COMPARING 1997 AND 2005 ENGLISH CURRICULA APPLIED IN 4th AND 5th GRADES IN TURKEY

Gürbüz Ocak, Serkan Boyraz, Hasan Kizilkaya
Afyon Kocatepe University, Turkey
E-mail: gurbuzocak@gmail.com, serkan.boyraz@gmail.com,
hasankizilkaya35@hotmail.com

Abstract

This study aims to collect teacher opinions about two curriculums applied in 4th and 5th grades in 1997 and 2005 both of which aimed to employ constructivist approach but with big differences. The study employed qualitative research method parallel to its aim, and ten teachers of English that were selected by purposive sampling method in order to be sure that they taught in both curriculums participated to it. The data from those participants was collected via a structured interview form that included six questions created by the researchers. Descriptive data analysis was used to examine the gained data, and then findings were coded into themes. It is notable that the most participants followed curriculums for this or that reason. Although they state both positive and negative sides of the two curriculums, all teachers find 2005 curriculum change positive and generally find it more effective and successful. Eight of the participants think that foreign language (English) teaching is either unsuccessful or inadequate due to lack of skills of speaking, writing and listening. They offer to solve this problem by adapting an assessment system that evaluates those skills, taking benefit of internet for more practice, sending pre-service foreign language teachers abroad.
Key words: *primary education, English curriculum, ELT in Turkey, teacher opinions.*

Introduction

Not only Turkey but also a big part of the world try to teach at least one foreign language to every citizen in order to keep them up to date in today's rapidly changing and developing world. The approaches they follow surely change in each country, and the debates go on about when to start teaching it. While all children except those with cognitive disabilities seem to be fully competent linguistically, adults' success change from person to person widely, and an understandable and acceptable explanation for that can be "Critical Period Hypothesis" which can be described as the limited time in which it is possible to acquire a language to native like levels; no matter it is mother tongue or a foreign one (Birdsong, 1999). In practice, the argument "if younger second language learners are more advantageous than older ones" is continuously put forward and debates go on about the best starting age for learning a second/foreign language in schools (Singleton D. , 2003). There are not many empirical studies supporting the belief of "the earlier, the better" but a study by Snow (1983) can be an example showing the effect of starting age on the rate of acquisition and the final success rate (Sadeghi & Khonbi, 2013). On the other hand, Mackay and Fullana (2007) stated that they didn't find a significant effect of starting age and exposure to accent. What is more, Singleton states that even pupils that have been exposed to a second language and then come together with some other pupils that start to learn the language only at a secondary level in the same classroom can have advantages for only a short period of time. In short, the debate about this approach seems to be everlasting.

In Turkey -where teaching of a foreign language (mainly English, less frequently French or German) started at secondary school (from 6th to 8th grades)- the education system underwent a big change in 1997 with a reform in the compulsory education. With the reform, compulsory education which had been 5 years became 8 years. There were tremendous changes in the curricula also, and one of them was in the curricula of 4th and 5th grades in which a foreign language was integrated as a course. The aim of this change was explained as the need to foreign languages that were inevitable tools in a world that communication technologies changed whirlingly and students were expected to have intermediate level of a foreign language at the end of eight years (Turkish Ministry of National Education (MEB), 1997). When you continue examining the explanations in mentioned journal, it is seen that teachers were warned about difficulty of starting learning a foreign language instantly and advised to use "games" and dialogues to make students more active in teaching. The 1997 curriculum stated that the language education had to be student centered and advised not to use traditional lecturing method in teaching. There were also reformative evaluation methods advised in the new curriculum, such as tests on listening, describing a picture verbally, acting in dialogues etc. So, the curriculum was really reformist in the way it was created and it was applied until 2005 when there was another change in the curricula in Turkish primary education.

In 2005, curricula in Turkey were renewed in the light of constructivist approach. This approach states that there is no transfer of information and every learner has to build up it himself (Glasersfeld, 1982). Piaget who is considered to be one of the foundational figures by many constructivists stated that only observing but no structuring activity by the learner is not enough to know (Phillips, 1995). If we are to come back our topic, we can say that the aim of the curricula change in 2005 in Turkey was to make courses more student centered and students more active. Besides, teachers were supposed to be guides directing students through learning process (Çelik-Şen & Şahin-Taşkın, 2010).

