

## **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.

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- 1- One can infer from the passage that...
  - a) the CEFR does not consider structural aspects of language.
  - b) For the CEFR, being exposed to real language is significant for interaction and communication.
  - c) On Turkish language education, you see slight impacts of the CEFR framework.
  - d) The proficiency levels of the CEFR prioritize physiological aspects of the audience rather than psychological ones.
  - e) The framework considers less the actual practices of language inside and outside the classroom.
  
- 2- The Turkish EFL curriculum...
  - a) regards the prestigious notion of English from the global perspective.
  - b) considers students as language learners rather than users.
  - c) is based on accuracy rather than fluency and practicality.
  - d) does not include grammatical practices.

- e) is strictly based on some guidelines suggesting a controlled context for language education.
- 3- As can be understood from the passage, ...
- a) participants of language education should be aware of the link between education and life.
  - b) language is mostly learnt and taught for formal purposes like examination.
  - c) the Turkish education is following the latest improvements in the field of language.
  - d) language is an instructional tool for the framework.
  - e) productive skills (i.e., writing and speaking) take less attention from the curriculum.
- 4- Action-oriented approach revealed in the passage can include...
- a) static aspects of language education.
  - b) reading and listening activities used in language teaching.
  - c) grammar teaching and learning
  - d) practices of language in use.
  - e) exercises for vocabulary knowledge.
- 5- For the new curriculum, ...
- a) learners should notice how language works for interdisciplinary communication.
  - b) only teachers' viewpoints were considered.
  - c) linguistic competence is more significant than communicative competence.
  - d) language skills are regarded and presented separately.
  - e) language materials should exclude specific learning skills and interests.

Answer key:

- 1- For the CEFR, being exposed to real language is significant for interaction and communication.
- 2- regards the prestigious notion of English from the global perspective.
- 3- participants of language education should be aware of the link between education and life.
- 4- practices of language in use.
- 5- learners should notice how language works for interdisciplinary communication.

