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The Perspectives of Multigrade Teachers on Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in Turkey

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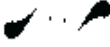
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Abstract

This research aims to examine the perspectives of multigrade teachers on teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) in Turkey. The data collected in this study, which included 13 multigrade teachers, was analyzed using qualitative analysis techniques, such as interviews. The results of the interviews yielded 10 themes: English language skills, teaching materials, digital games, classroom seating arrangements, methods and techniques, classroom challenges, garnering attention, assessment and evaluation, teacher suggestions, and additional notes. The examination of the findings of the study led to the conclusion that the multigrade teachers did not perceive themselves as being competent in teaching English, and the reason for this perception was that they did not have any training on TEFL during their undergraduate education. Additionally, the multigrade teachers complained about the technological inadequacies and the insufficiency of the materials for teaching English in multigrade settings.

Keywords: Multigrade classes, multigrade teachers, teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), perspectives



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Introduction

Education, which is shaped according to the needs of society and the individual, has emerged with different institutional structures through historical processes. In addition to the education systems developed with the modernising world, there are educational structures created for various reasons. Multigrade teaching is one such structures. It is the practice of teaching in more than one classroom by combining classes in regions with a low population, especially in villages, given the small number of students in each classroom, the need for teachers, and the lack of private teaching institutions (Tekişik, 1989).

Once the historical development of multiclass practices across the world is examined, it becomes evident that multigrade classrooms were created due to the needs and expectations in certain locations (Little, 2001). Although the practices of multigrade teaching declined with the rise of urban populations during the Industrial Revolution, such classrooms are still seen in several European countries, the USA, and Canada, in sparsely populated areas. For instance, Switzerland in 1960 attempted to put an end to the implementation of multigrade teaching by switching to the mobile education system. However, the concept of multigrade teaching was not abandoned completely because of various reasons, and instead vigorous efforts were made to refine it. In the 1980s, multigrade teaching continued to be implemented (Brunswic & Valerien, 2004). The practice still persists in both developed and developing countries, especially the United States and Canada.

The history of multigrade education in Turkey dates to 1930, when the Village Schools Curriculum came into force. After the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, many educational reforms were carried out by the Ministry of National Education. These reforms were refinements which involved a radical change or revision covering the curriculums at all grades in the Turkish national education system.

In 2018, teacher training programs implemented in education faculties were revised by the Council of Higher Education in Turkey. The 2-hour theoretical course called “Multigrade Teaching,” which was previously provided to primary school teacher candidates, was replaced by an elective course called “Alternative Educational Practices.” According to Erbaş and Karakaş (2021), given that a 2-hour theoretical course was not designed in such a way as to provide insufficient experience, it appears to be demanding for teacher candidates to impart their knowledge and skills to their prospective students.

TEFL in Multigrade Classes in Turkey

The multigrade curriculum, which was a separate program until the 2000–2001 academic year, has since been subject to the curriculum developed by the Turkish Education Board for elementary education (Şahin, 2007). English teaching programs in Turkey, where English is taught as a foreign language, have also been updated to be compatible with the changed programs.

With the entry into force of 8 years of compulsory education in 1998, TEFL was determined as 2 hours per week in the fourth grades of primary school. Within the scope of this curriculum, which was also put into effect in multigrade classes, English courses were revised within elementary education. With this revised program, English courses started to be taught by classroom teachers in multigrade settings, although English language teachers were mostly assigned to monograde teaching environments. Furthermore, TEFL began in multigrade classes for second-graders in elementary education, as it did in monograde schools, with the advent of the 4+4+4 education system in 2013. With this educational reform, the school entry age was lowered; elementary schools were divided into elementary, middle, and religious (Imam Hatip) middle schools; and middle school education became compulsory for all students. Unlike in monograde classes, English courses in multigrade classes were still taught by multigrade teachers.

