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AĞ UNIVERSITY
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**AN INVESTIGATION OF TEACHERS' CONCEPTION AND PRACTICES
CONCERNING ASSESSMENT IN ENGLISH FOR YOUNG LEARNERS
CLASSROOM**

THESIS BY

Nurcan AYAS

SUPERVISOR

Assist. Prof. Dr. Hlyya YUMRU

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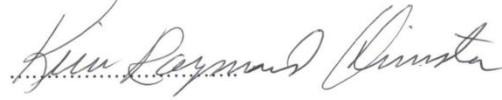
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Supervisor-Head of Examining Committee: Assist. Prof. Dr. Hülya YUMRU



Member of Examining Committee: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Şehnaz ŞAHİNKARAKAŞ



Member of Examining Committee: Assist. Prof. Dr. Kim Raymond HUMISTON

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ÖZET

ÇOCUKLARA İNGİLİZCEYİ YABANCI DİL OLARAK ÖĞRETEN İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN ÖLÇME VE DEĞERLENDİRME SÜRECİYLE İLGİLİ KAVRAYIŞLARI ÜZERİNE BİR ARAŞTIRMA

Nurcan AYAS

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Tez Danışmanı : Yrd. Doç. Dr. Hülya YUMRU

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Bu çalışmanın amacı, çocuklara İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğreten öğretmenlerin ölçme ve değerlendirme süreciyle ilgili kavrayışlarını ve ölçme değerlendirme sürecindeki seçimlerini araştırmaktır. Veri toplama aracı olarak “Öğretmenlerin Ölçme ve Değerlendirme Sürecine İlişkin Kavrayışları” (Brown, 2001-2003, 2008) ölçeğinin 27 maddelik kısaltılmış hali ve bir açık uçlu sorudan oluşan anket kullanılmıştır. Veriler, Osmaniye’deki ilkokul ve ortaokullarda çalışan 43 İngilizce öğretmeninden elde edilmiştir. Anketler SPSS 20 paket programı kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar, İngilizce öğretmenlerinin ölçme değerlendirme araçlarını büyük ölçüde bildiklerini, tercih ettiklerini ve pratikte çeşitli ölçme değerlendirme stratejilerini büyük ölçüde kullandıklarını göstermiştir. Ancak, sonuçların analizleri çocuklara İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğreten öğretmenlerin ölçme değerlendirme araçlarını büyük ölçüde bilmelerine rağmen, pratikte klasik ölçme değerlendirme araçlarını kullandıklarını göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çocuklara İngilizce Öğretimi, Öğretmenlerin Ölçme Değerlendirme Araçlarıyla İlgili Seçimi, Öğretmenlerin Ölçme Değerlendirme Süreciyle İlgili Kavrayışları, Ölçme ve Değerlendirme.

ABSTRACT

AN INVESTIGATION OF TEACHERS' CONCEPTION AND PRACTICES CONCERNING ASSESSMENT IN ENGLISH FOR YOUNG LEARNERS CLASSROOM

Nurcan AYAS

Master of Arts, Department of English Language Teaching

Supervisor : Assist. Prof. Dr. Hülya YUMRU

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The aim of the study was to investigate TEYL teachers' conceptions of assessment and their choices of assessment tasks in practice. Quantitative and qualitative data collection tools were utilized to collect data. The data of the study were gathered through an adapted version of Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment Questionnaire (TCoA-IIIA) originally developed by Brown (2001-2003, 2008). The data were obtained from 43 English language teachers in primary state schools in Osmaniye, Turkey. The quantitative data were subjected to SPSS 20 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). This study indicated that language teachers prefer variety of assessment tools and use various assessment strategies in practice, however, teachers prefer traditional types of assessment practices although they state high percentages of alternative assessment. Teachers' conceptions of assessment and their perceived preferences did not contradict. However, their actual assessment practices contradicted with their perceived preferences of assessment and the meaning they attached to the concept.

Key Words: Teaching English to Young Learners, Teachers' Choice of Assessment Tasks, Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment, Assessment.

ABBREVIATIONS

TEYL : Teaching English to Young Learners

MoNE :Turkish Ministry of National Education

ELT : English Language Teaching

TCoA-III A : Teacher Conceptions of Assessment Abridged Scale

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CHAPTER I

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the operational definitions, all of which are explained separately to give brief and detailed information.

1.1. Background of the Study

In recent decades, language teachers and curriculum makers have given special attention to assessment because assessment affects the way of teaching and evaluating language learners (Remesal, 2011; Dochy, 2001). Language teachers' beliefs and attitudes have a crucial role in this process since their attitudes towards assessment cover both the teaching and the learning process. This process may evaluate only language product or learning process. Thus, the examination of language teachers' perceptions of and attitudes toward assessment is quite significant (Ataç, 2012).

Assessment tools have an empirical role in schools because students are guided to higher education according to the results obtained from assessment tools. For this reason, young learners' English language teachers' beliefs are significant in this process because their beliefs influence their teaching strategies (Griffiths, Gore, and Ladwig, 2006).

Chan (2001) states that assessment is a kind of strategy, method or tool that may provide a teacher with necessary evidence about student progress. It is a way of collecting information about what students have learned. Teachers have a leading role in this learning process. Dochy (2001) suggests that teachers are *not* all the sources of knowledge and experience. For Dochy (2001), they are only a key to the explanation of knowledge and experience. Teachers are to supply learning and assessment in harmony because the nature of assessment tasks influences how learning happens. Accordingly, the product and the process should be assessed in a non-threatening atmosphere. Assessments is a cornerstone of powerful learning environment and the students share responsibility of their learning and make connection with the teacher during the assessment period (Chen, 2003). If this is the case, focusing on the young learners' English language teachers' perception of assessment is quite considerable.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Improvement of teachers about using assessment tools is a very significant issue in current education world (Graham, 2005). Following this line of argument, it is essential to understand teachers' attitudes that may influence their decisions on the teaching process. Especially in contexts where newly introduced language teaching policies are put into practice. Teaching English to young learners starts from Grade 2 in Turkish state schools with a law number 6, and date 01.02.2013 in 2013-2014 educational year curriculum. "The teaching program for English has been prepared in accordance with the general goals of Turkish National Education as defined in the Basic Law of the National Education No. 1739, along with the Main Principles of Turkish National Education" (MEB, 2013, p.2). According to this new teaching program of Ministry of National Education (MoNE) (2013), students will now get instruction in English from around 6-6.5 years old; thus, the new program must take the needs of younger learners into account.

For this reason, the teachers' teaching English to young learners (TEYL) conceptions of assessment is an important issue worthy to discuss.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The main aim of this study is to learn how primary school TEYL teachers in Osmaniye, Turkey perceive language assessment. More specifically, this study is an attempt to identify the teachers' teaching English to young learners (TEYL) conceptions of assessment and to find out their choices of assessment practices.

1.4. Research Questions

The research questions of the present study are as follows:

1. What are TEYL teachers' perceptions of assessment?
2. What are TEYL teachers' choices of assessment tasks in practice?

1.5. Operational Definitions

Assessment: Assessment in language learning classes is a necessary part of teaching and learning language. Nunan (2011) defines assessment as "the techniques and procedures for collecting and analyzing learner language, to determine what learners can and cannot do. These are intended to answer how well the learners done?" (p. 11).

Conceptions: For (Calveric, 2010), conception is “a framework or mental structure, encompassing beliefs, through which a teacher views, interprets and interacts with the instructional environment” (p.5).

Traditional Assessment: Traditional approaches of assessment methods such as pencil and paper tests are poor to reflect students’ real potential in learning process. These tests cause lack of communication skills and poor problem solving ability for students (Nasri, Roslan, Sekuan, Bakar, Puteh, 2010). Most people and children are afraid of a test or an examination. The aim of tests is to evaluate how much progress the student has made accordance with the objectives of the course and where the student takes place compared to other students locally even nationally. There should be more meaningful and less fearful way of assessing student abilities than standardized tests (MEB, 2006). Although traditional assessment takes place in educational area to categorize students based on their performances, new realization for assessment is facilitating learning and skills development. Alternative assessment provides an alternative to the traditional paper and pencil tests (Nasri et al. , 2010).

Alternative Assessment: Alternative assessment, which is also known as authentic assessment, is a way of monitoring students’ language progress and performance. Types of assessment as authentic are portfolio assessment, self-assessment and teacher observation (checklists, rating scales, anecdotal records, scoring rubrics). Individual differences, creative thinking skills and focusing on documenting the students’ progress are quite significant in alternative assessment process (MEB, 2006).

Alternative assessment can be classified as formative and summative. Formative one assesses the learning process and summative one assesses the product after learning (Zahorik, 1995; Brindley, 2001). A variety of assessment tasks can be used in young learner classes as keeping portfolio, diaries, activity sheets, oral question & answer, planned observation like checklist (Alkharusi, 2010).

