



# Foreign language curriculum and European Language Portfolio compatibility on the basis of foreign language education policies

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## Abstract

Knowing a foreign language has become one of the most necessary tools in politics, economy, social life and the use of technology. Around 90% of secondary school students learn English first, whether it is compulsory or not. In 2018, the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) reconsidered the curricula of the faculties of education. With this innovation, the necessity of "language teaching to keep up with the world" was emphasized. The lack of a planning process that meets the European criteria and meets the desired requirements in the planning of foreign language education makes an effective language learning process impossible. The European Language Portfolio (ELP) was developed by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg from 1998 to 2000. The European Language Portfolio (ELP) is an assessment used in foreign language teaching across Europe to support and record language learning. The document contains a guideline by which students can define their language proficiency. The method of this study, which was carried out with the data collection method with the qualitative research design, is phenomenology. The questions to be asked to the participants by the second researcher of the study were prepared by taking expert opinion and the final version was created by making a preliminary application. In this study, it was aimed to examine the compatibility between the "English Curriculum" and the "European Language Portfolio" implemented in schools. It is aimed to make an evaluation within the scope of foreign language policies regarding the use of foreign languages.

**Keywords:** The European Language Portfolio, English Curriculum, Language Policies, Language Teaching.

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## **1. Introduction**

The globalizing world is forcing today's societies to change. This rapid development affects societies and accelerates the transfer of knowledge and culture all over the world. In this context, it has become obligatory for every individual to learn at least one foreign language in order to keep up with the speed of the changing and transforming world (Demirkan, 2008). Foreign language teaching maintains its place as an important concept in our changing world in parallel with the rapidly developing technologies (Ekuş & Babayiğit, 2013). Therefore, knowing a foreign language has become one of the most necessary tools in politics, economy, social life and the use of technology (Mardievr & Mukhamadjanovna, 2020). French, German, Spanish and Russian represent 95% of all languages learned, with English teaching constantly expanding and dominating almost everywhere. Around 90% of secondary school students learn English first, whether it is compulsory or not. In addition, German or French emerges as the second most commonly learned foreign language (İnal & Arslanbaş, 2021). This situation naturally affects the language policies of Turkey's as well as the whole world.

In a general framework, it is possible to define language policies as "the set of principles, decisions and practices regarding the languages spoken within a political unit, their areas and regions, their development and use" (Eraydın, 2003). For about two centuries, foreign language teaching has been practiced in Turkey. With the effect of the education policies determined from time to time, different foreign language teaching paths were followed. However, it is a fact that students who have passed through foreign language teaching, which starts from primary education and continues until the end of higher education, unfortunately, do not know the foreign language at the targeted level (Çelebi, 2006). In our country, starting from the preschool period to the university and even the post-university period, the teaching of foreign languages, especially English, is one of the education policies that are constantly discussed and researched. However, unfortunately, it cannot be said that we have reached the desired level in both mother tongue and foreign language teaching (Bayraktaroğlu, 2012; Soner, 2007; Uysal, 2012; Davis, 2015). At the same time, despite the fact that foreign language education is carried out from the pre-school period (in certain schools) to the post-tertiary period, according to the report of the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (2019), Turkey lagged behind countries such as Indonesia and Saudi Arabia in the English Proficiency Index as 43rd among 44 countries. The 44th country is Kazakhstan. The same report says that in our country, there is not enough language investment for students, teachers are offered fewer opportunities and income, textbooks are not suitable for purpose and very few extracurricular activities are applied. In addition, the world-famous educational institution Education First announced the English proficiency data in the report prepared as a result of its researches in 2018. According to this report, Turkey ranks 31st and "very low" among 32 European countries and ranks 73rd among a total of 88 countries worldwide.

In Turkey, in 2018, the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) reconsidered the curricula of the faculties of education according to the changing demands and needs of the social, educational and political field. With this innovation, the necessity of "language teaching

to keep up with the world" was emphasized and it was mentioned that language learning and training English teachers should be built on concrete foundations. (Cetin, Unsal & Hekimoglu, 2021). This new curriculum is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which provides a common basis for language programs and a comprehensive way of defining language teaching and learning processes (Council of Europe, 2001). In addition to the faculties of education, the CEFR has been followed and implemented in primary and secondary education institutions with the European Language Portfolio top framework. Under the CEFR, in addition to having students as independent students, teachers are expected to expand their scope of personal and professional development. The restructuring of our curriculum is planned within the framework of the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL) and shaped by taking into account the prerequisites of teacher training programs and faculties of education (Çelik & Butcher, 2019).

Bayraktaroğlu (2012) argued that the level of language teaching could be increased by implementing a policy in accordance with Turkey's European Common Framework of Foreign Languages standards. The lack of a planning process that meets the European criteria and meets the desired requirements in the planning of foreign language education makes an effective language learning process impossible. The problem of "Foreign Language Education" in secondary and higher education is not only an "internal matter" but also one of the important elements of European integration. Therefore, it is necessary to take into account the objectives of Europe in this regard. It may be possible to get closer to this goal with the right language training planning. In order to achieve the goals, the European Language Portfolio should be implemented in Turkey and its awareness should be increased.

