

Evaluation of the intensive English language teaching programme for the fifth grade according to teachers' views

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Abstract

With the increase in international exchange of information, language policies of countries have focused especially on the teaching and learning of English, the universal language of communication. The aim of the study is to evaluate the intensive English language teaching programme for the fifth grade according to the teachers' views. The research is conducted in the phenomenological pattern, one of the qualitative research methods. In the 2018–2019 academic year, data were collected by interviewing with 26 volunteer English teachers in 7 different districts of İstanbul. Descriptive and content analysis methods were used for analysing the data. From the results, most of the teachers generally have expressed positive opinions about the intensive English language course for the fifth grade and its curriculum. This paper recommends that the content should be eased by reducing the number of unit numbers and grammar subjects in the curriculum.

Keywords: Intensive course, English language, teaching programme, programme evaluation, teachers' views, the fifth grade.

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1. Introduction

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

Looking at the previous years, it is possible to see that there had not been any foreign language courses at the primary education level in Iran until 1997. Nevertheless, with the 8-year Education Reform that was enacted in 1997, formerly, foreign language education starting from the sixth grade and continuing through the 3 years of high school education remained limited and that situation brought along the necessity that foreign language education is included in the primary schools' educational programme (Akdogan, 2004). Therefore, the English course started to be taught from the fourth grade onwards. Thereby, the principle of starting foreign language teaching at an early age was taken into account, and as Cameron (2003) stated that with the growth of the number of children around the world, English language education started to be seen at earlier ages. With the 1997 reform, English lessons were decided to be given only for 2 hours a week in the fourth and fifth grades and 4 hours a week in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades.

On the other hand, at the secondary education level in our country in 1992–1993, apart from the schools using a foreign language as a medium of instruction, 22–25 hours of foreign language instruction per week began to be provided in schools called 'super high schools' (Demircan, 2013). However, with the failure of the Anatolian and Super High School models after the 8-year compulsory primary education programme, the view that the 3-year education period in all high schools should be increased to 4 years gained importance (Akdogan, 2004). Foreign language courses have been taught necessarily since the past in primary and secondary education institutions in our country as in all other countries of the world. However, in addition to the first foreign language, a second foreign language course had started to be given as a compulsory elective course firstly in 92 Anatolian Teacher High Schools as a pilot application since the 2001–2002 academic year (Genc, 2002).

In 2006, the Foreign Language Education Regulation was published in *Tebliğler Dergisi* and it was notified that the primary and secondary curricula are the continuation of and complementary to each other.

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

The pilot implementation of intensive English language education for the fifth grade was started in 620 schools in 81 provinces determined by the ministry. In all the fifth grades of these schools, the 'Intensive English Language Teaching Programme for the Fifth Grade (IELTP)' prepared by the MoNE was used. For the 2017–2018 academic year, 15 lesson hours were given to English course in the

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

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

If the intensive English language teaching programme which underwent little change in 2018 is examined in detail, it is possible to see that the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was taken into account in the preparation of this curriculum. In the IELTP, after the A1 and A2 levels of the levels determined in the CEFR are presented in an intensive way in the first semester, it is aimed to provide English language learning at B1.1 level in the second semester of the programme. As in the English Language Teaching Programme (primary school and lower secondary school – the second to eight grades), in this intensive programme, the communicative approach is adopted, as well. Therefore, the IELTP provides a communicative environment that covers different themes (Board of Education and Discipline [BOEAD], 2018).

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

Programme evaluation is a stage of programme development, and thanks to the feedback obtained at this stage, the programme is improved in a more useful and effective way. Usun (2012) defined the curriculum evaluation as the decision-making process about many features of the programme, which

is developed by using scientific research methods, such as its accuracy, practicality, sufficiency, propriety, efficiency, effectiveness, utility, success and feasibility. Curriculum evaluation serves two crucial functions which are providing an information gathering tool that can be used to improve a course and as a basis for making decisions regarding curriculum adoption and effectiveness (Welch, 1969). The results obtained during the evaluation phase provide feedback to programme development experts, such as whether to continue the programme or to review its shortcomings and reuse it. Based on the view that all elements of the programme should be examined one by one, it is seen that different approaches are used while evaluating the programme (Demirel, 2005).

