

An examination of the 2018 high school English curriculum based on philosophical, psychological, and social considerations

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ABSTRACT

In our globalizing and developing world, learning English is regarded as compulsory because English has now become an international language. Therefore, the Turkish Ministry of National Education has always taken a particular interest in developments throughout the world in the teaching of foreign languages and the new curriculum was started to be used in 2018. Program evaluation activities are important to assess the degree of accomplishment in an educational program, identify the efficacy of the present program, and compile some helpful data for future programs. Therefore, this study aims to examine the 2018 High School English Curriculum from philosophical, social, and psychological perspectives because the way through understanding of a program and the rationale behind the program development process includes philosophical, social, and psychological considerations. This is a qualitative study with document analysis. According to the findings, considering the philosophical foundations, the program has been designed keeping in mind the student's development, interests, and needs. Based on the social foundations, it can be claimed that the curriculum has been shaped by taking into consideration the issues of recognizing and promoting national, local, and universal culture, the problems of the society regarding language learning, the needs of the society, and the opportunities to be provided with language learning. Regarding the psychological foundations, it can be stated that the developmental characteristics of the students, their prior knowledge, readiness levels, and learning differences are considered while preparing the program.

Keywords: English curriculum, program, philosophical, social, psychological considerations

2018 lise İngilizce dersi öğretim programının felsefi, psikolojik ve sosyal temeller bakımından incelenmesi

ÖZET

Küreselleşen ve gelişen dünyamızda, İngilizce artık uluslararası dil haline geldiği için İngilizce öğrenmek zorunlu olarak kabul edilmektedir. Bu nedenle T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı yabancı dil öğretiminde dünyadaki gelişmeleri her zaman özel bir ilgiyle karşılamış ve 2018 yılında yeni müfredat uygulanmaya başlanmıştır. Program değerlendirme faaliyetleri, bir eğitim programında başarı derecesini değerlendirmek, mevcut programın etkililiğini belirlemek ve gelecekteki programlar için bazı yararlı verileri derlemek için önemlidir. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma 2018 Lise İngilizce Ders Programını felsefi, sosyal ve psikolojik açılarından incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır çünkü bir programın anlaşılmasına giden yol ve program geliştirme sürecinin arkasındaki mantık felsefi, sosyal ve psikolojik temeller içermektedir. Bu çalışma doküman analizinin kullanıldığı nitel bir çalışmadır. Elde edilen bulgulara göre, felsefi temeller dikkate alınarak program, öğrencinin gelişimi, ilgi ve ihtiyaçları göz önünde bulundurularak tasarlanmıştır. Toplumsal temeller bakımından öğretim programının ulusal, yerel ve evrensel kültürü tanıma ve tanıma, toplumun dil öğrenimine ilişkin sorunları, toplumun ihtiyaçları ve çevre sorunları dil öğrenimi ile sağlanacak fırsatları dikkate alarak şekillendirildiği söylenebilir. Psikolojik temeller ile ilgili program hazırlanırken öğrencilerin gelişimsel özelliklerinin, ön bilgilerinin, hazırbulunuşluk düzeylerinin ve öğrenme farklılıklarının dikkate alındığı söylenebilir.

Anahtar kelimeler: İngilizce müfredatı, program, felsefi, sosyal, psikolojik temeller

Introduction

Language is a tool that allows us to share our feelings, thoughts, and ideas with others. There should be a common language that everybody can use to share how they feel and what they think. Therefore, in our globalizing and developing world, learning English is becoming necessary because English is no longer only the basis of science and technology. It has also become the international language that connects people from all over the world with different purposes. The fact that English as a foreign language tool benefits individuals and countries in cultural, political, and economic relations causes it to be widely taught in schools (Yücel et al., 2017). To teach English effectively there should be a systematic curriculum. The curriculum is a significant issue that attracts attention since it is about the systematic presentation of language and the teaching of learning (Dündar & Merç, 2017). Therefore, the Turkish Ministry of National Education has always maintained a keen interest in the advancements occurring globally in the field of foreign language teaching (Kahraman, 2012).

The main purpose of educational efforts is to give direction to people's lives and undoubtedly, in this process, there is the idea of revealing the talents and characteristics of individuals and making them a part of social life (Ersözlü et al., 2009). Today, it is impossible for a country without modern knowledge and technology to maintain its economic and political independence, and it is difficult for an education system without universal values to reach national goals in the 21st century (Akinoğlu, 2005). The education system, which has an important role in the social, cultural, political, and economic development of societies and the self-realization of individuals, has three basic elements, which are students, teachers, and programs (Akinoğlu, 2005). A good education can be achieved through well-planned and successfully well-implemented curricula that focus on effective learning (Bakiş, 2019). Hence, curriculum development becomes important in that programs are the guides which determine the way individuals are raised with the necessary qualifications (Bakiş, 2019). It is also crucial to implement an effective program to train individuals to have a good command of the international language. According to Karakaş (2019), given that curriculum documents are among the key types of documents in which judgements concerning language education policy and practice may be found, investigating them is of utmost relevance. Program evaluation studies should be conducted to assess the degree of accomplishment in an educational program, to identify the efficacy of the present program, and to obtain some helpful data for future programs.

