

INVESTIGATING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF 'INSPIRING FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER'

LİSE ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN 'İLHAM VEREN YABANCI DİL ÖĞRETMENİ' ALGILARININ İNCELENMESİ

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ÖZ

ABSTRACT

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Anahtar Kelimeler
İlham verici öğretmen,
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Bu çalışmanın amacı lise öğrencilerinin “ilham veren yabancı dil öğretmeni” kavramına yönelik algılarının incelenmesidir. Nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden olgu bilim yaklaşımı ile desenlenen çalışmaya, Nevşehir ilinde yer alan Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı bünyesindeki iki farklı orta öğretim kurumunda okuyan 58 öğrenci katılmıştır. Veriler yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu kullanılarak toplanmış ve içerik analizine tabi tutulmuştur. Araştırmacılar tarafından ayrı ayrı yapılan kodlamalarda kodlayıcılar arasındaki uyum oranı 0,94 olarak hesaplanmıştır. Araştırma bulguları öğrencilerin ilham veren öğretmen kavramını en çok öğretmen-öğrenci ilişkileri açısından ele aldıklarını, bunu kişisel özellikler, mesleki yeterlikler ve mesleğe yönelik tutumun takip ettiğini göstermektedir. Katılımcıların ilham verici olduğunu düşündükleri yabancı dil öğretmenleri ise öncelikle mesleki yeterlikleri, daha sonra kişisel özellikleri, öğretmen-öğrenci ilişkileri ve mesleğe yönelik tutumları kapsamında ön plana çıkmaktadır. Katılımcılar ayrıca ilham verici buldukları yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin dil öğrenimi, kişisel ve eğitim hayatları üzerinde birtakım etkileri olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Araştırma bulguları alanyazınla ilişkilendirilerek tartışılmış ve öğretmen eğitimcilerine, program geliştiricilere ve konuya yönelik çalışan araştırmacılara önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

The purpose of this study is to examine high school students' perceptions of the concept of inspiring foreign language teacher. Fifty-eight students studying at two different high schools within the Ministry of National Education in Nevşehir province participated in the study, which was designed with the phenomenological approach, one of the qualitative research methods. Data were collected using a semi-structured interview form and subjected to content analysis. In the coding done separately by the researchers, the agreement rate among the coders was calculated as 0.94. Research findings show that students mostly consider the concept of inspiring teacher in terms of teacher-student relations, followed by personal attributes, professional competencies and attitude towards the profession. Foreign language teachers, whom the participants consider inspiring, come to the fore firstly in terms of their professional competencies, then their personal attributes, teacher-student relations and attitudes towards the profession. The participants also stated that the foreign language teachers they consider inspiring had some impact on their language learning, personal and educational lives. The research findings were discussed in relation to the literature and suggestions were made to teacher educators, curriculum developers and researchers working on the subject.

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Introduction

Foreign language education is an issue that is becoming more and more crucial nowadays. Learning different languages is important for communicating and understanding different cultures. In addition to these, foreign language education might also directly contribute to the personal development of individuals and enable them to remain ahead of the game in their business and school lives. Gallagher-Brett (2004) states that knowing a foreign language provides a better understanding of society. İlkhan (1999, p. 303) notes that there are studies revealing that individuals who can speak two or more languages can think more broadly than individuals who speak a single language. In such a time when foreign languages and foreign language teaching are so indispensable, every country pays attention to giving the necessary importance to foreign language education to catch up with the time and not fall behind (Çelebi, 2006, p. 287). In the Turkish education system, foreign language courses were implemented a long time ago, and changes have been made to these curricula according to evolving needs. However, despite these regulations, Turkey's success in foreign language education is still not at the desired level (Demirpolat, 2015). As there are many factors influencing the quality of foreign language instruction, attributing this failure to a single cause is not appropriate. According to Çelebi and Suna (2013), the main reason for this failure is the lack of a strong language policy and well-designed planning for the implementation of the language teaching program in Turkey. Problems encountered in foreign language instruction include teacher-centered classes, grammar-focused lessons, insufficient time allocated to language learning (Oktay, 2015), overcrowded classrooms, not starting language teaching early enough, lack of suitable teaching environment, shortage of appropriate materials and exam-focused language teaching (Akdoğan, 2010). Nergis (2011) on the other hand, argues that foreign language teaching curricula in Turkey lack a consistent and solid philosophical framework both at pre-service and in-service levels, and teacher training policies in this field are shaped by daily political agendas. However, since teacher quality determines the quality of education (Seferoğlu, 2004), one of the most important issues to focus on to achieve the desired level of success in foreign language education should be the training of teachers in both pre-service and in-service curricula. Among the challenges faced by language teachers, which hold significant importance in foreign language education, are excessive workloads, insufficient in-service training and lack of motivation, inadequacy of assessment systems, and the inadequacy of university language teacher training curricula in terms of developing students' foreign language teaching skills (Bayraktaroğlu, 2012).

