EXPLORING EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PROJECT-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING IN TURKIYE

TÜRKİYE'DE PROJE TABANLI DİL ÖĞRETİMİNE YÖNELİK İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN ALGILARININ ARAŞTIRILMASI

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ABSTRACT

Project-based language teaching emerged as a learner-centred approach that sustains learning by doing. Although the related research documented the effectiveness of Project-based learning in foreign language instruction, few studies have been directed to evince the perceptions of language teachers about using Project-based learning in teaching EFL. This study aims to investigate the perceptions of EFL teachers on using PBL in English instruction in the Turkey context. For this aim, 77 EFL teachers working at state schools in Turkey voluntarily participated in the study. The data were collected from an online form involving a 16-item questionnaire with open-ended and closed-ended questions. The findings were analysed through quantitative and qualitative analysis. The study revealed that most of the teachers were not familiar with to use PBL in EFL instruction. Moreover, the results yielded reasons for preferring or not preferring PBL in EFL classes. Based on the findings and the implications, suggestions were provided.

ÖZ

Proje-tabanlı dil öğretimi, yaparak öğrenmeyi sağlayan öğrenci merkezli bir yaklaşım olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. İlgili araştırmalar yabancı dil öğretiminde proje tabanlı öğrenmenin etkililiğini gösterse de yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğretiminde Proje tabanlı öğretimin kullanılması ile ilgili birkaç çalışma dil öğretmenlerinin görüşlerini açığa çıkarmaya yönelmiştir. Bu çalışma Türkiye bağlamında İngilizce öğretiminde proje tabanlı öğretimin kullanımı ile ilgili yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğreten öğretmenlerin algılarını araştırmayı hedeflemektedir. Türkiye'deki devlet okullarında çalışan 77 İngilizce öğretmeni çalışmaya gönüllü olarak katılmıştır. Veriler 16 maddelik açık uçlu ve kapalı uçlu sorulardan oluşan bir anketi içeren çevrimiçi form üzerinden toplanmıştır. Bulgular niceliksel ve niteliksel analiz yoluyla incelenmiştir. Çalışma, öğretmenlerin çoğunun İngilizce öğretiminde proje tabanlı öğrenme yöntemini kullanma konusunda yeterince ilgili olmadıklarını göstermiştir. Ayrıca sonuçlar İngilizce sınıflarında proje tabanlı öğrenmenin tercih edilmesinin ve edilmemesinin nedenlerini de ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bulgular ve çıkarımlardan yola çıkarak öneriler sunulmuştur.

Introduction

In recent years, a tendency towards incorporating new pedagogical approaches has grown as an alternative to furnishing classroom activities rather than just abiding by traditional methods and techniques. As one of these innovative approaches, Project-Based Learning (PBL) has gained attention since it incorporates a number of techniques that put the learners at the centre of learning (Blumenfeld, et al., 1991). Basically, PBL refers to learning a specific course content through systematically designed projects in a process-based design. In its broadest sense, PBL is defined as a teaching method that helps learners to improve their competences and knowledge through practising for a definite period to bend over an engaging problem or a complex question. (BIE, URL 1). Within this concept, realizing learning, posing a challenging question, authenticity, active participation, and collaboration are pioneering keywords that describe the process of PBL (Blumenfeld, et al., 1991; Katz, 1992; Thomas, 2000). Theoretical assumptions address that PBL applies to several fields of study for educational purposes (Katz and Chard, 1989) over a sustainable period (Blumenfeld, et al., 1991). In PBL, projects are designed around a driving question and learners strive to address meaningful and authentic solutions to this problem (Thomas, 2000). The process is formulated by systematically defined tasks and products that follow planning, investigating the problem, addressing solutions, and reporting the findings through cooperative tasks (Beckett, 1999). Blumenfeld et al. (1991) also coined the term 'artifacts' to refer to products that can also be revised and progressed during the process. The practicability of PBL also led language teachers to account for its advantages specifically in foreign language teaching. Correspondingly, project-based language teaching (PBLT) has also been spotlighted as a learner-centred approach that yields significant speed advantages when implemented in an organised way in teaching a foreign language (Bakar et al., 2009, Collier, 2017; Fragoulis and Tsiplakides, 2009; Kimsesiz et al., 2017; Larsson, 2001; Legutke and Thomas, 1991; Sadeghi, et al., 2016). Yet, studies that show the tendency of using PBL in EFL teaching in Turkiye is limited. Presenting a documented review of research through emphasising teacher practice may reveal the challenges in implementing PBL in EFL teaching in Turkiye. Thus, one of the main aims of this paper was to survey the perceptions of English teachers on implementing PBL in teaching EFL. The study also aims to investigate the reasons for the limitations in implementing PBLT in EFL teaching in Turkiye. With these aims in mind, the research questions that led to the investigation are:

1- Are Turkish EFL teachers familiar with the implementation of PBL?

2- What are the perceptions of EFL teachers on using PBL?

3- For what reasons do EFL teachers prefer implementing PBL?

4- For what reasons do EFL teachers refrain from implementing PBL?

Literature Review

Project Based Learning

Originally, the use of PBL goes back to Dewey's practical methods that promote learning by doing (Du and Han, 2016; Thomas, 2000). As a constructivist approach, PBL puts learners at the centre of learning and requires the active engagement of the participants to construct knowledge (Erdem, 2002). In PBL, projects are designed around a driving question and learners strive to address meaningful and authentic solutions to this problem (Thomas, 2000). The process is formulated by systematically defined tasks and products that follow planning, investigating the problem, addressing solutions, and reporting the findings through cooperative tasks (Beckett, 1999). Thomas (2000) suggested some criteria to border the lines of a project involving centrality which implies that projects are central to the curriculum; a driving question around which the project is based, constructive investigation for a solution, autonomy that promote learners' engagement, and realism which signs authenticity. Similarly, Blumenfeld, et al., (1991) proposed that a driving question and an artifact representing a product are two main components of PBL. This way, learners may engage enthusiastically in an authentic environment (Kimsesiz, et al., 2017). Incorporating hands-on activities, PBL advocates the discovery of learning that involve interdisciplinary themes, field trips, and experiments in laboratories (Thomas, 2000).

