Comparison of speaking activities in Turkish and English language teaching coursebooks regarding self-assesment grid of CEFR

Gülden Tüm [a] * ID , Gülşah Parmaksız Emre [b] ID

[a] Çukurova University, Adana, 01130 Turkey
[b] Bahri Çelen Anatolian High School, Hatay Turkey

Abstract

Since most class activities revolve around the utilization of textbook, selecting an appropriate basis for teaching is one of the most important decisions a teacher is liable to make in shaping the content and nature of teaching and learning. While the quality of textbooks has improved dramatically in recent years, the process of selecting an appropriate textbook has not become any easier for most teachers and administrators. The past decade has also seen considerable changes in the use of English that present new challenges for ELT as well. Since speaking fluently and accurately has become the most expected result in language learning, speaking sections of the course books have been basis for course book selection. Since a criterion is needed to evaluate course books, the Common European Framework provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe (CoE, 2001). It also describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. In this study, two course books, Yeni Hitit 1 and Success in TFL and EFL context respectively have been evaluated in the way it handles and practices speaking skill across self-assessment of CEFR. It is found that these books give priority to different issues.

Keywords: Common European Framework; EFL; TFL; course books; speaking skills

1. Introduction

Communication medium-speaking gains a vital role in human life as the nature of being a human being, biological need for learning and teaching in order to be able to live in society (Yaman, 2001). In addition, it is the shortest way of building an interaction among people, strengthening the ties or even ending them. In course books, language is taught through grammar, vocabulary, and four skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) each of which can be important respectively according to the purpose of learners. However, of 4 language skills, speaking is the most crucial one since most of communication depends on it (Irismet, 2006: 4) and it requires not only a definite amount of linguistic

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*Corresponding author Tel.: +0-322.338-6084+2793/20
 E-mail address: guldentum@gmail.com

knowledge about linguistic patterns, vocabulary and pronunciation but also the skill in using all in an effective way, as well. In order to perform this oral productive skill, speakers do not merely assemble sentences but they have to produce and adapt them to their circumstances. This means making decisions rapidly, implementing them smoothly and adjusting our conversation as unexpected problems appear in the path. (Bygate, 1987: cited in Seçer, 2010; Nunan, 1999; Burkart & Sheppard, 2004) argue that success in learning a language is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the target language and this fact affects the designing of the course books and how to improve speaking skills have been always discussed in the field.

1.1. CEF, European Language Portfolio, and Speaking

The Recommendation No. R(98) 6 of the Committee of Ministers Concerning Modern Languages emphasizes intercultural communication, multilinguailism and plurilingualism as key policy goals and sets out concrete measures for each educational sector in Europe. Two instruments are developed as an outcome of the policy: a) CEFR, a new Descriptive Scheme for language education, and a system of Common Reference Levels used to compare language skills and certificates; and b) European Language Portfolio (ELP), a comprehensive document that not only covers formal certificates but also documents other language experiences such as growing up in a multilingual home situation. Throughout this knowledge, ELP-a practical concrete outcome and the realization of the principles of the CEFR- aims to make the language learning process more transparent to learners, develop their learning capabilities for reflection and self-assessment, and enable them gradually to take more and more responsibility for their own learning, and make them more autonomous. Little (2007) makes the connection between CEFR and ELP in that "the relation between the CEFR and the ELP resides in the fact that self-assessment is carried out using the CEFR scales".

The relationship of speaking ability, communication skills, CEFR, and ELP is based on the requirement a common framework of evaluating and certificating the proficiency level of using language throughout all countries that are in need and search of a commonly shared framework of language teaching, including a common rating scale for proficiency in language use. Hence, all these devices gain importance in terms of the means for educational administrators, course designers, teachers, teacher trainers, examining bodies to reflect on their current practice, with a view to situating and co-ordinating their efforts and to ensuring that they meet the real needs of the learners for whom they are responsible (CoE, 2001). Besides, the Framework enhances the transparency of courses, syllabuses and qualifications; thus, promoting international co-operation in the field of modern languages. Speaking gains more attention since it can be said to be at the heart of the CEFR for Languages-Learning, Teaching, and Assessment, in Global Scale, Self-Assessment Grid, Global Oral Assessment Scale, and Oral Assessment Criteria Grid. In this study, two levels (A1-Breakthrouh, A2-Waystage) and their descriptors for speaking have been handled across two course books (TFL and EFL): Yeni Hitit1 and Success.

