

Foreign Language Teaching Within 4+4+4 Education System in Turkey: Language Teachers' Voices

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Abstract

Problem Statement: In 2012 Ministry of National Education in Turkey has revised the education system so that the new 4+4+4 system requires a three-tier model of education with primary, secondary, and high school components. As with many changes in the curriculum, foreign language (FL) teaching has also been changed and the starting age for learning a FL has been lowered to 6.6 years of age (second grade). As one of the parties of the education process, teachers' views about this curriculum change and their understanding of teaching English to young learners (TEYL) have great importance.

Purpose of Study: The current research aims to investigate English teachers' ideas towards the starting age for FL learning, how it should be conducted with young learners, and finally what their current practices are when teaching children.

Methods: The data for the study is gathered from 203 primary school English teachers from seven different regions of Turkey via a questionnaire consisting of three parts concerning the aforementioned issues. The first part has closed and open-ended questions and aims at finding teachers views about the starting age/grade for language learning. Second part investigates teachers' beliefs about TEYL and third part

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investigates teachers' classroom implementations while teaching YLs. The reliability is taken for each part of the questionnaire. As a result, all sections of the questionnaire are found reliable with alpha values .758, .796, and .806 consecutively. Frequency analysis, Wilcoxon signed rank test, and ANOVA were used to make the analysis.

Findings and Results: The results indicate that teachers prefer language education to start at the first stage of primary school and even earlier during pre-school. Pertaining to teacher's beliefs about TEYL, most of the teachers revealed that FL teaching in primary school should be mainly based on listening and speaking rather than grammar; within a context through visual/kinesthetic activities, songs, and games rather than worksheets. However, the Wilcoxon signed rank test results revealed that there are significant differences between the participants' beliefs and their implementation.

Conclusions and Recommendations: Consequently, teachers are in favor of the recent changes in the curriculum; however, some teachers might need some in-service training regarding the use of appropriate techniques with YLs. These in-service training courses should involve practical tips to implement theoretically sound language teaching to children. Contribution and understanding of teachers, parents, and other educational institutions/organizations should be supported for a successful implementation of a language policy.

Keywords: Young learners, foreign language teaching, primary school, education system, English Language Teaching, 4+4+4

Introduction

The previous education reform in 1997 in Turkey marked the important changes for foreign language learning (FLL). As a result of these changes not only the compulsory education was increased to eight years but also the Turkish Government implemented a drastic change in the ELT curriculum and lowered the age of FLL to nine-ten years of age (4th grade). English as a FL was offered as a compulsory school subject in fourth and fifth grades for three hours a week. In this new curriculum the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) aimed to increase young FL learners' awareness, help them develop positive attitudes, and increase motivation (Damar, 2004; Kırkgöz, 2008; Kocaoluk & Kocaoluk, 2001; MoNE, 1997).

In 2005, the 1997 curriculum had gone through a revision. As a result, the duration of secondary schools (previously, high schools) extended to four years from three years. English was offered ten hours a week in the first year and four hours in the consecutive years (Kırkgöz, 2007). The changes were made due to Turkey's efforts to join EU (Kırkgöz, 2007). The renovation required a shift from traditional assessment such as pen and paper tests towards performance-based, on-going assessments via portfolios.

For the past 15 years the foreign language education (FLE) curriculum has gone through several changes. The changes involved recognition of English as a compulsory subject, an increase in the duration of FLE as well as the approach to teach English. In pursuit of these efforts a new educational reform is made in 2012, which is introduced as the 4+4+4 education reform. The new curriculum not only offers changes in the previous two-tier education, but also in FLE. With this curriculum innovation, compulsory education is increased from eight years to 12 years. In addition, starting age for primary school has been lowered to 66 months of age (5.5 years of age) from 72 months, and the duration of each tier; primary, secondary; high school is determined as four years. MoNE sets two aims for the new education system: Increasing the average duration of education and making necessary organizations to meet individuals' interests, needs, and abilities (MoNE, 2012). According to the new curriculum the starting age for FLL is lowered to 6.6 years of age (second grade).

