



Turkish Sign Language Education in the Dilemma of Professionalism and Amateurism¹

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Abstract

Turkish Sign Language education (TİDe) in schools for deaf and hard-of-hearing pupils is crucial both for the Deaf community and for enabling deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals to acquire standard Turkish Sign Language (TİD). However, its current state has not been systematically examined from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders. This study, limited to schools in Kayseri, explores the views of students, teachers, parents, and administrators using a two-cycle content analysis. The findings indicate that most teachers lack sufficient knowledge of TİD, as many were appointed without prior training and rely on limited learning acquired from students or non-formal educational settings. Moreover, TİDe is implemented without adequate parental or administrative support and faces a range of systemic challenges. By offering a panoramic view based on four stakeholder perspectives and by situating TİDe within the broader field of language education, this study provides essential insights and practical recommendations for specialists working in this area.

Keywords

Turkish Sign Language

Education

Deaf

Hard of Hearing

Profesyonellik ve Amatörlük İkileminde Türk İşaret Dili Eğitimi

Özet

İşitme engellilere yönelik okullarda yürütülen Türk İşaret Dili eğitimi (TİDe) sağır toplumu ve işitme engellilerin ölçünlü Türk İşaret Dilini (TİD) öğrenmeleri açısından kritik rol oynamaktadır. Ancak TİDe'nin mevcut durumu, gerçek bağlamında farklı paydaş görüşleriyle incelenmemiştir. Bu çalışmada Kayseri ilindeki okullarla sınırlandırılan bir alanda TİDe'nin mevcut durumunu betimlemek amaçlanmış, bu kapsamda öğrenci, öğretmen, veli ve okul yöneticisi görüşlerine başvurulmuştur. Görüşmeler çift döngülü içerik çözümlemesiyle incelenmiştir. Çalışmada TİDe'yi yürüten öğretmenlerin TİD konusunda yeterli bilgiye sahip olmadıkları saptanmıştır. Öğretmenlerin çoğu TİD öğrenmeden bu okullara atanmış, öğrencilerden veya yaygın eğitim kurumlarından öğrendikleri kadarıyla TİD'i öğretmeye çalışmaktadır. Bunun dışında TİDe, veli ve profesyonel okul yönetimi desteklerinden yoksun bir biçimde yürütülmekte; eğitim dizgesi açısından çeşitli güçlüklerle yüzleşmektedir. Bu araştırma, TİDe'nin görünümünü dört farklı bakış açısından panoramik bir biçimde betimlemesi ve TİDe'yi dil eğitimi bakışıyla ele almasıyla dikkat çekmektedir. Bu çalışmada TİDe'yi eğitsel bakışla ele alan uzmanlar için temel bilgi niteliğinde bulgular ortaya konulmuş, önemli öneriler yer verilmiştir.

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Introduction

Turkish Sign Language education (TİDe) has a long history (Akalin, 2013; Aslan Demir, 2010; Aykut, 2004; Demirel, 2013; Karadeniz, 2017; Oral, 2016; Özcan, 1994). TİDe did not become part of formal education until the late 19th century (Akalin, 2023). The inability to prevent “amateur” practices that fall short of legal requirements exacerbates the costs of the professionalisation process. It also results in several chronic problems being covered up. This situation creates an additional disadvantage for those who rely on TİDe, affecting them throughout their lives. This represents one of the most immediate challenges encountered in contexts where TİD education lacks clearly defined standards. According to data reported by the Anadolu Agency (2018), drawing on figures from the World Health Organization (WHO), 446 million people worldwide live with disabling hearing loss, who make up 5 per cent of the world's population, have severe hearing loss. The exact number of people affected by hearing loss in Türkiye remains unknown. However, the Ministry of Family and Social Services (MoFSS, n.d.) states that 836,000 people in Türkiye had severe hearing loss in 2011. According to the General Directorate of Public Health of the Ministry of Health (MoH, n.d.), approximately 2–3 per thousand of all newborns in Türkiye are born with severe hearing loss; this rate may increase to an average of 6 per cent due to adverse postnatal conditions. Given projections indicating that the global deaf population will reach 630 million by 2030 and 900 million by 2050, the urgency of policy- and practice-oriented interventions in this field is evident. Evidence further indicates that deaf children in developing countries face a substantially higher risk of school non-enrolment or dropout than their peers in developed countries (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2023). Research conducted in 2023 by the Turkish Association for Life without Disabilities indicates that the primary school dropout rate in Sweden is 11 per cent, markedly lower than the corresponding rate of 60 per cent observed in Türkiye. Moreover, whereas 22 per cent of persons with disabilities aged 30–34 complete higher education in European Union countries, the corresponding figure in Türkiye is only 6.8 per cent. This disparity underscores the imperative for a comprehensive evaluation of the educational opportunities available to persons with disabilities in Türkiye. A total of 463 special education institutions are currently operating in Türkiye, of which 84 schools—comprising 32 primary schools, 32 lower secondary schools, and 20 upper secondary schools—serve deaf and hard-of-hearing learners. These institutions serve 698 primary school pupils, 927 lower secondary pupils, and 967 students enrolled in vocational and technical upper secondary education (MoNE [Ministry of National Education], Presidency of Strategy Development, 2023a). A fundamental objective of education and training activities for individuals with disabilities, as in all educational contexts, is to provide high-quality language education, which is a prerequisite for effective communication between individuals and society. In addition to formal educational institutions, TİDe may also be provided by a range of public and non-governmental organisations.

Education, whether formal or informal, plays a crucial role for deaf individuals. In Türkiye, 92 per cent of deaf children are born to hearing parents without hard of hearing (Göl Güven, 2016; İlkbaşaran, 2016; Piştav Akmeşe, 2016). Suppose these children lack qualified sign language education during critical language acquisition periods. In that case, they may remain “semi-lingual” throughout their lives and display cognitive and academic development below their potential (MoNE, n.d.-a).

Sign language education has well-documented positive effects not only on language proficiency and educational achievement but also across a range of other developmental domains (Bilgiç et al., 2021; Göl Güven, 2016; Piştav Akmeşe & Kayhan, 2016) and enhances their overall well-being. For deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals, sign language education is recognised as a human right under the United

Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN), which Türkiye ratified in 2009. State parties are therefore responsible for promoting the use of sign language and ensuring the provision of qualified instruction. This includes enhancing teacher competence through pre-service and in-service training activities (UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2018). In this context, İlkbaşıaran (2013) notes that TİD courses, which had previously been offered as electives, became compulsory for students enrolled in programmes for teaching the hearing impaired in the 2014–2015 academic year. Furthermore, a Turkish Sign Language course with comparable content was incorporated into curricula as an elective course across all teacher education disciplines with the approval of the Council of Higher Education in 2018. Additionally, MoNE introduced several training initiatives and issued a series of regulatory frameworks related to TİDe (see MoNE, 2011; 2015; 2021; n.d.-c). However, the extent to which pre-service teachers nationwide benefit from this course, as well as the degree to which in-service teachers participate effectively in related training, has not yet been systematically examined.

A Brief Overview of Contemporary Studies on TİD

Following the enactment of the Law on Persons with Disabilities on 7 July 2005, the modernisation of TİD became more feasible. After this date, a significant number of studies, particularly guides and dictionaries, were published on TİD (see: Atila, 2011; Çelik, 2015; Çiçek, 2016; Erenbilge, 2021; Yazıcı, 2019). There is ample evidence to suggest that the history and education of TİD are intertwined. Indeed, a substantial body of research has examined the history of TİD and TİDe in tandem (Akalm, 2023; Erten & Arıcı, 2022; Kemaloğlu, 2014a; Y. K. Kemaloğlu & Y. P. Kemaloğlu, 2012). In addition, numerous studies have focused exclusively on the teaching of TİDe, as evidenced by the works of Piştav Akmeşe (2016), Piştav Akmeşe & Kayhan (2018), and Uysal & Atlar (2022). By contrast, within linguistics, research on TİD has continued to expand and diversify. For instance, İlkbaşıaran (2016) analysed TİD from the perspective of sociolinguistics, while Zeshan (2003) dealt with aspects of TİD. Makaroğlu's research has examined the neural processing of TİD (2009), the relationship between eyebrow movements and TİD (2012), as well as the cohesion template structure of TİD and the representation of the TİD lexicon (2018). In addition, Makaroğlu and Bekâr (2015) investigated the distributional aspects of syllable structure in TİD. İşsever and Makaroğlu (2016) conducted a syntactic analysis of TİD. Karaca and Bayır's (2018) study introduced syntax, sign derivation, compound signs, synonyms and antonyms, and various forms of communication in TİD. Moreover, Türk's (2018) research compared TİD with German Sign Language, thus contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the subject. These studies have helped to dispel several longstanding misconceptions about TİD and its education, including the misconception that all deaf people use a common language and the belief that sign languages are imperfect imitations of spoken languages. Furthermore, a substantial degree of standardisation—an essential prerequisite for TİD—has now been achieved.

