

PRIMARY SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM OF 6TH, 7TH AND 8TH GRADES*

İLKÖĞRETİM OKULLARI İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN İKİNCİ KADEME İNGİLİZCE EĞİTİM PROGRAMLARINA İLİŞKİN GÖRÜŞLERİ

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to investigate how the teachers who have different background characteristics perceive the goals and content of the English language curriculum implemented at the 6th, 7th and 8th grades of public primary schools. The study was conducted during the 2004-2005 school year with 368 English teachers selected from the seven regions of Turkey. The data was collected by using newly prepared questionnaires whose reliability and validity were sustained through pilot-testing. The results revealed that the goals of the curriculum were attained at the moderate level and there were problems with the curriculum content. The teachers' perceptions differed according to their school location, teaching experience and educational background. During the curriculum implementation, certain problems were encountered due to lack of resources, students, the program itself and the classroom environment.

Keywords: english language curriculum, teacher perceptions, background characteristics, primary school

ÖZET: Bu çalışmada amaç, ilköğretim ikinci kademedeki görev alan ve farklı kişisel özelliklere sahip öğretmenlerin İngilizce ders programlarının amaç ve içeriğine ilişkin algılarını ve programın uygulanmasında karşılaştıkları güçlükleri ortaya koymaktır. Çalışma, 2004-2005 okul döneminde Türkiye'nin yedi bölgesinden seçilen 368 öğretmen ile yürütülmüştür. Veriler, araştırmacı tarafından geliştirilen, geçerlilik ve güvenilirliğinin pilot uygulamalar ile sağlandığı anketler aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçları, programın hedeflerinin orta düzeyde gerçekleştiğini ve programın konuları açısından birtakım sıkıntılar yaşandığını ortaya koymuştur. Öğretmenlerin programı algılayışları, buldukları bölge, öğretmenlik deneyimleri ve eğitim düzeylerine göre farklılık göstermektedir. Programın uygulanmasında kaynak yetersizliğinden, öğrencilerden, programın kendisinden ve sınıf ortamından kaynaklanan birtakım sorunlar yaşanmaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: ingilizce eğitim programı, öğretmen algıları, kişisel özellikler, ilköğretim

1. INTRODUCTION

In English language education, as in any other subject, one can talk about various sorts of curricula rather than one type of curriculum. There is the "planned curriculum" meaning what is included in the guidelines prepared by the authorities (Öztürk, 2003). There is the "perceived curriculum" based on the interpretations of the teachers using these guidelines (Saylor, Alexander and Lewis, 1978). There is also the "experienced curriculum" shaped by the interactions of teachers, students and materials in the classroom (Öztürk, 2003). In fact, the planned curriculum is usually "invisible", so there is need for continuous investigation to observe its existence (Nunan, 1993, p. 138). This becomes much more significant when there is a change in the existing curriculum.

The "perceived curriculum" is highly influenced by the personal characteristics of the interpreter, meaning the teachers. There are studies showing the impact of certain teacher characteristics such as gender, educational background and teaching experience on their curriculum implementation (Başkan, 2001; Wayne & Youngs, 2003). Thus, any investigation that focuses on teachers' perceptions of the curriculum should consider the individual differences among them.

In Turkey, changes have been made in the English language curriculum of the public primary schools after the acceptance of eighth year compulsory education. In this regard, English language courses are offered as must courses starting from the fourth grade till the end of the eighth. This regulation seems to impose continuity and integrity among grade levels in terms of curriculum goals, contents and methodologies.

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In this regard, the students are expected to graduate from the public primary schools with “pre-intermediate” level of English (MONE, 2004). In the curriculum guidelines, importance was attributed to the four main skills which are speaking, listening, reading and writing (MONE, 2004). Besides, comprehension and use of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation are also prioritized (MONE, 2004). Again, the significance of being motivated to learn and use English is also expressed. The curriculum guidelines also include suggestions related to the methodologies. It is revealed that learner centered approaches should be employed and collaborative learning environment should be enhanced (MONE, 2004). Suggested techniques can be listed as “question and answer, drama and role plays and language games” (MONE, 2004). All these suggestions about the methodologies of the curriculum seem to be consistent with the related literature that focuses on the importance of learner-centered approaches while teaching English to young learners (Çakır, 2004; Moon, 2000; Philips, 2001).

However, research on the curriculum of fourth and fifth grades have shown that the specified goals and objectives of the curriculum were not achieved at the desired level (Büyükduman, 2005; Mersinligil, 2002). The main problems that hindered their achievement were stated as insufficient time allocated for the course, crowded classrooms and scarce resources (Büyükduman, 2005; İğrek, 2001; Mersinligil, 2002). Another reason might be the discrepancies between the planned curriculum of the Ministry of Education and the perceived curriculum of teachers having various background characteristics. Actually, the same studies have revealed that teachers perceive the yearly plans, unit plans and course books as their curriculum (Büyükduman, 2005; Mersinligil, 2002).