Teaching English to Young Learners: Young learners are defined as "children that are at pre-school or in the first couple of years of schooling. Children *do* exhibit different mental and social characteristics at different ages. A strict segmentation is particularly unhelpful” (Nunan, 2011, p. 2). Halliwell (1992) also states that young learners have a great potential in using limited language creatively and have a real imagination skill. In the primary school, Fantasy and imagination are inevitable parts of language classrooms because the role of

imagination provides a positive and friendly language-learning atmosphere for real language use. Repetition and simple instructions are also necessary for young learners' classes.

Pinter (2006, cited in Nunan, 2011) identifies the characteristics of young learners as they have limited writing, reading skills and little awareness. Fantasy, imagination and movement are in the center of their world. They are interested in themselves and pay little attention to the others.

A number of studies have suggested that foreign languages should be taught to children as early as possible. The benefits are personal and social. Personally, starting to learn a foreign language will help students to have a lifelong ability to communicate with more people and a deeper understanding of their own and other cultures. According to some results of research, students who receive second language instruction, are more creative and have good problem solving ability. Socially, the person fluent in other languages improves global communication (MEB, 2006).

CHAPTER II

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter includes the relevant literature about the importance of teaching English to young learners and the characteristics of young learners, the role of assessment in a teaching context, types of alternative assessment tools, teachers' conceptions of assessment and using assessment tools in educational base and the educational context in Turkey.

2.2. The Importance of Teaching English to Young Learners

In recent years, researches have pointed out the advantages of early language learning. Teaching English as a foreign language to young learners is popular due to the increasing need to communicate with people of other nations. Knowledge of a foreign language is necessary in the construction of European unity and has a crucial role in the development of cultural and economic links. Curriculum makers of primary school should be aware of this situation (Superfine, 2002). According to the regulations of Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE, 2006), learners become more competent in language learning if they start learning it from early ages with the belief that this situation helps them broaden their horizons and gives them the opportunity to communicate with many people (MoNE, 2006).

Similarly, Superfine (2002) argues that children, who learn a foreign language from early ages, have greater mental flexibility, superiority in concept formation and more mental abilities. They can get meaning of their native language system better. Children are able to develop a diverse cultural outlook and this helps a child to give tolerance towards people, who are different.

Brewster, Ellis and Girard (2002) suggest that the idea of younger learners do learn second language better than older ones is popular in countries, which have started teaching English at primary level. Many learner factors influence an early start of language learning. These factors are levels of motivation and confidence, differences in language aptitude and personality. The quality of teaching and provision of adequate time for learning are contextual factors. Having relevant numbers of well-trained primary language teachers is important in many countries. According to Singleton (1989), it is significant for a primary English Language Teaching (ELT) policy to have high-quality materials, appropriately trained teachers and favourable public attitudes (cited in Brewster, Ellis and Girard, 2002).

Nunan (2011) categorizes the challenges of teaching young learners as cognitive development, motivation, attention, multi-level groups and assessment. He mentions about solutions to these challenges. Learners follow steps from infancy to adulthood. When designing learning experiences and creating tasks and materials for learners at different ages, teachers need to take into considerations these steps in cognitive development. Providing evidence of progress and making learning goals explicit are strategies to help to maintain motivation. Due to young learners' limited attention span, it is crucial to change activities to keep their attention alive. Modifying tasks for learners at different levels and exploiting the diversity of your learners by personalizing the learning process are quite important for multi-level groups. Schools should focus on assessment as an integral part of learning. Practical implications of seeing assessment as part of learning process provides feedback to how well learners have performed. If a teacher deals with these solutions to challenges, it is a good way to be a successful teacher of young language learners (Nunan, 2011).

Halliwell (1992) identifies practical significance of priorities at primary level. Teachers should give high priority to attitude goals and they should establish risk taking, confidence and general goodwill towards language learning at this early stage. Attitude goals are needed in language teaching because they support process by which language develops.

Language resources for young learners guide English language teachers in teaching-learning process and teachers should be aware of the students' needs in choosing these sources. Learning resources must be suitable for students' ability, request and world. A qualified English language teacher of young learners is aware of the importance of songs and games in English (Sukarno, 2014).

Linse (2005) focuses on the role of teachers of young learners in language teaching as follows:

By the very nature of your job as a teacher of young learners, you must be aware of children's basic psychological needs. Teachers of young learners should provide the care necessary to meet these needs so that they can thrive and focus on learning. In other words, teachers of young learners have two jobs, to provide care and to provide instruction. In order to provide the best possible instruction, you need to adjust educational experiences to meet the developmental stages of the individual child (p. 2, cited in Nunan, 2011, p. 4).

Following the recent trends in education, new English Language Curriculum for Primary Education in Turkey is based on the process-oriented approaches with a focus on producing autonomous learners (MoNE, 2006). Accordingly, learner-centered approaches become more popular than teacher-centered approaches. Discovery learning is emphasized with the belief that within the discovery process learners discover their learning abilities and potential (MoNE, 2006). According to the recent teaching English to young learners programme by MoNE (MoNe, 2013), suggestions for practice in primary schools' teaching English classes are as follows:

- Go from the familiar to the unfamiliar. Use cognates as a starting point (e.g., doctor, zebra, gorilla). Use media, cultural artifacts and people as much as possible to contextualize the lessons and to keep students' interest alive.
- Do not correct students' errors on the spot. Note down the language issues that cause confusion, and then practice them as much as possible.
- The curriculum should be viewed and practiced as a spiral entity. Remember students' earlier learning and use previous activities, songs or crafts in students' free time to support retention.
- Talk to parents and suggest that they learn what their children learn at school. They should sing together for fun or use the expressions they learn at school during their time at home.
- Reading aloud is an interesting activity for this age group. Use drama and gestures as you read. Change your voice as appropriate, especially to voice a different character.
- Units are not discrete. You can always move between and among the units. Integrate bits and pieces as much as you like so as to make the communication run smoothly (p. 9).

2.2.1. Characteristics of Young Learners

The term 'young learners' refers to children from the first year of formal schooling (6 years old, in our case) to 12 years of age (MoNE, 2006). Pinter (2006) defines young learners as those children who "are at pre-school or in the first couple of years of schooling" and identifies some characteristics of young learners as: " 1) generally they have holistic approach to language, which means that they understand meaningful messages but cannot analyse language yet, 2) They have lower levels of awareness about themselves as well as about the

process of learning, 3) They enjoy fantasy, imagination and movement, 4) They are more concerned about themselves than other” (p.2, cited in Nunan, 2011, p.3).

For Superfine (2002), young learners tend to be keen and enthusiastic learners without inhibitions. Superfine further states young learners have a short attention span and this is why they need physical movement and actions in language learning process.

MoNE (2006) defines characteristics of young learners in English Language Curriculum for Primary Education as: they are imaginative, creative, and energetic, have short memories, lose their concentration easily, have emotional needs, have limited language skills and experience, are easily excited and love talking. To handle with these characteristics, teachers should use games, songs, puzzles, jokes, use settling activities, employ group work and use we-defined, well-experienced activities (MoNE, 2006, p.38).

Scott and Yetreberg (1993, p. 3) state some characteristics of young learners as: "a) They are able to learn in a social context, b) they like playing, singing and moving, c) taking some decisions about their own learning are crucial, d) They are positive, enthusiastic, eager about learning, e) they clearly define what they like and dislike, f) asking questions all the time is a part of their learning".

2.3. The Role of Assessment in a Teaching Context

Assessing and grading students are quite significant for instructors and students. Research tells us that assessment affects what is taught and learned in classrooms. Students study subjects to be assessed in tests and teachers spend a great deal of time preparing students for tests (Anderson, 1998). For Wiggings (1989) use of different types of assessment tools in classrooms promotes motivation for a better leaning environment and higher academic performance and thinking skills.

Dochy and McDowell (1997) regard assessment as a tool for learning. According to their view, “assessment of the students’ achievement solely which happens at the end of the learning process is no longer tenable. Both the product and the process are being assessed in the new assessment culture” (p.16, cited in Dochy, 2001, p. 16)

During traditional assessment in traditional classrooms, assessment has been considered as a final product of the teaching process. Assessment takes place after learning happens (Bintz, 1991). Anderson (1998) states that students are alone in assessment period and they have to achieve the tasks without the guidance of others. If they need help, it is

assumed that they are cheating. Boston (1994) argues that traditional assessment tools assess only definite measurable behaviours that deal with the products of learning rather than with the process of learning. Dochy (1994) adds that traditional achievement tests are product-oriented, thus they fail to supply necessary information for the learners.

However, alternative assessment treats learning as an active process. Bintz (1991) defines alternative assessment as “Learning is a natural, integral and ubiquitous part of living” (p. 309, cited in Anderson, 1998, p. 10). According to Johnston (1992), the process is precious as well as the product during alternative assessment period. Teachers attach importance to how, what and why students learn. When students have feedback about their learning process, they acquire new ways of altering learning strategies in order to achieve their goals. The aim of the assessment is never to classify students (Anderson, 1998).