The Deep-Rooted yet Uneven History of TİDe

Traditionally regarded as “trustworthy individuals capable of keeping secrets,” deaf people held prestigious positions in both the Seljuk and Ottoman states and were educated directly within palace schools (Akalm, 2013; Aslan Demir, 2010; Aykut, 2004; Demirel, 2013; Karadeniz, 2017; Oral, 2016; Özcan, 1994). Albert Bobovius, one of the translators at the Ottoman Palace, and Adolphus Slade (Müşavir Pasha), reported that deaf Turks were able to share stories and engage in lively conversation exclusively through TİD (Çuhadar, 2003). This suggests that TİD was recognised more broadly within society and processed at a high cognitive level. The historical development of TİDe broadly parallels European educational developments. Bonet introduced the finger alphabet in 1620; Bonifaccio, Bulwer,

and Dalgarno studied sign language education; and Charles-Michel Abbé de l'Épée opened the first official school for deaf students in 1760. However, these developments began to stall towards the 19th century, with Heinicke teaching lip-reading in the school he opened for people who were deaf or hard of hearing in Germany in 1778 and the learning of sign language being banned at a conference in Milano two years later (Lang, 2003 as cited in Akalın, 2014; Girgin, 2003). Despite ongoing wars, the Ottoman state—following European models—established special schools for deaf and hard-of-hearing students under the leadership of Merdi Grati Efendi, which provided instruction in religious knowledge and daily life skills. However, when these schools were closed due to budgetary constraints, only the children of wealthy families were able to continue TİDe through private courses (Demirel, 2013). The Yıldız School for the Deaf was established in 1902, and following the devastation of World War I, TİDe resumed with the establishment of a school by Fuat Bey in İzmir in 1920, during the most difficult years of the War of Independence (Günay & Görür, 2013). After 1953, interest in TİDe declined sharply, as the prevailing educational mentality regarded sign language education as detrimental to language learning. For a period, both TİD and TİDe studies came to a complete halt: TİDe education was suspended nationwide, and the standardisation of TİD was postponed. This situation, however, was transformed by two critical turning points. The first break in the forty-year negative attitude towards TİD and TİDe came in 1995 with the publication of the MoNE's adult TİD guidelines. Although this guide primarily reflected signs modelled on spoken Turkish rather than authentic TİD signs, were transferred (Kemaloğlu, 2014), this development nevertheless marked a change in the state's stance towards TİD. The second breakthrough came ten years after the publication of this guide, with the adoption of the Disability Act by the Turkish Grand National Assembly. This legislation granted TİD official status and specified the institutions jointly responsible for organising TİDe. In this context, the TİD Course Curriculum was adopted by the Board of Education of the MoNE on 26 July 2016 thereby defining the aims, content, teaching methods, instructional materials, and assessment procedures of the TİD course.

TİDe in Türkiye: Historical Development, Current Practices, and Educational Implications

The importance of TİDe for individuals with hearing loss is widely recognised. As with in spoken language, there is a critical period for learning TİD (Bellugi & Klima, 2001). Children who are not exposed to sign language stimuli until the age of five or six experience significant delays in sign language acquisition (Pallier, 2007, cited in Makaroğlu, 2009). This deprivation is not limited to the phonemic level but also results in difficulties in acquiring prosodic features such as stress, intonation, and rhythm. High-quality sign language education is a key means of preventing such difficulties.

In the early stages, the preparation of grammar books for TİDe was considered sufficient. Examples include the grammar works of Dikyuva and Zeshan (2008), Aslan Demir (2010), and the TİD grammar book produced by Dikyuva et al. (2015) within the scope of a project conducted by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies. Over time, the need for TİD dictionaries emerged. In addition to textbooks, the MoNE (n.d.-b) published a TİD dictionary and developed a digital learning platform for deaf and hard-of-hearing children.

Since 2015, there has been a noticeable increase in academic interest in TİDe. For instance, Bilgiç et al. (2021) developed an attitude scale based on the argument that a positive disposition toward the language is necessary for sign language learning. Buz (2019) investigated the development of a statistical TİD translation system for primary school students, while Gür (2018) and Sevgi (2019) examined the effects of age of acquisition on different language skills.

Teacher training for TİDe has also become a prominent area in the literature. Sarıkaya and Börekçi (2016) emphasized the importance of teachers in schools for the hearing impaired being

competent in TİD. Students with hearing loss are unable to communicate effectively with individuals who lack proficiency in TİD, which leads to adverse social and academic consequences. Piştav Akmeşe (2016) provided recommendations for improving TİD courses in higher education programs, aiming to increase their quality and effectiveness. Similarly, Aykutlu (2019) described pre-service teachers' views on the TİD course offered as an elective in education faculties. In response to the growing demand among non-native learners of TİD, several instructional resources have been produced on the subject (cf. Makaroğlu & Dikyuva, 2015). In this context, with the initiatives of Dr. Subaşı Uzun and Dr. Makaroğlu, a TİD as a foreign language course was launched at Ankara University Turkish and Foreign Languages Research and Application Center in 2017, based on the European Commission's Common European Framework of Reference for Sign Languages. Following the revision of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, the sections related to sign language education were translated into Turkish under the leadership of Çelik et al. (2020), with Makaroğlu contributing as a sign language expert (see Council of Europe, n.d.; MoNE Board of Education and Discipline, 2021).

Over the past quarter-century, undergraduate and postgraduate programmes on TİD have been established at various universities in Türkiye, and TİD courses have been offered in non-formal educational institutions. The TİD course was introduced as an elective in all higher education programmes in 2013 (Piştav Akmeşe, 2016) and became a compulsory course in teacher education programmes for the hearing impaired in 201. In its 2018 curriculum update for education faculties, the Council of Higher Education explicitly stated that TİD is among the elective courses that can be offered across all teacher education programs. However, the qualifications of instructors teaching this course were not scrutinized, nor was a feedback mechanism designed regarding classroom practices. Despite the passage of a decade, the observation made by Y. K. Kemaloğlu and Y. P. Kemaloğlu (2012) still holds true: although TİD is the natural language of individuals who experienced hearing loss before language acquisition and could not benefit from auditory-verbal rehabilitation, its significance continues to be overlooked within the educational system

Research indicates that the number of institutions in Türkiye providing TİDe at the pre-school level remains limited (Göl Güven, 2016). Although the number of deaf individuals is increasing, the enrollment of deaf and hard-of-hearing students in primary education institutions has been declining, and the technological infrastructure of these schools is often inadequate (Piştav Akmeşe, 2016). Despite a few initiatives, the expected improvements in schools for students with hearing impairments have not materialized. Moreover, the insufficient training of teachers in TİD makes it particularly challenging for students from hearing families to acquire TİD within the school context (Tutuk, 2021). It is not sufficient for teachers merely to know TİD; they must also possess the pedagogical and methodological competencies required to implement TİDe effectively.

Consequently, individuals with hearing impairments face significantly limited educational opportunities compared to their hearing peers, constitute a considerable portion of the illiterate population, and often graduate without the functional literacy skills needed to meet employment requirements (İlkbaşaran, 2016; Kubuş et al., 2016; Tufan & Arun, 2006; Piştav Akmeşe, 2016). Considering these challenges, the present study seeks to address the following unresolved issues:

- a) The extent to which top-down regulations in TİDe are put into practice has not been systematically examined.
- b) The quality of TİDe in public schools in Türkiye has not been investigated independently.