The teaching profession is one of the most respected occupations in society and has the potential to directly affect the future of students. Teachers who equip people with knowledge and skills, give them a vision and mission, and the profession they perform are valuable in almost every age and society (Karataş, 2020, p. 40). Teachers impress lives of students with their humane and professional qualities and struggle to contribute to the needs of each student. In this context, Erden (2001) states that “*teaching is a field of occupation with a professional status that is related to the education sector, has social, cultural, economic, scientific and technological dimensions, is based on special expertise knowledge and skills in the field, and requires academic study and professional formation*” (As cited in Ünişen and Demirel, 2018, p. 998). Kocasarac and Karataş (2018, p. 37) state that teacher quality directly affects the quality of education and training and the academic success of students. Based on this, it can be stated that teachers directly and positively influence the academic achievements of students in proportion to the qualities they possess. In this context, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) emphasizes that teachers should use well-chosen strategies that are suitable for both themselves and students and be a 'good enough source of motivation'. Çelikten et al. (2005, p. 209) state that teachers should have mastery of their field knowledge, teaching profession knowledge and teaching process planning skills. They list the characteristics that a good teacher should have as follows: (1) Being open-minded and objective towards students, (2) Taking students' expectations and needs into account, (3) Being able to investigate educational problems with scientific methods, (4) Taking individual differences into account in education, (5) Being open to innovations and developments, constantly renewing oneself, (6) Being able to understand and interpret social changes, (7) Closely monitoring the developments in educational technology, (8) Having an investigative personality, (9) Having high success expectations (2005, p. 214-215). A foreign language teacher who has these characteristics and contributes directly to the academic success of students will undoubtedly be a role model for students and a source of inspiration that opens their horizons. In this way, students will be able to develop their interest in foreign languages and start their academic and business lives with an advantage.

Turkish Language Association (TDK, 2023) dictionary defines inspiration as “to cause to intuit”; the source of inspiration as “the thing that inspires and comes from within” and being a source of inspiration as “nurture the imagination”. Hughes (2014) defines inspiration as “leadership that brings together individuals who look to the future with hope and creates an exciting picture of what needs to be taken into consideration”. Sammons et al. (2014), who addressed the term inspirational within the framework of the teaching profession, associated it with the concept of effective teacher. Dolloff’s (1999) definition of the concept is as the life-changing aspect of teaching that has the most impact on individuals.

Solpuk Turhan et al. (2019) state that the concept of inspirational teacher is a broad notion and includes various definitions such as “a good and effective teacher; a teacher who performs the teaching profession adequately, qualified and successfully in different aspects; a supportive teacher; a modern teacher”. McAleavy (2014) lists the qualities of an inspirational teacher as follows: “(1) Establishing genuine warmth and empathy towards all students in the classroom, (2) Respecting the student in both her/his behaviour and language use, (3) Praising learners for their efforts to realize their potential, (4) Seeking and honouring the student's choice and contribution (5) Making all students realize that their best effort is expected in the classroom.”

When studies on the subject of “inspirational teacher” in the literature were examined, researches have been found on the subjects of inspirational music teacher (Robinson, 2018), inspirational English teacher (Lamb and Wedell, 2013), inspirational English lecturer (Iftanti, 2015), inspirational teaching at the higher education level (Williams et al., 2016) and inspirational teacher in general (Solpuk Turhan et al., 2019; Sammons et al., 2014), but no study has been found that deals with the concept of inspiring foreign language teachers in depth from the perspective of high school students. For this reason, it was felt necessary to discuss the concept of “inspirational foreign language teacher” from the perspective of high school students and through interview method that allows it to be examined in detail. In this context, the findings of this research are expected to provide data on training inspiring foreign language teachers and therefore contribute to the quality of teacher education. In this regard, the main purpose of this research is to examine high school students' perceptions of the concept of “inspiring foreign language teacher”. In line with this general purpose, answers were sought to the following questions:

1. According to student perceptions, what are the general qualities that an inspirational teacher should have?
2. (If they have had any) What were the qualities of foreign language teachers that students consider 'inspiring'?
3. How have the foreign language teachers, whom students consider 'inspiring', affected their lives?

Method

Research Model

This research, which aims to examine high school students' perceptions of inspiring foreign language teachers, was conducted using the phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research methods. In phenomenological studies, where the practices of individuals with various experiences regarding a phenomenon are described (Creswell, 2017), the content of conscious experiences such as judgments, perceptions and emotions is focused on (Balls, 2009) and the meanings they attribute to the phenomenon are revealed (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011). Phenomenological research focuses on evaluating lived practices to describe and interpret individuals' experiences (Jasper, 1994). Therefore, the purpose of phenomenological research is to reveal individuals' experiences, perceptions and meanings regarding the phenomenon in question (Kocabıyık, 2016). In this direction, the concept of inspiring foreign language teacher, whose existence is known and cared for, was handled with a phenomenological design in the study and high school students' perceptions of the subject, their experiences and their opinions about the effects of the inspiring teacher on their lives were tried to be examined in depth.

Study Group

The study group of the research consists of 58 students studying at two different high schools within the Ministry of National Education in Nevşehir province in the spring semester of the 2022-2023 academic year. The study group was selected using criterion sampling, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods

Data Collection

Data were collected in the spring semester of the 2022-2023 academic year at times convenient for the researchers and participants. The interview forms prepared by the researchers were distributed to the study group by hand and the participants were asked to express their opinions in writing. There was no time limit for the participants to express their opinions. Within the scope of the study, 58 students participated in the study voluntarily.

Data Analysis

Content analysis, one of the qualitative data analysis methods, was used to analyse the data. Content analysis is the careful, detailed and systematic examination and interpretation of specific material in order to identify patterns, themes, biases and meanings (Bal, 2016, p. 258). Data analysis was carried out in five stages: 1. Transferring the data to the computer and creating raw data texts, 2. Coding the data, 3. Creating the themes of the coded data, 4. Organizing the codes and themes, 5. Presenting and interpreting the findings (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011).

