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English Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching English in Single-Sex Classrooms

İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Tek Cinsiyetli Sınıflarda İngilizce Öğretimi ile İlgili Algıları

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Abstract: This study examines English language teachers' perceptions regarding teaching English in single-sex classrooms prevalent in religious vocational secondary schools, high schools, and other vocational and technical high schools in Türkiye. The study employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing semi-structured interviews with eight English teachers from three different religious vocational high schools. These teachers instruct classes in female-only, male-only, and both male and female classrooms separately. The data collected from the participant teachers was analyzed in regard to the advantages and disadvantages of single-sex classrooms in language teaching. The findings of this study may provide insights into pedagogical implications for policy-makers, curriculum developers, material designers, and language teachers.

Keywords: single-sex classrooms, teaching English, teachers' perceptions, English in single-sex classrooms

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Öz: Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de imam hatip ortaokullarında, imam hatip liselerinde ve diğer mesleki ve teknik liselerde yaygın olan tek cinsiyetli sınıflarda İngilizce öğretimine ilişkin İngilizce öğretmenlerinin algılarını araştırmaktadır. Araştırmada nitel araştırma deseni kullanılmış, üç farklı imam hatip lisesinden sekiz İngilizce öğretmeni ile yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Öğretmenlerden üç tanesi kız, bir tanesi erkek, dört tanesi ise ayrı ayrı hem kız hem erkek sınıflarına ders vermektedir. Katılımcı öğretmenlerden toplanan veriler dil öğretiminde tek cinsiyetli sınıfların avantaj ve dezavantajları yönünden analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma bulguları, materyal tasarımcılar, müfredat geliştiriciler ve dil öğretmenleri için pedagojik uygulamalara ışık tutabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: tek cinsiyetli sınıflar, İngilizce öğretimi, öğretmenlerin algıları, tek cinsiyetli sınıflarda İngilizce

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1. INTRODUCTION

Single-sex classrooms or schools where boys or girls attend exclusively are prevalent in many countries in the world. Along with the Muslim countries, some other countries where single-sex education is popular are Chile, Israel, South Korea, Singapore, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, New Zealand, South Africa, and Australia (Riordan, 2011). Many studies were conducted to investigate the efficiency of such settings, and both positive and negative findings were obtained about the effects of single-sex education.

To start with the advantages of these classrooms or schools, the most frequently repeated benefit is the absence of distraction caused by the opposite sex, thus providing a more relaxed and anxiety-free learning environment for both sexes (Hubbard & Datnow, 2005; Riordan, 1990; Salomone, 2006; Spielhagen, 2006; Vail, 2002; Warrington & Younger, 2001). Another positive finding is that gender stereotypes are eliminated in such classrooms (Riordan, 2003; Vail, 2002). Also, it was found that female students and students from socioeconomically low families take advantage of these schools in terms of academic achievement (Riordan, 1990; Salomone, 2006; Tsolidis & Dobson, 2006; Vail, 2002). Finally, some other studies have pointed to the different learning styles of male and female students and the need for gender-based classrooms to teach students by their gender's learning styles (Gurian & Ballew, 2004; Sax, 2005; Spielhagen, 2006; Vail, 2002; Warrington & Younger, 2001).

As for the negative findings about single-sex classrooms, Gray and Wilson (2006) found out that those classrooms did not have a positive effect on male students and that male students in such classrooms tended to behave aggressively and competitively and showed no progress in academic achievement. Besides, single-sex education is thought to subvert diversity in contrast to coeducational settings where both male and female students attend together. Separating students deprives them of the opportunity to interact with the opposite sex, affecting the students' social relationships adversely, and causing gender stereotypes (NOW, 2006, as cited in Chambers II, 2009).

In Türkiye, studies were generally oriented around students' perceptions about mixed or single-sex-based education in higher religious education (Altıntaş, 2018; Çiçekdağı, 2019; Erpay & Sümer, 2019). Erpay and Sümer (2019) suggest that single-sex education does not significantly contribute to students' academic, emotional, and personality development. Still, this model allows pupils to express themselves more freely. On the other hand, Çiçekdağı's findings (2019) are in favor of the coeducational settings for the personality and academic development of students in higher religious education. Also, Altıntaş (2018) gives an account of students' perspectives on single-sex education with both advantages and disadvantages. The latter is expressed predominantly by the students in this research. Erdoğan (2020) evaluated the relationship between mixed-gender, single-gender education, and school engagement and concluded that single-gender schools for girls had better school engagement than single-gender schools for boys or mixed-gender schools. Offering a different perspective, Sarı (2017) investigated whether teachers support coeducation or single-sex education and found out that the former was preferred by most teachers.

