

The influence of the CEFR in Turkish national curriculum

Esin Hazar

Department of Educational Sciences, Faculty of Education, Sivas Cumhuriyet University, Turkey.

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ABSTRACT

Despite the ongoing attempts in Turkey to teach the English language to Turkish citizens so that they can communicate effectively in global contexts, the results reached are much lower than desired. To determine where the mistakes originate, different policies have been followed, course hours and instructional strategies have undergone constant changes. The curriculum which is one of the most important pillars of teaching and learning has been updated according to the principles of the CEFR which deeply affect foreign language teaching in Europe. In this study, the A1 level English teaching curriculum, which was prepared in line with the CEFR principles, was examined based on the CEFR communicative language activities. The learning outcomes included in the curriculum were compared in terms of production, interaction and reception activities, and the alignment of the curriculum to the tenets of the CEFR was revealed.

Keywords: CEFR, communicative activities, curriculum, English.

E-mail: esinhazar@gmail.com.

INTRODUCTION

Being a member of international organizations such as NATO and the OECD in which particularly Western nations' languages are spoken, national school curricula in Turkey have long adopted Western languages like German, French and English as foreign languages (Demirel, 2003). However, due to its international dominance, the English language has ruled as the unique language taught in state schools for many years. Although German has been launched as a second foreign language in high schools for the last few years, teaching English to students takes priority by the authorities.

English teaching policy in Turkey has evolved and modified in periods. While regular English classes were in practice in state schools as a subject to learn; some selected state schools implemented intensive English instruction not only for the English classes but also for all the other subject areas such as math, science, etc. starting from lower elementary till the end of the secondary schools. It was not possible to spread the practice throughout the country, both in terms of the

number of teachers and the materials used. Rather than spreading this practice across the country, an opposite policy was applied as an alteration of the educational philosophy of the country and the foreign language policy of these selected schools were completely abandoned in 1997 (Yıldız and Durmuşçelebi, 2013).

Apart from these selected schools, English instruction was merely based on the grammar translation method. Students used to be taught language structures such as subject, verb and object rather than the skills they needed to learn. Many foreign language teachers asked the students to learn all the grammar rules to the finest detail, as if they were training linguists, rather than being concerned with whether their students could communicate in English (Şahin, 2018).

After the reform in 1997, the introduction of foreign languages extended to the 4th grade of primary schools throughout the country considering the advantages of being introduced to a language at an early age. There was still an inconsistency in the foreign language policy of the ministry and the reputation of English instruction

was tarnished by talks that English could not be taught in the state schools and these talks perceived attention of the public and media as a big fiasco (Güçlü and Uçar, 2019). Meanwhile in Europe, to provide a common basis for the language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, assessment and textbooks, The Council of Europe introduced the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in 2001. Followingly in 2004, the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MONE) adopted the CEFR for English language teaching and that led to the changes in methodology, materials, assessment and learning outcomes of the curricula. Since then, English curricula were updated according to contemporary approaches, and the textbooks were designed to attract students' attention. In the preamble of the curricula and as stated by the authorities, English was no longer seen as a lesson to be taught, but rather as a communication tool to prepare its citizens for the needs of the global world in line with the CEFR. Regarding English as a communication tool is not a new concept indeed. The term "World Englishes" was long introduced to the literature by Kachru (1986). Kachru designed his 3C model to conceptualize the situation of the English language in the world. The speakers of English were classified in the three circles as the inner circle, outer circle and expanding circle. The inner circle represents the native speakers of English who use English in their daily lives, work, etc. In the outer circle, people speak English as a lingua franca and also speak their native languages. The last circle is the expanding circle which is related to the people using English as a foreign language and English serves as a means of communication (Kachru, 1986; Pung, 2009; Fennelly, 2016).

These three circles provide the English language with different roles namely English as a native language in the inner circle; English as a second language in the outer circle; English as a foreign language in the expanding circle (Kachru, 1986). However, Fennelly (2016) asserts that the English language represents the native language if it is the first language; a second language if immigrants use it to communicate; an additional language when the speakers of different languages use it as a lingua franca; an international language when speakers of different nations use it to communicate in the international settings; a foreign language when used only for academia. Fennelly (2016) argues that because English is highly important for business and technology, to categorize it as a foreign language is not probable, it plays a role of international language for any countries in the expanding circle.

