

İNGİLİZCE'NİN DİĞER DERSLERLE BİRLEŞTİRİLEREK ÖĞRETİLMESİ

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ÖZET

Bu makale, dil dersi ve diğer branş derslerinin birleştirilerek, ilkokul öğrencilerine yabancı dil öğretiminde uygulanan 'birleştirme yöntemi' hakkındadır. Dil dersi ve diğer branş derslerinin birleştirilmesinin, uygulamanın doğru yapıldığı zaman çoğunlukla başarılı olduğu vurgulanmaktadır.

İlk olarak, bunun faydalı bir yöntem olduğu anlatılmakta ve bunu etkin bir şekilde uygulamanın yolları tartışılmaktadır. Daha sonra, bu yöntemde öğretmenin rolü anlatılmaktadır. Son olarak, yabancı dilin sınıf öğretmeni tarafından öğretilmesi gerektiği ifade edilmektedir. Bunun mümkün olmadığı durumlarda ise, dil öğretmeni ve sınıf öğretmenin birbirleri ile işbirliği içinde çalışmalarını önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler : Birleşme, yabancı dil, ilkokul öğrencileri, diğer branş dersleri, sınıf öğretmeni, dil öğretmeni, işbirliği.

THE INTEGRATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE WORK WITH THE OTHER SCHOOL SUBJECTS

ABSTRACT

This paper talks about an integration approach, which adopted to teaching a foreign language to young children, that is the integration of language work and other school subjects. It is suggested that the integration of subjects and foreign language is often possible when it is applied appropriately.

Firstly, the reasons of presenting this approach as a beneficial one are justified and then the ways of applying this approach effectively are discussed. Moreover, the role of the foreign language teacher in this approach is described. Finally, it is proposed that the foreign language should be taught by the class teacher. If this not possible, it is offered that foreign language teachers and class teachers should work co-operatively.

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D.YILMAZ/İNGİLİZCE'NİN DİĞER DERSLERLE BİRLEŞTİRİLEREK...

Key Words : Integration, foreign language, young children, other school subjects, class teacher, language teacher, co-operation.

INTRODUCTION

Learning a second language is crucial in today's modern world. Parents who are aware of this fact desire their children to learn a foreign language in order to prepare them for the future world. It is proposed that it is better to start learning a foreign language at an early age as the children are better at achieving a language. However, teaching young children requires a different approach, different teaching methods and techniques. It is essential for the teachers of young learners to be aware of this difference. Working with young learners demands knowledge of educational theory and practise as well as knowledge of psychology.

In this paper, I am going to talk about an approach which can be beneficial in primary schools, that is integration of language work and other subjects. Firstly I am going to explain why this approach is a good idea, and then I am going to tell how it can be applied effectively. In the second section, I will tackle with the role of the teacher in this approach. I will propose that English should be taught by the class teacher. Where this is unrealistic, I suggest the English teacher works with the class teachers. Why is integration a good idea?

Language has a functional role in human's life. It is not just a set of information. However, in language learning, giving the target structure or function has often become important. Activities tend to isolate language items which are taught and practised for their own sake. Thus, language learning becomes a mechanistic process. Moreover, this involves learners in an artificial approach to language. We can avoid this danger by way of communication.

During the last twenty years, in the field of language teaching, we have seen a great emphasis on communication which also includes the meaningful interaction between people. Language learning, therefore, is not the learning and

D.YILMAZ/İNGİLİZCE'NİN DİĞER DERSLERLE BİRLEŞTİRİLEREK..

practising of new grammatical forms anymore.

Widdowson (1978) claims that language teaching methodology should link language learning and teaching with learners' everyday experience. This idea becomes very important for young learners who are handling a very new situation and trying to cope with school life, new ideas and information. They are, in a way, bombarded with so many new things. It is accepted that a different approach is needed for teaching children. Because it is obvious that children are different from adult learners in many respects. Clark (1990) offers some points about the difference between children and adults in learning a language. For example, children have not developed a fully formed system of their own language, as well as some concepts. Generally, the children's span of concentration is very narrow and they can get bored easily. Although they learn things at an unbelievable pace, they forget quickly. Therefore, the approach which is going to be discussed can help teachers to teach young children effectively.