All these studies examine the issue from a general educational perspective, yet research on the impact of single-sex classrooms on language education is rare both in the world and in Türkiye (Abdolalizadeh, 2010; Aslan, 2009; Chambers, 2005; Farisiyah et al., 2021; Kissau et al., 2009; Mathers, 2008; Nadafian & Mehrdad, 2015). Abdolalizadeh (2010) investigated the female learners' self-perceptions of oral performance in single-sex and coeducational classrooms in Iran and found that female learners prefer coeducation because those settings give them chances for constructive competition, socialization, and understanding of the opposite gender. All of these listed are appealing for strengthening oral communicative skills and willingness to collaborate to advance as English speakers. Chambers (2005) did a study in the English context about teaching foreign languages, German and French, in single-sex classrooms and reported that students appreciated working in single-gender groups and felt more comfortable participating in speaking activities and asking questions about their studies. Farisiyah et al. (2021) indicated that because male and female

students learn differently, single-sex classes have a favorable and significant impact on English achievement. Kissau et al. (2009) investigated the effect of single-sex instruction on students' motivation to learn Spanish. The results showed that boys, in particular, were less anxious and hence more eager to participate in Spanish class when opposite-sex pupils were absent. Mathers (2008) examined the role of single-sex and coeducational classrooms on merely boy students' attitudes and self-perception of competence in French and showed that in boys-only classrooms, students were more ready to work hard and take risks and not afraid of making mistakes. Nadafian and Mehrdad (2015) did a study on the relationship between EFL students' gender and their willingness to communicate in same-sex classrooms. They reported that female students were found to be more willing to communicate with the same gender peers or teachers.

1.1. Significance of the Study

In Turkey, the number of religious vocational secondary schools and high schools is increasing day by day. As Karateke (2021) reported, while the number of religious secondary schools (imam hatip ortaokulu) was 1099 during 2012-2013, the number has increased to 3427 between 2020-2021. While the percentage of religious secondary schools was 6,47%, it has risen to 18,01%. A similar case was also reported for religious high schools (imam hatip lisesi) with an increase from 708 schools to 1673 during the same period mentioned above.

If the other vocational and technical high schools with single-sex classrooms are also taken into account, it is assumed that the positive or negative impact of these classrooms should be considered in depth. Considering the existing literature, it can be concluded that the research is generally centered around the overall perspectives, not specifically related to language learning or teaching, and those referring to the language learning or teaching aspect of the matter are limited in number. More research needs to be carried out in this perspective, and this study aims to fill this gap in the literature.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

In this paper, language teaching is investigated through the experiences of teachers lecturing in single-sex classrooms. The results are expected to increase awareness of the advantages and disadvantages of single-sex classrooms and shed light on how language teaching should be carried out in such classes to utilize the advantages and minimize the disadvantages.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

This study investigated the teachers' perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of teaching English in single-sex classrooms. The qualitative method was employed in this research. Qualitative research allows the exploration and understanding of the meaning attributed to a social or human problem by individuals or groups (Creswell, 2009). As the teachers' experiences were resorted to as the data, phenomenological research was utilized. Phenomenological research is used "to seek reality from individuals' narratives of their experiences and feelings and to produce in-depth descriptions of the phenomenon" (Yüksel & Yıldırım, 2015, p. 1). The following research questions were answered in this study.

- 1- Are there any advantages of single-sex classrooms in language teaching? If so, what are the advantages?
- 2- Are there any disadvantages of single-sex classrooms in language teaching? If so, what are the disadvantages?

2.2. Sample Group

The data was gathered at three different Anatolian Religious Vocational High Schools in the same province, one for just girls, one for just boys, and the other including both girls-only and boys-only classrooms. Semi-

structured individual interviews were held with eight teachers (T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8) lecturing in such classes: three teachers lecturing just female classes, one teacher lecturing just male classes and four teachers lecturing both male and female classes separately. The purposeful sampling method was employed in the selection of participants. Purposeful sampling is based on deliberately selecting settings and participants to elicit critical information that other choices cannot provide (Maxwell, 2012). These teachers were chosen as the sample because they have been teaching English in single-sex classrooms. They have enough experience to talk about the advantageous and disadvantageous sides of such settings. The years of teaching experience of these teachers ranged from 10 to 25. All teachers who participated in this research had teaching experience in single-sex classrooms ranging from 2 to 8 years. The table below displays further information on the teachers who were interviewed.

Table 1.

Descriptions of Interviewed Teachers

Participants	Gender	Year of Professional Experience	Year of Experience in Single-sex Classrooms	Gender of Learners
T1	Female	23	6	Female/Male
T2	Male	25	2	Female/Male
T3	Male	10	6	Female
T4	Female	16	8	Female
T5	Female	16	5	Female/Male
T6	Female	20	5	Female/Male
T7	Female	16	6	Female
T8	Female	10	4	Male

2.3. Data Collection Instrument and Procedure

Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain the opinions of teachers. As Dearnley (2005) puts it, through semi-structured interviews, participants are asked the same questions in a flexible order to elicit their experiences in depth. The researchers created a semi-structured interview form for data collection. The form was composed of ten open-ended and interpretative questions. The questions were prepared by the researchers and checked by an expert in the field of foreign language teaching. The main questions were related to the pros and cons of teaching English in single-sex classrooms. The interview questions were pretested with one participant from the target group (T1). She was asked about the clarity of the questions. If the questions were considered misleading, she was asked how to change them to make them clear and understandable. In this way, the questions were improved. Before the interviews, each participant signed a consent form. Each interview lasted for approximately 40 minutes. All the interviews were conducted in Turkish for the teachers to express themselves better and avoid misunderstanding, and audio recorded with the consent of the participants. The transcriptions were then translated into English and have undergone several checks by different experts to reach a consensus on the right translations.

