



The Effect of Fathers' Language Training Program on the Receptive Language Development of Children *

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the efficacy of a training program so as to support language development in children provided for the fathers, having 36-48 month-old children who do not get pre-school education. For this purpose, "Father Language Assistance Program" has been developed by the researcher. The sample of the study consisted of 42 fathers, living in Emet county in Kutahya, whose children do not get preschool education, and the children of these fathers. In the study, the research design with pre-and post-test control groups was used. 22 fathers in the sample were involved randomly in the experimental group and exposed to 8-week father language assistance training program while the other 20 fathers were determined as the control group and did not get any kind of father training. The language development levels of the children were assessed with "Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test". In the analysis of data Mann Whitney U Test and Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test were used. According to the findings of the study, a statistically significant difference was found between the language development levels of the children whose fathers were involved in "Father Language Assistance Program" and the levels of other children whose fathers weren't. Therefore, "Father Language Assistance Program" affects children's language development levels positively. The study also proves the positive effect of the training program given to the fathers on children's language development and so contributes to the literature.

Keywords

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Introduction

It is an observable fact that there exists a continuous change and development in human life. It can be claimed that these changes and developments start from people's birth and last until the end of their lives. Scientific, social and political developments rapidly increasing in our age play a significant

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role in human life and are able to destroy the taboos in a number of situations that we perceive as absolute reality.

The very first years of human life has been a popular research subject of many scientific studies due to its significance. The environment in early childhood and the quality of education provided to children determine their future achievements and so their quality of life to a great extent. Some research studies reveal that the lack of stimulating environment and experiences in the early childhood restrict their learning and development in the following years, whereas an environment rich in stimulation increases the competency of using mother tongue that forms the basis of school education, logical-mathematical and spatial abilities, achievement motives, study habits and so their learning levels (Senemoğlu, 2004).

Education of child in the early ages defines not only the pre-school education provided institutionally but also a process that needs to start with child's birth. Therefore, with a few exceptions, it can be considered that for every child the first educational environment is family and the first teachers are parents and other family members. By providing rich stimulating environments, mothers and fathers can potentially help their children have some crucial gains. As Yörükoğlu stated (2000), for child, the things learned from parents, a strong background and relationships maintained in the early years continue to be essential throughout child's life. The effect of family is of vital importance for the child to be a competent and healthy individual especially in terms of cognitive, social, language and even sexual developments.

Family's being involved in their children's care and education process with a more modern and scientific base can be possible through family training. According to Kağıtçıbaşı (1989), it is obvious with some research that cognitive, social, emotional, psychomotor and personality developments of children whose parents are educated in terms of parenting skills are better compared to those whose parents are not.

Until a few decades ago, while every individual's early life was primarily and specifically associated with "mother", today it can be said that, although not wrong, this phenomenon is a prejudiced one since a good number of scientific findings suggest that father is really effective on child's cognitive, social, emotional, sexual (Güngörmüş Özkardeş, 2006, Kuzucu, 2011) and language development (Tamis LeMonda, Shannon, Cabrera, & Lamb, 2004; Pancsofar and Vernon-Feagans, 2006). Just like mothers, fathers also have a big role in children's cognitive, social emotional, language, sexual and moral developments.

However, it seems pretty difficult and even impossible with traditional or mere cultural values to maintain some issues such as the invaluable roles fathers should provide for their children, the way they should behave to act these roles and even the way they shouldn't behave. Then, the most logical solution is to provide an environment for fathers where they are trained on "being father" and even "being an effective father" with quality information and practices.

When the care and education of child in the early years is considered, the one that first comes to minds has always been mothers. Even, the anthropologist Margaret Mead defines fathers as a "biological necessity," and as an "accident socially"(cited in Parke, & Brott, 1999). During child's education process, fathers have not been a research topic for a long time. In theories related to child development as well (e.g. Bowlby's Attachment Theory), the importance of mothers is emphasized more while father is defined as the person that can support mother (cited in Güngörmüş Özkardeş, 2006). As a continuation of these perceptions, the target group of family training programs has been mainly mothers. While these kinds of family assistance programs are limited in Turkey, the family training programs involving fathers in the education process and helping them to be more efficient and competent in their children's care and education are also limited.

Many reasons such as women's starting to work life, divorce, death and having illegitimate child make it compulsory for fathers to take over their children's responsibilities more and all these suggest the necessity of fathers' being educated in child development and education at least as much

as mothers (Tezel Şahin, & Özyürek, 2010). In the literature, it can be seen that, studies about father training are getting increased. However, in Turkey, it is observed that the number of these kinds of studies are few in number (Aydın, 2003; Kocayörük, 2010). Within the framework of all these realities, it is essential to organize such training programs for fathers and reveal their effects on children.

When the literature is reviewed, it is possible to point that the first example of father training programs carried out abroad is "*Child Birth Education Classes*" (cited in Levant, & Doyle, 1983). Another example is the early intervention program called Head Start Program conducted in the USA since 1965. Although this is a mainly family-based program related to early childhood education, it gives a special importance to father involvement. Especially in the recent years, father and father involvement concept is of critical interest in this program and, that is why it has led to many projects with father involvement in different states (Fagan, & Stevenson, 1995). The findings of some studies indicate that fathers attending Head Start Program had positive gains about their children and thanks to the contributions of the program they supported their children's developments (Amato, 1996; Bogenschneider, 1997; Fagan, 1999; Fagan and Iglesias, 1999). It is also possible to realize a remarkable fact related to the training programs directly aiming at fathers or targeting both fathers and mothers in the studies of Lundahl, Tollefson, Lovejoy and Risser (2008). In the study conducted to determine the participation levels of fathers in parental education programs, 32 education programs were referred and it was found that 16 of them aimed at both fathers and mothers while the other 16 aimed at only mothers. The meta-analysis reveals striking results. According to the results of the analysis, fathers stated that compared to mothers, they had fewer gains in these parental assistance programs (Lundahl et al., 2008).

