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Voices of Underrepresented Stakeholders: Parental Evaluation on 5th Grade ELT Curricula

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Abstract

The opinions of parents as a school-based stakeholders on ELT curricula have been neglected by not only authorities but also the related literature. Except from their consent or demands' being a prerequisite for the application of intensive curriculum for 5th graders, parents do not have a role for the development or application of English language curricula in Turkish education system. The present study is an attempt to hearken to their voices about the English language curricula implemented for 5th graders in Turkish middle schools. To this end, a cross-sectional survey study was designed and 116 parents of 5th graders were reached through 'Parental Questionnaire on ELT Curriculum.' The data were analyzed through Nvivo 12 and the results were supported with visual maps and direct quotations. The findings indicated that with high expectations from the curricula, the parents supported learning English based on the factors of providing long-term benefits and keeping up the new world order. Sharing their opinions on teaching material, content, class hours, assignments, and activities, participants gave suggestions on cognitive, affective, and practical aspects to improve the applications.

Keywords: Curriculum Evaluation, English Language Teaching, Parental Evaluation, Stakeholders

1. Introduction

Due to the realization of how crucial English is for their children's education and career, parents have been willing to spend their resources for more English exposure and supporting early language learning (Rich, 2014). Parents' ambition to provide every opportunity for their children to learn English put the governments under pressure and forced them to lower the age of learning English (Enever, Moon & Raman, 2009) or reshape their language policy as in the case of Netherlands (de Bot, 2014) or Indonesia (Zein, 2017). In addition to their attitudes towards learning English, this also shows us how effective parents' opinions can be on the process of decision-making and application. Parents participate in the process mainly by becoming a member of school boards, and there are many ways for parents to involve in decision-making with students and teachers, yet they are still underrepresented as a group (Marsh, 2004).

Parents are deemed to influence the learning of their children most and children start their formal education within their family (Ornstein and Hunkins, 2018). Looking from a pedagogical perspective, Fullan (2007) claims, “the closer the parent is to the education of the child, the greater the impact on child development and educational achievement” (p. 189). Moreover, Marsh (2004) lists parents as one of the curriculum workers along with teachers, principals or specialists. Although the significance of parental involvement for the child’s learning is well-accepted, still there has been no set of criteria of standard among the schools in terms of involving parents into the teaching and learning process, especially the problem of what role parents have during the implementation still remains unresolved (Olibie, 2014). Parents can be seen as a partner of the teachers as they have unique knowledge about learning of the students, which makes them important stakeholders (Peterson, Wahlquist, Brown, & Mukhopadhyay, 2003). It is crucial to find ways to include parents and communities into the process for the development and implementation of the curriculum (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018). Seeing schools as the only party responsible from the implementation of the curriculum can be an inadvisable attitude as the stakeholders like parents can provide support (Jansen & Middlewood, 2003). As well as support, they can also share their opinions or evaluations as being one of the parties affected from the curriculum. However, curriculum studies have a gap when it comes to investigating the opinions of the parents (Ersoy, 2007). In the Turkish context, the studies focusing on the opinions of the parents are quite rare compared to the ones evaluating ELT curricula from teachers’ or students’ perspectives (Dündar & Merç, 2017).

Although there are not many, related literature provides studies evaluating ELT curricula from the perspectives of parents in different contexts and their results provide insightful information on the issue. For instance, investigating elementary English programs in Klein, Krekeler (1993) found out that parents were aware of the improvement of their children and had positive attitudes towards ESL instruction, yet there was a lack of communication between parents and teachers. Moreover, the study of Hillberry (2008) indicated that attitudes of the teachers towards children, teaching quality, encouraging and friendly environment for students, values education, and providing extra support for English learning in U.S public elementary schools were mostly appreciated by the parents while factors such as class size, lack of cultural understanding, and lack of guidance for parents about the school procedures were mentioned as disappointments. In the Mexican context, Romero, Sayer, and Irigoyen (2014) interviewed with parents to evaluate the implementation of the national EFL program and suggested that parents should be informed about the curriculum as they were one of the key stakeholders.

There have been few attempts to investigate the opinions of parents about ELT curricula in Turkish context, too. Evaluating newly designed ELT curriculum for the preparatory class of Anatolian high schools, Kefeli (2008) revealed that the majority of the parents did not answer questions about the coursebook; their knowledge about the classroom practice was limited to what their children told them. Additionally, in order to evaluate ELT curricula from the perspectives of various stakeholders, TEPAV and British Council (2014) found out that level of income, education, and English proficiency were deemed to have an effect on the support parents provided to their children. In general, parents were content with ELT curricula and teaching materials, but the satisfaction level of parents was found to have a negative correlation with their proficiency level of English (TEPAV & British Council, 2014). Very recently, evaluating the 7th grade English curriculum, the study of Çetin and Gündoğdu (2020) indicated that parents gave importance to speaking skills and believed that lack of opportunities to use the language in daily life affected their children’s learning, and increasing class hours could be helpful for more exposure to the language.

1.1. English Language Curricula for 5th Grade in Turkey

For the language policy of the countries within expanding circle, the status of English as a lingua franca and globalization has a significant impact (Kirkgöz, 2009). Foreign language courses have a long history within the Turkish education system (Demirpolat, 2015) and English has a pre-eminent place within the national curriculum (Kirkgöz, 2007). After World War I, English has global significance and for Turkey, teaching English has been on the agenda due to NATO membership and the start of negotiations for the European Union (Demirpolat, 2015). There have been three major curriculum reforms occurred in 1997, 2005, and 2013, which have affected English language teaching in the Turkish context (Erarslan, 2018). Increasing the duration of primary education from five

to eight years, 1997 regulation lowered the age for the introduction of English to nine and English became a compulsory course for 4th graders (Gürsoy, Korkmaz, & Damar, 2013). Adopting behavioristic approach, 1997 Educational reform lasted eight years (Erarslan, 2018) and was replaced with 2005 curriculum, the purpose of which was to leave the behavioristic approach behind, follow a learner-centered teaching, and adopt process-oriented assessment (Haznedar, 2010). As it resulted in abandoning the implementation of preparatory class, the effect of 2005 reform on secondary level got nation-wide criticism (Kirkgöz, 2017). Lastly, 2013 curriculum reform decreased the level of teaching English in primary schools to 2nd grade (Demirtaş & Erdem, 2015). The new system also caused 5th graders, young learners at the age of 10, to be a part of middle school students.

