BEST PRACTICES IN INITIAL LITERACY TEACHING

Research article

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Abstract

In the current study, is aimed to reveal what kind of practices can be good examples in the first literacy teaching process based on the opinions of primary teachers. For this purpose, the study was designed according to the nested single case design, one of the qualitative research designs. The study group of the study is composed of eighteen primary teachers selected by using the criterion sampling method. A standardized open-ended interview form was used as a data collection tool, and the obtained data were analyzed using content analysis. According to the results obtained, the primary school teachers are of the opinion that including games and materials necessary for these games, using digital platforms related to literacy, doing dictation exercises, rhyme reciting, teaching with rhythm and music, creating stories and regular reading activities in the classroom are useful in the initial literacy teaching process. Outside the classroom, it was determined that they found practices such as making children play in the schoolyard, ensuring parental support, giving less homework, using WEB 2.0 tools, recommending mobile literacy applications and writing exercises with natural materials. The primary teachers made suggestions to increase the quality of the initial literacy teaching process, such as using gamification, giving greater importance to practice, creating positive emotions in parents and children, and taking into account the developmental characteristics of children.

Keywords: Initial literacy, first grade, sample practices

1. Introduction

Initial literacy teaching is of vital importance. Literacy teaching which is accepted as the beginning of the formal learning journey starts in the first grade of primary school. The quality of education in this process, which starts in the first grade, will affect the development of the individual in many areas, especially in academic and social areas. When this process is considered as the first button on a shirt, if the first button is wrongly buttoned, the rest of the buttons will also be wrongly buttoned. For this reason, the quality and planning of this process are important because an individual's learning reading and writing and accordingly make sense of and interpret what has been read will allow him/her to express himself/herself, develop higher-order thinking skills and contribute to society.

Initial literacy teaching refers to the language teaching process that starts in early childhood, where language skills are developed, and continues through collaboration of the family and the school to impart reading and writing skills when a child begins the first grade of primary school (Baş, 2006). Based on this definition in the literature regarding initial literacy teaching, it can be defined as a mechanism in the triangle of student, teacher and family, where listening and speaking skills acquired in early childhood are combined with reading and writing skills with the aim of developing language skills as a whole. When these definitions are examined, it is seen that the variables that can influence the process include the characteristics of the student, family and teacher, as well as the teacher's pedagogical competences related to literacy teaching. For this reason, initial literacy teaching should be carried out by qualified primary

teachers because teachers are expected not only to teach reading and writing but also to instil a love for literacy, promote the conscious and correct use of the Turkish language according to its rules, foster skills such as information retrieval and exploration and encourage critical thinking (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB], 2019).

Initial literacy teaching involves a dynamic process. It is the responsibility of teachers to guide students and their families in this dynamic literacy teaching process. Teachers should design an effective educational environment in this process. Teachers should have a good command of literacy teaching methods and principles in order to design such an environment (Dehaene, Huron & Sprenger-Charolles, 2012; Güneş, 2019). This is of great importance for the efficiency of the process. Among these principles (Dehaene, Huron & Sprenger-Charolles, 2012; Güneş, 2019), first of all, it is useful to focus on the principle of selecting quality activities in line with the purpose. This principle includes careful selection of examples and activities to be given to students. Students think and make inferences based on the activities and examples they encounter in initial literacy teaching process. The first sub-dimension of this principle is being compatible with teaching. Being compatible with teaching means that the words and activities to be taught in the literacy teaching process are compatible with the teaching. In this process, activities consisting of poorly learned concepts and words should never be taught. The second sub-dimension is the error prevention dimension. In order to prevent mistakes and prevent misspellings, students should never be given misspelled words. The examples, words and syllables to be given in the literacy teaching process should be chosen carefully. The third sub-dimension is distinguishing the name and sound of letters. This dimension is related to the name and sound of the letters being different. This difference should be taught to children at the beginning of initial literacy teaching process. Otherwise, children may add and subtract unnecessary sounds and read and write incorrectly. The last dimension of this principle is providing a variety of activities. This involves presenting new, diverse, and rich activities with the aim of preventing rote memorization, preventing children from getting bored and facilitating easier learning for students who struggle with reading and writing. Another of the literacy teaching principles is active participation, attention and effort. This principle refers to the student's active participation in the learning process, paying attention to and having fun from learning. Teachers should ensure that students learn by having fun and are not afraid of making mistakes and provide an environment that supports their efforts. The last of the literacy teaching principles is the principle of adaptation to the student level. This principle means that the activities, texts and works provided during the initial literacy teaching process should be appropriate for students' level and needs. The literacy teaching principles stated and explained by Dehaene, Huron & Sprenger-Charolles (2012) and Güneş (2019) are important in terms of practices, activities and course designs to be prepared in the context of literacy teaching.

