

Investigation of Bilingual First-Grade Students' School Readiness

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed as a case study and the school readiness of first-grade bilingual students speaking Turkish and Kurdish was examined according to gender, whether they had preschool education, the language spoken at home, the number of siblings, and the educational background of their parents. The study group consisted of 300 children who started first grade in primary school in Viranşehir district of Şanlıurfa province, Turkey, in the 2014-2015 academic year and 15 first grade teachers working in this province. The data were collected using the Metropolitan Readiness Test, semi-structured Teacher Interview Form, and Family Information Form. The obtained data were evaluated with a two-way analysis of variance and content analysis. The results of this study revealed that receiving preschool education, the language spoken at home, the number of siblings, and the educational background of parents made a significant difference in the school readiness of the children, but the gender did not make a significant difference. As a result of the interviews with the primary school first-grade teachers, it was determined that children who received preschool education started primary school more ready than those who did not and that the family played an important role in school readiness.

KEYWORDS

Bilingualism; school readiness; preschool education; primary school.

INTRODUCTION

Starting school is an exciting and new experience for all children, regardless of the level of education. However, being ready for school is considered one of the most critical factors in successfully overcoming this process. School readiness is an important concept studied by many researchers and discussed from different aspects. It was demonstrated that school readiness was highly influential in learning, further skill development, academic skills, and other non-academic development areas (Arnold, 2004; Erkan et al., 2021; Jaramillo & Tietjen, 2001; Lim & Kim, 2014; Pianta & McCoy, 1997).

School readiness is often considered as the skills (cognitive, language, academic, and socio-emotional) that children have when they start school. School readiness refers to the child's skills and abilities that form the basis for school success. In the simplest terms, school readiness is the child's readiness for what the school expects and wants to teach (Parker et al., 1999). The main purpose of school readiness is to enable children to make a smooth transition to the first grade (Winter & Kelley, 2008). There is a strong relationship between children's readiness to learn and future academic success. Children who are less ready to transition to a school than their peers are unlikely to close the academic success gap. If children start primary school more prepared, they will benefit more from school (Lewit & Baker, 1995).

From 0 to 6 years old, the preschool period is the period when the child's development is the fastest and most critical. It is expected that the physical health and personality structure established in these years will continue in the same way in later ages. It was observed in long-term studies that most of the behaviors acquired in childhood shaped all behavioral and vital skills of the individual in adulthood (Lim & Kim, 2014; Oktay & Unutkan, 2005; Davis, 2010). Arnold et al. (2007) reported that international economic and political approaches, economic income levels, care and education services, brain development, home environment, and language factors effectively affected children's school readiness. Therefore, it is important for children's future lives to consider these factors other than the calendar age for starting primary school and to minimize the negative effects of possibly disadvantageous situations through preschool education. The children living in socio-economically and culturally unfavorable conditions could be as successful as their peers or reach a level close to their peers when necessary, precautions were taken with preschool education services and early childhood programs (Bekman et al., 2004).

Preschool education is not compulsory in Turkey and nearly half of the school-age children start primary school without going to any preschool education institution. In other words, some children start school without any preparation for primary education (Bekman et al., 2004; United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2012). As a result, the children, families, teachers, and school administrators face many problems and difficulties in the process of starting primary school. Therefore, it is important to raise the awareness, support, and guidance of kindergarten and first-grade teachers in reducing these problems in

this important process that originates from our education system and directly affects the lives of children.

In Turkey, "chronological age" is accepted as the basic criterion for starting school. Children who have completed 69 months as of the end of September of the year of school enrollment start the first grade of primary school (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2014). Therefore, the child's deficiencies and the aspects that need to be supported cannot be determined when starting school. In addition to this, not every child can benefit from preschool education, although it has become widespread. Not every child has the same family, culture, social environment, and economic opportunities (Erkan & Kirca, 2010). In addition to this, the number of children whose mother tongue is not Turkish, who learn to speak Turkish from educated family members (mostly bilingual elder siblings), or who start learning Turkish through formal education institutions is undeniably high. The mother tongue of families living, especially in the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolian regions of Turkey is primarily Kurdish. As there are parents who do not speak Turkish in these regions, children mostly start learning Turkish through formal education institutions instead of learning in their families. In return, this raises the question of whether these children are ready to start primary school in Turkey, where the national and official language of education is Turkish.

The fact that the family does not have a command of the country's official language may cause both the child's inability to be active in education life and the inability to establish the necessary communication link with the school. Failure to establish a connection between school culture and home culture may result in children dropping out of their education life and failing academically (Auerbach, 1989; Sylva et al., 2003).