Taking a firm action, the Ministry of National Education (MNE) piloted an Intensive English Language Curriculum (IntELC) for 5th graders in 2017-2018 academic year. In 2018-2019 academic year, a regulation was announced and schools were given permission to give English courses up to 18 hours in a week for 5th graders with the approval of school administration and the demand of the parents (MNE, 2018a). The main curriculum prepared for 5th graders consists of 10 courses including Turkish language, math, science and technology, and visual arts. The class hours of these courses range from 1 to 6 hours. The schools following IntELC eliminate the courses such as physical education and sports or visual arts from their curriculum and use the extra class hours for English. As well as being an opportunity for the learners, the application of IntELC also created a duality within the system as schools were already following 2-8 English curriculum (ELC). Although both of the curricula are based on the principles of CEFR and their major philosophy, teaching approaches are the same, IntELC aims to reach the proficiency level specified as “beginning of B1” (MNE, 2018b) while ELC aims for A1 level with its 10-unit content and three weekly class hours (MNE, 2018c). While major philosophy, language teaching approach, and suggested techniques for assessment and evaluation remained the same, expected language level, weekly class hours, and learning outcomes were reorganized. In terms of unit themes, it can be stated that the first 12 units of IntELC are similar to the content of ELC. When it comes to the learning outcomes, both of the curricula only have learning outcomes specified for language skills, except writing skills for ELC, and speaking skills have the most learning outcomes in both of the curricula, which is natural as they are based on communicative principles.

Considering all of the reforms the Turkish education system has experienced, the role of every micro and macro level member within the system should be recognized in order to overcome the difficulties resulting from the disconnection between policy and practice (Kirkgöz, 2017). For decision making about national curricula, all parties including parents should be involved (Pinar, 2003). As one of the prerequisites for the application of IntELC is the demand of the parents, their opinions on IntELC and ELC can provide crucial feedback for both of the curricula. Thus, present study aims to evaluate ELC and IntELC from the perspectives of parents and hearken to their words. To this end, the study tries to find an answer to the following research question:

1. What are the opinions of parents about IntELC and ELC for 5th graders?

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The present study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. In cross-sectional survey design, researchers conduct the study at one point in time to investigate “attitudes and practices, group comparisons, community needs, program evaluation, national assessment” (Creswell, 2012, p. 378).

2.2 Participants

116 parents of 5th graders living in a city center in the Central Anatolia Region of Turkey constructed the participant group of the study. The data were collected from five middle schools. Selected through random sampling, two of the schools were following IntELC. 26 % of the participants were male, only three of the participants had an advanced level of English and 38% of them had no knowledge of English. Among the participants, most of whom were housewives, there were teachers, laborers, academicians, and real estate advisors.

71 % of the participants were non-graduates, children of 23% of the participants were following ELC, and 95 % of the participants were supporting the application of IntELC. Lastly, 62% of the parents had not read the updated curriculum documents.

2.3. Data Collection and Procedure

In order to reveal the evaluations of parents about two ELT curricula, Parental Questionnaire on ELT Curriculum was prepared by the researchers based on the evaluations of four experts from the field of Curriculum Development and Evaluation and ELT. Within the first part of the form, demographic features such as education level or English proficiency level were elicited. The second part of the questionnaire was constructed with ten open-ended questions on the issues such as content, class hours, and coursebook. In order to reach more participants and eliminate the language barrier, the questionnaire was prepared in Turkish. After getting the permission from Ethics Committee and Directorate of National Education, the whole process of data collection took place between February and May in 2019. By means of a cooperation with administrators and English teachers of 5th graders, the questionnaires were sent to the parents by handing them over to the students and the ones sent back were collected. In some of the schools the data collection took place during parental meetings with the consent of the parents.

2.4. Data Analysis

Content analysis was conducted by using Nvivo 12 to analyze the data. The steps suggested by Creswell (2012) were adopted for the analysis. After transcribing the data, separate documents were prepared for each participant. Moreover, the files were enumerated and labelled as parents of ELC (P-ELC) or parents of IntELC (P-IntELC). Then, all of the data were went through several times by using a color coding system. In Vivo, Magnitude, and Descriptive Coding methods were adopted. In Vivo coding method requires using the words of the participants as a code instead of generating one and the Magnitude coding method enables to use symbols, descriptive statistics or abbreviations (Saldaña, 2013). Once the first coding segment was over, the defined codes were evaluated.

The second segment of coding was conducted to see whether any other codes could be generated from the data. At the end of the process, similar codes were organized to specify the themes. In order to calculate inter-coder reliability through the formula suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), 25% of the data was also coded by another researcher from the field of Program Development and Evaluation and inter-coder reliability was found to be 98 %, which is an acceptable range (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The relations of the codes were visualized through maps and the reporting was supported through direct quotations. As the data were collected in the native language of the participants, the quotations were translated into English by the researchers for reporting.

3. Results

With the aim of revealing the opinions of parents about English language curricula for 5th graders, the responses of the participants were analyzed and presented under the following categories: opinions of parents about the necessity of learning English, expected outcomes, the efficacy of the curricula to reach the expected outcomes, coursebook as an instructional material, and points to be improved in ELC and IntELC.

3.1. Opinions of the Parents About the Necessity of Learning English

Before covering the opinions of the parents specifically about ELT curricula, their thoughts about their children's learning English were investigated. As presented in Figure 1, the responses of parents, who were positive about the need for learning English, were categorized under personal and social factors.

