A qualitative inquiry into the application of 9th grade EFL program in terms of the CEFR

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Abstract

Current study investigated applicability of the 9th Grade EFL Program with regard to proficiency descriptors and educational principles of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Qualitative inquiry was followed by adopting a phenomenological approach to conduct the study. The data were collected through document analyses, face-to-face interviews, and teacher and students observations regarding classroom instructions. Descriptive analysis was administered to analyze the data obtained from the document analyses, interviews, and observations. The results showed that the EFL program corresponds to students' language levels and needs, while teachers come across problems due to course materials and insufficient class hours during implementations. Besides the participant teachers reported problems in terms of seminars and in-service training activities.

Keywords: CEFR; EFL program; 9th grade; program evaluation

1. Introduction

1.1. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

The release of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has affected language education contexts profoundly since 2001. Though the CEFR was published originally in English and French languages, nowadays language users can reach it in forty different languages. Although it was intended for language professionals and users in member states of the European Union (EU), the CEFR has become a reference tool in language education contexts across the world in curriculum development, assessment, and standard setting (Alderson, 2007; Byram & Parmenter, 2012; Hulstijn, 2007; Khalifa & Ffrench, 2008; Mirici, 2015; North, 2014). The CEFR can be used as a reference document in education contexts to define language users' language proficiency levels through its illustrative descriptors; also, it provides several pedagogical principles which can be followed to enhance the efficiency of language education contexts. Following these pedagogical principles can

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promote plurilingualism, pluriculturalism, intercultural awareness, and contribute to mutual understanding internationally (CoE, 2001; Çelik, 2013; Girard & Trim, 1998; Mirici, 2014).

1.2. The 9th Grade EFL Program in Turkey

The Board of Education (BoE) of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), Turkey proposed the latest curriculum for secondary schools on 19.01.2018 with the Article Number of 40. It was declared that the new program would be implemented for all grades of secondary schools step by step starting from the fall term of the 2018-2019 school year. It was announced that an action-oriented approach was adopted; four language skills were aimed to develop considering such educational principles as learner autonomy and self-assessment in order to address communication problems that the students may confront in their real lives (MoNE, 2018).

1.3. Importance of the Study and Research Questions

Program evaluation provides us real insights into efficiency of processes conduced in language education contexts, especially, when we consider time and effort devoted to a program development and implementation. In this respect, the current study investigates applicability of the new EFL program with regard to the CEFR. The research questions of this study are:

-    To what extent do the outcomes of 9th Grade EFL Program correspond to the proficiency descriptors of the CEFR?

-    What are the perspectives of EFL teachers in terms of the implementation of 9th Grade EFL Program with regard to the educational principles of the CEFR?

-    What are the classroom observations regarding the applicability of 9th Grade EFL Program with respect to the CEFR?

1.4. Literature Review

Foreign language program development and implementation issues hold crucial place both in our country and in other countries, and many research studies were carried out in order to investigate different aspects of foreign language programs. In this regard, the following paragraphs discuss a number of research studies to provide a general understanding to this study.

Several studies have looked for compatibility and applicability of EFL programs for different grades with the proficiency descriptors and principles of the CEFR. For example, Özer (2012) investigated correspondence of 3rd Grade English Language Program with the CEFR. Document analysis was followed to compare the program with principles of the CEFR. The analyses indicated that they share similar goals to a large extent (92%), while the EFL program does not handle language skills in accordance with the proficiency descriptors of the CEFR. Additionally, Kondakçı (2014) investigated five EFL curricula implemented in Turkey designed for secondary schools both for national and international language education contexts. The study discussed correspondence of EFL program of the MoNE with two other international programs in terms of philosophy, design, content, and assessment through a detailed content analysis. Likewise, Sak (2013) searched for differences and similarities of EFL programs followed at primary education in Finland and Turkey, and their compatibility to CEFR regarding attainments and skills. Qualitative inquiry was followed through a document analysis process. The results indicated several differences and similarities in attainments and skills of the EFL programs of these two countries. Furthermore, Arslan (2011) investigated views of experts and academicians regarding applicability of the CEFR in higher education context in Turkey. The study was conducted through interviews in 2010-2011 academic year. The results stressed importance of communicative

competence, integrated language skills, project and problem-based learning. Similarly, Egyptian context was investigated by Shaarawy and Lotfy (2013) through a quasi-experimental design in terms of blended learning approach and the CEFR proficiency descriptors. The results indicated a significant difference between the groups with regard to their writing proficiency as learners in the experiment group over scored learners in the control group. The study discussed importance of the research for Egyptian context. Accordingly, Nakatani (2012) investigated the influence of communicative strategy provided by the CEFR on Japanese EFL students' proficiency levels. The study followed a mixed methods approach to collect data from Japanese students. The results indicated that the CEFR implementations helped students to improve themselves in terms of strategy use and awareness.