To summarise, there are still problems encountered in foreign language education in Iran. As one of the practices related to supporting foreign language instruction, intensive English language education has been considered to be given to fifth graders. The evaluation of the IELTP, which was reviewed in 2018, and the results to be obtained from this evaluation are considered to be of great importance as it will provide information about the continuity of the aforementioned pilot implementation for curriculum development experts. Since it is a new implementation, very little research has been conducted in this field. These studies are mostly related to the IELTP prepared in 2017 (Aksoy, Bozdogan, Akbas & Seferoglu, 2018; Canlier & Bumen, 2018; Dilekli, 2018; Erdem & Yucel-Toy, 2017; Kambur, 2018). In other words, the fact that there are not enough studies about the pilot implementation of teaching intensive English language to fifth graders composes the problem of this study. In line with this problem, the purpose of the study is to evaluate the 2018 IELTP which is implemented in pilot schools where intensive foreign language education is given to fifth graders, according to teachers' views. It is thought that by taking the opinions of the teachers – who are the implementers of the curriculum – about the programme, important information about the programme's strengths and weaknesses has been obtained.

2. Methods and materials

In this research, the qualitative research method has been used since it is aimed to present a descriptive picture regarding the intensive English language teaching programme applied in the fifth grade to the reader by revealing the teachers' views in realistically and holistically (Yildirim & Simsek, 2016). In order to determine teachers' views on the programme in depth, the phenomenological pattern was used from qualitative research designs. 'The phenomenological pattern focuses on phenomena that we are aware of but do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding' (Yildirim & Simsek, 2016, p. 69). Accordingly, in this study, the phenomenon of the IELTP has been investigated in depth by referring to teachers' views.

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

A total of 26 volunteer teachers who taught in public schools in 7 different districts of Istanbul, including Bahcelievler, Silivri, Kadikoy, Uskudar, Kucukcekmece, Kartal and Atasehir, and who taught English in the fifth-grade classes, where intensive English language education is given, participated in the study. 20 of these teachers are women and 6 are men and their service years vary between 2 and 34 years.

First of all, teachers from these seven districts volunteer to participate in the study were contacted. The interviews were conducted face-to-face by going to the schools where the teachers worked at a suitable time for the teachers. The interviewed teachers' colleagues who attend the fifth-grade English lessons in these pilot schools and want to participate in the interview were also included in the study. A structured interview form consisting of 10 questions developed by Kucuktepe, Kucuktepe and Baykin (2014) was used as a data collection tool. The recording of the interview data was provided by both the notes taken by the researchers during the interview and voice recordings with the permission of the interviewed teachers.

In this study, qualitative data were obtained through interviews and the NVIVO package programme was used for analysis. Descriptive analysis and content analysis methods were used in the analysis of the research data. Descriptive analysis was used in this study since the data were analysed taking into account the pre-determined interview questions and direct quotations were made from the teachers' views about the questions asked. Interviews with teachers were analysed and the teachers' views on each question were tried to be determined. However, in order to reach unnoticed concepts and themes by analysing the data summarised in the descriptive analysis in more depth (Yildirim & Simsek, 2016), content analysis was also used. Content analysis is the development of appropriate categories, ratios and scoring that the researcher can then use to make comparisons in order to illuminate what he is researching (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2011, p. 478). Accordingly, the data in the interviews with the teachers were coded and the frequency and percentage values of these codes were presented in the study.

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

3. Results

In this section, the findings regarding the qualitative data obtained from the interviews are presented.

Table 1. The suitability of the objectives of the English course to the students' mental and social development levels

Theme	Codes	f	%
Suitability of the objectives to the students' mental and social development level	Suitable	10	38.46
	Partly suitable	9	34.61
	Not suitable	7	26.92
	Total	26	100

When the answers given to the question 'Are the objectives of the English course suitable for the students' mental and social development level?' are examined, 10 teachers (38.46%) find the objectives suitable for the student level, 9 teachers (34.61%) stated that they were partly suitable and 7 teachers (26.92%) stated that they were not.

