

**TEACHERS' PERCEIVED BELIEFS AND REPORTED
PRACTICES IN TWO DISTINCT EFL CONTEXTS:
TURKEY AND MACEDONIA**

**İNGİLİZCENİN YABANCI DİL OLDUĞU İKİ FARKLI BAĞLAMDA
ÖĞRETMENLERİN İNANÇLARI VE UYGULAMALARI: TÜRKİYE VE
MAKDEONYA**

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this study is to investigate the perceived beliefs and reported practices of the fifth grade English teachers at two distinct EFL contexts: Turkey and Macedonia. The theoretical framework is based on the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) policy statement for developmentally appropriate and inappropriate reported practices (Johnson and Ivrendi, 2002). One hundred and thirty two (n=132) Turkish and one hundred and thirty four (n=134) Macedonian fifth grade English teachers working in public schools participated in the study. The data came from a Teacher Belief Scale (TBS) and a focus group interview. The results revealed important implications in relation to the process of foreign language learning, which should be closely considered by the Ministry of Education while designing the fifth grade English curricula across different EFL contexts.

Keywords: Comparative Education; Teacher's Perceived Beliefs; Reported Practices; EFL; Fifth Grade Curriculum

ÖZET: Bu çalışmanın amacı beşinci sınıf İngilizce öğretmenlerinin algılanan inançlarını ve belirtilen uygulamalarını yabancı dil olarak İngilizce olan Türkiye ve Makedonya gibi iki ayrı ortamda incelemektir. Kuramsal çerçeve Ulusal Genç Çocukları Eğitim Derneği'nin (NAEYC) gelişimsel olarak uygun olan ve olmayan uygulamalar ile ilgili politika beyanına dayanmaktadır (Johnson ve Ivrendi, 2002). Çalışmaya devlet okullarında çalışan yüz otuz iki (n=132) Türk ve yüz otuz dört (n=134) Makedon beşinci sınıf İngilizce öğretmeni katılmıştır. Veriler Öğretmen İnanç Ölçeği (TBS) ile bir odak grup görüşmesinden elde edilmiştir. Çalışma yabancı dil öğrenme sürecine dair farklı dil öğrenme ortamlarında beşinci sınıf İngilizce müfredat tasarlarken Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı tarafından dikkate alınması gereken önemli sonuçlar ortaya çıkarmıştır

Anahtar Kelimeler: Karşılaştırmalı Eğitim; Öğretmenlerin Algılanan İnançları; Belirtilen Uygulamalar; Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce; Beşinci Sınıf Müfredatı.

1. Introduction

The increasing body of L2 and FL research literature on teachers' perceived beliefs in recent years illustrates the significance of investigating implementation of appropriate and inappropriate practices as major determinants of teacher's behavior in the decision making process (Vartuli, 1999). A large body of research has demonstrated the connection between teachers' perceived beliefs and reported

practices (Charlesworth et al., 1993; Jones and Gullo, 1999; Cassidy and Lawrence, 2000; Maxwell et al., 2001).

By contrary, some researchers have revealed that contextual factors including self-efficacy, teacher's control over the classroom, grade level, classroom size, pressure from administrators, unrealistic expectations of parents, achievement tests and the school or state curriculum seem to have an impact on classroom practices, which may contribute to the discrepancy between the beliefs teachers hold and what they do in classroom contexts (Stipek and Byler, 1997; Buchanon et al., 1998; McMullen, 1999; Vartuli, 1999).

However, to the knowledge of the researcher, there is not much research related to the relationship between teachers' perceived beliefs and reported practices on English language instruction across different ESL/EFL contexts. To fulfill this gap, the present study aims to identify fifth grade English teachers' perceived beliefs and reported practices along with the factors affecting their relationship in two distinct EFL contexts: Turkey and Macedonia.