However, it is essential to define the situation of English learning in primary schools. Children may be learning the language in the natural environment where the language is spoken. Probably they have to learn this language in order to communicate with their friends and teachers. They need to use their knowledge of English in the playground as well as in other lessons. However, some children will be learning the language as a foreign language. For example, in Turkey, in private schools English is taught as a foreign language. Turkish children can only meet with this language in the classroom. They do not hear it often and do not have the chance to use it. Thus, the English teachers should adopt the most productive learning situation for their students in Turkey.

It is important to find ways of developing learning activities which are enjoyable, interesting and stimulating and also support language learning. Many researchers propose that linking language learning with other subjects may help the teachers to achieve this situation.

D.YILMAZ/İNGİLİZCE'NİN DİĞER DERSLERLE BİRLEŞTİRİLEREK...

Children usually appreciate where their learning fits into their experience and what is real and concrete. In language learning this is vital. The concept of a foreign language being real like their own language is very important and should be established as quickly as possible at the beginning of the course. A child should be given a context in order to make learning meaningful. If the context is familiar and they think it is useful, learning can be more efficient. Using the other subjects in language class provides the children with an authentic purpose for their language learning and learning in general. It is suggested that in this situation children are no longer learning a language for its' own sake, but in order to extend their horizons in a cross-curricular way.

Thus, in order to make language learning easy and enjoyable for young children, teachers should relate it to their experience of everyday life either in school or at home. They can use topics and themes that interest children. The curriculum can be designed to have links between English work and other subjects. In English lessons teachers can use material or teaching methods from other subjects. The teaching of English cannot be isolated from the rest of the primary curriculum. In Britain integration of subjects in the curriculum is not a new method in primary schools. There is great emphasis on task based learning during which the children collaborate to solve problems, make models or retell stories. There are many benefits of integrating English study with the learning of other subjects.

Garvie (1991) argues that the whole curriculum can be used for each child's benefit, taking into consideration the total view of the child. Since the teachers know the children's mental and psychological development, they can foster the growing sensibility of children to one direction.

One of the most important reasons for the idea of integration being beneficial is the fact that children should see the foreign language as a very normal and natural thing. If they think that it is something totally different from other subjects, they can hardly understand the language learning. They should

D.YILMAZ/INGILIZCE'NİN DİĞER DERSLERLE BİRLEŞTİRİLEREK...

know it as something they can actually use. It should be an ordinary subject.

If the teachers want to make the language learning meaningful they can easily use other subjects like history, art or physical education. The students will be able to use the language in a real context. They will not only learn new vocabulary and new grammar but will actually use them.

The integration of language and other subjects reinforces conceptual development. There will be continuity between the subjects. This sense of continuity gives children confidence which is very motivating. It is clear that there will be a transfer of skills and knowledge from subjects like maths and geography to the language. This transfer helps children to "learn how to learn" which includes thinking strategies as well as study skills. Brewster (1993) claims that "learning to learn" leads children to a conscious development of their own learning strategies, so they become more effective, independent learners. It helps children to see a continuity between the learning of English and other subjects in the curriculum.

Halliwell (1992) suggests that besides students, teachers will also benefit from using existing skills in new areas and from meeting familiar ways of working in unfamiliar teaching situations. They will go from known to unknown subjects. Thus, the teaching will be easier for the teachers.

Integration approach gives children a wider viewpoint of why they are learning English. In this way, they do not see English as an isolated subject. Relating English learning to other subjects can help children to see that they are increasing their knowledge instead of simply learning a language without any real context. Brewster suggests that it reinforces certain key content areas and concepts which cross subject boundaries and underpins more general learning across the curriculum. It can maximise the limited time often given to foreign language learning because the teacher will have the chance to review the relevant subjects in the language class.