In the first stage, the data collected from the students in written form was transferred to the computer and made ready for analysis. In the second stage, the written texts were evaluated by the researchers by reading them separately several times, and the coding process was started, taking into account the inspiring teacher characteristics stated in the literature (Infanti, 2015; Lamb and Wedell, 2013; Robinson, 2018; Williams et al., 2016). In the third stage, the codes were brought together and grouped and the themes that were thought to include the codes were determined. Then, the codes and themes were re-evaluated and final updates were made. In the last stage, the data obtained was digitized and presented as frequency.

Validity and Reliability

In order to increase the validity of the research; while preparing the semi-structured interview form, similar studies in the literature were examined and expert opinions were got before the form was given its final form. Participant consent was obtained during the data collection process, and participants were informed about the confidentiality policy of the study in order to prevent them from hiding their real thoughts and experiences. During this process, no comments were made regarding the research topic in order not to influence the participant's opinions. The data collection and analysis processes of the study and how the results were reached were explained in detail. Participants were depicted by gender, age and grade level. The findings obtained through the interview form were presented without any comments and direct quotations were included to reflect the participants' perspectives. When quoting students, the numbers given to them (for example, S1) were added to the end of the quotations.

In order to increase the internal reliability of the study, a consensus was reached among the three researchers regarding data collection, analysis and the results and the consistence among the researchers was tested by comparing the individual codings of the researchers in the analysis of the data. Within the scope of the coder reliability study, the coding made by the researchers was compared and the consistency was tested. In the calculations made using Miles and Huberman's (1994, p. 64) formula [$\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{consensus}}{\text{consensus} + \text{disagreement}} \times 100$], it was determined that the agreement rate among the coders was .94. The findings were presented to a faculty member who is an expert in qualitative research. Her opinions and suggestions regarding the codes and themes were received and the necessary arrangements were made accordingly.

Findings

In this section, the findings obtained from the data analysis are presented under subheadings created within the scope of the research questions.

Findings Regarding Inspiring Teacher Qualities

The frequency distribution of the themes and codes reached in line with the explanations made by the students about inspiring teacher qualities are presented in Table 2.

Tablo 2. Inspiring Teacher Qualities According to Participant Opinions

Theme	Code	Frequency	Total
Teacher-student relationships	Caring	9	58
	Having a positive attitude	8	
	Motivating students	7	
	Respectful	6	
	Sincere	5	
	Being able to connect with students	5	
	Sharing personal experiences with students	4	
	Being able to guide students/Leader	4	
	Being able to empathize with students	3	
	Helpful	3	
	Not discriminating among students	2	
	Valuing students	2	
	Personal attributes	Tolerant	
Having effective communication skills		9	
Well equipped		6	
Kind		5	
Cheerful and smiling		4	
Energetic		3	
Authentic		2	
Clean and neat		2	
Creative		1	
Having a sense of humour		1	
Patient		1	
Unprejudiced		1	
Egoless		1	
Initiative taker		1	
Being open to different ideas		1	
Being able to look at events/situations from different perspectives	1		
Professional Competencies	Lecturing in a fun way	14	29
	Making students enjoy the lesson	4	
	Being able to convey knowledge	3	
	Establishing a kind but firm authority	3	
	Using various teaching methods and techniques	2	
	Aware of student differences	1	
	Keeping students' focus on the lesson	1	
	Developing students' interpretation skills	1	
Attitude towards the profession	Doing her/his job with pleasure	4	4
Total			140

As seen in Table 2, four theme groups were reached regarding inspirational teacher qualities in line with participant opinions as **teacher-student relationships (f=58)**, **personal attributes (f=49)**, **professional competencies (f = 29)** and **attitude towards the profession (f = 4)**.

According to the interview findings within the scope of **teacher-student relations**, the following codes were reached in order of frequency; caring (f=9), having a positive attitude (f=8), motivating students (f=7), respectful

(f=6), sincere (f=5), being able to connect with students (f=5), sharing personal experiences with students (f=4), being able to guide students/leader (f=4), being able to empathize with students (f=3), helpful (f=3), not discriminating among students (f=2) and valuing students (f=2). Below are some participant statements within this theme:

An inspiring teacher should be someone who has a way with students (really does) and can motivate us towards our achievements or what we can achieve. It is also important that she/he is understanding and does not discriminate against any students. Some teacher-student relationships are so good that one can say 'I want to be a teacher, too' (S1).

For me, the characteristics of inspiring teachers are the value they give to students, the interest and respect they show, their understanding the young mind, being friendly towards students, making them love the lesson, and sharing their own experiences with students (S11).

I think the most crucial thing for me is good relations with students and most importantly, treating everyone equally (S20).

In my opinion, it is her/his communication with students, her/his close interest in them, and her/his sincerity with them. She/He can raise their self-confidence and success by guiding them with her/his suggestions about life. Most importantly, her/his own success and experiences are inspiring for everyone around her/him (S28).

The second theme that emerged from students' statements about inspiring teacher qualities is **personal attributes**. This theme was expressed by the students as tolerant (f=10), having effective communication skills (f=9), well-equipped (f=6), kind (f=5), cheerful and friendly (f=4), energetic (f=3), authentic (f=2), clean and neat (f=2), creative (f=1), having a sense of humor (f=1), patient (f=1), unprejudiced (f=1), egoless (f=1), initiative taker (f=1), being open to different ideas (f=1) and being able to look at events/situations from different perspectives (f=1). In this regard, some participant expressions are as follows:

In my opinion, an inspirational teacher is always energetic. Being clean and tidy is also important (S5).

