



## ASSUMPTIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL KNOWLEDGE: TEACHING AND LEARNING ACCORDING TO TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

### İNANÇLAR VE PEDAGOJİK BİLGİ: İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLERİNE GÖRE ÖĞRETİM VE ÖĞRENME

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**ABSTRACT:** This article investigates assumptions and pedagogical knowledge of English teachers working in primary, secondary and higher education in Turkey to identify their current orientations towards practices in foreign language learning and teaching. A survey was administered to 197 participants. The two questionnaires, on learning and teaching, were designed in a way to identify the extent to which teachers' views overlap with those offered at teacher training programs as well as their beliefs and assumptions that markedly deviate from the current state of the art research. Findings overall reveal that teachers' views overlap considerably with those in foreign language learning and teaching scholarship. However, traces of Audiolingual Method can be seen in teachers' thinking. They favor the use of language laboratories as well as the repetition drills. Gender, age, and experience do not play a statistically significant role in the assignment of assumptions and pedagogical knowledge.

**Key Words:** teacher assumptions, pedagogical knowledge, foreign language learning and teaching.

**ÖZET:** Bu çalışma Türkiye'de ilk, orta ve yüksek öğrenim kurumlarında çalışan İngilizce öğretmenlerinin öğretim ve öğrenime karşı tutumlarını, inançlarını ve mesleki bilgilerini incelemektedir. Çalışmada 197 öğretmene uygulanan bir anket kullanılmıştır. Öğrenim ve öğretim üzerine hazırlanmış iki ayrı bölümden oluşan anket, öğretmen görüşlerinin öğretmen yetiştiren bölümlerde verilen bilgilerle ne kadar örtüştüğünü ve mevcut alan yazın bilgilerinden kayda değer tarzda ayrılan inanç ve tutumlarını ortaya koyacak şekilde tasarlanmıştır. Bulgular göstermektedir ki ankete katılan öğretmenlerin yabancı dil öğrenimi ve öğretimi alanındaki görüşleri, alanda kabul gören prensiplerle geniş çapta örtüşmektedir. Bununla birlikte, işitsel-dil yönteminin izleri hala görülmektedir. Öğretmenlerin dil laboratuvarı ve tekrara dayanan alıştırmaları destekledikleri görülmüştür. Ayrıca, cinsiyet, yaş ve deneyimin inançlar ve pedagojik bilgileri belirlemede istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir etkiye bulunmadığı da gözlemlenmiştir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** öğretmen inançları, pedagojik bilgi, yabancı dil öğrenimi ve öğretimi.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

If a teacher is trained properly in the light of the state of the art research, s/he is expected to teach adequately. Therefore, teacher training programs were and have been attributed a prominent place in educating the language teacher. However, research into the pedagogic behavior of language practicing teachers have revealed that teachers do not carry out their occupations in the light and formation of the principles taught to them during the training program at universities (Binnie-Smith, 1996; Almarza, 1996). This is partly so because, within the web of personal and social interactions, teachers of English appropriate new information and knowledge as to how best teaching should be conducted as well as what the nature of foreign language learning is. Furthermore, teachers' accumulated experience over the years on the issue of what the most effective ways of teaching are will play a vital role in their approach to and practice of teaching.

This study is essentially driven by the need to identify the causes of dissatisfaction and/or failure with the outcomes of English language education in the Turkish context. Further, it is partly assumed that dissatisfaction has a lot to do with teacher performances in the classroom. The first issue in this pursuit could be to find out the mental dispositions of practicing teachers, with the hypothesis that what teachers think will inevitably influence what they do. It would not be too wrong to say that teachers' understanding of what teaching and learning an additional language is shaped by two main factors: 1) teachers' pedagogical knowledge, received during pre-service education and 2) teachers'

beliefs and assumptions, obtained through experience. The present study attempts to determine which of these two is more influential for the ways teachers teach English.

## 2. TEACHER BELIEFS AND ASSUMPTIONS

The success of any type of education generally depends upon three key factors: the teacher, educational materials and the learner. Of these three, the conventionally and relatively more important one is the teacher, who guides, controls, promotes or hinders learning. In spite of the fact that in the last two decades or so the emphasis on education has shifted from teacher-centered to learner-centered teaching/learning, this has not declined the importance of the role of the teacher. The teacher still has the great role and responsibility of providing his/her students with an environment in which students can learn efficiently the subject matter as well as become independent learners who can reach the correct and sufficient knowledge; and subsequently evaluate, assimilate, adapt and reconstruct that knowledge in connection with their needs. This is more significant in cultures where students are more introvert and rely greatly on teacher initiation.

