The Investigation of Co-teaching Model in Second Language Teaching in Early Years Education[1]

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Abstract

This study examines the effects of co-teaching model on teachers in a private nursery in Turkey. Data were collected in a private nursery in the city of Siirt, Turkey. Participants were English language teachers and preschool teachers in the nursery in which a bilingual language model is implemented. The study is qualitative and semi- structured interviews and participant observation were employed as data collection means of data collection. Different teaching models are used in bilingual nurseries. Co-teaching is one of them and recently utilised in different contexts. But it seems that there is a limited research into it. Findings show that co-teaching enhance teachers' professional development and teaming skills. The findings also indicate that co-teaching enables teachers to improve their teaching skills and creates advantages for teachers. The study suggests that pre-service English language teachers need to have training in teaching young children.

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Introduction

In a context where young children learn English as a second or third language, teachers use different models and methods. In Turkey, bilingual education in early years has gained ground in recent years (Çetintaş & Yazici, 2016). This opportunity is mainly provided by private nurseries in which children learn both Turkish and English together. In the literature on learning English as a second language in non-English contexts, studies highlighted that bilingual language teaching models such as dual language were effective in developing children's second language learning and their bilingualism (Genesee & Lindholm-Lary, 2013). These models aimed to develop children's language skills in both languages (e.g., Turkish and English). In such models, teachers are expected to collaborate with each other. In other words, teachers become a team: one teacher is responsible for children's first language, and the other teacher is in charge of English. Scholars have defined this collaboration as 'co-teaching' (Schwartz & Gorgatt, 2018), 'team-teaching' (Dillion, 2015) and 'team entitativity' (Vangrieken, Dochy, Raes, & Kyndt, 2015). In this paper, the definition of co-teaching will be comprised. Co-teaching has been defined as 'teaching delivered to by the collaboration of two teachers' (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010; Schwartz & Gorgatt, 2018). In co-teaching, the goal is to enhance children's learning (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010).

The definition of co-teaching model goes beyond traditional definitions of teaching, which is mainly provided by solely one teacher. Despite having complexities, co-teaching may create advantages for teachers. But there is limited research into co-teaching model in early years education (Dillion, 2015; Schwartz & Gorgatt, 2018). In accordance with this, this study aims to examine the effects of co-teaching on teachers' professional development and teaming skills.

Theoretical framework

Sielo (2011) defined 6 types of co-teaching model. These were one teach- one observe, parallel teaching, situation teaching, alternative teaching, one teach- one assist and team teaching (p.35). In one teach- one observes structure, one teacher is responsible for teaching while the other teacher observes her teammate or prepare herself to her turn. In parallel teaching, teachers divide children into two equal groups in order to teach them simultaneously. In situation teaching structure, similar to parallel teaching, teachers divide children into three equal groups, and they guide children to rotate activities. In alternative teaching structure, one teacher is responsible of the majority of children, whereas the other teacher teaches a small group of children. This structure is arranged according to children's learning needs. One teach-

one assist structure, which is slightly different from the alternative teaching, one teacher teaches the whole classroom and the other teacher helps children individually. Team teaching structure enables both teachers to teach simultaneously large groups of children (Sielo, 2011, p.35). Each structure has its own advantage. What is common among these types of co-teaching is that teaching is directly and indirectly provided by two teachers, and that they create discrete learning opportunities for children. Similarly, Dove and Honigsfeld (2010) discussed seven distinct types of co-teaching model in teaching English as a second language. What the similarities among Dove and Honigsfeld's (2010) co-teaching model and that of Sielo (2011) are that (1) one teacher teaches children, and the other teacher assists. Another similarity is that (2) both teachers teach the same content at the same time. Additionally, it is common among Sileo (2011) and, Dove and Honigsfeld's (2010) types of co-teaching that children are categorized into small groups according to their learning needs. But there are distinctions that in one of Dove and Honigsfeld's (2010) types of co-teaching one teacher leads activities, and the other teacher assesses children via observations and checklist.

