

A Suggested Course Syllabus for Teaching English in Early Childhood

Özge Can CEYLAN¹ , Kürşat CESUR^{2*} 

Abstract

Teaching English in Early Childhood (TEEC) requires a variety of materials, in-class activities, skills and experience to prepare and utilize in the classroom. To design appropriate materials, in-class activities, and apply them collaboratively in the classroom, EFL teachers are required to receive necessary training in their teacher education programmes. This study aims to develop a course syllabus for pre- and in-service EFL teachers for TEEC settings. First, with the purpose of identifying the frequent topics in the content of (Teaching English to Young Learners) TEYLs and TEEC courses of state universities in Türkiye, books, published articles, and observations of online courses providing the relevant content, a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design was applied to reach the targeted data. The document analysis was employed via MS Excel. Secondly, using the qualitative data collected, a survey was prepared to gather opinions of EFL teachers having experience regarding teaching English in early childhood. The results obtained from the survey were analyzed employing SPSS Statistics Version 27. The data exhibit EFL teachers need more up-to-date topics, and opportunities to apply theory in real classroom. At the end of the study, the course syllabus was designed and offered based on the EFL teachers' needs.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Syllabus Design, Teacher Education, Teaching English to Very Young Learners

Erken Çocuklukta İngilizce Öğretimi İçin Ders İçerik Önerisi

Özet (Türkçe)

Erken Çocuklukta Dil Öğretimi sınıfta hazırlamak ve kullanmak için çeşitli materyalleri, sınıf içi etkinlikleri, becerileri ve deneyimleri gerektirir. Uygun materyaller ve sınıf içi etkinlikler tasarlamak ve bunları sınıfta iş birliği içinde uygulamak için, İngilizce öğretmenlerinin öğretmen eğitimi programlarında gerekli eğitimi almaları gerekmektedir. Bu çalışma, Erken Çocuklukta Dil Öğretimi hizmet öncesi ve hizmet içi İngilizce öğretmenleri için bir ders müfredatı geliştirmek amacıyla yapılmıştır. İlk olarak, sıkça geçen konuları belirlemek amacıyla Türkiye'deki devlet üniversitelerinin Çocuklara Yabancı Dil Öğretimi ve Erken Çocuklukta Dil Öğretimi derslerinin içeriği, ilgili içeriği sağlayan kitaplar, yayınlanmış makaleler ve çevrimiçi derslerin gözlemleri incelenmiş ve hedeflenen verilere ulaşmak için sıralı keşifsel karma yöntem tasarımı uygulanmıştır. Belge analizi MS Excel aracılığıyla yapılmıştır. İkinci olarak, toplanan nitel veriler kullanılarak, erken çocukluk döneminde İngilizce öğretimi konusunda deneyimli İngilizce öğretmenlerinin görüşlerini toplamak için bir anket hazırlanmıştır. Anketten elde edilen sonuçlar SPSS Statistics Version 27 kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Veriler, İngilizce öğretmenlerinin daha güncel konulara ve teoriyi gerçek sınıf ortamında uygulama fırsatlarına ihtiyaç duyduğunu göstermektedir. Çalışmanın sonunda, ders müfredatı, İngilizce öğretmenlerinin ihtiyaçlarına göre tasarlanmış ve sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Erken Çocuklu Eğitimi, Ders İçeriği, Öğretmen Eğitimi, Küçük Çocuklara İngilizce Öğretimi



How to cite: Ceylan, Ö. C. & Cesur, K. (2025). A suggested course syllabus for teaching English in early childhood. *International Journal of Educational Spectrum (IJES)*, 7(2), 187-207. <https://doi.org/10.47806/ijesacademic.1752188>

Submission Date: July 27, 2025
Acceptance Date: August 20, 2025

* Corresponding author

¹ Teacher, Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Türkiye, ozgeceylan85@gmail.com

² Assoc. Prof. Dr. Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Türkiye, kursatcesur@comu.edu.tr

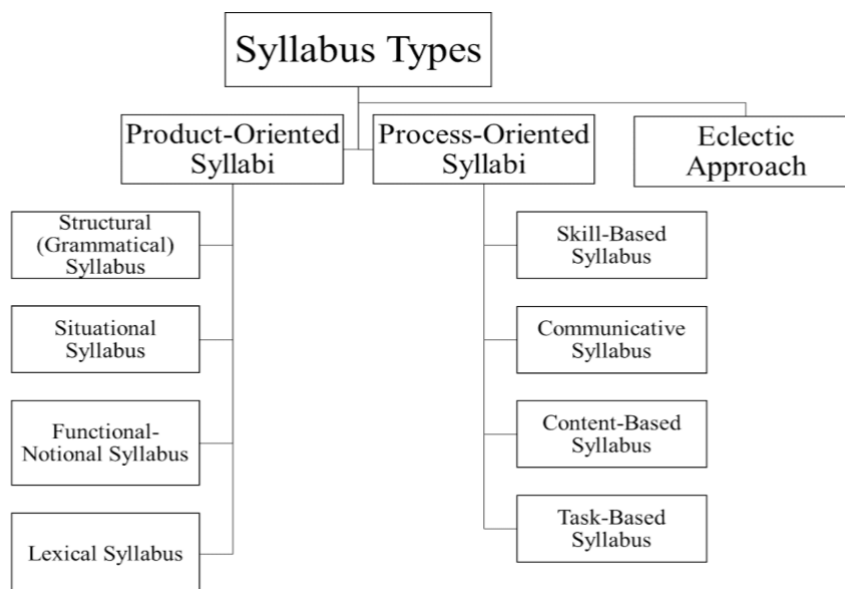
Introduction

In the recent globalizing world, English communication abilities have been essential beyond academic needs. Due to this fact, very young learners (VYLs) increasingly require English language exposure. In other words, the early childhood period has great potential in favour of language development. For this reason, teaching English at this age necessitates specific training for English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers because of their social and cognitive development process. However, creating, applying, and integrating an attractive and developmentally suitable syllabus is vital for an efficient English teaching lesson in this age group. As the characteristic features of young learners are taken into consideration, their learning ways and methods are different from adults in terms of cognitive, social and emotional aspects (Butler, 2019). Starting at an early age has plenty of benefits, as first, young learners pick up languages more quickly (Atak Damar et al., 2013). Their practice and use of language skills can be observed earlier than their awareness of the language, as well as their understanding has predominantly arisen by hands, ears and eyes (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990). Therefore, it enables the EFL teachers to adapt the materials and syllabus accordingly. Additionally, the younger learners have a shorter attention span than the adults. Also, they learn about the world by games (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990) which reflect the way they learn the language since it is a tool for communication in social life.