2. Literature Review

The general construct of teachers' beliefs is often difficult to define since it can encompass a wide range of concepts. Conceptually similar, but distinct constructs such as, attitudes, implicit and explicit theories, folk psychologies, ideologies, and perceptions, have all been used to refer to various teacher thought processes (Daniels and Shumow, 2003). Beliefs are not only difficult to define but also it is hard to measure them since they are not readily observable, nor are individuals consciously aware of all their beliefs (Pajares, 1992).

In the current study, teachers' perceived beliefs are described as falling somewhere along a continuum from child-centered or child-initiated to teacher-initiated, didactic or academically directed experiences (Einarsdottir, 2003). Specifically, teachers' beliefs are considered as representations of what constitutes developmentally appropriate practices in the early childhood classroom (Charlesworth et al., 1993).

One of the primary concerns of education has been on the possible negative effects of developmentally "inappropriate" practices, which are highly didactic and teacher-directed (Charlesworth et al., 1993). Due to this concern, there has been a shift towards the encouragement of developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) or child/learner-centered, progressive education (McMullen, 1998, 1999, and 2001). The main focus of developmentally appropriate practice has been related to the belief that children's development should be taken into account, and that adults are the ones responsible for structuring children's time, space and plan the activities according to their level of development (Erdiller, 2003). The present study stresses the importance of teachers' perceived beliefs, rather than their origin or development. Therefore, teachers' beliefs refer to implicit, perceived beliefs in relation to developmentally appropriate practices in early language classrooms.

In the last decade, a number of researchers have begun to look more closely at the teachers' perceived beliefs and reported practices in a variety of ESL and EFL contexts along with the factors affecting their relationship. In their study, Charlesworth et al. (1993) documented kindergarten teachers' perceived beliefs and

reported practices. The results revealed that more teachers professed beliefs in line with NAEYC's guidelines than did not. Although the teachers may have reported developmentally appropriate beliefs, they did not implement them frequently in their classrooms. Lastly, there was a stronger correlation between developmentally appropriate and inappropriate practices regarding actual classroom setting. In a similar fashion, Vartuli (1999) conducted a five-year study interviewing, surveying classroom teachers as well as observing their classrooms to investigate the relationship between beliefs and practices over the grade levels of kindergarten to third grade. Based on her findings, reported beliefs and practices tended to be closer to observed practices in kindergarten and preschool programs than in primary grade classrooms. Besides, as the grade level increased, the level of self-reported appropriate beliefs and practices decreased. This finding could be capturing a natural variation in teaching across grade levels. In another study with a group of twelve classroom teachers from various early childhood programs located in Turkey, Erdiller and McMullen (2004) examined the self-reported beliefs about appropriate practices in order to uncover the perceived barriers to effective practice. Results of the study revealed that Turkish teacher beliefs were closer to the developmentally appropriate versus inappropriate continuum with respect to the main points of Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP). Teachers' perceived barriers to effective teaching comprised physical conditions and resources, lack of teacher-parent partnership, and low status of teaching profession in Turkey. Findings from Jones and Gullo (1999) suggested that teachers' self-reported beliefs did not consistently match their observed practices. Out of the 87 classroom teachers who reported developmentally appropriate beliefs, only 66 classrooms reflected developmentally appropriate practices. Correspondingly, although 110 teachers reported beliefs were consistent with developmentally inappropriate practices, 141 teachers were found to implement such practices in their classrooms. Finally, Goldstein (1997) tried to identify the causes that inhibit the implementation of developmentally appropriate practice of one teacher in an ungraded primary classroom (traditional grades of preschool through second grade) in an elementary school in Northern California. Although the state of California had a policy which specifically focused on the use of developmentally appropriate practices in the primary grades, the teacher struggled to implement them due to three possible reasons: personal interpretation, partial adoption, and inconsistency in implementation. These three issues offered an opportunity for a more thoroughly examination of NAEYC's guidelines.

