EVALUATION OF LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOLS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM: TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND ISSUES CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Şeref Sedef Aktaş
181113118

MASTER'S THESIS

Department of Foreign Language Education
English Language Teaching Programme
Advisor: Asst. Prof. Hakan Dilman

Istanbul
T.C. Maltepe University
Graduate School
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181113118
Orcid: 0000- 0003- 2646- 8712

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JÜRİ VE ENSTİTÜ ONAYI

Bu belge, Yükseköğretim Kurulu tarafından 19.01.2021 tarihli "*Lisansüstü Tezlerin Elektronik Ortamda Toplanması, Düzenlenmesi ve Erişime Açılmasına İlişkin Yönerge*" ile bildirilen 6689 Sayılı Kişisel Verilerin Korunması Kanunu kapsamında gizlenmiştir.

ETİK İLKE VE KURALLARA UYUM BEYANI

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DEDICATION

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my thesis supervisor Assist. Prof. Hakan Dilman for his continuous assistance, and encouragement. He was always accessible whenever I needed his guidance and helped me in writing this thesis through his constructive feedback, valuable comments, and advice. He realised every detail even before I was aware that I needed.

I am particularly grateful to my sister, Mürvet Aktaş for her amazing attention to verbatim transcription. Without her, I would be in great difficulty along the process.

I wish to thank to Bülent Karabulut for always being there for me.

I would like to express my gratitude to my family who encouraged me throughout the process. This step of academic journey would not have been possible without their love, praying and support.

I will always be deeply grateful to all the English language teachers for their candid participation.

Şeref Sedef Aktaş

August, 2021

ÖZ

ORTAOKUL İNGİLİZCE MÜFREDATI DEĞERLENDİRMESİ: ÖĞRETMEN GÖRÜŞLERİ VE DEVLET OKULLARINDA İŞLEYİŞLER HAKKINDA

Şeref Sedef Aktaş
Yüksek Lisans Tezi
Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı
İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Yüksek Lisans Programı
Danışman: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Hakan Dilman
Maltepe Üniversitesi, Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü, 2021

Bu çalışmanın amacı 2017 yılında düzenlenen ortaokul İngilizce öğretim programının uygulanmasına ilişkin öğretmen görüşlerini ve 2019-2020 akademik yılı uygulama sürecinde öğretmenler tarafından karşılaşılan zorluk ve /veya sorunları ortaya çıkarmaktır. Bu nitel çalışma İstanbul'un çeşitli bölgelerinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu çalışmaya devlet ortaokullarında görev yapmakta olan toplam 15 İngilizce öğretmeni katılmıştır. Veriler öğretmenlerle yapılan derinlemesine görüşmelerle toplanmış ve içerik analizi ile analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmanın bulguları, katılımcıların uygulamada karşılaşılan bazı zorluklardan ve/ veya sorunlardan dolayı programın bazı yönlerine ilişkin olumsuz görüşlere sahip olduklarını ve planlanan ve uygulanan program arasında uyuşmazlık olduğunu göstermiştir. Bulgular, ders kitaplarının içeriğinin pratikte öğretim programı olarak algıladığını ve öğrencilerin ihtiyaç ve ilgileri açışından öğretmenler tarafından yetersiz bulunduğunu ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bu çalışmanın sonuçları İngilizce öğretim programının etkili bir şekilde uygulanmasını engelleyen zorlukların ve/ veya sorunların, yetersiz ders kitabı ve donanım, kalabalık sınıflar, İngilizce ders saatinin azlığı, İngilizce öğretim programının kademesiz bir şekilde uygulanması, karışık seviye grupları, öğrencilerin İngilizceye karşı olumsuz tutumları ve liselere geçiş sistemi/sınavı (LGS) olduğunu göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İngilizce öğretim programı, ortaokul, öğretim programı uygulaması, sorunlar.

ABSTRACT

EVALUATION OF LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOLS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM: TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND ISSUES CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Maltepe University, Graduate School, 2021

The study aimed to reveal the perceptions of teachers about the implementation of the lower secondary English language curriculum developed in 2017 and the challenges and/or problems faced by the teachers in the implementation process in 2019-2020 academic year. This qualitative study was conducted in several districts of İstanbul A total of 15 English language participated in the study. The data were collected through in-depth interviews with the English language teachers working in public lower secondary schools. The data were analysed through content analysis. The results indicated that the participants had negative views about some aspects of the English language curriculum and there was an incongruence between the planned and implemented curriculum due to the challenges and/ or problems that they encountered during the implementation. It was found out that the teachers regarded textbooks' content as curriculum in practice and found it as insufficient for students' needs and interest. The challenges and/ or problems impairing the effective implementation of the English language curriculum were revealed as lack of an efficient textbook, large class size, insufficient class hours, lack of necessary equipment, lack of gradual implementation, mixed ability classes, negative attitudes of students towards English, and central examination (LGS).

Keywords: English language curriculum, lower secondary school, curriculum implementation, challenges.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN : The Association of Southeast Asian Nations

CEFR : The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

EFL : English as a Foreign Language

ELT : English Language Teaching

ELTP : English Language Teaching Program

EPI : English Proficiency Index

LGS : The name for the placement test used entering to secondary schools since 2017

MONE : Ministry of National Education

OPEC : The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries

SBS : The name used for the placement test entering to secondary schools in 2008

TEOG : The name used for the placement test entering to secondary schools in 2013-2014

CURRICULUM VITAE

Şeref Sedef Aktaş

Department of Foreign Language Education

Education

Degree	*Year*	*University, Institute, Department*
MA	2021	Maltepe University, Graduate School, Department of Foreign Language Education
BA	2007	Marmara University, Faculty of Education, English Language Teaching
High School	2002	Bolu Anatolian Teachers Training High School

Work/Employment

Year	*Job*
2014 -	English Teacher. Ministry of Education
2007- 14	Various Private Schools and Language Courses in İstanbul

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Education is one of the most powerful investments that a country can make in its future so as to develop its economy and society. It is the key to a nation's development and "plays a very crucial role in securing economic and social progress" (Ozturk, 2008) helping knowledge, beliefs, and wisdom to be formed and developed. People in every society should benefit from education, knowledge, and skills since it is the unique remedy to economic wealth and social prosperity; it is "the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today" (Malcolm X,1964 as cited in Atwal, 2014, p. 397). Education is "the development of not only one's knowledge, abilities, and value orientation, but also the development of capacities to critically examine and improve the state of all three" (Curren, 2006, as cited in Raley & Preyer, 2010, p. 72). On the contrary to informal education, where learning is attained through interactive, dialogic, and experiential experiences, formal education is provided through a more systematic and structured guidelines, in other words curriculum, by educational institutions (Hewitt, 2017). It is through education that societies are transformed into the better and "the quality of education mostly relies on how the curricula are implemented" (Erdem, 2009, p.529).

"The education system is a social institution which should be expected to change along with other institutions. It would be more surprising, not to say disturbing, if the education were to stand still while else changed" (Kelly, 2004, p.1). To this connection, curriculum should be continuously evaluated since it plays an important role in change and development (Kelly, 2004, p.136).

Due to significant developments and changes in science, technology and communication channels, curricular developments have become more important (Demirel, 2012). Besides other disciplines such as maths, science, foreign language education has become more important. In the case of English, it has become the 'global language' (Crystal, 2003, p.3) all over the world in the last twenty years as a means of

‘contact language’ for communication among people who come from different cultures and have different first language backgrounds (Seidlhofer, 2001; Seidlhofer, 2005). There are millions of people who learn English for various intentions, and it can reasonably be claimed that English is widely used in the fields of business, academics, science, computing, education, transportation, politics, and entertainment (Crystal, 2003). According to the Science Citation Index reports, though half of the authors are from English- speaking countries, English was preferred in 95 % of its articles. What is to add, two-third of all scientific papers are in English (Huttner, 2015; Hamel, 2007). Likewise, half of all business is in English. According to Harvard Business review, ‘Global business speaks English’ and many important multinational companies (Airbus, Samsung, Renault, Microsoft, Amazon, and companies in Japan, German, China, France etc.) mandates English as the common corporate language (Neeley, 2012). Meanwhile, popular music worldwide (up to 95 %), half of the world newspapers are overwhelmingly ruled in English. In one-third of international organizations like OPEC (oil exporting organization), Asian trade group ASEAN, European Central Bank, the contact language is English (Mastin, 2011), and organizations like the United Nations, NATO, the European Union, English is one of the official languages.

The pervasiveness of English led many countries to give a special status on it, and English Language Teaching (ELT) have risen in these countries also called as ‘expanding circle’ countries in which English is taught as a foreign language. Unlike ‘Outer Circle’ countries in which English is commonly used in social life or the government offices like in India, Nigeria; in expanding circle countries English is one of the foreign languages taught in school curricula as in China, Japan, most of the Europe, Middle East. The importance of English is continuing to rise in the world, especially in expanding circle countries due to the impact of globalization (Kırkgöz, 2009; Bamgbose,2003, p.421). Similarly, Graddol (2007) argued that knowing English became a basic skill in the global world. In return, non-English-speaking countries built their foreign language education policies according to ‘the result of the need or desire for information access, technology transfer, and economic development’ (Grabe, 1988, p. 63).

The status can be best observed in Europe where English has gained a special role for wider communication. In countries like Scandinavia and the Netherlands, it has almost become a contact language. It is the ‘preferred first foreign language taught in schools’

almost all Europe. Students start to learn it at the beginning of secondary education. In Switzerland and Belgium which are multilingual states, English is preferred as the first foreign language to be studied rather than the countries' other national languages (Hoffman, 1998, pp. 145-146). The predominance of English over others (like French and German) is stated the same in other countries of European Union which have 24 official languages.

The increasing demand for English and its important role in education, Turkey, as one of the expanding circle countries, also went through developments and changes in foreign language teaching policy in that "the key to economic, political and social progress in today's society depends on the ability of Turkey's citizens to communicate effectively on an international level, so competence in English is a key factor in this process" (Ministry of National Education [MONE],2013,p.ii). Thereby, English was included as a compulsory subject at all levels of education. It is the predominant foreign language (EFL) whilst German and French are offered as selective subjects in the curriculum of some schools (Kırkgöz, 2009).

Similar to many other countries with the changing approaches and policies in education, Turkey has also undergone remarkable changes in foreign language teaching over twenty years. When English language teaching policies of Turkey are overviewed, it can be said that there have been four substantial reforms which were in 1997, 2006, 2012, and 2017.

To begin with 1997 curriculum reform, "Turkish educational system underwent a number of fundamental changes with respect to the English teaching policy at all levels of education" (Sarıçoban & Sarıçoban, 2012, p.31). The year 1997 was a turning point for Turkey's education system in which compulsory education was extended into eight years and English was started to be taught at fourth grade (İlköğretim ve Eğitim Kanunu, 1997; MONE, 1997, p.606). With this reform, students were first introduced to a foreign language at younger ages. It was explicated as a remarkable academic year since Communicative Language Teaching was first involved in Turkish language curriculum (Kırkgöz,2007, pp. 220- 221). The curriculum emphasized more on game-like activities, tasks enhancing communicative skills, and interactive activities. However, there was a gap between the practices and recommendations of the curriculum. The curriculum

objectives could not be attained effectively (Yanık, 2007) depending on several factors such as the textbook, students' attitudes towards English, the classroom conditions and it was regarded as ineffective for both learners and teachers (Kırkgöz et al., 2016).

In 2006, the 1997 curriculum was revised with more details about how young learners (4th and 5th grades) and adolescents (6th to 8th grades) learn a second language (Kırkgöz et. al., 2016, p. 1201). In an attempt to improve the communicative aspect of language learning, the 2006 curriculum was grounded on the principles of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages [CEFR] (Ersöz et al., 2006). The 2006 curriculum was mainly based on constructivist approach and Communicative Language Teaching in conjunction with multiple intelligences theory. By this means, effective teaching would be able to be supported for young learners with its tasks (Dinçer & Koç, 2020). However, as it were in previous curriculum, there occurred discrepancy between the idealized policy objectives and their practices in terms of time constraint, intensity of the content (over-loaded), lack of resources, physical conditions, and so on. Though the curriculum emphasized 'learning by doing', studies results showed it could not be carried out due to facts like insufficient materials and class size. Meanwhile, teachers criticized the program as it did not meet the daily needs of students. (Kırkgöz, 2009, p.681; Topkaya & Küçük, 2010; Örmeci, 2009). Therefore, a new curriculum should have been designed both for teachers and students for a more efficient learning and teaching environment.

In the ongoing process, in connection with the effect on starting second language education at an earlier age in many other countries, Turkey also redesigned its compulsory education, and in 2012, a new educational system was offered by Ministry of National Education (henceforth MONE) called 4+4+4 increasing compulsory education up to twelve years. In the new system, second language education was started at second grade with two hours of English at primary public schools (İlköğretim ve Eğitim Kanunu 2012; MONE, 2013, p.2), and increased up to four hours at 5th grades. With the following rearrangement, four hours of English was decreased to three hours at 5th and 6th grades. 2nd and 3rd grades kept on receiving two hours of compulsory English per week.

Following this, the third foreign language curriculum was designed and started to be implemented in the academic year of 2013-2014 by MONE. In this curriculum, it was clearly pointed out that Turkish students were unable to communicate in English since it

was used to be perceived and presented as an academic requirement to be met rather than a tool for communication. With this respect, the developed curriculum aimed to construct a relevance between students' daily lives and the materials used (MONE, 2013) and listening and speaking skills were much more emphasized compared to reading and writing skills. Moreover, performance-based assessments, portfolio studies and productive activities were improved and advised to be practiced. By the virtue of the third curriculum reform, an 'intensive English programme' was first mentioned for fifth grades.

Lastly, in 2017, the curricula for all courses in the primary and secondary school in Turkey were updated and as said a new ELT curriculum was also developed for these schools. However, there were not changes in English education. The notable difference was that the Intensive English Programme was also put into practice in 620 schools in 81 cities (see the list MONE, 2017a). Though this intensive English programme in 5th grade had been planned as compulsory throughout Turkey, it was enacted as optional in the 2018-2019 academic year. The ELT curriculum was not rewritten for intensive English programme, yet a new ELT curriculum was written for the fifth grades.

In the 2017 ELT curriculum, it is stated that the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) were closely followed, and real-life practices were stressed to enhance fluency, proficiency, and language retention. And as well, it is pointed out that basic skills and values education were reviewed and integrated with the aim of developing the language skills and proficiency without any concrete course content (MONE, 2018, p.3). As can be understood, English language curriculum were redesigned and developed accordingly to resolve the ongoing problems to reach the expected competency in English.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The changes indicate that curriculum reforms have been put into practice continuingly, and 'everything seems alright on the paper' (Altan, 2017, p.769). However, Turkey has been permanently ranking very low on English language competencies despite the changes in language policies. According to English Proficiency Index [EPI], Turkey rated 41st out of 60 in 2013, and 51st out of 72 countries in 2017 (Altan, 2017). Last but not the least, in 2019, Turkey was the 79th out of 100 countries by being classified

'*very low' (*italics original). According to EPI results, Turkey has 46.81 average rating while the average is 56.71 in Europe group (EPI, 2019). Rather than changing only curriculum, it necessitates to pay attention to the implementation processes of the curriculum and much research is needed to be conducted to investigate what happens in classrooms indeed, so that actions can be put into practice for a qualified teaching and learning (Arıkan, 2011). At this point, it is important to uncover the EFL teachers' viewpoints and to evaluate to what extent the English language teaching curriculum can be implemented and to make necessary suggestions for a desirable curriculum.

1.3 Purpose of the study

As indicated in preceding paragraphs, there is failure on command of English despite of long-term efforts and a gap between the planned and implemented curriculum. It is essential to conduct studies providing insight the implementation of the current English language curriculum for lower secondary schools. In this regard, there are two primary aims of this study: 1. To investigate the teachers' viewpoints about the curriculum. 2. To put forth the challenges faced by the teachers in the implementation process of the curriculum. To this connection, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the viewpoints of teachers about the current English language teaching curriculum and its implementations in lower- secondary public schools?
2. What are the problems/ challenges during the implementation of the curriculum from the perspectives of the teachers?
3. What are the recommendations of teachers to make a better implementation of the curriculum?

1.4 Significance of the study

Aiming to evaluate the English language teaching curriculum for lower secondary public schools, the present study makes contributions to the field in several respects.

First, the findings of the present study provide an authentic feedback of the current English language teaching curriculum and contributes to curriculum developers in innovations.

As previously mentioned, the English language teaching curriculum for lower secondary schools is closely based on CEFR. To this connection, the present study is expected to provide remarkable findings with respect to implementations of planned curriculum.

The present study is expected to help authorities to take actions for a better implementation of the curriculum. With the inclusion of the difficulties faced by teachers and their suggestions, the present study may help authorities to consider these problems and develop the English curriculum under the circumstances.

Finally, the related literature has found that the evaluation studies for lower secondary public schools focus on only one, or two or three levels of lower secondary grades. The present study is valuable as it provides data from the curriculum practitioners from all grades of the secondary schools. In the meantime, regarding Intensive English programme, though there are plenty of studies, this study provides a good deal of feedback about different implementations of different schools in İstanbul. In this regard, the present study gives a holistic perspective for all grades of lower secondary public schools.

1.5 Assumptions

This study has some hypothesis in terms of data collections instruments and participants. Firstly, the interview questions developed by the researcher are comprehensive enough to include all the necessary questions to reveal all participants viewpoints about the current English Language Curriculum for lower secondary schools and its implementations in different schools. Secondly, the participant teachers are assumed to have frankly returned the interview questions by expressing their true opinions.

1.6 Limitations

The most important limitation of the study is that it is limited to 15 English teachers in İstanbul, thus, the findings may not be generalized to Turkey. Considering the time and facilities, it is impossible for the researcher to reach many teachers and carrying out interviews. Thus, to overcome this constraint and make the sample representative, teachers were selected from different regions of İstanbul with the expectation to provide insights about English language teaching at lower secondary public schools.

The reader should bear in mind that the study is based on the implementations of 5^{th}, 6^{th}, 7^{th}, and 8^{th} grades in public schools in 2018-2019 academic year. The study does not attempt to provide insight about the future-dated implementations.

Finally, the real emphasis in the present study is not the outcomes of the curriculum; in other words, it is beyond the scope of this study to examine the attainment of the objectives of the curriculum. The focus is on the implementations of the curriculum to reveal practices and challenges faced in the teaching-learning process.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Some terms used frequently in the study are given below so as to set a framework for a general consensus within the body of the thesis.

English Language Teaching Curriculum refers to the curriculum developed based on CEFR by Ministry of Education for the 5^{th}, 6^{th}, $7^{th,}$ and 8^{th} grades in lower secondary public schools. The current program was accepted in 2012 with the acceptance of 12 years compulsory education and renewed in 2017.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) is an international guideline to describe language competences of learners of foreign languages across Europe and recently in other countries (Wikipedia, CEFR). It was designed by the Council of Europe in the 'Language Learning for European Citizenship' project to provide a main approach for learning, teaching, and assessing all languages applied in Europe. It describes foreign language proficiency of a learner at six reference levels. The CEFR comprises of three principal dimensions which are language activities, the domains, and the competences. *Language*

activities cover the activities like reception (listening and reading); production (spoken and written); interaction (spoken and written); and mediation (translating and interpreting). *The domains* refer to language use in different contexts like educational, occupational, public, and personal. *The competences* refer to the degrees of language competence in the domains, and described as A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2 levels (called as Common Reference Levels). The Common European Framework separates learners into three main level distinction which are also divided into six levels. Each level describes the abilities that a learner should be able to do in four skills: reading, listening, speaking, writing (see Appendix A).

Curriculum implementation refers to instructional practices carried out by teachers and students with respect to English language curriculum. It includes the process of attaining the curriculum objectives.

Perceptions refers to the views/ or ideas of teachers who teach English at 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades of public schools in Turkey about the English language curriculum.

Primary Education: The compulsory primary education includes students aged 5 to 13. It consists of four-year compulsory primary schools and four-year compulsory lower secondary schools.

Lower secondary school refers to a continuing level of compulsory education when children finish four-year compulsory primary education. It lasts 4 years and children around the age of thirteen must attend. Lower secondary schools vary with different programmes, and there are lower secondary schools for imams and preachers as well (MONE, 2018/19).

Upper secondary education covers all general, vocational, and technical institutions with at least four-year compulsory formal or non-formal education, based on primary and lower secondary education (MONE Statistics, 2018/19).

Behaviourism "equates learning with changes in either the form or frequency of observable performance. The learner is characterized as being reactive to conditions in the environment as opposed to taking an active role in discovering the environment. Instruction is structured around the presentation of the target stimulus and the provision of opportunities for the learner to practice making proper response" (Ertmer & Newby, 2013).

*Constructivism "*equates learning with creating meaning from experience. The emphasis is on learner control and the capability of the learner to manipulate information actively using what is learned. Problem solving skills allow learners to go beyond the information given" (Ertmer & Newby, 2013).

Leaner autonomy refers to "the principle that learners should take a maximum amount of responsibility for what they learn and how they learn it" (Richards, 2021a).

Task refers to "something that learners do, carry out, using their existing language resources or those that have been provided in pre-task work; use of communication strategies and interactional skills" (Richards, 2021b).

Activity refers to "any kind of purposeful classroom procedure that involves learners doing something that relates to the goals of the course, like singing a song, playing a game having a group discussion etc." (Richards, 2021c).

Language learning strategy refers to "the action a leaner takes to resolve a particular issue or problem. For example, when reading a difficult text, skimming it first for a general idea of the content before reading it more closely" (Richards, 2021b).

Competence refers to "having a series of desirable attributes including appropriate kinds of knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes" (Gonczi & Hager, 2010).

Evaluation refers to "procedures used to determine the overall effectiveness of a language course and may involve many different procedures such as interviews with teachers and students as well as classroom observation" (Richards, 2021d).

Assessment is "a general term referring to procedures that can be used to measure students' progress in a course such as tests, questioners, interviews" (Richards, 2021d).

Eclectic approach refers to "a teaching approach that is not based on a single method (e. g. task-based teaching) but that draws on several different method principles that are made use of in practice" (Richards, 2021e).

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature which includes information about English language teaching in Turkey, curriculum, curriculum evaluation, and evaluation studies conducted on English language curriculum in lower secondary schools.

2.1 Curriculum

Based on the broad literature on the term curriculum, it has had various definitions based on different philosophies of writers or theorists who explicate their own meanings or terms. The only standing feature which never change is the notion of change. There has always been change and differences resulting from different philosophies, the context curriculum is implemented or the time it is developed.

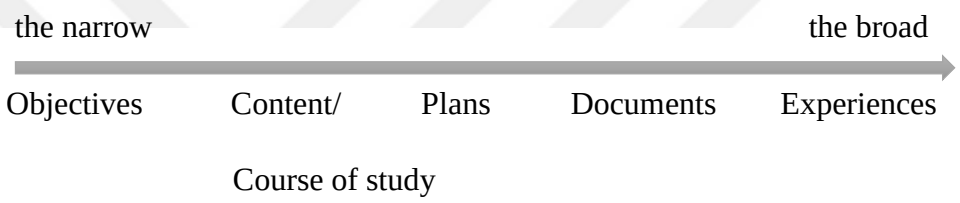
Based on the variety of points of views, people have focused on different components of a curriculum in their definitions. In the world of education, some regard it as subjects to be taught (a narrow way) (Robert Gagne, 1967; Popham James& Eva Braker, 1970; J.L. McBrien & R. Brant, 1997, as cited in Glatthorn, et al.,2018), while others associate it with all the experiences gained by learners directly or indirectly in or out of the school (a broad way) (John Dewey, 1902; Franklin Bobbitt, 1918; Harold O. Rugg, 1927; Hollis Caswell in Caswell &Campbell, 1935; Ralph Tyler, 1957, as cited in Glatthorn, et al.,2018).