Moreover, self-assessment aspect of the CEFR has become a research interest; many studies have investigated contributions of the CEFR in foreign language learning in terms of self-assessment. Denies and Janssen (2016) presented the results of their study regarding self-assessments through application of 12 can-do statements from the CEFR by 22,500 language learners. The results indicated positive correlations between the results; also, background profiles of the participants affected their patterns of results. Similarly, Runnels (2016) studied the relations between language proficiency and self-assessment due to extensive application of the CEFR as an assessment tool in language education contexts in Japan. The study discussed self-assessment preferences of the learners, effectiveness of the self-assessment for learners, and interpretability of the results. Also, Şentürk and Mirici (2019) expressed that self-assessment through CEFR-based documents such as English Language Portfolio (ELP) had positive effects on language learners.

There have also been studies which have addressed specifically alignment processes of the CEFR into national language education contexts. Ilc and Stopar (2015), for example, addressed the alignment process of national examinations conducted in English to the CEFR proficiency descriptors in Slovenian context. The study reported significance of this kind of processes since understanding descriptors in international benchmarks such as the CEFR may contribute substantially to language teaching policies followed by countries. Likewise, Huy and Hamid (2015) reported adaptation and alignment processes of the CEFR into language education context in Vietnam. The study addressed to perceptions of stakeholders on adaptation process of the CEFR in a state university. The results suggested implementation of the CEFR to confront possible problems in foreign language education both in Vietnam and in developing countries. Additionally, adaptation and implementation of the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL), another CEFR-based document, in language education contexts was strongly suggested (Çakır & Balcikanli 2012; Seitova, 2017; Yüce, 2019).

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Design

This study followed a qualitative model by adopting a phenomenological approach. In phenomenology, data regarding experiences are analyzed and compared to depict the nature of a phenomenon, for example, essence of being a participant in particular program. Phenomena can be feelings, social relationships such as professions, marriages, or can be a culture, an organization, and a program; experiencing phenomenon directly enables to understand what others feel about it, and, this addresses importance of interviewing (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). The study investigated applicability of the 9th Grade EFL Program of the MoNE with regard to the CEFR in language education contexts in the 2017-2018 school year. The study employed document analyses, face-to-face interviews, and observations regarding classroom instructions.

2.2. Participants

The participants were 11 EFL teachers chosen purposefully and conveniently; and, only volunteer participants were incorporated into the study. Demographic profiles of the participants were categorized in terms of sex, age, educational background (EB), department of graduation (DG), and teaching experience (TE). The participants were labelled with an alphabetical code from 'A' to 'K' to provide their confidentiality. All of the participants had a bachelor degree (BD). Most of them (n=10) graduated from an English Language Teaching (ELT) department, and, only one of them (n=1) graduated from an English Language and Literature (ELL) department. The participants had more than 5 years of teaching experience. The following table (Table 1) presents demographic profiles of the participants:

Table 1. Demographic Profiles of the Participants

Part.	Sex	Age	EB	DG	TE
A	F	38	BD	ELT	16
B	F	33	BD	ELT	11
C	F	42	BD	ELT	17
D	F	41	BD	ELL	20
E	F	30	BD	ELT	6
F	F	34	BD	ELT	12
G	F	52	BD	ELT	30
H	F	38	BD	ELT	17
I	F	37	BD	ELT	15
J	F	40	BD	ELT	17
K	F	42	BD	ELT	20

2.3. Data Collection

The first research question was answered through document analyses, the 2nd research question was answered through face-to-face interviews with the participants, and the last research question was answered through observations regarding classroom instruction in this study. The CEFR (2001), EAQUALS Bank of Descriptors-As Checklists (2008) documents and 9th Grade EFL Program proposed by the BoE (2018) were used during the document analysis processes. An interview form consisting of ten semi-structured interview questions was developed to carry out face-to-face interviews, and an observation checklist consisting of twenty items was developed to observe EFL classes.

