TEACHING YOUNG LEARNERS ENGLISHTHROUGH LANGUAGE TEACHING MATERIALS*

ABSTRACT
In the present study, a pretest-posttest control group design was used to examine the effect of language teaching materials on teaching English to young learners. The subjects of this study consisted of 76 fifth-grade primary school students attending Atatürk Primary School in Meram, Konya. The study was carried out during the spring semester of 2003-2004 academic year. Since there were only two fifth-grade classes, one of them was randomly assigned as experimental group (n=41) and the other as control (n=35). In the experimental group, the lesson was taught through language teaching materials while it was taught by using traditional teaching methods in the control group. Both groups were pre-tested and post-tested and the data were analyzed by using t-test. The results revealed that students in the experimental group got higher scores than the ones in the control group.
Keywords: English Language Teaching, Teaching Children English, Language Teaching Materials, Young Learners, Material Assessment

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ÖZET
Bu çalışmada, dil öğretim materyallerinin çocuklara İngilizce öğretimi üzerine etkisini incelemek amacıyla kontrol gruplu öntest-sontest deneysel araştırma modeli kullanılmıştır. Denekler, Konya ili Meram Atatürk İlköğretim okulunda okuyan 76 beşinci sınıf öğrencisinden oluşmaktadır. Araştırma 2003-2004 öğretim yılı bahar yarıyılında yapılmıştır. Okulda sadece iki tane beşinci sınıf bulunduğundan, rastgele seçim yöntemi ile birisi deney grubu (n=41) diğeri de kontrol grubu (n=35) olarak belirlenmiştir. Deney grubunda dersler dil öğretim materyalleri kullanılarak öğretilirken kontrol grubunda ise geleneksel öğretim yöntemleri kullanılmıştır. Her iki gruba da çalışma öncesi öntest ve uygulama sonrası sontest uygulanarak veriler bağımsız değişkenler t-testi uygulanarak analiz edilmiştir. Sonuç olarak, deney grubundaki öğrencilerin kontrol grubundaki öğrencilere oranla daha yüksek not aldıkları ortaya çıkmıştır.
Anahtar Kelimeler: İngiliz Dili Eğitimi, Çocuklara İngilizce Öğretimi, Dil Öğretim Materyalleri, Küçük Yaş Grupları, Materyal Değerlendirme

1. INTRODUCTION (GİRİŞ)

Along with the increasing need in learning foreign languages, most people want to learn a foreign language, and most parents want their children to learn a foreign language, especially English, at early ages. Thus, they used to send their children to private schools and the Ministry of Education put English lessons in the curriculum in order to meet this need by the end of 1990s.

Teaching young learners differs from teaching teenagers and adults according to their needs, expectations, learning style and strategies, interests, psychological and cognitive development. Young learners are considered as kinesthetic learners, thus they can easily get bored, and lose their interest, they do not like just sitting and listening to their teacher. If they enjoy the lesson, they will show it, but if they do not, they will express this directly, so teachers can keep going on or change the method they are applying.

Holden (1980, p.6) explains the above situation as: "If the children can only be persuaded to look on the language learning as an interesting activity which requires a certain amount of application attendance is more likely to be regular and progress will be more obvious."

Children's language learning strategies and motivations are different from adults learning a foreign language for specific purposes. McGlothlin (1997) gives the learning strategies of a child as follows:

- The child is not interested in language for its own sake.
- The child is not disturbed by the language he doesn't understand.
- The child enjoys the repetitive events of his life, and uses this enjoyment   to help him learn.
- The child uses his primary interests to help him learn.
- The child directs his attention to things that are easy to understand.
- The child possesses a natural desire to call an object by its name.
- The child uses his natural desire to participate in the life around him to help him learn new language.
- The child adds words to his speaking vocabulary more easily if he already   knows how to pronounce them.
- The child immediately uses the language, and his success in communication builds confidence.
- The child brings tremendous ingenuity to the task of learning.

