



Why Important is Learning Turkish as a Mother Tongue for Bilingual Students in England?

İngiltere'deki İki Dilli Öğrencilerde Türkçeyi Anadili Olarak Öğrenmek Neden Önemlidir?*

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ABSTRACT: Learning a mother tongue (L2) is important for bilingual children who live abroad in order to learn the L1 of that society, improve the effectiveness of their communication with members of a family and increase transmission of cultural values and facilitate personal development. This study deploys a qualitative research methodology. Data were collected from 4 students at 9-12 years old, 4 parents and 3 teachers at the Turkish Community Saturday School, in Nottingham, England. Structured-interviews and observations were used to gather data on learning techniques. The goal is to understand and describe the perceptions of teachers', students' and parents' learning of the mother tongue by bilingual Turkish students between the ages of 9-12. Research findings support that the perceptions of the participants on learning Turkish as mother tongue are critical, as they learn Turkish in order to foster effective communication with their families, by using Turkish effectively and learn Turkish cultural values.

Keywords: bilingualism, mother tongue, learning Turkish, action research, qualitative research.

ÖZ: Bir anadili öğrenmek (L2), ailenin üyeleriyle olan iletişimlerinin etkinliğini arttırmak ve kültürel değerlerin iletimini arttırmak ve kişilik gelişimini kolaylaştırmak için yurt dışında yaşayıp, yaşadıkları toplumun dilini (L1) kullanan iki dilli çocuklar için önemlidir. Bu çalışmada nitel araştırma metodolojisi kullanılmaktadır. Veriler 9-12 yaşlarındaki 4 öğrenciden, 4 veli ve 3 öğretmenden, İngiltere'de Nottingham şehrinde bulunan Türk Topluluğu Cumartesi okulundan toplanmıştır. Öğrenme teknikleri hakkında veri toplamak için yapılandırılmış görüşmeler ve gözlemler yapılmıştır. Amaç, 9-12 yaşları arasındaki iki dilli Türk öğrencilerin, öğretmenlerin ve ebeveynlerin Türkçeyi anadili olarak öğrenme algılarını anlamak ve tanımlamaktır. Araştırma bulguları, Türkçeyi etkili bir şekilde kullanarak ve Türk kültürel değerlerini öğrenerek, aileleri ile etkili iletişim kurmak için Türkçe öğrenirken, Türkçeyi anadili olarak öğrenme konusundaki katılımcıların algıların kritik olduğunu desteklemektedir

Anahtar sözcükler: iki dillilik, anadil, Türkçe öğrenimi, aksiyon araştırması, nitel araştırma

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Introduction

Over the past few decades, bilingualism and bilingual education have gained importance as essential notions in teaching pedagogy. Bilingualism, encountered in many different ways all over the world, is a major issue for education systems (Luchtenberg, 2002:49-50). Although many definitions are used for bilingualism, agreement about its exact description has not been achieved. For example, while some definitions address the linguistic elements (e.g. level of knowledge in each language), others draw attention to social factors (e.g. student's aims/motivations in learning an L2). However, all definitions are united in the fact that bilingualism describes an individual's knowledge and ability to use multiple languages in terms of the capacity to use a first language (L1) and the mother tongue (L2).

The discussion of the importance of learning an L2 for bilinguals across all subjects within the curriculum and the implications for teachers and their practice provides a strong background for my project. My school is currently practising an approach to the teaching of Turkish to bilinguals at a volunteer Saturday Turkish school. In this study, I intend to contextualise the research by discussing previous studies in this field. In addition, the research techniques and tools used to investigate the effects of this process on 3 teachers, 4 students and 4 parents, in terms of how their perceptions impact on children's linguistic development in the L2, will be described.

