A CEFR-based Curriculum Design for Tertiary Education Level

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research was to present a possible EFL curriculum design in line with the principles on the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). The qualitative data of the research were obtained through the interviews with the experts at TEFL through the semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher. The participants of the research were comprised of academics majored in both TEFL and the CEFR who were selected via purposeful sampling method. In order to analyse the qualitative data of this research, the content and thematic analyses were carried out using QSR Nvivo 8. According to the findings of the research, it was pointed out that the development of four language skills in order for language learners to be able to communicate, the consistency of content for learning and teaching EFL skills with real life situations, the employment of communicative language teaching methods, strategies, and techniques, and the use of alternative testing and assessment should be taken into consideration in the process of designing and developing key components of a CEFR-based EFL curriculum.

Key Words: Curriculum design, EFL, learners needs, the CEFR

1. Introduction

Conveying multi-purpose, flexible, open, dynamic, user-friendly and non-dogmatic features, the CEFR provides a real, solid, and common basis for planning of language learning curricula, planning of language certification, and also planning of self-directed learning (Council of Europe, 2001). In addition to this, the CEFR not directly but indirectly gives course designers, textbook writers, testers, teachers and teacher trainers who are directly and deeply involved in language teaching and testing opportunities in order for them to be able to clearly define teaching and learning objectives, content, methodology of teaching-learning, and testing and assessment methods for diagnosing learners' language proficiency.

Besides the aforementioned, within the language education policy frame of the Council of Europe, the CEFR developed by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe aims to promote multilingualism, linguistic diversity, mutual understanding, democratic citizenship, and social cohesion. Regarding the process of teaching and learning a language, it is the Council of Europe which briefly summarises the guiding principles emphasising that language learning is for all citizens, language learning is for learner's needs, interests, motivation, and abilities, language learning is for intercultural communication, language learning is dynamic and for life maintaining the responsibility

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and the independence of the learner in the lifelong process, language teaching is coordinated with the specific objectives, the use of teaching/learning materials and methods, and the assessment of learner achievement (Martyniuk and Noijons, 2007).

Regarding the CEFR and its use in higher education institutions, the studies (Gokdemir, 2005; Demirel, 2008; Maden, Ere and Yiğit, 2009) carried out concerning foreign language teaching process in Turkish higher education institutions point out that in the planning, practicing, and testing and assessment of foreign language teaching, foreign language teaching objectives have been vague and obscure in terms of the principles of curriculum development. It is also revealed as a result of using the CEFR to benchmark that in the process of teaching foreign language, the content and activities presented to language learners have not mirrored real life situations.

Moreover, they have not been designed to improve communicative language skills, and in the testing and assessment process of language learners, in 31 English proficiency exams taken from the websites of the universities including 94 state universities, 33 foundation universities, and 7 private universities, the content of the proficiency exams, the types and numbers of the questions regarding language skills to test learners four language skill level without a common basis vary greatly from an institution to another institution without putting a standard set of testing and assessment criteria in terms of unity both among higher education institutions in Turkey and with European higher education institutions.

It is figured out that at higher education level the practices and arrangements which have been made concerning teaching foreign language so far are not quite effective; furthermore, it is also stressed that a strong claim as regards foreign language teaching policy at higher education institutions should be set forth (YOK, 2007).

In this context the CEFR, which has been regarded as a novelty in the planning, practice and evaluation process of foreign language learning and teaching, presents a general framework for specifying foreign language curriculum objectives, designing teaching and learning content and activity types, opting teaching and learning techniques and strategies out, and defining testing and assessment methods at higher education level in European countries, may be regarded as the final point without any other alternative to stop ineffective and dissimilar foreign language teaching applications especially at Turkish higher education institutions.

When the studies concerning the application of the CEFR carried out in Turkish higher education institutions are examined, it is seen that a reading syllabus (Mut, 2007) and a speaking syllabus (Okçu, 2007) were developed according to B2 level for learners attending university preparatory school, a language curriculum (Ekşi, 2008) based on learner-centred approach was designed according to B2 level, a writing (Barışkan, 2006) and a reading (Bakla, 2006) syllabuses were advanced in line with A2 level, a speaking (Akan, 2007) syllabus was devised in accordance with C1 level, a language school curriculum (Sözen, 2005) was evaluated within the framework of the CEFR and multiculturalism, and the relation between ELP practices and alternative assessment methods was investigated.

In the limited number of Turkish higher education institutions, the employment of the CEFR from bottom to top related to specifying key components of foreign language teaching curriculum and its practices in the classroom have just newly started to come into prominence. Regarding the

employment of the CEFR around Europe, the report published by the Council of Europe (2005) and the research put into practice by Martyniuk and Noijons (2007) reveal that 90% of European countries use the CEFR for designing curricula and preparing lesson plans, 87% of European countries employ it to develop measurement and assessment tools, and 76% of European countries utilise it for the planning of teacher training.

Within the context of language curriculum development and testing and assessment in line with the CEFR, a teaching curriculum for Spanish learners (Garrido & Beaven, 2002), a Chinese proficiency exam (Chao et.al, 2010), and computer-aided diagnostic tests (Alderson & Huhta, 2005) were developed. In addition to this, by Pizorn (2009) within the framework of the CEFR, proficiency levels in four language skills of learners attending primary and secondary schools in Slovenia were specified, and by Maris, Noijons and Reichard (2009) a study regarding the benchmarking of videotaped oral performances of learners at different language levels in terms of the CEFR was carried out.

2. Significance of the Research

Concerning foreign language teaching when curricula of higher education in European countries are examined, the CEFR is seen to have an important role in specifying learning objectives in line with the CEFR levels and planning of language teaching and learning process, the heart of education. When European countries reports published by the Council of Europe are looked through in detail, it is obviously seen that in Luxemburg (Grand Duchy of Luxembourg Language Education Policy Profile, 2005-2006), designing the objectives and content dimensions of language curricula considering the social and academic needs of the learners according to communicative tasks in accordance with the CEFR and redesigning the qualities of testing and assessment methods are very substantial. In the report as regards Lithuania, it is stated that in the process of learning and teaching a foreign language learners are expected to progress personal, social, communicative, critical thinking and problem solving skills which are given much credence in language curricula; moreover, in the content dimension of curricula, the preparation and design of meaningful activities for learners which would enable them to advance communication skills along with linguistic and cultural skills, are greatly taken into consideration in developing curricula based on the CEFR language levels from A1 to C2 (Lithuania Country Report, 2003-2004).