2.4. Data Analysis

A descriptive analysis process was applied to the qualitative data collected from the participants through document analyses, face-to-face interviews, and observations. The researchers applied the strategy proposed by Akşit for quantification of the qualitative data (1998, in Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013, p. 281). Description is an indispensable factor in a qualitative inquiry, and researchers need to be flexible to confront dynamic processes arising throughout a research (Cresswell, 2009; Wolcott, 1994). Accordingly, the steps suggested by Yıldırım and Şimşek (2013; p.256) were followed to conduct a descriptive analysis to the data gathered from multiple sources. Firstly, a frame was formed for descriptive analysis. Next, the data were analyzed in line with the predetermined frame. Then, the results

were defined by giving direct quotations. Lastly, the results were explained by associations and comparisons.

2.5. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of the study was provided by following several strategies such as triangulation, member checking, intercoder agreement, peer review, external audits, and thick description. Firstly, triangulation points to comparing data by employing different sources, and researchers can investigate a problem from different perspectives (Given, 2015; Palmer & Bolderston, 2006).The researchers benefited from document analyses, face-to-face interviews and observations to ensure believability of the study. Secondly, transcriptions of the face-to-face interviews and conclusions on the transcriptions were shared with the participants in order to avoid any semantic loss. Member checking promotes credibility of conclusions (Creswell, 2007). Thirdly, an agreement on the themes and categories among several experts who were unaware of each other were sought by the researchers. Intercoder agreement highlights an agreement among several experts on the same data (Creswell, 2007). Fourthly, the results were shared and discussed with several peers who had conducted qualitative research studies beforehand to gain insights on the processes. Peer review enables to review processes and data by other experts who have knowledge and experience in the field (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Fifthly, external audits address to outsiders who comment on processes and results of a study (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993). Different experts were consulted about appropriateness of steps followed in the study. Lastly, the researchers applied thick description. This strategy enables readers to get most of a research study by giving clear details about it (Patton, 2002). All the processes followed in this study were described in a detailed way for readers to enhance transferability of the study in other contexts.

3. Results

The first research question explored the compatibility of outcomes proposed by 9th Grade EFL Program with proficiency descriptors of the CEFR. In this respect, a comparative analysis process was conducted with documents of the CEFR (2001), EAQUALS Bank of Descriptors-As Checklists (2008), and 9th Grade EFL Program. The results obtained after document analysis process were summarized in following table (Table 2) as:

Table 2. Compatibility of the EFL program outcomes with proficiency descriptors of the CEFR

Categories	EFL Program	CEFR Correspondence	Compatibility (%)
Language Functions	38	21	55.26
Pronunciation	12	1	8.3
Listening Skill	17	9	59.94
Reading Skill	16	11	68.75
Writing Skill	16	12	75
Speaking Skill	29	25	86.2
TOTAL	128	79	61.71

EQUALS Bank of Descriptors- As Checklists was used as a reference document to define the compatibility of outcomes of 9th Grade EFL Program with proficiency descriptors of the CEFR. Firstly,

the EFL program proposes 38 outcomes for language functions and 21 (55.26%) of them correspond to A1 and A2 levels. Secondly, the EFL proposes 12 outcomes for pronunciation and 1 (8.3%) of them correspond to A1 and A2 levels. Thirdly, the EFL program proposes 17 outcomes for listening skill and 9 (59.94%) of them correspond to A1 and A2 levels. Fourthly, the EFL program proposes 16 outcomes for reading skill and 11 (68.75%) of them correspond to A1 and A2 levels. Fifthly, the EFL program proposes 16 outcomes for writing skill and 12 (75%) of them correspond to A1 and A2 levels. Lastly, the EFL program proposes 29 outcomes speaking skill and 25 (86.2%) of them correspond to A1 and A2 levels. In sum, the EFL program proposes 128 outcomes to be attained and 79 (61.71%) of them correspond to A1 and A2 levels.

The second research question investigated applicability of the EFL program in terms of the CEFR educational principles. To form a frame, the researchers consulted different experts in the area and defined 8 main themes (plurilingualism, pluriculturalism, intercultural awareness, action-oriented approach, task-based learning, communicative language competence, autonomous learning, and self-assessment (ELP)) proposed by the CEFR (CoE, 2001) by following Miles and Huberman (1994) model. The formula of $\Delta = C \div (C + \partial) \times 100$ suggested by Miles and Huberman was applied to define internal validity of the descriptive themes, and 88.88% of agreement was defined among the experts (Baltacı, 2017; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). Based on these themes, semi-structured interview questions were prepared and implemented to the participants. The researchers labelled each participant in an alphabetical order as A, B, C, etc. to ensure the confidentiality of their identities. Respectively, results obtained from the face-to-face interviews as follows:

