



The Study of the Effect of “Life-Focused Foreign Language Acquisition Program” on Preschool Children’s English Learning

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Abstract

With the present study an objective and scientific detection is tried to be determined on 50-74 months-old preschool children’s foreign language development studying in government schools and facing foreign language education process for the first time depending on their teacher’s and parents’ observations and opinions. The present study is conducted in mixed method. In quantitative dimension of the study a single group pretest-posttest experimental model and in qualitative dimension phenomenologic research design were used. The data obtained with the interview form was used as a data collection tool and were examined via content analysis technique. As a quantitative assessment tool, the Life-Focused Foreign Language Acquisition Scale (LFFLAS) was administered three times as pretest, posttest and retention tests in the Spring term of 2016-2017 academic year. In addition, half-structured interviews were held with preschool children’s parents and the classroom teacher. According to the results of the study, it has been observed that life-focused foreign language acquisition practices were effective in children’s English language acquisition. According to the results of the qualitative data analysis, themes like “active use of English”, “positive attitude towards English”, “active transfer of what is being learned” and “sharing what is learned” are observed and expressed jointly in children’s foreign language learning process. However, according to teacher’s and parents’ statements, the children in the experimental group had some differences regarding self-confidence, progress and pronunciation.

Keywords

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Introduction

The ones who work in the field of child psychology or developmental psychology consider language acquisition as "language development" in terms of child development and examine its interaction with other aspects of development (Yapıcı, 2004). It is believed that children are more successful in learning foreign languages, and that they master the language, due to their encounter with a second language at an early age. Numerous researches (Asher & García, 1969; Kuhl, 2001; Sparks & Ganschow, 1991) refer to the fact that adults are disadvantaged because they are not exposed to language at a very young age in terms of speaking the foreign language like the very first one (Gass & Selinker, 1994).

In the second language acquisition process of children, the influence of many factors can be mentioned. When literature is examined in this regard, age, gender, social distance, socio-economic status, native language competence, parental education status, mental and psychological factors and numerous environmental factors play a decisive role in this process (Demirel et al., 2001). Weeks (1979) emphasized that children learn to speak in a natural environment so the main source and purpose of the language is "communication". Language input influences the child's perspective about life. For this reason, in order for the child to learn English while learning Turkish, he should be able to listen to it in his every day environment, be able to use it to communicate and feel the need to use it just like his mother tongue. Establishing social environments is important for the development of both languages (Yazıcı & Temel, 2011).

The absence of an environment in which young children will activate their foreign language learnings will wipe out the effort to be made in this regard at an early age. That's why the child needs to be exposed to the target language and the early childhood education field has reached a point where now we know at what age a normally developing child has almost a full command of his mother tongue so that he can start learning a new one. After three years of age, children's language development is similar to that of adults (Templin, 1957); ages of 3 and 4 are the ages that basic language skills are acquired and most of the the language rules are distinguished (Topbaş, 2006). It is then possible, after age 4 (48 months), to talk about the advantages of mother tongue experience in children's foreign language acquisition. For this reason, in order to avoid the negative effects of a foreign language on the mother tongue in the present study, age was an important variable in determining the children included in the study. So, the youngest child in the study was 4 years 2 months (50 months) and the oldest child was 6 years 2 months (74 months).

Studies conducted has revealed the significant effect of socioeconomic status on language development. Although the effect of this variable is not very clear in the first year, it increases by age. Since language is a dimension of behavior, it is expected to change within environment (Keklik, 2009; Templin, 1957). According to studies conducted in the UK, foreign language ability is related to parents' socioeconomic and educational status. They both play a very active role especially in the vocabulary development. In addition to vocabulary, it is mentioned that they also contribute to foreign language achievement, because children of upper social classes have opportunities to use foreign language skills in their travels abroad (Gass & Selinker, 1994).

In Turkey, Ministry of National Education (MNE) has taken striking decisions about the age of starting foreign language teaching. Until 1997, the foreign language education in government schools used to start in the 6th grade. Then, it started to be taught in the 4th grade and finally in 2012 government schools started to teach English as a foreign language in the 2nd grade. However, in the meantime private schools were offering foreign language classes starting from kindergarten. All these changes are made to make use of the advantages of starting language learning at an early age (Bekleyen, 2016). However, an effective foreign language teaching program for preschoolers has never been mentioned. The willingness of families in terms of giving their children a universal identity and all the financial opportunities they could offer to have their children learn English better than they did bring this language into the forefront during preschool years.

Education will be more realistic and meaningful for children in pre-school when the issues that need to be taught are related to real life. It is even thought that such a program would help children feel more responsible in an emotional sense. It is thought that a program prepared with such an approach would support the development of intelligence and social skills and the formation of community consciousness (Olsen & Clark, 1975).

The intention from the life-focused program is to make the new learnings meaningful via the traces left on the individual after interacting within the environment, to make it easier to establish and learn by associating new information based on existing information and to make the knowledge persistent. In order to count something as an experience, it has to cross the threshold of experience. Otherwise learning can not take place. So, learning occurs when the interaction with the elements in the teaching and learning environment exceeds the threshold of experience, which is, living it (Senemoğlu, 2013). According to John Dewey, education is a lifelong act. For this reason, learning through experiences is the most effective way of learning (Bender, 2005). In LFFLAP, every moment of real life is considered as an educational program, and everything in the environment served as a material to fulfill this purpose in a fun way.