- c) The knowledge and skills of teachers delivering TİDe, their in-class and out-of-class practices, the difficulties they encounter, and the solutions they develop have not been adequately described.
- d) The perspectives of students and their parents regarding TİDe, the challenges they face, and the solutions they propose remain unexplored.
- e) The competencies, practices, challenges, and recommendations of school administrators responsible for TİDe have not been documented.

Based on these general problems, the aim of this study is to analyze TİDe practices in Kayseri province, one of the 16 provinces in Türkiye with the highest proportion of individuals aged three and above who have at least one disability (4.33%–6.36% of the population). The study seeks to provide insights that may serve as a foundation for further research by addressing the following research questions:

- a) What is the current situation of TİDe in Kayseri province from the perspective of students?
- b) What is the current situation of TİDe in Kayseri province from the perspective of teachers?
- c) What is the current situation of TİDe in Kayseri province from the perspective of parents?
- d) What is the current situation of TİDe in Kayseri province from the perspective of administrators?

Method

Design of the Research

Case research is well-suited to uncover rich and varied information about the subject under study. As this study aims to present a detailed panorama of the current situation of TİDe in Kayseri province from different perspectives, the study was designed as a case study.

Case studies can be defined as studies in which one or more situations are examined in detail regarding many factors such as individuals, time, place, and social and cultural characteristics (Büyükoztürk et al., 2020). Yin (2014) categorises case studies—which are divided into different subtypes in the literature (Ersoy, 2016)—under two headings: holistic single-case design and embedded multi-case design. The embedded multi-level design was adopted in this study because TİDe was evaluated from the perspectives of students, teachers, administrators, and parents in formal educational institutions in the Develi district and the provincial centre of Kayseri. Drawing on the approaches of Stake (1995) and Yin (2014), Creswell (2021) identifies five basic principles that should be considered when conducting a case study. These are: (a) determining whether the research problem is appropriate for a case study, (b) delimiting the case(s) under investigation, (c) selecting data collection tools that will yield comprehensive data, (d) analysing the data as appropriate, and (e) concluding with final comments based on the analysis.

Within the context of these principles, it is worth examining the current state of TİDe in the Kayseri region. The study was confined to the current state of TİDe in Kayseri province. This research covers several dimensions of TİDe within Kayseri province. The viewpoints of students receiving TİDe, teachers delivering the service, school administrators serving deaf and hard-of-hearing learners, and parents of participating students were considered. Four separate semi-structured interview forms were prepared for each sub-case after consulting two experts and making the necessary revisions. The form used in the student interviews was also translated into TİD with the help of the researcher and a TİD

expert. In this way, the final versions of all the forms were produced. The data obtained from the participants were transformed into findings through content analysis with two-loop coding, and the analysis was completed with final comments. When all these processes are evaluated together, it can be said that this study was conducted in parallel with the five basic principles that case studies should follow.

Participants⁴

The study participants consisted of 21 individuals grouped into four clusters, all of whom participated voluntarily. In the first cluster, six students were enrolled in public primary schools for hard-of-hearing students affiliated with the MoNE in the Kayseri city centre and the Develi district. The second group included teachers of TİD in these schools. The third group consisted of principals and vice-principals working in schools for hard-of-hearing students. The final group consisted of six adults whose children were hard of hearing. These participants were the parents of pupils attending schools for hard-of-hearing students. Participants were assigned pseudonyms, the characteristics of which are described below. This was done to prevent the matching of data with individual participants and thereby protect data confidentiality. In the following sections of the study, participants are referred to using codes such as S1, T1, P1, and H1. The distribution of participants according to various characteristics is presented below (Table 1).

Table 1. Information about the students participating in the study

Name	Sex	Age Group	Class	Hearing Level
Mehmet	Male	6-10	2	71-90 dB
Ayşe	Female	6-10	4	71-90 dB
Asya	Female	6-10	3	91 and above
Deniz	Male	6-10	4	71-90 dB
Attila	Male	6-10	4	71-90 dB
Teoman	Male	6-10	2	56-70 dB

A substantial proportion of the students in the study exhibited hearing impairment within the 71-90 dB range. Interviews with the students revealed that only Asya's family had a regular income, whereas the others did not. Teoman's family was eligible solely for a disability pension. The students' academic achievement across subjects was deemed satisfactory or above average. The interview questions for the students were reviewed by the TİD interpreter. Subsequently, the first author video-recorded the interviews with the students with their cooperation. Introductory information about the teachers is presented in Table 2..

Table 2. Information on the teachers participating in the study

Name	Educational Background	Department Graduated from	Seniority (years)
Meryem	Bachelor's degree	Teacher Training for the Hearing Impaired	11-15
Melis	Bachelor's degree	History	00-05
Yusuf	Bachelor's degree	Teacher Training for Special Education	16-20
Umay	Bachelor's degree	Teacher Training for the Hearing Impaired	16-20
Sercan	Bachelor's degree	Teacher Training for the Hearing Impaired	16-20
Mikail	Bachelor's degree	Turkish Language and Literature	06-10

⁴ The names mentioned in the table and the findings section were made up by the authors to protect the anonymity of the participants. Fake names were used in this section to prevent matching between participants' personal information based on the data

All teachers held a bachelor's degree. Only half of the participating teachers had received training in teaching individuals who are hard of hearing. One of these teachers was a graduate of the Department of Special Needs Education (see Kargın, 2003). The remaining teachers did not hold a degree from a faculty of education. Half of the teachers had 16 years or more of professional experience. The remaining teachers had less than 15 years of experience (Table 2). Information regarding the seniority and professional education of administrators is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *Information on the administrators participating in the study*

Name	Educational Background	Department Graduated from	Administrative duty	Seniority (years)
Oğuz	Master's degree	Theology	Principal	31-35
İlteriş	Bachelor's degree	Theology	Principal	26-30
Ülker	Master's degree	Theology	Deputy Principal	11-15

Two administrators held a master's degree, and the third held a bachelor's degree; all three were qualified in theology. The assistant principal was the participant with the least seniority, whereas the other two had 26 or more years of professional experience (Table 4).

Table 4. *Information on the parents participating in the study*

Name	Hearing Level	Educational Background	Number of Deaf Children	Occupation	Average Monthly Income of the Family
Pelin	00-20 dB	Secondary School	1	Housewife	No regular income.
Nilüfer	00-20 dB	Secondary School	2	Housewife	3.000 TL
Gül	00-20 dB	Secondary School	1	Housewife	9.000 TL
Banu	91 dB+	Secondary School	2	Housewife	Minimum wage
Buket	71-90 dB	Elementary school	1	Housewife	No regular income.
Çiçek	00-20 dB	Associate degree	1	Sec. Officer	10.000 TL

Hearing impairment was present in two parents who participated in the study. Banu's hearing loss was 91 dB or above, whereas Buket's hearing loss ranged between 71 and 90 dB. Four participants had completed secondary education, whereas one had completed primary education.

Çiçek was the only participant with higher education and was employed as a security guard. Nilüfer and Banu had two children, whereas the remaining participants had a single child. Whereas Pelin and Buket did not have a regular income, Nilüfer received a disability pension of 3,000 TL. The family incomes of Gül and Çiçek exceeded 9,000 TL.

Data Collection Instruments and Process

Yin (2003, as cited in Güler et al., 2013) argues that, in case studies, data sources may include interviews, documents, reports, archival records, direct or participant observation, technological products, and works of art. Furthermore, scholars may integrate quantitative survey data into their investigations (Güler et al., 2013), thereby enabling more comprehensive insights into the phenomenon under examination. The primary data source for this study comprised participant interviews, conducted using semi-structured interview forms with open-ended questions designed to elicit participants' characteristics and viewpoints on the situation under investigation. Four different forms, developed for students, teachers, administrators, and parents, were designed by the researchers and submitted by the second researcher to two experts. One of these experts specialised in TİD linguistics and had conducted several studies on TİDe. The second expert had a background in TİD from the perspective of language education. The first reviewer suggested substantial revisions, whereas the second suggested minor revisions. The first expert was consulted again after the major and minor revisions had been made. After

the minor suggestions had been implemented, the forms were finalised. As stated above, the questions in the form prepared for the students were translated into TİD with the assistance of an expert external to the research team. In addition to the interviews, the first researcher took photographs of classrooms, instructional materials, and pupils' notebooks, and recorded notes using an observation form during the lessons she attended to understand teachers' classroom practices. The first researcher also kept a researcher's diary during the school visits. Thus, the data sources were diversified. Data collection took place between 11 August 2022 and 19 September 2022.