Although some academic and cognitive field studies argued that bilingual children demonstrated higher cognitive skills and academic achievement than their monolingual peers (Cummins & Swain, 1986; Diaz, 1986; Hakuta & Diaz, 1985; Ricciardelli, 1992), the findings of studies conducted with disadvantaged children were against bilingual children. Magnuson et al. (2006) conducted a study on the school readiness of bilingual immigrant children and concluded that these children's school readiness levels were lower than the school readiness levels of other children. Coley (2002) evaluated the studies demonstrating that the academic achievement of Hispanics living in America was low while bilingualism should be an advantage. The researchers concluded that the language spoken by these bilingual children at home and the socio-economic level of their families were ignored in the studies. They suggested that variables such as the child's perceptions of the language spoken at home, his/her command of the language, and how much and when he/she was exposed to the language of education were important variables for the academic success of bilingual children. In addition to this, the child's mother tongue is suppressed by the language widely used by the country, and the child cannot be successful in both languages when his/her mother tongue is not a language that is widely used by the society, or when he/she does not have the opportunity to develop his/her mother tongue through tools such as books, newspapers, and television (Ceyhan & Koçbaşı, 2009). Therefore, it was

determined in many studies conducted with immigrants abroad that the school readiness level of bilingual immigrant children was lower than the school readiness level of their monolingual peers (Jencks & Philips 1998; Lapointe, et al., 2007).

Considering the related literature, it is seen that there are lots of educational studies related to bilingual children with disadvantages in multicultural and multilingual countries (Baker, 2014; Caughy & Owen, 2015; Guhn et al., 2016; Irani & Purmohammad, 2022; Wangke et al., 2021) while studies on different languages in Turkey are mainly conducted in the fields of political sciences (Güneş & Gürer, 2018; Gürses, 2020; Yoltar & Yörük, 2020; Kurt, 2019) and linguistics (Arslan, 2015; Çelebi et al., 2015; Kasap, 2015; Kasap, 2021; Zeydanlıoğlu, 2012) and there is a limited number of studies in the field of education (Özfidan, 2017; Yorgun & Sak, 2021; Susar et al., 2019).

In this regard, this study aimed to investigate bilingual first grade students' school readiness according to some variables and teachers' views. Gender, the language spoken at home, number of siblings and parents' educational background were selected as variables and school readiness of bilingual children who received and did not receive preschool education were compared based on variables. In addition, this study also determined the views of first-grade teachers about the school readiness of bilingual children. In this regard, it is considered that examining the school readiness of bilingual children and determining the teachers' opinions on the subject are essential in terms of making arrangements to facilitate the school preparation processes of bilingual children and will contribute to the related literature.

METHOD

Research Method

This study was conducted as a mixed-method study with a triangulation design and the school readiness of bilingual (Turkish-Kurdish) first-grade students was examined according to some socio-demographic characteristics and teacher's opinions. In the triangulation design, one of the basic mixed-method designs, the quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analyzed separately. Then, the obtained data are combined and interpreted. In triangulation design, it can be aimed to support the findings obtained from quantitative data with qualitative data or to deepen the study through different perspectives. In this regard, the study group and sample group may be selected from the same group or the sample and study group may vary. In addition to these, the purposive sampling method should be preferred in determining the study group from which qualitative data will be collected while the sample from which quantitative data is collected can be determined by selective or random sampling method (Creswell, 2014). In this study, quantitative and qualitative data were collected separately. In addition to the quantitative data obtained to evaluate the readiness of the students, it was aimed to investigate the research problem in depth by considering the opinions of the teachers on through qualitative data. Quantitative and qualitative findings were combined and interpreted in the discussion section. Separately presented findings were combined and discussed.

Participants

The participants of this study were the first-grade students of the state primary schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in Şanlıurfa province, Turkey, in the fall semester of the 2014-2015 academic year and the primary school first-grade teachers working in the schools of these students. The children constituting the sample group of the study were determined by the convenient sampling method, one of the random sampling methods. In addition to this, the bilingualism of the children was considered as a criterion when determining the sample group. The criterion sampling method, one of the purposive sampling methods, was used when determining the teachers constituting the study group. One of the criteria determined was that teachers worked with bilingual children. Another criterion was that the participant teachers were teaching in the classrooms of the children where the quantitative data were collected as the quantitative and qualitative data would be combined when interpreting.