Until 2018, multigrade teachers did not receive any training on TEFL during their pre-service period in Turkey. However, they are obliged to teach English not only in Turkey, but also in most of the countries where multigrade education exists, such as Chile and Nigeria (Agu, 2015; Arriagada Cruces, 2015; Şevik, 2009). Thus, in multigrade classes, there can be challenges with teaching productive skills (speaking and writing), receptive skills (reading and listening), as well as English

pronunciation and intonation. These challenges can lead to success differences between students across the world studying in multigrade classes and those studying in monograde classes. The traditional, teacher-directed/textbook-based positivist approaches in teacher education literature that have attempted to reduce the complexities and ambiguities of life in teacher education programs to something knowable, measurable, and controllable are challenged by the characteristics of teacher education programmes as complex systems (Riedler & Eryaman, 2016).

In Turkey, pre-service training currently includes a course, “Foreign Language Teaching in Primary Schools,” which was included in the revised curriculum in 2018; however, since this program excluded multigrade teachers who graduated before 2018, it is apparent that TEFL in multigrade contexts today is fraught with challenges. A review of the literature reveals that only a few studies on TEFL in multigrade classes are available (Dogan et al., 2020; Karcı & Akar-Vural, 2011; Şevik, 2011; Ünal et al., 2016). Therefore, the current study aimed to answer the following questions from the perspectives of multigrade teachers on TEFL:

1. Which English language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking, and grammar) do multigrade teachers consider themselves relatively more competent in TEFL?
2. What kind of instructional materials do multigrade teachers use in TEFL?
3. How do multigrade teachers arrange classroom seating in English courses?
4. Do multigrade classroom teachers use digital games in English courses? If so, what games do they use?
5. What are the resources, activities, methods and techniques used by multigrade teachers in TEFL?
6. Do multigrade teachers have any challenges in English courses? What solutions, if any, are they approaching this/these challenge(s)?
7. What do multigrade teachers do to capture children's attention in English courses?
8. How do multigrade classroom teachers implement assessment and evaluation in TEFL?
9. What can be done to improve TEFL in multigrade classes?

Method

Research design

This study is a qualitative descriptive study designed to investigate the perspectives of multigrade teachers on TEFL through interviews. The purpose of descriptive studies is to identify, classify and record the facts of the research and the relationships between the cases (Yıldırım, 2000).

Study Group

The study group of the research consists of 13 multigrade teachers in different provinces during the 2021–2022 academic year, selected through snowball sampling. In the snowball sampling method, a reference person is selected regarding the subject of the study and other people are reached through this person (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). This sample selection, which continues in a chain manner, is completed as soon as data saturation is reached as a result of the research (Kerlinger & Lee, 1999). Table 1 shows the personal information of the multigrade teachers who participated in the research and the features of instructional settings.

Table 1. Features of the Participants and Instructional Settings

		<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Female	4	30.77
	Male	9	69.23
	Total	13	100
Age group	20-25	3	23.08
	25-30	3	23.08
	30-35	3	23.08
	35-40	2	15.38
	40-45	1	7.69
	45-50	1	7.69
	Total	13	100
Teaching experience(years)	0-5	6	46.15
	5-10	2	15.38
	10-15	3	23.08
	15-20	1	7.69
	20-25	1	7.69
	Total	13	100
Class size	5-10	4	30.77
	10-15	6	46.15
	15-20	3	23.08
	Total	13	100
Grade combination	2	7	53.85
	3	1	7.69
	4	5	38.46
Total	13	100	

Table 1 reveals that the majority of participants were male and younger than 35 years old. Most of the participants had teaching experience of no more than 15 years. While the majority of classes have fewer than 15 students, second grades and fourth grades make up the majority of those that are taught concurrently.

Data Collection

The data for the study were collected through a semi-structured interview form consisting of 10 open-ended questions developed and edited by the researchers. The data were collected by recording the voices of the volunteer multigrade teachers over the Zoom application out-of-hours. The questions were presented to experts in the field and evaluated. After the evaluation, the questions were revised and given their final form before being presented to the participants in the interview form. Voluntary consent was read to the participants before the audio and video recording, and it was reported that the data would be recorded. By using the back translation method, two authorized interpreters translated the questions into English. In actuality, one interpreter translated the statements of the interview form from Turkish into English, and the other did the reverse. The final version of the interview questions was asked after that.