1.2. Coursebook Evaluation

One of the necessary skills for language teachers to acquire is materials evaluation since it serves to cater students' needs as well as their own. In addition, it provides them opportunities for further improvement of their practices based upon the curriculum. No doubt, the need for a conscious and methodical evaluation process is concerned evident, calling for an evaluation beyond the so-called 'flick test' of a course-book, thus leading 'the way to the exploration of course-book evaluation by teachers' (Kayapınar, 2009: 70). In this manner, descriptors of CEFR are taken into consideration and course books are revised and published again. Up to date, there have been several studies in order to sort out whether or not comparison of books and choosing the best practical one become evitable in

language teaching to catch standardization in education throughout countries. For instance, Alavinia and Siyadat (2013) conducted a research and compared four English textbooks (American English File 1, American Cutting Edge 1, American Headway 1, and New Interchange 1) in terms students' attitudes in Iranian context to find out similarities and differences. Jafarigohar and Ghaderi (2013) investigated two EFL course books (Topnotch and Total English) to elicit whether or not teachers were satisfied with on the criteria such as language components, tasks, activities, exercises, and critical discourse analysis features. Ünlü (2015) compared Hitit (older version of Yeni Hitit) and Yeni Hitit1 Turkish teaching course books regarding their presentation of grammar and grammar exercises. Beyleri and Basogul (2013) investigated the comprehension activities included in the 'Yeni Hitit1' (Turkish) and the 'New Headway' (English) series, which are designed as foreign/second language teaching course books. Taking into comparative surveys in this field, this study aims to evaluate speaking parts of Yeni Hitit1 (Turkish) and Success (English) across self-assessment grid of CEFR and compare them to what extent they are covered in both books.

1.3. Research Questions

1- Do the speaking activities in two course books teaching foreign languages (Yeni Hitit1-Turkish and Success-English) have the components in the self-assessment grid of CEFR?

2- To what extent are the speaking activities existed, underused or overused in Yeni Hitit1 and Success?

2. Method

2.1. Instruments

In this study two foreign language teaching course books are taken into consideration: a) Yeni Hitit1 (A1, A2 Level), Turkish course book for foreigners, written by language instructors at TÖMER-Ankara University, Turkey, and revised considering the criteria set of CEFR (Ünlü, 2015); and b) Success (A2 Level), English course book for foreigners, written by James Comyns Carr-Jennifer Parsons, Pearson Education Limited, 2007, England. Yeni Hitit1 consists of 12 units, generally life-related original and fictional, each of which has three sub-topics (Akbal, 2008). Success has 14 thematic units, each of which consists of sections such as grammar and listening, reading and vocabulary, listening and speaking, and writing. The Success focuses on communication in real-world contexts presented within vocabulary, grammar, and skills linked to the CEFR. The information on units and themes are presented in the table below.

Table 1. Units and Contents in Success and Yeni Hitit1

SUCCESS	YENI HITIT 1
Unit 1 :Making contact	Unit 1: Merhaba (Hello)
Unit 2: A day in the life…	Unit 2: Günlük hayat (Daily life)
Unit 3: Same or different?	Unit 3: Yakın çevremiz (Our immediate neighbourhood)
Unit 4: A job for life	Unit 4: Zaman geçiyor (Time is passing by)
Unit 5: Home sweet home	Unit 5: Afiyet olsun (Have a good appetite)
Unit 6: Eat to live	Unit 6: Bürokrasi her yerde (Bureaucracy is everywhere)

Unit 7: Now and then   Unit 7: Gelecek de bir gün gelecek (The future is bound to arrive one day)

Unit 8: Make a difference   Unit 8: Rivayet Odur Ki… (Once upon a time)

Unit 9: Following fashion   Unit 9: Farklı Dünyalar (Different lifes)

Unit 10: Stuff dot com   Unit 10: Medya (Media)

Unit 11: Time for a break!

Unit 12: Healthy body

Unit 13: It's a small world

Unit 14: Who cares?

