


Evaluations of Class Teachers on Language, School Adaptation and Other Social Skills of Foreign National Children

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Abstract

Considering it is important to what level foreign children who are included in the education system have some different skills in the educational environment, it is aimed to examine the opinions of teachers about the language, school adaptation and social skills of foreign children. In the research, qualitative research method depending on the situation pattern was used and the opinions of 20 classroom teachers on various skills of foreign children were taken. Interviews were conducted through a semi-structured interview form, and direct quotations were included in the study. Expert opinions on the relevant measurement tool were received and five questions were asked within the scope of the research. 20 classroom teachers working in primary schools in Antalya province were determined according to the criterion sampling method. Content analysis method was used in the analysis of the data. Content analysis; coding of the data, finding the themes, arranging the codes and themes, defining and interpreting the findings took place in four stages. According to the results of the research, most of the teachers stated that they saw themselves as inadequate in developing the social skills of foreign students. For this reason, it is recommended that all teachers be given in-service training on improving the social skills of foreign students. Teachers stated that they felt alone in the process of developing social skills of foreign students and that they did not know enough what to do. For this reason, it has been found important to provide the support of various institutions, organizations and individuals to teachers in this process. Teachers stated that the most important factor that negatively affects foreign students' language, school adaptation and social skills is not knowing Turkish. For this reason, it has been stated that in order to improve the social skills of foreign students, it is necessary to teach Turkish to all foreign students first, and then move on to other skills training.

Keywords: Foreign Students, Skills, Opinions.

Introduction

People may have to go to other lands or other countries from their lands for various reasons. On the other hand, the most basic duty and priority of the state, families and other adults is the care, welfare and protection of all individuals, who are considered children up to the age of eighteen according to national and international laws, due to their physical, mental, emotional and social development, in all environments and conditions, 2018). In a study conducted by Buz (2008), it is stated that the vast majority of foreign citizens who have settled in our country from the Middle East in the last twenty years have problems in adapting to Turkey and establishing social relations. Adaptation and social relations problems of asylum seekers and foreign nationals; Longing for friendships in their country, missing the home and surroundings he left in his country, difficulty in adapting to the new situation due to the negative change in his financial situation, difficulty in adapting due to regional differences, future anxiety, loss of belief that he can solve his problems, difficulty in communicating with people, experiencing cultural differences, family problems It is expressed as not being able to speak, being afraid of rejection of the asylum application, not being able to express oneself due to language problem,

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feeling lonely, feeling useless and worthless, thinking about suicide, not being happy with what they have done, not being able to bear with people.

It is known that education life contributes to the individual and social development of children in studies conducted on foreign national and immigrant children. For this reason, it is important to examine the situations of children's adaptation to school, to determine the factors affecting their adaptation to school and to determine the intervention methods. In this case, it is necessary to work towards ensuring the adaptation of foreign children to school, for students to attend school, for their psycho-social and academic development, for them to benefit from the activities at school at a high level and to increase their academic success (İzol, 2019). Although there is no accepted definition of social skills (Denham, Hatfield, Smethurstb, Tan, & Tribe, 2006), Gresman (1985) defined social skills as a child's ability to interact appropriately with peers and adults. It is a psychological intervention that focuses on the development or improvement of social interaction, social performance, or interpersonal skills (Turner, McGlanaghy, Cuijpers, Van Der Gaag, Karyotaki, & MacBeth, 2018). Elliott and Busse (1991) suggested that there are five main clusters of social skill behaviors: cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control.

It is observed that parents and teachers often identify "social skills" as their primary concern (Little, Swangler, & Akin-Little, 2017). Social skills ensure that the relationships established between people are on a healthy basis. The individual gets acquainted with his environment during childhood and establishes social relations in this period. For this reason, social skills are a necessity for the child (Samancı & Uçan, 2017). One of the aims of the education system today is to ensure the full development of students' personalities and abilities. Although this implies working on their cognitive or intellectual development, it also means developing their emotional, motor, social and moral skills in line with this integral vision of the human being (Torres & Antonio, 2012).