2.4. Data Analysis

The qualitative data from the interviews were analyzed through content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is "the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). Initially, the data was divided into codes. Similarities and differences within bits of data were identified in this way. Finally, after reducing the irrelevant items, similar data segments were clustered into common themes. During this process, the researchers developed a codebook based on the transcripts' analysis. Another researcher was asked to cross-check the codes to increase reliability through "intercoder agreement", as coined by Creswell (2009, p. 191). Therefore, it was checked whether the data would be coded similarly by a different

researcher. The results were independently compared, and two main themes followed by subthemes were agreed on.

2.5. Ethical Approval

The ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Ondokuz Mayıs University ethic committee with the approval number 2022-758 on 26 August 2022.

3. FINDINGS

This investigation aimed to reveal the perceptions of English teachers about the advantages and disadvantages of single-sex classrooms in light of two research questions.

3.1. Research question 1: Are there any advantages of single-sex classrooms in language teaching? If so, what are the advantages?

The data drawn from the teachers' interviews suggest a unanimous acknowledgment of the advantages of single-sex classrooms in language teaching. According to the content analysis, four subthemes were identified under the main theme: advantages of single-sex classrooms. The following table shows these subthemes and codes.

Table 2.

Advantages of Single-Sex Classrooms

Theme	Subthemes	Codes
Advantages of Single-Sex Classrooms	Ideal Psychological Environment for Language Learning	Low level of anxiety, high level of willingness to communicate, risk-taking, self-confidence, lack of shyness, not being afraid of making mistakes
	Lack of Distraction by the Other Sex	Academic focus, no need to be noticed by the other sex, no anxiety created by the other sex, no pressure by boys over girls or vice versa
	Girls' classrooms are ideal for language learning	Girls' high motivation for language learning, aptitude, engagement in activities, being disciplined and organized, better communication with the teacher, easy classroom management
	Single-Sex Classrooms for Different Learning Styles and Interests	Boys' learning styles, girls' learning styles, activities addressing the interests and gender of the students

Quotations from the interviews accompany the findings to reflect the participants' views.

3.1.1. Ideal Psychological Environment for Language Learning

All the teachers agreed that in single-sex classrooms, students, especially girls, have low levels of anxiety. This is due to the lack of the other sex in the classroom. In the absence of the other sex, students are said to feel more secure, less shy, more confident, eager to take risks, not afraid of making mistakes, and thus more willing to communicate. To illustrate the teachers' perceptions, some selected comments are provided below.

In mixed classrooms, students cannot do every action, or say everything; they feel shy. In single-sex classrooms, they feel more relaxed. And this is what lowers anxiety in language learning. Less speaking anxiety, more willingness to communicate. (T1)

They feel less anxious, don't fear making mistakes, and don't feel shy because there are no boys in the classroom. This increases their self-confidence and interest in English. They feel less pressure on them. (T3)

Both male and female students experience anxiety while learning a language, but the absence of the other sex in the classroom decreases the anxiety level. Students feel shy and unwilling, especially in speaking, reading, and pronunciation. However, in single-sex classrooms, students are not afraid of making mistakes and even make fun of their mistakes. (T5)

3.1.2. Lack of Distraction by the Other Sex

Besides the anxiety and pressure created by the other sex, mixed classrooms were also reported to distract the students both emotionally and academically by four out of eight teachers. Therefore, teachers were in favor of single-sex classrooms in this respect. The attitudes of teachers were reflected in the following remarks.

The absence of the other sex both prevents distraction and helps academic focus. In mixed classrooms, students desire to be noticed by the other sex. (T2)

In co-educated schools, boys and girls try to show themselves to the other sex. This may distract them, and a negative remark or behavior of the other sex may ruin their self-confidence and decrease their interest in the lesson. (T3)

Because there are no girls in the classroom, boys can focus on the lesson better. In mixed classrooms, students sometimes want to be noticed by the other sex, and emotional affairs may affect their success. Yet, in single-sex classrooms, we do not face such problems. (T8)

3.1.3. Girls' classrooms are ideal for language learning.

Considering the characteristics of girls, classroom management, and classroom atmosphere, seven teachers expressed that girls' classrooms were ideal and non-problematic for language learning and teaching. The following comments typically display the participants' opinions concerning this issue.

Girls are more focused, attentive, and organized...they are careful about fulfilling their responsibilities...They are quieter; their learning environment is ideal. They learn easily. (T1)

In girls' classrooms, motivation, engagement, new and different thoughts, and success in language activities are higher. (T2)

Classroom management is accessible in girls' classrooms. And this affects the learning and learning environment positively. In this context, boys' classrooms are problematic. (T4)

Girls are apt and willing to learn a language and generally do it systematically. They try to understand the rules correctly, sing English songs, read books, etc. A room of girls eager to learn makes girls-only classrooms an ideal place to teach and learn a language. (T7)

3.1.4. Addressing Different Learning Styles and Interests

Seven teachers mentioned the differences between girls' and boys' learning styles. One teacher (T3) stated that he did not think there was a difference between the learning styles of students in terms of gender. Still, he agreed that single-sex classrooms contributed to addressing different interests based on gender. The following extracts show some opinions on this issue.

