

# A Qualitative Study on Primary School First Grade Turkish Course Curriculum\*

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**Abstract:** This study aims to identify the views of classroom teachers about primary school first-grade Turkish course curriculum implemented in the 2018-2019 education year and explore teachers' practices in the process of the instruction of first reading and writing. The interview part of the study included five teachers who taught first-grade students in Kayseri in the 2018-2019 education year. The observation part of the study had one classroom teacher who instructed first-grade students. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and observation forms. The data were analyzed using content analysis methods. The analysis results of the interviews regarding the implementation of the curriculum indicated that the teachers found their knowledge about the curriculum insufficient, and they had difficulties in implementing the curriculum. Classroom observations showed that the Teacher performed reading and writing instruction through various activities related to letter, syllable, word, and sentence instruction. The Teacher was found to take individual differences into account while he approached students, managed the lesson, and instructed the course. Teachers should be provided with efficient and comprehensive training about the revised Turkish course curriculum.

**Keywords:** Turkish course curriculum, classroom teacher, curriculum evaluation, instruction of first reading and writing

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## Introduction

Curricula include the activities an individual does at school or in social life. With this aspect, curricula are a country's essential component (Varis, 1996). Curricula are developed to help raise individuals who contribute to the development of a country, increase the quality of the education system, and protect cultural values (Ozdemir, 2009). The program is expressed as the sum of what children and young people need to do to improve their ability to do what needs to be done in adult life and become adults in every respect (Bobbitt, 1918). Oliva (2009) define the curriculum as a plan, program, content and learning experiences. Curricula have great roles in individuals' improvement as well as the achievement of the defined goals of the national education policies. Curricula are inseparable from instructional programs. The curriculum is a dynamic process that continues throughout life and out-of-school (Demirel, 2021). It should be sustainable and up to date so that it can be possible to keep up with the constantly changing and developing time, respond to the needs of society, and raise qualified individuals. Besides, curricula need to be evaluated to identify implementation problems and realize their functions (Erden, 1998). According to Saylor and Alexander (1974) evaluation, the purpose of program evaluation is to determine students' learning outcomes. besides, revealing the value of the program and managerial studies should be judged.

The revised curricula of the first, fifth, and ninth grades were started to be implemented in the 2017-2018 education year in our country, and those of all the other grades were started to be implemented in the 2018-2019 education year. The new curricula were designed to keep up with the scientific and technological innovations and respond to the needs of education (Ministry of National Education, 2019). This study is 'important as it aims to explore the efficiency of the first-grade Turkish course curriculum from teachers' views after the revisions. The curriculum reveals the answers to the questions of Why? How? When? and Where to reach a determined goal by benefitting from previous knowledge. Based on the answers given, the curriculum should thus be integrated into both the curriculum developers' rules and general characteristics composed of answers. Answers to these questions in the curriculum should comply with the social, economic, and developmental characteristics of the philosophy adopted by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) (Demirel, 2011).

The curriculum planning includes people to be involved in the instruction process, information to be acquired, methods of learning information, and time of learning. The curriculum explains the information to be taught and the relationships as well as the roles and responsibilities of teachers and students in the implementation process (Korkmaz, 2006). Any curriculum is affected by scientific and technological developments. With the developments in science, the curriculum needs to be revised so that it can respond to the needs (Atik and Aykac, 2017). When the education system was changed in our country's 2012-2013 education year, the curricula also went through some changes. In 2015, the Turkish course curriculum (first-eight grade) was

revised and piloted in the 2016-2017 education year. It has been implemented in all grade levels since the 2017-2018 education year (MoNE, 2019).

Identification and elimination of the problems in the implementation process of the curricula require their evaluation so that they can meet the needs of the time. According to Varis (1996), the evaluation includes identifying the methods, materials, student characteristics, teacher competences, socio-economic condition, and physical conditions and making them have the necessary characteristics to meet the needs. The curriculum could be subjected to various changes based on scientific developments in line with this.