The justification for focusing on these stakeholder's perceptions is based upon two important factors. Firstly, I teach specifically at the 3-7 age group within the researched school. According to Cummins (2001), every child has the potential for acquiring the language of their community from the moment they are born. Acquisition of one or more languages in early childhood is a phenomenon that results from social interaction, therefore, the basis of interaction and communication is based on language (Cummins, 2001). Some children at the school have mixed nationality parents (British-Turkish) and do not have enough experience in Turkish, because they speak English with their parents. Thus, I would be based on my research on another class within my school; 4 students between 9-12 years old. However, this could contaminate the findings by introducing bias into the data and results. Johnson and Christensen (2010:264) clarify that an important quality of validity is that researchers must be careful to pay attention to avoiding researcher bias. When analysing the data, I would have to be aware that participants' responses might be given in order to satisfy what participants thought I would like to hear and this could affect the validity of my findings.

I personally believe that it is most important to learn one's family's mother tongue, in this case, the Turkish language for Turkish children growing up in England. For this reason, my project will analyse the theory and practice in undertaking practice-based inquiry in connection to why learning one's family's mother tongue is important and what the advantages of this are for bilingual children. Firstly, I will discuss the previous literature and show how this has influenced my understanding of my chosen area of inquiry. Secondly, I will negotiate the methods of data collection, research instruments, and any ethical issues that need to be considered during the research. Finally, I will present my findings in relation to a critique of the process of practitioner inquiry and action research. This will then provide a reflection on the implications for myself as a teacher and researcher.

Learning one's Family's Mother Tongue

Language, as an integral part of cognitive processes, is an important element in cognitive functions such as understanding, thinking, and attention. Furthermore, language allows individuals to socialise and become integrated into groups and wider society (Yazici & Temel, 2012). Moreover, children acquire language via the use of cognitive skills, such as memory, attention, reasoning and problem-solving. Therefore, learning a language to understand what other people say and to explain what we are thinking to others is a necessary component of social life (Cummins, 2001). One's family's mother tongue may not be used as the L1 in one's country of residence; nevertheless, it is an important aspect of day-to-day family interaction. However, everyone has a mother tongue and it is requisite to know this language in order to maintain the cultural transmission of norms, beliefs and traditions (Cummins, 2001).

This research was conducted in Nottingham at a school set up by the Nottingham Turkish Community. Students are educated on Saturdays, and during the week, continue their British State School education. For this reason, this school is not compulsory and attendance is voluntary. This will mean that the students in the cohort do not have a specific timetable. My colleagues and I have different approaches to teaching Turkish as a mother tongue. While other teachers use worksheets produced by the Turkish Ministry of Education, I use PowerPoint presentations of stories which I prepare myself. When I teach, I tell the story rather than read it and afterwards, the pupils and I adopt the roles of the characters. I believe that students learn by hands-on-learning (Blake & Pope, 2008:60) and introducing new Turkish vocabulary in the appropriate context such as a story, draw pupils' attention more effectively than following decontextualised worksheets. A vast number of children acquire their L1 as their mother tongue and then another L2 in addition (Allman, 2005:58). Therefore, children who are exposed to two languages can start to learn both languages at the same time. The language acquisition capacity of children exposed to two languages is the same as children that learn one language. In early childhood, most children can acquire two or more language simultaneously, as part of living in bilingual families and communities (Allman, 2005:58). For this reason, children from international backgrounds living in England, using and learning English as an L1, in addition to their L2, is important in order to both learn English and facilitate interaction with L2 speaking family members, enabling the transference of culture. Which languages children will end up using more efficiently can vary depending on their language use in social environments (Martin, 1999:67).

This review has implications for my study and adds to my justification for researching students', parents' and teachers' views of learning Turkish as a mother tongue. While planning the structured interview questions, these different perceptions will need to be taken into account and interview questions planned accordingly.