To illustrate, focusing on experiences of individuals, Kelly (2004) states “the totality of the experiences the pupil has as a result of the provision made” (p. 8). Franklin Bobbitt (as cited in Oliva, 1997, p. 5), regards curriculum as “that series of things which children and youth must do and experience by way of developing abilities to do the things well that make up the affairs of adult life; and to be in all respects what adults should be”. While Hollis L. Caswell and Doak S. Campbell perceive curriculum as ‘all the experiences children have under the guidance of teachers” with a broad view; J. Gaylen Saylor, William M. Alexander, and Arthur J. Lewis enunciate “We define curriculum as

plan for providing sets of learning opportunities for persons to be educated" (as cited in Glatthorn, et al,2018, p.5) with a narrower view.

After all variety of definitions, Su (2012, p. 155) simply puts key terms for different definitions of the term curriculum and explained curricula mathematically as "experiences= content + goals+ methods+ assessment + extracurricular activities and learning environment+ hidden curriculum+ cultures". Sue (2012, p.155) puts all complex definitions of the term in a figure to illustrate from narrow to broad linear (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Linear conceptualization of "Curriculum" from the narrow to the broad



In this regard, Erarslan (2016) indicates that curriculum combines both micro-level aspects of education such as aims and contents of the curriculum and the macro-level aspects of the country like politics and economy. From all these various ideas, curriculum can be defined as an educational plan organized with intended policies and have learners gain the objectives and experiences systematically in the schools, and the actualization of those plans in the classroom (Glatthorn, et al, 2018).

It is important to note that curriculum has different dimensions such as *intended/planned curriculum, implemented/enacted curriculum, experienced curriculum, and hidden curriculum.* The planned curriculum refers to objectives and the content what is to be taught. The implemented curriculum refers to what is put into actual practice in schools. The experienced curriculum refers to the formal learning experienced by learners, their perceptions and interaction with the curriculum. And the hidden curriculum refers to learners' experiences at school beyond formal curriculum, such as values, beliefs, attitudes (UNESCO, p. 58). It is pointed in literature that there are inevitably discrepancies between these curricula, and it should be ultimately considered to close the

gap between the intention and reality; to be able to conduct theory and practice successfully (Kelly, 2004, pp. 272-273).

2.2 The components of curriculum

Curriculum has an important role in educational system by leading the teacher and the learner to reach the desired objectives. It leads the teacher and students to meet desired learning outcomes. The knowledge, skills, values, and experiences that students are expected to gain, the process of teaching and learning, and evaluating are important key points a curriculum highlight. A curriculum involves three components as objectives, teaching and learning process (syllabus), and evaluation (Akkoyunlu, 2008).

2.2.1. Aims, goals and objectives

Richards (2001) defines aims as 'general statements of the goals of a program' and states that they are guidelines for teachers, learners, and material writers, focuses on instruction and highlights primary and realizable changes in learning (p. 12). However, he defines objectives as specific changes that a program focuses and states they are smaller units of learning in terms of aims, organization of teaching activities and criteria of observable behaviour or performance (Richard, 2001, p.123). In other words, objectives point the change in behaviour and present criteria for learning content and experiences for teachers and learners as well as setting the standards for evaluation of the learning outcomes. The objectives of a course can be set around the teaching language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) or their subcomponents (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar), they can also emphasize communicative skills or reading or written skills (Richards & Rodgers, 1999).

2.2.2. Teaching and learning process

It refers to syllabus which can be defined as content of a course or subject to study, the selection and order of the information. Syllabus is a more detailed statement which includes the philosophy of the curriculum and intended steps for the objectives for each level. A curriculum may include several syllabi which is more specific. While a

curriculum comprises only the objectives (that the learners will have at the end of instruction), syllabus specifies the content of the lessons (which lead learners to the objectives) (Krahnke,1987, p. 2) and indicates in which order they will be taught (Richards, 2001, p. 2). In the narrowest meaning, the syllabus can be a notice or a checklist of things to do for a teacher who is busy and has a limited time to plan classroom time. Though there is a distinction between curriculum and syllabus in literature, it is barely clear, and this distinction is not a main concern in the present study as they can be used interchangeably (Richards, 2001, p.2).

2.2.2.1. Syllabus design in English language teaching and syllabus types

Within the context of foreign language teaching, syllabi can be roughly divided into two types as *product-oriented syllabi* and *process-oriented syllabi*. Product-oriented syllabi concern the outcomes, and they are specified as structural, situational, functional/notional, and lexical syllabus. On the other hand, process-oriented syllabi centres upon the learning process, and can be categorized as task-based, skill-based, and content-based syllabi are process oriented.

Designing a syllabus means to decide 'what gets taught and in what order' (Krahnke, 1987, p.4), and each six different types of language teaching syllabus mentioned exclusively here seldomly appear independently from each other. Nearly all of language teaching syllabi are combined two or more of the types described here, however, one syllabus dominates more than the others for a course. The other syllabi types can be integrated with the dominant one. On the other hand, these syllabi are not entirely separate from each other. The major teaching process in which instructional content is presented distinguishes which is dominant, such as the distinction between skill- based and task- based syllabi. The six types will be treated separately to differentiate the features, differences, strengths, and weaknesses of each. In language teaching, it is not recommended to practice one of the syllabi 'purely' (Krahnke, 1987, p. 9). According to Krahnke (1987), brief definition of these syllabi types as follows.

Structural (formal) syllabus. It is a collation of the forms of grammatical structures of a language course, usually consist of nouns, verbs, question forms, relative clauses, tenses, etc. It is commonly known as grammatical syllabus.

Notional / functional syllabus. It is a collation of the functions used in a language such as agreeing, apologizing, requesting and so on content of language teaching.

Situational syllabus: It is a collation of the content of how to use the language in imaginary or real situations. The language used in specific situations consists of different functions, potential manner of discourse. The fundamental intention of the situational teaching syllabus is to teach the language occurs in specific situations such as seeing a doctor, complaining at a restaurant, meeting new people and so on.

Skill-based syllabus. It is a collation of certain abilities that may be essential for using a language. People may need these skills to be able to use the target language competently such as linguistic competences (pronunciation, vocabulary), listening for a main purpose, writing well-organized paragraphs and so on. Another function can be improving a general competence in the language.

Task-based syllabus. It is a collation of combined and intentional tasks that students need to use the target language to complete. The tasks aim to improve the second language ability. The tasks arise the need of language use and they combine language skills in an explicit setting of language use such as applying for a job, talking to a customer representative on the phone and so on.

Content-based syllabus. The main purpose of this type of syllabus is to teach a content or information by using the target language. Students learn the language unintentionally while learning a piece of information or content (Krahnke, 1987, pp. 9-72).

Lexical syllabus. It is the type of collation of teaching the lexis particularly such as teaching most common meanings and collocations in a language (Smriti & Jha, 2015).

Considering all mentioned above, the newly developed curriculum (2017) can be regarded as a mixed typed of syllabi as an eclectic approach was adopted. In other words, the strengths of grammatical/ structural syllabus, the situational syllabus, the topical/ theme-based syllabus, the notional/ functional syllabus, the procedural / task-based

syllabus, and the skill-based syllabus were integrated into the recent curriculum. In the teaching programme, the units are based on a certain theme for each grade (5^{th}, 6^{th}, 7^{th},8^{th} grades), include functions and useful language with intended vocabulary, and suggested tasks and assignments that may take students' interest. The tasks and assignments review the content and improve the self-awareness and enhance learning to learn. The tasks are advised to be presented in class to improve self-confidence and observe language development. Language skills and learning outcomes of four skills were also stated in each unit.

2.2.3. Curriculum evaluation

It is agreed by all that curriculum evaluation is significant in curriculum studies. According to Richards (2013), curriculum evaluation enables understanding of worth, improvement, efficiency of a program. Kelly (2004) supposes that curriculum should be evaluated continually as it is a component of enduring change and development (p.136). Kelly views people have various intentions to evaluate a program as in continuous development or making decisions for allocations, and various interpretation of the data (p.137). Richard (2017) quotes the aim of evaluation "…is to promote review, reflection, and revision of the curriculum based on careful compilation from a variety of different sources" (as cited in Richards, 1997, p.286).

Weir and Roberts (1994) suppose an evaluation is conducted for providing efficient data for bigger audience and they also suppose evaluation "wouldn't only measure educational products but also help to throw light on the reasons why things are turning out the way they are" (p.8). According to them, curriculum evaluation must be considered with some main questions like why, when, what, how long. The needs of learners, sources, curriculum and its implementation realities, students' accomplishment, roles of school stuff like teachers and principal, teaching and learning conditions are some important aspects to evaluate the curriculum (Weir & Roberts, 1994, pp. 11-20).

2.2.3.1. Approaches to evaluate a program

Similar to variety of views on the meaning of curriculum, there are various approaches to evaluate curriculum in the literature, as well. According to Brown (1995, p.219), there are four main categories such as product-oriented approaches, process-oriented approaches, static characteristic approaches, decision facilitation approaches. Richard (2017), however, claims exploration and understanding are two main aims of evaluation and distinguishes two main types of approaches to evaluate a program as product-focused evaluation and process-focused evaluation (p.277).

Product-focused evaluation. Evaluation has two main aims to approach curriculum as a product; these are program accountability and program development. Accountability-oriented evaluation refers to assessment of the answerability of the stuff for the quality of their work based on the program. This kind of evaluation is conducted to understand the effectiveness of the program with its final points for usually decision makers or outsiders. In comparison, development-oriented evaluation is conducted to improve the program while it is implemented. Both insiders and outsiders may contribute this type of evaluation (Weir& Roberts, 1994, pp. 4-5). Teachers, students, and others who are closely in the implementation of the program are insiders and have a major contribution in planning and implementing an evaluation since they are key participants of the program. Conversely, outsiders refer to other participants like consultants, supervisors, or administrators who are not directly in program implementation but give a point view of program aspects to enhance teachers' perception of the class (Richards, 2017, pp. 280-281).

Product-focused evaluation can be conducted in two ways; *formative or summative* (Weir & Roberts, 1994; Brown, 1995; Richards, 2001; Scriven, 1967 as cited in Kelly, 2004, p. 137-138) based on the purpose of data collection.

Formative evaluation is held during the process and it provides information for the development and implementation of the curriculum (Weir & Roberts, 1994; Brown, 1995; Richards, 2001). It investigates if the program works well, what parts are problematic, and possible solutions to achieve successful outcomes (Richards, 2017, p. 283). The formative evaluation provides detailed data about the process itself and applied for the development of the staff or materials and designating the goals (Nation & Macalister,2010, p.133). Formative evaluation provides the justification for every stage

of curriculum development as it gives feedback throughout the process (Weir & Roberts, 1994) and it deals with such issues.

"- Distribution of time on different curriculum objectives.
- Placement of students at appropriate level.
- Suitability of the textbook and teaching resources.
- Appropriateness of use of materials and technology.
- Appropriateness of teaching methods and procedures.
- Quality of language used by students.
- Difficulties experienced by students.
- Students' level of engagement with the course.
- Balance between exercises and tasks.
- Pacing of the course.
- Suitability of ongoing assessment procedures." (Richards, 2017, p. 283).

Summative evaluation, on the contrary to formative evaluation, is carried out at the end of process and it gives an overall picture of how competent the curriculum or successful the course is. (Weir & Roberts, 1994; Brown, 1995; Richards, 2001). It deals with evaluating the effectiveness of the program, efficiency, and impact of it. It is conducted after the program is implemented and addresses such points below:

"- The effectiveness of a course as reflected in its results or outcomes.
- Adequacy of program objectives.
- Effectiveness of materials, resources, and tests.
- Suitability and effectiveness of teaching methods.
- Perceptions of students and teachers on the course.
- Report problems experienced during the course "(Richard, 2017, p. 284).

Kelly (2004) cites Scriven (1967) and Stenhouse (1975) as; 'Summative' evaluation is concerned with appraisal of the work, it is a form of 'pay-off' evaluation (Scriven,1967) and is concerned primarily to ascertain if the goals of the course have been achieved. 'Formative' evaluation, on the other hand, is concerned to provide feedback (Scriven, 1967; Stenhouse, 1975) and thus a base for course improvement, modification, and future planning (p. 138).

In brief, when data is collected to evaluate effectiveness according to designated criteria, it is summative. If data, however, is used for improvement and change for the program, it is formative. Meanwhile, collected data may be both used for summative and formative purposes in both accountability-oriented and developmental- oriented evaluations (Wei r& Roberts, 1994, p.5).

Process-oriented evaluation. Evaluation does not only collect data to improve the program or evaluate the outcomes of it but also collect data to figure out how the curriculum is implemented and understand teaching and learning processes. There are two ways to conduct process-oriented evaluation *descriptive* and *reflective evaluation.*

Descriptive evaluation refers to providing information on various aspects of the curriculum for those who may need such information. Descriptive evaluation seeks to collect as much as comprehensive and objective data it could via colleagues or students' observations, perceptions and so on.

It intends to explore such issues below:

- *Timing*: the amount of time spent on different activities

- *Time on task*: the amount of time that students spent actively on task in learning situations.

- *Classroom management*: the organization and management of classroom activities that teacher holds

- *Grouping arrangements*: the teacher's implementations of using small-group or whole class teaching

- *Participating patterns*: participation of students to group activities

- *Feedback*: how the teacher uses feedback strategies

- *Action zone*: the placement of the teacher in teaching procedures

- *Unplanned activities*: what the teacher does except from the planned

- *Use of textbook and technology:* teaching recourses and the amount of time they are used (Richards, 2017, p. 291-292).

Reflective evaluation refers to the evaluation which is based on asking and investigates how the knowledge is elicited. The focal point is exploring and understanding instead of assessing curriculum. Classrooms are seen rich environment for learning in this sociocultural approach as they are social places to interact and construct knowledge. Richards (2017) cites Lave and Wegner (1991) as; 'from a situated social perspective on learning, the classroom is conceptualized as an emerging "community of practice". This type of evaluation seeks answers for such questions below.

"- How do teachers and learners understand the curriculum?

- What is the nature of language teaching and learning?

- What is the nature of experiences they participate in?

- What learning opportunities arise during lessons?

- How does the teacher realize his or her principles and values in teaching?" and so on (p. 293).

Reflective evaluation can be conducted via observations, inquiry, participation, and critical reflectivity. Richard (2017) states that an evaluation deals with various aspects of a language program which are the outcome of the program, curriculum design, theoretical underpinnings, the syllabus and program content, teaching methods, materials of instruction, use of resources, the teachers, classroom language, teacher training, the institution, the students, and monitoring of pupil progress (p. 278).

This thesis features the teacher aspect by broaching how the curriculum is conducted in schools and what perceptions teachers have of it. Teachers as key insiders can carry out formative evaluation by observing the course and materials' effectiveness, difficulties encountered, and which alterations would be appropriate to run the programme efficiently. (Richards, 2017, p.280). In other words, if the recent curriculum, namely the 2017 English language curriculum for lower secondary school, is intended to be evaluated about how successful it is or which problems occur in implementation process, teachers have a great role in evaluating the program. That is why their voices must certainly be heard and considered in the process of designing and carrying out the evaluation of the recent program.

2.3 A historical perspective on English language teaching in Turkey

Historical background of English Language Teaching in Turkey can be examined from two distinctive periods as Before the Republic and After the foundation of Republic. Before the Republic scrutinized the foreign language teaching attempts during the Ottoman Empire in 19th century, with the foundation of Republic, Young Republic has initiated massive changes in the schooling of Turkish Nation and foreign language teaching was added to the curriculum. Within this context foreign language teaching in this period can be studied under five distinctive periods as ELTP until / till 1997, 1997 ELTP, 2006 ELTP, 2013 ELTP (within 4+4+4 reform), and 2017 ELTP.

2.3.1. English language teaching programme until 1997

English language teaching in Turkey dates to Tanzimat Period, the second half of the 19th century (Kırkgöz, 2005). Tanzimat Period (1839-76) was a westernization movement in Ottoman Empire, some of West languages, particularly French, were taught as well as Arabic and Persian in the schools, called *Mekteb* ((Demircan, 1993, p. 57). French was the first foreign language to be taught because of the close relations with France with the attempts of modernization of military structure and diplomacy. Besides, English was accepted as compulsory foreign language instead of French in State Navy College (Bahriye Mektebi) in 1848 (Gencer, 1977, p. 415, Boyacıoğlu, 2015) and English teachers gave lessons (Boyacıoğlu, 2015). With the approval of foundation of foreign schools in the country, German, Italian, American, French, English schools were opened (Demircan, 1993, p. 76). The first institution, Robert College, was founded by Americans in 1863 and English took its place as a medium of instruction in the institution. In the following years, several missionary and private schools were founded, and English was included into curriculum though French was the most popular language back then (Sarıçoban & Sarıçoban, 2012). Galatasaray Sultani High School (1868) was the first state school in which education was given in foreign language, in French. In the following years Arabic, Persian, Armenian, Latin, Greek, Bulgarian, German, Italian and English were given as selective course in the school. Later, English was integrated into the programs of School of Foreign Languages (Elsine Mektebi, 1879) and School of Navy Engineering (Çarkçı Mektebi, 1910) (Sarıçoban & Sarıçoban, 2012). In the Constitutional Period (Meşrutiyet Dönemi, after 1908), due to developing political relations, German was given great importance in foreign language education, and German education was given regularly in military schools. German and English were offered as selective, and French as obligatory in High Schools (called as Sultani) (Boyacıoğlu, 2015, p. 654). English was included in curriculum of School of Commerce (Ticaret Mektebi, 1909) and School of Political Sciences (Mektebi Mülkiye, 1908), School of Finance (Mektebi Maliye,1909) in addition to French, German, or Arabic (Erkek, 2009).

After the foundation of Republic, all the schools including foreign schools and minority schools were united under Ministry of Education with *The Law of Unification of Education* (1924, Tevhid-i Tedrisat) and education was made accessible for everyone. Later, Persian was outlawed to be taught in schools, and Arabic was only accepted to be

taught in İmam Hatip High Schools which offered a religious education (Suna & Çelebi, 2013). A western foreign language -in some schools a second selective western language, was started to be taught which were German, French, Italian and English and Latin (Demircan, 1993, p. 92).

Until 1988, there was not a national foreign language education policy. Though a foreign language education policy was established, it could not be given importance since illiteracy was a more serious problem of the Republic (Sarıçoban & Sarıçoban, 2012). From 1923 to 1997, the compulsory education was five-year primary education and after this compulsory education, students could go on secondary education with three-year in middle school and three-year in high school which prepared the students for Higher Education. The schools were categorized as public and private. In public schools, students started to learn English at 6th grade which was the first year of secondary school (Tuna, 2018). In 1980s, new high schools were started to be opened under the name of "Anatolian High School" in which the medium of instruction was English in some courses like Maths, Science, Chemistry, and Biology. Students were selected to these schools via a central examination after primary school. An intensive English program was implemented before lower secondary. In the first phase, the quality of education was high in Anatolian High Schools; however, the increase of the numbers and the lack of qualified teachers to work in these schools caused problems. With the 1997 reform, this programme was cancelled, and the lower secondary level of Anatolian high school was invalidated (Demirpolat, 2015, pp. 8-9).

Before 1997, three methods were commonly applied in Turkish foreign language teaching in formal education. These can be collected under three headings as Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method and Audio-lingual Method (Demircan, 1993, p. 174). Direct method was used from 1908 to Republic. According to Yücel (1938, as cited in Demircan, 1993), the expected success in foreign language teaching could not be reached with Direct Method. On the contrary to Grammar Translation, Direct Method aimed to teach spoken language rather than written language. Acquisition of phonics and pronunciation were significant in this method. Though Grammar Translation method was used before, it was kept on being applied in foreign language teaching at schools until 1941 and in the later years with 'reading- comprehension' and 'translation' practices. After 1971, audio-lingual method which was based on Behaviourist Theory became

prominent at schools. Though it was like Direct Method, it was not based on vocabulary teaching but oral-mechanic practices. Teaching was supported with flashcards, film strips, figurines, recorded audios. Even though these methods in touch with each other, Grammar Translation Method had always been popular since the proficiency exams for all purposes (academic, academic identity etc.) were based on translation (Demircan,1993, pp. 147-152).

2.3.2. 1997 Education reform

1997 curriculum is considered as a milestone in Turkish education system. First, MONE made a drastic change by integrating primary and secondary education and extending compulsory education from five to eight years. The introduction of English was decreased to 4th and 5th grades in public schools to provide longer exposure to the language. With the curriculum, English became a compulsory course in compulsory education starting from 4th and 5th grade with 2 hours, and 6th, 7th, and 8th grades had 4 hours of English (Demirpolat, 2015).

Second, the concept of the communicative approach was first introduced into Turkish education system with the emphasize on real language use to develop learners' communicative abilities in target language (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Though it was an important reform in terms of ELT, it could not reach the expected success as it mainly adapted behaviourist approach by running the use of question and answer, memorization, role-play, drills, and repetition instructional techniques as well as structural and vocabulary-based content (Erarslan, 2018). In addition to continuing use of traditional methods, studies revealed that the density of the curriculum for grades, insufficient time and resources, and large size of classes caused discrepancies between the theory and practice (Kırkgöz, 2007; Dönmez, 2010).

2.3.3. 2006 English language teaching program

1997 curriculum was redesigned in terms of its goals, content, instructional methods, and evaluation procedures. It was based on constructivist approach which is based on the idea that knowledge is gained/ discovered in a process by learner. The

curriculum highlighted the difference between language acquisition and language learning and young learners (grade 4-5) and adolescents (grade 6 to 8). Following a process-oriented syllabus (Eraslan, 2018), learner was encouraged to learn about their learning styles, and offered 'performance-based assessment' through portfolios in line with European Language Portfolio (Sarıçoban & Sarıçoban, 2012). It aimed to improve student's communication skills with classroom activities like problem solving, pair and group work (Topkaya & Küçük, 2010). Additionally, English was increased up to 8 hours per week in lower secondary, and eighth grade students were expected to graduate in pre-intermediate level (İlköğretim Kurumları Ders Dağılımı, 2005). However, like the previous curriculum, 2006 ELTP could not reach its aims in terms of practice as different studies remarked (Örmeci, 2009; Topkaya & Küçük, 2010). As a result, a new system was carried out in 2013 under the title of 4+4+4 education system.

2.3.4. 2013 English language teaching program

In 2013, education system in Turkey was redefined and 8+4 education systems was changed as 4+4+4 new education system. With this new transition, compulsory education was increased from eight to twelve years as primary education, lower secondary and upper secondary education. MONE divided the first four years as primary education; 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grades, the second four years as lower secondary education; 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades, and the third four years as upper secondary education; 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grades. Ministry of National Education (MONE) announced the age period for primary education is 6- 8.5 years involving 66 months old to start primary education, and 9- 12,5 years as lower secondary education (MONE, 2013). MONE especially highlighted the importance of lower secondary education as a basis for upper secondary education by providing different programs for lower secondary graders. For example, students had the options to choose İmam Hatip lower secondary schools and could go on their religious education in upper secondary school.

According to MONE, a new program should have been designed since the starting age for a foreign language was decreased and the previous programme did not meet the needs to teach young learners. Furthermore, the syllabi for the 4th through 8th grades must have been revised to support the continuity. Apart from all these, MONE additionally remarked that the overall success of students to interact in English is not at the anticipated

level. This necessitated to emphasise communicative competence in English language curriculum (MONE, 2013a).