This study is important in terms of contributing to the understanding of the fundamentals of foreign language education programs in Türkiye and to the strengths and developmental aspects of English as a foreign language teaching programs in Türkiye, in terms of shedding light to future curriculum development studies.

The Curriculum and Its Foundations

The process of planning is a core concept in learning and teaching. The etymological origin of the curriculum comes from the Latin word that means 'course' or 'track', and the most apparent interpretation of the word curriculum in the context of education, where learning is the major activity, is to see it as a course or 'plan for learning' (Taba, 1962). Concerning the curriculum development issue, planning, conducting, and evaluating are the cornerstones (Rajurkar, 2019). Program design refers to the arrangement of the key elements to lead and guide the development of the program, providing a framework for program planning (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017). Brown (1995) summed up the components of curriculum development as needs analysis, objectives, testing, materials, teaching, and evaluation. Since curriculum development is a systematic process, one should take into consideration all these steps when developing a detailed curriculum. In the context of language teaching, a program is viewed as a collection of courses delivered within a methodology to provide language instruction and achieve some linguistic goals (Lynch, 1996).

The first basis in the examination of the English Curriculum is to examine the philosophical considerations on which the program is based and to question the soundness of the philosophical considerations. Secondly, to understand the social considerations on which the program is based, it is necessary to examine the cultural elements in the program and the elements added to the program to meet the specific needs of the society in which the program will be used. Finally, in psychological considerations one should examine the teaching approaches within a curriculum. In every curriculum, there are teaching approaches that have shaped the program, and to understand and implement the curriculum in a better way, it will be beneficial for both teachers and students to follow the path drawn by these approaches on how to conduct educational activities. Since the English curriculum is analyzed in this study, it is necessary to understand which foreign

language teaching approaches shape the curriculum. In addition, while the program is being prepared, it is necessary to consider the developmental characteristics of the group to which it will be applied, their individual differences, and learning styles.

The Historical Process of Foreign Language Education

In the historical process of foreign language education and training, the first studies were started by the Ministry of National Education Board of Education and Discipline in 1968 as a result of the cooperation with the Council of Europe for the development of programs. With the contributions of the Council of Europe, the studies in the review of the education programs and the preparation of the textbooks started in a period that continued until 1972 (Demirel, 2007). The prepared program was published in the Journal of Notifications numbered 1747 in 1973. It was emphasized that the previous curriculum and textbooks were gradually removed from the 1974-75 academic year, and it was decided to introduce new programs and textbooks and to complete this process until 1977 (MEB, 1973). In 1988-1990, it was decided to switch to the Step Based System in foreign language teaching. The Foreign Language Education Development Center (YADEM) affiliated with the Ministry of National Education, Board of Education and Discipline was established and started its activities in 1988. The application of the Step Based System was terminated at the beginning of the 1989-90 academic year. (Demirel, 2007). In 1997, 8-year compulsory primary education was implemented, the pre-sixth grade foreign language preparatory class practice in Anatolian high schools was abolished, and it was decided to start foreign language teaching from the fourth grade in all primary schools (Demirel, 2005). The language development file model, which was prepared by the Ministry of National Education based on the European Language Portfolio, was sent to pilot schools for testing at the beginning of the 2002-2003 academic year. It is planned to expand this practice in all Council of Europe member countries after the 2004-2005 academic year.

Following the updating of the curriculum in Türkiye, a press release titled "On Our Curriculum Renewal and Changes" was made on 18 July 2017 by the Ministry of National Education-Board of Education and Discipline. It was stated that during the preparation phase of the new programs developed, qualitative and quantitative studies were carried out together, and studies were carried out by taking the opinions of the stakeholders. At the end of the studies, new programs were shared and used in 2018.

Related Studies

One of the current trends in English language teaching is curriculum development and evaluation studies. However, in related literature, there are not many studies about the new English course curriculum. It is possible to say that a limited number of studies have focused on obtaining the views of teachers and students about the program. However, there are numerous studies on the evaluation of previous programs.