Practised-based Inquiry

As Kemmis (2010:419) pointed out, action research's goal should not be just achieving knowledge of the world, it should also create a better world. Kemmis (2010:420) continues, outlining how action research should proceed:

...the collective responsibility of a profession like education...to contribute to the evolution of the professional practice for which its practitioners are not just accredited operatives, but also stewards

– custodians of the practice for their times and generation. As stewards, they have the responsibility to protect, nurture, support and strengthen the practice for changing times and circumstances, not as something fixed and fully sufficient but as something that must always evolve to meet new historical demands in the interests of changing communities, societies and the good of humankind... this eternal opening of possibilities and the eternal need to respond to historical change are, to me, at the heart of the justification for action research (Kemmis, 2010:420).

However, Hartas (2010:14) states that education is constantly evolving and varied, which is examined by criticism of the usefulness and relation of educational research to classroom practice and policy. For the aim of this study, Practised-Based Inquiry (PBI) and Action Research methods will be the main focus.

Traditional quantitative forms of educational research can seem similar to action research (Elliot, 1995:1). Nevertheless, there is the specific difference between action research and other educational research; action research focuses on problem-solving in researchers' own environments, while the others do not. Thus, the practitioner's classroom itself forms the central location of the research. Therefore, in action research, researchers wish to investigate issues or assess new approaches that will develop state of the art knowledge or have implications for other education methods (Johnson & Christensen, 2010:11). According to Reason and Bradbury (2007:1), action research faces challenges of social change and improvement, and in academia. The cause of this could be resistance to change by the community or school. Therefore, action research proposes substantive research on how to improve the quality of children's learning and educational staff's performance within an education setting. Moreover, Somekh (2006:1) and Elliot (1995:1) suggest that good research is guided by the values researchers want to realise in their practice.

This kind of research provides them with the opportunity to get feedback on their teaching and learn from this (Briscoe & Wells, 2002). Traditional instruction-based professional development advantages are rarely permanent (ibid). Nevertheless, it does seem to have a positive impact on teachers as participants in research, who are more likely to change their classroom practice as this depends on increasing their confidence in their own teaching ability (Briscoe & Wells, 2002; Rich, 1990). According to Briscoe & Wells (2002:432):

...when teachers become researchers...they are able to find ways to use the current knowledge base in combination with the knowledge they generate through their own research to support the teaching and assessment methods they choose to use in the classroom.

Strengths and Limitations

Much previous research has mentioned that there are many positive impacts of action research on the classroom environment. For example, it can provide improvements to, and expand upon, learning environments for educators, and also support the adoption of positive and novel approaches to teaching (Pelton, 2010:10). These are acceptable as strengths as action research is linked to the practice area of experienced researchers (Mukherji & Albon, 2018:98). Thus, if related individuals gain the benefits of research directly, this is accepted as real research. Thanks to PBI, researchers are offered an important opportunity to explore their own subject.

Although this is seen as a strength of PBI and action research by some researchers, others see this it is a weakness, and so researchers should be aware of this before starting to

their research. However, Anderson, Herr & Nihlen (2007) argued that action research necessarily involves both positive and negative outcomes. The validity of action research is questionable because researchers participate directly in the research itself. In this case, the researcher and what is happening in the class can affect and influence the final data and findings. The collected data needs to be analysed and presented without questions over its internal validity. In order for this to happen, the researchers' impact should be acknowledged and reflected on during the study. Moreover, Babbie (2010:418) points out that researchers need to avoid researcher bias, for instance, by putting their own values and preferences, aside and also with respect to research techniques for data collection and analysis.

Methodology

Elliott's (1991) *Practical Guide to Action Research* helped to decide on a plan of how to research my area of interest based on appropriate methods of collecting data within my school. A process of research is explained by Elliott (1991) using action, monitoring, exploration and revision. I started my inquiry by defining an area of study that was clearly relevant to the school and my own teaching experiences. My school would like to teach Turkish to bilingual children who speak both Turkish and English, during the school term of the 2015-2016 academic year. Owing to time constraints the aim of this research will be to carry out observations over the course of two days. This means that any recommendations made by this research will contribute to further improve research and discussion on this issue in the future.

