environment, so they feel as if they need to defend themselves.

Regarding Turkey as a crossing point

Another sub-theme under the politic problems is that the foreign students and their families in particular regard our country as a crossing point and they always dream and plant to move to another country.

Teacher 5 who has had foreign students for three years in her classes said:

“The foreign student in my class is older than the other students. Though he is supposed to be in a higher grade class, he is in my class. He does not know Turkish and does not want to learn it because he always dreams of going to America.”

Similarly, teacher 32 said:

“We can see the parents only at the registration. As they believe that they will stay in Turkey temporarily, they register their children to schools in order to get student certificate.”

From the points of views of the teachers, it may be said that some of the foreign students and their families alike do not want to stay in Turkey for a long time and that they want to move to other countries; therefore, they regard Turkey as a crossing point.

Not being able to adapt to the education system

Another sub-theme under the politic problems is that the foreign students cannot adapt to the education system in Turkey.

Teacher 3 said the following about this problem:

“The Iraqi girl came to my class during the orientation period. We love her a lot and we have never isolated her. But she did not want to learn Turkish. She participated in the smart board activities and that is all. I

have talked to her mother many times but her mother said that her daughter cannot adapt to the system.”

Teacher 18 said:

“Most of the families of these students think of moving to other countries, they do not accept our education system and they do not show enough interest and importance in education. Therefore, both these students and we get in trouble.”

Depending on the views of the teachers on the politic problems, it can be concluded that most of the foreign students and even their families feel insecure in Turkey and that they want to move to other countries. So they regard our country as a crossing point and they have problems in adapting to the education system. In addition, most of the parents are unwilling to do deal with such problems.

Economic Problems

From the opinions of the teachers, the foreign students encounter economic problems together with the other problems. Under the theme of economic problems, the teachers expressed two sub-problems: *the students’ not being able to meet the daily needs* and *not being able to get educational materials* as given in Figure 5.

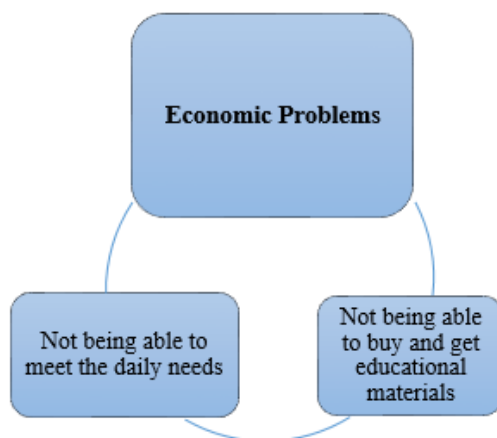


Figure 5

Economic Problems

Not being able to meet the daily needs

According to the the findings obtained from the interviews with the teachers, the foreign students cannot meet the daily needs such as accomadation, nourishment, clothes and cleaning.

Teacher 6 said:

“These students and their families have many economic problems. They do not have enough money. They can hardly survive. They are sometimes supported by the municipality, governorship, merchants, neighbors and us. As they do not have enough money, they have accommodation problems. Most of them live in bad and hard conditions. The students do not have shower. They have cleaning problems and this can be disturbing for the other students. The other students do not want to sit next to them.”

Teacher 29, on the other hand, said the following about this problem:

“Our students have accommodation problems. We know that our students who have to stay in tents with their families have difficulty in cleaning and shower needs. We directed my student to municipality in order for his needs to be met. We obtained economic support from the tradesmen and district governorship. We have found such a solution, but there are many schools which cannot produce such solutions and therefore, it is certain these students will have troubles.”

Depending on the opinions of the teachers, it may be said that the foreign students and their families have economic problems which inevitably lead to accommodation, cleaning and other related problems.

Not being able to buy and get educational materials

Another problem arising from the economic problems is that the foreign students cannot buy and get necessary educational materials.

Teacher 11 mentioned his opinions on this problem as follows:

“The economic conditions of the students are very bad. Therefore, they cannot buy materials such as school uniform, books, notebooks, bag, which is a very sad situation. We helped them and the municipality helped them. Sometimes the students may have to get some materials when we give them project homework. But the foreign students cannot buy them and even they sometimes wish they had those beautiful pens or pens which the other students have.”