It has become a very important matter in the teaching of English that

D.YILMAZ/İNGİLİZCE'NİN DİĞER DERSLERLE BİRLEŞTİRİLEREK...

students should be exposed to authentic spoken and written English. Because the students need to be able to cope with real English. For primary school students the content of other subjects may serve as authentic materials, which are taught in the foreign language. In this way they can see the actual use of the language. Generally, adults have some purposes for learning English like getting a job, travelling or communicating with people of other cultures, or if they are high school students, they may be motivated by getting good marks or a degree. But young children are not aware of all these things. Clark (1990) argues that they have few functional needs that might suggest priorities in terms of sequencing learning. Children see little purpose in studying sentences that do not make sense in their world, yet they do not understand the purpose of language to communicate. They are probably learning only because their parents want them to do. They are not aware of the functions of language. Therefore, using the other subjects in the language class may present an example of the function of language. In this way, they do not learn the grammar structures or vocabulary in a meaningless way.

Bloor (1991) suggests that linking English work with other subjects is a way of extending opportunities for natural language practise since the other subjects offer a different context for interaction.

There are many views on what children of primary school age should be learning as well as how they should learn. There are many different approaches to establishing the kind of curriculum and methodology that is most suitable for young children. It is claimed that learning in primary schools is firmly in the hands of the teachers, both in terms of content and in the way the content is learned.

Some teachers have used English very successfully as part of other lessons in the curriculum when they think it is suitable to do so. For example Bloor (1991) reports a Spanish school in which a geography lesson on Spanish exports involved the children discussing the words for items like fruit and vegetables that

D.YILMAZ/İNGİLİZCENİN DİĞER DERSLERLE BİRLEŞTİRİLEREK..

are normally exported to Britain. Moreover in the Nuffield Project, it was emphasised that from the start, French should, as far as possible, be an integrated subject in the primary curriculum. Connections should be made wherever possible with other subjects.

Furthermore, the teachers are encouraged to use some active methods that are used for other subjects. This leads to enrichment of the primary curriculum. Now it is worth explaining how we can integrate language work with the study of other subjects in an effective way.

Nevertheless, some teachers may think that it is very difficult and complicated to do this. In fact it may be very easy and valuable. Halliwell (1992) suggests that there are common elements in language learning and other subjects. Thus, the integration can be done in a simple way.

If the teachers want to link English to other subjects, they have to provide a meaningful context and purpose for pupils' language use to ensure genuine interaction whenever possible. A classroom task is chosen according to children's interests. The teaching should be supported by using visual aids, charts and maybe puppets. The children must be involved in the activity.

Primary teachers generally use diagrams or charts to handle complex information. In particular in maths and science lessons children encounter diagrammatic information and learn how to read and express ideas diagrammatically. The handling of information in this way is a common element of language work and other subjects. It can be a starting point for integration of subjects. In learning repeated patterns are used commonly. Pattern is fundamental to understanding and learning. It is the way we make sense of the outer physical world that surrounds us. For the teaching of maths and science, patterns are very important. We can only understand language by way of patterns. For example, the grammar of a language is a set of patterns. Thus, we can use this sense of pattern in language activities. It can be another starting point for integration.

D.YILMAZ/İNGİLİZCE'NİN DİĞER DERSLERLE BİRLEŞTİRİLEREK...

In language learning, in order to understand, seeing is important. Moreover, teachers make use of this matter when teaching other subjects. Hence, this can be another potential source of integration. Another common element of language learning and other subjects is that teachers can use non-verbal response which is a way of handling information without using any verbal language.

Some of the targets defined for maths and science such as locating, classifying, grouping, sequencing, measuring and comparing can easily be applied to foreign language activities. The amount of language required for such activities will not be discouraging for teachers and students. The reinforcement of the notions are crucial to the child's development of concepts.

Since there are many common elements in the teaching of foreign language and other subjects, the integration can be done easily. If it is done properly, the result may be sound. There are many ways of integrating language work with other subjects. However, it is extremely important to decide what teachers can do in practise to foster integration. The use of English can be arranged in different ways. Firstly, English can be used as material for other lessons. For example in maths, if children are going to learn how to record information diagrammatically, the survey which is required can be done in English. In language, they can practise question and answer forms and they can collect information for maths. Afterwards, they can use the results of the survey in the maths lesson in their mother tongue. Thus, they use the language for a purpose and they become aware of the functions of question and answer forms.