A well-planned and organised process is key to effective implementation in PBL (Nguyen, 2011). Hence, as discussed by Nguyen (2011), several factors need to be accounted to design a well-equipped implementation. Firstly, the project aims should comply with the aims of the curriculum by realising content learning both in process and product. Secondly, learners should be allocated adequate time for the phases in the projects, and they should also be allowed to access available subject matter resources. Another significant aspect of PBL is that it sustains authenticity enabling real-world applications (Erdem, 2002) and concerns (Nguyen, 2011). In this sense, authenticity will provide an opportunity for learners to experience the process from scratch through examination, reflecting ideas, offering solutions, and collaboration with peers (Nguyen, 2011). As one of the most important aspects highlighted by several explanations, collaboration among participants is advocated at almost every step in PBL (Blumenfeld et al., 1991). It is remarkable that PBL enables students to build a social relationship with their peers (Beckett and Slater, 2005; Çırak, 2006) and develops their cognition (Trepianer-Street, 1993) and autonomy (Thomas, 2000). It also promotes self-management strategies of the learners during the completion of a project (Kimsesiz, et al., 2017). It enables each participant to receive opportunities and support to direct project documentation effectively and to engage learners in real-world research practices (Thomas, 2000).

Another highlighted feature of PBL is that it positively affects learning and boosts learner motivation (Beres, 2011; Blumenfeld et al., 1991) which helps learners to better understand the content of the subject matter. PBL also helps learners to enhance their autonomy during engagement in planning the project (Skehan, 1998). Hence, this condition is advocated by the comparison that the more learners feel responsible for their learning, the more autonomous they grow (Nguyen, 2011).

As reflected by Mikulec and Miller (2011), through PBL, learners are engaged with several learning spots such as "experiential and negotiated learning, problem-solving, and research" (p. 81). PBL elicits collaboration among learners from elementary assignments to complicated tasks that take a long period to complete. As reflected by Lee (2002), PBL provides enjoyment as PBL is designed in accordance with the students' interests within a specific context. Hence, for an efficient process, it is offered to focus on areas that appeal to learners' interest and knowledge for a much more effective process of implementation (Lee, 2002).

One important aspect of implementing PBL is that learners need to be provided with adequate guidance and feedback (Katz and Chard, 1989). As sketched by Mikulec and Miller (2011) PBL requires careful planning. Teachers need to organise projects that motivate learners' participation and encourage inquiry (Blumenfeld, et al., 1991) and dedicate sufficient time to a well-organized process (Condliffe, 2016). In the process of implementation, PBL focuses on the learner, and the teacher acts as a "facilitator" and "motivator" (Nguyen, 2011, p. 140). Thus, having detailed knowledge about the content of the project, illustrating the topics, making adaptations when needed, and managing the process in an organised way are all important for an effective outcome (Blumenfeld et al., 1991).

For a systematic implementation, identifying steps in advance of organising project-based learning is essential. As described by Stoller (1997) and Thomas (2000), these steps begin with the identification of the theme or the problem, determining the purposes, structuring the project and the groups, and establishing the work program and the steps. Later, the process is directed to adjusting the measures and assessment instruments and lastly, resource identification for gathering information. After possible solutions are generated, the information and the solutions are analysed, and the product or the project is presented to real audiences. Finally, the process is evaluated in terms of efficacy and deficiencies.

In this context, it is worthwhile to consider the process of evaluation and assessment. Involving multiple criteria for a more reliable evaluation procedure, it covers both cooperation and individual work, participants' problem-solving, metacognitive and interactive skills (Thomas, 2000). As outlined by Thomas (2000), these measures may involve "observation, paper and pencil tests, performance tasks, standardized tests, ratings of student products, student self-reports, and the testimony of experts" (p. 39). There may be some situations that limit the implementation of PBL. The physical conditions of the school, time limitations, difficulty in equating the projects with the syllabus, and the performance of the teachers may cause avoidance in undertaking this multifaceted task (Hertzog, 1994). Relatedly, teachers need to pay regard to these potential restrictions and challenges for a well-organized process.

Project Based Language Teaching (PBLT)

Project-based language teaching was first introduced by Hedge (1993) to promote learner-centred teaching. In project-based language teaching (PBLT) there is a direct relationship between language learning and designing projects (Legutke and Thomas, 1991). As explained by Larsson (2001), once engaged in PBL, learners can develop their communicative, thinking, and problem-solving skills.

As pointed out by Nguyen (2011), PBL enables improving multiple skills to be improved in an "integrated, meaningful, ongoing activity" (p. 141). Research also confirms the effectiveness of PBL in improving speaking skills (Nguyen, 2011; Sirisrimangkorn, 2018; Türker, 2007) and writing performance (Köroğlu, 2011; Musthafa, 1997; Sadeghi, et al., 2016) of EFL learners. Some other studies confirm that PBL enhances learners' socialization (Beckett and Slater, 2005; Çırak, 2006). Comparative studies also confirm that EFL learners taught with PBL outperform those taught with traditional approaches (Köroğlu, 2011; Türker, 2007; Yıldız, 2009).

With reference to PBL for foreign language teaching, Fragoulis and Tsiplakides (2009) implicated that as a source of inspiration and encouragement to learners, teachers can achieve pedagogical aims through knowledge of reformed teaching methods, and voluntariness to work with innovative teaching practice rather than just continuing with non-traditional teaching practices. According to Collier (2017), there may be some challenges that need to be considered involving scaffolding activities in the L2, time limitation to maintain all tasks, and lack of teacher knowledge about the use of PBL. However, running practice, collaboration with other involved or experienced teachers, and ongoing examination of successful projects can pave the way for a much more effective PBL implementation (Collier, 2017; Peterson and Nassaji, 2016).