All these problems raised in the studies conducted at lower grade levels might be true for upper grade levels and needs to be examined. Again, teachers teaching at upper grade levels might be experiencing other problems in implementing the curriculum, which needs further investigation. Furthermore, teachers with various personal characteristics might be interpreting the planned curriculum in different ways and this should be recognized in such a study.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The specific research questions of the following study on the English language curriculum of the 6th, 7th and 8th grades of public primary schools are as follows:

1. How do the teachers perceive the goals and content of the curriculum?
2. Do teachers' perceptions of the curriculum goals and content differ according to their background characteristics such as school location, education and teaching experience?
3. What kinds of problems are encountered by the teachers during the implementation of the curriculum?

3. METHODOLOGY

This survey study was conducted with 368 English teachers implementing the English language curriculum of the 6th, 7th and 8th grades of public primary schools during the 2004-2005 schooling year. To determine the participants, first three cities from the seven regions of Turkey (one developed, one partially developed and one undeveloped) and then two towns from each city (one developed, one undeveloped) were selected considering their socioeconomic levels (DPT, 2003). Later, the Educational Directories of each city and town were asked to administer the questionnaires with five of the randomly selected English teachers. The data collection process was facilitated by the Education Research and Development Directorate of the Ministry of Education (ERDD).

In this survey, newly prepared “teacher questionnaire” was used as a data collection instrument. This questionnaire included three main sections as “personal information”, “opinions about goals and objectives” and “opinions about content”. While the first section included close and open-ended questions about the teachers' personal characteristics, such as their locations of schools, teaching experiences and educational backgrounds, the last two sections included five-point scales about the goals and contents of the curriculum. The statements about the goals were related to those presented in

the manual of the English Curriculum of Ministry of Education (MONE, 2004). The statements about the content were determined considering the related literature on selection and organization of content in English language courses (Nunan, 1989).

The reliability and validity of the questionnaire was achieved through expert opinion and pilot-testing. The teacher questionnaire was pilot-tested with 20 English teachers teaching in 11 schools of Ankara. During the pilot-testing, information about the respondents' problems in answering the questions was collected through interviews and they were rearranged considering their suggestions. The test-retest reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was .87.

To analyze data, frequency distributions, percentages, means and standard deviations were calculated. ANOVA was carried out to investigate whether the differences among teachers by background characteristics were significant. The confidence level of ANOVA was established as .01. The follow up test, Scheffé, was also conducted to evaluate differences among the means. To analyze the qualitative data about teachers' problems, the data were coded under pre-determined themes and the coded data were converted to frequencies and percentages.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Background of Teacher Participants

The demographic information about teacher participants, as presented in Table 1, reveals that the highest percentage of them was from the Mediterranean followed by the Black Sea, Eastern Anatolia, Marmara and Aegean, whereas the lowest percentage was from the Central Anatolia and Southeastern Anatolia.

Table 1: Background of Teacher Participants

		F	%
Regions	Mediterranean	71	19.3
	Black Sea	68	18.5
	Eastern Anatolia	60	16.3
	Marmara	56	15.2
	Aegean	44	12.0
	Central Anatolia	39	10.5
	Southeastern Anatolia	30	8.2
Developmental Level of Cities/Towns	Developed	131	35.6
	Partially Developed	131	35.6
	Undeveloped	106	28.8
Gender	Female	258	70
	Male	110	30
Educational Background	ELT	237	64.4
	ELL	72	19.6
	Other Fields	45	12.2
	Other Languages	14	3.8
Teaching Experience	1-5	236	64.0
	6-10	58	15.8
	11-15	23	6.3
	16-20	21	5.7
	20 –more	30	8.2

The percentages of teachers from the developed and partially developed cities and towns were equal and formed the greatest number of participants than those of undeveloped ones. Majority of these teachers were females and graduates of English Language and Teaching (ELT) departments of various universities in Turkey. There was also nearly one-fifth who graduated from English Language and Literature (ELL) departments and few who were the teachers of other fields such as math and chemistry, or teachers of other languages like German and French. Majority of these teachers had 1 to 5 years of experience, followed by teachers with more than 10 years of experience and teachers with 6 to 10 years of experience.

4.2. Teachers' Perceptions of Curriculum Goals

The mean scores obtained for the curriculum goals reveal that the majority were accomplished almost at a moderate level (see Table 2). Specifically, phonological knowledge such as pronouncing words (47.9%), and the skill of formulating sentences by using the newly learned grammatical structures (45.3%) and vocabulary items (45.2%) were sometimes attained. On the contrary, teachers believed understanding vocabulary items (53.5%), comprehending grammatical structures (47.9%), reading (52.5%), and transforming sentences into various forms (49.7%) were usually achieved.

