

Evaluation of the Intensive English Language Teaching Program for the 5th Grade according to Teachers' Views*

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Abstract

Language policies of countries have focused especially on the teaching and learning of English, the universal language of communication because of the increase in international exchange of information. In this context, one of the changes which were made in the field of foreign language teaching in recent years in Turkey is that the intensive foreign language education, put into practice in the 2017-2018 academic years, is implemented in the 5th grades of the determined pilot schools. The aim of the study is to evaluate the intensive English language teaching program for the 5th grade (IELTP) according to the teachers' views. The research is conducted in the phenomenological pattern, one of the qualitative research methods. In the 2018-2019 academic years, the data were collected by interviewing 26 volunteer English teachers from seven different districts of İstanbul. Descriptive and content analysis methods were used to analyse the data. As a result, most of the teachers generally have expressed positive opinions about the intensive English language course for the 5th grade and its curriculum. The instructional activities, methods, and techniques; tools and materials; measurement tools, methods and activities used by the teachers in their lessons are in line with the ones suggested in the curriculum. However, some teachers have indicated that they face with some problems such as being the subjects in the curriculum intense, above the students' level, and focusing on the grammar; abundance of the number of objectives; the lack of materials.

Keywords: Intensive English Course; English Language Teaching Program; Program Evaluation; Teachers' Views; The 5th Grade

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INTRODUCTION

International relationships have increased with the development of information technologies and globalization and it has become an obligation to learn English, which is the common communication language all around the world (*lingua franca*), to manage these relationships. Great importance is attached to foreign language education in Turkey, as well as in other countries. More specifically in the context of Turkey, many innovations, and changes especially in the foreign language education field have occurred in order to join the European Union and reach a more contemporary position by catching up with the standards of European countries in the 21st century (Salihoğlu, 2003).

Looking at the last years, it is seen that there had not been any foreign language courses at the primary education level in Turkey until 1997. Nevertheless, with the 8-year Education Reform which was enacted in 1997, formerly, foreign language education starting from the 6th grade and continuing through 3-year high school education remained limited and that situation brought along the necessity that foreign language education should be included in the primary schools' educational program (Akdoğan, 2004). Therefore, the English course started to be taught in the 4th grade. Thereby, the principle of starting foreign language teaching at an early age was considered, and as Cameron (2003) stated that with the growth of the number of children around the world, English language education started to be seen at earlier ages. Following the 1997 reform, English lessons were decided to be given only for two hours a week in the 4th and 5th grades and four hours a week in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades.

On the other hand, at the secondary education level in our country in 1992-1993, apart from the schools using a foreign language as a medium of instruction, 22-25 hours of foreign language instruction per week began to be provided in schools called "super high schools" (Demircan, 2013). However, because of the failure of the Anatolian and Super High School models after the 8-year compulsory primary educational program, the view that the 3-year education period in all high schools should be increased to four years gained importance (Akdoğan, 2004). Foreign language courses have been taught necessarily since the past in primary and secondary education institutions in Turkey as in all other countries of the world. Nonetheless, in addition to the first foreign language, a second foreign language course started to be given as a compulsory elective course firstly in 92 Anatolian Teacher High Schools as a pilot scheme in the 2001-2002 academic years (Genç, 2002).

In 2006, Foreign Language Education Regulation was published in the Journal of Announcement and it was notified that the primary and secondary curricula are complementary and also they are the continuation of each other.

After the 4+4+4 education reform started to be implemented in the 2012-2013 academic year, school starting age decreased to 5 (primary school 1st grade) and the age of starting to learn a foreign language to 6 (primary school 2nd grade). With this reform, students started English language learning from the 2nd grade on (Bayyurt, 2012). After the 4+4+4 education model was introduced to the Turkish education system in the 2012-2013 academic years, the need to review the curricula arose. Within the Ministry of National Education's framework of the policies to increase the quality of education, it is aimed to ensure that lower secondary and secondary school students learn at least one foreign language well in a way that they can communicate in written and verbal ways. Accordingly, in the 5th grade of some lower secondary schools and religious vocational lower secondary schools across the country, intensive foreign language (English) education was carried out in the 2017-2018 academic years. Intensive English language teaching for the 5th graders is reminiscent of the old Anatolian High School system (Yaman, 2018).

The pilot scheme of the intensive English language teaching for the 5th grade was started in 620 schools in 81 provinces determined by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). In all the 5th grades of these schools, "Intensive English Language Teaching Program for the 5th Grade" prepared by the MoNE was used. For the 2017-2018 academic years, 15 lesson hours were given to English

course in the classes where the pilot scheme was conducted, while 20 lesson hours were given to other lessons. In the document which was sent to the relevant institutions by the MoNE, it was stated that studies aiming to develop students' four language skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing) would be essential during the studies toward both teaching of the lesson and assessment and evaluation of the course at schools that provide intensive English language teaching. The increased number of English lesson hours of the 5th grades has also affected the number of units that need to be taught in that year, so it has been aimed to cover 40 units in the 5th grades of the schools that were determined as the pilot schools, while 10 units are covered in the other ones (MoNE, 2017).

However, some changes were made regarding this pilot scheme in the 2018-2019 academic years. First, the course hours were changed; while in the fifth grade of lower secondary school, foreign language (English) lessons could be taught up to 18 lesson hours on-demand, the lesson hours for other lessons remained as 20. In the same academic year, pilot schools started to use the "Intensive English Language Teaching Program for the 5th, 6th Grade", which was approved by the Authority Approval dated 21.09.2018. Therefore, in the 2018-2019 academic year, the "Intensive English Language Teaching Program for the 5th Grade" to be applied in the schools teaching intensive English language in the 5th grades of lower secondary; the "English Language Teaching Program for the 6th Grade" –prepared as the follow-up of the "English Language Teaching Program for the 5th Grade" which was implemented in the 2017-2018 academic year- is applied in the 2018-2019 academic year in the 6th grade level of lower secondary school. Unlike the previous year's curriculum, the last 4 units were removed from the IELTP and the total number of units was reduced to 36 (MoNE, 2018).

