

**THE EFFECT of DRAMA BASED EDUCATIONAL  
PROGRAM on TURKISH LANGUAGE AND  
CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT of TURKISH AND  
ENGLISH SPEAKER BILINGUAL CHILDREN in  
The UK. (NOTTINGHAM)**

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**Abstract**

The aim of this research is to examine the effects of drama based educational programme on Turkish language (listening and speaking skills) and concept development on Turkish-English speaker children in the UK. As quantitative research method, pre-test post-test single group was planned. After the implementation of the drama based program, semi-structured interviews had been administered. Participants were born in the UK, have got Turkish speaker parents, between the ages of 6-8 (62-96 months) total 32 (17 girls - 15 boys), whom attend state schools in Nottingham region. As data collection tools, "Peabody Picture Vocabulary Speaking Test" was used to measure the level of recognition of children's Turkish words and the "Opposite Concepts Test" was used to measure children's levels of recognition of opposite concepts. In the analysis of qualitative data, t test analysis of dependent groups was performed. In the quantitative case, after Drama Educational Program was applied, children were interviewed individually to try to get information about what they felt about their drama practices and tried to find out the progress of speaking skills. A typological analysis method was used in the evaluation of the interviews. As a result, there was a significant difference between the average scores of the children's pretest-posttest scores. Children's posttest scores were high after drama applications. In addition, children expressed positive feelings towards drama.

**Keywords:** Bilingualism, drama, children, language, concept learning.

**Introduction**

Children in early childhood (0-8 years) face new information every day, and they associate new information with existing concepts. With the increase in vocabulary and through experience, their concept acquisition will develop. The concepts in children are simple in this period. This is closely related to the initial perceived characteristics of objects. Over time, children become competent to make conceptual analyzes by better using their reasoning skills, and knowledge shifts from perceptual to conceptual. Children learn new concepts as a result of these analyzes (Caplan, 1974).

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Children need language to connect with other people through acquired concepts such as color, sense, emotion, opposites, time, geometrical shapes, number, direction-space-position, quantity, size. First, children adopt language in the family. Then they can increase the number of words through the training program, learn the word structures, and even recognize the similarities in tone and emphasis. Thus, language development and cognitive development (concept development) continue to evolve in parallel course (Hammer, Hoff, Uchikoshi, Gillanders, Castro, Sandilos, 2014).

Listening and speaking skills from the learning areas of Turkish teaching are very important skills for young children. The concept of comprehension is largely related to listening skills (Şahin ve Aydın, 2009). A child listens with the intention to understand and will understand the meaning. This process also provides acquisition in mental, social and emotional skills (Öztürk Samur, 2015).

In the rapidly changing and developing world new methods are being applied to the acquisition of knowledge. One of these new methods is the drama which helps the learning through the exercises. If educators provide opportunities for children to practice via drama, this will enable them to develop their creativity and sense of aesthetics, problem-solving, imagination, exploring and ability to cope with difficulties (Landy, 1982). In addition children will be feel more confident, free and gain multi-dimensional thinking. In terms of social development children gain through drama, language and communication skills, to improve the ability to understand and feel others (empathy), ability to move in the group and developing vocabulary (McCaslin, 1990).

By means of drama conventions, an imagined context can be created in which the class and teacher are able to suspend their disbelief (Winston, 2000, Winston, 2012) order to pretend, as a group, that they are other people, in other place, in another time (Neelands, 1992). Drama may have an independent curriculum with its own approaches and techniques, goals and acquisition. At the same time, drama is also an effective method that can be used to reach other learning programs (Akar Vural and Somers, 2012). The activities carried out by the drama method in language teaching are not in the form of direct knowledge transfer, they are effective in acquiring Turkish language skills (Bulut, 2015).

### **The importance of research**

The situations in which minority children in their country of residence meet in the process of acquiring a second language may differ from those of the bilingual children who are exposed to the both languages at the same time. In this case, the language the children use to carry on their daily lives outside the home is often the second one they learn. Generally, while the first language is acquired at home in the 0-3 age range, the children are exposed to their second language as they begin to school. Thus, a limited second language entry, which they are beginning to acquire later than their peers, causes difficulties on this level (Kleemans, Segers, Verhoeven, 2011).

