

AN OVERVIEW OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS MAKING TRANSITION AMONG DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL STAGES

FARKLI EĞİTİM KADEMELERİ ARASINDA GEÇİŞ YAPAN İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLERİNE GENEL BİR BAKIŞ

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Abstract: Turkey has experienced an educational reform introducing English into the primary curriculum since 1997, and the government has assigned English teachers to different educational stages and the practice of making transitions between educational stages have started to be implemented. Since 2013, teachers have been assigned to teach all grades from 2nd to 12th without any constraints or required qualifications. Thus, this study aims to investigate the experiences of English language teachers teaching at least two different educational stages by taking into consideration the transition as preference or obligation. Using a case study design, this study questions the opportunities and challenges of English teaching processes at various levels of education by requiring participant teachers to comment on the Ministry of National Education's English teacher appointment practices from different perspectives. The findings indicate that transition among stages has potential opportunities and challenges; however, most teachers believe making transitions among the stages is an effective practice since it offers them a dynamic process and gives them a chance for professional development.

Keywords: *Transition among educational stages, teaching English to different grades, English teacher appointment practices, Turkish educational stages*

Özet: Türkiye 1997 yılından itibaren İngilizceyi ilköğretim müfredatına dahil eden bir eğitim reformu yaşamış ve İngilizce öğretmenleri farklı eğitim kademelerine atanarak eğitim kademeleri arasında geçiş yapmaları uygulanmaya başlamıştır. 2013 yılından bu yana, öğretmenler herhangi bir kısıtlama veya gerekli nitelikler olmaksızın 2. sınıftan 12. sınıfa kadar tüm eğitim kademelerinde ders vermek üzere görevlendirilmiştir. Bu nedenle bu çalışma, eğitim kademeleri arası geçişi, tercih ya da zorunluluk olarak dikkate alarak en az iki farklı eğitim kademesinde görev yapan İngilizce öğretmenlerinin deneyimlerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Vaka analizi araştırma desenini kullanan bu çalışma, katılımcı öğretmenlerin Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı'nın İngilizce öğretmeni atama uygulamaları hakkında farklı bakış açılarından yorum yapmalarını gerektirerek çeşitli eğitim kademelerinde İngilizce öğretimi süreçlerinin fırsatlarını ve zorluklarını sorgulamaktadır. Bulgular, aşamalar arasındaki geçişin potansiyel fırsat ve zorluklara sahip olduğunu göstermektedir; ancak öğretmenlerin çoğu, aşamalar arasında geçiş yapmanın, onlara dinamik bir süreç sunduğu ve mesleki gelişim şansı verdiği için etkili bir uygulama olduğuna inanmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Eğitim kademeleri arasında geçiş, farklı sınıflara İngilizce öğretimi, İngilizce öğretmeni atama uygulamaları, Türk eğitim kademeleri*

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Introduction

In today's world, English has become the Lingua Franca or basic language of many individuals and countries, so Turkey also has started to give a high priority to foreign language policies in education. English language teaching has undergone many phases of transition since it was integrated into the Turkish education system, affected by political and socioeconomic factors (Kırkgöz, 2007). Especially in primary education, English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum experienced a period of change and innovation to achieve its goal of catching up with the European framework of language education and adapting its current system to new educational norms (Kırkgöz, 2007). Starting the major ELT curriculum reform in 1997, the government lowered the age of foreign language learning to ten years of age (4th grade) from twelve years of age (6th grade) in the Turkish context. In the fourth and fifth grades, English has become compulsory for two hours a week. In this curriculum, The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) aimed to familiarize the earlier ages with the foreign language, and help them encourage positive attitudes by increasing motivation (Damar, 2004; Gürsoy et al., 2013; Kırkgöz, 2008; Kocaoluk & Kocaoluk, 2001; MoNE, 1997). With the most recent policy reform in 2013, it reflected the rising importance of English more by lowering the onset of foreign language learning age from nine-ten to six years of age (2nd grade) (Gürsoy et al., 2013). Considering that English has become a major part of each educational stage from second to twelfth grade, the Turkish Government has taken and continues to do a range of steps, especially in revising the curriculum, teaching methods, teacher training and teacher education institutions (Kırkgöz, 2007). From a different viewpoint, changes and upgrades in the curriculum have affected not only the students but also the teachers besides teacher education programs and practices.

As well as the improvements in the implementation planning and preparation process, the government could not avoid the criticism about the practice of the foreign language policies: to meet the increased demand for English teachers, recruiting high school teachers to teach their new primary English classes has become a standard practice (Onat-Stelma, 2005). It was ignored the fact that controlling earlier ages may require different knowledge and skills compared to managing high-school students; and possible to pose a serious challenge for the teachers changing grade levels (Onat-Stelma, 2005). Another point is that, for a brief period after 1997 reform, an English

teacher could teach at most two years younger grades than her previous classes: a teacher who was formerly teaching sixth grade-middle school level- could teach fifth or fourth grades in state schools, not below. However, since 2013 reform, English teachers can teach all the grade levels from second to twelfth without any constraints or required qualifications contrary to many other branch teachers. The government has made it possible to switch from one educational stage to another even in an academic year to meet the teachers demanded. For the reasons such as that teachers who make a transition among different educational stages may find it very difficult to change their way of teaching to use different kinds of activities appropriate for the target group, these transitions might be disadvantages for both teachers and students; and may be one of the factors causing foreign language education strategies to be poorly implemented for several reasons.

