



A Qualitative Research on 2nd Grade Teachers' Opinions about 2nd Grade English Language Teaching Curriculum

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ABSTRACT. This study provides an account of 2nd grade EFL teachers' opinions about 2nd Grade English Language Teaching Curriculum. Data were collected through interviews with 14 teachers working at ten different state primary schools in five different cities of Turkey. Interviewed teachers had an experience in teaching ranging from one to twelve years. Data were analyzed by qualitative techniques according to pre-determined twenty categories standing for each of the interview questions. The results of the study indicated that teachers appreciated the 2nd Grade English Language Curriculum in terms of the need analysis, evaluation and assessment, age and level relevance, teaching techniques and vocabulary teaching while they criticized it mostly in terms of lack of extra materials, unsuitability to be applied in crowded classrooms, uncertainty of cultural focus, lack of necessary learning techniques, motivation for students and parents.

Key Words: *Foreign Language Teaching, English Curriculum, Program Evaluation*

INTRODUCTION

Individuals growing and living in today's societies require a second and even third or fourth language to various degrees after they have learnt their first language. In such a world, English is regarded as "one of the most important means for acquiring access to the world's intellectual and technical resources" (Talebinezhad & Aliakbari, 2001, p.2). It also builds bridges between the self and the others. Due to its role as a lingua franca of the past and today's globally changing world, English Language Teaching and Learning implies a process loaded with global characteristics. Therefore, teaching and learning of English as a foreign language (EFL) attracted the attention of a wide range of educational authorities. Eventually, it has taken its place in the curricula at various degrees of school all over the world.

Initially, arguments about the optimal age to start to learn EFL have intensified. A rich array of advantages of starting to teach English at early ages is confirmed by different researchers in the related literature (Halliwell, 1992; Lenneberg, 1967; Krashen, Long, & Scarcella, 1979). Then, not only in Turkey but also in other countries, teaching English at an early age and making it compulsory at the elementary level of the schooling system has become a common policy. And this required well planned, organized, closely monitored and evaluated curriculums to teach English at primary schools (Buttler, 2004). Because it is possible to solve problems occurring at different stages of the life with different reasons through curriculum design process (Towell & Tomlinson, 1999).

With the introduction of 8-year compulsory education in Turkey, English lessons became compulsory in the 4th and 5th grades of state primary schools in 1997-1998 academic year (Official Gazette, 1997). This was based on "The Ministry of Education Development Project" initiated by The Turkish Ministry of National Education and Turkish Higher Education Council (Kirkgoz, 2007).

The main reason that led the government to make English compulsory at the elementary level was to increase learners' communicative abilities in a language acknowledged by many to be a Lingua Franca (Official Gazette, 1997). It was also aimed to exposure students to the foreign language more at a younger age (MNE, 2000). This revolutionary movement was based on the fact that learning a language is important and necessary for following developments in science and technology, and that earlier start to language leads to a better understanding of it (Ministry of National Education, 2000, p.181).

Based on constructivist approach, in 2005 a new revolution was initiated to implement major changes in the subject areas of the primary schools (Topkaya & Kucuk, 2010). This new view of teaching aimed to put the students into the center of the educational processes (Piaget, 1973). Similar to other subject areas, English was also redesigned by implementation of a new language program

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starting with the 4th grades in 2006-2007 academic year and progressing respectively (Official Gazette, 2006).

With the implementation of new curricula in Primary Schools, Topkaya and Kucuk (2010) attracted the attention to a number of research studies on the different dimensions of different subject areas from Turkish, Maths and Science to English. They added that the results of these studies indicated that teachers complain about the difficulty of applying this program due to the size of their classes and lack of material. Moreover, Turkey fell behind many other countries in the results of Prills 2001, Pisa 2003, Pisa 2006, Pisa, 2009 (Cihan & Gurlen, 2009).

The results of aforementioned studies triggered a new revolutionary change in Turkish educational system. As a consequence, in 2013, Turkish educational system went through a change from the 8+4 educational model to the new 4+4+4 system. This resulted in a need for the redesign of current teaching programs. "With respect to English language education, in particular, this new system mandates that English instruction be implemented from the 2nd grade onward, rather than the 4th grade; therefore, a new curriculum which accommodates the 2nd and 3rd grades is necessary" and "takes the needs of younger learners into account" since "children will now receive instruction in English starting at around 6-6.5 years old" (Ministry of National Education, 2013, p.2).