Curriculum changes and renovations not only affect the learners but also teachers and teacher training process as well. During 1997 education reform curriculum changes were also made in the FL Departments of the Education Faculties so that a new course "Teaching English to Young Learners" (TEYL) was introduced to help pre-service teachers develop skills and knowledge related to teaching children. In addition, MoNE provided in-service training for practicing English teachers via its In-Service English Language Teacher Training and Development Unit (INSET). Fullan (1993) emphasizes the importance of the role of teachers in curriculum innovations as they act as mediators to transmit these changes to their students. For an effective implementation of a curriculum, teachers' understandings of the reasons and theoretical considerations underlying these changes are necessary. However, the results of studies conducted to find out the extent the teachers adopted the proposed curriculum revealed that it was not effectively implemented in classrooms and that teachers' practices showed variation (see İnal, 2009; Kırkgöz, 2008; Kırkgöz, 2009a). Thus, Kırkgöz (2009b) stresses the importance of resolving congruence between policy objectives and classroom teaching. For this point in mind, current research aims to find out about English teachers' opinions related to the 4+4+4 curriculum by focusing on the starting age for FL education, beliefs about and implementations in FL teaching to young learners (YLS).

Although TEYL dates back to 60s Johnstone (2009) argues that early language learning (LL) is in its third wave. The first movement was between 1960s-1970s and implemented by several countries such as the UK. Second wave corresponds to years between 1980s-1990s with the support of the European Commission and Council of Europe it was implemented by many countries in Europe. And the third wave began at the beginning of the 21st century with the inclusion of many Asian countries such as China, South Korea, Taiwan, and India. As a result of this movement many countries such as Poland and Croatia officially starts TEYL from Grade 1, China and Korea from Grade 3, and Turkey from Grade 2. Yet, reasons for early LL are still debatable in the academic circles. Two assumptions for "younger the better" philosophy is that younger children find learning FL easier (Nunan, 2003) and that

longer the duration of language education higher the proficiency by the time children graduate from school (Enever & Moon, 2009).

In Europe compulsory L2 learning starts from age 6-7. The EU strongly encourages the governments to start L2 as early as pre-school or primary school (Enever & Moon, 2009). According to the “Nuremberg Recommendations” (NR, 2010), the results of international studies reveal that TEYL live up to expectations from it. However, the reasons for an early start need to be understood well before its implementation. According to Johnstone (2009) an early start at around age five has several advantages: First of all, younger children can acquire the sound system of L2 easier than older children. Moreover, YLs have lower affective filter, thus are less anxious. Younger children will have more time to learn L2 in the long run. Various acquisitional processes can be used in time. For example, at the younger ages children depend on their intuitions but later on their analytical thinking develops as they move forward in Piaget’s cognitive developmental stages. Finally, Johnstone (2009) argues that cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional skills as well as their awareness on multiculturalism enable children to develop an identity that is going to be different if they start at a later stage. TEYL requires the use of different techniques and approaches when compared to adults. These differences arise from the differences between children and adults (Gürsoy, 2010). Children bring in some natural skills and characteristics to the classroom (Gürsoy, 2010; Halliwell, 1992). They have an ability to grasp the meaning from context although they have limited linguistic knowledge. They are talkative, thus, they can easily engage in communicative tasks especially if fun is also a part of the class environment. They like to have and create fun, so games, songs, fun activities in which the focus is on meaning rather than form can increase participation and risk taking. They are visual and kinesthetic. Hands-on activities, physical activities with lots of visual support facilitate LL. As they are at the earlier stages of their cognitive development they appreciate indirect learning. Direct learning doesn’t make sense when children haven’t developed analytical, hypothetical thinking. Most importantly, unlike adults, they don’t have a reason for learning another language when they can perfectly communicate in their mother tongue (see Gürsoy, 2010; Gürsoy, 2012a; Halliwell, 1992; Moon, 2000). Hence the selected activities should provide a reason for doing. It’s claimed that children have mostly intrinsic motivation, which is a result of their interest, enjoyment, and curiosity (Johnstone, 2009). As we grow older, instrumental reasons may cause our desire to learn.

The effective use of children’s characteristics in the language classroom would increase success. However, to what extent these can be implemented depends on the teacher. Although theoretical considerations are important in the decision making process when lowering the age of FLL, current resources, the teachers’ professional readiness in teaching younger ELT learners as well as their theoretical knowledge, beliefs, and their current practical implementations would also have an impact on the expected outcomes. Therefore, before any changes are put into practice, present infrastructure needs to be determined to improve the decisions made at the governmental level. From this aspect, to the authors’ knowledge, the current study is one of the first to inquire about primary school ELT teachers’ readiness to teach at a

lower grade level and a one that compare their beliefs and classroom implementations about TEYL. Therefore, the present study is significant in that it is an attempt to identify the current situation from the practitioners' point of view. The contexts in which educational policies are tempted to make changes towards the point where lowering the LL age is a consideration, stakeholders' ideas, contribution, and readiness need to be taken into consideration. For this purpose in mind, the current study aims to investigate teachers' views about the starting age for L2 learning as well as their beliefs about TEYL and their implementation of appropriate teaching techniques in their classrooms. It is hoped that the results would shed some light on future decisions to improve TEYL such as providing in-service training or re-examining the curriculum of pre-service teacher training programs.