Kachru (1990) listed some countries using English as native, second and foreign languages in the Three Circles Model of World Englishes. The countries in the first circle are the countries like the USA and UK where English is the primary language of its people. The Outer Circle includes the countries like India, Kenya and

Malaysia which were subjected to colonization by the inner circle countries, and the native linguistic range was introduced by English as an additional language. The expanding circle represents countries such as China, Korea and Japan where English is an important foreign language and a means of international communication (Fennelly, 2016). As the native language in Turkey is Turkish and Turkey is a monolingual country we can count on Turkey in the expanding circle of the model. English which is typically the unique foreign language in the national curricula primarily taught had long been considered as a subject to study with a profound tradition to teach grammatical rules in the classrooms. However, international trade and technological developments have required some shifts in the status of the English language in Turkey in recent years. Considering English as an international language changed the motive of teaching English only for academic purposes. The 21st century requires English to be used for business, work and education for the countries like Turkey in the expanding circle.

The shift in the savvy made the Turkish Ministry of National Education meet a more communicative language teaching policy and to support students' fluency, competence and language retention, curriculum studies focused on how learners experience English as a communication tool rather than focusing on language as a subject to study (MONE, 2018).

From this point of view, as a former English teacher who worked on the curriculum development studies for MONE and with a current position in the university as a curriculum specialist, I would like to examine the communicative aspect of the learning outcomes specified in the primary English curriculum in terms of communicative activities, scales and descriptors identified in the CEFR.

Within the scope of this study, the CEFR illustrative scales with A1 level descriptors were examined and the 6th grade English curriculum was analysed in terms of the descriptors of these scales. As language acquisition is most effective between the ages of 10-16 and these ages are perceived as a very productive period (Yule, 2006) the focus of this study is the curriculum of A1 level of 6th grade which is considered the most comprehensive activities for A1 level would involve.

In the present study, I investigated whether 6th grade learning outcomes of the English curriculum encompass the illustrative scales and the descriptors stated by the CEFR. The research question is:

1) to what extent do the learning outcomes of 6th grade English curriculum encompass the CEFR illustrative scales of communicative language activities?

To answer this research question, the CEFR original version and the updated versions released in 2018 and

2020 were examined in-depth in terms of communicative language activities, then the 6th English curriculum released by the Turkish Ministry of National Education was examined in terms of learning outcomes to compare with the CEFR. By the knowledge attained, I hope to provide an outline for the probable fallacies which lie behind the curriculum development studies and attempts to adopt procedures of the CEFR. The results of the study may provide an insight into the communicative aspect of teaching English and planning the curriculum for both authorities and the teachers.

Below, firstly English curriculum was reviewed and secondly, the CEFR was described briefly.

English as a foreign language in the Turkish National Curriculum

Foreign language teaching policies in Turkey have been following policies in line with Europe for the last 20 years but the expected outcomes cannot be achieved till now (Erdem, 2016). In one of the ongoing reforms, the primary school curriculum got its share of these changes and students at the age of 8 started learning English. The curriculum implemented was prepared by taking into account the language levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) included in the CEFR. From now on, pupils take 2 classes of English a week as A1 level learners until the end of the 6th grade.

The current curriculum was updated in 2018 in accordance with the views of the teachers, parents and academics taking into consideration the general objectives of Turkish National Education. The curriculum document for the English language in primary school begins with the major philosophy of the curriculum. The transition from concrete course content to an emphasis on language skills was underlined as a priority in this section. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) was utilized to design the curriculum. The principles and descriptors of the CEFR are suggested to be strictly pursued in the curriculum and described as:

“The CEFR particularly stresses the need for students to put their learning into real-life practice in order to support fluency, proficiency and language retention; accordingly, the new curricular model emphasizes language use in an authentic communicative environment.....drawing on an action-oriented approach in order to allow learners to experience English as a means of communication, rather than focusing on the language as a topic of study. Therefore, the use of English is emphasized in classroom interactions of all types, supporting learners in becoming language users, rather than students of the language, as

they work toward communicative competence” (MONE, 2018, p.3).