Inspiring teachers are well-equipped, tolerant, instructive and caring. They have improved themselves in different fields. They are the people who show that the concept of 'teacher' is not limited to branches (S10).

Understanding and patience. ... Not using her/his ego shield against the people around her/him (S22).

The most important feature of an inspirational teacher is to express her/his own opinion on certain and established issues. When the school administration imposes a rule that is not right or unfair towards us, the inspirational teacher should be able to express her/his opinion (S32).

It is seen that the theme of **professional competencies** is addressed as; lecturing in a fun way (f=14), making students enjoy the lesson (f=4), being able to convey knowledge (f=3), establishing a kind but firm authority (f=3), using various teaching methods and techniques (f=2), aware of student differences (f=1), keeping students' focus on the lesson (f=1), developing students' interpretation skills (f=1).

Teaching the lesson in a way that makes you enjoy it and teaching the lesson in a fun and not boring way. Encouraging students to study. We cannot expect a family atmosphere, because without authority we will neither give importance nor focus on the lesson (S6).

Encouraging students to study by making the lesson more enjoyable. Teaching the lesson in a way that we both learn and have fun during the lesson. Lecturing in a way that doesn't pin you down. Giving examples from real life and memories in class. I can say that using a variety of teaching techniques (S8).

Entertaining lectures, making the lesson productive and fun without forcing you to teach something. Making it more fun by inserting jokes during the lesson. Having a unique teaching style (S18).

From my perspective, an inspiring teacher is the one who is neither too strict nor too relaxed. The teacher must both be an authority in the lesson and be able to be a student with the student from time to time. Making jokes in class from time to time can relieve the serious and tense atmosphere in the lesson, but these should not be excessive (S35).

Teachers who know that each student's comprehension speed and learning method are different and teach accordingly are inspiring (T46).

The code determined within the scope of the theme of **attitude towards the profession** was determined as "doing her/his job with pleasure" (f=4). Sample participant expressions regarding the subject are as follows:

Doing her/his job with pleasure, teaching with pleasure and with the aim of teaching (S9).

I think the teacher's enthusiasm and eagerness are the most important things that make a teacher inspiring (S42)

Findings Regarding Inspiring Foreign Language Teacher Qualities

Participants were asked whether they had encountered a foreign language teacher who inspired them throughout their education life. 50 of the students answered "Yes" to this question. While four students stated that they met the inspiring foreign language teacher during primary school, 24 students reported that they met her/him during secondary school. The number of students who encountered an inspiring foreign language teacher during their high school years was 22. The participants were asked the distinguishing characteristics of the foreign language teachers that inspired them. The frequency distribution of the themes and codes obtained in line with the answers given is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Qualifications of Foreign Language Teachers Who Have Inspired Students, According to Participants' Opinions

Theme	Code	Frequency	Total
Professional Competencies	Lecturing in a fun way	13	42
	Being able to convey knowledge	9	
	Establishing a kind but firm authority	5	
	Making students enjoy the lesson	5	
	Improving students in all aspects	3	
	Using various teaching methods and techniques	3	
	Role-model	3	
	Tolerant to mistakes	1	
Personal attributes	Tolerant	12	39
	Kind	7	
	Cheerful and smiling	3	
	Energetic	3	
	Authentic	2	
	Intelligent	2	
	Determined	2	
	Open to different ideas	2	
	Being able to look at events/situations from different perspectives	2	
	Having effective communication skills	1	
	Respectful	1	
	Having a sense of humour	1	
	Solution oriented	1	
Teacher-student relationships	Having a positive attitude	11	37
	Motivating students	6	
	Caring	6	
	Sincere	4	
	Being able to guide students/Leader	4	
	Helpful	3	
	Not damaging student self-confidence	1	
	Not discriminating among students	1	
Valuing students	1		
Attitude towards the profession	Doing her/his job with pleasure	3	3
Total			121

When Table 3 is examined, it can be seen that the qualifications of foreign language teachers who have inspired students are included in the scope of **professional competencies (f= 42)**, **personal attributes (f = 39)**, **teacher-student relations (f = 37)** and **attitude towards the profession (f = 3)**. Codes reached within the scope of the theme of professional competencies are; lecturing in a fun way (f = 13), being able to convey knowledge (f=9), establishing a kind but firm authority (f=5), making students enjoy the lesson (f=5), improving

students in all aspects (f= 3), using various teaching methods and techniques (f=3), role-model (f=3) and tolerant to mistakes (f=1). Some participant expressions regarding the theme are given below:

He set a great example in my life with his profession and his achievements. The moment I met him, I decided that he was a real teacher (S1).

She would conduct the lesson in the most efficient way possible without making it boring. She would teach us not only the language but also the culture (S2).

She had her own style of expression. She also spoke English very well. We used to do different and fun activities in the lessons. Her lessons were always enjoyable for us (S13).

He would bring me back to the lesson when I was distracted, he taught the lesson in a fun way, and he was very good in his field and knew what he was doing. When there was a regression in the student, he would make him ambitious and win him back. He would teach planned lessons and would ask our opinions before creating these plans (S57).

Personal attributes of foreign language teachers that students describe as inspiring are; tolerant (f=12), kind (f=7), cheerful and smiling (f=3), energetic (f=3), authentic (f=2), intelligent (f=2), determined (f =2), open to different ideas (f=2), being able to look at events/situations from different perspectives (f=2), having effective communication skills (f=1), respectful (f=1), having a sense of humour (f=1) and solution oriented (f=1). Some participant expressions are given below to exemplify the theme:

She was a very kind, insightful and lovely person. Under any circumstances, she was always positive. It would make me very happy when she had a lesson (S5).