The first interview question investigated the EFL teachers' perceptions on whether the EFL program involve educational principles of 'plurilingualism and pluriculturalism' of the CEFR. Most of the participants (f=9) stated that the EFL program does not enable 9th grade learners to become plurilingual and pluricultural. They think that though nationalities and countries were mentioned in the first units of course materials, the other units do not involve activities which may foster plurilingualism and pluriculturalism. Sample extracts gathered from the face-to-face interviews are as follows:

A: "...No, it does not. It does not enable our students to become plurilingual or pluricultural. Though there are elements like 'hello' in different languages at the beginning of the term, it does not provide further samples for our students to become plurilingual or pluricultural. For example, it does not provide detailed items or samples of 'breakfast' to our students in different cultures. They do not know how to say a proper name in French or in Spanish. The activities do not teach samples of usages in different languages."

E: "...Only 'greetings' expressions. We have covered 5 units so far and we did not come across such activities or exercises."

According to the responses, the EFL program does not provide plurilingual and pluricultural elements.

The second interview question investigated the participants' perceptions about whether the EFL program for 9th grade students comprises 'action-oriented approach'. Action-oriented approach is one of the educational principles emphasized in the CEFR, and the EFL program asserts including an action oriented aspect in designing units of the program (MoNE, 2018). Most of the participants (f=10) think that the EFL program presents activities and examples for learners to solve their communication problems which they may encounter in their social contexts. One participant (f=1) did not want to state her views on this interview question. Sample extracts from the interviews are presented as follows:

G: "...The activities of communicative problems for the interested students are available."

H: "...There are dialogue activities for solving this kind of communicative problems and they are presented in patterns."

Based on the responses, it can be stated that the EFL program presents activities for language learners to overcome their communicative problems which may arise in their daily lives. According to the responses, the course materials which were designed in line with the program provide communication activities for students to prepare them for the real life situations. Thus, it can be concluded that the EFL program involves action-oriented approach principle of the CEFR.

The third interview question investigated the participants' perceptions on whether the EFL program comprises communicative language competence principle of the CEFR. While most of the participants (f=8) agreed that the EFL program enable students to develop their communicative language competences, one participant (f=1) did not want to express her views, and the other participants (f=2) expressed negative views on this issue. Several extracts from the interviews for this question are:

A: "...The new program and course materials are better than the previous ones when we compare them in terms of developing students' communicative competences. Especially speaking activities are up to the point. Describing a picture, their homes or close friends in a detailed way are some of the examples of speaking activities presented in the course materials based on the program and they help students to develop their communicative competences."

E: "...In fact, communicative competences can be developed easily with this program..."

The results showed that the EFL program provides activities to develop communicative language competences of students by focusing on language skills, especially speaking skill. The participants think that the activities in course materials based on language functions enhance students' speaking skills. It can be concluded that the EFL program comprises communicative language competence education principle suggested in the CEFR.

The fourth interview question investigated the EFL teachers' views on whether the EFL program for involve 'task-based learning' educational principle of the CEFR. Most of the participants (f=9) think that the EFL program presents real life tasks for students to accomplish in an ordinary day by using foreign language, while one participant (f=1) thinks vice versa. Sample extracts for this interview question are:

C: "...At the beginning of each unit, there are activities for speaking or expressing opinion on an event. There were subjects related to letters in previous years but now we come across subjects such as e-mails, blogs and attending to meetings etc. It presented skills for student such as maintaining a conversation in daily life. Discussion activities or expressions such as like/dislike are provided for students."

E: "...Yes, it does. It develops students. For example, they know how to respond an e-mail or write a postcard."

The results indicated that the EFL program involves task-based learning activities that students need to succeed in personal, public, educational, and occupational domains in their lives. It can be concluded from the results that the EFL program comprises task-based learning educational principle of the CEFR.

The fifth interview question investigated the participants' views on whether the EFL program comprises 'self-assessment' educational principle of the CEFR. The interview results showed that the EFL program helps students to assess themselves in foreign language learning through 'Check Yourself' parts in course materials. All of the participants (f=11) stated that self-assessment educational principle of the CEFR is presented in the EFL program. Sample extracts from the interviews are:

A: "...Yes, it does. There are 'Check Yourself' parts at the end of each unit..."

C: "...There are self- assessment activities at the end of units..."

According to the results, the EFL program enables 9th grade students to assess themselves through 'Check Yourself' parts in the course materials.