Likewise, teacher 26 said:

“There are foreign students having difficulty in obtaining lesson materials. But what attracts my attention is that most of the time they lose or misuse the materials after they get them.”

From the points of views of the teachers, we can say that the foreign students, due to economic problems, cannot buy and get necessary educational materials. We can also state that the teachers, the school administrators, the tradesmen, the mayor and the governor are trying to find solutions to economic problems. However, it can also be concluded that this support does not solve the problems as the teachers mentioned.

Social Problems

Depending on the views of the teachers, the social problems which the teachers think the foreign students encounter were presented under this title.

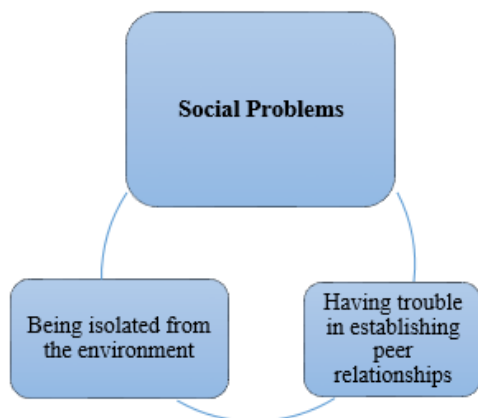


Figure 6

Social Problems

As seen in Figure 6, the sub-themes of the social problems were found out as *having trouble in establishing peer relationships* and *being isolated from the environment*.

Having trouble in establishing peer relationships

According to the views of the teachers, the foreign students have troubles in establishing peer relationships. For this problem, teacher 6 said:

“Some of the foreign students keep themselves away from the others in the class. They avoid having contact with the other students. As their Turkish language level is very low, they cannot make friends easily.”

On the other hand, teacher 24 said:

“The student in my class did not make any efforts to communicate with others at the very beginning. She always abstained from playing with the other students during the breaks. Now the situation is not so good, but at

least she began to talk to the others in the class. But she still has problems and cannot make friends though the other students try to embrace her.”

From the statements of the teachers, it can be said that as the foreign students have language problems or other personal problems, they tend to avoid making friends and communicating with the other students though the other students try to embrace them.

Being isolated from the environment

During the interviews with teachers, they emphasized that the foreign students isolated from the environment.

About this problem teacher 8 said:

“The foreign students had difficulty in making communication with their friends. The Turkish students did not want to accept and embrace them. It took time for both the foreign and other students to get used to each other.”

Likewise, teacher 7 who teaches to 3rd grade students said:

“The foreign student in my class is Uzbek. She is a good and hardworking girl. But she is alone. The other students in the class do not want to accept her in their environment and they do not want to play with her. I have had to explain the other students that she is our guest in our class. Some students tend to show cruel behaviors against her. However, as I always warn them, I can say that this problem between the students has declined.”

And teacher 28 stated similar expressions about the problem.

“The Turkish students in my class behave according my attitudes. I never let them to isolate the foreign students from the environment. But when they are together during breaks for example, the Turkish students may tend to isolate the foreign students; they do not want include the foreign students into their plays. But when I warn them against such a situation, they give up doing so.”

The statements of these three teachers show that the foreign students have difficulty in making friends, but this problem is due to the other students in the classes. However, the problem tends to decline with the warnings of the classroom teachers.

Physiological Problems

Depending on the views of the teachers, the physiological problems which the teachers think the foreign students encounter were presented under this title.

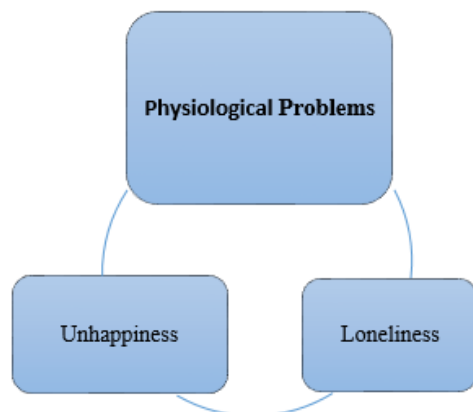


Figure 7

Physiological Problems

As shown in Figure 7, the sub-themes and problems related to the physiological problems are *loneliness* and *unhappiness*.

