



## İLKOKUL ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN İNGİLİZCE DERSLERİNDEKİ SORUNLARI VE BU SORUNLARIN ÇÖZÜMLERİ: “ÇOCUKLARA YABANCI DİL ÖĞRETİMİ” DERSİNİN ETKİLERİ VE YARARLARI

### PROBLEMS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS AND THEIR SOLUTION IN ENGLISH COURSES: EFFECTS AND BENEFITS OF “TEACHING ENGLISH TO CHILDREN” COURSE

Volkan MUTLU\*\*

#### Abstract

Teaching English to young learners is a problem because of not having English language teachers in primary schools. Because of this reason, primary school teachers have to teach English in the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> grades, but they do not have the desired English level and educational background. By taking into consideration the insufficiency of English language teachers and primary school teachers' inadequate English knowledge, this study examines the problems that these primary school teachers encountered, solutions of these issues, and the effects of how to teach English to children course on the thoughts of teacher candidates. A cross-sectional qualitative research design was used in this study in order to be able to answer the research questions and data, which is collected by using unstructured interview forms and personal letters, was analysed manually. The results of this qualitative study which has 21 primary school teachers and 24 teacher candidates as participants revealed that the most crucial problem in primary school English courses is the lack of English language teachers. Primary school teachers who got the responsibility of teaching English are not sufficient, and some of them do not teach English. They only had 3 hours basic English course in their universities, and most of them did not have any course about how to teach English so they have difficulties in English lessons. As it is impossible to appoint English language teachers to all primary schools, it is better to educate primary school teachers with in-service English courses and by adding a class about “how to teach English to children”. But most of the primary school teaching departments of the universities in Turkey do not have any courses for helping teacher candidates to understand how to teach English. Contrary to the lack of this course in the curriculums of the universities, examination of the personal letters cleared the suspicions about the benefits of the “how to teach English to children” course. Therefore, we believe that it would be beneficial to include such a course to the curriculums of all primary school teaching departments and insufficient English language knowledge of the primary school teachers can be supported by planning in-service English classes compatible with the English language lesson curriculums of the Ministry of the Education.

**Keywords:** primary school, teaching English to young learners, curriculum, ELT methods

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

As expressed by Brown (2007:1) “learning a second language is a long and complex undertaking” that includes different variables such as learner, learning atmosphere, learning materials, environmental factors, and teachers. The difference between second language and foreign language learning also makes it harder for the Turkish students to acquire a language successfully. In this acquisition process, teaching which is the process of “showing or helping someone to learn how to do something, giving instructions, guiding in the study of something, providing with knowledge, causing to know or understand” (Brown, 2007:8) and teachers are two of the main characters. The successes of the teachers and the methods they use in the classroom have a significant effect on language learning process.

Learner is another factor in language education as his/her character and individual ability are the definers of the success of the acquisition process. It is supported that starting language learning from an early period makes it easier to gather that language. Van Patten and Benati (2010) show that the term named as Critical Period Hypothesis expresses the benefits of starting the language learning from earlier periods of life. Although this hypothesis is first used for L1 education, it is also started to be used for L2 (Rokoszewska, 2012). Demirezen (2003) thinks that the age which is the cutting point of language education is 13 because children complete the brain development during this period. It is difficult to be successful in language learning when you start to learn it after the age of 13. Some researchers also support the impossibility of the adult learners to reach a native competence level. Cameron (2001) mentions that despite its benefits on some skills of language such as listening, starting the language learning process in early ages does not have developing effects on other skills. The researcher found in her study that young learners are less successful in grammar education when compared with adult learners.

\*Lecturer, Recep Tayyip Erdogan University Foreign Language High School.



To be able to understand the abilities of young learners, it would be beneficial to examine their language features. As mentioned in Scott and Ytreberg (2007), children between 5 to 7 years old can plan activities, argue something and express their needs, use cause and effect relationship and their imaginations, have numerous intonations in their L1, and understand the direct interaction. It is clear that they have the necessary capacity of using a language correctly in their daily lives and this makes them potential L2 learners. Being able to speak another language and not completing the brain development make them good language learners. Starting to learn a language in these ages can be used as an opportunity if the right methods and materials are used. Language teaching materials and the teacher itself should be proper in this process. These children are not able to understand the grammatical structures and systems of their L1 entirely, and this makes it impossible to learn the grammatical structures of the L2. Because of this reason, it is better to help them learn how to use language in an enjoyable classroom atmosphere. Şad (2015) supports this by expressing the importance of teaching the functional and communicative skills to the young language learners rather than forcing them to learn the structural patterns. Studies of Rokoszewska (2012) and Mohd (2003) are also supporters of using student-centered and up to date methods in order to be able to foster the learning. Mohd (2003) supports the use of student-centered methods and thinks that using these techniques will meet the students' needs better as they have different characteristics as a learner. Using classical methods will only teach the structures of the language or will just use the same pattern. However, giving students the chance of managing their own learning process by also directing them without obliging them to do a certain thing will help them to choose the best method and learn the language quickly in addition to decreasing their anxiety and increasing the self-esteem level. Rokoszewska (2012) writes in her book that the most desired learning methods for young learners are the audio-lingual method, total physical response, the communicative approach, task-based learning, storytelling or story-based methodology, and cross-curricular approach or theme-based teaching. Especially, the pleasant setting of total physical response and storytelling method or the freedom of task-based learning would provide the required setting for young L2 learners. It is apparent here that in addition to the learners' age and individual differences, teachers' capacities and teaching methods are essential elements of language learning.