The sixth interview question investigated the participants' views on whether the EFL program involves intercultural awareness educational principle of the CEFR. All of the participants (f=11) think

that the EFL program enables students to learn cultural similarities and differences. Their responses indicated that the EFL program involves interesting subjects on intercultural issues for students. Sample extracts for the sixth interview question are:

C: *"...Yes. The program provides this awareness. For example, our students learned the celebrations such as 'Thanksgiving Day', 'Halloween Day' and 'Christmas Day'."*

H: *"... Festivals, especially, are described for the students and 'Easter Day' is one of them."*

The interview results revealed that the EFL program presents intercultural awareness principle of the CEFR. The participants mentioned various examples from traditional rooms, festivals to American and Indian film sectors that they covered in EFL classes. Therefore, it can be concluded that the EFL program helps students to enhance their communicative language competences through activities comprising intercultural aspects in language learning.

The seventh interview question investigated the participants' perceptions on whether the EFL program involves autonomous learning educational principle of the CEFR. According to the results, seven participants (f=7) agreed that the EFL program equip students with basic skills which enable them to become autonomous in language learning while three participants (f=3) expressed negative views on this issue. Sample extracts from the interviews are:

G: *"...These kinds of activities are available. There are project parts."*

H: *"...We give project assignments to the students..."*

The interview results indicated that the EFL program comprises autonomous learning educational principle of the CEFR. The literature did not present any results regarding on autonomous learning in previous studies of program evaluation, thus, it can be stated that MoNE included activities regarding autonomous learning in the new EFL program.

The eighth interview question investigated the participants' views on seminars or in-service training activities on the new EFL program. The results showed that all of the participants (f=11) took part in a seminar or in-service training activity. Also, most of the participants (f=8) think that the seminars was not beneficial for their professional development for various reasons, while three participants (f=3) expressed positive opinions about the seminars. Sample extracts from the interviews are:

D: *"...The training was not favorable at all. I do not think that it provided new ideas or information for us."*

I: *"... No, it was not beneficial for me because it did not present new activities for me to be applicable in the classroom. They only provided information theoretically which I had already known."*

The results indicated that the seminars or in-service training activities did not contribute to their professional developments for various reasons. From the results, it can be stated that the seminars or in-service training activities regarding the new EFL program for the participants was not effective with regard to its scope and application.

The ninth interview question investigated the participants' views on appropriateness of learning and teaching processes to learners' language levels and needs. While most of the participants (f=9) think that the new EFL program is appropriate to students' levels and needs, one participant (f=1) expressed negative views, and one participant (f=1) did not answered this question. Sample extracts from the interviews are:

A: *"...I think the new EFL program is appropriate for the students' needs. There are up-to-date themes and activities designed for the students' interests. There are some problems which we come across in the classroom but they arise from different reasons... When we consider the students' levels, the situation is somehow different. We have been using the coursebook for the first time this year. The students had not any problems though the level was higher in the previous years. Because of the reasons stemming from the TEOG Exam of the previous year, we have difficulties in carrying out the courses..."*

H: "...The program is appropriate for the students' levels... It is also appropriate for the students' needs. It reflects the subjects which they are interested in daily life in the classroom environment."

J: "... It is appropriate to their levels. It starts with the basic subjects. It is also appropriate to student needs at our school."

According to the results, the participants (f=9) think the EFL program appeals to learners' levels and needs. The participants commented that the topics of the previous grades are reviewed in the program, and communicative needs of the learners are addressed in the units through activities. However, they stated that they confront several problems in accomplishing activities, but, these problems are not related to the design of activities, and they stem from study habits of previous years.

The tenth interview question investigated the participants' perceptions on the applicability, strengths and weaknesses of EFL program. After multiple readings of the transcriptions, the categories were defined as: being communicative (f=6), comprising interesting topics (f=4), intercultural awareness (f=3), course hours (f=9), and course materials (f=8).The interviews revealed factors affecting the implementations of the EFL program positively and negatively. While course hours, learning habits of students, and quality of materials can be sequenced among negative factors; interesting themes, presenting four language skills, addressing communicative needs of learners and intercultural issues can be sequenced among positive factors. Sample extracts for this interview are as follows:

A: "...There were not skill-based course materials in the previous years. Students were used to come across grammar structures such as 'used to' at the very beginning of the terms. But now, it is not the case. The program looks more like foreign resources. Listening activities are appropriate for students' levels... and, writing activities do not require direct composition writing. The simple and beneficial expressions on daily bases which students use in their ordinary lives enhance the writing skills of the students."