The European Language Portfolio (ELP) was developed and piloted by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg from 1998 to 2000 to support the development and advancement of multilingualism and multiculturalism at all levels worldwide (Mirici, 2007). Considered in the European context, this Portfolio is a concrete initiative to regulate foreign language teaching and improve the quality of communication between people from different language and cultural backgrounds (Mirici, 2008). ELP is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which provides a common basis for language curricula, curricular guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe (Council of Europe, 1998, 2001). ELP consists of three parts. These sections are: Language Passport, Language History (Biography) and Language File. The Language Passport is defined as an updateable overview of the person's experience and ability in different languages. This section of the ELP records official qualifications, diplomas and self-assessments and provides an overview of an individual's proficiency in different languages at a given time. This section also contains information about partial and specific competency; allows self-assessment and teacher evaluation by educational institutions and the examination board. In the Language File, the student can collect parts of their work and the language certificates they have. The reason for this review is to document and demonstrate skills, experiences and achievements in the language learning process. Here the student has the opportunity to select materials to document and demonstrate achievements or experiences. In the

Language Biography, a record of the student's personal language learning history is kept. The aim is to help the student assess learning objectives and reflect on their own language learning and cross-cultural experiences. The Language Biography not only facilitates the student's participation in the planning, but also aims to encourage the student to indicate what he or she can do in each language, as well as information about the linguistic and cultural experiences gained through formal and informal educational contexts. This component of the ELP is designed to promote multilingualism, that is, the development of proficiency in several languages. In addition, the document contains a guideline by which students can define their language proficiency according to common criteria and serve as a complement to traditional certificates (Council of Europe, 2005).

The European Language Portfolio can be seen as a tool that encourages intercultural and international approaches to curriculum development. In addition, both as a learning model and as a representative of a particular culture, it can be considered as a tool that increases communication skills for intercultural awareness and respect for others, as well as developing personality and communication skills to understand others (Mirici, 2008).

The European Language Portfolio (ELP) is an assessment used in foreign language teaching across Europe to support and record language learning. The Council of Europe's European Language Portfolio (ELP) was developed "to keep a detailed cumulative record of the user's experience learning and using a second and foreign language (L2)" (Little, 2001). In direct connection with the qualification directives of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001), it is designed to achieve a twofold goal: the first is to document the proficiency levels of users following the guidelines set by the Common European Framework of Reference (reporting function), and the other is to provide foreign language teachers with a framework for their processes related to autonomous learning (pedagogical function). ELP provides teachers and students with a set of activities that can be adapted to any foreign language curriculum, designed to help students plan, monitor, and reflect on language learning (Little & Perclova, 2001). These activities involve learners in the processes of self-assessment, developing effective learning strategies, setting learning goals, providing and projecting evidence of ability.

The European Language Portfolio is recognized as an effective self-assessment tool. (Lenz, 2004; Newby; 2012, Javana, 2012; Kurnaz, 2019) suggest that the European Language Portfolio is a tool through which learners can develop learner responsibility and autonomy through self-reflection and awareness. The Council of Europe (2006) also argues that the European Language Portfolio is a tool to promote student autonomy. Similarly, Glover, Mirici & Aksu (2005) argue that ELP encourages language learning by motivating students; in this way, it enables them to strengthen attitudes towards language learning. There are studies suggesting that ELP promotes self-assessment, enabling students to have positive attitudes toward language learning (Little & Perclova, 2001; Kohonen, 2001; Little, 2002b; Ushioda & Riley, 2002; Kohonen, 2004; Mirici, 2006; Ceylan , 2006; Koyuncu, 2006; Little, 2009).

In the literature review, very few studies on foreign language teaching policies and ELP compliance in our country were found. The continuity of foreign language education and training in our country (Çetintaş, 2010), the recognition of CEFR and ELP by English teachers (Güneş & Altınır, 2017), the examination of the harmony between the primary school official English curriculum and the program in practice (Karabacak, 2018), the European Union Foreign Language Education Policies and the foreign language and foreign language teacher training policies in our country (Cangil, 2004) can be cited as examples of these studies. The aim of this study is to investigate the compatibility of the foreign language curriculum applied in our country with ELP and to make an evaluation through the opinions of teachers on the use of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) on the four basic skills in the implementation process in English lessons. With these evaluations, it is thought that it will contribute to foreign language education policies through solution proposals to be offered on foreign/second language teaching problems in our country. Within the framework of this basic purpose, the following questions were answered:

1. Is the curriculum of the English course compatible with the European Language Portfolio? To what extent are the objectives of the reading, writing, speaking and listening dimensions in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in the teaching process?
2. In the teaching process, the realization of the four basic skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) dimensions in front of the realization of the objectives;
  - 2.1 What are the problems arising from the English program?
  - 2.2 What are the problems with learning resources?
  - 2.3 What are the problems arising from the learning environment?
  - 2.4 What are the problems arising from Attitudes towards English lessons?