According to Dilmac and İnanc (2015), one of the aims of primary and secondary school educations is to prepare students for life. Teaching English to the students of these schools serves this goal. As mentioned in Aslan (2008), starting from the 1997/98 education year, English language teaching in Turkey began to be supported with elective courses and teaching English to the primary school children starts from the second year of their education beginning from 2013 education year (Solak and Semerci, 2015; Bayyurt, 2013; and Ekus and Babayiğit, 2013). Teaching English to children is desired, and Turkish education system is organised again with the aim of reaching this target. In the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> classes, students have 2 hours compulsory English lessons each week (T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu Başkanlığı, 2016). It is understood that students come across English courses at an early age and they have opportunities to learn certain levels of English before finishing the primary school if their curriculums and syllabuses are planned and organised carefully.

Starting to learn English from primary school education is accepted as beneficial by not only language specialists mentioned in the earlier paragraphs which explain critical period hypothesis but also teachers and students. Both teachers who are the characters that carry out teaching activity and students who are responsible for learning have positive ideas about learning English in the primary school education. Seckin (2011) who studied with 15 English teachers tried to find out their opinions about teaching English. Teachers mentioned that teaching English in primary schools and the curriculum which makes children active in the lessons is essential and beneficial however insufficient course hours and materials hinder the learning activities. In another study carried out by Solak and Semerci (2015), both students and teachers expressed their positive ideas about starting to teach English at the second grade of primary schools. They thought that the education program is clear, coherent, and suitable for child development. It is clear that both students and teachers support the benefits of teaching English in primary schools. Starting to teach English from an early age is beneficial but how effective do we do it? Are problems only with the materials and course hours? These are the questions that should be answered in order to have more beneficial and useful language learning atmospheres.

Karbe (1998) thinks that a foreign language teacher should have four main features as the knowledge of the language, ability to form the content of the course, teaching skills, and planning and assessing abilities (cited in Aslan, 2008). Most of the English teachers in Turkey are not developed completely when these features are taken into consideration. Even their L2 language capacity is not sufficient to teach English, but the problem is more significant as there aren't English language teachers in a



considerable number of primary schools. As mentioned in Sad (2015), primary school teachers are being used to fulfill the English language teaching insufficiency. Do these primary school teachers have the abilities of English language teachers which were mentioned above? When the course structures of 13 universities from different regions of Turkey are examined, it was seen that, except Bogazici University, they have only 3+3 hours English I course. This course just teaches the basic elements of English and is not sufficient for being able to teach the primary school English language curriculum. Because of this reason, let alone the foreign language teaching methods, most of the primary school teachers do not have the necessary L2 capacity. These teachers try to teach something they do not know and this result in especially pronunciation mistakes. Although some studies such as Sevik (2009) who thinks that classroom teachers should take the responsibility of teaching English if needed and Sad (2015) who found that female classroom teachers believe that they are able to teach English and willing to do that support the primary school teachers' sufficiency to teach English. It can be mentioned that teaching something is impossible if you do not know what to teach. Sad (2015) expresses in the same study that male primary school teachers perceive themselves as ineffective in teaching English. Bayyurt (2013) also supports this idea by revealing the deficiencies of these teachers who teach English in primary schools as insufficiency in relating the L1 and L2 acquisition, being unable to use the proper assessment methods, not being able to take into account the course curriculum and child development together, and not being sufficient in the self-assessment of their personal and professional development.