The new system introduced English at second grade which was previously started at fourth grade (İlköğretim ve Eğitim Kanunu, 2012, MONE, 2013a). According to this regulation, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grades had two hours; 5th and 6th grades had three hours; and 7th and 8th grades had four hours of compulsory English courses per week. In addition to compulsory courses, students had also the opportunity to choose 2 ours of English from selective courses (İlköğretim Kurumları Haftalık Ders Çizelgesi,2013; MONE, 2013b).

The new ELT curriculum was developed on the principles of Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) and highlighted the importance of real-life practice for students to support fluency, proficiency, and language retention. The curriculum was based upon an action-oriented approach rather than a single teaching methodology. Thus, it suggested teachers to make use of an eclectic approach with mix of classroom techniques like drama, role play, theme-based activities through which students interact in English rather than approaching it as a subject area to learn (MONE,2013a). Thus, students would engage in activities in which actual communication between peers and teacher took place rather than the activities in which rehearsing materials (reading printed dialogue, memorizing lists of verb forms etc.) were in use.

Accordingly, it can be deduced that the new system gave more emphasis on communicative aspect of English. Within this purpose, oral skills such as listening, and speaking were emphasized in fifth grades; reading and writing skills were gradually covered in the following grades. Besides, the curriculum also suggested types of activities, materials to be used and assessment types like self or formal evaluation under the 'instructional design, instructional materials, and assessment' parts (MONE, 2013a).

2.3.5. 2017 Newly developed English language curriculum in lower secondary schools

MONE revised all teaching programs (51 curricula), including English with the aim of meeting the needs of individuals in this age in 2017 (MONE, 2017 a). With this aim in mind, English language programme was renewed 'in accordance with the general

objectives of Turkish national education as defined in the *Milli Eğitim Temel Kanunu* numbered 1739 (Basic Law of the National Education No. 1739), along with the Main Principles of Turkish National Education' (MONE, 2018a, p. 3). The revision included two major dimensions as such theoretical framework and revision of each grade. In these dimensions, several sub-dimensions were added such as values education, basic skills, testing, evaluation, suggestions and language skills, linguistic realizations, update of contexts, tasks, activities, functions, and forms covered in the curriculum (MONE, 2018a, p. 3). In other words, the curriculum was updated in terms of basic skills and values education, as well as developing language skills with various course themes and contents in accordance with national expectations of the country. It was emphasized that these changes were not drastic, but a minor updating and addition to the previous programme.

The programme reemphasized that CEFR principles and descriptions were considered in designing the content of the programme. The programme underlines communicative contexts and the importance of authentic use of language and real-life experiences as CEFR highlights. It stresses an eclectic approach in teaching- learning process with various methodologies and techniques in accordance with different age levels or grades.

The importance of creating a positive attitude toward English was emphasized, thus, authentic materials, drama and role play, hands-on activities are suggested to foster enjoyable and motivating learning environment. Learner autonomy, problem-solving skills and communicative competence are improved through action-oriented tasks. Listening and speaking were underlined as primary focus in all grades, especially in 5th and 6th grades (in addition to 2nd, 3^{rd,} and 4th grades). Reading and writing were gradually integrated; reading was emphasized as limited and writing as very limited in higher grades (MONE, 2018a, p. 10).

In addition, the curriculum underlines language learning strategies. Thus, it expects teachers to vary classroom instruction and assignments in and outside the classroom. In this sense, it offers various tasks and assignments in each unit of the syllabi to show teachers what is expected. Aiming to create a positive washback effect, it strictly emphasizes not to use some specific language learning strategies over others due to the examinations (MONE, 2018a, p. 4).

The new teaching program additionally involved key competences which refer to key knowledge, ability and attitudes expected to be gained by students such as friendship, justice, honesty, self-control as well as respect, love, responsibility, patriotism (MONE, 2018a). These competences were integrated into the themes and topics of each unit of the syllabi.

Apart from these, testing and evaluation were also prescribed with a variety of assessments like process and product-oriented testing techniques such as drama performances, keeping portfolios, self-assessments (formative assessment) and oral exams, quizzes, projects, regular pencil-paper examination (summative assessment). It was emphasized that there should not be inconsistency between the classroom practices and testing to avoid negative washback effect (MONE, 2018a, pp. 6-7).

The new program emphasizes interactional and communicative competence in English. Its principles can be collected in three parts: instructional design, instructional materials, and assessment. Within this framework, listening and speaking skills were highly emphasized over reading and writing skills. In other words, listening and speaking activities are primary; reading and writing activities are secondary emphasis. At the 5^{th} and 6^{th} grades, while short passages and controlled writing activities were introduced, at 7^{th} and 8^{th} grades, reading and writing skills were expected to reach a higher literacy level.

On the other hand, teachers were highly advised to carry out the communication in class in target language to maximize the exposure to English. The mother language usage was not prohibited; however, it was advised to be employed only in necessary circumstances like giving complex instructions or concepts.

In the recent program, compulsory English courses in lower secondary grade were set as 3 hours for 5^{th} and 6^{th} grades; four hours for 7^{th} and 8^{th} grades. There are also selective lessons up to two hours for English for all grades, if conditions are met (such as teacher or the choice of the students) (MONE, 2018b). The following table presents the distribution of compulsory English lesson hours in lower secondary schools in different programs through the years.

Table 1. Distribution of English course hours in lower secondary schools

Grades	Years

	1997	2006	2013	2017
5th grades	2	**3**	3	3
6th grades	4	8	3	3
7th grades	4	7	4	4
8th grades	4	7	4	4

2.3.5.1 Intensive English language teaching program

In 2017, MONE first announced that an intensive English language programme would be followed in 5th grades with 15 hours of English per week. In addition to English courses, students would also have 6 hours of Turkish, 4 hours of Maths, 3 hours of science, 3 hours of social studies, 2 hours of Religion and 2 hours of one of the selective courses.

The programme was started with 620 schools representing 81 cities in 2017 and decided to be increased gradually over the years. The schools were chosen by MONE in cooperation with the city governorships (MONE, 2017c). In the announcement, there was also another point to be considered that the intensive programme would be conducted in all 5th grades of the selected schools. In other words, if a school runs an intensive language programme for 5th grades, it must run it for all 5th grades. In addition, it was also announced that materials needed for the programme would be supplied by MONE and sent to teachers. On the other hand, it was announced that the schools could run an educational programme (like sports, social and cultural studies, or foreign language) up to ten hours (MONE, 2017c) which means school administrators could open an intensive language programme if they want.

The programme was designed with the principles of CEFR and mainly emphasized on improving learner autonomy and problem-solving skills with a communicative approach in English language teaching. It is mainly based on all language skills with different communicative activities rather than grammatical forms. The content of the program consists of 40 units mainly associated with daily use of English. In addition to this, there are also themes which develop students' cultural awareness and

vocabulary knowledge embedded in activities (MONE, 2017b). The language levels for lower secondary levels were set forth as A1 to B1.1 in 5th grades; and B1.1 to B1.2. at 6th, 7th, 8th grades (MONE, 2018a).

In conclusion, Turkey witnessed four major changes in its English language education programmes, and each of them brought about important alterations and redesign both in structure and implementation of the programmes.

2.4 Evaluation studies on lower secondary English language teaching curriculum

A survey was conducted by Harman (1999) to investigate about the problems during the implementation of foreign language teaching curriculum in primary schools in Şanlıurfa. The population comprised 384 students and 29 teachers. According to the findings, the objectives of the curriculum could not be attained depending on crowded classrooms, lack of materials, insufficient time, unauthentic contents, inappropriate contents for students' level and age.

Koydemir (2001) conducted a survey to investigate teachers teaching in 4th and 5th grade classrooms in İzmir. The population included 72 English teachers and 2456 students, and the results indicated that teachers did not implement student-centred activities and methods.

A survey was conducted in Adana by Mersinligil (2002) to investigate English language curriculum for 4th and 5th grades through the views of teachers, students, and the administrators. The population comprised 705 students, 136 teachers, and 146 administrators. According to the findings, half of the objectives were not attained, and teachers had more negative views than students. Teachers thought that students' background characteristics like their family's cultural, social, economic conditions and negative attitudes towards English caused the failure. Half of the teachers had positive views about the content of the curriculum, while others believed the content was overloaded with respect to students' level and age. It was revealed that a teacher centred teaching was applied.

Erdoğan (2005) conducted a survey to investigate the English curriculum for 4th and 5th grades through the views of teachers and students in Mersin. The population

consisted of 40 students and 130 teachers. Findings revealed that the allocated time for the programme was inadequate.

A survey was conducted by Büyükduman (2005) to investigate teachers' views about English language curriculum developed in 1997. The populations were 54 teachers teaching in primary schools at 4th and 5th grades in İstanbul. It was revealed that there was time constraint to cover the content, students had positive views towards English, the curriculum did not lead effectively, objectives were attainable for students' age and level, though reading objectives were attainable, listening, writing, and speaking objectives were not possible to attain because of crowded classrooms. Teachers had positive views about the textbook. Though the curriculum was based on communicative approach and learner-centred and teachers used appropriate assessments, it was not possible to assess the four skills simultaneously.

Er (2006) investigated the English Language curriculum of 4th and 5th grades in terms of objectives, content, teaching-learning process and evaluation. The population comprised of 593 English teachers and 535 inspectors from seven regions of Turkey. According to the results, there were problems to achieve the objectives, the content was uninteresting, listening and reading skills were mostly emphasized, however speaking skill was the least focused. The content was found to be consistent with the objectives, however there were time constraint to complete the content. The schools had lack of materials. The proposed evaluation procedures could not be implemented, the most preferred one was "fill in the blanks" exam.

Aküzel (2006) conducted a survey to investigate about foreign language education to find the reasons for failure and make suggestions to solve the problem. The population consisted of 290 students, 60 parents and 47 English teachers in Adana. The results showed that crowded classrooms, parents' education level, lack of weekly compulsory courses, lack of materials, lack of cooperation with parents.

Yanık (2007) investigated English language teaching process in lower secondary grades through the views of teachers and students. the population was 368 teachers and 1235 students from 21 cities of Turkey. The findings showed that majority of curriculum objectives were attained at a moderate level, the content and the order of content was found problematic. Various teacher-centred and student-centred were implemented and

students had positive views towards English. The main problems were resulted from lack of material and resources, textbook, classroom environment and the curriculum.

Kırkgöz (2007b) conducted a study to evaluate teachers' beliefs about how the new language policy was implemented in schools. The case study was conducted with 50 teachers. It was revealed with the findings that communicative language teaching was not preferred by teachers in classroom implementations and there was a big gap between the objectives proposed by the curriculum and classroom practices. It was found out that teachers mostly preferred traditional methods rather than communicative language teaching.

Kırkgöz (2008) conducted a case study lasted two years (2003-2005) to study teachers' instructional practices, the impact of their beliefs' in implementing the Communicative Oriented Curriculum. The population consisted of 32 teachers teaching 4th and 5th grades. It was revealed that teachers previous training experiences and their understanding had a fundamental impact on implementing the curriculum a big gap was found between the planned and implemented curriculum.

Kul-Sarıca (2009) investigated the English level of 8th grades in state primary schools in Aydın, according to Common European Framework (CEF) criteria. The population consisted of 209 students. according to the results, English language levels of students were A1 in terms of reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar according to CEF criteria; only 5% of the students (10 students) could reach the objectives of the curriculum.

Erkan (2009) investigated the problems in implementation of 4th and 5th grade English language curriculum. The population consisted of 93 teachers in Gaziantep. Findings revealed that though curriculum was based on constructivism, the teachers had lack of understanding due to lack of in-service training, lack of materials, insufficient time to complete the contents, inappropriate textbook for student' level. The proposed activities could not be implemented because of crowded classrooms.

Örmeci (2009) conducted a study to evaluate the English language curriculum for 4th, 5th, and 6th grades. The population consisted of 70 teachers in Burdur. Findings revealed that though curriculum could be applicable, lack of time, crowded classrooms, the higher level of objectives considering students' level, overloaded content, teacher-

centred instruction, and implementation of traditional assessment techniques caused problems for an effective implementation of the curriculum.

Günes (2009) conducted a study to reveal teachers' opinions on the English language curriculum and its implementations in 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. The population comprised 288 teachers in Ankara. The findings showed that teachers had positive views about the objectives and content was appropriate with students' levels, interesting for students and authentic. Some activities took much time and because of economic factors, some materials could not be provided by students. Teachers had positive views about assessment techniques and methods proposed by the curriculum, and could assess writing and reading skills properly, yet listening and speaking skills were not assessed adequately.

Yaman (2010) conducted a study to investigate teachers' perceptions on the English language curriculum for 4th and 5th grades. The population comprised 121 teachers in Gaziantep. According to the findings, programme could not develop four language skills of students because of the problems resulting from lack of materials, lack of time for content and activities, crowded classroom, inappropriate objectives with respect to students' level.

Dönmez (2010) investigated about the views of teachers and students about the implementation of 8th grade English language curriculum in public primary lower secondary school and the challenges they faced during the process. The population comprised 10 English teachers and 73 students. According to the findings, teachers did not implement the recommended learner-centred methods and strategies and assessment techniques in their classes. The challenges were addressed as lack of necessary materials, large class size, lack of time, lack of gradual implementation of the curriculum, and Level Determination Exam (SBS) which student had for a higher education.

Çelen (2011) examined the views of teachers and students about the English language curriculum for 6th grades. the population consisted 60 teachers and 650 students in Burdur. The findings showed that teachers and students had positive views about the components of the curriculum and there were not variables such as gender, experiences, in-service training among teachers' views.

İnceçay (2012) studied the challenges encountered by English language teachers in public schools during the implementation of the policy prepared in 1997. The findings revealed that the policy cannot be implemented appropriately because of teacher shortage, lack of resources, materials, and poorly resourced schools.

Yörü (2012) evaluated the curriculum which was implemented in 2008-2009 academic year for 8th grades. The population consisted of 138 teachers in Eskişehir. According to the results, the curriculum was insufficient to develop four skills, particularly listening and speaking skills.

Ocak, Kızılkaya & Boyraz (2013) conducted a study to evaluate the English language curriculum for 6th grade in terms of speaking skills and to find out the causes of students' speaking problems. The population composed of 11 English language teachers. The findings revealed that students' speaking abilities could not be improved since the curriculum was implemented predominantly on grammar and memorization of vocabulary; there were not sufficient time to do various activities and speaking activities were not appealing to students' interest. Crowded classroom and negative attitudes of students towards English, students' low self-esteem and non-authentic activities negatively affected speaking activities in classrooms.

Demirtas and Erdem (2015) conducted a study compare the 5th grade English language curriculum implemented in 2013-2014 and 2008-2009 academic years and to reveal teachers' views about the new curriculum. The population consisted 19 teachers in İstanbul. Findings revealed that starting age of learning English decreased, though number of units were decreased, the content load was excessive; writing objectives were decreased instead, language functions were increased. According to teachers, reading, speaking, and listening skills were above students' level, writing skill was underestimated, the suggested assessments were good but could not be implemented, the textbook was insufficient when compared to curriculum objectives, and lack of time was the main problem they faced.

Batdı (2015) conducted a study to investigate teachers' perceptions on the effectiveness of the English language curriculum for 8th grades. the population comprised 236 teachers in Elazığ in 2013-2014 academic year. Findings revealed that there was lack

of time to attain the curriculum objectives and students had negative attitudes towards the curriculum.

Dinçer (2013) evaluated the English language curriculum for 7th grades developed in 2012. The population consisted of 130 English teachers and 3739 students. According to the findings, the problems caused by lack of time, lack of material, overloaded curriculum, crowded classroom, classroom environment, and written exams as type of assessment.

Kozikoğlu (2014) evaluated how the English langue curriculum for 7th grades was implemented. The population composed 47 students. According to the results, listening and writings skills were not attained at prospected level since teachers did not implement the curriculum as suggested. Teachers predominantly used traditional teaching approach which were based on grammar and reading activities. Listening, speaking, and writing activities were not implemented regularly.

Kaya & Ok (2016) conducted a study to evaluate the implementation of English language curriculum for 8th grades. The population comprised 120 students and 2 English language teachers. Findings revealed that teachers mainly implemented grammar instruction rather than communicating in English which was prosed in the curriculum. Games, group work, pair work arts and crafts were least applied, and mostly used materials were whiteboard, and textbook rather than posters, films, maps, CDs, puppet etc. Due to TEOG examination, one type of assessment was used.

Erdem & Toy (2017) investigated the problems faced in the foreign-language oriented 5th grades through English language teachers' opinions. The population was 3 English language teachers and 173 students in İstanbul. According to the findings, the difficulties are mostly based on the large number of classes, the lack of a textbook and the lack of the curriculum and the readiness of students.

Dilekli (2018) conducted a study to evaluate the intensive English programme implemented in 5th grades through teachers' perceptions. The population composed 17 English teachers in Aksaray. Findings revealed that problems caused by the over-density of the intensive English program and limited time allowance for this heavy program. In parallel with these problems, it was suggested to improve the new program in the means of the material quality and technological requirements.

Aksoy et. al. (2018) conducted a study to evaluate the piloted intensive English programme for 5th grades through teachers' perception. The population composed of 170 English teachers from several cities of Turkey like İstanbul, İzmir, Ankara. The findings revealed that had positive views about the intensive programme and the need of authentic and well-written textbooks. In the study it was underlined as well that not all the teachers were implementing the programme since the programme was not widely practiced all over Turkey.

Dinçer & Koç (2020) conducted a study to explore teachers' views about the intensive English programme for 5th grades and the challenges they faced during the implementation process and their suggestions for a better implementation of the programme. The population composed of 7 English teachers in Erzincan. According to the findings, overloaded curriculum, inadequate guidance for teachers, inappropriate classrooms, mixed ability classes were the most encountered problems. Teachers suggested textbook designed by Turkish educators, language classrooms, selective preparation class, supplementary materials developed by MONE.

All in all, these studies present fundamental information about the evaluation studies that have been conducted on the English language curriculum for lower secondary grades since 1997. The participants were students, teachers, parents, and administrators. In terms of findings, these evaluation studies indicated that common challenges were faced in implementing the curricula in several schools in different cities. The problems frequently repeated include crowded classrooms, student' level differences, predominant use of white board and textbooks in classroom practices, negative attitudes towards English, lack of time to cover the content, assessment type which was predominantly written exams and no assessment for speaking and listening skills, teacher-centred instruction in which communicative approach were ignored, negative influence of central examinations (SBS, TEOG) and the gap between theory and opportunities. These findings showed that the curricula were not implemented as it was proposed to be implemented. With respect to the literature review on the studies related to lower secondary school curricula, it helped the researcher to justify the significance of this research in terms of gathering all the lower secondary school grades curricula evaluations from teachers' point of views since there were few studies showing the overall picture.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

The study investigates the views of English language teachers on the implementation of English Language Teaching Curriculum for lower secondary schools and unravel the problems/challenges in putting it into practice in public schools. It is aimed to represent how the English language curriculum at lower secondary level is implemented in different public schools.

A qualitative research approach is planned for this study since qualitative methods starts with the initial desire to understand a problem and concern how people construe their experiences, and build up their worlds, and what they infer from their experiences (Merriam, 2009, p.5). In other words, the key concern of a qualitative research is to understand how people interpret their lives and figure the process of meaning- the way people experience and attribute from it instead of the outcome or product (Merriam, 2009, p.14). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), "The qualitative researcher studies things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomenon in terms of the meaning people bring to them" (p. 3). Merriam (2009) quotes Patton (1985) as:

> Qualitative research] is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting -what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what 's going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting -and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting . . . . The analysis strives for depth of understanding. (p. 14)

There are a bunch of qualitative research types in literature such as narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study (Creswell, 2007), life and narrative approaches, participatory research, and clinical research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). The phenomenological method, specifically, is a research "design of inquiry

coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants" (Creswell, 2014). Phenomenological methods are powerful to bring into open the basis of experiences and perspectives of participants from their own point of views. There are variety of methods that can be used in phenomenologically based research such as interviews, conversations, participants observation, action research, focus meetings and analysis of individual texts (Lester, 1999). Specifically, interviews are main methods of data collection 'to get at the essence or basic underlying structure of the meaning of an experience' (Merriam, 2009, p. 25). Therefore, for the present study qualitative data was gathered through interviews to obtain detailed information about participants' experiences (Weir &Roberts, 1994, p. 142).

3.1.1 Research questions

1. What are the viewpoints of teachers about the English language curriculum and its implementation in lower secondary public schools?
2. What are the problems/ challenges faced during the implementation of the curriculum?
3. What are the recommendations of teachers for an effective implementation of the curriculum?

3.2 Setting

The participants of the study were English teachers working in various public lower secondary schools in İstanbul. Lower secondary public schools have different weekly schedule according to their school conditions. While some schools offer an intensive English programme, others may not as there are not enough teachers to run the programme. Besides intensive programme which is carried out in 5^{th} grades, schools may have different weekly schedule as well due to selective lessons which students have the right to choose. However, the choice is not determined by students will most of the time, but according to the school's conditions about teachers or classroom opportunities. Thus, students may have different weekly schedule comparing their peer from other schools. Teachers teach different grades or the same grades, to illustrate; a teacher may have only 5^{th} grade students, while another have classes from all 5^{th}, 6^{th},$7^{th,}$ and 8^{th} grades.

3.3 The participants

The participants of the study included 15 English language teachers teaching in public lower secondary schools, at 5th,6th, 7th, and 8th grade levels in 2018-2019 academic year. The population was selected through a non-probability sampling technique which "involves selecting members on the basis of availability, accessibility, or convenience" (Davis, 2015, p.202). The data was obtained by utilizing convenience sampling which is "the selection of respondents who are most readily available" (Davis, 2015, p. 202).

In addition, in selecting the participant, maximum variation sampling strategy was carried out by limiting the number of teachers to 2-3 for each district of Istanbul with the aim of increasing the range and richness of data. The demographics of the participants were given in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Demographics of the participants

Participants	Age	Gender	Program	University	Experiences
T1	27	Female	ELT	Boğaziçi University	4 years
T2	26	Female	ELT	İstanbul University	4 years
T3	31	Female	ELT	Anatolian University	7 years
T4	35	Female	ELT	İstanbul University	10 years
T5	29	Female	ELT	Uludağ University	8 years
T6	34	Female	ELT	Uludağ University	12 years
T7	40	Male	ELT	Uludağ University	16 years
T8	39	Female	ELT	Eskişehir University	8 years
T9	28	Female	ELT	Dokuz Eylül University	6 years
T10	27	Male	ELT	Anadolu University	4 years
T11	29	Female	ELT	Balıkesir University	5 years
T12	29	Female	Statistics	İstanbul Aydın University	4 years
T13	42	Male	ELT	Gazi University	19 years
T14	35	Female	ELT	İzzet Baysal University	14 years
T15	32	Female	ELT	İzzet Baysal University	10 years
					$\bar{X}$: 8.7

As shown in the table 2, except one, all participants had ELT degrees and varied from age, gender, and years of experience. The district of the participants school was not included into the table as it will not be included into the analyzation of the data.

