

The Content Analysis of the Research Papers on Foreign Language Education

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study was to determine the trends of recent research papers in foreign language teaching in Turkish context and to give ideas to researchers and policy makers for future studies. Content Analysis method was used in this study. The focus of the study was 189 research papers published between 2009-2013 years in journals indexed in SSCI (94) and the ULAKBIM (95) database in Turkey. Research Papers Classification Form was used as data collection instrument. The papers were scanned in terms of year of the journal, authors, language of the paper, journal index, topic of the paper, research design, data collection tools, sample, sample size and data analysis method. The results revealed that the most frequently studied topics on foreign language teaching and learning from 2009 to 2013 were concept analysis, teaching and learning, the highest number of articles were published in 2013, most of the authors were Turkish, majority of the articles were published in English, quantitative method was used more than qualitative method in research design, undergraduates were the focus of attention as sample group and 31-100 sample size was preferred more than others.*

Key words: *Content analysis, Analysis of research papers, Analysis of papers on language teaching, foreign language teaching, paper classification*

I. Introduction

The history of foreign language education in Turkey dates back to 19th century. Since then, different languages have dominated as a foreign language in Turkish education system and various policies, methods and approaches have been adapted and followed through time. With the increasing number of universities and foreign language teaching departments especially towards the end of the 20th century, foreign language teaching was placed on more scientific basis. Several journals have appeared, many articles have been published in both national and international journals, several researches have been conducted and a lot of seminars and conferences on foreign language teaching have been held both in Turkey and abroad. However, there has been no research studying the content analysis of the articles published on foreign language teaching though there have been some content analysis studies on math and science education in Turkey and abroad. Therefore, it is necessary to make an inventory of the articles published on foreign language education in terms of topic, research methods, data collection instruments, data analysis, years of publication, authors and the language of the articles published in Turkey to shed light on future studies in this field.

Sarıçoban & Sarıçoban (2012) classifies the development of foreign language education in Turkish education system into three main periods. The first phase can be named as The Tanzimat Period which is the beginning of Westernization movements. At that time, French was the dominant language as an important part of the curriculum in military schools, Medical Schools and the School of Political Sciences (Kirkgoz, 2005). However, the establishment of Robert College in İstanbul in 19th century influenced the destiny of French language in Turkish education system. Since the medium of instruction in this institution was English and this school attracted many different non-muslim population. Through time, the graduates of this school took important positions at the state mechanism and this made these types of schools more popular. It was reported that there were more than 400 American schools and nearly twenty thousand students were taking education at these schools. The total number of foreign schools on Turkish territory was almost 2000 at the beginning of 20th century (Sezer, 1999).

The second phase was called as The Republic of Turkey (1923-1997). During this period, Atatürk's efforts to modernize the Turkish society in many aspects including the change of alphabet also increased the demand for foreign language learning. Because, the introduction of the Latin alphabet in Turkish language made foreign language learning faster and easier. In addition, at this time, Anatolian High Schools assumed an important role in Turkish education system, because they were considered to be the best path to distinguished universities. In these schools, math and science lessons were presented in English and also English occupied an important place in the school curriculum. After 1980s, with the concept of globalization all over the world, English became the global language. This phenomenon also influenced Turkish education system and the number of universities that used English as the medium instruction increased and became more popular day by

day. The graduates of these universities were easily employed because of their English proficiency (Sarıçoban & Sarıçoban,2012)

The third period was named as 1997 Education Reform. During this period, the duration of the compulsory education was extended from 5 to 8 years. In addition, English language was introduced at the 4th grade at the elementary school instead of secondary school. In this curriculum, communicative approach replaced grammar translation and audio- lingual method and learner autonomy was emphasized (Kirkgoz, 2005). As of assessment, portfolio emerged and learners' whole performances during the learning process were taken into consideration. Moreover, the increasing number of private schools and universities made contribution to extend the English language to a wider population in Turkey (Sarıçoban & Sarıçoban,2012).

II. Review of literature

Current literature on content analysis of articles published In Turkish context has been mostly limited to mathematics and science education (Göktaş et al, 2012; Baki et al, 2011; Çiltaş et al, 2012; Sözbilir and Kutu, 2008).