Similarly, Harmer (2001, p. 38) lists the young language learners' strategies as:

- They respond to meaning even if they do not understand individual words.
- They often learn indirectly rather than directly- that is they take in information from all sides, learning from everything around them rather than only focusing on the precise topic they are being taught.
- Their understanding comes not just from explanation, but also from what they see and hear and crucially, have a chance to touch and interact with.
- They generally display an enthusiasm for learning and a curiosity about the world around them.
- They have a need for individual attention and approval from the teacher.

- They are keen to talk about themselves, and respond well to learning that uses themselves and their own lives as main topics in the classroom.
- They have a limited attention span, unless activities are extremely engaging they can easily get bored, loosing interest after ten minutes or so.

As it can be understood from the McGlothlin and Harmer's explanations above, children facilitate their learning as possible as they can. Language teachers should be aware of this fact and they should try to teach the language in the easiest way. Reason and Boote (1994) point out that the choice of methods depends on teacher preference and the circumstances of teaching such as the amount of time available for instruction and the extent to which practice can take place within the ordinary classroom alongside other class or group activities. Parents or other helpers may be involved, if so it is possible to use various methods. As long as the students feel successful and as long as there is progress it does not matter which method is used.

Schwartz and Pollishuke, (1991) state that "To facilitate learning a foreign language our classroom should be rich in print and language stimulating possibilities" (p. 28) and they give a list of some useful materials and resources for creating a language environment in our classes as in the following:

- posters
- picture books
- big books
- books with accompanying tapes and records
- signs
- puppets
- writing centre (paper, writing tools, ideas for writing)
- challenge cards
- message boards
- audio-visual equipments
- wordless books
- magazines
- newspapers
- fiction books
- novel sets
- dictionaries
- lists

Generally, it is accepted that children's attention span is very short; however, Brown (2001, p. 87) claims that children can also concentrate on something as long as an adult can if the things are interesting for them. Teachers can do various activities to keep their interests and attentions alive. Children like laughing, so teachers can make them laugh while learning and as the children are curious; teachers can use this curiosity to draw their attention. For these reasons, we may infer that language teaching materials are of great importance in learning/teaching a foreign language. Nevertheless, unfortunately, the use of these materials is generally neglected by teachers. In order to teach young learners a foreign language effectively teachers can make the lessons more active and enjoyable and this can be done through language teaching materials. Some of these materials are presented as examples below:

- **Blackboard**: Blackboard is the most important material for a teacher. It is always available in all the classrooms. Teachers can illustrate the language by using blackboard. Teachers can use blackboard for anything: writing, drawing, sticking things on, playing games etc (Pakkan, 1997).
- **Coursebook**: Almost all the teachers use a coursebook in their lessons, because they need to follow a curriculum, and a good coursebook may be very helpful for them in their teaching. Ur

(1996) mentions that "A coursebook provides a clear framework: teacher and learners know where they are going and what is coming next, so that there is a sense of structure and progress" (p. 184).

- **Flashcards:** Pakkan (1997, p. 15) describes flashcards as "sets of mounted cards with words or simple pictures or phrases". For use with all the learners in the classroom, they need to be large enough to be seen by everyone; smaller flashcards can be used in pair or group work. Flashcards are valuable resources for the teachers of young learners. They help teachers to present new vocabulary and actions as they make the meaning concrete. Flashcards are easy to be found, teachers can get flashcards from stationery. Teachers can also make flashcards themselves; they can prepare what they want.

- **Wallcharts, Wallpictures, Wallposters:** *Wallcharts* illustrate aspects of a topic, for example 'The British Constitution', in both textual and pictorial terms. A chart may be made of photograph, artist's drawing, symbol, graph and text. *Wallposters* illustrate a limited bit of information. They are used in advertising and propaganda. In language teaching they may be used to represent single actions or objects, they may also be part of a sequence of pictures. *Wallpictures* represent subjects containing a mass of information. These may be composite wallpictures, meant by the publishers to be used for language work, or cultural information pictures (Wright 1976, pp. 75-76).