Considering the recent importance attached to alternative assessment strategies, one may expect to know about teachers’ assessment practices. Education theorists and researchers focus on assessment practices, but the perceptions and the attitudes of teachers toward these practices are more significant because change will happen at the classroom level. Time constraints and state accountability systems set barriers to teachers in using alternative assessment tools (Bol, Stephenson, O’Connell and Nunnery, 1998).

Currently, national education reform efforts support the use of alternative assessment practices such as portfolio assessment, performance-based assessment and authentic assessment (Wiggings, 1989). According to Bintz (1991), learning plays an active role in alternative assessment and both the product and the process have crucial roles. Anderson (1998) emphasizes the significance of the constructivist assessment paradigm as “students often have a choice about which tasks they complete and which tasks are evaluated. When instructors encourage students to become more actively engaged in the evaluation process, they relinquish complete control and embracing a more democratic stance” (p. 11).

Alternative assessment practices contribute remarkably to education. For this reason, it might be appropriate to argue that the teachers need to consider the use of these assessment practices in their classroom practices to establish effective learning conditions.

2.4. Types of Alternative Assessment Tools

Learning and assessment should be in harmony for a better classroom setting. Alternative assessment tools have had a considerable effect on learning enhancement under

certain conditions. The nature of assessment tasks affects the methods that the students use for learning (Dochy, 2001). Thus, alternative assessment tools are closely associated with the evaluation of student works.

National assessment policies comprise alternative assessment tools as formative and summative. Formative and summative assessment tools have been used for different purposes in education. The aim of summative assessment is “to describe learning achieved at a certain time for the purposes of reporting to parents, other teachers, the pupils themselves and, in summary form, to other interested such as school governors or school boards. It has an important role in the overall educational progress of pupils but not in day-to-day teaching as does formative assessment” (Harlen & James, 1997, p. 370). Some examples of summative assessment are final exams and proficiency exams. Via summative assessment, teachers can collect useful data to learn to what extent their teaching goals are satisfactory (Zaimoglu, 2012). Garrison & Ehringhaus (2007) argue that summative assessment evaluates the success of the program or curriculum and student placement in proper programmes (cited in Zaimoglu, 2012, p. 9).

The aim of the formative assessment is “to know about pupils’ existing ideas and skills, and recognize the point reached in development and the necessary next steps to take” (Harlen & James, 1997, p. 369). According to Kealey (2010), formative assessment “can be formal or informal, written or oral, graded or ungraded, and focused on individual student progress or on the class as a whole” (p. 67). Cowei and Bell (1999) suggest that teachers and students use formative assessment in order to enrich the learning atmosphere.

Black and William (1998a) state that “we use the general term assessment to refer to all those activities undertaken by teachers-and by their students in assessing themselves- that provide information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities. Such assessment becomes formative assessment when the evidence is actually used to adopt the teaching to meet students’ needs” (p. 140).

Harlen and James (1997) summarize some characteristics of formative assessment as in the following: “(1) it takes the progress of each individual into account, it is never criterion-referenced, (2) validity and usefulness are paramount, (3) pupils have a central part in it, unless they come to understand their strengths and weaknesses, they will make no progress, (4) it is essentially positive in intent” (p. 372).

Nyquist (2007) defines different kinds of formative assessment under the name of weak, moderate and strong formative assessment. In weak formative assessment, teachers provide only correct results with some explanations for the students. In the moderate formative assessment, students have correct results with some explanations and some special suggestions for development. In strong formative assessment, students have correct results, some explanations and some specific activities to go a step further (cited in William, 2011). Black and William (2009) have clarified the definition of formative assessment as

Formative assessment is concerned with the creation of, and capitalization upon, 'moments of contingency' in instruction for the purpose of the regulation of learning process. How teachers, learners and their peers create and capitalize on these moments of contingency entails considerations of instructional design, curriculum, pedagogy, psychology and epistemology (p. 10).

The research has showed that the type of the assessment tasks affects learning environment according to students' needs. Traditional assessment tests are product-oriented and static. Thus, they fail to provide necessary information for learners. However, alternative assessment tools help learners become aware of their learning process. Students take the responsibility for learning with the teacher guidance and this helps them to practice self-evaluation, reflection and collaboration (Dochy, 2001).

2.5. Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment

The role of the teachers in assessment practices has a great impact while assessing students. It is necessary to help teachers for using both formative and summative assessment in a practical way in their classrooms to create a better learning environment. Teachers need help to identify 'next steps' in learning. The development in ideas and skills must be in the teachers' mind for considering the next appropriate steps (Harlen & James, 1997).

The perceptions and the attitudes of the teachers in assessment practices have a crucial role for setting a friendly classroom atmosphere. Dochy (2001) states that teachers' role in assessment is to indicate the students their strong points, their weaknesses and their growth, and is to assist students towards the achievement of the learning goals. According to Kealey (2010), teachers should control the results of their assessment practices to decide whether teaching methods have appropriate results for student learning.

The relationship between the teacher and the student is quite significant in the assessment period. Black and William (2009) present the teachers' role in assessment as:

The teacher must be accountable to the students in terms of taking on board, as far as reasonably practicable, the students' needs and preferences. Different students in the same class might be working towards different goals; this might be acceptable to the teacher. However, some students' intention is too far away from teacher's intention and the teacher should draw the students' attention to the teacher's (p. 22).

The beliefs and the conceptions of teachers of assessment are significant as these influence the learning atmosphere. Thompson (1992) indicates the differences between teachers' beliefs and conceptions as "conceptions are the mental structures, encompassing both beliefs and any aspect of the teachers' knowledge that bears on their experience, such as meanings, concepts, propositions, rules, mental images, and the like – instead of simply teachers' beliefs" (p.141, cited in Vardar, 2012, p. 6). Brown (2002) explains the significance of teachers' conceptions in education as follows:

Teachers' conceptions of and evaluations of student behaviour and performance (i.e., assessment), are affected by the conceptions teachers have about their own confidence to teach, the act of teaching, the nature of curriculum or subjects, the process and purpose of assessment, and the nature of learning among many educational beliefs (p. 3, cited in Zaimoglu, 2012, p. 15).

When the teacher assesses their students in the classroom, their individual experiences and conceptions affect their students' performance (Vardar, 2010). Nasir et al. (2010) propose that curriculum makers should take into account the teachers' perception on alternative assessment before the integration of alternative assessment to the school system, because the teachers have a significant role in assessment process. Alternative assessment tools can help teachers to develop their students' critical and creative thinking.

A TEYL programme needs teachers with knowledge of the social skills and appropriate teaching strategies for TEYL. According to Moon (2005), "In motivating students and providing input in a foreign language context, the provision of adequately qualified TEYL teachers is probably the most critical of all the conditions for Ministries to put in place in order to have a chance of successfully implementing a TEYL programme"(p. 32).

2.6. Using Assessment Tools in Educational Base and the Educational Context in Turkey

Nunan (2011) explains that assessment is a part of teaching-learning process. Assessment is way to determine how well the learners have done and to find out why. A number of issues should be taken into consideration in the task of assessing young learners. These are age “level of children’s motor, linguistic, social and conceptual development”, content of language learning “a focus on oral skills, vocabulary development, and language use at discourse level”, methods of teaching “interactive use of games, songs, rhymes”, aims “social and cross-cultural aims, as well as language learning aims”, learning theories “zone of proximal development, learning through social interaction” (p. 219). Linse (2005) adds to this view as follows:

I like to weave assessment and instruction together and try to constantly observe my learners so that I can adjust my instruction to meet their needs. Assessment should be integrated and reflect the type of instruction taking place in the classroom. Many oral and written language activities can easily be used for classroom-based assessment (p. 145, cited in Nunan, 2011, p. 220).

The aim of primary foreign language programs is to enrich standards of teaching English from early ages. The main concern in the primary classroom is to help children’s learning. Assessment should assist this aim by using tasks familiar to children and monitoring progress over time by collecting information about the students’ performance on classroom activities. This information will then assist teachers to reorganize their teaching strategies according to the students’ needs (Moon, 2005).

The Turkish Government declared in 2013 that the teaching of English as a foreign language would be compulsory in from the 2nd grades (ages 8-9) of primary schooling. English is a compulsory course in Turkish primary schools.

As stated by Ministry of National Education (MoNE), assessment procedures must be in line with the teaching methods and techniques. These techniques and methods should have the characteristics of national curriculum. National education policy reflects the general goals of educational policy (MoNE, 2006). The role of the assessment practices and using appropriate assessment tools according to needs of new designed curriculum are quite significant in applying national curriculum.