Data Analysis

Through an inductive approach, qualitative research seeks to establish categories and produce patterns of responses (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Content analysis was used in the analysis of the research data. Both the coding of the data and the interpretation of the numerical counts of the codes in content analysis adopt a descriptive approach (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Morgan, 1993). The data collected by recording the voice of the participants over the Zoom application was transcribed through a transcriber program. The voice recordings which were used to collect the data were translated into English by the primary researcher. The responses were grouped according to the questions, and the data was coded. The coded data produced themes for review. Finally, nicknames were given to the participating teachers, considering their genders.

Findings

English Language Skills

Under this theme, five codes were created within the framework of the responses given by the multigrade teachers about the foreign language skills in which they consider themselves relatively more competent in TEFL.

Table 2. Distribution of English Language Skills in which Multigrade Teachers Consider Themselves Relatively More Competent in English Courses

<i>English Language Skills</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Grammar	6	33.33
Reading	5	27.77
Writing	5	27.77
Speaking	1	5.55
Listening	1	5.55

As shown in Table 2, the most common skill cited was grammar ($f = 6$, 33.33%), while listening and speaking skills were found to be the least commonly preferred English language skills. In this regard, the statements of some participants are as follows:

Yavuz: “I feel competent in reading, writing and speaking at the beginner level. I'm not proficient in listening and grammar either.”

Osman: “I think I am better at reading and writing. First of all, as we teach in the multigrade classes which is situated in the east of the country, the children either speak Arabic or speak Kurdish at work. They do not speak Turkish. They speak two languages in general and stay a little distant from Turkish.”

Kaan: “Sir, grammar is better. So now you know that in Turkey, we have a little fear in English and a little bit of pronunciation in English, so we have a problem. I mean, be it in the education in the university, in the education in the high school, I mean...”

Instructional Materials

Five codes were developed in accordance with this theme, taking into account the responses provided by the multigrade teachers about the kinds of instructional materials that are used in English courses.

Table 3. Instructional Materials Used by Multigrade Teachers in English Courses

<i>Instructional Materials</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Technological devices	10	55.55
Worksheets	3	16.16
Teacher created materials	3	16.16
Coursebooks	1	5.55
Playing cards	1	5.55

According to Table 3, the majority of the responses ($f = 10$, 55.55%) were technological devices, while only 5.55% ($f = 1$) were textbooks and playing cards. In this context, some of the participant statements are given below:

Ali: “I mostly use audio-oriented materials. Listening texts, computers, and sometimes I use visual things. I mostly use listening texts for listening to something.”

İbrahim: “I usually use flash cards for students. Apart from these cards, the materials I generally utilize are listening texts which are related to the subject matter. Frankly, I do not have any extra materials.”

Zeynep: “I usually use hands-on, active things, that is, I make use of word tests, videos and translations that I have created on my own. I benefit from all the things I deem necessary through many activities, many social media tools.”

Digital Games

Under this theme, two codes were created for the digital games that the participants used for teaching English courses.

Table 4. Digital Games Used by Multigrade Teachers in English Courses

<i>Digital Games</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
EBA	2	50
Wordwall	2	50

As shown in Table 4, Education Information Network (EBA) and Wordwall were equally preferred by the multigrade teachers. Conversely, the majority of teachers ($f = 9$, 69.23%) stated that they never use digital games in English courses. Some of the statements of the participants are as follows:

Ali: “I use the activities in EBA instead of digital games. Games on EBA. Other than that, I can't think of anything right now.”

İrem: “Since the introduction of the concept of multigrade teaching, our work load has literally increased a little more at the school. As a result, it would make more sense to say that we cannot actually use the digital game, that is, we cannot use it.”

Yavuz: “Well, there was the Wordwall program. Can I pronounce it correctly? (He laughs). I do not know, but I guess matching games usually include matching and visual placement games. These are the ones I remember now.”

Classroom Seating Arrangements

Under this theme, four codes were created within the framework of the responses to how the multigrade teachers use classroom seating arrangements in English courses.

Table 5. Classroom Seating Arrangements Used by Multigrade Teachers in English Courses

<i>Classroom Seating Arrangement</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Peer-seating	6	50
U-shaped seating	4	33.33
Exam-style seating	1	8.33
Cluster seating	1	8.33

As indicated in Table 5, the ratio was 50% for the peer seating ($f = 6$), and 33.33% for the U-shaped seating arrangement ($f = 4$). Exam style and cluster seating were among the least preferred seating arrangements by multigrade teachers. The statements of some participants are listed below:

Fatma: “I use the classroom seating arrangement in the form of clusters in English courses. In order to increase the interaction of students with each other and to promote their rote learning, it is in the form of a cluster.”