First of all, he was someone who wasn't stereotypical. He was smart, funny and always energetic. We were eager for his lesson to come and we were happy (S6).

She had a very broad perspective and could look from different angles. In my opinion, foreign language teachers are always one step ahead on most things. They are excellent with both their success and the versatility of their thoughts. They are really broad-minded people (S28).

According to the research findings, when the foreign language teacher from whom the students were inspired is examined in terms of the theme of **teacher-student relations**; the codes of having a positive attitude (f=11), motivating students (f=6), caring (f=6), sincere (f=4), being able to guide students/leader (f=4), helpful (f=3), not damaging student self-confidence (f=1), not discriminating among students (f=1) and valuing students (f=1) were reached. Some sample student expressions regarding the theme are as follows:

He was able to understand me and had a great impact on determining my future. He believed that I could succeed and do everything under any circumstances. He was always there for me. Unlike my other teachers, I felt much more comfortable with him (S1).

He believed that I could learn English and he convinced me too and recommended me books. He made me believe in myself by making me solve the questions I could do first. Even when I couldn't do it, he would teach for minutes (S3).

She was insightful towards students and taught without hurting anyone's self-confidence. She was stating that it was okay when we made mistakes. I was counting the days for that lesson to come again (S4).

Instead of offending, humiliating or telling students that their levels were low, he taught them by showing what they could do and making them love the lesson (S 10).

He was a teacher who valued his students, treated each student equally, and addressed the whole class while teaching (S11).

She was such a good teacher that she would really act like the mother of the class. I really liked this too. When a student could not answer the question, instead of immediately moving on to another student, she would continue to wait until that student could do it, even after the lesson was over, and she never put pressure on the student during this waiting period (S30).

The code determined within the scope of the theme of **attitude towards the profession** is doing her/his job with pleasure (f = 3). S9 underlined the issue as follows:

He did not see what he did as just a job, he did not only aim to make money. He would do his job with passion and inform students about how to overcome obstacles they might encounter in life, apart from the course subjects. It was obvious that he enjoyed teaching his courses and he was teaching it with the aim of teaching.

Findings Regarding the Effects of Inspiring Foreign Language Teaching on Students

The participants were asked what impact the foreign language teacher they regarded as inspiring had on their lives. The themes, codes and frequency values obtained in line with the answers given are listed in Table 4:

Table 4. The Effects of an Inspiring Foreign Language Teacher on Students

Theme	Code	f	Total
Language learning	Selecting the language department	20	84
	Foreign language improvement	20	
	Enjoying foreign language courses more	20	
	Giving more importance to foreign language courses	10	
	Increased interest in foreign languages	6	
	Realizing the talent for foreign languages	4	
	Understanding how to study a foreign language	2	
	Breaking down prejudices against foreign languages	2	
Personal life	Increased self-confidence	13	53
	Self-discovery	8	
	Psychological support	8	
	Guidance on interests and hobbies	4	
	Being a role model	4	
	Guidance in future plans	3	
	Being more determined	3	
	Being more courageous	3	
	Being more dedicated	2	
	Self-improvement	1	
	Reduced concerns about the future	1	
	Increased self-worth	1	
	Becoming more organized	1	
	Developing a sense of responsibility	1	
Educational life	More disciplined/determined/steady work	14	23
	Being more active in classes	2	
	Becoming more successful	1	
	Increased scores	1	
	Establishment of study order	1	
	Better understanding the importance of education	1	
	Enjoying school more	1	
	Setting educational goals	1	
Choices made regarding education	1		
Total			160

According to Table 4, inspiring foreign language teachers had impacts on students' **language learning (f=84)**, **personal life (f=53)** and **educational life (f=23)**. Within the scope of the effects on **language learning**, it is seen that selecting the language department (f=20), foreign language improvement (f=20) and enjoying foreign language courses more (f=20) were emphasized. Then the following codes were obtained respectively; giving more importance to foreign language courses (f=10), increased interest in foreign languages (f=6), realizing the talent for foreign languages (f=4), understanding how to study a foreign language (f=2), breaking down prejudices against foreign languages (f = 2). Participant expressions within the scope of the theme are as follows:

My teacher's teaching style helped me understand the topics faster. The more I understood, the more consistently I studied and the more I started to enjoy English lessons. This is how I decided to choose the language department (S11).

My English was terrible during my secondary school days. When I looked at the English sentences written on the board, I used to see sentences that consisted only of jumbled letters and did not make any sense. However, with the help of my teacher in high school, I realized that I had a talent for foreign languages and my interest in foreign languages increased. (S29).

I saw him as an idol for myself and I gravitate towards language to be like him. At the same time, language lessons became one of the most enjoyable and easiest subjects in my life (S36).

Our foreign language teacher would explain the lessons with visualizations. Later, when I saw a question about grammar topics, the drawn tables and other visuals came to my mind and helped me realize that my visual intelligence was more improved. In this way, I studied my lessons by visualizing them and further increased the retention of the subjects in my mind (S58).

According to the participants' expressions, the effects of the inspiring foreign language teachers on students' **personal lives** include; increased self-confidence (f=13), self-discovery (f=8), psychological support (f=8), guidance on interests and hobbies (f=4), being a role model (f=4), guidance in future plans (f=3), being more determined (f=3), being more courageous (f=3), being more dedicated (f= 2), self-improvement (f=1), reduced concerns about the future (f=1), increased self-worth (f=1), becoming more organized (f=1) and developing a sense of responsibility (f=1). Excerpts from these findings are included below:

In the 9th and 10th grades, I was not very active in classes due to my shyness, frankly I was not active at all, and in the 11th grade, I had no idea what department to choose. But my teacher Özñur noticed my interest and talent in English, and I discovered myself in her lessons. She restored my self-confidence and revealed my potential talent. With her explanation and support, I have achieved many things that were once a dream for me (S2).