Data Analysis

In case studies, analytical methods such as pattern (model) matching, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic models, and comparison between case elements are used (Yin, 2003, as cited in Güler et al., 2013). In this study, explanation building was adopted from these methods of analysis. Accordingly, the aim was not to arrive at conclusive findings regarding the situation under consideration but rather to reveal initial insights that could serve as a basis for further study.

Data were analysed using content analysis to develop explanations. Content analysis is a technique developed to avoid subjective factors in interpreting verbal data based on inferences and provide systematic descriptions (Bilgin, 2014). In this study, participants' characteristics and some of the views expressed by the participants were analysed using frequency analysis, while others were examined through semantic content analysis. The data obtained from participants were analysed in two cycles. In the first cycle of coding, grammatical and exploratory methods were used together, and holistic, qualitative, magnitude, and sub-coding types were employed, following Saldaña (2019). After the first coding, the codes were mapped, and after the researchers had discussed the codes, they were organised into themes. In the second coding cycle, pattern coding was applied. After the second coding, data analysis was completed, and the data were transformed into findings.

Creswell (2021, p. 53) states that data collection, analysis, and reporting in qualitative research progress with and influence each other, resulting in different stages beginning to merge within the same process. Büyüköztürk et al. (2020) state that the information obtained through other data collection methods is usually included in research with descriptively. However, statistical values or tables are used from time to time, and, at this point, content analysis is one of the most effective means of exploration. In this sense, the analysis began to take shape at the start of data collection, and the study was analysed using content analysis. The interviews with participants were transcribed and transferred to a computer on the same day from audio recordings made with their permission or from the researcher's notes, and the resulting data were analysed using the NVivo 10 programme. After the data had been collected, the codes were reviewed, and agreed codes were generated through joint coding by the researchers and coder harmonisation.

One of these analytical methods, explanation building, was adopted in this study. Accordingly, the aim was not to reach conclusive findings regarding the situation addressed but, rather, to provide new information that would form the basis for further studies, to advance new ideas, to develop theoretical knowledge of the situation examined by explaining the findings in theoretical terms, and to reveal initial insights that could serve as a source for subsequent research. Data analysis was carried out using content analysis in accordance with the explanation-building method. In addition, participants' characteristics and some of the views expressed by them were analysed using frequency analysis, whereas others were examined using semantic content analysis. In the second coding cycle, pattern coding was applied. After the second coding, the analysis was completed, and the data were

transformed into findings. The final codes are presented as follows (Figure 1). Nevertheless, following the two-cycle analysis of the data, it was prepared for holistic interpretation in the third stage.



Figure 1. Case and categories

All data collected from students, teachers, parents, and administrators were analysed together during holistic interpretation. Common and differing views on the same subject were examined under the same heading (e.g., “Schools are the only place where TİDe is nurtured and developed”; “TİDe directly supports the lives of hearing-impaired individuals”, while specific situations were examined separately, etc.).

Ethics

This study was conducted with the approval of the Erciyes University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee, dated 26 July 2022 (Document No. 299), and with the permission of the MoNE, dated 7 July 2022 (No. E-47882400-602.04.01-53580919).

Findings

Schools are the only settings in which TİDe is nurtured and developed.

This study was conducted with the approval of Erciyes University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee. Apart from one student (S6), none of the participants received TİDe through formal

or non-formal education outside the school in which they were studying. S6 received special education at the Provincial Directorate of the National Education Guidance and Research Centre, where she also participated in TİDe. In the analysis of the students' TİD usage status, S2, S5, and S6 stated that they had a good command of TİD. S6 noted that she could express herself more easily through oral–auditory language and that she could communicate with her family in both TİD and Turkish, although she preferred Turkish. S2, another participant who knew both TİD and Turkish, stated that she could express her feelings and thoughts to others more easily when using TİD.

The difference in the level of hearing impairment between the two participants, together with the fact that S6 could hear with a hearing aid and had developed lip-reading skills, played a role. S3 and S4 defined their knowledge of TİD as 'intermediate' and stated that they knew only TİD. None of the participants considered themselves to that they used TİD at an advanced level. S3's parents and grandparents were hard of hearing and could communicate only through TİD. Another participant, S4, who stated that he could use TİD to a moderate extent, had only his father and uncle who were hearing impaired. The older siblings of S1 and S2 knew TİD. S1 stated that the only language he could use was TİD but that he could not benefit from it sufficiently. S1, S4, and S6 stated, "I can get along better with my friends and teachers", thanks to the TİDe organised at school. S1 and S3 noted that, had they not participated in TİDe, "they would not have been able to speak so well with their siblings or friends". S6, however, stated that she had difficulty communicating with her teacher because she did not know TİD at first. Subsequently, she had no difficulty communicating, stating: "There was no problem; it was difficult at first because I did not know the sign, but now it is fine."

All parents except one (P6) felt that they did their best to help their children with TİDe at home. According to P6, who felt inadequate in this regard, not knowing TİD was the main reason he or she could not support his or her child's TİDe as much as required. The remaining parents felt that their children's TİDe was sufficiently supported. For four parents, it was enough for their child to attend school to receive effective TİDe. According to P5, he or she felt able to provide sufficient support for the child's TİDe because the necessary technological equipment could be provided outside school.

Three parents (P1, P4, and P5) who were aware of TİD stated that their children did not need additional psychosocial support outside school during the TİDe process. In contrast, P3 and P6 stated that the school and teachers were unable to refer them to such support if needed. However, all participating parents stated that they could meet with the school administration and teachers whenever necessary. Four parents (P1, P2, P3, and P4) stated that they could help their children with their TİD homework only when asked.

TİDe directly supports the lives of hearing-impaired individuals.

A significant proportion of parents indicated that they knew non-standard TİD. Two parents who volunteered for the study (P1 and P4) stated that they knew TİD at an advanced level, and two (P5 and P6) at an intermediate level. P2 and P3 stated that they did not know TİD. None of the parents except P4 had receive instruction in TİD. While P2, P3, P5, and P6 indicated that they avoided teaching their children TİD at home until the children started school, P1 stated that his or her spouse taught their hearing-impaired child TİD. P4 noted that he or she and his or her spouse tried to teach TİD to their children. Only one parent received standardised TİD. This situation indicates a strong need for students to be provided with standardised TİD for communication and academic purposes.

Three students (S1, S4, and S6) stated that thanks to TİDe, they could get along better with their friends and teachers at school. S1 also noted that, thanks to TİDe, he or she could get along better with his or her brother and friends and could play games with them. S3 expressed similar thoughts and

stated that TİDe helped him or her play games with siblings and friends and make more friends. P5, however, believed that TİDe improved his communication with people with hearing impairments. The parents also supported this view. In fact, according to all parents who participated in the study, TİDe at school made their children's communication and daily life more manageable.

TİDe is a subject taught through monotonous practice and requires support outside school.

Most students (S1, S2, S3, and S6) prepared for TİD lessons by working with people in their close environment, such as their teacher, mother, siblings, or friends. Students reported that, during extracurricular activities, the teacher sent video calls or videos to them (S1, S3). While S3 stated that he or she prepared for TİD lessons alone and used only books and dictionaries in addition to working with the teacher, S4 reported that he or she did not study TİD outside school. S5 stated that he or she studied independently only when given homework and did not study when no homework was assigned. The work that S6 did with his or her mother in preparation for TİD consisted of learning the signs.