"...I cannot deal with all of the students in the classroom for speaking activities, because 4 hours of language courses are not sufficient to involve all of the students in the activities. There must be more course hours allotted weekly for us."

D: "...It refers different cultures in the course materials... It focuses on developing students' communicative skills... Student participation is emphasized in comparison to the previous ones."

H: "...It is rich in terms of content... The topics are interesting for the students and a different idiom is presented for the students in each unit."

The results showed that outside factors affect applicability of the EFL program negatively, and, design of the course materials, course hours allotted, study habits of students can be regarded among these factors. The participants think that the design of course materials is not professional, and they do not seem professional both for teachers and students. Also, the participants expressed that they do not use multimedia tools in EFL classes. For example, they stated that listening activities are not integrated to online materials, and they need to carry an extra flash memory to open listening audios for students. Similarly, they asserted that pictures and photos in the coursebook do not seem professional for learners' age group which leads them not to take classes seriously.

The third research question investigated applicability of the EFL program in terms of the CEFR educational principles in education contexts. Thus, an observation checklist involving of 20 items was developed by referring the aforementioned themes. The researchers carried out observations in two different traditional Anatolian high schools in the spring term of 2017-2018 school year. Each observation took 40 minutes. To ensure confidentiality of the schools and classes, the researchers coded schools as S1 and S2, classes and observations as O1 and O2. For example, 'S2-O4' refers to the fourth observation conducted in the second school. Also, correlation between the two observers was calculated by following the formula of "$\Delta = C \div (C + \partial) \times 100$" (Miles & Huberman, 1994), and 95% of agreement was determined between the observers. Accordingly, results obtained from the observations are as follows:

Items of the instrument investigated appropriateness and applicability of the EFL program with regard to themes of the units, language skills, pronunciation, everyday problems, plurilingualism, pluriculturalism, communicative competences, tasks in different domains, self-assessment, intercultural awareness, autonomous learning, language materials, students' age groups and levels, students' linguistic and intercultural needs, and general applicability of the program. Sample fieldnotes obtained from the observations are as follows:

- *The participation to the activities is high. (S1-O1)*

- *They can understand the listening audios.(S1-O4)*

- *The students replied to the questions asked by the teacher.(S1-O2)*

- *They are eager for the reading activities.(S1-O1)*

- *They wrote a short message to their families.(S1-O5)*

- *Peer corrections were provided for the pronunciation of 'customer, spicy, sour, delicious'.(S1-O1)*

- *Students discussed which foods are healthy or unhealthy.(S1-O3)*

- *One of the students: "Could I leave a message?" (in customer role).(S1-O5)*

- *Asking and answering questions about their favorite foods.(S1-O2)*

- *Airport attitudes, getting a boarding pass, boarding the plane.(S1-O3)*

- *Reading passages concerning Lisbon, Shanghai, and Buenos Aires. (S1-O4)*

- *Searching some topics on the Net.(S2-O3)*

- *Most of the students can easily participate in the activities.(S1-O4)*

- *Visuals and audios are not professional.(S1-O1)*

- *Conversations about types of illnesses and incidents. (S2-O4)*

- *Many examples about eating habits of different nations (Chinese, Brazilians etc.) are provided for the students in the lesson.(S1-O2)*

- *The students can easily follow and participate in the activities.(S1-O4)*

Fieldnotes obtained from the observations indicated that the EFL program comprises most of the criteria defined in the checklist. The results, firstly, showed that themes presented in the program are attractive for language learners. Secondly, the activities prepared for language learners are appropriate to their levels in terms of language skills and pronunciation. Thirdly, the program involves situations for language learners which may they come across in an ordinary day. Fifthly, the program includes possible problems and their solutions for language learners. Sixthly, the program provides activities for students to enhance communicative competences, intercultural awareness, autonomous learning, task-based learning, and self-assessment. However, several criteria were not addressed during the observations. For example, while materials implemented in the lessons are appropriate to students' language levels, they are partly appropriate to students' age groups. Also, there were not any activities regarding plurilingualism and pluriculturalism during the observations. All in all, the observations indicated that the new EFL program is applicable in English lessons.