She helped me change my personality and all my tastes. For example, I started watching a lot of foreign TV series and I took up watching them as a hobby. She also changed my style and taste in music. She transformed me into a more elite person (S4).

Learning vocabulary has become more enjoyable. I feel comfortable in her lessons, so it has become easier to learn things. She always boosts my self-confidence. Additionally, I started to want to travel and see countries just like my teacher. I began listening to foreign music and watching foreign films (S28).

Findings show that the effects of the inspiring foreign language teacher on students' **educational lives** include; more disciplined/determined/steady work (f=14), being more active in classes (f=2), becoming more successful (f=1), increased scores (f=1), establishment of study order (f =1), better understanding the importance of education (f =1), enjoying school more (f =1), setting educational goals (f =1) and choices made regarding education (f =1). Below are examples of participant expressions:

At a time when I was completely disconnected from classes, he showed me how fun classes could actually be and what I could achieve if I worked hard. I connected to school again and my scores increased (S 34).

My teacher helped me listen to lessons more carefully and study in a more disciplined manner. She helped me set up my working routine. I'm trying to learn without giving up (S44).

I started to go to school more willingly. I have a more positive outlook on lessons, she has made me care about education and work more diligently. While I had never wanted to go to school before, I started to attend classes more enthusiastically (S51).

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, the perceptions of high school students towards the concept of “inspiring foreign language teacher” were investigated. In this context, first of all, students' perceptions of the concept of inspiring teacher in general were examined. Research findings revealed that the participants addressed the concept of inspirational teacher primarily in terms of teacher-student relationships. This is followed, in order of importance, by personal attributes, professional competencies and attitude towards the profession. It is possible to say that teacher-student relationships come to the fore in the findings of other studies on the subject. For example, in a study conducted by Solpuk Turhan et al. (2019) with teacher candidates, it was found that participants considered

inspiring teacher qualities in the context of teacher communication (developing a passion for learning, establishing empathy, building good relationships, behaving like a parent/friend), personal attributes (being fair, sincere, consistent, reliable, sensitive to differences, exhibiting a positive attitude towards students, not discriminating, being tolerant, being creative, etc.), professional development (being innovative, participating in academic activities, being a role model, mastering the profession), and supporting students in various ways (supporting students' dreams, boosting their confidence, helping them gain different perspectives, nurturing their talents, fostering their personal, academic, and career development, promoting their psychological well-being, etc.). In another study conducted with teachers, some qualities such as having and conveying enthusiasm, developing positive relationships with students, flexibility, making learning fit for purpose for students, creating a safe and encouraging classroom climate and bringing innovation to the classroom were revealed as the basic characteristics of inspirational teachers (Sammons et al., 2014). Although similar findings have been obtained in various studies, there are differences in the priority ranking of the mentioned teacher qualifications. This may be due to the different educational experiences, values, cultural backgrounds, learning styles and expectations of students, teacher candidates and teachers.

50 of the 58 students who participated in the research stated that they had encountered a foreign language teacher who inspired them during their educational lives. This finding can be considered a positive situation in terms of the quality of foreign language teachers in our country. According to the opinions of the participants, the characteristics that made inspiring foreign language teachers different from other teachers were primarily associated with their professional competencies. In this context, it was frequently emphasized that the foreign language teacher would teach the lesson in an entertaining way. In line with participant opinions, inspiring foreign language teachers seem to have characteristics that make students' language learning process more enjoyable and efficient. Professional competencies are followed by personal attributes, teacher-student relations and attitude towards the profession, respectively. Similar findings were found when research on inspiring foreign language teachers was examined. In a study conducted by Lamb and Wedel (2013) in Guangzhou, China, and Jakarta, Indonesia, where the opinions of students aged 14 to 22 were gathered, the characteristics of inspiring English teachers were investigated. Primarily, the study identified categories related to methodology – good/effective teaching, followed by personal attributes, professional competence and relationships with students. The findings of a study examining the perceptions of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students towards inspirational English instructors focused on teachers' attitudinal skills (intellectual, emotional and spiritual), teaching strategy and changes in student learning (Iftanti, 2015).

Research findings showed that the most important impact of inspiring foreign language teachers on students was on language learning. Within the scope of this theme, the participants particularly focused on the effects of these teachers on their selection of language department, better improvement in foreign language and enjoying foreign language courses more. Based on the previous finding, this effect can be interpreted as a natural consequence of inspiring foreign language teachers' having a high level of professional competence. The fact that these teachers make the lessons more interesting and enjoyable may have increased the students' motivation to learn a language and therefore made them decide to choose the language department. This finding emphasizes how critical the role of the teacher is in students' decision to learn a language and their success in that language. Similarly, in Lamb and Wedel's (2013) study, the effects of inspiring foreign language teachers on students include making English lessons more interesting, gaining a sense of progress in English, gaining self-confidence in English, developing awareness of the importance of English, improving personal change etc.