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. Research model*

The method of this study, which was carried out with the data collection method with the qualitative research design, is phenomenology. The purpose of phenomenological studies, which expresses the research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2021), in which the participants describe their experiences about a phenomenon with their own definitions, is for individuals to describe a phenomenon through their lived experiences (Creswell, 2009). In this study, it was aimed to examine the compatibility between the "English Curriculum" and the "European Language Portfolio" implemented in our country in line with the opinions of English teachers working in schools affiliated to the Ministry of National Education and to examine four basic skills in the application process of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in English lessons in

our schools. It is aimed to make an evaluation within the scope of foreign language policies regarding the use of foreign languages.

### 2.2. Study group of the research

Maximum variation sampling method, one of the purposive sampling methods, was used to determine the research group. In the maximum diversity sample (Patton, 2014), where it is aimed to find and define the main themes that contain many differences, a relatively small sample is created, and the diversity of individuals who may be a party to the problem studied in this sample is reflected to the maximum extent (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). For this purpose, 21 English teachers working in primary, secondary and high schools in the province of Sivas in the 2022-2023 academic year, working at different levels and showing different demographic characteristics, formed the study group of the research (10 female and 11 male). Demographic information of the participants is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic information of the participants

Participants	Gender	Seniority	School Type
P1	Female	3 years	Secondary School
P2	Male	20 years	High School
P3	Female	8 years	High School
P4	Female	9 years	Primary School
P5	Male	22 years	Primary School
P6	Male	30 years	High School
P7	Female	16 years	Secondary School
P8	Male	31 years	High School
P9	Female	11 years	Primary School
P10	Female	18 years	High School
P11	Male	4 years	Secondary School
P12	Male	23 years	Primary School
P13	Male	25 years	Secondary School
P14	Female	14 years	High School
P15	Male	31 years	Secondary School
P16	Male	21 years	Primary School
P17	Male	17 years	Secondary School
P18	Female	14 years	Secondary School
P19	Male	17 years	Primary School
P20	Female	15 years	High School
P21	Female	6 years	High School

### 2.3. Data Collection

The most appropriate data collection method is face-to-face interviews which is used to learn about behaviors, emotions, or how people express the world around them (Merriam, 2015). Data about the research were collected through a semi-structured interview form

developed by the researchers. Semi-structured interview is an oral technique in which the interviewer tries to get information from another person by asking questions. Although the interviewer has prepared a list of predetermined questions, semi-structured interviews emerge in a conversational style that offers participants the chance to explore the issues they consider important (Longhurst, 2003). In the preparation of the interview form, firstly the literature on the subject was scanned and the questions were prepared by taking the opinion of a faculty member who is an expert in qualitative research. Then, in order to ensure content validity, the opinions of two faculty members working on education policies and foreign language teaching were sought, and finally, the form was finalized by making a preliminary interview with an English teacher who was not in the study group. In this context, in the interview form, in order to examine the compatibility between the 3 questions of demographic variables and the "English Teaching Program" and the "European Language Portfolio", and to determine the rate of use of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in English lessons in our schools, the opinions of the teachers were used. There are 5 questions prepared to be asked. The questions to be asked to the participants by the second researcher of the study were prepared by taking expert opinion and the final version was created by making a preliminary application. The codes (P1, P2, P3, ...) were given to the participants in the study. The interviews were conducted on predetermined days and times, in an environment where the participants felt comfortable, and using a voice recorder. Each interview lasted an average of 20-40 minutes. With the semi-structured interview form, the interviews with the teachers revealed different perspectives and dimensions along with the targeted questions on the subject.

#### *2.4. Analysis of Data*

Content analysis method was used in the evaluation of the obtained data. Roller & Lavrakas (2015) explained the definition of content analysis method as "a systematic reduction in which content is created to identify themes and extract meaningful interpretations of data, analyzed with particular attention to context" (as cited in Roller, 2019). Data obtained by various tools; It is analyzed in four stages: coding, finding themes, organizing codes and themes, defining and interpreting the findings (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In the analysis of the data in accordance with this method, the data obtained in the study were grouped according to the questions in the interview form at the first stage, and coding was made with the similar concepts that emerged, categories and themes were created and organized through the coding. Then, tables were created in line with the obtained data and the findings were interpreted. Finally, the findings were supported with direct quotations under the table with the repeated statements of the phenomenon and the impressive opinions obtained for a better understanding of the research.

### *2.5. Validity and Reliability*

In order to ensure validity and reliability in qualitative research, internal validity (credibility), external validity (transferability), internal reliability (consistency) and external reliability (confirmability) must be provided (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this sense, in order to ensure internal validity in the study, face-to-face interviews were conducted at a place and time desired by the participants, providing long-term interaction, and permission was obtained from the participants that the interview would be recorded; afterwards, it was informed that the interview data could be translated into scientific publications and confirmation was received regarding voluntary participation. In the provision of external validity, the determination of the research method and design, the creation of the study group, the method used in analyzing the obtained data were presented in detail in the research and detailed descriptions were made with the direct statements of the participants. In order to ensure internal reliability, the analysis of the data was carried out by two researchers separately by using researcher triangulation (Merriam, 2015), themes, sub-themes and codes were determined independently, and then those with disagreement and consensus were compared and finalized.