If the IELTP which underwent little change in 2018 is examined in detail, it is possible to see that the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was taken into account in the preparation of this curriculum. In the IELTP, after the A1 and A2 levels, of the levels determined in the CEFR, are presented intensively in the first semester, it is aimed to provide English language learning at B1.1 level in the second semester of the program. As in the English Language Teaching Program (Primary School and Lower Secondary School the 2nd - 8th Grades), in this intensive program, the communicative approach is adopted, as well. Therefore, it provides a communicative environment that covers different themes (Board of Education and Discipline (BOEAD), 2018).

The adoption and implementation of this practice by all schools in the country depend on the success of the current pilot scheme. Each curriculum is just an outline of the designed curriculum before its implementation. Although a decision can be made on the effectiveness of educational programs based on available information, the main judgment can only be reached after the program is implemented and it is observed whether there is a difference in students' learning. Although the starting point of program evaluation activities is the design, it is not possible to talk about a realistic evaluation if the implementation is not taken into consideration (Erden, 1998). Therefore, if the program design is piloted/tested before being disseminated to the whole country, and if this scheme is evaluated, the possibility of rearranging the program's deficiencies arises. Thanks to the pilot schemes, the problems encountered in the program's functionality and practicality are determined and necessary measures are taken to eliminate those in the program design (Özdemir, 2009). For these reasons, it is necessary to question the effectiveness of the curriculum, which includes teaching activities, serves the purpose; whether it leads to unwanted results, and whether excessive energy is wasted while doing these works (Ertürk, 1972). This is possible by evaluating the program. It can be said that curricula are not static but dynamic on the grounds that their deficiencies and insufficiency must be made up and revised according to the changing conditions.

Program evaluation is a stage of program development and thanks to the feedback obtained at this stage, the program is improved in a more useful and effective way. Uşun (2012) defined curriculum evaluation as the decision-making process about the different dimensions of the curriculum, which is developed by using scientific research methods, such as accuracy, practicality, sufficiency, propriety, efficiency, effectiveness, utility, success, and feasibility. Curriculum evaluation serves two crucial functions which are providing an information-gathering tool that can be used to improve a course and as a basis for making decisions regarding curriculum adoption and effectiveness

(Welch, 1969). The results obtained during the evaluation phase provide feedback to program development experts, such as whether to adopt the program or to review its shortcomings and reuse it. Based on the view that all components of a curriculum should be examined one by one, it is seen that different approaches are used while evaluating the curriculum (Demirel, 2005).

To summarize, there are still problems encountered in foreign language education in Turkey. As one of the practices to support foreign language instruction, intensive English language teaching has been implemented in the 5th grades. The evaluation of the IELTP, which was reviewed in 2018, and the results which were obtained from this evaluation are of importance as it will provide information about the continuity of the pilot scheme for curriculum development experts. Since it is a new implementation, very little research has been done in this field. These studies are mostly related to the IELTP prepared in 2017 (Aksoy et al., 2018; Canlier & Bümen, 2018; Dilekli, 2018; Erdem & Toy, 2017; Kambur, 2018). In other words, the problem of this study is that there are not enough studies about the pilot scheme of teaching intensive English language to the 5th graders. In line with this problem, the purpose of the study is to evaluate the 2018 Intensive English Language Teaching Program for the 5th Grade (IELTP) which is implemented in pilot schools where intensive foreign language education is given to the 5th graders, according to teachers' views. It is thought that by taking the opinions of the teachers –who are the implementers of the curriculum- about the program, important information about the program's strengths and weaknesses was obtained.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this research, the qualitative research method was used since it is aimed to present a descriptive picture regarding the IELTP applied in the 5th grade to the reader by revealing the teachers' views realistically and holistically. The phenomenological pattern was used in order to determine teachers' views on the program in-depth. The phenomenological pattern focuses on phenomena which we are aware of but do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding about (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Accordingly, in this study, the phenomenon of the IELTP was investigated in-depth by referring to the teachers' views.

Participants

Demirel (2005) showed teachers and students as the main reference source within the scope of program evaluation studies so as to check whether the program is effective in terms of making the desired changes. On the other hand, teachers were specified as the main reference source in this study. Since the thoughts, perceptions, and experiences of the individuals about a phenomenon are tried to be revealed in the phenomenology design, the people who have experience in the subject matter are selected for the study group and therefore a purposeful choice is made (Onat-Kocabıyık, 2016). Hence, the snowball sampling method, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used in the study. Snowball sampling is based on the fact that the people accessed earlier in the research process pioneer to access more people so as to include in the study group and so the list of the study group grows like a snowball (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016).

Twenty-six volunteer teachers who teach in public schools in seven different districts of Istanbul including Bahçelievler, Silivri, Kadıköy, Üsküdar, Küçükçekmece, Kartal and Ataşehir, and teach English in the 5th grade classes, where intensive English language teaching is implemented, participated in the study. Twenty of these teachers are women and six are men and their service years vary between 2 and 34 years.

Data collection process

Initially, from these seven districts, teachers who volunteered to participate in the study were contacted. The interviews were conducted face-to-face by going to the schools, where the teachers worked, at a suitable time for the teachers. The interviewed teachers' colleagues who attend the 5th grade English lessons in these pilot schools and want to participate in the interview were also included

in the study. A structured interview form which comprises ten questions and was developed by Küçüktepe, Küçüktepe and Baykın (2014) was used as a data collection tool. The recording of the interview data was provided by both the notes taken by the researchers during the interview and voice recordings with the permission of the interviewed teachers.