A review of the related literature indicates studies on the Turkish course curriculum (Epcacan and Erzen, 2008; Durukan, 2011; Karakoc, 2019; Altunkeser and Coskun, 2016; Kandemir, 2016; Dincel and Savur, 2018; Sagirli, 2019; Kirmizi and Yurdakal, 2019; Gok and Bas, 2020) and the instruction of first reading and writing (Aydin and Kartal, 2017; Erbasan and Erbasan, 2019; Ozdemir and Kiroglu, 2019; Gozukucuk, 2019; Solyali and Isiktas, 2020; Fidan, 2020; Altunkaynak and Cagimlar, 2020; Anras, 2020; Basar and Gurbuz, 2020; Karaman and Yilar, 2020). These studies were generally utilized quantitative research methods or the interview technique among the qualitative research methods. In addition, in their study entitled "Evaluation of First Grade Turkish Language (First Reading-Writing) Curriculum", Aslan and Altunova (2019) used interview and observation techniques in tandem. However, the study was found to make evaluations only concerning the process of first reading and writing.

This study aims to identify the views of classroom teachers about the primary school first-grade Turkish course curriculum implemented in the 2018-2019 education year and explore teachers' practices in the process of the instruction of first reading and writing. The present study included teachers' views about the first-grade Turkish course curriculum and made detailed observations of the process of first reading-writing and interdependent reading. With this aspect, the study is believed to fill a gap in the literature. According to this rationale, the study's problem statement is "What are the perspectives of primary school first-grade teachers on the Turkish course curriculum that began implementation in the 2018-2019 school year, and what are their classroom practices in the process of first reading and writing instruction? ". In line with this problem statement, the study sought answers to the following questions:

- 1:** What are the views of primary school first-grade teachers regarding the Turkish course curriculum and its implementation?
- 2:** What are the suggestions of primary school first-grade teachers regarding the problems and effective implementation of the curriculum?
- 3:** What are the teachers' practices in first reading and writing instruction in the primary school Turkish course?

## Method

### Research Design

In this study, interview and observation techniques were used together as qualitative research methods. Yildirim and Simsek (2013) define qualitative research as the holistic and objective investigation of cases and phenomena in their natural environment through qualitative data collection methods such as document analysis, observations, and interviews. The data obtained were subjected to in-depth content analysis.

### Study Group

The study group included classroom teachers who taught first-grade students in the central towns of Kayseri. The interview group that was identified using simple random sampling method included five first-grade classroom teachers. The interviews were administered voluntarily, and the data were collected using semi-structured interview forms. Table 1 demonstrates the demographic characteristics of the teachers who were interviewed.

**Table 1.**

*Demographic Characteristics of the Teachers*

Teachers	Gender	Degree	School they graduated from	Professional Experience	Socio-economic level of their school	How many times they instructed first graders
Tchr 1	Male	BA	Education F.	11-15 years	Medium	4
Tchr 2	Female	BA	Education F.	6-10 years	Medium	3
Tchr 3	Male	BA	Education F.	6-10 years	Medium	4
Tchr 4	Female	MA	Education F.	6-10 years	Medium	4
Tchr 5	Male	MA	Education F.	11-15 years	Medium	5 and more

As Table 1 shows, two participating teachers were females and three were males. Three participants had BA degrees, two had MA degrees. The professional experience of the participating teachers, all of whom had graduated from a faculty of education, was 6 to 10 years for three teachers and 11 to 15 years for two teachers. As to the number of times they taught first graders, while three teachers reportedly taught first graders four times, one taught them three times, and one taught them five and more times. The findings showed that the schools where the teachers worked had a medium socioeconomic level.

The observation part of the study, the study group included one first-grade Teacher who worked in the Kocasinan town of Kayseri in a primary school affiliated with the MoNE. The observation data were collected through a semi-structured observation form. The Teacher to be observed was identified using the "simple random sampling" technique. Hence, the study group was formed by randomly selecting one classroom

teacher among those who instructed first-grade students. Table 2 demonstrates the characteristics of the Teacher who was observed.

**Table 2.**

*Characteristics of the Teacher Observed*

Teacher	Gender	Degree	Professional Experience	School he graduated from	Average number of Students in Class	Having Received in-service training	Socio-economic level of his school	How many times they worked with first-grade students
Tchr1	Male	BA	11-15 years	Education faculty	26-30	No	Medium	5 and more

An analysis of Table 2 shows that the observed Teacher was male and had a degree from BA. He graduated from the Faculty of Education and had a professional experience of 11 to 15 years in teaching. He taught first graders five times and more. The school where he worked had a medium socioeconomic level and the number of students in his class ranged from 26 to 30. The Teacher did not receive any in-service training on the revised Turkish curriculum.