Actually, the students could comprehend the contents, but they had difficulties in applying them by using the three main skills, listening, speaking and writing. As for the listening skill, 48.2% of the teachers stated that it was achieved; however, there was still 33.2% claiming that it was sometimes attained. Again, 43.2% of the teachers informed their students could speak in English, but 34.6% believed their students could sometimes do so. Likewise, 39.1% of the respondents stated that their students were sometimes able to write in English, yet there was 46.6% disagreeing with them. Actually, writing was claimed to be the least attained one.

Finally, most of the teachers believed the goals related to the motivational intensity were achieved more when compared with those about the attainment of certain skills. In fact, the majority stated that their students were motivated to learn English (63.8% always/ usually).

Table 2: Teachers' Perceptions of the Attainment of Curriculum Goals

Goals of the Curriculum	%					Mean	N
	A	U	S	R	N		
Pronouncing words	1.4	35.5	47.9	14.9	.3	2.8	363
Understanding the meanings of vocabulary items	10.9	53.5	30.6	5.0	-	2.3	359
Forming sentences by using the vocabulary items (oral/ written)	6.0	31.7	45.2	15.4	1.7	2.8	359
Understanding the grammar	12.7	47.9	32.8	5.8	.8	2.4	363
Forming sentences by using the grammatical structures (oral/ written)	7.4	33.7	45.3	11.9	1.7	2.7	362
Transforming sentences into various forms	10.8	49.7	25.1	13.0	1.4	2.5	362
Understanding a listening text	10.6	37.6	33.2	15.3	3.3	2.6	359
Speaking in English	7.2	38.0	34.6	18.2	2.0	2.7	358
Understanding a reading text	13.8	52.5	27.9	5.5	.3	2.3	362
Writing in English	.8	13.5	39.1	37.8	8.8	3.4	362
Using spelling and punctuation	5.5	34.6	39.1	19.1	1.7	2.8	361
Doing dictations	1.9	29.5	45.4	20.1	3.1	2.9	359
Being motivated to learn English	19.2	44.6	27.0	9.2	-	2.3	359

A= always, U= usually, S = sometimes, R = rarely, N= never

4.3. Teachers' Perceptions of Curriculum Content

Mean scores for each statement measuring the teachers' opinions about the contents reveal that they either agreed on or felt undecided about most of them (see Table 3). Most of the teachers believed frequently used vocabulary was covered (80.1% agreeing/ strongly agreeing), grammar content was sequenced appropriately from simple to difficult (75.8% agreeing/ strongly agreeing) and was comprehensible (69.1% agreeing/ strongly agreeing)

The majority thought the reading/ listening tasks aimed to test comprehension (70.7% agreeing/ strongly agreeing) and practice grammar (66.5% agreeing/ strongly agreeing). Again, more than half found the reading/ listening texts comprehensible (57.5% agreeing/ strongly agreeing), and the speaking activities applicable (56.4% agreeing/ strongly agreeing).

The teachers were divided in their perceptions of content on five of the statements. While nearly half believed vocabulary activities were interesting for the students (47.7% agreeing/ strongly agreeing), close to one third either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this (32.4%). Similarly, a little more than one third believed grammar activities encouraged oral practice (39.5% agreeing/ strongly disagreeing), whereas the other one third did not feel so (36.7% disagreeing/ strongly disagreeing). Although some teachers found the writing activities boring (43.2% disagreeing/ strongly disagreeing), there were others finding them interesting (31.7% agreeing/ strongly agreeing). Likewise, some teachers felt the reading/ listening texts were not interesting for the students (40.7% disagreeing/ strongly disagreeing), but nearly one third thought the opposite (36.7% agreeing/ strongly agreeing).

The main contradiction was on the authenticity of speaking activities and applicability of writing activities. Although a little less than half stated that speaking activities were applicable to real life situations (47.1% agreeing/ strongly agreeing), almost one third disagreed with this (30.2% disagreeing/ strongly disagreeing). Similarly, a considerable percentage claimed writing activities could be performed by the students (46.9% agreeing/ strongly agreeing), but some did not feel so (28.9% disagreeing/ strongly disagreeing).