Şahinkarakaş (2012) states that the new approach to education in Turkey focuses on the needs of learners. New curriculum is designed as a learner-centered one. This new process causes some problems for some teachers, because they have to change their teaching and assessing habits in line with the needs of new assessment practices. Teachers perceive assessment as a way of making the parents, students and policy makers believe their teaching effectiveness. If it is true that teacher's beliefs are reflected during assessment, it is crucial to motivate the teachers and organize some in-service teacher training activities.

According to English Language Curriculum for Primary Education in Turkey, assessment period should be less fearful for learners. The more meaningful and the less fearful way of assessing student abilities is alternative assessment. These assessment tools include portfolio assessment, self-assessment, and classroom assessment and teacher observation (checklists, scoring rubrics and anecdotal records) (MoNE, 2006).

Characteristics of alternative assessment are stated in the English Language Curriculum for Primary Education in Turkey as follows: "1) it is performance-based and realistic, 2) it focuses on documenting the student's progress, 3) it is criterion-referenced and creative, 4) it considers individual differences, 5) it is inseparably integrated with teaching, 6) it emphasizes what students knows and what they can do" (MoNE, 2006, p. 26). If the teacher applies suitable assessment tools in teaching period, the process of learning will be more meaningful for the students.

The new English Language Curriculum for Primary Education by Ministry of National Education (2013) focuses on the significance of the assessment as a final element of the curriculum. Self-assessment is in the center of assessment process by adding self-assessment checklists for students. "What did you learn?", "How much do you think you learned?" and "What do you think you can do in real life, based on what you learned in class?" are the prompting questions for students. Keeping a dossier of their language learning achievement which is modeled on the European Language Portfolio, is another assessment practice. In this manner, " they will be able to track their progress independently of quantitative scoring and grades. In addition to self-assessment, formal evaluation will be carried out through the application of written and oral exams, quizzes, homework assignments and projects in order to provide an objective record of students' success" (MoNE, 2013, p. 5).

CHAPTER III

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter defines the methodological design of the study. The research design, the context of the study and the participants are presented. Later, data collection tools and data analysis procedures are introduced.

3.2. Research Design

This study mainly aimed to investigate TEYL teachers' conceptions of assessment and their conceptions of assessment tools. In addition, it was an attempt to identify their choices of assessment tasks in practice. The study employed both quantitative research methods to collect and to analyze data. Gay and Airasian (2000) define quantitative research as "“based on the collection and analysis of numerical data” (p. 8) and is used to “describe current conditions, investigate relationships, and study cause-effect phenomena” (p.11, cited in Calveric, 2010, p. 42). Among the quantitative methods, survey research was used to investigate TEYL teachers' conceptions of assessment and assessment tools. The survey studies are descriptive, thus they are necessary to search a variety of educational issues by concerning with assessing practice, opinions, preferences and attitudes in such related situations (Gay & Airasian, 2003 cited in Vardar, 2010). In the present study, an adapted version of Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment Questionnaire (TCoA-III A) originally developed by Brown (2001-2003, 2008) was used to collect data (see Appendix 2).

3.3. Context of the Study

This study was conducted with TEYL teachers who teach English at primary state schools in Osmaniye, Turkey. In state primary schools, the second and third graders have two hours of English classes per week. The fourth, fifth and sixth graders have three hours of English while 7th and 8th graders have four hours of English classes per week. English courses are obligatory at these grades. In addition, students can choose two hours of English as an elective lesson per week after the 5th grade. At the end of grade 8, students take a high-school entrance examination that includes a total of 120 questions of Mathematics, Turkish, Science, English, History and Religion –20 from each lesson. The teachers' evaluations of the students are also taken into consideration for finalizing the results of the placement tests. Thirty percent of teacher–evaluation results affect the students' exam results. Thus, teachers' conceptions of assessment are a quite important issue to be discussed. The present study deals

with the results of a research conducted on primary school teachers' perceptions of assessment in English language education. Griffiths, Gore and Ladwig (2006) have pointed out that teachers' beliefs influence teaching practices more considerably than teaching experience and socioeconomic school context do.

3.4. Participants

The participants of the study were 43 primary school TEYL teachers who work in Osmaniye, Turkey during 2014-2015 academic year. In this study, primary school English language teachers were chosen on purpose because teaching English to young learners has become more significant at primary schools in Turkey. According to Fraenkal & Wallen (2006), purposive sampling strategy is "based on previous knowledge of a population and the specific purpose of the research, investigators use personal judgment to select a sample. Researchers assume they can use their knowledge of the population to judge whether or not a particular sample will be representative" (p. 99).

3.5. Data Collection Tools

In this study, a Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment Questionnaire (TCoA-IIIa) adapted from Brown (2001-2003, 2008) was used (see Appendix 2) on receiving a permission from Brown (see Appendix 4) and the Head of Ministry of Education in Osmaniye to conduct the questionnaire in primary schools (see Appendix 1).

3.5.1. Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment Questionnaire (TCoA-IIIa)

The Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment Questionnaire (TCoA-IIIa) originally developed by Brown (2001-2003, 2008) consisted of two parts. In the present study, we adapted the original questionnaire by adding a new section with one open-ended question to find an answer to the second research question (see Section 1.4.). The aim of the first part was to identify the teachers' conceptions of assessment tools. For this reason, it included a list of 11 assessment tools and the teachers were asked to indicate the assessment tools that they had in mind when they thought about assessment.

The purpose of the second part in the questionnaire was to elicit the teachers' conceptions of assessment. To achieve this aim, the teachers were asked to respond to a total of 27 statements to indicate their perceptions of assessment using a six-point Likert-type rating scale, which were *Strongly Disagree (1)*, *Mostly Disagree (2)*, *Slightly Agree (3)*, *Moderately Agree (4)*, *Mostly Agree (5)*, and *Strongly Agree (6)*.

The last part, Part 3, included an open-ended question aiming to learn the teachers' choices of daily assessment practices. More specifically, the teachers were asked to answer the following question: What kind of assessment practices do you use while assessing your students' language achievement? (Assessments like portfolios, standardized tests, oral question & answer, planned observation like checklist, teacher made written test, student written work like activity sheet or spelling and student self or peer assessment). The open ended questions focused on topics such as the characteristics of assessment during teaching and learning stages and practical use of assessment tools in primary English classes. Remesal (2010) has stated that it is crucial to approach teacher's perception and practices from an interpretive and qualitative methodology because it allows participants to show their feelings and bring their experiences to the foreground. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) point out that people's words and actions are necessary for the data of qualitative inquiry, and these make the researcher capture language and behavior.

3.6. Data Analysis Procedure

The data collected from the questionnaire was subjected to Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Through the use of SPSS, descriptive statistics were figured out. Then, they were analyzed in terms of frequencies (f) and percentages (%). The tables were also prepared by SPSS application.

CHAPTER IV

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

The first aim of this study was to find out TEYL teachers' conceptions of assessment. The second purpose was to learn the teachers' choices of assessment tasks in practice. This chapter presents the findings gathered from the Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment Questionnaire (TCoA-IIIA) originally developed by Brown (2001-2003, 2008) (see Appendix 2). The findings of the study are presented in three sections. The first section presents the findings about the teachers' conceptions of assessment practices (Section 4.2.). The second section discusses the findings about the teachers' conceptions of assessment (Section 4.3.). The third section reveals the teachers' choices of assessment practices (Section 4.4.).

4.2. Findings about the Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment Practices

This section presents the teachers' conceptions of assessment practices. The teachers indicated the assessment practices they had in mind when they thought about assessment practices like portfolios, standardized tests, student self or peer assessment, students' written work, planned observation, teacher made written test, essay test, 1-3 hour examination, oral question & answer, unplanned observation and conferencing. Table 1 reveals presents the teachers' conceptions of assessment practices in detail.

Table 1. Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment Practices

Assessment Practices	N	%
Unplanned Observation	7	16
Oral Question & Answer	24	56
Planned Observation	22	51
Students Written Work	17	40
Student Self or Peer Assessment	18	42
Conferencing	3	7
Portfolio/Scrapbook	18	42
Teacher Made Written Test	26	61
Standardized Test	13	30
Essay Test	12	28
1-3 Hour Examination	7	16

As indicated in Table 1, Teacher Made Written Test (61%), Oral Question & Answer (56 %) and Planned Observation (51%) were the commonly preferred assessment practices by the teachers in language teaching process. In contrast to these tools, Conferencing (7%), 1-3 Hour Examination (16%), Unplanned Observation (16%), Essay Test (28%), Standardized Test (30%), Students Written Work (40%), Student Self or Peer Assessment (42%) and Portfolio/Scrapbook (42%) were the less used assessment practices.

4.3. Findings about the Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment

Gavin Brown's (2003) Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment Abridged Survey (TCOA-III A) was used to achieve the purpose of this study. Brown designed a scale (TCoA IIIA) to evaluate the structural relationships of the four main assessment conceptions and teachers' level of agreement or support for each conception (see Brown, 2002; 2004; and 2008). The COA-III Abridged instrument provided valid factor scale scores (Brown, 2006).