Considering the differences between the learning ways of young learners and adults, EFL teachers should be knowledgeable about how to select, prepare and apply the necessary materials for their students' level and age. This knowledge is provided and supported as well as contributed by the universities or teacher training programmes such as online courses. Therefore, the need for revision of the syllabus of the courses at the teacher training programmes or in the faculty of education of the universities seems to be inevitable. The idea that the teachers are supposed to have the necessary skills and training to instruct and guide the young children in EFL classrooms is a significant fact. As one of the main features of the early childhood stage is illiteracy (Yaşar Ekici & Cengiz, 2021), the active use of the target language for the sake of exposure in the children's environment is one of the most crucial aspects of a child learning a foreign language. For this aim, the most important figure is the teachers themselves who are expected to set up the proper environment (Sığırtmaç & Özbek, 2009) applying the knowledge about the stages of language development of children, and the experiences the teachers have gained.

Yet, despite this growing demand, due to the characteristics of VYLs, particularly short attention span and underdeveloped cognitive thinking abilities, teachers working with VYLs frequently face a variety of issues in the classroom (Uysal & Yavuz, 2015). In parallel with the common understanding regarding Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL), Bland (2019) highlights that teachers require a great level of language proficiency, pedagogical specialization, and in-depth information in the field of children's development. The lack of attention to early childhood language education in teacher training programs, specifically in pre-service education programs without a focus on VYLs, compounds the problem (Council of Europe, 2018). In this sense, designing a purposeful syllabus design takes an important place in teaching a foreign language because the teaching process, in a general aspect, and more specifically teaching a foreign language needs systematic and structured planning. As Murphy (2018) stated that a well-designed syllabus is a significant element of a teaching process, which offers "a doorway" through the beliefs about the foreign language teaching pedagogy of an EFL teacher (p.1). Likewise, a suitable syllabus designed effectively considering the dynamics of the learners supports meeting not only the teachers but the students' expectations, as well. As Yalden (1984) also explains, the syllabus is viewed as a tool for the teachers to reach the correct

match between the certain level of the students and the objectives of the lesson which is planned to carry on in the classroom. The attention drawn to the importance of a well-designed syllabus is briefly defined by Widdowson (1984) as a “framework” to conduct activities in a classroom: “a teaching device to facilitate learning” (p.26). Therefore, it is essential to understand the various types of syllabus design to decide on a suitable one with the purpose of reaching the objectives of the class besides meeting the needs of the learners. In this sense, it is clearly important to realize the main points of the different syllabus types.



Adapted from Breen (2001), Nunan (1988), Rabbini (2020), Reilly (1988), Robinson (1998), and Yanç (2002).

Figure 1. Syllabus Types

Initially, the product-oriented syllabi focus on the end results of language learning process. Ellis (1993) explains that the structural syllabus can be beneficial to support the learning process by gradually developing an understanding of specific grammar points, as well as fostering accurate grammatical production. According to the explanation about situational syllabus by Reilly (1988), the content of language teaching involves theoretical or real-life situations in which language is taught, practiced, and produced, in company with a situational language teaching syllabus designed to teach a foreign language that is applied in the contexts. In this way, it is supposed that the learners can choose the proper verbal reaction to a specific situation they come across in real life (Yanç, 2002). Dinçay (2010) states that a conscious choice of a proper syllabus is a vital decision in a foreign language teaching. The need to search for a type of syllabus design to include and apply the linguistic features of a language in parallel with the proper situational use was raised. Wilkins (1976) provides that the contextual functions and the structural features of a language are combined in the functional-notional syllabus design. Therefore, the focus switched to the functional and communicative purpose. Krashen and Terrell (1983) contribute that cases, functions, and themes can be entirely employed to convey basic communication objectives. Mentioning the lexical approach, its focus is seemingly similar to structural approach in terms of their way of designing syllabi for teaching a foreign language. It is claimed that the lexical approach has emerged as a reaction to structural approach (Mahdi et al., 2013). As Lewis (1997) states in his study, “the language consists of chunks which, when combined, produce continuous coherent text” (p. 7). Therefore, the lexical approach is regarded productive in the case of that learning process can be supported efficiently.

Secondly, the process-oriented approach to design syllabi holds a greater importance than the final result inasmuch as the procedural syllabuses are necessary to be able to track and mediate

the learning process, and personalized. (Mahdi et al., 2013; Nunan, 1988). For the purpose of systematically learning structure, the skill-based syllabus has been improved and applied. Rather than focusing on the grammatical structures or thematic elements, this syllabus suggests a more prominent point for the development of main language skills which can often be encountered in language education programs to provide learners the practical skills for daily interactions or specific purposes (Reilly, 1988; Şanal, 2016). Since there is no doubt that a language is basically a tool for communication, it is believed that the syllabus should be designed considering the communicative purposes. In this sense, Munby (1978) first manifests the communicative syllabus. According to him, needs analysis is essential so that a suitable syllabus can be designed. As another aspect regarding the product-oriented syllabus type, the content-based syllabus combines language and the content in learning manner for the purpose of teaching both a foreign language and the given content simultaneously in relevant contexts (Mohan, 1986; Snow et al., 1989). Lastly, task-based approach considers the tasks as core points for language teaching. In order to understand task-based syllabus (TBS), it is essential to have a clear sense of what a task means. Nunan (1989) defines a task as a communicative assignment that expects the learners to understand, produce, or engage in the target language while primarily concentrating on meaning rather than form. As Reilly (1988) expands, a TBS arranges and builds the courses around a variety of complex and meaningful tasks so that the students can be motivated to complete them using the language in the context.

Finally, the eclectic approach resulted from displeasure of applying a single method in teaching. Thus, Brown (2002) believes that the eclectic approach attempts to solve this complication. According to Liao (2020), depending on the conditions, the eclectic approach offers to incorporate the different approaches gathering the most efficient strategies.

As a conclusion, content-based syllabus type has been preferred to design the suggested course syllabus aimed in this study since it is believed that designing a syllabus for EFL teachers to teach English in early childhood requires multidisciplinary integration of the contents from two different disciplines: Early childhood education and teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). This integration carries significance to train EFL teachers with a purposeful syllabus design.

Preparing a syllabus design for the targeted purpose requires one to have a noticeable knowledge of the content. Since this study aims to propose a syllabus for early childhood, it is crucial to mention the characteristic information about the children, their developmental stages, and how they learn. As a general information, the early childhood period contains preschool years (approximately from 3 to 6) even though some sources highlight changing the age range (Imaniah & Tan, 2017; Pinter, 2011; Villar et al., 2019). Particularly for linguistic development, throughout the early childhood period, the language acquisition and the communication abilities of the children progress significantly (Hoff & Shatz, 2007), vocabulary building skills improve rapidly (O'Grady, 2005), even the overall comprehension skills develop beside the basic grammatical structures. Concurrently, children begin intensively to be curious about the world, and attempt creating connection with their surroundings via social interaction in meaningful contexts (Clarke, 2009; Jingga, 2022). Therefore, EFL teachers are expected to acknowledge these factors to be able to prepare materials and apply them and finally conduct efficient EFL lessons with the learners in preschool.