Practices, activities and lesson designs to be carried out by teachers in the classroom environment will make significant contributions to the academic success of children (Howes, Burchinal, Pianta, Bryant, Early, Clifford and Barbarin, 2008; LaParo, Pianta and Stuhlman, 2004). As well as the literacy activities carried out in the classroom environment, teachers' arrangements regarding the classroom environment may also be effective on the development of literacy skills. Effectively organized environments will increase children's participation and interest in literacy (Wolfersberger, Reutzel, Sudweeks and Fawson, 2004) and give them the opportunity to choose their own materials and activities (Wiltz and Klein, 2001). Teachers need to do some activities outside the classroom for the development of children's literacy learning skills and inform parents about activities that can be done at home. There are studies investigating the relationship between parents and school in the literacy learning process of children (Çelik Solyalı and Işıktaş, 2020; Del Bono, Francesconi, Kelly and Sacker, 2016;

Ekinci Vural, 2006; Günay-Bilaloğlu, 2014; Kılıç and Ertürk, 2020; Kıvrak and Yıldırım, 2020; Massetti, 2009; Polat and Kesik, 2022; Wilder, 2014; Wood, 2020). When the relevant literature is examined in the national context, it is seen that studies based on different teaching methods used in literacy teaching have been carried out. For example, in the study conducted by Güneş, Uysal, and Taç (2016) on initial literacy teaching by observing teachers, it was found that teachers predominantly provided their own examples based on the questions in the section of feeling and recognizing sounds and that they did not actively involve students in the lesson and that they used songs, videos, stories and pictures as materials. In writing and reading letters, they observed that teachers made various activities to help students write letters properly. In the stages of syllable, word, sentence and text formation, it was determined that the observed teachers used visuals to enrich the text in which they presented plenty of examples, but they did not pay attention to the formation of open syllables and closed syllables. Babayiğit and Gültekin (2019) used games to teach in the initial literacy teaching process. In the study, it was determined that there was no statistically significant difference between the experimental group, where the teaching method involving play was implemented, and the control group, where the teaching method involving play was not implemented, in terms of oral reading speed, writing speed and reading comprehension skills. Furthermore, it was determined during the research process that the primary teacher had positive views on the teaching method involving play in initial literacy teaching. Based on these views, it was concluded that the teaching method involving play was effective and efficient. In the study conducted by Kesik and Baş (2022), it was determined that literacy teaching based on digital technologies had a positive impact on students' phonological awareness skills, transition to reading, as well as reading speed and proficiency in both paper-based and screen-based reading. Some research results in the related literature show concretely that studies based on different practices, activities, methods and designs in the literacy teaching process yield positive results.

In the relevant literature, various research studies have been conducted on initial literacy teaching using different research designs. These studies have identified the problems encountered in initial literacy teaching, proposed solutions, explored the effectiveness of different strategies, methods and techniques and presented teacher opinions on various topics related to initial literacy teaching. Studies in the relevant literature have revealed that increasing efficiency through good practices in initial literacy teaching, which marks the first step of individuals' formal learning journey, is an important need. Based on this need, it is important to detect studies that are thought to increase the quality of the initial literacy teaching process and to include good examples. Thus, the current study aimed to reveal what kind of practices can be good examples in the initial literacy teaching process based on the opinions of primary teachers. To this end, answers to the following research questions were sought:

1. What kind of practices do primary teachers perform in the initial literacy teaching process that can be a good example to be conducted in the class?