Boys are kinaesthetic and auditory learners. Girls are visual and auditory learners... Both love digital learning... Some activities are hard for boys. For example, boys are bad at art and craft activities, but girls love such activities, including designing... Boys are mostly keen on technology-integrated activities. (T1)

The learning styles of boys and girls and teaching them are different. Girls are visual and auditory, and their attention span is longer. But boys need to move around the classroom. They cannot focus on one activity for a long time. (T2)

In a girls' classroom, you can shape your activities around their interests. For example, while teaching a grammar lesson, you can give examples only addressing their interest. (T3)

The interests of girls and boys are different. One of the advantages of single-sex classrooms is that we can manipulate the things that attract their attention. For example, we can use fashion in girls' classrooms while we can make use of sports in boys' classrooms. (T8)

3.2. Research Question 2: Are there any disadvantages of single-sex classrooms? If so, what are the disadvantages?

Teachers were also asked about the disadvantages of single-sex classrooms, and their common answers were categorized under four subthemes. The following table displays these subthemes and codes.

Table 3.

Disadvantages of Single-Sex Classrooms

Theme	Subthemes	Codes
Disadvantages of Single-Sex Classrooms	Communication Problems	Lack of real-life communication context, lack of communication opportunity between boys and girls, lack of discourse variety
	Boys' classrooms are not ideal for language learning	Boys' low levels of motivation for language learning, not being systematic and strategic, unwillingness, boys' negative impact on each other, complex classroom management
	Restrictions in Classroom Activities	Lack of the other sex in role-plays, dialogues and activities, lack of variety in activities
	Lack of Cooperation between Different Sexes in Learning	Lack of peer collaboration between boys and girls, lack of learning from one another

3.2.1. Communication Problems with the Other Sex

Five teachers share similar views on the lack of communication with the other sex in single-sex classrooms and its negative impact in the long run. These teachers expressed that students can have communication problems with the other sex in their adulthood. T1 and T6 specified this case, telling an anecdote as follows.

A student of mine said once: "Teacher, we feel shy while talking to our male friends outside. Why don't we attend coed classrooms?" (T1)

When children come together, they don't know how to behave. They feel shy and can't express themselves. For example, once, boys and girls had to sit next to one another during an exam, and, believe it or not, students felt so shy, and they could not behave in a relaxed way. This affected their exam results. Their marks came lower than usual. (T6)

The following comment also shows the view of another teacher regarding the same issue.

There is no interaction between girls and boys. And this affects the sociability of the students. The lack of the natural environment created by the existence of the boys causes an unnatural learning environment. How will they communicate with males in real life? These students

cannot experience discourse variability. Students also say that they have difficulty communicating with the other sex. (T3)

3.2.2. Boys' classrooms are not ideal for language learning

All the teachers expressed that in language learning when compared with girls, boys are not as systematic, strategic, motivated, interested, and willing as girls and that classroom management in boys' classrooms is hard. Thus, a classroom consisting of boys does not make an ideal language learning environment. The following comments illustrated this.

Boys love moving and cannot focus for so long. When they are gathered together in one classroom, they affect each other badly and cannot learn optimally. (T1)

Generally, girls have higher motivation in language learning. We can understand this from their participation in classroom activities, their readiness, and their strategies to learn the language. So a classroom that includes only girls is ideal for language teaching, but what about boys' classrooms? The fact that they are more unwilling is a challenge for the teacher. (T4)

While girls are eager to learn a language, boys' willingness rate is generally lower. They can't sit and listen for a long time and are not focused. Therefore, motivating boys-only classrooms for language learning is not so easy. Just integrating technology into teaching works. (T8)

3.2.3. Restrictions in Classroom Activities

Regarding classroom activities, two disadvantages were identified from the remarks of five teachers. The first is the lack of the other sex in some communicative activities such as role-plays and dialogues, and the second is the lack of activity variety in single-sex classrooms. Reflecting on their experiences in single-sex classrooms, teachers point to this issue as follows.

The task is a dialogue. And you need both male and female students. No boys or no girls. The activity does not reflect real life. (T1)

For example, while teaching clothes in the boys' classroom, you cannot find any examples of girls' dresses to point to. Boys are reluctant to act out in dialogues including a girl role. (T2)

The variety would be much more if we were in a mixed classroom. In the girls' classroom, you don't give examples about sports, but in diverse classrooms, you give examples addressing both girls and boys, increasing the variety. (T3)

Mixed classrooms are better for activities like role-plays and drama where the boys should also act. Single-sex classrooms are not sufficient in this respect. (T7)

3.2.4. Lack of Cooperation between Different Sexes in Learning

Four teachers emphasized the lack of opportunity to cooperate with the other sex in single-sex classrooms, pointing out that there might be things that girls could learn from boys and boys from girls. The following comments show the teachers' views on this issue.

