

# IDENTIFYING POSSIBLE IN-SERVICE TRAINING NEEDS OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TO FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADERS AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS

## İLKÖĞRETİM OKULLARINDA DÖRDÜNCÜ VE BEŞİNCİ SINIFLARA DERS VEREN İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN OLASI HİZMET İÇİ EĞİTİM PROGRAMI GEREKSİNİMLERİNİN BELİRLENMESİ

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to identify the possible in-service training (INSET) needs of English language teachers teaching the 4th and 5th graders at primary schools.

The subjects of this study were the English language teachers teaching the 4th and 5th graders of various primary schools in the city center of Bolu. During the study, the quantitative data were collected by means of an opinionnaire developed by the researcher.

The results of this study indicated that the in-service training programs (INSET) for English language teachers teaching the 4th and 5th graders at primary schools need to base their training on the following areas: a. Teaching basic foreign language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading, writing), b. Using audio-visual course materials, c. Raising awareness of the cognitive characteristics of primary school level foreign language learners, d. Using current approaches, methods and techniques in teaching grammar and vocabulary, e. Developing and applying appropriate criteria for selecting the course books and supplementary materials to be followed during the academic term.

### ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın amacı ilköğretim okullarında 4. ve 5. sınıflara ders veren İngilizce öğretmenlerinin olası hizmet içi eğitim programı gereksinimlerinin belirlenmesidir.

Çalışmanın örneklem grubunu Bolu il merkezindeki ilköğretim okulları 4. ve 5. sınıflarına ders veren İngilizce öğretmenlerinin katılacağı hizmet içi eğitim programının aşağıdaki temel konulara dayanması gerektiğini göstermiştir. a. Temel yabancı dil becerilerinin (dinleme, konuşma, okuma ve yazma gibi) öğretme, b. Görsel-işitsel ders araçlarının kullanımı, c. İlköğrenim çağındaki öğrencilerin bilişsel özellikleri konusunda bilinçlenme, d. Dilbilgisi ve sözcük öğretiminde çağdaş yaklaşım, yöntem ve tekniklerin kullanımı, e. Öğretim yılında kullanılacak ders kitaplarının ve yardımcı ders gereçlerinin seçimi için ölçüt geliştirme ve kullanma.

### INTRODUCTION

Due to rapid advances in technology and science the information content of our world today grows and doubles in comparatively short periods of time. Likewise, the roles that individuals have to fill in their professional and personal lives vary so rapidly that it sometimes becomes difficult to follow and to keep pace with them. In this respect, the in-service training (INSET) programs are regarded as a necessary, essential and important means, as Erşen (1993) states,

to keep pace with developments, to present new knowledge, to familiarize the teachers with new technologies, to promote support among teachers and to raise their awareness of learners at the primary school.

As far as staff development programs are concerned, Wiles and Bondi (1993) stress the importance of needs analysis by reviewing the needs of professional staff in terms of the training of experienced teachers, supervisors and administrators. Their analy-

sis also includes an awareness of recent trends and developments in their field, and their attitudes towards change. According to Van Lakerveld and Nentwing (1996), traditionally outside agencies were used to develop training activities and to bring them to schools; whereas today many schools define what they need and take the initiative to develop what is necessary to meet their needs. For them, this shift requires that in-service agencies be increasingly responsive to the needs of their clients. Therefore, needs assessment is regarded as one of the requirements of any effective INSET program. It is only through needs assessment that the program is structured and teachers' involvement is provided. Because of the importance of needs assessment it has become essential that the program organizers should take needs into consideration in developing INSET programs.

Although needs assessment is regarded as one of the prerequisites for successful and effective INSET programs, when the situation of the INSET programs for English language teachers in Turkey is concerned, as Koç (1992) states, a needs assessment procedure has not been actualized prior to the courses being organized because the necessary information concerning the teachers' needs and levels of proficiency in English has not been available in advance.

Altan (cited in Öztekin, 1997) reports his beliefs in this issue pointing out the fact that the programs for both courses and seminars do not meet the needs and expectations of Turkish EFL teachers as the program organizers do not take into account the needs, expectations and interests of these teachers.