Likewise, in Estonia it is pointed out that the content of foreign language teaching curricula support language learners' communication in terms of daily life and academic life. Besides, in higher education institutions language learners are supposed to reach B2 language level at the end of the foreign language education (Estonia Language Education Policy Profile, 2010). It is underlined in the report related to Austria that foreign language curricula are developed in the direction of the principles of language levels defined by Council of Europe, which enables language learners to communicate in personal, social, and professional life by supporting lifelong learning (Language and Language Education Policy in Austria, 2008). Similarly, language curricula generally playing a significant role in developing learners' communication skills and mutual cultural understanding are basically and philosophically based on learner-centred approach, communicative language teaching approach, and action- oriented approach (Armenia Language Education Policy Profile, 2009).

As is mentioned in the countries above, the development of language curricula is in line with the CEFR and it is aimed for learners to be able to reach B2 language level in Poland, too. In the process of developing language curricula, the core curriculum representing foreign language teaching objectives, language teaching applications, personal and academic needs of language learners and reflecting national foreign language philosophy serves actually a general framework for education institutions (Poland Language Education Policy Profile, 2005; Poland Country Report, 2005). In parallel with the applications in Poland, the importance of core curriculum mirroring foreign language teaching targets and language applications and showing national foreign language philosophy is also emphasised in Slovenia. In the course of developing foreign language curricula needs of language learners, improvement of creativity skills of learners, motivation, learning to learn skills of learners, and autonomous learning are focused on and supported based on integrated language skills teaching approach and communicative language teaching approach (Slovenia Country Report, 2003; Slovenia Language Education Policy Profile, 2010).

As the practices in aforementioned European higher education institutions are taken into consideration, it is clearly understood that the CEFR is a highly common, functional, and flexible tool with which European countries have been able and are able to employ to specify needs of language learners and put into practice the essentials of teaching and learning languages.

In this research, through the views of experts at TEFL and the CEFR, it is aimed to determine the needs of language learners, their content needs as well as their needs of teaching methods with their needs of testing and assessment. Besides, in the light of the data obtained from the interviews it is aimed to present a possible EFL curriculum design for higher education institutions. Within this framework, the following research questions are constructed:

1. What do you think ELLs need in an EFL curriculum in line with the CEFR?

2. What content do you think ELLs need in an EFL curriculum in line with the CEFR?

3. What teaching method do you think ELLs need in an EFL curriculum in line with the CEFR?

4. What testing and assessment approach do you think ELLs need in an EFL curriculum in line with the CEFR?

3. Methodology

In this study, it is aimed to present the views of the experts concerning what ELLs need to be exposed in the process of learning English as a foreign language. This research is conducted as phenomenology design of qualitative research. Phenomenological design forms a suitable ground for phenomenological researches which are comprehended but not grasped in a deeply and detailed manner (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2009).

3.1. Participants

For this research 22 academics, 11 of whom were from home country and 11 of whom from the UK, were intentionally chosen among the ones having majored in both TEFL and the CEFR in order not to compare and contrast their views over this issue but to shed a crystal-clear light on the process and

components of teaching and learning English as a foreign language and designing a curriculum based on the principles of the CEFR in the light of their views. Among the participants from home country, there are 7 academics having specialised on the subject area at higher education level with between 5 and 10 years working experience. Also, 4 academics with PhD degrees who are experts in the subject area having between 11-16 years working experience participated in the research. Among the academics from the UK, there are 6 participants being experienced on the subject area with between 10 and 15 years working experience and 5 participants who are specialists in the subject area with between 16-19 years working experience took part in the research.

The qualitative data are collected by using a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher. In the course of developing data collection instrument, subject area is carefully reviewed and interview questions are designed and formed to be clear, unidimensional, and non-directive in accordance with 4 research questions of the research along with the alternative questions and probes to enhance the participants understand the interview questions better and to obtain profound and richer data. Afterwards, in the direction of specialists' critiques in the field of Curriculum Development and Design, Teaching English as a Foreign Language, Testing and Assessment, the semi-structured interview questions are restated.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

In the pre- interviews, the academics were informed regarding the institution and occupation of the researcher and the aims, subject, dimensions of the research as well. Furthermore, the participants were stated that the interviews were going to be tape recorded and none of their opinions would be used for any other purposes but for this research. To analyse the data gathered from the participants, firstly the data were transcribed into written form. Subsequently, each expert was coded as "E" and numbered as "E1, E2, E3, E4...."

Before the content analysis through QSR Nvivo 8, to ensure accuracy of the data the randomly selected interview records of five different participants were handed out to two experts in the field of testing and assessment specifically on quantitative and qualitative studies. At the end of their coding process, the level of intra-coder agreement was found to be sufficient (.89 for rater 1 and .87 for rater 2).

The analysis was carried out based on the perceptions and views of the experts in TELF and the CEFR. The results of the analyses showed that the experts generally made similar codes as themes. Analysing qualitative data by using content analysis helps to reveal the truth which may be hidden in the data (Dey, 1993; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Straus and Corbin, 1998; Krippendorff, 2004; Creswell, 2009).

4. Conclusion

4.1. Needs of Language Learners

The themes based on the views of the experts regarding the needs of language learners are given in the 1st diagram below.

