The Practice of Teaching English to Young Learners in the Palestinian Context: A Multidimensional Analysis

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Abstract  
The new Palestinian Curriculum, launched in 1994, incorporates English as a foreign language as a basic component of the syllabus starting from the first grade, thus, fitting within the context of similar national and international endeavors which stress Early Start English Programs. Researchers of this paper highlight the Palestinian National Curriculum Committee's (PNCC) statement of objectives, which stresses bilingualism and intercultural communication, and take this statement as a starting point to present a comprehensive discussion of the serious obstacles encountered by Palestinian teachers as they struggle to implement an early start English syllabus. Forty Palestinian English teachers participated in the completion of a structured interview that investigated the reality of English learning in the classroom. Results of the structured interview highlight a number of challenges encountered by teachers such as large classes, insufficient number of weekly class periods, negative transfer due to the special nature of the first language (L1), lack of teacher training that specifically targets young learner (YL) teachers, as well as the noticeable marginalization of the target culture content and related skills. Such challenges obviously stand in the way of fully realizing the earlier stated curriculum objectives as outlined by the PNCC.

KeyWords: Teaching English to Young Learners, TEYL in the Arab World, Early Start English Programs, Age in EFL, Palestinian young learners of EFL