Bayyurt (2013) supports the idea of educating primary school teachers in order to make them able to teach English. According to Bayyurt, these teachers should be able to teach English in primary schools, and this necessitates learning a definite amount of English. Because of this reason, they should be thought English since the English course which they had at their university education is not sufficient. Bayyurt (2013) also believes in the necessity of restructuring the curriculums of primary school education departments because when 13 universities from different geographical regions in Turkey were examined, it was seen that only two of them (one of which is eclectic) have a course about how to teach English to young learners in the curriculums of primary school teacher education. Primary school teacher candidates do not have any classes on how to teach English to young learners despite having such courses for other lessons. Even if they have sufficient amount of English, they teach this language by using the same methods that they use in math and Turkish courses. However; children do not need to learn the system of the language and how to write in English when they are in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. They only desire to learn this new language in an enjoyable atmosphere as it is an exciting activity to be able to express themselves with these new words.

It is clear that language education needs evident features and one of the leading elements of this education is teachers. On the other hand, there aren't enough language teachers, and primary school teachers take the responsibility of teaching English in spite of their insufficient language and language teaching knowledge and experience. This situation creates problems not only in the English classes in primary schools but also on students' attitudes of learning a new language. Because of this reason, this study thinks that it is worth to examine the primary school teachers' problems while teaching English and pre-service primary school teachers' ideas on the benefits and effects of the "Teaching English to Children" course in order to understand whether this course can solve the problems of primary school teachers or not. For this aim, research questions are developed as;

1. What is the general situation in English language teaching in primary schools?
2. Do the primary school teachers have any idea about how to teach English?
3. What are the problems of the English language teaching in primary schools and their solutions?
4. Is the course of "how to teach English to children" beneficial for the primary school teacher candidates or not?

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Aim of the Study**

A cross-sectional qualitative research design was used in this study in order to examine the problems of primary school English courses and their solutions in detail by taking into consideration primary school teachers' and primary school teacher candidates' ideas. Qualitative research which was developed in the late 1800s and early 1900s is defined by Creswell (2005:39) as "a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants, describes and analyses these words for themes, and conducts the inquiry in a subjective biased manner". Dörnyei (2007) expresses the strengths of qualitative study as exploratory nature, making sense of complexity, answering why questions, broadening our understanding, flexibility when things go wrong, and rich material for the research report. This research



design provides a wide range of materials by also trying to understand the reasons for the students' answers. Although the data is complicated, it fills in the blanks with its broad aspect.

This study tries to find the problems of the primary school English courses and primary school teachers who teach English as a result of not having English teachers in their schools, and understanding whether the course of how to teach English to children is beneficial for primary school teacher candidates. To be able to find these problems and effects of the mentioned course, we tried to answer these questions;

1. What is the general situation in English language teaching in primary schools?
2. Do the primary school teachers have any idea about how to teach English?
3. What are the problems of the English language teaching in primary schools and their solutions?
4. Is the course of "how to teach English to children" beneficial for the primary school teacher candidates or not?

## 2.2 Participants

21 primary school teachers from 13 different cities of Turkey and 24 primary school teacher candidates joined this study. Teachers also have different amount of teaching experiences starting from one year to more than a decade. As we desired to have participants from seven geographical regions of Turkey, maximal variation sampling and voluntary sampling methods are used while choosing the sample group of primary school teachers. We got in touch with at least 500 primary school teachers and interviewed with 21 of them. As Dörnyei (2007) mentions, using maximal variation sampling provided the diversity and stability of the participants. Only volunteered individuals of those approximately 500 teachers took part in this study. To gather the teacher candidates' ideas on the benefits of the "how to teach English to children" course, we needed a homogenous group the member of which have all took part in that course and homogeneous sampling was the appropriate method for this aim. Depending on Dörnyei (2007) who thinks between six and ten individual is sufficient for a qualitative study and Creswell (2005) who supports the idea that sample size is not important in qualitative research, we think that the number of the participants is adequate.

## 2.3 Instrument

An open-ended questionnaire which was developed by the researcher and includes 15 questions was used in order to collect data from primary school teachers. As mentioned by McDonough and McDonough (1997), open-ended questionnaires provide more personal and detailed information when compared with traditional structured questionnaires of the quantitative studies. The reason of developing a new questionnaire is to be able to collect more detailed data related to the aim of the research and lack of a ready to use open-ended questionnaire.

The information of the effects of "How to teach English to children" course was collected from the primary school teacher candidates with the help of personal letters. Creswell (2005) classifies personal letters as a document type. Participants were asked to write their ideas about the course after finishing the term. They were free to write their thoughts, and they were also warned about not to write their names on these letters.

## 2.4 Data Analysis

It is cited in Creswell (2005) that there is not a definite way to analyse the qualitative data. However, there are guidelines for qualitative analysis process which includes organising data, transcribing it, analysing by hand or computer, explore the data, code it, and build descriptions or themes. Because of having small amount of data and desire to be close to the findings, manual analysis was used in the study. Another reason of choosing manual analysis is that computer software only organises data according to different themes; they do not comment on the collected data or defined themes.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This part of the study will reveal the results of analysed data according to the research questions. Because of this reason, it was divided into 4 different sections as what is the general situation of English language teaching in primary schools, do the primary school teachers have any idea about how to teach English, what are the problems of the English language teaching in primary schools, and is the course of "how to teach English to children" beneficial for the primary school teacher candidates or not.