In the light of this information, this research aims to investigate the experiences of English language teachers making a transition among different educational stages in state schools in Turkey also by discussing whether it is a choice or an obligation to make such a transition among the educational stages throughout their experiences of teaching. It tries to identify in what ways teaching one educational stage is different from another and questions the pros and cons of each level. Many studies in the literature are dedicated specifically to Turkish language reforms or teaching a foreign language to different age groups; however, this study mainly focuses on transferred teachers among different educational stages according to their preferences or obligatorily.

The study also attempts to offer some possible suggestions for teaching different educational stages and grades since this may be stressful for both teachers and students or the entire process can lead to a waste of time, effort, and money (Moon, 2005) if they do not take it seriously (Arslan, 2012; Cameron, 2003).

Towards this end, the aim of this study was twofold :

- to identify the opportunities and challenges faced by teachers in their approach, strategies or practices while teaching English to different educational stages (primary, secondary, or high school) in Turkey
- to understand in what ways the teachers have been influenced by the potentials of teacher appointment practices by reflecting the pros and cons of teaching English to each different stage.

Method

Design

This study adopted a case study design. The case study design helps a researcher to analyze the data closely within a particular context. It is particularly applicable to help understand the questions of “how and why” by making analysis and it is also extremely useful for the events over which the researcher does not have much control (Schell, 1992; Yin, 2009). This research design has mainly focused on the real-life and classroom experiences, issues and problems of English teachers making a transition between different educational stages.

Participants

In this study, snowball sampling which is one of the non- probability sampling techniques was used to collect data considering that it is mostly related to case study design and qualitative analysis (Taherdoost, 2016). The contributors approved the voluntary participation agreements to be involved in gathering data for the purpose of this study. Furthermore, the study was confirmed by the ethical commission of the authors’ institution with the document date and number of 25/06/2020-E.12457.

Descriptive profiles of the teachers who participated in this study are illustrated and summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.

Demographic Data of the Participant Teachers

Variables		f	%
Gender	Male	20	40.8
	Female	29	59.2
	Total	49	100.0
Educational Level	Bachelor’s Degree	44	89.8
	Master’s Degree	5	10.2
	Total	49	100.0
Age	20-25	12	24.5
	26-30	20	40.8
	31-35	11	22.4
	36-40	4	8.2

	40+	2	4.1
	Total	49	100.0
Years of Experience	1-4 years	18	36.7
	5-9 years	17	34.7
	10-15 years	13	26.5
	16+ years	1	2.0
	Total	49	100.0

As shown in Table 1, this study included 49 teacher participant teachers having at least two educational stages experience out of three (elementary, middle, and high school) in state schools in Turkey. They were asked to share their experiences related to each stage if they have any often by making comparisons. From a total of 49 participant teachers, 59.2% (f=29) were female and 40.8% (f=20) were male. In addition to this, 89.8% (f=44) of the participant teachers had bachelor's degrees in teaching while 10.2% (f=5) of them had master's degrees in English Language Teaching (f=3) and Educational Sciences (f=1) Departments. Age distribution of the survey respondents ranged under five categories as presented in the form of demographic information. According to this, the majority (40.8% (f=20)) of the teacher participants were between 26 and 30 years old, 24.5% (f=12) were between the ages of 20 and 25, 22.4% (f=11) of them were in the 31-35 age group, 8.2% (f=4) were between 36 and 40 and lastly, 4.1% (f=2) were above 40.

The research sample having participated in this study had a wide range of teaching experience. Out of 49 participants, 36.7% (f=18) had 1-4 years of experience, 34.7% (f=17) had been teaching for 5-9 years, 26.5% (f=13) were in the profession of teaching for 10-15 years and 2% (f=1) of them had 16+ years of experience in their teaching profession. Lastly, the participant teachers were from 26 cities from diverse regions in Turkey.

Under demographic questions, the participant teachers were asked their teaching experiences to analyze results deeply and following tables (Table 2 and 3) were formed.

Table 2.

Current Teaching Stages of the Participant Teachers

Current Teaching Stages	f	%
Elementary	7	14.3
Elementary- Middle School	7	14.2
High School	19	38.8
Middle School	15	30.6
Other (Science and Art Center)	1	2
Total	49	100

Table 2 shows participant teachers' current teaching stages in the state schools of MoNE in Turkey. As shown in Table 2, 14.3% (f=7) of the participant teachers had been teaching only at the elementary school stage, 14.2% (f=7) of them had been teaching at both elementary and middle school stages together, 30.6% (f=15) of them had been teaching at only middle school, 38.8% (f=19) of them had been teaching in the high school stage, and lastly 2% (f=1) of them had been teaching at one of the Science and Art Centers in Turkey.

Table 3.