2. What kind of practices do primary school teachers perform in the initial literacy teaching process that can be a good example to be conducted outside the class?

3. What are the suggestions of primary teachers to increase the quality of the initial literacy teaching process?

4. What are the sample practices that primary teachers apply or think are applicable in the initial literacy teaching process?

2.Method

2.1. Research Model

The current study, designed as a qualitative research within an embedded single-case design, aims to reveal the practices that primary teachers implement in the process of initial literacy teaching on the basis of their views. The embedded single-case design is defined as producing a result related to the whole by analyzing each of the sub-units separately within a single case. There must be more than one substrate and unit in this process (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2021). In line with the purpose and problems of the study, the embedded single case design was preferred since it focused on the suggestions to increase the quality of the teaching process with the practices that can be good examples both inside and outside the classroom in the initial literacy teaching process because the initial literacy teaching process is a single case and what is done inside and outside the class in this process are the sub-units of this case.

2.2. Participants

In the selection of the participants, the criterion sampling method, one of the purposive sampling methods, was used in line with the purpose and problems of the study. Criterion sampling is that units to be included in the study consist of individuals, events or cases having specific characteristics. Taking into account the criteria of having taught first graders at least twice and having professional experience of five years or more, a total of 18 primary teachers working in 10 different state primary schools in the 2022-2023 school year were included in the study. Some demographic information of the participating primary teachers is given in Table 1.

Table 1. *Demographic Information of the Teachers*

Teacher	Gender	Education Level	Professional Experience	Teaching First Graders (Times)
T1	Female	Undergraduate	6-10 years	2 times
T2	Female	Undergraduate	16-20 years	5 times and more
T3	Male	Undergraduate	21 years and more	5 times and more
T4	Male	Undergraduate	11-15 years	4 times
T5	Female	Undergraduate	21 years and more	5 times and more
T6	Female	Undergraduate	6-10 years	4 times
T7	Female	Undergraduate	6-10 years	2 times
T8	Female	Graduate	16-20 years	4 times
T9	Male	Undergraduate	6-10 years	4 times
T10	Male	Graduate	16-20 years	5 times and more
T11	Male	Graduate	16-20 years	3 times
T12	Female	Undergraduate	11-15 years	4 times
T13	Male	Graduate	11-15 years	3 times
T14	Male	Undergraduate	11-15 years	4 times
T15	Male	Graduate	16-20 years	3 times
T16	Male	Graduate	21 years and more	5 times and more
T17	Female	Graduate	11-15 years	4 times
T18	Female	Graduate	21 years and more	4 times

As seen in Table 1, 9 of the participating teachers are male and 9 are female. Ten of the teachers hold an undergraduate degree while 8 hold a graduate degree. Of the participants, 4 have 6-10 years of professional experience, 5 have 11-15 years of professional experience and

4 have 21 years and more of professional experience. Two of them have taught first graders twice so far, 3 of them 3 times, 8 of them 4 times and 5 of them 5 times and more.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

In order to collect the data of the study, a standardized open-ended interview form was prepared. In the standardized open-ended interview form, there are six open-ended questions prepared in line with the purpose of the study. The questions were submitted to the review of three experts, two of whom have a doctorate degree in primary teaching and one of whom is a science expert in the field of primary teaching. Additions, deletions and corrections were made in line with the feedback from the experts. When the interview form was given its final form, two primary teachers were asked to read and answer the questions in order to determine their comprehensibility. After the primary teachers answered the questions, they were asked whether the questions were comprehensible. They stated that the questions were comprehensible.

2.4. Data Collection and Analysis

Six questions in the standardized open-ended interview form developed to collect data in the study and questions to elicit some descriptive information were sent to the primary teachers in the study group via Google form. The answers given by the teachers were archived in excel format. In the analysis of the collected data, content analysis, one of the analysis methods in qualitative research, was used. Content analysis is "combining similar data within the framework of certain concepts and themes and interpreting them in a way that the reader can understand." (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2021).