Diagram 1. The themes based on the views of the experts regarding the needs of language learners are given in the 1st diagram below.
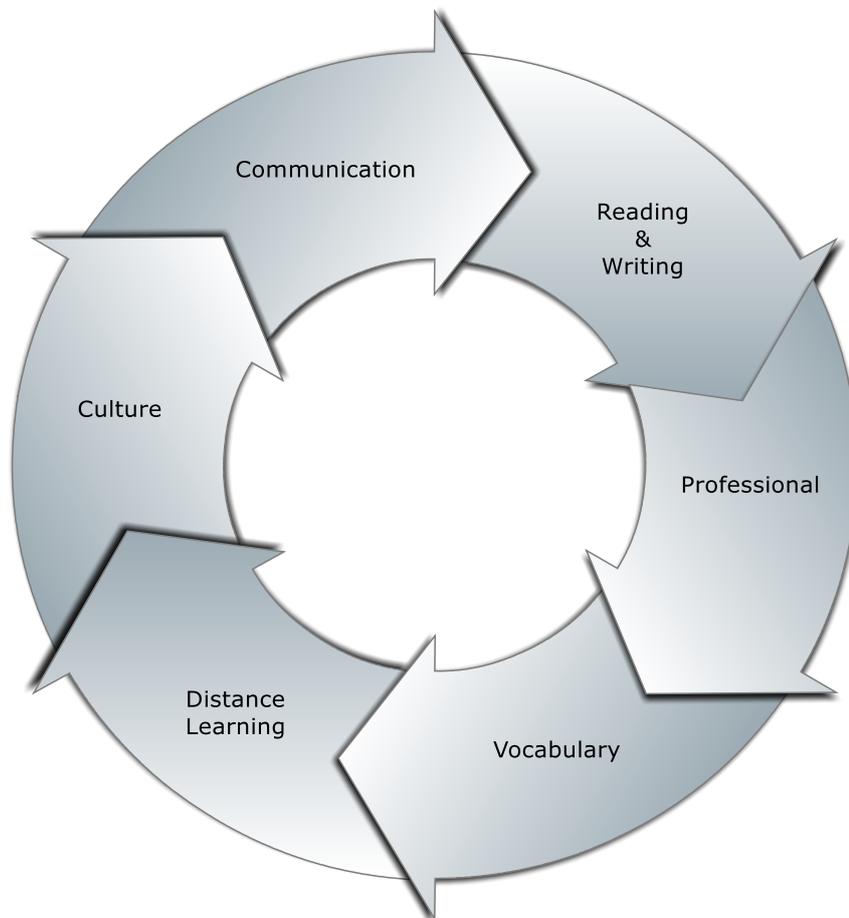
As a result of the interviews conducted with the experts, the general consensus among interviewees is that the needs of the learners are mainly on conducting communication, reading and writing skills. For example, some interviewees vocalise some ideas by highlighting the aforementioned issues in the following statements:

"… a learner's principal aim is to be able to speak the language and communicate with others at desired level…" (E2, E4, E8, E10, E14, E19…).

"… learners want to have the ability of speaking fluently…" (E8, E17, E19, E21, E22…).

"…one of their basic needs is to interact with each other either in classroom or out of classroom…" (E10, E14, E3…).

One of the other interviewees also expressed the importance of communication ability in a foreign language: "… in my opinion their basic need is to be able to communicate with each other in the class and outside the class…" (E13).

 Concerning the need for reading and writing skills, some of the interviewees vocalized their thoughts:

"To me, language learners need to learn and improve how to write and take notes effectively" (E8, E10, E12…).

"In the process of learning and teaching especially writing and reading skills should be taken into consideration as the primary needs" (E16, E21, E22…).

"At the same time writing, report writing and reading books and texts concerning their own fields are the fundamental needs of language learners" (E8, E19, E20…).

Based on the expressions of interviewees, it is concluded that language learners' needs should mainly be centred on language skills especially speaking, reading, and writing skills. Other needs focused on by the academics are content based instruction needs, vocabulary acquisition needs, distance education needs, and culture needs. These findings of the research are parallel with the following studies given below in that Çuvalcı (2000) in his study regarding learners attending higher education institutions points out that that English language learners mainly tend to improve their speaking ability. The study, aiming at defining needs of learners in the field of teaching English, conducted by Cihanoğlu (2001) at a higher education institution shows that language learners are eager to improve speaking and reading comprehension abilities. A similar study carried out by Tavil (2003) at a higher education institution reveals that language learners need to acquire speaking ability, understand what they listen and what they read and learn reading techniques.

Similarly, another study conducted by Deniz and Uysal (2010) shows that it is important for people coming from different cultures to communicate and understand each other in the fields of occupation, education and other common places. Communication is also focused on in the study of Eurydice (2001) entitled Profile of Foreign Language Teaching in Schools in Europe, after 1990, the needs of the learners about conveying communication, self-expression, and learning four language skills equally in a foreign language are regarded as significant while developing foreign language curriculum in Europe. These results show parallelism with the results of this study implying that the basic needs of individuals during the process of learning a foreign language is to improve communicative skills. In this regard, communicative skills can be considered to be the most important aspect for language learners in the process of their learning first or foreign language. In other words, as communicative skills are of the outmost importance in language learning, in the process of language curriculum development curriculum experts must bear in mind this point.

In addition to that, in the process of developing foreign language curriculum, objectives of teaching are needed to be defined considering needs of the society and needs of the learners. Nunan (1988)