Past Experiences of the Participant Teachers

Question	Answer	f	%
In which educational stage have you taught before?	Elementary	29	59.2
	Middle School	33	67.4
	High School	33	67.3

According to the multiple answers in the form, as shown in Table 3, 59.2% (f=29) of the participant teachers had elementary school experience, 67.4% (f=33) had middle school experience and 67.3% (f=33) of them had high school experience.

Data Collection Tools and Procedures

Data were collected between June 2020 and August 2020 and the process was completed in eight weeks. At the beginning of the study, the questions were planned to be asked through semi-structured interview; however, because of Corona virus infections worldwide, an open-ended form through Google-Docs was created by analyzing some related studies to collect data. The aim of the

form was to ask the participant teachers not only to share their experiences related to teaching each stage but also to comment on the English teacher assignment practice of MoNE. The questions were finalized based on the feedback obtained from the two experts whose fields are “English as a Foreign Language” after revising the similar items in the literature through inter-rater reliability forms. In the form, the questions asking the participants’ experiences in different stages are presented as optional since the participant teachers may not have any experience in the stated stage. The final instrument mainly contains 34 questions: as well as 9 demographic information questions, including 6 optional open- ended questions asking the participants to comment on teaching each educational stage, 7 required both multiple choice and open-ended questions including sub-questions which require participants to elaborate and compare their experiences so that the researcher can get really clear about what is tried to be implied, 2 more open-ended questions asking the teachers which level they enjoy teaching most and least, 2 multiple choice questions related to the English teacher assignment practice of MoNE and 1 last question asking for participant teachers’ suggestion if they have any for the appointment practices they have experienced.

Data Analysis

To analyze qualitative data, the researchers collect, register, decode and relay information. To achieve these, the analysis is defined; in other words, the researchers agree on the objectives of the study; what counts as adequate and necessary information; and how best to collect, register, analyze, and decode that information (Baptiste, 2001). In addition, to make descriptive analysis and correlation statistics for the related questions, SPSS software was also used with quantitative calculations.

For the qualitative aspect of this study, Miles and Huberman’s (1994) model and strategies of qualitative data analysis (three steps: data reduction, data display, drawing and checking of the conclusions) were used while analyzing the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The analyzing framework was adapted and taken into consideration to get a deeper understanding of the questions.

Findings

The findings illustrated here are about the teachers' opinions about the advantages and challenges of elementary, middle, and high school stages in three different tables. Moreover, the teachers' points of view on teaching different educational stages regarding different points are shown. The other findings are about teachers' preferences for teaching different educational stages. Furthermore, the correlation calculations of teachers' views and preferences are presented as an exploratory way aiming to allow researchers to develop their further in-depth research.

Table 4.

Good and Bad Sides of Teaching in Elementary Schools

Good Sides	f	%	Bad Sides	f	%
Easy to Teach	3	6.1	Can't Keep up with the Early Ages	4	8.2
Energetic- Dynamic	7	14.3	Classroom Management Problems	6	12.2
Fast Learners	3	6.1	Classroom Teachers' and Parents' too much Interference	2	4.1
Fewer Classroom Management Problems	3	6.1	Disadvantaged Students	1	2.0
Fun	13	26.5	Focus and Concentration Problems	6	12.2
Homogenous Grouping	1	2.0	Limited Class Hours	3	6.1
Motivated Students	14	28.6	Limited Cognitive Development	8	16.3
No Exam Anxiety	2	4.1	Limited Professional Development of Teachers	1	2.0
Pure Love	3	6.1	Limited Physical Development	1	2.0
Respectful Students	1	2.0	Not Autonomous Learners	6	12
The Sooner the Better Theory	1	2.0	Students Limited Knowledge of Native Language	1	2.0
Unprejudiced Learners	3	6.1	Tiring	1	32.7
Variety of Activities	6	12.2	Too Easy Level	5	10.2

Table 4 shows the opinions of the teachers regarding the good and bad sides of teaching English at elementary schools. It shows that motivated learners (28.6% (f=14)) and its being fun (26.5% (f=13)) were most frequently stated answers by the participant teachers. In addition, energetic-

dynamic students (14.3% (f=7)) and being able to provide a variety of activities to the students (12.2% (f=6)) were reported as positive things by the participant teachers having teaching experience at this stage. Some English language teachers (6.1% (f=3)) also stated that elementary school students were easy to teach, fast, and unprejudiced learners. Fewer classroom management problems were reported by 6.1% (f=3) of the participants. The fact that students feel pure love for the teacher was also appreciated by 6.1% (f=3). The other mentioned points by 10.1% (f=5) were the students' having no exam anxiety, consisting of homogenous groups. There was also a teacher expressing early teaching of a foreign language was crucial. Lastly, one of them mentioned the students were more respectful at the elementary stage.

Table 4 also shows the bad sides of teaching English at elementary schools; the participant teachers expressed thirteen negative things regarding teaching in elementary schools. The most frequently stated answer was it being tiring (32.7% (f=16)). Moreover, 16.3% (f=8) of the teachers believed that elementary school students had limited cognitive development. 12% (f=6) of them stated that they were not autonomous learners and sometimes had focus and concentration problems. In addition, classroom management problems were stated as another problem by 12.2% (f=6). Other important problems, a total of 36.6% (f=18), were students' too easy level, teachers' not keeping up with early ages, limited English course hours, and other stakeholders' (classroom teachers and parents) too much interference. Less frequently stated negative things were disadvantaged students, limited professional development of the teachers, students limited physical development, and limited knowledge of the native language.

