

Teaching Turkish as a Second Language: Research Trends, Results, and Future Perspectives*

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Abstract

The present study reviewed research on teaching Turkish as a second language in primary schools in Türkiye using a descriptive approach. A total of 127 articles and postgraduate theses were analyzed through descriptive content analysis, with discussions about research “trends” and “results” for each study. The findings indicated that the number of publications rose in 2020, 2021, and 2023, and the studies primarily aimed to determine the current status of teaching Turkish as a second language in primary schools. These studies were conducted using qualitative research methods; the study groups included teachers, and data were collected through interviews and analyzed using content analysis. Most studies did not examine a specific language skill but focused on educational environments, characteristics of teachers and students, and innovative methods. Results of the studies were categorized as structural and functional concerning educational environments, teacher and student characteristics, and innovative approaches and methods. The present study's findings were discussed based on the literature, and several recommendations were provided for future research.

Keywords: Second language teaching, Turkish language instruction, research trends, descriptive content analysis.

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İlkokullarda İkinci Dil Olarak Türkçe Öğretimi: Araştırma Eğilimleri, Sonuçlar ve Gelecek Perspektifleri*

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Öz

Bu çalışmada, Türkiye’de ilkokul düzeyinde ikinci dil olarak Türkçe öğretimine yönelik çalışmalar betimleyici bir perspektifle incelenmiştir. Bu doğrultuda 127 araştırma makalesi ve lisansüstü tez betimsel içerik analizi yöntemiyle analiz edilmiş, çalışmalar “eğilimleri” ve “sonuçları” açısından ayrı ayrı ele alınmıştır. Bulgular; araştırmaların 2020, 2021 ve 2023 yıllarında arttığını; genellikle mevcut yapıyı belirlemeye odaklandığını, nitel araştırma yöntemlerinin, öğretmenlerden oluşan çalışma gruplarının, veri toplama aracı olarak görüşme yönteminin, veri analizinde ise içerik analizinin sıklıkla tercih edildiğini göstermektedir. Araştırmaların çoğunluğunda belirli bir dil becerisi ele alınmamış, konular ise eğitim ortamları, öğretmen ve öğrenci özellikleri ile yenilikçi yöntemlere yoğunlaşmıştır. Araştırmaların sonuçları ise eğitim ortamlarının yapısı ve işleyişine ilişkin sonuçlar, öğretmen ve öğrenci özelliklerine ilişkin sonuçlar ve yenilikçi yaklaşım ve yöntemlere ilişkin sonuçlar olmak üzere üç başlık altında toplanmıştır. Sonuçlar, mevcut literatür ışığında tartışılmış ve alanın geleceğine yönelik öneriler getirilmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: İkinci dil öğretimi, Türkçe öğretimi, araştırma eğilimleri, betimsel içerik analizi.

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Introduction

The Transformation of Turkish Language Instruction in Türkiye Due to Migration

Globalization has transformed political, economic, and social structures, and migration has become a vital issue worldwide. Türkiye has emerged as a transit country for several nationals, primarily Syrians, who became refugees due to the civil war that began in 2011. In addition to the need for a safe haven and other essential requirements, the educational needs of the refugees have become increasingly important. As temporary foreign students in Türkiye transition to permanence, teaching Turkish as a second language and related studies is vital for both foreign students and the education system. Migration has influenced various fields, including education. There are 4,708,555 foreign nationals in Türkiye, 1,317,122 of whom are of compulsory education age. Of these, 1 million have been enrolled in formal education, and 433,304 attend primary schools (Directorate General for Lifelong Learning, 2024). One of the most significant challenges faced by children integrated into the Turkish education system is continuing their education without having attained sufficient proficiency in Turkish, the language of the society. Most students experience difficulties both in using and comprehending Turkish when they start school, which negatively impacts not only their academic achievement but also their adaptation to the classroom and social environment (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Crul et al., 2019; Taş & Minaz, 2022; Güngör Yereyikılmaz & Boyacı, 2024). In particular, bilingual students at the primary school level encounter problems in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, and face various challenges in understanding their teachers and lessons, communicating with peers, and adapting to the school environment (Koyama & Menken, 2013; Bunar, 2015; Güngör Yereyikılmaz & Boyacı, 2024). For these children, insufficient language skills directly affect not only their classroom participation, but also their academic achievement, self-confidence, sense of belonging, and overall social integration (Schachner et al., 2016; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2018). To address these issues, Türkiye has implemented various measures in education and language instruction. To enhance the language acquisition of foreign students and support their integration, two models have been adopted based on their duration of stay and the evolving dynamics of migration. Initially, students were enrolled in classes set up in camps and Temporary Education Centers (TECs) following the “segregation” model. In cities without centers, the “direct inclusion” model was implemented. As students were accepted as permanent residents, TECs were closed, and the Project for Supporting Inclusive Education for Kids in the Turkish Education System (PITES) launched in 2016, aimed to address issues in Turkish instruction, support their integration into society, and ensure their transition to public schools. Teacher training was organized in collaboration with UNICEF, and Turkish language instruction began for the 6-12 age group (A1-A2 levels), based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. However, due to challenges faced in the direct inclusion model, “compensatory education/courses” were introduced. It was decided that compensatory courses would be offered to students who could not meet the established goals in Turkish language and mathematics skills through the Primary Schools Catch-up Program (IYEP). Additionally, “adaptation classes” were created to assist students with inadequate Turkish language skills. These developments sparked discussions about bilingualism, specifically the preservation of the students' native language while they learn the local language, along with related pedagogical approaches.

International literature indicates that the challenges faced by immigrant and refugee students receiving education in the language of the host society are not limited to linguistic difficulties but also encompass social, psychological, and pedagogical dimensions (Cummins, 2000; García & Wei, 2014). In particular, communication barriers impact not only students' academic achievement but also their self-confidence, peer relationships, and overall well-being (Schachner et al., 2016; Bialystok, 2017). For successful integration, the primary aim of language instruction is to ensure that students develop sufficient academic language proficiency to meet both everyday communicative needs and to comprehend lessons and teachers (Block et al., 2014). Within this framework, the societal impacts of migration and multilingualism have increasingly come to the forefront, not only in educational settings but also in language education research. In light of these developments, both approaches and practices related to teaching Turkish as a second language, as well as research trends in this field, have gained growing significance.

