

Using Drama in English Classrooms: The Effects on Vocabulary Gains in Very Young Learners

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of drama technique on the vocabulary development while teaching English to Very Young Learners (TEVYLs). The study also attempts to find out the reflections of English teachers about using drama in their classroom practices. To meet these objectives, 23 very young learners (VYLs) and 7 teachers enrolled in an English program of a private kindergarten in Istanbul participated in this study. Data were collected from pre- and post- picture drawings to examine whether there was any difference in the vocabulary gains of the participants. In addition, observations and teacher's field notes were used to find out the effectiveness of dramatization while TEVYLs. The findings revealed that dramatization led to vocabulary gains in VYLs. The teachers perceived this method and related techniques to be entertaining, motivating and engaging leading to an interactive and dynamic learning environment. Based on these results, the study provides pedagogical implications and suggestions about integrating dramatization in VYLs' English classrooms

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İngilizce Sınıflarında Drama Tekniğinin Kullanılması: Erken Yaşta Kelime Kazanımı Etkisi

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Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı drama entegreli öğrenmenin Türkiye’de bir özel anaokulunda İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen Türk öğrencilerin kelime kazanımlarına etkisini incelemektir. Çalışma aynı zamanda öğrencilerin ve öğretmenlerin bu öğrenme yöntemine karşı algılarını ve uygulama esnasında İngilizce öğretmenlerinin karşılaştıkları zorlukları araştırmaktadır. Katılımcılar İngilizce başlangıç seviyesinde 23 altı yaş öğrencisi ve yedi öğretmenden oluşmaktadır. Çalışmadaki nicel veriler, resim çizme tekniği aracılığı ile ön-son kelime bilgisi testi ve gözlem kontrol listesi ile elde edilmiş olup çalışmanın başlangıcı ve sonucunda anlamlı bir fark ortaya çıkmıştır. Öğretmen yansıtıcı kağıtlarından elde edilen nitel veri ve öğrenci mülakatlarından açığa çıkan sonuç drama temelli öğretimin uygulama zorluklarının yansıra eğlenceli, motivasyonu arttırıcı, öğretici, dinamik, etkileşimli, doğal ve derse katılımı arttırıcı olduğunu gösterirken öğrenci mülakat sonuçları drama yönteminin entegre edilmiş öğretimin keyifli ve öğrenci açısından uygulaması kolay olduğunu göstermiştir.

Makale Türü

Araştırma Makalesi

Introduction

Interest in the teaching of English to young learners (TEYLs) has been steadily growing in recent years particularly in the field of language education, which is causing changes in various teaching approaches, and techniques (Kırkgöz, 2007; Cremin et al., 2009; Demircioğlu & İspir, 2016; Shin, 2006). English teachers put aside the traditional teaching techniques and prefer different types of teaching techniques to make their young learners (YLs) acquire the language in a more natural and meaningful way. Therefore, teachers become increasingly aware of the fact that in order to develop their young learners' foreign language skills and vocabulary knowledge it is vital to plan attractive, creative and engaging lessons. (Heathcote & Bolton, 1994; Warren, 2013; Rui, 2017).

It is obvious that teaching English may vary according to the age, level, needs and interests of the learners. Considering the process of language learning, Haynes (2007) states that, foreign language education is complicated and has its own stages differing across age groups. To exemplify, for young learners, it covers a silent period and early production period during which they are expected to learn 1000 words in total. Although they can produce some of them incorrectly, they are expected to start producing those basic forms and words in the early production stage. The researcher describes that after these two stages comes the "speech emergence" period in which learners are able to produce short structures or phrases from a selection of 3000 vocabulary words. Learners can also ask basic questions, interact and understand illustrated stories. Next, the "intermediate fluency stage" comes, where learners are able to use 6000 words. They can form complex spoken and written sentences as well. Finally, in the "advanced fluency stage," the researcher states that learners can become native-like in ten or fifteen years of language learning. Furthermore, these stages highlight the importance of vocabulary expansion which aid to communicate with the speakers of that language.