Several developmental theories permit to comprehend how children learn language in early childhood period. According to Jean Piaget, children communicate with their environments actively and build the knowledge by hands-on experiences due to their cognitive development,

particularly since the motor and preoperational stages (Cameron, 2001; Piaget, 1950). Another viewpoint is contributed by Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (SCT). It emphasizes the importance of social interaction, the notion of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which indicates the area where the children are able to achieve more with guidance than they can independently (Mahn, 1999; Vygotsky et al., 2012). Expanding on these concepts, Jerome Bruner introduces the notion of scaffolding which means adults and teachers provide support that gradually assist the children so that they can become more confident and independent in their learning process (Bruner, 1978, as cited in Ozdem-Yılmaz & Bilican, 2020; Takaya, 2013). Although these theories were developed in the past, they still directly meet the needs of early language classes today. In addition to the developmental stages of children, Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is a key point of learning in this period. It contains the awareness of the emotions, establishing relationships and feeling secure enough to overcome the risks, such as speaking in a new language (Gimbert et al., 2020).

Finally, it is essential to mention the specific pedagogical approaches for Teaching English in Early Childhood (TEEC). Based on the principles of affective filter theory, pedagogical approaches of TEEC highlight providing comprehensible input and creating a peaceful atmosphere (Prošić-Santovac & Savić, 2022; Schwartz, 2022). Among the methods and approaches in TEEC, Total Physical Response (TPR) is regarded as one of the most commonly benefitted methods in the sense of implementation to EFL classrooms (Intarapanich, 2013). TPR basically and briefly can be described as a method which employs physical movements along with facilitation of language acquisition (Djigunović & Krevelj, 2022; Schwartz, 2022). As Schwartz (2022) also indicates that TPR is an approach that supports language development and is intended to motivate young learners to present their own language production. As another approach studied within the context throughout a wide scale of historical discussions regarding EFL, the Natural Approach (NA) is described as more an analytical approach (Long, 2009). According to this approach, the focus is on the learners' role. Long (2009) claims that NA provides opportunities for individual learning, and linguistic features in a holistic environment. As also explained in the book written by Richards and Rodgers (2001), the NA emphasizes the exposure, in other words "input, rather than practice", increasing the potential "emotional readiness" for the learning process, aiming to maintain the concentration of the target language for long-term (p. 179). Learners receive the input of the target language prior to applying what they are taught. However, in the course program prepared by Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in Türkiye (2012), the children in early childhood (for the age group between 0-8 years) are not expected to learn and develop the literacy skills in EFL learning. Therefore, there is no syllabus objective with the purpose of learning how to read and write in English, for the students until the age of eight. In other words, the course program begins to present the content of objectives specifically for reading and writing skills for the students of the age of eight. Thus, in this study, developing and teaching literacy skills are not involved in the suggested course syllabus design for English teachers in early childhood settings.

Therefore, this study basically aims to seek the answer to the research questions as follows:

RQ1: What are the most frequent topics found as a result of the document analysis of the university courses, articles, books, and online courses in Türkiye regarding the subjects of Teaching English in Young Learners and Early Childhood?

RQ2: What are the most preferred topics by the EFL teachers and the lecturers about the content of Teaching English in Early Childhood?

Method

To gather and analyse the collected data based on the research question (RQ) 1 and 2, a sequential exploratory mixed-method design employed. To Creswell and Creswell (2023), an exploratory sequential mixed methods design primarily allows researchers to conduct qualitative research for the purpose of setting a base for the next step of research. Afterwards, the quantitative data is analyzed based on the findings from the previous phase.

Owing to the mixed-methods approach, the research objectives can be achieved more holistically than utilizing only one methodological approach (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2004; Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Considering that this current study follows a two-phased research path in order to reach the finding for the two objectives, a sequential exploratory mixed methods design for this current research is regarded as suitable, as it is illustrated in Figure 2.

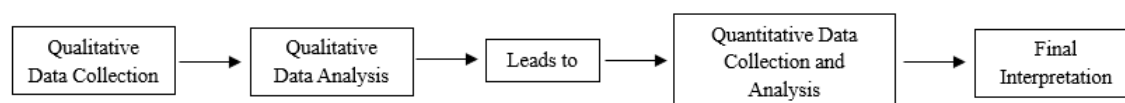


Figure 2. Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Design (Creswell & Creswell, 2023)

The first RQ, which is dealt with in the first phase, necessitates the systematic investigation of a wide collection of educational materials. Within the light of information reviewed from the literature (Cesur, 2012; White & Cooper, 2022), supporting the approach for similar purposes, the aim of meeting the first objective of this study is assumed to be successfully processed by interpreting and categorizing the results employing the qualitative data methods such as content or document analysis. Microsoft Excel was preferred as a tool for qualitative data analysis (Meyer & Avery, 2009) because of its practicability. The coding process for selecting documents was based on a keyword criterion, with the scope of the document analysis defined according to keywords such as “teaching English in preschool/kindergarten/early childhood” and “teaching English to very young learners/children.” Since the document analysis was conducted by a single coder, several strategies were employed to enhance trustworthiness, including double-checking all codes after a two-week interval, engaging in peer debriefing with colleagues experienced in TEYL and TEEC, and conducting member checking with two field experts to verify the accuracy and relevance of the coding categories. To further support validity, methodological triangulation was applied by integrating findings from the document analysis with the survey results, and the final coding scheme underwent expert review to ensure conceptual soundness and alignment with the research objectives. The sequential exploratory design adopted in this study thus provided a systematic process that strengthened both trustworthiness and validity.

For the second RQ of the study, specific viewpoints must be gathered individually. In this regard, the researchers have decided to apply one of the quantitative techniques based on the views from the specific studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; White & Cooper, 2022). Survey technique as a quantitative method has been employed for the second phase of the study. The survey has been prepared dependent on the results of the document analysis and the observation of the online courses.

Participants

The second phase of the study was conducted with both EFL teachers and lecturers in ELT departments who were currently on duty and had already served as English teachers in ÇOMÜ

ÇABAÇAM and ÇOMÜ Kindergarten, in order to gather opinions regarding the frequent topics determined from the document analysis. A convenience sampling method was used to select participants, as it allowed the researchers to access individuals who were readily available and directly relevant to the study's context (Etikan et al., 2016). Based on the responses provided, there were 42 participants in total, consisting of two lecturers in the ELT department and 40 EFL teachers.

Among 42 participants that have taken part in the second phase of this study, 19 participants obtained only the TEYLs course while there are no participants who have received any course specifically for only TEEC. As a result of this analysis, what is crucial to comprehend is that all the participants that graduated from the ELL department have no training regarding TEEC, however they have experience, or are currently on duty in the TEEC classrooms. Also, it should be remarked that there are 13 participants, regardless of their departments graduated, who have obtained neither TEYL nor TEEC courses, yet still have had experience or are working as an EFL teacher in the early childhood settings. As a result, what can be implied from this interpretation is that the teachers active in the TEEC field have inadequate theoretical background.