Method

Research Design

The introduction of the new education reform (4+4+4) in Turkey raises many questions in terms of teachers' awareness on the underlying principles and theories of early LL, their opinions about the appropriate age to start L2 education, their beliefs about TEYL, and their current classroom practices. A survey type research design is used in the study to find answers to the following research questions:

1. Which tier do English teachers think FLT should start?
2. What are the English teachers' beliefs about FLT to children?
3. What are the teachers' teaching practices with YLs?
4. Are there any differences between the teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices?
5. What are the effects of teaching experiences on teachers' beliefs?
6. What are the effects of teaching experiences on teachers' classroom implementations?

Research Sample

203 English teachers working in different primary schools ($n > 100$) in seven regions of Turkey contributed to the study. The participants filled out an on-line questionnaire prepared by the researchers. Initially, convenience sampling was used as the questionnaire link was posted on a social networking site. The participants shared the online questionnaire with their colleagues. As a result, chain-referral sampling method was implemented. Of these participants 185 are graduates of ELT, 14 are graduates of non-ELT departments (4 missing information) and 183 of them took a TEYL course at the university. The participants' years of experiences range from 1 to 11 and more years. 123 of the participants have 1-5 years of teaching experience, 49 of them 6-10 years, and 28 of them 11 or more.

Research Instrument and Procedure

Data for the study is collected via a questionnaire which consists of three parts. The first part has 14 closed-ended questions and an open-ended question that aims at

finding teachers views about the starting age/grade for LL. In the open-ended question teachers were asked to explain why they think that certain starting age is appropriate. Second part with 16 questions, investigates teachers' beliefs about TEYL and third part consisting of 13 questions investigates teachers' classroom implementations while teaching YLs. The items related to beliefs and implementations were derived from the basic theories of TEYL that are related to their characteristics, learning styles, and stages of development (cognitive, linguistic) that are identified by the earlier literature (see Halliwell 1992; Enever, J. & Moon, J., 2009; Gürsoy, 2011; Johnstone, 2009; Moon, 2000; NR 2010; Trujillo-Saez, 2001).

The questionnaire is prepared as a five-step scale. For the content and face validity of the instrument it was given to five experts in an ELT department of a large state university in Turkey. According to the Lawshe technique (1975) at least five experts are necessary to evaluate a given questionnaire. The experts rated each item in the questionnaire as the item "measures the target construct, relevant to target construct but unnecessary, or cannot measure the target construct" (Yurdugül, 2005). According to the experts' opinions, the number of the items in the first part of the questionnaire was reduced to 14 which was initially 17. The content validity ratio was found to be 70% in the initial version of the questionnaire. This ratio was increased to 100% when the disagreed items by the experts were extracted. Later on, it was piloted on 30 teachers and some minor changes were made to ensure face validity. Finally, the questionnaire was prepared in an electronic format for teachers who are willing to contribute to the study. The questionnaire is found reliable with .758, .796, and .806 alpha values in consecutive parts.

Data Analysis

The frequency analysis was made for the demographic information. As the normality assumptions were not met, dual comparisons were made by Wilcoxon signed rank test, instead of t-tests. The results of the Levene test showed homogeneity of variances that indicates availability to implement one-way ANOVA test for multiple comparisons. Tukey HSD test is used to identify the differences between groups. In addition, means and standard deviations were also calculated.

For the one open-ended question a content analysis was made. First, the groups of ideas were identified, than reoccurring themes were assigned under these groups, and frequency comparisons were made.

Results

The first part of the questionnaire revealed consistent results about the most appropriate time to start a FL education. Based on the frequency analysis, most of the participants (92%) stated that teaching a FL should start at the first stage of the 4+4+4 system (primary school), and only 3.5% of the participants thought that teaching a FL at this stage is not effective. In addition, the majority (93.1%) agreed that children are ready to learn a FL at the first stage by explaining their reasons in the open ended part of the questionnaire. Moreover, most of the participants (89.1 %) thought that the teaching hours of English in primary school should be increased and 81.2 % of

them stated that providing a one-year intensive preparation-class before starting high school is important for learners' FLL.

The teachers who advocated an early start in FLL in primary school emphasized that children of these ages are in more social interaction with the environment and very curious to learn new things. 30% stressed the importance of L1 (mother tongue) literacy as a factor that affects children's readiness for learning a FL. They signified that children in primary school can learn better as L1 literacy facilitates learners' L2 literacy. They believed that pre-school period might be too early, as very young children are still in the process of learning social skills, developing motor skills, and learning self-care.