Fatih: “I generally carry on the same sitting arrangement. I do not make any changes to the existing seating plan.”

İrem: “Since our class is already available due to the number of students, I also use U-shaped seating layout. I can reach all the children; because, I have six students in second grades.”

Methods and Techniques

Eight codes were created based on the responses given by the multigrade teachers addressing the resources, activities, methods and techniques they used in English courses.

Table 6. Resources, Activities, Methods and Techniques Used by Multigrade Teachers in English Courses

<i>Methods and Techniques</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Drama	3	27.27
Educational game	2	18.18
Peer teaching	1	9.09
Direct instruction technique	1	9.09
Demonstration	1	9.09
Dialogues	1	9.09
Snowball technique	1	9.09
Student-centered method	1	9.09

Table 6 revealed that 18.18% of the responses were educational games ($f = 2$), and 27.27% were drama technique ($f = 3$). The other responses were about peer teaching, direct instruction technique, demonstration, dialogue, snowball technique and student-centered methods. Some expressions are presented below:

İrem: “I use the books and some websites provided by the school, more precisely by the National Education. Apart from that, I use drama as a teaching method to make my narration permanent.”

Osman: “Sir, drama is first and above all. There are many resources on the internet; There are visual and audio sources, and there are videos about that. There are dialogues on the internet. We capitalize on them, sir.”

Özge: “Generally, it is for repetitive writing and reinforcement. Then I try to apply a method in which peer teaching is active in the form of communication with each other.”

Fatih: “I use role-playing and dialogue-style methods to make more students active in English courses. After the subject matter is explained, I ensure that the subject matter is reinforced with snowball activities. However, when teaching English, I mostly try to ensure that students interact with each other in dialogues.”

Classroom Challenges

Under this theme, seven codes were created for the challenges faced by the multigrade teachers in English courses.

Table 7. The Challenges Faced by Multigrade Teachers in English Courses

<i>Classroom Challenges</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
English pronunciation	4	28.57
Perception of self-inadequacy in English	4	28.57
Difference in the mother tongue of a teacher and students	2	14.29
Combination of different grades	1	7.14
Indiscipline due to the COVID-19 pandemic	1	7.14
Problem with making sentences in English	1	7.14
Problem with English comprehension	1	7.14

Table 7 shows that 28.57% of the responses ($f = 4$) were directly associated with challenges in English pronunciation and self-adequacy in English, while the difference between a teacher’s and students’ mother tongues accounted for 14.29% of the cases ($f = 2$). Apart from these, the other explanations included the combination of different grades, lack of discipline brought on by the pandemic, challenges with sentence construction in English, and challenges with English comprehension. In this regard, some participants’ comments are as follows:

Ömer: “As I answered the first question, I do not have much proficiency in English.”

Ali: “In the classroom, children generally have challenges with pronunciation. As a result, we have more problems with reading and writing in English; because, their alphabets are different. We do not work mainly on writing in primary school two, three and four. We have some difficulties with pronunciation. The child has some difficulty in reading what he sees.”

Ahmet: “Children studying at village schools do not have a good command of Turkish, when teaching English. First of all, they need to learn Turkish well so that we can teach English more easily. Unfortunately, today's literacy problem is at its peak. We are trying to fix it, but it just doesn't work in English. Infrastructure must be provided in Turkish. Children need to learn to read and write properly in Turkish so that we can pronounce English words better.”

Fatih: “... especially last year, as students were away from school due to the effect of the pandemic, there was a regression and a problem of falling behind not only in English courses, but also in other courses.”

Garnering Attention

Six codes were developed under this theme to describe the activities used by multigrade teachers to capture students' attention in English courses.