In the philosophy of the curriculum, a general reference appears to be made to CEFR in line with communicative competence and an action-oriented approach. In the general objectives of the curriculum, the use of English as an international language for the Turkish speakers to utilize in business, politics and social issues are underlined and the communicative aspect of learning is tied strictly to context-based language learning to make meaningful learning. The theoretical approach of the CEFR was expressed to be followed for the objectives for students to acquire language skills.

The curriculum includes several tables with the headings of *Unit/Theme; Functions and Useful Language; Language Skills and Learning Outcomes; Suggested Contexts, Tasks and Assignments*. In the category of Unit/Theme, ten designated themes such as life, downtown are suggested to be familiar to young learners to attract their interest. Functions and Useful Language column contains a lot of grammatical structures, phrases and vocabulary for each theme. Suggested Contexts, Tasks and Assignments category of the curriculum offers the same contexts as a list like brochures, cartoons, conversations, etc. for all the themes, functions and outcomes. For the suggested tasks and activities, the listing proceeds in the same way with the same tasks like drama, games, labelling, etc. for all the themes and objectives. On the other hand, suggested assignments differ in each theme and tasks include spoken interaction and written production activities. Language Skills and Learning Outcomes outline five areas of communicative competence; *listening; spoken production; spoken interaction; reading and writing*. Under this heading, 60 objectives are listed implying what students can do using the vocabulary, phrases and grammatical structures delivered in the language functions column. Six out of 60 objectives refer to writing skills; 12 to reading skills; 13 to listening; 15 to spoken production and 14 to spoken interaction in the curriculum.

Clearly, both the philosophy and objectives adopted in the curriculum emphasize communicative language acquisition and the use of the English language by Turkish citizens for communicative purposes is desired. The ministry has implemented various policies for teaching English, but discussions have continued for years regarding the fact that Turks cannot learn English. So why can't the Turks learn English even if they study it for years? Some sources state that this is due to the in-opportunity to communicate in real contexts and the lack of need to communicate in the English language (Şahin, 2018). Some sources focus on teacher competencies (Özer and Korkmaz, 2016). Some argue that educational policies and curricula lead the failure (Güçlü and Uçar,

2019). As the curricula are the cornerstone of the instruction and guide teachers in teaching contexts, teachers must initially read, understand, interpret and use the curricula for success. We must deeply analyse whether the curricula that are constantly developed in consideration of contemporary norms are suitable for improving the communicative skills of students. To answer these questions, the CEFR must be understood deeply first hand.

What Is the CEFR?

In the globalized world of today, the CEFR serves as a reference tool for different communities to communicate for various purposes. With in-depth explanations for the language learners to adopt, the framework depicts the ways to follow to communicate fruitfully. In Europe, the attempt to cross the border in terms of communication has created the need to develop a language reference framework called the Common European Framework of Reference. The CEFR is the European standard for language syllabuses, curriculum guides, exams, textbooks, etc. (Council of Europe, 2001). In 2018 and 2020 the CEFR was updated by the Council of Europe with modifications on several areas to make amendments in level descriptors such as pre-A1 and illustrative scales of the components. The substantial purpose of the CEFR is to serve as a tool to assist curricula planning, formulation of educational aims and outcomes and facilitate a road map for learning (Council of Europe, 2018; Council of Europe, 2020; Foley, 2019).

This framework presents the description of language use by adopting the action-oriented approach, breaking down language competence into three constituents: communicative activities, communication strategies and communicative language competencies. Communicative activities that include descriptors set out what activities language learners should do with language for communication. Communication strategies refer to the strategies used by learners in carrying out communication activities, and they are considered to be a fulcrum between the activities and the communicative language competencies that learners create during their language use experiences. They enable them to perform communicative activities and tasks beyond language and cultural boundaries in various contexts of social life (Hiranburana et al., 2017). Communicative language competence is classified under three headings: Linguistic competence, Pragmatic competence and Sociolinguistic competence (Council of Europe, 2001).