Table 5.

Good and Bad Sides of Teaching in Middle Schools

Good Sides	f	%	Bad Sides	f	%
Autonomous Learners	5	10.2	Classroom Management Problems	7	14.3
Awareness of Learning	3	6.1	Disrespectful Behaviors	3	6.1
Developed Cognitive and Academic Skill	14	28.6	Focus and Concentration Problems	2	4.1
Different Evaluation Techniques	1	2.0	Lack of Parents Support	1	2.0
Energetic Dynamic	2	4.1	LGS exam	5	10.2
Fast Learners	4	8.2	Limited Class Hours	1	2.0

Fewer Classroom Management Problems	4	8.2	Limited Cognitive and Academic Development	7	14.3
Fun	2	4.1	Limited Professional Development of Teachers	1	2.0
Good Communication	8	16.3	Unmotivated Students	7	14.3
Motivated Parents	1	2.0	Non-Autonomous Learners	2	4.1
Motivated Students	9	18.4	Out of Date Curriculum	2	4.1
Professional Developments of Teachers	1	2.0	Prejudiced Learners	2	4.1
Pure Love	2	4.1	Puberty	8	16.3
Well-implemented Activities	1	2.0	Students Limited Knowledge of Native Language	1	2.0
Variety of Activities	3	6.1	Tiring	1	2.0
			Too Easy Level	1	2.0

Table 5 displays teachers' opinions about teaching English at middle schools in Turkey. The participant teachers stated fifteen good and sixteen bad sides related to their experiences. The most stated positive thing (28.6% (f=14)) was the students' developed cognitive and academic skills. 18.4% (f=9) of the teachers reported that their students were motivated, and they (16.3% (f=8)) had better communication with middle school students. The students' being autonomous (10.2% (f=5)) and fast learners (8.2% (f=4)) were also thought to be favorable by them. Other stated answers, total 42.7% (f=23), were fewer classroom management problems, students' awareness of learning, the variety of activities, its being fun, energetic, and dynamic, students' pure love, teachers' having different evaluation techniques, motivated parents and students, professional development of the teachers and lastly well-implemented activities.

According to Table 5, the most frequently (16.3% (f=8)) reported bad side of teaching English at middle schools was students' being at puberty age. The participant teachers expressed classroom management problems, unmotivated learners and students limited cognitive and academic development in the same rate (14.3% (f=7)). Furthermore, LGS – high school entrance- exam was seen as another disadvantage by 10.2% (f=5). Students' disrespectful behaviors (6.1% (f=3)), focus and concentration problems (4.1% (f=2)), out-of-date curriculum (4.1% (f=2)), not autonomous (4.1% (f=2)) and prejudiced learners (4.1% (f=2)) were also mentioned answers. The least stated issues, a total of 12% (f=6), were limited professional development of teachers, limited class hours,

its being tiring, lack of parents' support, students limited knowledge of native language and its being easy level for the teachers.

Table 6.

Good and Bad Sides of Teaching in High Schools

Good Sides	f	%	Bad Sides	f	%
Adult like Learners	10	20.4	Alcohol and Substance Addiction	1	2.0
Autonomous Learners	7	14.3	Bullying	1	2.0
Awareness of Learning	3	6.1	Classroom Management Problems	5	10.2
Developed Cognitive and Academic Skills	6	12.2	Disrespectful Behaviors	4	8.2
ELT Classes	2	4.1	Focus and Concentration Problems	1	2.0
Fewer Classroom Management Problems	4	8.2	Generation Gap	1	2.0
Good Communication	10	20.4	Lack of English questions in the university entrance exam	2	4.1
Limited Paperwork	1	2.0	Limited Knowledge of English	2	4.1
Limited Workload	1	2.0	Unmotivated Students	1	2.0
Motivated Students	4	8.2	Opposite Gender Students	3	5.9
Professional Development of Teachers	1	2.0	Over Aged Learners	1	2.0
			Prejudiced Learner	6	12.2
			Puberty	2	3.9
				3	6.1

The participant teachers expressed eleven good and thirteen bad sides of teaching English at high schools in Turkey. These are presented in Table 6 with their intensity of frequency. Table 6 shows that the high school students' being adult-like learners (20.4% (f=10)) and the teachers' good communication with the students (20.4% (f=10)) were the most frequently stated answers. 14.3% (f=7) of the teachers believed that the students were autonomous learners and 12.2% (f=6) of them stated that high school students had more developed cognitive and academic skills. Other most stated positive things, a total of 26.6% (f= 13), were fewer classroom management problems, motivated students, the students' awareness of learning, and ELT classes. Less stated good things, a total of 6% (f=3), were less paperwork and workload, and professional development of the teachers.