Topbaş (2011) stated that bilingual children who migrated from Turkey to Europe would require improvements of their first language they as were educated in second language. If children do not learn mother-tongue fully, then there would be a delay in psychological and cognitive development. Bilingual children, lack proper vocabulary and grammar and they are inferior in their language skills. By learning basic categorization on the first language, it removes the need to re-learn these categories and strategies used in acquiring native language are being transferred to the second language (MacWhinney 1992; Verhoeven, Steenge, Van Balkom, 2012). In this sense, it is crucial to make a positive transfer to learn the phonetics system, the grammatical structures in the mother tongue.

Drama was used as learning method in this research. Because, drama is a process that enables children to use all of their senses effectively, drama application process allows them to communicate with others, by using their bodies, voices, emotions, thoughts, movements, to create, imagine and animate original ideas. When playing drama the experiences of the child process directly affect the quality of the learning (Çalışkan and Karadağ, 2014; Önder, 2012). Therefore, it is very important that the drama method is applied by organized and planned manner in education.

### **General purpose**

The aim of this research is to examine the effect of the drama based education program on language (listening-speaking) and concept development of Turkish-English speaking children living in the UK.

Depending on this main goal, the following questions were asked:

1. How do children describe drama?
2. What are the children's feelings about drama practices?
3. Is drama-based Education Program effective on children's language (Listening-speaking) development?
4. Is drama-based Education Program effective on children's concepts (opposite concepts) development?

### **Limitations**

1. Drama was used as a learning method in this research.
2. In terms of concept development, it is limited to the 'opposite concepts'.
3. In terms of language development, it is limited by listening and speaking skills.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Model**

In this study, the effect of drama based education program on the concept and language development of Turkish-English speaker children was examined. These children have a Turkish-speaking parent and live in the UK.

The independent variable of this research is drama based education program. Dependent variables are the level of naming the concepts measured by "Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test" and the words that are measured by "Contrasting Concepts Test".

Both Quantitative and qualitative research methods have been used in this study. Qualitative research methods are based on interview method. The interview is about what people think and why; emotions and attitudes are used to understand the point of view by entering the inner world of the individual and used as the data collection tools (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013).

In this research, interviewing method was used in determining the emotional situations that children perceive, feel in drama applications. Following the implementation of the Drama Based Educational Programme, the participants tried to obtain information about how they identified the drama and what they felt about drama practices by conducting interviews with the children individually. In quantitative research methods, pre-test, post-

test, one group pattern was preferred. In this model, one group is created. At first the pre-test applied and after experimental procedure, the post-test is applied (Karasar, 2015).

'Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test' was used to determine the language development level and 'Opposite Concepts Test' was used to determine the concept development level of the children. The differences between the pre-test and post - test scores of the children were examined and dependent groups t test analysis was performed.

#### Working group

**Table 1: Age and gender distributions of working group's children**

Ages	N	Gender
6	9	5 girls / 4 boys
7	12	6 girls / 6 boys
8	11	6 girls / 5 boys
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>17 girls / 15 boys</b>

In this study, a group of children between the ages of 6-8 years were selected. According to the consensus in the literature (Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, Krathwohl, 1956; Bloom, 1965), a large part of mental development, emotional and social development, physical growth occurs in early. Our working group consisted of 32 children (17 boys - 15 boys), who lives Nottingham region of England. All the children were attending the state school and parents spoke Turkish.

#### Data collection tools

In this study, the "Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test" was used to detect children's language development. Ankara Guidance and Research Center Turkish Experts adapted the test developed by Dunn, M. & Dunn, L. M. (2007). It is applied to children between 2-11 years old. The highest score is 100 for the age groups of the study group. The test was administered 16-27 minutes on average.

'Opposite Concepts Test', developed by researcher, was used to determine the concept development level of the children. It consists of 76 items about same- different- similar, open - closed, fast - slow, live - nonlive, moving - nonmoving, easy- difficult, dark- light, up- down, first- middle- last, beginning- end, dirty- clean, high- low, hungry- full, wet - dry, beautiful - ugly, right - wrong, tidy- untidy concepts. The validity and reliability studies of the 'Opposite Concepts Test' were conducted on 100 children from 5, 6, 7, 8 age groups (5 years: 25 children, 6 years: 25 children, 7 years: 25 children, 8 years: 25 children) living in the UK and speaking Turkish, English. The internal reliability of all the age groups of the scale was found to vary between .78 and .86, the duration of the test was 18-25 min on average.