Table 3: Teachers' Perceptions of Curriculum Content

Statements on Content	%					Mean	N
	SA	A	U	D	SD		
Vocabulary items are frequently used	14.3	65.8	9.9	6.6	3.3	2.2	363
Vocabulary activities are interesting	6.4	41.3	19.9	29.4	3.0	2.8	361
Grammar activities are for oral practice	7.0	32.5	23.8	30.5	6.2	3.0	357
Grammar contents are comprehensible	7.8	61.3	12.5	15.3	3.1	2.5	359
Grammar contents are sequenced from simple to difficult	16.5	59.3	9.2	12.5	2.5	2.3	359
The reading / listening texts are interesting	2.5	31.7	25.1	32.5	8.2	3.1	363
The reading / listening texts are comprehensible	4.7	52.8	22.4	16.2	3.9	2.6	362
The reading/ listening texts are used to practice the language structures	8.0	58.5	17.0	12.3	4.2	2.6	359
The activities of the reading/ listening texts are designed to test comprehension	8.3	62.4	14.9	13.3	1.1	2.4	360
Speaking activities are authentic	4.2	42.9	22.7	25.8	4.4	2.8	361
Speaking activities can be performed by the students	5.3	51.1	22.8	18.6	2.2	2.6	360
The writing activities are interesting	2.5	29.2	25.1	36.5	6.7	3.2	359
Writing activities can be performed by the students	3.6	43.3	24.2	23.3	5.6	2.8	360

SA= strongly agree, A= agree, U= undecided, D= disagree, SD=strongly disagree.

4.4. Differences in Teachers' Perceptions of Curriculum Goals and Content by Background Factors

The results of ANOVA showed that while teachers' location of school and experience were the factors differentiating their perceptions of the attainment of curriculum goals, education was the only factor differentiating their perceptions of content.

As shown in Table 4, the teachers in Central Anatolia differed significantly from the teachers working in other regions, especially Marmara and Mediterranean, regarding the achievement of forming sentences ($p=.006$), speaking ($p=.005$), reading ($p=.002$), and using mechanics ($p=.001$). In fact, the follow-up test, Scheffé, revealed that the teachers in Central Anatolia region differed from those in the Marmara Region as they believed speaking was attained more ($p=.048$). Contrary to the teachers in the Mediterranean Region, these same teachers claimed forming grammatically accurate sentences, reading, and using mechanics were achieved more ($p=.023$, $p=.006$, and $p=.027$, respectively).

Table 4: Differences in Teachers' Perceptions of Curriculum Goals by Location of School

	Region	Mean	SD	N
Forming sentences by using the grammatical structures accurately (oral/ written) F(6,355)= 3.087 p=.006	Marmara	2.50	.72	54
	Aegean	2.64	.87	44
	Mediterranean	2.43	.88	67
	Central Anatolia	3.08	1.09	39
	East Anatolia	2.77	.91	60
	South East Anatolia	2.63	.85	30
	Black Sea	2.74	.66	68
	Total	2.67	.84	362
Speaking in English F(6,351)= 3.164 p=.005	Marmara	2.50	.67	54
	Aegean	2.59	.92	44
	Mediterranean	2.55	.91	66
	Central Anatolia	3.18	.98	38
	East Anatolia	2.88	1.01	59
	South East Anatolia	2.62	.98	29
	Black Sea	2.66	.84	68
	Total	2.70	.92	358
Understanding a reading text F(6,355)= 3.575 p=.002	Marmara	2.18	.70	55
	Aegean	2.14	.82	44
	Mediterranean	2.09	.69	67
	Central Anatolia	2.74	.85	39
	East Anatolia	2.30	.75	59
	South East Anatolia	2.30	.88	30
	Black Sea	2.24	.72	68
	Total	2.26	.78	362
Using mechanics (spelling/ punctuation) F(6,354)= 3.760 p=.001	Marmara	2.77	.89	53
	Aegean	2.64	.87	44
	Mediterranean	2.60	.82	67
	Central Anatolia	3.26	.94	39
	East Anatolia	2.63	.90	60
	South East Anatolia	3.10	.89	30
	Black Sea	2.71	.77	68
	Total	2.77	.88	361

Mean Scores are based on a five point scale; 1= always, 2= usually, 3= sometimes, 4= rarely, 5= never

Experience was the other factor creating differences in the teachers' perceptions of the curriculum goals (see Table 5). Teachers with 1 to 5 years of experience differed significantly from others regarding the goals, pronunciation ($p=.000$), listening ($p=.000$), speaking ($p=.000$), reading ($p=.005$) and writing ($p=.000$). The follow up test, Scheffé, revealed that teachers teaching 1 to 5 years seemed to perceive that the goals related to pronunciation and listening were attained more when compared with the teachers with more than 6 years of experience. Also, teachers with 1 to 5 years of experience believed that speaking and writing were achieved more in comparison with the teachers having 16 to 20 years of teaching experience ($p=.009$ and $p=.020$, respectively).