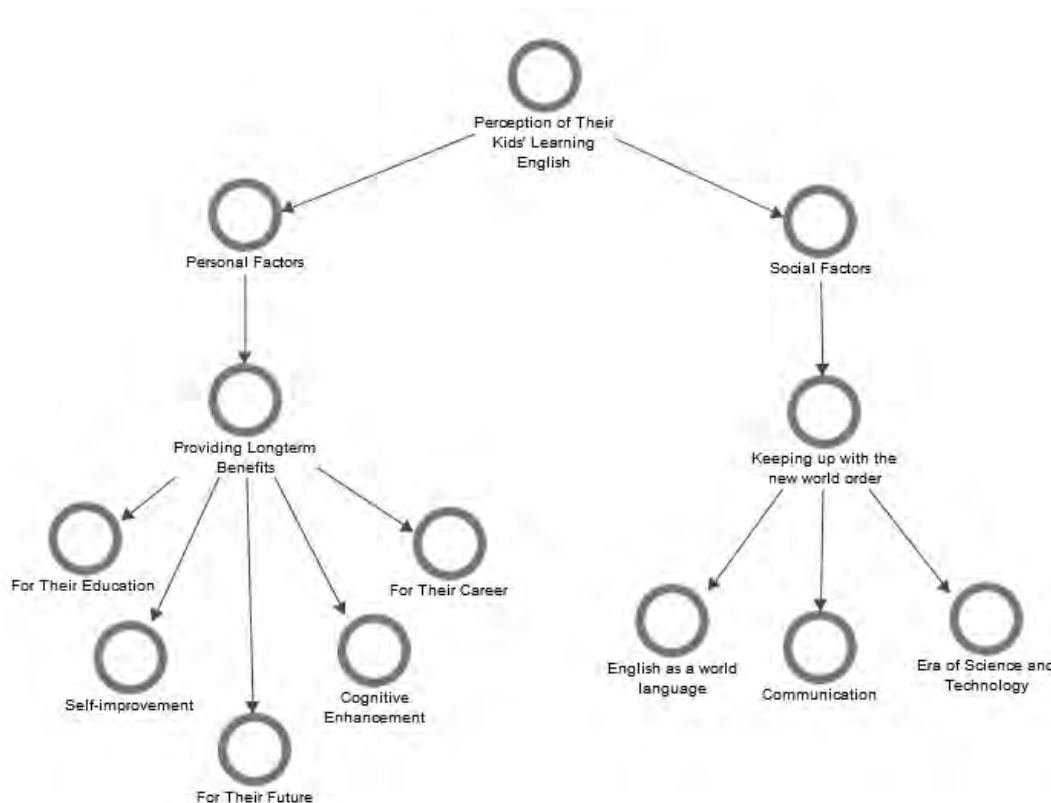


Figure 1: Opinions of the parents regarding their children's learning English

The sub-theme of personal factors was determined as providing long term benefits. The participants responded that learning English could be useful for the daily life, education, and career of their children. As stated by some of the parents:

I believe it is necessary for education and career and it should be taken to an advanced level (P-ELC, 12).

I believe learning English at this age and grade will have positive effects on my child's education and it is a sound decision (P-IntELC, 12).

Yes, I think s/he needs to learn English, knowing and speaking English fluently will be beneficial for education life and career (P-IntELC, 58).

Some of the participants focused on personal and cognitive development. They expressed their opinions in these words:

Of course s/he should learn English, it will contribute to his/her career, personality a lot (P-IntELC, 36).

Language education makes a big contribution to his/her cognitive enhancement (P-IntELC, 55).

One person, one language, gaining effective communication ability, contribution to cognitive enhancement (P-IntELC, 62).

For social factors, the sub-theme was specified as keeping up with the new world order, which embodies English as a world language, communication and era of science and technology. For English as a world language, some of the responses pointed out English as a global language. The following excerpts exemplify the opinions of some of the parents in this regard:

In our era, English is valid as a foreign language regardless of the profession, the ones who know the language happen to be one step further. In an era in which communication has improved that much, I believe that one needs to know the common languages to be a man of the world (P-IntELC, 21).

I definitely think that my child should know English, today not knowing English means living abstracted from the world (P-IntELC, 25).

Some of the responses indicated that it would be inevitable for the students to learn English in order to communicate. One of the parents responded:

Yes, s/he needs to learn especially when we think that we are living in a technological era, the importance of language has been increasing day by day, the distance between the countries has disappeared through communication. As English is the mostly commonly used language, the golden rule for the communication is to learn English (P-IntELC, 13).

Lastly, parents supported learning English as it has become the language of technology and science. Two of the parents explained their opinions in these words:

Yes, because I want my child to be able to manage any kind of software by having a high proficiency level of English, which has become the native language of the world in the era of science and technology (P-IntELC, 71).

I think it is necessary to learn English as it is the communication language of the world, to reach the related literature in the professional or other fields, the need of it for commercial and scientific needs, even the societies whose native language is different, are using English for those reasons and more (P-IntELC, 80).

Only two of parents questioned the need for learning English. They either questioned its necessity or timing. The following excerpts elaborate the opinions of these two parents:

I don't believe that it is necessary because it is not needed except education life, only it may change in line with the career choice and this can be made up with primary courses, it is not required by most of the school age children (P-ELC, 15).

No, it is not essential, it may be in the years to come but right now it is such an early age (P-IntELC, 49).

3.2. Expectations of the Parents from English Language Curricula

Asked for their expectations from English lessons, the responses of P-ELCs focused mainly on reaching a certain proficiency level (see Figure 2).

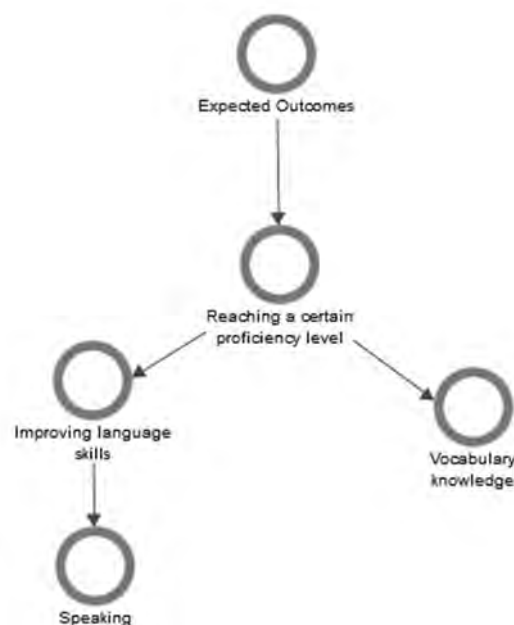


Figure 2: Expectations of the parents from ELC

Two of the parents expressed their expectations in these words:

I think that my child needs to have high proficiency level of English when s/he starts the university as a result of the education s/he takes at the middle school and high school (P-ELC, 12).