Data analysis

The qualitative data were obtained through interviews and the NVIVO package program was used for analysis. Descriptive and content analysis methods were used during the analysis of the research data. Descriptive analysis was used since the data were analysed considering the pre-determined interview questions and direct quotations were made from the teachers' views about the questions which were asked. Interviews with teachers were analysed and the teachers' views on each question were tried to be determined. However, content analysis was also used in order to reach unnoticed concepts and themes by analysing the data which were summarized in the descriptive analysis more in-depth (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Content analysis is the development of appropriate categories, ratios, and scoring that the researcher can then use to make comparisons in order to illuminate what he is researching (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2011). Accordingly, the data which were gathered through interviews were coded and the frequency and percentage values of these codes were presented.

Validity and reliability

In the study, it was aimed to ensure consistency by involving both researchers in the analysis of qualitative data and by receiving audio recordings from volunteering participants. The detailed description of research data and direct quotations from teachers' views contributed to the research in terms of transferability and persuasiveness.

FINDINGS

In this section, the findings regarding the qualitative data which were obtained from the interviews are presented. Each interview question constitutes the themes and each theme presented in the tables.

Table 1 Suitability of the Objectives of the English Course to the Students' Mental and Social Development Levels

Theme	Codes	<i>f</i>	%
Suitability of the objectives to the students' mental and social development level	Suitable	10	38,46
	Partly Suitable	9	34,61
	Unsuitable	7	26,92
	Total	26	100

The teachers' answers which were given to the question "Are the objectives of the English course suitable for the students' mental and social development level?" are shown in Table 1. Ten teachers (38,46%) found the objectives suitable for the student level, nine teachers (34,61%) stated that they were partly suitable and seven teachers (26,92%) stated that they were not. While P11 coded teacher found the objectives partly suitable for students' mental and social development level, P12 stated that they were unsuitable in these words:

P11: *"Partly, of course, as not every student's readiness level and background knowledge about English are the same."*

P12: *"They aren't suitable. The objectives for the 5th grade are beyond their mental level. I mean, it should be more simplified, more conversational. There are too many objectives. It is hard to acquire the objectives in that timespan."*

Table 2 Suitability of the English Course Content to the Students' Level

Theme	Codes	<i>f</i>	%
The suitability of the content of the English course to the student level	Suitable	8	30,76
	Partly Suitable	12	46,15
	Unsuitable	6	23,07
	Total	26	100

Table 2 shows the teachers' answers to the question "Is the content of the English course determined according to the student level?". Most of the teachers (n=12; 46,15%) found the content partly suitable for the student level while eight teachers (30,76%) found it suitable and six teachers (23,07%) found it unsuitable. The views of P1, P9 and P24 coded teachers are given below:

P1: *"Yes, it is suitable. It is interesting both for the kids and me. We already have the lesson joyfully. It's nice; I think there aren't any problems."*

P9: *"If it were only the first 20 units, the content would be appropriate for the kids. But as it goes further the content starts to become too much for the kids."*

P24: *"It's not suitable. Since there are topics beyond their cognitive levels that require them to narrate the sentence to a third person such as passive, direct, indirect and causative."*

Table 3a Suitability of the Suggested Teaching Methods, Techniques, and Activities in the Program

Theme	Codes	<i>f</i>	%
Suitability of activities, teaching methods and techniques suggested in the program	Suitable	13	50,00
	Partly Suitable	10	38,46
	Unsuitable	3	11,53
	Total	26	100

Table 3a shows the teachers' views regarding the suitability of teaching methods, techniques and activities which were suggested in the program. It is seen that half of the teachers (n=13) found the teaching methods, techniques and activities suggested in the program suitable. While ten of the teachers (38,46%) found them partly suitable, very few teachers (%11,53; n=3) stated that they were not. While P14 from the participants stated that the teaching methods, techniques, and activities which were suggested in the program were suitable, P19 stated that they were partially suitable. The views of these teachers are as follows:

P14: *"Kids don't like explicit grammar teaching. Today's generation loves very different games, songs, drama role-play, dialogue. In that sense, they are suitable, yes."*

P19: *"Not all of them are suitable because the class sizes are not small; they look like they are arranged for classrooms which include 15 people..."*

Table 3b The Most Used Teaching Methods and Techniques While Teaching English Course

Theme	Codes	<i>f</i>	%
The most used teaching methods and techniques	Question-Answer	24	25
	Educational Games	23	23,95
	Drama	15	15,62
	Computer-Assisted Instruction	11	11,45
	Group Work	7	7,29
	Communicative Language Teaching	4	4,16
	Total Physical Response (TPR)	4	4,16
	Direct Method	3	3,12
	Translation	3	3,12
	Other (Station, Brainstorming)	2	2,08
	Total	96	100

Table 3b shows the teachers' answers to the question "Which teaching methods and techniques do you use the most while teaching English?". When the table is examined, most of the teachers (n=24; 25%) stated that they used the question-answer method. It is respectively followed by these methods/techniques: Educational games (23,95%), drama (15,62%), computer-assisted instruction (11,45%), group work (7,29%), communicative language teaching (4,16%), TPR (4,16%), direct method (3,12%), translation (3,12%), station and brainstorming.