In mixed classrooms, every student takes advantage of each other's potential and learns from each other. Also, the ability to communicate and cooperate with the other sex increases. But this is missing in single-sex classrooms. (T1)

If the classrooms were mixed, there might be things that boys could learn from girls because girls are more disciplined and more strategic in language learning. (T2)

Language teaching is based on tasks. In mixed classrooms, collaborating with the other sex in these tasks may be enjoyable. Students may complete each other, learn from one another, and they may contribute to the learning of each other. (T4)

Coeducation provides diversity and different points of view. Both girls and boys make contributions, and they complete each other. However, in single-sex classrooms, students cannot see the other sex's perspective. (T5)

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Research Question 1: Are there any advantages of single-sex classrooms in language teaching? If so, what are the advantages?

The qualitative findings revealed four advantageous sides of single-sex classrooms. First, these classrooms were claimed to provide an ideal psychological environment for language learning. This is most probably thanks to the lack of the other sex in the classroom, as asserted by teachers. In the existence of the other sex, students may feel shy, under pressure, and afraid of losing face in front of the opposite sex. Thus, they might not attempt to take risks, which affects mainly students' oral skills negatively. For example, they are likely to be reluctant to speak or read a passage aloud. However, in the absence of the other sex, students may feel less anxious, more confident, and more willing to take risks and communicate. Similar findings were observed by several studies in general educational settings (Riordan, 1990; Salomone, 2006; Spielhagen, 2006; Vail, 2002; Warrington & Younger, 2001). Also, regarding language teaching, Chambers' (2005) finding that students feel more confident to participate in oral activities and ask questions about their learning corroborates this result of the study. Teachers in this study emphasized that girls took advantage of low levels of anxiety in single-sex classrooms; however, Kissau et al. (2009) indicated that in the absence of the opposite sex, boys were especially less anxious and thus more willing to participate in Spanish class. Likewise, Mathers (2008) pointed to the willingness of boys to work and take risks in French classes in single-sex classrooms compared to mixed classrooms. These differences in favor of girls or boys may be due to the research context. This study was conducted with teachers working in religious vocational high schools. Generally, conservative students attend these schools, which was probably why teachers observed a remarkable advantage for girls.

The second advantage of the absence of the other sex was the lack of distraction and its contribution to academic focus. In mixed classrooms, students tend to show or prove themselves to the other sex, especially teenagers may build an emotional bond with an opposite-sex student and try to draw their attention. This situation may lead to the distraction of the students and lessen their academic focus. This is not directly related to language teaching or learning, but the students' distance from academic matters also influences their success in language learning. This finding supports the previous research in literature (Hubbard & Datnow, 2005; Riordan, 1990; Salomone, 2006; Spielhagen, 2006; Vail, 2002; Warrington & Younger, 2001). For example, some of the results of Hubbard and Datnow's study (2005) were that boys did not have to act cool to impress the girls and the girls were more self-confident about their appearance without the harassment of the boys, which allowed them to focus on academics. This was also what was asserted by teachers interviewed in this research.

Thirdly, the teachers stated that girls' classrooms were ideal for language learning. Girls are claimed to be left-brain dominant, which makes them better at language (Gurian & Ballew, 2004; Sax, 2005). Also, girls are generally more disciplined, attentive, and committed to their responsibilities than boys. Each factor affecting language learning functions differently in boys and girls. In literature, there are arguments that girls have higher motivation, and a more positive attitude than boys (Coşkun, 2014; Xiong, 2010) and also that they are good at using language learning strategies (Aslan, 2009). Considering these factors, it sounds natural that a classroom full of female students may form an optimal language learning and teaching environment.

The last advantage drawn from the interviews is that single-sex classrooms appeal to different learning styles and interests of girls and boys. The teachers in this study expressed that boys and girls learn differently, and their interests are different from each other. Boys' attention span is shorter; they cannot focus on one activity for a long time and depend mostly on kinaesthetic activities. On the other hand, girls' attention span is longer, they can concentrate on any activity for a longer time, and they can take advantage of visual and auditory learning better than boys. As Skehan (1991, p. 279) says, "Success is achievable for each type of learner provided that learners play to their strengths." Warrington and Younger (2001) assert that single-sex classrooms make it possible for teachers to change the curricular methodologies and materials to satisfy the different demands of the students. In this respect, single-sex classrooms offer both girls and boys what they need for their interests and dominant learning styles, thus helping them use their strong sides. This result of the study seems to confirm the findings of earlier studies (Gurian & Ballew, 2004; Sax, 2005; Spielhagen, 2006; Thompson & Ungerleider, 2004; Vail, 2002; Warrington & Younger, 2001), which were carried out within general educational perspective. Also, in the context of language learning, it justifies the study by Farisiyah et al. (2021).

4.2. Research Question 2: Are there any disadvantages of single-sex classrooms? If so, what are the disadvantages?

The study uncovered four disadvantageous sides of single-sex classrooms. Initially, single-sex classrooms were criticized in that they might affect the students' social skills adversely and cause communication problems with the other sex in real life. This finding is consistent with that of NOW's (2006, as cited in Chambers II, 2009). When students are separated by gender, they interact with only the same sex, which might lead to a breakdown in communication with the other sex in the long run as an adult. Diverse classrooms are advantageous in this respect as they provide the students with a natural social environment and thus prepare them for real-life interaction (Dale, 1974).