I expect that my child will be at intermediate level or maybe more and can use English in the future (P-ELC, 27).

P-ELCs expected the curriculum to improve vocabulary knowledge and language skills. Among language skills, speaking skills were mostly cited. The following excerpts exemplify the responses of parents regarding their expected outcomes:

It will be really helpful if s/he starts learning and continues to improve. Learning English is not just about learning grammar. Paying attention to speaking besides grammar is what I expect. Because regardless of grammar knowledge, there should be activities to improve speaking and pronunciation (P-ELC, 1).

I want that s/he can express herself/himself well when s/he finishes the middle school, for instance s/he can express her/his wishes, anger etc. and manage daily life communication (P-ELC, 3).

Expectations of P-IntELCs showed some similarities. Categorization of expected outcomes from IntELC is presented in Figure 3.

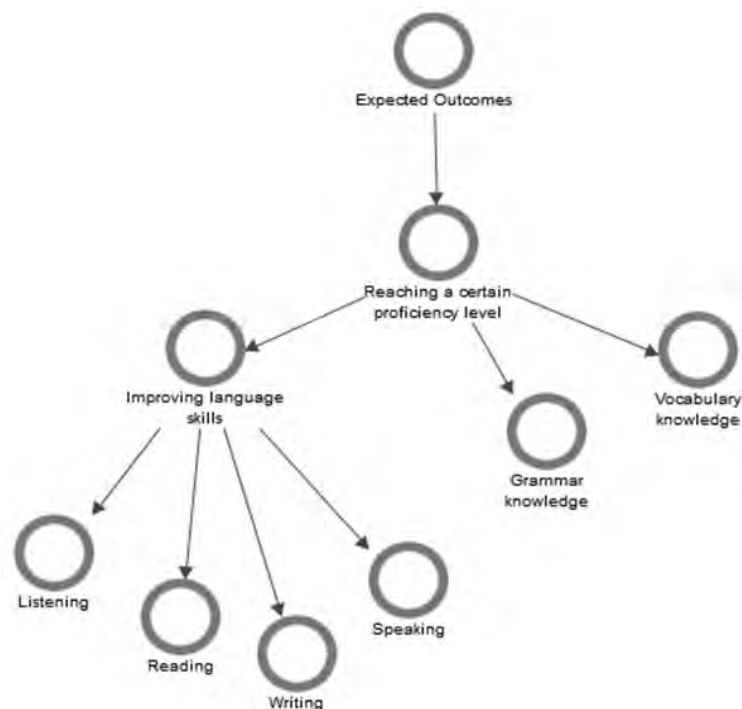


Figure 3: Expectations of the parents from IntELC

Just like P-ELCs, parents wanted IntELC to improve the proficiency level of the students. The responses of some of the parents implied great expectations. As one of the parents responded:

I want him/her to learn at a level that s/he can express herself/himself, recognize abstract and concrete notions and s/he can speak like a native in time (P-IntELC, 10).

In relation to proficiency level, responses indicated that the parents expected IntELC to improve language skills of the students. Two of them stated their expectations in these words:

I want my child to speak English like a native. We are expecting an education system which makes him/her speak and understand what s/he listens to and reads, and exchange mails (P-IntELC, 78).

What we expect is to make my child really learn and reach the speaking and writings skills in daily life (P-IntELC, 80).

Although two of the parents emphasized the importance of language skills for themselves by comparing them with grammar knowledge, some of them still had expectations about grammar knowledge. As stated by two of them:

It is necessary to focus on grammar and speaking in order to make children use it in daily life, have conversations, understand what is written (P-IntELC, 5).

I want her/him to speak well and have a grammar knowledge at this age and not to have difficulties in the future, to have pen pals and summarize stories (P-IntELC, 54).

As the last component of proficiency, the parents highlighted the importance of vocabulary knowledge for them. One of them stated:

What I expect is the ability to speak and have vocabulary knowledge rather than grammar structures, to understand the daily life vocabulary, reading comprehension and pronunciation and read a few books appropriate for the level in a year (P-IntELC, 21).

3.3. Opinions of the Parents Regarding the Efficacy of the Curricula to Reach the Expected Outcomes

As a follow-up to their expectations from ELT curricula, parents were asked to state how efficient they found ELC in terms of reaching the expected outcomes. The analysis of the responses is presented in Figure 4.

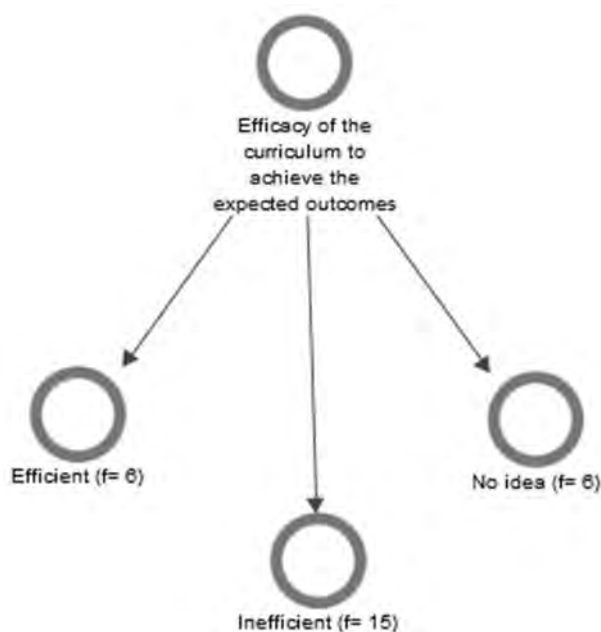


Figure 4: Opinions of the parents regarding the efficacy of ELC to achieve the expected outcomes

While some of the parents simply stated that they had no idea about the efficacy of ELC, six of the parents found ELC efficient. The rest of the parents believed that ELC was far from teaching English to their children. The responses indicated that their expectations were never met. One of them expressed his frustration in these words:

Of course it is inefficient because the only things they remember are counting from 1 to 10, 10-15 words and 20-25 sentences, we have high expectations but it is inefficient. They are having those classes for years but none of them can gain anything with the education they took, the thought and intentions are good but it goes for nothing because of the poor practice (P-ELC, 15).