Nevertheless, regarding the recent years, even just by searching over the internet, it is possible to claim that we come across father training programs more often. Fathers in Training, Nurturing Fathers Program, Father Plus and Fatherhood Programs can be given as example of such programs.

In the context of Turkey, it is difficult to encounter a richness considering father training programs. *Mother and Father School* that can be regarded as a parental education program is not a father training program on its own. However scientific data (Yavuzer et al., 2004) demonstrate that 38% of the participants in this program are male. This rate is of precious value indicating father training sample in Turkey. The most comprehensive example of father training in Turkey is *Father Assistance Program* initiated by Mother Child Education Foundation in 1996. *Father Assistance Program* aims to inform fathers on child development and raise their awareness on how important they are in child education. According to the results of the studies, *Father Assistance Program* makes various contributions to the fathers attending this program. In addition, these contributions of the program lead to a positive interaction within the family itself (Alibeyoğlu, 2009; Atmaca Koçak, 2004). Besides *Mother and Father School* and *Father Assistance Program*, research studies on father training are also carried out by universities within the scope of postgraduate education (Aydın, 2003; Kocayörük, 2007; Taşkın, 2005; Ünüvar, 2008). Despite the increase in qualitative and quantitative studies on fathers and children, it is advisable to conduct more studies, especially experimental studies, on this issue (Nelson, 2004).

The number of studies about the effect of father on child's cognitive, social, emotional and sexual development are more than the ones on child's language development. According to Güven and Bal (2000,), language together with its all rules can be learned through life naturally. While acquiring a language, children take first their mothers and fathers as a model, then other family members and finally other individuals in their social and school environments with whom they have interactions. Together with these models, enriched learning environments offered to children will also have a supportive role for children's language acquisition and their use of creative language. However, in this language development process of children, the number of studies on fathers' effect is quite limited.

Considering the lack of studies on fathers' effect in Turkey and limitedness in fathers' training programs and even beyond this the fact that no study about the effect of a program given to fathers on children's language development is encountered and as this issue must be investigated scientifically in a detailed way, this study dwells on the issue. With this aim in the study, a program is prepared for fathers so that they can support their 36-48-month-old children who do not get pre-school education in terms of language development and the efficacy of the this program was evaluated with the experimental and control group. In addition, the study tried to find out whether the effect of Fathers' Language Assistance Program differs or not according to the gender of children.

Also, the assumptions and limitations in the study are presented here. The assumptions in the study are as follows: a) the fathers in the experimental group apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes they acquired through Father Language Assistance Program to their children b) the fathers in the experimental and control groups whose language development levels were measured are as effective as the other factors such as mother, siblings, peers, television etc. in terms of children's language development levels and c) the duration of the education in the program provided for the fathers in the experimental group is considered enough. Also, as mentioned above, the study has a number of limitations. These are a) the study was limited to fathers in Emet county of Kutahya, who are available and volunteer, having 36-48 month-old children who do not get pre-school education and b) children's language development levels were limited to the level that Peabody Picture-Vocabulary Test can measure.

Methods

Experimental Research Method

In experimental designs, the basic aim is to test the cause-effect relationships between the variables. In order to fulfill this aim, researcher has to randomly assign subjects to treatment groups that are the levels of independent variables, to manipulate the independent variable and to control external factors. For experimental studies, there has been a variety of different classifications (Büyükoztürk, Kılıç Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2009). In this study, one of the real experimental designs, pre- and post-test with a control group and random assignment of the participants, was used. From this point forth, Father Language Assistance Program is the independent variable of the study while the dependent variable is the language development level of children whose fathers are trained in the experimental group.

Participants

The population of the study consists of the fathers, living in Turkey's west part in the country side (Kütahya-Emet), having 36-48 month-old children who do not get pre-school education. The researcher tried to reach these fathers with the posters and brochures he prepared on which information about a father training program to be given is written. All these posters and brochures were posted in public offices, in the neighborhood units and some private business firms. A sample was tried to be determined from this mentioned population.

52 fathers applied to these informing calls/invitations carried out for this aim. Since 10 of these 52 fathers have children aged more than 48-month-old, they were excluded from the sample and the rest 42 fathers were accepted as the sample of the study. 22 of these 42 fathers were determined as the experimental group, considering the possibility of losses during the treatment, and the other 20 as the control group. Therefore, 22 fathers were randomly involved in the experimental group and 20 of them in the control group, that is, the fathers in these groups were determined randomly. The distribution by age ranges and education level of fathers in the study and by the gender of their 36-48 month old children was presented below.

Table 1. Age Range Frequency and Percentage Distribution of fathers in the Experimental and Control Groups

Age Range	Experimental Group		Control Group	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
24-28	6	27	4	20
29-32	7	32	8	40
33-36	6	27	5	25
37-40	3	14	3	15
Total	22	100	20	100

In Table 1, it is observed that the age ranges of the fathers in the experimental and control groups are so close. In the sample, the smallest number of age range is the one between 37 and 40, with each group having 3 fathers.

Table 2. Education Level Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Fathers in the Experimental and Control Groups

Level of Education	Experimental Group		Control Group	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Primary Education	4	18	2	10
High School	6	27	4	20
Associate Degree	4	18	4	20
Undergraduate	8	37	9	45
Postgraduate	0	0	1	5
Total	22	100	20	100

In Table 2, it is observed that the fathers in the experimental and control groups are quite similar in terms of their level of education. While there exists no father in the experimental group with a postgraduate level, one person in the control group has postgraduate education level.