Research on Teaching Turkish as a Second Language

The terms “second language” and “foreign language” are often confused in the literature on teaching Turkish as a second language. According to Karaağaç (2011), a second language is one that an individual learns in an environment where it is spoken as a native language. In contrast, a foreign language is not commonly spoken in the learner’s immediate environment and is typically acquired through education (Saville-Troike, 2006). Therefore, for the current study, Turkish should be regarded as a second language for the foreign student profile in Türkiye. Due to this terminological confusion, bilingualism studies in Türkiye have generally focused on teaching Turkish as a foreign language. These studies aimed to determine the language proficiency of adults learning Turkish, develop materials, and enhance teaching practices (Biçer, 2017; Gülen Canlı & Tepeli, 2019; Kardoğan & Kardaş, 2023).

However, the teaching of Turkish is an extremely critical issue not only in terms of being taught as a foreign language, but also in situations where it should be addressed as a second language, especially at the early age groups level. Indeed, when teaching Turkish as a second language at a young age, primary education is the most critical stage for acquiring listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Foreign primary school students encounter various challenges in learning Turkish, and addressing these issues is vital for language proficiency, social communication, and academic success (Güngör Yereyikılmaz & Boyacı, 2024). This reality necessitates a better understanding and fulfillment of the specific needs unique to this age group and context. Therefore, it has become essential to systematically examine the scope, trends, and findings of research conducted within this framework in order to advance both theoretical and practical knowledge. However, a review of the existing literature reveals that studies which systematically classify and evaluate research focusing on teaching Turkish as a second language at the primary school level in Türkiye are still limited. Therefore, further research is needed on teaching Turkish as a second language in primary schools. Previous studies have primarily focused on bilingual Turkish children abroad, analyzed during specific periods, based on year patterns, and examined the aim of instruction, limited target language skills, and emerging trends (Avcı & Kurudayıoğlu, 2022; Büyükkiz & Güler Yıldız, 2021; Can & Kardaş, 2023; Kesik & Haliştoprak, 2023). As observed, a significant portion of existing research either focuses on Turkish children living abroad or on adults; the current language, communication, and adaptation problems faced by migrant, refugee, and bilingual primary school students receiving education in a second language in Turkey have not been systematically analyzed. The unique aspect of this study is its systematic review of all qualitative and quantitative research conducted on teaching Turkish as a second language at the primary school level in Türkiye. The study not only reveals the current situation but also clearly identifies gaps in the literature and offers guiding recommendations in the areas of policy development, implementation, and teacher training. In this respect, the research is considered to make a significant contribution to the literature and to guide future applied studies by providing an up-to-date and multidimensional data set that will serve as a basis for inclusive and integrative education policies.

This study aims to enhance understanding of the current status and trends, systematically demonstrating existing limitations through a comprehensive review of research on Turkish as a second language. The findings could assist in addressing challenges and achieving the objectives of inclusive education. Accordingly, the research questions were established as follows:

1. What are the trends in studies conducted on teaching Turkish as a second language in primary education in Türkiye regarding (a) years, (b) research goals, (c) research designs, (d) study groups, (e) data collection tools, (f) data analysis methods, (g) focused language skills, and (h) topics?
2. What are the results from research conducted on teaching Turkish as a second language in Turkish primary education?

Method

Research Design

Content analysis was employed in the study. Suri and Clarke (2009) define the content analysis method as research syntheses that are critical in disseminating researched information and shaping future research, policies, practices, and public perception. Content analysis examines data sources using

a summative and systematic approach grounded in essential scientific principles such as objectivity, intersubjective validity, reliability, generalizability, repeatability, and hypothesis testing (Neuendorf, 2002). The study utilized the descriptive content analysis method. The descriptive content analysis integrates quantitative and qualitative analytical methods to reveal general trends in research findings through a descriptive approach (Creswell, 2008; Cohen, Manion, & Marison, 2018). This study aims to identify research trends in teaching Turkish as a second language in Turkish primary schools and to analyze the results using a descriptive approach. The primary conceptual and methodological trends in both quantitative and qualitative research were examined. Thus, descriptive content analysis was deemed sufficient.

Data Sources

The data sources included four databases: Google Scholar, Dergipark, TR Index, and YÖKTEZ. The following keywords were used in the search: “primary school” and “Turkish for foreigners,” “primary school” and “Turkish as a foreign language,” “primary school” and “Turkish as a second language,” “primary school” and “foreign national” and “Turkish,” “primary school” and “refugee” and “Turkish,” “primary school” and “immigrant” and “Turkish,” “primary school” and “Syrian” and “Turkish,” and “primary school” and “asylum seeker” and “Turkish.” The search was conducted between May 13 and July 30, 2024. A total of 15,669 studies were identified in the Google Scholar database, 39,942 in the Dergipark database, 49 in the TR Index database, and 65 studies in the YÖKTEZ database. The studies were reviewed based on the inclusion criteria to determine the final dataset. Studies that (1) focused on teaching Turkish as a second language, (2) were conducted in Türkiye, and (3) used empirical methods were included. Duplicated publications across various databases, along with non-empirical and inaccessible texts, were excluded. When these were later published as articles in subsequent years, the article versions were incorporated. The final dataset included 127 publications.