Figure 5 shows the responses of the parents regarding the efficacy of IntELC to achieve the expected outcomes.

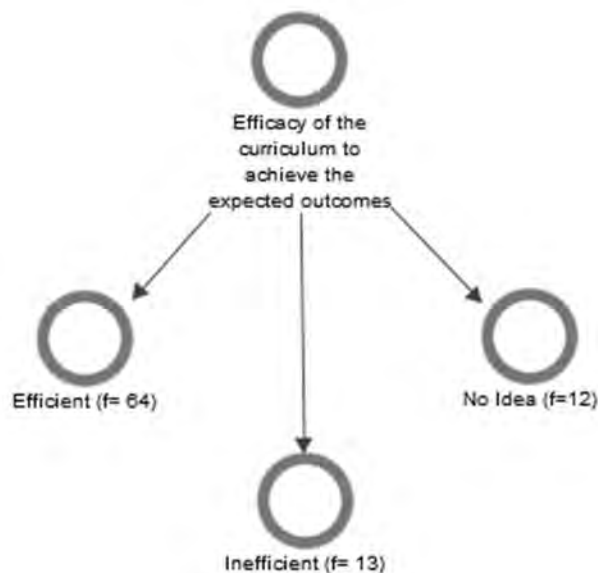


Figure 5: Opinions of the parents regarding the efficacy of IntELC to achieve the expected outcomes

As it can be understood from Figure 5, 12 out of 89 parents had no idea. 13 parents doubted the efficacy of IntELC to achieve the expected outcomes within the current conditions. While lack of reinforcement, class hours, need for extra support, and persistence of more class hours were mentioned as reasons for finding IntELC inefficient, majority of the participants praised IntELC and supported the application. The following excerpts are the examples of how they expressed their appreciation:

Unlike previous curriculum, increased class hours, use of smart board, supportive materials and the support of concerned teachers are promising steps, we have positive opinions for now, we can evaluate it better at the end of the year (P-IntELC, 59).

This year's curriculum is really good, I observe the improvements of my child, the pronunciation, forming sentences and expressions are really better (P-IntELC, 63).

They are regularly reading stories for beginners, I think it is good, medium of instruction is English and dramas and visuals make the lessons entertaining, I think it is productive, children are happy (P-IntELC, 70).

Suggesting the extension of the application, parents compared IntELC with the old systems or the way they had learnt English. They believed that IntELC was a promising step for their children. The following excerpts elaborate the opinions of some of the parents in this regard:

The lessons are enjoyable for our children, I think they are conducting enough activities compared to other schools, intensive curriculum is such a big chance and should be applied in all schools (P-IntELC, 28).

For us, it is really good to see an English education which is more than "yes" and "no", seeing our children's really learning is a sign for the appreciation of the curriculum. I want it to continue and believe that it will be efficient. I want it to be extended to all schools (P-IntELC, 60).

While the intensive curriculum was only being applied at high school level, it is really promising for future to have it at middle school level (P-IntELC, 62).

3.4. Opinions of the Parents Regarding the Coursebook as an Instructional Material

The participants also shared their evaluations regarding MNE-approved coursebook. Some of the parents could not evaluate the material because of their lack of English knowledge. The responses of the rest of the participants were divided into two main groups, categorization of which is presented in Figure 6.

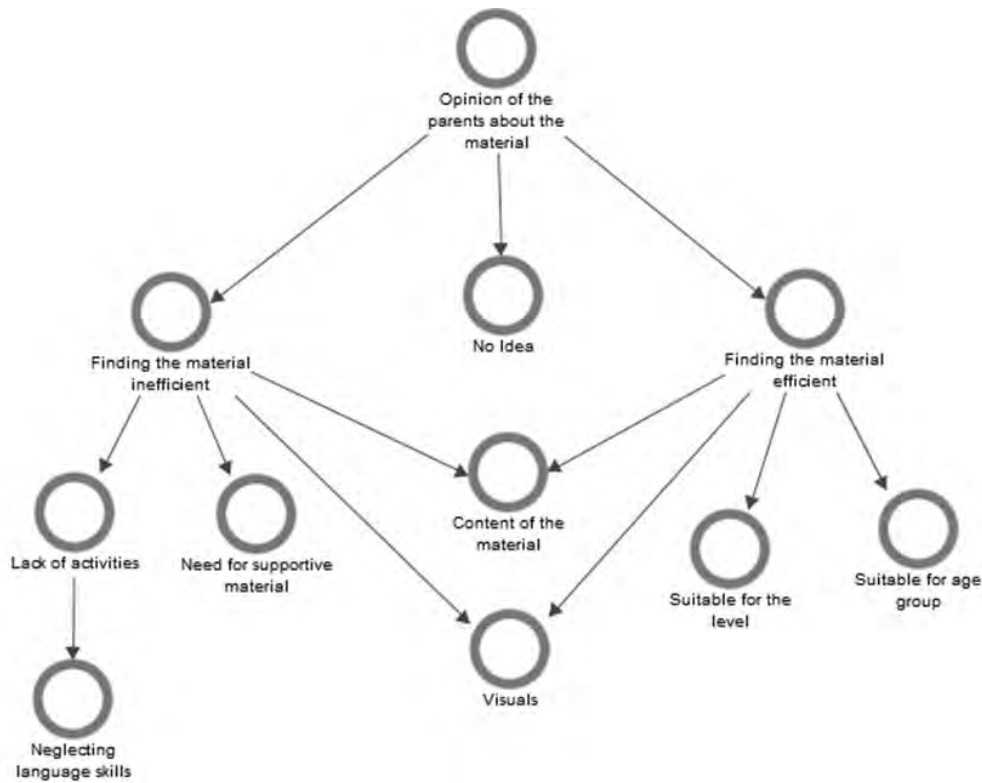


Figure 6: Opinions of the parents regarding ELC coursebook

Believing that the coursebook itself was not enough and there should be supportive materials, some of the parents pointed out the lack of the activities and one of them criticized the amount of speaking and listening activities. On the other hand, the coursebook was praised by half of the group for its efficiency and suitability to the level and age. Moreover, two aspects of the coursebook got both negative and positive opinions from the parents. One of these aspects was the content of the coursebook. Although it was praised for being clear, two of the participants criticized the scope of the content. The other aspect was the visuals in the coursebook. As well as being praised, high number of visuals in the coursebook were criticized. One of the parents mentioned:

As far as I can see there are lots of visuals, activities and tests are insufficient, there isn't much place left for activities because of pictures, the visuality is important but it is unnecessary to include that much (P-ELC, 15).