Successful learning experiences are the direct results of a planned curriculum which includes pedagogical activities that make sense to the learner (Dwyer, 1995). Because it stands for an "ongoing, planned intervention that seeks to achieve some particular outcome(s), in response to some perceived educational, social, or commercial problem" (Worthen, Sanders & Fitzpatrick, 1997, p.57). This planned curriculum still needs systematic evaluation since it is an "inquiry process for collecting and synthesizing evidence that culminates in conclusions about the state of affairs, value, merit, worth, significance, or quality of a program..." (Encyclopedia of Evaluation, 2005, p.139). Moreover, Scriven (1991) attracts the attention to the role of evaluation in developing the thing which is evaluated by defining it as "the process whose duty is the systematic and objective determination of merit, worth, or value"(p.4). He also claims "without such a process, there is no way to distinguish the worthwhile from the worthless" (p.4). However "curriculum design, application, evaluation and enhancement is a slow process, and subject to a number of extraneous influences which make it impossible to measure with totally scientific precision" (Towell & Tomlinson, 1999, p. 25). On the same basis, MNE accepts that "in spite of careful planning, a curricular model differs in many respects from the one that is put into practice; numerous external factors may affect its application, including school administrators, facilities, classroom resources and materials, teachers, class size, parents, and the students themselves. Therefore, the ultimate success of this program requires the external support, careful planning and commitment" (MNE, 2013, p.4) Olivia (2005) also supports this point putting forward evaluation as the element of an effective curriculum development. But what the problem is the complexity and variety of evaluation approaches arisen "from the varied backgrounds and worldviews of their authors, which have resulted in diverse philosophical, methodological and practical orientations and preferences" (Worthen, Sanders & Fitzpatrick, 1997, p.63). Taking teachers' perceptions of the curriculum into consideration while developing a curriculum may be seen as one of them and it implies a systematic ongoing process in curriculum development. This process requires evaluation to understand whether the plans for the teaching process are effective or not (Brown, 1995.) Richards (2003) claims that effective curriculum development includes "understanding the context of teaching, the needs of teachers and learners, the careful planning of courses and materials as well as the monitoring of teaching and learning" (p.xi). Moreover, as set by Topkaya and Kucuk (2010), the success of a change in education lies in teachers' perceptions of the means of that change since they are the ones to realize those changes in the field and face with the problem. Therefore, it is particularly important that we should have systematic information about the attitudes and perceptions of the teachers on the curriculum of the subject they teach. On this basis, the current study was conducted to find out teachers' perceptions of 2nd Grade English Language Curriculum. This study is significant since it provides good ideas for curriculum planning and helps the curriculum planners. The researcher promises valuable information to a wide range of the addressee to take into consideration in curriculum planning and evaluation. First, they provide feedback about the implementation of the English curriculum for 2nd Grade at Public Primary schools in Turkey. In other words, they give feedback about how the planned curriculum is perceived and implemented by the teachers. Thus, they

help the curriculum developers visualize how their decisions are interpreted and practiced by the teachers and what kind of problems they face in the classroom.

Review of Literature

Literature on English Language Curriculum Research of Schools in Turkey is generally centered around the curriculum for grades ranging from 4th to 8th (Büyükduman, 2001; Cihan & Gurlen, 2013; İğrek, 2001; Mersinligil, 2002; Mirici, 2000; Tok, 2003; Topkaya & Kucuk, 2010; Yanik, 2007; Yuksel, 2001). Most of these studies are conducted in the form of master or doctorate theses in different sites of Turkey. On the other hand, these studies evaluated the curricula from the perspectives of teachers. Yanik (2007) states such studies were carried out after the acceptance of eight year compulsory education. The researchers employed similar survey designs and collected data from the stakeholders about their perceptions of the implementation the related curricula by employing a questionnaire developed by the researchers. They were seen to analyze the data by SPSS. The results of these studies indicated differing views of teachers and students according to their locations, ages, genders, duration of experience and their grades. Most of the students were explored to have positive opinions about the curricula. Yet, there was a conflict between teachers and students in terms of the strategies followed and activities implemented in the classroom. While students stated question-answer and lecture as the most frequently used technique by teachers, teachers claimed to use more learner-centered techniques in the classroom (Yanik, 2007). There also seemed to be conflict between teachers' and administrators' opinions with regard to the communication between teachers-teachers and teachers-administrators.

Teachers were generally found to have negative opinions about the different dimension of New High School English Curriculum (Merter, Kartal & Çağlar, 2012). However, most of the studies on the Primary School English Curriculum explored teachers were satisfied with the curricula in terms of its content, design, statements and achievability of the aims and the suitability of them together with learning-teaching procedures to the developmental characteristics of the addressee (Cihan & Gurlen, 2013; Mersinligil, 2002; Topkaya & Kucuk, 2010; Yuksel, 2001). However, some of them also revealed that teachers found the implementation of the curriculum impossible due to large classes, lack of necessary amount of resources and training on teaching English to young learners as well as constraints of time and heavy content (Mersinligil, 2002; Topkaya & Kucuk, 2010).