Methodology of the Research

This study employed case study research method as a type of qualitative research, because the aim is to find out teachers' opinions about two English curricula applied in 1997 and 2005. Researches designed to find out how people feel or what they think about a particular subject or institution are qualitative researches and in the exploratory research design the main focus is on the discovery of ideas and insights (Kothari, 2009). As a method of qualitative research, in the case study the focus is on illustrating decisions, programs, processes etc. and their reasons, how they are followed and what the results are (Yin, 2003). The results of the qualitative research often require verbal expressions while quantitative ones can be presented in numerical form. The researcher tries to reduce large amount of distributed data to numerical summaries, means etc. in quantitative research, but s/he is to search for hidden meanings, non-obvious features, multiple interpretations, implied connotations, unheard voices etc. in qualitative research (Have, 2004).

Sample

The sample of the study consists of 10 English teachers who lectured to 4th and 5th grades both with 1997 and 2005 English curricula. As the aim is to find out opinions about two curricula, the teachers in the sample were chosen purposefully from those who lectured with both of the curricula. In this type of sampling, namely purposive sampling, participants are selected deliberately by the researcher thanks to their some required futures in the study (Kothari, 2009). This resulted that the samples needed to be teachers for at least 9 years so as to have taught with the curriculum applied in 1997. As it can be seen in the table, 7 of the participants are male and

the rest three are female. Six of them have been working for 9 to 10 years and three for 11 to 14 years and one for 15 to 19 years. The names of the participants have been kept hidden as a need of research ethics and they are coded as A1, A2 and on.

Table 1. Features of Attendants.

Attendants	Work	Gender	Experience (years)
A1	4th and 5th grade lecturer	Male	9-10
A2	4th and 5th grade lecturer	Male	9-10
A3	4th and 5th grade lecturer	Male	9-10
A4	4th and 5th grade lecturer	Male	11-14
A5	4th and 5th grade lecturer	Female	9-10
A6	4th and 5th grade lecturer	Female	11-14
A7	4th and 5th grade lecturer	Male	15-19
A8	4th and 5th grade lecturer	Male	11-14
A9	4th and 5th grade lecturer	Female	9-10
A10	4th and 5th grade lecturer	Male	9-10

Data Collection and Analysis

To summarize, the followings are the steps taken in the study:
- The two primary school English curricula (1997 and 2005) were chosen to be studied on.
- Teachers were chosen with the specific feature of applying these two curricula and asked if they would like to take part in the research.
- It was decided to collect the data using structured interview.
- Interview questions and their alternatives were prepared.
- Appointments were taken for face to face interviews, and other teachers were e-mailed the questions.
- Data were collected and brought together in tables.
- Content analysis was applied to the data and themes and codes were formed.
- Gained data were examined and evaluated.

Most qualitative researches are based on interviews and one of the reasons of using this kind of research is that it enables the researcher to find out real things from people's subjective experiences and attitudes that would otherwise remain inaccessible (Perakyla, 2005). So, in this study structured interview method was used to collect the data. A form was prepared asking some demographic and vocational information such as gender, experience etc. and 6 questions about the two curricula in question. The questions were examined by an expert in the field in order to provide content validity, and a pre-interview was carried out with a teacher to be sure of understandability of items. Required changes were made as a result of expert opinion and pre-interview results. The interviews were carried out in June, 2013, two of which face to face and the rest via e-mail. Then, coding phase started which can be considered as analysis part in quantitative researches. Codes will be titles of not words themselves but their meanings. To form codes, content analysis method which is a technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages was used (Holsri, 1968; Cited by Berg, 2001). While doing that, data are collected and made into texts such as transcripts; codes are analytically developed or inductively identified in the data; then codes are transferred into categorical labels or themes; similar phrases, patterns, relationships etc. are identified and materials are sorted by those categories; sorted materials are examined to pick