3.4 Data collection instruments

Interviewing is the most common form for almost all qualitative research (Merriam, 2009, p. 136). Though it has various formats, most preferred interviewing format is person-to-person. In-depth qualitative interviewing, perspectives of participants on their experiences or situations are expressed in their own words, and it involves face to face interaction between participants and interviewer (Taylor et al., 2016, p. 102) to get a deeper understanding when it is compared to other types of interviews. In-depth interviews can be designed structured, semi-structured or unstructured (Merriam, 2009, p. 89; Flick, 2018, p. 233). The present study was conducted in semi-structured format with a mix of less and more structured questions, flexible usage of questions and follow-up questions, and to rearrange the sequences of the questions according to the conversations' flow (Flick, 2018, p. 233; Merriam, 2009). In this type of interviews, though most part of the interview is designed with a list of questions; wording and order of the questions can be determined during the interview. This format enables the interviewer 'to respond the situation at hand, to emerge worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic' (Merriam, 2009, p. 90).

3.4.1. Interview

The interview schedule was developed by the researcher based on the related literature and own teaching experiences as an English language teacher. The first draft was sent to the consultant in order to find out whether the questions satisfied the content validity. Based on his suggestions, necessary changes were applied. To illustrate, some questions were rephrased, or some questions were abandoned. Then they were pilot tested with two English language teachers. The pilot administration for the interview lasted for about 30 minutes and a few more probing questions were added to the draft since additional issues arose during the interviews. To illustrate, a probing question was added into higher grades so that teachers could give more information about the effect of examination system. At last, the final draft of the semi-structured interview schedule consisted of seven main questions and some probing questions, and seven demographic questions to describe the characteristics of the participants. The final draft was sent to the consultant and administered in the interviews (see Appendix B). When the language preference for the interviews was asked, all participant teachers preferred to have the

interview in Turkish. All interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the participants and then transcribed verbatim. Each participant teacher was given a number such as Teacher 1 (T1), Teacher 2 (T2) and so on. The interviews can be found in Appendix C.

3.5 Data collection procedure

The data was collected in the first four months of 2019- 2020 academic year. The data collection started with the contact of 'Network of Teachers' held by İstanbul Provincial Directorate of National Education. After the contacts with the authorities, the interview questions were shared in the network and the interviews were planned with the volunteered English language teachers. The researcher arranged appointments with 15 teachers for in-depth interviews in different settings where participants would prefer and feel most comfortable. All interviews were conducted in participants' schools in their free time (no class, lunch time, or end of classes). Despite different places, all the interview settings had similar atmosphere in terms of participants' freedom to express their views frankly as they were determined by themselves.

Before the interview, interviewees were informed about the interview schedule so that they could feel comfortable during the interview. They were assured that the records would only be used for the present study. Again, the confidentiality of their responses was underlined, it was also remarked they could cut off the interviews whenever they would like to and get the notes and records back.

Following the demographic questions, interview schedule was conducted officially with audio recording. During the interviews, several probes or follow up questions were applied to encourage the respondents to explain their views and experiences in detail by directing to give an example or telling more on the relevant topic. The researcher listened to the respondents carefully and asked for clarification when needed. All the interviews were conducted in ease and comfortable atmosphere. The length of the in-depth interviews differed from at least thirty minutes to ninety minutes most.

Thereafter the interviews, the recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher in order to provide the accuracy. In order to avoid vagueness in the

conversations, the transcriptions were then also reviewed attentively by the researcher. The data was collected ultimately in two months.

3.6 Data analysis

Previous to data analysis, some criteria were considered to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. Data analysis was trustily done after related criteria were assured. There are different strategies to ensure trustworthiness of the data in qualitative research in literature. As stated by Creswell (2014) validity and reliability are two important issues in any qualitative research. Qualitative validity refers to the accuracy of the findings, while qualitative reliability refers to the consistency of the researcher's approach among other researchers and studies (p. 251).

To start with validity, Creswell recommends use of various strategies in order to control the accuracy of the findings. Among these strategies, three strategies were used in the present study. First, a *rich, thick description* refers to process of providing detailed description of the setting or participants. Rich description is used for transferability which refers to external validity and fittingness of a study in another setting or situation (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Transferability was assured with detailed description of the research context and demographics of the participants in the study. Second, *negative, or discrepant information,* which refers to contradictory evidence about a theme, were presented in the study to enhance realistic and valid findings. (Creswell, 2014, p.251-252). Last but not least, *prolonged time,* which refers to the time spent with the participants in the field, was also used for credibility. Researcher was also a teacher in a lower secondary school similar to the participants which helped the researcher to build trust with the participants, and facilitated more accurate and valid findings (Creswell, 2014, p. 252).

Reliability, "the extent to which the research findings can be replicated" (Merriam, 2009, p. 220) refers to the dependability in qualitative research. Detailed description of the steps, processes and procedures applied in the study could satisfy the dependability of the results. In the present study, research methodology was described in detail describing implementation of the study, selection of participants, data collection, and analysis procedure. Moreover, the audit trail was used to satisfy dependability. In the present study, the auditor was the supervisor of the researcher and he was informed about

the study in detail such as the data collection, derivation of categories, and decisions throughout the inquiry (Merriam, 2009, p. 223).

3.6.1. Analysis procedures

For the analysis of the collected data, content analysis was utilized, essentially "all qualitative data analysis is content analysis in that it is the content of interviews, field notes, and documents that is analysed" (Merriam, 2009, p. 205). "the process involves the simultaneous coding of raw data and the construction of categories that capture relevant characteristics of the document's content" (Merriam, 2009, p. 205).

In the present study, initially tape-recorded data were transcribed, next the raw data were read several times to "obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning" (Creswell, 2014, p. 247). Then, coding process was followed which is described as "taking text data or pictures gathered during data collection, segmenting sentences or images into categories, and labelling those categories with a term" (Creswell, 2014, p. 247).

The coding process took a long time since there were not preliminary codes decided beforehand. Initially, all the participant teachers were categorized under the grades they taught. While some teachers taught all grades, some might have few grades. Thereafter, the codes were derived from paragraphs, sentences or sometimes even from words of the individual responses of participant teachers. To satisfy the reliability of the data analysis, the supervisor of the researcher was constantly informed about the coding process and the themes were discussed and evaluated according to the randomly selected interviews. After categorizing codes and themes in relation to research questions, the participants' individual statements were attentively identified to be used as an exemplification of the teachers' perceptions on their views, experiences, and feelings. The results were reported in accordance with these quotations.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of the study, the purpose of which is to reveal teachers views about the implementation of English language teaching curriculum for lower secondary schools, challenges and/or problems faced by teachers during the implementation process and teachers' suggestions for a better implementation of the curriculum. Teachers views about the English language teaching curriculum were analysed under three main themes. These themes were (i) teachers' views about the curriculum and its classroom practices, (ii) challenges faced by teachers in the implementation process and (iii) teachers' suggestions for an effective implementation of the curriculum.

In the first theme, teachers' views were classified in terms of teachers' perception of the curriculum, their views about classroom practises in relation to the need of supporting material, weekly course hours, teaching-learning process and learning levels. In the second theme, challenges/ problems faced by teachers were analysed. Finally, in the third theme teachers' suggestions for a better implementation of the curriculum were presented. The curriculum for each grade, 5^{th}, 6^{th}, 7^{th}, 8^{th}, were analysed in terms of these three main themes.

4.1 Organization of the findings

The qualitative data gathered from the interviews conducted with the teachers who teach in lower secondary schools in different areas of İstanbul are presented considering research questions. The findings of this study are presented with teachers' paraphrased statements or direct quotes. In the translation of transcripts from Turkish to English, some additional phrases were used to provide comprehensibility when there was loss of meaning. The example of additions to teachers' quotes and their usage are showed in the Table 3.

Table 3. Sampling of definitive additions to teachers' quotes

Addition	Usage
It (the textbook) was not provided	*Completing the meaning of the quote*
(…)	Shows the statement was taken between statements which were not included in the quote

The responses of the teachers were reported together when their views were close or similar. The responses were reported separately if teachers' views were different, and they were labelled as "T" with numbers, for example "T1" referring the first teacher who was interviewed.

Table 4. Distribution of teachers for the related grades

Grades	**Participant Code**														
5th grades		T2		T4	T5				T9					T13	T14	
6th grades		T2	T3		T5	T6		T8		T10	T11			T13	T14	
7th grades			T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8		T10			T12	T13	T14	T15
8th grades	T1	T2	T3				T7		T9	T10				T13	T14	T15

4.2 Teachers' views about 5th grades' English language curriculum

There are two kinds of curricula for 5th grades in public schools, one is for intensive English programme and the other is for non-intensive classes. Both curricula follow Common European Framework of Reference for languages. When teachers were asked what they thought about the curriculum, it was revealed from their answers that textbook contents were generally perceived as curriculum and teachers mainly followed the curriculum offered in the textbook.

Based on this point of view, all the teachers (T2, T4, T5, T9, T13, T14) expressed their negative views on the textbooks. Two out of six teachers who had classes in non-intensive fifth grades stated the curriculum was overloaded, and prior learnings was forgotten easily. T9, for instance, expressed:

> *The book is overloaded. There are ten units but can never be completed in three hours of study. Depending also the age of this age group, it can be easily forgotten what have been taught. There are some units which are too overloaded.*

According to her experiences, T2 commented that listening activities on the book were not sufficient when it was compared to the curriculum objectives, and she did not have sources to reach these objectives. She additionally stated the situation that "…, we try to do listening exercise, however I could not reach listening sources of the book."

Talking about textbooks, other teachers (T4, T5, T9, T13, T14), who had classes in intensive programme, stated as well that the intensive English programme was idealized, however, the textbooks were not ideal to reach these objectives. It was revealed that no textbook prepared for intensive programme was received. The teachers stated:

> T4: *The Ministry of Education did not send a source for the intensive English programme. I prepare it myself. The books sent are not authentic and it does not work for cultural issues.*
>
> T5: *There is not a book for the programme now. A teacher spares an hour for the book, a unite can be completed in two hours. As children are already familiar with English (the content), they easily understand the book.*

Another remarkable comment to emerge from the interviews was the intensive English programme was more than students could achieve. T14 stated:

> *The programme is too overloaded; we cannot complete it all. Whoever teaches, the students are A1, however, the programme aims A2, even B1. We cannot reach to that level. We run this programme with 11 and 15 hours before, however, we could not fully complete it. They absolutely cannot reach B1, they cannot follow.*

In brief, it was revealed that all teachers who implemented both English Language Teaching Programme and Intensive English Language Programme for fifth grades perceived the contents of the programmes were overloaded and the objectives of the programme could not be reached in prospect level. It was remarked by all that the textbooks which were sent by MONE were not sufficient or authentic. The most striking result to emerge from the interviews that a textbook or a kind of source for the intensive English teaching programme was not provided for the teachers who prepared their own materials to implement the programme which means all schools had a different source for the programme on their own terms.

4.2.1. Views about classroom practices

When teachers were asked how they implemented the programme, interestingly, it was emerged from the data that while some schools separated classrooms as intensive and non-intensive classrooms, some schools ran intensive programmes for all fifth grades. To exemplify, teachers stated:

> T9: *We have three fifth grades. One of them is intensive, and the other two are normal classes. Normal classes have three hours of English per week.*
>
> T13: *The intensive programme is not applied in all classes at the school. because we do not have that many teachers. Now, we have 4 classes with intensive programme and 7 normal classes (non-intensive).*

In the interviews, teachers commented on supporting materials, weekly course hours, classroom instruction, and learning levels of students. As for supporting materials, T2 and T9, who taught in non-intensive classes, stated they did not have time to use supporting materials as they hardly ever completed the book in three hours per week.

> T2: *The programme is too overloaded. Three hours per week is not enough. Since 5th grades are in an adaptation process, there are a lot of stimulant for them in this process. Thus, they have difficulties, and we must interfere in them except from English.*
>
> T9: *There are not selective courses in our school. Some schools can support with selective courses, however, since our school is a İmam Hatip School, there are vocational courses instead. Thus, we have three hours per week, and in truth it is not enough for students.*

Other participants who had classes in intensive programme reported that they had to use supporting materials to be able to fill in the contents due to the fact that they were not provided materials by MONE. All participants (T4, T5, T9, T13, T14) indicated that supporting materials were decided with English group teachers considering parents expectations and cost as well. Majority of those (T5, T9, T13) stated four skills were considered in choosing/deciding process.

> T5: *We have a group meeting in the beginning of the academic year, and we try to choose the best book which were sent to us by publishers. For example, we picked a book two years ago, we liked it, and we go on to use it. We have different sources for reading, listening, and main course. We have five different sources and a dictionary bought. The cost may be a little bit high, but since the parents are attentive, no problem.*
>
> T13: *We do not use the books MONE sent for three hours of programme. We use coursebooks of some publishers like Cambridge, Oxford, Heinemann etc. How do we decide? We come together as English group teachers and decide. We use*

different sources for skills for example we have reading- speaking and writing-listening books. We also consider the cost so as not to push the limits. However, parents are in the expectation of using foreign publications as they are comparing the school with private schools.

T9: *We use supporting materials. We use the weekly hours as base. The other schools use different sources for reading, speaking etc. yet, since we have eight hours per week, we use only one source. I preferred a book which consists of all skills as much as possible. We have to speak to the parents because they may not be willing to buy. After talking all of them, and making a consensus, we choose a book within the economic boundaries.*

Whilst a minority mentioned that though they had decided which supporting material they would use; they were not pleased with the supporting materials since they had to consider the cost and parents expectations.

T4: *I use supporting material. As it is intensive programme, the ones MONE sent us are insufficient. While deciding my materials, it is important they include fours skills. The affordability of parents has an importance as well. I must choose affordable materials within reasonable bounds. Therefore, the sources we had chosen are not that good. I believe there are better books which have richer content and well-designed activities for speaking skill. I have difficulties in this issue. I chose the source as it was economic, but sadly it does not meet the need. The source MONE provided is not sufficient for fourteen hours programme, but the ones we chose is not sufficient either since it was chosen in economic boundaries.*

T14: *As you know MONE does not provide us any source for intensive programme. This is the biggest problem. Parents become uncomfortable when we do not use supporting materials. Meanwhile, we must choose a source which will be affordable for all parents. On the other hand, our preferences for three years were not good enough. As we consider the cost, our expectations are not met. Good sources are expensive. It is impossible to run this programme without a source.*

Regarding weekly course hours, non- intensive classes had three hours per week. On the other hand, there were significant differences between the schools which run intensive English programme. The allocated time for intensive English programme varied from 8 up to 14 hours per week in schools. Two out of 5 teachers indicated that they had 14 hours, however, two stated they had 11-12 and one teacher commented they had eight hours of English per week in intensive classes. Moreover, in some schools while teachers shared the weekly course hours of a class, in some others they did not.

T4: *Only one teacher had all the hours of a class. There are fourteen hours per week of an intensive class and the teacher herself plans the hours for the skills.*

> T5: *Our principal spared fourteen hours to one teacher in the first year. That was boring for both teachers and students. Then it was separated as main course, reading- writing, and speaking- listening. 6 hours were given to one teacher,5 hours to another, and 3 hours to another. That was more efficient.*
>
> T14: *They have eleven hours of English. It was divided as seven hours of main course and four hours of skill courses. Two different teachers teach the class.*
>
> T13: *We separated programme as eight hours main course, and four hours skill courses. We did so to make the programme more skill based. As much as I know other schools plan differently. Everybody practices it in their own terms.*
>
> T9: *Since our school is İmam Hatip, students have to take vocational courses too. That is why they have eight hours per week. Three hours are main course and five hours are selective foreign language. I do not think that eight hours is enough for them, we are always fall behind the curriculum, the book.*

As for classroom instruction, approximately all participants (except from T13) stated that communicative skills could not be practiced in classroom practices. For instance, T2 said:

> *I never do writing exercises. Since they will solve tests in 8th grade, I do not focus on writing… We cannot focus on paragraphs since we will not be able to complete, there are so many details, we studied non-exhaustively. We just studied vocabulary… And we cannot do listening exercises either… There was a 'Game' unit for example, names of the games etc. We could just study the names of the games. Otherwise, we would not be able to complete the unite.*

Likewise, another teacher, T5, remarked as well that classroom instruction was mostly based on grammar.

> *We are expected to do mostly speaking exercises in the curriculum. However, we cannot do this in a class of forty. Children listen, and we speak. They are mostly exposed to listening. When they want to speak, only 3 or 5 students can have time to speak. Maybe, that is why they cannot speak when they are graduated. We mostly do reading exercises. I think, grammar is more attached importance at schools.*

Maintaining similar opinion, T14 expressed that "The sources we had to choose are based on fill in the blanks etc. exercises. The sources are usually based on grammar, they don't address skills courses."

On the other hand, T9 stated that she could do listening and speaking exercises with the students who were at midlevel and top level of average of the class; the ones whose level were below were always falling behind the class. In addition, she said that 'I can do all kinds of exercises since the classroom sizes in our school are ideal. There are 23 students in my class, and I don't have any problem while doing any kind of exercise."

When the participants were asked about the levels of learning, interviewees who had non-intensive classes (T2, T9) agreed that students could not complete A1 at the end of the year by virtue of time constraint, though A1 was aimed to be completed in the curriculum. Similarly, most of the interviewees who had intensive classes commented that students below the average hardly reach A1, and students on the average could reach to A2 at the end of the intensive programme though A2 was aimed to be completed in the curriculum.

T4: *I suppose they are at A1 level, or in the beginning of A2.*

T5: *The ones graduated last year; half of them were good half of the were bad. The ones who were bad were A1 level. The one who were really good were at A2 level, close to B1.*

T9: *The ones who are good at A2, the bad ones are at A1.*

T13: *Majority of the class absolutely finish A2, they are in the beginning of B1.*

As a final word, T14 commented that "All in all, we complete the contents up to A2 level. But it is questionable how well they can use it."

To sum up, it was found out that schools had different implementations for fifth grades. While some schools had both intensive and non-intensive classes for 5th grades, some schools ran the intensive English programme for all 5th grade students. Non-intensive classes were not in need of supporting materials since they hardly ever kept pace with the program. On the other hand, intensive classes were in dire need of supporting materials so as to fill in the contents. Though supporting materials were determined in groups of teachers, some expressed that they were not pleased with the materials since they had to stay in the economic boundaries. Other teachers indicated that they were pleased with the supporting materials since parents were in cooperation and they were not obliged to tie into low priced sources. Meanwhile, while non-intensive classes had three hours of English per week, intensive classes weekly courses differed according to the schools' administration as well as teacher class schedule. The more surprising aspect of the data was that classroom instruction was based on grammar instruction in most of the schools rather than developing communicative skills due to the overloaded programmes, lack of sufficient sources and crowded classrooms. On the other hand, while it made sense non-intensive classes were considered A1, majority of intensive classes were as well

regarded A1, only a small number of respondents indicated some students could reach level of A2.

Table 5. Teachers' views about 5th grades' English language curriculum

Label	Participant Code
Views about textbooks/ programme	
Positive views	-
Negative views	
Overloaded	T2, T5 T9, T14
Insufficient in terms of audio, authenticity, content, layout	T4, T5, T9, T13, T14
Classroom practices	
The need of supporting materials	T4, T5, T9 T13, T14
Time allowance	
Sufficient	-
Insufficient	T2, T9 (non-intensive)
Instructional process	
Focus on grammar/vocab	T2, T4, T5, T9, T14
Focus on communicative skills	T13, T9 (sometimes)
Student's level of English	
At lower-than-expected level	T2, T4, T5, T9, T14
At expected level	T5, T9, T13

4.2.2. Teachers' views about implementational challenges of 5th grades' curriculum

Except from lack of materials, lack of time and overloaded content mentioned in the previous themes, two more challenges, readiness of students and inconvenient classrooms for language education, were obtained in the implementation phase of the curriculum of 5th grades from the perspectives of the teachers.

When teachers were specifically asked what challenges/problems they faced in implementing the curriculum in 5th grades, three out of 6 teachers initially commented that the lack of readiness in terms of age, background information and attitudes towards English. A teacher commented that this age group was not ready for lower-secondary school which means they encounter different teachers for all courses. One of the participants expressed the situation:

> T9: *5th grade is not appropriate for lower-secondary school. They cannot even adapt themselves to school. They still need a class teacher who deals with their all kinds of problems, they need counselling. Since there is not a counselling course, majority of courses is spent by the difficulties they faced, and they cannot*

focus on the lesson and diversity of teachers for different courses. Therefore, the programme does not move on the anticipated level in intensive classes.

T5 exemplified the situation as:

Children maintain primary school attitudes, and we have to deal with these problems a lot in the first months of the academic year such as "don't walk in the class, don't speak out loud, raise your hand to speak etc." They even ask permission for cleaning their nose. …. Children try to adapt to lower-secondary, but they cannot break themselves of primary school habits. And we transfer this intensive programme to them. I think this is too dense for them.

In addition, teachers remarked that the differences between background information of students and attitudes towards English had a significant effect in intensive classes.

T4: *I have big problems with the students who had had negative attitudes towards English in his/her prior experiences to reach the objectives of the curriculum or they may have had lack of former learnings. While I am dealing with these kinds of problems, it is difficult to reach the objectives of the curriculum. It is much easier to reach the objectives with the students who have already positive attitudes and sufficient former learnings. The difference between students cause good students to fall behind or missed out.*

T5: *We have big problems with students' readiness levels. Since it is forbidden to hold a placement test, while half of the class can have lack of former learnings, the other half can be beyond of those. The good students got bored when we started from "Hello, how are you?" This kind of differences make teaching English difficult.*

T9: *Though we cover primary school learnings such as subjects, words etc., we finish them in a short time. A student whose former learning is insufficient cannot keep pace with the others. And most of those students do not study hard either. I can say half of the class is like this. That is why they cannot adapt into the intensive programme. Unfortunately, half of the class is missed out.*

In addition to readiness issue, two out of six teachers (T13, T14) underlined negative attitudes to learn English, and how difficult it was to run the intensive English programme with those.

T14: *We run the intensive English programme to all 5th grades. We have fourteen intensive classes in our school. As much as I know it is obligatory to run the programme for all. There are unwilling and willing students in these classes. If the students are not willing or have bad attitudes towards English, they get bored after a while, and you can just teach ten out of thirty students.*

T13 commented that;

We have both intensive and non-intensive classes in our schools. Though some students would not like to be in an intensive class, their parents forced them to be in those classes. Thus, some students can feel under pressure and cannot handle

with the programme. On the other hand, there are some more competent students who cannot be registered in an intensive class. Though these students are so capable of learning English, they do not have the opportunity.

The teacher's last words emphasized the situation that *"While some students are forced to learn English, some other capable students could never reach the opportunity*".

The other recurring challenge in the implementation associated with over density of classrooms. Three out of six teachers explained that it was nearly impossible to do skill teaching in crowded classes in terms of classroom management and time constraint.

T5: *I would like to do speaking activities in my classes, but I get into difficulties. First, the class is crowded (40 students) and there is not enough time to let them all speak. Sometimes, even if I let them, there may be a chaos and noise in the class and school managers say, 'Isn't there a teacher inside?' that is why most of the teachers do not prefer speaking activities.*

T13: *The density of class is important. The time you spent with the student is depended on it. We teach thirty-two students in a classroom in intensive classes. I do not even count the noise.*

In brief, it was mostly assumed that lack of readiness of students in terms of background knowledge, age had a negative influence in implementing intensive English programme. Due to the age problems, neither could students adapt in lower-secondary school nor were willing to learn English with dense hours. Meanwhile, attitudes towards learning English and prior learning experiences of students had a significant effect in implementation process. Due to these facts, there could be a big gap between students' achievement. Lastly, it was remarked by half of the participants that communicative skill activities were not be applied in crowded classroom because of classroom management and some administrative problems.