It seems possible to have an idea on teachers' opinions about English Curricula for the grades from 4th to 8th through some research studies (Büyükduman, 2001, 2005; İğrek, 2001; Mersinligil, 2002; Mirici, 2000; Topkaya & Kucuk, 2010, Yuksel, 2001; Tok, 2003). However, there is a lack of research on 2nd grades curriculum since it has been just implemented in Turkey. To the researcher's knowledge, there seems to be no attempt in the literature to evaluate the 2nd Grade English Program. Effective program evaluation is a long and an expensive process requiring data from all the stakeholders ranging from faculties of education, inspectors, administrators to teachers, students and their parents and even all other possible impactees (Scriven, 1991). However, constraints of time and fund make it necessary for the researcher to evaluate the curriculum from the perspectives of teachers. Since teachers are the implementers of the instructional plans or any changes and the closest to the problems they cause or may cause, it is particularly important that we should have systematic information about their attitudes and perceptions on the curricula of the school they teach at. Within this perspective, this study provides an account of 2nd grade EFL teachers' opinions about 2nd Grade English Language Teaching Curriculum. Therefore, collecting teachers' opinions about the English curriculum for the 2nd grades through semi structured interview, the researcher offers valuable results in depth to be taken into account by the concerned bodies.

METHOD

Design

This *qualitative* research study was grounded in *ethnographic design* since it aims to gain insight into the teachers' opinions about the 2nd Grade English Program. Creswell (2012) defines ethnographic studies as "qualitative research procedures for describing, analyzing and interpreting a culture-sharing group's shared patterns of behavior, beliefs" and asserts that they can be conducted "when the study of a group provides understanding of a larger issue" (p.462). In the study, culture-sharing group is

narrowly accepted as teachers and their views on the related curriculum are investigated through a semi-structured interview protocol.

Research Questions

This study was conducted to explore the perceptions of Primary School English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers on the English Language Teaching Curriculum for 2nd Grades in Turkey. The aim to reach general insight about teachers' perception on the target curriculum is embodied in the following research questions:

1. What do the teachers think about 2nd Grade English Language Curriculum?
2. Do the teachers have negative or positive attitudes towards the curriculum?
3. Is there a reported perception that the curriculum has a negative or positive impact on their teaching?

Participants

The study employed snowball sampling to specify the teachers to participate in the study. It is a "form of purposeful sampling and typically proceeds after a study begins" (Creswell, 2012, p. 209). This was done consciously to include the convenient participants into the study by asking the participants to recommend other volunteer teachers since it was not easy to reach 2nd grade English Teachers. In that respect, was 14 English teachers who have been teaching English as a foreign language to 2nd graders in 10 different state primary schools in 5 different cities of Turkey participated in the study. The participants of the study have experience in teaching ranging from 1 to 12 years. On the other hand, they have similar socio-economic backgrounds such as the educational backgrounds and their yearly income. This was done consciously to eliminate some other factors other than the concern of the study that may affect the evaluation of the results.

Instrument

To reach the aims of the research, it was a must to have the results that show the language teachers' perceptions of the target curriculum. Therefore, a semi- structured interview with 20 questions was prepared by a by a subject specialist to provide the study with face validity. It was semi-structured because the questions were ready and the researcher was aware of the points to cover with the interviewee allowing them to proceed in their own pace and path. Each of the questions elaborated on teachers' opinions through "*How?, Why?, Why not?, please explain*" type of prompts. The primary motive behind choosing such an in-depth interviews as the instrument of the study was to elicit teachers' evaluations on a wide range of issues about the curriculum in detail.

Procedure

The data was collected from participant teachers by means of in-depth interviews in 2013-2014 academic year. Face-to-face interview occurred in the schools teachers worked or at the places they suggested. With some of the participants the interview was held on the net through Skype. They were initially informed about the purpose of the study and asked to sign *Informed Consent Form* before they participated in the study. They were ensured that all individual opinions were confidential and explained that they were free not to withdraw at any time from the study. Then the interviews with the volunteer teachers ranged from 60 to 90 minutes. The researcher conducted the interviews and asked for more information or elaboration to address the issue in depth.

Data Collection

The curriculum that is developed by Ministry of Education for 2nd graders was taken as a base. The data collection process followed a qualitative perspective. In order to see teachers' views about the curriculum, structured interviews were conducted with the participant teachers. The questions of the interview were prepared by a subject specialist to provide the study with face validity. The primary motive behind choosing interviews as the instrument of the study was to elicit teachers' evaluations on a wide range of issues about the curriculum in detail.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed qualitatively. This means that the researcher employed content analysis method. In other words, the data were gathered from the volunteer teachers through in-depth interviews. First, the data were coded. Then these codes were classified and evaluated according to 20 themes. Considering the research questions, these themes were pre-determined the researcher to stand for each of 20 questions in the interview. After the classification of the responses based on those pre-determined themes, their frequencies and percentages were calculated. The interpretations and comments on the teachers' opinions about the English Language Teaching Curriculum for 2nd Graders were made according to these findings. In order to provide the validity of the findings, member checking was applied. The questions were reviewed by some field experts to ensure content validity. In other words, the summary of the results were sent to 4 of the interviewees through telephones, face-to-face meeting or e-mails and asked them about the accuracy of the results. Then, the results that are related to each research question and obtained from each participant were displayed in separate tables.