Sözbilir and Kutu (2008) studied research methods/design and data analyses procedures used in science education research papers published in Turkey. They glanced at 413 papers on science education from 28 different journals publishing educational research in Turkey. This document analysis indicated that the number of educational researches and papers published summit in 2005 but then began to a decline in 2006 and 2007. There were differences in terms of the frequency studied and subjects and research methods with the international trends except these similarities. In addition, quantitative research methods were dominant on Turkish science education research while qualitative and mixed method researches were the increasing trend in the world.

Baki et al (2011) investigated the trends in Turkish Mathematics Education on the basis of master and doctoral theses. They examined 284 graduate theses in regard to research topics, research methods, data collection and sample. They found that mathematics education researchers mostly preferred experimental design and used questionnaires and achievement tests as data collection instruments. In addition, it was revealed that researchers mostly preferred working on the 6th, 7th and 8th gradestudents.

Çiltaş et al (2012) scanned 359 articles published between 1987 and 2009 years in the field of mathematics education from 32 different journals. 27 of these journals were national and 5 of them were indexed in Web of Science (SSCI). They revealed that quantitative research was more preferred, learning activities and studies were the main focus articles, more than one data collection tool was used.

Göktaş et al (2012) studied on educational research papers published from 2005-2009 in 2115 papers published in 19 Turkish educational research journals listed in SSCI and the ULAKBIM database in Turkey. They took into consideration study types, research methods, specific topics, data collection tools, data analysis methods, and types of samples and sampling methods. The results revealed that instructional technology; science education, guidance and counseling, and mathematics education were the most studied disciplines. Furthermore, quantitative research method, quantitative data collection tools and descriptive analysis methods were dominant. Undergraduate students and teachers were the most frequently studied samples. Moreover, there was no significant difference in terms of either the research methods or the data analysis methods used between SSCI and ULAKBIM indexed journals.

Current literature on content analysis of articles published on English Language Teaching in international context has been quiet rare as well. Woravut et al (2012) explored differences between Thai and international research articles in English Language Teaching (ELT). They analyzed 200 research articles comprising 100 research articles published in English by ELT academics in Thailand and 100 research articles published in international journals between 2003 and 2007. The results suggested that in terms of research quality, research conducted by Thai ELT academics seemed to have a lower quality of methodological foundation which was related to the appropriacy of method and the awareness of research decisions.

III. Method

The purpose of this study was to determine the trends of recent research papers in foreign language teaching in Turkish context and to give ideas to researchers and policy makers for future studies. Content Analysis method was used in this study. According to Sağlam & Yüksel (2007) Content Analysis helps to summarize content of many research papers and provides reliable and valid generalizations in a research field. Content analysis is generally used in qualitative studies as systematic analysis of papers. This study focused on research papers published between 2009-2013 years in journals indexed in SSCI and the ULAKBIM database in Turkey. Totally, 189 (94 SSCI and 95 ULAKBIM) research papers on foreign language education were scanned from 4 SSCI and 5 ULAKBIM indexed journals in Turkey. The titles of the journals scanned were presented in the appendix. The following research questions were answered in this study:

1. Which topics were frequently studied in these research papers in terms of years?

2. What were the distribution of language and author in these papers?
3. What data collection tools were frequently used?
4. Which research designs and data analysis methods were frequently applied?
5. What were the types and level of samples, and sample sizes in these research papers?

Instrument

In this study, Research Papers Classification Form which was developed by Sozbilir and Kutu (2008) was used as data collection instrument. This tool was presented in Appendix 2 and composed of the following sections: Year of the journal, authors, language of the paper, types of journal, journal index, subject of the paper, research design or methods of paper, data collection tools, sample, sample size, data analysis method. The collected data were transferred to SPSS 16.0 and the results were analyzed and presented in tables.

Findings and Result

The data collected in this study was presented in Tables as the topic of the articles in terms of years, the distribution of papers in terms of years, authors and language, the distribution of papers in terms of research design, data collection tools and data analysis method, the distribution of papers in terms of sample and sample size and the distribution of papers in terms of research design and data analysis method according to the years.