The researcher previously applied the program and examined its effects in a private preschool that has been teaching English as a foreign language to 3-6 year-olds. According to the results of the study conducted with a control group in experimental design, it was seen that the children in the experimental group obtained high language acquisition. Besides, the experimental group children who had LFFLAP got significantly higher retention scores than those children in the control group who had traditional foreign language program based on course books (Uslu, 2017a). In the present study, the LFFLAP that was previously applied by Uslu (2017a) in private school preschools, has been applied to preschool children in a government school who never had a foreign language learning experience before. The data of the study was collected through LFFLAS, teacher's and the parents' observations and opinions and the effect of the program on these children's foreign language acquisition was evaluated.

For this purpose, the answers to the following questions were searched:

- Is there a significant difference between the pretest-posttest foreign language acquisition scores of children attending government preschool?
- Is there a significant difference between the pretest-posttest foreign language acquisition scores and LFFLAS retention scores of children attending government preschool?
- What are the teacher's and parents' observations and opinions about the LFFLAP and children's English language learning?

Method

The present study is conducted in mixed method. When the research model is examined in detail, it is seen that it is carried out with a simultaneous mixed method in which two-stage qualitative and quantitative methods are applied together (Creswell, 2003). Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to work with a large number of techniques, can effectively identify the relevant field problems, provides a better understanding of events and facts. In this research model, qualitative and quantitative approaches are applied simultaneously and an equal priority is given to both approaches. The data are collected and analyzed separately within the framework of the two approaches. However, the findings of these two approaches are combined and interpreted according to the principles of the mixed method (Yaman, 2015, pp. 183-185). The present research is in weak experimental research design with one-group pretest-posttest design. There are two reasons why there is no control group in the research. Firstly, there was only one kindergarten class having the age group needed for the study (50-74 months-old). Secondly, there was no foreign language education before 2nd grade in public schools. This model is one of the pre-trial models. In this model, an independent variable is applied to a randomly selected group (Karasar, 2010).

The experimental design applied in the study is given in Table 1. In quantitative dimension of the study a single group pretest-posttest experimental model and in qualitative dimension phenomenologic research design were used. In phenomenology which is a descriptive research, the researcher is concerned with the participant's own personal (subjective) experiences, opinions and perceptions and examines the meanings that the individual puts into the events (Akturan & Esen, 2008). In this respect, the effects of the program which have been tested via experimental model, is supported and complemented with teacher's, parents' and principal's opinions about the practices.

Table 1. The Experimental Pattern Applied in the Study

	Pretest	Experimental Procedure	Posttest	Retention Test
G1	T1	X	T2	T3
Government Preschool	LFFLAS	Application of LFFLAP	LFFLAS	LFFLAS

Since the present study was carried out with a mixed method model involving qualitative and quantitative approaches, research data were obtained from two study groups, the children in the experimental group that the program is applied to and the children's parents and classroom teacher.

Study Group I

The research group of this study is composed of 50-74 months-old kindergarten children studying at a government school in Selçuklu district of Konya province. According to Karasar (2010), there is no randomness and matching in the groups in which the single group pretest-posttest model is applied. The model can also be defined as single-factor within groups or repeated measures design. The significance of the difference between pre-test and post-test values of the single group was tested. In this context, the LFFLAP was applied during the spring semester of 2016-2017 to 18 preschool children forming the study group.

The infrastructure of the school, the classroom, the cadre of the teachers and the school environment were appropriate for the research. Besides, parents and the classroom teacher were all excited about the program and willing to participate. The average age of the children in the study was $66,28 \pm 3,38$. There were four girls (22.2 %) and fourteen boys (77.8 %). All the children in the study group had never studied any foreign languages before.

Study Group II

The classroom teacher who had been working as a preschool teacher for 20 years in government schools and thirty-five parents (seventeen mothers and eighteen fathers) participated in the study group II. They provided the qualitative data of the study in terms of children's English learning and the life-focused applications of the program. Experimental group children's parents were tried to be included in the qualitative research group. Only one mother could not participate in the qualitative research group because she was divorced.

Table 2. The Distribution of the Experimental Group Children's Parents' Educational Status

Education Status	Mother Education Status		Father Education Status	
	-n-	-%-	-n-	-%-
Illiterate	1	0,06	-	-
Elementary School	6	33,4	7	38,9
Secondary School	6	33,4	5	27,8
High School	4	25	3	16,7
University	-	-	3	16,7

When mother education status was examined, it was seen that one of them was not literate (16,6%), six of them (33,4%) were primary school graduates, six of them (33,4%) were secondary school graduates and four of them (25%) were High school graduates. The mothers in the government schools were found to have their educational status at primary level. When the father education status was examined; seven fathers (38,9%) were primary school graduates, five were (27,8%) secondary school graduates, three (16,7%) were high school graduates and three of them (16,7%) had university education. Like mothers, fathers were also mainly elementary and secondary school graduates. The parents and their children had never been abroad and had no foreign language exposure. Almost all the parents of the children in the experimental group were tried to be included in the qualitative research group except one mother. That was because one of the children's parents were divorced and the mother did not want to be involved in the study.