Secondly, the teacher can simply use the techniques of other subjects in language work. For example, the teacher can use the mathematical concept of intersecting sets as a repetition activity in a meaningful way.

Thirdly, children can be introduced to topics of other subjects in the language class. For example, if they are going to study the history of their town, they can be introduced to the subject in the language class being given the

D.YILMAZ/İNGİLİZCE'NİN DİĞER DERSLERLE BİRLEŞTİRİLEREK...

condition that they need to tell the story of their town to foreign visitors. The opposite can be applied as well. The subject is firstly given and discussed in the mother tongue informing the children that they are going to deal with the same subject in the language class. Therefore, they learn the history of their town and they decide what kind of information a tourist may need. Then, in the language class, they study this subject.

In this way, language can be used for a real learning experience and the lesson can provide a realistic relation between English and the other subjects including the mother tongue.

The teachers can also use stories in order to integrate language work with other subjects. Carefully selected stories can be used to develop other subjects in the curriculum. For example, for a history lesson, the teacher can present a story about prehistoric animals and then the class studies the prehistoric period. A story that fits in some of the concepts and content areas taught in the class can be easily prepared. Garvie (1991) proposes that story can be used as a baseline for a topic based curriculum adding that it would certainly call for an integration of subject areas. Hence, teachers of young children can use stories legitimately in teaching all subjects as well as in foreign language.

A class teacher who teaches all the subjects can easily integrate English and the other subjects, for example geography. If the students are studying the directions and location of their country and neighbouring countries on the map, the subject can be introduced in English. However, the children should be taught from concrete to abstract. The location of a country which is probably studied on the map is an abstract concept for young learners, though it may be attractive due to the aspects of mystery and adventure. Children enjoy playing games on the map which foster their imagination. It may be a good idea to start with introducing the location of their school and house.

They are provided with the map of their town. They are asked to find their school, and show its place in the town. However, it is assumed that they know

D.YILMAZ/İNGİLİZCENİN DİĞER DERSLERLE BİRLEŞTİRİLEREK...

the concept of directions.

Where is your school?

My school is in the North of the town.

Where is your house?

My house is in the West of the town.

Every student can be asked to find his/her house on the map and the class decide which direction it is.

e.g. Asli's house is in the West of the town.

Then they are asked where the post office, council building, hospital etc. are.

The lesson is done on the map. The linguistic aim of the lesson is teaching the connotations of directions and some vocabulary items like council building and hospital. Moreover the structure:

"Where is your house?"

"My house is in the West of the town" is given. The non-linguistic aims are finding places on the map and developing the concept of directions. In the next lesson, a map of Turkey is provided. Firstly the directions are again shown on the map. Then, by showing the map, the phrases are given.

In the West of Turkey there is the Aegean sea.

In the North of Turkey there is the Black Sea.

In the South of Turkey there is the Mediterranean Sea.

In the East of Turkey there is no sea.

Afterwards, this knowledge is reinforced by activities.

1- Find three cities in the West of Turkey and write their names on the board.

The aim is to help them to find the West of the map and then find and record any three cities. They should know the difference between a city and a town. If they write the names of towns they are corrected.

Marmaris is not a city. İzmir is a city.

2-Say where the following cities are:

D.YILMAZ/İNGİLİZCE'NİN DİĞER DERSLERLE BİRLEŞTİRİLEREK...

İzmir Samsun Mersin
Antalya Sinop Muğla

Here again, they have to look at the map and find the cities and decide which direction it is.

3- towns and directions

The graph is drawn on the blackboard. The towns are famous touristic places of Turkey

Directions West South North East

Towns

Kuşadası

Akçaabat

Antakya

Harput

First, the teacher demonstrates,

"Where is Kuşadası?" "It is in the west of Turkey."

Then, the teacher ticks the correct place. The students come to board as pairs, one asks the question, the other finds the town on the map and ticks on the graph. If they can give the correct answer, they gain points. The more answers pairs give, the more points they gain.

This activity can be turned into a competition between the pairs, though the pairs should make co-operation.

4- Guessing Game - Where is X?