Necessary ethical permissions were obtained from the MoNE to conduct the study in primary schools in the Viranşehir district of Şanlıurfa province, Turkey, before establishing the study group. Five volunteer schools were determined by interviewing the school administrators in the district center. A total of 300 bilingual children (150 of these children received preschool education beforehand while 150 children did not receive preschool education) and 15 first-grade teachers working in these children's classrooms were included in the study. Demographic information about the sample and study groups was presented below.

Demographic Characteristics of First-Grade Teachers

Most of the first-grade teachers in the study group (n=12) were male. Considering the professional service period of the teachers, most of the teachers (n=8) had 1-5 years of professional experience. The frequency of teachers teaching first grade varied. It was determined that one teacher taught first grades seven times, four teachers taught first grades for the first time, four teachers taught first grades twice, five teachers taught first grades three times, and one teacher taught first grades four times.

Demographical Characteristics of Students

The demographic characteristics of the students constituting the sample group were presented in Table 1 separately for the groups that received and did not receive preschool education.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Bilingual First-Grade Students

Demographic Characteristics	Children Who Received Preschool Education		Children Who Did Not Receive Preschool Education		TOTAL	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
	<i>Gender</i>					
Female	73	48.7	70	46.7	143	47.7
Male	77	51.3	80	53.3	157	52.3
<i>Language Spoken at Home</i>						
Turkish	13	9	41	27	54	18
Kurdish	72	48	33	22	105	35
Both Turkish and Kurdish	65	43	76	51	141	47
<i>Number of Siblings</i>						
1-3 siblings	46	30.7	70	46.7	116	38.7
4-6 siblings	69	46.0	56	37.3	125	41.7
7 and over	35	23.3	24	16.0	59	19.7
<i>Mother's Educational Background</i>						
Illiterate	79	52.7	46	30.7	125	41.7
Literate	20	13.3	13	8.7	33	11.0
Primary School	42	28	49	32.7	91	30.9
Elementary School	6	4.0	20	13.3	26	8.7
High School	3	2.0	11	7.3	14	4.7
University	0	0	11	7.3	11	3.7
<i>Father's Educational Background</i>						
Illiterate	28	18.7	9	6.0	37	12.3
Literate	28	18.7	17	11.3	45	15.0
Primary School	51	34.0	40	26.7	91	30.3
Elementary School	24	16.0	20	13.3	44	14.7
High School	14	9.3	37	24.7	51	17.0
University	5	3.3	27	18.0	32	10.7

As in Table 1, 47.7% of the first-grade students in the study group were girls and 52.3% were boys. 48.7% of the girls and 51.3% of the boys received preschool education. Both Turkish and Kurdish were used at home by 47% of the children while only Kurdish was used at home by 35% of the children. Only Turkish was used at home by 18% of the children. Almost half of the students who received preschool education (48%) spoke Kurdish at home. Again, both Turkish

and Kurdish were spoken at home by nearly half (43%) of the students who received preschool education. Both Kurdish and Turkish were used at home by more than half of the students who did not receive preschool education (51%). The number of students who frequently used Turkish at home and did not receive preschool education (27%) was higher than the students who used Turkish at home and received preschool education (9%). 38.7% of the students had 1-3 years old siblings while 4.7% had 4-6 years old siblings. 41.7% of the mothers were illiterate, 30.9% were primary school graduates, and 11% were literate. More than half (52.7%) of mothers of students who received preschool education were illiterate. 32.7% of the mothers of the students who did not receive preschool education were primary school graduates. 30% of the fathers were primary school graduates and 17% were high school graduates. 34% of the fathers of the students who received preschool education were primary school graduates.

Data Collection Tools

To increase the validity of the study and enrich the results, data were diversified. "Metropolitan Readiness Tests, Sixth Edition (MRT 6)" and the "Classroom Teacher Interview Form" prepared by the researchers were used as the primary data source. As a secondary data source, the "Family Information Form" prepared by the researchers was used to collect demographic information about the children in the study group and their parents. Data collection tools were described below:

Metropolitan Readiness Test (MRT6)

This test was developed by Nurss and McGauvran (1995) to evaluate the school readiness of preschool children (6 years old). This test consists of three parts ("Beginning Reading", "Story Comprehension" and "Quantitative Concepts (Quantity Concepts and Reasoning)") and five sub-tests. Metropolitan Readiness Test consists of 70 questions in total and is administered in four sessions. To adapt the Metropolitan Test to Turkish and to six-year-old Turkish children, the opinions of five preschool experts and a linguist were consulted. Considering the validity and reliability study of the Metropolitan Readiness Test, the test was administered to 30 children as a preliminary study. As a result of the reliability analysis performed to calculate the internal consistency of the items, the reliability coefficient for the total pre-test was found to be $KR20=0.837$. After an interval of six to eight weeks, the test was re-administered to 30 children to whom the preliminary study was applied. The reliability coefficient for the total post-test was found to be $KR20=0.885$. Considering the validity study of the test, the dependent t-Test was applied between the pre-test and post-test. As a result of the analysis, the correlation coefficient of the test was found to be significant ($p<0.05$) and 0.863 (Erkan & Kirca 2010; Erkan, 2011)