2.2. Data collection procedures and data analysis

This study is designed as twofold: a) a descriptive study as it gives numerical and graphic procedures to summarize a collection of data in a clear and understandable way (Jaggi, 2003) and b) the quantitative research because it is the numerical representation and manipulation of observations for the purpose of describing and explaining the phenomena that those observations reflect (Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2015). "The obvious benefits of quantitative data are that the numerical form makes comparison easy, data are standardized, visible and amenable to the tests of classical survey statistics" (Cooper & Branthwaite, 1977 cited by Hart, 1987, p. 29). All the speaking sections of the units in both coursebooks are taken into consideration one by one and recorded by the researcher by checking the self-assessment grid of CEFR, which categories speaking parts as spoken interaction (SI) and spoken production (SP). Comparison is carried out with the frame suggested in CEFR and the speaking sections of both books have been analyzed unit by unit. In Yeni Hitit 1, the symbol 🎤 is introduced for speaking activities. However, there is no separate "speaking" section in Success and language skills appear in integrated parts as "listening and speaking, "reading and speaking", or "speaking and listening". Since both books are for beginners, the self-assessment grid is taken into account regarding descriptors of the grid for A1 and A2 levels.

Table 2. Common Reference Levels: Self-assessment Grid (L)

		A1	A2
SPEAKING	Spoken Interaction (SI)	• I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. • I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	• I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. • I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.
	Spoken Production (SP)	• I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.	• I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms about my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.

As observed in the Table 2, speaking skills are considered in two measurements as spoken interaction such as asking and answering simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics (A1) and also spoken production such as describing family and other people, living conditions, educational background or job (A2) in order to reflect individually himself or taking part in conversation mutually. Within this grid, evaluation seems to be standard identifying the categories regarding the levels to catch easily the importance of speaking activities.

Table 3. The Descriptors in the Self-assessment Grid (SAG)

	A1	A2
Spoken Interaction (SI)	• Asking and answering simple questions in areas of immediate need • Asking and answering simple questions on familiar topics	• Communication on familiar topics and activities • Handling very short social exchanges
Spoken Production (SP)	• Describing where you live and people you know	• Describing family • Describing other people • Describing living conditions • Describing educational background • Describing present or most recent job

As presented in Table 3, the descriptors in the self-assesment grid (SAG) are identified in order to analyze them one by one such as describing where one lives (A1) and describing living conditions (A2) which means a (+) more than level A1. In CEFR, the levels are recognized as A1, A1+, A1++, or A2, A2+ etc. This is clearly formulated in CEFR suggesting ways for teachers to utilize in foreign language teaching. As seen in the table, each descriptor in the scale is divided into two or more descriptors and written as a separate criterion to be searched, standardized, and evaluated/assessed during the analysis in two course books, namely Yeni Hitit1 and Success.

3. Results

Table 4. Speaking Descriptors in Yeni Hitit1 and Success

Level	SELF-ASSESSMENT GRID (SAG)	Yeni Hitit1		Success	
		f	%	f	%
A1	**Spoken Integration (SI)**				
	Asking and answering simple questions in areas of immediate need	4	30	6	42
	Asking and answering simple questions on familiar topics	7	59	8	58
A1	**Spoken Production (SP)**				
	1.Describing where you live and people you know	2	17	4	29
A2	**Spoken Integration (SI)**				

		1.Communication on familiar topics and activities	11	92	7	50
		2.Handling very short social exchanges	7	59	10	72
A2	**Spoken Production (SP)**				
	1.Describing family	2	17	1	8
	2.Describing other people	2	17	3	22
	3.Describing living conditions	2	17	1	8
	4.Describing educational background	2	17	0	0
	5.Describing present or most recent job	1	9	0	0

Based on the analysis of two books and as indicated in Table 4, Yeni Hitit1 has 54 and Success has 14 speaking activities. When the analyses of two books at A1 and A2 level are taken into consideration in Table 4, it is observed that the units are analyzed separately regarding the items (A1, two ones in spoken integration (SI) and one spoken production (SP); A2, two in SI and five in SP). Findings related to the A1 speaking descriptors in both books reveal that there are slight differences in between. For the first two items in A1 level in SI, it is observed that the first one is asking and answering simple questions in areas of immediate need and the results indicate it is 30% for Yeni Hitit1 while this ratio is 42% in Success. Surprisingly, the second item in SI, asking and answering simple questions on familiar topics, almost equal results are observed in both books, Yeni Hitit1 (59%) and in Success (58%). Upon consideration of SP in A1, the findings of the item about describing where you live and people you know reveal that there is a dramatically difference between two books Yeni Hitit1 (17%) and in Success (29%).