The categorization of the opinions of the parents regarding MNE-approved coursebook for IntELC is presented in Figure 7. As there was not a MNE-approved coursebook prepared specifically for IntELC, the students used the same coursebook with the ones following ELC along with their supportive materials. Thus, all of the parents evaluated the same coursebook regardless of the curriculum their children followed.

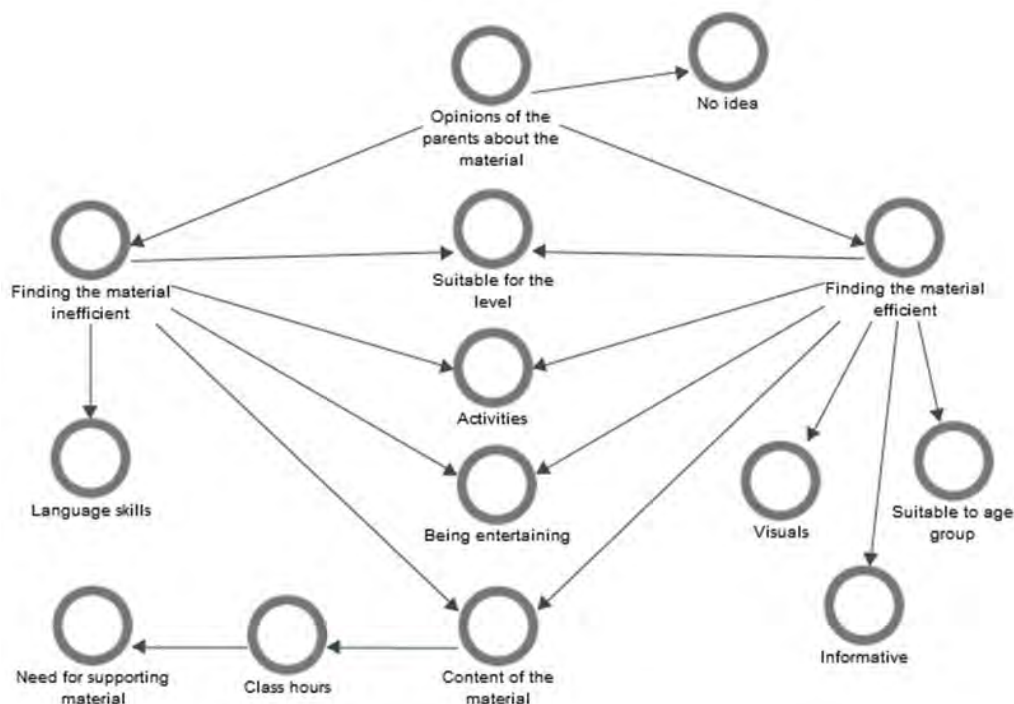


Figure 7: Opinions of the parents regarding IntELC coursebook

As English knowledge constituted an impediment for some of the parents, there was no point of investigating the coursebook for them. Just like the participants of ELC, the rest of the parents who stated an opinion were at odds over the coursebook. For some aspects there were both positive and negative comments. First of those aspects was coursebook's being entertaining. Although one of the parents stated that the coursebook was not productive and enjoyable, some of the parents stated contrary opinions. Another controversial aspect was the content of the coursebook. Contrary to the positive evaluations, there were some criticisms directed to the content of the coursebook for being superficial. Additionally, parents evaluated the content of the coursebook in terms of weekly class hours and believed that there was an inconsistency between the content and the class hours, which also created the need of supporting materials. There were both positive and negative evaluations about the activities in the coursebook. Some parents suggested enriching the activities by adding tasks and dialogs. The last issue that there was no consensus among the participants was the suitability of the level. Some of the participants praised the coursebook for being easy to understand and instructing while one of the participants shared a different opinion. He expressed himself in these words:

Explanations or examples are quite bad. It is difficult sometimes even I have difficulties. I think they published a bad coursebook, the explanations are so short, the examples, too. It is quite hard for children. I think the first thing to do should be changing the coursebook, an easier coursebook with more examples would make it easy for children to learn (P-IntELC, 26).

3.5. Opinions of the Parents Regarding the Points to Be Improved in ELC and IntELC

Finally, the participants were asked to state their opinions regarding the points to be improved for a more efficient application. The categorization of the responses for ELC is presented in Figure 8.