- **Real Objects:** Real objects, also called realia, bring some significant reality to language classroom. Using a variety of real objects is one of the most effective ways of teaching and learning vocabulary. Brown (2001, p. 143) states "realia is probably the oldest form of visual aids, but they are still effective in helping students to connect language to reality".

- **Puppets:** We, as teachers, all aware that children like puppet a lot, and also it can be a good teaching material. Applying puppets into teaching a foreign language increases the children's interest. Puppets can be classified as paper bag puppets, glove puppets, hand puppets or finger puppets. Byrne (as cited in Holden, 1980) explains the process of using puppets as:

    Puppets are introduced once and the students know them. The puppets represent characters which appear in the course book such as Professor Patent, Tricky Dicky, and Yankee Doodle Dandy etc. Students choose the character they want to be and announce him (e.g. I'm Professor Patent), then hold up the puppet (p.27).

    In line with Byrne's explanation, Özdeniz (2004) gives one of the most important advantages of using puppets by stating that children can feel more confident when talking through the puppet.

- **Flannel Board:** The flannel board is one of the most widely used teaching materials. A teacher can easily prepare this material by gluing or pinning flannel or fluffy material to a piece of cardboard. Cut-outs, pictures, and figurines may be backed with sandpaper or with flannel so that they will stick to the flannel. The flannel board has to be placed in such a way that the pictures or figurines placed on it will not slide down. (Pakkan, 1997, p.19)

- **Using Technology:** There are various technological equipments which a teacher can easily find and use in his/her language

classroom. Nowadays, almost all schools have a tape recorder, an OHP, a video, a CD player, VCD player, projector or a computer but there are a few teachers who use these equipments, thus they should learn how to use them and bring them into the classroom.

Consequently, the use of technology in language teaching is gaining more importance nowadays. Thus, teachers should be aware of the technology and should know how to use it. They can join discussion groups on internet and also join some institutions to receive daily or weekly lesson plans or activities. There are lots of materials on the Internet teachers can reach free of charge and use them in their language classrooms, for example, they can find almost all the songs for children on the Internet and download them. Moreover, they can prepare their lessons on computers and give lessons by using data shows.

2. RESEARCHE SIGNIFICANCE (ÇALIŞMANIN ÖNEMİ)

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of language teaching materials on young learners' achievement level in English classes. This study also provides an opportunity to compare traditional teaching and teaching through language teaching materials.

In the present study, a pretest-posttest control group design was used to examine the effect of language teaching materials on teaching English to young learners. The subjects of this study consisted of 76 fifth-grade primary school students attending Atatürk Primary School in Meram, Konya. The study was carried out during the spring semester of 2003-2004 academic year. Since there were only two fifth-grade classes, one of them was randomly assigned as experimental group (n=41) and the other as control (n=35).

In the experimental group, the lesson was taught through language teaching materials while it was taught by using traditional teaching methods in the control group. Both groups were pre-tested and post-tested and the data were analyzed by using t-test. The results revealed that students in the experimental group got higher scores than the ones in the control group.

3. EXPERIMENTAL STUDY (DENEYSEL YÖNTEM)

In the present study, the effect of teaching young learners English through language teaching materials on the achievement level in comparison to traditional teaching was examined. For this reason, this study was designed as an experimental study with pre-test, post-test control group. The study was carried out during the spring semester of 2003-2004 academic year.

3.1. Subjects (Denekler)

The sample of the study consisted of 76 fifth-grade students in Meram Atatürk Primary School in Konya. Since there were two fifth grades in the school one of them was randomly assigned as experimental group and the other as control group. The experimental group comprised 41 students while the control group comprised 35 students.

3.2. Instruments (Veri Toplama Araçları)

Pre and post-test was used for the experimental study as assessment instruments. This test was prepared by the researcher after the interview with the classroom teacher. This pre and post test included four sections as fill in the blanks, answer the questions, complete the sentences, and make sentences according to the given chart. The test was applied to students attending another school to measure its reliability, and it was found to be reliable and the reliability coefficient was 0.93.