In one study, Yücel et al. (2017) examined the English course curriculum of the last fifteen years within the framework of the various criteria by using the document analysis method. They worked on the 2006 and 2013 primary school and 2002, 2011, 2014, and 2016 high school English language curricula according to the principles of scope, gradualness, continuity, cohesion, balance, usefulness, and flexibility, which are stated as crucial factors within the framework of the curriculum design principles in the literature. The findings of their study revealed that the developments in the world in the field of language education at both primary and secondary education levels were followed and innovations were tried to be included in the programs. It was found that there were problems in the understanding and application of the communicative approach by teachers in secondary education programs. Another study conducted by Çelik & Büyükalın Filiz (2018) aimed to evaluate the Secondary Education English Language Curriculum (2014) according to Eisner's Educational Criticism Model. The findings showed that the grammatical patterns and the communicative approach were in conflict, which was a weakness of the program. The 2014 program focused on teaching listening and speaking skills and communication, did not include other language skills, and integrated teaching of the four language skills and language and real-life relationships. In their study, Zorba & Arıkan (2013) aimed to examine the extent to which the 9th Grade English Program of Anatolian High Schools overlapped with the principles of the CEFR. The results showed that the English Course Program covered 7 of the 9 principles of the CEFR, but there was not sufficient focus on some principles. In addition, a disproportionate distribution was observed among the objectives in the four language skills.

Aim and Research Question of the Study

Using these concepts mentioned above as a starting point, this study's main purpose is to examine the 2018 High School English Curriculum by elaborating on philosophical, psychological, and social considerations. Consequently, this study aims to address the following research question:

“What are the general features of the 2018 English Secondary Education Program in terms of philosophical, psychological, and social considerations?”

Method

In this study, which was carried out as qualitative research, document analysis was used. Document analysis includes the analysis of written materials containing information about the case or cases aimed to be investigated. As stated by Bowen (2009), document analysis can be preferred to make a data triangulation in studies where different methods are used together, or it can be preferred as a stand-alone qualitative research method, which is the case in this study. Bowen (2009) stated that three stages should be carried out for document analysis: examination, reading (in-depth examination), and interpretation. These steps were followed in this study.

The Document and Analysis of the Document

The 2018 High School English Curriculum was obtained from the official website of the Ministry of National Education and through search engines on the internet.

The document analysis process can be carried out in two ways: content analysis and thematic analysis (Bowen, 2009). In this study, content analysis was preferred and the findings that emerged during the interpretation process were gathered under themes.

In qualitative studies, since the interpretation of the researcher has a shaping role in the analysis of the data; it is extremely important to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the findings. Creswell (2012) mentions three types of strategies used to ensure validity in qualitative research, which are data triangulation and member check. Member check is the preferred strategy in this study; therefore, the documents were examined separately by two researchers and the findings were compared to minimize subjectivity.

Findings

1. Philosophical Considerations

Program development processes are conducted by finding answers to a lot of questions. The answers to those questions give shape to the program as the product of demanding work. As Akpınar (2017) suggests, some of the questions within the scope of philosophical considerations are as follows: “What is the aim of this program? What kind of individual is wanted to be raised and why should this individual learn English? What will students be able to do with the English they learn at the high school level? How effective have philosophical views been in the preparation of the objectives?”

The program has been designed keeping in mind the student's development, interests, and needs. In addition, the program is updated according to changing needs (For instance, this program gives importance to communicative competence). Students can plan their own improvement with the support of their teachers and peers. In addition to personal needs, the needs and expectations of the society are taken into consideration. Critical thinking, a democratic learning environment and values education are other dimensions emphasized in the program. For all these reasons, we can name the educational philosophy of the program "Constructivism".

To understand the philosophical foundations on which the new English Curriculum is based, it is necessary to understand the approach on which CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) is based because the current English curriculum has been prepared in the light of the CEFR as mentioned in the program.

“This curriculum has been designed in accordance with the descriptive and pedagogical principles of The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Therefore, the language proficiency levels are reflected as A1, A2 (Basic Users) and B1, B2 (Independent Users). The approach adopted is an action-oriented approach since in this curriculum, the target language (English) is seen as a vehicle for communication rather than a lesson to study.”

Regarding the explanations above, it is possible to see that the action-oriented approach is effective in shaping the English curriculum. It is described in the CEFR as follows:

“Based on this approach, language users and learners are primarily social actors; that is, it is an action-oriented approach in the general sense, as it considers members of society assuming not only linguistic, communicative tasks in certain conditions, in certain environments and fields of action.”

“We can talk about communicative tasks here, as individuals use their unique competencies in a strategic and planned way while performing the tasks, they undertake to achieve a certain result. Therefore, the

action-oriented approach encompasses the cognitive and emotional possibilities and intentions of individuals, and all the abilities they possess and use as social actors.”

Based on these explanations, it is seen that communicative tasks, the roles of people who use the language in society, and the abilities suitable for these roles are emphasized. In other words, the focus is on the use of language for communicative purposes. The statements supporting this understanding and included in another part of the program are as follows:

“The main goal of the new 9th-12th grades English Curriculum is to engage learners of English in stimulating, motivating, and enjoyable learning environments so that they become effective, fluent, and self-directed users of English.”