Table 3c The Most Used Activities While Teaching English Course

Theme	Codes	f	%
Activities that are used the most	Singing a Song	19	21,34
	4 Skill-Based	16	17,97
	Speaking	13	14,6
	Matching	11	12,35
	Colouring	8	8,98
	Board/Poster Preparation	8	8,98
	Storytelling	6	6,74
	Word Games	4	4,49
	Memory Games	2	2,24
	Arts & Crafts	2	2,24
	Total	89	100

Table 3c shows the answers which were given to the question "Which activities do you use the most while teaching English?". It is observed that in the English teaching process, the teachers mostly make use of singing songs (21,34%), 4 skill-based (17,97%), speaking (14,6%), and matching (12,35%) activities. These are respectively followed by colouring (8,98%), board/poster preparation (8,98%), storytelling (6,74%), word games (4,49%), memory games (2,24%) and arts & crafts (2,24%) activities.

Table 4 Sufficiency of the Periods That Are Determined in the IELTP for Teaching All Subjects

Theme	Codes	f	%
Sufficiency of the periods that are determined in the program	Sufficient	12	46,15
	Partly	1	3,84
	Insufficient	13	50,00
	Total	26	100

The teachers' views regarding the time that is allocated for covering the subjects in the IELTP are shown in Table 4. It is seen that half of the teachers stated that the allocated time was insufficient, while 46,15% of them found this period sufficient. Only one teacher (3,84%) found the time partially sufficient. The views of the teachers who found the periods that are allocated in the program to be sufficient, partly sufficient, and insufficient for the subjects to be covered are as follows:

P4: "It is sufficient; I mean for now there aren't any problems. We teach 13 hours, 11 plus 2 more hours are enough as there are elective courses."

P22: "Partly sufficient. The units are very dense. There are many units to finish. When it has a hitch for one day, it breaks off."

P26: "No, it isn't sufficient enough for them to understand the subjects totally."

Table 5a Suitability of Suggested Tools and Materials in the Program

Theme	Codes	f	%
Suitability of the suggested tools and materials in the program	Suitable	19	73,07
	Partly Suitable	2	7,69
	Unsuitable	5	19,23
	Total	26	100

Table 5a includes the findings of the question "Are the tools and materials suggested in the program suitable for the structure of the course?". The great majority of the teachers (n=19; 73,07%) stated that they were suitable, while five teachers (19,23%) stated that they were unsuitable and two teachers (7,69%) stated that they were partially suitable. The views of the teachers coded P5, P24 and P25 are given below:

P5: *"No, there isn't anything that comes for us, no books."*

P24: *"Partially suitable but we aren't given any tools in practice."*

P25: *"They are suitable; the visual materials appeal to all types of intelligence."*

Table 5b The Most Used Tools and Materials While Teaching English Course

Theme	Codes	f	%
The most used tools, equipment and materials	Smart Board	19	19,19
	Song	17	17,17
	Video	13	13,13
	Visual	7	7,07
	Poster	6	6,06
	Animation	5	5,05
	Flashcard	5	5,05
	EBA (Education Information Network)	5	5,05
	Cartoon	4	4,04
	Web site	4	4,04
	Puzzle	3	3,03
	Puppet	2	2,02
	Web 2 Tools	2	2,02
	Paper-Crayon	2	2,02
	PowerPoint Presentation	2	2,02
	Other (Map, Microphone, Toys)	3	3,03
Total	99	100	

As shown in Table 5b, the tools and materials that the teachers use the most in English lessons are detected as smart board (19,19%), song (17,17%), video (13,13%), visual (7,07%) and poster (6,06%). These are followed respectively by animation (5,05%), flashcard (5,05%), EBA (5,05%), cartoon (4,04%), website (4,04%), puzzle (3,03%), puppet (2,02%), web 2 tools (2,02%), paper and crayon (2,02%), PowerPoint presentation (2,02%), map, microphone, and toys.

Table 6a Suitability of the Assessment Tools, Methods and Activities That Are Suggested in the Program

Theme	Codes	f	%
The suitability of measurement tools, methods and activities that are suggested in the program	Suitable	14	53,84
	Partly Suitable	9	34,61
	Unsuitable	1	3,84
	No idea	2	7,69
	Total	26	100

When Table 6a is examined, views of the majority of the teachers (53,84%) regarding the suitability of measurement tools, methods and activities that are suggested in the program are in the direction of those being suitable. Nine teachers' (34,61%) views are in the direction of those being partly suitable and only one teacher's (3,84%) view is in the direction of those being unsuitable. Two of them (7,69%) stated that they had no idea about the issue. Quotations from some of the participants' views on this question are presented below:

P2: *"I have no idea. I actually haven't used measurement a lot."*

P10: “Suitable considering the program, but not the children. In theory, it is suitable and very nice but when you attempt to do it, it is not.”

P16: “I can say partly suitable. Some of them really fully measure but some of them don’t, I think. It differs from child to child. For example, some children don’t want to participate in speaking activities.”

Table 6b The Most Used Measurement Tool, Method and Activities While Teaching English

Theme	Codes	<i>f</i>	%
Most used measurement tools, methods and activities	Multiple-Choice	19	14,72
	Gap-Filling	18	13,95
	Quiz	14	10,85
	Project	14	10,85
	Matching	13	10,07
	Short Answer	10	7,75
	Question-Answer	8	6,2
	True-False	6	4,65
	Observation	4	3,1
	Portfolio	4	3,1
	Worksheet	3	2,32
	Drama	3	2,32
	Poster/Banner	3	2,32
	Presentation	3	2,32
	Dialogue/Story Building	3	2,32
	Rubric	2	1,55
	Audio/Video Recording	2	1,55
Total	129	100	

The question "Which measurement tools, methods and activities do you use the most while teaching English?" has been posed to the teachers. Their answers are shown in Table 6b and they mostly have stated that they used measurement tools, methods, and activities such as multiple-choice (14,72%), gap-filling (13,95%), quiz (10,85%), project (10,85%), matching (10,07%) and short answer (7,5%). These are followed respectively by the question-answer (6,2%), true-false (4,65%), observation (3,1%), portfolio (3,1%), worksheet (2,32%), drama (2,32%), poster/banner (2,32%), presentation (2,32%), dialogue/story building (2,32%), rubric (1,55%) and audio/video recording (1,55%).