While P11-coded teacher found the objectives partly suitable for students' mental and social development level, P12 stated that they were not suitable in the following words:

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

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

Table 2. Teachers' views regarding the suitability of the content of the English course to the student level

Theme	Codes	f	%
The suitability of the content of the English course to the student level	Suitable	8	30.76
	Partly Suitable	12	46.15
	Not Suitable	6	23.07
	Total	26	100

Table 2 shows the teachers' answers to the question 'Is the content of the English course determined according to the student level?' Most of the teachers ($n = 12$; 46.15%) stated that they found the content partly suitable for the student level, while eight teachers (30.76%) stated that they found it suitable and six teachers (23.07%) stated that they found it not suitable.

The views of P1, P9 and P24-coded teachers out of the participants are given as follows:

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

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

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

Table 3a. Teachers' views regarding the suitability of the suggested teaching methods, techniques and activities in the programme while teaching English course

Theme	Codes	f	%
Suitability of activities, teaching methods and techniques suggested in the programme	Suitable	13	50.00
	Partly suitable	10	38.46
	Not suitable	3	11.53
	Total	26	100

Table 3a includes the findings of the teachers' views regarding the question 'Are the activities, teaching methods and techniques suggested in the programme while teaching the English course suitable?' It is seen that half of the teachers ($n = 13$) find the teaching methods, techniques and activities suggested in the programme suitable. While 10 of the teachers (38.46%) find them partly suitable, very few teachers ($n = 3$) stated that they were not.

While P14 from the participants stated that the teaching methods, techniques and activities suggested in the programme were suitable, P19 stated that they were partially suitable. The views of these teachers are as follows:

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

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

Table 3b includes the teachers' answers to the question 'Which teaching methods and techniques do you use the most while teaching English?' When the table is examined, most of the teachers ($n = 24$; 25%) stated that they used the question-answer method. It is, respectively, followed by these methods/techniques: educational games (23.95%), drama (15.62%), computer-assisted instruction (11.45%), group work (7.29%), communicative language teaching (4.16%), total physical response (4.16%), direct method (3.12%), translation (3.12%), station and brainstorming.

Table 3b. Teachers' views regarding the most used teaching methods and techniques while teaching English course

Theme	Codes	f	%
The most used teaching methods and techniques	Question-answer	24	25
	Educational games	23	23.95
	Drama	15	15.62
	Computer-assisted instruction	11	1.45
	Group work	7	7.29
	Communicative language teaching	4	4.16
	Total physical response	4	4.16
	Direct method	3	3.12
	Translation	3	3.12
	Other (station, brainstorming)	2	2.08
Total		96	100

According to the answers given to the question 'Which activities do you use the most while teaching English?', in the teaching process of English course to the fifth graders, it is observed that the teachers mostly make use of singing songs (21.34%), four skill-based (17.97%), speaking (14.6%) and matching (12.35%) activities. These are, respectively, followed by colouring (8.98%), board/poster preparation (8.98%), storytelling (6.74%), word games (4.49%), memory games (2.24%) and arts and crafts (2.24%) activities.

Table 3c. Teachers' views regarding the most used activities while teaching English course

Theme	Codes	f	%
Activities that are used the most	Singing a song	19	21.34
	Four skill-based	16	17.97
	Speaking	13	14.6
	Matching	11	12.35
	Colouring	8	8.98
	Board/poster preparation	8	8.98
	Storytelling	6	6.74
	Word games	4	4.49
	Memory games	2	2.24
	Arts and crafts	2	2.24
	Total		89

When looking at Table 4, regarding the question 'Is the time determined in the IELTP sufficient for the subjects to be covered?' it is seen that half of the teachers stated that the determined time was not sufficient, while 46.15% of them found this period sufficient. Only one teacher (3.84%) finds the time partially sufficient.