The CEFR describes the six common reference levels grouped into three categories C1 and C2 for proficient users, B1 and B2 for independent users, A1 and A2 for basic users. Level A1 (Breakthrough) refers to the lowest level of generative language use. The learner at this level

can “*interact simply, ask and answer simple questions about themselves*” rather than relying purely on a very finite rehearsed, lexically organised repertoire of situation-specific phrases. Level A2 (Waystage) refers to the social functions such as “*greeting people, discussing what to do*”. The learners at this level are supposed to be familiar with frequently used expressions and able to express themselves in everyday situations. Level B1 (Threshold) indicates the Threshold Level in which a learner can interact in various contexts and deal with daily problems. The learner can communicate his ideas “*expressing the main point, asking somebody to clarify, etc.*” Level B2 (Vantage) reflects the focus on argument, language awareness and effective social discourse in conversational management. At this level, the learner can *comprehend* the main ideas of a complex text, *assemble a detailed text*, and have an unrehearsed conversation. Level C1 (Effective Operational Proficiency) displays the ability to express oneself fluently, spontaneously and efficiently for social, academic and professional purposes as in “*producing clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured speech.*” And Level C2 (Mastery) implies that the learner at this stage can easily comprehend heard or read, express oneself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely and distinguish finer shades of meaning in the most complicated contexts (Council of Europe, 2001).

To catch up with the real communicative needs, the CEFR replaced the four skills model (listening, speaking, reading and writing) with the communicative activities which were identified as reception, production, interaction and mediation and provided descriptors for the reception, interaction and production. However, there are not descriptors for all levels especially for A1, which is the focus of this study, as all the language activities may not be launched until a specific competence level (North, 2007).

The CEFR communicative language activities

Language learners should be occupied with communicative language activities to perform communicative tasks. As stated by the Council of Europe in the CEFR documents, the reference categorizes these activities into 3 dimensions one of which is reception comprising listening and reading activities.

Reception activities

Oral comprehension: In aural reception (listening) activities, the language user as a listener receives and processes a spoken input produced by one or more speakers. The expression “oral comprehension” covers comprehension in live, face-to-face communication and its remote and/or recorded equivalent. It thus includes

visual-gestural and audio-vocal modalities. Illustrative scales are provided for overall oral comprehension, understanding conversation between other people, understanding as a member of a live audience, understanding announcements and instructions, understanding audio (or signed) media and recordings.

Audio-visual comprehension: This competence area with an illustrative scale for watching TV, film and video refers to the activities for the language user to identify the main points; details in the live and recorded video material when the learner simultaneously receives an auditory and visual input.

Reading comprehension: In visual reception (reading) activities the user as reader receives and processes as input written texts produced by one or more writers. Illustrative scales are provided for reading correspondence, reading for orientation, reading for information and argument, reading instructions and reading as a leisure activity

Production activities

Productive activities and strategies include both speaking and writing activities.

Oral production: In oral production (speaking) activities the language user produces an oral text which is received by an audience of one or more listeners. Illustrative scales are provided for overall oral production, sustained monologue, describing experience: sustained monologue, giving information: sustained monologue, putting a case, public announcements and addressing audiences.

Written production: In written production (writing) activities the language user as writer produces a written text which is received by a readership of one or more readers. Illustrative scales are provided for overall written production, creative writing, and reports and essays.

Interaction activities

Oral interaction: In interactive activities, the language user acts alternately as speaker and listener with one or more interlocutors to construct conjointly, through the negotiation of meaning following the co-operative principle, conversational discourse. Illustrative scales are provided for overall spoken interaction, understanding an interlocutor, conversation, informal discussion (with friends), formal discussion (meetings), goal-oriented co-operation, obtaining goods and services, information exchange, interviewing and being interviewed and using

telecommunications.

Written interaction: Written interaction concerns interactive communication through the medium of script or sign. Illustrative scales are provided for overall written interaction, correspondence and notes, messages and forms.

Online interaction: Online communication is always mediated through a machine. Illustrative scales are provided for online conversation and discussion, goal-oriented online transactions and collaboration.

METHOD

In this study document analysis which is a form of qualitative research was utilized. In document analysis, documents that comprise public records, personal documents or physical evidence are interpreted by the researcher to reveal the meaning of an assessment topic (Bowen, 2009). The CEFR documents were examined in dept in terms of communicative language activities and the analysis of 6th grade curriculum in terms of the learning outcomes was carried out to compare the A1 level descriptors in the CEFR.