Correspondingly, 80.7 % of the teachers revealed positive thoughts about starting to teach a FL during pre-school period, only 5.4 % of them thought that it would be ineffective. The open-ended part of the questionnaire revealed the teachers' reasons for choosing pre-school period as the most appropriate time to start teaching a FL. Most of the teachers emphasized the importance of critical period for LL, particularly in terms of developing a better pronunciation. According to the teachers' answers, the reasons for an early start arise from children's characteristics. They indicated that younger children are less anxious and more curious than older learners. They have low affective filters, less prejudices, more motivation, and willingness to learn new things. Due to having fewer inhibitions in learning a FL, they have more meaningful and natural learning through games, songs, stories that are similar to children's experiences during language acquisition process. Therefore, the participants believed that children in pre-school period do not learn English to pass from tests.

The teachers also stressed the importance of multilingualism and multiculturalism by stating that very young learners (VYLs, children under 7) would have the opportunity for gaining awareness of another language, develop sympathy for different languages and cultures, and tolerance for diversity. Another reason, they highlighted for starting earlier, was related to life-long learning. If children start learning English earlier, the duration of learning and the exposure to language also increases. %25 of the participants considered the issue within children's cognitive and affective development. Based on their experiences, they stated that younger children are like blank slates thus, learn everything easily and rapidly. The participants also believed that YLs should be taught by taking their characteristics into consideration to foster positive attitudes towards learning a FL.

Both the teachers who chose pre-school period and those who advocated primary school period focused on meaningful teaching by using appropriate methodology for children. They stated the importance of whole language learning as opposed to the single emphasis given to grammar and vocabulary. Finally, 10% stated that learning a language is a kind of skill that could be gained earlier as with other skills.

The majority of the participants (91.6 %) thought that starting FL education at the second tier of 4+4+4 education system would be late and 74.3 % of them stated that it would be impossible to succeed in FL education if it starts later than primary school. Only 5.9 % of the participants approved of starting at this stage.

During the content analysis of the open-ended question three different ideas emerged related to the starting age for FLL. Several recurring themes were found for

each idea. First group claimed that it is best to start FLL in pre-school, second suggested primary school and the last group proposed secondary school.

30% of the teachers indicated that primary school is the best time to start FLL. Some of the themes that are identified were related to children's characteristics, cognitive and physical development, and affective factors. Teachers claimed that affectively children are less anxious, more motivated, enthusiastic, and they can easily develop positive attitudes towards FL with the use of appropriate teaching techniques. The participants (64%) also mentioned that children are, by nature, more sociable, interactive, and talkative. Children at primary school are more developed in terms of cognitive and physical abilities than the pre-schoolers. They are also more advantageous as they are more developed in their L1 knowledge as well as world and conceptual knowledge.

67% of teachers suggested that even an earlier start is more advantageous for FL development. The reasons to start at pre-school were themed around the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH), duration of LL, cognitive processes that are similar to L1 acquisition, and children's characteristics. Related to the CPH the majority of the teachers (70%) claimed that younger children are more advantageous in terms of developing appropriate pronunciation of the language. Teachers (50%) also argued that increased exposure and longer duration for FLL is more advantageous in the long run. Moreover, they (41%) also suggested using indirect teaching, relating FLL to their real lives, and enabling them to learn unconsciously, which is closer to L1 acquisition.

Only 3% of the teachers claimed that secondary school is the most appropriate time to start teaching a FL. They mentioned that children before secondary school have limited cognitive abilities. They believed that earlier start is time consuming, as young children learn fast but also forget fast. Another reason for their claim was that L1 knowledge facilitates the learning of FL structures. They also pointed out the exam-oriented curriculum in Turkey and its effects on teaching methodology. They thought that such a system prevents meaningful language teaching.

Pertaining to the second part of the questionnaire which is about the teachers' beliefs about TEYL, the results were in line with the literature except for the use of L1 and translation method while teaching children. The majority of participants (with frequencies over 90 %) indicated that FL teaching in primary school should be mainly based on listening and speaking rather than grammar; within a context through visual/kinesthetic activities, songs, and games rather than worksheets. Moreover, they stated that the classroom environment should be enjoyable for children and that developing positive attitudes towards a FL is important for YLs. Most of the participants thought that children at those ages should be evaluated via activities and games rather than pen and paper tests (94.1%). However, 93.1% of them thought that the education system leads teachers to use pen and paper tests. Although 96.1% of them believed that language should be taught by using simple English via visuals and body language without having the need to use Turkish, 41.4% of them stated that teachers should give the meaning in L1 as well.