Apart from studies on teachers' perceived beliefs and reported practices in specific contexts, many researchers have emphasized the importance of comparative education. To illustrate, Berge (2005) investigated the perceived beliefs and reported practices of first grade classroom teachers in the United States ($n=23$) and Finland ($n=17$). The study also investigated the relationships between background characteristics, beliefs and practices as well as factors that influenced the planning and implementation of teachers' classroom practices. The theoretical framework was based on DAP regarded as child-centered in nature. Data were gathered using a modified version of the Teacher Questionnaire: Primary Version (based on Burts, Charlesworth and Hart, 1992). The results indicated that teachers both in Finland and the United States believed more strongly in developmentally appropriate than inappropriate practices. Nevertheless, American first grade teachers reported stronger appropriate beliefs than Finnish ones. While appropriate beliefs and practices were related only among the American participants, inappropriate beliefs

and practices were strongly related to both samples. In addition, educational level was the only background characteristic related to appropriate dimensions of beliefs and practices. Lastly, both groups agreed that curriculum, government policies and they (as teachers) were mostly influential on the way in which classroom instruction was implemented. Besides, McMullen et al. (2005) analyzed what caregivers and classroom teachers of 3- to 5-year-old children from the U.S. (n=412), China (n=244), Taiwan (n=222), Korea (n=574), and Turkey (n=214) had in common considering self-reported beliefs and practices in relation to DAP. Data came from a modified version of the Teachers Belief Scale (TBS) and the Instructional Activities Scale (IAS) (based on Charlesworth et al., 1991). According to the findings of the study there were similarities in statements related to the basic tenets of perceived beliefs and reported practices in all five countries associated with integrating across the curriculum, promoting social/emotional development, providing concrete/hands-on material, and allowing play/choice in the curriculum.

Though some research on teachers' perceived beliefs and reported practices has extended to elementary school levels, it is still limited in number with respect to comparing different ESL/EFL settings. The present study aims to extend the knowledge on fifth grade teachers' perceived beliefs and reported practices by investigating the similarities and differences between two different EFL contexts: Turkey and Macedonia. Before discussing the methodology of this study, brief information about teaching English to young learners in Turkish and Macedonian contexts will be provided.

2.1. Teaching English in Turkish EFL Context

During 1997, The Turkish Ministry of National Education (MNE), in cooperation with the Turkish Higher Education Council, decided to make drastic changes in relation to the English language policy to reform Turkey's ELT practice. At the level of primary education, this reform integrated primary and secondary education into a single stream, and the public primary schools were obliged to start teaching English at fourth grade (Kırkgöz, 2007). This was the first time the concept of communicative teaching was introduced. Students started playing more active roles in the learning process and the teacher has been seen as a facilitator in the learning process.

Nevertheless, in 2000, foreign language education in kindergarten and in the first three years of primary education was officially permitted by the Ministry of Education. Currently, English is taught three hours a week in the fourth and fifth grades, and four hours a week in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades. The course books are written by the Ministry of Education and generally taught by native speakers of Turkish.

2.3. Teaching English in Macedonian EFL Context

Macedonia is believed to belong to the expanding circle of English spread. The use of English in the country may share some characteristics with the other countries in the expanding circle, which has become the link language in the united European context (Dimova, 2003; 2005). In public Macedonian schools, English has the status of a foreign language in the elementary school curriculum. Foreign language instruction is introduced in the fifth grade, at the age of 11, and is offered three classes per week.

The last novelty in the elementary educational system is the implementation of two foreign languages, one mandatory (English) and the other elective (French, German, or Russian). The textbooks used for instruction are often published by the Oxford University Press, and are generally taught by native speakers of Macedonian.

Based on this research of the literature fifth grade is the common grade where English is started to be actively taught as a foreign language both in Macedonian and Turkish EFL contexts. Thus, this study aims to investigate the similarities and differences between perceived beliefs and reported practices of fifth grade English teachers in these two EFL contexts and find out the possible factors that might influence their classroom practices. Specifically, the following research questions were addressed:

- 1) What are the Turkish and Macedonian EFL teachers' perceived beliefs about developmentally appropriate and inappropriate reported practices in 5th grade classrooms?
- 2) Is there a relationship between the perceived beliefs and developmentally appropriate and inappropriate reported practices among Turkish and Macedonian 5th grade EFL teachers?
- 3) What factors do Turkish and Macedonian EFL teachers perceive to be influential on the way they plan and implement their classroom practices in 5th grade classrooms?