Experimental Procedure

In the present study, the effects of Life-Focused Foreign Language Acquisition Program (LFFLAP) on children who are attending government preschool is examined. The LFFLAP was developed and applied by Uslu (2017a) in a previous study in a private school for doctoral dissertation (for 10 weeks; 3 hours a day). In the beginning, LFFLAP has been applied in two sessions as a pilot study on children from the government school. After the pilot application, the Life-Focused Foreign Language Acquisition Scale (LFFLAS), which was previously developed for and applied to private schools for doctoral dissertation by Uslu (2017a), was administered as a pre-test to the children in the study group. One week after the pre-test was administered, LFFLAP was administered for a total of 120 hours/sessions (3 hours/sessions a day) for kindergarten children in public school for 8 weeks. This phase was carried out by the researcher and the classroom teacher was present at all sessions. During the implementation phase of the program:

At the beginning of each session: 5 minutes of entry activity was carried out at the beginning of the lesson during the application of the program. As entrance activities; to draw attention and to motivate children, taking their ages into consideration, simple stimuli, nonverbal communication techniques, materials that appeal to five senses, games, questions, ambiguities, a problem that the teacher or the children had before coming to school (for instance, something happened in the previous lesson they had or an absent child) were all used. Child-centered activities were carried out as much as possible during the pre-test. Calling children by name from the first day of the program as the teacher met them during the pre-test was great way of drawing their attention to what's going on from the very first day of the program.

During each session: While speaking the language teacher gave examples from each student's life by paying attention to his needs and the individual differences. The activities were all tried to be derived from child's own experiences and knowledge as far as possible. In this context, the children were exposed to language during the first hour, and the teacher spoke in English using visual materials. In the second hour, listening to the songs prepared for the program, dancing to the music, playing games in time with the music, going out in the garden, singing took place via individual and group activities. During the last hour, more relaxing activities such as group conversation, playdough, coloring, watching cartoons, talking on photos which were poster-sized, reading stories and drawing took place. During the first weeks, the objects that children see in the school environment (such as Turkish Flag, car, toys, balls, legos, blocks) everyday, the classroom objects (such as table, desk, chair, spoon, fork, crayons, coloring pencils and the paper) that they use every day, and their needs (such as water, food, toilet, tissue etc.) are preferred and taught at first with simple and clear instructions. Question words (such as What, Where, Who), body language, mimics and real objects were used very often. In addition, activities for self-care skills have been the most benefited experiences in the program. All these activities have been implemented within the scope and framework of LFFLAP implementation principles.

During the conclusion part of the session: A review of the previous lesson is carried out the first two hours. Many words have been repeated through flash cards. The verbs are expressed via body language and mimics. In the beginning, to see whether the children understood the target language or

not they were free to translate what is being told into Turkish and ask questions in Turkish where the teacher would reply back in English. However, in the following weeks the language teacher/the researcher checked this by saying them "In English, please!" and letting them express whatever they could in one or two words or modeling them use their body language along with it. There was no homework. At the end of the session, all the children were saying goodbye to each other and the language teacher was cuddling them one by one like a mother if they were ok with it. The ones who were shy just waved and shook hands.

Outside the classes: Every morning and evening, via WhatsApp application on smart phones, good morning and good night messages/videos are shared with children's parents including the vocabulary they have learned at conversational base. This was the part that parental support was received. Besides, the songs composed for the program first shared with the children on WhatsApp underlining that they were a gift from their teacher and specially made for them. Teachers and families shared daily conversations about the implementation of the program and interactions with real life situations related to the topics covered.

At the end of the program: LFFLAS is applied to children in the study group as post-test and in order to apply the retention test, no foreign language activity/ instruction is carried out for three weeks following the post-test.

Data Collection Tool

Life-Focused Foreign Language Acquisition Scale (LFFLAS)

In the present study, in order to assess the level of English language acquisition of 50-74 months-old children who were attending government school, LFFLAS was used (Uslu, 2017b). In order to test the validity of the LFFLAS developed for preschool children the following techniques were applied; literature review, content validity, construct validity, expert opinion, known group validity and item analysis techniques (Uslu, 2017b).

The population of the present study is 50-74 months-old Turkish children attending preschool institutions where they receive instruction of English as a foreign language. The study was conducted on this study group since the population of the study was very extensive (22,712 preschool children) in Konya and included all the 50-74 months-old Turkish children who were going to preschool education institutions in Turkey. Approximately 90% of these children are studying in the districts of the city center (Selçuklu, Meram, Karatay). Taking into account both the granting of permission necessary to conduct the study, and to be able to reach the participants in the research group easily, 120 children were selected. The children were attending preschool/kindergartens of private schools located in one of the central districts of the province during the 2015-2016 academic year. Firstly, preschool education institutions providing foreign language education in the Selçuklu district of Konya were determined in order to create a sample for the application practice of the scale. Seven private schools providing foreign language education to their students in this area were identified. In correspondence with these schools, a total of 4 schools had volunteered to work with the researcher. Preschool children between the ages of 50-74 months were included in sample and the tests of the scale were carried out on all preschool children of these four schools. The characteristics of the children participating in the study were obtained by the personal information form prepared by the researcher. Children learning English as a foreign language between the ages of 50-74 months in their schools were included in the study group. Applications were carried out by the researcher in the schools the children were attending.

The scale is composed of 3 parts formed with 78 questions. "Knowing Self" is the first part with 11 questions; "Useable Vocabulary" is the second part with 28 questions and "Recognizable Vocabulary" is the third part with 39 questions. The first and the second parts of the scale are related to expressive vocabulary. In the first part, 11 questions were asked to get to know the child and see if s/he can talk about himself/herself. No pictures are shown in this first part. In the second part, a series of colorful photos taken in real life situations are shown and the child is asked to say the word that related to the picture that the teacher/researcher shows/asks. The 3rd part is related to receptive vocabulary and the child is asked to show the picture that matches the word or sentence spoken by the teacher/researcher.