### *2.6. Ethical Consent of the Research*

The permission of the ethics committee of the study was obtained by the Sivas Cumhuriyet University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Social Sciences Ethics Committee dated 27.12.2022 and numbered E-60263016-050.06.04-245576 and numbered 40.

## **3. Results**

In order to examine the compatibility between the "English Curriculum" applied in foreign language classes and the "European Language Portfolio" (European Language Portfolio) of the European Union, and to determine the rate of use of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in English lessons by English teachers in our schools. According to the data obtained from the semi-structured interview forms conducted with the teacher, the opinions of the teachers are mainly in the direction of an incompatibility between the "English Curriculum" and the "European Language Portfolio" and the "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)". In this context, teacher opinions; Themes, sub-themes and codes were determined under the headings of a) Problems caused by the English program, b) Problems caused by learning resources, c) Problems caused by the learning environment, d) Problems caused by attitudes towards the English lesson.



### 3.1. Problems Caused by the English Program

According to the data obtained from the opinions of English teachers, the themes, sub-themes, codes and frequency distributions related to the problems arising from the English curriculum are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Teachers' views and frequency of the problems caused by the English program

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes	F
Problem Caused by the English Program (f: 62)	Time Related	The program is too full	19
	Problems (f: 36)	Anxiety about educating curriculum	17
		Level Related	The program does not take into account the level of students
	Problems (f:21)	The program does not cover the 4 basic skills at the same level	13
	Other (f:5)	No questions from English in central exams	5

When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that the biggest problem faced by English teachers within the scope of the difficulties arising from the program is related to time. 19 of a total of 21 teachers stated that the program was very loaded, so they had problems both in educating the curriculum and in acting towards the cognitive and social readiness of the students. In parallel with this, 17 teachers stated that they could not educate the curriculum during the academic year.

*"I do not think that the secondary school English curriculum and the European Language Portfolio are compatible with the teaching situation in practice. Because, despite the efforts to spread the practice, the course hours do not reach a sufficient level to meet the expectations, and we cannot realize the relevant gains due to the intensity of the program. (P18)"*

*"The number of hours of English Lessons given to us is not enough to develop 4 skills. You want to do an in-class practice, but you also have to train the curriculum. When the curriculum doesn't catch up, the first part you neglect is the listening part. (P7)"*

Another problem arising from the program is problems with the level. 13 of the teachers stated that the program does not cover the 4 basic skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) equally as in the European Language Portfolio, and that English lessons are given on a grammar basis. Under this sub-theme, 8 English teachers said that the program did not take into account the level of students and that the objectives were not prepared for students.

*"...The curriculum needs to be simplified and updated considering student temperament and learning styles. (P11)"*

*"In terms of reading comprehension and writing skills, starting from the 9th grade, different methods and techniques (mind/concept maps, note-taking*

*skills, etc.) should be taught to students with a skill-based education approach. But this is not possible with the program we have. (P21)”*

*“It is impossible to act in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. I think that the aims of the four basic language skills were not realized due to the concern of educating the curriculum and the intense and complex nature of the curriculum. (P3)”*

Under the theme of the problems arising from the English program, 5 teachers see the absence of questions from the English course in the central exams as an obstacle to meeting international standards. Especially high school teachers think that the absence of questions from the English course in the central exams held at the secondary education level and the fact that this situation is not included in the program creates difficulties in the context of acting jointly with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

*“... The fact that there are no questions in English in AYT and TYT reduces the interest in our course. The student does not take seriously the course that is not asked in the university exam. (P20)”*

*“I think at least at the TYT level; English questions should be asked to all high school students. In this way, the student can be more motivated, unfortunately, the way to motivate most students is the fear of exams. (P10)”*

### 3.2. Problems with Learning Resources

According to the data obtained from the opinions of English teachers, the themes, sub-themes and codes related to the problems related to learning resources, which is another reason for the incompatibility between the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the language program implemented in our country, are presented in Table 3 together with their frequency distributions.

Table 3. Teachers' views frequency of problems related to learning resources

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes	f
Problems Related to Learning Resources (f:77)	Technology related problems (f:31)	Internet connection problems	12
		Computer, smart board etc. device shortcomings	13
	Problems with textbooks (f:41)	Lack of technological facilities in the student's home	Lack of technological facilities in the student's home
Books above student level			15
Other (f:5)		Books do not cover the 4 basic skills at the same level	9
	The textbook content is out of date	17	
		Lack of additional resources	5

When Table 3 is examined, it is revealed that one of the biggest problems of English teachers regarding the problems related to learning resources is related to technology. Of the 21 teachers, 12 talked about Internet-related problems, 13 talked about the lack of

technological devices, and 6 teachers talked about the lack of necessary technological facilities in the students' homes. Within the scope of 21st century skills, the importance of technology, especially its importance in language teaching, has been insisted upon.