Table 3. Gender Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Children of Fathers in the Experimental and Control Groups

Gender of Child	Experimental Group		Control Group	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Female	11	50	9	45
Male	11	50	11	55
Total	22	100	20	100

In Table 3, it is seen that the gender distribution of the children of fathers in both groups are very similar. In the experimental group, children were divided in half according to their genders while the control group consisted of 9 female and 11 male children.

Data Collection Instruments

Peabody Picture-Vocabulary Test (PPVT)

The original form of Peabody Picture-Vocabulary Test was developed by Dunn in 1959. The adaptation studies for Turkish society were carried out by Katz, Önen, Demir, Uzunkaya and Uludağ in 1974. The components of Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test are 100 cards each consisting of 4 pictures including animal, object, and nature figures etc. that were arranged from the easy to the difficult and a record form in which the answers of the subjects are recorded by the implementer. During the application of the test, children are asked to point or say the appropriate picture out of 4 on the card. This is a performance test applied individually measuring the development in vocabulary knowledge of children aged 2-12. There is no time limitation for the application of the test and it can

be answered within 10-15 minutes. No prerequisite training is required for the implementation of the test (Öner 1997). The reliability of the test ranges between 0.71 and 0.81, and test-retest reliability is determined to be between 0.52 and 0.90 (Özgüven, 2011).

There are a great number of studies related to language development where Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test was used (Çiyiltepe, & Aslan, 2008; Erbay, & Öztürk Samur, 2010; Gözalan, & Koçak, 2014; Haitana, Pitama, & Rucklidge, 2010; Hoffman, Templin, & Rice, 2012; İpek, & Bilgin, 2007; Kaygılı, Koçyiğit, & Erbay, 2009; Karaaslan 2003; Özkes, 2013; Simos, Sideridis, Protopapas, & Mouzaki, 2011; Taner, & AsudeBaşal, 2005; Tepeli, & Karadeniz, 2013; Yıldırım Doğru, Bek, Konuk Er, & Demiray, 2010).

Father Language Assistance Program Evaluation Form

The form was created with the aim of determining the views of fathers attending Father Language Assistance Program (FLAP) about the program and program executive by studying similar practices (Öğüt, 1998; Aydın, 2003; Kocayörük, 2007). In the form prepared with four point likert scale, the subscales of the program namely Content/Themes, Written Materials, Visual Materials, Practical Activities and Discussions were scored with one of the points including (1) "Poor", (2) "Average", (3) "Good " and (4) "Very good". When it comes to the program executive, scoring related to Communication Skills, Conveying Knowledge, Competency over Subject Area and Managing Discussions was carried out with the following points: (1) "Poor", (2) "Average", (3) "Good " and (4) "Very good". Father Language Assistance Program Evaluation Form aiming to determine opinions of fathers in the experimental group was applied to the fathers on 15th June, 2012, the last day of the program, in one session. After giving necessary explanations, researcher left the fathers alone for 15 minutes considering the possibility of their being affected and requested from one of the fathers to collect the forms, put in an envelope and inform the researcher.

Personal Details Form

Personal Detail form is a document consisting of 2 pages with A and B forms designed by the researcher in order to obtain some personal information about the fathers and children participating in the study. In form A, questions related to the age, occupation, education level of fathers and their child/children's age and gender are presented while in form B, there is a template where fathers can write their names, surnames, telephone numbers and addresses. Personal details form was filled in on the dates between April 2 and 15, 2012 by the fathers responding to the announcements related to the training program to be given to fathers in the county. Personal details form gathered from 52 fathers were analyzed by the researcher regardless of checking B form and as mentioned earlier 10 fathers were excluded as their children's age is more than 48 months.

Father Language Assistance Program

The Preparation of Father Language Assistance Program

Mother and father has an influence on children's process of learning a language and their development on language skills through various interactions with child. Majority of the studies on the effect of parent talk on language learning process of children focus on the talk between mother and child (Golinkoff, & Ames, 1979). Both mother and father tend to adjust their talks with their children from a few different aspects so as to support them in terms of language development. This means a modified speech which is linguistically less complicated and more exaggerated with a higher pitch (Kitamura, & Burnham, 2003; McRoberts, & Best, 1997). Some other studies aimed to find out similarities and differences between the talks of mothers and fathers with their children since there are some differences with the way a mother talks with her child and the way a father talks. (Radin, 1981). Also, according to the results of some studies, mothers talk with their children more compared to fathers (Leaper, Anderson, & Sanders, 1998). According to McLaughlin, White, McDevitt and Raskin (1983), mothers are much more sensitive about their children's language developments compared to fathers.

The number of studies on the contribution of fathers to the language development of their children is limited. Furthermore, most of these limited number of studies focus on the way mother and father talk with their child and the frequency of these talks. On the other hand, it can be understood from several studies that positive interaction with father contributes especially to the cognitive and language development especially in the second and third years of child's life (Tamis LeMonda, Shannon, Cabrera, & Lamb, 2004). Moreover, some other studies reveal that fathers also adjust their speech with their children as much as mothers do (Kruiper, & Uzgiris, 1987). It has also been observed that both mother and father spend equal time talking with their children; however, fathers tend to repeat less compared to mothers (Rutherford, & Przednowek, 2012; Kruiper, & Uzgiris, 1987). Rowe, Coker and Pan (2004) stated that fathers' speech generally consisted of wh- questions such as what, where, when, how, which, why and also requests for an explanation about a specific situation or event. Some findings in recent research also indicate that fathers make speeches that contribute to their children's language proficiency development (Lamb, 2010).