LFFLAS was developed by Uslu for doctoral dissertation (2017a) and published as scale development article (2017b). The construct validity of the scale is conducted via exploratory factor analysis and 4 subscales are found. These subscales are; 'Vital Vocabulary', 'Crucial Vocabulary', 'Social Vocabulary' and 'Useful Vocabulary'. According to the reliability analysis, the KR-20 value of the scale was found as 0.95. Besides, the split-half reliability coefficients of the scale in terms of the four subscales vary between 0.93 and 0.97. The reliability of the subscales was 0.90 for "Vital Vocabulary" subscale, 0.96 for "Crucial Vocabulary" subscale, 0.91 for "Social Vocabulary" subscale and 0.89 for "Useful Vocabulary" subscale. Similar results of KR-20 and split-half reliability coefficients are important evidence of the high internal consistency of the scale.

"Semi-structured Interview Form and Documents" as a Qualitative Data Collection Tool

During the implementation process of LFFLAP and after it is completed, interviews were held with children's parents and classroom teacher to determine the effects of the program on the second language learning skills. In face-to-face interviews, Patton's (2002) "standardized open-ended interview" technique was used (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). In this process it was appropriate to use the semi-structured interview form to "minimize the interviewer's influence and subjective judgments" (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). At the beginning of the research period, parents and the teacher were informed about the purpose of the study and were reminded that their participation was voluntary. The data collection process was conducted through face-to-face interviews and on the phone with the parents who could not come to the interview.

Interviews carried out between the 20th of February and 7th of April. The following questions were asked; "How did the LFFLAP affect your child's English?" - "What are the effects of the activities on your child?" - "What is your opinion about "teaching English" during preschool period?". In addition, WhatsApp correspondence, letters from the teacher and parents, the video and audio recordings, and daily notes from the researcher's observations were examined.

The qualitative data obtained in this study were analyzed by "content analysis" technique within the framework of the phenomenological methodology. Phenomenological methodology differs from traditional methodologies both in purpose and procedure. The task of a phenomenological researcher is to "see" the logic or meaning of an experience, for any subject, rather than to discover causal connections or patterns of correlation. The nature of the task demands extensive study of a small sample, allowing the subjects to speak for themselves and to reveal the logic of their experience as lived (Dukes, 1984). In the study, the participants' consistency regarding their opinions from the beginning to the end of the program, the frequency of their repetition of discourses supporting their opinions and the opinions expressed by the majority of participants (Baş & Akturan, 2013) were taken into account. After getting the necessary permission for voice and video recordings both from the parents and the classroom teacher, the data were collected through the interviews. In the analysis of the data, firstly transcripts were created for all the interviews, the transcripts were read again and again and the important expressions were identified and listed. First parents' WhatsApp text messages were printed out and children's WhatsApp voice messages, and video recordings were transferred into manuscript and then analyzed via content analysis. At this stage, opinions were put together under seven themes. After the opinions were described systematically and explicitly within the framework of these themes, they were explained and interpreted and some results were obtained.

Interview data obtained with the participation of all parents and classroom teacher, except one mother. The daily WhatsApp correspondence were marked on the theme frame, the data containing the same theme were put together and reported. The following coding technique was used in the analysis of the data obtained via interview form: For the themes, the letter "T" was the code having the number of the theme next to it such as T1, T2, T3 etc. The opinions of the parents go from P1 to P16 (for example; P1 for Parent 1, P2 for Parent 2, P16 for Parent 16 etc). The opinion of the classroom teacher as a participant is coded as "CT". Quantitative analysis of the study was performed via SPSS 21.0 program. In the comparison of the children's pretest-posttests, pretest-retention tests and posttest-retention tests in terms of foreign language acquisition scores, Wilcoxon Z test was used as a non-parametric statistical technique since the data were not distributed normally. In addition, children's foreign language acquisition scores have been expressed comparatively by graphs according to pretest, posttest and retention test evaluations.

Results

Both quantitative findings of the study in terms of comparisons between children's pretest, posttest and retention test scores and qualitative findings regarding teacher's and parents' opinions about LFFLAP were given in this section.

Table 3. The Comparison of Preschool Children's LFFLAS Pretest-Posttest Scores

Vital Vocabulary	Negative Ranks	0,00	0,000	-3,728	0
PreTest-PostTest	Positive Ranks	9,5	171		
Crucial Vocabulary	Negative Ranks	0,00	0,00	-3,727	0
PreTest-PostTest	Positive Ranks	9,5	171		
Social Vocabulary	Negative Ranks	0,00	0,00	-3,539	0
PreTest-PostTest	Positive Ranks	8,5	136		
Useful Vocabulary	Negative Ranks	0,00	0	-2,814	0,005
PreTest-PostTest	Positive Ranks	5,5	55		
LFFLAS TOTAL SCORE	Negative Ranks	0	0	-3,725	0
PreTest-PostTest	Positive Ranks	9,5	171		