Therefore, the shortened inventory was selected as a measure for this study.

Brown (2002) recommended four main conceptions for how teachers conceive of assessment as improvement: 1) "assessment is useful in improving teacher instruction and

student learning by providing quality information for decision-making”; 2) student accountability “assessment is about accountability of students through certification processes”; 3) school accountability “ teachers or schools are made accountable thorough internal and external evaluations”, and 4) irrelevance “assessment is irrelevant or pernicious to the work of teachers and the life of students” (p. 25, cited in Vardar, 2010, p. 9).

The Conceptions of Assessment Questionnaire (TCoA-IIIA)(Brown, 2003) consisted of 27 items and these 27 items were classified into subgroups by Brown (2007) in his previous study (2007). These categorized subgroups by Brown (2007) were used in analyzing TEYL teachers’ conceptions of assessment in this study. These categorized subgroups are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Subgroups of Conceptions

Subgroup	Item	Statement of conceptions of assessment
School Accountability	1	Assessment provides information on how well schools are doing
	10	Assessment is an accurate indicator of a school's quality
	19	Assessment is a good way to evaluate a school
Student Accountability	2	Assessment places students into categories
	11	Assessment is assigning a grade or level to student work
	20	Assessment determines if students meet qualifications standards
Irrelevance	7	Assessment forces teachers to teach in a way that is contradictory to their beliefs
	8	Teachers conduct assessments but make little use of the results
	9	Assessment results should be treated cautiously because of measurement error
	16	Assessment is unfair to students
	17	Assessment results are filed & ignored
	18	Teachers should take into account the error and imprecision in all assessment
	25	Assessment interferes with teaching
	26	Assessment has little impact on teaching
	27	Assessment is an imprecise process
Improvement	3	Assessment is a way to determine how much students have learned from teaching
	4	Assessment provides feedback to students about their performance
	5	Assessment is integrated with teaching practice
	6	Assessment results are trustworthy
	12	Assessment establishes what students have learned
	13	Assessment informs students of their learning needs
	14	Assessment information modifies ongoing teaching of students
	15	Assessment results are consistent
	21	Assessment measures students' higher order thinking skills
	22	Assessment helps students improve their learning
	23	Assessment allows different students to get different instruction
	24	Assessment results can be depended on

School accountability refers to the “Evaluation of the worth of teacher’s, school’s work or the curriculum itself is the essence of accountability conception. From that evaluation, it can be decided whether a weakness is severe enough to justify a possible prescribed course of action or whether a proficiency is substantial enough on which to base certification or reward” (Brown, 2001, p.4). For Brown (2008) *Student Accountability* “consists of assigning grades for each student, comparing each student’s performance with others, checking for students’ progress according to the criteria determined before, selection of the students to higher level of educational institutions, informing parents or other policy-makers in the system” (cited in Vardar, 2010, p.13). *Irrelevance* “indicates teachers who view assessment as unrelated to the work of educators and students. In accordance with formal testing, teachers who perceive this assessment conception refuse assessment due to its perceived harmful influence upon teacher autonomy and professionalism” (Brown, 2003, cited in Calveric, 2010, p.20). Accordingly, followers of the irrelevance conception believe “assessment detracts from student learning and excludes the inclusion of teachers’ intuitive evaluations, student-teacher relationships, and in depth knowledge of curriculum and pedagogy” (Brown, 2003, cited in Calveric, 2010, p. 20). The last subgroup is *Improvement*. Brown (2003) defines this improvement conception as: “(a) students’ achievement or performance is depicted through assessment results and (b) the assessments yielded reliable and valid data necessary for accurately describing student performance. Under these circumstances, the purpose of assessment requires wide-ranging use of varied assessment tools, both formal and informal teacher-based, aimed at succinctly capturing students’ academic profiles, “with the explicit goal of improving the quality of instruction and student learning” (p. 4, cited in Calveric, 2010, p.17).

Table 3 reveals TEYL Teachers’ conceptions of assessment in the present study regarding the items in the subgroup *School Accountability* as identified by Brown (2007).

Table 3. Items Related to School Accountability

Items	Frequencies						Percentages (%)					
	SD	MD	SA	MA	MA	SA	SD	MD	SA	MA	MA	SA
1.Assessment provides information on how well schools are doing	8	15	7	8	1	3	18,6	34,9	16,3	18,6	2,3	7
10.Assessment is an accurate indicator of a school's quality	3	9	11	10	6	4	7	20,9	25,6	23,3	14	9,3
19.Assessment is a good way to evaluate a school	4	10	12	8	4	5	9,3	23,3	27,3	18,6	9,3	11
SD= Strongly Disagree MD= Mostly Disagree SA= Slightly agree MA= Moderately Agree MA= Mostly Agree SA= Strongly Agree												

In TCoA-III A, Items 1, 10 and 19 were related to school accountability. As it can be seen in Table 3, % 34,9 of the teachers mostly disagreed and % 18,6 of strongly disagreed with the item *Assessment provides information on how well schools are doing* (TCoA-III A,1). It indicated that % 53, 5 of the teachers rejected the idea that assessment provides information about how well schools do.

The TCoA-III A Item 10, *Assessment is an accurate indicator of a school's quality* was slightly agreed by %25,6 of the teachers and moderately agreed by %23,3 of the teachers. It shows that % 48.9 of teachers see assessment as an accurate indicator of a school's quality.

The TCoA-III A Item 19, *Assessment is a good way to evaluate a school* was slightly agreed by %27,3 of the teachers, but moderately disagreed by % 23,3 of the teachers. %27,3 of the teachers support the idea that evaluating a school with assessment tools is a good way.

On the contrary with this conception, % 23,3 of the teachers do not support the conception of evaluating schools through assessment.

Table 4 indicates TEYL Teachers' conceptions of assessment in the present study regarding the items in the subgroup *Student Accountability* as identified by Brown (2007).

Table 4. Items Related to Student Accountability

Items	Frequencies						Percentages (%)					
	SD	MD	SA	MA	MA	SA	SD	MD	SA	MA	MA	SA
2.Assessment places students into categories	4	6	6	11	13	2	9,3	14	14	25,6	30,2	4,7
11.Assessment is assigning a grade or level to student work	1	3	7	14	12	6	2,3	7	16,3	32,6	27,9	14
20.Assessment determines if students meet qualifications standards	1	6	7	14	10	5	2,3	14	16,3	32,6	23,3	11,6

Teachers' conceptions about school accountability were also subjected to the analyses through Items 2, 11 and 20. Item 2 *Assessment places students into categories* was mostly agreed by % 30,2 of the teachers and moderately agreed by %25,6 the teachers. On the other hand, % 32,6 of the teachers moderately agreed and % 27,9 of the teachers mostly agreed with the item 11; *Assessment is assigning a grade or level to student work*. In addition, Item 20, *Assessment determines if students meet qualifications standards* also demonstrated that % 32,6 of the teachers moderately agreed and % 23,3 of them mostly agreed Item 20. These answers give us a clue that the teachers are in favor of using assessment in grading students. The teachers mostly agree with these items as they use assessment in their classes to categorize students and assign a grade or level to their work related to their beliefs about assessment.

Table 5 shows TEYL Teachers' conceptions of assessment in the present study regarding the items in the subgroup *Irrelevance* as identified by Brown (2007).

Table 5. Items Related to Irrelevance

Items	Frequencies						Percentages (%)					
	SD	MD	SA	MA	MA	SA	SD	MD	SA	MA	MA	SA
7.Assessment forces teachers to teach in a way that is contradictory to their beliefs	7	7	10	8	6	4	16,3	16,3	23,3	18,6	14	9,3
8.Teachers conduct assessments but make little use of the results	4	7	15	7	6	4	9,3	16,3	34,9	16,3	14	9,3
9.Assessment results should be treated cautiously because of measurement error	0	3	15	7	8	10	0	7,0	34,9	16,3	18,6	23,3
16.Assessment is unfair to students	7	15	12	6	1	1	16,3	34,9	27,9	14	2,3	2,3
17.Assessment results are filed & ignored	7	13	6	11	5	1	16,3	30,2	14	25,6	11,6	2,3
18.Teachers should take into account the error and imprecision in all assessment	0	4	9	9	8	13	0	9,3	20,9	20,9	18,6	30,2
25.Assessment interferes with teaching	2	3	9	11	10	7	4,7	7,0	20,9	25,6	23,3	16,3
26.Assessment has little impact on teaching	10	12	9	4	5	3	23,3	27,9	20,9	9,3	11,6	7,0
27.Assessment is an imprecise process	3	8	16	5	9	2	7,0	18,6	37,2	11,6	20,9	4,7

The TCoA-III A Items 7, 8, 9, 16, 17, 18, 25, 26 and 27 were related to the Irrelevance subgroup. The seventh item of TCoA-III A *Assessment forces teachers to teach in a way that is contradictory to their beliefs* was slightly agreed by % 23,3 of the teachers and moderately agreed by %18,6 of the teachers. In addition, Item 8 *Teachers conduct assessments but make little use of the results also* revealed that % 34, 9 of the teachers slightly agreed and % 16,3 of them moderately agreed Item 8. When we look at the items of TCoA-III A Items 7 and 8, we can see that teachers think assessment as a force to make them teach in way that is contradictory to their beliefs. Also, % 51, 2 of teachers agreed Item 8, which indicates that they conduct assessment but make little use of it.