3. Methodology

Data for this study came from one hundred and thirty two (n=132) Turkish and one hundred and thirty four (n=134) Macedonian fifth grade English teachers working in public schools. The demographic information demonstrates similarities between the two settings.

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Subjects

	Gender		Age		Class size	
	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Turkey (n=132)	71	61	33.18	3.816	38.63	4.653
Macedonia (n=134)	66	68	30.77	4.944	34.55	1.878

Data for the present study came from the first two parts (Part 1 and Part 2) of Teacher Belief Scale (TBS) adapted from Erdiller (2003) which comprised a total of 36 items (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.725$). The first part included some demographic information from the teachers such as, their gender, age, years of teaching fifth grade and class size. The second part was designed to gather data with respect to teachers' perceived beliefs in each country (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.746$ for Turkish teachers and Cronbach's $\alpha=0.843$ for Macedonian teachers). Although the Teacher Belief Scale (TBS) includes 36 items, the present study excluded 7 items such as, "The basal reader is ... to a classroom reading program" and "It is ... for children to color within predefined lines" since those items were more appropriate for lower grade levels. The teachers rated the importance of each statement from "not important at all" (1) to "extremely important" (5) on a 5-point Likert scale. The online version of the questionnaire was prepared using Survey Monkey and emailed to Macedonian fifth grade English teachers where permission was granted whereas it was administered to the Turkish fifth grade English teachers by the researcher.

Furthermore, the last part examined the factors that might have an influence on the way teachers plan and implement foreign language instruction in fifth grades (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.121$ for Turkish teachers and Cronbach's $\alpha=0.273$ for Macedonian teachers). The two groups of teachers were asked to rank the following 7 items from (1) being "*the most influential*" and (7) "*the least influential*": parents, school/center policy, supervisors/administrators, myself (teachers), state regulations, colleagues and students.

Finally, a focus group interview which is a structured process for interviewing a small group of individuals (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995) was carried out with fifty six (n=56) Turkish and Macedonian fifth grade English teachers who received the highest, the middle and the lowest score in relation to the relationship between perceived beliefs and reported practices in each setting. The purpose of a focus group interview was to obtain in-depth views regarding the topic of concern. The focus group interview lasted 30 minutes in length which was audiotaped and transcribed by the researcher according to Bogdan and Biklen's (1998) framework. Specifically, the questions were parallel to the questionnaire with the aim of gaining in-depth understanding considering the perceived beliefs and reported practices of the fifth grade English teachers' in Turkey and Macedonia.

4. Data Analysis

Descriptive analyses including mean and standard deviation were used to identify the Turkish and Macedonian EFL teachers' perceived beliefs related to the Teacher Belief Scale (TBS) as well as find out the factors that might have an influence on both groups' classroom practices. A nonparametric test, Mann-Whitney U was applied to indicate when significant differences existed in the responses of the two independent samples. Besides, Spearman correlation analyses were conducted in order to describe relationships between the appropriate and inappropriate beliefs and practice between Turkish and Macedonian samples.

For the qualitative part of the study, the data from the focus group interview were analyzed by means of pattern coding as suggested by Bogdan and Biklen's (1998) framework. Results of the data analysis were presented in relation to teachers' perceived beliefs on developmentally appropriate and inappropriate practices by country. Additionally, the relationship between the perceived beliefs and reported practices were analyzed by each group. The perceived beliefs and developmentally appropriate and inappropriate practices were grouped according to Berge's (2005) and Erdiller's (2003) previous findings. Factors that influenced teachers' planning and implementation of practices were described separately for the two independent samples. Finally, the possible reasons behind teachers' perceived beliefs and reported practices were generally discussed in the study.