The third part of the questionnaire is related to whether the participants teach their lessons in line with their beliefs about teaching YLs. Although the participants

indicated strong positive beliefs towards theoretically appropriate FLT to children the percentages of teachers who use these techniques in the classroom shows a decrease. For instance, the majority of the participants (94.1%) thought that FLT in primary school should be based on listening and speaking skills. Whereas, only a minority (31.5 %) stated that they use these skills frequently. In addition, almost all of the participants (99%) indicated that TEYL should be activity-based. Yet, the number of participants who apply activity-based teaching decreased to 67.8 %. The decrease between beliefs and implementation points out some problems and triggers the efforts to find solutions. Teachers' beliefs and implementations were compared via Wilcoxon signed rank test and presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Comparison of Participants' Beliefs and Their Classroom Implementations

<i>Items</i>		<i>M</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>Sig.</i> <i>(2-tailed)</i>
Listening and Speaking	Beliefs	4.33	4	-11.009*	0
	Implement.	3.11	3		
Contextualized Lang. Teaching	Beliefs	4.43	5	-7.010*	0
	Implement.	3.84	4		
Activity-based Language Teaching	Beliefs	4.64	5	-9.813*	0
	Implement.	3.81	4		
Visual and Kinesthetic Activities	Beliefs	4.72	5	-9.533*	0
	Implement.	3.97	4		
Enjoyable Classroom Environment	Beliefs	4.76	5	-10.085*	0
	Implement.	3.83	4		
Teaching Grammar via Worksheets	Beliefs	3.98	4	-2.257*	.024
	Implement.	3.77	4		
Developing Positive Attitudes	Beliefs	4.75	5	-7.353*	0
	Implement.	4.32	4		
Performance-based Assessment	Beliefs	4.5	5	-10.017*	0
	Implement.	3.31	3		
Pen and Paper Exams	Beliefs	3.98	4	-8.050*	0
	Implement.	3.11	3		
Using L2& Body Language	Beliefs	4.46	5	-6.537*	0
	Implement.	3.98	4		
Using Turkish	Beliefs	3.52	4	-.536*	0.592
	Implement.	3.51	4		

p<0.05

* based on positive ranks

According to the results, it is clear that there are significant differences between the participants' beliefs about teaching YLs and how they actually teach, except for the use of Turkish in the lessons. Teachers believe that Turkish should be used while TEYL and also they indicated that they use it during teaching. For the other items related to the issues about TEYL, it can be said that the teachers cannot/do not transfer their beliefs about TEYL into their actual teaching.

Regarding the years of experience of the participants, the results of a one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences with regard to three items in the questionnaire. According to the results of Tukey HSD test, there was a significant difference between the novice teachers and the teachers with 6 to 10 years of experience ($p < .006$) in item 7 which is about providing a one-year intensive preparation class before starting secondary school. Considering the mean scores, it is clear that the teachers with 6 to 10 years of experiences ($M_{(6-10 \text{ years})} = 4.57$) agreed on the importance of providing a one-year intensive preparation class before starting secondary school for FLL more than the novice teachers ($M_{(0-5 \text{ years})} = 3.96$).

Moreover, as determined by multiple comparisons (one-way ANOVA), there was a significant difference between novice and more experienced teachers in item 15 ($p < .036$) which emphasizes that language teaching in primary school should focus on listening and speaking. The mean scores of the groups showed that the more experienced teachers ($M_{(6-10 \text{ years})} = 4.4$) supported this idea more than the novice teachers ($M_{(0-5 \text{ years})} = 4.27$).

Finally, there was also a significant difference ($p < .022$) between the teachers with 6 to 10 years of experience and those with more than 10 years of experience in item 37. The mean scores of the groups indicated that the more experienced teachers ($M_{(11 + \text{ years})} = 4.17$) were teaching grammar via exercises rather than games and activities more than the other groups ($M_{(6-10 \text{ years})} = 3.59$; $M_{(0-5 \text{ years})} = 3.80$).

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the current research are important as it gives insights about English teachers' ideas about lowering the age for FL teaching. As the most recent ELT curriculum requires such changes, teachers' ideas and beliefs about TEYL gain prominence. Their ideas reflect how they would grasp these changes as offered by the MoNE. Moreover, how they implement TEYL in their classrooms and the extent they teach according to their beliefs are valuable for policy makers to furnish teachers' needs while teaching children.