Table 5: Differences in Teachers' Perceptions of Curriculum Goals by Experience

	Experience	Mean	SD	N
Pronouncing vocabulary items F(4,358)=15.836 p=.000	1-5	2.97	.71	235
	6-10	2.54	.66	56
	11-15	2.32	.57	22
	16-20	2.38	.50	21
	20-more	2.24	.51	29
	Total	2.77	.72	363
Understanding a listening text F(4,354)=9.547 p=.000	1-5	2.85	.99	233
	6-10	2.33	.92	55
	11-15	2.14	.85	21
	16-20	2.00	.55	21
	20-more	2.28	.70	29
	Total	2.63	.98	359
Speaking in English F(4,353)=5.741 p=.000	1-5	2.85	.94	231
	6-10	2.54	.97	56
	11-15	2.48	.68	21
	16-20	2.10	.77	21
	20-more	2.38	.49	29
	Total	2.70	.92	358
Understanding a reading text F(4,357)=3.827 p=.005	1-5	2.36	.81	234
	6-10	2.14	.67	56
	11-15	2.09	.75	22
	16-20	1.81	.60	21
	20-more	2.10	.62	29
	Total	2.26	.77	362
Writing in English F(4,357)=6.272 p=.000	1-5	3.56	.85	234
	6-10	3.20	.90	56
	11-15	3.09	.81	22
	16-20	2.90	.54	21
	20-more	3.14	.79	29
	Total	3.40	.86	362

Mean Scores are based on a five point scale; 1= always, 2= usually, 3= sometimes, 4= rarely, 5= never

Table 6: Differences in Teachers' Perceptions of Content by Educational Background

	Educational Background	Mean	SD	N
The reading /listening texts are interesting F(3,359)=4.596 p=.004	English Language Teaching	2.26	.95	231
	English Language and Literature	2.33	1.05	69
	Other Languages (e.g. German, French)	2.21	.80	14
	Other Fields (e.g. Chemistry, Maths, etc.)	2.11	.91	45
	Total	2.25	.96	359

Mean Scores are based on a five point scale; 1= strongly agree, 2= agree, 3= undecided, 4= disagree, 5= strongly disagree

Table 6 displays the relationship between the departments from which teachers graduated and their perceptions of content. The test was significant only on dependent variable, the reading and/or listening texts are interesting for the students ($p=.004$) proved by the follow up test Scheffé, as it indicated that teachers of other fields seemed to perceive that these texts were interesting as opposed to the teachers from ELT and ELL departments of universities ($p=.004$ and $p=.035$, respectively).

4.5. Problems Encountered by Teachers during Curriculum Implementation

When the teachers were asked to provide information about their problems in implementing the curriculum, 84.5% complained about lack of materials, 63.9% about the course book, 56.3% about the students, 48.4% about the curriculum and 25.3% about the classroom environment (see Table 7).

Majority of the teachers complaining about materials revealed that their schools were in short of audio materials such as cassettes, CDs, VCDs, tape recorders and video players (64.1%). There was also 44.3% revealing that they did not have readily available visual materials such as OHPs, pictures and flashcards. In addition, 37.8% claimed they had problems in providing their students with supplementary materials to practice the language skills due to the shortage of other resource books, story books and even dictionaries.

The teachers also complained about the course book and 42.1% claimed that the books were not communicative enough. In fact, they said, "the book leads to memorization as it involves a lot of mechanical exercises and activities." Moreover, according to 34.8%, there was too much unknown language in the reading texts. They said, "Although certain grammatical structures are not explained in the unit, they appear in the text." They also added, "Some texts involve too much unknown words." There was also 31% stating that there was insufficient number of exercises to practice grammar and vocabulary. Besides, 23.6% complained about the physical layout of the book. They said, "The course book is not as colorful as other commercial books... It is not full of pictures, and it has serious problems with print quality." According to 21.7%, another problem with the book was the grading of contents. In short, the teachers informed, "The grammar contents logically irrelevant are sequenced one after the other, and the units are not thematically related to one another." In relation to this, 19.8% found the reading passages unauthentic, boring and long, and 17.8% complained about not having explanations for grammatical structures. Finally, 14.1% admitted that the course book was unsuitable for their students' English levels.

The main problem with the students was their lack of interest in the lesson (42.4%). These teachers stated that especially the 8th graders did not pay attention to the lesson as English was not assessed in the national exams. 37.5% of the teachers also informed, "The students can't perform reading and writing skills even in Turkish." In addition 35.9% complained that some students lacked the needed grammar and vocabulary background knowledge in English.

A considerable percentage of teachers complaining about the curriculum stated that it was overloaded (40.8%). 35.1% also revealed that the focus of the curriculum was on the development of grammar and vocabulary rather than the skills. In fact, it was stated, "There is little or no opportunity provided for the development of especially listening, speaking and writing." Some of those teachers

complaining about the overloaded curriculum content also claimed that no time was left for review and practice (23.1%). Besides, 13% mentioned that there was need for continuity in the curriculum. In other words, teachers believed, “The contents should be repeated in each grade so that students will not forget the previously studied language structures.”

Finally, almost all the teachers having problems with the classroom environment complained about crowded classrooms (22.3%). According to them, “Crowded classes mainly restrict the implementation of listening and speaking activities.” There were also teachers saying, “Since our classes are very crowded, we spend too much time to give feedback to students’ writing and to read the exams.” Another problem was having students of various levels in the same classroom (15.2%).