Limitations of the Study

The validity of the findings is exposed to some limitations. There are some limitations of this research in terms of transferability to the population. First of all, the study was limited to 14 teachers teaching English to 2nd Graders in five different cities of Turkey. This makes it impossible to generalize the results. A study with a larger amount of teachers from different cities could produce different results. Lack of time, fund and nature of the data collection instrument and study made that impossible. Moreover, in such a study whose participants include teachers, it was impossible for the researcher to control the situations in which interviews were administered. Thus, the place where the interviews were held, the time and duration of answering the questions and the type of assistance provided were some of the conditions which were beyond the control of the researcher.

FINDINGS

In this part, the results of the study will be presented to stand for each research question. The perceptions of interviewed teachers on 2ND Grade English Language Teaching Curriculum will be presented according to the categories based on twenty questions in the interview and the codes extracted from their responses. This part will include four tables embracing each of five questions in the interview.

As shown in the table, five different pre-determined categories based on the first five questions of the interview were listed and codes were formed according to the teachers' answers. In the literature, coursebook was claimed to be one of the most-frequently-used materials at schools and assumed as a part of the program and perceived as the concrete version of the curriculum. These answers seem to validate this claim. Because the teachers seemed to rely on the design and presentation of units in the book while evaluating the philosophy, need analysis, materials and teaching-learning techniques dimensions of the curriculum. Teachers commented on the philosophy of the program positively. While only two of the teachers reported that the curriculum aimed for *"a perfect pronunciation through repetition of some simple phrases"* other teachers pointed out the international, communicative and fun nature of it defining its goal as to *"have a positive point of view to learn a foreign language and to gain the ability of communication in English"*. Additionally, most

of the teachers (57 %) claimed the need analysis was not done before designing phase and attracted the attention to the fact that *"learning and teaching English in Turkey is always important and debating"*.

Table 1. Categories for 1ST, 2ND, 3RD, 4TH and 5TH Questions

Categories	Codes			
<i>Philosophy & Goal</i>	Internationality	Repetition for pronunciation	Learning with fun	Communication
N	2	2	7	3
%	14 %	14 %	50 %	22 %
<i>Need analysis</i>	Systematic		Haphazard	
N	8		6	
%	57 %		43 %	
<i>Materials</i>	Adequate		Inadequate	
N	10		4	
%	71 %		29 %	
<i>Teaching techniques</i>	Adequate		Inadequate	
N	12		2	
%	85 %		15 %	
<i>Learning techniques</i>	Adequate		Inadequate	
N	4		10	
%	29 %		71 %	

However, other teachers (43 %) seemed to find the need analysis unsatisfactory stating

"the curriculum's goals are suitable for this age group. And it achieves its goals"

They also indicated

"the irrelevance of some certain vocabulary items to children".

In terms of teaching techniques of the curriculum, most of the teachers (85 %) regarded the curriculum to present *"a rich array of teaching techniques"*. However, only two of the teachers seemed to have negative attitudes toward the curriculum stating that

"the curriculum was repeating the same old fashioned techniques".

Additionally, most of the teachers (71 %) criticized the curriculum for not having a part to help students learn better. On the other hand, ten of the teachers (71 %) stated that the curriculum was *"successful in defining the materials to be used"*. However some of the teachers (29 %) criticized the curriculum since

"it only gave the coursebook to them to be used in the classroom."

Table 2. Categories For 6TH , 7TH , 8TH , 9TH and 10TH Questions

Categories	Codes		
<i>Evaluation and Assessment</i> N %	Adequate 13 93 %		Inadequate 1 7 %
<i>Approaches and Methods</i> N %	Communicative 8 57 %	Behaviorist 2 15 %	Eclectic 4 28 %
<i>Type of the Curriculum</i> N %	Communicative 8 57 %	Structural 2 15 %	Communicative and Structural 4 28 %
<i>The Balance Between Theory and Practice</i> N %	Balanced 12 85 %		Unbalanced 2 15 %
<i>Teacher-Friendliness</i> N %	Positive 12 86 %	Doubtful 1 7 %	Negative 1 7 %

As stated in table 2, all of the teachers except for one were reported to find the curriculum adequate in terms of evaluation and assessment. One of them, as an example, stated:

"There is not only pen and paper tests and also teacher observation, self and peer evaluation, project and portfolio evaluation in this curriculum. There are many alternatives to evaluate"

However, one of the teachers found that dimension unsatisfactory stating

"there is a guide book but I think it s not enough for inexperienced teachers".

As for the 7th question, two of the teachers (15 %) seemed to find the curriculum behaviorist because of its heavy reliance on repetition while more than half of them (57 %) found it communicative thanks to its focus on dialogues, songs, games, chants.

"The Communicative Approach because listening and speaking are the main skills in this curriculum. The students have not English notebooks and they do not write anything. They hear and speak English in the classrooms" said one of the teachers.