Table 1 displays the topic of the articles in terms of years.

Table 1 The Topic of the Articles in Terms of Years

| Topic of the paper | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | total |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------------------|
| teaching | 5 13% | 4 16% | 7 19% | 5 13% | 5 6% | 26 14% |
| learning | 4 11% | 3 12% | 7 19% | 7 18% | 5 9% | 26 14% |
| Teacher training | 5 14% | 2 8% | 3 8% | 3 8% | 4 8% | 17 9% |
| Curriculum studies | 2 5% | 2 8% | 0 % | 5 13% | 1 2% | 10 5% |
| Development and of adaptation of scales and tests | 0 % | 3 12% | 0 % | 1 3% | 1 2% | 5 3% |
| attitudes | 4 11% | 1 4% | 3 8% | 2 5% | 7 13% | 17 9% |
| Concept analysis | 4 11% | 2 8% | 1 3% | 5 13% | 10 19% | 22 12% |
| Development of teaching materials | 0 | 2 8% | 2 6% | 1 3% | 2 4% | 7 4% |
| Educational technology | 8 22% | 2 8% | 3 8% | 3 8% | 2 4% | 18 10% |
| More than one topic | 2 5% | 2 8% | 9 25% | 4 11% | 13 25% | 30 16% |
| others | 3 8% | 2 8% | 1 3% | 2 5% | 3 6% | 11 6% |
| total | 37 100% | 25 100% | 36 100% | 38 100% | 53 100% | 189 100% |

According to Table 1, the most frequently studied topics on foreign language teaching and learning

from 2009 to 2013 were concept analysis (12%), teaching (14%) and learning (14%). In addition, 16 % of the articles covered more than one topic. On the other hand, the least frequently studied topics were development and adaptation of scales and tests (3%) and development of teaching materials (4%). Despite the improvements in educational technology, only 10 % of the researches were on this topic. It could be stated that there was no statistically significant difference between years and topics.

Table 2 shows the distribution of papers in terms of years, authors and language.

Table 2 The Distribution of Papers in terms of years, authors and language

| Year of publication | N | % |
|-----------------------|-----|------|
| 2009 | 37 | 19,6 |
| 2010 | 25 | 13,2 |
| 2011 | 36 | 19 |
| 2012 | 38 | 20,1 |
| 2013 | 53 | 28 |
| Total | 189 | 100 |
| Authors | N | % |
| Turkish | 162 | 85,7 |
| Foreign | 25 | 13,2 |
| Mixed | 2 | 1,1 |
| Total | 189 | 100 |
| Language of the paper | N | % |
| English | 139 | 75,5 |
| Turkish | 37 | 19,6 |
| Others | 4 | 2,1 |
| total | 189 | 100 |

According to Table 2, the highest number of articles was published in 2013. However, the number of the articles published in 2010 was the least. Therefore, it could not be stated that there was a regular increase in the number of articles through the years. As of the authors of the articles, nearly 86% of the authors were Turkish and 13% were foreign. In addition, while 76% of the articles were published in English, 20% of them were in Turkish.

Table 3 displays the distribution of papers in terms of research design, data collection tools and data analysis method.

Table 3 The Distribution of Papers in terms of research design, data collection tools and data analysis method

| research design | N | % |
|-------------------------|-----|------|
| Quantitative | 92 | 48,7 |
| Qualitative | 64 | 33,9 |
| mixed | 33 | 17,5 |
| Data collection tools | N | % |
| observation | 1 | ,5 |
| interview | 8 | 4,2 |
| Achievement tests | 4 | 2,1 |
| questionnaire | 58 | 30,7 |
| documents | 34 | 18 |
| Alternative instruments | 8 | 4,2 |
| More than one | 61 | 32,3 |
| others | 15 | 7,9 |
| total | 189 | 100 |
| Data analysis method | N | % |

| | | |
|--------------|-----|------|
| Quantitative | 94 | 49,7 |
| Qualitative | 63 | 33,3 |
| mixed | 32 | 16,9 |
| total | 189 | 100 |

As of research design, quantitative method (49%) was used more than qualitative method (34%). In addition, 18% of the papers had a mixed design. The ratio was nearly the same in terms of data analysis method. In other words, quantitative analysis (50%) was used more than qualitative analysis (33%). As data collection tools, questionnaire (31%) was used the most. The next tool which had the highest rate was the documents (18%). Moreover, more than one data collection tools were used in 32% of the articles. Table 4 shows the distribution of papers in terms of sample and sample size.