states that a great many of the foreign language curriculum of many countries are reused by reviewing and improving. It is also emphasised that while deciding on the applied curriculum, syllabuses, materials, instructors, and learners need to be analysed in detail, because it is stressed that social dynamism requires education curricula to be dynamic, and the dynamism of education curricula is only possible if the manpower is directed to objective processes, and individuals are educated regarding social requirements (Arsal, 1998). Individuals are possible to get prepared to the most suitable status and roles by considering needs of the society, qualifications and needs of individuals, and presenting equality of opportunities to them (Varış,1998). In this context, when the literature about this issue is reviewed (Büyükkaragoz, 1997; Demirel, 2004; Ertürk, 1995), it can be stated that needs analysis, society, individuals, and subject area play important roles in development of curriculum. Besides, according to Yalden (1987), learners, instructors, administrators, textbook writers and material development experts are good sources of data in the process of needs analysis.
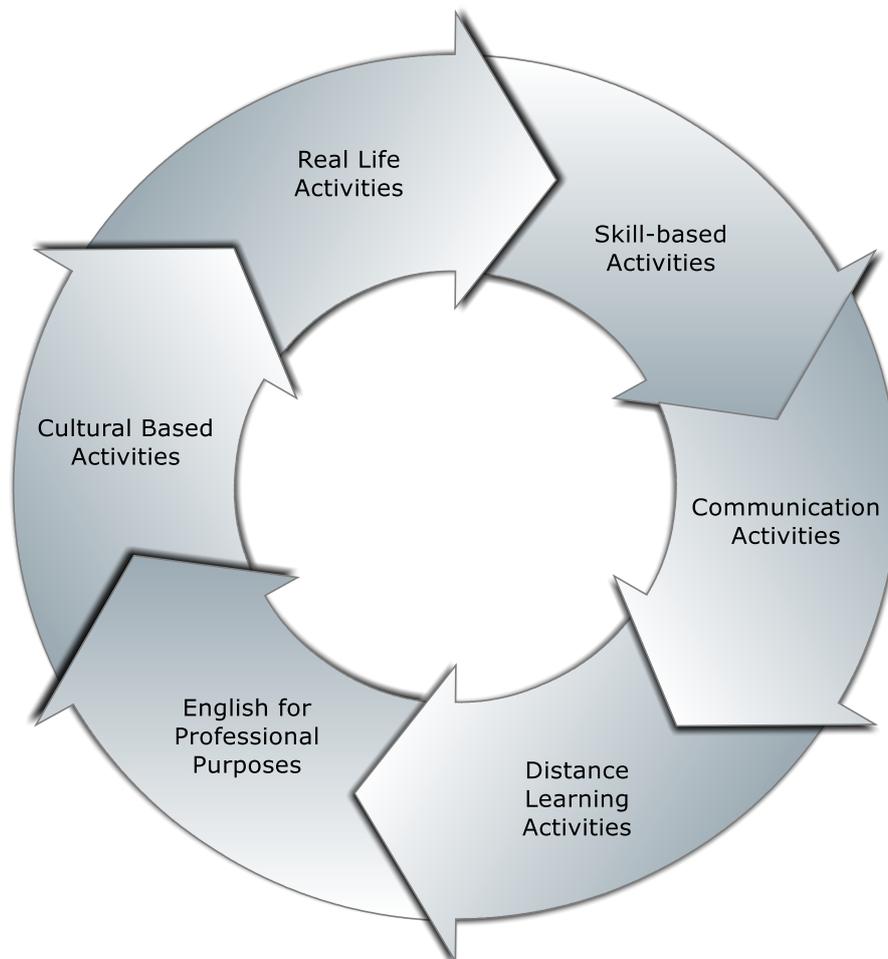
In this study, in the process of needs analysis of language learners; the views of the experts interviewed by the researcher about the subject area are stated. In this sense, needs of language learners in conveying communication and developing reading and writing skills in foreign language are mainly pointed out. Apart from these, content based instruction need of ELLs is also underlined by the views of the experts in the study. When ELLs aware of the fact that they are able to use the foreign language in their academic study or professional work, they become more interested and motivated (Snow et al, 1992). Hence, it is understood that content relevant to students' academic or professional needs help ELLs to facilitate their acquisition of language and content knowledge together. In addition to this, the experts express that in order for ELLs to be effective communicators they are expected to be empowered with sufficient word stock because learning vocabulary items play a very crucial role in all language skills. This finding is in line with the following studies (Gu, 2003; Nation, 2011) in that they assert that the acquisition of sufficient vocabulary is essential for successful language use and without an extensive vocabulary, ELLs are unable to use the structures and functions for comprehensible communication. According to "Horizon Report", published annually by "The New Media Consortium", the trend in accessing information technologies has been evolving towards independence, and learning is becoming more autonomous (Johnson, Smith, Willis, Levine, & Haywood, 2011). Thus, ELLs desire to pursue their education based on the developing technology, seeking ways to learn at their own learning speed, and in their own learning style (Van Der Werf & Sebatier, 2009). These studies draw a close parallelism with the finding of the current study.

Additionally, the experts in the study mentioned that culture is central component of all languages around the world. According to the following researchers (Heath, 1986; Byram, 1988; Gudykunst & Kim, 1992), it is not the context itself that changes language use or how interactants behave, actually it is the meaning associated with that context, and that meaning is determined by the culture. It is vital, therefore, for ELLs to also be effective culture learners.

4.2. Content for Language Learners

The themes constructed in line with the views of the experts related to designing content and activities for language learners are given in the 2nd diagram below.

Diagram 2. The themes constructed in line with the views of the experts related to designing content and activities for language learners are given in the 2nd diagram below.

Real Life Activities

Skill-based Activities

Cultural Based Activities

Communication Activities

English for Professional Purposes

Distance Learning Activities

As a result of the interviews conducted with the experts, it is revealed that on the one hand content for learners should mainly be based on real life activities, language skills activities, communication activities, distance learning activities, on the other hand to some extent they should also include activities for content based instruction and activities for cultural learning.

Most of the interviewees asserted that content and activities are the most crucial components of teaching process:

"On the basis of daily life and real life, in-class activities need to be chosen and arranged" (E1, E3, E6, E7…).

Another interviewee also mentioned: "In the teaching process content and activities reflecting real life in-class and out-of-class should be presented" (E4, E8, E14…).

Additionally, some of the interviewees assumed that integration of language skills in the process of preparing activities is of great importance. For example, one of the other interviewees said: "Content and activities should be designed in a way to integrate foreign language skills" (E4, E5, E9….).

Another interviewee also mentioned: "In the process of designing the content and activities for reading skill daily newspapers, e-mails and simple manuals mirroring real life could be added in teaching process" (E12).

Some of the interviewees claimed that communicative language activities and content are the real incentives for language learners in the process of foreign language learning by stating:

"In order for language learners to develop their language skills the content and activities could be enriched with pair and group discussions, games and songs" (E2, E18, E22…).

A group of the interviewees stated that blending technology with language teaching could be a significant motivator for language learners. One of them declared: "My opinion is that technology is a crucial component of presenting content of teaching that has to be integrated with the process of teaching languages" (E7).

Another interviewee also uttered: "Such technological tools as wikis, video conferences, and blogs could be more useful and effective in teaching language skills and presenting the content of teaching" (E2).

These results show similarities with the following studies mentioned. In the report published by the Council of Europe (2000) entitled Methodology in Language Learning, in designing content and activities for foreign language teaching process, it is pointed out that task-based learning approach is crucial in many European countries, and in this context, it is stressed that the variety of content and activities related to real life is a must. In another study carried out, the significance of the use of task-based learning approach is laid emphasis on especially the preparation of course content and activities in line with "daily life and real life" principle for higher education foreign language teaching process (Daniel, 2008).