The reliability of the Metropolitan Readiness test for this study was calculated using the "Kuder Richardson 20 (KR20)" technique as correct answers were scored as "1" and incorrect answers were scored as "0". The reliability coefficient of the Metropolitan Readiness Test was

found to be $KR=0.8$. In line with this result, it was interpreted that the reliability of the test was high.

Family Information Form: Family Information Form was prepared by the researchers to determine the demographic characteristics of first-grade students such as gender, whether they received preschool education, the language frequently spoken at home, the number of siblings, and the educational background of their parents. This form consisted of six items.

Teacher Interview Form: This form consisted of two sections. In the first section of the form, "Personal Information Section", there were three questions to obtain data on teachers' gender, professional service period, and how many times they served as first-grade teachers. In the second section of the Teacher Interview Form, there were semi-structured questions with open and closed-ended questions to determine the opinions of the first-grade teachers about the school readiness of the children. Interview questions were as follows: "Do children start primary school with a good command of Turkish? What do you think are the reasons for this? What do you think is the role of preschool education in school readiness? Do you think children who receive preschool education start primary school ready? How would you explain your opinions? Do you think children who do not receive preschool education start primary school ready? How would you explain your opinions?"

Data Collection

After obtaining the necessary ethical permissions to collect the data, the administrators of the schools were informed about the study. "Parental consent form", "voluntary participation form" and "family information form" were applied to the families of the children constituting the study group before using the data collection tools. The first-grade teachers were requested to help deliver forms to the families and return the forms.

The data of this study were collected in 2014-2015 during October when the children started primary school. The Metropolitan Readiness Test was administered to the children individually by the first author of this study in a quiet environment at the school to determine their school readiness. The application of the test took an average of 45-50 minutes for each child. The interview form prepared for first-grade teachers was applied to the teachers at the school where they worked, the questions were asked by the researcher, the answers provided by the teachers to the questions were recorded, and their approvals were obtained by showing the recorded responses at the end of the interviews.

Data Analysis

Analysis of Quantitative Data

The normal distribution of the data obtained from the first-grade children participating in the study, which were the parametric test assumptions, and the homogeneity of the variances were tested statistically. The normality of the obtained data was analyzed by using the "skewness and kurtosis coefficients" and "Kolmogorov-Smirnov test". The homogeneity of the variances was analyzed by using "Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances". As the p values were less than 0.05 with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and Levene test, it was considered said that the

distribution of the data was normal, and the variances were homogeneous. Parametric statistics were used as the data met the parametric test conditions.

A “bi-directional analysis of variance” was used to determine whether the gender of the child, the language frequently spoken at home, the number of siblings, and the educational background of the parents were effective on the school readiness of bilingual primary school first-grade children who received or did not receive preschool education. The analysis findings of this study were presented based on the total test score of the Metropolitan Test. The data were analyzed by using SPSS 16 package program. The significance level of 0.05 was taken as the basis for determining whether the differences between the means were significant or not.

Analysis of Qualitative Data

The answers provided by the first-grade teachers to the interview questions were analyzed by the thematic analysis technique. Thematic analysis is one of the qualitative data analysis methods that includes many principles and methods. In thematic analysis, the explicit content of the data, that is, a directly observable statement, can form the theme. In addition to this, implicit expressions that the data source does not express directly but can be interpreted may also emerge as a theme (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The data were coded in line with the responses of teachers by considering the similarities, differences, and relations, categories were created, and the data were classified under these categories. In this study, the expressions of the teachers were interpreted, and the themes were determined. A reliability study was conducted by taking expert opinions on the emerging themes and categories. Within the scope of reliability, the data obtained from the study group were analyzed separately by both researchers. Miles and Huberman’s model was used to revealing the level of internal consistency. The consensus among coders, also called internal consistency, can be calculated by using the following formula: $\Delta = C \div (C + \partial) \times 100$ (Δ : Confidence coefficient, C : Number of topics/terms on which there is consensus, ∂ : Number of topics/terms on which there is no consensus). According to the coding control showing the internal consistency, it is expected that the consensus between coders should be at least 80% (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The inter-coder consensus value (intra-rater) of the study was found to be .9025. In addition to this, the first author of the study re-coded the data of the interview with a teacher in different periods to test her consistency and obtained the same results. Wolcott (1990) argued that providing the opinions of the study group with direct quotations in qualitative research was important in terms of validity and explaining the results. In this regard, the collected data were interpreted by providing direct quotations to the opinions of the first-grade teachers about the school readiness of bilingual children to increase the validity of the study. First-grade teachers were coded as FT1, FT2, and FT15 (FT: first-grade teacher).