Table 7a Relationship between the English Course Units and Topics and the Other Courses’ Topics

Theme	Codes	<i>f</i>	%
Relationship with other courses	Yes	15	57,69
	Partly	8	30,76
	No	3	11,53
	Total	26	100

In Table 7a, it is seen that many of the teachers (n=15; 57,69%) can build a relationship between the English course and other courses. Besides, 30,76% of the teachers stated that they could build a relationship partially, while 11,53% stated that they could not. One of the teachers (P2) stated that she could not build a relationship between the English course and other courses, while P11 stated that she could partially build a relationship with other courses:

P2: “I have never related to other courses. I have unfortunately never attempted a thing like this. Maybe it should be done but I haven’t.”

P11: *“I partially do. For example, this does not always happen of course but as an example, while teaching adjectives, I ask children to make a connection to Turkish definitely. Thus, they understand the topic better.”*

Table 7b The Courses That Can Be Related While Teaching English Course

Theme	Codes	<i>f</i>	%
Relationship with other courses	Turkish	19	26,76
	Social Studies	15	21,12
	Science	12	16,9
	Music	11	15,49
	Mathematics	10	14,08
	Arts	4	5,63
	Total	71	100

According to Table 7b, the teachers' answers regarding which courses they can relate to the most while teaching English concentrate on the Turkish course (26,76%). The other courses teachers can relate to the English course are social studies (21,12%), science (16,9%), music (15,49%), mathematics (14,08%), and arts (5,63%), respectively. Some teachers' statements on this issue are as follows:

P3: *“For example, on ‘Animals’ subject, we give children pictures of animals and have them colour the pictures. They learn both animals and colours. At the same time, we relate to music by singing and art course.”*

P9: *“Inevitably we most relate to Turkish course. Because both are language courses anyway. Our topics are more or less similar.”*

P7: *“There is a relationship built with the social studies course. ...things related to different cultures... there are a lot of festivals that other countries have. ...we teach scientists, scientific developments. Yes, it can be related to the science subjects.”*

Table 8 Finding a Suitable Environment for Achieving the English Course's Objectives

Theme	Codes	<i>f</i>	%
Finding a suitable environment while teaching the course	Yes	16	61,53
	Partly	6	23,07
	No	4	15,38
	Total	26	100

When the answers (Table 8) to the question "Can you find a suitable environment (tools, materials, resource book, laboratory, etc.) to achieve the objectives while teaching English course?" are examined, it is seen that most of the teachers (n=16; 61,53%) could find a suitable environment while teaching English lessons. While 23,07% of the teachers could partially access it, 15,38% of them could not find a suitable environment. The expressions of the teachers who have different views are below:

P5: *“Unfortunately, no. We do not have our own classroom. But we have a smart board. At least, we do the listening activities with it.”*

P23: *“Partly. The internet and electricity may be cut. The board may get broken. We can't always reach those.”*

P25: *“Yes, we just don't have a language laboratory. I make use of EBA application, lesson materials and Morpa Campus application.”*

Table 9 In-Service Training Status about Teaching the Intensive English Course for the 5th Grades and the IELTP

Theme	Codes	<i>f</i>	%
In-service training status	No	26	100
	Yes	0	0
	Total	26	100

When Table 9 is examined, it is ascertained that none of the teachers received any in-service training regarding teaching the intensive English course for the 5th grades and the IELTP. In this regard, the views of P10, P24 and P26 are presented below:

P10: *“I haven’t received in-service training. I truly do not know if there is training like that. There should be in-service training. We haven’t had any preparation regarding the program.”*

P24: *“We haven’t. We were just given a file in which what we would do was written.”*

P26: *“No. An hour-long introduction of the program was given.”*

Table 10 The Problems That Are Encountered While Teaching the Intensive English Course in the 5th Grade

Theme	Codes	<i>f</i>	%
The problems that are encountered while teaching lessons	Large class sizes	16	16,16
	Inappropriateness of the program for the student level	16	16,16
	Boredom of the students due to extra class hours	12	12,12
	Extreme intensiveness of the subjects in the program	11	11,11
	Extreme variety of students’ readiness	11	11,11
	The absence of a coursebook	8	8,08
	Extreme numbers of objectives in the program	8	8,08
	Having inclusive students	8	8,08
	The program’s being focused on grammar	4	4,04
	Classroom management problem	3	3,03
	Not being able to use a supplementary resource	2	2,02
Total	99	100	

According to Table 10, the most common problems that the teachers faced in the 5th grade were the large class sizes (16,16%) and the inappropriateness of the program for the student level (16,16%). These problems are respectively followed by the boredom of the students due to extra class hours (12,12%), the extreme intensiveness of the subjects in the program (11,11%), extreme variety of students’ readiness (11,11%), the absence of a coursebook (8,08%), extreme numbers of objectives in the program (8,08%), having inclusive students (8,08%), the program’s being focused on grammar (4,04%), classroom management problem (3,03%) and not being able to use a supplementary resource (2,02%).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings from this study have revealed that the majority of the teachers generally presented positive opinions regarding the implementation of intensive English language teaching for the 5th grade and IELTP. There are also studies in the literature (Aksoy et al., 2018; Dilekli, 2018; Berkant et al, 2019; Kambur, 2018; Kayabaşı & Köse, 2019) whose results are in parallel with the current study. According to the critical period hypothesis Lenneberg (1967) put forward, brain plasticity is lost after adolescence and the obstacles of learning a language increase rapidly after the adolescence period. In a similar vein, Long (1990) alleged that it is impossible for individuals to have a native-like accent after the age of twelve for the reason that they lose their phonological abilities in second language acquisition. When the critical period hypothesis in language learning and the benefits of teaching a foreign language to children at an early age are considered, it can be said that the

implementation of the IELTP for the 5th grade students, who are ten years old on average, occupies an important place.