In TİD lessons, 'matching' is the activity that all participants stated they had done. In this activity, visuals and words were matched. The teacher asked students either to make the sign of the entity in the visual or to write the sign. Students matched the correct sign or spelling with the corresponding visual. In the "Find the Sign" activity (S1, S2, and S6), the teacher presented a picture to students and asked them to make the corresponding sign. Sometimes this consisted of a single word, and at other times it involved a complete sentence. The "painting" activity (S2, S3, and S4), which students mentioned as one of the classroom activities, was primarily used in studies related to colours, and students painted the corresponding drawings using the colours taught. In the "cut and paste" activity (S2, S3, and S6), the teacher distributed a sheet of paper with pictures related to signs previously taught. The teacher asks the students to cut and paste the visuals in their notebooks. Two pupils (S3 and S5) stated that play activities were carried out in TİD lessons. In these activities, verbal games such as Camel and Dwarf, musical chairs, and hand-to-hand activities were carried out. The "Mathematics with Signs" activity (S4 and S5) emphasised numbers, figures, arithmetic operations, and signs of geometric concepts.

In free or teacher-directed drawing activities (S4 and S6), students drew pictures related to signs they chose or were given by the teacher. The least frequently used activity was writing, which was mentioned only by S4. In this activity, the teacher shows the word with TİD and asks the pupil to write this word. As can be seen, the activities carried out in class did not reach the variety of activities mentioned in the programme. Moreover, the teachers' views on this issue also support the students' statements. Two of the teachers (T2 and T6) searched the internet for videos and texts in which the signs were mentioned in the preparation of the TİDe activities.

T4, however, stated that he/she did not do any special preparation and claimed that the activities in the textbook were sufficient. The activities most frequently mentioned by teachers as being carried out in TİDe were translating from Turkish into TİD for specific commemorative days and weeks (T3 and T5), translating songs (T1 and T3), expressing written sentences in TİD (T1 and T5), and drama (T5). Teachers also use cut-and-paste (T4), matching (T4), writing (T4), and games (T2) activities, which students also mentioned. T2 gives the following explanations regarding the game activities:

I teach silent films primarily by explaining the words to each other in silence and playing a game against each other about what they mean at the end. I also teach a game called hand-to-hand. I line them up in rows, I give the sign of the word to the last person, and they tell the person in front of them in sign language what they understand. We do the ear-to-ear game in sign language. We also learn names, animals, and towns with signs... (S2).

Furthermore, three students (S1, S3, and S5) stated that they were satisfied with the TİD lessons they had received. However, S2 and S6 noted that they feel sad during TİD lessons because they do not know the signs sometimes and adequately give up learning. A review of teachers' responses shows that students expressed similar views.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, even experienced teachers conducting TİDe (T3, T4, T5, and T6) encountered considerable difficulties in carrying out activities. All participants identified a lack of techno-pedagogical skills in using distance-education tools and a lack of student involvement as the main reasons for their struggles. T4 characterised online education for the hearing-impaired as a failure, whilst T5, who was instructing first-grade pupils at the time, expressed feeling utterly defeated. During the online-education period, two individuals indicated that they would have preferred being unwell at school rather than healthy at home.

All teachers deemed the textbook sent by MoNE adequate for TİDe instruction and noted that no additional resources were necessary. T1 demonstrated the most diversified use of materials during TİDe, often incorporating visuals, cue cards, videos, and smart boards. Meanwhile, T2 utilised computers and projection devices in TİD lessons. The supplementary materials utilised by the participants during their lessons, beyond the textbook and dictionary, are outlined as follows: computer (T2, T6), visuals (T1, T3, and T5), cue cards (T1, T3), video (T1, T6), interactive whiteboard (T1), projection device (T2), and photocopier (T4). Based on the data obtained from the participants, it can be concluded that teachers do not utilise many additional materials for sign language education. During the researcher's observations, it became apparent that the technological devices specified in MoNE's (2017) plan were absent from the classrooms where TİDe was conducted. Additionally, MoNE's (n.d.-c) TİDe digital content remained unused.

On the other hand, in terms of measurement and evaluation, MoNE considers it necessary to use individual observation forms to determine the success of hearing-impaired students. In line with this, all the students said there are no examinations in TİD classes and that their teachers sometimes interview them and their parents about their progress. However, only half of the teachers (T1, T3, and T4) stated they could develop and implement individual observation forms effectively. T4's views on assessment, presented below, are thought-provoking in relation to the assessment and evaluation processes undertaken in TİDe:

The paperwork makes me tense, and it is difficult to leave the programme and give so many points for this mark. For this reason, when the end of the year comes, I give grades based on the individualised education programme. There are too many schedules in these forms; frankly, I do not pay much attention to them, especially if the class size has reached five, as all five are in first grade! If I let go and turn my back... One year, I could hardly even fill my class notebook; what a measurement...

Teachers stated that they used multiple-choice tests (T2, T6), specially developed observation forms (T3, T4), practical tests (T2, T6), and short assessments on the subject (T1) to determine children's TİD competence levels. T2 explained the examinations conducted in courses without an individualised curriculum as follows:

I conduct two exams. One of these exams is written and multiple-choice. In the practical exam, they shoot a video of themselves in sign language. I scale it as follows: 'How accurately is the word formed? What is the speed when making the sign? Is the message given to the other party correctly? Are gestures used?' I scored it using various scales.

No TİDe education project has been implemented in schools. Administrators (with code H) attribute the lack of a project to the student's lack of readiness. According to H1, the activities students enjoy most outside the classroom are trips. Pupils often ask him, "When are you going to take us skiing/to the zoo/for a picnic/to eat pita bread with minced meat?" However, according to H1 and other administrators, the financial situation of the students does not always allow such activities to be organised.

Knowing TİD is a matter of conscience.

None of the teachers learned TİD in a structured way through formal training programmes. T3 and T5 learned TİD superficially from colleagues at school. T1 and T6 first learned TİD at a basic level in a school-based course. T1 subsequently attended a non-formal education course run by the Public Education Centre of the Provincial Directorate of National Education, whilst T6 attended a TİD course on an online training platform at a level that would enable her to work as an interpreter and translator. T2 took TİD courses at both levels at the Public Education Centre. T4 attended introductory and translation courses at the Kayseri Vocational Education and Culture Joint-Stock Company of Kayseri Municipality.

When asked about their reasons for learning TİD, two teachers (T3 and T4) stated that they had learnt TİD as part of their preparation for professional life, thinking that they would need it in the future because they were studying special education, but that they did so by choice and without any external guidance. Two teachers (T5 and T6) stated that they learned TİD after working in a school for the hearing-impaired because they had to communicate with students or conduct TİD lessons. However, this necessity expressed by the teachers is in the form of acquiring a skill that the Ministry or the institution considered necessary, but rather a necessity felt by the teacher in the context in which he or she worked. T6's comments on this issue are as follows:

It was like I was forced to learn TİD. I thought that everyone at the school for the hearing impaired knew TİD and that I would have difficulties. Still, when I went there, I realised that teachers, especially branch teachers, could request to go to these schools as if they wanted to be transferred to a regular school without any training. I could get along with my students if I did this: I write whatever the essential requirement is on the blackboard, and they write it, too. After all, the hearing impaired knows TİD. This was one of my biggest mistakes. Teaching is a work of conscience; one realises this by doing and living. At specific points, I felt that I was adding new ones to the communication barriers of the students. Then I said, "Since I am in this school, my students are also hearing impaired, I need to learn this language."

These words from T6 clearly show that teachers appointed or transferred to schools for the hearing-impaired are not tested to determine whether they know TİD, nor is this checked after they have taken up their posts.

Two teachers (T1 and T2) started working in these schools and learned TİD because of their interests or experiences. T1 associates his learning of TİD with the otitis media he had experienced as a child. T1 says the following regarding this:

When I had ear infections as a child, I believe the doctors' warnings that I could lose my hearing were distressing and had a significant impact on me. My interest in sign language grew during that period, and I researched. I pursued child development studies at a vocational high school for girls. While searching for potential coursework, I became enamoured with the hearing-impaired department and enrolled. I was victorious in my initial year and felt the need

to acquire knowledge of sign language. However, using TİD was prohibited, and the faculty disapproved of TİD learning and implementation, believing it to be detrimental to the development of language skills in the pupils.