FINDINGS

The findings of this study were presented under two headings: quantitative findings showing the results of the Metropolitan Readiness Test (MRT 6) applied to bilingual first-grade students

and qualitative findings reflecting the opinions of first-grade teachers on bilingual children's school readiness.

Quantitative Findings

The results of the two-way analysis of variance, in which the total test scores of the School Readiness Test administered to 300 first-grade bilingual students with and without preschool education were analyzed in terms of various socio-demographic variables, were presented in Table 2.

As in Table 2, the test total score averages of bilingual students who received preschool education were higher than the average scores of those who did not receive preschool education in all variables discussed. Considering the test total scores of the bilingual students according to the gender variable, the average total score of the boys who received preschool education ($\bar{x}=38.22$) was higher than the average of the girls ($\bar{x}=37.38$). Considering the children who did not receive preschool education, it was determined that the average score of boys ($\bar{x}=25.15$) was higher than that of girls ($\bar{x}=25.01$). The difference between the school readiness test average scores of these two groups was not significant ($F=0.36$; $p=0.55$; $p>0.05$). It was found that the common effects of preschool education and gender on students' school readiness were not significant ($F=0.19$; $p=0.66$; $p>0.05$). Based on this finding, it can be interpreted that gender does not have a significant effect on school readiness.

Considering the effect of the language spoken at home on the school readiness of bilingual students, the average school readiness test score of the students who received preschool education and only Turkish was spoken at home ($\bar{x}=43.54$) was higher than both the average score of the students who spoke Turkish and Kurdish at home ($\bar{x}=38.24$) and the average score of the students who only spoke Kurdish at home ($\bar{x}=29.73$) was found to be high. The average school readiness test score ($\bar{x}=29.92$) of students who did not receive preschool education and spoke Turkish at home ($\bar{x}=29.92$) was higher than the average score of students who spoke Turkish and Kurdish at home ($\bar{x}=26.06$) and the average score of students who only spoke Kurdish at home ($\bar{x}=23.33$). In addition to this, the average score of students who did not receive preschool education, where only Turkish was spoken at home ($\bar{x}=29.92$), was higher than the average score of students who only spoke Kurdish at home ($\bar{x}=23.33$), and students who spoke both Turkish and Kurdish ($\bar{x}=26.06$). Considering the students who only spoke Kurdish at home, the average test score of the group who received preschool education ($\bar{x}=29.73$) was higher than the average score ($\bar{x}=23.33$) of students who did not receive preschool education. The results of the two-way analysis of variance showed that the difference between the test score averages according to the language spoken at home was significant in favor of the students who only spoke Turkish at home ($F=46.95$; $p=0.00$; $p<0.05$). It was determined that the common effect of the language spoken at home and getting preschool education on school readiness levels was significant ($F=8.21$; $p=0.00$; $p<0.05$). Therefore, it can be reported that both the language spoken at home and preschool education had an impact on school readiness.

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation, and Variance Analysis Results of Bilingual First Year Students' School Readiness Test Scores According to Various Socio-demographic Variables

Variables	Preschool Education	Gender	n	\bar{x}	Ss	S.V.	S.S.	S d	M.S.	F	p
Children's Gender	Received	Female	73	37.38	7.82	Gender	17.7	1	17.7	0.3	0.55
		Male	77	38.22	8.78						
		Total	150	37.81	8.30						
	Did not receive	Female	70	25.01	4.39	PES	12103.61	1	12103.61	249.32	0.00*
		Male	80	25.15	5.93	GxPES	9.20	1	9.20	0.19	0.66
		Total	150	25.09	5.25						
Language Spoken at Home	Received	Turkish	41	43.54	5.92	Language spoken at home	3288.50	2	1644.25	46.95	0.00*
		Kurdish	33	29.73	8.61						
		Turkish and Kurdish	76	38.24	6.32						
		Total	150	37.81	8.31						
	Did not receive	Turkish	13	29.92	2.98	LSAHxPES	575.35	2	287.67	8.21	0.00*
		Kurdish	72	23.33	5.10						
		Turkish and Kurdish	65	26.06	4.96						
The number of Siblings	Received	1-3	70	39.83	7.64	Number of siblings	846.02	2	423.01	9.44	0.00*
		4-6	56	37.93	8.21						
		7 and over	24	31.67	7.69						
						PES		1			