In the course of the study, a document analysis form was developed to examine the outcomes of 6th grade English curriculum. The development of the form was based on the CEFR A1 descriptors of communicative language activities: 1) Reception activities, 2) Production activities, 3) Interaction Activities. The curriculum within the scope of the study was examined by taking into consideration the three components and their illustrative scales. The aforementioned curriculum was analysed independently by two researchers and results were compared using Cohens Kappa to calculate the percent compliance of the encoders (McHugh, 2012). It was found that Cohen Kappa values correspond to values between 0.89 and 1.

FINDINGS

The first step taken is to analyse the illustrative scales and descriptors of reception, production and interaction activities in A1 level excluding the overall comprehension scales as they are general statements for the relevant comprehension category.

Reception activities in the curriculum

Reception activities are categorized into three comprehension categories as oral comprehension, reading comprehension and audio-visual comprehension

(Council of Europe, 2020).

Oral comprehension

The aspects of oral comprehension involved in reception are different sorts of unilateral listening. An examination of the objectives for listening skills reveals that all the 13 listening related-outcomes seem like a sample of the descriptors representing understanding audio (or signed) media and recordings. The examples of the learning outcomes in line with this scale are illustrated in Table 1.

The textbook of 6th grade contains activities for listening comprehension and the learning outcomes are merely based on these tape recordings. There are no outcomes in relation to understanding a conversation between other students and the teacher or as a member of live audience. Although the learner is not an addressee in group interaction, he/she may promote to catch specific information from the announcement or instructions; follow talks supported by real artefacts, pick up and connect words via simple conversations among friends or the teacher for real-life contexts if related outcomes were included in the curriculum.

Table 1. Examples of outcomes in the curriculum relevant to oral comprehension descriptors in the CEFR.

Oral comprehension	
Understanding conversation between other people	
Understanding as a member of a live audience	
Understanding announcements and instructions	
Understanding audio (or signed) media and recordings.	Students will be able to pick up the expressions in a dialogue comparing things. Students will be able to recognize phrases, words, and expressions related to repeated actions Students will be able to identify the names of different food in an oral text.

Reading comprehension

Comprising both written and signed texts the categories of reading comprehension blend various reading purposes and functions. The descriptors and scales of which are exemplified in the curriculum with at least one outcome excluding “reading correspondence”. While the number of the outcomes addressed reading for information and argument is nine, only one representative objective for the other three scales provided. The examples of the learning outcomes in line with represented scales are illustrated in Table 2.

Orienting the real-life experiences and the needs of the age to learning outcomes is something curriculum misses as in the category of reading correspondence. People tend to communicate via digital tools in the age whereas the curriculum relays no outcomes in line with reading correspondence practiced through e-mails, constant messages, even letters, postcards, short notes. Reading for orientation is another neglected category and the only related outcome is modified to be labelled in Pre A1 Level in the 2018 revision of the CEFR. Reading instructions is another key point that is turned a blind eye in the curriculum while the learners of a language need to effectively communicate in the target language, handle signs, notices, labels, etc. and understand and follow written directions.

Audio-visual comprehension

The illustrative scale of audio-visual comprehension, “watching TV and film” is not represented in the curriculum whereas digital tools such as interactive boards and tablets are generally available in the classrooms since 2012 across the country. In the digital age we live engaging solely with audio materials but not supporting visual comprehension is another lack of the curriculum. To provide oral comprehension, visual, gestural support may be complementary together with sound recordings. To achieve the communicative aspect of the CEFR, the gestural features of a language, slang and idiomatic usage should be accompanied to understand the target culture (Council of Europe, 2018).

Production activities in the curriculum

Both speaking and writing activities are involved in the production category.

Oral production

Spoken production is categorized in terms of three scales for A1 level: Sustained monologue: Describing

Table 2. Examples of outcomes in the curriculum relevant to reading comprehension descriptors in the CEFR.