Like T2 and T5, both of whom graduated as teachers of the hearing-impaired, TİD was not included in their undergraduate education. None of the administrators employed at schools for the hearing impaired are alumni of the faculty of education. Two of the three administrators who participated in the study voluntarily served as principals, and the other held the assistant principal position. Two administrators possess master's degrees, while the remaining administrator has a bachelor's degree. It is worth noting that all three administrators had degrees in theology and had received no TİDe. However, administrators emphasise that a significant issue presented in TİD is the appointment of teachers to schools for the hearing-impaired without sufficient knowledge of TİD and lacking pedagogical training on TİDe.

According to H3, employing educators trained in TİD resolves only a fraction of the issue; there is also a need to educate parents in TİD. Despite some parents refusing to allow their children to learn TİD, they should be encouraged to do so and learn to support their children's TİD and literacy skills at home (H3). H2 believes that by extending the TİD programme to a broader community, some of the problems could be tackled with greater ease.

Teachers have limited knowledge of the grammatical features of TİD

None of the teachers could provide in-depth responses to the researcher's inquiries regarding the grammatical characteristics of TİD. The current situation indicates that teacher training and education have not incorporated the latest research regarding TİD's categorisation as a specified language. Four participants (T1, T4, T5, and T6) were asked to define TİD and describe its characteristics. They provided a definition stating that "body language is a way of communicating that uses your gestures and facial expressions."

According to T1, this language varies regionally and is hard to comprehend if the beginning is missed. T2 describes TİD as a language that differs from Turkish, featuring transposed sentences. T4 likened TİD to Arabic and claimed that it is a language that is easily learned but quickly forgotten. Meanwhile, T6 stated that TİD lacks synonymy, homonymy, and simile. These definitions reflect a profound lack of knowledge about TİD among teachers.

The chronic lack of understanding among teachers regarding the linguistic characteristics of TİD can be observed. When questioned about their involvement with scientific research and publications regarding TİD, TİDe, and deaf and hard-of-hearing people, it was revealed that none of them were dedicated to this pursuit. Four teachers (T1, T3, T4, and T6) indicated that they scrutinised only the dictionaries dispatched by MoNE. Meanwhile, three teachers (T1, T2, and T4) declared that they pursued prominent personalities like Mesut Öztürk, Mesut Yazıcı, and Sibel Şengün on social media for the hearing-impaired and acquired new terminology through their posts. Only T1 supported a scientific project to enhance TİD education by capturing sign language videos and submitting them to MoNE while preparing the TİD Dictionary. This situation also applies to school administrators and parents. None of the administrators attempted to develop a project on TİDe at school or to analyse scientific research. Of the parents, only P2 reported that he or she followed the resource entitled "Sign Language Guide and Talking Hands with the Guidance of the Teacher".

Teacher incompetence is not the only challenge facing TİDe.

When asked whether there were any problems during the TİD process and, if so, what they were, the students' responses pointed to an issue raised in the introduction to the TİD study: the standardisation of TİD. Indeed, the most common challenge that students reported concerning TİD was that their families did not know the 'new' signs (S3) or that these 'new' signs were difficult for them (S3, S4, and S5). The adjective 'new' used by the students in these statements is comparative in nature and indicates that they categorised TİD signs as 'old' and 'new'. For the students, the signs in TİD learned at school are 'new', whereas the signs in TİD acquired from their families and/or close environment are 'old'. Students' thinking in this way suggests that during the TİDe education process, students have not been exposed to enough activities to make them aware that the TİD used in their families and close environment and the standard TİD taught at school are different. Furthermore, the challenges expressed by the students are related to the TİD process and the nature of TİD itself. For S6, the fact that her family did not know TİD was the most critical challenge encountered during the TİD process. In contrast, S1 and S2 reported encountering no difficulties in the TİDe process. The first issue teachers mentioned when discussing the challenges they faced in TİD was the TİD curriculum. While one-third of the participants (T1 and T4) stated that they found the curriculum adequate, two-thirds identified various negative aspects. The negative aspects of the TİD curriculum identified by the participants were that preparing individual programmes for each student is tiring (T2, T5); that the content and outcomes of the programme do not align with students' levels and realities (T3); and that the programme contains many gaps that must be addressed by the teacher (T2). The teaching process is not suitable for fulfilling this programme (T6). Other challenges encountered and highlighted as important by the participants in the context of TİDe, as well as the suggestions they made in response to these challenges, are summarised below (Table 5):

Table 5. *TİDe's problems and suggestions*

Problem	Suggestion	Participants
Differences in TİD	A standard form of TİD should be established.	S1, S2, S3, S5
Teachers' entry into work without good TİD skills	TİDe should be taught as a university course.	S1, S4, S6
The critical period has passed when TİDe is started.	TİDe should be started before preschool.	S1, S3
Low level of student readiness for TİDe	TİD should use peer and family education.	S1

Difficulties in teaching abstract concepts (T3, T5), insufficient time allocated for lessons TİD lessons (T2, T6), and students' lack of prior knowledge (T4, T6) are other challenges mentioned by the teachers. In addition, teachers reported that students begin learning TİD at a late age (T1); that TİD is incomplete (T4); that students lack attention (T2); that meaning may be missed when they focus solely on the sign (T5); and that signs not used or encountered for some time tend to be forgotten (T5).

One of the challenges that teachers expect TİDe to address is the lack of TİD skills among teachers who deliver courses other than TİD. According to T1, T4, and T6, the ability of branch teachers to use TİD is very limited. According to the participants who shared this observation, although teachers from other branches working in schools for the hearing impaired and delivering courses other than TİD make considerable efforts for the development of their students, they spend at least one semester learning TİD after they begin working, as they did not learn it prior to their service. Consequently, their lessons are viewed as being largely ineffective. Two teachers (T2 and T3) stated that this challenge diminished as teachers' seniority increased and ceased to be an issue over time. T5, in contrast, argued that the learning and use of TİD by teachers in other branches was related to their desire for self-

improvement rather than to pre-service training or seniority, and that the use of TİD varied from person to person, making generalisation impossible.

Teachers stress the need for two measures to overcome the problems mentioned above: that special educators who proficient in TİD should provide support courses for families and children (T4, T5), and that all staff working in schools for the hearing impaired should learn TİD (T1, T6). Teachers also suggested that an active association for the hearing impaired should be established in Kayseri (T2); that a platform should be created where those providing TİDe can collaborate (T2); that TİD should be offered in all schools (T1); that negative prejudices against TİD should be overcome (T1); and that teachers who will teach TİD should receive high-quality TİD training (T6)..

Another source of challenges in TİDe is the late start of TİDe. According to all teachers except one participant (T4), there is a critical period for TİDe, which has already passed by the time children start school. T5 stated that, in terms of TİDe, the age at which children with severe hearing loss start school, the early diagnosis of their condition, and the time at which they begin using a device are crucial. T4, in contrast, expressed different opinion from the other participants. According to T4, TİD can be learnt at any age; the important factor is not the age but the active use.

Half of the teachers (T1, T3, and T5) think that the readiness of students with hearing impairment within their families was good. Two participants believe the students' readiness is more closely related to the willingness to use TİD than to the presence or absence of a hearing-impaired person in the family. T2 stated that those without a hearing-impaired family member try to learn TİD through the Internet but cannot acquire TİD sufficiently to communicate at school or follow their lessons.

Results and Recommendations

This study, which adopts a rare holistic approach to TİD within the context of language education, seeks to present a comprehensive account of the current state of TİD in Kayseri province. The data collected from students, teachers, administrators and parents reveal a noteworthy finding: that TİD is taught by teachers who have had no prior exposure to the language, lack knowledge of its linguistic features, and have learned it primarily through informal means after entering the profession. It has been observed that although most TİDe teachers have undergone training for children with special needs, they lacked pedagogical knowledge and resources regarding the purpose, content, methods, processes, measurement and evaluation of teaching and learning TİDe. To bridge this gap, they rely on intuition, student feedback, and experiences gained during teaching. The uniformity of the tasks performed by teachers during TİD lessons, which are constrained by textbook content, and the inability to conduct appropriate measurement and evaluation procedures can be ascribed to the same underlying cause. A significant number of teachers began focusing on TİD only after being assigned to schools for the hearing impaired, whereas personal motives drove others. For this reason, educators view the process of acquiring TİD not merely as a professional matter but as a conscientious obligation.