Table 8. Activities Used to Capture Students' Attention in English Courses

<i>Garnering Attention</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Drama	4	21.05
Digital tools	4	21.05
Concrete materials	4	21.05
Listening activities	3	15.79
Motivational speech	3	15.79
Repetition	1	5.26

Table 8 indicates that while 15.79% of the responses ($f = 3$) were found to be listening activities and motivational speech, 21.05% of the responses ($f = 4$) were drama, digital tools, and concrete materials, respectively. Additionally, a different response claimed that repetitions were used to garner attention and, they served as reinforcement. In this context, below are some expressions from some of the multigrade teachers:

Zeynep: “We usually use songs, or as I said, there are materials that can attract their attention more. These can be puppets. I would say different materials. In other words, even the simplest balloon can become a remarkable material for children. According to our usage style.”

İrem: “They are more interested in drama. I usually tell it through drama because it is something more visual. I can do it again using images. It is a little more fun than the normal narration. That is why, these activities work better for me.”

Ali: “In order to attract the attention of the children, there are some game sites in English that I opened online. I'm trying to play them for the app. Apart from that, there are listening texts. Sometimes I try to find images by the relevant subject matter.”

İbrahim: “In one-on-one dialogue with students, I emphasize how important English is. Because the language they use is Arabic. They speak Arabic at home with their families, but I try to explain to the student that this is not enough. The language spoken in the world is English and why it is necessary to learn English. In fact, I say that it is basically the language of the world, that everyone speaks this language.”

Assessment and Evaluation

Seven codes were developed under the theme for the assessment and evaluation process in English courses.

Table 9. Assessment and Evaluation Practices for English Courses

<i>Assessment and Evaluation</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Written examination	6	33.33
Quiz	4	22.22
Activities in textbooks	3	16.67
Educational games	2	11.11
Digital tools	1	5.55
Worksheets	1	5.55

Speaking	1	5.55
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Written examinations accounted for 33.33% of the answers ($f = 6$), and quizzes for 22.22% ($f = 4$), as indicated by Table 9. However, digital tools, worksheets, and speaking were mentioned by 5.55% ($f = 1$) of the respondents, respectively. Examples from the statements of some multigrade teachers are given below:

Özge: “I administer two exams during the semester. In addition, I sometimes hold two or three quizzes on the relevant subject matter. I usually apply it in English writing skill. I give grades according to their communication in English courses. This is how I measure and evaluate.”

İrem: “... if you are going to teach something to understand whether they have learned or not, I repeat this every day and I try to get feedback by asking them every day. Apart from this, of course, we measure their success through written examinations, filling in the blanks, and multiple choice exams in a way we know.

Yavuz: “I assess how well students are able to complete the textbook evaluation sections.”

Teacher Suggestions

Under this theme, 9 codes were created from the suggestions given by multigrade teachers to improve TEFL.

Table 10. Teacher Suggestions to Improve TEFL

<i>Teacher Suggestions</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Assignment of an English teacher	5	31.25
Resource enrichment	4	25
Providing a technological environment	1	6.25
Increasing English course time	1	6.25
International experience	1	6.25
Emphasizing the importance of English	1	6.25
Embedding English into daily routine	1	6.25
Reducing the number of classes that study together	1	6.25
Training or supporting course	1	6.25

According to Table 10, 31.25% of the responses ($f = 5$) emphasized that an English teacher should be assigned to multigrade classes, while 25% ($f = 4$) stated that the English resources should be improved. The quotes from a few multigrade teachers are below:

Özge: “I think that the most important condition for teaching English in multigrade classes is that English teachers should attend this class; because, TEFL is a field that requires specialization. I think that's the biggest thing. This is what should happen.”

Yavuz: “I think subject matter teachers, namely English teachers, should be assigned to English courses in multigrade classes. Additional course regulations of schools with combined classes should be arranged accordingly. Even if there are training or support courses etc. to be given to classroom teachers, I don't think they can teach English as efficient as subject matter teachers do.”

Fatma: “First of all, it should be developed more technically because video, visual, song, these are very important. Without smart boards, computers and internet, they inevitably fall behind. Also, textbooks can be enriched a little more.”

Fatih: “First of all, to reduce the number of classes that study together. At least two classes are united anyway, even that is not good. The teaching of the course is not easy as the number of classes studying together increases.”

Additional Notes

Ten codes were developed under this theme for the additional notes that the multigrade teachers intended to state.