Apart from the learning process, Wilkins (1972) states the importance of vocabulary and form teaching by saying "...very little can be conveyed without grammar, and nothing can be conveyed without vocabulary" (pp.111-112). Considering this quotation, teaching the necessary structures and target vocabulary is crucial in language classrooms and therefore, it should be integrated in lesson plans using enjoyable and communicative activities. Stewing and Buege (1994) point out that children can understand the meanings of vocabulary and their functions such as nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs when physically acting them out in forms. Therefore, dramatization techniques have a lasting effect on the way students learn, understand, and internalize the meanings of English vocabulary.

One of the most effective in-class techniques, which helps VYLs to develop their ability to understand, learn, and produce English is through dramatization. Specifically, dramatization in education has been developing for the past twenty years, and it is one of the oldest teaching techniques (Brown, 1993; Boudreault, 2010; Dal, 2017; Kocaman, Dolmacı & Bür, 2012; Wessels, 1987; Zafeiriadou, 2009). According to Brown (1993), dramatization is a powerful way of helping young learners express themselves and gain more confidence. Through dramatization, young learners become more interested in the lessons because they feel like they are playing games rather than learning a subject. Specifically, this technique is useful for YLs' because it replicates the thing that makes people learn languages the fastest: necessity. Barnett (1998) states in *Educational Drama and Language Arts* that if a child needs to speak a language to communicate and to be involved in an

interactive, tangible way, they will be more engaged with the language and therefore, will pick it up quicker.

Several studies emphasized that children's participation and interest is higher when they are exposed to dramatization techniques in English lessons. They also perceived dramatization fun, enjoyable and felt more confident while learning English (Gardner, 1999; Fuentes, 2010; Yılmaz, 2010; Rew & Moon, 2013; Hazar, 2015). To exemplify, according to the study conducted by Fuentes (2010), two equivalent groups of primary level Galician students' vocabulary expansion is tested through an experimental research. The purpose was to find out whether dramatization exercises are more useful to teach topic-based vocabulary than didactic methods or not. The usefulness of six dramatization techniques were examined and how beneficial dramatization is to teach and to learn a foreign language is determined. The results indicated that the learners who are instructed through didactic methods showed lower success in learning vocabulary than the learners who are instructed through dramatization techniques. It was also observed that dramatization techniques contributed highly in learners' vocabulary expansion.

In another study carried out by Yılmaz (2010), the effect of creative drama-based activities on seventy-eight young learners' English vocabulary acquisition was investigated. A variety of drama-based activities were administered to the treatment group for a duration of eight weeks. Additionally, the feelings of the participants about drama-based lessons were measured following each drama-based lesson. The results reported that drama-based activities had a significant effect on enhancing vocabulary development. Moreover, the responses of the participants were supportive of drama-based activities.

Rew and Moon (2013) looked at the direct effects of a specific dramatization technique through an experiment method study. Forty-nine primary students participated in English drama-based (role-play) lessons for eight weeks. The obtained results demonstrated that the speaking ability of the participants was highly developed. Similarly, Hazar's (2015) study indicated that even in a very limited time the speaking skills of young learners developed after practicing English through drama-based activities. The participants exhibited positive attitudes towards the use of this technique in English lessons as well.

In addition, Gardner (1999) argued that children gain more self-confidence through dramatization and feel more flexible in role-playing. They get a safe space to practice their English and test-out different phrases or words. They also become more eager to speak during the lesson which aids with the development of their overall communicative competence (Heinig, 1993; Üstündağ, 1997).

Based on these overviews, building an authentic classroom atmosphere in English classes is essential in order for teachers to succeed in the language teaching process with young learners (Pinter, 2017). When young learners feel they are not enjoying while they are learning, they can easily lose interest in the activities being implemented in class (Chou, 2014). In such a classroom environment, the language teaching and learning process can become harder. As teachers turn away from traditional teaching techniques such as vocabulary memorization and repetition, they focus on actively preparing children to produce the language during lessons. Dramatization techniques become effective tools particularly for developing communicative competence and vocabulary of young learners (Hapsari,

2015). In this regard, teachers are expected to plan more creative and participatory lessons and bring activities that can promote YLs' self-learning, peer and group interaction in authentic situations (Edelenbos, Johnstone & Kubanek, 2006; Warren, 2013).