In a similar study, Barna, Kuti, and Nemeth (2008) underline the necessity of task-based communicative activities for language learners to improve their language communication skills, and thanks to this, in the process of foreign language learning, language learners are able to perform real communication. Moreover, it is expressed that distance learning platform provides language learners with real communication atmosphere, and it is highly motivating for most language learners (Barna, Kuti, and Nemeth, 2008; Boulon, 2008). In the research conducted by Pietila (2009) to get language learners' views about authentic and artificial materials, it is pointed out that the use of authentic materials in language classrooms is regarded as useful and beneficial by the majority of the language learners.

In this context, it may be concluded that in the planning of foreign language teaching process, the design of the content and activities should be in accordance with real life, and distance learning platform presenting rich learning environment to language learners is essential. Furthermore, action-oriented approach, communicative language teaching approach, and task-based learning approach, which could enable language learners to employ foreign language skills effectively in the process of learning a foreign language, may be regarded as the fundamental approaches in designing of content and activities. Hancock (2010) lay stress on the necessity of planning of foreign language curricula based on action-oriented approach to improve language skills of language learners rather than grammar teaching. Within the framework of communicative language teaching approach, Little (2007) points out that language content and activities should be diversified as reception, production, interaction, and mediation for language learners.

In task-based learning approach, the emphasis regarding the preparation of content and activities is put on the necessity of real-world context in terms of four domains of language use- public, personal, educational, and professional. With the support of National Centre for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL), the research done by Jacobson, Degener, and Gates (2003) to look into the effect of using authentic materials in language classrooms puts forwards that bringing texts which are in line with language learners' lives, needs, and interests into classrooms is fairly effective in the development of their language skills and reading skills.

In parallel with the above aforementioned on teaching and learning approaches, distance learning platform, regarded as one of the rich learning environments, fosters learners' language autonomy in learning a foreign language process, and progresses learners' language, communication, and social skills (Driscoll, 2000). When the literature as regards distance learning practices is reviewed, it is seen that there are a number of researches and studies which set forth that distance learning applications in the process of teaching and learning a foreign language are effective (Garcia & Molina, 2009; Ming & Bidmeshki, 2004; Yates & Delgado, 2008; Ybarra & Green, 2003).

For many scholars, incorporating cultural elements intertwined with language itself into foreign language curricula is supposed to be indisputably an integral part of TEFL curriculum. Besides, it is claimed that at any rate, foreign language learning is foreign culture learning, and, in one form or another, culture has implicitly been taught in EFL classroom (Kramsch, 1993; Byram, Morgan et al., 1994; Straub, 1999).

Consequently, within the scope of the results of second research question, in the process of developing foreign language curriculum, it is pointed out that the selection and design of content and activities should be in the direction of language learners' needs which may be in personal, public, educational and professional domains. Moreover, as language learners are active participants of language learning process, it may highly be advisable that the fundamentals of foreign language curriculum should be based on action-oriented approach, communicative language teaching approach, and task-based learning approach including professional and cultural oriented activities along with the supportive distance learning platforms.

4.3. Methods, Strategies and Techniques for Language Learners

The themes generated in conformity with the views of the experts concerning the organization of learning situations for language learners are given in the 3rd diagram below.

Diagram 3. The themes generated in conformity with the views of the experts concerning the organization of learning situations for language learners are given in the 3rd diagram below.

Drama-based Learning

Communicative Language Teaching

Project-Based Language Learning

Cooperative Language Learning
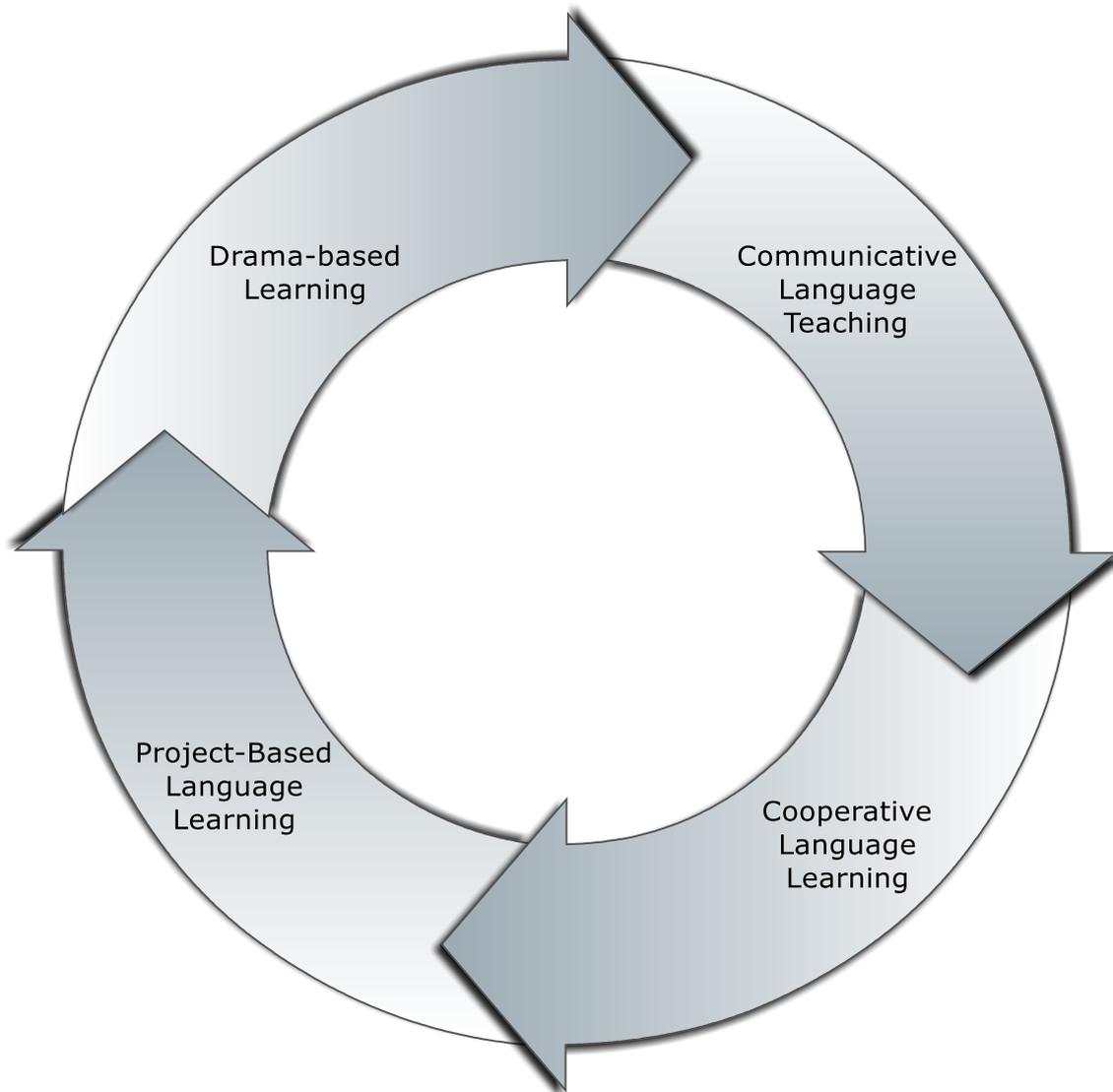
As a result of the interviews carried out with the experts, it is revealed that the approaches that are likely to be followed in the process of teaching and learning a foreign language include communicative language teaching, cooperative language learning, project- based learning, and drama-based learning. These findings draw parallelism with the studies carried out by the following researchers (Gardner, 1996; Berman, 2002, Christison, 2005).