Adaptation of the individual to the society in which he lives is among the main purposes of education. The realization of this harmony depends

on the social skills of the individual (Çubukçu & Gültekin, 2006). Social skill development is as important as other developmental stages in children's lives. Adaptation to social life, which gains exponentially more importance in the lives of individuals, begins in childhood, when the first stages of social development are intense (Samancı, 2010). In this respect, social skills play an important role in the acquisition of basic knowledge, skills and habits in the primary school period (Çubukçu & Gültekin, 2006). Acquiring social skills contributes to the success of students in the education process (Field, 2003). Therefore, the opinions and recommendations of primary school teachers should be taken into account. When the literature is examined, it is seen that foreign national children; their academic experience (Perumal, 2015), their language development (Ataseven, 2019; González & Correa, 2014), their adaptation to school (Aykut, 2019), their participation in education (Kranrattanasuit, 2020; McIntyre & Hall, 2020; Meda, Sookrajh & Maharaj, 2012); Mwangi, 2014; Ndiujye and Rao, 2018, Özkan, 2019). Considering the level of social skills of foreign children included in the education system, it is important to examine the opinions of teachers about the social skills of foreign children with this study.

Method

Model of the Research

Since the aim of the study was to examine the opinions of teachers on the social skills of foreign children, a case-based qualitative research method was used. In the situation design, factors related to a situation are investigated with a holistic approach and focus on how they affect the relevant situation and how they are affected by the relevant situation (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). In this study, within the scope of the situation pattern, the opinions of 20 classroom teachers on the social skills of foreign children were taken.

Working Group

20 classroom teachers whose opinions were taken within the scope of the research were determined on the basis of voluntariness according to the criterion sampling method. According to the criterion

sampling method, participants are determined according to predetermined criteria (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). In this study, while determining the opinions of teachers about the social skills of foreign children, classroom teachers with foreign children in their classes were determined as criteria.

Data Collection Tools

As a result of examining the relevant literature in the data collection tool created by the researcher, questions about some skills of foreign children were prepared. Expert opinions were taken about the appropriateness of the questions in the relevant measurement tool and ten questions prepared within the scope of the research were deemed appropriate.

Data Collection

20 classroom teachers working in central primary schools in the province of Antalya were determined according to the criterion sampling method and standardized open-ended interviews were conducted with the determined teachers via telephone. Each interviewee is asked these questions in the same style and in the same order (Patton, 1987). Audio recordings were taken during the interviews with the permission of the participants.

Analysis of Data

Content analysis method was used in the analysis of the data. The main purpose of content analysis is to reach concepts and relationships that can explain the collected data. Content analysis for this purpose; Coding of the data takes place in four stages as finding the themes, organizing the codes and themes, defining and interpreting the findings. (Lightning and Lightning, 2018). In order to ensure external

reliability in the research, detailed explanations about the teachers participating in the research were included, and to ensure internal reliability, the data were coded separately by two different coders, one of whom was the researcher. The reliability formula ($\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{consensus}}{\text{consensus} + \text{disagreement}}$) suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) was used to calculate the percentage of agreement between coders, and the reliability was calculated as 94%. This result shows that the reliability of the coding is sufficient (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In order to increase the internal validity of the research, the data were constantly reviewed, and to increase the external validity, detailed explanations about the research processes were included.

Findings

Within the scope of the research, there are eight teachers with professional seniority between 1 and 20 years, and twelve teachers between 21 and 40 years. 11 of the teachers stated that they were in the classrooms of foreign students before the 2022-2023 academic year. The majority of the teachers stated that they worked with foreign students for four years or less. In addition, it has been observed that there are teachers who have worked with foreign students for more than nine years. Other findings of the study are as follows:

Teachers' Opinions on the General Evaluation of Foreign Children

Ask the teachers, "Can you evaluate the foreign national children in your class in general?" question was posed. The answers given by the teachers were analyzed and presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Teachers' General Evaluations of Foreign Children

