



ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTION SUGGESTIONS

(Review study)

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Abstract

This article explores the challenges faced by primary school English teachers and the strategies they employ to overcome these obstacles. With the growing importance of foreign language learning in the globalized world, particularly English, the study highlights the significance of early language education in enhancing cognitive, social, and emotional development. It examines key challenges such as low student motivation, language barriers, classroom management issues, limited teaching resources, and insufficient teacher training. Drawing on a literature review and interviews with primary school teachers, the article discusses effective solutions including the use of interactive and creative teaching methods, student-centered approaches, and continuous professional development. The findings suggest that while these challenges can hinder language learning, adopting innovative teaching strategies and supporting teacher training can significantly improve the quality of English education at the primary level. The article concludes by recommending strategies to enhance student engagement, teacher efficacy, and the overall success of English teaching in primary schools.

Keywords: English teaching, primary school, challenges

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1. Introduction

Education is a fundamental building block for the development of any society, and language teaching is an essential part of this process. Today, language skills play a critical role not only in communication but also in cultural understanding and cognitive development. In the globalized world, foreign language learning is considered an important tool that supports children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. In this context, English teaching, especially at the primary school level, has become one of the top priorities of educational systems.

Language teaching at the primary school level is a critical process that lays the foundation for students' cognitive, social, and emotional development. Language is more than just a tool for communication; it is a powerful instrument that shapes human thinking and guides one's perspective on the world. "Language is not just a tool for communication; it is a tool for thinking and helps students develop their mental flexibility." (Gardner, 1983). Therefore, the language learning process greatly contributes to both academic and personal development. When children acquire language skills at an early age, not only do their linguistic abilities improve, but their cognitive flexibility, problem-solving skills, and empathy also develop. In this context, it can be said that language teaching plays a critical role in enhancing students' academic success, as well as their social adaptation and cultural awareness.

Particularly, English as a second language has gained even more importance in the globalized world. Today, English is not only a language of communication but also a global connector in business, science, technology, cultural exchange, and education. Knowledge of English is a significant requirement to be competitive in the global labor market, to access scientific research, or to engage in international cultural interactions. Therefore, English teaching should be introduced to children at the primary school level from an early age. The languages learned at an early age are more effective and enduring in the long run, emphasizing the importance of motivation and the correct teaching methods during this process.

However, in order for English teaching at the primary school level to be successfully implemented, the challenges teachers face need to be overcome. These challenges are not only related to the technical aspects of language teaching but also include pedagogical, psychological, and cultural dimensions. Factors such as students' motivation for language learning, developmental differences, social and emotional dynamics in the classroom, insufficient teaching materials, and teachers' professional competence can hinder an effective teaching process. Particularly, working with students who have different learning styles and varying language levels is one of the greatest challenges for teachers. Additionally, external factors such as language barriers in the classroom, students' lack of self-confidence, and insufficient family support can also complicate the teaching process.

In this context, developing effective solution strategies to address these challenges can make students' language learning processes more efficient and enhance the quality of teaching. Creative teaching methods, student-centered approaches, technology-supported education, and continuous professional development opportunities are important tools that can help overcome these challenges. Additionally, developing strategies to increase student motivation can help them engage more in the language learning process.

This article will examine the main challenges faced by primary school English teachers and the solutions developed to overcome these challenges in detail. Potential ways to overcome the obstacles encountered in the teaching process will also be discussed.

2. Method

2.1. Data Collection

In this study, data on the challenges faced by primary school English teachers and suggested solutions were collected through a literature review and existing research. The study, based on information obtained from various sources, addresses the main problems teachers encounter and the strategies proposed to deal with these issues. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 English teachers working in different schools, and their experiences were gathered. During face-to-face interviews, teachers were asked about the challenges they faced in the foreign language teaching process at an early age and how they overcame these challenges. The questions used in the interviews covered topics such as teachers' language teaching experiences, classroom management, student motivation, language barriers, teaching materials, and professional development.

2.2. Data Collection Tool

Qualitative research methods were used as the data collection tool, and the teachers' experiences were analyzed through existing research and academic publications. Interviews with primary school teachers were conducted, and problems and solutions were noted. The literature review provided a comprehensive perspective on the challenges teachers face and ensured the validity of the proposed solutions.

2.3. Analysis of Data

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The information obtained from the literature review was categorized according to the main challenges faced by teachers and the proposed solutions. The findings were grouped into various areas, including motivation deficiencies, classroom management problems, and other challenges encountered in language teaching.

3. Findings

Language learning is not only a tool for communication but also a process that supports students' cognitive, emotional, and social development. Vygotsky's (1978) "social interaction theory" emphasizes that children acquire language skills by interacting with their environment, and teachers play an important guiding role in this process. Additionally, the positive effects of early language learning on brain plasticity have been highlighted in numerous studies (Bialystok, 2011).

Language learning at the primary school level has a significant impact on language skill development and academic achievement. It has been shown that early learning of a second language offers cognitive, social, and cultural benefits (Snow, 2010; Cummins, 2000). However, teachers face various obstacles while managing this process. Gardner (2009) and Dörnyei (2001) have examined the strong relationship between language learning and motivation, highlighting the difficulties teachers face in increasing their students' willingness to learn a language. The literature identifies the main challenges teachers encounter as follows:

- **Student Motivation:** Student motivation is a critical factor for the success of the language learning process. Numerous studies emphasize the strong impact of motivation on language learning. Dörnyei (2001) states that student motivation plays a decisive role in language learning willingness. However, at the primary school level, students are often observed to have low motivation for language learning. Many students think that learning a language is not fun or that it is not useful in their daily lives, which decreases their motivation.