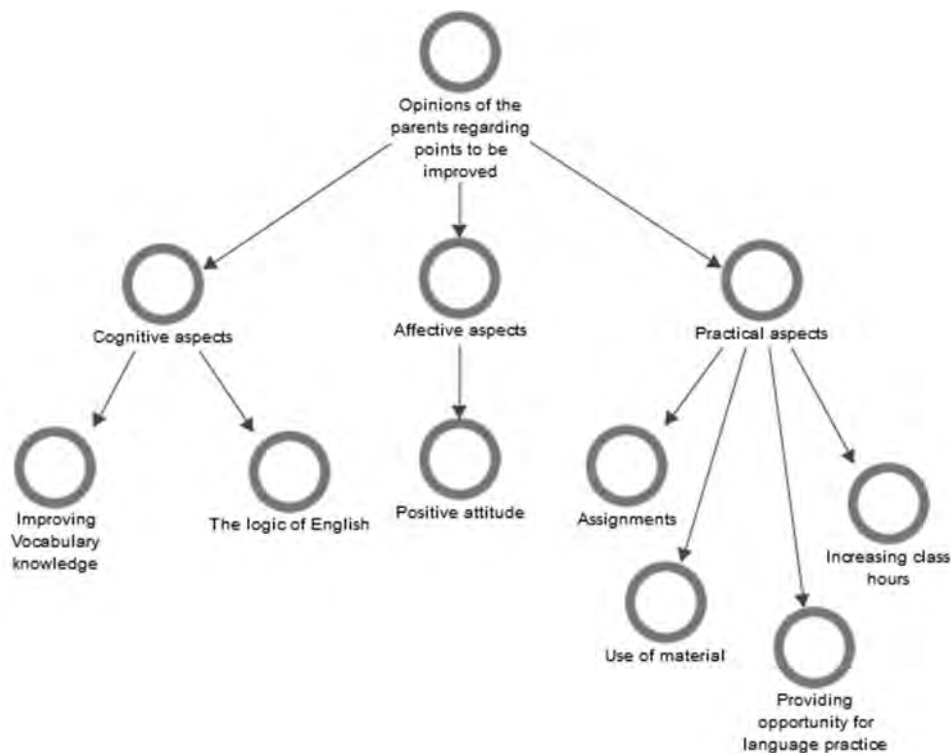


Figure 8: Opinions of the parents regarding the points to be improved in ELC

Two points mentioned within the cognitive aspects were referring to vocabulary knowledge and understanding the language itself. Participants believed that ELC should pay more attention on increasing vocabulary knowledge and what students needed was to understand the nature of English as a language. For the affective aspects, the parents focused on having positive attitude towards learning English, rather than seeing it as an obligation.

There were four main topics under practical aspect. As an improvement, parents expected ELC to create more opportunities for language practice. Two of the parents highlighted the need for using supportive materials while one of the participants suggested that the students' learning could be supported through assignments. Lastly, most of the participants were not content with the weekly class hours and increasing class hours was the suggestion cited most. However, one of the parents shared a different point of view and proposed narrowing down the scope instead of struggling with an extensive content. He explained himself in these words:

The important thing is what is being done within those hours rather than the amount of the class hours. Taking the coursebook as a base, the class hours are insufficient, the curriculum has some deficiencies, there is a lack of practice and as the class hours are insufficient in terms of the scope of the curriculum, the subjects are covered superficially. The system and the curriculum should be reorganized. Instead of including more units without covering them, following less units can be more beneficial (P-ELC, 15).

The categorization of the opinions of the parents regarding the points to be improved in IntELC is presented in Figure 9.

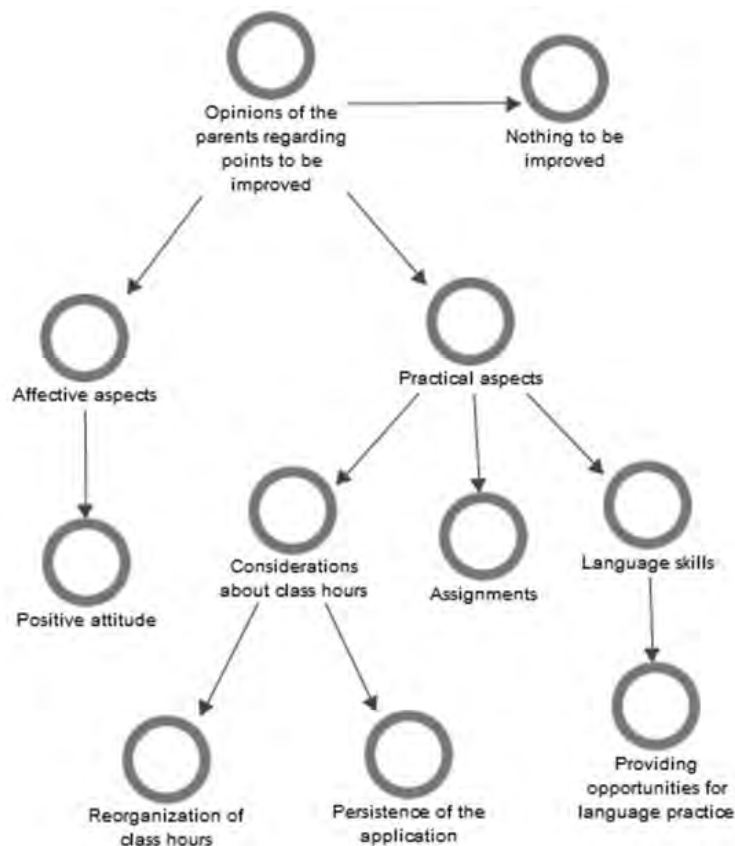


Figure 9: Opinions of the parents regarding the points to be improved in IntELC

Before covering the points mentioned by the participants, it is important to state that there was a group of participants responding that there was no shortcoming of IntELC for them. Two of them showed their appreciation in these words:

I like everything about the curriculum, I don't have any complaints, I am pleased with it. I think the class hours are ideal for intensive curriculum, children get bored time to time but they will see its benefits when they pass the class (P-IntELC, 54).

I don't see any deficiencies, every school should follow intensive curriculum, for this school it is efficient, I believe that they do everything for English (P-IntELC, 63).

Although most of the parents appreciated the application, some of them believed that there was still a room for improvement. The first category was about affective characteristics. Within this aspect the parents mainly focused on helping students to develop a positive attitude towards English and motivation for permanent learning. To achieve this, they suggested to explain the learners the reasons to learn English. Two of the parents explained themselves in these words:

It is theory-based but speaking and listening is insufficient, children shouldn't be bored with theory and tests, they should make children like learning languages, especially English. Children should understand that the main thing is to understand the logic of English without boring them with the rules and they should be encouraged for speaking (P-IntELC, 77).

Some seminars explaining the importance of English can be held, children can understand why they should learn English (P-IntELC, 10).

The second category covered practical aspects. The participants shared their suggestions in terms of class hours, assignments, and language skills. Some of the parents believed that students needed assignments for reinforcement. Moreover, participants expected IntELC to focus more on language skills and provide more opportunities for language skills. Some of them even suggested to reschedule the weekly class hours and setting separate hours for each skill or forming speaking clubs in order to focus more on language skills. Associatively, one of the parents

believed that they needed well-informed parents to provide students extra opportunities for language practice. She stated:

It is necessary to construct a group of informed parents and provide opportunities to the students who want to improve themselves with activities like clubs, parents should be informed to form a unit at the school (P-IntELC, 24).