In Table 6, it is seen that the most frequently stated negative opinions about teaching English at high schools were unmotivated (26.5% (f=13)) and prejudiced (12.2% (f=6)) learners. Moreover, classroom management problems (10.2% (f=5)), students' disrespectful behaviors (8.2% (f=4)), puberty (6.1% (f=3)), absence of English questions in the university entrance exam (4.1% (f=2)), and students' limited knowledge of English were seen as problems, too. Less frequently stated answers, a total of 12% (f=6), were alcohol and substance addiction problems, generation gap, bullying, opposite gender students, focus and concentration problems, and overaged learners.

Table 7.

Points of View on Teaching Different Educational Stages Regarding Different Points

Teaching different educational stages is different in terms of...	Answers	f	%
(16) 'student development'	Yes	47	95.9
	I haven't considered this before	2	4.1
(18) 'teaching strategies'	Yes	45	91.8
	No	1	2.0
	I haven't considered this before	3	6.1
(20) 'students' motivation'	Yes	45	91.8
	No	2	4.1
	I haven't considered this before	2	4.1
(22) 'teacher motivation and professional development'	Yes	42	85.7
	No	5	10.2
	I haven't considered this before	2	4.1
(24) 'classroom management'	Yes	43	87.8
	No	6	12.2
(26) 'teacher collaboration and school administration'	Yes	23	46.9
	No	20	40.8
	I haven't considered this before	6	12.2
(28) 'parental support'	Yes	32	65.3
	No	11	22.4
	I haven't considered this before	6	12.2

In the form, the participant teachers were also asked whether teaching different educational stages is different in terms of students' development, teaching strategies, students' motivation, teacher motivation and professional development, classroom management, teacher collaboration and school administration, and lastly parental support issues. Although some of the teachers already mentioned some of the given categories in the open-ended questions, when they were specially requested to make a choice related to different points, most of them agreed on different educational stages had different features related to the categories given in Table 7 at different rates.

Out of 49 participant teachers, 95.9% (f=47) believed that student development in each educational stage was different. 91.8% (f=45) stated that different teaching strategies might be used for each educational stage and students' motivation in different educational stages differed. 87.8% (f=43) of the teachers agreed that classroom management problems might be different according to educational stages. 85.7% (f=42) claimed that elementary, middle, and high school stages also differ in terms of teacher motivation and professional development opportunities for the teachers. 65.3% (f=32) believe that parental support changes in each stage and lastly 46.9% (f=23) of the teachers stated that teachers' collaboration and school administration differ somehow in different stages.

Table 8.

Teachers' Preferences for Teaching Different Educational Stages

Preferences	Answers	f	%
(30) What level do you enjoy teaching MOST?	Elementary	15	30.6
	Middle-School	12	24.5
	High School	19	38.8
	Not make any difference	3	6.1
(31) What level do you enjoy teaching LEAST?	Elementary	22	44.9
	Middle-School	9	18.4
	High School	11	22.4
	Not make any difference	7	14.3
(32) Do you have experience teaching at different Educational Stages...	by choice	24	49.0
	by chance	25	51.0
	Yes	35	71.4

(33) Is it a good practice to make transitions among different Educational Stages?	No	7	14.3
	I haven't considered this before	7	14.3

Table 8 shows English teachers' preferences for teaching three different educational stages in Turkey. Out of 49 participant teachers, 38.8% (f=19) stated that they liked teaching high school students, 30.6% (f=15) enjoyed teaching elementary school students and 24.5% (f=12) of them liked teaching secondary school students, the stage did not make any difference for 6.1% (f=3). As for the least preferred teaching stages expressed by English teachers, 44.9% (f=22) did not prefer teaching elementary school students very much, 22.4% (f=11) enjoyed teaching high school students less, 18.4 (f=9) were less pleased with middle school students, 14.3% (f=7) stated each stage was appropriate for them. Furthermore, the teachers making transitions and having experience of teaching different educational stages were asked whether they were assigned according to their own preferences or compulsorily; 24% (f=49) recorded having experienced by choice and 25% (f=51) stated they were assigned by chance. Finally, the teachers were asked for their opinions related to the English teacher assignment practice of the MoNE among different educational stages (elementary, middle, and high school) and 71.4% (f=35) remarked it is a good practice; however, 14.3% (f=7) stated that this transition should not be made, other 14.3% (f=7) stated not considering this issue before.

Table 9.

Correlations of Teachers' Views and Preferences

Teaching different educational stages is different in terms of	(16)	(18)	(20)	(22)	(24)	(26)	(28)	(30)	(31)	(32)	(33)
(16) 'student development'											
(18) 'teaching strategies'											
(20) 'students' motivation											
(22) 'teacher motivation and professional development'											
(24) 'classroom management'											
(26) 'teacher collaboration and school administration'											
(28) 'parental support'											
(30) enjoy teaching MOST?											
(31) enjoy teaching LEAST?											

(32) Having experience by chance/choice	-.21	.12	-.10	.20	.24	.40**	.13	-.13	-.02		
(33) Is it good to make transitions among Stages?	-.12	.06	-.17	.30*	.29*	.30*	.09	.14	-.01	.41**	
Mean	1.08	1.14	1.12	1.18	1.12	1.65	1.47	2.20	2.06	1.51	1.43
Sd	.40	.50	.44	.49	.33	.69	.71	.96	1.13	.51	.74

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As shown in Table 9, there are moderate and high positive correlations at .05 and .01 significant level for students' motivation and development, parental support and teaching strategies, parental support and teacher motivation- professional development, teachers' assignment reasons and teacher collaboration- school administration, teachers' opinions related to assignment practices of MoNE and teacher motivation- professional development, teachers' opinions related to assignment practices of MoNE and teacher collaboration- school administration, teachers' opinions related to assignment practices of MoNE and teachers' assignment reasons. The mean and standard deviation for each question is also computed and shown separately in Table 9.