Aiming to investigate whether anxiety and inadequate motivation could affect the willingness to communicate, Farouck (2016) used PBL to increase the motivation of learners and content relevance. Grouping students to conduct fieldwork activities in English, learners were directed to deal with content and peers through Web 2.0 environments. They also engaged in communicative tasks and presented their projects in the classroom supplemented with peer feedback. The study showed that students could develop language and evaluation skills for presentation. It was also found that learners' communication anxiety was diminished. Moreover, learners' language and evaluation skills for the presentation were also improved. In another study that investigated and compared ESL teachers' and learners' beliefs and attitudes toward PBL in L2 classrooms, Peterson and Nassaji (2016) collected data from 118 participants of whom 88 were students and 30 were teachers. The data were gathered through interviews and parallel written questionnaires. The findings demonstrated that both teachers and students showed positive attitudes towards PBL and marked several advantages of PBL in language learning compared to traditional approaches. The participants also figured significant points when implementing a project-based design. As a result, Peterson and Nassaji (2016) emphasized the importance of teachers' education about the current teaching approaches that focus collaboration and learner participation. More recently, Bakar et al. (2019) found out that PBL proved to be a suitable and enjoyable approach to teaching English and effective for learners with low proficiency in English. Bakar et al. (2019) also highlighted that meticulous planning, guided instructional approach, and the right implementation can bear profitable outcome.

In the review of the related literature and the research, PBL emerges as a fruitful approach in several ways not only for a variety of pedagogies (Katz and Chard, 1989; Thomas, 2000) but also for EFL teaching (Bakar et al., 2009, Collier, 2017; Fragoulis and Tsiplakides, 2009; Kimsesiz et al., 2017; Larsson, 2001; Legutke and Thomas, 1991; Sadeghi, et al., 2016). Despite promising results, little research has documented the perception of EFL teachers in organising activities in a project-based design (Kemaloğlu Er, 2022). Despite the small scale, this study attempts to fill this gap in the literature.

Methodology

Research design

The analysis of the research questions requires the operation of both qualitative and quantitative analysis. Hence, the study is based on a mixed-method design as this type of design enables different combinations of qualitative and quantitative research for data collection and analysis (Dörnyei, 2007).

Participants

77 Turkish EFL teachers voluntarily participated in the study. 64 of the participants were female (83%) and 13 were male (17%). Their teaching experience ranged between 1 – 35 years (M=14,4) and their age ranged between 23-57 (M=37). For the distribution of the questionnaire, convenience sampling was employed as it is practical (Creswell, 2007) to reach to the volunteering English teachers to participate in the study. The participants were all non-native English teachers working at state or private schools at different levels all around Turkiye. Nearly half of the participants (*n*=33, 44%) reported that they work in a secondary school and other participants stated that they work in a primary school (*n*=22, 28%) and high school (*n*=22, 28%). The distribution of their department of graduation elicits that most of the participants were graduates of English Language Teaching departments (*n*=63, 82%) and a few of the participants (*n*=7, 9%) were graduates of English Language Literature and other departments.

Instrument

The instrument used in the study consists of 16 items that cover attitudinal questions. Briefly, attitudinal questions examine the attitudes, ideas, beliefs, and interest of the people taking part in a questionnaire (Dörnyei, 2007). Questions 1-5 covered demographic information about the participants. Questions 6-16 asked participants to clarify their general perceptions about the use of PBLT in teaching EFL. Questions 7, 8, 9, and 11 required a yes-no reply, and Q12 and Q14 involved multiple selections of answers. Participants were also invited to provide reflections in open-ended questions (Q13, Q15, and Q16) about the use of PBLT in EFL teaching. The questionnaire was adapted from a questionnaire by Liu, et al. (2021) who focused on investigating the perceptions of EFL instructors of task-based language teaching in China. Their instrument also involved 16 items covering the same procedures of investigation mentioned above. For the content validity of the items in the questionnaire on PBLT, the item-object congruence (IOC) was used by two independent scholars to check the quality of the items in the questionnaire. The IOC Index mean of scored 1.00 for each part in the questionnaire (Turnet & Carlson, 2003). The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for internal consistency reliability of the items (*n*=7) in Q12 was calculated α =.73 and the items (*n*=7) in Q14 was calculated α =.82.

Data collection

The questionnaire used in the study was designed in an online data collection program. The data was collected through this online questionnaire form supplemented by a link that was forwarded to participants by a social media program supported by smartphones. The online questionnaire link (see the appendix) was sent to over 100 English language teachers and eventually, 77 of them contributed to the study.

Data analysis

For the analysis of the quantitative data, descriptive analysis was employed and for the quantitative data analysis a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was adopted. The descriptive analysis of the items 6-12 and item 14 involved frequency and percentage values of the responses as specific measures. As the questions 13, 15, and 16 involved qualitative analysis, thematic analysis was applied to get the gist of the responses. Thematic analysis deals with "identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 35). Hence, the data were read for two times for comprehending the general trend of the data. Later, codes were generated from the data and initial themes were formed. Finally, the data was contextualized after labelling the themes. Furthermore, total word count and the distribution of top 10 words in the transcript reflected by the participants in open-ended questions were also analysed through an online word counter system for the qualitative data in the study. Irrelevant words such as 'the' or 'and' were not included in the analysis of the data.

Procedure

For the first phase of the study, items in the questionnaire were identified and designed. As the questionnaire used in the study was adapted from a questionnaire that focused on the implementation of task-based language learning (Liu et al., 20219, the wording of the theme was changed to match the implementation of project-based language learning. The order of the questions was designed in the same way as it was on the original survey. Yet

the fourth item that asked participants to elicit whether they were teaching English for English majors or non-English majors was eliminated as this question was irrelevant to the course of this study. On addition, question 16 was also removed as it asked a consent for interview which is not involved in this study. However, department of graduation and the school type where the participants serve as an English teacher was added to the demographic information part in the questionnaire. After the refinement of the questionnaire, it was forwarded to two different scholars to review the questions and evaluate in terms of consistency and relevance. Later, after the confirmation from the scholars through the content validity measure, the online link was sent to participants. After three weeks of data collection, the results were analysed employing both qualitative and quantitative analysis. The reliability analysis was operated through a statistical package program to measure the internal consistency of the items (n=7) in Q12 and Q14. After this process, the findings were reported.