Table 6. Teachers' views about implementational challenges of 5th grades' curriculum

Label	**Participant Code**
Lack of intensive textbook	T4, T5, T9, T13, T14
Inefficient textbook	T4, T5, T9, T13, T14
Lack of readiness in terms of background knowledge, age.	T4, T5, T9
Crowded classrooms	T5, T13, T14
Different levels of students in same classroom	T4, T5, T13
Lack of time	T2, T9
Negative attitudes towards English/lack of interest	T4, T13, T14
LGS effect	T2

4.2.3. Teachers' suggestions on 5th grades' curriculum

Teachers were asked what they would suggest for a more effective implementation of the English language teaching curriculum. Teachers who teach non-intensive classes suggested that the content of the curriculum should be simplified in terms of themes, and the number of the units should be decreased. A teacher (T9) stated "there are ten units, and we cannot always complete all of them in three hours per week. Some units are too overloaded. The number of the units should be reduced, and units should be simplified." Another teacher (T2) commented that "For example in the first unite, countries and nationalities were difficult for 5th grade students. If there were only countries, they could understand. But they do not understand nationality notion, they are yet in the beginning of greetings and three hours of study is not enough."

Both teachers suggested the weekly course hours should be increased, when the conditions are considered, T2 suggested an hour, T9 suggested at least three more hours to the weekly schedule.

Further insight was pointed out by a teacher who teach in intensive English classes on the simplification of the programme.

> T14: *I suppose the programme should be simplified. Not B1 but A2 would be good. I think the program is like for High school prep classes. We try to complete the programme as soon as possible. There are 40 units and there are modules in each, and we cannot do activities for fun.*

T14 went on her suggestion on the source issue:

> *There must be a source which can address all the children. These are 5th grade children. And it is difficult to have a ten-year-old child to sit and study those sources we could afford. When we try to study something on the internet, most of the time it does not work. The source that would be provided should be able to work without internet. If there were a good source, I believe this programme would be more efficient.*

Sharing similar perspective, T4 expressed the source issue as follows:

> *The sources provided by MONE are mostly about Turkey, they are not authentic. To learn a language means to learn the culture of it as well. And children cannot learn of the culture with these sources. If the sources are more qualified, I believe, the outcome of the programme will be much better.*

Looking at the textbook problem from a different point, T5 suggested that,

> *To me, MONE should choose a book which will be suitable from a school in the farthest town to the biggest school in the country. Because children have difficulties to get the materials we choose. And furthermore, the sources we chose were hard. That is why MONE should supply good sources in European standards and sent all to the sources. I believe there should be one book which all schools study for the programme. Thus, neither students nor we as teachers would not have difficulties.*

From a different angle, another participant commented that textbooks should include more grammar explanations. T2 suggested that "*it would be better if there were short sections explaining grammar points and showing sentence samples. So that students can understand much better."*

Another major theme revealed from the interviews that students should be distinguished either by a placement test or willingness for the programme. Three out of five teachers (T4, T5, T13) who taught in intensive classes suggested a placement test before the intensive English teaching programme was introduced to students. Thus, there would not be a gap between the students, and they would not affect each other negatively.

> T5: *The background information attained from primary school is not good enough. In some classes we may have to study "Hello, how are you?" for three weeks. While half of the class have good background information, the other half may not have studied English in primary, played in the garden instead. The difference between these students makes teaching English difficult. Classes should be homogenous.*
>
> T4: *It is not allowed to hold a placement test. It may not also a good idea to label students like this. However, when academic success and background information are considered, this situation can be a good opportunity for unsuccessful students as well. It is difficult to balance in mixed classes.*

Another emerging suggestion related to intensive programme was the will of the students; accordingly, the intensive programme should be implemented not in the 5th grade but in a grade in which students are mature enough to decide if they would like to learn English. T13 explained that "I have a lot of difficulties with the students who would not like to learn English. I think, students should be asked if they would like to study. Students should be able change between intensive and non-intensive classes during an academic year."

Maintaining similar opinion about the will of the students, T14 also stated that:

> *We practice this programme for all classes in 5th grade. We have fourteen intensive English classes this year. As much as I know, it is obligatory. However, there are unwilling students. The programme is dense, and when the student does*

not like English, he/she gets bored. That is why, to me, the programme should be practiced on the students who are willing to learn.

T14 added intensive programme should be practiced on 7th grade in which students would have the conscious what they would like to learn. 5th grade in which students are about 9/10 years old was an early age to make such a choice.

Sharing a similar perspective, T5 felt that "*5th grade is not suitable for intensive English programme, they cannot adopt themselves. I think it is too dense for them. They should have this programme in a further age".*

Further suggestions were on the issue of teachers' weekly schedule. While some teachers (T4, T14) suggested that only one teacher should teach one class for all the courses to be able to follow student's improvement, some other teachers (T5, T13) commented different teachers for a class would enhance students' learning and would be helpful for the sake of skills teaching. Giving her opinion, T5 mentioned that "*If a teacher has fourteen hours, she may never do speaking or listening exercises since it is not her style. But if it is separated as skills, they are obliged to do the skill courses."*

Lastly, the most striking suggestion to emerge from the interviews that MONE should standardise the intensive English teaching programme in terms of weekly course hours, textbook or who will be included in the programme.

T13: *Of course, all classrooms should be able to take intensive programme. But they cannot. We have four intensive, and seven non-intensive classes. To what extent are these students are chosen into intensive classes? I do not know how they are registered in these classes. Is it according to success average, or the order of register, or something else? There must be a standard.*

T5: *MONE holds some common examination for all same grades. questions are asked from the textbooks MONE sent. However, we do not study the book since it is not suitable for our students. In this case, our students may have bad results from these examinations. To me, MONE should provide one textbook so that we can study.*

T9: *To me, there must be certainty about the weekly hours. Some schools practice 10, some other practice 13, some even practice 17 hours per week. We practice 8 hours per week in respect to schools' conditions (imam hatip lower secondary school). This is the minimum course hour; however, this is the maximum we can in our school. In this case, there is a contradiction even between parents whose children attend different schools, both in intensive English programme, however their English levels are far beyond each other.*

Taken together, teachers believed that both curricula for non-intensive and intensive programmes should be simplified. Accordingly, MONE should provide a sufficient textbook which is authentic and sufficient for all intensive English programme. Teachers shared a common insight that intensive classes should be distinguished either by a placement test in terms of background information or a criterion based on the willingness of students to learn English. In this sense, a minority suggested that intensive English teaching programme could be practiced in another grade in which students could choose what to study. Finally, it was pointed out that MONE should standardise the implementations in terms of textbooks, weekly course hours and how students would take advantage of intensive programmes.

Table 7. Teachers' suggestions on 5th grades' curriculum

Label	**Participant Code**
Simplification of textbooks in terms of content, number of units.	T9, T2, T14,
Developing textbooks in terms of authenticity, coherency, activity non-internet based	T14, T4, T5
Textbooks should be more grammar-based	T2
Separation of students as willing / unwilling /placement test	T4, T5, T13
Intensive programme should be implemented in gradually	T13, T14, T5
More compulsive weekly course hours (for non- intensive)	T9, T2
Weekly schedule should be separated	T5, T13
Weekly schedule should not be separated	T4, T14
Standardization in terms of weekly course hours, textbooks, which students for intensive classes	T9, T5, T13

4.3 Teachers' views about 6th grades' English language curriculum

When teachers were asked what they thought about the curriculum of 6th grades, it was revealed once again that they perceived textbooks as the curriculum to follow. To express the situation, T13 stated “we decide on a coursebook and the curriculum of the book we teach becomes our curriculum to follow”. In this sense, teachers expressed their opinions on the curriculum assuming the textbook studied in 6th grades.

On the contrary to 5th grades, English teaching curriculum for 6th grades does not vary according to the students who had completed the intensive English teaching programme or attended non-intensive classes. As mentioned in related literature, though MONE featured the intensive curriculum for 5th grades in detail, a further intensive programme was not released for 6th grades who completed an intensive programme in the previous year. Along the same line, it was pointed out by the teachers that they did not have a different curriculum for the 6th grades who completed the intensive programme. In this sense, it was expressed by all the teachers (T2, T3, T5, T6, T8, T10, T11, T13, T14) that the present curriculum was simplistic for the students who had completed the intensive English programme. A group of teachers stated that:

> T5: *The curriculum for 6th grades goes back to the drawing board. While there is an intensive programme for 5th, I do not understand why there is none for 6th grades and 7th, and 8th grades as well. They already know everything on the textbook. It is too simplistic as the students completed intensive program in the previous year. Since their level of English is higher, the curriculum and the book we study do not match.*

> T10: *The book is simplistic for these students. It is like in primary level for them. I do not know if the book matches with the curriculum, yet it is too easy for the children coming from intensive programme. There are not grammar activities, mostly based on pictures. There are not even enough reading passages. Children get bored.*

T14 summarized the situation as follows:

> *An intensive programme is practiced in 5th grades; however, it is not continued in 6th grade. So, we start back A1, it is not a follow-up of a prep class. Whatever we taught in 5th; we teach the same in 6th grade. Themes, vocabulary are different, subject/grammar is same. There is not a different curriculum for intensive 6th grades. We use the same.*

Furthermore, most teachers, T2, T3, T5, T6, T10, T11, pointed out that the book could not meet the needs to reach the objectives of the curriculum in terms of improving four skills in English. For example, T10 stated that the listening exercises were too complicated or too fast for the level of the students.

Maintaining similar opinion, T11 commented:

> *The listening exercises are too long in the textbook. There are always speaking activities and students get bored since they are not interesting and asking to speak about the same questions. Students always say, 'let us skip this part, we talked this before'. Grammar is almost not included in the book. Thus, children do not comprehend the subjects. This book was sent by MONE, but it is a private publication. The previous book which was MONE's was better.*

Similarly, T2 stated that listening exercises were too fast and difficult to understand for the students. T2 also commented that "the book is enough for three hours per week. However, I cannot just have the book studied since it does not provide exercises for the grammar issues."

A further insight was noted by T6 that *"I can finish all the exercises of a unite on the textbook in two hours, and they can finish the workbook at home which means the book (the unite) can be completed maximum in two weeks."*

Concerning textbook issue, T3 highlighted students who have both weekly three hours and five hours of English use the same book. As a result, students who have longer hours can learn better and do more activities.

On the other hand, two out of 9 teachers, T8 and T14, stated positive views about the textbook. For example, T14 commented that *"I like the book and it addresses skills henceforth. I mostly do speaking activities since my 6th grades already know the subjects from the previous year (intensive)."*

Teachers also highlighted that there was not an official programme for the students who had completed the intensive English programme in the previous year. Thus, some schools ran two different programmes for 6th grades. Four teachers (T3, T5, T6, T13) stated that they practiced a different programme since the 6th grade curriculum MONE advised was not a follow up for intensive students. To express the situation a teacher stated:

> T6: *There are two different programs in our school: normal classrooms and intensive English programme classrooms. In intensive classrooms, we have 6 selective hours of English in addition to 3 hours of main course. We have foreign publications in these classes and study their programme. It is a follow up for 5th intensive programme.*

In brief, all teachers commented that the programme followed for 6th grade students was not sufficient for the students who had completed the intensive English programme. In addition, most of the teachers had negative views about the textbook which was stated as simplistic in terms of skill exercises and listening exercises were above the level of the students. As for the positive view, a minority of teachers indicated that the textbook was good enough since the students already learnt the subjects in the

previous year. Furthermore, some schools followed an intensive programme in their own terms to continue the intensive programme of the previous year.

4.3.1. Views about classroom practices

When teachers were asked how they implemented the programme in their schools, they commented on supporting materials, weekly course hours, classroom instruction, and levels of learning. Five out of 9 teachers (T2, T5, T6, T11, T13) expressed that they needed to use supporting materials in their classes as either a follow up programme for intensive classes or extra smart board applications, stories, and tests in normal classes. The teachers stated they chose the materials with English group teachers considering the level of the students and cost as well.

> T5: *You know the book the government sent us is far below their level. That is why we choose a supporting material which is a foreign publication. The school management asks us to do so. The books we choose are like a follow up for the previous year intensive programme.*
>
> T6: *We needed supporting materials for both normal and intensive classes. In intensive programme, the book we choose is not related to MONE programme. It is a foreign publication, and it is a course pack including smart board application, stories etc. In normal classes, we preferred a book with Turkish writers. While we are deciding on the books, we think about the cost as well. Here is a state school, we must think about the cost. For example, we could not choose the book we liked last year because of its price.*

T13 stated they preferred supporting materials only for classrooms which are a follow up for intensive classes whilst they could not use one for normal classes as it was strictly banned. He expressed; it was tolerated orally by provincial directorate of national education for intensive classes. He added it was not needed to use supporting materials in normal classes. Otherwise, T11 stated she used supporting materials to have students to solve questions in normal (non-intensive) classes.

On the other hand, some teachers (T8, T10, T13, T14) expressed the belief that they were pleased with the books MONE provided, and they were sufficient for the level of students.

> T14: *I like the books MONE sent recently. I do not prefer supporting materials for my 6th grades for two years. The book is already intensive and addresses the skills. There are more speaking activities which I prefer to do a lot. The 6th grade*

students already know the grammar structures, so they can have the opportunity to practice them.

With regard to weekly course hours students have in their school programme, while some schools offered two hours of selective English courses in addition to three hours of main course, some schools could not offer these selective courses due to insufficient number of teachers or the administrative issues. There were also some other schools which offered at least eight or more hours of English as a follow up programme to the intensive English programme of the previous year. Furthermore, the difference between the weekly course hours did not only change from school to school, but also from the classroom to classroom in the same school. For example, T6 stated that while classes who were called 'project classrooms', which continued intensive English programme after the 5th grade, had nine hours of English a week while others only had three hours. While T6 stated it was resulted from administrative issues in their school, T3 explained this situation as "*The number of the teachers is not enough, so while some classes have selective courses some others don't."* All in all, it was revealed that there was not a consensus about the weekly course hours of English in the 6th grades.

As for classroom instruction, almost all teachers (except T14) stated they could not teach in all four skills in class time because of the time constraint or classroom size. Some felt that they had to skip speaking and listening activities, while others considered that there was not enough time for writing and listening activities. A teacher (T3) stated "*five hours a week is not enough. There is no room for speaking exercises. We try to finish the book on time."* Similarly, T8 said that:

> *We do not have problems in grammar and vocabulary; however, students fall behind in listening and writing. Students cannot hear or easily understand the listening, they need so much repetition. Thus, it consumes so much of our class time. They cannot construct sentences either. We can barely complete the curriculum in three hours.*

A common view amongst interviewees was that vocabulary teaching was a focus in the curriculum, however, students cannot speak though they knew the vocabulary. As T11 put it:

> *There is not a grammar subject in the textbook, even a page. Children memorize the vocabulary. Children know the meaning of the words but cannot make a sentence with them. The curriculum does not lead us to teach a grammar subject,*

it suggests students to discover, learn inductively. However, they can never do that.

In their accounts of the events surrounding, two participants (T3, T11) indicated that they had students to solve tests for LGS (a common examination for secondary-school education) as well, they did not have time for either speaking or listening skills. Similar to the teachers but with different reasons, T6 mentioned that *"our classrooms are with thirty-eight students. How can you improve skills with thirty-eight students, which student can you listen, or follow what s/he wrote? There is also a classroom management problem."*

Unlike other interviewees, T14 stated *"I know the students from the previous year, intensive programme, I focus on skills rather than grammar since I know they already knew the subjects. There is no need to start from the beginning, but it's more helpful to do more practice in skills."*

When asked to the teachers which level students could reach at the end of sixth grade, the mostly frequently stated reply that students were at A1 or barely in the beginning of A2 if they had completed intensive English programme. Two teachers added that just a few (4 or 5) students may have reached to the beginning of B1. T10 expressed that "*They finish at about A1; we cannot claim they are at A2. Though they had completed the intensive English programme in the previous year, they forget everything with three hours a week."*

In sum, it was found out that supporting materials were needed in addition to the textbooks MONE provided by over half of the participants. There were fewer teachers who considered the textbooks were sufficient for the level of the students. As for weekly course hours, 6th grade students seemed to have different opportunities in different schools, or even in the same school. The weekly English hours differed from school to school or normal and intensive English programme in the same school depending on the administrators and opportunities of the schools. In accordance with teachers' statements, four skills could not be practiced effectively in classes. It was stated by only one participant that classroom practices were on developing four skills since the subjects mentioned in the curriculum were the same with the previous year's subjects. In addition, it was expressed by a small number of teachers that LGS (secondary school entrance

examination) studies were on the mainstream of classroom practices. In response to the question about learning levels, it was understood that students were below the expected learning level since they were frequently assumed either A1 or barely A2.1 no matter had they completed intensive programme in the previous year.

Table 8. Teachers' views about 6th grades' English language curriculum

Label	Participant Code
Views about textbooks/ programme	
Positive views	T8, T14
Negative views	
Unsuitable for students' level	T2, T3, T5, T6, T10, T11
Insufficient in terms of authenticity, content, layout	T2, T3, T5, T6, T8, T10, T11, T13, T14
Classroom practices	
The need of supporting materials	T2, T5, T6, T11, T13
No need for supporting material	T3, T8, T10, T13, T14
Time allowance	
Sufficient	-
Insufficient	T14, T3, T8, T10, T11
Instructional process	
Focus on grammar/vocab	T2, T3, T5, T6, T8, T10, T11, T13
Focus on communicative skills	T14
Student's level of English	
At lower-than-expected level	T2, T3, T5, T6, T8, T10, T11, T13, T14
At expected level	-
Optimal intensive class implementations	T3, T5, T6, T13
No consensus on weekly course hours (for intensive except from selective hours)	T3, T6, T10, T13

4.3.2. Teachers' views about implementational challenges of 6th grades curriculum

The interviewees pointed out some other challenges that they encountered in the implementation process in addition to the lack of time, insufficient book, which did not meet the need of students neither coming from the intensive programme nor non-intensive classes. The challenges they mentioned additionally inconvenient classrooms for language education, the deficiency of a follow-up intensive programme, and negative attitudes towards language learning.

The teachers were asked what challenges they had in implementing the curriculum in 6th grades, five out of 9 teachers (T6, T8, T11, T13, T14) reflected that the classrooms were crowded, and it was barely impossible to do skill activities in these classes. T8 commented as well *"We cannot do listening exercises well because of the school conditions. There is not a projector or loudspeaker in the school. I try to use my phone, or small speakers, but do not work well."*

It was stated by T5, T6, T13 that since there was not a follow up programme for sixth grade after intensive programme, they tried to continue the intensive classes with their opportunities by using supporting materials. Thus, it was expressed that students could be unsuccessful in common examinations since they were not studying the textbook sent by MONE.

> T5: *The most challenging problem for both teachers and students is to follow two different books. We use supporting materials, and predominantly teach it. However, in common examinations at the end of the year, most students may have already forgotten what they have learnt on MONE textbook.*

On the other hand, T14 stated that *"Everything goes well with sixth grades. In lower secondary, I can say 6th grades are the most comfortable classes. Maybe that is because I know them from previous year, the intensive programme*". She had stated she implemented the curriculum MONE offered and did not need any supporting materials.

The last challenge mentioned by five out of 9 teachers (T5, T6, T8, T10, T11) was negative attuites towards learning a foreign language and negative effect of LGS.

> T6: *Children do not want to learn English. That is caused by their surroundings and families, as well. They feel like they abandon the religion. They do not want to learn others language as others do not learn theirs. That is why they are reluctant to learn the language.*

T11, talking about İmam Hatip Lower Secondary School,

> *The problems are about the school surrounding, socioeconomic conditions of students. We are, unfortunately, in a bad surrounding. There are only five students following the lesson. The others either forget their book, or do not listen or do homework.*

In addition, T5 explained that "*The number of questions were decreased from 20 to 10 in LGS. If there is an intensive programme, why is LGS applied so? So absurd!'.* In relation to LGS effect, T11 claimed that "*Families also encourage students to study maths,*

science rather than English since its weighted mean in LGS is lower than these courses. They say, 'what is in it for me' and do not study English."

In brief, it was revealed that crowded classrooms were one of the biggest challenges to implement the English programme for almost half of the interviewees. Providing necessary equipment seemed a problem for a teacher who did not have necessary equipment in her school to improve listening skill. On the other hand, there was a confusion about implementing the curriculum for 6th grade since the textbook sent by MONE was below the students' level who completed intensive programme in the previous year. However, there was a participant as well who was pleased with the textbook provided by MONE. Finally, the willingness of students to learn the language and the LGS influence negatively affected and complicated their learning processes.

Table 9. Teachers' views about implementational challenges of 6th grades curriculum

Label	**Participant Code**
Inefficient textbook	T2, T3, T5, T6, T8, T10, T11, T13, T14
Lack of a follow up intensive programme	T5, T6, T13
Crowded classrooms	T6, T8, T11, T13, T14
Lack of audio / visual equipment	T8
Time constraint	T3, T8, T10, T11, T14
Negative attitudes towards English/ lack of interest	T5, T6, T8, T10, T11
LGS effect	T3, T11, T5

4.3.3. Teachers' suggestions on 6th grades' curriculum

Teachers were asked what they would suggest for an effective implementation of the 6th grade English language curriculum. Five out of 9 teachers (T2, T3, T6, T8, T10) reflected the textbooks should be developed for both students who came from normal or the intensive English program. While half of them meant the books should be simplified in terms of themes, vocabulary, the number of units for the normal classes, the others meant the books should be improved in terms of skills, reading and grammar for the students coming from the intensive English programme.

T3: *The book should be simplified. It is overloaded for the students. In a unite, there are past simple, modal can, conjunctions at the same time. It is so complicated.*

T6: *The book is too simplistic for the students coming from intensive programme. Students in normal classes do not understand how simple it is, however, the ones coming from intensive programme say, 'There is nothing in this book', they even make fun while turning the pages as there were nothing to do. I would like MONE to provide us such books that we do not need any other supporting materials or lost in web. We really need well-equipped, more sufficient, more skill-based books.*

T8: *The book should be enriched with funnier themes and exercises. There can be more vocabulary and grammar. while there are four writing activity, there is only one for grammar.*

T10: *I do not know if it is because of its cost, MONE does not give importance on textbooks. If it can develop it, there are good publishers who can do well.*

T2: *There should be a workbook. So, they can make more sentences and learn grammar well.*

Along similar lines, T5 stated *"My only suggestion for 6th grade, there should be a different programme for those coming from the intensive programme. MONE should think of a change for those, should think better."* In line with this suggestion, T13 suggested there should be level classes so that students would not affect badly each other's learning processes.

The other suggestions were about the number of English courses, increasing the amount of time spent in English and decreasing the population of the classrooms to do skills exercises practically. While five teachers (T3, T8, T10, T11, T14) suggested that the number of the English courses should be increased at least two hours a week, three out of 9 reflected the classrooms should not be crowded in language classes. T10 commented that "*The lessons should be increased up to at least five hours a week. By so doing so, we can both improve skills and teach effectively." Though T10 suggested at least five hours a week, a teacher, T3, stated "five hours a week is not enough, at least two hours more should be added into the weekly schedule."* Meanwhile, T3, T10 and T11 reflected language classrooms should have less population, like twenty students at most.

T11: *I think the courses should be at least ten hours a week, and there must be 20 students most. There should be a practical chance for students who like to have these classes or not, we should not force students to learn who do not want to learn.*

To sum up, it was revealed that a well-developed textbook which could meet the needs of students coming from normal and the intensive programme was highly demanded. It was remarked by two participants that textbooks should have more grammar exercises to improve students' knowledge about grammar. Apart from these, it was suggested by more than half of the teacher that weekly course hours should be increased. While another suggestion was about classroom population which was suggested to be reduced, the other stated suggestion was about designing a different programme for the students having completed the intensive programme and level classes to enhance teaching and learning process.