Data Collection

The procedure of data collection and analysis of this current study includes two dependent phases as it is illustrated in Figure 3. The data collection tool applied in the second phase has been created based on the findings of the analysis conducted in the first phase.

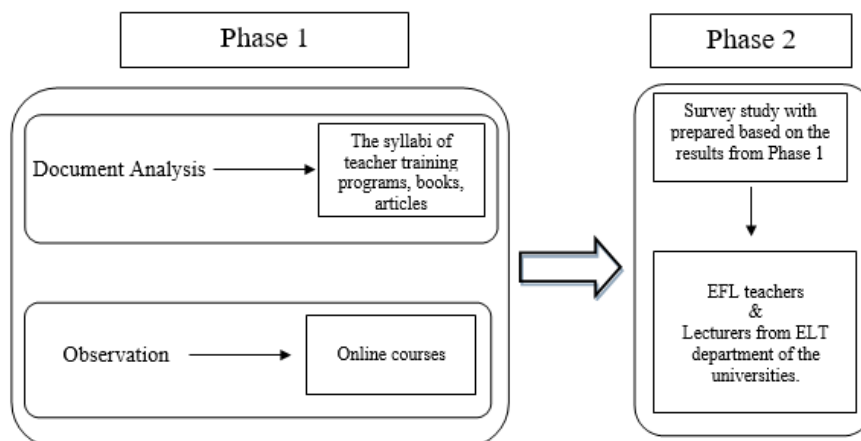


Figure 3. Data Collection Procedure

The aim of the first phase is to find out the most frequent topics related to TEYLs, TEVYLs, and TEEC included in the syllabi of the teacher training programs in ELT and Preschool Teacher Education (PTE) departments of the 57 state universities in Türkiye. One of the total numbers of the universities investigated possesses the contents in scope at both ELT and PTE departments. Therefore, there are 58 contents analyzed. The syllabi content has been reached through the Bologna systems of the universities. The content of three universities has been excluded out of the scope because of the unavailability of their Bologna systems to reach their content. As a result, there are 55 syllabi content retrieved from 54 different state universities. Likewise, the content of 20 published books and 17 published articles written about the related topics have been examined. Additionally, the observation of 14 online courses has been conducted to contribute to the topics found out by means of document analysis. The content analysis of 106 documents in total have been carried out.

The second phase of the study is essential to gather the opinions of the EFL teachers and the lecturers according to their experiences. For the purpose of data collection, a survey has been prepared as a tool based on the 30 main titles already finalized in the first phase. Survey as a data collection tool is regarded as an efficient method to gather both qualitative and quantitative data. In particular, utilizing a survey to collect quantitative data enables the qualitative data to extend into a larger scale to support the specific contexts (Gül, 2023).

After receiving the expert opinions regarding the survey questions, the final version of the survey has been applied to the participants for the data collection process. The survey has been delivered to the participants via online form, asking their consents before the application.

The concept of reliability is intended to use as trustworthiness for the qualitative data collection process. More specifically, in a sequential exploratory design, these notions, trustworthiness and validity, are explained by means of a systematic process. First, the qualitative data is collected and analysed. Later, the quantitative data is gathered via data collection instrument which has been designed depending on the qualitative data in order to provide insight in more detailed, or to explain the primary qualitative data (Creswell, 2003). The survey as quantitative data collection tool has been applied to the participants based on the ethical board permission together with the institutional approval received. Hence, the integration of these two phases is regarded as a fundamental aspect of how validity and trustworthiness are realized in this design (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Data Analysis

The data has been collected via a cross-sectional survey that has been developed for the second phase of the study. Cross-sectional survey design allows the researchers to gather data regarding the particular point in time (Creswell, 2012). The content of the survey has been prepared aligned with the topics identified from the document analysis of the first phase. The responses of the survey are elicited by online forms that have been sent to the participants. The quantitative data gathered by means of ordering the 30 main categories of the most frequent topics in terms of their importance according to the EFL teachers and lecturers' opinions, experiences, and preferences related to the TEEC. The items of the survey contain three sections. The first section is regarding the asking for their consent determining whether they agree to provide the data for the research or not. Later, the second section is composed of the questions in order to gather general information regarding the participants' education and professional background together with the experiences in the field. The final section includes the 30 main topics from the document analysis. In addition to the topics, one open-ended question is added at the end of the survey in order to gather an independent response to contribute to the frequent topics. The responses in this section could be potentially considered significant to include in the results supported by the literature. Therefore, a meaningful set of results can be found to integrate with the suggested course syllabus tailored for the requirements of teaching English in early childhood. The gathered data from the survey has been analyzed by employing descriptive analysis via SPSS Version 27.

Findings

The RQ1 guides to search for the answers to the first phase of the study. This analysis allows to present the frequent topics containing on the content of the documents based on the RQ 1. The findings for the first RQ are exhibited in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency of the Topics of Teaching English to Young Learners and in Early Childhood

	<i>f</i>
Teaching vocabulary	53
Teaching reading	52
Classroom Management	50
Teaching speaking	50
Teaching writing	49
Teaching listening	49
Use of Games	48
Basic characteristics / features of YL	41
Assessment and Evaluation in YL classrooms	41
Use of Songs / Music	39
Teaching grammar	36
Preparation of lesson plans for children	36
Materials	35
Specific theories to teach English to children	35
Teaching English in Different Age Groups	33
Children and learning	32
Methods and approaches in TEYL	31
Teaching through stories	29
Theme based teaching and learning	27
Language Acquisition in Children	24
Language Development of Children	22
Use of Drama	22
Storytelling	20
Task and activity-based learning	16
Samples (activities, materials, lessons)	16
Use of technology in TEYL	16
Learning styles and strategies of YL	16
Application of Activities	15
Cognitive development of YL	14
Supporting FL learning	14
Contextual Language Teaching	13
Vocational development methods for teacher of TEYL	13
Classroom Language	12
Learning environment	12
Use of Child Literature	11
Policies in TEYL/primary school	11
Culture	10
Difficulties faced in TEYL	10
Effective Teacher-Student Interaction	10
Development of visual and audial tools	10
Content-based language teaching	10
Role-playing	10
Myths in TEYL	8