Reading comprehension	
Reading correspondence	
Reading for orientation	Students will be able to read specific information on a poster about a certain place
Reading for information and argument	Students will be able to understand the label of food products Students will be able to understand short and simple texts about the weather, weather conditions and emotions.
Reading instructions	Students will be able to follow short, simple written instructions
Reading as a leisure activity	Students will be able to understand short and simple texts, such as personal narratives about repeated actions

experience, sustained monologue: giving information and addressing audiences. The analysis of the objectives for oral production reveals that 13 out of 15 spoken production-related outcomes are in the scale for Sustained monologue: describing experience. The examples of the learning outcomes are illustrated in Table 3.

Speaking skills in the curriculum are handled under two categories as production and interaction, however, these two are not clearly expressed and sometimes interwoven. For instance, the outcome in Spoken Production “Students will be able to talk about the weather and their emotions in a simple way.” should be categorized as a production activity. However, in the language functions, the related structures of the outcome were presented as “what is the weather like? It is sunny.” Thus there is a general confusion in the curriculum on whether the

objectives are about production skills or interaction skills and the examples of just the opposite are also available as in the outcome “Students will be able to talk about occupations”. This one is assumed as an interaction activity without any interpersonal connotation. This mess in the teachers' main guide is striking. As an end, the corresponding descriptors were assigned checking the language functions as well, regardless of the category stated in the curriculum as production or interaction. Another mismatch in this category is that the outcome “Students will be able to make comparisons between two things” is not a descriptor of the A1 level of the CEFR. As the learning outcomes are mostly expressed through phrases like “talk about” or “describe” they are mostly processed in the Sustained Monologue: Describing Experience category with two exceptions implying more formal presentation.

Table 3. Examples of outcomes in the curriculum relevant to oral production descriptors in the CEFR.

Oral production	
Sustained Monologue: Describing Experience	Students will be able to talk about repeated actions. Students will be able to make comparisons between two things Students will be able to talk about occupations. Students will be able to talk about their holidays.
Sustained Monologue: Giving Information	
Addressing Audiences	Students will be able to talk to people about the protection of the environment Students will be able to talk about the concept of democracy

Written production

Creative writing and reports and essays are the two categories for written production for A1 level learners. All

of the learning outcomes related to written production fit the creative writing activities and no outcomes were found available concerning reports and essays. The examples of the learning outcomes can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Examples of outcomes in the curriculum relevant to written production descriptors in the CEFR.

Written production	
Creative Writing	Students will be able to produce a piece of writing about occupations and the dates. Students will be able to write short and simple pieces in various forms about holidays Students will be able to write about past events with a definite time.
Reports And Essays	

Either spoken or written production activities have a social value and these skills should be taught via education or experience (Council of Europe, 2018). Thus the curriculum appears to fail to embrace diverse production activities which cannot be acquired naturally.

Interaction activities in the curriculum

Interaction is assumed the focus of language use in the CEFR with an emphasis on spoken production as the origin of language. There added descriptors for both written and online interaction as the requirements of the age implied extended descriptors for online interaction together with written interaction (Council of Europe, 2018).

Oral interaction

Oral interaction as a fundamental in learning has a range

of illustrators in the CEFR including understanding an interlocutor, conversation, informal discussion, goal-oriented cooperation, obtaining goods and services, information exchange and interviewing and being interviewed.

The curriculum contains 14 learning outcomes for spoken production excluding the descriptors for understanding the interlocutor, obtaining goods and services, interviewing and being interviewed. The examples of the learning outcomes are given in Table 5.

In this category, we can encounter pre-A1 and A2 level outcomes such as “Students will be able to give each other suggestions about the protection of the environment” for A2 level. As stated in the production activities, the same confusion in relation to spoken production and interaction descriptors continues; interaction descriptors are mostly about one-sided activities not for two parties as in “*ask people, give suggestions, tell the time*” but portrayed as spoken interaction in the curriculum.

Table 5. Examples of outcomes in the curriculum relevant to oral interaction descriptors in the CEFR.

Interaction activities	
Oral Interaction	
Understanding an Interlocutor	
Conversation	Students will be able to talk about and express the feelings and personal opinions about places and things.
Informal Discussion (with friends)	Students will be able to ask people about their food preferences Students will be able to ask people to compare things Students will be able to talk about the stages of classroom president polls
Goal-Oriented Co-Operation	Students will be able to give each other suggestions about the protection of the environment
Obtaining Goods and Services	
Information Exchange	Students will be able to tell the time and dates. Students will be able to ask people about the weather Students will be able to ask personal questions. Students will be able to state the dates.
Interviewing and Being Interviewed	

Written interaction

To provide the necessary skills for the students to obtain concerning a written exchange of interpersonal structure, the CEFR offers a correspondence scale of an interpersonal structure in this category. For the information transfer, interaction through notes, messages and notes is discoursed as well. Nevertheless, no descriptors on these are included in the curriculum.