Data Analysis

Two different analysis approaches were used in the data analysis process of the study. Features such as the year of the studies, research design, study group, data collection tools, data analysis methods, and the language skills focused on were analyzed using the descriptive analysis method. In contrast, the inductive content analysis method was used to identify trends regarding the aim, research topics, and findings. These two methods were selected based on the nature of the sub-objectives of the study and the quality of the data obtained. Thus, both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study were systematically and holistically presented. To identify the trends in the studies based on the year of publication, research design, study sample, data collection tool, data analysis method, and relevant language skills, two authors compiled the data. The data were cross-checked and finalized. The final data were coded according to previously defined categories and cross-checked again. The inter-coder agreement was 96% (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To identify the trends in the study research goals, topics, and results, the two authors created codes and independently assessed the correlations among these codes. The two code sets were compared, and any inconsistent codes were eliminated. The codes were then organized into categories, and the categories were grouped into themes. During the categorization process, the authors independently reviewed the data and established separate categories. Subsequently, the categories were revised and finalized to ensure their reliability. The inter-coder agreement was 96% for the research aim trends, 94% for the study topic trends, and 85% for study results (Miles & Huberman, 1994). While making methodological classifications in the examined studies, the research designs, data collection methods, and analysis approaches reported by the authors in the relevant articles and theses were taken as they were. In other words, the information presented in the method sections of the studies was accepted as accurate and complete, and the analysis process was conducted accordingly. This approach was preferred in content analyses to comparatively evaluate the diversity of methodological terminology across different studies and to ensure objectivity in the analysis.

Findings

In the first section, the research trends in teaching Turkish as a second language in primary schools in Türkiye are discussed, and the trends in research findings are addressed in the second section.

Section 1. Research Trends in Teaching Turkish as a Second Language at Primary Schools in Türkiye

Years

The initial study on teaching Turkish as a second language in Turkish primary schools was conducted in 2016. The greatest number of studies was published in 2020, 2021, and 2023. Figure 1 illustrates the annual distribution of studies.

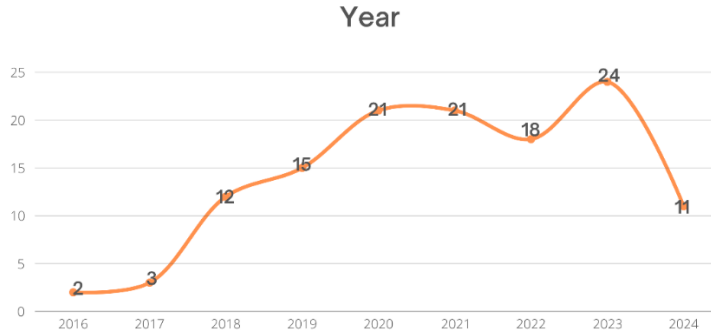


Figure 1. Annual distribution of studies

Research Goals

The goals of the studies were categorized into three themes: (1) assessing the current status, (2) exploring various approaches, and (3) developing curricula. The themes and categories associated with the research goals are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Themes and categories for research goals

Theme	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Assessing the current status	Current status, problems, and solution recommendations	56	44,1
	Investigating applications, course materials, and curricula	41	32,3
	Determining teacher characteristics	11	8,7
	Total	108	85
Exploring various approaches	Determining the impact of various approaches	15	11,8
	Applicability of these approaches	3	2,4
	Total	18	14,2
Developing curricula	Developing draft curricula	1	1
	Total	1	0,8
Total		127	100

Most studies aimed to determine the current status ($n=108$, 85%). The most frequently studied category within this theme was assessing the current status, problems, and solution suggestions ($n=56$, 44.1%). This was followed by examining practices, course materials, and curricula ($n=41$, 32.3%). Fewer studies concentrated on identifying teacher characteristics ($n=11$, about 8.7%). Eighteen studies explored various approaches (14.2%). Within this theme, the majority of studies focused on assessing the impacts of various approaches ($n=15$, 11.8%) and their applicability ($n=3$, 2.4%). Curriculum development is a minimally studied area; only one study ($n=1$, 0.8%) was conducted on curriculum design. The distribution of studies based on research goals is presented in Figure 2.

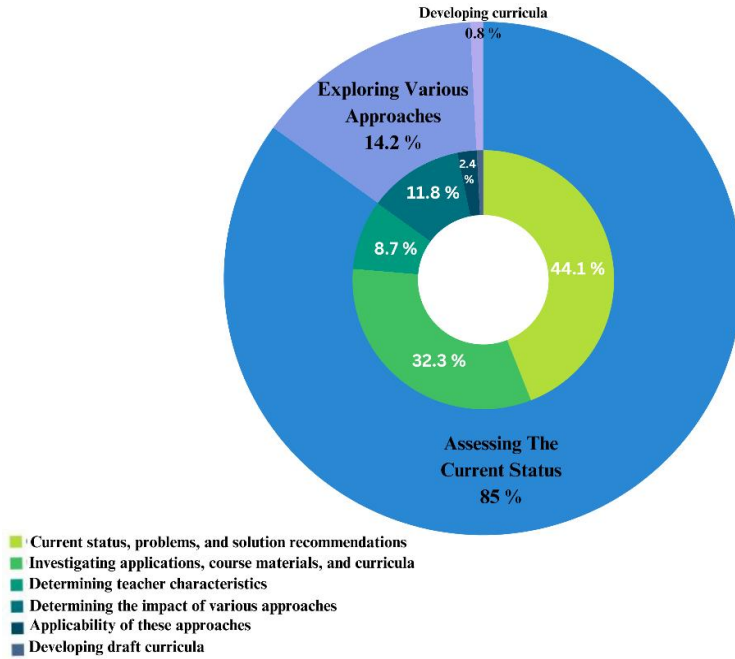


Figure 2. Distribution of studies based on research goals

Research Designs

Most studies were qualitative (n=85, 66.9%), while fewer were quantitative (n=26, 20.5%). The least utilized research design was the mixed method (n=11, 8.7%). 4% of the studies (n=5) did not specify a methodology. Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of studies based on research design.