Findings

In response to Q6 (Are you familiar with PBLT in teaching English?), nearly half of the participants (n=36, 47%) reported that they have a little familiarity, and some of them (n=16, 21%) reported that they were not very familiar with this method. Moreover, a few of the participants (n=8, 10%) stated that they were not familiar at all. On the other hand, some of the teachers (n=17, 22%) revealed that they were very familiar with PBLT. The distribution of responses to 7, 8, and 9 are given in Figure 1 below.
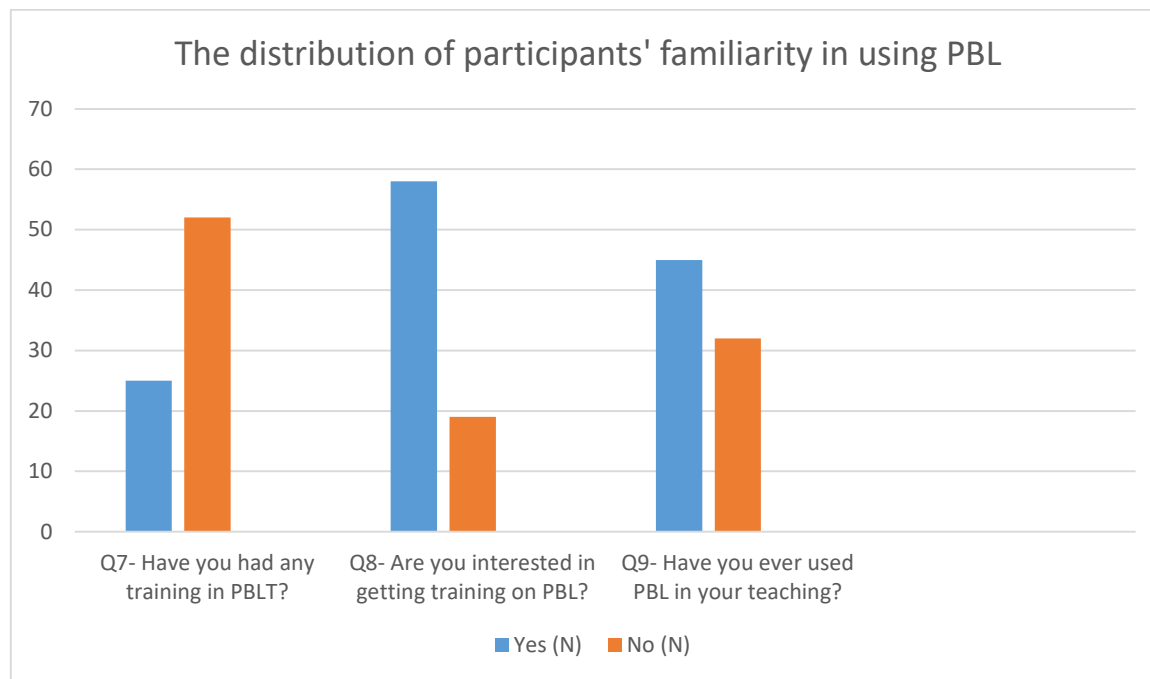

Figure 1. The distribution of participants' familiarity in using PBL in teaching EFL

In response to Q7, more than half of the participants (n=52, 68%) revealed that they did not have any training in the use of PBLT in language teaching. For Q8, the majority of the participants (n=58, 75%) stated that they were interested in getting some training on the use of PBLT. With reference to Q9, most of the participants (n=45, 58%) noted that they also used PBL in teaching English.

Q10 interrogated the frequency of implementing PBLT and the results figure that nearly half of the participants (n=29, 38%) revealed that they never used it. Similarly, some of the participants (n=27, 35%) noted that they use PBLT less than once in every 10 lessons. Few of the teachers (n=14, 18%) reflected that they use PBLT about once in every 6-10 lessons. Yet, very few of the teachers (n=7, 9%) reported using this method once in every 2-5 lessons. The common frequency of implementing PBLT shows that it was rarely used in English classes by the participants.

In response to Q11, more than half of the participants (*n*=42, 55%) reflected that they do not use PBLT in teaching English.

Table 2. Reasons for Implementing PBL in EFL classes

Option	Frequency	%
PBL increases learners' academic growth.	32	42
PBL progresses learners' interactive skills.	55	71
PBL activates learners' needs and interests.	46	60
PBL improves learners' autonomy	24	31
PBL provides learners with a collaborative learning environment.	42	55
PBL is suitable for small group work.	27	35
PBL grants a relaxed environment to sustain the target language use.	36	47

In response to Q12, participants opted for the reasons for implementing PBL in teaching English. As displayed in table 2, the pioneering options involved that PBL improves learners' interactive skills (*n*=55, 71%), activates learners' needs and interests (*n*=46, 60%), and creates a collaborative learning environment (*n*=42, 55%). Nearly half of the participants clicked that PBL helps learners for academic growth (*n*=32, 42%), provides learners with a relaxed atmosphere to increase target language use (*n*=36, 47%), and fosters learner autonomy (*n*=24, 31%). Moreover, some of the participants pointed out the idea that PBL was suitable for implementation in a small group of learners (*n*=27, 35%).

In response to Q13 which asked participants to reflect on other reasons for implementing PBL in EFL instruction, P. 61 noted that PBL enables learner participation providing learning by doing and improving the speaking skills of the participants.

"PBL enables learners to actively participate. It also promotes learning by doing. When we implement a project-based approach for a specific topic, students learn the related vocabulary easily. We plan the presentation with appropriate speech items for learners' level. So, it also motivates them in speaking" (P. 61).

Another participant (P. 22) described that PBL is a good alternative for motivating learners, especially children.

"It cannot be used as the main approach in teaching a language, but some specific techniques are highly applicable for project-based learning. Students focus on a certain topic, and they learn it well. To increase motivation and speaking, and to arrange activities that promote learner participation, PBL can be a fine alternative. Especially with children who need movement in the classroom" (P. 22).