4. Discussion

The results of the document analyses support the previous studies regarding language outcomes in literature. For example, Özer (2012) stated that 3rd Grade EFL program did not equally administer language skills for students at primary school. Similarly, our study indicated that the outcomes of the EFL program do not totally correspond to the CEFR proficiency descriptors. Likewise, the face-to-face interview results contribute to previous results in the literature in terms of plurilingual and pluricultural

issues, seminars or in-service training activities, course hours, course materials, being communicative and skill-based, while they contradict with previous results in the literature regarding self-assessment. Initially, according to the responses, the EFL program does not provide plurilingual and pluricultural elements. This result was supported by the previous studies (Dağ, 2008; Sarıca, 2009; Zorba, 2012). Dağ (2008) suggested including multilingual and multicultural elements in EFL programs of secondary schools. Similarly, Sarıca (2009) called for an EFL program comprising pluriculturalism and plurilingualism for 8th grade students. Likewise, Zorba (2012) stressed that plurilingualism is a neglected aspect in 9th grade EFL program. Based on the result, it can be asserted that plurilingualism and pluriculturalism are two disregarded issues in EFL program development processes of the MoNE, though they are strongly suggested by the CEFR. Next, the EFL program enables 9th grade students to assess themselves through 'Check Yourself' parts in the course materials. This result contradicts the previous studies (Karcı, 2012; Örmeci, 2009; Zorba, 2012). Zorba (2012) stated that 9th grade EFL coursebook did not present self-assessment parts for students. Similarly, Karcı (2012) expressed evaluation problems of EFL program for 9th grade students. Based on the results, it can be stated that self-assessment needs of language learners were paid attention in the new EFL program by the MoNE. Thus, it can be concluded that the new EFL program comprises self-assessment educational principle of the CEFR. Then, the results indicated that seminars or in-service training activities did not contribute to their professional developments for various reasons. From the results, it can be stated that the seminars or in-service training activities regarding the new EFL program for the participants were not effective with regard to its scope and application. Previous research studies with different grades also indicated similar results (Bayraktar, 2014; Bergil & Sarıçoban, 2017; Dağ, 2008; Doğan, 2007; Karcı, 2012; Özel, 2011; Öztürk, 2006). In this respect, it can be concluded that seminars and in-service training activities seem ongoing problems for language teachers, though the issue had been revealed in many studies previously. Lastly, the results showed that outside factors affect the applicability of the EFL program negatively, and, design of the course materials, course hours allotted, study habits of students can be regarded among these factors. The participants think that the design of course materials is not professional, and they do not seem professional both for teachers and students. Also, the participants expressed that they do not use multimedia tools in EFL classes. For example, they stated that listening activities are not integrated into online materials, and they need to carry an extra flash memory to open listening audios for students. Similarly, they asserted that pictures and photos in the coursebook do not seem professional for learners' age group which leads them not to take classes seriously. The results contributed to the previous results for different grades indicated in the literature (Dağ, 2008; Karcı, 2012; Sarıca, 2009). Likewise, course hours allotted (4 hours a week) seem insufficient to include all students in activities equally, and this affects implementations negatively. Previous research studies for different grades also discussed this issue as a problematic factor (Bayraktar, 2014; Dağ, 2008; Karcı, 2012; Örmeci, 2009; Yörü, 2012). However, the participants mentioned some positive aspects of the EFL program which enhance its applicability. For example, they think that the EFL program comprises more communicative and skill-based activities than the EFL programs proposed in previous years (f=6). Furthermore, they think that the EFL program enables students to become more aware of intercultural differences (f=3). Also, they expressed that the EFL program presents interesting themes and topics which are appealing for students in comparison to the previous EFL programs (f=4).

Similarly, the observation results either support or contradict with the previous results discussed in literature. Firstly, the observation results showed that the EFL program presents interesting topics for language learners while it disregards plurilingualism and pluriculturalism aspects. This result contributed to previous results in literature. For example, Demirlier (2010) indicated that primary education EFL programs presented appealing topics for students. Similarly, Güneş (2009) stressed that 5th Grade EFL Program had interesting content for students. Also, plurilingualism and pluriculturalism