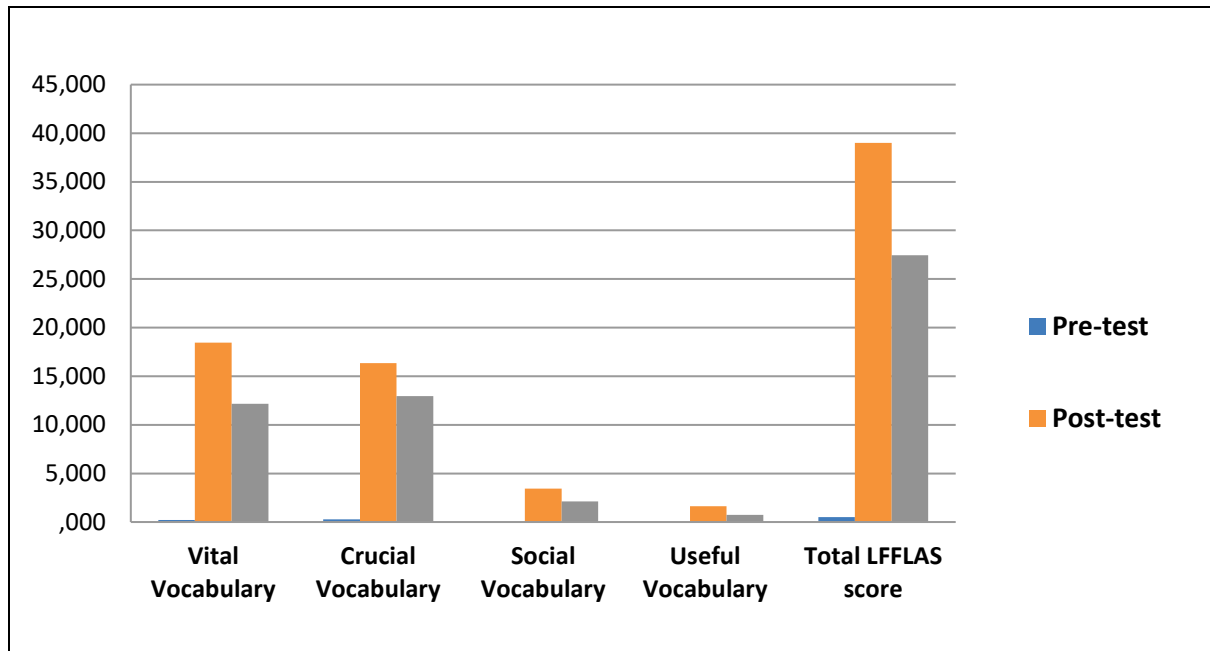
In Table 3 preschool children's LFFLAS pretest-posttest comparisons before and after the implementation are given. According to the results of Wilcoxon test, the Z value was calculated as 3.728 for Vital Vocabulary subscale, 3.722 for Crucial Vocabulary subscale, 3.539 for Social Vocabulary subscale, 2.814 for Useful Vocabulary subscale and was 3.725 for the total score. According to these findings, there was a significant difference between LFFLAS pretest and posttest scores regarding all the subscales and total scores ($p < 0,05$). In all dimensions and total scores of pretest, the significant difference is found in favor of posttest which shows that LFFLAP applied in the government school was effective on preschool children's foreign language acquisition meaningfully.

Table 4. The Comparison of Preschool Children's LFFLAS Pretest-Retention Test - Posttest-Retention Test Scores

		Mean Rank	Total Rank	Z	p
Vital Vocabulary	Negative Ranks	0	0	-3,732	0,000
Retention Test- PreTest	Positive Ranks	9,5	171		
Crucial Vocabulary	Negative Ranks	0	0	-3,73	0,000
Retention Test- PreTest	Positive Ranks	9,5	171		
Social Vocabulary	Negative Ranks	0	0	-3,446	0,001
Retention Test- PreTest	Positive Ranks	8	120		
Useful Vocabulary	Negative Ranks	0	0	-2,041	0,041
Retention Test- PreTest	Positive Ranks	3	15		
LFFLAS TOTAL SCORE	Negative Ranks	0	0	-3,725	0,000
Retention Test- PreTest	Positive Ranks	9,5	171		
Vital Vocabulary	Negative Ranks	9,5	171	-3,735	0,000
Retention Test- PostTest	Positive Ranks	0	0		
Crucial Vocabulary	Negative Ranks	9	153	-3,641	0,000
Retention Test- PostTest	Positive Ranks	0	0		
Social Vocabulary	Negative Ranks	5	45	-2,68	0,007
Retention Test- PostTest	Positive Ranks	0	0		
Useful Vocabulary	Negative Ranks	5	45	-2,754	0,006
Retention Test- PostTest	Positive Ranks	0	0		
LFFLAS TOTAL SCORE	Negative Ranks	9,5	171	-3,729	0,000
Retention Test- PostTest	Positive Ranks	0	0		

In Table 4 preschool children's LFFLAS pretest-retention and posttest-retention comparisons are given. Three weeks after the application of the program is completed, the children in the experimental group were administered LFFLAS as retention test. First, the scores obtained were compared with the pre-test scores of the children. According to the analysis, the Z value was calculated as 3.732 for Vital Vocabulary subscale, 3.730 for Crucial Vocabulary subscale, 3.446 for Social Vocabulary subscale, 2.041 for Useful Vocabulary subscale and was 3.725 for the total score. According to these findings, there was a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores regarding all the subscales and total scores of LFFLAS ($p < 0.05$) and the meaningful difference is found in favor of retention test which shows that LFFLAP applied in the government school had high retention on preschool children's foreign language acquisition compared to children's pretest scores obtained before the program was applied. Likewise, children's LFFLAS retention and posttest scores were compared and according to the analysis, the Z value is found as 3,735 for Vital Vocabulary, 3,641 for Crucial Vocabulary, 2,680 for Social Vocabulary, 2,754 for Useful Vocabulary and the total score is found as 3,729 LFFLAS.