4.1. The Results of the Perceived Beliefs on Developmentally Appropriate and Inappropriate Practices of Turkish and Macedonian fifth grade English teachers

In an attempt to answer the first research question regarding the perceived beliefs about developmentally appropriate and inappropriate practices among Turkish and Macedonian EFL teachers' item mean scores varied from 2.36 (SD=0.504) to 4.54 (SD=0.522) for Turkish and from 3.55 (SD=0.527) to 4.66 (SD=0.500) for Macedonian fifth grade English teachers as shown in Table 2.

Besides, out of 29 items, there were 15 items with no significant difference between Turkish and Macedonian teachers indicating that they shared some of the same beliefs such as, individual differences in interest/development, self esteem and positive feelings, active exploration etc.

On the other hand, there were 14 items in which Turkish and Macedonian EFL teachers differed significantly. To begin with, Turkish EFL teachers gave significantly more importance to the following items; selecting own activity (8, $p=0.006$), separate subjects at separate times (6, $p=0.000$), working silently and alone on seatwork (10, $p=0.000$), and punishments and reprimands (18, $p=0.008$). By contrary, the following items were rated higher by the Macedonian EFL teachers: teacher observation as an evaluation technique (2, $p=0.008$), planning own creative drama, art and writing activities (9, $p=0.000$), learning through interaction (12, $p=0.000$), teacher as facilitator (16, $p=0.023$), establishing rules (19, $p=0.001$), reading stories individually, and/or on a group basis (20, $p=0.000$), tell/retell stories (21, $p=0.001$), participate in dramatic play (23, $p=0.000$), integrated English (25, $p=0.000$), and teacher talks to the whole group and ensures participation (15, $p=0.029$).

Table 2. The Perceived Beliefs on Developmentally Appropriate and Inappropriate Reported Practices by Each Country

	Turkey		Macedonia		<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
DARP					
Item 2	2.72	0.786	3.88	0.781	0.008**
Item 4	4.36	0.674	4.33	0.500	n.s.
Item 5	4.36	0.504	4.00	0.866	n.s.
Item 7	4.45	0.522	4.55	0.527	n.s.
Item 8	4.45	0.522	3.66	0.500	0.006**
Item 9	2.36	0.504	3.66	0.500	0.000***
Item 11	4.18	0.750	4.33	0.500	n.s.
Item 12	2.54	0.522	4.22	0.44	0.000***
Item 16	4.54	0.522	5.00	0	0.023*
Item 19	2.45	0.522	3.55	0.527	0.001**
Item 20	2.54	0.522	3.77	0.444	0.000***
Item 21	2.45	0.522	3.55	0.527	0.001**
Item 22	4.18	0.603	4.33	0.500	n.s.
Item 23	2.36	0.504	4.66	0.500	0.000***
Item 24	4.27	0.646	4.22	0.666	n.s.
Item 25	2.45	0.522	4.00	0.707	0.000***
Item 26	3.90	0.700	3.88	0.781	n.s.
Item 27	4.09	0.700	4.11	0.600	n.s.
Item 28	4.09	0.700	4.44	0.527	n.s.
Item 29	4.27	0.646	4.66	0.500	n.s.
DIRP					
Item 1	4.45	0.522	4.22	0.44	n.s.
Item 3	4.54	0.522	4.33	0.500	n.s.
Item 6	3.63	0.504	2.33	0.500	0.000***
Item 10	4.45	0.522	2.44	0.527	0.000***
Item 13	4.27	0.646	4.33	0.500	n.s.
Item 14	4.27	0.646	4.44	0.527	n.s.
Item 15	4.45	0.687	5.00	0	0.029*
Item 17	4.00	0.632	4.00	0.707	n.s.
Item 18	4.18	0.750	3.00	0.866	0.008**

Note: DARP: Developmentally Appropriate Reported Practices; DIRP: Developmentally Inappropriate Reported Practices.