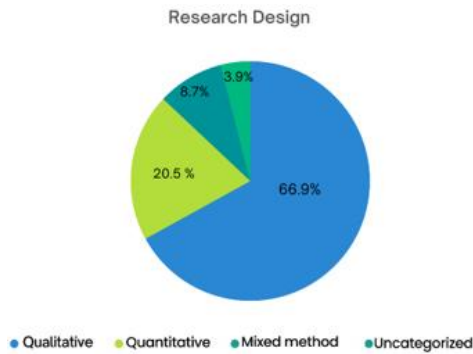


Figure 3. Distribution of studies based on research design

The Study Groups

Studies were conducted with various study groups. These groups are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of the studies based on study group

Study group	f
Teachers	77
Students	46
Course material	28
Administrators	5
Parents	4
Textbook authors	1
Official documents and instructions	1

The most studied group was teachers ($f=77$). Students ($f=46$) were the second most popular study group. Course materials such as curricula, textbooks, and exams ($f=28$) were also studied. It was observed that only a few studies investigated administrators ($n=5$) and parents ($n=4$). Textbook authors ($n=1$) and official documents and instructions ($n=1$) were studied less. Certain studies were conducted with more than one group. The distribution of the studies based on the study group is presented in Figure 4.

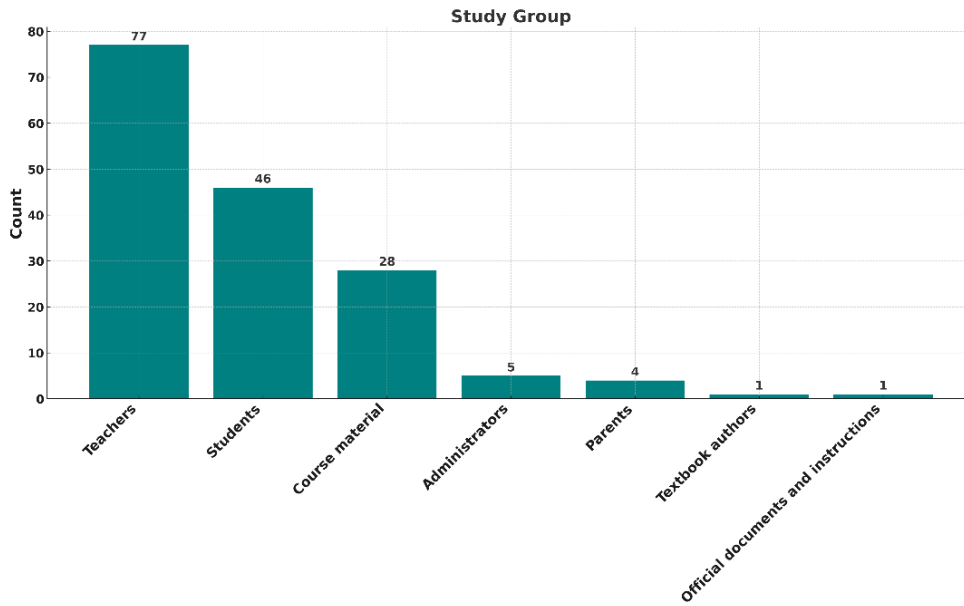


Figure 4. *Distribution of studies based on study group*

Data Collection Tools

It was observed that participant-, material-, or product-based data collection tools have been used in the studies. The data collection tools employed are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *Distribution of studies based on data collection tools*

Data collection tools	f
Participant-based tools	
Interview form	64
Scale	30
Achievement test	11
Survey	9
Observation form/Field note	8
Researcher diary	4
Audio and video recordings	2
Inventory	1
Math problems	1
Material- or product-based tools	
Document analysis	13
Student products	9
Rubric	2
Checklist	1
N/A	3

Participant-based tools in Table 3 refer to those that collected data directly from the participants, while material- or product-based tools refer to those that analyzed a document, product, or material. The most common tool was interview forms ($f=64$), followed by scales ($f=30$). Document analysis ($f=13$) and achievement tests ($f=11$) were also common data collection tools. Fewer studies employed surveys ($f=9$), student products ($f=9$), observation forms/field notes ($f=8$), researcher diaries ($f=4$), and audio and video recordings ($f=2$). Additionally, certain studies used specific tools such as rubrics ($f=2$),

checklists (f=1), inventories (f=1), and math problems (f=1). Certain studies did not specify their data collection tools (f=3), suggesting that some studies lack detailed information about these tools. It was noted that multiple tools were used in some studies. The distribution of studies based on data collection tools is illustrated in Figure 5.

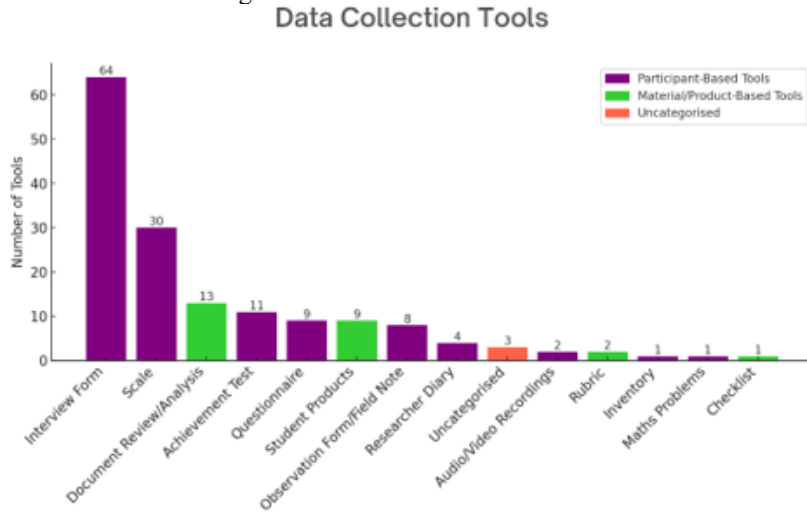


Figure 5. Distribution of studies based on data collection tools

Data Analysis Methods

It was observed that various data analysis methods were used in the studies. The data analysis methods employed are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of studies based on data analysis methods

Data analysis method		f	
Qualitative	Content analysis	52	
	Descriptive analysis	28	
	Document analysis	6	
	Thematic analysis	4	
	Induction	1	
Quantitative	Descriptive analysis (Frequency, percentage, etc.)	25	
	Predictive analysis	t-test	14
		Mann Whitney U Test	7
		ANOVA	5
		Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	3
		Kruskal Wallis	2
		Correlation	2
		Chi-square	1
	Regression	1	
	N/A	6	