In light of these observations and the concise literature review, dramatization helps teachers and learners to recycle and consolidate the previously or newly learnt vocabulary and forms when applied to classroom environment. By increasing the number and types of dramatization activities in English lessons, teachers may create a more natural learning atmosphere which increases the motivation, participation and confidence in VYLs. The present study, therefore, emphasizes the consistent use of dramatization by using the techniques, warm ups, miming, puppetry, simulations and role-play in VYLs' English lessons. Specifically, this study explores the effectiveness of these techniques on the vocabulary gains while TEVYLs. Finally, this study attempts to reveal the reflections of the teachers about the integration of dramatization in VYLs' English classrooms.

To meet these objectives, the following research questions were addressed in this study:

- Is there any significant difference in the vocabulary gains of the VYLs after the incorporation of the drama technique?
- What are the reflections of English teachers about drama-based lessons while TEVYLs?

Method

Research Model

Teaching can be considered to be a craft. It can be both described as an art and a science, which is why great teachers always experiment and make some mistakes (Johnson, 2017). However, teachers would like to know how and what they are teaching is actually useful for their learners. One option to find this out is through case studies (Yin, 2009). Most simply, case study is defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in-depth and within its real-world context” (Yin, 2009, p. 16). As the present study attempted to gather in-depth information about a particular sample and context, case study was adopted as a research design of this study.

Setting and Participants

The present study was conducted with 23 YLs (13 female and 10 male) of English at a private kindergarten in Istanbul, Turkey. They were all 6 years old and they were at the beginning level of proficiency (pre-A1 level).

Apart from the VLYs, 7 English teachers participated in this study. 4 teachers were Turkish, 2 American and one British. All teachers were female, and their age ranged from 29 to 34 years old. They had teaching experience between 5 to 9 years and have been working in the same school for the last three years. The participating teachers were teaching 25 hours each week. The lessons were 40-minute long. The lessons were based on the Content Based (CB) Approach including warm up, circle time, active time and table time activities.

The teachers met each day after school, and they prepared drama-based lesson plans collaboratively. Specifically, the aim of the lessons was to improve the vocabulary of the learners

by engaging them in various activities. For example, a lesson plan of the unit “At the Circus” was designed based on dramatization and activities such as games, stories and craftwork were integrated to help learners improve the target vocabulary related to the topic. During the lesson, the teachers created fun and enjoyable classroom environment to generate interaction among VYLs.

Data Collection Tools

In this case study, data were collected from picture drawings to examine if there was any difference in the vocabulary gains of the VYLs after drama-based lessons. As for the teachers’ reflections about using drama techniques while TEYLs, data were gathered from observations and teacher’s field notes. The following section describes each data collection tool in detail.

Picture drawing. Picture drawing as a method of data collection has been used in a number of studies (De Lange, Olivier, Geldenhuys, & Mitchell, 2012). The technique is also known as the “draw and write” approach. The teachers in this study adapted this method to allow very YLs draw and say the vocabulary they have learned through drama-based lessons since their writing skills were not developed yet. Specifically, in this research, the learners were asked to describe and draw pictures about seven words related to circus performers in order to find out their vocabulary gains before and after drama-based lessons. The YLs looked at the displayed picture on the smart-board and drew the performers they can name as pre- test. As post- test, by looking at the same circus picture displayed on the smart board during pre-test, the participants drew and colored the performers they could name. Then, they said the names of the performers by pointing to the visuals on their own papers.

Teacher field notes. During the drama-based lessons, the teachers observed their lessons and took field notes (Dewey, 1993). Keeping field notes after each lesson provided the teachers with the opportunity to get in-depth information about the effectiveness of using dramatization while TEVYLs.