Tedick and Walker (1994) suggest that despite the vast descriptive and prescriptive literature on second language teacher preparation it is important to uncover the conceptions, beliefs, and values that underlie the descriptions and prescriptions, or the thoughts that guide teachers' practices in classrooms. A teacher has different types of knowledge at different levels. One main type is the content knowledge which is the knowledge of the subject matter that the teacher teaches. During the teaching practice, the teacher prepares, amongst other things, the knowledge, and then select, adapt and tailor it to student needs and qualities. 'Belief' as a general term is "... a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behavior." (Borg, 2001: 186-87). Implications of this general description of beliefs is clear for teachers; for beliefs to be 'beliefs', they need to be evident in their behaviors. When this term is collocated with teachers, 'teacher beliefs', it refers to teachers' pedagogic beliefs or those beliefs of teachers that are relevant to their teaching practice. Woods' (1996: 55) definition is more comprehensive: teacher beliefs is "...the entity of what teachers embrace, including attitudes, values, beliefs, thinking, images, knowledge, conception, working principles, practical knowledge, and implicit theories." The present study accepts both definitions as accurate descriptions of the state of mind of teachers relating to teaching and learning.

Pajares (1992), working extensively on teachers' beliefs, concluded with a certain level of certainty that teachers' beliefs had a much greater influence than teachers' knowledge on their lesson planning, decision-making, and general classroom practice. This should, of course, not to be interpreted negatively in the sense that teachers do wrong the moment they deviate from what the contemporary scholarship suggests. In fact, this could be an attempt to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Further, some merit should also be seen in their determination to change given the variety of contexts they practice. Mok's (1994) search for the causes of beliefs are illuminating. Mok indicated that teacher's beliefs about best teaching were guided by their previous experience as a learner as well. It is not surprising that what they perceive to be as perfect or near perfect examples of teaching and learning when they were at the receiving end of education process can be influential in their current thinking.

In studies (among others, Binnie-Smith, 1996; Almarza, 1996) carried out to reveal teacher beliefs that shape and guide their classroom behavior, it has been clearly seen that there is a discrepancy between what teachers are taught at teacher training programs and what they believe and implement in the classrooms. What they believe and assume to work for learning forms their beliefs and assumptions whereas the research based knowledge they receive in pre-service training could be appropriately referred to as pedagogical knowledge. Woods (1996) offers a convenient acronym BAK, with B standing for beliefs, A for assumptions, and K for pedagogical knowledge.

The working teachers' beliefs and views about language learning and teaching may, and perhaps has to, change over time, nonetheless, within certain boundaries. However, they may change so much so that they can have little to do with what they had come to have accepted during their pre-

service education, a situation that may problematize the whole idea of language education. Placing aside this extreme example, teacher views may change due to different teaching contexts, target learner group's different features and their diverse needs, which deserves applause, as teachers are evidently trying to adapt to various challenges that were not foreseen in the teacher training books. Findings in this study are to be interpreted in the light of this distinction.

Since teachers' BAK is of crucial importance to learning-teaching practices in the classroom, many studies have been carried out to reveal the underlying belief system of teachers in their classroom practices (Gatbonton, 1999; Donaghue, 2003; Johnson, 1992, 1994; Breen, 1991; Fogarty, Wang & Creek, 1983). The question that needs to be answered is why, of all of the possible choices that could be made by teachers, are some selected and others not? The teacher's BAK play an important role in how the teacher interprets events related to teaching (both in preparation for teaching and in the classroom), and thus affect the teaching decisions that are ultimately made (Woods, 1996:184; Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher, & James, 2002).

The underlying assumption of the studies in the literature is that when teachers work to promote learning in the classroom they are guided by mental acts that have been shaped by the knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning that they have accumulated through the years. Thus, if one can ascertain what these thoughts are, valuable insights can be gained into the knowledge that lies behind them. For instance, Binnie-Smith (1996) examined the reports of 9 experienced ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers in order to understand the nature of their classroom decisions. She found that these teachers' decisions were influenced extensively by their personal constructs of second language theory and their individual beliefs about learning. Additionally, Almarza (1996) examined how 4 ESL pre-service teachers' concepts of teaching developed and whether they could be modified by a course in teacher education. The findings of her study indicate that such concepts are shaped by teachers' past experiences as students. These concepts can be modified slightly by teacher training, but the influence of their learning experiences on the shape of their classroom behavior remains profound.

The present study sets out to reveal a picture of English teachers teaching at Turkish primary and secondary schools as well as universities. This study attempts to tap the area immune from the contextual problems of language teaching, primarily the area where teachers have control over. We are interested in what teachers think rather than what they do although we recognize that there is a strong link between what one does and what one thinks.