Parallel to these explanations, various suggestions for communication-oriented instruction are included. The aim is to motivate students and make them enjoy using the language. It is possible to say that the action-oriented approach takes its source from the communicative approach, which is the most popular and accepted foreign language teaching approach. The aim of the communicative approach, which first emerged in the 1980s and provided profound changes in the understanding of language teaching, is to emphasize the feature of the target language as a means of communication. Therefore, it is emphasized that by using real resources in English lessons, students can see what language learning serves in real life and that the lessons can become fun, useful, and responsive to student needs. In short, it is possible to see the effects of the communicative approach in shaping the new English course curriculum. The following statements are shared to cite some quotes from the program that reflect this understanding:

“Integrating the four core skills emphasizes speaking and listening skills to enable students to practice the communicative and real-life use of language.”

As stated in the excerpt above, the purpose of language communication is emphasized, and the emphasis is placed on speaking and listening skills. To see to what extent this is reflected in the objectives, the distributions of the objectives of the four skills (listening & speaking, reading & writing) are shown for each grade level in the table below.

Table 1. Objectives Based on Grades and Skills

Grade	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Pronunciation	Total
9 th Grade	17	29	16	16	10	82
10 th Grade	13	23	18	15	10	79
11 th Grade	13	19	14	12	10	68
12 th Grade	18	20	17	17	10	82
	61	91	65	60	40	311

When the figures in Table 1 are examined, it is seen that speaking objectives are much higher than other skills' objectives, that the objectives of reading, listening, and writing skills follow respectively, and that the number of objectives of these skills is quite close to each other. It is possible to say that the objectives for other skills are equally distributed. The inclusion of objectives to improve pronunciation can also be considered as an indication of the emphasis on speaking skills. In addition to these, in the introduction part of the program, the importance of creating effective communication environments in the classroom is emphasized and it is suggested that it is useful to provide students with activities in which they could cooperate to experience several types of communication. For example:

“Collaboration rather than competition among students is encouraged in the 9th-12th Grade English curriculum because collaborative activities are more in line with the natural process of language learning. In the natural language learning process, students must practice interacting with each other to be able to converse and develop the interpersonal communication skills necessary to become effective communicators.”

In the action-oriented approach, the importance of learner autonomy and self-assessment is emphasized; additionally, the use of language for communicative purposes is highly recommended. It is possible to see the reflections of this understanding in the new English curriculum. Learner autonomy has been mentioned in many places, and it has been stated that it is necessary to provide students with the opportunity to follow their learning processes by creating self-evaluation opportunities and enriching their learning with different strategies. The following quotations are shared below to give examples from the program in this regard:

"Adolescents are going through significant physical, cognitive, and emotional changes and are on the way to establishing their own identity and independence."

"In addition, Crawford (2007) mentions that young adolescents are curious about exploration, peer interaction, and autonomy. Therefore, improving student autonomy is in Chapters 9-12."

"Teachers encourage and prepare students to learn how to learn English autonomously."

"Students are encouraged to be autonomous in their learning of English in and out of the classroom."

As can be understood from the quotations above, there is a student-centered understanding of the program. However, these suggestions reflect the general understanding and do not specifically indicate what teachers can do to improve student autonomy.

To summarize the understanding that the 2018-9th -12th Grade English Curriculum is based on, English must be primarily adopted as a communication tool, rather than being considered as a lesson. Therefore, a student who has completed the 12th grade is a student who has language proficiency at a level to express himself comfortably, learns the language primarily to communicate, can get to know different cultures thanks to the language he has learned, and has the quality of being open to various ideas, values, and lifestyles, and is responsible for his learning. After summarizing the basic understanding of the program, it will be useful to find the social foundations on which the program is based to make sense of the program from an additional perspective.

2. Social Considerations

Language teaching is necessarily recognized for its social functions. Learners as "social actors" are exposed to the course content through language functions or speech acts (Byram& Grundy, 2010), and social perspectives are considered in the development of language teaching programs. Needs (both individual and societal), educational aims, instructional goals and objectives, course content, technology, family, school, and culture are concepts to be worked on to have a deep understanding of a course program (Çoban, 2017).

This part of the findings is divided into two subsections: culture and social needs as the evaluation of the English course curriculum is restricted to these two points in this paper.

2.1. Culture

Another emphasis of the action-oriented approach mentioned in the paper is on the cultural dimension of language. Since language learning will enable the recognition of new cultures, awareness of cultural diversity and appreciation of these cultures is a dimension of the process that should not be skipped. Below is a statement taken from CEFR of this understanding:

"Mother tongue and cultural competence are not limited to learning a second or foreign language and culture, the new competence gained is not independent of the old competence. A language learner does not acquire two different and independent forms of action and communication but becomes multilingual and develops intercultural awareness."

As stated in the explanation above, language learning is the process of acquiring a new identity, and it is the whole of experiences in which the focus is on understanding the target culture. Having knowledge about the target culture and various foreign cultures and acquiring the skills to convey one's own culture in the target language are influential factors in learning English, which has the feature of connecting different cultures with its feature of being a lingua franca.