Data Collection Procedure

This section outlines the procedural steps of the study including sampling, qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments. To provide an overview of the procedure of the study the following table presents the data collection procedure applied in this study:

Table 1. *Overview of Data Collection Procedure*

Week	Unit Name: At the Circus
Week 1	Pre-picture drawing
Week 2	Drama-Based lesson 1 including warm up, songs, puppetry, role-play, drawings, observation and field notes
Week 3	Drama-Based lesson 2 including warm up, songs, puppetry, role-play, drawings. Teacher observation and field notes
Week 4	Drama-based lesson 3 including songs, warm up games, miming, Role-play simulations, drawings, observation, and field notes
Week 5	Drama-based lesson 4 including songs, warm up games, miming, Role-play simulations, drawings, observation and field notes
Week 6	Post-picture drawing

Data Analysis

In the present study, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed successively. The quantitative data were collected from pre- and post- picture drawing while the qualitative data were gathered through observations and filed notes. As for the analysis of the vocabulary gains obtained from pre- and post- picture drawings, the data did not meet the assumption of Normality Distribution for parametric measurement ($p > .05$). Therefore, a non-parametric test, Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to compare whether there was a difference in the vocabulary gains of VYLs after drama-based lessons.

Apart from the quantitative data, the qualitative data gathered by means of observations and teacher's field notes went through thematic analysis to identify, analyze, and report the themes related to using drama-based lessons in VYLs' English classrooms. The six-phase approach to thematic analysis was followed in the study (Clarke and Braun, 2012). First, the data were transcribed by two raters who had were one of the researchers and an MA student experienced in qualitative research. The transcribed data were read and re-read for familiarization purposes. Then, initial codes that were relevant to the research questions were generated, and the codes and the associated data extracts were collated together. After that, the identified codes were grouped into main themes. Finally, the obtained themes were reviewed by the two raters to ensure that they worked well to identify the data parallel to the research questions and finalized the data for reporting purposes. The overall inter-coder reliability was found to be .83, which indicated high reliability between the two raters (McHugh, 2012).

Findings

The following section of this study first reports the vocabulary gains of YLs before and after drama-based lessons. Then, the teachers' reflections are presented in the study.

To begin with, during the drama-based lessons there were seven target words related to the circus performers the YLs were expected to learn and make use of during the lessons. The vocabulary gains were examined pre- and post- picture drawings. Table 2 below reports the obtained findings:

Table 2. *Vocabulary Gains Pre- and Post- Picture Drawing*

	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	z	p
Negative Ranks	0a	.00	.00		
Positive Ranks	23b	12.00	276.00		
Ties	0c			-4.250	.000*
Total	23				

a. post < pre b. post > pre c. post = pre

Table 3. *Descriptive Statistics of Pre- and Post-Picture Drawing*

(N=23)	Min.	Max.	M	SD
Pre	0	1	.09	.288
Post	4	7	6.09	.996

According to the Wilcoxon Test results, the difference regarding very young learners' vocabulary gains were statistically at a 95% confidence level ($Z = -4.250$; $p = .000 < .05$). In addition, when the vocabulary rate was analyzed, it was found that the rate before the implementation was 0.9

and 6.09 after the use of drama-based lessons. In brief, the findings indicated that the vocabulary gains of students increased during the drama-based lessons.

Furthermore, to find out the reflections of the teachers about using drama while TEYLs, the 5 themes namely, entertaining, motivating, promoting participation, dynamic learning environment, interaction were induced from the teacher's field notes while observing the lessons. Each theme is described in the following part of the study.

Entertaining. The analysis of the teachers' field notes showed that they found dramatization entertaining for YLs. Teachers stated that YLs were cheerful and had fun during drama-based lessons. This finding is supported in the following excerpts:

[...] The students are having fun. They are laughing at each other during miming activities. (T1, Field notes, 12.02.2020)

[...] I can see that the English teacher could build an enjoyable atmosphere by applying drama-based activities. We should apply these types of activities more often. (T2, Field notes, 15.02.2020)

[...] Children liked the activities. They had fun. We also had fun. They watched each other and the teacher with a great interest. (T7, Field notes, 19.02.2020)