According to research findings, inspiring foreign language teachers also had various effects on students' personal lives. At this point, the participants expressed effects such as increased self-confidence, self-discovery, changes in interests and hobbies, self-improvement and increased self-worth. In this context, it can be concluded that inspiring foreign language teachers are aware of not only conveying academic knowledge to students, but also contributing to their personal life skills and development. Finally, it was determined in the study that inspiring foreign language teachers also had an impact on the general education lives of the students, such as more disciplined/determined/steady work, being more active in classes, establishing a study order and setting educational goals. The fact that students become more disciplined, determined, hard-working, active and goal-oriented individuals in language classes seems to be reflected in their general educational lives. Therefore, it can

be said that inspiring teachers play an important role not only in their field of expertise, but also in the overall educational experience of their students.

In summary, it was concluded that students consider the student-teacher relationship as a determining factor in evaluating their teachers as inspirational. This finding is important as it emphasizes the importance of teachers' skills in not only conveying information but also supporting, understanding and empathizing with their students. Secondly, students prioritized the professional competencies of foreign language teachers, whom they regarded as inspiring. This finding demonstrates that inspiring foreign language teachers' professionalism and expertise have a positive impact on students, highlighting the significant role of a foreign language teacher's knowledge and skills in methodology during the educational process. The findings of the research also show that inspiring foreign language teachers may contribute not only to students' language improvement, but also to their overall academic success, life skills and personal growth.

In conclusion, this research presents the potential of teachers to be inspirational from the perspective of high school students. It can be concluded that students select teachers they find inspiring by considering factors such as their teachers' professional competencies, personal attributes, student-teacher relationships and attitudes towards the profession. This finding can provide valuable insights for educators on which areas they need to improve to enhance their inspiration for students.

This study has various limitations. Due to the nature of qualitative research, there are generalization restrictions in this study, which was conducted with a limited participant group, so it may be recommended that the extent of the findings' generalizability be established through quantitative research. It is evident that the role of teachers in the language learning process is crucial, and inspiring teachers hold a special significance in this regard. Therefore, research assessing the effectiveness of teacher training programs for cultivating inspiring foreign language teachers can be conducted. These studies can help determine which skills need to be developed during the training of prospective teachers. Other research topics may include how to create more effective curricula to support the professional development of inspiring foreign language teachers.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Türk Dil Kurumu (TDK, 2023) sözlüğü ilham vermeyi “*ıçe doğmasına sebep olmak, esindirmek*”; ilham kaynağını “*esinlenmeyi ve ıçe doğmayı sağlayan şey*” ve ilham kaynağı olmayı da “*hayal dünyasını beslemek*” şeklinde tanımlamaktadır. Hughes (2014) ise ilham vermeyi; “*geleceğe umutla bakan bireyleri bir araya getiren ve göz önünde bulundurulması gerekenleri beyecan verici bir tablo haline getiren liderlik*” olarak tanımlamaktadır. İlham verici sözcüğünü öğretmenlik mesleği çerçevesinde ele alan Sammons vd. (2014) kavramı etkili öğretmen kavramı ile ilişkilendirmişlerdir. Dolloffun (1999) kavrama yönelik tanımı ise *öğretimin bireyler üzerinde en fazla etkiye sahip, yaşamı değiştiren yönü* şeklindedir. Solpuk Turhan vd. (2019) ilham verici öğretmen kavramının geniş bir mefhum olduğunu ve “*iyi ve etkili öğretmen; öğretmenlik mesleğini yeterli, nitelikli ve farklı yönlerden başarılı bir şekilde icra eden öğretmen; destekleyici bir öğretmen; çağdaş bir öğretmen*” gibi çeşitli tanımları bünyesinde barındırdığını ifade etmiştir. McAleavy (2014) ise ilham verici bir öğretmenin niteliklerini şu şekilde sıralamıştır: “(1) Sınıftaki tüm öğrencilere karşı gerçek sıcaklık ve empati kurma, (2) Öğrenciye hem davranışlarında hem de dil kullanımında saygı duyma, (3) Öğrencileri potansiyellerini gerçekleştirmeye yönelik çabalarından dolayı övme, (4) Öğrencinin seçimini ve katkısını arama ve onurlandırma (5) Tüm öğrencilere sınıfta kendilerinden en iyi çabanın beklendiğini fark ettirme”.

Alanyazında ilham verici öğretmen konusuna ilişkin yapılan çalışmalar incelendiğinde, ilham verici müzik öğretmeni (Robinson, 2018), ilham verici İngilizce öğretmeni (Lamb ve Wedell, 2013), ilham verici İngilizce öğretim görevlisi (Iftanti, 2015), yüksek öğretim düzeyinde ilham verici öğretim (Williams vd., 2016) ve genel anlamda ilham verici öğretmen (Solpuk Turhan vd., 2019; Sammons vd, 2014) konularında çalışmalara ulaşılmış, ancak ilham veren yabancı dil öğretmeni kavramını ortaöğretim öğrencilerinin bakış açısından derinlemesine ele alan bir çalışmaya rastlanmamıştır. Bu nedenle ilham verici yabancı dil öğretmeni kavramının lise öğrencilerinin perspektifiyle ve ayrıntılı bir şekilde incelenmesine imkân tanıyan görüşme yöntemi ile ele alınması gereği duyulmuştur. Bu bağlamda bu araştırmanın bulgularının ilham veren yabancı dil öğretmeni yetiştirme konusunda veri sağlaması ve dolayısıyla öğretmen eğitiminin niteliğine katkı sunması beklenmektedir. Bu doğrultuda bu araştırmanın temel amacı, lise öğrencilerinin “ilham veren yabancı dil öğretmeni” kavramına yönelik algılarını incelemektir.