## Data Collection Tools

Data were collected through semi-structured interview and observation forms. The first part of the two-part interview form composed six questions that included the teachers' characteristics. The second part included three questions about the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum from the teachers' views and suggestions about it. The observation form included two structured forms developed separately to start the first reading and writing phase and independent reading phase. The first part of the forms included personal characteristics. The second part included items that aimed to identify the teachers' activities for the instruction of the first reading and writing and independent reading phases.

## Data Analysis

This study utilized semi-structured interview and observation forms to collect data. The raw data obtained were subjected to content analysis. Qualitative studies use data triangulation to increase reliability and validity. In other words, more than one method (observation, interview) is used in tandem. This way, the data obtained are expected to support each other (Yildirim and Simsek, 2013). This study also used triangulation. Semi-structured interviews were administered to 5 teachers, and the interviews were recorded using a voice recording device. The recordings were transcribed and a 25-

page raw data was obtained. Codes and themes were formed based on these data. While the first reading and writing phase and progress stages included 39 hours of observations, the independent reading phase included 15 hours of observations. The data obtained during the observations were transferred to a computer and a 40-page document of raw data was obtained. The data were studied in detail and the codes and themes were formed accordingly.

## **Validity and Reliability**

One of the most important criteria of scientific research is the credibility of the results. The two most commonly used criteria in research are; "Validity and "Reliability". In quantitative research, these two elements determine scientificity. Researchers are expected to test the reliability and validity of the data collection research method correctly and present the results to the interested parties. There are various explanations, methods and statistical tests for this. Qualitative research, on the other hand, does not have methods and tests for reliability as in quantitative research. However, various measures are taken for both reliability and validity in qualitative research. However, these measures differ from quantitative research. This difference in qualitative research is due to the research of social cases and the criteria to be considered in basic propositions. While the phenomenon and the nature of the event come to the fore in qualitative research, the quantitative characteristics of the phenomenon and event are important in quantitative research (Kirk & Miller, 1986).

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), definitions become sharper when two researchers code using the same data set. In this way, it is possible to reach a common vision about what the encodings mean and which data piece belongs to which code. Whether the encoders use similar codes for the same pieces of data is the key point of this technique. Conflicts indicate that definitions need to be expanded or corrected. The intercoder reliability ratio can be calculated by dividing the number of agreed codes by the total number of agreed and disagreed codes. Initially, intercoder reliability is not expected to be higher than 70%. However, it is recommended that this ratio be close to 80%, or even more than 90% depending on the size of the data. Encoder reliability is checked separately to determine whether the categories and codes obtained for each interview form a consistent and meaningful whole. Encoder reliability is calculated using the formula  $(\text{Consensus} / \text{Consensus} + \text{Disagreement} \times 100)$ . In this study, three teacher interview forms, three student interview forms, three parent interview forms and three administrator interview forms were sent to another coder, who is doing a master's degree in Cukurova University Classroom Education Department, and asked to extract codes. As a result of these studies, the agreement rate between the two encoders was calculated as .90. It was observed that the consistency of the codes and categories was highly similar between the first and the second encoder. In addition, the researcher examined the consistency in the coding he made at two separate times. For this, the researcher tested his own consistency by coding the interview forms for three teachers, students, administrators and parents a second time after twenty days. As a result, the coding reliability coefficient was calculated as .92 by the researcher. In the creation of

the themes of the codes obtained from the interviews, a Turkish Language Teaching Specialist at Çukurova University Education Faculty Primary Education Department served as the second coder and determined the themes of 35 codes, which were 20% of the randomly selected total codes. Afterwards, the two coders came together to examine the consistency between their analyzes, different situations were discussed and compromises were sought. As a result of these studies, the agreement rate between the two encoders was calculated as .96.