up meaningful patterns and processes; finally identified patterns are considered in the light of previous research and theories and small set of generalizations are made (Berg, 2001). In this phase, answers from participants were brought together in tables for each question in order to find out similarities and differences. Then, key words in each participant's answers and their main ideas were picked up. Similarities in the answers for the same question constructed a code and differences were also included as different codes. For example, the first question ask if the participants follow the curriculum and why or why not. So the answers were first coded into "yes" and "no". Then, the reasons became another code. In order to provide the reliability of the research, another researcher was asked to examine data; then Miles and Huberman formula (P (Percent of Agreement) = [Number of Agreements / (Total Number of Agreements + Number of Disagreements)] X 100) was applied. As a result of this calculation, P is found as 88%, and when P is above 70%, it is a valid value for the reliability of a research (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Table 2. Matching Values between the Researcher (R) and Co-researcher (CR).

Themes	Positive			Negative			Unclear		
	R	CR	%	R	CR	%	R	CR	%
Loyalty for the Curricula	7	7	100	3	3	100	-	-	-
Opinions on 1997 Curriculum	9	8	90	6	4	75	-	-	-
Opinions on 2005 Curriculum	10	10	100	5	5	100	-	-	-
Pros and cons of 2005 curriculum	10	10	100	5	5	100	-	-	-
Comparison of the Two Curricula	23	21	92	6	5	85	1	1	100
The Success of Language Teaching	4	3	80	8	7	89	-	-	-
Ways of Improving Language Teaching	9	9	100	-	-	-	1	1	100
Total Match	95			92			100		

Results of Research

As mentioned before, the attendants were asked six questions about their opinions for curricula in general (one question), for English curricula developed in 1997 and 2005 and applied in 4th and 5th grades (four questions), and if they find the foreign language education in Turkey successful and what can be done to improve English teaching (one question). Codes retrieved from their answers to these questions and the comments were given below.

Question-1: *Do the curriculum affect your in-class activities? Do you follow classroom activities and evaluation proposals in the curriculum? To what extent do you take into account those stated to be done by the curriculum?*

Table 3. Coding results for question number 1 (Theme: Loyalty for the Curriculum).

Attendants	Follow	Attendants	Not Follow
A1-A6	Because of managers	A5	As not meeting the needs
A1-A3-A4-A6-A9-A10	With changes appropriate to the needs of the classroom	A8	Teachers' own way
A3-A7	Because of unity in education		

As it is seen from the table, two of the teachers follow the curriculum because of a demand coming from their managers. Attendant 6 states this as: "*...Furthermore, school management and supervisors were more interested in if everything was normal on the paper and the curriculum was being followed at least in the classroom register. So, after a while, I thought it was enough to follow the curriculum and then started and continuing doing so.*" On the other hand, six of the teachers state that they follow the curriculum not completely but with required changes in order to make it more effective for their students. Attendant 10 explains it as: "*Surely, the curriculum affects what I do in the class, because it is the compass of the teacher and determines which way to take… I cannot say that I follow it one hundred per cent because some parts of it may not be appropriate for my classroom. In this case, I try to make minor changes without out of the frame.*" Two teachers with different reasons each state that they do not follow the curriculum. A5 thinks that it is better to cover fewer units than required in the curriculum but with good results in the covered ones. A8, however, points out that every teacher has his or her own way and do not follow the curriculum but just the course book.

Question 2: *What are the positive and negative sides of the English curriculum developed in 1997? What are the successful and unsuccessful sides of it? Do you think that it encouraged students and provided positive attributes for learning English?*

Table 4. Coding results for question number-2 (Theme: Opinions on 1997 Curriculum).