Loneliness

According to the views of the teachers, the foreign students feel lonely. For this problem, teacher 1 said:

“The foreign female students do not want to sit next to boys. They try to establish communications with the other students during the plays, but the level of the communications is very low. During the lessons, as they abstain from making mistakes, they do not participate in the lessons and they either prefer to sit alone or talk to the other foreign students in the class. But if there is only one foreign in the class, you can obviously observe that she/he is lonely.”

Teacher 5 who has had foreign students in her classes stated similar opinions:

“I have a foreign student in my class. She feels lonely most of the time. Sometimes I see her crying when something bad happens. She is always shy, isolated, and alone.”

The statements of the teachers show that the foreign students are most of the time alone in the classroom, during breaks or in other settings in the school. They feel lonely.

Unhappiness

Another problem observed by the classroom teacher with the foreign students is that these students are unhappy. About this situation, teacher 30 said:

“I always observe these students. They do not communicate with the other students; they do not make friends; they do not play with the other students; they do not like school. They are always unhappy about being in the school and they are sometimes absent from the school.”

From the statements of the teachers, it can be said that most of the foreign students are usually lonely, keeping themselves away from sitting next to the other students, not participating in the activities or plays and they are not happy about being in the school.

The Problems in Teaching-Learning Process

Depending on the views of the teachers, the problems in teaching-learning process which the teachers think the foreign students encounter were presented under this title.

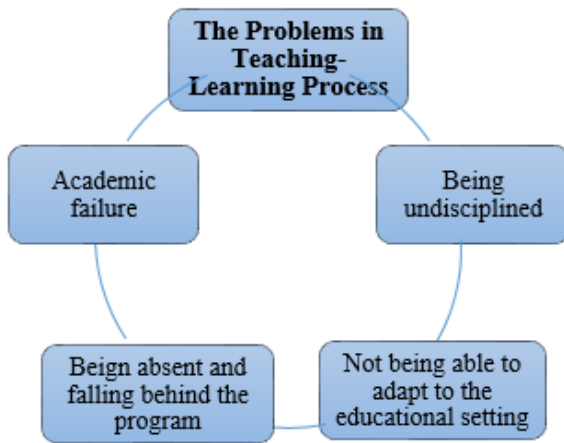


Figure 8

The Problems in Teaching-Learning Process

As seen in Figure 8, the sub-themes and problems related to the problems in teaching-learning process are *being undisciplined*, *not being able to adapt to the educational setting*, *being absent and falling behind the program* and *academic failure*.

Being undisciplined

One of the problems the teacher mentioned in the interviews that the foreign students may be undisciplined and break the rules.

Teacher 1 said about the discipline problems caused by the foreign students:

“One of my students is registered in my 4th grade class just although he has never been registered to school in his country before. We have had many problems in the class. He does not listen to the lessons, assaults the other students and even he has begun to steal the things of the others. He spoils the discipline in the classroom.”

Teacher 26 who has had foreign students in her classes for six years said:

“I have two foreign students in my class. When they first came to the class, they tried to communicate with the others via sign language. These two students formed their own group in the class. And they began to say bad words to the other students and behave cruelly to the others. These students are generally aggressive and ill-tempered. They get angry with very small mistakes of their friends. They have many discipline problems and they are not interested in the lessons. So they do not do any homework. We have limited time and we give them some studies to enhance them I but they do not study at home.”

From the statements of the teachers, it can be understood that some of the foreign students tend to break the rules of the class and display undesired behaviors and they are undisciplined.

Not being able to adapt to the classroom setting

Another problem the teachers stated in their interviews is that the foreign students experience adaptation problem to the classroom setting. Teacher 13 who teaches to 1st grade students said:

“I believe that all children have the right of having education. But it very important to provide them with appropriate educational settings and I do not think that such settings are not provided for the foreign students. These students experience great difficulties to adapt to our educational settings. They cannot catch up with the other students in the class.”

Teacher 23 who teaches to 4th grade students said:

“It takes for these students about four, five months to get used to the school and the class. They have trouble in playing with the children. They fall behind the level of other students in almost all of the lessons. This makes my Syrian student aggressive.”