A2 Speaking descriptors analyses are indicated in two levels in the table as spoken interaction (SI) and spoken production (SP) as well. According to the table, the results of first item in SI which is related to communication on familiar topics and activities are rather different in between two books. For instance, communication of familiar topics is given a very high ratio 92% in YH1 while only 50% is seen in Success course book. For the second item of handling very short social exchanges, the ratio is 59% in Yeni Hitit1 and 72% in Success. Upon consideration on the spoken production for A2, five items are covered: Describing family, describing other people, describing living conditions, describing educational background, and describing present or most recent job. For describing family, both books fail to give importance 17% (Yeni Hitit1) and 8% (Success). For describing other people, similar results are observed in two books (Yeni Hitit1- 17%; S-22%). When taking into account of describing living conditions, the results are highly surprising, 17% in Yeni Hitit1 and 8% in Success. For the results of describing educational background, Yeni Hitit1 seems to cover the same amount (17%) whereas there is no activity in Success (0%). For describing present or most recent job, Yeni Hitit1 covers very few room (9%) while it is unmentioned in Success.

In addition to the analyses of two books in terms of speaking descriptors, the units in both books are necessary to be examined separately in order to shed light to the existence in teaching materials. Hence, each speaking part has been evaluated and a tick has been put into for the unit as Self-assessment Grid (SAG) in Spoken Integration (SI) and Spoken Production (SP). In this section, SI and SP descriptor analysis has been presented considering the books Yeni Hitit1 (YH1) and Success (S) in the table below.

Table 5. A1-A2 Speaking Self-Assessment Grid Analysis for SI and SP in YH1 and S

L	SAG	UNITS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
A1	SI-1	YH 1	✔		✔		✔		✔							
	SI-1	S	✔			✔	✔	✔				✔	✔		X	X
	SI-2	YH1	✔	✔		✔	✔		✔		✔	✔				
	SI-2	S		✔		✔	✔	✔		✔		✔	✔			✔
	SP-1	YH1							✔		✔					
	SP-1	S			✔		✔			✔					✔	
A2	SI-1	YH1	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔	✔	✔	✔	X	X
	SI-1	S		✔	✔				✔	✔		✔	✔			✔
	SI-2	YH1	✔	✔		✔	✔	✔				✔	✔		X	X
	SI-2	S	✔			✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔			✔
	SP-1	YH1							✔		✔					
	SP-1	S			✔										X	X
	SP-2	YH1				✔			✔							
	SP-2	S			✔					✔				✔		
	SP-3	YH1	✔	✔												
	SP-3	S													✔	
	SP-4	YH1	✔	✔												
	SP-4	S													X	X
	SP-5	YH1		✔												
	SP-5	S													X	X

Table 5 presents information about the descriptor analysis unit by unit regarding A1 and A2 levels in two books, YH1 and S. At A1 level, for spoken integration, it is observed that YH1 includes the simple questions in areas of immediate need is in Unit 1, 3, 5, and 7 whereas these questions take part in Unit 1, 4, 5, 6, 10 and 11 in S. The second item related to asking and answering simple questions on familiar topics seems to be equal in usage (7 in YH1 and 8 in S). When considered the units separately, it is observed that YH1 includes simple questions on familiar topics in Unit 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, and 10 while S includes them in Unit 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11 and 14. For A1, spoken production sections, related to describing where you live and people you know shows that merely two in YH1 while it is four in S. In other words, YH1 has descriptive information about place and people in Unit 7 and 9 while S has information in Unit 3, 5, 8, and 13.

At A2 level, upon the consideration on the spoken integration, it is seen that all the units in YH 1 cover familiar topics except Unit 8 whereas in S, merely Unit 2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 11, and 14 give importance to familiar topics. For the second item, handling very short social exchanges, it appears that YH1 includes seven speaking activities whereas this amount is then in S. Based on the analyses unit by unit, it is seen that YH1 gives activities on social exchanges in Unit 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 11 and 12.