Attendants	Positive Sides	Attendants	Negative Sides	Encouragement to language learning	
A1-A6-A7	Communication skills	A2-A7-A8	Rapid and tremendous change – not enough preparation	Yes	No
A3-A4-A8-A9-A10	Early start to foreign language learning	A8	No contribution to language learning	A4-A5-A6	A1-A7-A10
A5	Entertaining	A10	Student features not taken into account		

Half of the participants think that taking the age of starting to learn a foreign language to 4th grade was the positive side of the 1997 curriculum. Besides, as two participants state, the curriculum gave importance to communicative skills which can be accepted as a reform. One participant adds that it was also enjoyable. The expected result of early start to learning a foreign language was stated by A10 as: "*I find really positive that 1997 curriculum brought foreign language learning to 4th and 5th grades, because such an early start is an advantage in learning English or any other foreign languages...*" However, three participants claim that the curriculum change in the way it occurred was so unexpected and unforeseen that they were not ready to apply it and it took some time to adapt. Attendant 7 explains it: "*…Because of the tremendous changes in the education system, the teacher got confused. It took some time to adapt myself to the curriculum. I can say that it the following years there were more successful applications…*" One attendant, A8, claims that the curriculum didn't bring any contribution to language learning, and one other, A10, says students futures were not taken into consideration in the curriculum.

Question 3: *Do you find it as a positive change to apply constructivist approach in 2005 curriculum? Were you informed adequately about this approach? Do you think that it contributed visibly to students' language learning (LL)?*

Table 5. Coding results for question number-3 (Theme: Opinions on 2005 Curriculum).

Attendant	Constructivism		Training about new approach		Visible contribution to LL	
	Positive	Negative	Yes	No	Yes	No
A1	X			X		X
A2	X			X	X	
A3	X			X		
A4	X		X			
A5	X			X	X	
A6	X		X		X	
A7	X		X*		X	
A8	X		X*		X	
A9	X		X*			
A10	X		X		X	

*not sure if it was enough

The most obvious and interesting thing seen in the table is that all participants think that adapting a constructivist approach in 2005 curriculum was positive even though four of them had no special training on the subject and three more are not sure if the training was enough. A1, one of those who had no special training about constructivism but still finds it positive explains it: "*Surely, I find it positive. I didn't have either an in-service training or any other training about constructivist approach, and I couldn't understand what kind of an application it was in the beginning. However, I tried to follow slowly in time…*" A2, in the same situation with A1, states that: "*There was not informing in adapting this approach just like the one before. We were informed just a bit with some memos. Anyway, we tried to adapt ourselves and I can say that the curriculum was positive. Because the topics were appropriate to the students and there were activities that would make students active. I can say that even if we had difficulties in the beginning, students enjoyed it in time. It contributed their learning.*" While only one of the participants think that 2005 curriculum didn't bring visible contribution to students' learning English, the reason might also been explained by the attendant himself: "*…I was working at a village school and it was not possible for my students to take the responsibility of self-learning; they were always reluctant and aimless, so I cannot say that the curriculum provided visible contribution at the school I worked.*" While three participants, A3-A4 and A9, didn't comment if the curriculum provided visible contribution to LL, the other six declared observing such a contribution.

Question 4: *What are the positive and negative sides of 2005 curriculum when compared to 1997? Was there anything you liked applying or saw as a problem in 2005 curriculum that didn't take place in the previous one?*

Table 6. Coding results for question number-4 (Theme: Pros and cons of 2005 curriculum).

Attendants	Positive Sides	Attendants	Negative Sides
A1-A2-A5-A10	Student centered	A3-A6	Much paperwork
A2-A7-A9	More active students	A4-A9	Homework by families
A1-A3-A4	More applicable/active/enjoyable Activities like songs and games	A10	Density of topics
A6-A7	Enabling process evaluation		
A8	Enforcing teachers to be up to date		

It is worth noting that every participant had some positive things to say about 2005 curriculum of 4th and 5th grades, and the most important thing teachers pointed out is its being student centered and letting more active students. While six teachers found that aspect positive, two more can be added them as they indicated that thanks to this curriculum activities were more applicable and enjoyable for students and kept them really active. For example, A3 says: "…*Anyway, I can say that lessons were more active and enjoyable with 2005 curriculum. We applied many activities such as songs and games to cover the topics. I can say that these are the most important pros.*" A6 and A7 point an important future of constructivist approach which is process evaluation. A6: "…*The most satisfactory thing in 2005 curriculum for me was its enabling process evaluation via project-performance homework, but these were time consuming activities for teacher also…*" While all teachers took part in the study had something positive in their minds against constructivist approach in 2005 curriculum, only half of them noted negative aspects. Two participants claim that it brought much paperwork, and other two complain about families' doing their children's job of performance-project homework which is questionable if this was a negative side of the curriculum. A9 explains it: "*As a problem, I think families' doing students' works and meaninglessly doing their homework. This is completely contradictory to the aim of the curriculum. Families might be trained about this also.*" Only one teacher thinks that the topics to be covered were more than appropriate.