## Findings

### Findings concerning the First Research Question

The first research question of the study is "What are the views of first-grade primary school teachers about the Turkish course curriculum and its implementation?". The interviews conducted with the teachers included questions about the information they received about the revised first-grade Turkish course curriculum. Table 3 demonstrates the distribution of the themes, codes, and frequencies of their answers to this question.

**Table 3.**

*Distribution of the Themes, Codes, and Frequencies regarding the Preparation and Information about the First-Grade Turkish course Curriculum*

Theme	Code	Sub-code
Source of Information	Seminar	Social Media Reading articles about it
	Individual Efforts	Reviewing e-curricula Related Department of the Ministry Circle of Friends
Information obtained	Changes in the letter groups Decrease in the attainments Transition to Manuscript Letters	
	Increase in open-ended questions Exclusion of dictionary use	
Preparations made	Preparing texts Activities for deriving words Planning the time allocated to letters	
	No preparations	

As Table 3 demonstrates, the teachers' answers to this question were grouped into three themes: the source of information, information obtained, and the preparations made. While two teachers indicated social media as the source of information, one Teacher reported to have obtained information through the seminar. Reading articles, reviewing e-curricula, related department of the ministry, and circle of friends were the

sources indicated by each teacher. The teachers' views regarding this theme are as follows: "We received a seminar on the general changes in all curricula during the seminar weeks." (Tchr 2). "No information was given regarding the curriculum. We obtained information with our own efforts. We obtained sufficient information by searching on our own". Three teachers mentioned the changes in letter groups, two teachers mentioned the decrease in attainments, one Teacher mentioned the transition to manuscript letters, one Teacher mentioned the increase in open-ended questions, and one Teacher mentioned the exclusion of the use of a dictionary when it came to information obtained. "There are modifications in the arrangement of the letters employed previously in the education of reading and writing," teachers say about this theme. "There are also some changes in grammar instruction. For instance, learning how to use dictionary taught in previous years to first-grade students is not included in this year's curriculum" (Tchr 1). In the preparation theme, two teachers reportedly prepared texts, one Teacher prepared word derivation activities, one Teacher planned the time allocated to letters, and two teachers reportedly made no preparations. Teachers' views regarding this theme are as follows: "I made preparations for teaching particularly manuscript letters and increasing the speed of text reading; I also made some changes in the texts to be used according to the sound groups that can be formed with manuscript letters in the text." (Tchr 5).

The interviews conducted with the teachers aimed to ask questions regarding the activities found boring by students and their favorite topics and activities. The distribution of the themes, codes, and frequencies regarding the teachers' answers to this question is demonstrated in Table 4.

**Table 4.**

*Distribution of the themes, codes, and frequencies regarding the Teachers' Views about Students' Engagement in the Turkish course*

Theme	Code	Sub-code
Enjoying		Playing educational games (word derivation)
		Doing Drama
	Reading	Reading short texts
		Timed Reading
	Writing	Filling in blanks
		Forming complete sentences
Answering reading comprehension questions about the text		
Completing Sentences		
Getting bored	Writing	Writing something
		Synonym words activity
		Complete Sentences activity
		Punctuation marks (comma)
	Reading	Reading long texts
		Activities about reading comprehension

Table 4 shows that the teachers' answers included two themes: enjoying and getting bored. Four teachers mentioned educational games, two teachers mentioned short texts and filling in the blanks, one Teacher mentioned drama, one Teacher mentioned timed reading, one Teacher mentioned forming complete sentences, one Teacher mentioned comprehension questions, and one Teacher mentioned deriving words. The teachers' views about this theme are as follows: *"They like reading short stories not longer than one page and answering the questions about them. They like word derivation activities."* (Tchr 1) *"They love completing sentences and filling in the blanks activities a lot."* (Tchr 4). As for the theme of getting bored, the activities mentioned by the teachers included writing by three teachers, long texts by two teachers, punctuation marks (comma) by one Teacher, synonym words activity by one Teacher, and completing sentences activity by one Teacher. Teachers' views regarding this theme were as follows: *"They mostly get bored of writing a text. They say, Teacher, when is it going to finish? or When is the break time? We are doing this to correct their spelling mistakes, but I know that they do not enjoy it much. However, correcting their spelling has been beneficial."* (Tchr 5) *"They really get bored especially when they are writing. They get even more bored during dictation..."* (Tchr 2)

### Findings in relation to the Second Research Question

Semi-structured interview forms were utilized for the study's second research question: "What are the suggestions of primary school first-grade teachers regarding the problems and effective implementation of the curriculum?" The teachers were asked about their opinions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum. Table 5 demonstrates the distribution of the themes, codes, and frequencies of the answers to this question.