Discussion

This study aimed to identify the different practices, advantages, and challenges of teaching three different educational stages (elementary, middle, and high schools) English in Turkey. The experienced teachers were also asked whether it is their preference or obligatory assignment to teach at least two ministerial educational stages throughout their careers. Finally, the participant teachers shared their opinions about English language teacher assignment practice of Ministry of National Education for different educational stages and they were given a chance to make possible suggestions. Therefore, this study makes a major contribution to research on having experience of teaching different ages by comparing elementary, middle, and high school stages in Turkish context.

The present study found that each educational stage has its own good features and challenges in terms of teaching English although some issues are common. In the research, many teachers agreed that primary school children are motivated language learners. Fun, energetic, dynamic lessons and the variety of activities are thought to be remarkable points of teaching English in an elementary school, respectively; however, it's being tiring was highly emphasized because students are not

autonomous and have limited cognitive development; accordingly, limited focus and concentration abilities. These results are consistent with Broughton et al.'s (2002) findings which showed that many primary school children can be involved in a task for a maximum of ten minutes. For the encountered problems stemming from the students' being physically active, it is recommended the teachers to turn it to their advantage by using appropriate exploratory and expressive activities such as action songs, dramatization, and manipulating real objects and puppets which are natural to the young children. For middle school students, the teachers mentioned that the students have developed cognitive and academic skills as well as being autonomous when compared to elementary school students. The participant teachers also reported that the students are motivated to a certain extent. The study is in line with those recent studies indicating elementary school students' motivation decreases as they become older (Dörnyei et al., 2006; Psaltu-Joycey et al., 2017; Tragant, 2006). In order to handle the motivation problems of the students switching to middle school, it is possible, therefore, that different language teaching and learning approaches can be used as Cameron (2003) proposes. Moreover, according to the participant teachers, middle school students can express themselves in the target language and communicate with the teacher better. As for the challenges, puberty is seen as a big problem by some English teachers. The behaviors mostly related to the puberty age were reported to lead to some classroom management problems. Within the Turkish context, some of the teachers make a similar point that the LGS exam (High School Entrance Exam) sometimes restrains them from supplying extra-curricular activities and causes the students to lose their motivation. As noticed by Lesiak (2015), adolescents experience a rigorous period as well as important changes psychologically and physically thus, the teacher must notice those characteristics and act in a particular manner. Most English teachers having experience in high school levels stated that they have adult-like learners; accordingly, communicating with them well, high school students were also recorded to have more developed cognitive and academic skills and to be more autonomous when compared to elementary and middle school students. These results seem to be consistent with Loukotova's (2011) study that older learners understand the significance of learning better and discern the importance of English knowledge when compared to primary school students. Harper and De Jong (2004) suggest the teachers to be aware of the fact that older learners have more advanced cognitive abilities such as memory and spatial thinking; accordingly, benefit from more those advanced linguistic and cognitive bases than young learners. As for the problematic issues of teaching at high school stage,

most teachers recorded having unmotivated and prejudiced learners in their classes. Some of them also expressed that they have difficulty in establishing an authority in the class and it ends up hindering the learning process since it brings classroom management problems along. When the teachers were specifically asked to compare educational stages in terms of six different aspects; including students' development and motivation, teachings strategies, teacher motivation, collaboration, professional development and school administration, classroom management and parental support, the majority agreed on each stage has different features and points apart from the given sub-titles.

Another point tried to be investigated throughout this study is the teacher assignment practice of Ministry of National Education. Although most of the teachers believe teaching each stage differs in a lot of ways and requires different skills, the majority think being able to make transition among educational stages is a good practice for English teachers; in this way, they find a chance to teach dynamically and develop their professional skills by refreshing their ability and pushing their limits to teach different ages in a dynamic system. Regarding the last sub-question of the study, out of 49 teachers, nearly half of them pointed out that it is their preference to have a chance to teach English to different age group even though the other half stated to be assigned randomly. However, SPSS statistics showed that these results are not statistically significant.

To develop a full picture of English language teachers' assignment preferences and results in Turkey, additional studies will be needed because the teachers are appointed to the schools mostly according to government employee point system and it depends on the years of experience in teaching profession. In this study, when considered that the participant teachers consist of homogenous group in terms of years of experiencing, more experienced teachers are seen to have a chance to choose their teaching group after analyzing each group as well.

Conclusion

The results of this investigation show that although each stage has some advantages and challenges for the teachers, no matter whether the teachers are assigned obligatorily or voluntarily, they believe it is a good practice of MoNE to be able to teach from second to twelfth grades in Turkish context. They also state that teaching each stage is different in terms of many points such as students' development, teaching strategies, students' motivation, teacher motivation and

professional development, classroom management, teacher collaboration and school administration, and parental support. According to the results, it is not possible to say that any of the stages out of three (elementary, middle, or high school) is remarkably stated as favorite by the participant teachers.