		Total	150	37.81	8.31						
	Did not receive	1-3	46	25.41	5.85		8575.8	8575.8	191.4	0.00	
		4-6	69	25.30	4.75		4	4	3	*	
		7 and over	35	24.23	5.42	NOSxPES	464.02	2	232.01	5.18	0.01
		Total	150	25.09	5.25						*
Mother's Educational Background	Received	Illiterate	46	33.65	7.01	Mother's educational background	3237.5	5	647.5	18.54	0.00
		Literate	13	32.15	9.48		6	1			*
		Primary School	49	37.31	6.71						
		Elementary School	20	41.50	4.43						
		High School	11	48.00	7.97	PES	3382.7	1	3382.	96.88	0.00
		Bachelor's Degree	11	47.27	4.45		7	77			*
		Total	150	37.81	8.31						
	Did not receive	Illiterate	79	24.11	4.79						
		Literate	20	23.25	4.10	MEBxPES	77.18	4	19.29	0.55	0.70
		Primary School	42	26.24	4.77						
		Elementary School	6	31.50	8.21						
		High School	3	34.00	5.20						
Bachelor's Degree		-	-	-							
	Total	150	25.09	5.25							
Father's Educational Background	Received	Illiterate	9	31.55	8.02	Father's educational background	3225.7	5	645.1	18.96	0.00
		Literate	17	35.12	7.94		1	4			*
		Primary School	40	32.92	7.84						
		Elementary School	20	36.60	6.42						
		High School	37	40.92	5.55						
	Bachelor's Degree	27	45.48	6.39	PES	5379.4	1	5379.	158.0	0.00	
		Total	150	37.81	8.31		5	45	7	*	
Did not receive	Illiterate	28	22.93	4.09							

Literate	28	22.61	4.98						
Primary School	51	24.76	4.42						
Elementary School	24	25.87	3.82	FEBxPES	182.83	5	36.57	1.07	0.37
High School	14	31.28	4.98						
Bachelor's Degree	5	33.20	6.38						
Total	150	25.09	5.25						

*p<0.05 significant

G x PES = Gender x preschool education status

LSAH x PES = Language spoken at home x preschool education status

NOS x PES = Number of siblings x preschool education status

MEB x PES = Mother's educational background x preschool education status

FEB x PES = Father's educational background x preschool education status

S.V. = Source of variance

S.S. = Sum of squares

M.S = Mean of squares

Considering the effect of the number of siblings on school readiness, it was determined that the average score of the school readiness test ($\bar{x}=39.83$) of the students who received preschool education and had one or three siblings was higher than those who had more siblings. It was determined that the school readiness test average score of those who did not receive preschool education and had one or three siblings ($\bar{x}=25.41$) was higher than those who had preschool education and had more siblings. The results of the variance analysis demonstrated that the difference between the test score averages according to the language spoken at home was significant in favor of the students who only spoke Turkish at home ($F=9.44$; $p=0.00$; $p<0.05$). The joint effect of the number of siblings and preschool education on school readiness was found to be significant ($F=5.18$; $p=0.01$; $p<0.05$).

Considering the effect of the mother's educational background on school readiness, as in Table 2, the Metropolitan test total score average of the students whose mothers were high school graduates among the students who received preschool education ($\bar{x}=48.00$) was higher than those whose mothers had other educational backgrounds. It was determined that the total average score of the students whose mothers were high school graduates among the students who did not receive preschool education ($\bar{x}=34.00$) was higher than those whose mothers had other educational backgrounds. In this regard, it was interpreted that the total score averages of the children whose mothers were high school graduates in both groups (the group which received preschool education and the group which did not receive preschool education) were higher in the school readiness test. However, the total average score of the children who received preschool education ($\bar{x}=37.81$) was higher than the total mean score of those who did not receive preschool education ($\bar{x}=25.09$). The results of the variance analysis demonstrated that the difference between the test score averages according to the mother's educational background was significant in favor of the students whose mothers were high school graduates ($F=18.54$; $p=0.00$; $p<0.05$). It was determined that the joint effect of the mother's educational background and preschool education status on school readiness was not significant ($F=0.55$; $p=0.70$; $p>0.05$).