Art and Craft	8
Psychological development	8
TEYL in the world	8
Very Young Learners Teacher	8
Visual teaching	7
Family Involvement	7
Determining priorities, syllabus, and coursebook	7
Issues in Teaching English to Children	7
Syllabus for YL	7
Use of Interactive Applications	6
Learning to learn	6
Teaching pronunciation	6
Motivation	6
English teaching programme in Türkiye	6
Story-based language teaching	6
Effective Communication	6
Benefits of TEYL	5
Emotional development	5
Intercultural Competence	5
Analysis of activities based on coursebook	4
Activity-based lesson plan	4
Practical Applications	4
Program Evaluation for YL	3
Use of Cartoons	3
Interdisciplinary English	3
Critics of TEYL curriculum in Türkiye	3
Project-based teaching	3
Critical period hypothesis and TEYL	3
Working with a coursebook	3
Policy Issues in TEYL/Primary Level	3
21. century skills in TEYL classrooms	3
Topic-based learning	3
CEFR	3
Observation	3
Reflection and feedback	3
Repetition and personalization	3
Neurological basis of language processing	3
Social and Emotional Learning	3
Historical development of TEYL	2
Process of TEYL	2
Active Participation in the class	2
Integrative Physical Response Method	2
Gamification in TEYL	2
Positive relationships	2
Collaboration and Cooperation	2
Outdoor Education in Language Teaching	2

Learning Routine	2
Scaffolding	2
Value Teaching	2
Engagement	2
The Relationship Between Native and Additional Languages	2
TEYL in Türkiye	1
Technology Assisted Language Teaching	1
Nature of tasks in language classrooms	1
Task development	1
Sustainable development targets and TEYL	1
Strategies for children with special needs	1

The result of the document analysis presents the topics sorted by the most to the least frequent topics included in the content of TEYL and TEEC courses at the state universities in Türkiye, published articles and books as well as the observation of the online courses regarding the subject of teaching English in pre-school education. According to the identification of the frequency, the topics of *teaching reading* and *teaching writing* have been excluded due to the fact that particularly children in the early childhood stage are, who are typically considered the age between 3 and 6 (Doan & Quyen, 2022), “with illiteracy who have not started their schooling yet” (p.107), and they are not acquired the literacy skills in a FL at schools (Veliou et al., 2022). Therefore, the topics covering teaching literacy skills in TEEC settings are omitted from the results before the process of preparation of the survey for the second phase of the study.

The survey analysis is essential in order to provide the answer to the RQ2 “What are the most preferred topics by the EFL teachers and the lecturers about the content of Teaching English in Early Childhood?”. For answering this question, the survey has been prepared based on the categorization of the topics resulting from the document analysis and delivered to the participants to collect their opinions regarding their experiences. As a result of the document analysis, the categorization of the topics has been presented to the experts in the fields. According to the experts’ opinions, the notion of “young learners” has been changed to “very young learners” or “early childhood” where it is necessary in the survey.

Table 2. Most Frequently Preferred Topics by the Participants (N=42)

	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Using and developing creative teaching tools (songs, games, puppets, art and craft)	1	10	9,31	2,054
Motivation and engagement in the classroom	1	10	9,24	2,046
Development and application of visual tools	1	10	8,98	2,078
Classroom management and interaction	1	10	8,95	2,129
Material design, development, and its application	0	10	8,88	2,211
Learning styles and strategies of very YLs	1	10	8,83	2,241
Social and emotional learning	0	10	8,74	2,296
Practical classroom applications	1	10	8,71	2,212
Strategies for teaching a foreign language to children with special needs	1	10	8,71	2,298
Language development in children	0	10	8,62	2,668
21st-century skills in very YL classrooms	1	10	8,57	2,221
Basic characteristics of children in Early Childhood	1	10	8,57	2,401
Lesson planning types and their applications	1	10	8,55	2,200
Reflective practices (feedback, observation)	1	10	8,55	2,319
Psychological and emotional development of children	0	10	8,52	2,634
Teaching language skills (speaking, listening, vocabulary, pronunciation)	1	10	8,40	2,706
Cognitive and neurological foundations	0	10	8,38	2,603
Use of technology in and for the class	1	10	8,36	2,468
Vocational development of very YL teacher	1	10	8,36	2,574
Curriculum and syllabus development	0	10	8,29	2,472
Parental and family involvement	1	10	8,12	2,539
Challenges faced	0	10	8,07	2,797
Interdisciplinary English teaching	0	10	7,98	2,772
Specific approaches and methods	1	10	7,95	2,659
Literature and story-based teaching	1	10	7,83	2,556
Local policy and global perspectives	0	10	7,50	2,716
Teaching Values	0	10	7,36	2,937
Assessment and evaluation in very YL classrooms	1	10	7,05	2,938
Myths and misconceptions in very YL	0	10	7,05	3,068
Specific theoretical frameworks	0	10	6,71	2,990

The participants have been asked to number the topics from 1 to 10 in the order of importance. 0 (zero) means it has no importance while “1” represents the least important and “10” demonstrates the most important item. Based on the topics exhibited in Table 2 which are ranked in terms of the preferences, they are assumed to include in the scope of the aimed suggested course syllabus. The duration of the courses in one semester at universities based on the information found in the bologna systems is 13 weeks, except for the midterm and final examination weeks. Therefore, the most frequently preferred 14 topics are planned to be considered. According to the results, the 14 most frequently preferred topics are ordered as follows: *Using and developing creative teaching tools (songs, games, puppets, art and craft)* ($M=9,31$); *motivation and engagement in the classroom* ($M=9,24$); *development and application of visual tools* ($M=8,98$); *classroom management and interaction* ($M=8,95$); *material design, development, and its application* ($M=8,88$); *learning styles and strategies of*

VYLS ($M=8,83$); social and emotional learning ($M=8,74$); practical classroom applications ($M=8,71$; $SD=2,212$); strategies for teaching a foreign language to children with special needs ($M=8,71$; $SD=2,298$); language development in children ($M=8,62$); 21st-century skills in very YL classrooms ($M=8,57$; $SD=2,221$); basic characteristics of children in Early Childhood ($M=8,57$; $SD=2,401$); lesson planning types and their applications ($M=8,55$; $SD=2,200$) and as the final topic among the most frequent 14 topics is *reflective practices (feedback, observation)* ($M=8,55$; $SD=2,319$). To design the suggested syllabus within the frame of purposeful objectives and outcomes, the opinions of the experts in the field have been taken into account (See the Appendix). From a critical viewpoint, the most preferred topic is *using and developing creative teaching tools (songs, games, puppets, art and craft)* ($M=9,31$) while the least preferred topic is *specific theoretical frameworks* ($M=6,71$). In this sense, it can be deduced that the participants have determined the “practical” topics rather than theoretical information as also highlighted in Önal and Gürsoy’s study (2020). This interpretation indicates the reality regarding the lack of practice into TEEC classrooms is an issue to raise. More practical topics, and applicable information could be integrated to the syllabus based on the needs of the EFL teachers in kindergarten or preschool institutions. The last question of the survey is specified as open-ended which aims the participants to state if they have any recommendations for teaching English in kindergarten/preschool besides the topics provided. There are 8 different answers in total which are coded in terms of their main points emphasized, as listed in Figure 4.