One of the most important studies on the fathers' contribution to language development in the early ages was carried out by Pancsofar and Vernon-Feagans (2006). The results of the study show that fathers contribute significantly to their children's expressive language development in the later stages of children's life. The same study demonstrates that when fathers used a variety of different words with their 24-month-old children and when they became 36-month-old, it is observed that they developed a better expressive language skill. In this study it is depicted that compared with fathers, mother's language use does not create a big difference on child (Pancsofar, & Vernon-Feagans, 2006).

Considering the studies on father and children's language development, it can be seen that mainly mother and language relationships and father's position in this process is dealt with especially in the studies before 2000 (Golinkoff, & Ames, 1979; Leaper, Anderson, & Sanders, 1998; McLaughlin, White, McDevitt, & Raskin, 1983). On the other hand, after 2000, it can be said that the number of studies on the effects of fathers on children's language development have increased and awareness on the issue has been raised (Lamb, 2010; Rowe, Coker, & Pan 2004; Pancsofar, 2008; Pancsofar, & Vernon-Feagans, 2006; Rutherford, & Przednowek, 2012; Tamis LeMonda, Shannon, Cabrera, & Lamb, 2004). Even so, all these show that fathers and their children's language development is studied from a limited perspective with a history of 10-15 years. As a result, the idea that fathers can affect their children's language development positively lead to a new program preparation for fathers based on language development, which can raise more awareness on the issue.

The preparation of Father Language Assistance Program (FLAP) was completed in about six months' time. During this time, the researcher examined family education, adult education and previous applications on these issues other than the examinations he did on early childhood education and besides, he gave the final shape of the program with contributions and criticism of three professors and two assistant professors working in the field of preschool education at state universities in Turkey.

FLAP was prepared in a context in which a training process to be given to the fathers of children who did not receive preschool education aims to increase the level of language development in these children. Therefore, FLAP differs from the father education programs in literature. Especially, father education programs implemented in Turkey provide information to fathers on many issues such as family life, communication with children, children's development qualities, family attitudes, father involvement and enable these fathers to have more interaction with their children and raise awareness in them. However, although these father education programs provide valuable contributions to the field of literature, they mostly focus on measuring fathers' competence and perceptions on related issues before and after the education (Alibeyoğlu, 2009; Aydın, 2003; Kuzucu, 1999; Taşkın, 2005). FLAP offered an education program to fathers who has 36-48 months old children not receiving preschool education and focused on the interaction these fathers would have with their children and its results while getting education (for 8 weeks). Therefore, during the education that

would be given to fathers, FLAP aimed to increase the effect of these fathers on their children's language development level.

Present applications were examined while FLAP was being prepared. Although the program aimed to attain the gains regarding increasing children's language development levels during/ at the end of the education process that would be given to fathers, as a prerequisite to this it was built upon informing the fathers on issues such as child development, communication with children, parental attitudes and the importance of the father in child's life. Thus, while the program was being prepared, it was considered that first of all, information about the issues mentioned should be provided to fathers and after that in the light of this information, they should have an idea of what they could do to contribute to their children's language development. Accordingly, a certain part of the training was dedicated to information and applications supporting language development no matter what topics were presented to the experimental group of fathers on a weekly basis. In this context, the final version of the program was achieved in the light of current applications in the field of literature [(Aydın, (2003); Taşkın, & Erkan, (2009); Ünüvar, (2008); Çakır, (2009); Yavuzer et al., (2004); Atmaca Koçak, (2004)] and with the support of expert academics.

The Implementation of the Father Language Assistance Program

The researcher started training on 27th April and on 15th June 8-week-training was completed. The program consisted of 2 hours of activity for 8 weeks. The first week session comprised four 30-minute sub sections. Two 90+30-minute sub sections took place in all the sessions from the second week to the eighth week. While weekly sessions were taking place, a 5-minute break was given after each sub-section, but break times were not deduced from the training time.

Each week the training started with the discussion and exchange of ideas regarding the implementation of the activities carried out previous week. The trainer provided all kinds of material related to the content of the training to the fathers. No matter what topic was determined for the weekly sessions, the last 30 minutes of the sessions were planned and implemented as language development support activities. In this section, the trainer tried to tell fathers both theoretically and practically what they could do to support their children's language development. Father Language Assistance Program did not impose any financial burden on the fathers.

FLAP, as mentioned before, was prepared in approximately 6 months' time. The facts that there is no program sample for fathers that will support children's language development, the process is directly related to adult training, the target group is fathers who have 36-48 month-old children, mothers are regarded as the one that should take care little children caused some difficulties for the process. Within the process of developing the program, the program was shaped with the contributions and critics of five senior faculty members via email. Also, when the program took its final form, the next step was to determine the sample of the study. The process to determine the sample group was presented in a detailed way under the title of "Participants". At this point, the main concern was if fathers would attend such kind of training or continue it for 8 weeks. Because of the abovementioned reasons, no research tool intended to measure the reliability of program application was developed and no data was gathered for this issue. However, a form was created with the aim of determining the views of fathers attending FLAP about the program and program executive by studying similar practices (Öğüt, 1998; Aydın, 2003; Kocayörük, 2007) and the form was filled in by the fathers in the experimental group at the end of the program. The frequency and percentage distributions of the experimental group fathers' opinions on Father Language Assistance Program were given in Table 4.