According to Koç (1992), the problems encountered by English language teachers are related to teaching strategies, the organization of teaching materials and approaches to classroom management. In the meantime, Doğuelli (1992) reports that the problems of English language teaching in Turkey are mostly concerned with the practical applications of theoretical knowledge in actual (real) classroom settings (contexts), the nature of the professional guidance received and the nature of the communication channel among colleagues at schools in order to exchange their experiences and to grow together.

Başçavuşoğlu (1983) believes that the problems

are mostly related to teachers' knowledge of foreign language teaching approaches, methods and techniques, learners' psychology and measurement and evaluation procedures.

In relation to the problems in teaching at primary school levels, Özkardeş (1996) states some crucial issues such as the selection of course books to be followed, awareness of English language teachers in selecting the topic areas to be covered and in selecting and implementing foreign language teaching approaches, methods and techniques. Karıslı (1996) points out the difficulties in organising and creating a natural learning environment during the acquisition of foreign language skills.

Pakkan (1996) also points out that foreign language teachers need to observe the applications of theoretical topic areas by subject specialists. The results of Öztekin's 1996 study of a group in Aksu, Antalya showed that the needed training and information on materials and resources. The teachers in her study expressed that they were in need of specific help and training on dealing with large, mixed ability classes. In other words, they needed advice about particular kinds of materials, suggestions on how to deal with mixed groups, on monitoring group work in large classes, and on using computers and video in their language classes (Öztekin, 1997).

In conclusion, it could be said that English language teachers in Turkey need to be trained regarding the areas stated above and the professionals need to consider these areas while organising INSET programs for the teachers.

## METHOD

The main question posed by this study is "What are the possible INSET program needs of primary school English language teachers teaching English at first level, including 4th and 5th graders?"

The subjects of this study were primary school English language teachers (n=20) who had been teaching at first level (4th-5th year classes) at various primary schools in the city center of Bolu. 85% of them (n=17) were females and 65% of them (n=13)

were said to be new teachers of English (teaching between 0 to 5 years). 50% of them (n=10) were graduates of various education faculties. In terms of their professional status, 55% of them (n=11) were regular teachers.

During the study, a 5-point Likert type opinionnaire was given to the teachers for the preparation and development of the opinionnaire, the relevant literature by Demirel (1989), Smith (1989), Doğuelli (1992), and Ekmekçi (1992), and the criticisms and the opinions of subject specialists were taken into account.

After the necessary legal permission had been taken from the authorities in Bolu, the opinionnaire was given to the teachers in order to identify their possible INSET program needs.

For the analysis of the data, the SPSS program for Windows was used. By means of the SPSS program, the frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviation scores for each item in the opinionnaire were calculated.

The results of this study are limited to the possible in-service training program needs of the primary school English language teachers teaching the 4th-5th graders in the city center of Bolu.

## RESULTS

When the findings were analyzed, it was observed that 75% of the teachers (n=15) stated that they need to be trained in teaching foreign language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading, writing) and they need training on the use of various visual course materials. Also, 70% of the teachers (n=14) said that they need training on the implementation of various foreign language teaching techniques that provide the active participation of the learners. 65% of the teachers (n=13), at the same time, agreed that they need training on teaching vocabulary and on using audio course materials. The need for training on the use of various technological means such as TV., video and computers for teaching English was mentioned by 60% (n=12) of the teachers. Moreover, 50% of them (n=10) stated that they need training on the cognitive characteristics of primary school first level English language learners, teaching grammar, and the selection of the course books to be followed during the term

and materials to be covered during the English language classes.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study highlight the fact that during the preparation of INSET programs for primary school English language teachers teaching the 4th and 5th graders, the program organizers need to take the following study areas as a starting point: teaching foreign language skills, using various visual course materials, implementing and maintaining foreign language teaching approaches, methods and techniques, teaching vocabulary, using various audio course materials and various technological means while teaching English, learning about the cognitive characteristics of young English language learners, teaching grammar and the selecting of the course books and supplementary materials.

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