Table 4 The Distribution of Papers in terms of sample and sample size

| sample | N | % |
|----------------------|-----|------|
| Elementary (1-4) | 4 | 2,1 |
| Secondary (5-8) | 5 | 2,6 |
| High school (9-12) | 2 | 1,1 |
| Undergraduate | 83 | 43,9 |
| Post graduate | 2 | 1,1 |
| Teachers/instructors | 16 | 8,5 |
| More than one | 9 | 4,8 |
| no | 68 | 36 |
| total | 189 | 100 |
| Sample size | N | % |
| 1-10 | 36 | 19 |
| 11-30 | 16 | 8,5 |
| 31-100 | 56 | 29,6 |
| 101-300 | 28 | 14,8 |

| | | |
|----------------|-----|-----|
| 301-1000 | 15 | 7,9 |
| More than 1000 | 4 | 2,1 |
| no | 34 | 18 |
| total | 189 | 100 |

As sample group, undergraduates had the highest rate (44%). The next highest rate belonged to the teachers and instructors (9%). In addition, in 36% of the articles, there was no sample group. In other words, these studies were document analysis with no sample group. As of sample size, 30% of the articles were 31-100 sample size. The next highest rate was 101-300. In addition, in 18% of the articles, there was no sample and sample size.

Table 5 displays the distribution of papers in terms of research design and data analysis method according to the years.

Table 5 The Distribution of Papers in terms of research design and data analysis method according to the years

| Research design | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | total |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Quantitative | 18 49% | 15 60% | 17 47% | 17 45% | 25 47% | 92 49% |
| Qualitative | 14 38% | 6 24% | 13 36% | 16 42% | 15 28% | 64 34% |
| mixed | 5 14% | 4 16% | 6 17% | 5 13% | 13 25% | 33 18% |
| Total | 37 | 25 | 36 | 38 | 53 | 189 |

| | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
|----------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Data analysis method | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | total |
| Quantitative | 20 54% | 15 60% | 17 47% | 18 47% | 24 45% | 94 50% |
| Qualitative | 14 38% | 6 24% | 14 39% | 14 37% | 15 28% | 63 33% |
| mixed | 3 8% | 4 16% | 5 14% | 6 16% | 14 26% | 32 17% |
| Total | 37 100% | 25 100% | 36 100% | 38 100% | 53 100% | 189 100% |

According to Table 5, through the years, there was no regular increase in the use of quantitative and qualitative research design and data collection tools. While the year 2010 (60%) had the highest rate in quantitative research design, 2012 (45%) was the year which had the lowest rate. As of data analysis method, the year 2010 (60%) had the highest rate, contrary, 2013 (45%) had the lowest in quantitative dataanalysis.

IV. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the current trends in foreign language teaching and learning in Turkey to give ideas to policy makers and authors for current and future studies.

According to the results of the study, while the most frequently studied topics on foreign language teaching and learning from 2009 to 2013 were concept analysis, teaching and learning, the least frequently studied topics were development and adaptation of scales and tests and development of teaching materials. Despite the improvements in educational technology, the number of research papers on this topic was few. Furthermore, there was no statistically significant difference between years and topics. The finding of this study was in parallel to the findings of Çiltaş et al (2012). They also revealed that learning activities and studies were the main focus articles published between 1987 and 2009 years in the field of mathematics education. However, Göktaş et al (2012) studied on educational research papers published from 2005-2009 and the results revealed that instructional technology, science education, guidance and counseling, and mathematics education were the most studied disciplines.

As of years, authors and language, the highest number of articles were published in 2013. However, the number of the articles published in 2010 was the least. Therefore, it could not be stated that there was a stable increase in the number of articles throughout the years. As of the authors of the articles, most of the authors were Turkish and majority of the articles were published in English. However, Çiltaş et al (2012) found that most of the papers published on mathematics education in Turkey were in Turkish. This controversy was normal because of the nature and content of these disciplines.