Only two teachers (15 %) reported it as eclectic since

" it both focuses on the repetition and games, communicative activities".

On the other hand, the teachers produced similar responses on the type of the curriculum to those on its approaches and techniques. In other words, those who found it behaviorist also regarded it as structural. Similarly those reporting it to be eclectic stated that it was both

"structural and communicative since it employs methods based on both of them".

On the other hand, the unbalance between theory and practice in the curriculum perception was attributed to lack of enough practice and heavy reliance on knowledge by two teachers (15 %). However, most of the teachers (85 %) found it balanced since it included enough practice for the students. One of them explained himself as

"the curriculum aims to teach firstly and then it gives chance the student to practice it with various methods and techniques".

In terms of teacher-friendliness dimension, the table revealed that one of the teachers (7 %) thought it is not friendly since

"it is overloaded with more than the teacher can give and the students can take".

Although one of teachers (7 %), who was coded as doubtful, stated it is teacher friendly, she stressed that;

"I wish I had more materials such as flashcards and posters than it provided".

The other teachers (86 %), on the other hand, commented in favor of the curriculum as;

"Yes, the teacher is a guide. The students are tourists. They travel in a friendly ship. Because communication is basic."

Table 3. Categories For 11TH, 12TH, 13TH, 14TH and 15TH Questions

Categories	Codes		
<i>Age Relevance</i>	Relevant	Irrelevant	
N	14	0	
%	100 %	0 %	
<i>Level Relevance</i>	Relevant	Irrelevant	
N	14	0	
%	100%	0%	
<i>Grammar Teaching</i>	Available	Unavailable	
N	3	11	
%	22 %	78%	
<i>Vocabulary Teaching</i>	Available	Unavailable	
N	13	1	
%	93 %	7%	
<i>Four Skills</i>	Reading and Listening	Speaking and Listening	Adequate
N	1	12	1
%	7 %	86 %	7 %

As revealed in the table, teachers seemed to find the target curriculum relevant to the age and level of the addressees. They justified their responses as

"the activities and the topics are funny. The students are free in the classrooms as they sing, draw, colour, act, play etc".

It was also reported by the teachers that relevant to the level of

"the students who meet the foreign language first time since the level is beginning and it is not too hard for them".

In terms of specific grammar teaching approach of the curriculum, most of the teachers (78%) believed it did not follow a specific teaching approach to grammar stating that

"grammar is learned unconsciously with especially speaking activities".

However, three of them (22 %) reported the existence of a specific grammar teaching approach, which they believed *"embedded into playing and vocabulary learning"*. However, when it comes to the vocabulary teaching approach of the curriculum, most of the interviewed teachers (93%) praised the systematic approach of the curriculum to vocabulary teaching. They thought

"repetition, visuals are emphasized" while one of them (7 %) stated that *"some words are so irrelevant to their age and level"*.

In the 15TH question, teachers were asked to evaluate the curriculum in terms of the presentation of the four skills. Only one of the teachers (7 %) thought it focused on four skills with *"pair works, listening, reading passages and writing"*.

On the other hand, other teachers (93%) were reported to perceive the curriculum as unbalanced in terms of four skills. One of them criticized the curriculum since it only focused on *"listening and reading some words again and again."*

Other teachers stated the curriculum was efficient in focusing on speaking and listening skills as *"the basic skills"*. This showed the teachers were not consistent in terms of their reactions to the 15TH question

Table 4. Categories For 16TH, 17TH, 18TH, 19TH and 20TH Questions

Categories	Codes			
<i>Cultural Content</i>	Local	Unavailable	Target	International
N	2	9	2	1
%	15%	63%	15 %	7 %
<i>Strengths</i>	Variety of Text Types	Adequacy	Vocabulary Presentation	
N	3	6	5	
%	22 %	43%	35 %	
<i>Weaknesses</i>	Lack of Materials	Lack of motivation	Lack of Necessary Communicative Activities	
N	7	2	5	
%	50%	15 %	35%	
<i>Achievement In Terms of Ultimate Goals</i>	Reachable		Unreachable	
N	13		1	
%	93 %		7%	
<i>Suitability For Teaching and Learning Situations</i>	Impracticality for crowded classes	Unsuitability of Structural Approach	Communication	
N	12	1	1	
%	86 %	7%	7 %	

As shown in the table, it was found out that teachers had different ideas with respect to the cultural focus of the curriculum. While two of the teachers (15%) stressed the focus on target culture elaborating on the main character Teddy in the coursebook and one of them (7 %) stated it had a multicultural focus stating

"the students learn greetings in different languages such as Hola ! (Spanish) , Guten Tag! (German) , Bon Jour ! (French) etc".

On the other hand, two of the teachers (15%) stated that it focused on the local culture without justifying their responses. However most of the teachers (63 %) stressed the lack of a cultural focus in it since

"it was totally based on presenting basic vocabulary items".