2.5. Validity and Reliability

In order to strengthen the credibility, consistency and confirmability of the study, the answers given by the primary teachers to the questions were coded by the researcher and a primary teacher with a doctorate degree. Then the codes were placed under the themes and categories. Themes, categories and codes were submitted to the review of an expert with a doctorate degree in the field primary teaching. In line with the feedback given by the expert, the themes, categories and codes were finalized. In order to confirm whether the analyses conducted reflected what was said, the findings and comments were read to one of the participants who hold a graduate degree in the study group. In addition, purposive sampling was used to ensure transferability in the study.

2.6. Research and Publication Ethics

In this study, all the rules specified in the "Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive" were followed. None of the actions specified under the title of "Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics", which is the second part of the directive, were carried out.

2.6.1. Ethics Committee Permission

Name of the committee = Harran University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee

Date of decision = 13.01.2023

Document number = 2023/09

3. Findings

In this study, in which good practices in initial literacy teaching were examined, it was seen that the data derived from the opinions of the primary teachers were gathered under four main themes. These themes are;

- In-class practices in initial literacy teaching
- Out-of-class practices in initial literacy teaching
- Suggestions for improving the quality of the teaching process
- Good practices in initial literacy teaching

3.1. In-class practices in initial literacy teaching

Some of the findings obtained in the current study are related to the successful practices that the primary teachers in the study group carried out in the classroom during the initial literacy teaching process. Under the theme of in-class practices, there is the category of educational-instructional practices and the codes related to this category. In Table 2, the themes, categories, codes and frequencies related to the codes are explained.

Table 2. *In-Class Practices in Initial Literacy Teaching*

Theme: In-Class Practices		
Categories	Codes	f
	Playing games, preparing materials for games	7
	Using digital platforms	7
	Dictation exercises	5
	Creating, reciting and memorizing tongue twisters	5
	Teaching sounds with rhythm and music	4
	Creating a story for the sound	4
	Repetition	4
	Regular reading activities in the class	4
	Watching videos about sounds/letters	4
	Using WEB 2.0 tools	4
	Reinforcing the sound/letter with visuals	6
Learning and teaching practices	Doing syllable exercises	3
	Watching animations on sounds	2
	Promoting a love for literacy	2
	Engaging children in drama	2
	Daily regular writing activities	2
	Designing interactive and hands-on activities	2
	Ensuring peer support	1
	Making children feel vowels	1
	Making children recognize the distinction between sounds in the first sound group	1
	Not rushing in the literacy teaching process	1
		1

When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that the primary teachers mostly prefer to play games and prepare materials for games and use digital platforms in the initial literacy teaching process in the classroom. They listed the reasons for preferring to play games and prepare materials for games as learning by having fun, more effective learning, active participation and children's not experiencing a sense of failure. They listed the reasons for using digital platforms as their being comprehensive and carefully prepared, including songs, animations, nursery rhymes and games related to sounds/letters. Some of the primary teachers' opinions on this subject are as follows:

I like making children play games. I leave the games I play in class to the library during the break and I see that they are having fun by playing them even in the break [T9].

The use of digital platforms is, in my opinion, the most successful application. The song of a letter, tongue twisters for each letter, letter-sound awareness activities and letter games found on these platforms provide significant support during this process [T15].

The primary teachers frequently include dictation practices in the classroom, creating rhymes, reciting and memorizing practices in the initial literacy teaching process. They listed the reasons for including dictation activities as making it easier to combine letters, increasing reading speed and contributing to the learning of spelling rules. They explained the reason for engaging students in nursery rhymes, reading and memorizing exercises as their strengthening the memory and ensuring the participation of the whole class. The opinion of a primary teacher on this subject is as follows:

Dictation activities on the board, making them read and memorize rhymes. Memorization makes their memories stronger. They better understand how to combine letters while doing dictation activities on the board [T5].