Research and Reflective Practice

Action research is undertaken by researchers that play a main role in the educational setting that they are studying and have a great interest in their findings. Reflective practice is also essential to the process of their research. Izzo (2006:11) describes the action research process as non-consecutive; it is a cycle; observe, reflect, plan and act. Furthermore, these elements can occur simultaneously. Because of the continuous reflection facilitated by these processes in action research, very specific aims and methods of recording observations must be adhered to. Keeping a reflective journal is suggested by many action research practitioners. According to Townsend (2013:58), there is a crucial connection between action research and keeping a journal. He explains this:

Writing can also be a means of inquiry. Keeping records of the progress of action research, such as through journal writing, not only can be a useful way of documenting the process but also, through the act of writing, provide a means to achieve the all-important reflective aspect of action research (Townsend, 2013:58).

Journal writing can help researchers with a useful combination of material. The research field including preliminary thoughts shows the planning process, the action taken on the strength of the project's findings. Costello (2003:10) suggests that this shows the development between the start point and the results of the action plan.

For Stevens & Cooper (2009:1) reflection is a process to allow teachers to make sense of their classroom experiences. Whereas keeping a journal and reflective practice are seen as an effective way to achieve key learning goals (Stevens & Cooper, 2009:8), others claim that action research should include both reflexive teaching and reflection. However, Elliot (1995:2) believes that good action research should not only be reflective but also reflexive. Therefore,

teachers can reflect on other things without their experiences becoming involved. It can be suggested that to be effective, action research and data collection should be done using different research tools and techniques. Burns (2010:56) also outlines that it should be noted that data is not enough to gain knowledge and understand pedagogical issues on a deeper level; this requires that the data is connected to action, observation and reflection.

When starting this research, a specific field needed to be chosen in terms of a practice that I found challenging and that I felt needed to be researched in order to formulate a practical response (Briscoe & Wells, 2002); because I wanted to seek out previously unexplored topics. As a teacher, I have a good idea of the importance of learning one's mother tongue for students, even if I needed to observe and do interviews to understand participant's views in depth. However, I am aware that this inquiry is too narrow to generalise about in practice, but I want to create an inquiry which will develop strategies that will improve teachers' approach to teaching bilingual children, and also students' and parents' perceptions to help to improve learning and teaching techniques is based on real needs. I finally settled on the importance of learning a mother tongue for bilingual children in England, and the following research question: What are students', parents' and teachers' views of learning Turkish as a mother tongue? In order to answer this, a valid research was designed.

Research Method

Qualitative research methods are used in this study deploying quota sampling within purposive sampling. Therefore, the main criterion was that the school should have bilingual students learning Turkish at the weekend, in addition to attending state schools. Although I would like to plan school-wide research, I decided to start with an inquiry of school routines because of limited resources and time. This would include the teachers, pupils at age of 9-12 and their parents. I thought that this small-scale study would be a good starting point, which could be adopted or expanded once I had reflected on the findings. Beginning the research would involve 4 bilingual students at age of 9-12, 3 teachers and 4 parents. In order to start, I chose to do informal interviews with all teachers. Then, I planned to carry out a structured interview prepared by me as a researcher. According to Grady (1998:49), action research's data can include 'interview, observation and document analyses'. Interviews thus provide qualitative data that can be used for reflection while negotiating the research's findings. Before conducting the interview I decided to request the advice of my supervisor. We discussed possible techniques, interview questions and the ethical issues involved in holding interviews. I also spoke with the three teachers and parents that were included in my research. I explained my aims in carrying out this research and secured informed consent from them and gained parents' permission for interviewing their children. I also promised them that although I would use their views and opinions in my study, their identities and responses would be anonymous in the context of my project. This is in order to allow them to feel free "...to suggest ideas, to clarify potential options, to react to ideas, to recommend a course of action" (Kreuger, 1994:3). If I want the other teachers as participants in my further research, I know that the environment needs to be non-judgemental and permissive (Kreuger, 1994:9).