As shown in second category, 6 of the teachers (43%) stated that it would be a strength of it to *"donate the students with primary knowledge of English"*. They also found it strong in terms of being funny and relevant to the students' ages and levels. Some other teachers (22 %) saw the strength of the curriculum in its inclusion of various types of texts *"such as stories, dialogues and puzzles."* On the other hand, some other teachers (35 %) pointed out the presentation of the vocabulary items with visuals and games. On the other hand, teachers listed the weaknesses of the curriculum as a lack of motivation for the students to speak, lack of materials to help them learn English effectively, lack of communicative activities. In addition to complaining about *"some irrelevant, tiring words"* and not *"motivating parents help their children"*, they were not also happy with the conditions of their schools stating that the curriculum was

"okay for well-equipped schools but not for our state schools".

Most of the teachers (93 %) stated:

"if conditions in terms of population in the classroom and equipments in the school are well", (...) the curriculum can achieve its ultimate goal".

Only one of them (7 %) was not in the same opinion with the others stating that

"it can maximum achieve eighty percent of its goals".

In terms of the last question looking for comments on the learning and teaching situations for which the curriculum is unsuitable, most of the interviewed teachers (86 %) complained about the populations of their classrooms which makes it impossible to implement the curriculum. One of the teachers set this situation as

"Playing is very effective in learning but if we imagine that we have 50 students in a class, this game will be just waste of time. I will call them "game noisy"

One of the teachers (7 %) reported:

"for grammar and structure based situations this curriculum is not suitable"

However, another teacher complained that it was not efficient in fostering *"communicative atmosphere"*.

As a reaction to the answers of the teachers to interview questions partly proved that the teachers are not able to evaluate the curriculum as expected by a teacher. Their reactions seemed to be vague in their instructional value since they sometimes contradicted with themselves. Moreover, it was explored as an overall of the teachers' reactions to the interview questions, teachers seemed to perceive the course book as the primary and even only tool of realizing the curriculum. Because it was observed by the researcher that teachers relied on the English Language course book for 2nd Grades while reacting to the questions. Therefore, this research, like the other studies in the same area, tended to share a common base with those conducted to evaluate the course book.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this part of the study, the findings are discussed in detail in the sequence of the research questions posed by the researchers.

As a result of the analysis of 14 teachers' reactions to twenty interview questions, it was explored that teachers tend to appreciate the target curriculum to a large extent. More specifically, teachers pointed out the international, communicative and fun nature of it. In addition to their nearly balanced approach to the need analysis of the curriculum, most of the teachers regarded that the curriculum donated them with *a rich array of teaching techniques*. However, most of the teachers criticized the curriculum since it did not present the options to learn better to the students. Within this perspective, the present study explored similar results to those of others who indicated that Primary School English teachers were mostly satisfied with the curricula in terms of its content, design, statements and achievability of the aims (Cihan & Gurlen, 2013; Mersinligil, 2002; Topkaya & Kucuk, 2010; Yuksel, 2001). On the other hand, it came out to be contradictory with some studies which explored that teachers were generally negative about the different dimensions of New High School English Curriculum (Merter, Kartal & Çağlar, 2012).

In terms of teachers' negative or positive attitudes towards the curriculum, four tables presented in the findings sections made it possible to analyze teachers' attitudes towards the target curriculum in detail. As a result, it could be interpreted that interviewed teachers appreciated evaluation and assessment, the balance between theory and practice, age and level relevance, its being teacher-friendly, teaching techniques and communicative nature of the 2nd Grade English Language Curriculum to a large extent. However, it was criticized on the account of lack of adequate need analysis, motivation for the students to speak, materials to help them learn English effectively, communicative activities to help them learn to communicate in the living language. Moreover, teachers also complained about the irrelevant teaching conditions since they make it too difficult to effectively apply the curriculum. Claiming to be provided with only a coursebook, interviewed teachers justified these conditions by lack of extra materials, lack of motivation for students to study English outside the classroom and their parents help their children. These results of the study seemed to be in total harmony with those of Büyükduman (2001 & 2005), Mersinligil (2002), Yuksel (2001) and Topkaya & Kucuk (2010). Although they conducted research on teachers' opinions on 4th and 5th English Language Curriculum, they supported the results of the current study indicating that teachers were mostly content with the curriculum in terms of its design, aims, age relevance, philosophy behind it while they found the implementation of it problematic owing to the crowded classrooms, time constraint and lack of materials such as CDs, photocopy machines, tape recorders etc.