However, in S, Units covering exchanges are Unit 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 14. For the analysis of the spoken production at A2 level, five items appear as describing family, describing other people, describing living conditions, describing educational background, and describing present or most recent job. For describing family, both books fail to give importance; for instance, in YH1 two activities (Unit 7 and 9) take part whereas in S merely Unit 3 gives place for family. For describing other people, similar results are observed (two activities in YH1, Unit 4 and 7; three activities in S, Unit 3, 8, and 12). For the analysis of describing educational background, it is observed the same amount in YH1 (two parts in Unit 1 and 2); nevertheless, no room in S course book. For the last item at A2 spoken production descriptor, describing present or most recent job it both books, it is observed that again YH1 covers this item once merely in Unit 2 while it is unmentioned in S course book. The figure below gives information about spoken interaction and production in both levels (A1 and A2) in two language teaching course books.
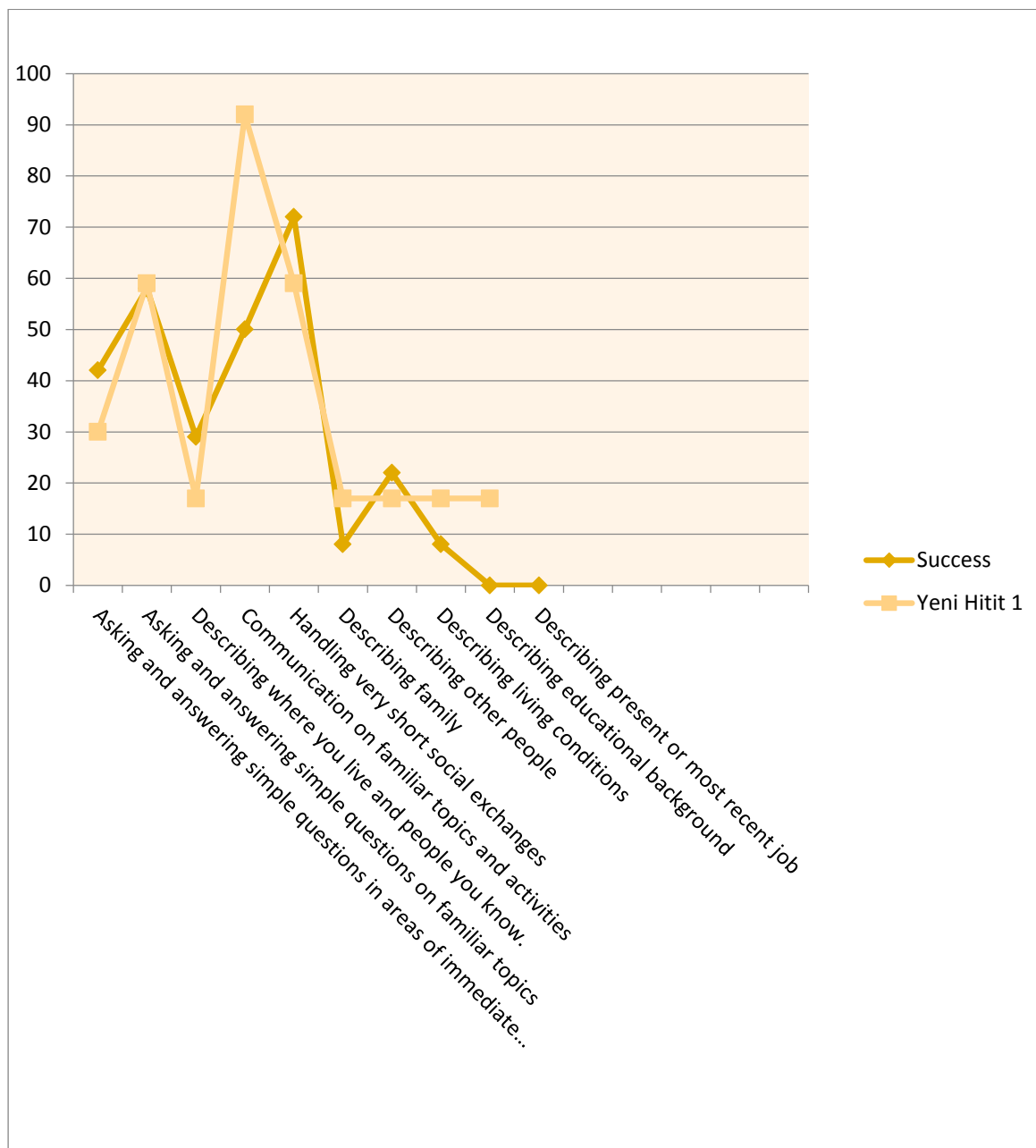