Another disadvantage claimed by the teachers was that boys' classrooms were not ideal for language learning. Firstly, this is due to the general characteristics of boys. As the studies in the literature show, they are generally thought to be less attentive, more competitive, and not easy to control (Hubbard & Datnow, 2005; Sax, 2005; Thompson & Ungerleider, 2004). Moreover, boys have lower motivation in language learning (Coşkun, 2014; Xiong, 2010) and are worse than girls at using language learning strategies (Aslan, 2009). In boys-only classrooms, boys may not positively affect each other academically, may distract one another easily, and such classrooms might reinforce the competition between them (Gray & Wilson, 2006). Such a learning environment is not suitable for language learning as well. However, there may be exceptions for boys-only classrooms with higher achievement in languages as in the study of Kissau et al. (2009).

The third drawback detected in the interviews was related to the classroom activities in terms of diversity and lack of the other sex. The teachers reported that the absence of the other sex in the classrooms could be a problem in the implementation of some activities such as dialogues and role-plays. They also asserted that if the classrooms were mixed, they could be using a range of different activities involving both sexes and catering to both girls' and boys' interests, and that would create diversity in the classroom. In literature, to the researchers' best knowledge, studies did not focus on the lack of the other sex in language activities. Concerning activity diversity, earlier studies seem to support single-sex classrooms in addressing different learning styles of girls and boys (Gurian & Ballew, 2004; Farisiyah et al, 2021; Sax, 2005; Spielhagen, 2006; Thompson & Ungerleider, 2004; Vail, 2002; Warrington & Younger, 2001).

The final disadvantage obtained from this study was the lack of cooperation between different sexes in learning. There may be things that boys can learn from girls and vice versa. The teachers expressed that cooperation between different sexes could foster their learning. Consistent with this finding, Sukhmandan et al. (2000) also argued that students in single-sex schools do not have the opportunity to learn about the

perspective of the opposite sex. However, in mixed classroom settings, students have the chance to exchange viewpoints with the other sex. Regarding the contribution of cooperation to language learning, the study by Abdolalizadeh (2010) confirms this finding of the study by concluding that female students prefer mixed classrooms to improve their oral skills through constructive competition, cooperation, and socialization with the other sex.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study focused on English language teachers' perspectives on single-sex classrooms in language teaching. Through semi-structured interviews, eight teachers reported on the advantages and disadvantages of single-sex classrooms in English language teaching. An anxiety-free learning environment, lack of distraction by the other sex, and catering to different learning styles are among the advantages reported by the teachers. Also, the teachers believe that girls-only classrooms are ideal for language teaching because girls are easy to control in respect of character and more adept at language learning. As for the disadvantages, communication problems with the other sex, restrictions in classroom activities, and lack of cooperation between different sexes were frequently repeated by the teachers interviewed. Furthermore, the teachers agreed with the idea that single-sex education does not favor boys.

Some of these results, especially those related to the communication and cooperation with the opposite sex peers, do not seem to be unique to language learning only; thus, they need to be considered in terms of students' social, psychological, and academic development in a broader educational context. Policymakers need to weigh what students gain and lose through such kind of education. Also, this matter should be attended to by the authorities with regard to their short-term and long-term benefits and damage.

It is advisable for teachers that they take advantage of single-sex classrooms by providing the students with conditions where they can play to their strengths. Teachers can focus on only one gender group's demands and interests. They can benefit from such settings by altering curricular materials as suggested by Warrington and Younger (2001) and adding extracurricular activities to better meet the different needs of girls and boys separately.

This study gives a portrayal of teachers' perceptions only, so for future research, it is suggested that an in-depth study be conducted to reveal the students' perspectives as well. Also, the research is limited in the number of participants. Further research is needed particularly from different schools and language teaching contexts.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

1.GİRİŞ

Tek cinsiyetli sınıflar ve okullar pek çok ülkede mevcuttur. Ülkemizde de imam hatip ortaokullarında, liselerinde ve bazı mesleki ve teknik Anadolu liselerinde, öğrenciler tek cinsiyetli sınıflarda öğrenim görmektedir. Alanyazın incelendiğinde, bu sınıfların avantaj ve dezavantajlarıyla ilgili araştırmaların yapıldığı görülmektedir. Başlıca avantajı, karşı cinsin olmaması sebebiyle dikkatin dağılmaması ve stressiz bir öğrenme ortamı sağlamasıdır (Hubbard & Datnow, 2005; Riordan, 1990; Salomone, 2006; Spielhagen, 2006; Vail, 2002; Warrington & Younger, 2001). Ayrıca, kız ve erkek öğrencilerin ihtiyaçlarına ve öğrenme stillerine daha uygun öğrenme ortamları sunduğu da belirtilmektedir (Gurian & Ballew, 2004; Sax, 2005; Spielhagen, 2006; Vail, 2002; Warrington & Younger, 2001). Dezavantajları ise, tek cinsiyetli sınıfların çeşitliliği ve karşı cinsle etkileşimi engellediği (NOW, 2006, akt. Chambers II, 2009) ve bu sınıfların erkek öğrencileri olumlu etkilemediği (Gray & Wilson, 2006) yönündedir.