Regarding the importance of underlying teacher beliefs about language teaching and learning and how they shape the process of teaching, this study sets out to determine the beliefs of language teachers on two major points: a) how learners learn a foreign language b) how a foreign language is best taught. This study pursues the following research questions:

- 1- Are there any assumptions of teachers of English about language learning and teaching radically different from those of contemporary?
- 2- If so, what are they, and to what extent they overlap or deviate from the established research findings?
- 3- How do participant teachers' assumptions and pedagogical knowledge differ in regards to gender, experience, type of graduation and type of school they work at?

### 3. THE STUDY

197 teachers took part in the study from a wide range of schools in Istanbul through a convenient sampling technique. 117 of these were female while 80 were male. The sample included instructors working in either public or private sector at Prep. classes at universities, primary and high school teachers (Table 1).

Two questionnaires were prepared by the author in the light of the accumulated literature in language education. Questionnaire items received face value from colleagues in the field for the statements' ability to tap teachers' beliefs, assumptions, and pedagogical knowledge. The first questionnaire, "Scale for Beliefs on Learning a Foreign Language", include item statements worded in the form of propositions. Likewise, "Scale for Beliefs on Teaching a Foreign Language", included

items to find out teachers' understanding of views on teaching. Participants were asked to indicate their levels of agreement/disagreement on the content of the item statements through a five-point *Likert* type scale: (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree, (3) Undecided, (4) Disagree, and (5) Strongly Disagree.

**Table 1 Demographic Information on Participants**

Variable	Features	N	%
Sex	Female	117	59.4
	Male	80	40.6
Experience	0-5 years	82	41.6
	6-10 years	62	31.5
	11-15 years	24	12.2
	16 +	29	14.7
Type of School	Public Primary School	30	15.2
	Public High School	58	29.4
	Private Primary School	21	10.7
	Private High School	19	9.6
Type of Graduation	University	69	35.1
	ELT Graduate	131	66.5
	Non-ELT Graduates	66	33.5

The questionnaires were administered to participants by the researcher himself at schools where participants worked. The researcher was always present during administration in case an item statement required explanation. Completion of questionnaires usually took 20 to 25 minutes. Though the item statements were worded in Turkish, some participants required explanation, which was done in only a few occasions by the researcher. Overall, there were no problems during the procedure.

## 4 RESULTS

### 4.1. Results of the Learning Questionnaire

In the pilot study for the learning questionnaire, reliability and internal consistency were computed, which produced the following: the reliability alpha has a moderate level of reliability ( $\alpha = .60$ ), and KMO test produced a moderate level of internal consistency ( $p = .000$ ). Further, one-sample T-test was computed, which displayed a significant difference between the expected and calculated scores. These results warranted the administration of the questionnaire to larger samples. As the items in the questionnaire were assessed by the participants on a 5-point Likert scale, the possible scores of this 40-item questionnaire range from 40 to 200. First, one sample t-test was run to calculate the significance between the expected and the calculated scores, which yielded  $M = 17.96$  and  $p < .05$ , as seen below in Table 2.

**Table 2 One-Sample Test for Learning**

	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff	Test Value = 120 95% Confidence Interval of the Diff	
					Lower	Upper
LEARNING	25.155	196	.000	17,9594	16,5514	19,3674

As such, a significant difference was observed between the expected and calculated scores. That is, the first research question (Are there any assumptions of teachers of English about language learning and teaching radically different from those of contemporary?) is worth pursuing. Next is the third research question (How do participant teachers' beliefs, assumptions and pedagogical knowledge differ in regards to gender, experience, type of graduation and type of school they work at?) to probe whether independent variables (participants' gender, participants' experience, the type of school participants are working at and participants' type of graduation) play a significant role in their BAK orientations. For this purpose, Anova and t-tests were conducted. The results did not generate any significant difference in terms of the participants' demographic attributes, except for one: a significant

difference was noted between those working at private schools and those working at public high schools ( $p < .05$ ). We can now answer the second research question: If participants have BAK, what are they, and to what extent they overlap or deviate from the established research findings? To be able to answer this question on the basis of mean percentages for the responses to item statements, the five point scale was divided along the following lines:  $M \leq 2.50$  is considered supportive of a statement whereas  $M \geq 3.50$  is not supportive (Table 3). Recall that  $M=1$  represents strong agreement while  $M=5$  strong disagreement.