Question 5: *Can you compare the two curriculums in terms of ease in application, effectiveness and success?*

Table 7. Coding results for question number-5 (Theme: Comparison of the Two Curriculums).

Ease in application		Effectiveness		Success	
1997	2005	1997	2005	1997	2005
A2-A4-A6 A7-A9-A10	A1-A5-A8	A3*	A1-A2-A3*-A4-A5- A6-A7-A8-A9-A10	A3*	A1-A2-A3*-A4-A5- A6-A7-A8-A9-A10

*A3 thinks that both curriculums were effective and successful in their age.

As can be seen in the table, six participants found 1997 curriculum easier to apply than three others who thought it was 2005. One participant, A3, didn't state a difference between the two in terms of easiness in application: "*We were not informed much about either curriculum. So I cannot say one was easier than the other. We tried to apply in a better way in the following years after getting experienced in the first year.*" This participant also indicated that both programs were effective and successful according to the requirements of their ages, and he was the only one voting for 1997 curriculum in terms of effectiveness and success. As he voted for both, all participants are seen to be finding 2005 curriculum more effective and successful. C5 states that: "…*On the other hand, 2005 curriculum was easier to adapt for us as we knew the change before. It was spoken in some meetings. And as this was the case, I can say that this one was more effective and successful in any perspective. Even though it forced the teacher and the student to work more, it was necessary to be more hardworking in the end.*"

Question 6: *Do you think that English teaching is successful in our country? What should be done in order students to learn it better?*

Table 8. Coding results for question number-6 (Theme: The Success of Language Teaching).

Successful	
Yes	No
A4*-A7-A9*-A10*	A1-A2-A3-A4*-A5**-A6-A8-A9*

*It depends on how you define success.
**Looks from the point of adequacy rather than success.

As can be seen, English teachers who took part in this study are not satisfied with the level of foreign language learning in Turkey. Only two of them, A7 and A10, didn't directly state negative opinions and A7 explains it as: "*I don't think it can be better under these circumstances. After all, there is not much need to know a foreign language in our country.*" A10 looks from a different point of view: "*It can be accepted as successful in terms of the attainments in the curriculum. We can teach whatever in the curriculum, less or more. Only thing that we cannot improve is speaking and this might be the result of lack of practice.*" An interesting opinion comes from A4 and he thinks that language teaching is both successful and not: "*To me, our teaching of English is both successful and not. It depends on the point of view you look at from. I think that we are really successful in English on-paper and in terms of grammar. On the other hand, it is obvious that there are some problems with speaking, listening and writing.*" A9 also thinks in a similar way with A4, and states that it is successful in terms of written exams but unsuccessful if you ask for using the foreign language as a communication skill. A1 who is one of those finding English teaching unsuccessful explains his point of view: "*I don't think that we are successful in English teaching, because our educational system is exam-centered. Although we put stress on the communication aspect of the foreign language, we cannot avoid memorizing and grammar.*" We can summarize this part as teachers are not happy with the way they teach or "cannot teach" English.

Table 9. Coding results for question number-6 (Theme: Ways of Improving Language Teaching).