The most common data analysis method was qualitative analysis. The preferred qualitative analysis method was content analysis (n=52), followed by descriptive analysis (n=28), document analysis (n=6), thematic analysis (n=4), and induction (n=1). Descriptive analysis (frequency, percentage, etc.) (n=25) was the most common quantitative analysis method. The most common predictive analysis method was the t-test (n=14), followed by the Mann Whitney U test (n=7), ANOVA (n=5), Wilcoxon Signed Rank test (n=3), Kruskal Wallis test (n=2), correlation (n=2), chi-square test (n=1), and regression analysis (n=1). Six studies did not specify a data analysis method. Some studies utilized more than one data analysis method. The distribution of studies based on the data analysis methods is illustrated in Figure 6.

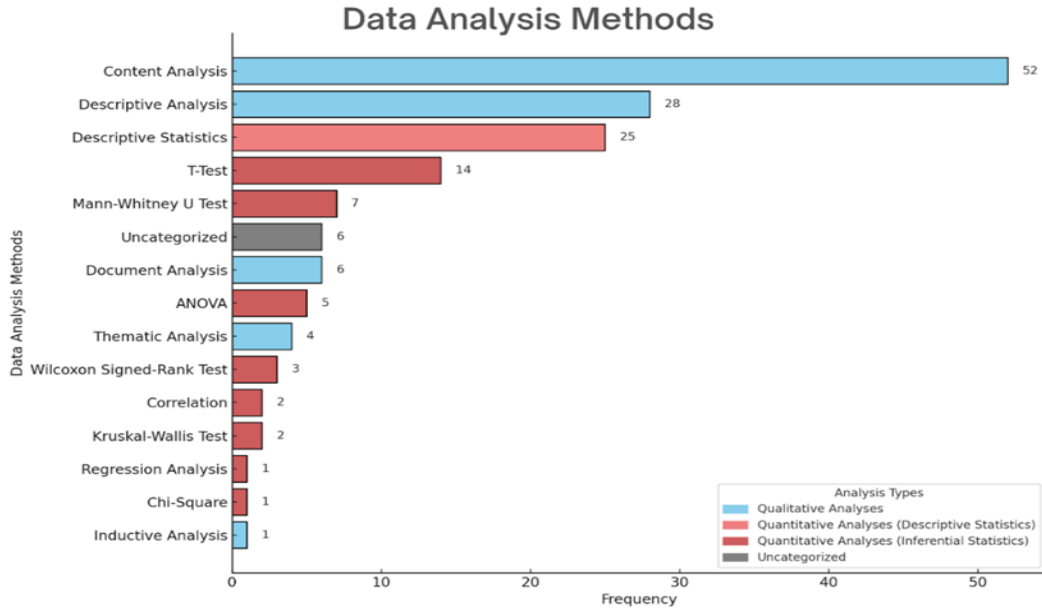


Figure 6. Distribution of studies based on the data analysis method

Focused Language Skills

Various language skills were examined in the studies. However, some studies did not focus on a specific language skill (f=51). The majority of studies concentrated on the four fundamental language skills (f=20). The most frequently focused language skills included reading (f=32), writing (f=23), and speaking (f=8). Listening was the least focused language skill (f=4). The distribution of the studies based on the focused language skills is presented in Figure 7.

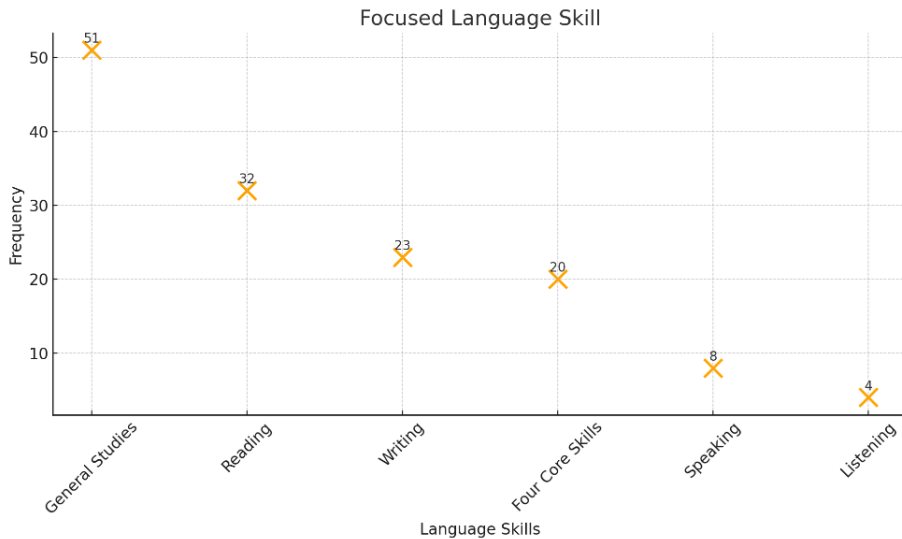


Figure 7. Distribution of studies by focused language skill

Topics

The studies were organized into three themes based on their topics: (1) the structure and functions of educational environments, (2) characteristics of teachers and students, and (3) innovative methods and approaches in language teaching. Table 5 presents the themes, categories, and codes related to the study topic.