Let us begin the analysis with the items that include pure assumption (which are followed by the sign (F) in the table). Item 01 assumes that children learn a foreign language more easily than adult people. This belief was used to support the early introduction of foreign language learning when people tried to resemble second language learning to first language acquisition. The critical period hypothesis was the main base of this idea but literature did not provide satisfying evidence that there is any such cut-off point for *foreign* language learning. However, in this study nearly all of the teacher participants (90.9 %) believe that there is such a point. A deeper analysis displays much more clear evidence that such a belief does not change according to participants' demographic variables. Another assumption held by many teachers is in item 03: "Some languages are learned more easily than others" is not supported by the literature, and therefore should not be used to justify failures. This also shows that teachers need more training in foreign language learning compared to teaching. According to item 28, teachers think that it is students' responsibility to come to class motivated. Knowledge of teacher initiation and intrinsic motivation has us say that teachers too are responsible in creating desire to learn through interesting activities and course materials. Item 13 reveals that most teachers still favor the motto "Practice makes perfect". A tenet of Audiolingual Method, repetition and drilling are still highly respected by teachers. The use of language laboratories is still a debated issue among teachers although it is no longer favored by research. A clear majority of the teachers surveyed believe that language labs should come back into the profession (item 37). The last assumption in the learning questionnaire relates to the fashionable idea that to master a language one needs to spend time in an English speaking country (item 11).

As for those items that are highly endorsed and supported by research, the following is due. Aptitude plays a significant role in foreign language attainment, which can be better secured with the use of multi-media devices as well as group and pair work techniques and using songs in the classrooms. Learner styles and characteristics, autonomous learning, the judicious use of Turkish in English classrooms are some of the pedagogical principles currently in place (in the tables T stands for a proposition that is supported by research whereas F stands for a belief or an assumption).

**Table 3 Endorsed Items in the Learning Questionnaire (N=197)**

Item Statements	M	SD
01 Children learn a foreign language more easily than adult people. (F)	1.48	.81
02 Some people have special aptitude to learn foreign languages. (T)	1.54	.82
03 Some languages are learned more easily than others. (F)	1.81	.87
17 Practicing by using multimedia devices is important. (T)	1.88	.82
08 A person who speaks a foreign language learns a second one more easily. (T)	1.94	.88
34 Group and pair work are the best techniques to improve the speaking skill. (T)	1.95	.80
18 Learning a foreign language is different from learning academic lessons. (T)	1.95	.93
28 Students should themselves have the motivation necessary for learning. (F)	1.97	.95
38 Teaching English through songs is useful. (T)	2.00	.776
40 The use of Turkish in English teaching can be sometimes useful. (T)	2.04	.83
13 Repeating and drilling a lot is important in language teaching. (F)	2.15	1.18
37 The contribution of language labs to language teaching is unquestionable. (F)	2.20	1.11
11 English is best learned in an English-speaking country. (F)	2.21	1.11
36 No student learning style is similar to another. (T)	2.26	1.08
24 Students who are not trained on how they can improve their English outside the class cannot be successful. (T)	2.30	.84

The number of unendorsed items is comparatively fewer: a total of 6 items (Table 4). By item 22, teachers oppose rightly the idea that English is very difficult: students have no excuse for failing in this premise. The next item which received high disagreement is to do with aptitude. This result is in clash with item 02, discussed above. Item 07 is essentially lecturing avoidance strategy: do not say a grammar feature if you cannot say it correctly. This should be classified as pedagogical knowledge on behalf of teachers. It is nice in item 16 that a considerable number of teachers do disagree that grammar teaching is the most important element of language teaching.

Again, acquisition of new words should be contextualized and related to existing vocabulary items (item 35) and fortunately most of the teachers are aware of this. Finally, item 04, which has nothing to do with language learning, measures participants' overall evaluation of success in foreign language learning in Turkey. A considerable number of teachers think Turkish people are not that good in learning a foreign language.

**Table 4 Unendorsed Items in the Learning Questionnaire (N=197)**

Item Statements	M	SD
22 Learning English is very difficult. (F)	3.97	.94
09 Students doing well in sciences are not good at foreign language learning. (F)	3.79	1.02
07 It is essential not to say a specific language structure until it is said correctly. (F)	3.63	1.09
16 The most important element of learning a foreign language is its grammar. (F)	3.57	1.09
35 It is not absolutely necessary to relate new words to words learned before. (F)	3.36	1.09
04 People in my country are good at learning a foreign language.	3.34	1.01

#### 4.2 Results of the Teaching Questionnaire

To seek out participants' BAK about approaches towards language teaching, a questionnaire which consists of 36 items was set up and a pilot study was conducted. The results of the pilot study displayed a moderate reliability ( $\alpha = .60$ ) but a quite internal consistency. The 36-item teaching questionnaire has possible scores ranging from 36 to 180 in a 5-point Likert type scale and the expected value is  $36 \times 3 = 108$  points. That is, if the observed value is calculated over 108 then the participants' beliefs towards language teaching will be estimated high, which is also the expected result of the study. Otherwise, the results will be estimated low. For that reason, we have run the t-test to calculate the significance and obtained the mean difference as 12.76;  $p = .000$ . This result answers the first research question: teachers possess beliefs and assumptions that are radically different from the commonly accepted practices.