### 3.1 What is the General Situation of English Language Teaching in Primary Schools?

As mentioned in the previous part of the study, English courses start from the 2<sup>nd</sup> grades of primary schools, and there are two hours of English in the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> grades. Although students begin to learn some vocabularies in kindergartens, compulsory English language teaching starts in primary schools. As an implementation of Turkish National Education Ministry, teachers are obliged to use previously defined



course books, and it is forbidden to use other materials at schools. These course books are not written by native speakers and generally, do not include extra sources such as hypermedia elements (initially developed videos, songs etc. for the aims of the course), additional teacher materials, and internet study links for students. An important problem of primary school English courses is the absence of English language teachers, and this leads the Ministry of Education to give the responsibility of English language teaching to the primary school teachers.

When the programs of the universities are examined, it is seen that most of the primary school teachers do not have a specialised training on how to teach English, and this creates problems for ELT courses. One of the teachers that I interviewed was not graduated from primary school education department which means that this teacher even does not know how to educate a child let alone teaching English. Although the number of these kinds of teachers is decreasing, people who graduated from other departments of the universities still work as a substitute teacher. These teachers are not able to deal with children’s problems in addition to their insufficient capacity of teaching techniques and activities. Teaching, especially teaching a child, is not explaining something directly. It needs to use different sources, procedures, and elements by also taking into consideration the students’ general situation which includes psychological, cognitive, and physical features of them. More than half of the primary schoolteachers that joined this study didn’t have any course about how to teach a foreign language to children. When we compare this with the curriculums of the primary school teaching departments of the Turkish universities, we can express that most of the primary school teachers do not have any education on teaching a new language.

In addition to not having a course about teaching a foreign language, primary school teachers’ English level is not sufficient for teaching in their schools. Only four teachers expressed that they have upper-intermediate English level. Other teachers have beginner or elementary level English, and this makes it difficult for them to teach English. Teachers are generally an idol for primary school children that teachers’ deficiency of not being able to answer students’ questions in the lesson can decrease those children’s motivation level. Not having a proper level of target language also affects the way these teachers plan their courses as some of them even do not do anything to teach English. They use this time to do activities for other courses. When teachers are asked about what they think about teaching English in primary schools, only one of them who has a beginner level English mentioned contrary idea by expressing that students are not able to learn it.

Primary school teachers that joined this study believe the benefits of teaching English at the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> grades. They think that learning English is a necessity in these days and starting to learn it in primary schools, even before primary schools, will be helpful for children as they are ready to acquire different things at their age. Some of the teachers touched the point that English courses should be given by English language teachers not primary school teachers. Teacher 2 expressed that “it would be perfect if we had English language teachers at our school. I cannot teach them anything because I don’t know English and this makes me feel bad”. Teacher 10 and 14 also supports the importance of teaching English and the necessity of English language teachers in this procedure. Another important problem was mentioned by teacher 16 who expressed the situation in eastern parts of the country as “it is beneficial but teaching English takes too much time in eastern parts because it is the third language of the children not the second. I do different activities, but students choose memorisation since they learnt Turkish with this method”. Although there are different problems with teaching English, teachers are agreed on the necessity of the English courses in primary schools. However; contrary to the teachers’ general beliefs on the need of the English courses in primary schools, results on the application of these courses show that most of the teachers are not beneficial for those lessons.

Table 1: What primary school teachers do in the English Courses?

Which one do you do in English lessons? * Which one is true for you? Crosstabulation				
		Which one is true for you?		Total
		I try to speak English in the courses	I speak Turkish	
Which one do you do in English lessons?	I teach English	4	10	14
	I use the time to support other course subjects such as Math, Turkish etc.	0	7	7
	Total	4	17	21



As understood from the table, seven teachers don't teach English and 10 of the 14 teachers who teach English speak Turkish in the classroom. Only four teachers try to speak English and 1 of these teachers who speak English only has elementary level English which means he/she is only able to talk about limited things and the pronunciation of this teacher is not in the desired level. If a child learns something not in a correct way, he/she has difficulties about learning it correctly in their future life. Because of this reason, it is clear that English courses in primary schools should be given by English language teachers or primary school teachers and teacher candidates should have both "how to teach English to children" course at university and in-service English lessons to develop their capacity.