Similarly, Teacher 33 said:

“As you know these students come from very different cultures, countries and backgrounds. When they first come to our country, they experience

an adaptation problem to their new life in a new country. Then, when they come to school, everything is completely different from what they had in their own countries. For example, my son had to change his school and he had some adaptation problems to his new educational environment. Now think of the foreign students! Isn't it very normal that they have great difficulty in adapting to a new country, new school, new classroom, new friends, and new education programs?"

From the statements of the teachers, we may say that the foreign students experience an adaptation problem in the classroom setting and it takes time for them to get used to it. Depending on the views of the opinions, this adaptation problem is normal as they are in a new country.

Being absent and falling behind the education program

Another problem the students have in educational settings is that they fall behind the education program.

About this problem, teacher 5 said:

"They are trying to follow mathematics, but they just listen to the lessons in the other courses and they do the activities in the books by looking at their friends' books."

On the other hand, teacher 28 stated:

"The text books we use are not even appropriate for our Turkish students, so how do you expect them to be appropriate for the foreign students? We achieve success by preparing other teaching and learning materials. The biggest problem with the foreign students is that since most of these students do not know Turkish well-enough, they fall behind almost all teaching programs. They should learn Turkish first. They should be taught Turkish first before they come to our classes. But unfortunately, we do their registrations even if they do not know Turkish."

Teacher 14 who teaches to 2nd grade students mentioned about the problem and said:

"These students are absent most of the time. They do not have any worries whether they have fallen behind. Their parents also do not care about whether their children go to school or not learn something or not. Since they do not come to the class regularly, they are unaware of what we are doing in the class, what I am teaching and what the others are learning."

The statements of the teachers show that most of the foreign students fall behind the education programs. The teachers focused on some reasons for this problem. One is they do not know Turkish well-enough; therefore, they cannot follow the education process effectively. Another serious problem is that these students are absent from the school very often, which means that they do not follow the teaching-learning process.

Academic failure

The problem of academic failure is another sub-problem which was mentioned by the teachers during the interviews.

Teacher 3 in the interview mentioned about this problem with its possible reasons and said:

“These students do not want to learn our language. I have a foreign student in my class, I dealt with him very closely in the second semester so that he could learn Turkish, but I could not get a result. I even talked to the mother and suggested her that she should come to school and learn Turkish, but I got a negative answer. I used smart board very often while teaching Turkish, but this did not work. He even does not know counting in math. The language problem causes their failure in the lessons, exams and activities.”

Teacher 4 who teaches to 2nd grade students said:

“As they even do not understand the instructions for the exams, they fail in the exams. They understand better by visual explanation. They are good at math, but in the other courses where the language plays great role, they do not understand anything, so they fail.”

Similarly, teacher 17 said:

“As these students do not know Turkish, they experience problems in all courses. They can only participate in math while doing four operations activities. Apart from the Visual Arts and Physical Activities courses, they have problem in all courses and they cannot show any success.”

From the opinions of the teachers, it is obvious that most of the foreign students cannot achieve academic success largely due to the problem of language. As most of these students do not know Turkish and even some reject learning Turkish, the failure in the courses become inevitable. However, it is also concluded from the statements of the teachers that in such courses as math, visual arts and physical activities, the foreign students are better as they do not have to use language a lot.

Results and Discussion

This study aimed to identify the problems encountered by the foreign students from the point of views of the classroom teachers. Depending on the interviews with the primary school teachers for the aim of this study, following results have been obtained.

The teachers stated that the foreign students in primary schools have many problems. They stated that one of the most important problems, which is also the source of some other problem is that most of the foreign students have language problem; that is, they do not know Turkish. While just a few of them can learn the language, most are unwilling to learn it and they do not have any efforts. Although the teachers try to do their best to teach the language, they say that these attempts, unfortunately, result in failure. On the other hand the problem language brings about some other sub-problems as the teachers stressed. The teachers stated that because of the language problem, the foreign students have difficulty in self-expression, comprehending what they read or they listen and what is going on in the classroom, in the school, in the lessons, etc. In a study conducted by Biçer, Çoban and Bakır (2012), they found out that most of the problems result from the language problems. They stated that the foreign students do not know Turkish and this brings about many other problems.