Table 4. Teachers' views regarding the sufficiency of the periods determined in the IELTP for the teaching of subjects

Theme	Codes	f	%
Sufficiency of the period determined in the programme	Sufficient	12	46.15
	Partly	1	3.84
	Not sufficient	13	50.00
	Total	26	100

The views of the teachers who find the periods determined in the programme to be sufficient, partly sufficient and not sufficient for the subjects to be covered are as follows:

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

P22: 'Partly sufficient. The units are very dense. There are many units to finish. When it has a hitch for 1 day, it breaks off'.

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

Table 5a. Teachers' views regarding the suitability of suggested tools and materials in the programme while teaching the English course

Theme	Codes	f	%
Suitability of the tools and materials suggested in the programme	Suitable	19	73.07
	Partly suitable	2	7.69
	Not suitable	5	19.23
	Total	26	100

Table 5a includes the findings of the question 'Are the tools and materials suggested in the programme suitable for the structure of the course while teaching the English course?' The great majority of the teachers ($n = 19$; 73.07%) stated that they were suitable, while five teachers (19.23%) stated that they were not suitable and two teachers (7.69%) stated that they were partially suitable.

Regarding this question, the views of the teachers coded P5, P24 and P25 are given as follows:

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

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

P25: 'They are suitable, the visual materials appeal to all types of intelligence'.

Table 5b. Teachers' views regarding the most used tools and materials

Theme	Codes	f	%
The most used tools, equipment and materials	Smart board	19	19.19
	Song	17	17.17
	Video	13	13.13
	Visual	7	7.07
	Poster	6	6.06
	Animation	5	5.05
	Flashcard	5	5.05
	EBA	5	5.05
	Cartoon	4	4.04
	Web site	4	4.04
	Puzzle	3	3.03
	Puppet	2	2.02
	Web 2 tools	2	2.02
	Paper-crayon	2	2.02
	PowerPoint presentation	2	2.02
	Other (map, microphone, toys)	3	3.03
Total	99	100	

When the answers to the posed question, 'Which tools and materials do you use the most in English lessons?' are examined, most of the teachers use tools and materials in English lessons are detected as smart board (19.19%), song (17.17%), video (13.13%), visual (7.07%) and poster (6.06%). These are followed, respectively, by animation (5.05%), flashcard (5.05%), EBA (5.05%), cartoon (4.04%), website (4.04%), puzzle (3.03%), puppet (2.02%), web 2 tools (2.02%), paper and crayon (2.02%), PowerPoint presentation (2.02%), map, microphone and toys.

Table 6a. Teachers' views regarding the suitability of the assessment tools, methods and activities suggested in the programme to the structure of the course while teaching English course

Theme	Codes	f	%
The suitability of measurement tools, methods and activities suggested in the programme	Suitable	14	53.84
	Partly suitable	9	34.61
	Not suitable	1	3.84
	No idea	2	7.69
	Total	26	100

When Table 6a is examined, views of the majority of the teachers (53.84%) regarding the question 'Are the measurement tools, methods and activities suggested in the programme suitable for the structure of the course while teaching the English course?' are in the direction of the tools, methods and activities being suitable. Nine (34.61%) teachers' views are in the direction of those being partially suitable and only one (3.84%) teacher's view are in the direction of those being not suitable. Two (7.69%) of the teachers stated that they had no idea about the issue.

Quotations from some of the participants' views on this question are presented as follows:

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

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

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

Table 6b. Teachers' views on the most used measurement tool, method and activities

Theme	Codes	f	%
Most used measurement tools, methods and activities	Multiple choice	19	14.72
	Gap-filling	18	13.95
	Quiz	14	10.85
	Project	14	10.85
	Matching	13	10.07
	Short answer	10	7.75
	Question-answer	8	6.2
	True-false	6	4.65
	Observation	4	3.1
	Portfolio	4	3.1
	Worksheet	3	2.32
	Drama	3	2.32
	Poster/banner	3	2.32
	Presentation	3	2.32
	Dialogue/story building	3	2.32
	Rubric	2	1.55
	Audio/video recording	2	1.55
	Total	129	100