As well as rescheduling the weekly class hours, parents stated their opinions about the number of class hours and the persistence of application throughout the middle school. There was no consensus about whether the weekly class hours of IntELC sufficient or not. While some of the parents were content with the amount and even wanted more hours, some of the parents were concerned that their children might get bored. As IntELC does not include classes like music or art, parents suggested to integrate those classes in English to compensate the lack of them. While most of the participants expected the application of intensive curriculum to continue throughout the middle school instead of restricting it only to 5th grade to get better results, one of the parents criticized the number of the main courses students had to follow within IntELC.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

There were personal and social factors behind the support of the parents to their children's learning English. The personal factors were related to the future and personal development of the children. They saw speaking English as a prerequisite for their children to find a job and have a successful future mainly because English has become the leading language in the world of business. Moreover, some of the parents supported learning English as it could contribute to self-improvement and cognitive enhancement. Social factors were related to the language of the world, global communication, and science and technology, all of which are embodied by English. Being parallel to the study of Kefeli (2008), the results of the present study should be interpreted as parents' awareness of the role of English in today's world. Becoming a global language to communicate, English is used to construct political and financial relationships (Kachru & Smith, 2009). It is also seen as the language of knowledge, science, and technology (Crystal, 2003). Justifying the opinions of the parents within the present study, Ahmad (1993, p. 210) believes that in Turkish context "English had become the sine qua non for a successful career in virtually any field and parents struggled hard to have their children acquire a working knowledge of the language."

The effect of this perception on affective factors and success of the students should also be discussed. In the field of education, it is well-accepted that there is a parental influence on the attitudes or motivation of the students (Phillips & Filmer-Sankey, 1993; Szpotowicz, Djigunovic, & Enever, 2009). According to Young (1994, p. 48), "supportive, encouraging parents who value FLL communicate this to their children may initiate the motivational process by indicating a route leading to attainment of esteem via FLL". The studies have provided evidence for the role of parents in the language development of the children, and positive attitude and support of the parents will get favorable results for any field (Tavil, 2009). Moreover, pupils' perception of the language they are learning can be affected with the experiences or attitudes of family members towards language learning (Phillips & Filmer-Sankey, 1993). Thus, the reflections of positive parental attitudes could be detected within orientations of the learners (Bartram, 2006). The correlation between parental influence and academic success is well-accepted by the educational psychologists, in addition to its importance especially during developmental stages (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Considering the related literature, the opinions of the participants can be interpreted as a promising support for the language learning of the students.

While P-ELCs expressed their frustration in terms of reaching the expected outcomes, most of P-IntELCs were content with the curriculum. What parents expected from ELC and IntELC was to make their children reach a certain proficiency level mainly for speaking skills. Their expectations were found to be parallel to the reasons behind their support. The grade of their children may be effective in shaping their point of view because with the impact of secondary education placement examination, learning a foreign language has been kept in the background compared to exam strategies especially at 8th grade and what parents and school administrations care more is students' success at the exams (Çakır, 2017). However, the expectations of the participants were not exam-oriented and this can be a promising step for the implementation of ELC and IntELC.

Both P-ELCs and P-IntELCs shared divided opinions about MNE-approved coursebooks. Aspects such as content, activities or visuality of the coursebook were both praised and criticized. One of the biggest problems for P-IntELCs was the inconsistency between the class hours and coursebook content because they had to meet the deficit with extra coursebooks. The opinions of parents on coursebook are crucial because they use those materials in order to support the learning of their children (Şahin, 2020). The parties responsible for coursebook selection are “students, parents, teachers, coursebook writers, administrators, curriculum planners, and academics” (Arikan, 2009, p. 310). Although their opinions have not been paid attention in the related literature in Turkey yet, parents, as one of the school-based stakeholders and material users, also have the right to express their opinions about EFL coursebooks (Şimşek & Dündar, 2017). This lack of attention can be explained through free of charge coursebooks distributed by MNE or parents’ leaving the role of selector to authorities and teachers (Şimşek & Dündar, 2017). According to Dias De Carvalho and Fadigas (2009), parents gave importance to coursebooks as they saw these materials as a reflection of what their children were doing at the school. In other words, coursebooks serve as a bridge between the school and parents. Thus, the opinions of the parents about the coursebooks their children use is more important than it seems as the coursebooks are basically the first reference parents use to evaluate educational activities conducted by the school and the teachers. Thus, their opinions should be taken into consideration while selecting and evaluating the materials.

Parents’ mentioning that they had no idea about the content and the material or not giving any answers to some of the questions in the parental questionnaire can be interpreted as a sign of their lack of awareness or knowledge. Some of them saw no points in examining materials used by their children because of their lack of English knowledge. Supporting this finding, Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008, p. 8) list down the barriers for ELL parental engagement as “(1) school-based barriers; (2) lack of English language proficiency; (3) parental educational level; (4) disjuncture between school culture and home culture; and (5) logistical issues”. However, the existence of these barriers should not discourage the stakeholders. The study of Baeza (2012) indicated that parents did not let the factors such as low education level or cultural background prevent their engagement with their child’s education both at school and at home. As pointed out by one of the parents, raising awareness among the parents and their involvement are crucial for the success of the children and consequently, the curriculum. Being the most important and difficult part of the process, the implementation needs parental involvement to be efficient (Olibie, 2014). Parental involvement should not be seen as a unilateral act. Parents need to be directed by the schools and the teachers during this process, especially when they have no idea how to participate (Poyraz, 2017). Specifically focusing on foreign language learning, Young (1994) suggests that families can contribute to the process of their child’s learning a foreign language by talking about the importance of language learning, providing opportunities for them such as vacations, learning programs or materials to read, and assisting with their homework.

The present study is an attempt to reveal the opinions of the parents on ELT curricula for 5th graders in Turkey and its findings indicated that parents as a group of underrepresented stakeholders could contribute to the curriculum evaluation process when given a chance to share their opinions. It was also revealed that whilst they had quite a few things to state about ELT curricula, they also needed detailed information about them and their applications. Including parents into the curriculum evaluation process as much as teachers is not an easy path to follow but further research on different grades and local contexts can provide significant results and contribute to the issue.

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