In support of this, there are cultural points in course content and some objectives. The English course curriculum has a total of 40 themes, 10 of which are different for each grade level. In some of these themes, examples from various cultures are included, and it is suggested that students share various items of their own culture in English, such as food, clothing, and celebration. For instance, in Figure 1 shared below, examples from different cultures are shared in the column named "Functions and Useful Language" in the theme named "Traditions" at the 10th-grade level. (e.g., In western cultures, people wear shoes at home, but in Eastern cultures, they take off their shoes when entering a house. In the column "Language Skills and Learning Outcomes", it is possible to see cultural reflections in the objectives related to reading skills: "Students will be able to answer the questions about short texts on social, educational, and technological lives of the people in the past around the world." Looking at the objectives related to writing skills, it is possible to figure out that they can use some information specific to different cultures: "Students will be able to write a short paragraph, comparing traditions around the world." Details of the "Traditions" theme are shared in the figure below:

Figure 1. An Example of Cultural Elements in Themes and Objectives – Grade 10 – Theme 4

THEME 4: TRADITIONS		
Functions and Useful Language	Language Skills and Learning Outcomes	Suggested Materials and Tasks
<p>1. Describing habits and routines in the past</p> <p>2. Making oral presentations on a specific topic</p> <p>People used to watch shadow plays.</p> <p>In Western Cultures, people wear shoes at home, but in Eastern cultures, they take off their shoes when entering a house.</p> <p>People used to dispel all the bad spirits with fire but now they use fireworks for celebrations.</p> <p>People did not use to have personal computers.</p> <p>We used to live in a small town when I was young, but now we live in a big city.</p> <p>I used to play with my dolls when I was a kid.</p> <p>She used to carry her blanket with her when she was a child.</p> <p>I didn't use to go to school on foot when I was at primary school.</p> <p>There didn't use to be any traffic jam in the main streets of this city 50 years ago.</p> <p>Ahi Evran used to recommend the members of Ahi Foundation to be honest while trading.</p> <p>The Ottoman Sultans used to build foundations for charity.</p>	<p>Listening</p> <p>E10.4.L1. Students will be able to locate specific information about traditions in charts by watching short documentaries.</p> <p>Pronunciation</p> <p>E10.4.P1. Students will be able to practice /t/ and /Ø/ sounds. Eg. three /θri:/ tree /tri:/</p> <p>Speaking</p> <p>E10.4.S1. Students will be able to deliver a short speech using visuals on traditions.</p> <p>E10.4.S2. Students will be able to talk about several things they used to do when they were children.</p> <p>Reading</p> <p>E10.4.R1. Students will be able to answer the questions about short texts on social, educational, and technological lives of people in the past around the world.</p> <p>E10.4.R2. Students will be able to identify the differences between the lifestyles and customs of people in the past and the ones in the 21st century in a written text.</p> <p>Writing</p> <p>E10.4.W1. Students will be able to write a short paragraph comparing traditions around the world.</p> <p>E10.4.W2. Students will be able to write the things they used to do when they were children.</p>	<p>Documentaries</p> <p>Scanning and Matching Headings with Paragraphs</p> <p>Pictures of a City in Turkey... Years Ago and Now</p> <p>Short Reading Texts</p> <p>Completing Timelines with Events and Dates</p> <p>Descriptive Paragraphs</p> <p>Oral Presentations</p> <p>Posters of Past and Present</p> <p>Collaborative Story Writing</p> <p>Songs</p> <p>Communicative Games</p> <p>IDIOMS/PROVERBS OF THE WEEK</p> <p>DISCUSSION TIME</p> <p>TECH PACK</p> <p>E-PORTFOLIO ENTRY</p> <p>VIDEO BLOG ENTRY</p>

It is also possible to encounter different reflections of cultural elements in the program at other grade levels and themes. For example, the themes of "Food and Festival" in the 10th grade, "Facts about Turkey" and "Values and Norms" in the 11th grade, as their names suggest, present some cultural elements and English together. It offers the opportunity to engage with elements belonging to both their local cultures and various foreign cultures.

2.2. Social Needs

There are many studies on foreign language teaching in Türkiye and especially the weaknesses in English teaching. Despite the effort and time spent, our weakness in our English proficiency is evident as Türkiye ranks 64th among 111 countries according to the English Proficiency Index (EPI-2022) with "low proficiency". In addition, Türkiye ranks 34th among 35 European countries. The issue of not being able to learn or speak

a language in Türkiye is the subject of many research studies, conferences, and workshops, and is discussed in television programs, conversations, and articles in newspapers and magazines that people frequently follow in our current life. Therefore, determining the factors that will complicate language acquisition in the language learning process, prevent the achievement of goals and vice versa, and facilitate the achievement of these goals has been the main purpose of many studies (Sunel, 1989; Tayhani, 1993; Yılmaz, 2008; Kayrak, 2010). In some of the related studies, there are findings that the communication function of the language of the school environment is neglected.