Table 4. Frequency and Percentage Distributions of the Experimental Group Fathers' Opinions on Father Language Assistance Program

Program	Very Good		Good		Average		Poor	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Content/ Themes	20	90	2	10	-	-	-	-
Written Materials	18	82	4	18	-	-	-	-
Visual Materials	22	100	-	-	-	-	-	-
Practical Activities	16	73	6	27	-	-	-	-
Discussions	22	100	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 4 shows that the fathers in the experimental group scored each title related to Father Language Assistance Program with either "very good" or "good". According to this table, the content/themes of the program is evaluated as very good by 20 fathers (90%) and good by 2 fathers (10%); written materials are evaluated as very good by 18 (%82) and good by 4 fathers (%18); visual materials are evaluated as very good by 22 fathers (100%); Practical Activities are evaluated as very good by 16 fathers (73%) and good by 6 fathers (27%); Discussions are evaluated as very good by 22 fathers (100%). None of the fathers evaluated the content/themes, written materials, visual materials, practical activities and discussion of the program as average or poor. Frequency and percentage distribution of the experimental group fathers' opinions on program executives is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Frequency and percentage distributions of the experimental group fathers' opinions on program executives

Program	Very Good		Goog		Avarege		Poor	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Executive								
Communication Skills	18	82	4	18	-	-	-	-
Conveying Knowledge	17	77	5	73	-	-	-	-
Competency overSubject Area	22	100	-	-	-	-	-	-
Managing Discussions	19	86	3	14	-	-	-	-

Data in Table 5 indicates that the fathers in the experimental group scored each title related to Program Executive with either "very good" or "good" options. According to this table, communication skills are evaluated as very good by 18 fathers (82%) and good by 4 fathers (18%); skills to convey knowledge are evaluated as very good by 17 and good by 5 fathers; competency over subject area is evaluated as very good by 22 (%100); skills to manage discussions are evaluated as very good by 19 (83%) and good by 3 fathers (14%). None of the fathers evaluated the communication skills, conveying knowledge, competency over subject area and managing discussions as average or poor.

The Content of Father Language Assistance Program

Father Language Assistance Program aimed at fathers whose children did not or could not get preschool education. This has two important reasons. Firstly, according to the data obtained from the Ministry of Education, the rate of preschool enrolment for 4-5 year- old- children in Turkey is still 44%. (MOE, 2011). Enrolment rates for 36-48-year-old children for 2011 are unknown. The second reason is to eliminate the possibility that the level of increase in language development expected to develop in children after the Father Language Assistance Program might stem from preschool educational institutions. If FLAP could demonstrate that it has a positive effect on language development independent from preschool education institutions in this study, it is intended to be applied to the fathers of the children receiving preschool education.

Another point considered while Father Language Assistance Program was being prepared was the fact that factors other than the father could also affect children's language development levels and the effort to try to limit these factors as much as possible. Firstly and especially, limiting the effect of mothers in this direction is of paramount importance regarding bringing out the effect of the program. In order to reveal sample fathers' direct or indirect contributions to their children's language development level, it was thought to create a control group consisting of mothers and other possible factor (TV, computer, siblings or friends, cognitive maturation and so on). Between the pre-test and post-test mean scores in the control group, a difference in favour of the post-test scores was assumed to explain the effect of mothers and other factors on children's language development levels. The 8-week content of Father Language Assistance Program consists of the following headings:

1. Introduction, Presentation of the program, Contract and Accident Prevention
2. Daily life and Sharing Education
3. The importance of father in child's life
4. Development features of 3-6-year old children
5. Language development and its significance
6. Parental attitudes
7. Children and communication
8. Overview

It is difficult to give all of the content prepared regarding Father Language Assistance Program here. However, in order to provide more information to the readers, the content of the week 5 is presented in detail below:

Language Development and Its Significance (5th week's content)

First Class: Language Development and Its Significance, Duration: 90 min.

Teaching Methods and Techniques: Lecture, question and answer, discussion, demonstration, creative drama

Educational Status/ Lecture:

- ❖ *The trainer firstly gets information about the activities presented a week before. Fathers are asked to tell their lives. Discussions are started on fathers' approaches and the situations emerging during their life experiences.*
- ❖ *The trainer asks fathers to describe any event without using a dictionary by choosing a few volunteers among the fathers.*
- ❖ *The trainer gives information with the help of computer presentations on the definition of language and its importance.*
- ❖ *The trainer gives information with the help of computer presentations on the language development of 0-3 year-old children.*
- ❖ *The trainer gives information with the help of computer presentations on the language development of 3-6 year-old children.*
- ❖ *The trainer gives information about the factors affecting language development. (Age, gender, number of siblings, birth order, parental education level, socio-economic status).*
- ❖ *The effect of father on language development is presented with computer presentations.*

Second Class: Language Development Assistance Activities, Duration: 30 min.

Educational Status/ Lecture:

- ❖ *An activity list of the week is distributed to the fathers. Discussions are made on how these activities will be carried out and even what else can be done.*
- ❖ *Fathers are taught how to make simple binoculars from two paper towel rolls. The trainer distributes the rolls to the fathers.*

- ❖ *Fathers are taught how to make a simple parachute with a nylon bag, a rope and an empty matchbox.*
- ❖ *Fathers are asked to carry out the four activities absolutely together with the child. Then, information is provided about performing three similar activities determined by the fathers. Fathers' opinions/ questions/ suggestions are taken.*

Activity 1: *The game called "examining the environment with binoculars made from cardboard" is played. Father and child observe the objects/ events/ situations in the environment with the help of binoculars by going out on a balcony or looking through a window. Father and child talk about the objects/ events/ situations.*