In response to Q14 which asked the reasons for refraining from using PBLT in English classes, the results are as follows:

Table 3. Reasons for refraining from using PBL in teaching EFL

Option	Frequency	%
Assessment of learners' project-based performance is problematic.	9	12
I have restricted proficiency in the target language.	5	7
I have limited knowledge of project-based instruction.	17	22
PBL requires much preparation time in comparison to other approaches.	32	42
Students are not accustomed to project-based learning.	26	34
Textbook materials are not applicable for PBL implementation.	43	56
Large class size impedes PBL implementation.	47	61

As depicted in table 3 above, more than half of the participants avoid implementing PBL in teaching English due to inappropriate materials in textbooks (*n*=43, 56%) and large class sizes (*n*=47, 61%). Some other participants reflected that they cannot use PBL since their knowledge of using PBL is inadequate (*n*=17, 22%), PBL requires focused preparation (*n*=32, 42%), and students are not accustomed to having classes with PBL

(*n*=26, 34%). A minority of the teachers confessed that their target language proficiency is limited (*n*=5, 7%) and that they have difficulty in assessment with PBL (*n*=9, 12%). Given these points, as revealed by the findings, teachers refrain from implementing PBL in EFL teaching due to a variety of reasons.

In response to Q14 which asked participants to reflect on their reasons for avoiding implementing PBL in English classes, they (*n*=12) revealed several justifications such as time limitations, learners' low level of interest, and limited linguistic knowledge. As noted by P. 42, the topics may not be appropriate for students' interests.

> "*Sometimes the project topics are not interesting to the learners, or the topics are outdated*" (P. 42).

One of the participants (P. 31) wrote that she needs to prepare students for an examination that will take place at the end of the academic year and cannot allocate adequate time for such kind of activities.

> "*Especially in the 8th grade, because of the high school entrance exam, it is difficult to spare time for the PBL. We need to take multiple-choice tests to get prepared for the examination, not just any other practical implementations*" (P. 31).

Concerning Q16, participants were requested to suggest any other comments or reflections concerning implementing PBL in English instruction in Turkey. Some of the participants reflected their ideas based on their experiences in using PBL in English classes. The comments that promote using PBL are as follows:

> "*I can sometimes implement PBL in my classes and my students are really keen on using the target language. If we have time, we use this method*" (P. 13).

> "*Once applied thoroughly, PBL is the best way to learn and teach but it is obvious that the need for time and money makes it difficult to implement*" (P. 21).

> "*There must be collaboration among students and teachers. No fear. Students should feel relaxed. Projects must be given according to students' interests*" (P. 28).

> "*It can bear positive outcomes if PBL is also involved for assessment of learner participation and the development of speaking skill*" (P. 72).

Some other reflections were directed at challenges in implementing PBL in English instruction. Parallel to their pointed ideas in the previous questions, some of the participants wrote that implementing PBL would take much time and effort, so they could not organise a project-based English instruction. In this sense, P. 24 figured that,

> "*I think that the implementation of PBL can't be efficient in Türkiye. Students need to have a certain amount of knowledge. Numbers of students and student proficiency level are not sufficient for this implementation*" (P. 24).

Similarly, P. 21 wrote that

> "*Implementing PBL takes much more time than the regular class activities, so we need extra class hours for project activities*" (P.21).

Another important point noted by several participants (N=5) was that large class size is a great impediment to organising a project-based course design.

> "*Crowded classes are an obstacle for this method*" (P. 51).

> "*The classes are very crowded, the level of the students is not enough, the class is not suitable for many of the activities*" (P. 54).

> "*Large classes are a big problem to implement*" (P. 73).

> "*Large class sizes prevent us from doing the lessons in the way we want*" (P. 62).

Handling the issue from distinct perspectives, P. 9 elaborated that:

> *As a practitioner of the curriculum, I am supposed to complete the contents in the plan which is defined by MoNE (Ministry of National Education). Therefore, we have limited time to implement PBL which is time-consuming. However, I can say that PBL can be used well if it takes its source from active learning which is done by doing and experiencing, and the active*

participation of the students. Besides, students' learning styles and individual differences also play an important role while implementing PBL. Uninterested students may lead to problems in classroom management or their groups. While working in groups, they have to collaborate, use technology, communicate with each other, and be productive. If they lack these skills, PBL may not be implemented well" (P. 9).

The thematic analysis of the data content revealed 6 major themes that focus on the implementation of PBL in English classes. These are 'time limitation' (*f*=6); 'active participation' and 'crowded classes' (*f*=4); 'lack of materials', 'improving speaking', and 'motivation' (*f*=2) respectively. Once examined, the total word count of the whole transcript from participants was 486 words of which 54% (*n*=263) consisted of primary key words and the rest was common words (*n*=223 words, 46%). The most frequently occurring primary 10 keywords that appear in the reflections by the respondents were 'students' (*f*=11), 'time' (*f*=6), 'implementation' (*f*=5), 'need' (*f*=5), 'class' (*f*=4), 'activities' (*f*=4), 'project'(*f*=4), 'learning' (*f*=4)', 'speaking' (*f*=3), and 'participation' (*f*=3). The distribution of the top ten keywords in the total word count shows that related keywords are among essential parts of the implementation with reference to PBL.

<div align="center">

Discussion

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R.Q.1- Are Turkish EFL teachers familiar with the implementation of PBL?