Online interaction

Online interaction covers scales for Online conversation and discussion and Goal-oriented online transactions and collaboration. The former puts stress on the communication of interlocutors online and the latter underlines the collaborative structure of online interactions with a highlight on multimodality (Council of Europe, 2018).

The curriculum seems to overlook the needs of the age, regrettably, interaction is merely focused on spoken type and written and online interaction are neglected. Considering students are communicating in the digital environments these days, especially ignoring online interaction is a big loss for them not to be able to acquire the necessary digital skills needed for digital communication.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The adoption of the CEFR in the curriculum policy of Turkey is a long-standing practice. Research carried out asserts various reasons for the failure of these attempts. Some studies put forward that the curricular changes failed due to teacher incompetence and textbook content (Doğan, 2007; Sezgin 2007). Other studies stated that the curricula did not meet the CEFR descriptors on linguistic competence for full accomplishment (Tosun, 2013; Yiğit, 2010). The present study aims to find out the reasons why the adoption of the CEFR fails in terms of communicative language activities as they are solid indicators of the learning-teaching process.

The first results of this study are those reception activities in the curriculum point out solely the CEFR descriptors related to listening to audio recordings whereas there are several descriptors that students can take advantage of. Simply stressing audio-vocal modalities may not be sufficient to build up meaning being expressed by the recordings, as stated by the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020) the learners should receive and process the inputs produced by not only recordings but also other people. Regarding the Turkish citizens' lack of experience with English-language announcements and instructions, the learning objectives should be coherent with the tasks engaging with the

environments in terms of comprehensible input and focus on the competencies of spoken receptions in real-world situations (Şahin, 2018), which seems to be neglected in the curriculum. In Turkey, a project has been in use for more than ten years with which all the classes were equipped with interactive whiteboards so that students could make use of new technologies. However, the curriculum explicitly ignores the audio-visual comprehension category although the studies perceive audio-visual mass media as beneficial sources of language input for learning a language (Doring, 2002; Bahrani and Sim, 2012). As the textbooks are centred on audio materials ignoring visual aids, spoken reception activities cause the students to get distracted and bored easily. Another point is that audio material during the class is used to teach grammar points instead of real learner participation in real-life tasks.

For reading comprehension, a number of different scales for diverse contexts such as public announcements, reading correspondence are illustrated by the CEFR which point out specific situations. On the contrary, the curriculum seems to utilize mainly one aspect of those, namely reading for information and argument though reading comprehension is a mixture between reading intention and reading specific genres with particular functions (Council of Europe, 2018). While the contribution of skimming and scanning helps students improve reading comprehension (Díaz and Laguado, 2013) it is not clear why not to adopt objectives related to reading for the orientation category. Similarly, there is obvious evidence of the positive effects of reading as a leisure activity for foreign language learning. Reading on one's interests is suggested to attain higher levels of competence in foreign languages (Lao and Krashen, 2000). These positive aspects of reading activities appear to be ignored in the curriculum with a vague emphasis on reading for orientation, reading as a leisure activity and reading instructions.

The next results are about production activities. Four scales are addressing the A1 level in the oral production activities in the CEFR one of which is Sustained monologue: describing experience prioritizing descriptions and narratives. The curriculum focuses on the sustained monologue: describing experience descriptors mainly, which is also supported by Ramírez Ortiz and Artunduaga Cuéllar (2018) in their study asserting that spoken production mainly monologue skills are the main objective of English language teaching. However, in another study carried out by O'Malley and Valdes Pierce (1996) it is suggested that addressing audiences via oral reports helps learners choosing a topic and addressing the topic in a limited time which is an activity ignored in the curriculum as well.