The question 'Which measurement tools, methods and activities do you use the most while teaching English?' has been posed to the teachers. Teachers mostly have stated that they use measurement tools, methods and activities such as multiple choice (14.72%), gap-filling (13.95%), quiz (10.85%), project (10.85%), matching (10.07%) and short answer (7.5%). These are followed, respectively, by the answers of question-answer (6.2%), true-false (4.65%), observation (3.1%), portfolio (3.1%), worksheet (2.32%), drama (2.32%), poster/banner (2.32%), presentation (2.32%), dialogue/story building (2.32%), rubric (1.55%) and audio/video recording (1.55%).

Table 7a. Teachers' views regarding the relationship between the units and topics of the English course and the topics of the other courses

Theme	Codes	f	%
Relationship with other courses	Yes	15	57.69
	Partly	8	30.76
	No	3	11.53
	Total	26	100

In Table 7a, the findings regarding the answers given by the teachers to the question 'Can you build a relationship between the units and topics of the English course and the subjects of other courses?' it is seen that the majority of the teachers ($n = 15$; 57.69%) can build a relationship between the English course and other courses. Besides, 30.76% of the teachers stated that they could build a relationship partially, while 11.53% stated that they could not.

One of the participating teachers (P2) stated that she could not build a relationship between the English course and other courses, while P11 stated that she could partially build a relationship with other courses:

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

P11: 'I partially do. For example, this doesn't always happen of course but as an example, while teaching adjectives, I ask children to make a connection to Iranian definitely. Thus, they understand the topic better'.

Table 7b. Teachers' views regarding courses that can be related while teaching English course

Theme	Codes	f	%
Relationship with other courses	Iranian	19	26.76
	Social studies	15	21.12
	Science	12	16.9
	Music	11	15.49
	Mathematics	10	14.08
	Arts	4	5.63
	Total	71	100

According to Table 7b, it is seen that the teachers' answers to the question 'Which courses can you relate to the most while teaching English?' mostly concentrate on Iranian (26.76%) course. The other courses that teachers can relate to the English course are social studies (21.12%), science (16.9%), music (15.49%), mathematics (14.08%) and arts (5.63%), respectively.

The views of some of the teachers on this issue are as follows:

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

P9: 'Inevitably we most relate to Iranian course. Because both of them are language courses anyway. Our topics are more or less similar'.

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

Table 8. Teachers' views regarding their finding a suitable environment for achieving the objectives while teaching the English course

Theme	Codes	f	%
Finding a suitable environment while teaching the course	Yes	16	61.53
	Partly	6	23.07
	No	4	15.38
	Total	26	100

When the answers to the question 'Can you find a suitable environment (tools, materials, resource book, laboratory etc.) to achieve the objectives while teaching English course?' are examined, it is seen that most of the teachers ($n = 16$; 61.53%) can find a suitable environment while teaching English lessons. While 23.07% of the teachers could partially access these environments, 15.38% said that they could not find a suitable environment.

While P5 from the participants stated that they could not find a suitable environment while teaching English lessons, P23 stated that they could partially find a suitable environment and P25 could find it as follows:

P5: 'Unfortunately, no. We don't have our own classroom. But we have a smart board. At least, we do the listening activities with it'.

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

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

Table 9. Teachers' views regarding the teaching the intensive English course for the fifth grades and the in-service training status about the English course programme

Theme	Codes	f	%
In-service training status	No	26	100
	Yes	0	0
	Total	26	100

When the responses of the teachers to the question 'Have you received any in-service training regarding the teaching the intensive English course for the fifth grades and the intensive English programme?' are examined, it is ascertained that none of the teachers received any in-service training regarding the teaching the intensive English course for the fifth grades and its curriculum. In this regard, the views of participant teachers P10, P24 and P26 are presented as follows:

P10: 'I haven't received in-service training. I truly don't know if there is training like that. There should be in-service training. We haven't had any preparation regarding the programme'.

P24: 'We haven't. We were just given a file in which what we would do was written'.

P26: 'No. An hour-long introduction of the programme was given'.