Table 10. Teachers' suggestions on 6th grades' curriculum

Label	**Participant Code**
Developing textbooks for both intensive& non-intensive in terms of authenticity, content and simplifying textbooks for non-intensive.	T2, T3, T6, T8, T10
More compulsive weekly course hours	T3, T8, T10, T11, T14
Language classrooms with fewer students for skill education	T3, T10, T11
Separation of students as with level classes or willingness	T13, T11
An intensive programme should be followed/ provided	T5
Textbooks should be more grammar-based	T2, T8

4.4 Teachers' views about 7th grades' English language curriculum

Having been referred to the curriculum by the interviewees previously, textbooks interchangeably referred to the English language teaching curriculum in this part, as well. When the teachers were asked about their views on the English language teaching curriculum for 7th grades, ten out 11 teachers (T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T10, T12, T13, T15) expressed their negative views. There was only one teacher (T14) who expressed her positive view on the curriculum and its objectives. Meanwhile, some of the teachers had both negative and positive views about the curriculum (T3, T10, T12). The negative views expressed by the teachers concentrated on either difficulty or simplicity of the textbooks. Three out of 11 teachers (T3, T5, T8) stated that the curriculum was difficult and not appealing to the interest of the students. To exemplify these views, the participants stated:

T8: *The transition from 6th grade to 7th seems like high. The level of the books is difficult for the students. On a sudden, the level is increasing. Though students finish grade 6 in level of A1, the book is like to start at the end of A2. Students always try to catch the level of the book. For example, the book assumes they already knew 'past simple'. However, students did not study it for a long time in the previous year.*

T3: *I like the book. However, I suppose it gets difficult after a few units. Students have difficulty to keep pace with. The content of the book is well organized, but the activities are not sufficient.*

However, five out of 11 (T4, T6, T7, T12, T13) stated it was simplistic for the level of the students. The distinction between the students completed normal or the intensive English programme was highlighted, as well.

T4: *The subjects students studied in 5th grade are repeated in 7th grade too. So, students say they get bored, rightfully. The themes are all the same, the grammar subjects are all the same, just a little bit enriched with further vocabulary. But there are not appealing themes or grammar subjects for students' interest. For example, there was a party unit in grade 5, and there is also a party unit in grade 7. The units are presented this way, and students learn the same things repeatedly.*

T7: *The curriculum of MONE fall short of our students in project classrooms (which is following the intensive English programme). To avoid the misunderstanding that the textbook is not studied, we scan the subjects of the book before the exams.*

T6: *The textbook of 7th grades has always been easy for my students. I can finish all the units on time. So, we do not have the anxiety to complete the curriculum on time.*

T10: *The same things are repeated continuously. The 7th grade programme is like the 6th grades. As a matter of fact, I taught one of the subjects from the 6th grade textbook. Students get bored, and they lose their interest in time.*

In short, it was found out that the curriculum followed through textbook did not meet the needs of students either because difficulty or simplicity of the contents. It was remarked by almost all that the curriculum (textbook) was designed without regarding the students' prior learnings. It was highlighted that the background of the students was important to specify the level of the book. Meanwhile, it was pointed that the content of the book was not appealing to the interest of students. A small number of teachers expressed positive views on the textbooks.

4.4.1. Views about classroom practices

When teachers were asked about classroom practices for the curriculum for 7th grades, they expressed their opinions about supporting materials, weekly course hours, classroom instruction, levels of learning as previously mentioned. As for supporting materials, four out of 11 teachers (T3, T8 T10, T12) stated they did not use supporting materials resulting from the cost, unconcerned parents, or time constraint for the courses. One of the teachers (T10) stated:

> *I do not use supporting materials. I thought the textbook sent by MONE was not good enough. I wanted a book with more activities, and fun. Students get bored when it is boring. However, there is the cost issue, parents may not like to buy. So, we could not buy one this year.*

Likewise, T8 stated that she did not make use of supporting materials since they could hardly ever finish the textbook in the course weekly schedule.

On the other hand, six out of 11 teachers (T4, T6, T7, T13, T14, T15) stated they needed to make use of supporting materials because of skills education or having students to practice for LGS examination. Teachers stated the materials to be used were decided in English group teachers considering the cost, exam studies and the coherency with MONE programme. One of the teachers (T4) stated that *"These children will take the LGS examination in 8th grade next year. Thus, we try to have them solve as more questions as possible. We chose our materials considering this. We did not take account of four skills."* Along the same line, T15 expressed that "*I use supporting books which are based on LGS. The textbook sent by MONE does not include multiple choice questions. But I have to teach how to solve these questions."* Another teacher (T6) agreed they preferred the supporting materials which includes exam studies and consistent with MONE programme. She stated that "*We are using a book which is consistent with MONE. So, teachers do not have to follow the textbook sent by MONE."*

Unlike these teachers, T7 stated that they chose their supporting materials considering four skills. She drew attention on practicability, project classrooms and parents will:

> *Five skills are important in language teaching. The supporting materials we preferred include systematic activities, it makes teachers' job easier. So, I do not have to think about what and how to teach. If you do all the exercises, it is enough for the students. However, the textbook sent by MONE include so many inessential*

activities which are not worth studying, so we skip. In addition, these are project classrooms, if you do not use supporting materials, you cannot fill the courses. And parents ask us to do so, as well.

T13 and T14 also commented they preferred to use supporting materials for the projects classrooms in which students come from the intensive English programme.

> T13: *The textbook MONE sent is finished in four hours. We must teach it as the examinations are based on it. We use supporting materials in project classrooms. Those are main books we follow. However, in normal classrooms we just use digital activities like 'Quizlet'.*
>
> T14: *The book MONE sent is indeed insufficient. I use story books or books called skill book in my classes. There are reading and listening activities in it. I like the textbooks MONE sent for two years. However, I have six hours a week. It is of necessity to look for something supportive.*

As for weekly course hours, it was revealed once again that students had different programmes than their peers in the same schools or different schools. Some interviewees (T8, T10, T12, T15) indicated that there were not selective courses in their schools. T3 explained that there were three normal classes which had four hours of compulsory English course, and one class which had two hours of selective course in addition to compulsory English course in their school. Talking about this issue, four out of 11teachers (T4, T6, T7, T13) mentioned there was a difference in weekly course hours depending on if the students were in project or normal classes. They agreed they had four hours of compulsory course weekly in normal classes, whilst it differed in project classes. Schools offered selective courses up to six hours, which meant students could have had up to ten hours of English weekly.

Besides, two participants (T10, T15) expressed the belief that four hours of compulsory course was insufficient, one participant (T14) stated six hours of English was sufficient for 7^{th} grades.

Considering classroom instructions, nine out of 11 teachers (T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T12, T13, T15) reflected that studying exam techniques for LGS was the main concern in class teaching rather than skills education which was focused on the curriculum. Three teachers (T7, T12, T15) additionally stated that students did not have the motivation for skills education if it was not necessary for the LGS examination.

> T5: *We predominantly teach grammar, yet there is a little focus on this in the curriculum for this grade. It generally focuses on speaking and listening. If we do so, the students will not be able to get ready for LGS. That is why we have them*

do tests. Besides, my students can solve LGS questions easily because they finished the intensive programme. I think that is why they could solve, otherwise they would not.

T5 highlighted as well that "the success is regarded according to LGS result by students and parents; however, the purpose and the understanding of success is different in the curriculum."

T12: *I would like to focus on skills in my classes. But most of the students are more concerned about LGS, so they want to study the subjects which are more helpful in LGS. They think speaking, listening, and writing activities are unnecessary.*

T15: *Students asks why they did not study for LGS when they cannot solve questions in their weekend courses. Especially the ones who go to special weekend courses ask for this. They want to go on lessons on the focus of LGS.*

Talking about communicative skills, four interviewees (T3, T8, T10, T15) underlined they as well did not have time to do skills as it was guided in the curriculum since there were not enough time to do so.

T15: *We cannot give importance on skills much other than grammar. Because this is time consuming. Speaking, listening is time consuming. You should let the student talk, so that s/he can understand what s/he studied. But 4 hours is not enough for this. In addition to all this, it is expected to let students to write something. When I try to do writing activity, it takes at least an hour. By so, what is left, only three hours. In which we will study other skills?*

On the contrary, some interviewees (T4, T6, T8, T13, T14) said that LGS did not have an effect in classroom practices. For example, T6 said:

LGS does not have an effect in my teaching. Because for LGS, students need to know vocabulary rather than grammar subjects. But sometimes when I say 'this is important for LGS, students pay more attention, and they take notes willingly. I know they will forget whatever they study in 7th grade in their summer holiday before 8th grade, Thus I do not bother to lecture for LGS peculiarly.

Talking about LGS issue, T14 stated "*Parents expect us to teach for LGS, but we teach for it in the weekend courses, not in main courses. But this depends on the teacher. What you expect them to do. I do not do LGS studies."*

In the final issue of classroom practices, respondents were asked in which level the students could complete 7th grade. Over half those reported that most of the students were good at reading and understanding, however their listening and speaking skills were not as good as their grammar knowledge. For example, T3 said that "*The programme finishes at A2. In terms of grammar and reading, they reach A2. However, they are barely*

at A1 in listening and speaking. If we talk about writing, they can never make a sentence correctly". As one interviewee put it:

> T12: *When we look at the classes, overall is at A1. Of course, there are good students, but just three in each class. Ten students can be regarded as mid-range. But the rest is so bad in a class of forty.*

A minority (T14, T13, T8) mentioned that students in intensive classes could complete level A2 though there were some students who could not or reach an upper level. But they all agreed that students in normal classrooms hardly completed level A1.

Overall, these results indicated that majority of the teachers preferred to make use of supporting materials due to various facts like exam preparation, skills teaching or weekly course hours. It was revealed that supporting materials were needed more by the teachers who taught students coming from intensive classes. Whilst it was stated by a minority that supporting materials were not used owing to the unaffordable cost and limited weekly course hours. As for weekly course hours, schools had different implementations with the number of selective courses in addition to compulsory main courses. The results revealed as well that there was a dominant examination (LGS) concern in classroom activities. Whilst it was stated by only a minority that the programme was followed without LGS concern. In terms of learning levels, it was believed in broad strokes by most that students were A1 in communicative skills like listening and speaking. However, majority of students were commented as good at reading and grammar skills.

Table 11. Teachers' views about 7th grades' English language curriculum

Label	Participant Code
Views about textbooks/ programme	
Positive views	T14, (T3, T10, T12)
Negative views	
Simplicity of the textbook	T4, T6, T7, T12, T13, T15
Overloaded / difficult	T3, T5, T10, (T8 intensive)
Insufficient in terms of authenticity, content, layout	T4, T5
Classroom practices	
The need of supporting materials	T4, T6, T7, T13, T14, T15
No need for supporting material	T3, T8, T10, T12
Time allowance	
Sufficient	-
Insufficient	T3, T8, T10, T15
Instructional process	
Focus on grammar/vocab	T3, T4, T5, T6, (T7), T8, T10, T12, T13, T15
Focus on communicative skills	(T7), T14,
Student's level of English	
At lower-than-expected level	T3, T12, (T14, T13, T8; non-intensive)
At expected level	(T14, T13, T8 intensive)
Optimal intensive class implementations	T4, T6, T7, T8, T13

4.4.2. Teachers' views about implementational challenges of 7th grade curriculum

Respondents were asked about challenges affecting their teaching processes, they mentioned two more factors other than lack of time and insufficient sources (textbook) mentioned in previous themes. Of the study related population, most of respondents adverted the inconvenient classroom conditions for language education and negative attitudes towards learning English. Approximately half of those (T4, T7, T8, T13) who responded this question commented that the physical conditions of classrooms were either too crowded or unequipped for language education. To exemplify these views, the teachers said:

> T7: *Teaching English should be predominantly done with listening and task-based activities in small groups. But our class sizes are so many. We generally try to keep students seated, and this is tiring. There are some teachers who try to do activities in their classes but cannot manage the classroom. Then, we all become those classical teachers who always say, 'Be silent, sit down, do not do!'.*

> T8: *We do not have smart board in our school. These are young learners; they learn more easily with songs or games. Thus, I use my phone to connect to internet and a small loudspeaker. But that is difficult. We have these kinds of difficulties, in terms of technology.*
>
> T4: *The classroom size is ideal, there are twenty-two students. It is very good for speaking exercises. However, the physical condition of my classroom is not convenient, it is too narrow, and I cannot do speaking exercises as I planned in my mind. Physical conditions affect teaching.*

Furthermore, just over half of the respondents (T4, T5, T6, T12, T13, T15) commented that students had negative attitudes towards learning English due to their environment, lack of self-esteem and motivation. A group of teachers stated that:

> T4: *Speaking activities are not efficient. Children have cold feet to speak English, they have the belief that they cannot do it. I tried to help them about this, but I can help up to some extent.*
>
> T6: *Though they learnt a lot, they still have the fear and anxiety, if they cannot manage. Whenever I give homework about writing, they use 'Google translation' instead of making their own sentences. Or they never want to speak in English in class. They have the perception that English is too difficult. Even if they come from the intensive programme, they suppose they will never understand. I do skill activities as much as possible, but they have inhibitions and not eager to learn. Every beginning of the year, they come to the class forgetting what they had learnt before.*
>
> T12: *Students do not care about English. Their families are not educated. The families also think English is unnecessary for them. So, children cannot have positive attitudes towards English by getting out of their surroundings though some of them know it is necessary.*

While over half of the teachers (T3, T4, T5, T10, T12, T15) commented that LGS had a negative effect on their class teaching, the others (T4, T6, T8, T13, T14) stated they did not do LGS studies in their classes.

> T5: *My students can solve LGS questions easily. But they cannot speak in English as well as they solve questions. English is coefficient with Religion subject in LGS. So, they take it for granted. The number of questions of English in LGS was decreased from 20 to 10. Thus, they mostly would like to study maths or science.*

T10 stated that her students were not eager to study English as it was suggested in the curriculum since the questions would be different in LGS. In the same vein, T13 stated that though she did not do LGS studies in her classes, children preferred to do grammar and vocabulary studies rather than skill activities since they thought it would be more beneficial in LGS examination. T15 added that "*Though curriculum is based on*

communicative skills, we cannot practice it. There are questions in LGS which are not exemplified in textbooks MONE sent. Students want to study for LGS".

In summary, these results showed that communicative basis of the curriculum was neglected by most in classroom practices because of unequipped and crowded classrooms, negative attitudes towards English and negative outcomes of LGS studies

Table 12. Teachers' views about implementational challenges of 7th grade curriculum

Label	**Participant Code**
Inefficient textbook	T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T10, T12, T13, T15
Lack of a follow up intensive programme/textbook	T4, T6, T7, T12, T13
Crowded classrooms	T7, T13
Lack of audio / visual equipment	T8
Time constraint	T3, T8, T10, T15
Negative attitudes towards English/lack of interest	T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T12, T13, T15
LGS effect	T3, T4, T5, T6, T7, T8, T10, T12, T13, T15

4.4.3. Teachers' suggestions on 7th grades' curriculum

When teachers were asked what they would suggest implementing the English language teaching curriculum for 7th grades, the views surfaced mainly in well-supported textbooks and the increase of weekly course hours. They had suggestions about LGS examination, as well. Over half of those (T3, T4, T6, T7, T8, T10) expressed the belief that textbooks should be of interest to students, simplified and well developed for the level of the students in terms of listening and speaking activities. A teacher (T10) commented "MONE can take support about publishing of the textbook from the private publishers. Their books are more interesting and efficient."

T6 suggested that "*These children are age of technology children. Technology triggers their attention too much. These are not children for pencil and paper. MONE should design the textbook technologically. They don't like to open the book, yet they like to do the same on smart board."*

Another teacher stated:

> T3: *I wish the book were simple. They should simplify the book. We have little time; we teach grammar in a rush to be able to finish the book on time. If they cannot, they should increase the number of weekly course hours.*

Like these views, T4 suggested *"The content /themes of the book must be absolutely enriched. Though we can enrich it, we do not prefer to do so since in LGS examination they will be responsible everything in the book."*

On the other hand, some teachers (T10, T12) suggested that the textbook should consist of activities for LGS examination if students are responsible of it. The comment below showed the recommendations of the teachers as well for LGS examination if it must be applied inevitably.

> T5: *The intensive programme is carried out in 5th grades and it is continued in 6th grades. but it is cut in 7th grade. It should be conducted in all grades of lower secondary school. The number of the questions in LGS should be increased and skills like listening and speaking should be evaluated in this examination as well, as it is overrated in intensive programmes. Children do not give importance when its weighted mean is lower than the other subjects. They want to study science, maths. etc.*

Unlike T5, T4 suggested students should not have LGS anxiety so that they can focus on skills classes.

Three teachers (T10, T13, T15) believed that classrooms should be separated according to students' language level. In accordance with this, T10 suggested students, who attend to intensive classes, should be separated based on volunteer basis, and T13 and T5 believed classroom for English language teaching should be homogeneous. Teachers also suggested the classrooms size should be decreased (T13) and the number of weekly course hours could be increased (T3, T4, T8, T10, T12) up to six or eight hours a week.

In sum, it was suggested that a well-developed textbook which was also supported by technology could meet students' needs. It was additionally suggested that textbooks should have studies for LGS examination. Another suggestion was the integration of skills questions into LGS examination so that students would be more interested in skills studies in classroom practices. The most repeated suggestion was the increase of the weekly course hours so that skills studies could be done practically.

Table 13. Teachers' suggestions on 7th grades' curriculum

Label	Participant Code
Developing textbooks in terms of skills activities, authenticity, content and simplifying the contents.	T3, T4, T6, T7, T8, T10
Textbooks should be technology oriented	T6
More compulsive weekly course hours	T3, T4, T8, T10, T12
Language classrooms with fewer students for skill education	T13
Separation of students as with level classes or willingness	T10, T13, T15
Textbook should consist of LGS studies	T10, T12
LGS should evaluate skills	T5
English should not be included in LGS	T4

4.5 Teachers' views about 8th grades' English language curriculum

When teachers were asked what they thought about the curriculum of 8th grades, it was found out once again that they regarded it as textbooks as they followed the curriculum via textbooks. T3 stated this clearly as:

> *Curriculum and the textbook are the same thing for us. We follow the curriculum from the book. The objectives of the textbook are the same with the curriculum. When we follow the book, it is like we follow the curriculum.*

In this regard, three out of 9 teachers (T1, T9, T15) stated the textbook was not sufficient to reach the objectives, and two out of 9 teachers (T3, T7) stated the textbook was not appealing for students.

> T1: *The programme is less than what is expected from 8th grades. Students study for LGS and the book is insufficient. The contents are not good enough. The textbook does not meet the curriculum objectives.*
>
> T15: *The book is not sufficient. There should have been more speaking and listening activities. The contents should have been different than the previous year (7th grade).*
>
> T3: *The book never gets student' attention, students think it is boring. For example, there is a sports theme, but the sports in the book are never interesting for this age group, they are extreme sports. They are too abstract for them.*
>
> T7: *The books should be prepared in detail. For example, the book we use now, the samples are not interesting, the pictures are not appealing for 8th grade student. The visual quality is very bad. By this way, I mean, it does not take students' interest.*

T3 also commented the textbook was too overloaded and it was difficult for the level of students to be able to follow the programme.

> *The reading passages are difficult, the vocabulary is difficult. Though we practice over and over, they do not understand. For example, there is a 'present perfect' theme. It's impossible for 8th grades to understand it. The book is like filled with lots of grammar subjects and vocabulary. It is not appealing for students.*

T14 agreed her comment as follows:

> *8th grades have an overloaded programme. Though skill education is targeted in 5th, 6th, 7th grades, it becomes reading& understanding in 8th grade. I think the content of the book is too difficult for the students. I think that vocabulary is very difficult. They will not use most of them. They just memorize them, they must. They will absolutely forget them.*

Unlike these teachers, one teacher, T13, stated the book was better when compared to previous years.

> *It is not bad. I mean, it does not focus on grammar like it used to. I think it is good that it focuses on expressions, dialogues. Of course, it is open to question, but students do not have to fill in the blanks anymore.*

Another significant point highlighted by the teachers was the ambiguity about the books to be studied as there were two different MONE books to be used in 8th grades. Thus, they (T2, T9, T10) felt obliged to study both because of LGS anxiety.

> T9: *MONE has two books for 8th grades. It sends textbooks interchangeably to different schools. Though the contents are similar, the vocabulary is not. Students at same grades from different schools take a common test, and our students could not solve questions since we did not study the other book.*
>
> T2: *MONE has two kinds of book. Students study for LGS, we feel we must teach both in order not to teach less. One of them has more reading passages, the other has more exercises for matching, vocabulary etc. We do not know from which book the questions will be asked, so we teach both.*

Overall, it was found out that textbooks were regarded neither sufficient nor appealing for the students. It was believed by almost all that that the textbooks did not meet the objectives expected from 8th grades. In addition to the difficulty of the textbooks for students' level, the ambiguity of which book to be studied was remarked to complicate teaching process, as well.

4.5.1. Views about classroom practices

When teachers were asked how they implemented the programme in their school, their comments combined in the same headings as supporting materials, weekly course hours, classroom instruction, and learning levels. Six out of 9 teachers (T1, T7, T10, T13, T14, T15) stated they made use of test books as for supporting materials owing to LGS examination studies. To exemplify these views, the teachers stated:

> T13: *We are LGS oriented in both intensive and normal classes. We always have students solve tests alongside MONE textbook. Students ask for books for LGS studies. This process does not move with MONE books. Let me tell so. The system is telling LGS will be applied at the end of the year. Good. What shall we do? You will have test. Good. It says I will examine you on multiple choice questions. Good. But there is not even one multiple question in MONE textbook. Not even one! MONE does not let to have students to buy a supporting material. It only publishes 5 sample questions online per month. It expects you to wait for those 5 questions during a month. It is no secret that it is not enough for students.*
>
> T14: *We use test books rather than skills book in 8th grade. We study MONE book, we try to do all the activities there since LGS is based on it. But, for sure, we teach for LGS rather than skills education.*

Only three out of 9 teachers (T2, T3, T9) stated they did not use supporting materials because of time constraint but they gave handouts based on grammar and LGS. To express this situation. One of the teachers (T9) stated "we do not use supporting material. But there are plenty of vocabulary and reading exercises in the book. Of necessity, they solve tests. I sometimes handout tests." In a similar manner, T3 stated that "there is not enough time to solve test in the lesson. I give handouts for LGS and grammar study for further studies."

As for weekly course hours, majority of respondents (T2, T3, T7, T9, T10, T13, T15) stated students have four hours of main course and commented it was not sufficient for the students. One of the teachers (T10) stated, *"…in order to do what the curriculum offers, we need extra time, especially in crowded classroom, you cannot do skills, for example speaking exercises in just an hour".*

A minority participant (T1, T3, T13) stated students had been led to choose selective English course in addition to main course since they were in intensive programme. While T3 stated students two hours of selective, T13 stated his classrooms had eight hours of English in 8th grade.

> T3: *All our 8th grade students have two hours of selective English. But last year, they did not since there were not enough teacher at the school. We always hurried*

to complete the book on time. Even if they are at the same school, they do not have the same English hours.