In accordance with the distribution of papers in terms of research design, data collection tools and data analysis method; quantitative method was used more than qualitative method in research design. The ratio was nearly the same in terms of data analysis method. In other words, quantitative analysis was used more than qualitative analysis. As data collection tools, questionnaire was used the most. The next tool which had the highest rate was the documents. Moreover, more than one data collection tool was used in remarkable amount of the articles.

The findings of this research were in consistent with the results of most of the studies in different areas and they proved that quantitative method was used more than qualitative method. Sözbilir and Kutu (2008) also revealed that quantitative research methods were dominant on Turkish science education research while qualitative and mixed method researches were the increasing trend in the world. The findings of Baki et al (2011) were also in line with the results of the present study. They found that mathematics education researchers mostly preferred quantitative design and used questionnaires and achievement tests as data collection instruments. Çiltaş et al (2012) also found that quantitative research was more preferred and more than one data collection tool was used in the papers published between 1987 and 2009 years in the field of mathematics education. According to Göktaş et al (2012), quantitative research method, quantitative data collection tools and descriptive analysis methods were dominant on educational research papers published from 2005-2009 as well. In international context, Woravut et al (2012) suggested that in terms of research quality, research conducted by Thai ELT academics had a lower quality of methodological foundation which was related to the appropriacy of method and the awareness of research decisions.

In terms of sample and sample size, undergraduates were the focus of attention as sample group. One

of the reasons for this result was that it was easier to reach the population for the researchers. The teachers and instructors were the next sample group which had the next highest rate. In addition, in one third of the articles, there was no sample group, because, these studies were document analysis with no sample group. As of sample size, 31-100 sample size was preferred more than others. Then the next highest rate was the sample group with 101-300 population.

Similarly, Göktaş et al (2012) found that undergraduate students and teachers were the most frequently studied samples on educational research papers. Çiltaş et al (2012) also revealed that 31-100 sample size was preferred the most in Turkish mathematics education. Similarly, Sozibilir and Kutu (2008) also found that 51-100 sample size was dominant in Turkish science education researches. However, the findings of Baki et al (2011) revealed that researchers mostly preferred working on the 6th, 7th and 8th grade students in Turkish mathematics education.

V. Conclusion

All in all, it is understood that no stable increase has been observed in the amount of articles published throughout the years. This study shows that the topic of the researches are limited to the teaching, learning and concept analysis in English Language Teaching area. It is suggested that the study topics should be extended to other fields like e-learning, distance learning and educational technology as rising trends in education. Not only foreign language educators but also educational experts should be encouraged to focus on topics in foreign language learning and teaching. Interdisciplinary researches with other disciplines in terms of educational technology in language teaching and learning, English for specific purposes, teaching English to the members of other professions can contribute new viewpoints to the studies in this area. Since most of the authors are Turkish, it is understood that the scope of the studies are restricted with Turkish context and more international cooperation is required to extend researches in international area. In addition, authors should focus on qualitative research method and analysis more due to the scarcity of the studies in this aspect. Questionnaires which are common in quantitative methods have been widely used as data collection instrument and therefore, mixed instruments can help to reach more reliable and valid results.

As most of the articles are published in English, it can be considered positive for the internalization of the researches. In this case, these studies can reach to larger readers all over the world. Furthermore, due to the introduction of foreign language teaching at early ages, elementary, secondary and high school students should be taken into consideration more as sample group, because, undergraduate population has been targeted so far in many studies. As sample size is generally larger in quantitative studies to collect more reliable and valid results in international researches, it should be extended to more than 300 participants in this type of researches. Finally, it is believed that this study illustrates the current trends on foreign language teaching and learning area and shed light on future studies for authors and policy makers. As implications for further researches, the studies will be more comprehensive if the studied years are extended to previous years and the number of journals scanned is increased. Moreover, comparing Turkish journals with international ones will give new ideas to increase the quality of researches in Turkish context and boost the rate of publication in international journals.

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