4.3. The Relationship between Perceived Beliefs and Developmentally Appropriate/Inappropriate Reported Practices by Each Country

In order to answer the third research question of this study, the Spearman correlation coefficient was used to analyze correlation of perceived beliefs and appropriate/inappropriate reported practices among Turkish and Macedonian fifth grade English teachers.

As shown in Table 3 below, the Turkish EFL teachers' perceived beliefs did not correlate with their appropriate reported practices ($r = -0.403$, $p = 0.282$). Likewise, there was no significant relationship between their perceived beliefs and inappropriate reported practices as well ($r = -0.075$, $p = 0.825$). These findings revealed that the two variables did not have any impact on each other.

On the other hand, although the Macedonian EFL teachers' perceived beliefs did not correlate with their appropriate reported practices ($r = -0.047$, $p = 0.892$), there was a strong negative relationship between their perceived beliefs and inappropriate reported practices ($r = -0.901$, $p = 0.001$). In other words, while one of the variables increased the other one decreased or vice versa (see Table 4).

Table 3. The Relationship between Perceived Beliefs and Appropriate Reported Practices in Turkey

Turkey	Perceived Beliefs	Appropriate Practices
<i>r</i>	0.403	0.047
<i>p</i>	0.282	0.892

$p > 0.05$

Table 4. The Relationship between Perceived Appropriate Beliefs and Inappropriate Reported Practices in Macedonia

Macedonia	Perceived Beliefs	Appropriate Practices
<i>r</i>	-0.075	-0.901
<i>p</i>	0.825	0.001**

** $p < 0.01$

4.4. The Results of the Factors that might have an Influence on Fifth Grade Teachers' Classroom Practices by Each Country

As for identifying the possible factors that might influence the EFL teachers' classroom practices, both groups responded to seven factors that had possible influence over their planning and implementation of instruction.

As shown in Table 5, descriptive analyses and *t*-tests were conducted in order to highlight any perceived differences in influence between Turkish and Macedonia EFL teachers. While both groups agreed that the school policy, teachers (themselves) and students had certain influence over the way they planned and implemented instruction, Turkish EFL teachers perceived administrators and state regulations as having significantly more influence on their teaching while Macedonian EFL teachers ranked parents and colleagues to be more influential on their classroom practices.

Table 5. Factors that might have an Influence on Fifth Grade EFL Teachers' Classroom Practices by Each Country

	<i>Turkey</i>		<i>Macedonia</i>		<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Parents	2.81	0.873	3.88	0.600	0.001***
School policy	4.90	0.943	3.66	0.500	n.s.
Administrators	5.27	1.103	3.00	0.707	0.000**
Teachers	3.18	0.750	3.77	0.666	n.s.
State regulations	4.90	0.943	2.88	0.600	0.001***
Colleagues	2.90	0.700	3.88	0.781	0.001***
Students	2.72	0.467	3.33	0.866	n.s.

p<0.01. *p<0.001. n.s. = no significance

4.5. The Results of the Focus Group Interviews

As for the qualitative data of this study, focus group interviews were conducted with fifty six (n=56) Turkish and Macedonian fifth grade English teachers who received the highest, middle and lowest scores from the questionnaire administered to the two groups of participants. The aim was to obtain in-depth views on the topic of concern based on the information gathered from the questionnaire.

Specifically, when asked about their teaching philosophy, the teachers stated that the fifth grade English program employs methods and activities to develop the basic language skills and strategies. Teachers serve as models responsible for developing both students' fluency and accuracy in English. They are the ones who will teach English to students by transferring their content knowledge. In order to achieve this aim, the teachers stated that active learning in a warm and positive environment is a priority in the learning process. Thus, the teachers should make sure that they create a lively learning environment in which students can express themselves with words or physical movements.

When the participating teachers were asked about the effective evaluation techniques, both groups indicated that standardized tests, and performance on worksheets and workbooks are crucial. Macedonian teachers added that teacher observation is an important evaluation technique as well. Apart from assessing only students' performance, the teachers should be observed and provided with some feedback about the courses they teach, which will help them see their own strengths and weaknesses, and also increase teacher collaboration.