In terms of the impact of curriculum on their teaching, 14 participant teachers did not report that the curriculum had a negative impact on their teaching. However, it may be interpreted intuitively that teachers who complain about the lack of resources and materials are possible to be negatively affected by the curriculum. Yet, it is quite easy to see that they lacked of proper training to evaluate the curriculum since their answers were not comprised of any hints of specific information about the curriculum. As an example, most of the teachers were not even aware of the fact that the curriculum for the 2nd graders did not want them to use notebook as a material in the classroom. In this way, such a curriculum can be difficult for teachers who heavily relied on the use of notebooks in the classroom to foster root learning. This unawareness may lead us to think that the curriculum exerted no impact on their teaching since, as revealed by Zincir (2006), teachers designed their lessons taking the coursebook into account rather than the curriculum booklet itself. Because of their observed inability to professionally evaluate it, their reported perception that the curriculum has a negative or positive impact on their teaching would not help us make an interpretation about that issue. However, it may be still claimed as an interpretation that those teachers found that the curriculum can achieve its ultimate goal as long as the proper conditions for the implementation in the classrooms are set.

The curriculum specific nature of this research question makes it impossible to compare the results with those of other studies. Because there seems no study on this hot issue yet. However, it may be thought that the study may be in parallel with the results of the study conducted by Cihan & Gurlen (2013) on teachers' opinions on the English language curriculum of the 5th graders. They (2013) explored that teachers positive opinions about its learning fostering structure. On the other

hand, the studies which indicated teachers' opinions that the curriculum loaded too much on the part of the teachers or lacked of necessary materials seemed to contradict the current study (Mersinligil, 2002, Merter, Kartal & Çağlar, 2012; Topkaya & Kucuk, 2010; Yuksel, 2001). The reason behind this argument is that such points may have negative impact on teaching process.

Implications of The Study

The current study has explored that the teachers have positive attitudes towards different dimension of the English Language Curriculum for 2nd graders including its communicative nature, reliance on speaking and listening skills, age relevance, presentation of a variety of text types and vocabulary items. However, it also finds out the fact that problematic points the implementation of the curriculum are due to over-populated classrooms, lack of materials. Within this perspective, followings are recommended to be implemented by the addressee:

- ✓ Conditions of the implementation including classroom size and materials should be developed as well as the capacity of teachers to apply the curriculum through effective in-service trainings.
- ✓ Teachers should participate in curriculum committees while developing the aims and objectives of the curriculum.
- ✓ Teachers' evaluations of the curriculum should be taken into consideration while evaluating components of the curriculum.
- ✓ The content of the curriculum should be decreased so that time can be left for review and practice.
- ✓ An embracing approach should be taken to design the curriculum taking recent methods and techniques in English language teaching, the school and classroom contexts and the learner needs and interests into account.
- ✓ More interactive tasks such as games, role-plays, discussions and communicative activities that encourage oral practice should be involved in the curriculum.
- ✓ Teachers should be provided with information about the curriculum covering its purposes, goals and objectives in teachers' books.
- ✓ Attention should be paid to make the written curriculum, yearly plans and the course-books parallel to one another.
- ✓ Course books should be redesigned in terms of their objectives, content and methodologies. The new course-books should be four folded; a student book, a workbook, a CD that involves listening texts and a teacher's book which may help the teachers with design their lessons including examples of feedback techniques, communicative activities and tests.
- ✓ The teachers can be informed about the recent approaches and methods in instruction, evaluation and assessment by continuous pre and in service training.

Areas For Further Research

Curriculum design, application, evaluation and enhancement is an enduring process which may be affected by a number of factors. Therefore, it is impossible to measure it with totally scientific precision (Towell & Tomlinson, 1999). Thus, replications of this kind of studies following the similar research design may indicate some results different than those found in this study. Moreover, those probable differences in the results may help us draw general conclusions on teachers' evaluation of the English Language Teaching Curriculum for 2nd Graders. To better understand this complex phenomenon, further research may investigate:

- ✓ replication of the same study with more teachers with a survey design,
- ✓ replication of the same study where data is collected from both the students and the teachers through triangulation method including survey, interview, observation,
- ✓ the relationship between teachers' teaching beliefs and their interpretations of the curriculum objectives,
- ✓ the consistency between the curriculum objectives and the course books,
- ✓ course book evaluation study incorporating the opinions of not only the students and teachers but also the writers,
- ✓ comparison of the findings of a research carried out with private schools and state schools.
- ✓ evaluation of the curriculum collecting data from all the stakeholders including not only teachers and students but also administrators, parents and even policy makers.

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İkinci Sınıf İngilizce Dersi Programı İle İlgili İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Görüşleri Üzerine Nitel Bir Çalışma

ÖZ. Bu çalışma 2. sınıf İngilizce öğretmenlerinin ilgili program ile ilgili görüş ve farkındalıklarını ortaya koymaktadır. Veri Türkiye'nin 5 farklı ilinde 10 farklı devlet ilköğretim okulunda görev yapan 14 öğretmenle yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme tekniği kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Öğretmenleri mesleki tecrübeleri 1 ila 12 yıl arasında değişmiştir. Toplanan veri görüşme formunda her bir soruya uygun olacak şekilde oluşturulmuş 20 temaya (kategori) göre nitel bir şekilde analiz edilmiştir. Araştırmanın sonuçları araştırmaya katılan öğretmenlerin 2. Sınıf İngilizce Öğretim Programını ihtiyaç analizi, ölçme ve değerlendirme, yaş ve düzey uygunluğu, öğretim teknikleri ve kelime öğretimi gibi açılardan olumlu bulurken ekstra materyal eksikliği, kalabalık sınıflarda uygulanma zorluğu, kültürel odağının bulunmaması, gerekli öğrenme tekniklerinin bulunmaması, öğrenci ve velileri motive edecek yanının bulunmaması gibi açılardan da eleştirdiklerini göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yabancı Dil Öğretimi, İngilizce Dersi Programı, Program Değerlendirme, İngiliz Dili Öğretimi