The findings of this study align with those of Tutuk (2021) and Piştav Akmeşe (2016). According to Şimşir (2021), teachers demonstrated limited engagement with scientific studies on TİD and TİDe and did not read relevant research. Instead, they tended to rely on social media posts, particularly those on Instagram, related to the subject matter. However, as Genç and Genç (2013) pointed out, reliance on subjective evaluations may lead to the acquisition of inaccurate information. Our study further confirmed previous research (Güleç-Aslan et al., 2013; Piştav Akmeşe & Kayhan, 2019; Sarıkaya & Börekçi, 2016), demonstrating that teachers in TİDe do not possess the expected level of competence.

However, the administrators involved in this study recognise the issue of teachers being assigned to their schools without any knowledge of TİD. Moreover, the fact that none of the parents who were satisfied with their children's TİD instruction at school had received standard TİD instruction highlights the home dimension of this problem. Both parents and students agree that TİDe, as taught in schools, enhances communication skills and fosters positive relationships. Nonetheless, a primary concern highlighted by students, parents and teachers alike is the lack of standardisation surrounding TİD. Children learn different versions of TİD at home and are exposed to varying forms of TİD during school, which is problematic. This situation goes beyond the accent differences in oral-auditory language and the variance between spoken and written language. It equates to the challenge of learning two languages, making the TİD course arduous for students. The TİD lexicon acquired from students' families and environments may differ from the standard TİD lexicon, negatively impacting their learning experience. An extended timeframe and the distribution of standardised TİDes to parents are necessary to address this issue. Therefore, TİD faces not only challenges relating to teacher expertise but other complications as well. The incomplete standardisation process of TİDe, combined with the limited potential for families to support standard TİDe (either due to lack of hearing impairment or unfamiliarity with the language), and the distance between administrators and special education/TİDe pose significant problems. Furthermore, the age at which individuals begin TİDe is far beyond the critical period for language acquisition. Ivanova et al. (2022) reported that Icelandic children commence kindergarten at the age of two. However, children with hearing impairment in Iceland may begin kindergarten between 10 and 12 months of age at the discretion of their families and are offered the opportunities to learn sign language. These challenges suggest that TİDe, in schools for the hearing impaired, confronts numerous obstacles at institutional and social levels beyond the classroom.

It is apparent that the school administrators had not obtained a degree from a faculty of education, let alone graduated from departments of special education. Consequently, the administrators' responses to queries regarding TİDe were primarily centred on the school's budget and infrastructural facilities. Despite the greater demand for innovative technological provisions for hearing-impaired students compared to those who are not (Giménez & Rosich Sala, 2007; Solak Berigel & Karal, 2021), the facilities currently offered by schools remain inadequate.

TİDe is a component of education focused on language learning. Teachers' continuous and effective use of sign language is vital for enhance communication with their deaf students (Hall et al., 2019). The contribution of TİD courses to TİDe, which have been included as elective courses in faculties of education since 2018, has not been adequately examined. Transforming the Departments of Special Education within faculties of education into a discipline that trains TİD trainers directly would be advantageous. This could be achieved through collaborative studies with the Turkish Language Education and Linguistics. Explanations of technical terms shall be provided upon their first mention, and objective evaluations will be employed throughout the text. The language will be formal and devoid of biased expressions, contractions and colloquialisms while adhering to grammatical correctness and conventional academic structure. Consistency in citation style and footnote format will also be maintained. In their 2018 study, Piştav Akmeşe and Kayhan found that teachers who practised TİD did not feel competent in this area and called for more practice-based studies on TİD during undergraduate education. Furthermore, the requirement for teachers to take TİD courses from individuals without pedagogical competence (Kubuş et al., 2016) requires attention.

To create the infrastructure required for language education, efforts should be made to establish a standard TİD based on linguistic scientific findings. To this end, it is essential to organise training sessions for teachers and parents on the standard form of TİD, carefully examining their active

participation and achievement levels. Ivanova et al. (2022) discovered that families with hearing-impaired children lacked proficiency in sign language, and that those who learn it as a second language are still insufficient as role models. Kisch (2008) and Nyst (2010) note that the large number of individuals with severe hearing impairments in families leads to the development of their sign language. Meek (2020) contends that when an individual in a family has a severe hearing impairment, communication ties within the family may not develop adequately, leading to deprivation of implicit learning. This highlights the need for intensive studies on parent education, as it constitutes one of the most critical complementary elements of TİDe.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Giriş

İşitme güçlüğü çeken/ sağır bireylere yönelik gerçekleştirilen Türk İşaret Dili (TİD) eğitimi (TİDe), dil eğitiminin alanlarından biridir. Türkiye’de son dönemlerde yapılan yasal düzenlemeler ve bilimsel araştırmalar sayesinde TİD’in öğretimine yönelik önemli adımlar atılmıştır. Ancak ülke genelinde çalışmalarını sürdüren 84 işitme engelliler okulunda gerçekleştirilen TİDe’nin mevcut durumu dil eğitimi açısından paydaş görüşleri çerçevesinde çok yönlü olarak ayrıca incelenmemiştir. Bu eksiklikten hareketle, Kayseri ilinde gerçekleştirilen TİDe’yi bütüncül olarak betimlemek amacıyla bu çalışmada şu sorulara yanıt aranmıştır:

- Öğrenci görüşlerine göre Kayseri ilindeki TİDe’nin mevcut durumu nedir?
- Öğretmen görüşlerine göre Kayseri ilindeki TİDe’nin mevcut durumu nedir?
- Veli görüşlerine göre Kayseri ilindeki TİDe’nin mevcut durumu nedir?
- Yönetici görüşlerine göre Kayseri ilindeki TİDe’nin mevcut durumu nedir?

Yöntem

Bu çalışmada Kayseri ilinde TİDe’nin mevcut durumuna ilişkin farklı perspektiflere dayalı ayrıntılı bir panorama sunmak için çok katmanlı durum araştırması benimsenmiştir. Çalışma kapsamında Kayseri merkez ilçeleri ve Develi’de yürütülen TİDe; öğrenci, öğretmen, yönetici ve veli bakış açısıyla değerlendirilmiştir. Her bir alt durum için iki ayrı uzmanın görüşüne başvurularak gerekli düzeltmeler yapılan, dört ayrı yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu hazırlanmıştır. Öğrencilerle yapılacak görüşmelerde kullanılacak form ayrıca araştırmacı ve TİDe veren bir uzmanın desteğiyle TİD’e aktarılmıştır. Katılımcılardan elde edilen veriler iki döngülü kodlama ile içerik çözümlemesiyle irdelenerek bulgulara dönüştürülmüştür.

Araştırmanın çalışma grubu 21 kişiden oluşmaktadır. Bu kişiler dört öbekte toplanabilir İlk öbekte Kayseri il merkezi ve Develi ilçesi sınırları içinde bulunan, MEB’e bağlı resmî işitme engelliler ilköğretim okullarına kayıtlı altı öğrenci yer almaktadır. İkinci öbekte ise bu okullarda öğrenim gören öğrencilerin velisi olan altı yetişkin bulunmaktadır. Aynı okullarda görev yapan altı TİD öğretmeni ile TİDe verilen kurumlarda görev yapan üç yönetici, üçüncü ve dördüncü öbekteki katılımcılardır. Çalışma kapsamında öğrenciler “S”, öğretmenler “T”, yöneticiler “Y” ve veliler “V” biçiminde kodlanarak anılmıştır.

Bulgular

Öğrencilerin Gözünden TİDe’nin Mevcut Durumu

TİDe eğitimine ilişkin katılımcıların üçü (S1, S3 ve S5) işitme engelliler okullarında yürütülen TİDe’den memnun olduğunu beyan etmektedir. Ancak S2 ve S6 işaretleri iyi bilmedikleri için TİD derslerinde kendilerini üzgün hissettiklerini söylemiştir.