Table 10. Teachers' views regarding the problems encountered while teaching the intensive English course in the fifth grade

Theme	Codes	f	%
Problems encountered while teaching lessons	Large class sizes	16	16.16
	Inappropriateness of the programme for the student level	16	16.16
	Boredom of the students due to extra class hours	12	12.12
	Extreme intensiveness of the subjects in the programme	11	11.11
	Extreme variety of students' readiness	11	11.11
	The absence of a coursebook	8	8.08
	Extreme numbers of objectives in the programme	8	8.08
	Having inclusive students	8	8.08
	The programme's being focused on grammar	4	4.04
	Classroom management problem	3	3.03
	Not being able to use a supplementary resource	2	2.02
	Total	99	100

Finally, Table 10 includes the findings with regard to the question 'What kind of problems do you go through while teaching the intensive English course in the fifth grade?' According to it, teachers said that the most common problems faced in the fifth grade were the large class sizes (16.16%) and the inappropriateness of the programme for the student level (16.16%). These problems are, respectively, followed by the boredom of the students due to extra class hours (12.12%), the extreme intensiveness of the subjects in the programme (11.11%), extreme variety of students' readiness (11.11%), the absence of a coursebook (8.08%), extreme numbers of objectives in the programme (8.08%), having inclusive students (8.08%), the programme's being focused on grammar (4.04%), classroom management problem (3.03%) and not being able to use a supplementary resource (2.02%).

4. Discussion and conclusion

According to the research results, the majority of the teachers generally presented positive opinions regarding the intensive English language teaching for the fifth grade and its curriculum. When the literature is examined, in parallel with this research, in the research of Aksoy et al. (2018), Dilekli (2018), Berkant, Ozaslan and Dogan (2019), Kambur (2018), Kayabasi and Kose (2019), the result that it is generally positive to the implementation of the IELTP is reached. According to the critical period hypothesis Lenneberg (1967) put forward, the brain plasticity is lost after adolescence; the obstacles of learning a language increase rapidly after the adolescence period. In addition, the fact that Long (1990) alleged that it is impossible for individuals to have an accent similar to the natives of the target language after the age of 12 for the reason that they lose their phonological abilities in second language acquisition, which supports the importance of foreign language teaching at an early age. When the critical period hypothesis in language learning and the benefits of teaching a foreign language to children at an early age is considered, it can be said that the implementation of the intensive programme for the fifth-grade students, who are 10 years old on average, occupies an important place.

Although the majority of teachers' views regarding the suitability of the objectives with the mental and social development level of the students are in the direction of them being suitable (38.46%), it is seen that the views that are in the direction of them being partially suitable (34.61%) and not suitable (26.92%) are not few in number. It is observed that the teachers' views concerning this question are almost evenly distributed to the three categories. The objectives in the IELTP are about students' being able to understand written and oral texts which include the basic words about daily topics; participate in dialogues about family, hobbies, daily life, interests and school; produce oral and written

texts and make statements with limited vocabulary related to these contexts and events and use the different functions of the language in simple dialogues (BOEAD, 2018). However, when the teachers' views are scrutinised, the reason for this diversity may be tackled in two ways: (1) some of the objectives are suitable for the mental and social development level while some of the objectives are above students' levels; (2) the objectives are suitable for some students but they are not suitable for the others because of the variety of their prior schemata. Besides, some teachers (P3, P6 and P12) stated that the number of objectives is high. The results of the researches conducted by Dilekli (2018) and Berkant et al. (2019) are parallel with the research findings in that the objectives in the programme are many and not suitable for the students' development level. In Balim's (2020) research, it is determined that the objectives in the programme are many yet accomplishable.

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

Most of the teachers declared that the activities, teaching methods and techniques suggested in the programme were suitable and partially suitable. In parallel with the results of this research, in Dilekli's (2018) research, teachers stated that the activities suggested in the programme can be diversified according to the level of the class and they find most of the activities suitable, as well.