#### Drama Educational Programme and Procedure

Before we prepared the drama educational program, we screened the theoretical bases of language and concept development in early childhood. The theoretical knowledge we obtained as a result of this screening has been associated with stimuli that children meet in their daily life to support language and concept development. Then, concepts, goals and achievements related to the language and cognitive development specified in the Early childhood Education Program for Children, which were published by the Ministry of National Education in Turkey in 2013, were examined (MEB, 2013). Opposite concepts were selected from the list of gains expected of children in early childhood. All this

information is planned in the light of the drama activities that enable children to learn in accordance with their level of development and life-style.

This research is a multidisciplinary study that brings together Education sciences and theater-drama. Preparatory work for the drama-based educational program was started in November 2016 and the program was completed in February 2017. In order to demonstrate the applicability of the Drama Based Educational Program, it has been presented to four experts from Adnan Menderes University Faculty of Education and Goldsmiths University, Department of Theater and PErformance. After the necessary arrangements were made, the drama activities were made up of th researchers in the form of 8 half-day session plans. In order to emphasize the opposite concepts in the drama activities; puppets, matching cards, photographs, cognitive activities, different clothes, costumes, power point slide shows were used. Pilot study session plans were applied to four children initially and the children were observed in order to gather information about the difficulties they may have experienced about the expressions. Education programme was revised accordingly.

The drama based education curriculum was implemented by the researcher from 25 March 2017 to 25 July 2017. Drama practices were completed in 72 hours during 3 months of Turkish lectures attending school on the weekends (Saturday: 3 lesson hours, Sunday:3 Lesson hours). The duration of the drama session took around 40 minutes, followed with a discussion / evaluation after the event. Firstly, we implemented the drama applications, then we chatted with children, about the drama work. We discussed by asking questions in the descriptive, emotional, cognitive, and experiential levels.

**Findings And Discussion**

In this section, quantitative and qualitative findings are presented in tables and they will be discussed.

Qualitative Findings;

Findings of interviews with children about drama practice.

**Table 2: The identification of drama from children’s views**

	<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>When I said drama, what comes in to your mind?</b>	Play	13
	Imitate	12
<b>What kind of activity?</b>	Pretending	5
	Theater	2
	Total	32

In the research when the children were asked ‘What does it come to mind when saying drama? What kind of activity?’. The answers were play (13), imitate (12), pretending (5) and 2 children responded “theater”. This shows that the drama based educational program, allows the children to make positive and correct definitions of the drama concept and understand it.

The views of children on defining drama are as follows.

Child C.A. (Y7) *‘It was not like a lesson, it was like a game’.*

Child Y.G. (Y8) *‘We played a very comfortable game on the pitch. I said what I wanted to say. I did what I wanted to do. It was a very beautiful game’.*

Child I.A. (Y6) *'In the drama, I think imitations are made with you, I pretended like father. I was an eagle sometime, and I was fussed in high altitudes. These came to my mind.'*

Child Y. U. (Y8) *'I went to the theater 4 times with my mother. Your lessons look a bit like theater, I like the theater.'*

**Table 3: The feelings expressed about the drama practices children felt**

	Sub-themes	F
<b>What did you feel when you played drama? Please tell me.</b>	I had fun	9
	I learned	8
	I liked it	7
	I was happy	5
	It was difficult some times	3
	Total	32

In this table, there is a view on how the children felt after the drama and put this information. According to the findings, when they were playing drama; 9 children had fun, 8 children felt learned, 7 children said that they liked it and 5 children said that they were happy and expressed positive emotions, while 3 children found difficulties in expressing negative emotions. When the interviews made with the children, they were asked about the reasons behind their replies and they were very pleased with their friends. They expressed that their drama classes seemed like playing. The children who found drama hard also felt challenged in the discussion section.

The views of children on their feelings in drama practice are as follows.

Child L.H. (Y7) *'Lessons went very well, I had a lot of fun. I wish all lesson same all like that'.*

Child Y.A. (Y6) *'Being an architect was fun. I'll be an architect when I grow up.'*

Child E.K. (Y7) *'I was happy playing with the play dough. I sculpted and made a huuge and beautiful sculpture.'*

Child D.Y. (Y8) *'I learned a lot while doing drama with my friends. I think I'm speaking Turkish easier. I talked with my friends and decided. That was nice.'*

Quantitative Findings

**Table 4: Working group's 'Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test' related dependent groups t test results**

Ages	Test	n	X	Ss	Sd	T	p
<b>6</b>	Pre-test	9	19.22	3.96	1.32	1.88	.001*
	Post-test	9	46.56	3.21			
<b>7</b>	Pre-test	12	24.91	4.83	1.46	0.89	.000*
	Post-test	12	57.55	4.59			
<b>8</b>	Pre-test	11	33.18	4.12	1.24	1.22	.000*
	Post-test	11	62.82	4.53			

Total pre-test children: 32 / Total post-test children: 32

\*P< .05

As seen in table, it was found that there was a significant scores difference between pre-test and post-test scores of the children in this study relation 'Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test'. Children's post-test score averages are higher than pretest averages in all ages groups.