The second research question probed the extent to which teachers' beliefs, assumptions and pedagogical knowledge overlap or deviate from the established research findings. For this purpose, the items relating to assumptions were taken into account. As was with the analysis above,  $M \leq 2.50$  is considered supportive of a statement whereas  $M \geq 3.50$  is not supportive. As the number of items that are supportive of the item statements is great (18), we decided to present the top ten items (Table 5).

Speaking overall, the fact that most teachers agreed with the contents of propositions is promising for teaching practice in Turkey (Table 5). Only item 13 brings in a false assumption, that is, "Mastery in listening/reading skills is essential before writing /speaking". As a matter of fact, learners at every stage of development can benefit from productive skills and waiting for mastery of receptive skills before students start to produce can be both impractical and too ideal, especially in input-scarce countries. Fear of students producing errors is just not justified. Errors are part and parcel of learning endeavor.

As for the endorsed items that are grounded in literature, we can say the following. Personal traits and tendencies of learners; the role of writing and speaking in the emergence of language development; significance of in-service training; speech errors requiring further speaking opportunities; appropriate teaching materials; importance of stress and intonation; contribution of subconscious learning in informal contexts including those involving native speakers; and to end with, use of familiar character names (i.e. Turkish) have been noted.

**Table 5 Endorsed Items in the Teaching Questionnaire (N=197)**

Item Statements	M	SD
31 Students' needs and talents should be known for an effective teaching. (T)	1.61	.86
01 The real acquisition happens by students' practice in speaking and writing. (T)	1.75	.86
25 In-service training helps improve the quality of English teaching. (T)	1.86	1.01
05 Errors in the speech of learners require lots of spoken practice. (T)	1.90	.88
18 Lack of suitable materials harms language instruction to a great extent. (T)	1.94	.98
33 Features of spoken language like stress and intonation should be taught. (T)	1.95	.89
06 Language is meaningful communication and learned subconsciously in informal social environments. (T)	2.04	.93
03 It is a sign of learning if students can interact with native speakers. (T)	2.12	1.04
13 Mastery in listening/reading skills is essential before writing /speaking. (F)	2.19	1.01
20 Teachers can use Turkish names for characters in dialogues. (T)	2.23	1.04

Next is to find out what teachers relatively strongly disagree. Table 6 presents the five items that had an average mean above 3.50. Generally speaking, as was the case with results presented above, teachers appear to have the right orientation. Most teachers are of the idea that speaking should not be left to its own course development, that drama does in no way distract the aim of a lesson, that materials addressing five senses are vital, that pronunciation is a priority, and consequently, that exams do contribute to the language instruction.

**Table 6 Unendorsed Items in the Teaching Questionnaire (N=197)**

Item Statements	M	SD
14 No need to teach speaking, as learners themselves begin to speak mostly. (F)	4.05	1.02
30 The teacher's use of drama distracts the aim of language instruction. (F)	4.04	1.01
34 There is no need for materials that address the five senses. (F)	4.03	1.07
28 Pronunciation is not a field having a priority for a language teacher. (F)	3.62	1.10
29 Exams do not contribute to language instruction, even if indirectly. (F)	3.59	1.03

Having thus far addressed the second research question, we can now turn to the third research question, which inquired into whether beliefs and assumptions are associated with a group of demographic attributes in the participant teachers. For this purpose, we ran ANOVA and t-tests using the SPSS version 11.5. The results of the test revealed that teachers' views did not significantly correlate with any of the independent variables (i.e. gender, experience, type of graduation, and type of school they work at).