*“...The use of LMS (Learning Management System), where students can write and send articles on various subjects, and where teachers can send and evaluate assignments, should be allowed. In this sense, there is a big deficiency in our program. I have difficulty in providing enough material and necessary environment especially for speaking purposes. We are having difficulty finding listening texts supported by images and videos. (P9)”*

*“...we don't have an internet connection and our smart boards are broken, I can't get them to work on listening texts. Interactive activities are very important in language learning, especially with young students, but our schools do not have the necessary technological tools. Most of my students don't have a computer or internet, so they don't have the chance to make up for the deficiencies at home. (P12)”*

When the problems related to textbooks were examined under the same theme, 17 teachers said that the book contents were not up-to-date and were behind the age. 15 English teachers stated that English books were not suitable for the student level at both primary, secondary and high school levels and that the books were well above the student level. Textbooks, which are the most basic and accessible course materials, should offer an effective and healthy teaching method. In this context, a comprehensive and innovative textbook is one of the most important elements in language learning. The teachers who participated in the study mentioned the inadequacies of the books in this sense. They added that the same textbooks do not contain the 4 basic skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) at an equal level, and that the distribution of activities for these skills in the books is not equal.

5 English teachers cited the lack of additional resources needed due to the fact that the contents of the books are not up-to-date and their level is heavy for the students, as the reason for not being able to reach the standards of the European Language Portfolio and the Common European Framework of Reference for Language.

*“...textbooks depending on the curriculum; focus on grammar issues rather than improving their listening, reading and writing skills so, students get lost in vocabulary and grammatical patterns. The texts in the books are not up-to-date and not oriented to the needs of the students and are not suitable for their level. The books still use traditional teaching methods instead of contemporary teaching methods. Textbooks should be enriched with short, interesting and daily life texts. (P15)”*

### 3.3. Problems Caused by the Learning Environment

According to the data obtained from the opinions of English teachers, one of the reasons for the incompatibility between the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the language program implemented in our country is the problems arising from the learning environment. The themes, sub-themes and codes obtained in line with the data obtained from the English teachers who participated in the interview are presented in Table 4 together with their frequency distributions.

Table 4. Teachers' views and frequency of problems caused by the learning environment

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes	f
Problems Caused by Learning Environment (f:87)	Problems with Technological Hardware in Classrooms (f:39)	No internet in the classroom	13
		No computer in the classroom	10
		No/broken smart board	16
	Problems with the physical structure of the classroom (f:27)	Crowded classrooms	11
		Classes unsuitable for language teaching	16
		No language lab	12
	Problems with the language lab (f:21)	Non-purpose use of the laboratory	4
		The laboratory does not have the necessary materials	5

When Table 4 is examined, it is seen that the lack of technological equipment in the classrooms takes the first place among the problems of English teachers arising from the learning environment. 13 of the 21 teachers stated that there is no internet in the classrooms, 10 teachers do not have computers in their classrooms, and that they have problems in carrying out language teaching activities in an area that requires interaction such as foreign language teaching. Emphasizing the importance of hearing the language, especially in gaining listening and speaking skills, English teachers said that they had difficulty in finding a smart board, computer or even a CD player where they could do these activities. 16 teachers who participated in the study stated that they did not have smart boards brought to schools by the FATİH project or that smart boards were/are often broken.

*“ ... Perhaps the most important component in language education is the material. In particular, materials that will stimulate the student visually and audibly are very important in teaching English. For this, among other lessons, we need technology, especially in our lessons. Despite the rapidly developing technology, there are still no necessary facilities in many of our schools. In order to gain the skills mentioned in the European Language Portfolio and the CEFR, our classrooms must first be equipped with the necessary materials. I think this is one of our main problems in language teaching... (P1)”*

*“Documents published on education policies all over the world focus on 21st century skills and technology requirements. This includes the European*

*Language Portfolio. Language education progresses with technology. My students need the equipment to hear how a native speaker speaks, how he/she pronounces words, how and where he/she stresses. Because where else would they hear the language they learned, someone speaking as a mother tongue... but this is not possible in my classes. (K14)”*

Problems related to technological equipment in classrooms are followed by problems related to the physical structure of the classrooms. The teachers who participated in the study showed the classrooms and crowded classrooms that are not suitable for language teaching as an obstacle to acting in accordance with the European Language Portfolio and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and catching international standards in language teaching. Out of 21 teachers, 16 teachers expressed their opinions about classrooms that are physically unsuitable for language teaching, and 11 teachers about crowded classrooms. In an area such as language teaching that requires one-on-one approach and interpersonal interaction, crowded classrooms and classrooms that are not suitable for language teaching make it difficult for English teachers to achieve a European Union standard.

*“The time I have to spend teaching English is spent taking attendance, silencing the class, or maintaining discipline. It is impossible to reach international standards with 35-40 3rd grade students in a closed area. We do not have a laboratory where I can take students to English classes. If such an opportunity exists, children's readiness for language, learning speed and similar things will be positively affected. (P16)”*

*“In the European Language Portfolio, there are criteria ranging from asking and answering questions using short and simple sentences, to making clear and fluent descriptions and presenting opposing views regarding speaking skill. However, there are criteria for listening skills that range from understanding very basic phrases when spoken slowly and clearly to not having difficulty understanding any type of speech. How is it possible to realize this in a class of 39 students... the lesson ends before even half of the class gets a say. It is impossible to do especially speaking and listening exercises in a crowded classroom. (P18)”*

The last sub-theme of the theme of problems related to the learning environment is the problems related to the language laboratory in schools. Of the 21 English teachers who participated in the study, 12 said that there was no language laboratory in their school, and 5 said that even if there were language laboratories, they did not have the necessary visual and auditory materials. 4 English teachers stated that there is a laboratory in their school, but it is not used in accordance with the purpose, and they cannot teach English there.