As seen in Table 2, other frequently used activities by the teachers include teaching sounds with rhythm and music, creating a story for the sound, repetition, doing regular reading activities in the class and watching videos about sounds/letters. They explained the reason for teaching with music, rhythm and drama as ensuring more permanent learning in children. They explained the reason for creating a story about the sound as waiting for the story with excitement, listening more carefully and increasing the retention of the sounds in the mind. They stated the reason for repetition as learning letters quickly and increasing their retention. They explained that the reason for watching animations and video recordings related to sound/letter is that children make progress in their syllable and word formation skills after the first few sounds. Some primary teachers' opinions on these issues are as follows:

Instructional design with rhythm and play ensures learning and active participation with fun, without getting bored [T15].

Repeating letters every day increases the speed of learning letters and the permanence of what is learned. Children of this age learn best through repetition. As a result of the repetitions made in chorus and with fun imitations, most of the students learn all the letters before half of the letters have been finished [T13].

Many other practices applied by the primary teachers in the classroom during the initial literacy teaching process are explained in Table 2. They explained the reasons for doing some of them. For example, they explained the reason for ensuring peer support as students with different levels of progress in the literacy teaching process learn more easily from each other. They stated the reason for the implementation of interactive and hand-on activities as ensuring permanent learning because they require active participation. They explained the reason for raising the awareness of daily vowels as recognising syllables through sounds. They stated that the reason for not rushing in the literacy teaching process is to ensure retention in learning. They explained the reason for using visual art works related to sounds/letters as keeping the curiosity alive and developing students' muscles. Some of the primary teachers' opinions on these issues are as follows:

I think that going slowly without rushing ensures permanence in learning [T18].

I think peer learning is very effective. I observe that students with different levels of progress in literacy teaching learn more easily from each other [T17].

3.2. Out-of-Class Practices in Initial Literacy Teaching

Some of the findings obtained in the study are related to the successful practices conducted by the primary teachers outside the classroom during the initial literacy teaching process. Under the theme of out-of-class practices, there is the category of educational-instructional practices and the codes related to this category. In Table 3, the themes, categories, codes and frequencies related to the codes are explained.

Table 3. *Out-of-Class Practices in Initial Literacy Teaching*

Theme: Out-of-Class Practices		
Categories	Codes	f
	Playing games in the schoolyard related to literacy	5
	Ensuring parental support for literacy activities	4
	Giving less homework	4
	Using WEB 2.0 tools	2
	Suggesting mobile literacy applications	2
	Doing writing activities in the schoolyard with natural materials	2
Learning and teaching practices	Doing regular literacy activities at home	1
	Trip to out-of-class learning environments	1
	Sending a video about the sound/letter to be taught one day in advance	1
	Orienteering arrangement	
	Video recording and sharing home reading exercises	1
		1

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that the primary teachers mostly prefer to play games related to literacy in the schoolyard, to ensure parental support in literacy studies and to give less homework outside the classroom during the initial literacy teaching process. They explained the reason for playing games related to literacy in the schoolyard as follows; children of this age are play-age children, they are not porters who will carry unnecessary cognitive load and they need to go through a process where they feel happy. They explained the reason for giving less homework as students' being bored with more repetitive homework. Some teachers' opinions on these issues are as follows:

In physical education class, I am preparing A3 size cards with syllables in the garden. I want the students to make 2 rows and form the word I said from the mixed syllables on the ground. Students are both competing and playing games. Of course, after all, they learn [T14].

Reading exercises at home accompanied by their parents in a way that children can enjoy [T6].

According to the frequency values in Table 3, the primary teachers also largely prefer to conduct activities such as using WEB 2.0 tools outside the classroom, recommending mobile literacy applications and doing writing activities in the garden with natural materials. They explained the reason for using WEB 2.0 tools as creating permanent behaviours in children. In their reason for recommending mobile literacy applications, they stated that they provide students with the opportunity to progress at their own pace without needing anyone's support and to work with a second teacher. They stated that the reason for doing writing activities in the garden with natural materials is that writing on the soil provides students with permanent learning, writing without paper and pencil outside the classroom feels like a game to students, students do not forget the letters they have designed themselves and the learning activities done in nature lead to more permanent learning. The opinions of some primary teachers on these issues are as follows:

> *Writing on the soil provides students with permanent learning. Writing without paper and pen outside the classroom feels like a game to students. All students are willing to write [T13].*

> *My only favourite is the "I'm learning to read and write" app. because it gives students the opportunity to progress at their own pace without needing anyone's support, and to work with a second teacher [T11].*

3.3. Suggestions for Increasing the Quality in the Initial Literacy Teaching Process

In the study, the primary teachers were asked their opinions about what should be done to increase the quality in initial literacy teaching. The suggestions and frequencies of these suggestions are given in Table 4.