According to the findings, the majority of the teachers are in favor of an early start in primary school, which is consistent with an earlier study (Çelik Korkmaz, 2010), and think that secondary education would be too late to start FLE. This result is important as it supports the recent education system, which requires FLE to start at second grade. It can also be interpreted as the teachers' readiness for teaching YLs at an earlier age. Moreover, 80.7% indicated that FLE should start at the pre-school, which requires teaching a FL to very young learners (VYLs). It seems from the

answers of the participants that they are influenced from the global trends to start FLE at an early age. The 4+4+4 curriculum and the teachers' ideas are consistent with the EU recommendations to start FL at the pre-school or primary school (Enever & Moon, 2009). It is also found out that the teachers' have sound reasons for an early start that support the previous arguments in the literature. They argued that YLs are more advantageous in learning the sounds of the FL by pointing out the critical period (Ellis, 1985; Gürsoy, 2011). By relying her argument to brain research Çetintaş (2012) argues that L2 learning should start as early as possible for phonetics of the language to be learned. In addition, teachers' ideas that YLs are less anxious, more curious, more enthusiastic, highly motivated (when appropriate methods and techniques are used) are also emphasized in the previous literature (Johnstone, 2009; NR, 2010; Trujillo-Saez, 2001). The teachers also stated that when TEYL is done indirectly with the use of activity-based teaching, the children will not feel that they are learning English to achieve in tests. Thus, they will not learn it as an end to itself but a medium to learn about other concepts, topics, etc.

It should also be noted that the participants value multilingualism and multiculturalism as often stressed by the EU. Trujillo-Saez (2001) argues that early LL has attitudinal benefits, which would pave the way for intercultural understanding. The results of "Foreign Languages in Primary and Pre-school Education" project identify the positive effects of early LL. Accordingly, it helps the development of language skills, contribute to the development of positive feelings toward other cultures and languages and it promotes self-confidence (Blondin, 1998).

The teachers who advocate an early start emphasize the use of appropriate teaching techniques with children to reach the desired outcomes. These techniques involve activity-based teaching (NR, 2010) during which children learn by developing experiences with the language. Children learn indirectly as they focus on meaning rather than form (Gürsoy, 2012b; Moon, 2000). Therefore, the classroom activities should involve games, songs, stories, puppets, role-play, and drama activities. The participants believe that such classroom teaching would lead to better learning outcomes with positive attitudes, higher motivation, and understanding towards diversity in the world. In their answers whole LL was underlined as opposed to grammar and vocabulary teaching. Unlike these participants the minority (5.9 %) argued that FLT at an early age is time consuming as children forget rapidly and that it is difficult for YLs to understand L2 structures. They also argued that L1 use facilitate the learning of FL structures. It can be understood from these claims that a small number of teachers that advocate FLL at a later stage adopt traditional methods of language teaching by focusing on the teaching of grammar and L1 use. Although Turkey has implemented CLT in its 1997 education reform, it seems that its aims were not totally appreciated by some teachers in 15 years that it was used.

With regard to the second part of the questionnaire, the participants developed theoretically appropriate beliefs about TEYL. However, it can also be seen that the teachers were dubious about the use of L1. The literature suggests that teachers use L2 for the majority of the time to increase exposure and to give reasons to use L2 in the classroom (Moon, 2000). As the age for learning a FL is lowered to 6.6 years of

age in the 2012 curriculum, this point must be taken cognizance of by the policy makers to support teachers in developing skills to express meaning without much need to use L1.

One of the most important findings of the current research was related to the difference between teachers' beliefs and implementations. The difference indicates that teachers cannot/do not transfer their beliefs to their classrooms. Çelik-Korkmaz (2010) also reported similar findings in her study. Accordingly, the teachers of that study stated that they had to focus more on vocabulary and grammar teaching rather than contemporary techniques for teaching YLs. The teachers also indicated that they thought they would use games, drama, songs, stories, TPR, and puppet activities during their pre-service training. As a reason for their lack of use of the aforementioned techniques, they pointed out the curriculum requirements and standardized tests such as "SBS" (Placement Test). In the process of implementing the new ELT curriculum within the 4+4+4 education system, applicability of the curriculum by the teachers should be one of the concerns of the policy makers. As important is the understanding of the principles underlying FLT to YLs, factors such as the examination system, teachers' skills to implement the suggested methods and techniques also play a role in the success of the new curriculum.

Another important result of the study is that there are significant differences between ELT and non-ELT graduates in terms of their beliefs about TEYL. Teachers who received ELT training seem to have more relevant beliefs with the theory about teaching children. However, due to an imbalance in the number of participants in the ELT and non-ELT groups, further studies are necessary to inquire such differences.