*“We have language classes in our school. I attend English classes in both 11th and 12th grade language classes. I have 20 hours of lessons per week for these two language classes. We do not have a language laboratory in our school. I think it is very important for my students to have a special area where I can do these 20 hours of lectures, listening and speaking activities, both for their development and for their academic success. (K5)”*

*“... yes, there is a language laboratory in our school, which was established before I came to this school, but there is no useful material in it. Existing equipment is very old and idle. That's why we don't use it. It is used as a warehouse. (K3)”*

### 3.4. Problems Caused by Attitudes Towards English Lesson

According to the data obtained from the opinions of English teachers, the themes, sub-themes and codes obtained regarding the problems arising from the attitudes of students towards the English lesson, which is another reason for the incompatibility between the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and the language program applied in our country, are presented in Table 5 together with their frequency distributions.

Table 5. Teachers' opinions and frequency of the problems they think are caused by students' attitudes towards the English lesson

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes	f
Problems Caused by Students' Attitudes Towards the English Lesson (f: 22)	Attitude towards the lesson (f:22)	Indifference/Unwillingness	8
		Fear of making mistakes	7
		Shyness	4
		Learned helplessness	3
Attitudes Towards Language Learning (f: 19)	Attitudes Towards Language Learning (f:19)	See learning as an unnecessary activity	9
		Prejudices	6
		Inexperience	4

When Table 5 is examined, one of the difficulties that English teachers face in terms of acquiring the basic skills in the European Language Portfolio is the attitudes and behaviors of the students towards the English lesson. Under the sub-theme of the psychological attitudes of the students towards the lesson, 8 teachers who participated in the study mentioned the apathy / reluctance of their students towards the English lesson. The reluctance of students to learn the target language turns into behavior over time. Given the significant impact of affective factors on learning in foreign language learning, this attitude hinders learning. The 3 teachers who participated in the study related this situation to learned helplessness and added that the students came to the point of “I can't do it anyway, so why should I bother”. 4 teachers said that their students did not

participate in activities, especially in speaking lessons, and that they were ashamed to speak in front of the class.

*“...students have a general indifference towards the lessons. I think this situation is more intense in English classes. They don't care about the lesson because it is a completely different field from their mother tongue. Especially after the pandemic period, I feel that the interest and enthusiasm for my course has decreased even more. There is a general state of ignorance in children. For this reason, it is very difficult to achieve the goals in the relevant documents because it is almost impossible to make the student do something he or she does not want. Their peers in European countries discover the importance of knowing a language at a much earlier age. With the European Union projects we did, I had the opportunity to see some European countries and examine the schools there. Young people can speak a second or even a third language, even at a basic level. (P12)”*

Regarding the students' attitudes towards language learning, 9 out of 21 teachers stated that they found it unnecessary for their students to learn English, therefore they were reluctant to participate in the lesson. Teachers also stated that their students have a fear of making mistakes, so they do not attend the lesson. 6 teachers said that their students are prejudiced against language learning, and 4 English teachers claimed their students' inexperience in language teaching in order to meet the standards mentioned in international documents. They stated that the fact that English is a universal language spoken almost everywhere in the world and that it is an important tool for students to achieve their goals both personally and professionally is sometimes overlooked by students.

*“... students sometimes may not be aware of the seriousness of the situation. They do not think that knowing English can open new doors for them in terms of employment. Such important things are unfortunately ignored during adolescence... (P2)”*

*“Some of my students have a serious fear of making a mistake, of mispronouncing. No matter how much I encourage them, they withdraw into their shells for fear of making mistakes. Especially adolescent students think that if they make mistakes in English class, their friends will laugh at them. The prejudice 'I will be embarrassed if I can't answer correctly' is etched in their minds. This is probably related to the period they were in... (P6)”*

#### **4. Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions**

In this study, it was aimed to examine the compatibility of English teachers between the "English Curriculum" applied in foreign language courses and the "European Language