Although the majority of teachers' views regarding the suitability of the objectives to the students' mental and social development level are in the direction of them being suitable (38,46%), it is seen that the views that are in the direction of them being partly suitable (34,61%) and unsuitable (26,92%) are not few in number. It is observed that the teachers' views concerning this question are almost evenly distributed to the three categories. The objectives in the IELTP are about students' being able to understand written and oral texts which include the basic words about daily topics; participate in dialogues about family, hobbies, daily life, interests, and school; produce oral and written texts and make statements with limited vocabulary related to these contexts and events and use the different functions of the language in simple dialogues (BOEAD, 2018). However, when the teachers' views are scrutinized, the reason for this diversity may be tackled in two ways: (1) some of the objectives are suitable for the mental and social development level while some of the objectives are above students' levels; (2) the objectives are suitable for some students, but they are unsuitable for the others because of the discrepancy of their prior schemata. Besides, some teachers (P3, P6, P12) stated that the number of objectives is high. The findings from the studies both by Dilekli (2018) and Berkant, Özaslan and Doğan (2019) support our research findings in that the objectives in the program are many and unsuitable for the students' development level. In Balım's (2020) research, it is determined that the objectives in the program are many yet accomplishable.

The majority of the teachers stated that the content is partly suitable for the student level. The teachers came up with reasons for this such as the topics in some units exceeding the students' level, the number of units being high and units being predominantly grammatical. In the research of Dilekli (2018) and Balım (2020), it was concluded that the content was intense, as well. When the curriculum of 2018 is examined, it is seen that the IELTP consists of 36 units. It is understood that in these classes one unit is expected to be covered almost every week when the fact that an academic year consists of 36 weeks is taken into consideration. Some teachers (P5, P12, P14) implied that inasmuch as a new unit being covered every week, the next unit has to be moved onto before the students are able to comprehend a topic fully. The previous subjects are forgotten, as new subjects are covered in the following weeks constantly, even if the objectives of that week's lesson are met (P3). When the curriculum is examined, it is seen that different contexts are presented so as to provide rich and relevant input. Hence, in order to create a relationship between language learning and daily life, the themes of each unit are selected to represent the ideas and problems that students are familiar with, and themes such as family, friends, animals, holidays, leisure activities are emphasized (BOEAD, 2018). However, when the subjects of the units are examined in detail, it is observed that abstract subjects are included in the curriculum. For example, there are grammar subjects like the reported speech in unit 24 and the passive voice in unit 27. It can be inferred that these subjects are unsuitable for students' readiness levels as both students have not had these subjects in Turkish lessons and these subjects are overcomplicated for their age group. In this regard, it might be considered that there will be more accurate implementations when it is taken into account that a child is ready to learn when their cognitive disposition and what is to be taught are matched, as Fisher (1996) stated.

Most of the teachers declared that the activities, teaching methods and techniques which are suggested in the program were suitable and partially suitable. In Dilekli's (2018) research, teachers stated that the activities which are suggested in the program can be diversified according to the level of the class and they find most of the activities suitable, which shows similarity with our study.

It is seen that teachers respectively appeal to the question-answer, educational game, drama, computer-assisted education, group work, communicative language teaching method, TPR, direct method, translation and brainstorming out of teaching methods and techniques while teaching in classes where intensive English language instruction is applied. According to Büyükalın-Filiz (2009), thanks the question-answer method students' ability to think and reviewing strategy enhance and this method arouses curiosity. Games, on the other hand, make students use the language without worry or shyness by getting them to be active participants and a more effective learning environment can be

provided for students by making the lesson more enjoyable; additionally, games are one of the effective ways of teaching vocabulary in that they give learners a chance to use the same patterns repeatedly in a meaningful and purposeful way (Ataş, 2019; Bakhsh, 2016; Gürbüz, 2013; Lilić & Bratož, 2019). Based on the literature, it can be said that the question-answer and educational game method/technique, which teachers say they use the most in their lessons, are qualified in a way that facilitates the teaching, motivates the student, and enables the active participation of the student. In the IELTP, it is depicted that since no single language teaching methodology was viewed as flexible enough to meet the needs of learners at various proficiency and developmental levels and to accommodate a wide variety of learning styles and strategies, an eclectic blend of instructional techniques has been adopted (BOEAD, 2018). Based on the suggestion of various teaching methods and techniques such as TPR, drama, educational game, question-answer, etc. within the scope of the eclectic approach in the curriculum, it has been detected that the methods and techniques that the teachers who participated in the research claimed to use in intensive English language classes were in line with those suggested in the program.

As for the activities, English teachers stated that they respectively used singing, four skill-based activities, speaking, matching, colouring, preparing a board-poster, storytelling, vocabulary games, memory games, and arts & crafts activities. In terms of the activities that are used by the teachers, it is seen that the activities are like those suggested in the IELTP. Gürbüz (2013) argued that while learning a foreign language, especially young learners are more receptive to songs and keener on singing; they love drawing, colouring, and craft activities.