Considering the effect of the father's educational background on school readiness, the test total score average of the students whose fathers had bachelor's degrees among the students who received preschool education ($\bar{x}=45.48$) was higher than those whose fathers had other educational backgrounds. It was determined that the total average score of the students whose fathers had bachelor's degrees among the students who did not receive preschool education ($\bar{x}=33.20$) was higher than those whose mothers had other educational backgrounds. In this regard, it was interpreted that the total score averages of the children whose fathers had bachelor's degrees in both groups (the group which received preschool education and the group which did not receive preschool education) were higher in the school readiness test. However, the total average score of the children who received preschool education ($\bar{x}=37.81$) was higher than the total average score of those who did not receive preschool education ($\bar{x}=25.09$). The results of the variance analysis demonstrated that the difference between the test score

averages according to the father's educational background was significant in favor of the students whose fathers had bachelor's degrees ($F=18.96$; $p= 0.00$; $p<0.05$). It was determined that the joint effect of the father's educational background and preschool education status on school readiness was not significant ($F=1.07$; $p= 0.37$; $p>0.05$).

Qualitative Findings

Semi-structured open and closed-ended questions about children's school readiness were asked to 15 first-grade teachers within the scope of this study. As a result of the thematic analysis, two main themes emerged: teachers' opinions on school readiness and teachers' opinions on the role of preschool education in school readiness. The findings were shared under two sub-headings by including direct quotations from the teachers.

Teachers' Opinions on the School Readiness of Bilingual Children

Most of the first-grade teachers (f:9) reported that the children did not have a good command of Turkish when they started the first grade. Teachers, who reported that children did not have a good command of Turkish, mostly (f:9) associated the reason for this with family and close environment. One of the teachers reported that the reason for this was the media tools offered to children as well as the family. Teachers, who reported that children started primary school with a good command of Turkish, also emphasized the effect of family and close environment (f:4). In addition to this, receiving preschool education (f:4) and the effect of television (f:3) were among the other reasons reported by teachers. Some of the opinions of teachers were as follows:

(FT5): "There was a problem about speaking Turkish in the village because the students were away from social environment and technology such as television and internet and that Kurdish was constantly used within the family and among their friends. Of course, this problem is encountered less if the children have received preschool education".

(FT10): "...The children speaking Turkish learned it by hearsay in environment-family and television programs".

(FT2): "Most of the children were speaking Turkish. This was because most of the children received preschool education. Of course, they also learn it from television as they watch television for long hours".

Teachers' Opinions on the Role of Preschool Education in School Readiness

First-grade teachers reported that receiving preschool education contributed positively to their students' school readiness. They explained these contributions mainly with preparation for school (f:6), adaptation to school (f:6), motor skills (f:6), and language skills (f:6). One of the teachers reported that preschool education had a positive effect on children's self-care skills. Some of the opinions of teachers were as follows:

(FT8): "Children are ready for school. They do not have language problems and they are more inclined to comply with the school and classroom rules".

(FT6): “It eliminates the adaptation period. It is very beneficial in terms of learning how to use a pencil, learning school rules, learning how to behave at school, and learning certain basic information”.

All the teachers reported that children who did not receive preschool education did not start school ready. In addition to this, teachers reported that the children who did not receive preschool education were inadequate in terms of language skills (f:4), school adaptation (f:4), and motor skills (f:3). Teachers reported that preschool education had positive contributions to school readiness. However, considering whether the children who did not receive preschool education started school ready or not, some of the teachers (f:7) reported that children who received preschool education started school ready while some (f:8) reported that they did not start school ready. Three of the teachers, who reported that children who received preschool education started school ready, explained their opinions by the fact that the children had a good command of Turkish and three of the teachers explained their opinions by the fact that children had good adaptation to school skills. Teachers, who reported that children did not start school ready even though they received preschool education, explained their opinions on the problem of adaptation to school, the language spoken by the family, and the effect of the environment. In this regard, some of the opinions of teachers were as follows:

(FT15): “Those who received preschool education start school ready. They are willing to attend the classes. They don’t have communication problems at all. They are more social than other students”.

(FT3): “No, those who received preschool education do not start school ready. The children in my class who did not receive preschool education are more successful in obedience and adapting to the school culture”.

(FT5): “Considering the environmental conditions, the benefit of preschool to children is undeniable. However, when we consider the opportunities and conditions of the families and the environment here, it is not possible to say that those who received preschool education are also fully ready”.

(FT11): “No. A child who has not received preschool education spends a few months adapting to the school culture”.

(FT9): “The child who does not receive preschool education does not know the language (Turkish). We can't even communicate for a long time. So, they don’t start school ready”.