The answers in Table 5 revealed three themes that included strengths, weaknesses, and suggestions in line with the teachers' responses. The strengths of the curriculum from the teachers' views included the transition to manuscript letters indicated by five teachers; achievement of the attainments and making reading and writing easier indicated by three teachers; appropriate for the readiness level, associated with daily life, and shortening the learning duration indicated by two teachers; and appropriate for students' level, modern and creative, and reading comprehension questions indicated by one Teacher each. The teachers' views about this theme are as follows: *"The positive side is the transition to manuscript letters"* (Tchr 2). *"The positive side is that we are using manuscript letters now"* (Tchr 3).

Lack of materials, double schooling, and lack of end-of-unit evaluations were mentioned by nine teachers; lack of family support, insufficient time allocated to reading and writing, and inappropriate to students' level were mentioned by two teachers; difficulties in reading consonants, insufficiency in measuring attainments, insufficient coursebooks, crowded classrooms, and students' writing like they speak were mentioned by one Teacher. The following are the opinions of the teachers on this subject: *It's a new school, and so many things are missing. We do not have adequate*

technological facilities in our school. We are using the equipment with secondary school. We have no computer; we bring our personal computer here. It is not appropriate for all students and classrooms (Tchr 4). "The activities are not appropriate for the students in terms of their level. Things would be better if the topics were ordered from easier to more difficult ones. The biggest problem in our context is that children write things in the way they speak in daily life. Families are indifferent. Parent support is important." (Tchr2).

**Table 5.**

*Distribution of the Themes, Codes, and Frequencies regarding the Strengths and Weaknesses of the Turkish course Curriculum according to the Teachers' Views and their Suggestions*

Theme	Code
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transition to manuscript letters</li> <li>Achievement of the attainments</li> <li>Making reading and writing easier</li> <li>Appropriate for the readiness level</li> <li>Associated with daily life</li> <li>Shortened learning duration</li> <li>Appropriate for students' level</li> <li>Modern and creative</li> </ul>
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of materials</li> <li>Double schooling</li> <li>Insufficient end-of-unit evaluations</li> <li>Lack of family support</li> <li>Insufficient time allocated to reading and writing</li> <li>Inappropriate for students' level</li> <li>Attainments remaining at recall level</li> <li>Difficulties in reading consonants</li> <li>Insufficient assessment of the attainments</li> <li>Insufficient course books</li> <li>Crowded classrooms</li> <li>Students' writing like they speak</li> </ul>
Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing the number of activities in the book</li> <li>Making assessments for practice</li> <li>Obtaining the missing materials</li> <li>Making texts short and interesting</li> <li>Making the attainments comprehensible</li> <li>Making the texts appropriate for students' level</li> <li>Increasing the duration in practical courses</li> <li>Teaching vowels first</li> </ul>

When the teachers were asked about their suggestions, the themes based on their answers included the followings: the number of the activities in the book should be increased as indicated by four teachers; the assessment should be based on practice as indicated by three teachers; the missing materials should be obtained and the texts should be short and interesting as indicated by two teachers; and the attainments should be comprehensible, the texts should be appropriate to students' level, the time

allocated to practical courses should be increased, and vowels should be taught first as indicated by one Teacher each. Teachers' views about this theme are as follows: "The curriculum can be improved by designing better content and including more practical activities" (Tchr 5. "Activities in line with the goals should be increased and they should be supported with course materials." (Tchr 1).