The results for the familiarity of participants with PBL showed that the familiarity level of the participants was not adequate to implement PBL in an English course design. Moreover, the frequency of integrating PBL in English instruction was also low. As displayed in the findings, most of the respondents (55%) self-reflected that they do not use PBL in EFL instruction. There may be some challenges in the consideration of implementing PBL (Hertzog, 1994). Time management, the context of the activities being directed, and designing valid and reliable assessment tools may cause teachers to refrain from implementing PBL (Aldabbus, 2018). Moreover, teachers need to gain understanding the techniques and practical experience in implementing the project approach (Mentzer et al., 2017). As suggested by Mentzer et al. (2017), teacher training on the integration of PBL is essential to overcome the potential drawbacks of implementing PBL approach. One significant aspect of PBL was that; teachers play an important role as a facilitator in the design of the projects (Nguyen, 2011). As PBL requires careful planning and organisation (Mikulec and Miller, 2011; Nguyen, 2011), teachers should arrange project design to motivate learner participation and encourage inquiry (Blumenfeld, et al., 1991). Moreover, to achieve fruitful results, teachers need to have detailed knowledge of the project content, illustrate topics, make adaptations, and manage the process in a systematic way (Blumenfeld, et al., 1991). Reviewing all these accounts, teachers need to have detailed knowledge about the implementation of a project-based course design in EFL instruction.

R. Q. 2- What are the perceptions of EFL teachers on using PBL?

The results for this question revealed that most of the participants (68%) did not have any training in implementing PBL in EFL teaching, yet three out of four of the participants (75%) reported that they would be interested to have training in this issue. In addition, more than half of the participants stated that they use PBL in English instruction yet, as reported by the participants the frequency of implementing PBL was very low rating less than once in every 10 lessons (35%), once in every 6-10 lessons (18%), and once in every 2-5 lessons (9%). Nevertheless, more than half of the instructors (55%) reflected that they do not use PBL in EFL instruction. Linked to these findings, teacher training on the use of innovative practices and techniques in foreign language teaching emerges as an important part of effective language teaching (Peterson and Nassaji, 2016). Hence, it is vital for EFL teachers to manage the process of the project work for an efficient outcome (Blumenfeld et al., 1991).

R. Q.3 - For what reasons do EFL teachers prefer implementing PBL?

The results regarding the reasons for preferring PBL in teaching English demonstrated that the respondents consider the usefulness of PBL in improving learners' interactive skills, activating their needs and interest, and enabling learners with a collaborative learning environment. According to the results, participants also figured that PBL enhances learners' academic achievement and learner autonomy and increases target language use in a relaxed atmosphere. The respondents also put it down that by realizing learning by doing, PBL enables active

engagement of the learners. It also helps learners gain vocabulary insight and advance speaking skills and improves motivation.

Within this scope, respondents' reflections are in line with the descriptions and implications in the literature. Collaboration was cited as a key aspect of PBL that developed social relationships among participants and enabled them to engage in real-world practices (Beckett and Slater, 2005; Blumenfeld, et al., 1991; Çırak, 2006; Mikulec and Miller, 2011). Furthermore, that PBL affects learning positively and improves learner motivation was also emphasized (Beres, 2011; Blumenfeld et al., 1991). It was also purported that organising a project-based course design would improve learner autonomy (Nguyen, 2011; Skehan, 1998; Thomas, 2000) as the process is based upon learner-centred tasks (Beckett, 1999; Erdem, 2002). Learner interest was featured as another essential criterion of PBL as learners' motivation and participation would increase when the topics and tasks appeal to the interests of the participants. The related literature also encompassed that PBL was a favourable approach in improving students' speaking skills (Nguyen, 2011; Sirisrimangkorn, 2018; Türker, 2007) and writing performance (Köroğlu, 2011; Musthafa, 1997; Sadeghi, et al., 2016) in the English language. Compared to traditional methods, PBL instruction yielded fruitful results in teaching EFL in the Turkish context (Köroğlu, 2011; Türker, 2007; Yıldız, 2009). Drawing on these expositions, integrating PBL in EFL instruction will serve as a promoter of language teaching with a wide range of interrelated advantages.

R. Q. 4- For what reasons do EFL teachers refrain from implementing PBL?

Despite all promising implications, this study also discovered that in most cases, EFL teachers hesitate to use PBL or they are unaware of the potential benefits of PBL in English instruction. The findings uncovered that the majority of the participants alleged large class sizes and inappropriate materials in textbooks as an obstacle to implementing PBL. Furthermore, respondents confessed that they had limited knowledge of the use of PBL, and students were not accustomed to doing project work. Nearly half of the participants also stated that PBL requires a tedious preparation compared to other approaches. The respondents also typed that project topics should appeal to students' interest, but some topics may not be engaging enough, or they may even prove to be outdated. Some of the teachers also noted that the conditions in the Turkish context may not be suitable for a process-based implementation as the time duration allocated for EFL classes was not adequate, and learners get prepared for examinations in the form of multiple-choice tests. Another important issue put down by one of the respondents was that as EFL teachers, they had to stick to a course curriculum that was previously identified by the MoNE in Turkiye. Moreover, it was also written that students should have a sufficient proficiency level and skills in using technology, collaboration, and group work. Otherwise, causing problems in classroom management, it would not be suitable for a project-based implementation in English classes. These results of the thematic analysis also promoted the description of PBL in general eliciting that PBL enables active participation and improves speaking skill and motivation. Yet, time limitation and crowded classes were referred as challenges in terms of implementation.

As modelled by Nguyen (2011) the key to successful PBL implementation is a well-organized process. Thus, several issues should be taken into account when arranging project-based instruction. Initially, the aims of the project design and the curriculum should be parallel in scope (Hertzog, 1994). Time allocation should be adequate as PBL is based on a definite period of extended time (Collier, 2017; Condliffe, 2016; Hertzog, 1994). The teachers should also have detailed knowledge about how to implement a project-based course design (Collier, 2017; Hertzog, 1994). Otherwise, teachers may refrain from arranging courses based on a project design (Aldabbus, 2018; Mentzer et al., 2017). What merits a specific comment here is that teachers should pay attention to the potential challenges as well as to the school context for a successful implementation process (Thomas, 2000). As highlighted by Peterson and Nassaji (2016), teachers with training on current approaches in language teaching may affect their willingness to try different teaching methods and strategies for their classroom.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions of using PBL in English instruction. The results indicated that EFL teachers' level of familiarity with PBL was low. In other words, most of the participants were not aware of the usefulness of PBL in language instruction. An important point elicited in the study was that most of the instructors did not use PBL and even did not have adequate knowledge about the process of PBL.