### **3.2 Do the primary school teachers have any idea about how to teach English?**

Answering the second question of this study will help us to understand the teachers' levels and the methods they use in the classrooms. When they are asked if they thought that they were able to answer students' questions accurately, only 8 of the 21 teachers said "yes". This finding makes it apparent that most of the teachers do not feel sufficient in teaching English. This finding supports the previous ones which revealed that primary school teachers do not have an adequate amount of L2 knowledge to teach.

These primary school teachers are not also appropriate to teach English because of the reason that they even do not have any idea about main language teaching methods. 14 of these teachers answered the question "which language teaching methods do you know?" as I do not know any of them. Six teachers know GTM, and one teacher knows Direct Method which are the methods that shouldn't be used in the process of teaching a foreign language to the children. They are the oldest methods and generally include memorisation or too much repetition. However, children need to play games and do such kinds of activities. Although six teachers know GTM, only two of these teachers use it in the classroom, and one teacher uses Direct method. Ten teachers try to do different activities instead of being depended on a specific method while other 8 of them do not do anything. Teacher 11 and 12 seek to use games, activities, videos, and songs to help their children enjoy the process and stay active. The progress of their students will be slow but they will learn something without being aware of it and will like English. Despite not directly using GTM, teacher 21, 3, and 14 teaches grammar and vocabulary which means the use of memorisation and direct explanation methods. Other teachers generally do the activities that the students book provided by the Ministry of Education has.

It was also tried to be understood what primary school teachers would do if the children did not understand the subject. Four teachers directly use memorization and translation methods in order to help those children. One teacher uses the same method, and four teachers try to get help from hypermedia. It is clear that neither the main nor the supporting techniques that primary school teachers use are desired ones. Only teacher 13 has an exciting idea as he/she thinks that "while teaching English at the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, we shouldn't use writing because students have just learned how to read and write. Showing them the written forms of English words may confuse them as these words are not read in the same way they are written. Animations can be used in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade".

### **3.3 What are the problems of the English Language Teaching in primary schools?**

Problems of English Language Teaching in primary schools tried to be understood by directly asking them to the primary school teachers who are obliged to teach this course because of an insufficient number of English language teachers. Teachers were also asked to mention the solutions of those problems.

According to primary school teachers, the most critical problem is not having English language teachers in their schools. As explained in the previous paragraphs, both pedagogical and language knowledge of the primary school teachers are not at a certain level, and this makes it difficult for them to teach English. They think that not having an English language teacher at their school is the most significant problem of language education. Another issue mentioned by the primary school teachers is having students who do not know Turkish that teaching them English becomes a more significant problem. This point is not only a problem for English courses but also a problem of other classes. Students choose to memorise because of the techniques most of the teachers use in their classrooms, and this creates problems. Students are not able to speak English as they are generally thought by using classical GTM which is the most undesired method of modern English language classrooms. This use also led to another problem which is named by the primary school teachers as not being able to use the language in daily lives. Students who memorise words or do direct translations cannot be able to use the language in real world situations. Students should be active in English language classrooms and learn the language structures that they can use while talking with other people. Other problems mentioned by primary school teachers are children's insufficient cognitive capacity, not having enough course hours, not giving importance to the speaking activities, teachers' inability to teach English to the children, and not having necessary sources and laboratories.



Mentioned problems are not only related primary schools but also general atmosphere of the language classrooms. Because of this reason, solutions are organised as teacher related and general solutions. Teacher-related solutions are having English language teachers in primary schools, educating primary school teachers, and educating English language teachers on how to teach English to children. The easiest way of solving the problems of primary school teachers is to have English language teachers in primary schools. Having English language teachers in those schools will save primary school teachers from not teaching something that they are not educated on, and they do not know well. If it is not possible to have English language teachers in those schools, the problem can be solved by educating primary school teachers on how to teach English and how to develop their own English language levels. Primary school teachers think that an education about how to teach children should also be given to the English language teachers. Although there is a course about teaching English to young learners in the curriculums of the most English language teaching departments, it is maybe not enough to solve the problem. Solutions which are not related to teachers are starting the English courses from secondary schools instead of primary schools (which is not desired by language educators and researchers), increasing the course hours, beginning the English language teaching from the family, having English prep-class education not at the 5<sup>th</sup> grade but in kindergarten, having applied English courses, having the necessary laboratories, and writing new books which are easier than that we have today.

We designed this diagram by examining the primary school teachers' ideas about the problems and solutions of the English courses at schools. Although we divided them in two categories as teacher related and general problems and solutions, our main aim is to examine teacher related problems.