Konuyla ilgili Türkiye’de yapılan çalışmalar genellikle yükseköğretim düzeyindeki öğrencilerin karma ve tek cinsiyetli sınıflarla ilgili algıları etrafında şekillenmiştir (Altıntaş, 2018; Çiçekdağı, 2019; Erpay & Sümer, 2019). Bu çalışmalardan farklı olarak Erdoğan (2020) karma ve tek cinsiyetli eğitim ve okula bağlılık arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemiş, Sarı (2017) ise öğretmenlerin karma ve tek cinsiyetli eğitimle ilgili görüşlerini araştırmıştır.

Gerek yurtdışında gerekse Türkiye’de yapılan çalışmalarda konu genel eğitim çerçevesinde ele alınmış, tek cinsiyetli sınıfların dil eğitimine etkisi üzerine sınırlı sayıda araştırma yapılmıştır (Abdolalizadeh, 2010; Aslan, 2009; Chambers, 2005; Farisiyah vd., 2021; Kissau vd., 2009; Mathers, 2008; Nadafian & Mehrdad, 2015).

Türkiye’de imam hatip ortaokullarının ve liselerinin sayısı (Karateke, 2021) ve mevcut alanyazın çalışmaları dikkate alındığında, özellikle dil öğretiminde tek cinsiyetli sınıfların olumlu ve olumsuz etkilerinin derinlemesine incelenmesi gerektiği sonucuna ulaşılmaktadır. Zira dil iletişim kurmaktır, iletişim ise sadece hemcinsle değil, karşı cinsle de kurulan etkileşimle gelişir.

Mevcut çalışmanın amacı, tek cinsiyetli sınıfların dil öğretimine ve öğrenimine olan etkisini bu sınıflarda öğretim yapan öğretmenlerin deneyimleri yoluyla araştırmaktır.

2. YÖNTEM

Araştırmada nitel araştırma deseni kullanılmış, fenomenolojik araştırma yapılmıştır. Fenomenolojik araştırmada amaç , "bireyin deneyimlerinden ve duygularından yola çıkarak belli bir fenomen üzerinde yaptığı anlatılarında gerçeği aramak ve bu fenomene yönelik derinlemesine açıklamalar üretmektir"(Yüksel & Yıldırım, 2015, s.1). Çalışmada cevap aranan iki araştırma sorusu vardır:

1. Tek cinsiyetli sınıfların dil öğretiminde herhangi bir avantajı var mıdır? Varsa nedir?
2. Tek cinsiyetli sınıfların dil öğretiminde herhangi bir dezavantajı var mıdır? Varsa nedir?

Bu sorulara cevap bulmak için üç farklı imam hatip lisesinden 8 İngilizce öğretmeni ile yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Öğretmenlerden 3 tanesi kız, 1 tanesi erkek, 4 tanesi ise ayrı ayrı hem kız hem erkek sınıflarına ders vermektedir. Araştırmacılar veri toplamak için toplam 10 sorudan oluşan yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşme formu hazırlamıştır. Sorular araştırmacılar tarafından hazırlanmış ve bir alan uzmanı tarafından kontrol edilmiştir. Katılımcılar görüşme öncesi rıza onam formu imzalamışlardır. Her bir görüşme yüz yüze yapılmış ve yaklaşık 40 dakika sürmüştür. Görüşmeler katılımcıların kendilerini rahat ifade etmesi için Türkçe yapılmış ve ses kaydı alınmıştır. Toplanan veriler önce İngilizce’ye çevrilmiş, sonra içerik analizi yapılmıştır. Bu süreçte, veriler kodlara ayrılmış, benzer kodlar ortak temalarda toplanmış ve bu temalardan da iki ana temaya ulaşılmıştır. İçerik analizi aşamasında araştırmacılar bir kod

kitabı oluşturmuş, bir diğer araştırmacı tarafından da kodlama yapılmış ve iki kodlama arasında karşılaştırma yapılarak güvenilirlik sağlanmaya çalışılmıştır.

3.BULGULAR, TARTIŞMA VE SONUÇ

Öğretmenlerden toplanan verilerin sonucunda iki ana temaya ulaşılmıştır: tek cinsiyetli sınıfların avantajları ve tek cinsiyetli sınıfların dezavantajları.