Topics Suggested By The Participants
1. Creating Learner-Friendly Learning Environment 2. AI-Based Teaching Resources 3. Opportunities for School Experience with vYLS 4. Learning to Play Simple Musical Instruments (ukulele, guitar) 5. Establishing Emotional Bond 6. How to Encourage The Students To Be More Creative 7. Creating and Using of Innovative Materials 8. The Importance of The Teachers' Wellbeing

Figure 4. The List of the Topics Gathered from the Open-ended Question of the Survey

Based on the answers, the suggested topics are related to the practical skills in the classrooms, as it has been also particularly emphasized after the result of the survey analysis. The answers provided by the participants can be regarded as quite supportive of the results of the survey analysis. With this open-ended question, it has been targeted to collect supportive ideas in the hope that they would be impactful for the syllabus planned to suggest for the TEEC courses.

Conclusion and Discussion

Content of the TEYL courses delivered in ELT departments at the state universities in Türkiye demonstrates the approach which includes both consistency and important divergence. The consistency is dominantly regarding the centralized curriculum framework suggested by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) the target of which is to standardize the teacher training program in the national aspect; and therefore, it frequently addresses to the common proficiency objectives as indicated in such framework like CEFR (Ataberk & Mirici, 2022; Öztürk & Aydın, 2019). With the intention of centralization, it is aimed to provide a single-guided path

for the prospective teachers (Öztürk & Aydın, 2019). Therefore, they are trained for standardized objectives and similar purposes in the same context throughout the country.

On the other hand, noticeable divergence can be observed in its practical applications and theoretical foundations. ELT programs are prepared with the objective of training the pre-service teachers to teach English to all age groups. After earning the BA degree from ELT programs in Türkiye, EFL teachers are expected to be capable of teaching English as a FL to any student of any age. Within the scope of TEYLs in particular, it is evident that there is the same significant gap between the theory and practical readiness of EFL teachers (Önal, 2025; Öztürk & Aydın, 2019). In this regard, as it is reported in some recent studies, both pre-service and in-service EFL teachers highlight that the current program is initially theory-based and include insufficient practical application opportunities. Moreover, materials in the course content are regarded inadequately tailored to the actual classroom needs or lack of innovative teaching methods (Ataberk & Mirici, 2022; Önal & Gürsoy, 2020; Öztürk & Aydın, 2019) specifically for TEYLs settings. In addition to this, there is a remarkable need for necessary resources and updates for the content. For instance, the use of technology and digital tools in the classroom are presented in the lectures. However, it is indicated as an additional topic rather than mentioned as in the actual curriculum (Gürsoy & Özcan, 2021; Öztürk & Aydın, 2019). As it is illustrated in Table 1, according to the result of the document analysis, the topics of *Use of Technology in TEYL* and *Technology-Assisted Language Teaching* are not demonstrated among the most frequent topics. Another example regarding the divergence could be multicultural awareness of EFL teachers. Multicultural awareness is a vital topic since English is taught as a lingua Franca in Türkiye. This causes a requirement for EFL teachers to conduct their lessons as an adequately competent non-native speaker of English considering the context of an increasingly multicultural and multilingual world (Bayyurt et al., 2019).

Considering the results of the survey analysis, several research report that pre-service teachers in ELT department frequently complain about the opportunities of application the theoretical knowledge in real classroom settings (Ataberk & Mirici, 2022; Ataş & Balıkçı, 2021; Öztürk & Aydın, 2019; Şahin, 2023; Önal, 2025). That is why the EFL teachers ranked the following topics as significance: *Using and developing creative teaching tools (songs, games, puppets, art and craft)* ($M=9,31$), *development and application of visual tools* ($M=8,98$), *material design, development, and its application* ($M=8,88$), *practical classroom applications* ($M=8,71$; $SD=2,212$), *lesson planning types and their applications* ($M=8,55$). These topics allow us to claim that hands-on activities support the EFL teachers to build classroom management skills, receive more practical information, and ability to apply the theory for their classrooms.

The second point is regarding the interaction with the children and their engagement in the classroom. Practical requirements of EFL teachers in the classroom contain both improving solid classroom management skills and dynamic interaction with children (Şahin, 2023; Zhou et al., 2021). Therefore, *motivation and engagement in the classroom* ($M=9,24$), and *classroom management and interaction* ($M=8,95$) are considered by the participants as crucial.

Another aspect to discuss according to the results of the survey is related to understanding children in early childhood as language learners. This point includes the main idea about how kids learn a language and therefore, how EFL teachers can adapt their teaching process accordingly. Considering the importance of the fact that effective TEYLs process requires to take some key elements into account such as gaining insight regarding the unique learning styles of children, and the way they process information and internalize. Understanding these facts enables EFL teachers to be able to adapt and manage the lesson process via age-appropriate

strategies containing a diverse range of methods, approaches, activities in materials development and their lesson planning (Cesur & Bulanık, 2020; Önal, 2025). Based on the results of the survey, the participants consider the following topics significant so that they can prepare their materials and apply practical applications in their lessons: *Learning styles and strategies of VYLs* ($M=8,83$); *social and emotional learning* ($M=8,74$); *strategies for teaching a foreign language to children with special needs* ($M=8,71$; $SD=2,298$).

To compare the results of the document analysis and survey, according to the results of the survey, *specific theoretical framework* is demonstrated as the least important topic while it is found out that the *specific theories to teach English to children* is the 14th most frequent out of 100 topics according to the document analysis. From another perspective, based on the results of the document analysis, the 10 most frequent topics considered as important are *teaching vocabulary, teaching reading, classroom management, teaching speaking, teaching writing, teaching listening, use of games, basic characteristic features of YLs, assessments and evaluation, and use of songs or music*. On the other hand, as can be observed in the analysis of survey results, the 5 most frequently preferred topics by the teachers are *using and developing creative teaching tools (songs, games, puppets, art and craft), motivation and engagement; development and application of visual tools; classroom management and interaction; material design, development, and its application*. In the light of this information, what can be concluded is that considering the needs of the practitioners is necessary during the process of designing this course syllabus (See the Appendix) targeted at training pre- or in-service EFL teachers for TEEC.

The conclusion includes the answers to the open-ended question. As the answers provided for the open-ended question, the views stated as *creating learner-friendly learning environment, AI-based teaching resources, opportunities for experience with VYLs, learning to play simple musical instrument (ukulele, guitar), establishing emotional bond, how to encourage the students to be more creative, creating and using innovative materials, and the importance of the teachers' wellbeing*. The topics suggested by the participants support the deduction towards the significance of the requirements expressed by the EFL teachers. In addition to this, it could be obviously stated that each suggestion points out a different conclusion to draw. They have great potential to enhance and dive into a wide range of diverse perspectives. Thus, it is crucial to highlight that the syllabus designers should take the opinions of the EFL teachers into account while preparing training for the purpose of TEEC.