Notwithstanding the relatively limited sample of the study, this study offers valuable insights into the experiences and shared feelings of English teachers with sincere quotes related to their professions. The major limitation of this study is not to be able to reach as many participants as possible and not to make face to face interviews because of the coronavirus outbreak worldwide.

The scope of this study was restricted to 49 teachers of English from different regions of Turkey, which makes it hard to generalize the findings beyond the study group. Therefore, more studies should be conducted to achieve a more representative and generalizable set of results.

This research has thrown up many questions in need of further investigation and revealed a lot of points related to teaching different educational stages in English. Further studies with more participants need to be carried out to find out the features comprehensively. By analyzing study results, policymakers, school principals, governments, English language teachers and other stakeholders may shape their applications since each educational stage is unique in terms of teaching and learning English.

ETHICAL STATEMENT: In this study, no action was taken against scientific research and publication ethics in accordance with the Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive. In addition, before the data were collected, ethical approval was obtained from the Social Sciences Ethics Committee, one of the Non-Interventional Clinical Research Ethics Committees of Amasya University, dated 25/06/2020 and numbered E.12457. I undertake that "Mehmet Akif Ersoy University Journal Editorial Board" has no responsibility for all ethical violations, that all responsibility belongs to the Corresponding Author and this study has not been sent to another academic publication for evaluation at the same time of this current submission.

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Geniş Özet

Günümüz dünyasında İngilizce, birçok kişi ve ülke için geçerli veya temel dil haline gelmiş, bu nedenle Türkiye de İngilizce öğretimi için eğitimde yabancı dil politikalarına öncelik vermeye başlamıştır. İngilizce öğretimi, Türk eğitim sistemine entegre edildiğinden bu yana siyasi ve sosyoekonomik faktörlerden etkilenecek birçok süreçten geçmiştir (Kırkgöz, 2007). 1997'de büyük İngilizce öğretimi müfredat reformunu başlatan hükümet, yabancı dil öğrenme yaşını Türkiye bağlamında ortaokul 6. sınıf öğrencilerinden 4. Sınıf'a indirmiştir. 2013'teki en son politika reformu ile, yabancı dil öğrenme yaşını daha da düşürerek, 2. Sınıf'a indirerek, İngilizce dersinin artan önemini daha fazla yansıtmıştır (Gürsoy et al., 2013). Bütün bunların sonucu olarak,

okullarda toplamda artan yabancı dil ders saatleriyle birlikte, talebi karşılamak için, ilköğretim İngilizce derslerini öğretmek için lise İngilizce öğretmenlerinin görevlendirilmesi standart bir uygulama haline gelmiştir (Onat-Stelma, 2005). 2013 eğitim reformundan beri, İngilizce öğretmenleri, diğer birçok branş öğretmeninin aksine, ikinci sınıftan on ikinci sınıfa kadar tüm sınıf seviyelerine herhangi bir kısıtlama olmadan veya gerekli nitelikler aranmadan derslere girerek öğretmeye başlamıştır. Ancak, daha erken yaşları kontrol etmenin lise öğrencilerinde sınıf yönetimi sağlamaktan daha farklı bilgi ve beceriler gerektirebileceği göz ardı edilmiş; farklı sınıf düzeyinde öğretmeye başlayan öğretmenler için ciddi bir zorluk teşkil edebilmiştir. Bu bağlamda, bu araştırma, Türkiye'deki devlet okullarında farklı eğitim kademelerinde (ilkokul, ortaokul veya lise) öğretmenlik yapma tecrübesi olan İngilizce öğretmenlerinin öğretmenlik deneyimleri boyunca eğitim kademeleri arasında böyle bir geçiş yapmanın bir tercih mi yoksa zorunluluk mu olduğunu tartışarak deneyimlerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. En az bir eğitim kademesinde (ilkokul, ortaokul veya lise) görev yapan/yapmış olan öğretmenin, farklı eğitim kademelerinde İngilizce öğretmenin hangi yönlerden farklı olduğunu açıklamaya çalışmaktadır ve her eğitim kademesine, hatta sınıfa öğretmenin olumlu taraflarını ve dezavantajlarını sorgulamaktadır. Literatürde özellikle Türkiye'de ve dünyada yabancı dil öğretimi, eğitim reformları veya farklı yaş gruplarına yabancı dil öğretimine yönelik birçok çalışma mevcuttur; ancak bu çalışma ağırlıklı olarak farklı eğitim kademeleri arasında tercihlerine göre veya zorunlu olarak görevlendirilen öğretmenlerin deneyimlerine odaklanmaktadır. Araştırma bu bağlamda şu iki temel soruya cevap vermek için yürütülmüştür: Türkiye'de farklı eğitim kademelerinde (ilkokul, ortaokul veya lise) görev yapan/yapmış olan İngilizce öğretmenlerinin yaklaşımlarında, stratejilerinde veya uygulamalarındaki değişiklikler ve zorlukları incelemek; farklı eğitim kademelerinde İngilizce öğretmenin artılarını ve eksilerini tartışarak öğretmenlerin bu öğretmen görevlendirme uygulaması için değişikliklerden ne şekilde etkilendiklerini anlamak ve olası öneriler sunmak.