are strongly suggested in previous research studies (Dağ, 2008; Sarıca, 2009; Zorba, 2012).   Secondly, it was observed that though the course materials present self-assessment parts in 'can-do' forms, the application of these parts seems problematic. One of the researchers observed that the teacher did not cover one of these parts at the end of a unit and skipped to the next unit. Dönmez (2010) and Karcı (2012) reported similar problems. Dönmez (2010) mentioned that 8th Grade EFL teachers did not benefit from alternative tools and techniques for assessment. Likewise, Karcı (2010) addressed similar problems in relation to assessment parts of EFL program for 9th Grade. Thirdly, when the observation results are considered in terms of students' age groups and language levels, the literature presents contradicting results. The current study demonstrated that while course materials are appropriate for students' language levels, they are not appropriate for students' age groups. Güneş (2009) stated that course materials for 5th Grade EFL classes were appropriate to students' age groups, while Örmeci (2009) reported that course materials for 4th, 5th, and 6th grades were not suitable for students' both age groups and language levels. Fourthly, the observations indicated that the students dealt easily with pronunciation of new words both through teacher corrections and peer corrections. This result contradicts the findings reported by Yörü (2012). Yörü (2012) reported negative views on pronunciation activities in terms of 8th Grade learners. Lastly, the observations indicated that the EFL program is applicable in language education contexts in general in terms of the predetermined criteria of the checklist. This result also contradicts the previous results discussed in literature. Karcı (2012), Örmeci (2009), and Yörü (2012) reported negative views on applicability of EFL programs of several grades, while Güneş (2009) and Yaman (2010) reported positive views on applicability of EFL programs.

5. Conclusions and Implications

The current study investigated the applicability of 9th Grade EFL Program within the light of proficiency descriptors and educational principles of the CEFR through a phenomenological inquiry (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Firstly, the study found that outcomes of the EFL program are not totally compatible with the CEFR regarding proficiency descriptors proposed for language learners at A1, A1+, and A2 levels. Secondly, the study demonstrated that the new EFL program for 9th grade students involves the CEFR's educational principles of communicative language competence, intercultural awareness, task-based learning, action-oriented approach, autonomous learning, and self-assessment, while it disregards plurilingualism and pluriculturalism. Thirdly, the study indicated that activities of course materials are appropriate to learners' language levels and needs, while design of the course materials does not appeal to learners' age groups. Additionally, insufficient course hours affect the applicability of the EFL program negatively as the language teachers do not include all students into activities during classes. Fourthly, the study showed that though the course materials include self-assessment parts for learners, their applications seem problematic during classes as these parts are above learners' levels. Furthermore, it was found that ELP is not implemented in EFL classes though it is strongly suggested in the CEFR. Fifthly, seminars and in-service training activities for EFL teachers do not seem to contribute to EFL teachers' professional developments. All in all, the study found that the EFL program is applicable with respect to the CEFR at a large extent.

From the conclusions, several implications can be suggested to enhance the applicability of the new EFL program. Firstly, outcomes of the EFL program can be rearranged by considering the proficiency descriptors of the CEFR. Secondly, plurilingualism and pluriculturalism principles can be included in the EFL program. Thirdly, user-friendly and professionally designed course materials which are appropriate students' age groups can influence the application of the EFL program positively. Fourthly, course hours for secondary schools can be rearranged by consulting EFL teachers. Fifthly, authorities can propose the application ELP to present internationally recognized standards for students to assess

and reflect their levels and achievements. Lastly, seminars and in-service training activities can be planned more professionally for EFL teachers by considering their professional needs in terms of new EFL programs and current issues in these programs.

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9. sınıf YDİ programının ADOÇEP bakımından uygulanmasına nitel bir araştırma

Öz

Bu çalışma 9. Sınıf yabancı dil olarak İngilizce (YDİ) programının Avrupa Dilleri Ortak Çerçeve Programı (ADOÇEP) yeterlilik betimleyicileri ve eğitimsel ilkeleri bakımından uygulanabilirliğini araştırmıştır. Araştırmayı gerçekleştirmek için olgu bilimsel yaklaşım seçilerek nitel araştırma takip edilmiştir. Veriler doküman analizi, yüz yüze görüşme ve sınıf içi öğretimlere ilişkin öğretmen ve öğrenci gözlemleri yoluyla toplanmıştır. Doküman analizleri, görüşmeler ve gözlemlerden toplanan verileri analiz etmek için betimsel analiz uygulanmıştır. Sonuçlar YDİ programının öğrencilerin seviyeleri ve ihtiyaçlarına uygun olduğunu gösterirken, öğretmenlerin uygulamalarda ders materyalleri ve yetersiz ders saatleri bakımından problemlerle karşılaştıklarını göstermiştir. Ayrıca, katılımcı öğretmenler seminerler ve hizmet içi eğitim aktiviteleri bakımından problemleri bildirmişlerdir.

Anahtar sözcükler: ADOÇEP; YDİ programı; 9. Sınıf; program değerlendirme

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