### Findings in relation to the Third Research Question

The third research question was "What are the teachers' practices in first reading and writing instruction in the primary school Turkish course?" The teachers' classroom activities in the process of first reading and writing were observed, and the themes and codes concerning the activities conducted in the phase of feeling-recognizing-distinguishing the sound are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6.**

*Distribution of the Themes, Codes, and Frequencies in Feeling-Recognizing-Distinguishing the Sound Activities*

Theme	Code
Feeling-Recognizing Distinguishing the sound	By showing how the sound is produced in the mouth
	With music
	With examples from daily life
	With videos
	By imitating the sound
	By telling stories
	With tongue twisters and riddles
	Through Chinese Whisper
	Roleplaying
	Showing pictures

The codes about feeling, recognizing, and distinguishing sounds with music, with examples from everyday life, videos, by imitating the sound, by telling stories, with tongue twisters and riddles, through Chinese Whisper, roleplaying, and showing pictures were included in the feeling-recognizing-distinguishing the sound theme, as shown in Table 6.. The observation notes regarding this as follows:

**26<sup>th</sup> of September, 2018**

*Then does anyone want to play the mother role? S1: I do Teacher. Tchr: Ok, come then. Now first take a doll. Tell me dear, how do mothers sleep their baby? S1: They sing a lullaby; they sleep the baby by saying "eee, eee, eee, eee, e".*

15<sup>th</sup> of October 2018

Now, children, we are going to say "k, k, k, k, k" with our mouth. We are not going to open our mouth wide; we are going to produce the sound between our teeth. Then he showed some pictures with and without the "k" sound in them. He asked which one had the "k" sound and which one did not.

Table 7 demonstrates the themes and codes in relation to the observations regarding the teachers' activities at the stage of reading and writing the letters.

**Table 7.**

*Distribution of the Themes, Codes, and Frequencies concerning Reading and Writing the Letters*

Theme	Code
Reading and writing the letters	Showing visuals that are not examples for the letter
	Showing how to write the letter in uppercase and lowercase
	Making them write with their fingers in the air and on the desk
	Showing how to write the letter within the lines (notebook, worksheets)

Table 7 demonstrates that the Teacher engaged in activities such as demonstrating how to write the letter in uppercase and lowercase, having pupils write with their fingers in the air and on the desk, and demonstrating how to write the letter within the line. T. Observation notes regarding these activities are as follows:

15<sup>th</sup> of October 2018

*The Teacher wrote the letter "k, K" on the board and often showed what spaces they should write. Then he asked them to write in the air, on the desk, and on the sand using their fingers. Then he wrote the letter in their notebook. He checked how they wrote the letter.*

19<sup>th</sup> of November 2018

*The Teacher showed the writing direction and spaces of the letter "R, r". Then he asked the students to write in the air and on the desk using their fingers. Then he wrote the letter in their notebooks. He checked how they wrote the letter by walking around their desks.*

Table 8 demonstrates the distribution of the themes, codes, and frequencies regarding the observation notes about forming syllables, words, and sentences after reading and writing the letters.

**Table 8.**

*Distribution of the Themes, Codes, and Frequency of Forming Syllables, Words, and Sentences.*

Theme	Code
Forming Syllables	Puzzles
	Giving examples for closed syllables (el-al-an)
	Visuals
	Giving examples for open syllables (le-la-ki-na)
	Bingo game Board work with cardboard Hopscotch
Forming words from syllables	Dictation
	Deriving words from open syllables (la-le)
	Deriving words from closed and open syllables
	Bingo Game (picking up syllables)
	Wheel of fortune Puzzle
Forming sentences from words	Writing the sentences written on the board in their notebooks
	Puzzle word game
	Forming sentences from mixed words
	Prize word game
Capital letters Punctuation Marks	Activity for putting full point at the end of the sentence
	Writing Proper Nouns in Capital Letters
	Starting sentences with a capital letter
Reading Texts	Making students read the texts

Table 8 reveals that in the forming syllables theme, the Teacher used puzzles, offering examples for closed syllables, employing visuals, giving examples for open syllables, bingo games, hopscotch games, and board work with cardboard after reading and writing the letter.T. Observation notes regarding these activities are as follows:

**22<sup>nd</sup> of October 2018**

*The Teacher wrote closed and open syllables such as “il, ik, li, ki” on the board and asked the students to write them on their notebooks. While reading them, the Teacher repeated how to combine them many times, and asked each student to repeat it*

**19<sup>th</sup> of November 2018**

*The Teacher told the students that he prepared a Bingo Game for them and gave the bingo cards to the children. Then he put all the syllables they had learned until that day in a bag, took a randomly chosen syllable, and asked the student who had that syllable*

to cover the card with it. Then he gave a prize to the first person who completed the Bingo.