Before we end the presentation findings, it is useful to search for a correlation between participants' overall responses for learning and teaching. For this purpose, the Pearson correlation coefficient was computed:  $r = .435$ . A correlation between two scores (i.e. that of teaching and learning) is confirmed. Next, a t-test was run to see whether this correlation is statistically significant or not. The correlation is significant at level .05 ( $p = .000$ ). This statistically significant correlation shows that teacher's beliefs deeply influence their approaches and practices to language teaching.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Results obtained in the language learning area answered the first research question positively. That is, teachers possess assumptions that are radically different from those established by research. As for the third research question, it was seen that independent variables such as gender, experience, and type of graduation do not play a significant role for the way they hold assumptions and pedagogical knowledge in foreign language learning. Nonetheless, the type of school they work at showed some marked differences. Those teachers working in the public sector have significantly higher levels of beliefs and assumptions than those working in the schools of the private sector. In

other words, the principles by which private school teachers teach tend to be closer to those prescribed by the contemporary research. This may be due to the fact that private school teachers are more often scrutinized to update their knowledge in the field and shape their practices in the light of the recent developments. It may also be very much related to the very little amount of in-service training that public school Turkish teachers of English receive (Karaata, 2010).

The second research question extends the first research question: what specific assumptions and features of pedagogical knowledge do teachers have? In what follows, we present those areas pertaining to assumptions, as this is the area where pedagogic intervention can take place. The highest agreed item is “Children learn a foreign language more easily than adults”. This statement would be absolutely true if the context were a second language learning one. However, in foreign language learning contexts it is difficult to uphold this statement. Hardly is there a body of research that shows, when independent factors are held constant, lower age would produce a higher retention rate for foreign language proficiency. In fact, some studies show that younger adults and adults outperform their younger groups (Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle, 1978). The proposition contained item 03 “Some languages are learned more easily than others” is not supported by the literature. Linguistics tells us that languages by and large have equal complexity in the features they have.

The issue of motivation has been one of the important determiners of attainment in language proficiency. In this regard, it was important to find out what teachers think. Item 28 wanted to capture their views on motivation. Majority of teachers think that it is students’ responsibility to come to class with a reasonable level of motivation. Research has put forward that learners who lack instrumental, integrative and extrinsic motivation can be motivated through intrinsic motivation (Dörnyei, 1994). Intrinsic motivation occurs in the presence of challenging tasks, interesting activities and course materials, which leaves plenty of room for teachers to work in. Item 13 reveals the inclination of teachers towards the Audiolingual Method, which could be summarized in the motto “Practice makes perfect”. Repetition and drilling is still highly respected by teachers, supported by our observations. Closely related with this method is the use of language laboratories. Teachers favor the use of language laboratories. The final assumption the study unearthed in the learning questionnaire relates to the popular idea that to learn a language one needs to be exposed to environments where language is used in social transactions.

In the area of teaching, too, teachers hold assumptions that need attention, which basically answers the first research question positively. The second research question probed the area where teachers’ beliefs, assumptions and pedagogical knowledge are. It is encouraging to see that almost all item statements that received highest agreements from the participant teachers are pedagogically sound. Of the ten endorsed items, only one is related with an assumption: “Mastery in listening/reading skills is essential before writing /speaking” (item 13). It may appear to common sense that receptive skills need to precede those of the productive. Furthermore, a silent period is regarded as essential when learners can store enough knowledge master skills before they can put them to production. This is a position that is not justified totally and still debated. The importance of integrating the skills in language teaching is overwhelmingly noted by researchers. One might argue that especially at the very beginning stages the sequence should be listening/reading followed by speaking/writing. However, this cannot be generalized beyond these stages, which form a minority of language development phases overall.

The questionnaire for language teaching elicited favorable responses beyond the expectations of the authors. Teachers appear to have been equipped with the state of the art knowledge. Compared with those responses obtained in the language teaching questionnaire, teachers suffer in their orientations towards the nature of foreign language learning. Attention is clearly needed to be placed on informing teachers on how learning takes place. The accepted paradigm in language education is that teaching needs to be informed by learning outcomes.

Recall that this study was essentially driven by a need to tap problems and dissatisfaction in English language learning. In looking for a factor to blame, teachers appear to be the main culprit, or perhaps the easiest to inspect and lecture. There are of course other factors that do affect the learning outcomes. The scope of this study is limited with investigation of the reported views of the practicing teachers. In view of the results, teachers are not to be blamed for the disappointment experienced in



Turkey. These conclusions can be regarded as safely drawn from the reported views of teachers, especially the encouragement given by Pajares (1992), who claimed that teachers' beliefs had a great influence on their general classroom practice. However, reported views may not fully depict the picture in actual practice, which was earlier noted as a methodological problem. Then, it could be illuminative to look at their practice, if we still insist that teachers are a major party that needs rectification, which could be a direction for future research.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study set out to capture the English language education scene in Turkey from the perspective of practicing teachers, as teachers' views and practices are critical since their agency in the education process is extremely important in implementing novel and effective techniques. Further, the study was initiated to account for the dissatisfaction with the outcome after years of time and resources investment in English learning in Turkey. The findings seem to suggest that language teachers cannot be blamed, at least for the majority of ailing areas in language education. Though surveyed teachers appear to have more than tolerable levels of beliefs on what language learning is, they rate extremely well in their dispositions toward the concept of teaching. Duplicate studies are needed to ascertain or falsify the results reported in this study. Irrespective of these findings, we believe there will be quite a few, expert and non-expert alike, who will continue to place blame on teachers, saying that they have not been properly and adequately trained. Perhaps one way to alleviate these objections and concerns is to look at the classroom practices of language teachers.