Within this regard, it is essential to follow training programs that introduce not only PBL but also other related innovative and learner-centred language teaching methods and techniques. It was also found that participants revealed promising ideas about the benefits of PBL illustrating that PBL was effective as it promotes learner autonomy, motivation, engagement, and participation. However, PBL was not without its challenges. Within this regard, the study concluded that instructors may abstain from PBL implementation due to limited knowledge about how to direct English instruction based on a project design. Furthermore, PBL may not be preferable due to time limitations, long preparation time, insufficient materials, and curriculum requirements in the Turkish context. Parallel to the findings, pedagogical implications were offered for a more effective project-based course design in EFL and how to direct practitioners for a well-designed implementation of PBL in English instruction.

Pedagogical Implications

In light of all these indications, it is important to provide practical implications for a better procedure for the implementation of PBL. For practitioners, it is of vital importance to participate in training courses or making research about how to best implement PBL in EFL instruction. Participating in training courses about the implementation of PBL will make instructors more aware of the benefits of PBL in EFL instruction and it will contribute to effective outcomes in terms of improving motivation, learner autonomy and engagement, collaboration, and investigation. Moreover, integrating project-based activities will develop learners' language skills, speech production, and vocabulary growth.

Limitations and Further Research

The study was limited to 77 EFL teachers. With a larger number of participants, more elaborate results can be attained. Moreover, the study focused on the perceptions of EFL teachers about the implementation of PBL in Turkiye. Focus on other aspects of PBL implementation will reveal more detailed results. Thus, studying with a larger sample of participants and different aspects of PBL is suggested for more extensive results and implications.

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Appendix- The questionnaire used in the study

I voluntarily accept to participate in the study.

Yes ☑ No ☑

1. Gender?

Male ☑ Female ☑

2. Years of teaching experience:………………..

3. Age: ……..

4. Department of Graduation:

English Language Teaching ☑

English Language & Literature ☑

Others ☑

5. Current school type of your workplace?

Primary school ☑

Secondary school ☑

High school ☑

6- Are you Familiar with PBL?

Very familiar ☑

A little familiar ☑

Not very familiar ☑

Not familiar at all ☑

7- Have you had any training in PBL?

Yes ☑ No ☑

8- Are you interested in getting some training on PBLT?

Yes ☑ No ☑

9- Have you ever used PBL in your teaching?

Yes ☑ No ☑

10- Approximately, how often do you use PBL?

☑ about once in every 2-5 lessons

☑ about once in every 6-10 lessons

☑ less than once in every 10 lessons

☑ never

11- Are you still using PBL in your teaching?

Yes ☑ No ☑

12- Please put √ for any reasons that you decide to implement PBL (Multiple choice).

☑ PBL increases learners' academic growth.

☑ PBL progresses learners' interactive skills.

☑ PBL activates learners' needs and interests.

☑ PBL improves learners' autonomy

☑ PBL provides learners with a collaborative learning environment.

☑ PBL is suitable for small group work.

☑ PBL grants a relaxed environment to sustain the target language use.

13- Further to the previous question, if you have other reasons, please write them down.

……
……
……

14- Please put √ any reasons that you avoid implementing PBL [Multiple choices]

☑ Assessment of learners' project-based performance is problematic.

☑ I have restricted proficiency in the target language.

☑ I have limited knowledge of project-based instruction.

☑ PBL requires much preparation time in comparison to other approaches.

☑ Students are not accustomed to project-based learning.

☑ Textbook materials are not applicable for PBL implementation.

☑ Large class size impedes PBL implementation.

15- Further to the previous question, if you have other reasons, please write them down.
……
……
……

16- What are your comments and reflections concerning any aspects of the implementation of PBL in English classes in Turkey?
……
……
……

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Son yıllarda geleneksel eğitim- öğretim uygulamalarından ziyade yeni eğitimsel yaklaşımlar ön plana çıkmaktadır (Erdem, 2002; Köroğlu, 2011). Yapılan çalışmalar farklı pedagojik alanlarla bütünleştirilebilen, yapılandırmacı yaklaşımı destekleyen, öğrenciyi öğretim sürecinde merkeze alan yenilikçi yaklaşımların benimsenmesinin eğitim-öğretim sürecinde daha başarılı sonuçlar ortaya çıkardığını göstermektedir. Bu yenilikçi yaklaşımlardan biri olan proje tabanlı öğrenme (PTÖ) öğrenmeyi belirli bir süreç dahilinde projeler etrafında gerçekleştirmeyi hedefleyen yapılandırmacı ve öğrenci merkezli bir yöntemdir (Blumenfeld, et al., 1991; Thomas, 2000). PTÖ süreci, işbirliği yaklaşımı ile planlama, problemi belirleme, çözüm önerileri sunma ve bulguları raporlama gibi süreçleri takip eden görevler ve proje adı altında ortaya çıkan ürünler üzerinde sistematik olarak düzenlenmektedir (Beckett, 1999). PTÖ beraberinde getirdiği iş birliğine dayalı öğrenme, öğrenen özerkliği, doğal öğrenme, yaparak yaşayarak öğrenme ile 21. Yüzyıl becerilerinin desteklendiği bir öğrenme ortamı sunmaktadır. Hemen hemen bütün alanlara hitap eden PTÖ, uygulanabilirliği açısından yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin de ilgisini çekmektedir (Bakar vd., 2009, Collier, 2017; Fragoulis ve Tsiplakides, 2009; Kimsesiz vd., 2017; Larsson, 2001; Legutke ve Thomas, 1991; Sadeghi, vd., 2016). Bu alanda yapılan çalışmalar PTÖ'nin yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğrenilmesinde öğrencilerin konuşma performansının (Nguyen, 2011; Sirisrimangkorn, 2018; Türker, 2007) ve okuma becerilerinin (Köroğlu, 2011; Musthafa, 1997; Sadeghi, vd., 2016) geliştirilmesinde ve kelime öğretiminde (Kimsesiz vd., 2017) başarılı sonuçlar ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bunun yanı sıra, proje sürecindeki işbirlikçi yaklaşımın öğrencilerin sosyal becerilerinin gelişmesine katkı sağladığı da yapılan çalışmalarda belirtilmiştir (Beckett ve Slater, 2005; Çırak, 2006). Ancak ilgili alan yazın incelendiğinde bu alanda uygulamaya yönelik olarak öğretmen görüşleri üzerine gerçekleştirilen yeterli bilimsel veri bulunmamaktadır (Kemaloğlu Er, 2022). Dolayısıyla bu çalışma Türkiye'de yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğretiminde PTÖ yönteminin kullanılmasında İngilizce öğretmenlerinin algılarını araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaçlar doğrultusunda çalışma dört temel araştırma sorusu üzerinden yürütülmüştür:

1- Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğreten Türk öğretmenleri PTÖ uygulanmasına aşina mıdır?