Evaluation	Teacher code	f
There are individual differences.	(T1,8,10,11,12,15,18)	7
It adapts over time.	(T1,5,9,10,11)	5
There is a language problem.	(T1,4,7,10,14, 16,17)	7
Know Turkish.	(T3,5,13)	3
Shy, introverted.	(T2,4,19)	3
Compatible.	(T2,6)	2
There is a problem with distance education.	(T9,11,20)	3
Reluctant in classes.	T6	1

He cannot express himself.	T7	1
Unsuccessful.	T19	1

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that the teachers mostly stated that the individual differences among the students came to the fore and they had language problems while evaluating the students. Most of the teachers stated that they had problems with foreign students at the beginning, but the problems decreased with the acceptance of other students over time. It is among the statements of the teachers that the classroom teacher has an important role in ensuring the integration between foreign students and other students. In addition, the language problem is seen as an important factor. The fact that families do not know Turkish is considered as a serious problem by the teachers. Some teachers' views on this subject are as follows:

“At first we had difficulties. I can rate it that way. The language problem is already the most important problem.”(T1).

“They don't know Turkish, they feel foreign. The family doesn't know either. Both his family and he are shy.”(T4).

“They were crying silently. When I asked him why are you crying, he didn't answer. They cannot express themselves. Even if they are in a bad situation, they cannot express themselves even if they are wronged. They are behind in success. Since they do not know the language, they are a little behind.”(T17)

Teachers' Opinions on Communication Skills of Foreign Children

“What can you say about the communication skills of the foreign children in your class?” question was posed. The answers given by the teachers were analyzed and presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Communication Skills of Foreign Children

Communication skills	Teacher code	f
Communication skills are poor.	(T1,4,6,7,10,12,13,20)	8
Good communication skills.	(T2,3,11,14)	4
Initially poor communication then good.	T9	1
Girls are good, boys are weak.	(T8,16,17)	3
Russian students are good.	(T5,18,19)	3

When Table 2 was examined, it was seen that most of the teachers stated that the communication skills of foreign students were weak. It is seen that teachers have different opinions about the level of communication skills. The fact that foreign students do not know Turkish is seen as the most important factor in their communication skills. In addition, teachers stated that female students communicate better than male students. There are also opinions that Russian students communicate better than other foreign students. Some teachers stated that students' communication skills are directly related to their families. Some opinions on the subject are as follows:

“Indeed, language is very important. I think the biggest problem is the language. I think the most important element that makes a person feel belonging to a country and adapts to that land is

language. The language problem unfortunately alienates these children from us.”(T13).

“There is communication within the family. He falls into the background because he cannot use the language with us. They talk to themselves with their own family. He is good at communicating in his own language. I say which side of your house, I say house, he shows with his hand. There is little communication.”(T14).

Teachers' Opinions on Expressing Themselves of Foreign Children

“Do you think that the foreign children in your class express themselves well? From where?” question was posed. The answers given by the teachers were analyzed and presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Self-Expression Skills of Foreign Children

Ability to express oneself	Teacher code	f
He can't.	(T1,4,6,7,10,13,15,16,17,18,19,20)	12
He can.	(T2,3,8,9,11,14)	6
Medium-level.	(T5,12)	2

When Table 3 was examined, it was stated by the teachers that most of the students had problems in expressing themselves. The fact that foreign students do not know Turkish is shown as the biggest reason for this situation. On the other hand, the teachers stated that the shyness of the foreign students and the fact that they do not act with the group and do not share with the group prevent adequate development in expressing themselves. The teachers stated that the fact that families do not speak Turkish at home and that some students do not make enough effort to learn Turkish makes this situation even more difficult. In addition, teachers stated that Afghan students are better adapted to society than Syrian students and thus express themselves better. Looking at Table 3, it is seen that the number of foreign students who express themselves is also high. The reason for this situation is that the students know Turkish. There are also students who express themselves, albeit at a moderate level. Teachers stated that students express themselves using body language. Teachers also stated that students use body language as a complement to verbal expressions. The statements

of teachers supporting this issue are given below.