In addition, in co-teaching there exist roles and responsibilities to be shared and discussed as teachers are in an ongoing decision- making process which includes the contents of and structures of activities, and the evaluation of children's progress (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010; Villa, Thousand, & Nevin, 2008). Based on the interviews with teachers, Careless (2006) demonstrated that that factors such as pedagogic and interpersonal aspects affected co-teaching practices. Pedagogic aspects encapsulated training and relevant experiences for co-teaching. Interpersonal ones were the ability of cooperation with her/his partner and their sensitiveness towards each other's views. Similar to Careless (2006), Vangrieken et al. (2015) underscored that attitudes towards collaboration (e.g., willingness and commitment, awareness of benefits) affect teaming in co-teaching. The ability and understanding of combination of skills and knowledge also influence co-teaching (Vangrieken et al., 2015).

Friend (2008) also identified the following challenges: arranging time for planning, positive working relationships between co-teachers, clarification of roles and responsibilities, and institutional support. These challenges point to the importance of time arrangement, understanding of each other, taking on their own roles and professional support in service in co-teaching. Researchers such as Main (2007) reflected that lack of skills and training can negatively affect the implementation of co- teaching. However, teachers can overcome such complexities through the engagement of ongoing collaboration and discussion about planning (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010). They might also overcome complexities through support (e.g., in-service training) from nursery managements and experts in the field (Dove & Honigsfeld,

2010). The support that co-teachers can be provided embraces in-service training in co-teaching methods and procedures (Dove &Honigsfeld, 2010). This notion implies that co-teaching needs to have a programme that identifies roles, responsibilities and time-management.

The advantages of co-teaching

Schwartz and Gorgatt (2018) examined co-teaching model in a bilingual language nursery in Israel. The purpose of the nursery was to develop Hebrew (first language) and Arabic (second language). In their study, one teacher transferred instructions to children in Hebrew (L1), and the other teacher was responsible for teaching Arabic (L2). They found that co-teaching improved teachers' teaching performance and teaming skills. The authors highlighted that as time progressed, teachers overcame challenges that were encountered (Schwartz & Gorgatt, 2018). Dillion's (2015) study, which examined the impacts of co-teaching on teachers, discovered that co-teaching provided teachers with support in all areas of teaching. Teachers can support each other with biliteracy in activities (Dillion, 2015). Co-teaching also enables emergent bilingual children to learn an activity in both languages (e.g., Arabic and English) (Dillion, 2015).

Reviewing studies on co-teaching model, Vangrieken et al. (2015) suggested that co-teaching not only enables teachers to develop their professional knowledge, but also they can benefit socially and emotionally from collaboration. For example, newcomers benefit from experienced teachers (Carrol & Foster, 2008), and they can feel more motivated and less isolated (Vangrieken et al., 2015). Shipley (2009) found that co-teaching enabled teachers to evolve their teaching (e.g., sharing ideas for activities) and to expand their repertoire of activities and teaching tools. Similarly, Hartigan (2014) discovered that the majority of teachers (n:58) valued co-teaching model as it helped them to enjoy their jobs. It is more likely that in co-teaching model activities can be student-centred (e.g., children's learning progress and their performance increased) (Vangrieken et al., 2015). Findings of a recent study by Sanders-Smith, Lyons, Yang and McCarthy (2020) indicated that in co-teaching model teachers can follow children's discrete interests simultaneously. The authors also highlighted that co-teaching enables children to experience distinct styles of teaching in the classroom, and they encourage children's participation in classroom activities by employing different languages. For example, the preschool teacher may exert English lexical items or sentence in English to draw children's attention to activities.

Methodology

This study was implemented qualitatively and conducted between October 2019 and January 2020 in a bilingual private nursery in Siirt, Turkey. The data collection methods were semi-structured interview and participants' observations. Co-teachers' practices were observed in one classroom by the researcher. Interviews with the other teachers in the nursery were additionally conducted. There were 4 preschool teachers and 3 Turkish native English teachers. In each classroom, there were one preschool teacher and one English language teacher. In this study, the data were mainly drawn from the interviews with the teachers. The data were also supplemented with participant observations of co-teachers' practices and children's learning. The purpose of harnessing these two methods was also to understand how co-teachers planned, helped each other, structured activities and cultivated children's learning. I did my participant observations in one classroom in order to understand how the preschool teacher and English language teacher structured and planned classroom activities, and how they developed (children's skills such as literacy and math in both languages.