Bu çalışmada çoğunlukla vaka analizi deseni ve nitel analiz ile ilgili olduğu düşünülerek veri toplamak için olasılıksız örnekleme tekniklerinden biri olan kartopu örnekleme kullanılmıştır. Araştırma, Türkiye'deki devlet okullarında (ilkokul, ortaokul ve lise) en az iki eğitim kademesinde öğretme deneyimine sahip 49 İngilizce öğretmeni ile yürütülmüştür. Öğretmenler Türkiye'nin çeşitli bölgelerinden, 26 ilden katılım sağlamıştır. Veriler Mart 2020 ile Nisan 2020 arasında toplanmış ve süreç sekiz haftada tamamlanmıştır. Katılımcı İngilizce öğretmenlerinden, öğretme

tecrübeleri buldukları her eğitim kademesine öğretme tecrübeleriyle ilgili deneyimlerini karşılaştırmalar yaparak paylaşımları istenmiştir. Araştırma için veri toplamak amacıyla birçok farklı çalışma analiz edilmiş olup, çalışma alanları “Yabancı Dil olarak İngilizce” olan iki uzman görüşü alınarak Google-Forms üzerinden açık uçlu sorulardan oluşan bir form oluşturulmuştur. Ölçme aracı 34 soru içermektedir: 9 demografik sorunun yanı sıra, katılımcılardan her eğitim kademesinde öğretme hakkında yorum yapmalarını isteyen 6 isteğe bağlı açık uçlu soru, araştırmacının ima edilmeye çalışılan şey hakkında gerçekten netleşebilmesi için katılımcıların deneyimlerini detaylandırmasını ve karşılaştırmasını gerektiren alt soruları içeren 7 hem çoktan seçmeli hem de açık uçlu soru, öğretmenlere en çok ve en az hangi sınıf seviyelerine öğretmekten hoşlandıklarını nedenleriyle birlikte soran 2 açık uçlu soru, Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı’nın İngilizce öğretmeni atama ve görevlendirme uygulamasıyla ilgili 2 çoktan seçmeli soru ve katılımcı öğretmenlerin varsa önerilerini soran son 1 sorudan oluşmaktadır. Toplanan verilerin analizinde, çalışmanın nitel boyutu için, Miles ve Huberman’ın 1994 modeli ve nitel veri analizi stratejileri (üç adım: veri azaltma, veri görüntüleme, sonuçların çizilmesi ve kontrol edilmesi) kullanılmıştır (Miles & Huberman, 1994). İlgili soruların betimsel analizi ve korelasyon hesaplamalarının yapılabilmesi için ise SPSS programından da yararlanılmıştır.

Araştırmanın sonuçları, öğretmenler için her eğitim kademesine öğretmenin bazı avantajları ve zorlukları olmasına rağmen, zorunlu veya gönüllü olarak görevlendirilmiş veya atanmış olsunlar, ikinci sınıftan on ikinci sınıfa kadar öğretmenlik yapabilmeyen Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı’nın olumlu bir uygulaması olduğuna inandıklarını göstermektedir. Ayrıca farklı eğitim kademelerinde öğretimin her aşamasının öğrenci gelişimi, öğretim stratejileri, öğrenci motivasyonu, öğretmen motivasyonu ve mesleki gelişimi, sınıf yönetimi, öğretmen iş birliği ve okul yönetimi, veli desteği gibi birçok noktada farklı olduğunu belirtmektedirler. Sonuçlara göre, üç eğitim kademesinden (ilkokul, ortaokul veya lise) herhangi birinin katılımcı öğretmenler tarafından dikkat çekici bir şekilde favori olarak belirtildiğini söylemek mümkün değildir. Araştırmanın görece sınırlı örneğine rağmen, bu çalışma İngilizce öğretmenlerinin meslekleriyle ilgili samimi alıntılarla deneyimlerine ve ortak duygularına ilişkin değerli bilgiler sunmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın en büyük kısıtlılığı, dünya genelindeki korona virüs salgını nedeniyle mümkün olduğunca çok sayıda katılımcıya ulaşamamak ve yüz yüze görüşme yapamamaktır.

ETİK BEYAN: " "An Overview of English Language Teachers Making Transition among Different Educational Stages" başlıklı çalışmanın yazım sürecinde bilimsel, etik ve alıntı kurallarına uyulmuş; toplanan veriler üzerinde herhangi bir tahrifat yapılmamıştır ve veriler toplanmadan önce Amasya Üniversitesi Girişimsel Olmayan Klinik Araştırmalar Etik Kurulu'ndan 25/06/2020 tarih ve E.12457 sayılı etik izin alınmıştır. Karşılaşılabilecek tüm etik ihlallerde "Mehmet Akif Ersoy Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi Yayın Kurulunun" hiçbir sorumluluğunun olmadığı, tüm sorumluluğun Sorumlu Yazara ait olduğu ve bu çalışmanın herhangi başka bir akademik yayın ortamına değerlendirme için gönderilmemiş olduğunu taahhüt ederim. "