Attendants	What can be done
A1-A4-A6	Adapting an evaluation system with speaking, writing and listening
A9-A10	Directing students to online practice with English speakers
A3	The Europe Union as a chance of more interaction with English
A2	Sending pre-service English teachers abroad / native teachers
A5-A8	No idea

Three teachers agree on the necessity of using an evaluation system that enables evaluating active skills speaking and writing and listening. This way students are thought to be more motivated as A1 indicates: "*…In order to learn it better, speaking and listening skills should be more dominant than grammar in assessment, so that we can use the foreign language actively and get rid of dependency on rules.*" A9 and A10 put stress on modern technology and students' high interaction with the internet and suggest using it in a way that students benefit in terms of listening and speaking skills. This is explained by A10: "*…These problems (mentioning about*

speaking and listening) can be resolved via benefiting from the technology. Students always use the internet. I think that it can be contributing if they are directed to the web sites by which they can practice their speaking and listening." A3 sees the expected membership of Turkey to the European Union as a chance for the whole nation to practice foreign language and also to be familiar with and respectful to other cultures. A2 suggests sending pre-service English teachers to abroad as a part of their undergraduate program, and we can infer from this that the participant sees the problem in the teachers not students. He also advices employing native teachers in order to motivate students better which might confirm our inference from his previous comment. Interestingly, A5 and A8 don't have any idea about how to improve English teaching although they find it inadequate and unsuccessful. A8 explains his point of view: "*I don't think it is successful. If you ask why, it is not only students at schools but also other people taking private courses that fail speaking and writing in English. In the light of this information, I would like to state that the problem is not the schools but the perspective of the society to foreign language learning. It is rather difficult to find a solution to such a deep problem.*"

Discussion

The aim of the study was to compare two English curricula used in Turkish primary education both of which were supposed to be formed under the light of constructivist approach and teacher opinions were used to reach that point. Although both of the curricula tried to bring a constructivist approach to foreign language teaching, the previous one is stated as not bringing a big change by the participant teachers. This was high probably the result of its being a not well-planned revision. Such a change would require a better training for teachers; however, it was not the case as we learn from participants' statements. To be able to benefit from such a big change, the system with its all elements had to be updated and reformed appropriate to this new approach. For example, while the curricula of primary schools were changed in 1997, the curricula of education faculties who brought the teachers that would apply it didn't change. So, both in-service and prospective teachers had the difficulty of not being trained for such an approach. 1997 curricula change can be criticized especially due to this point.

The teachers participated in the study state that they follow the curriculum as it is a map or compass that lets them to find their way in the complex environment of education or it is dictated by their managers or supervisors from the ministry of education. Importantly, they also stated they have been making necessary changes for their students in order to make curricula more applicable and such small changes are seen as a natural reaction to personal and/or regional and/or socio-economic and/or socio-cultural etc. differences of their students. In their study in which they tried to find out the effect of the curriculum in student achievement, Crawford and Snider (2000) stated that it was a critical variable but the teacher was not. Parallel to one of the teacher's opinion, Handal and Herrington (2003) explain that teachers with successful applications of a curriculum might rely on their own beliefs instead of current trends in pedagogy. So, we can say that this study supports the findings of other researches such as by Richardson (1996), Tobin & McRobbie (1996) and Roehrig, Kruse & Kern (2007) in the point that teachers' beliefs have a significant role on their classroom activities and curriculum implementation.

Most of the participants find 1997 curriculum change positive in that it brought language teaching at an earlier grade which was 4th although they generally say to have being unprepared for such a big change. However, at those times scholars such as Scott (1990) and Scott and Ytreberg (1990) were not trying to decide if to teach English as a second or foreign language to young learners but already looking for ways how to teach them. While other countries were trying to find ways to teach a second or foreign language at earlier ages, educators in Turkey seems to be caught standing on one foot by the change in 1997. It is also interesting that they generally find it positive to start teaching at an earlier age and adapted themselves in a short

while. In this context, findings of researches differ. For example, Shehadeh and Dwaik (2010) state that they found the late starters (at fifth grade) of EFL in their study did better in reading and vocabulary than early starters (at first grade) and no statistically significant differences between the two existed in terms of structure. On the other hand, Yamada et al. studied on 30 Japanese EFL learners aging from 7 to 11 years and found that the younger did better in a vocabulary learning exercise (Singleton & Ryan, 2004). Nevertheless, the conflict if "the younger the better" still goes on, but teachers participated in this study state that they were happy with the change decreasing the age of English learning in primary schools.