The theme of forming words from syllables included activities such as dictation, deriving words from open syllables, deriving words from closed and open syllables, bingo game, wheel of fortune game, and puzzles. Observation notes regarding these activities are as follows:

**8<sup>th</sup> of October 2018**

*The Teacher combined the letter "e" and the open syllable "la" by writing them on the board; he read the word "ela" quickly and taught the students how to read it. He stated that when the word ela is written in small letters, it is an eye color in Turkish (Hazel). He also explained that it is used as a proper noun when it is written in capital letters. He then combined the open letters of "la" and "le" and wrote them on the board. He asked the students to read it and write it on their notebooks.*

In the theme of forming sentences from words, the Teacher utilized activities such as writing the sentences written on the board in their notebooks, puzzle word games, forming sentences from mixed words, and prize word game. Observation notes regarding these activities are as follows:

**17<sup>th</sup> of December 2018**

*In the puzzle game formed by the Teacher, the children formed sentences with words and wrote these sentences on the board.*

*The crow croaked.*

*Gizem bought a magazine.*

*Gaye drank soda.*

*My aunt became a bride.*

An analysis of the codes in the capitalization and punctuation marks theme showed that the Teacher utilized activities such as putting a full point at the end of the sentence, writing proper nouns in capitals, and starting sentences with a capital letter. Observation notes regarding these activities are as follows:

**2<sup>nd</sup> of January 2019**

*The Teacher explained that they would put a punctuation mark at the end of the sentence in this lesson, so he would put a space at the end of the sentence; he also said that the students would place those punctuation marks. Then he wrote the examples on the board.*

*Ali went to the hospital ( )*

*The doctor became ill ( )*

*The carpet maker will come tomorrow ( )*

Observation notes regarding the activities done by the Teacher at the text reading phase are as follows:

**2<sup>nd</sup> of January 2019**

*The Teacher wrote a text on the board and asked the students to read this text. Then he asked them to write them in their notebooks.*

*Jale and Julide*

*Jale and Julide went shopping. Jale bought an agenda and pajamas. Julide bought a very beautiful lamp-shade for her room. They put the things they bought in the jeep's trunk and went home. They saw gendarmes at the door.*

In the process of independent reading, observations included issues such as the Teacher's classroom management, the methods and techniques he used, the way he approached the students, and the activities he used for the curriculum attainments. Some notes regarding these observations are as follows:

**20<sup>th</sup> of February 2019**

*The Teacher first talks with students when he comes to the classroom, saying "How are you children, are you doing well?". Then he starts the lesson. He does not directly give the information to be learned in the lesson; he uses various techniques to help them discover themselves through the problems he uses, he makes them feel that they will learn something new. For instance, in one lesson, he gave the punctuation marks and capitalization in the wrong way in the text. Then he asked the children to read this text and asked this question: "Children, do you think something is missing in this text you have read?". In line with their answers and suggestions for solutions, he informed them about how to use the punctuation marks and mentioned the importance of capitalization.*

**12<sup>th</sup> of March 2019**

*The Teacher had the dictation activity called "Attention Please"; while writing Aunt Canan, he emphasized that the word Canan was a proper noun. He said, "Children we should start with capital letters". The Teacher stated that the titles such as aunt, uncle, or Mr. written before names should also be written in capital letters. While the children were writing, he walked around them and asked "...what should we do when we are writing a new sentence after a full point?". He also explained how to use comma although it is not given in the curriculum. An example regarding the text written in S2's notebook is given in the appendix (Appendix 7).*

*The Teacher told the students that he would do syllabication in that lesson. He reminded the vowels that were instructed before. He stated that the syllabication should be done according to the number of vowels.*

*The Teacher gives examples that could attract students' attention. The children love their teacher a lot. He sometimes does funny things, and students like it a lot.*

Observations showed that during the independent reading and writing phase, the teacher conducted activities that the students enjoyed, and the students seemed to learn the rules of the Turkish course during these activities (these rules included capitalization, punctuation, and forming complete sentences). Despite the fact that it was not part of the curriculum, the instructor was observed and observed to teach where and how to use commas in sentence and text activities. Besides, the Teacher was found to do activities for all the listening, speaking, reading, and writing attainments.

## Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study showed that the teachers learned the changes in the curriculum mainly through social media, circle of friends, and the related department of the ministry. Besides, only one of the teachers was found to have participated in a seminar about the curriculum. It could be concluded that teachers had insufficient in-service trainings about this issue. The findings reported by Aydin and Kartal (2017) and Kirmizi and Akkaya (2009) are in line with these results. Teachers were discovered obtaining information about the Turkish course curriculum, including changes in letter groups, the transfer to manuscript letters, and the reduction in the number of attainments.

The teachers found the curriculum attainments clear and comprehensible, and consistent with each other; however, they also thought that they were not appropriate for students' level and readiness. These findings are not in line with some other findings in the literature (Mackey, 1997; Collins, 2005; Bozkurt, 2011; Guzel and Karadag, 2013; Ari, 2017). These studies reported that the attainments were appropriate for students' levels and they were not clear and comprehensible. The findings of this study showed that the teachers found the curriculum appropriate for the attainments concerning the learning domains and daily life; however, they thought that the number of examples was insufficient and the examples were not appropriate to students' level.

The teachers stated that the students mostly enjoyed deriving words, reading short texts, and filling in the blanks in the Turkish course, and they found writing something and reading long texts boring. The teachers were found to utilize mostly observations and filling in the blanks activities for the assessment of the Turkish course. Classroom observations also support these findings. The findings indicate that the teachers preferred using the activities that the students liked for assessment and evaluation.

The present study identified the strengths of the Turkish course curriculum as the transition to manuscript letters, the achievement of the attainments, making reading and writing easier, and association with daily life. As for the weaknesses were reported to be lack of materials, double schooling, lack of end-of-unit evaluations, insufficient time allocated to reading and writing, and inappropriate for students' level. Hengirmen (2007); Kirmizi and Akkaya (2009); Uygun and Katranci (2011), and Bagci, Ayranci and Mutlu (2017) also reported that the materials to be used in the curriculum were insufficient. In addition, they recommended increasing the activities in the book, making assessments for practice, and obtaining the missing materials. These findings are in line with the results of the present study.

The Teacher used activities such as feeling-recognizing-distinguishing the sound, reading-writing the letter, forming syllable-word-sentence, reading texts, listening to songs for teaching spelling-punctuation, watching videos, giving examples from daily life, doing puzzles, dictation, bingo games, and forming complete sentences, according to observations made during the process of first reading and writing and progression. In general, when teaching a kid to write, the child first assists the child in visually recognizing the letters, after which the letters are guided to be produced by drawing. T Later, the development of hand, arm and physical movements is being studied. In this process, the process of drawing letters should be automated, attention skills should be used well, and all attention should be paid. should focus on the lettermaking process (Bara et Gentaz, 2006; Vinter et Zesiger, 2008). The findings of the study are in line with the studies conducted by Babayigit and Gultekin (2019), Gunes, Uysal and Tac (2016). These findings suggest that the Teacher used different methods and techniques from the scope of the curriculum, and tried to keep students active with audio-visual materials considering individual differences.

In the independent reading and writing phase of the first reading and writing process, the Teacher benefited more from activities such as reading fluently, understanding what is read, and writing without looking. He was also found to consider speaking and listening strategies during the reading activities. In addition, the teacher was observed to teach the use of comma although it was not included in the first-grade Turkish course curriculum, and the students were found to have no problems with the use of comma. In this regard, it can be concluded that including the use of comma in the curriculum would not cause any problems.

This study was conducted within the scope of the Turkish course and first-grade primary school level. Similar studies could be conducted in different courses and classroom levels. In addition, this study used observation and interview techniques; future studies might benefit from document analysis techniques such as student notebooks, teacher journals, or minutes of parents' meetings. Teachers should be provided with an efficient and comprehensive training about the revised Turkish course curriculum. In this regard, the training should be qualified and be provided by people specialized in the field; it should also be practical and enable feedback from teachers.

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