While half of the teachers think the time that is allocated to implement the curriculum is insufficient, almost the other half of the teachers (46,15%) uttered that this time is sufficient. When the statements of the teachers who think the time is insufficient are examined, it is perceived that they thought the time was insufficient because of the extra number of the objectives, the content density, and the excessive number of the units. Besides, the teachers coded P10 and P11 complained that they could not spare time for each student because the class size is crowded and one of the teachers (P11) stated that it caused time problems in crowded classes to arrange activities regarding the speaking skill especially. When looking at the 2018 IELTP, it is seen that it is proposed for an entire academic year, comprising approximately 540 hours of classroom input and practice. After A1 and A2 levels are presented to the students in the first semester, it is aimed to get students' proficiency levels to B1.1 level at the end of the second semester by teaching them half of the B1 level (BOEAD, 2018). Canlier and Bümen (2018) affirm the scope of the curriculum is too wide in that there is the objective to upgrade students' foreign language proficiency five levels in a time span as short as a year in the IELTP and it may affect the permanency and continuity of the learning outcomes negatively. However, in the research carried out by Dilekli (2018) majority of the teachers stated positive views regarding the timespan being sufficient.

Most of the teachers (73,07%) stated that the tools and materials suggested in the curriculum are suitable. For instance, one of the teachers (P7) asserted that they are suitable because materials that are technological and address students' cognitive levels are suggested. On the other hand, in the research by Berkant et al. (2019), teachers stated that the materials prepared for the intensive English language teaching implementation are unsuitable to the readiness levels of students and not appealing to the students.

According to the research findings, teachers mostly benefit from technological tools and materials such as smartboard, songs, videos, animations, cartoons, PowerPoint presentations, EBA, web 2 tools, websites, respectively. Apart from technological materials, teachers also implied that they use traditional tools and materials such as visuals, posters, flashcards, puzzles, puppets, paper-crayons, maps, microphones, and toys. It can be inferred that the tools and materials which are used by teachers in their lessons are effective in foreign language instruction, as taking advantage of technological innovations in a class environment will increase the interest in the topics that are covered and increase motivation by making learning fun (Göçerler & Çoraklı, 2019). In addition, there are studies in the literature on the positive effects of the smartboards and songs, which the teachers stated they use the

most, in the teaching environment. In the study of Tilbe et al. (2017), it is seen that smartboards increase students' learning eagerness and motivation and made a positive impact on students' participation by making the subjects more interesting and fun. Songs, on the other hand, can be used to set a context of a lesson; they can be incorporated into all language skills and components and are effective at making classes engaging and fun (Shin, 2017; Teopilus, 2009). When the tools and materials suggested in the IELTP that plans to keep students continuously exposed to English through audio and visual materials are observed (BOEAD, 2018), it is seen that they are like the tools and materials that teachers use in their lessons. Similarly, in the research of Erdem and Yücel-Toy (2017), English teachers stated that smartboards, videos, and computers could be used in intensive English language teaching applied in the 5th grade.

Most of the teachers stated that the measurement tools, techniques, and activities suggested in the curriculum are suitable and partly suitable. In Dilekli's (2018) study, most of the teachers thought that the assessment-evaluation activities in the program were based on classical approaches and the skill-based assessment-evaluation approach was ignored. In the study by Balım (2020), it was concluded that detailed assessment-evaluation of listening and speaking skills were not carried out while reading and writing skill-based assessment-evaluation was carried out.

It stands out that some teachers did not have any ideas about the measuring tools, methods and activities suggested in the curriculum and even made statements such as "...I actually haven't used measurement a lot". This situation can be interpreted as teachers' low curriculum literacy and insufficient pedagogical knowledge. Furthermore, when asked whether the objectives were appropriate for the student level, the teachers gave more content-related answers (the content is dense; it is difficult to teach tenses, etc.).

It is concluded that, while teachers are making an assessment and evaluation regarding their lessons, they mostly use both traditional and alternative measurement tools, methods and techniques such as multiple-choice, quiz, project, matching, question-answer, true-false, observation, portfolio, drama, presentation, rubric, audio/video recording, etc. When the curriculum is observed, it is stated that the theoretical frame of measurement tools, methods and techniques that are suggested in the program is based on the CEFR, in which various types of assessment and evaluation techniques are emphasized and it is heavily centered on alternative and process-oriented measurement procedures. Portfolios, projects, performance assessment, creative drama tasks, class newspaper/social media projects, journal performance, etc. are emphasized in the curriculum as an alternative assessment. In addition to alternative and process evaluation, it was mentioned that formal evaluation would be made through written and oral exams, quizzes, homework, and projects (BOEAD, 2018). In Erdem and Yücel-Toy's (2017) research, while intensive English language 5th grade students thought that written exams, homework, oral exams, project assignments, making presentations and portfolio assessment are respectively important in English teaching as assessment methods and activities, teachers stated that both process and product evaluation are necessary. In this respect, it can be said that similar results have been obtained with the ones from the present study.

Most of the teachers stated that they could build a relationship between the units and topics of the English course and the subjects of other courses. However, some of the teachers implied that they could not build a relationship with other courses even if they wanted to, since the subjects planned to be covered in the English lesson took place much earlier than the subjects of other lessons. Most of the teachers stated that since especially grammar subjects are taught in English lessons without being taught in Turkish lessons, they first explained the rules of the subject in Turkish and then switched to English. It may be expressed that this requires twice more workload for English teachers and prevents them from completing the program consisting of 40 units in a short period of 36 weeks, as well.