Portfolio" of the European Union and to examine the use rate of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in English courses in our schools. According to the results obtained from the research, it was seen that there was a serious mismatch between the English Teaching Program implemented in our schools and the European Language Portfolio and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Primary, secondary and high school teachers who participated in the study first pointed out the problems arising from the English program to the difficulties encountered in achieving the standards mentioned in international documents regarding English teaching. Teachers should ensure that the fundamental mismatch between the English curriculum and the European Language Portfolio and the CEFR is; They showed the reasons such as the fact that the program is very busy and the anxiety of raising the curriculum arising from this situation, the program is not suitable for student cognitive and social readiness, it does not cover 4 basic skills equally and there are no questions from the English course in the central exams, especially at the secondary education level. These findings are in line with the views of English teachers in the study of Çelebi and Narinalp (2020). In the related study, teachers stated that the intensity of the program is one of the most basic problems encountered in English teaching. Likewise, Yılmaz (2005), Kızıldağ (2009), Doğan (2009) and Erdem (2016) stated that the foreign language program was insufficient for the teaching of English in our schools to be effective, successful and in accordance with international standards, that it restricted the teacher and that the curriculum of English lessons was very intensive and definitely not flexible. In the vision section of the 2016 secondary education program, it was stated that students should be raised as individuals who can read, write, speak and understand what they listen to. However, it has been reported by Topkaya and Küçük (2010) and Soğuksu (2013) that the 4 basic skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening are not taught in an integrated way in the English program and this approach cannot be applied in classroom activities. Kozikoğlu (2014), on the other hand, showed in his study that the English Curriculum is not suitable for the developmental goals of the student, the goals remain at the level of knowledge and comprehension, and it is aimed at transferring grammar rules, especially ignoring communicative skills such as speaking and listening.

The teachers who participated in the study emphasized that another reason for the incompatibility between the European Language Portfolio and the CEFR and the English program was the problems with learning resources. Teachers have pointed out problems with technology and problems with textbooks under this theme. In relation to technology, reasons such as internet connection problems, deficiencies of devices such as computers, smart boards, etc. and lack of such technological facilities in the student's home have been suggested. In our age where 21st century skills are now a necessity, technological deficiencies in schools hinder areas that progress with technology such as language teaching. For students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, the computer, smart board or internet connection in schools is unfortunately the only way to access these



opportunities. If these opportunities cannot be provided in school, the student is deprived of these skills. This further widens the gap between them and their peers living in Europe. Regarding the textbooks, the negativities such as English textbooks being above the student level, the books not covering the 4 basic skills at an equal level and the content being up-to-date are indicated. The findings obtained in the light of these sub-themes present similar findings to the study in which Soner (2007) stated in his study that the lack of necessary tools in our schools, technological impossibilities and the lack of opportunities for the student to practice foreign languages outside of school are among the important problems in English teaching. In addition, Özoğlu (2019) stated in his study that the physical and technological facilities in the classrooms directly affect the efficiency in the courses. The findings of the study regarding textbooks; The fact that the textbooks are not up-to-date and motivating and the content is multi-loaded presented similar data with the studies of Dönmez (2010), Demirtaş and Erdem (2015) and Yıldırım and Tanrıseven (2015). Textbooks are the most basic, most accessible tools for all subjects, including English lessons. The findings obtained in the study; Topkaya and Küçük, 2010; Seçkin, 2011; Küçüktepe et al., 2014 and Yüceer et al., 2016 showed similarities with the findings obtained in their studies. The negativities such as not sending the applications related to the listening texts in the books to the teachers, the book instructions are not clear and understandable enough, the books are not sufficient in terms of visual and content, and the content of the book is not suitable for the interest and level of the students make it difficult for the students to acquire the achievements in the international documents.

Problems related to the learning environment are another element emphasized by the teachers in the study. Some of the English teachers who participated in the study stated that although they are in their schools, there is no internet, smart board and computer in their classrooms. Having these facilities in only some classes does not allow all students to use them. Especially in teaching English lessons that require direct interaction and communication, technological devices are at least as necessary materials as textbooks. For learners of English, perhaps the only way to hear a native speaker is the internet. Having such technological opportunities in the classrooms individualizes learning, facilitates learning follow-up and makes teaching interesting and permanent. The findings obtained from the study agree with the point that the student is much more active in computer-assisted learning, takes responsibility for his own learning and makes education enjoyable, as Lee (2000) and Uşun (2013) show in their studies. Also, Çelik and Bindak (2005); Pala (2006); Güneyli, Birikim and Perkan (2009); Demirbilek and Yücel (2011) also mentioned the positive effects of computer and internet use in foreign language education in their research. The opinions of the teachers participating in the study on this subject are in line with the information in the literature. The problems arising from the physical structure of the classes are also among the factors that make it difficult to comply with the European Language Portfolio and CEFR. Crowded classrooms

and classrooms that are not suitable for language teaching make it difficult to teach English in our schools. It does not seem possible to teach language in classes of 35-40 students. Direct communication is one of the most indispensable elements in teaching language in general and English in particular. It is not possible for an English teacher to speak to half the class in a crowded classroom in a 40-minute lesson. Haznedar (2010) obtained similar findings in his study and pointed out the obstacles to productivity in language teaching as crowded classrooms and physical inadequacies in schools and classrooms. Sevinç (2006) also stated in his study that the existing classrooms are too crowded and therefore it is difficult to take into account the individual differences between students in the classrooms. The last of the difficulties encountered under the theme of problems related to the learning environment is the lack of language laboratories in schools, the lack of necessary equipment or the use of these laboratories in accordance with their purpose. Language laboratories in schools are the units where all the relevant tools and materials that students will use in language teaching are available. Reading and listening texts necessary to develop 4 basic language skills, technological tools and equipment that can be processed are necessary for an effective language education. Teachers who participated in the study said that there were no language laboratories in their schools, and this situation caused problems in reaching the listening and speaking competencies mentioned in the CEFR. Similarly, Can and Can (2014) found in their studies that the absence of language laboratories in schools is one of the most important and serious problems encountered in foreign language teaching. Özmat and Senemoğlu (2020) achieved similar results in their studies and emphasized the necessity of language laboratories in English teaching.