In comparison of posttest-retention test, there is a significant difference in all the subscales and the total score of LFFLAS. When the mean scores of posttest and retention test scores of children are examined, the difference is found to be in favor of the posttest. In the retention test applied three weeks after the experimental procedure was completed, a slight decrease in LFFLAS scores was seen. The preschool children attending government school received a high level of foreign language retention compared to pretest but there was a decrease in their acquisition compared to the posttest scores due to the lack of foreign language education for 3 weeks. The results of the children's pre-test, post-test and retention-test scores 3 in terms of foreign language acquisition are presented in the following graphic.



Graphic 1. Preschool Children’s LFFLAS Pre-test, Post-test, Retention Test and Total Test Scores

When the graphic is examined, at the beginning of the program it is seen that preschool children in government school, who had no foreign language experience before the LFFLAP, had very high language acquisition scores at the end of the 8-week application. However, in the retention test applied 3 weeks after the experimental procedure was over, a 25% decrease was observed compared to post-test scores.

Qualitative Findings

As a result of the analysis of the data obtained from the parents’ and the classroom teacher’s opinions during the LFFLAP, 7 themes were reached. While structuring these themes, it was determined that there were 4 common themes and there were 3 themes that children were showing difference in terms of their parents’ and teacher’s opinions. Commonly emerging themes found were; active use of English, positive attitude towards English, active transfer of what is being learned and sharing what is learned. These findings are similar to the 7 themes emerged in the experimental study carried out by Uslu (2017a) with preschoolers attending private school.

Table 5. Qualitative Analysis Results of Parents’ and Classroom Teacher's Opinions about the theme “Active Use of English”

T 1. Active Use of English

While he is talking about his cars he mentions their colors in English. Names the animals in English. Tries to talk to his sister in English and they ask each other questions/words. While talking about his age, he says first in Turkish then in English (P1/Mom)

Using those greeting phrases and all the other new vocabulary he learns at school such as “Good morning, Good night, Yes, No, Hello” all the numbers and the colors appropriately (P2/Mom).

Humming the songs that she listened to at school (P3/Mom).

He thought everyone in the world was speaking Turkish before English classes (P14/Dad).

Since the program started, the children started to use English words in my classes (CT).

At first they started to name the numbers and colors in English among each other during my classes (CT).

He is showing of with his English to our guests and neighbors and say "I know English" (P12/Mom).

He unexpectedly uses an English term at home (P15/Dad).

The videos you sent are very useful as we don't know any English and we like watching them (P6/Mom).

Instead of saying "Evet" in Turkish, he uses the English word "Yes" instead when I ask questions. And uses "No! No! No!" instead of "Hayır". When I ask him why he says it three times he laughs and says "because my english teacher says so" (P11/Mom).

When Table 5 is examined, it is seen that children participated in the activities performed in English classes during the program. According to the participants, it was observed that children frequently used English concepts in expressing objects in their surroundings and talking about the events happening in their daily lives.

Table 6. Qualitative Analysis Results of Parents' and Classroom Teacher's Opinions about the theme "Positive Attitude towards English"

T 2. Positive Attitude towards English

He is curious about the name of everything in English (P4/Mom).

They are enjoying the classes (CT).

She especially enjoys the videos and trying to talk the same way her teacher does (P7/Mom).

He wants to speak English (P10/Mom).

They are looking forward to their English classes (CT).

During the activities in my classes they use the English form of the words they know (CT).

He watches the English videos his language teacher is sending on WhatsApp. We are learning too (P13/Mom).

He was very happy when he heard that he was going to learn English. He especially looks forward to watching videos on WhatsApp and very excited about them (P8/Dad).

They always ask me when the English lesson is going to start (CT).

She said something like "incoy yor miil (Enjoy your meal)" when we were about to eat our dinner (P9 / Mom).

Her sister studying at the same school in 2nd Grade is also listening to your voice messages on WhatsApp. They are learning together (P16/Mom).

In the government school that the program is applied, the preschool children showed their positive attitudes towards English via participating in activities, humming the songs in English, listening to the voice messages sent through WhatsApp Application and answering them (no questions were asked and no respond was expected, the researcher just sent these messages to reach them at home and share her daily life experiences with them in order to expose them to English language). According to parents' and the classroom teacher's opinions, the mentioned positive behaviors and attitudes are observed increasingly both inside and outside the school throughout the program.

Table 7. Qualitative Analysis Results of Parents' and Classroom Teacher's Opinions about the theme "Active Transfer of What is Being Learned"

T 3. Active Transfer of What is being Learned

Sometimes he asks those whom he recently meets the questions like "How are you?" and "What's your name?" (P6/Mom)

He uses everyday life expressions such as "good morning, good night, brush your teeth, drink water etc." sometimes during the day (P9/Mom)

The families say that from time to time their children use English at home during their daily routines (CT).

When his father speaks constantly he said once "talking talking talking" and he laughed when we didn't understand what he was saying (P12/Mom).

He doesn't like it when we use the word "öğretmen" and he corrects and says "No! Teacher" (P15/Mom).

It has been observed that children who have been exposed to English for the first time in school environment frequently started to use the new concepts and expressions not only at school but also at home in their daily lives. In the interviews carried out with the participants and on WhatsApp correspondence it is seen that parents and classroom teacher primarily emphasize the transfer of children's learning into daily life situations. It was understood from the expressions of the parents that the concepts used in everyday life are more like concrete materials, greeting and meeting phrases, and some basic self-care skills. During the implementation of the program the parents shared when their children said something in English on WhatsApp application and got support from the language teacher immediately. Especially those parents who wanted to help their children with their pronunciation asked for support via voicemails and used WhatsApp application very often. The researcher responded to all the messages and was very devoted throughout the program.