Regarding methodologic teaching needs of language learners, most of the interviewees held the idea that communicative language teaching approach is an indispensable part of language teaching process. They attach great importance to this approach. For instance, one of the interviewees said:

"The philosophy of foreign language teaching should be based on communicative approach" (E1, E12…).

One of the other interviewee also expressed: "Instead of teaching grammar intensively, actually activities suitable to real life on the basis of communicative approach need to be included in teaching process" (E10, E13, E20…).

Another interviewee articulated: "In order for language learners to be active participant in learning process communicative strategies and tactics should be employed by instructors in the classroom setting and cooperative learning in the process of designing activities for language learners could be taken into consideration much" (E19, E20, E21…).

To be effective, foreign language curriculum should contain such types of activities and tasks enabling learners to develop language competences as roleplay, drama, simulation, and language games, which are typically employed in communicative activity- based language teaching and learning (Barna, Kuti and Nemeth, 2008). Likewise, Littlewood (1981) states that pair and group work strategies are effective strategies to facilitate communication and interaction among language learners. In addition to this, it is stressed that task-based learning and communicative language teaching play a very important role in the integration of language skills (Richards and Rogers, 1986; Richards, 2001) through activities and tasks which should be designed in terms of such strategies and techniques as project work, games, role play, role cards, pair and group work, simulation, and drama (Richards, 2006; Byrne, 1986; Holden, 1981).

Consequently, within the scope of the results of the third research question, it is pointed out that in the organization of learning situations, activities and tasks should be based mainly on the principles of communicative language teaching. In line with communicative language teaching approach, multiple intelligence, inference-based learning, project-based learning, and cooperative learning activities and tasks based on pair/group work with drama, games, and projects could be taken into account in the in the process of developing a foreign language curriculum based on the CEFR.

4.4. Testing and Assessment Methods for Language Learners

The themes consistent with the views of the experts concerning the testing and assessment of language learners are given in the 4th diagram below.

Diagram 4. The themes consistent with the views of the experts concerning the testing and assessment of language learners are given in the 4th diagram below.
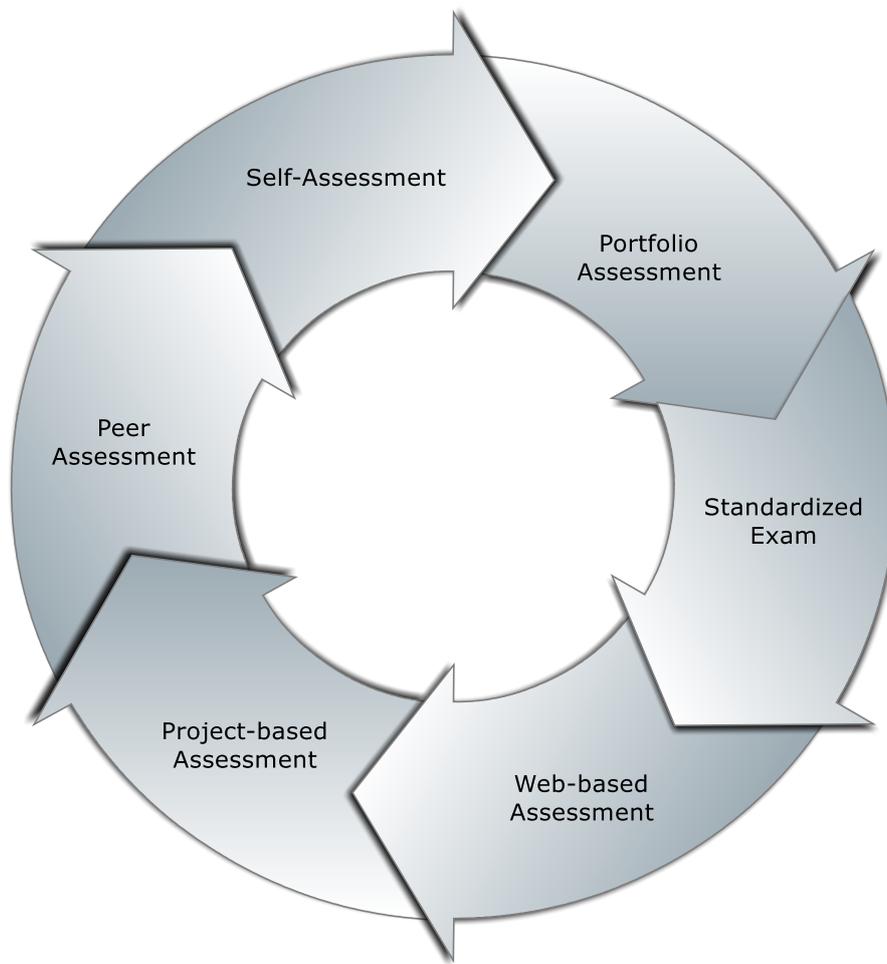
It is clearly seen that the academics' opinions on testing and assessment centre upon the alternative assessment tools like self-assessment, portfolio, project works, peer assessment, web-based assessment, and a standard language test assessment on four language skills. The findings of the research are in accordance with the literature in that in the process of language learning and teaching the importance of positive assessment, in other words focusing on what the language learners are able to do, is more crucial. In this context, most of the interviewees claimed that instead of summative oriented assessment types employing formative assessment instruments could be more accurate to see the big picture. For example, one of the interviewees said that: "Testing of language learners needs to focus on teaching process, in other words, language learners should not be tested through summative assessment types but through formative assessment types" (E1, E5, E8, E9….).