Table 5. *The themes, categories, and codes related to the study topic*

Theme	Category	Code
The structure and functions of educational environments	Educational applications and projects	Inclusive classes IYEP PIKTES
	Material and resources	Textbooks Story books Curricula Dictionaries
	Learning-teaching processes	General teaching process Problems
Characteristics of teachers and students	Characteristics of teachers	Burnout Self-efficacy Professional satisfaction Attitude Communication skills Technological and pedagogical content knowledge
	Characteristics of students	Readiness Language skills Cognitive skills Metaphorical perception
Innovative methods and approaches in language teaching	Game-assisted instruction	Educational games Digital games Gamified language skills program
	Strategic applications	Dual teacher method
	Creative and interactive instruction methods	Aktive learning Word wall Class diary Dramatization Word recognition inventory Children's songs Children's literature
	Cultural and contextual teaching approaches	Culturally responsive instruction Inclusive education
	Collaborative and social instruction methods	Peer instruction Parental support

The studies concentrated on the structure and functions of educational environments, the characteristics of teachers and students, and innovative language teaching methods and approaches. The categories within the theme of structure and functions of educational environments included educational applications and projects, materials and resources, and learning-teaching processes. The category of educational practices and projects encompassed inclusive classes, PIKTES, and IYEP. Studies on materials and resources have examined the quality of materials such as textbooks, storybooks, curricula, and dictionaries. The learning-teaching processes reflect general educational functions and the challenges associated with them. In the area of teacher and student characteristics, studies have analyzed the professional and personal characteristics of teachers alongside various student attributes. The theme of innovative approaches and methods in language teaching encompasses topics such as game-assisted instruction, strategic applications, creative and interactive instructional methods, cultural and contextual approaches, and collaborative and social instructional methods. Some studies have evaluated the effects of these methods on students' language skills, while others have analyzed their applicability. The trends in research topics are presented in Figure 8.

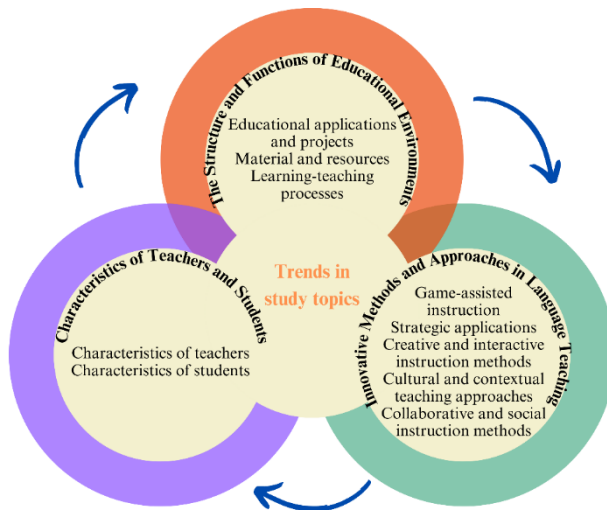


Figure 8. Trends in research topics

Section 2: The Results Presented in Research on Teaching Turkish as a Second Language in Turkish Primary Schools

The previous study results were organized into the themes of (1) results related to the structure and functions of educational environments, (2) results related to teacher and student characteristics, and (3) results related to innovative approaches and methods. These themes are illustrated in Figure 9.

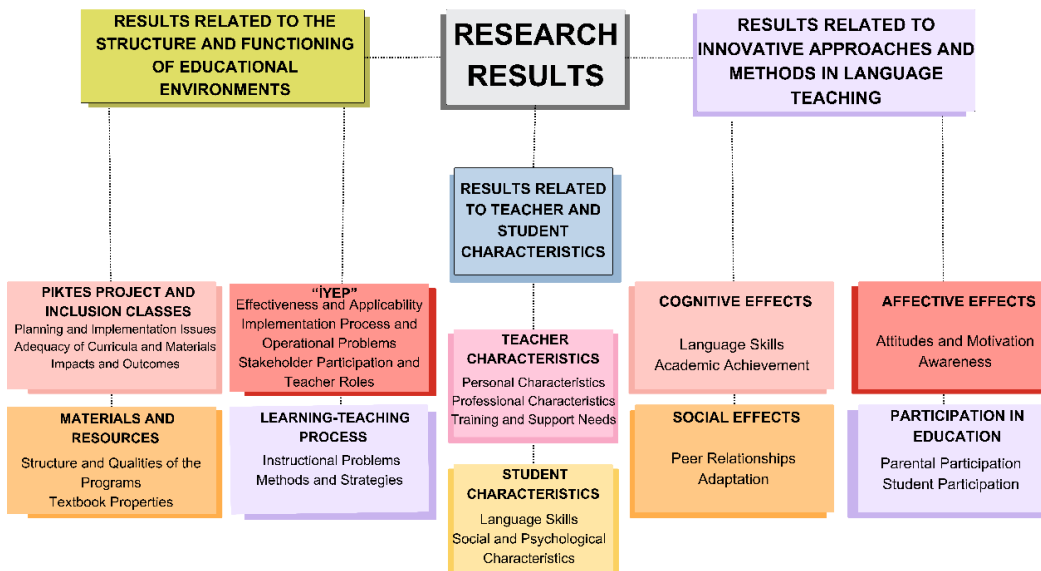


Figure 9. Research results

Theme 1: Results Related to the Structure and Functions of Educational Environments

This theme addresses the results of the research on the structure and functions of educational environments in four categories: (1) results on the PIKTES project and inclusion classes, (2) results on IYEP, (3) results on materials and resources, and (4) results on learning-teaching process.

The results on the PIKTES project and inclusion classes revealed planning and implementation issues, such as inadequate planning, inappropriate class levels, limitations of the project to certain classes and provinces, and physical problems within the classrooms. Additionally, it was reported that practices unsuitable for inclusive education restricted the interaction of students with the Turkish

language and students. It was found that the curricula and materials were inadequate. Reports indicated that certain practices led to the exclusion of students, negatively impacting their language development and resulting in academic failure; however, in some instances, these practices supported academic, emotional, and social growth. Regarding the effectiveness and applicability of the IYEP subcategory, it was noted that the program was applicable and improved academic achievement, school commitment, student self-confidence, and Turkish language skills. The textbooks were suitable for the students' level.