Finally, research results revealed that the most experienced teachers prefer teaching grammar via exercises without any contextualization, whereas, less experienced teachers prefer games and activities to teach grammar. This finding might be related to the fact that less experienced teachers received training on TEYL as a result of the 1997 curriculum reform. However, earlier graduates did not have such training, thus they might lack some methodological and theoretical information regarding TEYL.

The results of the current research have implications for the policy makers as well. FL teachers are in favor of the recent changes in the curriculum; however, due to the differences between their beliefs and implementations some teachers might need in-service training regarding the use of appropriate techniques with YLs. These in-service training courses should involve practical tips to implement theoretically sound language teaching to children. According to NR (2010) it is suggested that "Structural and financial provision for the training and continuing professional development of teachers is ensured" (p. 7). Although the majority of the teachers have relevant ideas about why the age of FLE should be reduced, the underlying principles of early language teaching need to be clarified. In addition, the FL teachers also think that the duration of FL education should be longer. Hence, the frequency of the English lessons might also be some of the issues that policy makers might project on.

The NR, (2010) also argues that “Objectives of reform measures are made transparent to the general public” (p. 7). For a successful implementation of a language policy, contribution and understanding of teachers, parents, and other educational institutions/organizations is necessary. Therefore, the new language curriculum should provide information about the objectives of the curriculum, the underlying theory behind early language teaching, and principles of TEYL. Finally, further research is necessary to investigate the barriers that are in front of the implementation of child appropriate teaching techniques, which take cognizance of children’s cognitive, social, linguistic, and physical development.

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4+4+4 Eğitim Sisteminde Yabancı Dil Öğretimi ile ilgili Öğretmen Düşünceleri

Atıf:

Gürsoy, E., Korkmaz, S.Ç., & Damar, A. E. (2013). Foreign language teaching within 4+4+4 education system in Turkey: Language teachers' voice. *Eğitim Araştırmaları-Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 53/A, 59-74.

Özet

Problem Durumu: 2012 yılında Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Türkiye'de eğitim sisteminde düzenleme yapmış ve yabancı dil öğrenmeye başlama yaşı 6.6 yaşa (ikinci sınıf düzeyi) düşürülmüştür. Program değişiklikleri ve yenilikler sadece öğrencileri değil aynı zamanda öğretmenleri ve öğretmen eğitimi süreçlerini de etkilemektedir. Bu eğitim sisteminin bir parçası olarak, yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin bu program değişimi ile ilgili görüşleri ve çocuklara yabancı dil öğretimi ile ilgili algıları çok büyük önem taşımaktadır.

Araştırmanın Amacı: Bu çalışma İngilizce öğretmenlerinin yabancı dil öğrenmeye başlama yaşı ile ilgili düşünceleri, bu sistemin çocuklarla nasıl yürütüleceği ve son olarak da çocuklara yabancı dil öğretirken yaptıkları uygulamaları araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Araştırmanın Yöntemi: Çalışmanın verileri Türkiye'de yedi farklı bölgede ilkokullarda çalışan 203 İngilizce öğretmeninden anket yoluyla toplanmıştır. Söz konusu anket üç bölümden oluşmaktadır: Birinci bölüm açık ve kapalı uçlu sorulardan oluşmaktadır ve yabancı dil öğrenimi ile ilgili başlama yaşı/sınıfı hakkında öğretmen görüşlerini bulmayı amaçlar; ikinci bölüm öğretmenlerin çocuklara yabancı dil öğretimi hakkındaki inançlarını sorgular ve üçüncü bölüm ise öğretmenlerin sınıf içi uygulamalarını tespit etmeyi amaçlar. Anketin tüm bölümleri sırasıyla .758, .796, ve .806 alfa değerleri ile güvenilir bulunmuştur. Veriler değerlendirilirken, frekans analizi, Wilcoxon signed rank test, ve ANOVA analiz yöntemleri kullanılmıştır.

Araştırmanın Bulguları: Verilerin analizi, öğretmenlerin yabancı dil eğitimine başlama yaşı olarak 4+4+4 eğitim sisteminin birinci aşamasını (ilkokul) ve hatta okul öncesini tercih ettiklerini göstermiştir. Yabancı dil eğitiminin birinci kademe başlanması gerektiğini düşünen katılımcılar bu dönem çocuklarının sosyal yönden yeterince gelişmiş olduklarını ve yeni bir şeyler öğrenmeye daha hevesli olduklarını vurgulamışlardır. Ayrıca kendi dillerinde okur-yazar olmalarının yabancı dil öğrenme sürecinde kolaylık sağlayacağını belirtmişlerdir. Öğretmenlerin büyük bir kısmı, yabancı dil öğretime 4+4+4 eğitim sisteminin ikinci aşamasında başlanmasının çok geç olacağını belirtmişlerdir. Yabancı dil öğrenmeye okulöncesi dönemde başlanması gerektiğini düşünen öğretmenler, çocukların özellikle daha iyi telaffuz geliştirmeleri açısından kritik dönemde olduklarını belirtmişlerdir. Çocukların karakteristik özellikleri göz önünde bulundurulduğunda bu dönemde ki çocukların yeni bir dil öğrenmeye karşı merak ve motivasyonlarının daha yüksek; endişe, önyargı ve olası psikolojik