To sum up, it can be claimed that there is an obvious need for ongoing communication between the practitioners and academy. In parallel, the content of a course syllabus is required to include more practical topics as well as the opportunities to observe the teaching environment in this specific context, and practice theoretical knowledge in the classroom.

References

- Ataberk, B., & Mirici, İ. H. (2022). An investigation of the 21st century skills in English language teaching (ELT) programs in Turkey. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching (IOJET)*, 9(4), 1513–1544.
- Atak Damar, E., Gürsoy, E., & Çelik Korkmaz, Ş. (2013). Teaching English to young learners: Through the eyes of EFL teacher trainers. *ELT Research Journal*, 2(3), 95–110.
- Ataş, U., & Balıkcı, G. (2021). Linking theory and practice in an ELT program: An evaluation of materials, testing and practicum courses. *Journal of Narrative and Language Studies*, 9(17), 211–226.
- Bayyurt, Y., Kurt, Y., Öztekin, E., Guerra, L., Cavaleiro, L., & Pereira, R. (2019). English language teachers' awareness of English as a lingua franca in multilingual and multicultural contexts. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 5(2), 185–202. <https://doi.org/10.32601/ejal.599230>
- Bland, J. (2019). Teaching English to young learners: More teacher education and more children's literature! *Children's Literature in English Language Education*, 7(2), 79–103.
- Breen, M. P. (2001). Syllabus design. In R. Carter & D. Nunan (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to teaching English to speakers of other languages* (pp. 151–159). Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, H. D. (2002). English language teaching in the 'Post-Method' era: Toward better diagnosis, treatment, and assessment. In J. Richards & W. Renandya (Eds.), *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice* (pp. 9–18). Cambridge University Press.
- Butler, Y. G. (2019). Assessment of young English learners in instructional settings. In X. Gao (Ed.), *Second handbook of English language teaching* (pp. 477–496). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02899-2_24
- Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching languages to young learners*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cesur, K. (2012). *Examining competencies of prospective English teachers through their pedagogical content knowledge: A case study* (PhD thesis, Gazi University). Ankara.
- Cesur, K., & Bulanık, F. (2020). EFL teachers' most preferred topics for the syllabus of the course "Teaching English to young learners". *International Journal of Educational Spectrum*, 2(1), 25–37.
- Clarke, P. (2009). *Supporting children learning English as a second language in the early years (birth to six years)*. VCAA.
- Council of Europe. (2018). *Common European Framework of Reference: Companion volume with new descriptors*. <https://rm.coe.int/cefrcompanion-volume-with-new-descriptors-2018/1680787989>
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluation quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Pearson Education Limited.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2023). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. SAGE Publications.

Dinçay, T. (2010). Designing a learner-centered ESP course for adults based on evidence from a questionnaire and incorporating the learner's aims into a situational-based syllabus. *Dil Dergisi*, 150, 7–21. https://doi.org/10.1501/dilder_0000000135

Djigunovic, J. M., & Krevelj, S. L. (2022). From preprimary to primary learning of English as a foreign language: Coherence and continuity issues. In M. Schwartz (Ed.), *Handbook of early language education* (pp. 613–639). Springer.

Doan, T. V., & Quyen, B. T. T. (2022). Difficulties encountered by teachers in using storytelling to teach very young learners. *HCMCOUJS-Social Sciences*, 13(1), 106–116. <http://dx.doi.org/10.46223/HCMCOUJS.soci.en.13.1.2287.2023>

Ellis, R. (1993). The structural syllabus and second language acquisition. *TESOL Quarterly*, 27(1), 91–113. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3586953>

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11>

Gimbert, B. G., Miller, D., Herman, E., Breedlove, M., & Molina, C. E. (2021). Social emotional learning in schools: The importance of educator competence. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, 18(1), 3–39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/19427751211014920>

Gül, Y. E. (2023). A theoretical perspective on survey method from quantitative research methods. *Universum*, 4(106), 64–68. <https://doi.org/10.32743/UniPsy.2023.106.4.15254>

Hoff, E., & Shatz, M. (2007). *Blackwell handbook of language development*. Blackwell Publishing.

Imaniah, I., & Tan, N. (2017). *Teaching English for young learners*. FKIP UMT PRESS.

Intarapanich, C. (2013). Teaching methods, approaches and strategies found in EFL classrooms: A case study in Lao PDR. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 88, 306–311. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.08.510>

Jingga, J. (2022). Teaching English language in early childhood. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 2(1), 46–54. <https://doi.org/10.52622/joal.v2i2.78>

Krashen, S., & Terrell, T. D. (1983). *The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom*. Oxford Peganon.

Lewis, M. (1997). *Implementing the lexical approach: Putting theory into practice*. Language Teaching Publications.

Liao, X. Q. (2020). How communicative language teaching became acceptable in secondary schools in China [Conference presentation full paper]. *The Asian Conference on Education*

ACE 2020: *Surviving & Thriving: Education in Times of Change*. Tokyo, Japan. https://www.ajcr.org/_files/ugd/c51627_bd738f10144146449ab4e8c0a2e2f803.pdf

Long, M. H. (2009). Methodological principles for language teaching. In M. H. Long & C. J. Doughty (Eds.), *The handbook of language teaching* (pp. 373–394). Wiley-Blackwell.

Mahdi, R. N., Ehsan, A., & Javad, Z. (2013). A critical review of recent trends in second language syllabus design and curriculum development. *International Journal of Research Studies in Language Learning*, 2(2), 63–82. <https://doi.org/10.5861/ijrsl.2012.152>

Mahn, H. (1999). Vygotsky's methodological contribution to sociocultural theory. *Remedial and Special Education*, 20(6), 341–350. <https://doi.org/10.1177/074193259902000607>

Meyer, D. Z., & Avery, L. M. (2009). Excel as a qualitative data analysis tool. *Field Methods*, 21(1), 91–112. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X08323985>

Ministry of National Education. (2012). *Çocuklar için İngilizce erken dil öğretimi kurs programı*. Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu Başkanlığı.

Mohan, B. A. (1986). *Language and content*. Addison-Wesley Publishing.

Munby, J. (1978). *Communicative syllabus design*. Cambridge University Press.

Murphy, R. S. (2018). The concept of syllabus design and curriculum development. In Faravani et al. (Eds.), *Issues in syllabus design* (Vol. 6, pp. 1–23). https://doi.org/10.1163/9789463511889_001

Nunan, D. (1988). *Syllabus design*. Oxford University Press.

Nunan, D. (1989). *Designing tasks for the communicative classroom*. Cambridge University Press.

O'Grady, W. (2005). *How children learn language*. Cambridge University Press.

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Leech, N. L. (2004). Enhancing the interpretation of significant findings: The role of mixed methods research. *The Qualitative Report*, 9(4), 770–792.