I had chosen to focus on individual interviews for two reasons. Firstly, I wanted to learn each teachers', pupils' and parents' individual views. I thought that when in a focus group, participants might be concerned by the influence of others perceptions of them. I had to be sure

that my participants felt that they could be honest and open about their positions in order for my research to be successful. Secondly, because of limited time, I wanted to ensure that my interviews were directly about the comparison of different views of learning the mother tongue. According to Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2010:166) throughout the focus group, participants are responding to the group dynamic rather than their actual views about the questions asked by the researcher. By doing individual interviews, I was able to control the questions asked and my participants were able to feel unrestrained and comfortable with answering honestly.

Data Collection

Interview

While preparing the interview questions, I thought carefully about how I would ask the questions and the possible effect this could have on my participants. I tried to adopt the questions so that they were easily understood by this specific student age group. Klenke (2016:123) supports that question formats and vocabulary used should be understandable for all participants in structured interviews. I wanted to be sure that they noticed that this study was not a judgment of teacher's skills, parents' roles for parents and students' responsibilities; and that I was conducting it in order to find out how the teaching approach can be improved and how the Turkish course can be made more effective for students learning and understanding of the cultural values within. Somekh (2006:28) stated '...there is a moral imperative to act in the best interests of clients (e.g. children, patients) and colleagues.'

I gathered research data from the interviews, which included participants' personal information, as well as questions about the learning and teaching of Turkish; concerning learning and using Turkish, concerning problems encountered in the teaching and learning of Turkish and proposed solutions. I discussed the interview questions with my supervisor before starting the research. We determined that they were appropriate for all participants. By asking the same questions to all interviewees, the answers can be compared (Klenke, 2016:123). The data was collected from 4 bilingual students, 4 parents and 3 teachers, between the 9th and 16th of April 2016.

Observation

Observation is generally used in order to discover phases, typically in an unstructured form, to investigate a situation as a precursor to teasing out the insights gained as hypotheses (Robson, 1993:192). For this reason, as an appropriate step, a simple observation was used, since it was a small group. The process can take only a short time and the major motivation is to find out what was happening (Robson, 1993). However, it can obviously be seen that observation could affect the situation under observation (Patton, 2005). I did not want to affect the normal behaviour of participants, neither in a position nor due to time limitation, therefore I tried to attempt to make myself less obvious in this case (Waddington, 2004), and so my participants' behaviour was not greatly affected (Robson, 1993). Nevertheless, I did not cause behaviour change as I attempted to make them feel as though no observation was taking place.

During the study, I carried out the unstructured classroom observation twice. I had focused on two key points: how enthusiastic the students were about learning their mother tongue within the Turkish school and how the students, parents and teachers have realised their

learning goals. Pelton (2010) said observation should be focused on the learning and thinking of students. I observed 4 bilingual children as interviewees. These classroom observations allowed me to see their views on the learning and using of the mother tongue in class. Using observation as a research method concurs with Pelton (2010:10) who argues that teachers should use on-going reflection on what is happening in the learning process and modify their plans accordingly.

Ethical Considerations

As a teacher-researcher, my position in connection to my participants is significant importance according to the research methodology and humanitarian considerations (Burgess, 2002; Hopkins, 2007; Sultana, 2007). Research participants should feel comfortable and not under pressure throughout the interviews and class observation. If they feel uncomfortable as they know they are being observed and; answer the interview questions with answers they think I will want to hear, this is known as the observers' paradox (Labov, 1972). Therefore, I must acknowledge that as an observer and interviewer, I cannot acquire completely reliable results from this piece of action research.