The data obtained in the National Needs Analysis on Teaching the English Language in Public Schools in Türkiye, which is a comprehensive national study conducted by the British Council and TEPAV (2014) can be accepted as evidence of the problem of not using the language for communication purposes. This study aims to make recommendations to the Ministry of Education regarding the development and implementation of an appropriate English language curriculum based on English teachers' current teaching expertise (and future needs), and identify the professional needs of English teachers to support the Ministry of Education's goal to improve students' English language proficiencies. This study was conducted to provide the Ministry of National Education with a comprehensive national report on the current stage of teaching English in public schools, which could be used to implement any future English language teaching or learning reform initiatives. In the study, data were collected through questionnaires and interviews, and the opinions of students, parents, and teachers were obtained. In addition, classroom observations were carried out at primary, secondary, high school, and vocational school levels. More than 80% of the teachers observed had professional and language proficiency to meet their needs as English teachers. However, it was observed that in all the schools visited, English was not taught as a language of communication, but as a subject (such as history, geography). In all observed classes, it was determined that students did not learn to communicate in English and to bring functionality to the language. Almost all the observed classrooms were in a structure where students sat in two-people rows. However, teachers failed to use this seating arrangement to separate students into pairs or groups for independent, communicative language practice as part of daily classroom activities.

The situation regarding our failure in using English to communicate, which has almost become a social problem, was also reflected in the 2018 English curriculum, and solutions were suggested; accordingly, as can be seen in the excerpt from the program presented below:

"In Turkey, the lack of effective communicative competence in English lessons continues to be a problem for most students. In the context of teaching English to foreigners, it is constantly stated that priority is given to grammatical proficiency in Turkey, with an excessive focus on teaching and evaluating grammatical structures in English. To take a step towards solving this problem, the new 9th-12th Classroom English curriculum takes into account all aspects of communicative competence (grammatical proficiency, discourse proficiency, social language proficiency, strategic competence."

As mentioned in this quote, teachers should design activities for students to acquire all four basic language skills and implement the program by considering that the distribution of the objectives, especially emphasizes the communication dimension.

Another difficulty encountered in terms of language teaching in schools in Türkiye is that students must follow English lessons in heterogeneous classes in terms of language proficiency. English lessons in public schools are programmed according to grade levels, and students with different educational and experience backgrounds and therefore different language proficiency levels take lessons in the same classes. A student who has completed over his or her first 8 years of education in public schools is expected to have language proficiency at A2 level with the English courses he/she has completed. The language proficiency levels in the 2018-Elementary English course curriculum are as follows:

Figure 2. 2018-Primary English Curriculum Language Proficiency Levels

Levels [CEFR] (Hours / Week)	Grades	Skill focus	Main activities/Strategies
1 [A1] (2)	2	Listening and Speaking	TPR/Arts and crafts/Drama
	3	Listening and Speaking	
	4	Very Limited Reading and Writing	

2 [A1] (3)	5	Listening and Speaking Limited Reading Very Limited Writing	Drama/Role-play
	6	Listening and Speaking Limited Reading Limited Writing	
3 [A2] (4)	7	Primary: Listening and Speaking Secondary: Reading and Writing	Theme-based
	8	Primary: Listening and Speaking Secondary: Reading and Writing	

According to the information presented in the figure above, a student in the 9th grade should take English lessons at the B1 level. However, the language proficiency levels of the grade levels in the new programs are presented in Figure 3:

Figure 3. 2018-High School English Curriculum Language Proficiency Levels

Grades (CEFR*) Hours per Week	Learner Age	Skill/Grammar/Vocabulary/ Pronunciation Focus	Main Activities (Can be used in all grades)
9 (A1/A2) 4	14-14.5	All four skills integrated with an emphasis on Listening and Speaking. Maximum seven new vocabulary items per lesson. Limited Pronunciation practice.	Roleplays/Simulations Graphics/Charts Paragraph Reading and Writing
10 (A2+/B1) 4	15-15.5	All four skills integrated with an emphasis on Listening and Speaking. Limited focus on Language Structures. Maximum seven new vocabulary items per lesson. Limited Pronunciation practice.	Information Gap Activities/Roleplays Paragraph Reading and Writing Skimming and Scanning
11 (B1+/B2) 4	16-16.5	All four skills integrated with an emphasis on Listening and Speaking. Maximum seven new vocabulary items per lesson. Limited Pronunciation practice.	Surveys/Short Oral Presentations/Drama Short Reading Texts and Paragraph Writing
12 (B2+) 4	17-17.5	All four skills integrated with an emphasis on Listening and Speaking. Maximum seven new vocabulary items per lesson. Limited Pronunciation practice.	Synthesis of Language Structures. Conversations/Oral Presentations/Projects/Task-based Activities Argumentative/Descriptive Text Writing

Considering the information above, a 9th-grade student will take English lessons at A1 and A2 levels again. This situation is explained in the program as follows:

“The rationale behind starting from A1/A2 levels in 9th Grades is that although students are expected to be at A2 level by the end of 8th grade according to the 2nd-8th grade English curriculum, in practice, students with different capacity levels, English proficiency and individual learning differences are generally expected. Since they have entered the 9th grade, there is a need to repeat the content presented in previous lessons. For students starting Grade 9 with lower language proficiency, teachers can emphasize the repetition and development of A1-level functions, vocabulary, and structures. For students with higher levels of English proficiency, teachers can spend more teaching time at the A2 level, especially by devoting time to the use of productive language skills such as speaking and writing.”