One of the other interviewees mentioned that: "Formative evaluation types such as portfolios, project works, and self-assessment ought to be prioritised in the beginning of designing testing instruments" (E14, E15, E19, E20…).

Another interviewee also asserted that: "Employing a standard exam could come up with meaningful and accurate results for both teachers and learners" (E13, E18, E20, E23…).

Moreover, another interviewee vocalised that: "It is essential for language learners to assess themselves and peers by using rubrics, peer assessment, and checklists in terms of learning how to evaluate their and peers' skill levels and knowledge by means of web-based platform" (E2, E12, E14, E15…).

According to Bahar (2006), self- assessment and peer assessment have the outmost importance in the curriculum of many developed countries all over the world. It is also stated that self-assessment and peer assessment are important for parts of testing and assessing process in terms of language learners and peers (Bama, Kuti, and Nemeth, 2008). For Little (2007), language learners ought to be involved in the process of planning, monitoring, and evaluating of their own learning. In Ames and Gahagan's study (1995) it is mentioned that involving language learners in the self- assessment process enhances their responsibilities on their learning. In Uysal's study which focused on the contributions of language learners to testing and evaluation process (2008), it is also revealed that foreign language learners have positive attitudes towards self- assessment and peer assessment, and foreign language learners regard such assessments as a part of learning process.

It is also pointed out in Prestidge and Glaser's study (2000) that peer assessment and self- assessment enable students learn to appreciate and see the results of their efforts. Furthermore, in the following studies about the European Language Portfolio, it is stated that the opinions of educators about ELP are positive and they desire to reach a higher level about the applications of ELP (Ataç, 2008) , and the language learners attending a higher education institution find project and portfolio based assessments more effective (Yaşar, 2006) and the results of another research reveal that portfolio encourages language learners to take responsibility towards their own learning, to produce more qualified works and make their learning more meaningful (Erdoğan, 2006). Likewise, according to the report published by the Council of Europe (ELP Report, 2009) portfolio enables language learners to develop their autonomy and self-assessment skill. In this respect, it can be pointed out that involving language learners in learning-teaching process by self-assessment is crucial. Considering all these in mind it is clear that the findings on self-assessment, peer assessment and ELP show parallelism with the ideas of academicians studying on the testing and assessing in foreign language teaching.

In the symposium called "Evaluating the Language program in University's Preparatory Classes", Enginarlar (2009) states that a central English testing that assesses students' levels of language is required because of the fact that at higher education institutions there is no common and standard set of criteria in terms of testing and assessment approaches. Further Daloğlu (2009) mentions the importance of maintaining a certain common and standard set of criteria at higher education institutions, specifically in the Schools of Foreign Languages in Turkey. In this regard, the findings of the research show parallelism with the contentions of Erginarlar and Daloğlu (2009).

When the role of learners in testing and assessment process is taken into consideration, it is stated by Nunan (1988) that in learner-centred curriculum which emerged in 1980's, apart from considering learner needs and learner autonomy, learners are also involved in testing and assessing process. Similarly, Oskarsson (1981) states that instead of being passive in the process of evaluating the products and the process it is crucial to gather ideas of learners. On a similar footing, Lewkowicz and

Moon (1985), and Bahar et.al (2006) state that in order to activate learners in every stage of teaching-learning process, student-centred assessment ought to be employed, thus the learning would deepen and become more meaningful for learners. It is stressed by Boud and Falchikov, (1989) that for language learners in order to be involved in the process of testing and evaluating instead of traditional testing and assessment methods, alternative testing and assessment methods, namely, self-assessment, peer assessment, and portfolio gain crucial importance.

Peer assessment is defined as peers' judging the values of learning outputs or products of other students in the similar status (Topping, Smith, Swanson, and Eliot, 2000). On the other hand, self-assessment is defined as the process in which language learners judge their own success or failure considering objectives set by themselves or others (Lewkowicz and Moon, 1985). Further, Mirici (2000) defines language portfolio as a tool in which language learners' performances and success are recorded during the language learning process both in and out of school from planning of language program to evaluation of the program. Moreover, Race (2001) states that self-assessment enhances language learners comment on their own studies and enforces the improvement of learner-instructor communication. Besides, according to Somervell (1993), peer-assessment is not a process of grading, but a process which encourages all language learners to take responsibility and judge the studies of their peers in a fair and consistent way. Also, Ellington (1997) mentions in his study that the peer assessment ought to be well planned, correctly implemented and monitored in order to be successful and efficient in the testing and assessment process. In other words, peer assessment should be implemented in an atmosphere where language learners and instructors and learners and peers show respect to each other.

Technology has also a direct impact on the assessment process of ELLs. Technology can offer affordances that provide new ways of assessing by means of myriad of tools as podcasts, audio files, blogs, or wikis. To put it another way, there is an abundance of tools that could be employed in assessment process of ELLs, which will enable assessors to store, retrieve and share recordings of ELLs. Moreover, technology does not only help with what we assess; it actually can even help us generate relevant materials for assessment (Biggs, 1999; JISC, 2007; Stoynoff, 2012). These studies are in conformity with the finding of the current study.

Generally, it can be concluded that in higher education throughout the process of language teaching, it is necessary to use a standard and common set of criteria which may show parallelism with higher education institutions in European countries, and during the process of assessing language learners' proficiency of the language, both the alternative evaluation approaches enabling learners to play an active role in the course of their learning and assessment periods such as portfolios, project works, self-assessment and peer-assessments supported by web based assessment along with the traditional evaluation methods could be included in the development of foreign language curriculum.