Motivating. Considering this theme, the English teachers expressed that YLs were highly motivated during the lesson. They were wondering what comes next as the activities were attractive as displayed in these excerpts:

[...] Children are wondering what comes next. They seem to be motivated enough to understand the content of the activities. The children can understand the teacher's instructions, too. There is no need for extra explanation. (T3, Field notes, 12.02.2020)

[...] The activities are so attractive and eye catchy. Nearly, all of them are focused. (T5, Field notes, 15.02.2020)

[...] The activities were so motivating, and my learners liked them a lot. (T4, Field notes, 15.02.2020)

[...] During the activities, students were motivated, and they listened to the instructions carefully. (T6, Field notes, 19.02.2020)

Promoting participation. The field notes of the teachers showed that incorporating drama promoted the participation of YLs as well. The participants were very enthusiastic to participate in the activities as drama attracted their attention. This finding is supported below:

[...] The kids want to participate in all of the activities. Their fingers are up all the time. (T2, Field notes, 12.02.2020)

[...] Some of the children wanted to join the same type of activity more than one time in order to role-play a different character this time. They say, "Teacher, again please." (T5, Field notes, 15.02.2020)

[...] Participation is high. Sometimes children are reluctant to wait their turn. (T1, Field notes, 19.02.2020)

Dynamic learning environment. All English teachers highlighted that drama-based English lessons encouraged a dynamic, creative and an energetic learning environment as displayed in these comments:

[...] The activities of the lesson are not passive. Children are active most of the time. They sing, play games and role-play. (T3, Field notes, 12.02.2020)

[...] There is less teacher talk. Students are more creative and dynamic while performing drama-based activities. This is exactly what we need. (T2, Field notes, 15.02.2020)

[...] They are not expected to sit and listen instead they run to the center to practice, speak, sing, play games. (T6, Field notes, 19.02.2020)

[...] Most of the time they are active and energetic. They do lots of actions, mime, sing, draw and color. They learn through movement. (T5, Field notes, 22.02.2020)

Interaction. For the last theme induced from the field notes, the teachers indicated that drama-based lessons promoted interaction between students. They talked with their peers and were more active during the lesson. Considering this finding, they said:

[...] Students talked to each other in English. All activities supported peer work. Student talk time was more than teacher talk time. Children interacted with each other in English. (T7, Field notes Data, 12.02.2020)

[...] I observe that children are more active. They talk more and interact with their peers. (T1, Field notes Data, 15.02.2020)

[...] Kids are learning and practicing more and more. Drama promoted interaction in my class. (T2, Field notes Data, 19.02.2020)

[...] They talked via puppets in pairs, they were like playing at home. The classroom atmosphere was more interactive. (T4, Field notes Data, 26.02.2020)

To summarize, based on the reflections of the participants, it can be inferred that drama-based English lessons resulted in higher motivation among YLs, which enabled them to pay more attention and actively participate in the lesson. The lessons were entertaining and interactive which created a dynamic learning environment in the classroom.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of drama method on the vocabulary development of YLs of English. The study also attempted to reveal the reflections of teachers about TEYLs through drama-based lessons. The first research question focused on the effects of drama-based lessons on the vocabulary gains of YLs. The findings of the pre- and post- picture drawings revealed that using the drama techniques helped YLs with their vocabulary development. This finding is in line with Demircioğlu's (2010) study which indicated that after using drama, there was an increase in the vocabulary expansion of the majority of the young learners. Similarly, Alqahtani's (2015) study reported that drama-based lessons are beneficial for the expansion of YLs' vocabulary knowledge.

Furthermore, the second research question attempted to find out the teachers' reflections about drama-based lessons. The field notes showed that the YLs were more willing to participate in the lesson as they had fun while learning. They were also motivated and their interaction among their peers increased which created a dynamic learning atmosphere in the classroom. Similar to these findings, Bouldreault (2010) stated that the benefits of using drama-based English lessons were counted as being an effective natural promoter of interaction, communication, participation and motivation. Therefore, it is noteworthy to point out that English teachers should consider incorporating this technique into their lessons to establish a more effective and interactive teaching and learning environment.