A student thinks of a city or town, and tells what it is to the teacher so that the teacher controls the activity.

The class asks questions in order to guess which city it is.

Is it in the west of Turkey?

Is it a town or city?

After they find if it is a town or city and the direction, they try to guess but they

D.YILMAZ/İNGİLİZCE'NİN DİĞER DERSLERLE BİRLEŞTİRİLEREK...

have only three choices. If they repeat the name of the city or town which they have said before, they lose point if they cannot find the place which a student thinks of, that student gains point. This activity may develop memory skills of the students as well as the concept of directions. It also involves competition. During all these activities, they get the chance to see the neighbour countries of Turkey. In the next lesson, they can study the neighbour countries.

The Role of the Teacher in this Approach

Teaching at the primary school requires a special skill and education. Primary school is extremely important in a person's life where he meets an educational institution for the first time. The first impression is created by the teacher. The primary teachers are always the most important people in many children's life. If the children are taught foreign language, teachers must be more careful in choosing their methods and techniques. As Wright (1989) claims, teaching of a foreign language in primary school is not a watered down version of aims and methods used at the secondary level.

The nature of children which is different from high school students is very important for the teachers of young children. However, there is not a single way of teaching young children. A teacher's characteristics might influence the foreign language classes. Teachers in primary schools are likely to be of two kinds. The first type is the class teacher who teaches all subjects to one class, and the second type is a specialist English teacher. If the teacher is the permanent class teacher, they have the ideal situation for integrating English to the other subjects because they know exactly what the class has been studying. However, the problem is that they are not specialist in teaching English skills, although they may be trained to teach young children and are skilled at determining and meeting educational needs. A non-specialist teacher at primary level is not generally good at English. They are not fluent and accurate in their use of English.

If the teacher is a specialist in English, probably he/she has to teach English

D.YILMAZ/İNGİLİZCE'NİN DİĞER DERSLERLE BİRLEŞTİRİLEREK..

in different classes at different age levels. At that time, English teachers are generally less familiar with the educational needs of primary school children. A specialist teacher could find more difficult in integrating English with other studies.

It is essential that primary school teachers should have skills in both areas if they are going to teach foreign language. Teachers of young children should know something about educational theory and practice as well as recent developments in language teaching methodology and psychology.

As it has been discussed so far, children should learn how to use their knowledge of English actually, not only the structures or vocabulary. Therefore, by integrating English work to other subjects a teacher can make English a part of communication. If the teacher of English is also the general class teacher, s/he has wonderful opportunity to integrate the learning of English with the rest of curriculum. This is the ideal situation if the English will take place in the primary curriculum. However, this approach is very demanding for teachers. They should have time to develop lesson plan and they need quite a lot of knowledge of English. Many non-specialist teachers may feel unable to cope with. In that case, primary school teachers can be trained to teach English through in-service training programmes. This is what is really needed, if the school authority wants to give place to English in the curriculum. Because the class teacher is the only one who knows the development of children and what they are learning. Thus, s/he is the most suitable one to teach English to the children.

This may seem unrealistic to apply. However, a specialist teacher has still the chance to integrate his/her work to the other subjects. S/he can contact with the class teacher to find out what the students have been studying. At that time, it is important that the class teacher is willing to collaborate with the English teacher. It is known that working in collaboration always brings a beneficial result. Thus, English teachers should know how to build up close

D.YILMAZ/İNGİLİZCENİN DİĞER DERSLERLE BİRLEŞTİRİLEREK..

working relationship with the subject teachers if they really want to use integration approach.

CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to look at integration approach in the primary schools which suggests the link of English work to the other subjects. It is suggested that the integration of subject and foreign language is often possible when it is done appropriately. Although it may bring heavy demands on the class teachers' time and knowledge of English, the best way of teaching English to primary school students is the teaching done by class teachers. If this seems impossible to put into practice, it is offered that English teachers and class teachers should work co-operatively if they want to use integration approach so that they can carry on an effective teaching.

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D.YILMAZ/İNGİLİZCE'NİN DİĞER DERSLERLE BİRLEŞTİRİLEREK...

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