“If they do not know Turkish, they cannot express it very well. He does not know Turkish, but the child is telling something with his hands, arms, objects and beings.”(T15).

“So they only express themselves physically. Words are very few.”(T10).

“They can't. Because they do not know Turkish.”(S7).

“They can explain themselves. At least what they want to do with their wishes in the class, their troubles. At least they don't have a problem with that aspect. He can understand most of what is being said. They can express themselves well enough to continue their school life”(T8).

Teachers' Opinions on Problem Solving Skills of Foreign Children

Asking the teachers, “Do you think it is sufficient to solve the problems faced by the foreign children in your class? From where?” question was posed. The answers given by the teachers were analyzed and presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Problem Solving Skills of Foreign Children

Problem solving skills	Teacher code	f
Sufficient.	(T2,3,8,9,11,12,15)	7
Not enough.	(T1,4,5,7,10,14,16,17)	8
Medium-level.	T13	1
I don't know enough.	(T6,18,19,20)	4

When Table 4 is examined, most of the teachers stated that they can solve the problems faced by foreign students themselves. Some teachers stated that students solve this situation by asking others for help. Teachers; They stated that students who can solve problems have high self-confidence, entrepreneurial, do not distinguish themselves from Turkish students and can speak Turkish. However, the number of teachers who state that there are students who cannot solve the problems they encounter is quite high. There are opinions that

these students feel shy, introverted and alienated. In addition, it was stated by the teachers that some students turned to violence to solve their problems, and these students developed the idea of protecting themselves with violence, and thus the students formed a violent defense mechanism. However, there are also opinions that this situation has been brought under control over time. Some of the teachers' views on the subject are as follows:

“Some of them tend to be too violent. I had a student... He gets stuck in everyone's throat as a

self-defense mechanism. I'm not mad at this kid. Then I tried a different method. I have always taken care of the child. I expressed my love. His attitude towards his friends with interest and love has also changed a lot. I gave an award, took it around with me. When I gave a task in class, I always gave it to him. He felt that he was valuable. His propensity for violence was so great that I was afraid he would kill someone one day. As she approached him lovingly, she gathered herself a little more. It's very nice that they talk to their friends now, thank you. That has

changed a lot.” (T15).

“No, there is a boy who gets his nutrition. I found out later. She didn't tell me that, she cries all the time. I found out months later.” (S7).

Teachers’ Opinions on Social Skills of Foreign Children

Ask the teachers, “What do you think about the social skills of the foreign children in your class?” question was posed. The answers given by the teachers were analyzed and presented in Table 5.

Table 5 Social Skills of Foreign Children

Social skills	Teacher code	f
Weak	(T1,2,4,5,6,7,9,10,19,20)	10
Strong	(T3,8,11,12,13,14)	5
There are individual differences	(T15,16,17,18)	4
It increased over time	T13	1

When Table 5 is examined, it is seen that most of the teachers stated that foreign students are weak in terms of social skills. Teachers stated that these students do not participate in social activities, they do not initiate an interaction with other students first, they talk to a limited number of students, and they cannot establish friendships because they are introverted. However, some teachers stated that their students are strong in terms of social skills. For example, there are opinions stating that they play games with their classmates in the hallway, in the garden, are willing to take on tasks, and go shopping with their friends to the canteen. In addition, some teachers claimed that Russian students are better than other foreign students in terms of social skills.

“There is still shyness. There are three students he is chatting with in the class. Brain teasers and skill booster sets abound in the classroom. He especially plays with these three friends, not with the others. He watches the others but does not play.”(S9).

“It's normal, they talk to other kids. They can shop with them, go to the canteen together, play together in the hallway, and show them to their friends sitting behind them while there is any activity in the classroom.”(T8).

“They are generally waiting from the other side.”(S7).