3.3. Procedures (Yöntem)

The steps followed throughout the study are given step by step in the following:

- After getting the necessary permissions from the provincial directorate of national education, an interview with the school teacher was conducted and the topic of the unit going to be taught was learned.
- Data collecting material was prepared and applied to another group of students to measure its reliability and its reliability was measured by an authority.
- The content of the unit is examined, necessary materials, such as OHP, flashcards, real objects, puppets, are prepared in order to achieve the expected behaviours of the unit.
- Since there were only two fifth-grade classes in the school, one of them was randomly assigned as experimental group.
- A pre-test was applied to both groups before the treatment in order to determine whether the groups have the same level of knowledge about the topic.
- The study was carried out in a four week –two hours for each week –period.
- Different language teaching materials and activities were used in experimental group by the researcher. On the other hand, the students in control group were taught as usual, no special treatment was carried out in the control group.
- After the treatment, both groups were given a post-test and their scores were analyzed by using independent samples t-test.

3.4. The Analysis and Interpretation of the Experimental Study (Deneysel Çalışmanın Analizi ve Yorumlanması)

The data obtained from pre-test and post-tests were analyzed by using independent samples t-test in order to make comparisons between the experimental and control groups. Differences are considered to be statistically significant if $p<0.05$.

3.5. The Comparison of Pre-Test Results of the Experimental and the Control Groups (Deney ve Kontrol Gruplarinin Öntest Sonuçlarinin Karşilaştirilmasi)

At the beginning of the study, it was hypothesized that students had not learnt the topic before. In order to verify this hypothesis a pre-test was applied to both groups. The pre-test results are given in table 1 below:

Table 1. The comparison of pre-test results of the experimental and the control groups

(Tablo 1. Deney ve Kontrol gruplarının öntest sonuçlarının karşılaştırılması)

Group	N	Mean	St. Dev.	t	P
Experimental	41	7.05	3.84	0.45	0.65
Control	35	7.40	2.70		

In table 1 above, t-test results of the experimental and control group students' pre-test are shown. The average score of the experimental group was found as 7,05±3,84; and the average score of the control group was found as 7,40±2,70. According to these results, no significant difference was found between the groups (p>0.05). Thus, it can be said that the groups are homogeneous at the beginning of the study.

3.6. The Comparison of pre and Post-Test Results of the Experimental Group (Deney Grubu Öntest ve Sontest Sonuçlarının Karşılaştırılması)

After the treatment, a post-test was administered to both groups in order to determine whether there were any differences between the groups or not. The scores were analyzed by using independent samples t-test and the results are presented in table 2:

Table 2. The comparison of pre-test and post-test results of the experimental group
(Tablo 2. Deney grubu öntest ve sontest sonuçlarının karşılaştırılması)

Test	N	Mean	St. Dev.	t	P
Pre-test	41	7.05	3.84	7.82	0.001
Post-test	41	17.32	10.21		

The above table shows the comparison of the experimental group students' pre-test and post-test scores. While the average score of pre-test was found 7,05±3,84, the average score of post-test was found 17,32±10,21. As is seen in the above table, there is a statistically significant difference between pre and post-tests results of the experimental group (p<0.001) after the treatment. In other words, students' post-test scores were higher than their pre-test scores.

3.7. The Comparison of pre and Post-Test Results of the Control Group (Kontrol Grubu Öntest ve Sontest Sonuçlarının Karşılaştırılması)

Table 3. The comparison of pre-test and post-test results of the control group
(Tablo 3. Kontrol grubu öntest ve sontest sonuçlarının karşılaştırılması)

Test	N	Mean	St. Dev.	t	P
Pre-test	35	7.40	2.70	6.32	0.001
Post-test	35	11,91	4.65		

In table 3 above, the control group students' pre-test and post-test scores were compared. While the average score of pre-test is found 7,40±2,70, the average score of post-test is found 11,91±4,65. According to the analysis, t-value was found as 6.32, and this value represents a significant difference at the 0.05 level. In other words, it can be said that control group students' post-test scores were also higher than their pre-test scores at the end of four weeks, too.