Çalışma nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden biri olan olgu bilim (fenomenoloji) deseni kullanılarak yürütülmüştür. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu 2022-2023 eğitim-öğretim yılı bahar döneminde Nevşehir ilinde yer alan Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı bünyesindeki iki farklı orta öğretim kurumunda okuyan 58 öğrenci oluşturmaktadır. Çalışma grubu, zengin bilgi sağladığı düşünülen durumların derinlemesine analizine olanak tanıyan amaçlı örnekleme yöntemlerinden biri olan ölçüt örnekleme kullanılarak seçilmiştir (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2011, s.107). Çalışma grubunun seçiminde gönüllülük esasının yanı sıra, araştırmacılar tarafından belirlenen ölçütler; öğrencilerin lise 11 ve 12. sınıflarında ve dil bölümünde öğrenim görüyor olmalarıdır. Dil bölümü ve 11-12. sınıf öğrencilerinin daha fazla yabancı dil öğretmeni tanıma bakımından diğer bölüm ve sınıflardaki öğrencilere göre daha zengin deneyimlere sahip olma özelliklerinin yanı sıra, farkındalık düzeylerinin de daha yüksek olabileceği gerekçeleri ile bu ölçüt belirlenmiştir. Öğrencilerin sahip olduğu bu deneyim zenginliğinin, araştırma konusu hakkında daha derinlemesine bilgi edinilmesine katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmüştür.

Çalışmada veriler araştırmacılar tarafından geliştirilen Kişisel Bilgi Formu ve Yarı Yapılandırılmış Görüşme Formu kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Veriler 2022-2023 eğitim öğretim yılı bahar döneminde araştırmacılar ve katılımcılar için uygun olan zamanlarda toplanmıştır. Araştırmacılar tarafından hazırlanan görüşme formu çalışma grubuna elden dağıtılarak, katılımcıların görüşlerini yazılı olarak belirtmeleri istenmiştir. Katılımcıların görüşlerini ifade etmeleri sırasında herhangi bir süre kısıtlamasına gidilmemiştir. Çalışma kapsamında 58 öğrenci çalışmaya gönüllü olarak katılmıştır.

Verilerin analizinde nitel veri analiz yöntemlerinden içerik analizi kullanılmıştır. Verilen çözümlenmesi beş aşamada gerçekleşmiştir: 1. Verilerin bilgisayara aktarılması ve ham veri metinlerinin oluşturulması, 2. Verilerin kodlanması, 3. Kodlanan verilerin temalarının oluşturulması, 4. Kodların ve temaların düzenlenmesi, 5. Bulguların sunulması ve yorumlanması (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2011).

Araştırmada özetle, öğrencilerin öğretmenlerini ilham verici olarak değerlendirmelerinde öğrenci-öğretmen ilişkilerini belirleyici bir faktör olarak gördükleri sonucuna varılmıştır. Bu bulgu öğretmenlerin sadece bilgi aktarmakla kalmayıp aynı zamanda öğrencilerine destek verme, onları anlama ve onlarla duygudaşlık kurma becerilerinin önemini vurgulaması açısından önemlidir. İkinci olarak, öğrenciler ilham verici olarak gördükleri

yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin mesleki yeterliklerini öncelikli olarak ön plana çıkarmışlardır. Bu bulgu ilham veren yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin profesyonelliklerinin ve uzmanlıklarının öğrenciler üzerinde olumlu bir etki yarattığını ve eğitim sürecinde yabancı dil öğretmenin yöntem konusundaki bilgi ve becerilerinin ne kadar büyük bir rol oynadığını göstermektedir. Araştırmanın bulguları ayrıca ilham veren yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin öğrencilerin sadece dil gelişimine değil, aynı zamanda genel akademik başarılarına, yaşam becerilerine ve kişisel gelişimlerine de katkıda bulunabilecekleri göstermektedir.

Sonuç olarak, bu araştırma öğretmenlerin ilham verici olma potansiyelini lise öğrencilerinin bakış açılarından sunmaktadır. Öğrencilerin; öğretmenlerinin mesleki yeterlilikleri, kişisel özellikleri, öğrenci-öğretmen ilişkileri ve mesleğe yönelik tutumları gibi faktörleri göz önünde bulundurarak ilham aldıkları öğretmenleri seçtikleri sonucuna varılabilir. Bu sonuç, eğitimcilerin kendilerini geliştirmek ve öğrencileri için daha ilham verici olmak için hangi alanlarda kendilerini geliştirmeleri gerektiği konusunda önemli bilgiler sağlayabilir.

Bu çalışmanın çeşitli sınırlılıkları bulunmaktadır. Nitel araştırmanın doğası gereği, sınırlı bir kitle ile gerçekleştirilmiş olan bu çalışmada genelleme kısıtı bulunduğundan bulguların yaygınlık düzeyinin nicel araştırmalarla ortaya konulması önerilebilir. Dil öğrenimi sürecinde öğretmenlerin rolünün kritik olduğu ve ilham veren öğretmenlerin bu süreçte özel bir öneme sahip olduğu açıktır. Dolayısıyla ilham veren yabancı dil öğretmenleri yetiştirilmesi için öğretmen eğitim programlarının etkililiğini değerlendiren çalışmalar yapılabilir. Bu çalışmalar ile öğretmen adaylarının eğitimleri sırasında hangi becerilerinin geliştirilmesi gerektiği belirlenebilir. İlham veren yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin profesyonel gelişimlerini desteklemek adına daha etkili programların nasıl oluşturulabileceği diğer araştırmaların konusu olabilir.