It was determined that the finding that the demographic characteristics of the family were effective in the quantitative research findings was supported by the responses provided by the teachers to the interview questions. Teachers often emphasized that the family played an important role in the school readiness of bilingual children. In addition to this, teachers reported that preschool education played an important role in helping children start primary school without having a good command of Turkish. However, some teachers also reported that bilingual children who received preschool education did not

start school ready. This situation emphasized that receiving preschool education in preparation for school was important but not sufficient on its own.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of this study, it was determined that the school readiness of bilingual (Turkish-Kurdish) first-grade students who received preschool education was higher than those who did not receive preschool education. In the interviews, teachers reported that preschool education had positive contributions to school readiness. Similarly, many studies demonstrated that preschool education was an important factor in children's school readiness (Duman & Köksal, 2019; Özyurt & Güzel, 2018). For example, Özyurt and Güzel (2018) conducted a study to investigate the school readiness of 221 preschool children and determined that the school readiness score averages of the children increased as the duration of preschool education increased.

There was no statistically significant difference between the school readiness levels of the students who received and did not receive bilingual preschool education by gender. Similar studies also revealed that gender was not associated with school readiness (Erkan & Kırca, 2010; Erkan, 2011; Görmez, 2007; Uslu & Uslu, 2013).

In this study, it was determined that the language used in the homes of the students affected their school readiness. It was an important finding that the test scores of those who received preschool education were higher among students who spoke only Kurdish at home and that children who spoke only Turkish at home were more advantageous than all other groups. As a result of the interviews, the teachers reported that their students started school without knowing Turkish and that their school readiness levels were low even if they received preschool education, mostly because the family did not speak Turkish at home. Kızıldağ (2022) conducted a study with 120 teachers working in Van province, Turkey, and determined that students frequently experienced language conflicts. These findings demonstrated that both receiving preschool education and the use of Turkish, which was the language of formal education, at home played an important role in children's school readiness. In parallel with these findings, Han et al. (2012) conducted a study on the school readiness of immigrant children living in the United States and found that families' command of the country's official language affected children's school readiness and that the bilingual children of families who did not use the official language of the country and the language of formal education start schooled at a more disadvantageous level than the children of families who were monolingual and had a good command of the country's official language. Similarly, Chilora (2000) conducted a study and determined that children whose mother tongue was the same as the mother tongue of the teacher had higher school success in primary school among bilingual and multilingual children.

In this study, it was concluded that children with fewer siblings had higher school readiness levels than those with more siblings. This finding contradicts the finding of a study conducted by Cinkılıç (2009). Cinkılıç conducted a study to investigate the effect of preschool

education on the school readiness of primary school first-grade children and concluded that the test scores of students were higher in terms of sentence expression-comprehension knowledge and ability to associate objects with their properties as the number of siblings increased. It is known that another factor that is as effective as preschool education on a child's school readiness is the family. Therefore, it is considered that this situation arises from other demographic characteristics of the family. Froiland, Powell, & Diamond, (2014) reported that families with low socioeconomic status and many children spent less time with their children.

In this study, it was determined that the school readiness levels of children whose mothers were high school graduates were higher than those whose mothers had other educational backgrounds. Considering the educational background of fathers, it was determined that the school readiness levels of children whose fathers had bachelor's degrees were higher than those whose mothers had other educational backgrounds. Many studies in the literature demonstrated that the mother's educational background affected children's school readiness (Erkan & Kırca, 2010; Erkan, 2011; Uslu & Uslu, 2013; Tunçeli & Akman, 2013). For example, Tunçeli and Akman (2013) conducted a study to investigate different variables affecting the school readiness of 6-year-old children, who were attending preschool education, and determined that the school readiness level of the children of parents with high educational backgrounds was higher than the children of those with low educational backgrounds.

In line with the findings of this study, it can be interpreted that bilingual children do not start school sufficiently ready and, therefore, both their academic success and their future lives are at risk. It is known that early intervention programs implemented in other countries with cultural diversity are effective in reducing and eliminating risk factors. Similarly, bilingual children can be prevented from falling behind their monolingual peers with intervention programs appropriate to the culture of the country. In addition to this, the findings revealed that preschool education affected school readiness positively. This finding also highlights the important role of a system other than the family, preschool education, to provide an equal start to school for children with limited opportunities in the family environment. Therefore, it is considered important to ensure the participation of all bilingual children in preschool education through education policies and to monitor their school attendance. For parents with low socioeconomic and educational backgrounds to support their children's school readiness skills and to support the education provided at home too, parent education can be sustained in parallel with their children's education and parents can be encouraged to participate in school activities.

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