Furthermore, the EFL teachers were asked to talk about the most important types of activities for fifth grade English learners and briefly state their reasons. While Turkish and Macedonian EFL teachers believed that students should be enrolled in activities that respond to their development and interest such as, listening to songs, reading age/content appropriate materials in class, writing, circling or matching items on worksheets, using pictures/flashcards, there were also some differences between the two groups. To illustrate, Turkish EFL teachers considered playing games directed by the teacher significant to make learning more enjoyable whereas Macedonian EFL teachers regarded extensive reading, telling/retelling stories and participating in dramatic play as crucial for developing basic language skills and strategies among fifth graders. One of the teachers made the following comment:

"We believe that our students should read not just in the classroom, but also at home. They should be involved in some pleasure reading which they can

tell or retell to their teacher and peers. They can even tell their imaginary stories which can be discussed and dramatized in the classroom to make learning more fun."

In addition, most of the teachers defined their role as "a guide" responsible for developing social skills, self-esteem and positive feelings among peers apart from only teaching the language whereas the students were seen as being actively involved in the learning process.

Finally, Macedonian EFL teachers considered input from parents crucial for providing feedback to the effectiveness of the courses being taught, whereas the Turkish EFL teachers said that they would like to have more contact with parents since their input is important. They also mentioned that they usually have a chance to meet them at parents meeting during which parents are mostly interested in learning about their children's exam grades.

Furthermore, when both groups of teachers were asked to state their opinions on the effective teaching methods for fifth graders, they agreed that involving students in physical movements while teaching the language is of crucial importance. Students should learn by doing and exploring which would create a more positive learning environment and attract their attention. Apart from the students, the teachers should move around individuals and make sure that everyone is following the course and participating as well. Thus, group discussions might be used to ensure equal participation and student involvement. However, Turkish EFL teachers argued that due to crowded classes, they often experience difficulties in involving students in physical movement. To avoid this problem, they prefer students working silently and alone on seatwork.

As for the effective methods to deal with appropriate and inappropriate behaviors in their classrooms, the two groups claimed that students should be socially reinforced for appropriate behaviors and lose special privileges for misbehaviors. Particularly, fifth grade students are mostly influenced by their peers. They believed that reinforcing appropriate behaviors and punishing misbehaviors of certain students will affect others' performance as well. Turkish EFL teachers added that teachers should sometimes use their authority through punishments to encourage appropriate behaviors among students. As for the Macedonian EFL teachers, isolating students from their peers might decrease the misbehavior, while giving rewards like, certificates might increase the appropriate behavior in classrooms as indicated in the excerpt below:

"Being isolated from other friends in case of misbehavior makes a student feel embarrassed since their friends are the most important people around them. Just the opposite, being rewarded makes a student become a model for others."

In another question, the teachers were asked to state their opinions on involving students in multicultural and nonsexist activities. Both groups agreed that teaching different cultures without focusing on single gender (dominantly male), raises students' awareness about various life styles and traditions all around the world.

Furthermore, when asked about integrating English with other subject areas, the two countries shared opposing views. Macedonian EFL teachers claimed that integrating

English with subjects as social sciences makes the learning process more meaningful and interesting for students. On the other hand, Turkish EFL teachers believed that English should be taught separately due to the loaded schedule of other courses. Thus, integrating English with other subject areas would affect the pacing of the courses, which would lead to some time constraints while trying to follow the curriculum.

Finally, the teachers were asked to comment on the major influences on planning and implementing foreign language instruction at fifth grade. They gave parallel answers to the ones in the scale. The two groups shared common views on the impact of the school policy, teachers (themselves) and students on English teaching. Nevertheless, due to compulsory teacher observation as an evaluation technique, Macedonian EFL teachers considered "*colleagues*" and "*parents*" as more influential, whereas Turkish EFL teachers argued that "*state regulations*" and "*administrators*" are mostly effective in ways they plan and implement foreign language instruction at fifth grade.