In conclusion, the findings of this study revealed that drama is an effective instructional method on developing vocabulary in YLs' English classrooms. Drama-based lessons foster participation and create dynamic learning environment which leads to a highly motivating, entertaining and interactive language learning and teaching environment.

Pedagogical Implications, Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The present study has some pedagogical implications to be considered. First, this study showed that drama is an effective technique to be used while teaching vocabulary to YLs in English classrooms. As this technique is perceived as motivating and entertaining, it can also be implemented while teaching language skills such as speaking. As a result, the findings of the study strongly confirm that using dramatization while TEVYLs results in interactive and dynamic language teaching and learning environment.

On the other hand, this study has some limitations which might be addressed by future research. First, the number of the participants was limited as the sample was not very large in the target setting. Therefore, expanding the number of the participants might lead to more generalizable and comparative results. Due to time constraints, dramatization was used only for 6 weeks with a particular focus on content and vocabulary. Implementing this method for a longer period might lead to more in-depth findings related to overall language development of VYLs. Therefore, the results of this study should be taken as suggestive for further researchers interested in using dramatization while TEVYLs.

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Appendix

Sample Lesson Plan

LEVEL	Kindergarten age 6	Duration	40 min.	Lesson hour	1-2
Theme /Topic	At the Circus				
Book / Unit(s)	Bebop 3 / At the Circus				
Target Vocabulary	Performers at the circus	Target Structure	- Hello		
	Clown		- I'm a ringmaster/ clown/		
	Ringmaster		dancer / acrobat/ strongman /		
	Acrobat		magician/ juggler.		
	Strongman		- Welcome to the circus.		
	Magician				
	Juggler				
	Dancer				
Level of the students	Beginner				
Number of the students	23				
The aim of the lesson	Teaching theme related vocabulary (i.e., circus performers).				
Materials	Poster, flash cards, you tube songs related to the topic, some craft work materials and worksheets for table time activities and smart board.				
Primary & Secondary objectives	Teaching target vocabulary and creating a safe environment to practice the newly learned vocabulary through fun drama activities.				
Songs & videos shared with students	A day at the circus https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyLtMTNxjK8				

<p>Activity 1: Warm up- Let's go to the circus today!!!</p>  <p>Ss will be asked eliciting questions about the place and the performers they see in the poster before the activities of the lessons.</p> <p>T plays a theme related song from you tube link.</p> <p>Ss watch and listen to the song.</p> <p>Ss make a train and go to the circus all together.</p> <p>Ss walk around the class and listen to the circus song.</p> <p>When the song finishes, the T says: "We are at the circus now."</p> <p>T makes the Ss sit on the floor in a semi-circle.</p>	<p>Objective (s):</p> <p>To make students familiar with the theme.</p> <p>To familiarize them with the new topic.</p> <p>To make a smooth start to the lesson.</p> <p>To check whether Ss know target vocabulary or not.</p>
<p>Activity 2: Presentation- Mini Theatre- (10 mins.)</p> <p>T talks with two puppets.</p> <p>T says: <i>"Hello I'm a ring master, welcome to the circus."</i></p> <p>The puppets say: <i>"Hello I'm a clown/dancer/juggler/ acrobat/ ringmaster/ strongman, welcome to the circus."</i></p>	<p>To expose students with the target vocabulary and structures.</p> <p>To develop their listening skills.</p> <p>To present the theme with a fun activity.</p>
<p>Activity 3 Practice- Puppetry</p> <p>T asks Ss to do puppetry as she did during presentation section.</p> <p>T calls the volunteer Ss to present.</p> <p>T creates a dynamic class atmosphere so that Ss feel safe.</p> <p>Ss decide which performer they want to be at the circus.</p>	<p>Objective (s):</p> <p>Ss interact with each other using puppets.</p> <p>Ss use the target vocabulary.</p> <p>Ss talk time increase.</p> <p>T talk time is reduced.</p>
<p>Activity 4 Table Time</p> <p>T hands out white papers for the students</p> <p>T asks them to draw and color the performer they want to be at the circus.</p> <p>Ss talk about their pics. They make sentences such as, <i>"Look! I'm a dancer."</i></p>	<p>Objective (s):</p> <p>Ss learn through a productive activity.</p> <p>Ss have fun while learning.</p> <p>Ss talk about their performance.</p>