3.8. The Comparison of the Experimental and the Control Groups' Post-Test Result (Deney ve Control Gruplarının Sontest Sonuçlarının Karşılaştırılması)

After the comparisons of pre and post-test results, it was revealed that the achievement levels of both groups were higher according to their post-test scores. Another comparison test was conducted in order to find whether there were any statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups' post-test scores and to analyze the effects of the treatment. The results were given in the table 4 below:

Table 4. The comparison of the experimental and the control groups'
post-test results
(Tablo4. Deney ve control gruplarının sontest sonuçlarının
karşılaştırılması)

Group	N	Mean	St. Dev.	t	P
Experimental	41	17.32	10.21	2.88	0.005
Control	35	11.91	4.65		

This table presents the statistics of both experimental and
control group students' post-test results. These results were compared
by using independent samples t-test, and while the average score of
the experimental group students was found 17,32±10,21, the average
score of the control group was found 11,91±4,65. T-value between two
groups was 2.88. This figure represents a significant difference
between experimental and control group students' post-test scores
(p<0.05).

When the results of the groups are examined, it is seen that the
achievement of the experimental group students was higher than the
achievement of the control group students, and the empirical evidence
indicated that, using language teaching materials affects teaching
English to young learners in a positive way.

4. CONCLUSION (SONUÇLAR)

This study aimed to find an answer to the question of whether
language teaching materials affect the achievement level of young
learners in English lessons. It is a well-known fact that English
Language Teaching has many problems stemming from various reasons and
among those are traditional teaching methods such as grammar
translation and question/answer exercises as well as the teaching
habits of teachers all of which affect the achievement level of young
learners.

Especially in primary schools teachers use translation, as it is
shortcut and easy, instead of showing or explaining topics to students
by using an object or special materials. Most of the scholars and
methodologists suggest different methods which focus on the functions
of the language and communicative language teaching as alternatives to
traditional methods.

In the light of the rich literature about language teaching
materials the researcher aimed to find out the effects of language
teaching materials on the achievement level of young learners. The
analysis of the experimental study indicated that the experimental
group students' achievement level was significantly higher than those
taught using traditional teaching methods. Consequently, the results
showed that grammar and vocabulary can be taught more effectively
through language teaching materials.

To sum up, the results of the experimental study carried out on
fifth grade students confirmed that using language teaching materials
increased the achievement level and could be used effectively in
teaching grammar and vocabulary as an alternative to traditional
methods.

5. SUGGESTIONS (ÖNERİLER)

As language teachers, we all know that creating a language
classroom atmosphere in which the students actively participate in the
lesson is very difficult. The lessons are generally teacher dependent
and students listen to their teachers in a passive mood. As mentioned
before, young learners' attention span is very short, so they can lose
their interest easily. In order to prevent this, teachers should use
different kinds of activities. To do this they can use language

teaching materials, they can play games with these materials or they can act out a conversation between puppets, or they can have the students watch a cartoon in the target language etc. Consequently, it will be useful to sum up the suggestions as:

- Language teaching materials help teachers make their lessons interesting and joyful, so they can easily attract students' attention during the lesson.
- Teachers should be informed about using language teaching materials. This can be done by planning in-service training programmes for language teachers and also teachers of other subjects.
- Teacher trainees should be taught how to use language teaching materials, especially technology.
- Curriculum designers should pay close attention to language teaching materials and they should also prepare various language teaching materials for teachers.
- Although this study was carried out in Meram Atatürk Primary School in Konya, the results can be generalized for primary schools in Turkey, and of course some other relevant materials can be added for teaching young learners.

NOTICE (NOT)
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