As seen in the quotation above, suggestions are presented on how teachers should deal with students in heterogeneous classes, and it is mentioned that heterogeneous classes are an issue encountered in public schools.

When the social foundations on which the 2018 9th -12th Grade English Curriculum is based are examined, it is obvious that the elements related to the cultural dimension of language teaching are included in the program and the program offers suggestions for finding solutions to some problems encountered in language teaching in Türkiye, and the program is prepared to meet these needs. The next part of the study will present the psychological considerations on which the program is based.

3. Psychological Foundations

In the psychological foundation, it is important to examine and understand whether there is a curriculum prepared according to the characteristics of adolescents and the language development characteristics of adolescents (Yapıcı, 2017). The language teaching approaches that the program is based on, and the points prepared by considering the developmental and language development characteristics of adolescents will help to understand the psychological foundations on which the English Curriculum is based.

In the philosophical foundations section of the program, it is stated that an action-oriented approach is adopted as the language teaching approach in the program following CEFR, and it is important to create environments that will enable the language to be acquired by following a communication-oriented way, according to that approach. In addition, when the language teaching approaches adopted in the program are examined, it is seen that an emphasis is placed on communicative language teaching. This approach is important in terms of being up to date, aiming at the improvement of all four basic skills, meeting the need for speaking, and most importantly creating opportunities for the person to express himself. In addition to these, it is stated that an eclectic approach is adopted in the program design processes, and it is expressed as follows:

“While designing the new 9th -12th grade English curriculum, an eclectic approach to language teaching and learning methods has been adopted. While the program was being developed, a single teaching method was neither fully adopted nor excluded. Different teaching techniques and learning tasks are included in the program and their selection is made according to both the theme of each unit and the language functions presented in each unit.”

Regarding the explanation above, it is possible to point out that there is a diversity in terms of methods and language tasks, especially in the organization of instruction. It can be said that this situation will be beneficial to ensure that the target language is used in different contexts.

As stated in the introduction to this section, knowing the student group to which the program will be implemented will ensure that the program is well-prepared and implemented effectively. Therefore, it is important to consider the cognitive characteristics of adolescents. According to Piaget (1999), adolescents can use logical abstract systems in various scientific and social situations as they pass into the abstract operational stage. Exchange of views and discussion begin to take an important place in the lives of adolescents. Adolescents' attitudes toward society's customs and traditions may differ, and they begin to realize that these may differ in different groups. It is possible to see the reflections of these features on the program, for example, including different cultures in the themes, suggesting class discussions, group discussions, suggestions to benefit from peer assessment, and suggesting collaborative studies. To give an example of the achievements that may have been prepared by considering these features:

“E9.3.W1. Students will be able to write their opinions on a blog.”

“E9.10.S2. Students will be able to agree or disagree with others by giving their opinion.”

“E11.10.S2. Students will be able to make comments about moral values and norms in different cultures.”

In addition, the language development characteristics of adolescents are also mentioned in the English Curriculum, and it is stated that adolescent students can follow the language learning process more consciously. The explanation in the program about this is as follows:

“Students at this age are expected to be more aware of the language learning process in their mother tongue and to be able to reflect this on their second language learning experience. Therefore, studies on learning some complex language structures are included in some parts of the program, albeit in a limited amount.”

Finally, there are some explanations in the program that the affective needs of adolescents should also be justified. It has been stated that cooperative learning is a way that adolescents prefer more than competition, and some issues are mentioned based on the literature on adolescents. For example, Powell et al. (2010) state that collaboration meets the affective needs of adolescent students better than the competition because adolescents view their friends as more trustworthy and generally trust their peers more than the adults in their lives. Brown (2000) states that adolescents are going through significant physical, cognitive, and emotional changes and are on the way to establishing their own identity and independence. Crawford (2007) mentions that young adolescents are keen on exploration, peer interaction, and personal autonomy.

Following the quotations above, there is an emphasis to create safe learning environments with cooperation, interaction, and communication so that students can think reflectively about their learning and be aware of their own needs, strengths, and weaknesses. It is possible to see the reflections of this understanding when looking at course objectives and activity suggestions presented for each theme; however, there are not any effective goals included.