T13: *In intensive classes, they have eight hours of English, in normal ones, they have four hours.*

Considering classroom instruction, all the participants, without exceptions, expressed how skills teaching were trivialised by students, parents and administrators depending upon LGS. They commented they planned classroom practices in accordance with LGS rather than the objectives of the curriculum. The following quotations illustrated this view:

T2: *We do not do listening. We never do speaking exercises either. As they will be responsible of multiple questions, they do not need writing exercises either. The only thing we should do, vocabulary teaching. A quick review of the subject, and multiple-choice questions.*

T7: *All you do becomes mathematics for students, parents and even administrators. Not the quality but the quantity is important. At the end of the day, everybody evaluates you how many questions you could have students solved.*

T14: *The expectation of students is to solve tests. Thus, I cannot do skills in class. Children think it is unnecessary. I mean, they want to do the book as quickly as possible and solve tests. Both children and their parents have this tendency.*

T9: *The fun or practical part of language is ignored since students are exam oriented. They want to solve test as many as they can, and memorize vocabulary, just that. No expectation for language competency. In this current system, students aim to enter a good high school, thus they aim a good point from LGS. English is not a language anymore, but a subject to study.*

T1: *We cannot motivate students to do skill activities since they would not be asked in LGS.*

One of the teachers pointed out that:

T2: *The weighted mean of English was decreased in LGS. Thus, students do not even want to study English. Thus, we must quickly skip most of the activities. They already think they cannot manage to solve questions in English, and they give up. So, we just give exam tactics them, all we can do.*

As for learning level of English that students could reach at the end of the year, six out of nine teachers (T1, T2, T3, T9, T10, T15) commented they were at A1 or beginning of A2 except from individual differences in which students could reach B1. One of the teachers (T1) said that "*Most of them are unsuccessful, there are few who have individual motivation".* Another teacher (T10) stated "*They are good at vocabulary and reading. They can be at A2 in terms of these. But for other skills, I can say A1."* The rest of the teachers (T7, T13, T14) could not comment on this question. To exemplify, T14

stated that "*Students are supposed to be at B1 according to the curriculum. But it is open to question that how far we go. Since we do not teach skills, I cannot know which level they are."*

To summarize, it was seen that MONE curriculum objectives and its perception of success at the end of 8th grade were not consistent. The type of evaluating system channelized both teachers and students to multiple choice question rather than skills education which was mainly aimed in the curriculum. Majority of teachers made use of supporting materials as for LGS studies, only a small number of teachers indicated they did not since they could barely complete the textbook because of time constraint. Parenthetically, it was fund out that selective English courses were not preferred in most of the schools. It could have been resulted from the low weighted mean of English in LGS. All the teachers pointed out students were not interested in learning English as a language but as a school subject for a better higher education. It was additionally highlighted that not only students' but also teachers' success was regarded according to LGS results by parents and school administrators. In response to learning levels, it was found out that most of the students were at A1 or at the beginning of A2, in addition to individual differences though the curriculum aimed B1 for 8th grade of the students.

Table 14. Teachers' views about 8th grades' English language curriculum

Label	Participant Code
Views about textbooks/ programme	
Positive views	T13
Negative views	
Overloaded / difficult	T2, T3, T14
Insufficient in terms of authenticity, content, layout	T1, T3, T7, T9, T13, T14, T15
Ambiguity which textbook to teach	T2, T9, T10
Classroom practices	
The need of supporting materials	T1, T7, T10, T13, T14, T15
No need for supporting material	T2, T3, T9
Time allowance	
Sufficient	-
Insufficient	T2, T3, T7, T9, T10, T13, T15
Instructional process	
Focus on grammar/vocab	T1, T2, T3, T7, T9, T10, T13, T14, T15
Focus on communicative skills	-
Student's level of English	
At lower-than-expected level	T1, T2, T3, T9, T10, T15
At expected level	none
Optimal intensive class implementations	T1, T3, T13
No consensus on weekly course hours (for intensive except from selective hours)	T1, T3, T13

4.5.2. Teachers' views about implementational challenges of 8th grades

When teachers were specifically asked if they encountered challenges in teaching process, they re-emphasized the density of textbooks, time constraint and negative effect of LGS on English language teaching-learning processes. They, additionally, mentioned negative attitudes towards language learning and inconvenient classrooms for language education.

Three out of 9 (T2, T3, T14) teachers stated the textbook was overloaded and too difficult for the students, consequently it affected students' motivation to make an effort. As one interviewee said:

> T3: *We have the fear to finish the book. Children have difficulty in learning the vocabulary. Because there are too many words. the book cannot be completed on time. The themes are difficult and there are extraordinary words for them. For*

example, there is "inexpensive" instead of "cheap", or "fascinating" which they never comprehend, they always confuse it "fantastic".

In same vein, T14 put it:

> *There are too many unnecessary vocabularies in 8th grades book. For example, 'cooking' unit. There are such words that students will never use. They are not appealing for these aged children. Consequently, children get bored and lose their motivation.*

Almost all teachers (T1, T2, T3, T7, T9, T10, T13, T15) said that course hours allowed for English were insufficient to reach the objectives of the curriculum. For example, one interviewee (T15) said *"Because of LGS, we solve tests in one of the lessons. Thus, there are three hours left a week and it is impossible to do skills in such limited time."* Talking about LGS issue, all teachers agreed that LGS affected their teaching process negatively. As one interviewee put it:

> T14: *In the classes I teach, both students and parents expect us to teach for LGS. When I ask a student 'what do you think about…?' s/he says 'why bother? Tell the meaning of the word and let us pass here'. They do not want to talk, write, or read. They only think, when they see a word, they must remember a typical type of question like in maths.*

More than half of the teachers (T2, T3, T9, T10, T13, T14) mentioned that students had negative attitudes towards learning English either because its low weighted mean in LGS or previous unfortunate experiences or their surroundings. As three interviewees commented:

> T13: *There is a nonsense comment like 'why should we learn their language; they should learn ours'. This perception should change. However, students in intensive classes do not have this perception.*
>
> T10: *English is perceived as a relaxing lesson as art or music classes since because it is weighted mean is not so high. Maybe because of their families, they care much about vocational lessons like Qur'an, Islamic law etc.*
>
> T9: *The good students want to solve tests. They do not want to do writing or speaking exercises, they hang back and say, "I cannot speak, I do not understand". They even want to read silently rather than reading aloud. They are so afraid of making mistakes.*

Another recurrent challenge some participants (T3, T13, T15) specifically commented was inconvenient classroom conditions for language education. T15 said that *"My classrooms are crowded. Skill exercises take time, and we do not have it*". Likewise, T13 stated that *"There is a fact like MONE internet. It does not even let us to open*

'YouTube' videos. If I cannot even reach to YouTube, how will I have students listen songs, at least?".

In sum, these views surfaced mainly that teachers had difficulty in terms of time constraint, negative attitudes towards language learning, and inconvenient classrooms for language education. However, the most prominent challenges they faced were related to density of textbooks and the evaluating system of LGS without emphasizing the abilities underlined in the curriculum. The results suggested that language education was predominantly based on vocabulary and reading exercises rather than developing communicative skills as it was aimed in the curriculum.

Table 15. Teachers' views about implementational challenges of 8th grades

Label	**Participant Code**
Inefficient textbook	T1, T2, T3, T7, T9, T13, T14, T15
Crowded classrooms	T10, T15
Lack of audio / visual equipment	T3, T13, T15
Time constraint	T1, T2, T3, T7, T9, T10, T13, T15
Negative attitudes towards English/ lack of interest	T2, T3, T9, T10, T13, T14
LGS effect	T1, T2, T3, T7, T9, T10, T13, T14, T15
Lack of teachers	T3

4.5.3. Teachers' suggestions on 8th grades' curriculum

When teachers were asked for their suggestions for a better implementation of the English language teaching curriculum for 8th grades, they centred on two main themes. The first was to simplify the book to keep students interest alive and let students' will to succeed. Three out of nine teachers commented that:

> T1: *The programme can be simplified. It can be revised as to be followed by all students. when it is started at a certain level, students whose English is bad or do not have interest are lost*.
>
> T3: *The textbook should be simplified; the content should be simplified. The biggest problem is the density of the book.*
>
> T14: *The themes in the book are too intense. It is too difficult for them to memorize that vocabulary, s/he will never use them. I think it should be simplified.*

The other suggestion the teachers voiced during the interviews was the alteration of LGS content. Six out of 9 teachers (T1, T7, T9, T10, T13, T15) suggested that the type of questions should be changed, and the weighted mean of English should be increased to have students to regard it as a beneficial subject to study. Teachers stated that:

> T1: *The type of questions can be changed, and the weighted mean can be decreased in LGS. If something is not asked in an exam; students tend to ignore it. This perception towards English should be changed.*
>
> T7: *If there is an exam, the textbook should be designed according to it. There are listening exercises in the book, but listening is not included in exam. Then, why shall students deal with it? I mean, everything should be parallel with each other. If you have a curriculum like this, you should regard students as responsible with all aspects of it.*
>
> T15: *Exams can be regulated like TOEFL. It should consist of skill abilities. Thus, students would like to learn language competences, they will have to learn listening or speaking, or writing.*
>
> T9: *The distribution of school subjects was equal, there were twenty question in LGS before, and students were equally making an effort. But now, the number of English questions were decreased to 10. Frankly speaking, English lost its importance. They prefer to study maths instead of studying English to get more points. If examination system goes on, the number of English should be increased.*

On the other hand, T14 suggested that:

> *I suppose English should not be asked in LGS. I mean, if students are not exam-oriented; I believe English will be regarded as for communicative aspects. Students perceive it as just a subject to study. If it is not included in the exam, students may want to use English. There are only ten questions in English in the exam. Students already study for other subjects and plus English. I have lots of students who liked English in previous grades but not in 8th grade.*

Lastly, one teacher (T15) suggested that if communicative skills were aimed in English language teaching, more time should be allowed for class hours. She said that *"We need extra time to do communicative activities. For example, speaking is not something you can do in 40 minutes. Especially with 35-40 students in class".*

In brief, while it was suggested the textbook should be simplified by some of the participants, it was suggested by majority that LGS examination style should be regulated, and all skill competences should be included in it. Thus, students would be more eager to learn and practice in English rather than only solving multiple choices. It was also pointed that more time should be allocated for English course hours per week.

Table 16. Teachers' suggestions on 8th grades' curriculum

Label	Participant Code
Developing textbooks in terms of skills activities, authenticity, content and simplifying the contents.	T1, T2, T3, T14
More compulsive weekly course hours	T15
LGS should evaluate skills	T1, T7, T15
English weighted mean in LGS should change	T1, T9, T10, T13
English should not be included in LGS	T14
A download pool for LGS studies	T13

Table 17. The summary of teachers' views for 5th,6th, 7th, and 8th grades curriculum

Findings / **Topics**	**Grades**			
	5th grades	**6th grades**	**7th grades**	**8th grades**
Views about curriculum & Classroom practices	Positive views Negative views *The textbook was overloaded and insufficient in terms of authenticity, content, layout. *Supporting material was needed. *Insufficient weekly course hours (non-intensive) *Mostly focused on grammar/vocab, less focused on communicative skills. *Ss' level of English was mostly believed lower-than-expected. *Less ss were supposed to be at the expected level of English.	Positive views A few believed the textbook was good and appropriate for ss. Negative views *The textbook is mostly believed unsuitable for ss level. *All believed textbook was insufficient in terms of authenticity, content, layout. *Half made use of supporting materials, while the other half did not. *Mostly believed weekly course hours were insufficient. *Focused on grammar/vocab. *SS level of English was all believed lower than expected. *Some schools applied their own intensive programme, thus there were not a standardization of weekly course hours of intensive programme among schools.	Positive views A few believed the textbook was efficient for ss. Negative views *Teachers believed the textbook was simplistic for intensive ss. and difficult for non-intensive. *A few believed textbook was insufficient in terms of authenticity, layout, and content. *Most made use of supporting materials, some did not. *Insufficient weekly course hours *Almost all focused-on grammar/vocab activities *A few focused on communicative skills *Ss' level of English was lower-than-expected. Only a few could reach the expected level. *Most schools continued intensive programme, thus there were optimal implementations for intensive programme.	Positive views Negative views *Overloaded and insufficient textbook in terms of authenticity, content, layout *There were two different textbooks, there was an ambiguity which book to teach. *Most made use of supporting materials. *A few did not. *Insufficient weekly courses *Focus on grammar/ vocab *No focus on communicative skills *Ss' English level were lower-than-expected. *Some schools continued intensive programme in their own conditions, no standard implementation.

Findings / Topics	Grades			
	5th grades	**6th grades**	**7th grades**	**8th grades**
Views about challenges in implementation	*Lack of intensive textbook *Inefficient textbook *Lack of readiness in terms of background, and age. *Crowded classrooms *Different level of ss in same classroom decreased the efficiency of teaching. *Lack of time (non-intensive) *Negative attitudes towards English and lack of interest. Ss did not want to learn or do skills activities. *Negative effect of LGS. Few wanted to study for it	*Lack of an efficient textbook *Lack of gradual implementation of intensive programme. *Crowded classrooms *One of them had lack of necessary equipment like visual/audio. *Lack of time *Negative attitudes towards English and lack of interest. Ss did not want to learn English. They had lack of interest in communicative skills. *Negative effect of LGS. A few wanted to practice for it	*Lack of an efficient book *Lack of follow up intensive book. *Crowded classrooms *One of the teachers had lack of visual/ audio equipment. *Lack of time *Negative attitudes towards learning English. They had lack of interest. *Negative effect of LGS on communicative skills teaching. Ss preferred studying for examination.	*Lack of efficient textbook *Crowded classrooms *Some teachers had lack of audio/ visual equipment. *Lack of time *Negative attitudes and lack of interest towards English. *Negative effect of LGS in communicative skills teaching. Ss did not need for it. *One stated there were lack of teacher in the school.

Findings / Topics	Grades			
	5th grades	**6th grades**	**7th grades**	**8th grades**
Suggestions on the implementation	<u>For curriculum</u> *Should be simplified in terms of number of units, content. *Should be developed in terms of authenticity, coherency, activity (non-internet based) *Should consist of more grammar activities. *An intensive programme should be continued in higher levels. <u>For practices</u> *More compulsive weekly course hours (non-intensive) *Weekly schedule should/should not be separated. *Separation of students via level or willingness *Practices should be standardized in terms of weekly course hours, textbooks, students.	<u>For curriculum</u> *Should be developed for intensive & non-intensive classes. *Should be developed for skills. *An intensive programme/ book should be provided. *Should consist of more grammar activities. <u>For practices</u> *More compulsive weekly course hours *Fewer students in language classrooms *Separation of students via level or willingness	<u>For curriculum</u> *Should be simplified in terms of content, vocabulary. *Should be developed for skills. *Should be technology oriented. *Should consists of LGS studies. <u>For practices</u> *More compulsive weekly course hours *Fewer students in language classrooms *Separation of students via level or willingness <u>For LGS</u> *Should evaluate skills. *English should not be included.	<u>For curriculum</u> *Should be simplified in terms of content, vocab, grammar. *Should be developed well for four skills. <u>For practices</u> *More compulsive weekly course hours *Fewer students in language classrooms. <u>For LGS</u> *Should evaluate skills. *Weighted mean of English should increase / decrease. *A download pool for studies.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this study is to reveal teachers' viewpoints about the implementation of the English Language curriculum for lower secondary schools and the challenges and/or problems encountered by the teachers during the implementation process. Particularly, this study focuses on teachers' views on the textbooks and classroom practices of the curriculum. This study reveals teachers' suggestions for a more efficient implementation of the curriculum, as well. This chapter presents discussions and implications related to the study. After a short summary of the findings for each research question, the findings are discussed in accordance with the literature and previous research; afterwards, implications for practice and for future research about English language curriculum for lower secondary school (5-8th grades) are presented.

5.1 Discussion

This section presents discussions about the findings of the present study. Findings are discussed respectively in relation to each research question.

5.1.1. The teachers' views about the curriculum and its implementation in 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades

The first research question was asked to find out teachers' perceptions about the lower secondary English language curriculum and its implementations in the classrooms/ schools they have been teaching. Several interview questions were used to reveal teachers' views and implementations in practice to answer this research question.

To start with the findings related to teachers' perception, it was found out that all teachers perceive textbooks as curriculum for the grades they teach and consider curriculum can be followed by following the textbook's content. On this basis, they have both negative and positive views about the textbooks. Teachers substantially have

negative views about the textbooks provided by MONE in several terms, which are: over-density; insufficiency of contents, layout, authenticity; inappropriateness for the level of students. The findings of the study revealed that textbooks which are lacked needful features and quality hindered successful implementation of the curriculum for all grades of the lower secondary school. This finding is along the same line with previous findings (Harman, 1999; Mersinligil, 2002; Er, 2006; Aküzel, 2006; Yanık, 2007; Erkan, 2009; Örmeci, 2009; Yaman, 2010; Dönmez, 2010; İnceçay, 2012; Yörü, 2012; Ocak, Kızılkaya & Boyraz, 2013; Demirtaş & Erdem, 2015; Dinçer, 2013; Erdem & Toy, 2017; Dilekli, 2018; Aksoy et al., 2018).

Teachers expressed textbooks are overloaded and consisted of many difficult vocabularies and grammar subjects in reading passages; thus, prior learnings were forgotten easily. Besides, listening activities are difficult and fast when compared to level of students. This finding of the study is consistent with Mersinligil (2002), Örmeci (2009), Dinçer (2013), Dilekli (2018)'s studies which revealed curriculum was overloaded for different grades of lower secondary schools. Additionally, teachers reflected textbooks are insufficient in terms of content, layout, and authenticity; thus, they are not appealing to students' interest and are not sufficient to develop four skills. This finding is also supported by some of these studies which emphasized that textbooks used in teaching-learning process had a crucial importance to facilitate learning; yet they were found insufficient by teachers to meet these needs, especially for listening and speaking skills (Er, 2006; Yörü, 2012), and boring and badly designed (Yanık, 2007; Erkan, 2009). It was highlighted in Aksoy et. al. (2017)'s study that an authentic and well written textbook was needed.

Teachers also regarded the textbooks were not at level of students in simplicity or difficulty aspects. It was found out that textbook did not differ according to intensive programme or normal (non-intensive) classes. Thus, they were regarded as simple for students who are in intensive classes, and as difficult for ones who are in normal classes. It was also commented by a considerable number of teachers that the textbooks were above the level of students though they have completed intensive programme. Additionally, it was observed from the responses of teachers that there is not a gradual implementation of the intensive programme after 5^{th} grade. These findings of the study were confirmed by other studies in which previous English language curriculum and the

current curriculum were evaluated in various grades. For example, Demirtas & Erdem (2015), Örmeci (2009), Erkan (2009)'s studies revealed the difficulty of the curriculum for the students' level; and Erdem & Toy (2018)'s studies revealed the lack of textbook for intensive classes and normal classes (İnceçay, 2012); and Dönmez (2010)' s study revealed gradual development were not considered in the curriculum.

On the other hand, a minority of teachers relatively have positive views about textbooks (besides 5th grades') as textbooks were found appropriate for the level of the students, sufficient and supportive in classroom implementations. This finding is consistent with findings explicated by previous studies (Mersinligil, 2002; Büyükduman, 2005; Güneş, 2009). For example, Mersinligil (2002) noted that half of the teachers had positive views about the content of the curriculum. Likewise, Büyükduman (2005) reported that teachers are pleased with the textbook, content, and its activities. Güneş (2009) also supported teachers had positive views about the curriculum, especially about proposed assessment techniques.

There is a considerable difference between the rates of the perception of teachers about textbooks. Only a small number of teachers regarded textbooks efficient in teaching-learning process. This could be resulted from their prior experiences; regarding textbooks were better currently when compared to the previous textbooks they taught before. However, most of the teachers perceived the textbooks as insufficient. This appears to be caused by content and layout of the textbooks. Textbooks were regarded as overloaded, as well. This might be caused by allocated time for weekly course hours which were indicated as insufficient by almost all. This finding of the study was also reported by Dilekli (2018), which concluded that the overloaded programme could not be implemented because of time constraint.

In sum, it can be deduced that despite the changes of English language curriculum through the years, teachers' perception has not changed about the efficiency of textbooks in the implementation. Considering all these, the textbooks which are core materials to follow the curriculum were argued as overloaded, insufficient for students' needs and interest, and inappropriate for students' level and hindered the successful implementation of the curriculum by majority. Though the curriculum objectives are idealized, it is apparent that the resources MONE provided are not helpful to reach these objectives.

As for the views of teachers related to implementation of the curriculum in their classrooms/schools, this study reveals that a clear majority of the teachers make use of various supporting materials for both intensive and non-intensive classes in different grades with similar reasons. Teachers stated they needed supporting materials for intensive classes since neither the textbook provided by MONE fill in the contents of course hours nor parents are contented for further studies in intensive programmes with MONE books. This finding of the study is also in accordance with the other studies which were conducted about English language curricula for different grades as those studies also found out that teachers needed supplementary materials and there was a lack of a textbook for intensive programmes (Erdem &Yücel, 2017; Aksoy et al., 2018, Dinçer & Koç, 2020). In addition, teachers indicated they needed supporting materials for LGS studies since MONE textbooks do not include studies for the examination about which students are highly concerned. Though some teachers are pleased with the supporting materials they have decided on, most of them complain about the supporting materials they have been using since they had to choose affordable ones which also parents would agree to supply. However, as stated in related literature, supporting materials are prohibited (MONE, 2018c) ignoring the additional support for students and teachers in intensive programmes and LGS studies. In the related studies, there are not satisfying findings about supporting materials since it is also reported by Dönmez (2010) that teachers may be concerned about speaking it out since MONE prohibited to use a book other than the provided ones.

When the classroom practices are considered, the findings notably emphasize that in teachers' classroom practices mainly derived from traditional activities rather than focusing on communicative skills, especially leaving out speaking and listening activities due to several reasons like insufficient textbook, lack of time, crowded classrooms, negative attitudes of students towards English. This finding is also confirmed by several studies. For instance, Koydemir (2001), Mersinligil (2002), Er (2009), Kırkgöz (2007a), Örmeci (2009), Dönmez (2010), Ocak et all, (2013), Kozikoğlu (2014), Kaya & Ok (2016) found that teachers predominantly applied teacher-centred instruction and traditional methods like mostly grammar and vocabulary memorization, fill in the blanks, or reading out loud instead of student-centred instruction such as group work, project-based assignments, games or real-world concepts in the classroom. Similarly,

Büyükduman (2005), Erkan (2009), Güneş (2009), Yaman (2011), Yörü (2012), Batdı (2015) reported that teachers focused on reading and writing skills and left out speaking and listening skills because of crowded classroom, unauthentic textbook, or lack of time. Additionally, Yaman (2010), Demirtaş & Erdem (2015) concluded that these skills were underestimated and could not be developed in classroom practices as anticipated because of inappropriate objectives with respect to students' level. Kırkgöz (2007b) and Kırkgöz (2008) also highlighted that there was a big gap between the planned and implemented curriculum referring the difference between the curriculum objectives and classroom practices.

Furthermore, this study found out that teachers and, in line with their comments-students who study for LGS did not prefer communicative activities since students were responsible of reading, grammar and vocabulary in the examination, rather than speaking and listening competences. This finding is consisted with Dönmez (2010), Kaya & Ok (2016)'s studies which revealed classroom instruction was mostly based on grammar instruction depending on SBS/ TEOG (which were the same kind of examinations with LGS in the mentioned years) in which listening and speaking competences were not assessed. On the other hand, when the actual use of English is considered like Graddol (2006) has argued about Kachru's model's limitations about outer and expanding circle countries (as cited in UKEssays,2018), it can be deduced from the finding that English is not considered as a basic skill for communication, but a subject to be learnt by students and teachers in the lower secondary stage of Turkey, which can be placed in expanding circle countries.