In the subcategory related to implementation process and operational problems, issues such as insufficient time, lack of activities, inadequate financial support for teachers, the inclusion of students with varying levels in the same group, and absenteeism were reported. The research also concluded that student selection was inappropriate, module durations were unbalanced, and the implementation of the program after the classes had negative effects. Adequate information was not provided to parents, administrators lacked awareness, and teachers were not trained. In the sub-category of stakeholder participation and teacher roles, it was noted that teacher participation was voluntary and that they considered the program essential. In the sub-category focusing on the structure and qualities of the programs regarding materials and resources, it was determined that the Turkish as a second language curricula were generally well-qualified and incorporated various types of literacy; however, the curricular achievements were limited concerning 21st century skills and lacked fundamental language skills. In the subcategory of textbook properties, it was reported that the visual and cultural aspects of the textbooks were adequate; however, language elements and student levels were insufficient, and the activities lacked diversity. In the subcategory of instructional problems, it was concluded that issues were encountered in initial reading and writing, student readiness was lacking, and the application of the same curriculum for both native Turkish speakers and foreigners led to certain complications. Additionally, problems such as physical issues in educational environments, a lack of parental involvement, adaptation difficulties, and insufficient emphasis on listening skills were also noted. In the subcategory of methods and strategies, it was determined that teachers employed techniques such as visualization, dictation, role-play, technology-assisted instruction, game-based learning, peer instruction, and traditional measurement and evaluation methods.

Theme 2: Results Related to Teacher and Student Characteristics

This theme examined the results of studies on teacher and student characteristics in two categories: (1) Teacher characteristics and (2) Student characteristics. In the subcategory of personal characteristics, the studies reported that teachers possess high cultural intelligence, low burnout, moderate life satisfaction, and effective communication skills. Within the professional characteristics subcategory, it was noted that the professional attitudes, satisfaction, and job satisfaction of teachers were moderate, while their technological and pedagogical knowledge was rated highly. In the training and support needs subcategory, the authors highlighted the inadequacy of pre-service and in-service training; however, they also acknowledged the positive impact of in-service training when available. The results regarding student characteristics revealed that the students' four basic language skills and vocabulary were lacking. The authors noted that the students faced issues related to social and psychological adaptation, discipline problems, lack of motivation, anxiety about losing their identity, and resistance to learning Turkish; however, they exhibited positive emotional attitudes towards the Turkish language and held high self-efficacy perceptions about their writing skills.

Theme 3: Results Related to Innovative Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching

This theme investigates the results of research on innovative approaches and methods for language instruction, organized into four categories: (1) cognitive effects, (2) affective effects, (3) social effects, and (4) participation in education. The results indicated that innovative methods contributed to the development of students' cognitive skills, comprehension, expressive abilities, vocabulary, and grammar. These approaches also enhanced academic achievement and facilitated lasting learning. In the affective effects category, it was reported that students developed positive attitudes toward the Turkish language, felt motivated to learn, and became more aware of Turkish culture. In terms of social effects, it was observed that peer relationships strengthened, and students' social and educational adaptation improved. The results regarding participation in education showed that these methods increased both parental and student involvement in educational activities and ensured attendance.

Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

The findings of the study demonstrate that research on teaching Turkish as a second language in Turkish primary schools has increased since 2016, with a significant rise occurring between 2020 and 2023. Günaydın (2020) noted that the number of studies focused on bilingual Turkish children grew from 2015 to 2020. Both Avcı and Kurudayıoğlu (2022) and Can and Kardaş (2023) reported an uptick in related studies following 2013-2014. Research on teaching Turkish as a foreign language (Kardoğan & Kardaş, 2023) indicated that the number of studies rose between 2011 and 2015; however, it saw a decline after 2015. The findings of the present study were inconsistent with previous reports regarding the annual distribution of studies on teaching Turkish as a foreign language, yet they aligned with findings on bilingual Turkish children and teaching Turkish as a second language. The results revealed that changes in migration and education policies significantly impacted research on teaching Turkish as a second language after 2016.

Most studies focused on determining the current status, and only a few investigated different approaches and curricular development. Studies on teaching Turkish to bilingual Turkish children and as a foreign language generally investigated related problems (Kesik & Halistoprak, 2023; Kardoğan & Kardaş, 2023). Although studies on determining the current status could provide a foundation, the lack of studies on solutions, innovative approaches, and curricular development should be noted. This demonstrates that the literature lacked studies that developed advanced solutions and curricula.

Most studies were qualitative, while mixed-method studies were rare. Günaydın (2020) noted that qualitative research was prevalent among studies focused on bilingual Turkish children, and a similar pattern was observed in research on teaching Turkish as a foreign language (Biçer, 2017; Kardoğan & Kardaş, 2023; Can & Kardaş, 2023). These findings highlighted the need for more mixed-method studies in Turkish language instruction. Most studies involved teachers, and Cengiz and Halistoprak (2023) indicated that this research mainly examined primary school teachers. A comparable trend was noted in studies on teaching Turkish as a second language. Günaydın (2020) also pointed out that primary and junior high school students represented the most studied group of bilingual Turkish children. Interview forms were the most preferred data collection tools, followed by scales, document reviews, and achievement tests. Qualitative content analysis has been the most common data analysis method, followed by descriptive, document, thematic, and inductive analyses, while descriptive analysis has been frequently used in quantitative studies. Günaydın (2020) and Cengiz and Halistoprak (2023) emphasized that content analysis has been prominent in research, while descriptive statistics have been favored in quantitative research, in contrast to predictive analysis. In the classification of qualitative data analysis, although the term “content analysis” is used in a significant portion of the reviewed studies, a closer examination shows that most of these studies are limited to descriptive analysis and do not possess the theoretical and methodological depth required for content analysis. Previous research conducted in Turkey has emphasized that the types of qualitative analysis are not well understood and that there is conceptual confusion in methodological statements (Çalık & Sözbilir, 2014; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). Nevertheless, in this review, the methodological classification was based on the types of analysis reported by the authors in each study. This approach was preferred to ensure comparability and objectivity in systematic reviews. As a result, the findings indicate that the widespread use of qualitative data analysis reflects a focus on obtaining in-depth information in the studies, whereas the limited use of quantitative methods suggests that data diversity remains insufficient.