Table 8. Qualitative Analysis Results of Parents' and Classroom Teacher's Opinions about the theme "Sharing what is learned in English"

T 3. Sharing what is Learned in English

They are sharing what they have been learning with me and with their friends (CT).

She is also trying to teach us (P3/Mom).

He makes sure that he watches the video you sent on WhatsApp before he goes to bed (P6/Mom).

She sometimes asks her sister the English names of the objects around (P7/Dad).

Children were enjoying the English class so the absencies lessened during the application of the program (CT).

Preschool children's classroom teacher and parents stated that the children had positive attitude towards English by giving examples of behaviors in terms of sharing the foreign language at home and in other classes at school. In this regard, the classroom teacher expressed that the program was offering a deeper, more pleasant and intense way of foreign language sharing.

However, the content analysis of parents' and teacher's opinions differed in terms of language acquisition among children. The themes emerged are as follows: self confidence in using English, progress in English language and its pronunciation.

Table 9. Qualitative Analysis Results of Parents' and Classroom Teacher's Opinions about the theme "Self-Confidence in Using English"

T 5. Self-confidence in Using English

He is having problems with the words that he encounters for the first time (P1/ Mom)

At first they were shy, confused and silent. In the following weeks they were totally ok with the new language (CT)

Especially four weeks after the program started there have been some changes. He wanted us to ask the questions about "getting to know him" (P4/Mom)

We usually see that he tries to speak English especially after listening to his language teacher's voice messages on WhatsApp (P3/Mom).

She gets excited when she wants to speak in English (P7/Mom).

He listens to WhatsApp messages carefully. He wants me to translate what you say. Unfortunately, I do not speak English. Can you write for me in Turkish so I can tell him? (P15/Mom).

(Note: it is translated for the ones who needed from that day on right after sending the voice messages/videos for the parents in text form)

One of the most important differences among the kindergarten children in the government school during the program was the self-confidence. Some children have shown intense self-confidence, such as being able to express themselves in school/daily life/home environment, to show what they have been learning, and just being happy and proud about it. However, according to the parents' expressions, the children showed a low performance in the first few weeks and did not express much but they stated that their children changed in the following weeks. It was also seen that some parents also seem to have a lack of confidence in supporting their children in English but felt comfortable to ask for help and support from the English teacher on WhatsApp whenever they needed.

Table 10. Qualitative Analysis Results of Parents' and Classroom Teacher's Opinions about the theme "Progress in English"

T 6. Progress in English

In the beginning she could only use the words "yes and no" but now she can express herself and talk about her needs (P3/Mom)

My child was telling me that it was difficult to understand during the activities at first but when I told her that she doesn't have to take the class, she said "but I want to learn it, it is fun" (P4/Mom).

Some children were ok just listening to their language teacher speaking in English all the time (CT).

Children who were quite, just listening and trying to figure out at first became very active after 4-5 weeks (CT).

Despite enjoying English lessons, listening to songs by herself was quite difficult for her. She preferred watching videos where she didn't need much help (P13/Mom).

Unfortunately I cannot speak English and no one knows around so we are not very supportive (P16/Mom).

One of the most important criteria in the foreign language learning process is the development and change in language skills. In this respect, a considerable progress was seen in children's foreign language levels. The parents emphasized that their children's foreign language development was above their expectations. However, some of the parents expressed their concerns about their children's learning and progress at the beginning of the program in terms of their adaptation to activities.

What is expected from parents in terms of their children's progress in English is sharing their children's experiences, attitudes and behaviors that they witness rather than evaluating their language learning or commenting on their progress in English. Besides, monolingual parents will be aware of new vocabulary usage in English as they have native language experience and can easily realize when a different vocabulary is used. After all they are informed about the foreign language program being applied and was constantly being in contact with the researcher.

Table 11. Qualitative Analysis Results of Parents' and Classroom Teacher's Opinions about the theme "Pronunciation"

T 7. Pronunciation

He is struggling to pronounce the words correctly (P5/Mom)

There is no problem in expressing simple words such as "Yes/No". However, my daughter had difficulty while pronouncing some words that are used often in everyday life such as "six" or "fish" (P6/Dad)

Since the program, they started to speak Turkish more fluently (P9/Mom).

Families had difficulty in helping their children with their English, especially with pronunciation since most of them had no English (CT)

The children often go on using the words they know appropriately in my class when there is no language teacher around (CT).

Teacher and parental interviews showed that there was a significant increase in some children's ability of expressing themselves in English. In addition, a high level of improvement in pronunciation and vocabulary is seen. However, pronunciation and expressing self were some of the difficulties that children had problem with during the activities. Especially parents stated that it was hard for them to support their children at home in pronunciation and speaking so WhatsApp application was a great help.

Discussion and Conclusion

There were significant differences regarding the effects of LFFLAP on preschool children's language acquisition attending to a public school. At the beginning of the application, they had very low foreign language acquisition scores from LFFLAS applied as pretest. However, the foreign language acquisition posttest scores were significantly higher, especially in the subscales of Vital and Useful Vocabulary and the total scores. In the retention tests applied 3 weeks after the application, the children got higher retention scores compared to pretest. However, when compared with posttest scores, there was a slight decrease in children's foreign language acquisition.