Activity 2: *The game called "I am learning the professions" is played. Father and child take a trip on a available day. The father gives a notepad and a few crayons to his child. Father and child visit a variety of shops and businesses one by one. They visit grocery stores, barbers, construction workers, teachers, carpenters, cooks, and drivers and so on. Father and child ask these people what they do and why. The child is asked to save what s/he has learnt during the trip as thumbnails. This activity can occasionally be repeated for several weeks.*

Activity 3: *Making a simple parachute. Father and child make a parachute with necessary materials. The parachute is dropped from a place with an appropriate height. Father chats with his child by asking questions such as "If you were in the parachute, what would you see below?", "how is up?" "What has drawn your attention while coming down?"*

Activity 4: *the story called "Mumi is looking for the Sun (Dinçer, 2003)" is read to the children by the fathers. The story is tried to be acted out. New titles are tried to be found for the story. Father and child talk about the words in the story. Father gets the child to tell the story.*

- ❖ *The session ends.*

Collection of Data

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) was administered to the children whose fathers were both in the experimental and control groups before the start of Father Language Assistance Program. The first measurement was made by visiting children's homes between 19th and 22nd April, 2012. Prior to the measurement, the researcher briefly chatted with the family next to the child and tried to have the child trust the researcher. In addition, the researcher said that s/he was going to play a fun game with the child and if the child completed the game, s/he would give the present s/he brought to the child. In this way, PPVT was administered to the children whose fathers were in the experimental and control group. A quiet environment for the test was provided and in some cases, the family stayed in the same room with the children but away from the area where the measurement was taking place.

After the completion of the first measurements, FLAP was initiated with the fathers in the control group on 27th April, 2012. At the end of eight sessions carried out on every Friday evening, the program ended on 15th June, 2012. Following the completion of FLAP, PPVT was administered to the children whose fathers were in the experimental and control groups as post-test between 18th and 22nd June, 2012, and data collection process was completed by thanking the children and their parents.

Analysis of Data

With the aim of determining the appropriate statistical method in the analysis of the data in the study, test of normality was conducted and it was seen that the obtained results did not have normal distribution ($p < 0.05$). As a result of this, nonparametric statistics were employed to analyze the data of the research. For the comparisons between the experimental and control groups, Mann Whitney U test that tested whether the scores obtained from two unrelated samples showed a significant difference was used. In the comparison of pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental and control groups, Wilcoxon Signed Order test that tested the significance of the difference between the scores which belonged to the two related sets of measurements.

Findings

1. Is there a significant difference between the language development levels of children of fathers who attend the "Father Language Assistance Program (FLAP)" and who do not in terms of pre-test and post-test?

To determine the difference between the language development levels of children of fathers who attend the "Father Language Assistance Program (FLAP)" and who do not, the comparisons of pre-test and post-test of the points that the children in the experimental and the control groups had got in Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) were made. The average and standard deviation values of the points that the children whose fathers were in the experimental and the control groups got in the pre-test are shown in Table 4.

Table 6. Average and Standard Deviation Values of the Pre-Test Points that the Children Whose Fathers were in the Experimental and the Control Group got in PPVT

Group	Scale	n	Pre-test	
			\bar{X}	ss
Experimental	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test	22	5.01	.461
Control	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test	20	4.99	.376

When Table 6. is examined, it was found out that PPVT pre-test average of all the children in the experimental group was 5.01, and the pre-test average of the control group's fathers' children was 4.99. Mann Whitney U Test was carried out to test whether or not there was a difference at first in terms of Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test points between the children whose fathers were in the experimental and control groups. The acquired results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. The comparison of the Pre-Test Points of the Children whose Fathers were in the Experimental and Control Groups with Mann Whitney U Test

Groups	n	Average Rank	Rank Sum	U	p
Experimental	22	22,84	502,50		
Control	20	20,02	400,50	190,50	.452

Table 7. Results show that there isn't a statistically significant difference between the pre-test points that the children in the experimental and control groups got in PPVT ($p > 0.05$). According to Mann Whitney U Test results, it is seen that there is no significant difference between the language development levels of the children of fathers who attend the study before they entered into the Father Language Assistance Program. It could be said that the language development levels of the children in both groups were similar to each other in the beginning of the education.

The average and standard deviation values of the points that the children whose fathers were in the experimental and the control groups got in the post-test are shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Average and Standard Deviation Values of the Post-Test Points that the Children whose fathers were in the Experimental and the Control Groups got in PPVT

Group	Scale	n	Post-test	
			\bar{X}	ss
Experimental	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test	22	5.60	.461
Control	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test	20	4.99	.376

When Table 8. is examined, it was found out that PPVT post-test average of all 22 children in the experimental group was 5.60, and the post-test average of the control group's fathers' children was 4.99. The post-test results of the children in both groups were analysed with Mann Whitney U Test to

specify whether or not the language development levels of the children in the experimental and control groups, at the end of FLAP, were similar. The results are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. The Comparison of the Post-Test Points of the Children whose fathers were in the Experimental and Control Groups with Mann Whitney U Test

Groups	n	Average Rank	Rank Sum	U	p
Experimental	22	29,36	646,0	47,0	.000
Control	20	12,85	257,0		

When Table 9. Results are examined, it is seen there is a statistically significant difference between the post-test points that the children whose fathers were in the experimental and control groups got in PPVT ($p < 0.05$). According to Mann Whitney U Test results, a statistically significant difference was found out between the language development levels of the children of fathers who received education in Father Language Assistance Program and the language development levels of the children whose fathers were in the control group who did not receive education in Father Language Assistance Program. When average rank is taken into consideration, it is seen that the difference results in the experimental group's favour. From this point of view, it can be said that Father Language Assistance Program affects the language development levels of the children in a positive way.

2. Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores on the language development levels of children whose fathers attended FLAP?

A pre-test and post-test comparison of the points that they got in PPVT was made to specify whether or not the language development levels of the children of fathers who attend Father Language Assistance Program differ before and after the program.

The point averages of the pre-test and post-test that the children whose fathers were in the experimental group got in PPVT and the standard deviation values are given in Table 10.

Table 10. Average and Standard Deviation Values of the Points that the Children whose Fathers were in the Experimental Group got in PPVT

Measurement	Scale	n	\bar{X}	ss
Pre-test	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test	22	5,01	.461
Post-test	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test	22	5,60	.493

When Table 10. is examined, PPVT pre-test average of all 22 children whose fathers are in the experimental group is 5.60, and the point averages that they got in the post-test is 5.60. This case shows the increase of the points of the children whose fathers are in the experimental group. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test which is used in testing the difference between two points acquired from the related samples was applied to ascertain whether this difference is statistically significant; and the results are given in Table 11.

Table 11. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results for the Pre-Test and Post-Test Points That the Children whose fathers were in the Experimental Group Got in PPVT

Post-Test Pre-Test	n	Average Rank	Rank Sum	z	p
Negative Rank	0	.00	.00	4.02	.000
Positive Rank	21	11,00	231.00		
Equal	1 -	-	-		

When Table 11. is examined, one of the children whose fathers (in the experimental group) attend Father Language Assistance Program takes place in the equal rank, and the other 21 children

are in the positive rank. There are no children who take place in the negative rank. From this point of view, The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test results show that there is a significant difference in favour of the post-program (post-test) between the points before and after the program that the children whose fathers were in the experimental group got in PPVT ($z=4.02$, $p<0.05$). It can be said that Father Language Assistance Program which was held according to these results has had a positive effect on the levels of the children's language development.

3. Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores on the language development levels of children whose fathers did not attend FLAP?

A comparison of the pre-test and the post-test of the points that these children got in PPVT was made to ascertain whether the language development levels of children whose fathers were in the control group formed before the Father Language Assistance Program differed or not before and after the program. The point averages of the pre-test and post-test that the children whose fathers were in the control group got in PPVT and the standard deviation values are given in Table 12.

Table 12. The Average and Standard Deviation Values of the Points that the Children whose Fathers were in the Control Group got in PPVT

Measurement	Scale	n	\bar{X}	ss
Pre-Test	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test	20	4.993	.376
Post-Test	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test	20	4,998	.374

When Table 12. is examined, the pre-test average of the children whose fathers are in the control group is 4.993, and the post-test average of them is 4.998. This result shows that the pre-test and post-test points that the children whose fathers were in the control group got in PPVT hardly ever changed. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test which is used in testing the difference between two points acquired from the related samples was applied to ascertain whether or not there is a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test points that the children whose fathers were in the control group got in PPVT; and the results are given in Table 13.

Table 13. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results for the Pre-Test and Post-Test Points That the Children whose fathers were in the Control Group Got in PPVT

Post-test - Pre-test	n	Average Rank	Rank Sum	z	p
Negative Rank	3	6.50	19.50	1,312	.190
Positive Rank	8	5.81	46,50		
Equal	9	-	-		

When Table 13. is examined, 9 of the children whose fathers (in the control group) didn't attend Father Language Assistance Program take place in the equal rank, 3 of them are in the negative rank, and 8 children are in the positive rank. From this point of view, The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test results show that there isn't a statistically significant difference between the points before and after the program that the children whose fathers were in the control group got in PPVT ($z=1.312$, $p>0.05$). This finding suggests that language development of children whose fathers didn't attend Father Language Assistance Program is similar before and after the treatment.

4. Do the effects of "Father Language Assistance Program (FLAP)" show a significant difference with respect to children's genders?

The pre-test point averages that they got in PPVT were compared to ascertain whether the language development levels of children whose fathers were in the experimental group differed or not with respect to their genders before the Father Language Assistance Program. The arithmetic mean and standard deviation values of the pre-test points that the children whose fathers were in the experimental group got in PPVT with respect to their genders are given in Table 14.

Table 14. The Average and Standard Deviation Values of the Pre-Test Points that the Children whose Fathers were in the Experimental Group got in PPVT with Respect to their Genders

Gender	Scale	n	\bar{X}	ss
Daughter	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test	11	5,06	.423
Son	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test	11	4,95	.511

When Table 14. is examined, that the daughters have a point average of 5.06, and the sons have a point average of 4.95 is observed, considering their pre-test results. Mann Whitney U Test was carried out to specify whether or not the difference between the pre-test point averages that the daughters and sons got in PPVT was statistically significant.

Table 15. The Comparison of the Pre-Test Points of the Children whose fathers were in the Experimental Group with Mann Whitney U Test with Respect to Gender

Gender	n	Average Rank	Rank Sum	U	p
Daughter	11	13,59	149,50	37,500	.133
Son	11	9,41	103,50		

Table 15. results show that there isn't a statistically significant difference, considering the gender, between the pre-test points that daughters and sons of fathers in the experimental group got in PPVT ($p>0.05$). According to Mann Whitney U Test results, considering the gender, a significant difference is not seen between the language development levels of children who attend the study before entering into Father Language Assistance Program. At the very beginning of the education, it can be said that the language development levels of the children in both gender are similar to each other.

The post-test point averages that they got in PPVT were compared to ascertain whether the language development levels of children whose fathers were in the experimental group differed or not with respect to their genders after the Father Language Assistance Program. The arithmetic mean and standard deviation values of the post-test points that the children whose fathers were in the experimental group got in PPVT with respect to their genders are given in Table 16.