Item 9, *Assessment results should be treated cautiously because of measurement error* was also slightly agreed by % 34.9 of the teachers and strongly agreed by % 23,3 of them. It makes % 58, 2 out of %100 of the teachers. Most of the teachers agree that assessment results should be treated cautiously because of measurement error. Similarly, Item 18 *Teachers should take into account the error and imprecision in all assessment* was strongly agreed by %30,2 and moderately agreed by % 20,9 of the teachers. It was the same as Item 9 that % 60,1 out of %100 teachers accepted that teachers should take into account the error and imprecision in all assessment. Furthermore, the ratings for Item 25, *Assessment interferes with teaching* showed that % 25,6 of the teachers moderately agreed and % 23,3 of them mostly agreed with the Item 25. This finding implies that the teachers believe assessment interferes with teaching.

Item 16, *Assessment is unfair to students* also demonstrated that % 34, 9 of the teachers mostly disagreed and %16, 3 of them strongly disagreed; while % 27, 9 of them slightly agreed Item 16. As can be seen in Table 5, % 51, 2 of the teachers disagree with the idea that assessment is unfair to students. In addition, % 27,9 of the learners mostly disagreed and % 23,3 of them strongly disagreed Item 26, *Assessment has little impact on teaching*. These results from Item 16 and Item 26 showed that assessment is fair to students and has a significant impact on teaching. Item 27, *Assessment is an imprecise process* also demonstrated that % 37,2 of the teachers slightly agreed and % 20,9 of them mostly agreed with Item 27. As it can be understood from the answers of the teachers, teachers view assessment as an imprecise process.

Item 17, *Assessment results are filed & ignored* indicated that % 30,2 of the teachers mostly disagreed and % 16,3 of them strongly disagreed; while % 25,6 of them moderately

agreed Item 17. As it can be understood from these conceptions, while some teachers presented that assessment results are filed and ignored, the others rejected this belief. Mostly, they believed that assessment results are not filed and ignored.

Table 6 reveals TEYL Teachers' conceptions of assessment in the present study regarding the items in the subgroup *Improvement* as identified by Brown (2007).

Table 6. Items Related to Improvement

Items	Frequencies						Percentages (%)					
	SD	MD	SA	MA	MA	SA	SD	MD	SA	MA	MA	SA
3.Assessment is a way to determine how much students have learned from teaching	2	3	7	4	13	14	4,7	7,0	16,3	9,3	30,2	32,6
4.Assessment provides feedback to students about their performance		5	4	3	14	16	0	11,6	9,3	7,0	32,6	37,2
5.Assessment is integrated with teaching practice	2	3	3	9	15	10	4,7	7,0	7,0	20,9	34,9	23,3
6.Assessment results are trustworthy	2	3	3	9	15	10	4,7	7,0	7,0	20,9	34,9	23,3
12.Assessment establishes what students have learned	2	1	3	13	15	9	4,7	2,3	7,0	30,2	34,9	20,9
13.Assessment informs students of their learning needs	0	3	5	4	20	11	0	7,0	11,6	9,3	46,5	25,6
14.Assessment information modifies ongoing teaching of students	0	3	10	8	18	4	0	7,0	23,3	18,6	41,9	9,3
15.Assessment results are consistent	0	4	4	9	16	10	0	9,3	9,3	20,9	37,2	23,3
21.Assessment measures students' higher order thinking skills	3	4	4	14	14	4	7,0	9,3	9,3	32,6	32,6	9,3
22.Assessment helps students improve their learning	2	2	5	13	12	8	4,7	4,7	11,6	30,2	27,9	18,6
23.Assessment allows different students to get different Instruction	1	4	5	15	15	3	2,3	9,3	11,6	34,9	34,9	7,0
24.Assessment results can be depended on	1	2	9	13	11	6	2,3	4,7	20,9	30,2	25,6	14,0

In TCoA-III A, Items 3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 13, 14, 15, 21, 22, 23 and 24 were related to Improvement. As it can be seen in the Table 6, % 32,6 of the teachers strongly agreed and % 30,2 of the teachers mostly agreed with Item 3 *Assessment is a way to determine how much students have learned from teaching*. It means that % 62,8 of the teachers use assessment as a way to determine how much students have learned from teaching. Similarly, % 34,9 of the teachers mostly agreed and % 23,3 of the teachers strongly agreed with Item 5 *Assessment is integrated with teaching practice*. It indicated that % 58,2 of the teachers see assessment as an integrated process with teaching practice.

Items 6, 15, 24 are related to assessment results. Item 6, *Assessment results are trustworthy* demonstrated that % 34,9 of the teachers mostly agreed and % 23,3 of them strongly agreed with this item. In addition, % 37,2 of the teachers mostly agreed and % 23,3 of the teachers strongly agreed with Item 15 *Assessment results are consistent*. Also, Item 24 *Assessment results can be depended on* revealed that % 30,2 of teachers moderately agreed and %25,6 of the teachers mostly agreed with Item 24. These percentages of agreement showed that assessment results are consistent, trustworthy and can be depended on according to most of the teachers.

Item 12, *Assessment establishes what students have learned* was mostly agreed by %34.9 of the teachers and moderately agreed by %30,2 of the teachers. % 32,6 of the teachers mostly agreed and % 32,6 of the teachers moderately agreed with Item 21 *Assessment measures students' higher order thinking skills*. These two items indicated that assessment establishes what students have learned and assessment measures students' higher order thinking skills according to higher percentages of teachers' agreement.

Items 4, 13, 14, 22, 23 are related to students' improvement. The item *Assessment provides feedback to students about their performance* (4) was strongly agreed by % 37.2 of the teachers and mostly agreed by % 32,6 of the teachers. % 46,5 of the teachers mostly agreed and % 25,6 of the teachers strongly agreed with Item 13 *Assessment informs students of their learning needs*. Similarly, 14th item *Assessment information modifies ongoing teaching of students* was mostly agreed by % 41,9 of the teachers and slightly agreed by %25,0 of the teachers. It can be understood from the responses given to the Items 4, 13, 14 that assessment provides feedback to students about their performance and informs students of their learning needs and assessment information modifies ongoing teaching of students.

Item 22 *Assessment helps students improve their learning* was moderately agreed by %30,2 of the teachers and mostly agreed by %27,9 of the teachers. % 34,9 of the teachers mostly agreed and % 34,9 of the teachers moderately agreed with the Item 23; *Assessment allows different students to get different Instruction*. As it can be seen in these conceptions, teachers believe that assessment helps students improve their learning and assessment allows different students to get different instruction.

4.4. Findings about the Teachers' Choices of Assessment Practices

The last part of the survey, Part 3, included an open-ended question aiming to learn the teachers' choices of daily assessment practices. More specifically, the teachers were asked to answer the following question: *What kind of assessment practices do you use while assessing your students' language achievement? (Assessments like portfolios, standardized tests, oral question & answer, planned observation like checklist, teacher made written test, student written work like activity sheet or spelling and student self or peer assessment)*. The open-ended question was asked in order to triangulate the findings elicited through the first and the second part of the questionnaire data.

Table 7 indicates TEYL Teachers' choices of assessment in the present study.

Table 7. The Teachers' Choices of Assessment Practices

Assessment Tools	F	%
oral question & answer	43	100
standardized tests	36	86
teacher made written test	35	83
student written work like activity sheet or spelling	31	74
portfolios	28	67
student self or peer assessment	28	67
planned observation like checklist	27	64

Identifying which assessment tools were mostly chosen by teachers was a good indicator about learning the teachers' choices of assessment practices. Frequencies and percentages were calculated to examine which assessment tools were commonly chosen and used in assessment process. Statistics revealed that oral question & answer (100%), standardized tests (86%), teacher made written test (83%), student written work like activity sheet or spelling (74%), portfolios (67%), student self or peer assessment (67%), planned observation like checklist (64%), were the assessment tools commonly chosen by teachers teaching these subjects. When these results were compared Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment Practices as indicated in Table 1 (see Section 4.2.), the commonly chosen and used tools did not change a lot.