Uzun Özet

İngilizce Sınıflarında Drama Tekniğinin Kullanılması: Erken Yaşta Kelime Kazanımı Etkisi

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Giriş

Erken yaşta yabancı dil eğitiminin önemi, farklı yöntem ve yaklaşımların geliştirilip uyarlanmasına yol açmıştır (Kırkgöz, 2007; Cremin et al., 2009; Demircioğlu & İspir, 2016; Shin, 2006). Geleneksel yöntemlerin yerine, çocukların yabancı dil edinim sürecinin daha doğal ve anlamlı olmasını sağlayan güncel teknikler geliştirilmiştir. Yabancı dil eğitiminde doğal öğrenme ve öğretmen sınıf ortamı yaratılması önemlidir (Pinter, 2017). Erken yaşta dil öğrenme sürecini eğlenceli, hale getirmek önemlidir (Chou, 2014). Özellikle kelime edinimini ezberci yaklaşımın yerine, interaktif ve eğlenceli hale getirmek gerekir. Bunu sağlamanın bir yolu drama yöntemini kullanmaktır. Bu yöntem erken yaşta iletişim becerisi ve kelime edinimi sürecini desteklemektedir (Hapsari, 2015). Bu sebepten ötürü, yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin drama yöntemini kullanarak, derslerini daha eğlenceli, yaratıcı ve öğrenci odaklı yapmaları önemlidir (Edelenbos, Johnstone & Kubanek, 2006; Warren, 2013).

Yabancı dil edinim sürecinde, öğretmenler derslerini daha eğlenceli, yaratıcı ve kapsayıcı hale getirmek için sınıflarında yeni yöntem ve tekniklere yer vermeye başlamıştır (Heathcote & Bolton, 1994; Warren, 2013; Rui, 2017). Yabancı dilde anlama ve üretme yetilerinin geliştirilmesi konusunda drama önemli bir yöntem olarak bilinmektedir. Çocukların özellikle kendilerini daha motive, rahat ve güvenli hissetmeleri konusunda sınıflarda drama kullanımını yaygın hale gelmeye başlamıştır (Brown, 1993). Drama yöntemi kullanıldığında çocukların dil öğrenme sürecinin daha eğlenceli ve kapsayıcı olduğu, aynı zamanda bu yöntemin dil öğretimini de daha anlamlı ve interaktif hale getirdiği vurgulanmıştır.

Erken yaşta dil edinimi sürecinde drama yönteminin önemi birçok çalışmada vurgulanmıştır (Gardner, 1999; Fuentes, 2010; Yılmaz, 2010; Rew & Moon, 2013; Hazar, 2015). Çalışmaların sonuçlarına göre drama yöntemini aktif olarak kullanmanın, çocukların dil başarılarını, derse katılımlarını ve eğlenerek öğrenmelerini desteklediği bulunmuştur. Ayrıca çocukların kelime haznesinin gelişmesinde önemli rol oynadığı da vurgulanmıştır (Hapsari, 2015). Drama yöntemini yabancı dil sınıflarında etkin kullanmanın öneminden yola çıkarak, bu çalışmanın amacı drama entegreli öğrenmenin Türkiye'deki bir özel anaokulunda İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen Türk öğrencilerin kelime kazanımlarına etkisini incelemektir. Çalışma aynı zamanda öğrencilerin ve

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öğretmenlerin bu öğrenme tekniğine karşı algılarını ve uygulama esnasında İngilizce öğretmenlerinin karşılaştıkları zorlukları araştırmıştır. Elde edilen bulgular sonucunda drama yönteminin erken yaşta yabancı dil eğitim ve öğreniminde nasıl etkili kullanılacağı yönünde tavsiyelerde bulunmuştur.