5. Summary and Conclusion

This paper aimed to find out the similarities and differences of perceived beliefs and reported practices between fifth grade English teachers in Turkey and Macedonia and also, to identify the possible factors that might influence their classroom practices.

The findings of the study revealed moderate yet consistent links between teachers' perceived beliefs and reported practices. Nevertheless, differences appeared between the two groups particularly in teachers' perceived beliefs on developmentally appropriate and inappropriate practices. A possible explanation for this finding might be that one group of teachers is more familiar with the ideals professed and language used by NAEYC policy statement for developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) (Berge, 2005).

Another possible explanation concerns itself with the cultures. Alexander (2000: 27) stated, "In studying foreign systems of education we should not forget that the things outside the schools matter even more than the things inside schools...All good and true education is an expression of national life and character". If this statement holds true today, it is crucial to consider the possible influence of culture and politics on teachers' perceived beliefs as well.

In addition, both Macedonian and Turkish fifth grade English teachers showed variety in terms of developmentally appropriate and inappropriate classroom practices, which seems to provide evidence for what Buchanan et al. (1998) described as a paradox. Teachers tend to use a combination of practices labeled as appropriate and inappropriate based on their unique settings. Berge (2005) argued that since the teacher is an interactive decision maker, it is his/her responsibility to consider each practice employed in the classroom and its appropriateness in a specific context for a particular group of learners.

Furthermore, no significant relationship was found between Turkish EFL teachers' appropriate or inappropriate beliefs and practices. Likewise, Macedonian EFL teachers' appropriate beliefs and practices did not correlate either. These findings

signify no impact of the variables on each other. The only strong negative relationship was identified between Macedonian teachers' inappropriate beliefs and practices which shows that while one variable increases the other one decreases or vice versa. A similar finding has been evidenced in a study conducted by Charlesworth et al. (1993).

Finally, both Macedonian and Turkish EFL teachers agreed that school policy, teachers (themselves) and students are influential on the way they plan and implement activities in classrooms. Particularly, school policies and teachers (themselves) had relatively high amounts of influence, which were supported by Berge's (2005) study. Thus, policy makers, researchers, and teachers themselves should particularly focus on these three variables to achieve any desired change in classroom practice.

The other four influential items which teachers were questioned involved parents, colleagues, administrators and state regulations. While Macedonian EFL teachers perceived colleagues and parents as having more impact on their teaching, Turkish EFL teachers ranked administrators and state regulations as more important. Again, cultural and/or political differences between Macedonia and Turkey should be taken into account in relation to providing further explanation on the differences between the influences of those four variables.

Teachers' own perceptions of what influences their teaching can offer suggestions about how to proceed toward improved practices. Similar to previous studies, training focused on specific teaching practices at the pre-service and in-service level is effective in helping teachers improve classroom practices (Dunn and Kontos, 1997; Buchanan et al., 1998; Berge, 2005).

The present study has some limitations which should be mentioned for further research in this area. As the current investigation into comparing perceived beliefs and reported practices between Macedonian and Turkish fifth grade English teachers was carried out with small samples, the possibility of generalizing the data is limited. Besides, caution needs to be exercised when considering teachers' responses on the Teacher Beliefs Scale and the Instructional Activities Scale, which emphasized both perceived beliefs and reported practices. Including additional data collection instruments like, observation and field notes might have provided triangulation and more reliable results. Besides, the two samples were from a single context (state schools), which might affect the external validity of the study. Further research should try to complement the data by examining teachers' performance at private schools in both settings.

In conclusion, comparative studies provide insights into teachers' perceived beliefs and reported practices in different contexts. By comparing beliefs and practices cross-culturally, assumptions held in each country and their unique characteristics have the opportunity to be challenged, serving as a main guide to the process of foreign language learning, which should be closely considered by the Ministry of Education while designing the fifth grade English curricula across different EFL contexts.

6. References

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