To summarize, a language teaching approach compatible with CEFR is adopted in the preparation of the 2018 English Curriculum, and the entire program is prepared with a focus on communication. In addition, it is possible to claim that cognitive development and language development characteristics of adolescents are also considered, and their affective characteristics are also partially followed.

Results, Discussions and Suggestions

As stated in the introduction, this study aims to examine the 2018 High School English Curriculum from philosophical, social, and psychological perspectives because the way through understanding a program and the rationale behind the program development process include philosophical, social, and psychological foundations. When the program is understood better, it is easier to implement. Therefore, this study intends to shine a light on teachers in terms of program understanding as they, together with their students, are the actual users of the curriculum.

As Cevizci (2011) points out, education requires an understanding of human nature. As curricula are developed to meet educational needs, they need to have a philosophical, social, and psychological rationale. When the need for learning English as a lingua franca is an issue in Türkiye, the course curriculum should be designed to meet those needs.

According to Dewey (1916), philosophy is the theory of education. Additionally, Ornstein and Hunkins (2017) state that philosophy determines educational goals, relevant course content, and instructional design. Therefore, it is possible to say that there is no curriculum without philosophy, and it is important to understand the English teaching approach in the latest English Curriculum to achieve our goals. The 2018 English Curriculum highlights the action-oriented approach, and there is a strong emphasis on communication and interaction.

Considering the philosophical foundations of the 2018 English Curriculum, it is possible to state that the program has been designed keeping in mind the student's development, interests, and needs. In addition, the program is updated according to changing needs (this program gives importance to communicative competence, although previous programs gave importance to grammar proficiency). The information learned is in a way that students can use in daily life as mentioned in the previous section, that is, the information is useful. Students can plan their development in cooperation with the support of their teachers and peers. In addition to personal needs, the needs and expectations of society are taken into consideration. Critical thinking, a democratic learning environment and values are other dimensions emphasized in the program.

While philosophical foundations are mainly about the teaching approaches, social foundations of a program are about the people, the society and the context, namely where the curriculum is used. Büyükkaragöz (1997) asserts that curricula should be designed in such a way that people's social development and their adaptation to their society could be possible. Once this is managed, the program will be based on a clear social foundation.

During the examination of the 2018 English course curriculum, it is possible to find some clues about social considerations. In this dimension, the curriculum has been shaped by taking into consideration the issues of recognizing and promoting national, local, and universal culture, the problems of the society regarding language learning, the needs of the society, and the opportunities to be provided with language learning. In addition, emphasis has been placed on teaching values. In terms of social foundations, one of the most emphasized parts of the program is culture. In addition, reducing the differences arising from culture and improving the awareness of the multicultural learning environment can be seen among the objectives.

In the development of a new program, the questions of "What do we teach?" and "How can we teach in the best way?" need to be answered (Janescik, 2003). The course content and the instructional design should fit well with the target population. Students' needs as living human beings should be considered. The 2018 English Curriculum can be accepted to be sufficient to reflect psychological considerations.

Regarding the psychological considerations of the 2018 English Curriculum, high school students are in adolescence and have an abstract processing period in terms of development. When we examine the developmental characteristics, it can be proposed that internalized thought or speech comes to the fore, their empathy skills are developed, and the issues of finding their identity and identification are valid for students. The developmental characteristics of the students are tried to be reflected in the program. Students' prior knowledge and readiness levels are considered while preparing the program. In the program, emphasis was placed on learning differences in terms of individual differences. While students who start secondary education are expected to be at A2 level at the end of the 8th grade, the reason for them to start from A1 in the 9th grade is both to create subject repetition and to provide opportunities for the development of grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills for low-level students. In other words, the program classifies the differences arising from learning as high-level and low-level students.

In related literature, there are not many studies about the new English course curriculum. However, there are studies that were about the previous programs. For example, this study shows similar results to the study of Yücel et al. (2017) which shows that the developments in the world in the field of language education at both primary and secondary education levels were followed and innovations were tried to be included in the programs of 2006-2013. Another study that has similar results was conducted by Çelik & Büyükalan Filiz (2018) in which they found that the content, which complemented the four language skills, was related to life and the themes were found to be interesting and appropriate for language teaching. On the other hand, a study that contradicts the findings of this study is the study conducted by Cihan and Gürten (2009). They found that the outcomes for listening and speaking skills, which are among the four basic skills, are not attainable and that these outcomes are related to the age and developmental characteristics of the students and the weekly lessons. can be reorganized for the hours of the day.

To conclude, the 2018 English course curriculum has adopted an up-to-date and useful approach to teaching English communicatively. Society's and high school students' needs are considered when determining the course objectives and course content. However, if English teachers, the implementers of the program, do not spend any effort to understand the rationale of the program, there will be a gap between the theory and the practice. Therefore, the authors of this article hope to contribute to the field by helping teachers figure out the philosophical, social, and psychological considerations of the 2018 English course considering the findings of this study in their efforts to become qualified practitioners of the program.

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