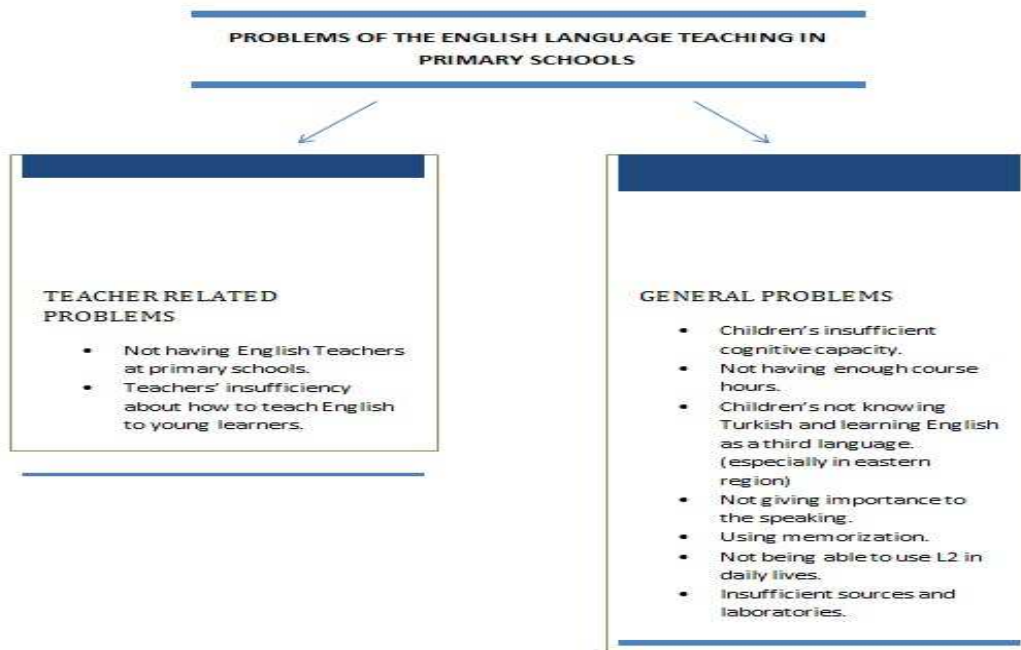


Figure I: Problems of English language teaching in primary schools

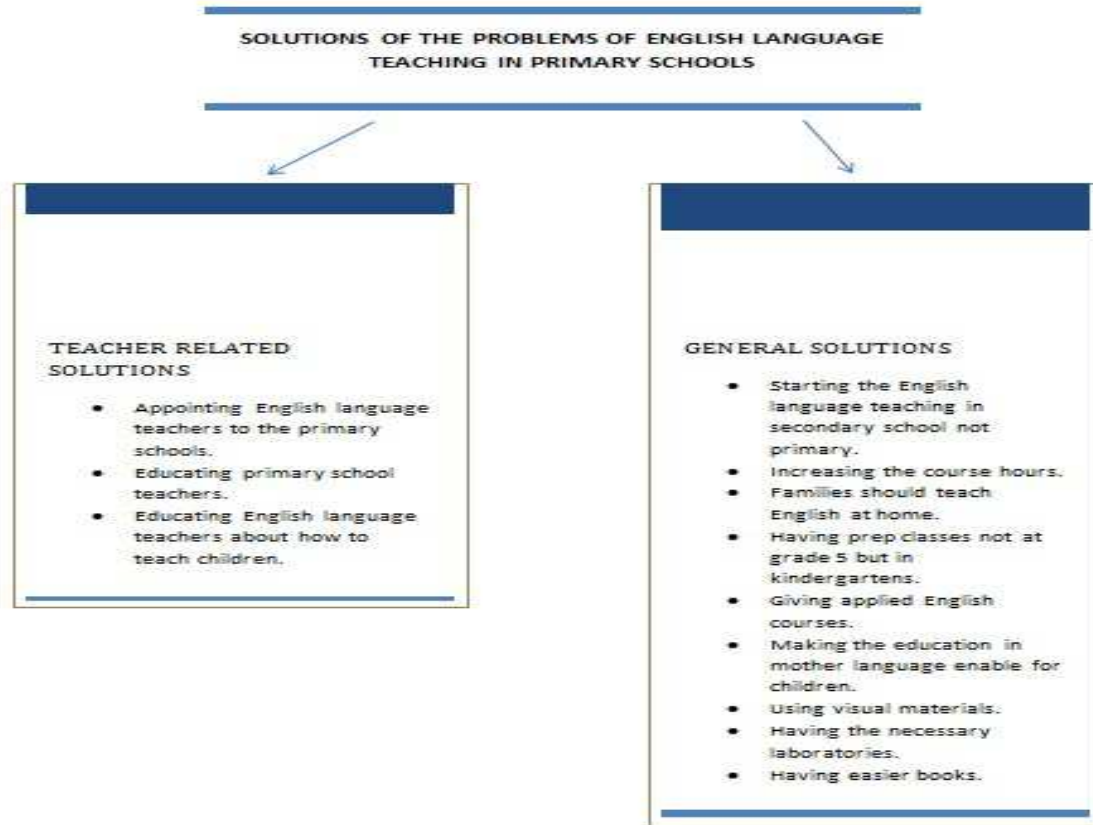


Figure II: Solutions of the problems of English language teaching in primary schools