Research ethics prescribe that a clear agreement with research participants should be obtained before the start of the research (Bell, 2005). This research was planned systematically and carefully to meet the best ethical standards which I intend to follow up later in the research process. This involved confirmation of the proposal, consent forms and guaranteeing the anonymity and confidentiality of my participants. I got written permission from the head teacher of the school, the teachers involved, and the parents to conduct this project at Nottingham Turkish Community Saturday School. I guaranteed my participants' anonymity and confidentiality in the use of their provided data. In the case of the 9-12 years old students, I requested permission to participate from their parents and also from the students themselves, by clearly explaining my study's aims, before beginning any communication about interviews or observations with them. Moreover, I needed to obtain a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check in order to study students in England because I worked at a British school as a non-European researcher. I had requested and I got the DBS certificate. Nevertheless, if I wish to improve my research opportunities in the future, this is an essential point that would need to be considered. In addition, I recorded the permissions using the research proposal information sheet (Appendix A), consent form (Appendix B), and letter of permission (Appendix C).

Limitations and Bias

Marshall & Rossman (2014) stated that there is no such thing as a perfectly designed piece of research. Every study, without doubt, has its own strengths and weaknesses and the project is no exception. The first key limitation of my research was a lack of time because the classes only run on Saturdays. Secondly, the using audio recording of interviews was problematic owing to the observer's paradox (Labov, 1972). My participants were affected by having their responses recorded, meaning that their answers were limited perhaps due to shyness. Moreover, qualitative research also has its own advantages and disadvantages. For example, triangulation is time-consuming, sampling, observations and interviews need to be analysed in detail. In this case, the paper's findings cannot be generalised to all bilingual students', parents' and teachers' perceptions of learning a mother tongue in every country and context; thus the present study's external validity is questionable.

When thinking about my research in relation to bias, it is important that it pointed out that I am directly a part of the school staff. I teach a class that included bilingual children who have continued to learn Turkish during this academic term. Thus, I needed to be aware that bias could happen throughout my research and I needed to be sure that my views did not impact my observation and data analysis. Furthermore, I needed to prepare a fair and ethical interview setting, while making clear that the questions and my position during the interviews were linked to the project's research goals and do not represent my personal opinions and judgments.

Findings

The research findings covered three main themes: students'; parents'; and; teachers' views on learning Turkish as a mother tongue by Turkish bilingual children aged 9-12. The data analysis was separated in terms of participants' cohorts and lastly, each participant's view was compared.

The Perceptions of Students on Learning of Mother Tongue

During the students' interviews, I focused on their aims in learning and using Turkish, the problems they encountered, and, the solutions they found for these. All my student participants take a Turkish course every Saturday for 3 hours.

When I asked about their first language; their answers were different from each other even though they are Turkish. Two of them have mixed parents, so they answered this question 'English'. However, students having Turkish parents said 'Turkish'. These pupils are confused about their first language because of their social differences. According to my observation, although students' answers were different, they have similar levels of Turkish. Nevertheless, having Turkish parents affects their use of and learning ability of Turkish. Here it seems relevant to point out that the social environment influences students' rate of acquisition of a mother tongue (Allman, 2005:58; Martin, 1999:67).

As their purpose of learning Turkish, while three of the students replied 'my mother/father wants me to', and a second answer 'to communicate well with my family members'. Students attend the Turkish course because their Turkish parents want them to; moreover, the children want to interact with their Turkish family members both in England and when they visit Turkey. Apart from this Turkish course, students use Turkish when 'reading stories, speaking Turkish with other Turkish speaking parent and relatives, and, watching movies' to improve their Turkish. I asked them about problems they had encountered and for their advice on solutions. Although one student has speaking problems according to my observation, he said he has 'no problems'. When I explained the question more deeply, they expanded their answers. All students said they suffer from writing issues in Turkish and issues understanding what they have read. Moreover, they outlined that if they know that someone can speak English, they do not feel constrained to speak in Turkish. As far as solutions, one of the students wanted more enjoyable activities on the course, whereas another wanted more writing and reading practice. However, they supposed that if they read Turkish stories and practice the Turkish language more in daily life, apart from the Turkish course, they can speed up their acquisition. Interestingly, one student said if they did less writing exercises, it could improve their learning.

The Perceptions of Parents on Learning of Mother Tongue

I interviewed parents about their views on their children learning Turkish as a mother tongue. All participant parents are Turkish but two of them have a British wife/husband. The parents believe that when children learn Turkish as a mother tongue, they understand their culture much more in their own language because every language and culture has its own characteristics. One of them with a British family said:

...we speak English with my kid in our daily life because my husband is British, does not understand Turkish.