Table 11. Additional Notes of Multigrade Teachers Regarding TEFL

<i>Additional Notes</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
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Pre-service training	4	28.57
The issue of the native language of teachers and students	2	14.29
Familiarity of subject matters	1	7.14
Equality of opportunity	1	7.14
Differences of English level	1	7.14
Lack of English use in daily life	1	7.14
Game-based approach	1	7.14
Enriching the content of coursebooks	1	7.14
Material development based on practice	1	7.14
Reducing the number of coexisting classes	1	7.14

Table 10 shows that 28.57% of the responses placed a strong emphasis on pre-service education, and 14.29% (f = 2) were classified as having a mother tongue issue. Some of the participant statements are provided below:

İbrahim: “Classroom teachers are not offered English teaching courses in their pre-service training. English was taught only at a simple and superficial level. I can teach Turkish and Mathematics very well, but I cannot teach English. They didn't teach us how to teach English.”

Zeynep: “I would definitely recommend and would like for multigrade teachers to pursue coursework during their pre-service training related to teaching English.”

Ahmet: “... what I would like to add is that English is a world language. English is already difficult for our children. We should provide opportunities for our children to love English. If we provide opportunities to our children, all children are a treasure, I think they can achieve good things in line with their possibilities.”

Kaan: ... “I think it is very, very difficult to study English in a multigrade class. In other words, because the level of children is really low, they come to us without knowing Turkish anyway. First of all, we teach Turkish.”

Conclusion

The results show that the perception of self-inadequacy in TEFL is noted among multigrade teachers owing to their lack of training in teaching English during their undergraduate education. Therefore, most teachers acknowledged that they benefited from online classroom activities as they were easy to implement. Despite this, they still preferred to use the traditional measurement tools in their English courses.

Mother tongues of students and pronunciation challenges were highlighted as critical issues in TEFL. It was concluded that the self-efficacy levels of teachers and students were low, which was a reason for the pronunciation challenge. Teachers considered themselves the least competent in listening and speaking skills, which hampered their competence in teaching the English language, depending on the pronunciation problem. The difficulties arise because the native language of many students in multigrade classes is not Turkish, which has also affected their teaching of English. Teachers stated that they focused more on teaching Turkish to cope with the problem, and that teaching English remained the second priority. Additionally, it has been concluded that 2 hours a week for English courses, are insufficient in multigrade classes.

Although multigrade teachers leaned towards teaching English in multigrade settings, they emphasized that teaching a foreign language required expertise, and they laid weight on the requirement for the assignment of English language teachers in multigrade classes. Finally, to improve the effectiveness of teaching English in multigrade classes, it was concluded that the multigrade teachers should be provided the required training; English support materials should be made available in English courses, and necessary modifications should be made to the curriculum planing in multigrade classes.

Suggestions

The following needs to be applied to improve the effectiveness of TEFL in multigrade classes:

- In-service training can be compulsory for multigrade teachers who have not engaged

in pre-service training in TEFL.

- Teacher's guidebooks can be designed specifically for teaching English in multigrade classes.
- Multigrade settings can be arranged so that teachers can benefit from the advantages of technology.
- Audio-visual material support can be provided for teaching English in multigrade classes.
- Awareness of multigrade teachers can be raised about digital games for English courses.
- Adjustments can be made in the English curriculum and textbooks for multigrade classes. Weekly English course hours can be increased, and the activities in the English books can be diversified.
- English language teachers who work in nearby schools can be assigned to multigrade classes for English courses.
- Teacher candidates whose mother tongue is not Turkish can be given a separate training on TEFL during their undergraduate education.
- Those who constitute the study group of this research are the teachers who graduated before 2018, and have not received training on TEFL during their pre-service training. Thus, a comparative study on TEFL can be conducted among teachers who graduated and were appointed before and after 2018.