Data collection instruments and process

Necessary permission was taken from the nursery management and the ethic committee. Participation in this study was voluntary. A semi-structured interview form was composed and prepared by the researcher before the interviews were generated. But questions for the English language teachers and preschool teachers were different. In other words, in terms of questions, two interview forms were prepared by the researcher. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers to elicit their views of co-teaching (Mifsud & Vella, 2018). The purpose of this application was to apprehend and examine the effects of co-teaching on the English and preschool teachers discretely. Before the interviews were conducted, interview times were arranged according to the teachers' availability during the day. During the interviews, the participants were asked for clarification, and they asked me for further explanations on the interviews' questions. In other words, the interview process was interactive. The teachers were interviewed separately when one teacher was responsible for classroom activities and the other teacher observed the classroom.

Some of questions reflected in the interviews with the teachers were:

- What contributed to your knowledge by teaching with the preschool teacher/ the English language teacher?
- Which activities do you plan with the preschool teacher/ the English language teacher?

- What did you learn in early years education? (for English language teachers)

Setting

This nursery was bilingual and implemented a bilingual language programme (Turkish and English). Children aged 4, 5 and 6 attended the nursery. The nursery was private, and taught children aged 5-6 English, not children aged 4 which the teachers viewed early for learning English. There were three classrooms in which two teachers were teaching at the same time. The teachers mainly employed the content-based approach to teaching English (Bayyurt, 2012). For example, after the preschool teacher taught the number 1 in Turkish, the English language teacher taught it in English. This was done at the beginning of the term. But as the time progressed and children were familiar with English, the English language teachers first taught the content, and then the preschool teachers taught it in Turkish.

A typical day in the nursery was as follows: free playtime, breakfast, intelligence games (by a different teacher)/ preschool programme (by preschool teacher), music (by a different teacher), English (by English teacher), lunch, preschool programme, rest and sleep and repetition of the day. The intelligence games and music were given in two days a week.

Participants

There were 6 teachers in the nursery; 3 preschool teachers and 3 English language teachers. The English language teachers did not have either pre-service training in co-teaching or in teaching young children English. When they started their jobs, the training about co-teaching was generated by nursery management. The English language teachers were graduated from undergraduate English language courses. One of them had four years teaching experience. The other two teachers had just graduated from undergraduate English courses at the time of study.

Data analysis

In this research, inductive coding was performed on the collected data. To explain, the data were given codes, and then similar codes were subsumed under certain categories (Gibbs, 2007). Different codes and categories were identified from the interviews with the English language teachers and preschool teachers. These are presented in tables in the following section. The teachers' statements are also provided in tables (Prosic-Santovac & Radovic, 2018). The categories that were emerged from the data from the interviews with the English language teachers were *professional knowledge* and *teaming*. Those that were emerged from

the data from the interviews with the preschool teachers were *drawing children's attention, professional knowledge* and *planning.*

Findings

English language teacher is abbreviated as LT, and preschool teacher is abbreviated as PT in the Tables below.

Table 1 shows categories and code from the interviews with the English language teachers.

Categories	Codes	statements
Professional knowledge	Plays	I learned plays and seating arrangements that motivated children's learning (LT1)
	Knowledge of teaching young children	We were not taught how to teach young children English during our undergraduate course. So, I had not known how to teach and structure preschool activities. But co-teaching enabled me to adapt the activities to English (LT2). I learned how to structure language activities. For example, co-teaching helped me understand which materials and teaching methods were useful for such activities (LT3).
Teaming	Planning Activities	First, we planned activities according to children's skills and interests. Then we decided on activities in which children developed their skills. We planned language activities (LT1) We could plan some activities together, not all activities. I taught English topic by topic, I thought the preschool programme followed us (LT2).
	Responsibilities	We had consensus for planning activities. But each teacher was responsible for her own activities. After the preschool teacher had finished the activities, I taught the same content in English. I also structured other classroom activities such as art (LT3).