Ozdem-Yılmaz, Y., & Bilican, K. (2020). Discovery learning—Jerome Bruner. In B. Akpan & T. J. Kennedy (Eds.), *Science education in theory and practice: An introductory guide to learning theory* (pp. 177–190). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-43620-9>

Önal, A. (2025). A modernization proposal for English language teacher training programs in Türkiye. *Психолого-педагогічні науки*, 1, 236–242. <https://doi.org/10.31654/2663-4902-2025-PP-1-236-242>

Önalan, O., & Gürsoy, E. (2020). EFL teachers' views and needs on in-service training as a part of professional development: A case study in Turkish context. *Bartın University Journal of Faculty of Education*, 9(2), 373–387. <https://doi.org/10.14686/buefad.713100>

Öztürk, G., & Aydın, B. (2019). English language teacher education in Turkey: Why do we fail and what policy reforms are needed? *Anadolu Journal of Educational Sciences International*, 9(1), 181–213. <https://doi.org/10.18039/ajesi.520842>

Piaget, J. (1950). *The psychology of intelligence*. Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Pinter, A. (2011). *Children learning second languages*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Prošić-Santovac, D., & Savić, V. (2022). English as a foreign language in early language education. In M. Schwartz (Ed.), *Handbook of early language education* (pp. 449–473). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-47073-9_13-1

Rabbini, R. (2020). An introduction to syllabus design and evaluation [Conference presentation full paper]. *The Asian Conference on Education ACE 2020: Surviving & Thriving: Education in Times of Change*. Tokyo, Japan. https://www.ajcr.org/_files/ugd/c51627_bd738f10144146449ab4e8c0a2e2f803.pdf

Reilly, T. (1988). Approaches to foreign language syllabus design. *ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics Washington DC*. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED295460>

Richards, J., & Rodgers, T. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

Robinson, P. (1998). State of the art: SLA theory and second language syllabus design. *The Language Teacher*, 22(4), 7–14.

Schwartz, M. (2022). Language-conducive strategies in early language education. In M. Schwartz (Ed.), *Handbook of early language education* (pp. 641–668). Springer.

Scott, W. A., & Ytreberg, L. H. (1990). *Teaching English to children* (N. Grant, Ed.). Longman.

Siğırtmaç, A., & Özbek, S. (2009). Teaching English in early childhood. *İnönü University Journal of The Faculty of Education*, 10(1), 107–122.

Snow, M. A., Met, M., & Genesee, F. (1989). A conceptual framework for the integration of language and content in second/foreign language instruction. *TESOL Quarterly*, 23(2), 201–217. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3587333>

Şahin, İ. (2023). Teaching practicum in English language teaching (ELT): A systematic review. *International Journal of Educational Spectrum*, 5(2), 167–196. <https://doi.org/10.47806/ijesacademic.1328463>

Şanal, F. (2016). Syllabus design. *Journal of Turkish Language and Literature*, 2(3), 187–192. <https://doi.org/10.20322/lt.57312>

Takaya, K. (2013). *Jerome Bruner: Developing a sense of the possible*. Springer.

Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. B. (2003). *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research*. Sage Publications.

Uysal, N. D., & Yavuz, F. (2015). Teaching English to very young learners. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 197, 19–22. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.042>

Veliou, E., Argiri, M., & Kontogeorgou, E. T. (2022). Teaching English to very young learners through art. *Culture - Journal of Culture in Tourism, Art and Education*, 2(3), 82–92.

- Villar, M. B., Maldonado, E. Y. C., Zamarron, R. C., & Chavez, A. J. G. (2019). *The challenge of teaching children*. Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas.
- Vygotsky, L. S., Hanfmann, E., Vakar, G. C., & Kozulin, A. (2012). *Thought and language: Revised and expanded edition*. The M.I.T. Press.
- White, R. E., & Cooper, K. (2022). *Qualitative research in the post-modern era: Critical approaches and selected methodologies*. Springer.
- Widdowson, H. G. (1984). Educational and pedagogic factors in syllabus design. In C. J. Brumfit (Ed.), *General English syllabus design* (pp. 22–28). Pergamon.
- Wilkins, D. A. (1976). *Notional syllabuses*. Oxford University Press.
- Yalden, J. (1984). Syllabus design in general education. In C. J. Brumfit (Ed.), *General English syllabus design* (pp. 13–21). Pergamon.
- Yanç, S. (2002). *A suggested advanced reading course syllabus for the first year (first term) students in ELT departments* (Master's thesis). Hacettepe University, Institute of Social Sciences, Ankara, Türkiye.
- Yaşar Ekici, F., & Cengiz, S. (2021). Erken çocuklukta okula uyum ve erken okuryazarlık eğitimi. In F. Yaşar Ekici & K. Kırkıç (Eds.), *Erken çocukluk eğitimi: Kuramdan uygulamaya* (pp. 121–150). Nobel Tıp Kitapevleri.
- Zhou, S., Hiver, P., & Al-Hoorie, A. (2021). Measuring L2 engagement: A review of issues and applications. In P. Hiver, A. H. Al-Hoorie, & S. Mercer (Eds.), *Student engagement in the language classroom* (pp. 75–98). Multilingual Matters.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to ÇOMÜ ÇABAÇAM and ÇOMÜ Kindergarten English teachers since they sincerely contributed to this study as participants.

Author Contributions

The article is based on a master thesis supervised by the second and written by the first author. All authors have contributed equally to this article.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have declared no conflict of interest in this study.

Funding

The authors did not receive any funding for this article from any institution.

Appendix***A Suggested Course Syllabus for Teaching English in Early Childhood***

Objectives: This course aims to prepare in- and pre- service EFL teachers to efficiently and confidently teach English to very young learners by integrating the theoretical framework with practical aptitudes by noticing the age-appropriateness while designing lesson plans, developing materials, and applying them successfully.

Weeks	Topics
1.	Basic characteristics of children in early childhood
2.	Language development in children in early childhood
3.	Learning styles and strategies of very young learners
4.	21 st century skills for very young learners
5.	Motivation and engagement in the very young learners' classroom
6.	Classroom management and interaction with the children in early childhood period
7.	Strategies for teaching a foreign language to children with special needs
8.	Mid-Term Week
9.	Material design, development and their application
10.	Using and developing creative teaching tools
11.	Development and application of visual tools
12.	Lesson planning types and their applications
13.	Reflective practices in TEVYLs (feedback, observation)
14.	Practical classroom applications
15.	Final Week

Outcomes: By the time they finalize this course, the students will be able to:

- gain insight into the developmental stages of the children in the early childhood period;
- be knowledgeable about the linguistic competence of children in early childhood period;
- obtain theoretical and practical information about strategies for teaching English to children with special needs;
- recognize, develop, and apply the effective strategies in teaching English to children in early childhood period;
- design, assess, and modify age-appropriate resources and materials, and lesson plans;
- be able to implement engaging practices in the real classroom settings;
- develop independent, critical, reflective, and objective treat on their own teaching practices;
- be aware of the significance of professional development opportunities