In few studies (Güneş, 2009, Büyükduman, 2005, Örmeci, 2009, Çelen, 2011) there are findings that teachers had positive views about the components of curriculum, however, it was reported consequently in these studies as well that curriculum could not be implemented the way it was recommended. When teachers' views are examined for the instructional processes in the present study, it reveals that most of the implementations seem to have been derived from teacher-centred practices and "structural" and "lexical" syllabi rather than learner-centred, and communicative "skill-based", "task-based" syllabi (Krahnke, 1987, p. 9-72). This contradicts to the suggestions given in the curriculum emphasizing communicative competence and action-oriented tasks and not to use some specific language learning strategies over others (MONE, 2018, p.4). It is also

contradictory with the related literature recommending using variable syllabi (Krahnke, 1987, p.9) and learner-centred approaches like Communicative Language teaching. The ignorance of listening and speaking activities, and writing- according to some teachers' comments, reveals most valued skills emphasized in the curriculum are not attained and the implemented curriculum is far different from the planned curriculum. Besides, it is also found out from the teachers' comments that reading skill is far developed from any other skills since it is mostly practiced in classroom implementations.

In this regard, it can be said that there is a consistency between the implementations of the curriculum though curriculum was revised several times throughout the years. Likewise, being reported in previous studies, the present study revealed that students' communicative competence, listening, and speaking skills were not developed with the classroom implementations in present. This may be caused by same kind of circumstances remained as a challenge over the past years.

The findings related to English level; most teachers believed students were at lower-than-expected level. Majority of the teachers regarded students at A1, whilst a minority regarded some of their students at the beginning of A2 or at A2 (namely in 5^{th} and 7^{th} grades). Meanwhile, there were no teacher who believed their 6^{th} and 8^{th} grade students could reach A2 which is expected level in the curriculum. In other words, students from all grades are regarded not to be able to reach the objectives of the curriculum in prospected level. This finding is in accordance with Kul-Sarıca (2009) in which students English language level were reported A1 in terms of reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar according to CEFR criteria and only 5% of the students could reach the objectives of the curriculum. However, unlike these findings, Yanık (2007) concluded in her study that students could reach the objectives at a moderate level. Another finding the present study reveals is that students are regarded better at reading, solving questions and grammar knowledge compared to listening and speaking skills. This finding is also consistent with Büyükduman (2005) and Mersinligil (2002)'s studies in which teachers regarded reading skill was attained most, and other skills were not at the expected level. This seems to be caused from the dominant instructional processes, discussed previously, in which these kinds of activities were mostly focused. Meanwhile, with respect to this, it can be argued that students consistently fall behind the planned

curriculum since the level of the textbook is not appropriate with their needs and it is written according to the expected levels of the curriculum.

Besides, while it is understandable students were at A1 with respect to weekly course hours in non-intensive classes, it is questionable students are regarded as A1 in intensive classes with more weekly course hours than the normal classes. This may be caused from the textbook which are overloaded for normal classes and teachers who make their efforts to complete it on time and do not spare time for communicative activities. On the other hand, in intensive English programme in which a different textbook is not provided in accordance with their compulsory weekly course hours, the same failure arises since the supporting materials are not at desired quality and overloaded according to students' levels.

The findings related to the weekly course hours are regarded by all teachers in all grades as insufficient since they had only three or four hours per week for the programme they previously commented as overloaded. Surprisingly, teachers also believed intensive programme time allowance was less than needed. This finding is consistent with Dilekli (2018) and Dinçer & Koç (2020)'s studies which found that intensive programme was overloaded, and time allowance was not sufficient for it. In this study, only few teachers believe weekly course hours are sufficient in intensive classes which have more class hours than normal classes. This may cause from the different implementations of schools for intensive programme. According to the findings while some classes have up to 14 hours of English per week, some other may have only two hours. In other words, schools have different implementations for intensive classes in terms of weekly course hours, textbooks, grades, or which students involved in the programme. According to the findings, while some schools run intensive English programme for only 5^{th} grades, some schools continue to run the programme for higher grades with their own opportunities. Within this context, it is possible to bring forward students in the same grades from different or even from the same school have different opportunities compared to their peers.

In overall, it can be argued that although the English language teaching curriculum emphasizes language use in a communicative environment and real-life practices in classroom interactions, and support learners in becoming language users (MONE, 2018),

the findings of the present study indicated there was big gap between the planned and implemented curriculum. When the studies conducted to evaluate English language curricula are viewed, similar and significant problems regarding curriculum implementation still exist. The crucial problem with respect to this is that the present curriculum cannot be implemented the way to develop students' communicative competence, their writing, and especially listening and speaking skills. Though the outstanding aim of the curriculum is to develop learners' communicative competence, predominantly through listening and speaking skills (MONE, 2018a), it can be put forward from these findings that the curriculum cannot be practiced in its anticipated terms. The possible underlying causes behind this failure are presented in the following discussion.

5.1.2. Teachers' views about the challenges of the curriculum in 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades

The second research question was asked to reveal teachers' opinions about challenges they have been experiencing during the implementation of the curriculum. The results showed that there are several factors hindering the effective implementation of the curriculum.

The first factor impairing the curriculum implementation is about textbooks which have serious problems about their content, layout, and level, as mentioned previously. Besides being overloaded, textbooks were regarded as insufficient to enhance four skills, especially listening, and speaking skills. The listening parts were found to be too fast and difficult. Specifically, listening and speaking texts were regarded as unappealing for the students' attention as they are not designed authentically. The number of grammatical exercises were found insufficient while vocabulary was overemphasized with unnecessary words which are difficult and above the level of students. In this regard, the textbooks are not as desired featured and quality. This finding is directly consistent with previous studies which were mentioned earlier. In some of these studies, it was emphasized that textbooks were crucially important in learning-teaching processes, however they were regarded as insufficient by the teachers. In addition, Arıkan (2017)

highlighted teachers regarded textbooks as curriculum in practice, and they found it as unsatisfactory.

Furthermore, it was observed from teachers' responses that there are not different textbooks for students who completed intensive programme in the previous year, the same textbooks are used for both normal and intensive programmes. Thus, the lack of textbook caused students to lose their interest in the lesson since it restarts all the structures they have studied before. Another problem resulting from the textbooks is that there are two types of textbooks provided by MONE and teachers feel responsible to use both in their classes since students could need knowledge from both in LGS. Similarly, Yanık (2007) reported teachers had to use various textbooks which caused serious limitations of the implementation of the curriculum. She highlighted reading and listening texts were unauthentic and, long and above the level of the students and there were not enough communicative tasks.

In addition to problems resulting from textbook, the second factor affecting successful implementation of the curriculum is that the teachers feel under pressure to focus mainly on central examination studies through reading and vocabulary practices. They complained both school administrators and parents evaluated teachers' success based on their students' success in LGS and students were not willing to study on skills exercises since they were focused on the examination in which these skills will not be evaluated. Likewise, Basok (2017) revealed in his study that teachers were criticized by school administrators when students had poor results from the central examinations. Thus, teachers felt obliged to focus mostly on vocabulary and grammar-based practices. In parallel, Dönmez (2010), Kaya &Ok (2015) highlighted central examinations were a challenge in the implementation of the curriculum and teachers felt dilemma between implementing the curriculum or lecturing for central examination (Dönmez, 2010). Though the curriculum is mainly based on communicative skills of learners, the central examinations are based on reading and vocabulary knowledge. Like it was emphasized in Vural's (2017) study, these examinations are not designed to assess students' listening and speaking abilities though the curriculum was designed on communicative aspects of the language. Additionally, it was highlighted by the teachers in the present study that the decrease of weighted mean of English in LGS caused students to lose their motivation to study the course attentively. It was emphasized that students prefer to spend more time

and energy on the other subjects which enable them to get higher scores in the examination. These findings may help us to understand the factor behind the failure of the objectives of curriculum in terms of communicative competence. Considering all these, central examinations can be argued as playing an important role in teaching-learning processes and affecting predominant activities in classroom practices regardless of what the curriculum recommends. In this context, it can be argued that classroom practices are mostly based on lecturing rather than process-oriented learning and communicative activities.

The third factor spotted by teachers as a challenge in implementing the curriculum is lacked interest of students and their negative attitudes towards learning a foreign language. According to the teachers, students are not willing to participate in activities and some of them regard English as no need to learn because of either their environment they live in or the low-weighted mean of English in LGS. This present finding seems to be consistent with other research which found lack of interest and negative attitudes towards English impaired the learning process. For example, Mersinligil (2002) found out that background characteristic of students like social and economic conditions of families affected students' perception, and their negative attitudes caused failure. In accordance, Ocak et al., (2013) and Batdı (2015) found out similar results indicating students had lack of motivation to participate classroom activities and negative attitudes towards learning a foreign language. Yanık (2007) concluded that this could result from overloaded programme and insufficient class hours which lead teachers to ignore listening, speaking, and writing practices. In the same vein, in the present study, teachers highlighted that they could do better to have students involved in activities if they did not have to rush. It seems possible that students' lack of interest may also cause from not only their environment and negative attitudes towards English, but also the problems due to overloaded programme, lack of time and unauthentic and insufficient textbook. Students, therefore, seems to have lack of prior knowledge and self-esteem to attend the classroom activities.

Another important point about lack of interest is that students are obliged to participate in the same classroom no matter they are willing to study in intensive programmes. Some teachers indicated that though the students are not willing to study English in intensive programmes- in which they may have up to 14 hours a week, they

are forced by their parents and exposed to learn English in the intensive programme. This situation results from either all the classrooms in the school are intensive and the students must attend these classes; or parents want to register their children in these classrooms without considering child's will. Consequently, these students may have lack of interest in the lessons and impair the classroom atmosphere in teaching process. As one of the teachers exemplified the situation "The child does not want to eat the meal, but you force him/ her to eat it fourteen plates every week". This dilemma is one of the most important problems in 5th grades of intensive programme. Considering all these factors, it can be argued that students' negative attitudes or low level of motivation towards learning a foreign language cause a vital problem in learning-teaching processes and implementing the curriculum as desired.

The last but not the least important problem hindering an effective implementation of the curriculum is classroom environment. As for data obtained from teachers, classrooms are crowded with mixed level students which affect the teaching process negatively. Teachers additionally commented that physical conditions with lack of audio and visual materials like smartboards or loudspeakers were not suitable to conduct leaner-centred or communicative activities. They indicated that because of the number of the students, they did not have enough time to monitor each student and give feedback about their speaking or writing activities. Meanwhile, they commented they had classroom management problems, especially about the noise, which is adverted as a problem by their administrators, as well. Some of the teachers are anxious about the misconception they would be claimed as unqualified to manage their classes. The result about classroom environment in terms of class size and lack of necessary equipment agree with the other studies (Harman, 1999; Er, 2006; Aküzel, 2006; Yanık, 2007; Erkan, 2009; Örmeci, 2009; Yaman, 2010; Dönmez, 2010; İnceçay, 2012; Ocakmet al., 2013; Dinçer, 2013; Erdem & Toy, 2017) in which class size and lack of necessary materials were reported as a challenge in implementing the curriculum in lower secondary schools.

The lack of prior knowledge and the mixed level of students were also indicated as a problem since it was difficult to balance the level of instructional activities. Teachers have problems in doing activities which would be appealing for all students with different levels and trying to keep good students motivated while they are supporting students with

lack of knowledge. Likewise, Dincer & Koç (2020) reported mixed-ability classes were one of the most important problems teachers faced.

All these problems about the density of the programme and insufficient textbooks, obsession with central examination (LGS), negative attitudes of students towards learning English, crowded classrooms, lack of time, lack of necessary equipment, lack of prior knowledge and mixed ability classes were found to be leading factors hindering the effective implementation of the curriculum. These results agree with the findings of previous studies which were conducted for different grades of lower secondary state schools. What is added to the literature is that the present study showed an overall picture of challenges the teachers faced for all the grades in lower secondary schools. Their views provided us a valuable feedback to understand the reasons of the gap between planned and implemented curriculum and demonstrated the practicability of the planned programme in micro-level. Although the curriculum was designed considering learning needs and developmental characteristics of learners, the teachers found it unpractical because of the density, the system and the difficulties faced in the process. When all these challenges mentioned above are considered together, it can be understood that they influence each other and may cause a failure. To illustrate, when the curriculum is overloaded, the teachers ignore skills, and focus on lecturing to complete the content in the limited time. Also because of technical problems, allocated time, and class size not much focus is given on process learning, thus students cannot experience the fun part of learning a language but focus on reading and vocabulary for LGS or lose their interest to participate in classroom activities. The findings showed that there is an incongruence between the planned and implemented curriculum. The possible solutions recommended by the teachers for implementation of the curriculum are presented in the following discussion.

5.1.3. Teachers' suggestions for an effective implementation of the curriculum in 5^{th}, 6^{th}, 7^{th}, and 8^{th} grades

The third research question was asked to reveal teachers' requirements and suggestions for the effective implementation of the English language teaching curriculum

in lower secondary schools. Teachers frequently commented similar requirements for all the grades of lower secondary school.

The primary suggestion was about the revision of textbooks. They repeatedly highlighted the necessity of redesigning the textbooks in terms of authenticity, content, and layout. They additionally emphasized that it is difficult to appeal students' attention with the current textbooks which are not technology-based. With the necessity of time and age students grown up, it was suggested by the teachers that textbooks should at least have smart board applications. By doing so, students may like to participate the lessons more when compared to the lessons conducted by books. In addition, they re-emphasized that textbooks should be developed in terms of four skills, especially for speaking and listening activities and simplified in terms of number of units and content, vocabulary, and grammar. The teachers who had classes in intensive classes pointed out the urgent and vital need of a textbook which is designed in accordance with the intensive programme for all grades.

The second suggestion was centred upon the allocated time and class sizes. The teachers indicated that they needed more weekly course hours to conduct the recommended teaching-learning processes in their classrooms. In addition, it was revealed that the decrease of the class sizes could enable teachers to conduct more learner-centred activities and monitor and evaluate their progress. Though the objectives emphasize process-oriented learning and communicative activities, the teachers commented it was not applicable to attain the objectives due to the allocated time for the course and class sizes.

The third suggestion was made about intensive classes. The teachers argued that there should be a standardization for the intensive programmes in all schools in terms of weekly course hours, textbooks and students who can participate. Some schools have fewer course hours when compared to others or more tragically students in same grades and in the same school have different weekly schedule. Regarding intensive programmes, the teachers mentioned the significance of separating students via level or willingness to increase the participation of the students in the lessons. By doing so, they believe that the curriculum can be implemented more productively. Another important suggestion the teachers raised about the intensive programmes was that there should be a follow-up

programme after the intensive programme for 5th grades. Though an intensive programme was published by MONE, it was argued by the teachers that it was not applicable due to lack of sources.

The last but not the least suggestion was about the central examination. Teachers believed that LGS should not only evaluate reading and vocabulary knowledge but also speaking and listening skills. Therefore, they believed that both students and teachers would give importance on skills exercises in their learning and teaching processes. On the other hand, the teachers doubted about the weighted mean of English in LGS. While some of them believed the increase of weighted mean of English could motivate students, some others supported it must be decreased or not be included in LGS at all to reduce the anxiety in learning process.

All these suggestions are consistent with previous studies in which a well-designed textbook, language classrooms, standards for selective preparation class (intensive programmes), supplementary materials, more allocated time, and regulations on central examinations system (Dönmez, 2010; Demirtaş & Erdem, 2015; Aksoy et all., 2018; Dilekli, 2018; Dinçer & Koç, 2020) were reported to be needed. It can therefore be assumed that the needs of the teachers did not differ throughout the years when previous studies are reviewed. The teachers in the present study expected developed textbooks, simplification of the curriculum according to the allocated time, lessening class sizes and some necessary arrangements in LGS considering the English language teaching curriculum, as well. To this connection, it is necessary for the authorities to take actions to provide necessary conditions for an applicable and effective implementation of the planned curriculum rather than putting emphasis on innovating it.

5.2 Implications

The present study has shown that the current English language teaching curriculum for lower secondary schools could not be implemented as it is recommended due to the challenges discussed above. Multiple suggestions were also made by the teachers as practitioners to implement it more efficiently. The results of this study also headed remarkable implications for educational practice and further research in English language curriculum in lower secondary public schools.

5.2.1. Implications for educational practice

Based on the suggestions of the teachers and discussions of the results of this study, implications for educational practice and further research are presented in the following paragraphs.

Although the curriculum mainly underlines communicative competence and stresses listening and speaking skills for lower levels which are advocated by CEFR, this study has found that the teachers generally focused on lecturing through reading and vocabulary studies. One of the substantial reasons leading to ignorance of the communicative aspect of English in teaching process was the assessment system of LGS. Students, and teachers consider focusing on the recommended skills as loss of time since they are not included in the examination system. To this connection, it is recommended that either English should be dispensed from LGS examination, or the assessment criteria of English should be redesigned with the objective of the curriculum.

The findings of the interviews have also revealed that the curriculum is overloaded concerning the allocated time for doing activities in communicative context and real-life experiences as recommended in the curriculum. The results of the interviews have shown that the teachers feel anxious to finish the planned curriculum on time and tend to skip listening, speaking, and writing activities due to lack of time. To this connection, it is recommended that the curriculum should be simplified; in other words, the content of the curriculum should be decreased to enable teachers to provide the joy of learning a language in their classroom practices and do activities for the mentioned skills. Concerning the nature of learner-centred teaching, the allocated time should be increased so that the teachers could be comfortable to do learner-centred activities in their classroom practices.

Another important challenge to implement the curriculum successfully was regarded as lack of interest and mixed-ability classes, especially in intensive classes. Students who have negative attitudes or not willing to learn a foreign language are obliged to share same classrooms with the students who are willing and have necessary prior learnings. An implication of this is the possibility that the right of choice which programme to continue, or a level determination test can be provided.

Besides, in the present study it was found that textbooks are not well-written and sufficient for teachers' and students' needs. Besides consisting being difficult for the level of the students and consisting difficult vocabulary, they were regarded as not appealing for students' interest since they were not authentic and well-designed. To reach the objectives as planned in the curriculum, one of the best ways is to develop the textbooks which teachers follow as a practical curriculum. The Ministry of National Education should pay attention on textbooks immediately and receive a professional help from private publishers. Additionally, taking students' comments on the textbooks before being published could lead satisfying results.

Finally, this study has shown that most of the teachers regarded that crowded classrooms are one of the most important factors to implement the curriculum successfully. Besides, schools are also lack of necessary audio materials to enable skill activities in classrooms. Therefore, practical solutions to class sizes and lack of supporting materials problems should be found and the planned curriculum should be able to be implemented in all lower secondary schools.

5.2.2. Implications for further research

The implications for further studies are presented in the following paragraphs. These implications may help further research on English language curriculum for lower secondary public schools.

The present study was conducted in İstanbul, a city of Turkey. It would be interesting to conduct similar studies in different cities; and comparing the experiences of teachers can contribute to the literature.

This study was based on the views of the teachers about the implementation of the English language curriculum in lower secondary public schools and the data was collected through interviews with a qualitative research design. The results of the study can be varied through different type of data collection such as questionnaires or observations.

This study did not aim to evaluate the outcomes of the curriculum, in other words it did not investigate to what degree could the objectives were attained by the students. It did not give a detailed information about the outcomes of the four skills. A further study could assess the attainment of the objectives by the students.

Furthermore, though the findings revealed the textbooks were not efficient for an efficient implementation of the curriculum, the present study was not conducted to evaluate textbooks. Further work needs to be done to evaluate the textbooks used in lower secondary schools.

Lastly, the present study included teachers for a curriculum evaluation. Considerably, more work will need to be done by investigating students and administrators for an inclusive evaluation.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) Global Scale

PROFICIENT USER	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
INDEPENDENT USER	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
BASIC USER	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

5th grades

1. Sınıf yoğun İngilizce programı hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?
2. Programı beğeniyor musunuz?
3. Ders dağılımı nasıl yapılıyor?)
4. Program amaçlarıyla öğrenci kazanımları uyuşuyor mu?
5. Ek kaynak kullanıyor musunuz? Kullanıyorsanız seçimlerinizi nasıl yapıyorsunuz? Seçtiğiniz kaynakları yeterli buluyor musunuz?
6. Programı uygularken zorluklar yaşıyor musunuz? Yaşıyorsanız neden?
7. Öğrenciler 5. Sınıf yoğun İngilizce programını hangi seviyede bitiriyor?
8. Okulunuzda farklı 5. Sınıflarda sizce program farklı uygulanıyor mu? Uygulanıyorsa neden ve nasıl?
9. Sınıf programı için bir öneriniz var mı?

6th grades

1. 6. Sınıf müfredatı hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz? Sizce yeterli mi?
2. Okulunuzda 6. Sınıfların kaç saat İngilizce dersi var?
3. Program amaçlarıyla öğrenci kazanımları uyuşuyor mu?
4. Ek kaynak kullanıyor musunuz? Kullanıyorsanız seçiminizi nasıl yapıyorsunuz? Seçtiğiniz kaynakları yeterli buluyor musunuz?
5. Programı uygularken zorluklar yaşıyor musunuz? Yaşıyorsanız neden?
6. Öğrenciler 6. Sınıfı hangi seviyede bitiriyorlar?
7. Sınıf programı için bir öneriniz var mı?

7th grades

1. Sınıf programını nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz? Sizce yeterli mi?
2. Okulunuzda 7. Sınıfların kaç saat İngilizce dersi var?
3. Program amaçlarıyla öğrenci kazanımları uyuşuyor mu?
4. Ek kaynak kullanıyor musunuz? Kullanıyorsanız seçimizi nasıl yapıyorsunuz? Seçtiğiniz kaynakları yeterli buluyor musunuz?
5. Programı uygularken zorluklar yaşıyor musunuz? Yaşıyorsanız neden?
6. Öğrenciler 7. Sınıfı hangi seviyede bitiriyorlar?
7. LGS ders işleyişinize etki ediyor mu? Etki ediyorsa nasıl?
8. Sınıf programı için bir öneriniz var mı?

8th grades

1. Sınıf programını nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz? Sizce yeterli mi?
2. Okulunuzda 8. Sınıfların kaç saat İngilizce dersi var?
3. Program amaçlarıyla öğrenci kazanımları uyuşuyor mu?
4. Ek kaynak kullanıyor musunuz? Kullanıyorsanız seçimizi nasıl yapıyorsunuz? Seçtiğiniz kaynakları yeterli buluyor musunuz?
5. Programı uygularken zorluklar yaşıyor musunuz? Yaşıyorsanız neden?
6. Öğrenciler 8. Sınıfı hangi seviyede bitiriyorlar?
7. LGS ders işleyişinize etki ediyor mu? Etki ediyorsa nasıl?
8. Sınıf programı için bir öneriniz var mı?

APPENDIX C

The Approval of MONE

Bu belge, Yükseköğretim Kurulu tarafından 19.01.2021 tarihli "*Lisansüstü Tezlerin Elektronik Ortamda Toplanması, Düzenlenmesi ve Erişime Açılmasına İlişkin Yönerge*" ile bildirilen 6689 Sayılı Kişisel Verilerin Korunması Kanunu kapsamında gizlenmiştir.

APPENDIX D

Ethics Committee Approval

Bu belge, Yükseköğretim Kurulu tarafından 19.01.2021 tarihli "*Lisansüstü Tezlerin Elektronik Ortamda Toplanması, Düzenlenmesi ve Erişime Açılmasına İlişkin Yönerge*" ile bildirilen 6689 Sayılı Kişisel Verilerin Korunması Kanunu kapsamında gizlenmiştir.

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