Discussion

The present study shed light on the perspectives of multigrade teachers of TEFL in multigrade classrooms. The study also examined the English language skills for which multigrade teachers regard themselves as relatively more competent when teaching English. The foreign language skills, teaching materials, digital games, classroom seating arrangements, methods and techniques, classroom challenges, garnering attention, assessment and evaluation, teacher suggestions, and additional notes emerged as ten themes from the interviews with the participants. While most of these studies focused on how to teach in multigrade classrooms, there is little research on multigrade teachers' perspectives on TEFL. That is, the topic of this study has not been sufficiently researched, based on previous studies in the relevant literature. Only a few researchers, such as Doğan (2020), Eze (2015), Karıcı and Vural (2011), Şevik (2011), Ünal (2016) have conducted studies on teaching English in multigrade settings.

The first question revealed that the majority of the multigrade teachers regarded themselves as relatively more competent in grammar skills rather than other skills when teaching English. More specifically, the multigrade teachers indicated that listening and speaking skills were the least preferred. This seemed logical since most of the multigrade teachers also complained about the insufficiency of English instructional materials to assist them in applying more interactive activities based on the needs and varying levels of the students. However, this finding contrasted with Ünal's (2016) study, which showed that teachers strived to overcome their inadequacies in teaching English by avoiding grammar teaching as a solution.

The results of the second question indicated that most of the teachers preferred to use technological devices when teaching English. Interestingly, only one participant stated that she used a textbook in English courses. This may be because teachers do not consider English textbooks sufficient for instructional purposes. However, this finding contrasted with the study of Doğan et al. (2020), which showed that many participants benefitted from prepared materials, such as English coursebooks and worksheets, when teaching English.

The results of the third question revealed that the majority of multigrade teachers generally did not change the classroom seating arrangement in English courses, and their students had fixed peer-seating. This may be because there are no factors that affect students' learning in terms of distance or small class size; however, allowing students of varying ages and heights to sit in a row can have negative consequences in the classroom. Using U-shaped seating may be more beneficial for students sitting in the back of the classroom. For instance, in the study of Ocakçı and Samancı (2019), some

teachers reported that they preferred the U-arrangement so that all the students could easily see the board and the teacher.

The fourth question revealed that the vast majority of the multigrade teachers never utilized any digital games when teaching English. This might be because the multiclassrooms are located in rural areas, which have a lack of technology infrastructure. EBA and Wordwall were used as equally preferred platforms among teachers. Ünal's (2016) study showed that some multigrade teachers preferred games for teaching vocabulary in EBA.

In response to the fifth question, the multigrade teachers commonly stated that they utilized drama as a teaching technique to engage students in English courses. This aligned with a finding in Doğan et al.'s (2020) study, which investigated classroom teachers' perceptions of EFL courses.

In response to the sixth question, which was related to the challenges of TEFL in multigrade classes, most of the multigrade teachers stated that they generally met difficulties with English pronunciation. They also acknowledged that they perceived themselves as being incompetent to teach English. This finding is bolstered by a discovery in Karıcı and Vural (2011), which revealed that teachers generally considered themselves incompetent to teach English.

The seventh question asked what multigrade teachers do to attract students' attention in English courses. The overwhelming majority of the respondents emphasized drama, digital tools and concrete materials.

According to the eighth question, which inquired how the multigrade teachers carried out assessment and evaluation in TEFL, the most common assessment tool cited was written examinations, followed by quizzes. This result might suggest that teachers favor conventional methods of assessment and evaluation over alternative tools. Therefore, teachers need to be made aware of alternative assessment and evaluation approaches for TEFL.

The ninth question, which involves recommendations of multigrade teachers about the improvement of TEFL, revealed that the assignment of an English language teacher in multigrade classes and the availability of a variety of resources were the most frequently mentioned recommendations. This result is due to the fact that multigrade teachers regard both themselves and their textbooks as inadequate for teaching English. Similarly, in Şefik's (2011) study, multigrade teachers were unaware during their undergraduate education that they would be teaching English in the future, and they perceived it as an injustice for students to teach English on their own.

Finally, when they were asked if they had additional views related or unrelated to the relevant questions, the majority of the teachers underlined that training for TEFL should be provided during undergraduate education. The fact that English courses are grammar-oriented during pre-service education means that teacher candidates may not have a sufficient command of English to help prospective students promote their receptive skills, productive skills, English pronunciation and intonation. Thus, various methods, techniques and strategies on how to teach English as a foreign language should be included in the pre-service training of multigrade teachers.

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