Figure 1. Success and Yeni Hitit1 Regarding Speaking Descriptors of CEFR

The Figure 1, indicates the results about speaking descriptors in Success and Yeni Hitit1, an it is obvious that Success has more speaking activities (%42) than Yeni Hitit1 (30%) which can enable students *ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need*. However, Yeni Hitit1 has slightly more speaking activities (59%) than Success (58%) in terms of *asking and answering simple questions on familiar topics*. Success (29%) has more speaking activities than Yeni Hitit1 (17%) in terms of *describing where you live and people you know*. Yeni Hitit1 seems to be motivating to include more speaking activities (92%) than Success (50%) regarding the theme of *develop communication on familiar topics and activities*. This result is also supported by Ünlü (2015), who found more communicative activities regarding ELP in Yeni Hitit1.   On the other hand, Success has slightly more speaking activities (72%) than Yeni Hitit1 (59%) to enable students *handle very short social exchanges*. In terms of *describing family*, Yeni Hitit1 (17%) provides more speaking activities than Success (8%) while Success (22%) has more speaking activities than Yeni Hitit1 (17%) on *describing other people*. Yeni Hitit1 *(17%)* doubles speaking activities compared to Success (8%) in terms of *describing living conditions*. Moreover, Success does not have a speaking activity to stimulate practice on *describing educational background* and *describing present or most recent job* while 17% and 9% of Yeni Hitit1 speaking activities can practice *describing educational background and describing present or most recent job* respectively. It can be concluded that each book gives importance to requirements of A1 and A2 speaking production and interaction. However, some descriptors are not much emphasized in Success and Yeni Hitit1 at the same time. It could be said that both of the course books focus on speaking interaction than production with some differences. In Yeni Hitit1, productive descriptors have 17% at most. In Success, one production descriptor has 29% at most and two of descriptors are ignored with 0%. However, interaction descriptors are between 30% and 92% in Yeni Hitit1 while this proportion is between 42% and 72% in Success.

4. Discussion

The results indicate that books prepared to teach foreign languages should be strengthened in order to help learners utilize real communicative language structures in different circumstances. Books apparently seem to include linguistic patterns more for formal usage rather than different usages in different situations. Indeed, learners need more input in order to improve their communicate skills since they have different purposes and needs while learning any target language. The results bring the necessity of using items such as announcement and other cultural items to realize multi-purposeful demands if they reach their targets for learners. Therefore, the curriculums should be overviewed again and categories regarding different goals should be reexamined to determine to confirm hypotheses. Even Common European Framework for References are likely to be back to realize the aims for learners, teachers and institutions. Therefore, some suggestions should be left to the institutions, language instructors, and even learners since the interrelations could be based different priorities in different cultures.

5. Conclusions

The analyses on the speaking descriptors in Yeni Hitit1 and Success regarding the self-assessment grid of CEFR reveal that there have been some differences in functional attitudes. It can be said that both of the books focus speaking interaction rather than speaking production. Production activities seem to be limited in terms of referring self-assessment grid. In this situation, teachers seem to get more responsibilities providing extracurricular materials to the classrooms. However, if the course

books provide enough instructions or guidance enriched with visuals/realia including language components, tasks, activities, exercises, and critical discourse analysis features for learners, the speaking activities would be more attractive, satisfying and timesaving for teachers as also found in the study by Jafarigohar and Ghaderi (2013). In order to provide the language course books to be user-friendly, material providers or writers should take all the descriptors in CEFR in detail and encounter the needs of learners not only having materials in the descriptors but also trying to realize a corpus regarding speaking needs (Kilimci, 2014) and evaluating them for any classroom environment.