2- İngilizce öğretmenlerinin PTÖ yönteminin kullanılmasına yönelik algıları nelerdir?

3- Hangi nedenlerde dolayı PTÖ'yü uygulamayı tercih etmektedir?

4- Hangi nedenlerden dolayı PTÖ'yü uygulamaktan kaçınmaktadır?

Bu araştırma soruları doğrultusunda Türkiye'deki farklı düzeyde eğitim kurumlarında görev yapmakta olan 77 İngilizce öğretmeni çalışmaya gönüllü olarak katılmıştır. Veri toplamak amacıyla Liu vd. (2021) tarafından geliştirilen anket PTÖ için uyarlanarak kullanılmıştır. Anket 16 maddelik açık uçlu ve kapalı uçlu sorulardan oluşmaktadır. Verilerin analizi için tanımlayıcı analiz ve tematik analiz kullanılmıştır.

1. araştırma sorusuna yönelik bulgular öğretmenlerin çoğunun proje tabanlı öğrenme ile çok fazla aşina olmadıklarını ortaya çıkarmıştır. 2. Araştırma sorusuna yönelik olarak proje tabanlı öğrenme yönteminin etkililiği ile ilgili katılımcılar genellikle olumlu görüşler bildirmiştir. Bu konudaki bulgular katılımcıların yarıdan fazlasının (68%) daha önce PTÖ yöntemi ile ilgili eğitim almadığını, dörtte üçünün (75%) bu alanda eğitim almak istediğini, çoğunluğun (58%) ise PTÖ yöntemini derslerinde kullandığını ortaya çıkarmıştır. Katılımcıların ifadelerine göre proje tabanlı dil öğretiminin derslerde kullanılma sıklığının bir hayli az olduğu bulunmuştur. Katılımcıların PTÖ yöntemini tercih etmesinin nedenlerini sorgulayan 3. araştırma sorusuna yönelik bulgular PTÖ'nün etkileşimli becerileri geliştirmesini (71%), öğrencilerin ilgi ve ihtiyaçlarını harekete geçirmesini (60%), işbirlikçi öğrenme ortamı sunmasını (55%), akademik başarılarını desteklemesini (42%) ve öğrencilere rahat bir öğrenme ortamı sağlamasını (47%) gerekçe olarak göstermiştir. Bu konudaki açık uçlu sorulara verilen cevaplar PTÖ'nün etkili yönlerini vurgular niteliktedir. Katılımcıların PTÖ yöntemini kullanmaktan çekinmelerinin nedenlerini sorgulayan 4. araştırma sorusu ile ilgili ortaya çıkan bulgular daha çok kurumsal ve izlence ile ilgili nedenlerdir. Bu konudaki bulgular, ders kitaplarındaki yetersiz materyallerin (56%), sınıf mevcudunun fazla olmasının (61%), öğretmenlerin PTÖ konusunda yeterli bilgi ve donanıma sahip olmamalarının (22%) ve öğrencilerin PTÖ ile ders işlemeye alışkın olmadıklarını açığa çıkarmıştır. Bu konudaki katılımcı görüşleri, bu bulguları destekleyerek sınavlara hazırlanma sürecinde PTÖ uygulamasının uygun olmayabileceğini, ders saatinin yetersiz olduğunu, geniş kapsamlı bir süreci yönetme konusunda öğretmenlerin ve öğrencilerin geri planda durabileceğini, sunum sürecinde hedef dilde öğrencilerin yeterli iletişim becerilerine sahip olamamasını gerekçe olarak açıklamışlardır.

Bu anlamda çalışmanın bulguları alan yazındaki çalışmaları destekler niteliktedir. PTÖ'nün yabancı dil öğretiminde etkili olmasının yanı sıra uygulamada dikkate alınması gereken konular bulunmaktadır. Bu süreçte öğretmen lider rolündedir ve süreci iyi planlamalıdır (Bakar vd. 2019). Etkili bir uygulama için ders öğretmeninin PTÖ uygulanmasında gerekli bilgi ve donanıma sahip olması da önemlidir (Collier, 2007; Fragoulis ve Tsiplakides, 2009; Peterson ve Nassaji, 2016). Aynı zamanda PTÖ uygulamasında belirlenen konuların müfredatla uyumlu olması, zamanın verimli şekilde kullanılması, öğrencilerin ilgi ve yeteneklerine hitap etmesi son derece önemlidir (Hertzog, 1994).

Sonuç olarak proje tabanlı dil öğretimi İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğretilmesinde konuşma ve yazma becerilerini geliştirmesi, işbirlikçi öğrenmeyi desteklemesi, öğrenci katılımını ön plana çıkarması, öğrencilerin araştırma yeteneklerini ve İngilizce'de akademik başarılarını geliştirmesi açısından son derece yararlıdır. Etkili ve başarılı bir öğrenme süreci için ders öğretmeninin PTÖ'nün uygulanmasında gerekli bilgi ve donanıma sahip olması, süreci iyi planlaması ve yönetmesi, değerlendirmeyi anlaşılır bir şekilde sürdürmesi gerekmektedir. PTÖ'nün uygulanmasında daha verimli sonuçlar elde etmek adına konu ile ilgili eğitici faaliyetlerin takip edilmesi ve uygulama örneklerinin incelenmesi önerilmektedir.