Just like early starting age to foreign language learning, we can say that constructivism in education also came to Turkey much later than many other countries with the 2005 curricula changes. Sigel (1978) was trying to find a way for constructivist perspective in teacher education; books were being written on how to integrate constructivism into education by Glasersfeld (1991), Larochelle, Bednarz, & Garrison (1998) and many more before 2000s, but Turkey could only adapt a curriculum based on constructivism in 2005. Maybe, the previous curriculum had some features of constructivism but participants state that it was not enough to provide either a student centered class or positive attitudes toward English learning. However, 2005 curriculum brought these two into the classroom environment thanks to its new evaluation processes such as process evaluation and activities such as games and songs, as the participants generally state.

When asked, all our participants had something positive to say about 2005 curriculum. To give examples, some of the teachers were happy its bringing student centered classes and more active students. As learning English is a long process, they say, it is also good to be able to evaluate its development in a process rather than with two written exams each term. Performance and project homework done in a while and portfolios are the best examples of process evaluation brought by that curriculum, and they are described as formative assessment that assess a progress and requires a change and development for not only students but also teachers. On the other hand, this is a reason why many teachers are not volunteer to adopt such an assessment approach (Harmer, 2007). Many entertaining activities such as games and songs were also placed in that curriculum.

Both of education faculties' and primary schools' curricula were adapted to constructivist approach in the change of 2005 and the training of in-service teachers was wider. This, high probably, is the most important reason why this change got a better reaction and less resistance from the previous one. It is interesting that although participants state 2005 curriculum brought bigger changes, they also find it easier to apply. This might be a result of trainings they received before the change. However, even those who received no training find it easier, after applying it for a while, than the previous one. As Kirk and MacDonald (2001) state, we learn much from reform projects, but generally not from stories of success but failure. So, failures faced in applying 2005 curriculum shouldn't be considered as problems, but it is better to name them as experience. Even though positive attitudes of teachers to curriculum innovation may not be a direct sign of the implementation of that innovation, teacher attitudes can affect the possible success or failure of it (Lee, 2010). What is more, this change was expected as it had been talked in the educational environments, such as meetings of school managers, and a teacher points out that he and some of his colleagues searched about it to learn its features before the change.

The last thing our participants stated is the success of foreign language teaching and learning in Turkey. Even teachers are not happy with the current situation, and they offer to make changes in assessment processes and include checking listening, speaking and writing abilities in the exams. Even though there are debates if modern technology is pedagogically beneficial (Salaberry, 2001), the participants emphasized its benefits and wide use and its letting us to communicate with foreign people, either for this or that reason, and offer it as a solution to lack of practice Turkish students face. In conclusion, the two curricula changes done in

1997 and 2005 with the same approach, namely constructivism, got different reactions from the teachers and their conclusions were also different. Time passed after first change seems to have helped teachers be more ready for the second one and changes in lifestyles and of course in technologies also resulted in a better adaptation process. Participating teachers into curriculum development process would be a good way of decreasing resistance of teachers to new curricula.

It is important to note that generalization of the results is really limited as this is a qualitative study and the number of the participants is only 10. What is more, questions asked to the participants deal only with a limited content, namely effectiveness and ease in use of the two curricula. Also, the number of questions limits the information that would be collected. For further studies on the topic, the effect of experience on curriculum changes may be a beneficial study. May be, a study that separates teaching English into skills such as listening and/or speaking can also add valuable information to the literature.

References

Birdsong, D. (1999). Introduction: whys and why nots of the critical period hypothesis for second language acquisition. D. Birdsong içinde, *Second language acquisition and the critical period hypothesis* (s. 1-22). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Çelik-Şen, Y., & Şahin-Taşkın, Ç. (2010). Yeni ilköğretim programının getirdiği değişiklikler: sınıf öğretmenlerinin düşünceleri. *Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, VII* (II), 26-51.

Crawford, D., & Snyder, V. (2000). Effective mathematics instruction: The importance of curriculum. *Education and Treatment of Children, 23* (2), 122-142.