ÖZET

Amacı ve Önemi: Bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki 2'nci sınıf İngilizce öğretim programıyla ilgili, İngilizce öğretmenlerinin algılarını belirlemek amacıyla yürütülmüştür. Öğretmen görüşlerine dayalı yapılan program değerlendirme çalışmaları programın diğer öğelerini ihmal etmekle birlikte zaman ve bütçe gibi sıkıntılardan dolayı yürütülen programla ilgili doğrudan bilgi toplayabilmek adına etkili bir yoldur. Ayrıca yapılan incelemeler sonucunda İngilizce Öğretim Programlarının değerlendirilmesi 4-8. sınıflar arasında yoğunlaşmıştır. Ülkemizde henüz uygulanmaya başlanan 2. sınıf İngilizce Öğretim Programının değerlendirilmesi adına atılmış ilk adımlardan biri olması açısından bu çalışma yetkililerce dikkate alınması gereken önemli sonuçlar ortaya koymaktadır.

Yöntem: Bu nitel araştırma *etnografik desene* oturtulmuştur çünkü 2'nci sınıf İngilizce programı hakkında öğretmenlerin fikirlerinin iç yüzünü anlamayı hedeflemiştir. Bu nedenle, 20 sorudan oluşan ve uzmanlarca incelenen yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu ile 2'nci sınıf İngilizce öğretim programı hakkında öğretmenlerin fikirlerini toplanmıştır. Toplanan veriler içerik analizi yöntemi kullanılarak nitel olarak analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma soruları dikkate alınarak, temalar, araştırmacılar tarafından görüşmede yer alan 20 sorunun her birini temsil edecek şekilde önceden belirlenmiştir. Öğretmenlerin cevaplarından da kodlar belirlendi. Daha sonra bu kodlar sınıflandırıldı ve 20 temaya göre değerlendirildi. Önceden belirlenmiş bu temalara dayalı olarak verilen cevapların sınıflanmasından sonra bu cevapların sıklıkları ve yüzdeleri hesaplanmıştır. Öğretmenlerin 2'nci sınıfların İngilizce öğretim programı hakkındaki fikirleri üzerine yapılan yorum ve değerlendirmeler bu bulgulara dayanılarak yapılmıştır. Bulguların geçerliliğini korumak için katılımcı kontrolü yöntemi (member checking) uygulanmıştır.

Bulgular: 2'nci sınıf İngilizce Öğretim Programı ile ilgili görüşme yapılan öğretmenlerin görüşleri görüşmede yer alan 20 soruya bağlı olarak oluşturulan kategorilere ve bu öğretmenlerin cevaplarından çıkarılan kodlara göre beşer soruyu içeren dört tablo halinde detaylı sunulmuştur. Ayrıca bulgular görüşme yapılan kişilerin kendi söylemleri ile de desteklenmiştir. Araştırmanın sonuçları araştırmaya katılan öğretmenlerin 2. Sınıf İngilizce Öğretim Programını ihtiyaç analizi, ölçme ve değerlendirme, yaş ve düzey uygunluğu, öğretim teknikleri ve kelime öğretimi gibi açılardan olumlu bulurken ekstra materyal eksikliği, kalabalık sınıflarda uygulanma zorluğu, kültürel odağının bulunmaması, gerekli öğrenme tekniklerinin bulunmaması, öğrenci ve velileri motive edecek yanının bulunmaması gibi açılardan da eleştirdiklerini göstermiştir.

Tartışma ve Öneriler: Sonuçlar öğretmenlerin hedef programı büyük ölçüde beğendiğini ortaya çıkarmıştır. Dahası öğretmenler programın uluslararası, iletişimsel ve eğlenceli yönüne vurgu yapmıştır. Programın dengeli ihtiyaç analizi yaklaşımına ek olarak, öğretmenlerin çoğu programın kendilerine bir dizi öğretim tekniği sağladığına dikkat çekmiştir. Ancak öğretmenlerin bir çoğu programı öğrencilere daha iyi öğrenme seçenekleri sunması gerektiği konusunda eleştirmiştir. Bu bağlamda; etkili hizmetiçi eğitimler ile programı uygulayan öğretmenlerin kapasitesinin artırılmaya çalışılmasının yanı sıra sınıf mevcudu ve materyalleri içeren gibi durumları içeren uygulama şartları da geliştirilmelidir.