Another stated that

My kids suffer both languages at the same time since although I can speak English, I prefer to speak Turkish and my wife speaks English with our kids.

I observed these two children's Turkish skills, the child's exposure to both language is better than other students. Therefore, I can say that the social environment and the level and duration of time of exposure to two languages has a positive effect on learning languages (Allman, 2005; Martin, 1999). However, the other two parents from a Turkish family replied if children do not need to speak Turkish, they do not use it, because they express themselves in English easily. In order to encourage them to use Turkish, they try to provide a rich linguistic environment by providing Turkish storybooks, speaking Turkish to them and watching Turkish movies.

Parents stated that as a parallel idea with children, their kids find it difficult to read and write. However, parents noted that there is insufficient learning material, TV programmes and games in Turkish, and, even if there are some, they are violent and not appropriate for the age groups. They gave some solutions to these problems; that games can be translated into Turkish, then while playing, they learn the language; that educational programmes in Turkish can be improved (appropriate to age and culture); and that the Turkish Ministry of Education could provide more material to promote the learning and teaching of the language for Turkish children living internationally.

Consequently, students prefer to speak English, because they find it easy to express themselves; all parents agree they and their children need to practice more and use in Turkish in daily life in order to improve.

The Perceptions of Teachers on Learning of Mother Tongue

There are one formal teacher and 3 volunteer teachers (including myself) at Nottingham Turkish Community Saturday School. Teachers think that learning Turkish as a mother tongue is important in order to not to forget their own culture, to gain advantages in knowing two languages and facilitate good communication with family members and relatives. Both teachers gave similar answers that the school curriculum features Turkish reading and writing activities and cultural activities like cousin culture and wedding ceremonies. However, one of them mentioned mathematical activities; that students should learn numbers in Turkish. Educator's teaching approach is generally based on providing a fun learning environment for children. For example, he pointed out that singing songs, playing games, describing pictures and doing crosswords are effective teaching techniques. Nevertheless, the level of students should be taken into account when planning teaching activities. Due to the fewer Turkish resources, formal teachers believe that all of these qualities are gained through experience.

Therefore, planning educational activities should be based on students' readiness and teacher's previous teaching experiences. According to my observations, teachers who work as volunteers, often do not have a great deal of experience in teaching; thus he implies that formal teachers are more skilled. So that, I suppose that using volunteers is not an effective way to teach.

When asking about the amount of time students spent using Turkish, children of mixed parents said that having Turkish speaking family is an opportunity to learn and use Turkish, because they speak Turkish both home and Saturday school, so their exposure to the language much greater. On the other hand, if the father is Turkish, it is difficult to practice in Turkish, since students spend the most time with their mother at home while their father is working; however, by the same rationale, if the mother is Turkish, they can speak more Turkish in their daily lives.

Teachers explained the problems encountered in teaching Turkish at the school. As it is not a British state school and it runs only on a voluntary basis, students do not feel it necessary to attend, speak or improve their skills. Moreover, no attendance marking system is in place and students are not compelled to use Turkish. However, they are at different ages in the group, so this makes it difficult to find appropriate study activities to cater for all. In order to solve these problems, the teachers and I believe that as teachers, we should make our classes as fun and stimulating as possible in order to engage the children in learning Turkish. Nevertheless, the parents should keep up to date with their kids' learning. Whereas one of them said there should be Turkish language course-books available in order to make learning fun for bilingual students, others stated that peer education is important and it should be provided, using effective technology, and taught by a professional educator.