As indicated in Table 1 (see Section 4.2.), Teacher Made Written Test (61%), Oral Question & Answer (56 %) and Planned Observation (51%) were the commonly preferred assessment practices by the teachers in language teaching process. As it can be seen in Table

7, the teachers' choices of assessment practices are similar to their conception of assessment in their mind according to Oral question & answer (100%), standardized tests (86%) teacher made written tests (83%) and planned observation(64%). Traditional assessments tools were selected by most of the teachers in the present study except for student self or peer assessment and portfolios. As Gelbal & Kelecioğlu (2007) stated, “teachers had tendency to use the tools especially which they knew or had higher efficacy beliefs towards using them” (cited Vardar, 2010, p. 76).

The assessment practice, which was about using oral question and answers, in assessing students in the classroom was chosen by 100% of the respondent teachers. The same practice was preferred by %56 of the teachers as indicated in Table 1 (see Section 4.2.). This data shows that most of teachers preferred and utilized oral question answer in the teaching process. According to Mohammed (2011), questioning is a significant process to be used in teaching and learning process. Questioning helps students to develop their language skills as listening, reading, speaking and writing skills. Teachers should be aware of differences among students and should give enough time for students to think about answers.

Standardized tests were chosen by 86% of the teachers. On the contrary to these high percentages of choice, 30% of teachers stated that they preferred standardized tests as an assessment tool as shown in Table 1. Teachers' conceptions of assessment tools and their choices of assessment tools indicated difference about standardized tests. Farber (2010) revealed that providing time and opportunity for teachers to meet testing needs for various students is quite crucial in primary classes in order to handle test anxiety. Teachers should develop strategies for a better and fearless test environment in primary classes.

As can be inferred from Table 7, most of the teachers stated that they used teacher made written tests in assessing process. It makes % 83 out of %100 of the teachers. Similarly, % 61 of the teachers stated teacher made written test as a conception of assessment in Table 1. The results show that most of the teachers conceive teacher made written tests as an assessment practice and use teacher made written tests in their classes. Osterlind (1989) emphasizes that teachers should be careful while preparing teacher made written test. The grammar, syntax, punctuation and spelling must be right. Creative and novel ways of expressing ideas are also significant in test item construction.

The assessment tool *student written work like activity sheet or spelling* was chosen by % 74 of the teachers. In this case, the ratings elicited from the Table 1 showed that % 40 of

the teachers perceived student written work like activity sheet or spelling. It means that 31 out of 100 of the teachers use student written work like activity sheet or spelling assessing process in general terms. On the other hand, as can be seen in Table 1 (see Section 4.2.), 17 teachers mentioned they perceived student written work activities such as worksheets. According to Sobel and Taylor (2006), it is relevant to provide additional student work for handwriting and spelling instruction at risk children in the primary classes.

The ratings elicited from the assessment tool *Portfolios* indicated % 67 of the teachers stated portfolios as their choice in assessing process. In contrast to these ratings of choice, % 42 of them stated portfolios as assessment practice in their mind. As it can be understood from the answers of the teachers, most of them benefit from portfolios in young learners classes. Miller (2002) indicates that using portfolios in young learners' classes promotes learning and includes a significant potential for improving and demonstrating transferable skills as an ongoing process.

Student self or peer assessment is another assessment tool. Sixty-seven percent of the teachers chose student self or peer assessment. However, % 42 of teachers preferred this tool to indicate assessment tools in their mind. Similar to portfolios, this assessment tool has a high rating to use in assessing process more than theoretical conceptions and beliefs. According to Miller (2002), "self-assessment obliges students more actively and formally to evaluate themselves and may develop self-awareness and better understanding of learning outcomes. Peer assessment by overseeing and evaluating other students' work, the process of peer assessment develops heightened awareness of what is expected of students in their learning" (p. 8).

Planned observation like checklist was chosen by 64 % of the teachers. Additionally, % 51 of the teachers mentioned planned observation like checklist in Table 1 as their conception of assessment. The ratings elicited from the teachers indicated that the teachers use planned observation like checklist in practice as well as they perceive the tool. Hannel (2005) states that teachers' observations about their students provide useful information about students' individual needs. Teachers may organize their observations in a systematic way by using appropriate checklist. While preparing checklist, student's unique personality, learned behaviors and cultural differences should be taken into account by teachers.

It can be understood from the results of the survey that teachers indicated differences in their assessment practices that they used in the classrooms and conceptions of assessment

in their minds. Teachers utilize assessment tools in teaching and learning process to develop students' higher order skills and better learning strategies. The aim of teachers in using assessment tools in teaching and learning process is associated with the Improvement subgroup.

CHAPTER V

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter includes a brief summary of the present study. The conclusions deduced from the adopted version of TCoA-III A are clearly presented. As a teacher researcher, the limitations that I encountered during the research are also explained comprehensively in the following section. Finally, some suggestions for further studies are made in this chapter to enlighten the coming studies.

5.2. Summary of the study

In the present study, two research questions were built up and examined to determine TEYL teachers' conceptions of assessment and their choices of assessment tasks in practice. The research questions of the present study were as follows:

1. What are TEYL teachers' perceptions of assessment?
2. What are TEYL teachers' choices of assessment tasks in practice?

The participants of the study were 43 primary school English language teachers who work in Osmaniye, Turkey during 2014-2015 academic year. The Conceptions of Assessment Questionnaire (TCoA-III A) (Brown, 2003) was used to investigate the teachers' conceptions of assessment associated with the first research question. There were both long and short versions of scale in English. The short version was conducted in this study with 27 items rated on a 6-point rating scale degreed from 1(Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree). The items in the scale were sub grouped by Brown (2003) under the four main conception of assessment as *Student Accountability*, *School Accountability*, *Improvement*, and *Irrelevance*. Descriptive findings were analyzed through frequencies and percentages related to these sub grouped items.

TEYL teachers' choice of assessment tasks in practice was analyzed with an open-ended question to find an answer to the second research question. The teachers were asked to answer the following question: *What kind of assessment practices do you use while assessing your students' language achievement?(Assessments like portfolios, standardized tests, oral question & answer, planned observation like checklist, teacher made written test, student written work like activity sheet or spelling and student self or peer assessment)*. The findings

gathered through the open-ended question were analyzed using content analysis. Frequencies and percentages of the findings emerged from the content analysis were also calculated to investigate which assessment tasks were commonly used in assessment process.

5.3. Conclusions

The first aim of the study was to find out TEYL teachers' conceptions of assessment. The Conceptions of Assessment Questionnaire (TCoA-IIIA) (Brown, 2003) consisted of 27 items and Brown (2007) classified these 27 items into subgroups in his previous study. These categorized subgroups by Brown (2007) were used in analyzing TEYL teachers' conceptions of assessment in the present study. These categorized subgroups are *assessment for improvement*, *assessment for student accountability*, *assessment for school accountability*, and *assessment as irrelevant*. According to the results, as identified through the items included in *School Accountability* subgroup, teachers supported the idea that evaluating a school with assessment tools is a good way. The teachers also view assessment as an accurate indicator of a school's quality. On the other hand, teachers rejected the idea that assessment provides information about how well schools do. In line with conceptions of teachers about the student accountability subgroup, the teachers are generally in favor of using assessment in grading students. The teachers mostly stated that they use assessment in their classes to categorize students and assign a grade. TEYL teachers' conception of assessment related to *Irrelevance* subgroup generally indicated that teachers think assessment as a force to make them teach in way that is contradictory to their beliefs. They also think that assessment interferes with teaching. In addition, they are aware of the fact that they make little use of the results of the assessments they conduct. Most of the teachers agree that assessment results should be treated cautiously because of measurement error. Moreover, most of them believe that assessment results are not filed but ignored.

The percentages of the teachers' agreement about *Improvement* subgroup showed that teachers believe assessment results are consistent, trustworthy and can be depended on. Additionally, TEYL teachers' conception of assessment related to students' improvement indicated that assessment provides feedback to students about their performance and informs the students of their learning needs and assessment information modifies ongoing teaching of students. Assessment, the teachers believe, helps students improve their learning and assessment allows different students to get different instruction.

When these results were compared to the Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment Practices as indicated in Table 1 (see Section 4.2.), the percentages of chosen assessment tools and perceived assessment practices did not vary a lot. More specifically, as indicated in Table 7 (see Section 4.4.) teachers' choices of assessment tasks in practice were oral question & answer (100%), standardized tests (86%), teacher made written test (83%), student written work like activity sheet or spelling (74%), portfolios (67%), student self or peer assessment (67%), planned observation like checklist (64%), were the assessment tools commonly chosen by teachers teaching these subjects.

Most of the participant teachers in this study elected the traditional assessment tools except for portfolios and student self or peer assessment. This conclusion verifies that of Gelbal's & Kelecioğlu's (2007) argument that "teachers had tendency to use the tools especially which they knew or had higher efficacy beliefs towards using them" (cited in Vardar, 2010, p. 76). Similarly, Şahinkarakaş (2012) argues, "teachers in general, view assessment as being embedded within instruction. In other words, they perceive assessment as a way to provide evidence of teaching and learning" (p. 1791).