Many teachers use game-based learning, group work, and creative lesson plans to overcome this low motivation. These approaches, which aim to develop students' language skills in fun ways, are often preferred by teachers. For example, teachers use music, songs, Web 2.0 tools, and fun stories to make lessons more engaging. These activities increase students' interest in learning the language and create a more positive classroom atmosphere.

- **Language Barriers:** Language barriers cause students to struggle with understanding and expressing themselves in English. Particularly, the underdevelopment of students' basic language skills makes it difficult for teachers to plan lessons effectively. Students may have difficulty understanding due to vocabulary gaps or grammatical errors. This situation prevents teachers from progressing through lessons without disrupting the flow or demotivating students.

Many teachers use visual materials and interactive teaching tools to overcome language barriers. When planning the English teaching process at the primary school level, teachers must consider the developmental characteristics of students. The physical, mental, emotional, and social development of students should be considered when applying appropriate methods and techniques based on their developmental stage (Yıldız, 2012). Visual and auditory stimuli are more sensitive to students, so lesson materials supported by visuals are effective in developing their language skills. Teachers also work on interacting more with students individually, seeking ways to improve their language skills.

- **Classroom Management:** The energetic nature of primary school-aged children and their tendency for distraction pose significant challenges in classroom management. Students often struggle to focus during group work or individual lessons. This makes it difficult for teachers to maintain focus during the lesson and achieve learning objectives.

Literature suggests that the most effective strategies for classroom management include positive reinforcement and providing students with clear instructions. Marzano (2007) and Pianta (2017) emphasize the importance of teachers maintaining a consistent and continuous approach when

managing student behavior in the classroom. In this context, teachers can improve the learning process by establishing clear and positive communication with students. Additionally, organizing group games and interactive activities to ensure student participation can reduce distractions.

- **Limited Resources:** The educational materials used in primary schools are generally limited, which hampers teachers' ability to plan their lessons effectively. The lack of resources makes it difficult for teachers to present their lessons in a richer and more diversified way. Particularly, the inability to access digital materials restricts teachers' effective use of technology in education.

However, the use of digital tools and online resources presents an important alternative to address this issue. Teachers are able to make their lessons more effective by using free educational materials and digital tools available on the internet. Additionally, creating and sharing their own digital resources with students is another suggested solution. For example, handmade flashcards, simple language games, and other creative teaching tools can engage students.

- **Insufficient Training:** Some primary school English teachers' limited language proficiency directly affects the quality of teaching. This makes it difficult for teachers to use their language skills effectively in the classroom. Furthermore, the lack of continuous professional development opportunities also negatively impacts the quality of education.

Continuous professional development programs should be created to support teachers' development. Special courses, seminars, and workshops should be organized to improve teachers' English proficiency. Creating platforms where teachers can share experiences with one another can help them overcome the challenges they face more quickly.

4. Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

As awareness of the importance of English teaching at the primary school level increases, the challenges faced by teachers have also become more apparent. Factors such as low student motivation, classroom management problems, and language barriers make it difficult for teachers to increase the effectiveness of their lessons. These challenges can negatively affect the teaching process and delay the development of students' language skills.

Low student motivation is one of the biggest barriers to language learning. The lack of interest in English lessons and the belief that learning the language is useless for students can significantly affect the efficiency of the learning process. In this context, teachers turning to game-based learning, group work, songs, and stories have proven to be highly effective. However, it should not be limited to entertaining activities. To increase students' interest in English, teachers should provide examples of how the language is used in real life during lessons. Furthermore, acknowledging students' success through rewards or certificates can help increase motivation and contribute to long-term success.

The energetic nature of primary school students presents significant classroom management challenges. With their short attention spans, students can sometimes lose focus during group work. To overcome this, teachers should maintain a consistent and clear approach to managing student behavior. Using behavior management techniques, providing clear instructions, and incorporating group games that encourage active participation can help address these issues.

Another critical issue is the lack of teaching materials. Although teachers cannot always access high-tech materials, they can use free online resources and create their own educational materials. This not only enriches the lessons but also provides students with interactive and visually appealing activities. Furthermore, teachers can find ways to make learning English more enjoyable by using songs, educational videos, and digital tools.

Teacher training is another factor that significantly affects the success of English teaching. Teachers with insufficient language proficiency or pedagogical training face greater challenges in providing an effective education. In this regard, providing continuous professional development programs can help teachers improve their knowledge and skills.

In conclusion, while challenges exist in primary school English teaching, teachers' creative approaches and the right resources can help overcome these issues. By focusing on student-centered approaches, utilizing technology, increasing motivation, and supporting teachers' professional growth, the overall quality of English education at the primary school level can be significantly improved.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests and Ethics

“In this article, journal writing rules, publishing principles, research and publication ethics rules and journal ethics rules were followed. Liability for any violations that may arise regarding the article belongs to the authors. "The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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