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## Genişletilmiş Özet

Öğretmenlerin eğitim ve öğretim konularındaki görüşleri üzerine bugüne kadar yapılmış araştırmalar, her zaman üniversitede aldıkları eğitim ve öğretimin ışığında mesleklerini yürütemediklerini ortaya koymuştur (Binnie-Smith, 1996; Almarza, 1996). Bunun nedeni de, öğretmenlerin hem eğitim görürken hem de öğretmenliğe başladıktan sonra zamanla üniversitede aldıkları eğitime aykırı olarak görüşlerini değiştirmeleri olarak gösterilmiştir. Bu bir bakıma kaçınılmaz olmakla birlikte, İngilizce öğretiminin iyi sonuçlar vermesi açısından aldıkları eğitim doğrultusunda öğretmenlik yapmalarının önemi ortadadır. Tedick ve Walker (1994) öğretmenlerin mezuniyetten sonra ve belli bir deneyime sahip olduktan sonraki görüşlerinin ortaya konmasının gerekliliğini belirtmişlerdir.

Bu araştırma, Türkiye'deki İngilizce öğretimi ve öğreniminin istenilen düzeyde iyi sonuçlar vermemesinin İngilizce öğretmenleriyle ilgili olup olmadığını ortaya koymak için yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın temel amacı iyi sonuç almak için mevcut etkenlerden birinin, yani, öğretmenlerin, yabancı dil öğretimi ve öğrenimi ile ilgili görüşlerinin ne olduğunu ortaya koymaktır. Bu maksatla hazırlanmış 76 maddelik bir anketle, öğretmenlerin inançları ve pedagojik bilgileri ölçülmeye çalışılmıştır. Bağımsız değişken olarak, cinsiyet, yaş, deneyim, öğretmenlik bölümü mezunu olup olmadıkları ve özel veya devlet okullarında çalışmak esas alınmıştır. İngilizce öğretimi ve öğrenimi bilgi ve inançlarını ölçmek için geliştirilmiş olan bu anket, İstanbul'da ilk, orta ve yüksek öğrenimde çalışan 197 öğretmene (117 bayan ve 80 erkek) uygulanmıştır. Okul ve öğretmenlerin ankete katılımı isteğe bağlı ve ulaşılabilirlik ölçütlerine göre sağlanmıştır. Anket verileri SPSS 11.5 programı ile istatistiksel analize tabi tutulmuştur.

İngilizce öğrenimine dair sonuçlar aşağıdaki gibidir. Birinci araştırma sorusu olan "Öğretmenlerin yabancı dil öğrenimi ve öğretimi ile ilgili inanç ve tutumları güncel araştırmalarla elde edilenlerden farklı mıdır?" olumlu olarak yanıtlanmıştır. Diğer bir deyişle öğretmenler, bilgileri dışında bilimsel olmayan bazı fikirlere de sahiptirler. İkinci araştırma sorusu kapsamında öğretmenlerin edinmiş oldukları inançların ve bilimsel bilgilerin neler olduğu sorgulanmıştır. Çocukların yetişkinlerden daha iyi İngilizce öğrendikleri, bazı dillerin diğer bazı dillerden daha kolay öğrenildiği, güdülemenin öğrencilerin kendi başarılarına halletmeleri gereken bir olgu olduğu gibi anket maddelerine öğretmenlerin yüksek oranda verdikleri kabul cevaplarından, yerleşik akademik bulguların dışında bazı inanç ve pedagojik bilgilerinin olduğu anlaşılmaktadır. Yapılan araştırmalar (Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle, 1978) İngilizcenin kullanılmadığı ülkelerde erken veya geç yaşta öğrenmenin herhangi bir etkide bulunmadığını göstermiştir. Hatta bazen, yetişkinlerin bazı konuları çocuklardan çok daha iyi öğrendiği belirtilmiştir. Diğer yandan, dilbiliminden elde edilen verilere göre, dillerin basitlik ve karmaşıklıkta birbirlerine çok yakın oldukları bilinmektedir. Dolayısı ile bazı dillerin kolay öğrenilebileceği gibi varsayımlar yanlıştır. Yine, yapılan araştırmalar ışığında öğretmenlerin güdüsüz öğrencileri, ilginç, heyecan veren etkinlikler seçerek güdülemeyi sağlayabilecekleri ifade edilmiştir (Dörnyei, 1994). Bunların başında içten gelen, anlık ve öğretmen destekli güdüleme yöntemleri sınıf içi güdülemeyi artıran faaliyetler olarak kayıtlara geçmiştir. Üçüncü araştırma sorusu olan, cinsiyet, yaş, deneyim, öğretmenlik bölümü mezunu olunup olunmama ve özel veya devlet okullarında çalışmanın sahip olunan inançları kayda değer şekilde belirleyip belirlemediği sorusu olumsuz yanıtlanmıştır. Yani, inançlar herhangi bir cinsiyet, yaş veya başka bir demografik etkene bağlanamaz. Ancak, çalışılan sektör burada belirleyici olmuştur. Devlet okullarında çalışanların diğerlerine oranla anlamlı olarak daha fazla yanlış fikirlere sahip oldukları sonucu belirmiştir.