Table 4. *Quality in the Initial Literacy Teaching Process*

Theme: Suggestions for Increasing the Quality in the Initial Literacy Teaching Process	
Suggestions	f
Doing dictation activities	4
Gamification of the learning process	4
Doing repetitive reading activities	4
Not rushing when the first sounds are taught	3
Encouraging students to develop positive attitudes towards literacy	2
Involving students in the design of course content	1
Reducing the anxiety level of students and families	1
Using the interactive whiteboard actively and effectively	1
Choosing the right resource for students	1
Choosing the right teaching methods	1
Planning so that students progress at their own pace	1
Developing positive relationships with students	1
Determining the classroom rules together with students	1
Providing literacy materials and necessary equipment for the classroom	1
Working in collaboration with parents	2
Conducting the literacy process in accordance with the interdisciplinary approach	1
Doing a short sports activity before class every day	1
Scheduling weekly visual arts, music and game physical activities classes	1
Enabling peer learning in the classroom	1
Pronouncing the sounds without elongating them	1
Introducing square texts for reading after a certain stage	1

Theme: Suggestions for Increasing the Quality in the Initial Literacy Teaching Process	
Suggestions	f
Engaging in daily writing activities during the second term	1
Using waste materials in the classroom	1
Planning the school orientation week well	1
Planning speaking and listening/watching activities	1
Focusing on confusing letters	1
Not using words meaningless to children	1
Reading books to student everyday	1
Allowing them to create a class library and to choose their books	1
Not comparing students with each other	1

The primary teachers suggested doing dictation activities, gamification, repetitive reading activities and not rushing when the first sounds are taught to increase the quality in the initial literacy teaching process. Apart from these four suggestions, twenty-seven more suggestions are presented in Table 4 to increase the quality in the initial literacy teaching process. The opinions of some primary teachers about these suggestions are as follows:

> *Enriching the literacy process with games, songs and stories makes the difficult literacy process easy for both the teacher and students [T13].*

> *Plenty of repetitions and dictations are good [T7].*

> *When teaching first sounds, one should not hurry. Every sound must be fully taught. A lot of dictation is required. Enough dictation should be done for sentences, words and sounds [T2].*

3.4. Good Practices in Initial Literacy Teaching

In the study, the primary teachers were asked to present sample practices that they applied in the initial literacy teaching process or that they thought were applicable. Among the practices presented by the teachers, the ones that can be good examples are selected and presented below:

3.4.1. Examples of Game-Based

> *"Creating syllables and words with Legos: The purpose of this application is to enable students to form syllables by combining letters and words by combining syllables. This practice can also be done with balance boards and water bottle caps. [T9]"*

> *"Play dough: The purpose of this application is to enable students to create letters with play dough, syllables from letters, and words from syllables. [T9]"*

> *"Bees on a flower: The purpose of this application is to improve students' reading and writing skills. Words are written on the prepared flowers and pasted on the board. The student on the board makes a sound like a bee and goes to one of the flowers. He/she reads and dictates the word written on the flower. [T9]"*

> *"Fishing: The purpose of this application is to improve students' reading skills. Words are written on the prepared fish images. Magnets are attached to the images*

and they are put into a lantern or a box. Students try to catch fish with a magnetic fishing rod. He/she reads the word written on the fish he/she caught. [T9]"

"Making students feel with puppets: The purpose of this application is to make the sound to be taught felt with the help of puppets. First, the puppet is designed or purchased. The sound to be felt by the students is presented with a dialogue, story or narrative by the puppet. By moving the puppet, it is tried to make the sound felt by students with the appropriate tone, gestures and facial expressions. [T10]"