Table 7: Problems Encountered by Teachers While Implementing the Curriculum

	F	%
Lack of support in terms of materials and equipment	311	84.5
Lack of audio materials	236	64.1
Lack of visual materials	163	44.3
Lack of supplementary materials to develop the language skills	139	37.8
Problems resulting from the course book	235	63.9
Lack of communicative tasks and activities	155	42.1
Having unknown language within the texts	128	34.8
Inadequate number of grammar and vocabulary exercises	129	31.0
Physical layout	87	23.6
Grading of content	80	21.7
Long and unauthentic passages	73	19.8
Not having explanations for grammatical structures	62	17.8
Unsuitable for students’ English level	52	14.1
Table 7 (continued)	F	%
Problems resulting from the students	207	56.3
Lack of interest in learning English	156	42.4
Inability to perform reading and writing skills even in Turkish	138	37.5
Lack of background in English (i.e. vocabulary, grammar)	132	35.9
Problems resulting from the curriculum	178	48.4
Loaded curriculum content	150	40.8
Ignorance of certain skills (i.e. Listening, speaking, writing)	114	35.1
No time left for review and practice	85	23.1
No repetition of content in 6 th , 7 th and 8 th grades	48	13.0
Problems resulting from the classroom environment	93	25.3
Crowded classrooms	82	22.3
Having students of different levels in the same classroom	56	15.2

The total number of responses may exceed the total number of respondents due to multiple responses.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In conclusion, majority of the English language curriculum goals at the sixth, seventh and eighth grades of public primary schools were achieved at a moderate level. This result seems to be in line with the results of the studies conducted at lower grade levels (Büyükduman, 2005; İğrek, 2001; Mersinligil, 2002). Actually, the results revealed that grammar, vocabulary and reading were attained more than listening, speaking and writing as more time was allocated to these skills in the program. Still, according to the majority their attainment was not at the desired level. In fact, it was observed that while revealing their perceptions of curriculum goals and content, the teachers were evaluating the course books suggested by the Ministry of Education. This is quite normal in a case where they were not provided with a written curriculum (Nunan, 1993). Thus, it could be stated that there is need for providing teachers with written curriculum guidelines where the goals, contents and methodologies of the courses were clearly stated. One way to do this is to supply schools with those guidelines so that teachers can refer to them. Another way could be posting them on the web-site of the Ministry of Education. A better way could be reconsidering the course books and making changes in them.

As for the course books, the teachers had doubts about the quantity and variety of the vocabulary and grammar exercises in them. They also complained about the motivational level of the speaking and writing activities together with the listening/ reading texts. These problems might definitely be the most important reasons affecting the achievement of four main skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening). Actually, there is tremendous amount of literature focusing on the importance of teaching the four main skills in an integrated way with communicative tasks and activities such as games and role-plays (Çakır, 2004; Moon, 2000; Philips, 2001). Again, young learners tend to forget what they have learned easily, so there is need for continuous revision and practice of the language items (Çakır, 2004; Moon, 2000; Philips, 2001). Actually teachers have already complained that their students lacked the needed background in English in terms of grammar and vocabulary. Thus, in an attempt to revise the course books or the program, attention should be paid for integration and continuity.

It is known that English can be attained better in suitable contexts (Nunan, 1993) and this context can be created by means of texts with interesting topics and audio-visual materials like tapes, videos, pictures and posters (Çakır, 2004; Moon, 2000; Philips, 2001). However, teachers mentioned that their schools lacked those facilities. Hence, the physical qualities and facilities of the schools should be improved by providing the necessary audio, visual and supplementary materials that facilitate the teaching and learning of English. If it is not possible to spare a budget for this, the schools can be provided with internet facilities at least for the teachers who can be trained to produce their own materials.

Crowded classrooms and having students with various English levels in the same classroom were other problems raised by the teachers. Therefore, having practical suggestions for the crowded classrooms and mixed-ability groups on these web-sites are assumed to overcome those problems. Actually, the related literature states that having students with varying English levels in the same classroom is inevitable and could also be reasonable (Çopur, 2005; Dellicarpini, 2006). To overcome the problems of such classes, teachers may have contingency plans for early finishers and they might differentiate their tasks so that each will appeal to different types of learners (Çopur, 2005; Dellicarpini, 2006).

The teachers mainly complained about that their students were not independent learners who studied regularly for the course. In relation to this problem, the teachers should consider that the learners might not be aware of their own learning styles. Simply, the students might not know how to study English. Thus, teachers should either vary their teaching styles to meet the learning styles of their students or they should change the unconscious learning styles of the learners to conscious learning strategies (Hismanoğlu, 2000; Littlewood, 2000; Zhenhui, 2001). In brief, teachers should help their students by teaching the strategies of successful language learners.