It is clear that although teachers also mentioned general problems about language learning in Turkey, the most significant obstacle expressed by the teachers is not having English language teachers in their schools. First solution to this problem is appointing English language teachers to all primary schools. As this is impossible because of the student capacity of the schools which are in small villages and economic reasons, another solution which is educating primary school teachers about how to teach English to young learners becomes more critical. When the curriculums of universities are examined, it is apparent that most of them only have 3 hours Basic English course and they do not have any course about how to teach English in primary school education departments. Teacher candidates and appointed teachers have low capacities in English and they do not know how to teach what they know. It is certain that primary school teacher departments should add a course about "how to teach English to young learners" in their curriculums, and teachers should be supported with in-service English courses related to the primary school language course curriculums of the Ministry of the Education. Students who have taken the course "how to teach English to young learners" mentioned positive feedbacks about it and this will be reviewed in the next research question.

### **3.4 Is the course of "how to teach English to children" beneficial for the primary school teacher candidates?**

Teacher candidates who had a course about how to teach English to young learners in the last term of their education mentioned positive ideas about this course. None of them expressed that the lesson is not beneficial. Although some teacher candidates said that they also need to learn English in addition to this course, they are generally pleased to take such a course.

8 of the teacher candidates revealed that this course helped them to shape the English lessons that they will teach in the future in a positive way. They learned how to teach English successfully and which activities not to do in the classrooms. In addition to learning basic English teaching models, they also discovered which one to use and which one not to use. Another most expressed point is the experience that they had with the English courses. Teacher candidates had not known anything about how to teach English before this course but learned to handle the situation with the help of the course. They, at least, had an opportunity to see what is happening in an English language course. The third item which was mentioned by the teacher candidates is essential to take into consideration as it is about the atmosphere of the language





classrooms. They think that they also learned that children should acquire the language with games not with direct teaching or memorisation. Children should enjoy the process and have fun while learning, and teachers shouldn't use GTM (which is generally applied by primary school teachers who teach English) or other classical methods and shouldn't be depended on the course book exercises. They can prepare extra materials and help students to enjoy the process. It is certain that a course about how to teach English to young learners is beneficial in general, but it should also be supported with in-service English courses in order to help primary school teachers who don't know English or who don't have the desired level of language knowledge. Other benefits of this course mentioned by teacher candidates are;

- We understood that English teaching methods have similar sides with some of the techniques that are used in all courses.
- Understanding English language teaching methods will help us in the future.
- I understood that the reason why I hadn't been able to learn English for years is the wrong methods used by my English teachers.
- The course helped us not to get afraid of teaching English when we become teachers.
- I understood the points that I should be careful about in the future.
- I would have problems in English courses in the future if I hadn't had this course.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study tried to find out primary school teachers' ideas about teaching English and problems of English courses and primary school teacher candidates' reviews of a course named "Teaching English to children" by using an online interview form and personal letters. 21 primary school teachers from different parts of Turkey and 24 primary school teacher candidates joined this qualitative study. Results revealed that primary school teachers do not know how to teach English and most of them do not even have a proper English level for teaching English. Because of the curriculums of the most of the education faculties in Turkey, primary school teacher candidates have only three hours basic English course, and a few of them have the chance of being educated on how to teach English. So, they generally use memorisation or classical methods in their classes. Using memorization, traditional PPP model, and too much grammar makes the lesson boring for the children. Children do not want to learn English in their future life. Primary school teachers also have difficulties while they are struggling to teach something that they even don't know themselves. These teachers think that English language teachers should enter English courses in primary schools or teachers should be educated. As a result of economic situation and equilibration in teacher appointments, it is impossible to have English language teachers in all primary schools in Turkey. Especially, primary schools which are in small villages and have a small number of students will struggle with this problem. This makes the second choice, which is to educate primary school teachers on how to teach English, a more desirable one; however, most of the teachers do not have such an education.