"Word building with students: The purpose of this application is to have students form and read words inside or outside the classroom. Letters are written in large font on A4 size coloured paper. Each student is given a different letter. A word is said to the student who comes to the board (for example, the word PEN). The student is asked to call his/her friends who have the letters that will form the word spoken to him/her and arrange them to form the word. [T10]"

"Animation with drawing and story: The purpose of this application is to make open syllables easier to remember through animation with drawing and story. For this, firstly, a drawing is made about the open syllable (For example, by drawing the syllable "mo", it is likened to the Clever Rabbit Momo's motorcycle with a broken rear wheel).Then the story of the drawing is told. [T13]"

"Creating a story from plant and animal names: The purpose of this application is to teach the sound with the help of stories, using the animal or plant name that starts with the sound to be taught (for example, d sound with donkey, s sound with stork, o sound with octopus, g sound with goat, c sound with cow, m sound with mint). These stories should be created as a continuation of each other (I start the story as if there is a forest and as if there is a sea next to the forest. One day, a donkey that lost its way came to the forest and started to live here. While flying over the forest during the migration season, a stork admired the greenery and made a nest on a branch of a tree. The donkey and the stork became friends there. One day, when they got up in the morning, they heard a voice coming from the sea. An octopus is singing. La la la la la…). [T13]"

"Word bingo: The purpose of this application is to enable students to form and read words. This application can be started after the letter "a". Words related to unlearned letters can also be included. After learning the letter "a", a bingo game is prepared from words containing the first group (e, l, a, k, i, n). Bingo cards are distributed to the students. Word cards are drawn from the bag and read by the teacher and the word is written on the board. Students who cannot read yet look for the word written on the board on the card in their hand. [T13]"

3.4.2. Examples of Digital Material Applications

"Repetition with mobile applications: The purpose of this application is to allow the repetition of a sound / letter taught through any mobile application. For this, a

mobile application that can be used for literacy development is recommended to parents and they are asked to download it to their phones. They are asked to work on creating syllables, words and sentences about the sound/letter taught. In addition, they are asked to practice listening-watching and reading audio texts. [T10]"

"Syllable and word creation with WEB 2.0 tools: The purpose of this application is to improve students' reading and writing skill. For this, WEB 2.0 tools suitable for syllable and word creation are determined. The learned letters are placed in the determined WEB 2.0 tools. Students are expected to form syllables and words from these letters and read them. Matching activities (Wordwall, Learningapps) and voice recording using the student's own voice (Chatterpix) can also be used. [T1]"

3.4.3. Examples of Natural Material Applications

"Writing with natural materials: The purpose of this application is to improve students' writing skills by using natural materials outside the classroom. For this, students are taken out of the classroom. Students are asked to write the letter, syllable or word on the ground with a stick or branch. [T13]"

3.4.4. Examples of Out-Of-Class Applications

"Word building in the garden: The purpose of this application is to enable students to read by forming words outside the classroom. For this, syllables are written on A4 size papers. The papers are arranged in a mixed manner in the school garden. Students are asked to line up in pairs. Whichever student creates the given word first, that group wins. [T14]"

"Observation in the schoolyard or classroom: The purpose of this application is to make observations about the sound being taught and find objects and entities related to that sound. For this, students are kept in the classroom or are taken out to the garden. They are asked to make observations. According to their observations, they are asked to find objects and entities that start with the taught sound and in which the taught sound included. [T16]"

3.4.5. Examples of Printed Material Applicatio

"Sentence picture matching: The purpose of this application is to get students to read sentences. For this, sentences are written related to the sounds/letters learned. Images related to these sentences are found or drawn. These images are placed on the board in a mixed order. Students are asked to find and match the image that reflects the sentence they read. [T12]"

"Drawing objects related to sound: The purpose of this application is to reinforce the sound that the student has just learned. The student is asked to find an object that contains the newly learned sound and draw that object when he/she goes home. He/she is asked to bring the picture he/she drew to school next day. The student goes to the board and tells about the object he/she has drawn to his/her friends. [T16]"