The teachers who participated in the study stated that the last of the reasons for the incompatibility between the European Language Portfolio and the CEFR and the English program was related to the students' attitudes towards the English lesson / learning English. English teachers have stated that their students have moved away from language learning due to apathy/unwillingness, fear of making mistakes, embarrassment/shyness, and learned helplessness, and they have failed to learn the target language. In foreign language teaching, it is very important for the student to develop a positive attitude towards the target language. Only in this way the students can develop open and positive behaviors towards learning and put himself in a productive learning environment. At the same time, the student's attitude towards the lesson not only affects his own learning, but also shapes the classroom climate. According to Şahin (2009), the individual's willingness to learn in foreign language teaching, providing external motivation, and taking measures to facilitate learning will significantly contribute to student success. Soyupek (2007), in his study, focused on the importance of attitude and motivation in language teaching and obtained similar results. Similarly, the student's anxiety towards language learning and the fear of making mistakes are also important barriers to learning. These feelings are also directly related to the attitude

that the student develops towards the lesson. Horwitz and Young (1991), stated that the fear of being negatively evaluated by others, not being able to make a proper social impression or being unsuccessful hinders learning in their research. Another problem encountered in reaching international standards in English teaching is that the student sees the lesson as unnecessary or the prejudices he/she develops against language learning. According to the findings obtained from the study, some students do not have any positive ideas about why they should learn a foreign language. They do not have information about the advantages of being bilingual in both their academic and professional lives. In this context, the results obtained from the study Toker Gökçe (2013), Öztürk et al. (2015) and Yaman's (2018) studies show similar results. These prejudices need to be broken in order to provide an effective language learning environment and achieve the achievements specified in the CEFR.

As a result, in order to increase the compatibility between the "English Curriculum" applied in foreign language courses and the "European Language Portfolio" (ELP) of the European Union, and to increase the rate of use of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in English lessons in our schools, to European standards. Education policies are very important. In this sense, although foreign language teaching is considered as a policy in the education policy documents (2023 Education Vision, 11th Development Plan, 20th National Education Council decisions...), as the results of the study show, there are many problems in front of achieving the desired results, especially in the implementation process. It is a reality encountered. At this point, ensuring compatibility between the English Language Teaching Program and the European Language Portfolio and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is seen as a solution. For this reason, our most important suggestion within the scope of the study is to the decision makers to develop an effective language education policy, starting from the pre-school period, including university and adult learning, by ensuring compliance with the documents specified in foreign language teaching, to disseminate this policy and to make it a step of lifelong education.

The realization of such a policy is possible by minimizing the problems emphasized by teachers in this research. In this sense, in order to achieve international standards in foreign language teaching, it is important to improve and develop the problems arising from the English curriculum, course materials (textbooks, technological equipment, internet and additional resources), eliminate the physical deficiencies and disruptions in our schools and classrooms, and improve our students' attitudes towards foreign language learning.

1. According to the research results, the English curriculum is very intense and complex. It is seen that the resources, objectives and learning/teaching processes included in the program are above the student level and teachers are constantly

concerned about educating the curriculum. In this context, foreign language education programs need to be simplified and updated.

2. The findings obtained from the study showed that the overcrowding of the classrooms constitutes an obstacle to teaching English. Accordingly, measures should be taken to reduce the number of classrooms in Turkish Schools.
3. Necessary examinations should be made to eliminate the deficiencies of the textbooks. In order to improve, develop and update the textbooks, commissions consisting of primary, secondary and high school English teachers should be established. It is very important to make the textbooks supported by technology and enrich them with visual and auditory elements. Activity-based books can be prepared that the student can have fun while learning. In addition, preparing and distributing additional resources, which will enrich the learning environments and help them complete their deficiencies, will help to eliminate an important problem in language teaching.
4. According to the results of the research, Turkish Schools and classrooms do not have the basic physical and technological competencies required for language teaching. In this direction, it is necessary to eliminate the lack of necessary materials, to improve the necessary physical and technological infrastructure, and to transform the existing classrooms into a form suitable for language teaching.
5. Establishing a commission to support and improve language teaching among the stakeholders of the Ministry of National Education (administrators, teachers, students, parents), NGOs and university representatives (academics) for the development of foreign language teaching, and this commission's teaching methods and techniques, measurement types. It can be recommended to carry out coordinated studies for alternative models and their efficient use.
6. In order to find solutions to the main problems encountered in the field of foreign language teaching, national research should be conducted, solutions should be developed in the light of the findings, and appropriate foreign language teaching methods should be developed considering the social, cognitive and cultural characteristics of the students.

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