These results support the findings of the experimental study conducted with a control group of children going to a private school (Uslu, 2017a). The results of the study in which the children in the experimental group of LFFLAP obtained high language acquisition and retention scores at a significantly higher level than the children in the control group in which traditional foreign language teaching method was applied overlap with the results of the present study. It was seen that despite the children had no foreign language experience before and their parents' educational background, the program was effective positively on these children's English language acquisition, helped them develop positive attitudes and behaviors towards English and raised language awareness.

The results of the present study are similar to Leseman's (2000) findings. According to Leseman, the nature and diversity of the interaction that children establish during preschool play an important role in the development of language skills. Foreign language skills develop at a meaningful level in environments where there is intense language interaction with both teachers, family members and also with peers. Particularly, arranging the internal and external environments to support foreign language education along with the teaching practices focused on real life experiences may have played an important role in foreign language acquisition.

It is important for the children to actively use the subjects that are taught in the preschool period in all dimensions of life. According to Ortega (2009), it is important to teach the language with real life experiences. In the research process, children used Basic English while performing self-care skills, expressing objects, talking about events and sharing their feelings. In the researches conducted, it is found that the inadequacy of vocabulary knowledge, foreign language interaction and experiences have an important influence on student's foreign language acquisition in terms of grammar and pronunciation (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Saxton, 2010; Topbaş, 2006). According to Kara (2004), the ability to understand and separate sounds in foreign language teaching can only be gained by being exposed to the target language. Similarly, according to Gass and Selinker (1994), the child's second language acquisition is similar to the first language acquisition. This is possible by being in an environment that is natural, in a school or social environment with a structure that support foreign language acquisition. The findings of the present research is parallel to the results of the LFFLAP applied previously (Uslu, 2017a) to children attending a private preschool. Preschool children in both schools had high levels of foreign language acquisition. In particular, the richness of stimuli in close environment and the supporting psychological environment enriched with music and art have positively influenced their foreign language acquisition.

As a result of the analysis of qualitative data obtained from the teacher's and parents' views and perceptions in the process of preschool children's foreign language learning, they emphasized that children's language development is at a very high level. However, when the teacher's and parents' opinions were analyzed, there were differences among the children regarding the themes of 'confidence in foreign language', 'pronunciation' and 'progress in foreign language'. According to their statements, preschool children that are attending government school partly had problems in adapting to language use and expressing self-confidence, expressing self in foreign language and in their foreign language acquisition.

One of the issues raised by the foreign language experts in Turkey is the lack of aim and method in language teaching and not being able to monitor the necessary progress during language teaching (İşeri, 1996; Balcı & Sünbül, 2015). However, depending on the qualitative interviews conducted with the participants of the present study, themes such as 'active use of English', 'positive attitude towards English', 'active transfer of what is being learned' and 'sharing what is learned' emerged during the learning process of children via LFFLAP practices. According to Bange (2005), role playing, action activities designed according to daily life, using similar and rich interaction methods in real life will enable to learn foreign language effectively (Lyster, 2007). The low level of progress made by some children in the present study were especially supported by the qualitative and quantitative findings in the literature showing that parents' education level and income are effective in their participation of their children's education (Blanden & Gregg, 2004; Smits & Gündüz Hoşgör, 2006). The facts that children attending government school were having only their foreign language teacher as a source since they have monolingual parents and having no experience abroad can be considered as the causes of the challenges met during the program.

In the present study, the most frequently expressed feature by the teacher and parents was preschoolers' positive attitudes in terms of effective characteristics. One of the most important purposes of preschool programs is to help children gain affective qualities. According to Johnston (2005), when the child is given the options of being volunteer to communicate, engaging in building relationship, or being quite until feeling confident about it, it appears that the child is more willing to initiate communication in the foreign language. Such affective features help to bring about the desire to learn a foreign language. Nevertheless, it is observed that some of the preschool children in government school had low self-esteem about their foreign language. Especially parents with poor educational backgrounds have expressed their children's self-confidence problems in the learning process. A considerable number of parents have spoken about the fact that they do not know any foreign languages and can not help their children in this regard.

Lin and Warden (1998) conducted a study in which they investigated the factors that prevented children from learning English, and found that these children had inadequate and inaccurate experiences in learning English in their environment. Similarly, during English learning, children may face a number of issues that may prevent them from expressing themselves verbally in the foreign language (Keller, Troesch, & Grob, 2013). In the present study, according to the opinions of the teacher in public school, it was found that some children were quiet and showed uncertain behaviors during the first two weeks of the foreign language learning process.

According to the interactionist approach in foreign language, acquisition takes place as a result of the characteristics and environmental influences that the child has. According to this, especially when the foreign language is taught during the preschool period, it is important to include the environment, culture, customs and social characteristics of the native language in foreign language learning process. According to Vygotsky (1986), in the arrangement of information to be taught to children, the nearest surroundings and closest environment, both naturally and socially, should be the source while giving examples and choosing the subjects to teach. Likewise, Pirpir (2011) points out that children discover the structure of their environment and express themselves via language. In the present study, similar findings were obtained in terms of foreign language learning process related to the child's social and cultural environment and experiences.

Suggestions

- Due to their developmental characteristics, preschool children are at a time when they are open to foreign language learning and easily experience language acquisition. In order to ensure equality of opportunity in education, English language should be taught also to preschoolers in government schools. Both families and children should be supported in this respect.
- Teaching materials and tools appropriate to the basic principles of foreign language teaching program focused on preschool period life can be prepared.
- In order to contribute to preschool children's foreign language learning, in-service training courses and seminars can be given to language teachers about life-focused curricula.
- Experimental and qualitative studies of LFFLAP can be conducted with preschool children coming from different socio-economic levels.

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