"Pasting images in the notebook: The purpose of this application is to improve students' writing skills. Word images consisting of learned sounds/letters are

pasted into the student's notebook. The student is expected to write the word in the related image next to the image. [T15]"

4. Discussion and Results

According to the opinions of the primary teachers in the study group, it has been determined that practices such as incorporating games and materials related to games into the classroom, using digital platforms for reading and writing, conducting dictation exercises, reciting tongue twisters, incorporating rhythm and music in instruction, creating stories, engaging in regular reading activities and a lot of repetition are effective in the initial literacy teaching process. Upon examining the identified practices, it can be observed that they are application-oriented and include concrete elements that actively engage first-grade students based on their developmental characteristics during the process. Indeed, these practices are believed to appeal to multiple sensory organs during the learning process, thereby motivating children and fostering a positive attitude towards the literacy learning process. When these results are examined together with the relevant literature, it is evident that factors such as the physical and cognitive characteristics of first-grade students, school readiness, their interest in the lessons, as well as the monitoring of their assignments and in-class activities, can have a positive or negative impact on the initial literacy teaching process (Türkücü Tabak, 2021). Some research findings indicate that group games and technology-supported games (Öztürk and Aksu, 2019), educational games (Babayiğit and Gültekin, 2019; Bektaş, 2020), visually supported stories (Sönmez, 2022), and songs (Arslan, 2015; Şahin, 2021) have positive contributions to students' literacy learning process and enhance their reading and writing skills. These results in the literature support the results obtained in the current study on the basis of the opinions of the primary teachers. This situation demonstrates that in the process of initial literacy teaching, classroom games and game-based materials, digital platforms, dictation exercises, teaching through music and activities based on story creation are effective in actively engaging students and providing concrete learning experiences. According to Yıldız (2015), interactive material-supported teaching positively affected the reading skills of the first graders in primary school. This result shows concretely the effect of interaction which is the result of concrete experiences and active participation on the learning process during the initial literacy teaching process.

It has been determined that the primary school teachers find the practices such as playing games outside the classroom in the schoolyard, ensuring parental support, giving little homework, using WEB 2.0 tools, recommending mobile literacy applications and writing with natural materials are effective in the initial literacy teaching process. When the practices conducted outside the classroom are considered, it is thought that playing games and working with natural materials are effective in engaging them with concrete experiences as primary school first grade students are in the play age because of the developmental period they are in. In addition, working with natural materials will contribute positively to both their active participation in the learning process and the development of their motor skills. In addition, it is stated that giving less homework prevents situations such as boredom in the literacy teaching process and makes the process more pleasant. Since children are in the digital age, WEB 2.0 tools and mobile applications are thought to attract and motivate them in the teaching process and appeal to more than one sensory organ. It is also among the opinions that these applications serve as mentors in the process and offer the opportunity to learn at their own pace. Kikas et al. (2018) found that student-centred practices were more effective on some reading skills of students in the first grade of primary school. This result supports the conclusion of the current study that student-centred practices outside the classroom are effective on students' literacy skills. There are also different research results on this subject in the related literature. In the study of Martens et al. (2012), various reading, writing and art activities with picture books

were found to be effective on primary school first grade students' reading comprehension skills. In the study conducted by Clark, Nelson, and D'Angelo (2009), it was determined that applications based on digital games were effective on students' reading comprehension success. According to the results revealed by Güneş, Uysal and Taç (2016) by observing classroom teachers, teachers had different activities done at different stages of primary literacy teaching, the effect and frequency of these activities differed and they were effective on students' reading skills. These results in the relevant literature support the results obtained in the current study. This situation supports the conclusion that practices such as playing games outside the classroom in the schoolyard, ensuring parental support, giving less homework, using WEB 2.0 tools, suggesting mobile literacy applications and writing exercises with natural materials can be used in the initial literacy teaching process because they are student-centred.

When the suggestions of the primary teachers to increase the quality of the initial literacy teaching process were examined, it was seen that gamification of the process, practice-oriented teaching, creating positive emotions in parents and children towards literacy with some activities to be carried out and taking into account the developmental characteristics of children were suggested by the teachers.

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