Glasersfeld, E. (1982). An interpretation of Piaget's constructivism. *Revue Internationale de Philosophie, 36* (4), 612-635.

Glasersfeld, E. v. (1991). *Radical constructivism in mathematics education.* London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Handal, B., & Herrington, A. (2003). Mathematics teachers' beliefs and curriculum reform. *Mathematics Education Research Journal, 15* (1), 59-69.

Harmer, J. (2007). *The practice of English language teaching.* London: Pearson Longman.

Have, P. T. (2004). *Understanding qualitative research and ethnomethodology.* London: Sage Publications.

İlköğretim okulu 4. ve 5. sınıf yabancı dil (İngilizce) öğretim programı (1997). *Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Tebliğler Dergisi*, 606-623.

Kirk, D., & MacDonald, D. (2001). Teacher voice and ownership of curriculum change. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 33* (5), 551-567.

Kothari, C. (2009). *Research Methodology Methods and Techniques.* New Delhi: New Age International Publishers.

Larochelle, M., Bednarz, N., & Garrison, J. (1998). *Construtivism and Education.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lee, J. C.-K. (2010). Teacher receptivity to curriculum change in the implementation stage: the case of environmental education in Hong Kong. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 25* (1), 95-115.

MacKay, I., & Fullana, N. (2007). Starting age and exposure effects on EFL learners' sound production in a formal learning context. *New Sounds 2007: Proceedings of the Fifth International Symposium on the Acquisition of Second Language Speech* (s. 324-335). Florianópolis: Federal University of Santa Catarina.

Miles, M., & Huberman, A. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis.* London: Sage Publications.

Perakyla, A. (2005). Analyzing talk and text. N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln içinde, *The sage handbook of qualitative research* (s. 869-886). California: Sage Publications.

Phillips, D. (1995). The good, the bad, and the ugly: the many faces of constructivism. *Educational Researcher, 24* (7), 5-12.

Roehrig, G., Kruse, R., & Kern, A. (2007). Teacher and school characteristics and their influence on curriculum implementation. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 44*, 883-907.

104

Sadeghi, K., & Khonbi, Z. (2013). Learners' starting age of learning EFL and use of language learning strategies. *English Language Teaching*, 28-34.

Salaberry, M. (2001). The use of technology for second language learning and teaching: a retrospective. *The Modern Language Journal, 85* (1), 39-56.

Scott, C. (1990). *Teaching children English as a second language.* London: Routledge.

Scott, W., & Ytreberg, L. (1990). *Teaching English to children.* London: New York.

Shehadeh, A., & Dwaik, R. (2010). The age factor in EFL learning: insights from the Palestanian early start English program. *An-Najah University Journal of Research (Humanities), 24* (7), 2119-2150.

Sigel, I. (1978). Constructivism and teacher education. *The Elementary School Journal, 78* (5), 332-338.

Singleton, D. (1995). Introduction: a critical look at the critical period hypothesis in second language acquisition research. D. Singleton, & Z. Lengyel içinde, *The age factor in second language acquisition: a critical look at the critical period hypothesis multilingual matters* (s. 1-29). Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters.

Singleton, D. (2003). Critical period or general age factor(s)? M. Mayo, & M. Lecumberri içinde, *Age and the acquisition of English as a foreign language* (s. 3-22). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Singleton, D., & Ryan, L. (2004). *Language acquisition: the age factor.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matter Ltd.

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research design and methods.* California: Sage Publications.

Gürbüz Ocak	PhD., Associate Professor, Department of Educational Sciences, Afyon Kocatepe University, Afyonkarahisar, Turkey. E-mail: gurbuzocak@gmail.com
Serkan Boyraz	Masters Student, Department of Educational Sciences, Afyon Kocatepe University, Afyonkarahisar, Turkey. E-mail: serkan.boyraz@gmail.com
Hasan Kizilkaya	Masters Student, Department of Educational Sciences, Afyon Kocatepe University, Afyonkarahisar, Turkey. E-mail: hasankizilkaya35@hotmail.com