As a result of how much views of the experts are similar to what the Common European Framework really says, the philosophy of the CEFR and views of the experts draw a parallelism in that they regard language learners as social agents with the aim of establishing communication with others in different contexts. As for the content of the language activities, the CEFR puts forwards the fact that language learners' communicative competence should be activated by various real-life receptive and productive language activities that could be contextualised within the public domain, the personal domain, the educational domain, and the occupational domain. This really shows a close similarity to

the views of the expert. Additionally, according to the CEFR, language activities called as language tasks are employed to enable language learners to interact with each other through the use of role-plays, projects, or group work, which is quite similar to the views of the experts in terms of the employment of methods and strategies in the process of teaching a language. As regards testing of language learners in the CEFR, both the CEFR and the experts hold the belief that alternative assessements types icluding self-assessment, portfolio assessment, or peer assessment play a crucial role in the process of learners' evaluation. In line with the views of the experts and the philosophy of the CEFR, a possible curriculum designed is proposed below.

4.5. A Possible CEFR-based Curriculum Design for Tertiary Education Level

Diagram 5. A possible design of learner-centred curriculum.
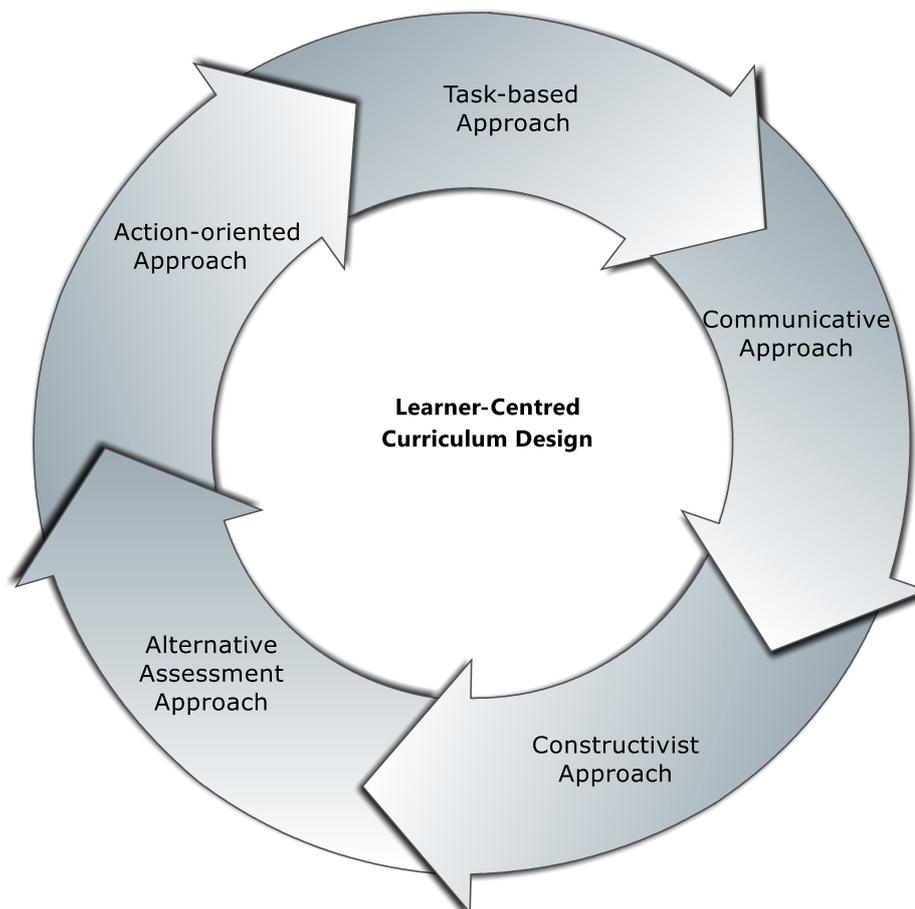
Based on the findings of this research and the CERF in line with the literature regarding foreign language teaching-learning, as learners, their needs, and interests are the basis of a curriculum, in the course of developing a language curriculum being a core element of a curriculum this should be thought on by curriculum experts, which is also emphasized by Harden and Crosby (2000) and Nunan (1988) saying that learners' individual needs, their ages, their cognitive characteristics, and learning styles should be specified in developing language curricula, which refers to learner-centred curriculum. A learner- centred curriculum puts emphasis on shifting learners' roles from passive to active. It also supports learners' autonomy and responsibility (Brandes and Ginnes, 1986; Lea and Troy, 2003; Lynch, 2010). Besides, by taking active roles in foreign language learning, learners are able to construct knowledge through social interaction meaningfully (Bredo, 1999; Cobb, 1999; Vygotsky, 1978), which also enables learners to gain new skills through collaboration with their peers (Jensen, 1998).

In the direction of the learner-centred curriculum, the content and activities for language learners should be selected in accordance with real life situations. Ivan (2007) points out that in order for language learners to be able to communicate with others in personal, public, academic, and professional dimensions, the selection and design of the content and activities should be done based on action-oriented approach and task-based learning approach. Moreover, it is stated that pair and group works, project works, role plays, distance learning, portfolio should be included in the process of developing a language curriculum (O'Neil and McMahon, 2009). In testing and assessment process related to learner-centred curriculum, language learners are entitled to have a word on their own assessment, which underlines (McCombs and Miller, 2007; Gibbs, 1995) that peer assessment, self-assessment, group and project works are indispensable part of this process.

The 5th figure proposes key approaches and components for learner-centred curriculum development process. In the process of language learning, since learners are regarded as social actors who carry out some tasks and duties by communicating with others in four dimensions in the context of constructing knowledge meaningfully, firstly, educational philosophies underlying learner-centred curricula for higher education institutions should be action-oriented approach, task- based learning approach, and constructivist learning approach that are supported by communicative language teaching and alternative assessment methods.

Generally, for higher education institutions the recommendations concerning the development of the language curriculum that could be made within the framework of language learners proficiency levels are as follows,

• Language learners interest, motivation, cognitive characteristics, individual need differences should be taken into consideration.

• Content and activities should be basically opted out and designed to develop their four language skills based on learners' needs

• A part of content and activities should be presented through distance learning platform in which language learners make meaning of their worlds of learning and evaluate their own progress in language skills

• In order for language learners to be able to good communicators both in classrooms and outside classrooms, communicative teaching and learning methods, strategies, and techniques such as drama, games, project works and so forth should be employed in the presentation of content and activities to students.

• In the testing and assessment of language learners' proficiency levels, alternative assessment methods as portfolio assessment, peer assessment, self-assessment checklists or control lists should also be employed along with traditional testing methods.

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