Finally, the results revealed that these are the common problems of teachers all over Turkey, from west to east and from north to south. This is in accordance with the expectations as the conditions of public primary schools are more or less the same (Başkan, 2001). However, teachers' location of school, experience and education were still the factors affecting their perceptions of the attainment of curriculum goals. Specifically, the teachers in Central Anatolia and teachers with 1 to 5 years of experience seem to perceive some of the curriculum goals such as pronunciation, listening, reading, speaking and writing were attained more. One main interpretation of this finding could be that teachers with 1 to 5 years of experience may be too novice to fully grasp the curriculum and the factors affecting its implementation. Again, since teachers with 1 to 5 years of experience are new graduates, they might be using the recent methodologies and techniques more than the experienced ones. Furthermore, most of the teachers attending from Central Anatolia might be novice so that there might be a parallelism between these two variables. In relation to educational level, teachers of other fields seem to perceive that reading/ listening texts are interesting for the students. This might be attributed to these teachers' being unknowledgeable about the kinds of texts suitable for the teaching and learning of English.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Herhangi bir eğitim ortamında, tek bir programdan ziyade, “planlanan” ve “algılanan” programlardan bahsedilir. “Planlanan” program, eğitim otoriteleri ve alanda uzman kişiler tarafından hazırlanan, yazılı dokümanlarda da yer alan programdır (Öztürk, 2003). Bu program, çoğunlukla programı kullananlar tarafından ya “bilinmemekte” ya da “yorumlanarak” uygulanmaktadır (Nunan, 1993). Dolayısıyla “algılanan” program, kullanıcıların yorumları ile oluşmaktadır. “Algılanan” program, deneyim, yaş, cinsiyet, eğitim durumu gibi kullanıcıların kişisel özelliklerine göre de farklılıklar gösterebilir (Başkan, 2001; Wayne & Youngs, 2003). Bu nedenle, bir eğitim programının incelenmesi veya değerlendirilmesi esnasında, farklı özelliklere sahip kullanıcıların o programı nasıl yorumladıklarına dikkat etmek ve uzmanların çabalarının anlaşılıp anlaşılmadığına bakmak gerekir. Özellikle, Türkiye gibi İngilizce eğitiminde program hedeflerinin tam olarak edinilemediği ve öğretmenlerin program olarak yıllık planları ve ders kitaplarını algıladıkları ortamlarda bu tarz araştırmalar daha da önem kazanmaktadır (Büyükduman, 2005; Mersinligil, 2002).

Bu çalışmada amaç, ilköğretim ikinci kademe görev alan ve farklı kişisel özelliklere sahip öğretmenlerin, İngilizce ders programlarının amaç ve içeriğine ilişkin algılarını ve programın uygulanmasında karşılaştıkları güçlükleri ortaya koymaktır. Çalışma, tüm Türkiye’den seçilen 368 İngilizce öğretmeni ile yürütülmüştür. Örneklemin belirlenmesinde birden fazla yöntem kullanılmıştır. İlk olarak, sosyoekonomik gelişmişlik düzeyinin İngilizce öğrenimine etkisi göz önünde bulundurularak, Türkiye’nin yedi bölgesinden bir gelişmiş, bir orta derecede gelişmiş ve bir az gelişmiş olmak üzere üçer il ve bu illere bağlı ikişer ilçe (bir gelişmiş ve bir az gelişmiş) seçilmiştir (DPT, 2003). Daha sonra, belirlenen il ve ilçelerin eğitim müdürlerinden bağlı buldukları bölgeden beşer öğretmeni belirlemeleri istenmiştir. Veri toplama aracı olarak geçerlilik ve güvenilirliği pilot

uygulama ile sağlanan anketler kullanılmıştır. Beşli gösterge çizelgesi olarak hazırlanan anket soruları belirlenirken Milli Eğitim Bakanlığının İngilizce eğitim programından ve ilgili literatürden yararlanılmıştır (MONE, 2004; Nunan, 1993).

Sonuçlar, ilköğretim ikinci kademe İngilizce ders programındaki hedeflerin orta derecede edinildiğini göstermiştir. Her ne kadar, telaffuz, kelime, dilbilgisi ve okuma becerileri konuşma, dinleme ve yazma becerilerine kıyasla daha çok edinilse de halen istenilen düzeyde geliştirilememektedir. Yine öğretmenlere göre öğrencilerin İngilizce öğrenmeye istekli olmaları gibi duyuşsal hedefler belirli bilgi ve becerilerin öğrenilmesine dayanan hedeflere karşın daha çok gerçekleşmektedir. İlköğretim ilk kademe İngilizce ders programları için yürütülen çalışmaların işaret ettiği gibi bu kademedeki öğretmenler de program olarak yıllık planları ve ders kitaplarını değerlendirmektedir (Büyükduman, 2005; Mersinligil, 2002). Bu bağlamda, dersin konuları hakkında çeşitli şüpheleri vardır. Örneğin, kelime ve dil bilgisine yönelik çalışmalar sayı ve çeşitlilik açılarından yetersiz bulunmaktadır. Yine öğretmenler, programda yer alan kelime, dil bilgisi, konuşma ve yazma çalışmaları ile okuma ve dinleme metinlerinin öğrencilerin ilgilerini çekmekten uzak olduklarını savunmaktadırlar. Aslında, temel sorun programın hedeflerinin ve/ veya konularının çok fazla olmasıdır. Bu nedenle sınıfta yeteri derecede pratik ve tekrar yapmaya fırsat kalmamaktadır.