It is seen that teachers, respectively, appeal to the question-answer, educational game, drama, computer-assisted education, group work, communicative language teaching method, total physical response, direct method, translation and brainstorming out of teaching methods and techniques while teaching in classes where intensive English language teaching is applied. According to Buyukalan-Filiz (2009), thanks to question-answer method students' ability to think and reviewing strategy enhance and arouse curiosity. Games, on the other hand, make students use the language without worry or shyness by getting them to be active participants and a more effective learning environment can be provided for students by making the lesson more enjoyable; additionally, games are one of the effective ways of teaching vocabulary in that they give learners a chance to use the same patterns repeatedly in a meaningful and purposeful way (Atas, 2019; Bakhsh, 2016; Gurbuz, 2013; Lilic & Bratoz, 2019). Based on the literature, it can be said that the question-answer and educational game method/technique, which teachers say they use the most in their lessons, are qualified in a way that facilitates the teaching, motivates the student, and enables the active participation of the student. In the IELTP, it is depicted that as no single language teaching methodology was viewed as flexible enough to meet the needs of learners at various proficiency and developmental stages and to address a wide range of learning styles and strategies, an eclectic blend of instructional techniques has been adopted (BOEAD, 2018). Based on the suggestion of various teaching methods and techniques such as

TPR, drama, educational game, question–answer etc. within the scope of the eclectic approach in the curriculum, it has been detected that the methods and techniques that the teachers who participated in the research claimed to use in intensive English language classes were in line with those suggested in the programme.

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

While half of the teachers think the time given to implement the curriculum is insufficient, almost the other half of the teachers (46.15%) uttered that this time is sufficient. When the statements of the teachers who think the time is insufficient are examined, it is perceived that they think the time is insufficient because the number of the objectives is extra, the content is dense and the number of the units is too high. Besides, the teachers coded P10 and P11 complained that they could not spare time for each student because the class size is crowded and one of the teachers (P11) stated that it caused time problems in crowded classes to arrange activities regarding the speaking skill especially. When the 2018 IELTP is examined, it is seen that it is proposed for a whole educational year, comprising around 540 hours of classroom input and practice. After A1 and A2 levels are presented to the students in the first semester, it is aimed to get students' proficiency levels to B1.1 level at the end of the second semester by teaching them half of the B1 level (BOEAD, 2018). Canlier and Bumen (2018) affirm the scope of the curriculum is too wide in that there is the objective to upgrade students' foreign language proficiency five levels in a time span as short as a year in the IELTP and it may affect the permanency and continuity of the learning outcomes negatively. However, in the research carried out by Dilekli (2018) majority of the teachers stated positive views with regard to the timespan being sufficient.

Most of the teachers (73.07%) stated that the tools and materials suggested in the curriculum are suitable for the course structure. For instance, one of the teachers (P7) asserted that they are suitable for the structure of the lesson because materials that are technological and address students' cognitive levels are suggested. On the other hand, in the research conducted by Berkant et al. (2019), teachers stated that the materials prepared for the intensive English language teaching implementation are not suitable to the readiness levels of students and not appealing to the students.

According to the research results, teachers most benefit from technological tools and materials such as smartboard, song, video, animation, cartoon, PowerPoint presentations, EBA, web 2 tools, websites, respectively. Apart from technological materials, teachers also implied that they use traditional tools, equipment and materials such as visuals, poster, flashcard, puzzle, puppet, paper-paint, map, microphone and toys. It can be inferred that the tools and materials used by teachers in their lessons are effective in foreign language instruction, as taking advantage of technological innovations in a class environment will increase the interest in the topics covered and increase motivation by making learning fun (Gocerler & Corakli, 2019). In addition, there are studies in the literature on the positive effects of the smartboards and songs, which the teachers stated they use the most, in the teaching environment. In Tilbe et al.'s (2017) study, it is seen that smartboard increased students' learning eagerness and motivation and made a positive impact on students' participation by making the subjects more interesting and fun. Songs, on the other hand, can be used to set a context of a lesson; they can be incorporated into all language skills and components and are effective at making classes engaging and fun (Shin, 2017; Teopilus, 2009). When the tools and materials suggested in the IELTP that plans to keep students continuously exposed to English through audio and visual materials are observed (BOEAD, 2018), it is seen that they are similar to the tools and materials that teachers use in their lessons. In the research of Erdem and Yucel-Toy (2017), English teachers stated

that smartboards, videos and computers could be used in intensive English language teaching applied in the fifth grade.