Results

The aim of my PBI was to explore students', parents' and teachers' views on learning Turkish as a mother tongue by bilingual Turkish children. I wished to investigate why learning a mother tongue is important for bilinguals. The general perceptions from the interviews and my observations showed that all my participants agreed that people should learn their own language in order to understand their own culture and communicate with family members. They shared the opinion that learning and teaching the mother tongue is beneficial to their further career; nevertheless, it would still improve their cognitive development, because according to Cummins (2001), learning a second language contributes to skills at learning another language.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the goals of my research, observations and interviews; my data would suggest that learning Turkish as a mother tongue by bilinguals has had positive outcomes on the identified problems and solutions. While students say writing and reading are the most difficult parts of learning Turkish, parents and teachers mention there are not enough educational tools, such as TV programmes and educational course-books in Turkish. In order to solve these issues, teachers and parents note that using technology and educational books as well as making lessons as fun as possible, is important. However, students state that they need more practice in Turkish. Verhoven (1996) suggests that although children's language

proficiency improves quickly in early childhood, this proficiency reduces over time, as they near the end of the critical period.

Nevertheless, despite these positive outcomes, based on the research findings and the opinions of the participants involved, I feel that it is too early to judge whether this solution has improved the effectiveness of learning and teaching Turkish. There is a need to do more in-depth research involving different schools and different year groups which would provide more reliable data. Moreover, it would help to reduce some limitations caused by time constraints.

This process of conducting this practice-based research has shown me the advantages of identifying a focus which is relevant to the changing of practice in my school. During the process, I was able to reflect on and plan how to collect the data and process my findings. I was also able to discuss my concerns and ethical issues with my supervisor. This provided me with the opportunity to build professional and positive relationships. I investigated and reflected on possible teaching methods and found out what was happening at the school. My understanding of action research and PBI has improved and I now understand the importance of keeping journals that show my initial opinions towards my chosen area. I am aware of the effects of bias and other limitations of the original research aim. Keeping a reflective diary provided me the opportunity to remain focused during the study.

This inquiry has shown me that for future studies of this area, and if I work with different age groups, I should adopt the interview questions to be age appropriate. Moreover, PBI is not just a method of improving professional practice, which should create the principle of personal decisions in practice. I need to broaden my sample to generalise my results. I think PBI participants are aware of their potential for knowledge production and educational and social change (Anderson *et al.*, 2007:32). As I am still working at the school, I will continue to explore the strengths and limitations of this study during the academic term. This will contribute to my professional development.

Implications

Action research has been defined as using researchers' own experiences as the focus of their investigation in research conducted (Anderson *et al.*, 2007). I will be associating my research to my classroom and exploring the views of other teachers within my school, and also those of parents and students. I am aware of the implications this may have on my data and results. While undertaking this action research, so as to eliminate these possible risks to internal validity, techniques to avoid researcher bias and ensure the validity of my findings will be deployed. First of all, knowing the problems and solutions to learn Turkish has provided me with many productive ideas, therefore, I can feedback to other teachers and continue to support the students' needs within our school. This study also showed me that although students have difficulties in learning Turkish, they are willing to learn it as their L2.

Secondly, I will use more than one research techniques. I will conduct classroom observations to investigate to how children use their mother tongue effectively; structured interviews with students, parents and teachers; and record my findings reflectively. The collected data's validity can be checked using triangulation. According to Klenke (2016:123), triangulation is commonly achieved by combining observations and interviews.

Finally, I will keep a journal that will help me to record actions and reflect on my own practice and that of other teachers' within my student age group, and also my school. To achieve this, I will use a similar approach to Hole & McEntee (1999) that highlight the Guided Reflection Protocol that seeks to understand what happens, why it happens, what it could mean and what implications it has for future research. I would like to write about why I am studying this subject, what happens throughout my research, why I think this is occurring and how I believe it could impact on future practice. Additionally, I would like to ask other teachers to write this kind of journal. To Stevens & Cooper (2009:124), journals are seen as a private, honest and authentic source of data. Because of this, I will ask them to keep journals about their class-work and use them as a reflective tool in interviews when they give feedback. This will provide them with the opportunity to write honestly about their perceptions yet overcome the ethical issues preventing private journals being read by others.

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