The teachers also stated that the foreign students in their schools experience some cultural problems. The teachers said that such problems are inevitable as these students come from very different cultural backgrounds. There are students from Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Ukraine and Turkish Republics. As the teachers mentioned, these students are unfamiliar with the customs and traditions of the country and it takes time for them to get used to the traditions and customs. Another cultural problem is that some of the foreign students and their families are members of other religions. Therefore, as the teachers said, these students and even their families do not want Religious Culture lessons. Similarly, Açık (2008), Gürle (2012) and Kasdemir (2010) state in their studies that since the foreign students are from different countries with different cultures, traditions, customs and religions, they experience difficulty in adapting Turkish culture.

Another finding of the study shows that the foreign students feel insecure in the country, they regard Turkey as a crossing point and that they are not able to adapt to the education system. These problems have been stated under the theme of political problems. The teachers mentioned that most of the foreign students come from a chaotic environment. They have wars, skirmishes and bombs in their countries. They could not be secure in their own countries, so it is very normal that they feel insecure in Turkey, as well as the teachers stressed. On the other hand, the teachers reminded that most of these students and their families do not want to stay in Turkey for a long time; they always dream and think of moving to other countries. So Turkey is just a crossing point for them. Like the finding of this study, Yol (2011), Topcuoğlu (2012) and Güngör (2015) have stated similar problem in their studies.

The teacher also emphasized that these students have economic problems and these problems bring about other related problems. The teacher are of the opinion that one of the most serious problems the foreign students and their families encounter is that most of them accommodation problem. Even, some have to live in tents. Most of them live in bad and unsanitary conditions. Because of this, they are not able to meet their daily needs like washing, having shower and cleaning. On the other, because of the economic problems, the students are not able to buy and get educational materials. The teachers stated that they try to help these children. The mayor, governor and tradesmen also try to help the foreigners in need. Güçlü (1996), Çağlar (1999), Özyürek (2009), Polat (2012) and Güngör (2015) also stated that the foreign students have economic problems; their families have accommodation problems and that they cannot meet their daily needs. Çağlar (1999) mentioned that the foreign students are not able to buy educational materials due to economic problems. However, in a study conducted by Kiroglu, Kesten and Elma (2010), it is stated that the foreign students do not have accommodation problems in Turkey.

Another problem emphasized by the teachers is that the foreign students have social and physiological problems. Depending on these problems, the foreign students are told to have trouble in establishing peer relationships. The teachers stressed that there are two reasons for this problem. One is due to the other students' not wanting to embrace the foreign students. The other reason is due to the foreign students' personally not wanting to join the other in the class. They keep themselves isolated from the environment, as a result of which they may feel lonely and unhappy. Polat (2012) and Güngör (2015) stated in their studies that the foreign students in primary schools cannot make friends in their schools; most of them prefer to be alone, not to sit next to the other students or not to play with them. That is why; most of these foreign students seem unhappy, isolated and alone.

Finally, the teachers focused on the problems encountered by the foreign students in teaching-learning process. One of the first sub-problems the teachers pointed out related to the problems in teaching-learning process is that most of the foreign students are undisciplined and they break the rules. They do not care about the teaching-learning activities in the class and they do not want to participate in the classroom activities. Even some of them distract other students and prevent them from listening to the lessons. The teacher also said that since these students had different educational settings in their own countries, they now have adaptation problem to the education settings in the new country. Another reason for this problem is that they do not know Turkish well-enough, as a result of which they cannot participate in education activities. The teachers also emphasized that the problem of not knowing Turkish leads to academic failure in almost all courses for these students. Another problem is that these students are absent most of the time and therefore, they fall behind the education program. The teachers said that the foreign students and even their families do care about the attendance. They also said that when they talked to the students and their parents about the attendance problem, they could not get any desired result. Like these findings of this study, Güngör (2015) found out that when the foreign primary students are faced with a new culture and a

new education system, they are not able to express themselves, cannot establish communications with their friends and teachers, cannot understand the lessons and have academic failure in most courses.

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