Studies have generally focused on reading and writing skills, while listening and speaking skills have rarely been investigated, as reading and writing skills are easier to measure, whereas listening and speaking skills are inherently difficult to evaluate. Avcı and Kurudayıoğlu (2022) observed that research on bilingual Turkish children has centered on writing and reading skills. Can and Kardaş (2023) noted that these studies prioritized speaking, reading, and listening skills, following writing skills. The differing linguistic needs of the study groups may explain this disparity. There are a limited number of studies on listening and speaking skills in Turkish as a foreign language (Gülen Canlı & Tepeli, 2019; Kardoğan & Kardaş, 2023). Despite the crucial role of these skills in everyday communication, their neglect hindered the acquisition of verbal proficiency in the target language. Therefore, there is a need for research on speaking and listening skills in teaching Turkish as a second language. The study also

concluded that a notable number of studies did not examine any language skill, resulting in a significant gap in evaluating learning processes, monitoring language development, and identifying challenges.

The topical trends included the structure and functions of educational environments, characteristics of teachers and students, and innovative approaches and methods. The first group of research focused on inclusion classes, educational applications, and projects such as PIKTES and IYEP, along with materials, resources, and learning-teaching processes. The second group concentrated on the characteristics of teachers and students that may be significant in language instruction. Studies on innovative approaches and methods examined game-assisted teaching, strategic applications, creative and interactive methods, cultural and contextual techniques, and collaborative and social instructional methods. Previous research on teaching Turkish as a foreign language has explored problems, teacher and student characteristics, materials, methods, and techniques (Biçer, 2017; Kardoğan & Kardaş, 2023). In contrast to the present study's findings, the studies on bilingual Turkish children mainly focused on speech anxiety, communication issues, writing skills, pedagogical knowledge, and perspectives on bilingualism, while also examining textbooks, teacher requirements, and the comparison between monolingual and bilingual children (Günaydın, 2020; Kırımlı & Kayhan, 2022). The differences in these topical trends may be attributed to the contextual distinctions between bilingualism and teaching Turkish as a foreign language.

The results reported in these studies were categorized into the themes of the structure and functions of educational environments, teacher and student characteristics, and innovative approaches and methods. Within the scope of the structure and functions of educational environments, challenges related to planning and implementation in the PIKTES project and inclusion classes, curricula, and materials have been documented. The project led to the exclusion of certain students, along with issues in language skills and academic failure, but it also contributed to academic, emotional, and social development under specific conditions. Similarly, Oyar Uzun (2023) concluded that the project faced challenges in areas such as functions, communication and adaptation, course content, instructor competencies, and physical conditions. The results regarding IYEP indicated that the program was applicable and contributed to the academic and emotional skills of the students. Despite operational challenges, the teachers participated willingly and viewed the program as essential. These findings suggested that to enhance the effectiveness of current applications, a holistic approach should be adopted, with a focus on planning, material development, and teacher training. The results concerning the materials and resources revealed that the curricula, while well-designed, did not adequately address basic language skills. The visual and cultural aspects of the textbooks were sufficient; however, there were issues with linguistic elements, as the textbooks were not suitable for the students' level, and the activities lacked variety, negatively impacting instruction. These findings revealed a lack of a systematic and balanced approach to the four basic language skills, demonstrating that instructional materials should be reviewed for pedagogical adequacy, activity diversity, aesthetics, and content. To develop all language skills effectively, materials should be designed with a holistic and student-centered approach. Study findings indicated issues such as instruction in initial reading and writing, student readiness, physical classroom facilities, curricula, parental participation, and adaptation. Teachers employed visualization, dictation, and role-play in their instruction, along with innovative methods like technology-assisted and game-assisted learning, as well as peer instruction. However, they relied on traditional methods for measurement and evaluation, which limited the effectiveness of the innovative strategies due to the inability to assess the impact of these approaches on student performance. This led to an inconsistency between instructional methods and evaluation tools.

The study emphasized the significance of teachers' personal and professional traits, as well as their training and support needs. Findings showed that teachers demonstrated high cultural intelligence, strong communication, and technological-pedagogical knowledge while experiencing low burnout and moderate life and job satisfaction. Student analysis focused on language skills and social-psychological conditions, revealing challenges in basic language skills, vocabulary, adaptation, discipline, motivation, and self-concerns. Güngör Yereyikılmaz and Boyacı (2024) highlighted that students learning Turkish as a second language faced difficulties in language skills and vocabulary. This research also identified strengths such as a high sense of self-efficacy in writing and positive emotional attitudes toward the Turkish language among students who are resistant to learning it. These findings underscore the need

for comprehensive teacher training and individualized approaches to enhance students' language development and well-being.

Innovative approaches and methods in teaching Turkish as a second language enhance cognitive, emotional, and social skills, improving comprehension, expression, vocabulary, and grammar, which contribute to academic success and long-term learning. They also foster positive attitudes, motivation, and cultural awareness while strengthening peer relationships and social adaptation. Language instruction should be seen as both an individual and social process, with increased parental involvement and student participation promoting attendance. Gülen Canlı and Tepeli (2019) highlight these methods' role in fostering achievements and positive attitudes. Their findings affirm that innovative approaches support language skills alongside emotional, social, and cultural development, making language education an inclusive, multidimensional process. Thus, policies should prioritize student-centered, interaction-oriented methods.

The study is constrained by the studies accessed using the method outlined in the methodology section. In this study, the research designs and types of analysis reported by the authors in the reviewed studies were accepted as accurate as they were presented. It was assumed that possible conceptual or practical errors in the researchers' methodological statements were not taken into account during the content analysis, and that this constitutes one of the main limitations of the study. Future research could incorporate different indexes and types of research. Given current trends, one might expect an increase in "solution-oriented," "application-based," and "curricular development" research. The findings underscored the need for further quantitative and mixed-method studies to achieve comprehensive and generalizable results. Future research should concentrate on language skills, identify student needs, and develop effective methods and curricula. This focus would enhance instruction and help students adapt to social life and the education system.

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