As demonstrated in Table 1, co-teaching contributed to English language teachers' professional knowledge. They recognised the importance of plays and seating arrangements in children's learning and motivation. It seems that co-teaching enhanced teachers' teaming skills such as planning activities and having responsibilities. According to the researcher's participant observations, the English language teacher and preschool teacher did not have conflicts about planning activities or their roles.

Table 2 indicates categories and codes from the interviews with the preschool teachers were

Categories	Codes	Statements
Drawing children's attention	Use of different language	I learned how children paid attention to a different language. Sometimes we reminded children of classroom's rules and appropriated behaviours in English. Children paid more attention to warnings in English (PT1).
	Types of activities	Activities in English could be more interesting for children than those in Turkish (PT2).
Professional knowledge		I learned how to structure an activity in English (PT3).
Planning		We decided together on our weekly activities. We started teaching basic concepts and reviewed their learning (PT1).

This table highlights that preschool children paid attention to language use in classroom activities. This means that the teachers, especially preschool teachers supported the use of the languages in the classrooms as they made warnings in English. This table and the table above designate that the teachers planned classroom activities together. It was also observed that the English language teacher (LT1) and preschool teacher (PT1) had consensus on the time and structure of activities. The nursery had a programme that identified teachers' roles and set expectations from the teachers. Co-teaching, as contributed to the knowledge of the English language teachers, developed the preschool teachers' professional knowledge. It seems that co-teaching enabled the preschool teachers to familiar themselves with English. For example, one of the preschool teachers (PT1) stated that she learned the following sentences in English: "May I drink water?", "May I go to toilet?" and "I am hungry?". She also stated that she learned children songs in English.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper has examined the effects of co-teaching model on the English language and preschool teachers. The findings from the interviews with the English language teachers were *professional knowledge* and *teaming,* and from the interviews with the preschool teachers were *drawing children's attention, professional knowledge* and *planning*. What was common among the findings was that the co-teaching model had positive impacts on both English and preschool teachers' professional development. For example, this finding indicated that the co-teaching model contributed to the English language teachers' professional knowledge was enriched with teaching young children English and learning important themes such as play in early year education. The finding supported Schwartz and Gorgatt's (2018) study, which showed that co-teaching contributed to the teachers' professional knowledge and improved the teachers' teaming skills.

This study accorded with previous studies (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010; Vangrieken et al., 2015) on co-teaching model by indicating that there were advantages of co-teaching for both the English and preschool teachers. The findings demonstrated that the teachers collaborated with each other to plan their activities and be a team (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010). It could be argued that the decisions of planning classroom activities reduced conflicts among the English language teachers and preschool teachers. The preschool teachers highlighted that co-teaching developed children's skills such as speaking in both languages (Dillion, 2015). The preschool teachers also underscored that the use of a different language (English) drew children's attention to activities, and it encouraged them to participate in activities (Sanders-Smith, 2020).

This study supported Vangrienken et al.'s (2015) study which indicated the importance of pre-service training in co-teaching model. During the interviews, the English language teachers highlighted that they did not have pre-service training in teaching young children English. But they learned methods and technics of teaching children English as a second language in-service.

This study suggests implementations for teachers, head teachers and policymakers. This study emphasises that English language teachers can benefit from pre-service training (e.g., courses and seminars) in teaching young children English. It suggests that head teachers can provide teachers with pedagogical assistance that helps them to implement the co-teaching model both pre-service and in-service. The study also considers that the co-teaching model can be applied to state-funded nurseries in which English is taught as a second language via kids

club (Official Gazette, 2014, article no:83). In such clubs, the English language teacher discretely teaches children English after all daily classroom activities have been done. This study suggests that policymakers can support pedagogical changes in kids club in order to enable nursery managements to integrate English club into daily activities. This study had limitations. One of the limitations was that it was conducted in one nursery and with the teachers in that nursery. Therefore, the number of participants was limited.

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