Öğretmenler programı uygularken materyal eksikliği, öğrencilerin dersle yeteri kadar ilgilenmemeleri, sınıfların kalabalıklığı ve sınıflarda çok farklı düzeylerde öğrencilerin bulunması gibi sorunlarla da karşılaşmaktadırlar. Burada öğretmenlerin materyal eksikliğinden kastı video, teyp, kaset, CD, DVD gibi cihazlar ile resim ve fotoğraf gibi görsel materyallerdir. Öğretmenlere göre öğrenciler her ne kadar dersteki çalışmalarla ilgilenseler de eve gittiklerinde İngilizce'ye yeteri kadar zaman ayırmamakta ve hatta ödevlerini dahi yapmamaktadırlar. Aynı zamanda bazı öğrenciler gerekli kelime ve dil bilgisi bilgisine sahip değillerdir. Sınıfların kalabalıklığı özellikle dinleme, konuşma ve yazma becerilerinin geliştirilmesini hedefleyen öğrenci merkezli çalışmaların yürütülmesini engellemektedir.

Öğretmenlerin programın hedeflerinin edinilmesine yönelik görüşleri çalıştıkları bölge, ve öğretmenlik tecrübelerine göre farklılık göstermektedir. Özellikle İç Anadolu bölgesinde çalışan ve öğretmenlik tecrübesi 1 ila 5 yıl arasında değişen öğretmenlere göre konuşma, yazma ve noktalama işaretlerinin doğru kullanılması gibi hedefler daha çok gerçekleştirilmektedir. Yine, deneyimleri 1-5 yıl arasındaki öğretmenler telaffuz, dinleme, konuşma, okuma ve yazma becerilerinin daha çok edinildiği savunmaktadırlar. Branş dışı öğretmenlere göre programda veya kitaplarda yer alan okuma/ dinleme metinleri öğrencilerin ilgilerini çekecek düzeydedirler.

İlköğretim ikinci kademe İngilizce ders programının hedeflerinin daha iyi edinilmesi için programın tekrar gözden geçirilmesi ve belirtilen olumsuzlukların ortadan kaldırılması gerekmektedir. Bu nedenle, ders kitapları da tekrar gözden geçirilmeli, konular azaltılarak daha fazla pratik ve tekrara yer verilmelidir. Program sadece kelime ve dil bilgisi becerilerinin geliştirilmesine yönelik olmamalı, dört becerinin (dinleme, konuşma, okuma, yazma) birbirleri ile kaynaştırılarak öğretilmesi hedeflenmelidir. Özellikle öğretmenler uygun yöntem ve teknikler kullanarak öğrencilerinin ders dışında da İngilizce ile ilgilenmelerini sağlayabilirler. Kısaca, öğrencilerin derse çalışmamalarının nedeni derse nasıl çalışacaklarını bilmemeleri olabilir. Bu nedenle öğretmenler derslerini hazırlarken öğrencilerinin çalışma sitillerini göz önünde bulundurmalı ve bu çalışma sitillerini uygun çalışma stratejilerine çevirmelidirler (Hismanoğlu, 2000; Littlewood, 2000; Zhenhui, 2001). Son olarak, İç Anadolu bölgesinde çalışan ve öğretmenlik deneyimleri 1 ila 5 yıl arasında olan öğretmenlerin programın hedeflerinin edinilmesi hakkında daha olumlu görüş bildirmeleri şu şekilde yorumlanabilir. İç Anadolu bölgesinden katılan öğretmenlerin çoğu 1 ila 5 yıl arası tecrübeye sahip olabilirler. Bu yıllar arasında çalışan ve yeterli deneyime sahip olmayan bu öğretmenler diğer tecrübeli öğretmenlere kıyasla program hakkında daha az bilgiye sahip olabilirler. Ya da 1 ila 5 yıl arasında deneyime sahip öğretmenler fakültelerden yeni mezun oldukları için literatürde yer alan en son yöntem ve teknikleri daha çok kullanıyor olabilirler. İngilizce dersi veren diğer branş öğretmenleri ise ne tür okuma veya dinleme metinlerinin İngilizce derslerine daha uygun olabileceğini kestiremiyor olabilirler.