For the category of written production, the written equivalent of Sustained monologue: Describing experience, Creative writing activities surpass as does its

equivalent. More formal writing types such as reports and essays are disregarded. This has perhaps resulted from the fact that A1 level learners may experience problems while writing reports and essays in terms of cohesion, grammar, spelling and punctuation or the general consideration about the status of essay writing in language teaching is not clear (Smith, 1994; Bakry and Alsamadani, 2015; Belkhir and Benyelles, 2017).

The last of the results are on the interaction activities. The curriculum underestimates interpersonal aspects of interaction and disregards the competence for understanding the person in a two-way conversation even if it was stated in the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2018) that the highest priority for oral reception is on understanding the interlocutor for the communicative intention. Conversation which is another interpersonal function stated was not fully utilized in the curriculum. To develop communicative activities in line with the CEFR descriptors, the curriculum should provide learners with practical guidance about how native speakers conduct conversations in English (Cane, 1998). Learning scenarios for real-time communication empower motivation and unleash enthusiasm to engage in language activities (Rusman et al., 2018) which can be achieved through using the scales of obtaining goods and services, interviewing and being interviewed for uncovering the meaning of words in everyday talk to elicit meaning (Schaffer, 2006) or goal-oriented co-operation which enforces collaboration within a daily scene in real life (Council of Europe, 2018). Nevertheless, none of these were benefited in the curriculum.

The CEFR proposes two scales for written interaction: the first of which is correspondence dealing with the exchange in written form from both simple, personal messages to professional exchange. The latter is notes, messages and forms emphasizing information transfer (Council of Europe, 2018). We cannot see any traces of the descriptors belonging to those categories although the learners of English should be acquainted with social properties and interactional perspectives of the language and be guided to make use of social sub-skills and pragmatic elements in both personal or professional letters, notes, messages and forms (Arvani, 2006).

Online interaction is of great significance for the digital natives considering their time spent in digital environments (Cinganotto, 2019). As a result, the European Council (2018) augmented descriptors and two scales for online interaction: Online conversation and discussion, Goal-oriented online transactions and collaboration for A1 learners. The curriculum does not involve learning outcomes related to online interaction which is generally contemplated as a substantial aspect of competence in foreign language learning and the lack of objectives on multimodal conversation and discussion may defer for the learners to become global citizens and improve transversal competencies whereas in the

worldwide practices the curricula tend to be designed with integration of online interaction activities for language learners to progress in terms of language skills and digital skills (Cinganotto, 2019; O'Dowd and Lewis, 2016).

It can be inferred from the results of that study that the 6th grade EFL curriculum focuses on developing four language skills with an expectation for speaking skills categorized as production and interaction instead of the CEFR's action-oriented descriptive plan modifying the four skills model with communicative language activities. The CEFR as a useful tool to design curriculum stresses the goal-oriented approach. That is to say, the learning outcomes in the curriculum must be arranged and followed by tasks, materials and assessment types. A coherent curriculum should contain the overall objectives of the courses, the domains where the target language is used, in what sort of language activities to be engaged, the specific tasks to be performed (Nagai et al., 2020). In this case, the overall aims of the English language courses are well depicted by curriculum designers underlining the principles of the CEFR. As for the descriptor scales in the CEFR, there are several types of language activities with a great number of scales. For the courses, the most effective descriptors and scales should be chosen considering the domains in which these activities to be performed. The domains in which the activities take place and the tasks for maturing communicative skills in relation to these descriptors are not set in detail in the curriculum and the curriculum constraints most of the subcategories of the modes of communicative language activities to a large extent.

As a former English teacher and a present lecturer at curriculum studies, examining the curriculum and determining the ambiguities on tasks, domains and modes of communication activities in the English curriculum, I can assure readers that English teachers in Turkey require training on the implementation of the CEFR for designing their lesson plans and learning how to incorporate CEFR-aligned instruction in the classrooms to achieve the learning outcomes stated by the curriculum and if we as Turkish citizens wish to learn English for communicative purposes in line with the CEFR.

The stunted English levels of Turkish students deserve more attention by the authorities considering that a full of five years of the primary curriculum targets only A1 level and it is still a big failure. To benefit from what the CEFR offers, examining and understanding the CEFR thoroughly, adopting the principles and providing teachers to be familiar with the CEFR in implementation are essential.

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