The second aim of the study was to find out TEYL teachers' choices of assessment. When the frequencies to check for which assessment tasks were chosen in practice, it was found that Oral Question & Answer, Standardized Tests, Teacher Made Written Test, Student Written Work like Activity Sheet or Spelling, Planned Observation like Checklist were the assessment tasks commonly chosen to use in practice by teachers. In the study, both the open-ended question and related TCoA-IIIA items seem to contradict with each other.

Analysis of conceptions and choices revealed significant relationships with beliefs and practices, which should be considered when developing ways to improve teachers' assessment ability. Results from this study indicate that TEYL teachers' conceptions of assessment contradict with their choices of assessment tasks in practice. TEYL teachers' conception of assessment is mostly related to improvement of the students. Their choices of assessment tasks in practice are mainly traditional types of assessment as teacher made written test and standardized tests. Black and William (1998) state that "There is a tendency to use a normative rather than a criterion approach, which emphasis competition between pupils rather than personal improvement of each. The evidence is that with such practices the effect of feedback is to teach the weaker pupils that they lack ability, so that they are de-motivated and lose confidence in their own capacity to learn" (p. 18). Additionally, Calveric (2010) reveals

that “while encouraged to utilize rubrics, portfolios, and authentic assessments, teachers, schools, and students continue to receive rewards or sanctions for students’ performance on standardized testing. Understanding the reasons behind teachers’ assignment of assessment value would support the use of alternative assessment approaches in addition to traditional testing strategies” (p.106). According to Nasri et al. (2010), teachers' perceptions about alternative assessment should be gathered and examined before the alternative assessment is connected with the school curriculum. Since, teacher is a significant representative of a change in education. If the teachers have positive perceptions about alternative assessment, they will assist to utilize alternative assessment in educational base. Demir, Öztürk and Dökme (2011) add that “alternative measurement and evaluation techniques play an important role in increasing the quality and determining the shortages in education. Therefore, teachers who carry out the alternative measurement and evaluation techniques are supposed to have the necessary information about these techniques” (p. 2352).

5.4. Limitations of the Study

The educational setting of the study was limited with primary school English language teachers at state primary schools in 2013-2014 academic year in Osmaniye, Turkey. The conceptions of the teachers about assessment were specific only in this setting and the number of the participants was not sufficient to generalize the results of the study. Generalization of the study requires big sampling of participant. The results reflected the teachers’ elected characteristics of assessment beliefs and value of practices. No data were collected to confirm whether teachers’ choices of assessment tasks in practice were consistent with the real practice in primary schools English teaching classrooms.

5.5. Suggestions for Further Studies

The researcher conducted this study to explore TEYL teachers’ conceptions of assessment and assessment practices together with their choices of assessment tasks in practice. Further research related to how assessment conceptions and assessment choices in practice must be conducted in order to move this research to more practical implementation.

This study was limited with the participants elected from Osmaniye. Further, the number of participants should be increased from different cities of Turkey to make generalizations of the results. In addition to primary school English language teachers, teachers from high school and teachers from private school also should be added to the further studies in order to see the differences among these groups. Teachers of Mathematics, Turkish,

Science and Technology and Social Studies also should take part in future studies to compare results of each other's conceptions of assessment and assessment choices in practice. Furthermore, students and curriculum makers' conceptions of assessment should also be investigated in order to get a general view of assessment users.

The short version of the questionnaire was used in the study with limited number of participants. The long version of the questionnaire with a wide range of participants should be used in further studies.

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7.APPENDICIES

7.1. Appendix 1: Permission from Osmaniye National Education Directorate



T.C.
OSMANİYE VALİLİĞİ
İl Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü

Sayı : 33217192/300/2295366

05/06/2014

Konu: Araştırma İzni

VALİLİK MAKAMINA

İlgi : İlimiz Saimbey İlkokulu Müdürlüğü'nün 30/04/2014 tarih ve 107 sayılı yazısı.

İlgi yazı ile belirtilen İlimiz Saimbey İlkokulu İngilizce öğretmeni Nurcan AYAS'ın İlimiz genelinde bulunan ilkokul ve ortaokullarda "Ölçme Değerlendirme Tutum Anketi" konulu proje çalışması İlimiz Eğitimi Araştırma ve Değerlendirme komisyonu tarafından incelenmiş olup, mezkur anketin yapılması Müdürlüğümüzce uygun mütalaa edilmektedir.

Makamınızca da uygun görüldüğü takdirde olurlarınıza arz ederim.

Ramazan ÇELİK
İl Milli Eğitim Müdürü

OLUR
05/06/2014

Dr.M.H.Nail ANLAR
Vali a.
Vali Yardımcısı

Bu belge, 5070 sayılı Elektronik İmza Kanununun 5 inci maddesi gereğince güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır

Adnan Menderes Mah. Yeni Vilayet Kon.
L-M Blok 80010 OSMANİYE
Elektronik Ağ: www.osmaniye@meb.gov.tr
e-posta: temelegitim80@meb.gov.tr

Ayrıntılı bilgi için:M.SÜNBÜL.Şb. Md.
Tel:(0328)8261783-84
Faks: (0 328)8250330

7.2. Appendix 2: Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment Questionnaire (TCoA-IIIa)

Conceptions of Assessment III Abridged Survey

This survey asks about your beliefs and understandings about ASSESSMENT, whatever that term means to you. Please answer the questions using YOUR OWN understanding of assessment.

1. Please indicate which of the following assessment PRACTICES you have in mind when you think about assessment.

When I think about ASSESSMENT these are the kinds of PRACTICES I have in mind (*Tick all that apply*)

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Unplanned Observation | ☐ Student Self or Peer Assessment |
| ☐ Oral Question & Answer | ☐ Conferencing |
| ☐ Planned Observation (<i>e.g., Running Record, Checklist</i>) | ☐ Portfolio / Scrapbook |
| ☐ Student Written Work (<i>e.g., activity sheets or spelling</i>) | ☐ Teacher Made Written Test |
| | ☐ Standardised Test |
| | ☐ Essay Test |
| | ☐ 1-3 Hour Examination |

2. Please give your rating for each of the following 27 statements based on YOUR opinion about assessment. Indicate how much you actually agree or disagree with each statement. Use the following rating scale and choose the one response that comes closest to describing your opinion.

- Strongly Disagree
- Mostly Disagree
- Slightly Agree
- Moderately Agree
- Mostly Agree
- Strongly Agree

Please tick one box for each statement

Conceptions of Assessment	Strongly Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Mostly Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Assessment provides information on how well schools are doing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Assessment places students into categories	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Assessment is a way to determine how much students have learned from teaching	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Assessment provides feedback to students about their performance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Assessment is integrated with teaching practice	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Assessment results are trustworthy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Assessment forces teachers to teach in a way against their beliefs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Teachers conduct assessments but make little use of the results	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Assessment results should be treated cautiously because of measurement error	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Assessment is an accurate indicator of a school's quality	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Assessment is assigning a grade or level to student work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Assessment establishes what students have learned	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Assessment feeds back to students their learning needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Assessment information modifies ongoing teaching of students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. Assessment results are consistent	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. Assessment is unfair to students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. Assessment results are filed & ignored	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. Teachers should take into account the error and imprecision in all assessment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. Assessment is a good way to evaluate a school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. Assessment determines if students meet qualifications standards	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. Assessment measures students' higher order thinking skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. Assessment helps students improve their learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. Assessment allows different students to get different instruction	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. Assessment results can be depended on	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. Assessment interferes with teaching	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. Assessment has little impact on teaching	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27. Assessment is an imprecise process	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

7.3. Appendix 3: Open ended Question

1) What kind of assessment practices do you use while assessing your students' language achievement? (Assessments like portfolios, standardized tests, oral question & answer, planned observation like checklist, teacher made written test, student written work like activity sheet or spelling and student self or peer assessment).

7.4. Appendix 4: Permission Mail from Brown, G. T. L. (2014).

Gavin Brown

gt.brown@auckland.ac.nz

Yes of course you may use the questionnaire

It has already been translated and used in Turkey

Please reference the attached studies. This will save you translation and will allow you to make comparison of your results to that of these students. One of them was done at your university I see.

Associate Professor Gavin T L Brown, PhD

Director Quantitative Data Analysis and Research Unit (Quant-DARE)

School of Learning, Development & Professional Practice

Faculty of Education, The University of Auckland

Private Bag 92019, Auckland, 1142, New Zealand

Tel: [+649 623 8899](tel:+6496238899) ext. 48602; Fax: [+649 623 8827](tel:+6496238827)

<http://www.education.auckland.ac.nz/uoa/gavin-brown>

New: Brown, G. T. L., Pishghadam, R., & Shayesteh Sadafian, S. (2014). Iranian university students' conceptions of assessment. *Assessment Matters*, 6, 5-33.