Although it is proved by the primary school teacher candidates that "teaching English to children" is a beneficial course and this supports the necessity of being educated for English lessons, most of the universities in Turkey do not have such a class. This study makes it clear that only 2 of the 13 universities have a course about how to teach English in their curriculums of the primary school teacher education departments. Primary school teacher candidates should be developed by adding this course to their education curriculums. This will create a generation which has more experienced and well-supported primary school teachers that are ready to teach foreign languages. As the methods are the tools of teachers such as the shovel and pickaxe of a gardener, using the right tool will make the process more comfortable for the teachers. By taking into consideration this, we believe that all universities should include a course about teaching English to children in their primary school education department curriculum and primary school teachers should be supported with in-service English courses related to the curriculums of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> grade English courses since it is not possible to provide English language teachers for all primary schools. As the primary school teachers generally have beginner and elementary level English, they generally come across problems in the courses. Especially, the pronunciation of the words creates difficulties for those teachers. In-service English courses will be helpful in the solution of this issue. Teachers will get short information and a quick education on the subjects that they will teach in their courses. This will decrease their anxiety and increase the classroom performance. A teacher with the right tool and material, namely who knows the proper method and a certain amount of English related to their school subject, will be more beneficial for the young learners.

As this study was carried out with primary school teachers and teacher candidates, it can be repeated by using students and curriculum designers or by increasing the number of the participants. By this



way, we can be able to understand if the results are validate or not. Primary school teacher education systems of other countries can also be examined and compared with the system in Turkey.

#### REFERENCES

- ASLAN, H. O. (2008). "Eğitim Fakülteleri Kapsamında İlköğretime Yönelik Yabancı Dil Öğretimi Modelleri", *Ç.Ü. Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, V. 35(3), p. 19-27.
- BAYYURT, Yasemin (2013). "4+4+4 Eğitim Sisteminde Erken Yaşta Yabancı Dil Eğitimi", *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Yabancı Dil Eğitimi Çalıştayı*, V. 1, p.96-107.
- BROWN, H. Douglas (2007). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching (5<sup>th</sup> ed.)*, New York: Pearson Longman.
- CAMERON, Lynne (2001). *Teaching Languages to Young Learners*, The UK: Cambridge University Press.
- CRESWELL, J. W. (2005). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research(2nd ed.)*, New Jersey: Pearson.
- DEMIREZEN, Mehmet (2003). "Yabancı Dil ve Ana Dil Öğreniminde Kritik Dönemler", *Tömer Dil Dergisi*, V.118, p. 5-15.
- DILMAÇ, Oğuz & İnanç, Cihan (2015). "Sınıf Öğretmenlerinin Görsel Sanatlar Dersine Yönelik Öz Yeterlik Düzeyleri", *Bartın University Journal of Faculty of Education*, V. 4(2), p. 382-400.
- DÖRNYEI, Z. (2007). *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*. Spain: Oxford.
- EKUŞ, Bahattin & Babayiğit, Özgür (2013). "Investigation of Primary School Teachers' and English Teachers' Views About from Second Grade Primary School to be on Foreign Language Education About", *Researcher: Social Science Studies*, V. 1, p. 40-49.
- MCDONOUGH, Jo & McDonough Steven (1997). *Research Methods for English Language Teachers*, Great Britain: Arnold.
- MOHD, S. Ali (2003). "English Language Teaching in Primary Schools: Policy and Implementation Concerns", *IPBA E- Journal*, p.1-14.
- PATTEN, B. Van & Benati, Alessandro G. (2010). *Key Terms in Second Language Acquisition*, Great Britain: Continuum.
- ROKOSZEWSKA, Katarzyna (2012). *Comparing Selected Modern Methods of Teaching English to Young Learners*, ProQues Ebook Central: Peter Lang GmbH.
- ŞAD, S. Nihat (2015). "Do Prospective Classroom Teachers Perceive Themselves as Effective and Willing to Teach Young Learners English?", *Educational Sciences: Theory&Practice*, V.15(5), p. 1257-1269.
- SCOTT, Wendy A. & Ytreberg, Lisbeth H. (2007). *Teaching English to Children*, New York: Longman.
- SEÇKİN, H. (2011). "İlköğretim 4. Sınıf İngilizce Öğretim Programına İlişkin Öğretmen Görüşleri", *Uluslararası İnsan Bilimleri Dergisi*, V.8(2), p. 550-557.
- ŞEVİK, Mustafa (2009). "The Teaching of Modern foreign Languages in Primary Schools and Generalist Class Teachers", *Ankara University Journal of Faculty of Educational Sciences*, V. 42(1), p.377-401.
- SOLAK, Ekrem & Semerci, Hüseyin (2015) "The Views of English Teachers and Students Towards Learning English at the Second Grade of Elementary Schools", *Journal of Language and Literature Education*, V. 16(1), p. 1-23.
- T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu Başkanlığı 20/12/2016 Tarihli ve 43769797-121-E.14376252 sayılı yazısı.