Öğrencilerin büyük bir kısmı (S1, S2, S3 ve S6) TİD derslerine yakın çevresinde bulunan kişilerle çalışarak hazırlanmaktadır. Öğretmenle birlikte yapılan okul dışı çalışmalarda ise öğretmenin öğrencileriyle görüntülü görüşme yaptığı veya onlara video gönderdiği dile getirilmiştir (S1, S3). Bir katılımcı (S4) dışındaki öğrencilerin tamamı TİD derslerine yönelik Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı (MEB) tarafından gönderilen ve derslerde kullanılan TİD kitabıyla ilgili olumlu görüş beyan etmiştir. TİD derslerinde bütün öğrencilerin yapıldığını belirttiği etkinlik “eşleştirme” dir. En az gerçekleştirilen etkinlik ise yalnızca S4’ün belirttiği yazı yazma etkinliğidir.

Öğrencilerin TİDe kapsamında en çok yakındığı sorun ailelerinin “yeni” işaretleri bilmemesi (S3) veya “yeni” işaretlerin kendilerine zor gelmesidir (S3, S4 ve S5). Öğrencilerin yarısı (S3, S4 ve S5) derslerde yalnızca TİD kullanıldığını, işitme cihazlarıyla belirli düzeyde işitebilen öğrencilerden oluşan diğer yarıdaki öğrenciler de (S1, S2 ve S6) derslerde TİD’den de yararlandığında işlenen konuyu daha iyi anlayabildiklerini bildirmiştir.

Öğretmenlerin Gözünden TİDe'nin Mevcut Durumu

Öğretmenlerden hiçbiri TİD’i dizgeli bir biçimde, örgün eğitim programlarında öğrenmemiştir. Öğretmenler öğrencilerle iletişim kurabilme veya TİD derslerini yürütebilmek için mecbur kalmaları nedeniyle TİD öğrenmeye yöneldiklerini ifade etmektedir. TİD’in dil bilgisel özelliklerine ilişkin sorulara hiçbir katılımcı öğretmen ayrıntılı yanıt verememiştir. Bununla birlikte hiçbir öğretmenin TİD, TİDe ve işitme engellilere yönelik bilimsel çalışma ve yayınları takip etmeği görülmüştür.

Belirli günler ve haftalar için Türkçeden TİD’e çeviriler yapma (T3, T5), şarkı çevirme (T1, T3) ve yazılı cümleyi TİD ile konuşarak anlatma (T1, T5) ve drama (T5) etkinlikleri öğretmenler tarafından TİDe’de en sık gerçekleştirildiği dile getirilen etkinliklerdir. Bütün öğretmenler, MEB’in gönderdiği ders kitabını TİDe eğitimi için yeterli bulmaktadır. Katılımcıların yarısı (T1, T3 ve T4) bireyselleştirilmiş gözlem formlarını etkin bir biçimde geliştirip uygulayabildiklerini dile getirmiştir. Öğrencilerin TİD yetkinlik düzeylerini belirlerken çoktan seçmeli testler (T2, T6), özel geliştirilen gözlem formları (T3, T4), uygulamalı sınavlar (T2, T6) ve konuyla ilgili kısa değerlendirmelerden (T1) de yararlanılmaktadır.

Öğretmenlerin üçte ikisinde sözü edilen TİD dersi öğretim programıyla ilgili olumsuzluklar şunlardır: her öğrenci için ayrı ayrı bireyselleştirilmiş eğitim programı hazırlanmasının yorucu olması (T2, T5), program içerik ve kazanımının öğrenci düzeyiyle ve gerçeklikle örtüşmemesi (T3), programın öğretmenin iyileştirmesine gerek duyulan çok boşluk barındırması (T2) ve öğretim sürecinin bu programı yerine getirmeye elverişli olmaması (T6). TİDe’nin geneline ilişkin ise öğretmenler, işitme engelliler arasında kullanılan farklı işaret dillerinin olması (T1, T2, T3, T5), TİD’in yaygınlaşmamış olması (T1, T4, T6) ve TİDe’ye kritik dönem geçtikten sonra başlanması (T1, T3), soyut kavramların öğretiminde yaşanan güçlükler (T3, T5), TİD dersleri için ayrılan zamanın yetersizliği (T2, T6), öğrencilerin ön bilgilerinin yetersiz olması (T4, T6), öğrencilerin dikkat eksikliği yaşamaları (T2), işarete odaklanarak anlamı kaçırmaları (T5) ve bir süre kullanmadıkları/karşılaşmadıkları işaretleri unutmalarından ve TİD dersleri dışındaki dersleri yürüten öğretmenlerin TİD kullanmadaki eksikliklerinden de yakınmaktadır.

Yöneticilerin Gözünden TİDe'nin Mevcut Durumu

Yöneticiler TİDe ile ilgili eğitim almamıştır. Okullarda eğitim ve araştırma projesi gerçekleştirilmemiştir. Öte yandan yöneticiler okullarındaki fizikî alt yapının TİDe eğitimi için elverişli olduğunu ifade etmektedir. Ayrıca Y1 okul bütçesinin okul içi işleyiş için kâfi olduğunu dile getirmiştir. Yöneticilere göre TİDe ilgili en büyük sorun, okullara atanan öğretmenlerin TİD bilmemesidir. Yöneticiler öğretmenlerin TİDe almalarını gerekli görmekte, toplum içinde TİD kullanımına yönelik farkındalığın geliştirilmesi gerektiğini ifade etmektedirler.

Velilerin Gözünden TİDe'nin Mevcut Durumu

Bütün veliler okulda verilen TİDe’nin, çocuklarının iletişimlerini ve yaşamlarını kolaylaştırdığını dile getirmiştir. Beş veli, okulda yürütülen TİDe eğitimine 10 üzerinden (V1, V2, V3, V4 ve V5) 7 ve üzeri puan vermiştir. Veliler, TİDe’ye ilişkin genelde olumlu görüşler bildirmiştir. Veliler; TİD’in toplum içinde yaygınlaştırılması ve işitme sorunu yaşamayanların da TİDe almaları (V6,

V5), TİDe'ye okula başlamadan önce başlanması (V3) ve TİD'in ölçünlüleşme sürecinin tamamlanması (V4) gerektiğini düşünmektedir.

Sonuç ve Öneriler

TİDe'nin dil eğitimi bağlamında bütüncül olarak ele alındığı bu araştırmada Kayseri ilinde gerçekleştirilen TİDe'nin mevcut durumunu çok yönlü olarak ortaya koymak amaçlanmıştır. Öğrenci, öğretmen, yönetici ve velilerden sağlanan veriler doğrultusunda ulaşılan bulgulardan en çarpıcısı TİD'i daha önce öğrenmemiş, bu dilin dil bilimsel özellikleri hakkında fikir sahibi olmayan, göreve başladıktan sonra yalnızca yaygın öğrenmeler aracılığıyla öğrendikleri kadarıyla bu dille tanışanlar tarafından TİDe'nin verilmekte olduğudur. Ayrıca TİDe veren öğretmenlerin çoğunun özel gereksinimli bireylere yönelik eğitim almalarına karşın TİDe ile ilgili eğitsel bilgilerin verilmediği bir lisans eğitimi sonrasında başladıkları görevlerinde sezgisel bir biçimde, öğrencilerden gelen dönütler ve öğretim esnasında edinilen deneyimlerle bu boşluğu tamamlamaya çalıştıkları görülmektedir. Öğretmenlerin TİD'e ilişkin ilgilerinin kaynağı profesyonel gelişim arzusu değil, kişisel dinamiklerdir. Ayrıca TİD'in ölçünleşme sürecinin tamamlanmamış olması, ailelerin standart TİD'e destek sunma potansiyellerinin -işitme engelli olmamaları veya standart TİD'i kullanmadıkları için- düşük düzeyde olması ve yöneticilerin özel eğitime ve TİDe'ye uzak olmaları ve TİDe başlama yaşının kritik dönemin ilerisinde bulunması da çalışmada gözlenen diğer önemli sorunlardır.

TİDe'nin dil eğitimi bağlamında ele alınabilmesi gerekli alt yapının oluşması için dil bilimsel bulgularla ölçünlü TİD oluşturulmasına yönelik çabalar desteklenmeli ve ölçünlü TİD ile ilgili öğretmen ve veliler başta olmak üzere etkin katılım ve başarı durumunun dikkatle incelendiği eğitimler düzenlenmelidir.