İncelenen ikinci alan da öğretmenlerin İngilizce öğretimine dair olan görüşleridir. Bu alanda da öğretmenlerin birtakım yanlış düşünce ve inançlara sahip oldukları ancak bunların hoş görülebilecek kadar etkisiz oldukları görülmüştür. Öğretmenlerin, son dönemde ortaya çıkan gelişmelerin alan yazına kazandırdığı bilgileri edinmiş oldukları saptanmıştır. Bu bölümde elde edilen verilerle öğrenim anketi ile elde edilen veriler karşılaştırıldığında, katılımcıların öğretim ile ilgili konularda oldukça daha fazla bilgi sahibi olduklarına göze çarpmaktadır. Bu sonuca göre, öğretmenlerin daha çok yabancı dil öğreniminin nasıl gerçekleştiği konusunda ek bilgi ve beceri edinmeleri gerektiği ortaya çıkmaktadır. Tekrar öğretim alanındaki sonuçlara dönecek olursak, öğretmenlerin yüksek

rakamlarda onayladıkları ilk on anket maddesi incelendiğinde görülmektedir ki biri hariç hepsinde isabetli davranmışlardır. Bu maddeler, ankete katılan her seviyede çalışan öğretmenlerin pedagojik bilgilerinin yeterli olduğuna kanıttır. Yanlış inanç olarak kabul ettiğimiz madde 13. maddedir: “Konuşma ve yazma becerileri öğretilmeden önce, dinleme ve okuma becerileri iyice sağlamlaştırılmalıdır.” Yaygın olan görüş, bütün becerilerin atbaşı olarak öğretilmesi, birinin diğerinden daha önce veya sonraya bırakılmamasıdır. Anımsanacağı üzere, bu çalışma öğrenim çıktılarının zayıf ve yetersiz kabul edildiği ve bundaki büyük sorumluluğun öğretmenlerde olabileceği varsayımına dayanmakta idi. Bunun gerekçesi de, Pajares’in (1992) belirttiğine göre öğretmenlerin kendi geliştirdikleri veya çevreden elde ettikleri öğretim ve öğrenim ile ilgili inanç ve tutumların, yaptıkları işi doğrudan etkilemesidir. Ancak, öğretmenlerin bu türden araştırmalara verdikleri yanıtların her zaman gerçeği yansıtmayabileceği, araştırmacının hoşuna gidecek yanıtları verebilecekleri veya yaygın öğretmen görüşlerini kendi düşünce ve inançları olarak gösterme eğilimine girebilecekleri unutulmaması gereken ve araştırmayı olumsuz etkileyebilecek etkenlerdendir.

Sonuç olarak, Türkiye’deki İngilizce öğrenim çıktılarının, zayıf, yetersiz ve beklentilerin uzağında olması karşısında, sadece öğretmenlerde eksiklik aramak yersiz olacaktır. Her ne kadar, öğretmenler, belirttikleri görüşler itibarıyla, mükemmel olmasalar da, düşündüklerini yaptıkları varsayımından hareketle, bu olumsuz sonuçtan dolayı tek kabahatli etken sayılamazlar. Öğretmen faktöründen başka, ders kitabı, süresi ve benzeri faktörler de incelenmelidir. Bu araştırmanın tamamlanması ve bütüncül bir bilimsel gerçeklik yansıtabilmesi için de öğretmenlerin belirttikleri inanç, tutum ve pedagojik bilgilerini sınıf ortamında ne kadar pratiğe döktükleri başka bir araştırmayla incelenmelidir.