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

When the teachers evaluated the foreign students in general, they drew attention to the language problem. The fact that these students do not know the language causes them to understand what is explained in the lessons and not be able to express themselves. Similarly, in the study conducted by Başar et al. (2018), it was concluded that foreign students do not know the language, causing them not to understand the teacher and isolating themselves from the classroom environment. In addition, Agcadağ Çelik (2019) explained in his research that the reason why foreign students cannot integrate with the education system is the language problem. Another point that teachers express when evaluating students is that foreign students are shy and introverted. It was stated that some students did not even hear their voices for months. The fact that these students feel alienated, the traumas they have experienced and the living conditions they are in can undoubtedly be seen as the reason for this situation. In addition, Chios (2016) determined in his study that teachers made suggestions for teaching Turkish to foreign students.

Another view of the teachers is the communication skills of foreign students. Most of the teachers stated that these students’ communication skills were weak. It can be said that the main reason for this situation is

that they do not know the language. Because language is one of the most important elements of common life that keeps people together. However, there are also teachers who state that the communication skills of foreign students have improved over time. Because these students started to learn the language over time, enabling them to establish a dialogue with their teachers and friends. Similarly, in the study conducted by Aykut (2019), the fact that foreign students do not know the language was seen as the biggest obstacle to communication. Sever (2020) also states that although foreign students initially had problems with their classmates, this problem disappeared over time and foreign students communicate with their friends.

Most of the teachers stated that foreign students are weak in terms of social skills. An activity of these students was stated by the teachers that they were not the students who started the game in general. It was stated by the teachers that they were involved in the games and studies when they were invited by other classmates or guided by the teacher. In Aykut's (2019) study, teachers stated that they included foreign students in classroom activities, thus enabling them to socialize with other students. Based on this finding, it can be said that other students and teachers have an important role in the development of social skills of foreign students. There are also teachers who state that there are foreign students with strong social skills.

There are opinions that it is more appropriate for foreign students to take part in the work done for the whole class rather than behaving like a different student. Some teachers stated that they do not know what to do because there is not enough time or they do not have enough information about these students. Similarly, in the study conducted by Er and Bayındır (2015), it was found that the teachers did not receive any training in the education of foreign students, therefore these students had problems in their education. Undoubtedly, the most important task falls to the teacher to increase the social skills of foreign students. For this reason, training should be given to all teachers working with foreign students, and teachers should not be allowed to think that they are left alone with these students. Teachers should be able to cooperate with all kinds of institutions, organizations and individuals for foreign students

when necessary. In this context, Gürel and Büyükşahin (2020) revealed in their study that not all of the teachers received an undergraduate education on the education of foreign students.

The research findings revealed that the majority of the teachers did not find themselves sufficient to increase the social skills of foreign students. Er and Bayındır (2015) stated that some teachers could not get along with foreign students because they had language problems, and the student could not express himself. For this reason, teachers stated that they could not contribute enough to the student due to the communication problem. They also pointed out that working with foreign students requires a separate expertise and that it is difficult to contribute to this process with classroom teacher education. Some teachers, on the other hand, stated that they did not receive any training and did not know what to do to increase the social skills of foreign students. Supporting this finding, Gichiru (2014) found in his study that most of the teachers lack knowledge and skills about the education of foreign children. Similarly, Bacakova (2012) stated in her study that they found themselves inadequate regarding foreign national children. Contrary to this situation, there are also teachers who consider themselves sufficient to increase the social skills of foreign students. These teachers stated that they work with students who speak Turkish and have no communication problems, so they contribute to them adequately. In addition, some teachers stated that they are closely interested in foreign students, that they have a good dialogue with these students, and that they approach them with love and compassion. In addition, in Aykırı's (2017) study, it was determined that there were teachers who stated that they had good relations with foreign students. In this context, it can be suggested to provide the support of various institutions, organizations and individuals to teachers. Teachers stated that the most important factor that negatively affects the social skills of foreign students is that they do not know Turkish. For this reason, in order to improve the social skills of foreign students, it is necessary to teach Turkish to all foreign students first.

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