It is seen that Turkish, social studies and science courses come first among the lessons that teachers can build relationships with the English course. These are followed by music, mathematics, and arts courses, respectively. The fact that teachers can build a relationship between English lessons and the subjects of different lessons shows that they can apply an interdisciplinary approach in foreign

language education. In interdisciplinary instruction, the information and skills in different disciplines are brought together in a meaningful way, making the learning-teaching process effective and meaningful (Duman & Aybek, 2003; Yıldırım, 1996). For instance, when IELTP was observed, it is understood that a relationship could be built with social studies course with “country life” topic in unit 25 and “deep into history” topic in unit 33; with science course with “people and animals” topic in unit 8 and “discovering the space” topic in unit 36. However, although the unit subjects such as "games and sports", "extreme sports", "fine arts" are reconciled with the subjects of physical education, arts, and music courses, it is not possible to plan the synchronous progress of the subjects of these courses because these courses are not given in the classes where the intensive English language implementation is applied. Therefore, it may not be possible to say that a fully interdisciplinary instruction is conducted in the context of these units.

Most of the teachers indicated that they were able to find a suitable environment to accomplish the English lesson's objectives. In Dilekli's (2018) research, teachers generally had positive views about physical infrastructure, which supports the findings of this study. However, some teachers, even though they are a few in numbers, enunciated that they are not able to reach a suitable environment. Some of the teachers who stated that they are not able to reach or are partially able to find a suitable environment put forward reasons such as not having an internet connection at their schools (P7, P9, P23) and students' not having coursebooks (P2, P3, P7, P9). Moreover, it is determined that none of the schools where the interviewed teachers worked had language laboratories. Some of the teachers uttered that not being given any English coursebooks by MoNE to be used in the intensive English language classes creates an important problem and they apply to open the electronic version of the coursebook on the smartboard or photocopying as a solution. A study by Kambur (2018) concluded that because of the lack of materials and technological infrastructure, crowded class size and traditional seating arrangement; the effective implementation of the program was prevented. In the research conducted by Özkan, Özdemir and Tavşancıl (2018), infrastructural problems such as technological inadequacies and the lack of materials emerged due to the lack of digital and printed materials that will enable students to practice in intensive English language classes. Likewise, in the research of Berkant et al. (2019), teachers complained about the late delivery of course materials, lack of materials and staff, and insufficiency of the physical environment.

It is understood that none of the teachers, who were interviewed, received in-service training pertaining to teaching intensive English language for 5th graders and the IELTP. Only a few of the teachers in one school explained that they were given a file inside which what to do was written and a one-hour program introduction was made. Most of the teachers stated that they suffered from not being provided such in-service training and they had problems due to the lack of preparation. However, a few teachers (P2, P7, P8) articulated that there is no need for in-service training related to the IELTP and that in-service training on language teaching to young learners covers this level. In this context, although the student characteristics are the same as in the in-service training on language teaching to young learners, intensive English language instruction is applied for the first time at the 5th grade level and differs from the English course curriculum of the 5th grade, where the intensive English language teaching is not applied.

Regarding the problems that teachers faced while teaching English in intensive English language 5th grade classes, they mostly complained about the crowded class sizes, unsuitableness of the curriculum for the student level, boredom of students due to the excessive class hours and very intense subjects in the program. These were respectively followed by problems such as the variety of students' background knowledge, the absence of a coursebook, extreme number of objectives in the program, having inclusive students, grammar-focused program, etc. The reason for the difference in student readiness may be that all 5th grade students studying at the pilot schools are given intensive English language instruction without any choice. In the research of Berkant et al. (2019), it is seen that teachers went through many problems such as technical problems and the unsuitability of the objective, topic, and materials for the students' level. In Özkan, Özdemir and Tavşancıl's (2018) study, experts stated that the foreign language lessons' content is dense in Turkey and vocabulary and grammar teaching are predominant. According to Scott and Ytreberg (1990), how good children are in

a foreign language does not depend on whether they learn grammar rules and very few of the pupils, even at the age of 10-11, will be able to cope with grammar as such. Considering that the students in the target object of the intensive English language implementation are also at this age group, integrating in-class and out-of-class activities related to teaching four language skills rather than grammar may have more positive results in terms of students' cognitive levels.

Recommendations

In consequence of the acquired results of this research, the following can be recommended with regard to the implication of the IELTP:

- 1) The content should be eased by reducing the number of units and grammar subjects in the curriculum. Thus, it is thought that the time that is determined for the curriculum will be sufficient and the subjects covered in the lessons will become more permanent. In addition, more emphasis can be placed on speaking and listening skills, which students will benefit from in order to communicate, rather than heavy grammar subjects that challenge students cognitively.
- 2) Schools, where this practice will be carried out, should be strengthened in terms of physical structure and equipment and so the necessary infrastructure for implementation should be provided in advance. As an example, language classes and language laboratories, where an interactive whiteboard and internet access are made available beforehand and the class sizes are capable of conducting preparatory education effectively, can be prepared for this implementation.
- 3) In order to fill the deficiency of the coursebook, a common problem of many teachers, special coursebooks can be prepared for the classes where intensive English teaching will be conducted by the Board of Education and Discipline and those can be sent to schools in advance. In addition to the course books, those can be supported in terms of colourful and enjoyable materials appealing to the students' age group such as various paintings, pictures, posters, flashcards, puppets, toys, storybooks, three-dimensional models, etc.
- 4) In the curriculum, especially the alternative assessment tools, assessment-evaluation tools and activities have been mentioned very generally and no examples regarding the activities have been presented. By eliminating these deficiencies in the curriculum, more detailed information about the testing situations can be given and sample assessment-evaluation activities can be included.
- 5) With reference to the result, the majority of the teachers did not examine the curriculum in detail; in-service training can be given in pilot schools where this practice is implemented especially to English teachers regarding this new implementation and new curriculum. In the meantime, it may also be suggested to give teachers seminars on program literacy.
- 6) Further studies regarding the IELTP can be conducted;
 - in Turkey's other provinces
 - by taking different stakeholders' views such as students, parents, school administrators, etc.
 - using quantitative research methods.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

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