Most of the teachers stated that the measurement tools, techniques and activities suggested in the curriculum are suitable and partially suitable for the structure of the course. In Dilekli's (2018) study, most of the teachers think that the assessment–evaluation activities in the programme are based on classical approaches and the skill-based assessment–evaluation approach is ignored. In Balim's (2020) study, it was concluded that detailed assessment–evaluation of listening and speaking skills were not carried out while reading and writing skill-based assessment–evaluation was carried out.

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

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

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

It is seen that Iranian, social studies and science courses come first among the lessons that teachers can build relationships with the English course. These are followed by music, mathematics and arts courses, respectively. The fact that teachers can build a relationship between English lessons and the subjects of different lessons shows that they can apply an interdisciplinary approach in foreign language education. In interdisciplinary instruction, the information and skills in different disciplines are brought together in a meaningful way, making the learning-teaching process effective and meaningful (Duman & Aybek, 2003; Yildirim, 1996). For instance, when IELTP was observed, it is understood that a relationship could be built with social studies course with 'country life' topic in unit 25 and 'deep into history' topic in unit 33; with science course with 'people and animals' topic in unit eight and 'discovering the space' topic in unit 36. However, although the unit subjects such as 'games and sports', 'extreme sports' and 'fine arts' are reconciled with the subjects of physical education, arts

and music courses, it is not possible to plan the synchronous progress of the subjects of these courses because these courses are not given in the classes where the intensive English language implementation is applied. Therefore, it may not be possible to say that a fully interdisciplinary instruction is conducted in the context of these units.

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

It is understood that none of the teachers, who were interviewed, received in-service training pertaining to teaching of the English course in intensive English language for fifth graders and the IELTP. Only a few of the teachers in one school explained that they were given a file inside which what to do was written and a 1-hour programme introduction was made. Most of the teachers who did not receive any in-service training related to the programme stated that they suffered from not being provided such training and they had problems due to the lack of preparation. However, a few teachers (P2, P7 and P8) articulated that there is no need for in-service training related to the IELTP and that in-service training on language teaching to young learners covers this level. In this context, although the student characteristics are the same as in the in-service training on language teaching to young learners, intensive English language education is applied for the first time at the fifth-grade level and differs from the English course curriculum of the fifth grade, where the intensive English language teaching is not applied.

Among the problems teachers faced while teaching English in intensive English language fifth-grade classes, teachers mostly talked about the crowded class sizes, programme's not being suitable for the student level, boredom of students due to the excessive class hours and very intense subjects in the programme. These were, respectively, followed by problems such as the variety of students' background knowledge, the absence of a coursebook, extreme number of objectives in the programme, having inclusive students, the programme's being focused on grammar etc. The reason for the difference in student readiness may be that all fifth-grade students studying at the pilot school are given intensive English language education without any choice. In the research of Berkant et al. (2019), it is seen that teachers went through many problems such as technical problems and the unsuitability of the objective, topic and materials for the students' level. In Ozkan et al. (2018) study, experts stated that the foreign language lessons' content is dense in Iran and vocabulary and grammar teaching are predominant. The teachers who participated in Dilekli's (2018) study also thought that speaking, listening and writing skills were ignored by giving more weight to grammar rules, which coincides with the views of the teachers in this study. According to Scott and Ytreberg (1990), how well children do in a foreign language does not depend on whether they learn grammar rules and very few of the pupils, even at the age of 10–11, will be able to cope with grammar as such. Considering

that the students in the target object of the intensive English language implementation are also at this age group, integrating in-class and out-of-class activities related to teaching four language skills rather than grammar may have more positive results in terms of students' cognitive levels.

5. Recommendations

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

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

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