Yöntem

Bu çalışma bir vaka analizi olup (Yin, 2009), Türkiye'deki özel bir anaokulun yabancı dil sınıfında yürütülmüştür. Katılımcılar 23 altı yaş öğrencisi ve 7 İngilizce öğretmeninden oluşmaktadır. Çalışmada öğrenciler başlangıç düzeyi İngilizce seviyesindedir. Öğretmenler, 6 hafta boyunca İngilizce derslerini (haftalık 25 ders) drama yöntemini uyarlayarak yapmıştır. Öğretmenler güncel İngilizce programında yer alan "Sirk" konusunu dramatizasyon ile işlemiştir. Her haftanın başında bir araya gelerek ders planlarının üzerinden geçip, konuyu ve aktiviteleri drama yöntemine uyarlamıştır. Ön-son testten elde edilen nicel veriler SPSS ile analiz edilmiştir. Analizler sonucunda çocukların kelime kazanımlarında çalışmanın başlangıcına nazaran önemli bir gelişme olduğu ve her iki test arasında anlamlı bir fark olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Nitel verilerin tematik analizleri sonucunda ise drama entegreli öğretimin birkaç uygulama zorluğunun olmasının yanı sıra bu yöntemin daha eğlenceli, motivasyonu artırıcı, öğretici, dinamik, etkileşimli, doğal olduğu ve öğrencilerin derse katılımlarını olumlu etkilediği gözlemlenmiştir. Ayrıca öğrenci mülakat sonuçlarına göre drama kullanımının İngilizce derslerine entegre edilmesinin, eğlenceli, motive edici olduğu ve aynı zamanda öğrenci odaklı öğrenmeye neden olduğu bulunmuştur.

Tartışma ve Sonuç

Bu çalışmada elde edilen bulgulara göre drama yönteminin erken yaşta yabancı dil eğitimde etkili olduğu bulunmuştur. Ön-son test sonuçlarına göre öğrencilerin kelime kazanımlarına katkıda bulunduğu ve çalışmanın sonucunda kelime kazanımını önemli ölçüde artırdığı gözlemlenmiştir. Çalışmada elde edilen bulgular daha önceki çalışmalar tarafından da desteklenmektedir (Alqahtani, 2015). Ayrıca drama yöntemini kullanmanın dersi daha eğlenceli hale getirdiği, motivasyonu artırdığı ve öğrencilerinin derse katılımlarını olumlu yönde etkilediği bulguları da benzer çalışmalar tarafından desteklenmiştir (Bouldreault, 2010). Erken yaş yabancı dil sınıflarında drama kullanımının öğrencide olumlu algı geliştirdiği ve adayları bu yöntem sayesinde hem kelime kazanımların arttığı hem de eğlendikleri bulunmuştur. Ayrıca drama entegreli derslerde adayların farklı karakterlere bürünerek kendilerini daha rahat ifade ettikleri tespit edilmiştir. Bu süreçte adaylarda motivasyon ve derse katılımın arttığı, drama sayesinde sınıfların daha interaktif olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır.

Tüm bu bulguların sonucunda, erken yaşta yabancı dil eğitimi sürecinin drama yöntemi kullanılarak desteklenmesi ve ders planlarının ona göre tasarlanması gerektiği önemle vurgulanmıştır. Drama yönteminin erken yaşta yabancı dil eğitimi sürecinde etkili kullanılması sonucunda çocukların kelime bilgisine artış olduğu ve öğrenme sürecinin daha eğlenceli ve kapsayıcı hale getirdiği gözlemlenmiştir. Hem öğretmenler hem de öğrenciler için drama entegreli dersler sayesinde daha doğal ve eğlenceli öğrenme ve öğretme ortamı yaratılmıştır. Ayrıca, drama yönteminin etkin kullanılmasının dinamik, motive, eğlenceli ve interaktif sınıf ortamı yarattığı ve özellikle erken yaş yabancı dil sınıflarında aktif olarak bu yöntemin kullanılması gerektiği sonucuna varılmıştır.