Tek cinsiyetli sınıfların dil öğretimindeki avantajlarına bakılacak olursa, ilk olarak bu sınıfların dil öğrenimi için ideal öğrenme ortamı sağladığı öne sürülmektedir. Bunun sebebinin, öğretmenler tarafından da ifade edildiği gibi karşı cinsin olmaması sebebiyle öğrencilerin kendilerini daha rahat ifade etmesi, derse katılmak ve risk almak için daha az çekinmesi olduğu söylenebilir. Benzer bulgular başka çalışmalarda da gözlemlenmiştir (Chambers, 2005; Riordan, 1990; Salomone, 2006; Spielhagen, 2006; Vail, 2002; Warrington & Younger, 2001). Ayrıca, bu çalışmadaki öğretmenler tek cinsiyetli sınıfların özellikle kız öğrenciler açısından daha faydalı olduğunu belirtmişlerdir, ancak alanyazında kızların bulunmadığı sınıflarda erkek öğrencilerin daha az kaygılı ve derse katılmaya daha istekli olduğunu gösteren çalışmalar da mevcuttur (Kissau vd., 2009; Mathers, 2008). İkinci avantaj, karşı cinsin yokluğunun dikkatin dağılmasını engellemesi ve akademik odaklanma sağlamasıdır. Karma sınıflarda öğrenciler karşı cinsin dikkatini çekme ya da kendilerini onlara kanıtlanma çabasına girebilmekte, bu da öğrencilerin derse odaklanamamasına sebep olmaktadır. Bu bulgu önceki araştırma bulgularıyla örtüşmektedir (Hubbard & Datnow, 2005; Riordan, 1990; Salomone, 2006; Spielhagen, 2006; Vail, 2002; Warrington & Younger, 2001). Üçüncü olarak, kız sınıflarının dil öğrenimi için ideal olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır. Kızların sol beyinlerin baskın olmasından dolayı dilde daha yetenekli olması (Gurian & Ballew, 2004; Sax, 2005), erkeklerden daha yüksek dil öğrenme motivasyonlarının olması ve dil öğrenmeye karşı daha olumlu tutum geliştirmeleri (Coşkun, 2014; Xiong, 2010) bu iddiayı destekler niteliktedir. Son avantaj ise, tek cinsiyetli sınıfların cinsiyetle bağlantılı farklı öğrenme stillerine ve farklı ilgi alanlarına hitap etmesidir. Bu sonucun da diğer araştırma sonuçlarını doğruladığı görülmüştür (Farisiyah vd., 2021; Gurian & Ballew, 2004; Sax, 2005; Spielhagen, 2006; Thompson & Ungerleider, 2004; Vail, 2002; Warrington & Younger, 2001).

Tek cinsiyetli sınıfların dil öğretimindeki dezavantajları ile ilgili ilk sonuç, öğrencilerin sosyal becerilerini olumsuz etkilemesi ve gerçek hayatta karşı cinsle iletişim problemi yaşamasına sebep olma ihtimalidir. Oysa, karma sınıflar öğrencilere gerçek hayattaki gibi, doğal bir ortam sunmakta ve onları hayata daha iyi hazırlamaktadır (Dale, 1974). Bir diğer olumsuzluk, tek cinsiyetli sınıfların erkekler için ideal bir dil öğrenme ortamı oluşturmamasıdır. Erkeklerin daha fazla rekabetçi, daha az dikkatli ve kontrol edilmelerinin daha zor olduğu alanyazında da ifade edilmektedir (Hubbard & Datnow, 2005; Sax, 2005; Thompson & Ungerleider, 2004). Dolayısıyla sadece erkeklerden oluşan bir sınıfta, öğrencilerin birbirini olumsuz etkilemesi, rekabet duygusunun güvenli öğrenme ortamını tehlikeye sokması muhtemeldir (Gray & Wilson, 2006). Öğretmenler tarafından ifade edilen bir başka dezavantaj ise, diğer cinsin yokluğundan dolayı sınıf aktivitelerindeki sınırlılıktır. Özellikle role-play ve diyalog gibi etkinliklerde öğretmenler zorlandıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Son dezavantaj, öğrenmede farklı cinsiyetler arasındaki işbirliğinin olmamasıdır. Kızların erkeklerden, erkeklerin de kızlardan öğreneceği şeyler olabileceği, bir diğer cinsiyetin bakış açısını da görmenin önemli olduğu düşünülürse, karma sınıfların bu konuda daha iyi ortamlar sağladığı söylenebilir. Alanyazında benzer bulgulara rastlanmaktadır (Sukhnandan vd.,2000; Abdolizadeh, 2010).

Araştırma sonuçlarına bakıldığında, tek cinsiyetli sınıfların olumlu olabildiği gibi olumsuz sonuçlarının da olabileceği görülmektedir. Politika belirleyicilerin kısa ve uzun vadede bu avantajları ve dezavantajları değerlendirmesi gerekmektedir.

ETHICAL PERMISSION TO RESEARCH

In this study, all rules stated to be followed within the scope of the “Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive” were observed. None of the actions specified under the title of “Actions Violating Scientific Research and Publication Ethics,” which is the second part of the directive, have not been carried out.

Ethics Committee Approval Information

Ethical committee = Ondokuz Mayıs University ethic committee

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CONTRIBUTION OF RESEARCHERS

The contribution rate of the 1st author to the research is 60%, and the contribution rate of the 2nd author to the research is 40%.

Author 1: Determination of the method, research design, validity and reliability studies, data collection, data analysis, reporting.

Author 2: Determination of the method, research design, validity and reliability studies, supervising the study.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest in the research.