engellerin ise daha az olduğuna dikkat çekmektedirler. Böylece yabancı dil öğretiminin, tıpkı anadili öğrenirken olduğu gibi oyunlar, şarkılar ve hikâyelerle daha anlamlı ve doğal bir dil öğrenme süreci sağlanarak yapılması gerektiğine inanmaktadırlar.

Öğretmenlerin çocuklara yabancı dil öğretimi ile ilgili inançlarına bakıldığında, birçoğunun ilkökulda yabancı dil öğretiminin temel olarak dilbilgisi yerine dinleme ve konuşmaya dayalı olması gerektiğini düşündükleri görülmüştür. Dinleme ve konuşma etkinliklerinin çalışma kâğıtlarından çok görsel ve fiziksel aktiviteler, şarkılar ve oyunlar bağlamında olmasını tercih ettikleri ortaya çıkmıştır. Çocukların yabancı dil öğrenmeye karşı olumlu tutum geliştirmelerinin ve bunun sağlanması için de sınıf ortamının çocuklar için eğlenceli hale getirilmesinin önemli olduğunu ifade etmişlerdir. Katılımcıların çoğu dil öğrenim sürecinde çocukların gelişiminin yazılı sınav yöntemleri yerine aktiviteler ve oyunlar yoluyla değerlendirilmesinin önemine değinmişlerdir.

Öte yandan Wilcoxon signed rank test sonuçları katılımcıların çocuklara yabancı dil öğretimi konusundaki inançları ile öğrettikleri arasında anlamlı farklılıklar olduğunu göstermiştir. Buna göre tecrübeli öğretmenlerle yeni öğretmenlerin çocuklara yabancı dil öğretimi hakkındaki inançları arasında anlamlı farklılıklar bulunmuştur. Ayrıca tek yönlü ANOVA çoklu karşılaştırma sonucuna göre, yeni ve daha tecrübeli öğretmenlerin çocuklara yabancı dil öğretiminde dinleme ve konuşmaya ağırlık verme konusundaki inançları arasında da anlamlı farklılıklar bulunmuştur ($p < .036$). Son olarak da 6 - 10 yıl arası tecrübesi olan öğretmenlerle, 11 yıl ve üstü tecrübesi olan öğretmenler arasında oyun ve aktiviteler yerine alıştırma yoluyla dilbilgisi öğretimi konusunda anlamlı farklılık bulunmuştur ($p < .022$).

Sonuçlar ve Öneriler: Çalışma sonunda öğretmenlerin eğitim/öğretim programındaki değişiklikten memnun olduğu ortaya çıkmış ve hatta öğretmenlerin büyük bir çoğunluğu dil öğretiminin anaokulu seviyesinde başlamasının faydalı olacağını belirtmişlerdir. Ancak öğretmenlerin inanç ve uygulamaları arasında çıkan farklılıklardan hareketle bazı öğretmenlerin çocuklara yabancı dil öğretimi uygulamaları konusunda hizmet-içi eğitime ihtiyacı olduğu düşünülmektedir. Bu hizmet-içi eğitim seminerlerinin teorik olmaktan ziyade uygulanabilir teknikler içermesi gerektiği düşünülmektedir. Buna ek olarak bundan sonra yapılacak çalışmaların teorik olarak geçerli olması ve çocukların bilişsel, sosyal, dilsel ve fiziksel gelişimleriyle uyumlu olan dil öğretim yöntemlerinin uygulanmasının önündeki engelleri de araştırması tavsiye edilmektedir. Öğretmenlerin, velilerin ve diğer eğitim kurum ve kuruluşların algısı ve katılımı başarılı bir dil politikasının uygulanabilmesi için yadsınamaz faktörlerdendir. Bu yüzden ilgili kişi ve kurumların sürece katılımları da teşvik edilmelidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çocuklar, Yabancı dil öğretimi, ilkökul, eğitim sistemi, İngiliz dili eğitimi, 4+4+4