This shows that the drama-based education is effective in helping children to recognize and express their own language. Since the development of children's language skills and concept knowledge is considered important in early childhood, this result obtained with the concept education program implemented with the educational drama program is valuable.

Language acquisition can only be accomplished effectively in environments where the person has verbal interaction with another person. Because language only develops within the concepts and through social interaction (Lantolf, 2000, Merleau-Ponty, 1962, Vygotsky, 1987). "Dramatic play and improvisation are advantageous to language acquisition as the created situations place the emphasis on social interaction and thus, facilitate knowledge transfer from the classroom to the outside world" (Zafeiriadou, 2009:6).

**Table 5: Working group's 'Opposite Concepts Test' related dependent groups t test results**

<b>Ages</b>	<b>Test</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>Ss</b>	<b>Sd</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>6</b>	Pre-test	9	16.00	1.32	.44	1.88	.001*
	Post-test	9	29.35	1.41			
<b>7</b>	Pre-test	12	23.67	2.49	.71	1.63	.000*
	Post-test	12	34.75	3.28			
<b>8</b>	Pre-test	11	33.50	2.94	.85	2.12	.000*
	Post-test	11	38.62	1.61			
Total pre-test children: 32 / Total post-test children: 32							

\*P< .05

The result show that there is a significant differencebetween the pre-test and post-test averages of the 'Opposite Concepts Test'. Children's posttest scores are higher than the average test scores. This shows that, concept education applied by drama method is effective for children in defining and the usage of concepts.

**Results and Discussion**

The most prominent result of our study is the finding that nearly half of the children defined the drama as play, and other half of children defined it as imitation and animation. According to San (1991), drama in education is to revitalize with games or developing games; using a word, concepts, behavior, sentences, thoughts, experiences, events and the use of theatrical techniques. Drama combines play and learning which is appropriate to the nature of children and makes their learning effective, long-lasting and more meaningful. Therefore, children should be able to define play, animation, imitation and theater after the drama educational program, after demonstrating children information about drama.

Children have expressed positive feelings about their drama practices, indicating that they had fun, learned, were happy and enjoyed the drama practice. Only 3 children expressed negative feelings especially in the discussion section of our first drama

practises. This may be due to the fact that children are bilingual and drama practices were all in Turkish. Although bilingual children speak Turkish at home, they speak English at school and outside. Thus they may have had difficulty in expressing themselves during Turkish drama practises.

Children in all age groups have succeeded in pairing Turkish words with pictures after drama educational program. Drama practices were given in Turkish words and concepts to develop their Turkish language skills. Children started expressing themselves easily, demonstrated better problem solving skills, started developing communication skills and learned Turkish words via drama techniques. This shows that the drama is an effective educational program for them to use their Turkish language more effectively.

Finally, children in all age groups were more successful in expressing opposite concepts such as same- different- similar, open - closed, fast - slow, live - nonlive, moving - nonmoving, easy- difficult, dark- light, up- down, first- middle- last, beginning- end, dirty- clean, high- low, hungry- full, wet - dry, beautiful - ugly, right - wrong, tidy- untidy in Turkish after the drama educational program.

As a result of this research, the curriculum in which drama was used as a method has been effective in learning bilingual children's Turkish words and opposite concepts. Drama based education program has increased the recognition rates of bilingual children's Turkish words. In addition, the drama based education program has increased the frequency bilingual children's use Turkish opposite concepts. It was also found that children developed positive feelings towards drama and children expressed their feelings more easily with drama.

Following this work, same study can be performed for different ages and / or for longer periods. It is also possible to conduct such an experimental study on children living in the UK who have parents with different languages. The positive result is that after a longer period of time, children could be tested again for their permanence about knowledge, language and concept. In addition, different studies on the development of social, emotional, self-care skills can be conducted to examine the effects of educational drama programs with different activities in early childhood children.

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