Table 16. The Average and Standard Deviation Values of the Post-Test Points that the Children whose Fathers were in the Experimental Group got in PPVT with Respect to their Genders

Gender	Scale	n	\bar{X}	ss
Daughter	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test	11	5,69	.491
Son	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test	11	5,50	.500

When Table 16. is examined, that the daughters have a point average of 5.69, and the sons have a point average of 5.50 is observed, considering their post-test results. Mann Whitney U Test was carried out to specify whether or not the difference between the post-test point averages that the daughters and sons got in PPVT was statistically significant.

Table 17. The Comparison of the Post-Test Points of the Children whose fathers were in the Experimental Group with Mann Whitney U Test with Respect to Gender

Gender	n	Average Rank	Rank Sum	U	p
Daughter	11	12,95	142,50	44,500	.300
Son	11	10,05	110,50		

Table 17. results show that there isn't a statistically significant difference, considering the gender, between the post-test points that daughters and sons of fathers in the experimental group got in PPVT ($p>0.05$). According to Mann Whitney U Test results, considering the gender, a significant difference is not seen between the language development levels of children of fathers who attend the study after the Father Language Assistance Program. According to this finding, it can be inferred that Father Language Assistance Program does not create any difference in children's language development based on genders.

Discussion, Results and Suggestions

The results of this research show that participation of fathers in FLAP contributes positively to the children's language development levels. When the results are examined, a statistically significant difference between the point averages that the children whose fathers were in the experimental group attending FLAP and the ones of fathers in the control group not attending FLAP got in Peabody Picture-Vocabulary Test was acquired in favour of the experimental group. According to this result, it can be said that FLAP has a positive effect on the children's language development.

Another result supporting this is also the statistically significant difference which is found between the pre-test and post-test points that the children whose fathers were in the experimental group got in Peabody Picture-Vocabulary Test. This difference was not seen on the control group's children. According to this result, it could be said that the high point average that the children whose fathers were in the experimental group got in the post-test results from FLAP, because a significant difference didn't occur although a 9 weeks' time elapsed between the participation of the children whose fathers were in the control group in the pre-test and post-test. This difference that occurs in the children whose fathers were in the experimental group shows that FLAP has an effect which is stemmed from fathers on the children's language development levels.

This basic result of the research shows that the participation in FLAP has an affirmative effect on the 36-48 month-old children's language development levels. Even though it wasn't implemented directly with fathers, it was detected that mothers and fathers who attended the programme of family participation education which Zembat, Aydın and GülayDuman (2007) performed showed positive effects on their 5-year-children's language development levels. And this result supports the FLAP's findings. In a similar way, the positive effects of fathers' interactions with their children in gaining the expressive language skill are showed (Pancsofar, & Vernon-Feagans, 2006). As a result, the education programmes in which fathers are supported about the subjects of children's development and education present positive contributions to children's development.

This effect on children's language development levels, along with fathers' being trained, puts forward the necessity of contributing more to children's upbringing for fathers. Pancsofar and Vernon-Feagans (2010) found out that there was an increase in expressive language skills of 15-36 month-old children as long as fathers' education levels went up. Search results show that parents' reading books to their babies in early ages affects their upcoming language development levels positively (Karrass, & Braungart-Rieker, 2005; Pancsofar, & Vernon-Feagans, 2006). These findings support the conclusion of that father training has an important effect on children's language development levels. For this reason, the participation of fathers in an education programme, especially to support the language development in children, may cause positive effects on these developments of children.

Another important result of the study is that an education process involving fathers on a base supporting the language development assists the language development in children in a positive way. The matter to consider here is that the researcher who gives training to fathers doesn't have any kind of interactions with the children except the measurements, and is the reflection of language-based development emerging in children and the education which is given to fathers to the children.

Some suggestions were offered concerning the results gained from the research. Firstly, the research shows that father training makes positive contributions to children's language development levels. In the light of this result, programmes like FLAP are suggested to be extended especially for families whose children don't benefit from the pre-school education. It is thought that getting the support of Ministry of National Education or of other non-governmental organisations to extend FLAP or similar programmes to the regions first and the country subsequently would be beneficial. On the grounds that FLAP focuses on the language development and it contributes positively to children's language development levels, this programme and suchlike are offered to be applied in regions where families and their children who learn Turkish in preschool education institutions live. Supporting the children about the language at school and home, especially whose mother tongue is

not Turkish would help them learn language. On the basis of search result, another offer is reflecting the awareness of the importance of fathers in children's lives and educations to the country-wide. Fathers can considerably contribute to children's development with an 8-week training. This result puts forward the importance of father in child's education once more. That's why fathers must absolutely have an active role in children's education and their awareness of this subject must be heightened. For this purpose, telling the importance of father training is thought to be helpful by publishing the study findings and announcing them with families by means of media. Another offer is extending the father training programmes like FLAP with a holistic point of view with the aim of supporting children's development in other fields. Particularly, along with the language development, supporting the children at home within the family who don't get preschool education through their periods of cognitive and socio-emotional developments would be helpful with the purpose of supporting their development and upcoming school successes. To guarantee the participation of fathers in training programmes regularly, father trainings could be given at homes or at other places like coffee houses in cooperation with the local administrations and also as a part of various sportive activities.

In a similar way, training programmes which have a content of supporting mothers' language development too can be arranged. In this work, FLAP was applied to fathers who had 36-48 month-old children. FLAP can also be applied for children at different groups of age. Finally, researchers who will develop and implement similar father training programmes are suggested to spare more time to present application samples rather than convey verbal information and not to let the father training hours coincide with some sport programmes and national-religious holidays.

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