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Türkçe ve İngilizce dil öğretimi kitaplarında yer alan konuşma etkinliklerinin ortak avrupa metnindeki öz-değerlendirme ölçeğine göre karşılaştırılması

Öz

Sınıf içi etkinliklerinin büyük bir çoğunluğu kitabın verimli kullanılmasıyla ilgili olduğundan, öğretimde uygulamanın belirli bir temele göre seçimi öğretmenin, öğretme ve öğrenme ortamını oluştururken konuyu şekillendirmesi açısından önemlidir. Son yıllarda ders kitabının kalitesinde olumlu bir artış olmasına rağmen uygun ders kitabıyla ilgili seçimler hala hem kurum hem de öğretmenler için sorun oluşturmaktadır. İngilizce öğretimiyle ilgili yeni girişimlerde de son yıllarda büyük değişiklikler olduğu gözlenmektedir. Akıcı ve doğru konuşma dil öğreniminde en önemli beklentilerden birisi olduğu için, ders kitaplarındaki konuşma bölümleri de son yıllarda özellikle yabancılara Türkçe öğretimi ile ilgili kitapların seçiminin temelini oluşturmaktadır. Bu konuda Ortak Avrupa Çerçevesi; dil izlenceleri, programları, değerlendirmeleri ve ders kitaplarını incelemede kriter oluşturmak için standard, kapsamlı ve ortak bir temel sağlamaktadır (CoE, 2001). Bu çerçeve aynı zamanda dil öğrenicilerine iletişim kurmak ve iletişimsel açıdan dilin kullanımını öğretmek için bilişsel yolları ve etkili iletişim kullanma yollarını nasıl geliştireceklerini tanımlamaktadır. Diğer önemli unsur ise gerek öğretmenlerin gerekse kurum ve öğrencilerin öz değerlendirme konusunda da kitaplarda bulunan etkinlik ve dil öğretimi unsurlarını içermesi konusunda duyarlı davranmalarıdır. Bu çalışmada, yabancılara Türkçe öğretmek üzere hazırlanan Yeni Hitit 1 ile yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğretmek üzere hazırlanan Success isimli kitapların konuşma becerilerini kapsayan alıştırma ve dil becerilerini öğreten konuşma bölümleri CEFR öz-değerlendirme ölçütüne göre değerlendirmiştir. Sonuçlar kitaplar arasında farklılıklar olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Avrupa Ortak Başvuru Metni; yabancı dil olarak ingilizce öğretimi; yabancı dil olarak Türkçe öğretimi; yabancı dil ders kitapları, konuşma becerisi

AUTHOR BIODATA

Gülden TÜM is currently an associate professor of at the English Teaching Language Department at Çukurova University, where she has taught since 1986. Ms. TÜM has been teaching at both undergraduate and graduate levels at the Department of Foreign Language Education. Between 1988 and 1992 she taught Turkish and Turkish Culture voluntarily in the Family Support Center and at Maryland University, at the American Base, Adana, Turkey. Since then, she has taught Turkish as a foreign language. Between 2004 and 2006, she was appointed as Turkish Language Instructor by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to work as a Turkish Language Instructor in Belarus in two universities: Minsk State Linguistics University and Belarus State Economic University. Nowadays, she writes articles and language books: Turkish exercise book, test book, and reading book in order to help foreign learners of Turkish learn Turkish. In 2012, she went to several American Universities such as Portland State University, Princeton University, NY University, Columbia University, U-Penn, Yale University to teach and observe Turkish lessons, to use her Turkish reading draft book and to exchange knowledge with several Turkish language Instructors (Erika H. Gilson, Pelin Başçı, Feride Hatipoğlu, Güliz Kuruoğlu, Ahmet Okal, Ethem Erol, Zübeyde Colak, Sibel Erol).

Gülşah PARMAKSIZ EMRE graduated from Gazi University ELT department in Ankara, 2011 and she has been working as an EFL teacher in Ministry of Education since then. She taught in Kızılömerli Primary and Secondary School in Sumbas, Osmaniye between 2011-2015. Afterwards, she was appointed to Bahri Çelen Anatolian High School and she has been teaching there since 2015. She has also been an MA student in ELT deparment of Çukurova University since 2014.