

As noted by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), attention to the formal aspects of language is an essential element in the construction of meaning; therefore, it is necessary to consider these in the context of communicative language learning. However, in accordance with Cameron's (2001) contention that children's grammatical knowledge of a language emerges naturally through "the space between words and discourse" (p. 18), the structural features of English are handled implicitly as learners/users develop communicative skills, rather than addressed as a separate issue.

Instructional materials: For each grade level, a series of 10 sample units is provided, structured around interrelated themes. The use of thematic units is supported by Hale and Cunningham (2011), who point out that this approach allows educators to present new information in a manner that is both relevant and interesting to learners, encouraging them to build on existing knowledge while at the same time revisiting earlier material in as a means of supporting retention. In order to create a link between language learning and daily life, the themes for each unit have been chosen to reflect ideas and issues that are familiar to young students; therefore, themes such as family, friends, animals, holidays, leisure activities and so on are highlighted. In consideration of the CEFR's emphasis on developing intercultural competence and appreciation for cultural diversity (CoE, 2001), cultural issues are also addressed. Elements of both the target culture and international cultures are presented in a positive and non-threatening manner (Elyıldırım & Ashton-Hayes, 2006) in keeping with the themes of each unit, at the same time stressing the value of home culture in order to avoid the formation of negative attitudes.

Materials developers are encouraged to follow this model in the design of integrated resources that can be tailored to meet the needs of students in a diverse range of contexts with respect to school type, sociocultural outlook and economic status, thus allowing classroom teachers greater discretion in the selection of appropriate activities and learning materials (Trujillo, Torrecillas, & Salvadores, 2004). On the other hand, although previous English language curricula have been designed according to the principles of communicative language teaching, conventional textbooks have often allowed for too much flexibility in classroom application. As a result,

there has been a tendency among some teachers to repurpose the tasks that are presented, frequently de-emphasizing their communicative aspect. For instance, instead of teaching an interactive question-and-answer song, a teacher might adapt it as a listen-and-fill-the-blanks activity. To address this issue, teacher resource packs, which may consist of lesson plans, printed handouts, flashcards, audio-visual materials and so on, will be considered besides textbooks, particularly at the 2nd, 3rd and 4th grade levels. These packages may be adapted according to a particular teaching context, thus supporting classroom instructors in meeting the needs of their students while at the same time maintaining compliance with the objectives of the newly established curricular model.

A suggested model: It is often the case that, in spite of careful planning, a curricular model differs in many respects from the one that is put into practice; numerous external factors may affect its application, including school administrators, facilities, classroom resources and materials, teachers, class size, parents, and the students themselves. Therefore, the ultimate success of this program requires the external support, careful planning and committed partnership of all involved. It is also important to note that such models are broad frames that addresses millions of students and thousands of teachers in Turkey's case. Therefore, a fine-tuned English education is not only based on a generic model of English curriculum, but rather to a careful planning, getting familiar with the characteristics of the school district and the demography so that the administrators and teachers could be able to identify the needs, expectations and possible readiness level of the students.

Model English Language Curriculum (For 2nd – 8th Grades)

| Levels [CEFR*] (Hours / Week) | Grades | Skill focus | Main activities/Strategies |
|----------------------------------|--------|---|----------------------------|
| 1 [A1] (2) | 2 | Listening and Speaking | TPR/Arts and crafts/Drama |
| | 3 | Listening and Speaking Very Limited Reading and Writing° | |
| | 4 | Listening and Speaking Very Limited Reading and Writing° | |
| 2 [A1] (3) | 5 | Listening and Speaking Limited Reading° Very Limited Writing° | Drama/Role-play |
| | 6 | Listening and Speaking Limited Reading° Limited Writing° | |
| 3 [A2] (4) | 7 | Primary: Listening and Speaking Secondary: Reading and Writing | Theme-based ∞ |
| | 8 | Primary: Listening and Speaking Secondary: Reading and Writing | |

° Any skill marked as very limited refers to short and simple oral/written texts and materials. For instance, in the 2nd through the 4th grades, the focus is primarily on developing listening and speaking skills, as supported by Cameron's (2001) assertion that "for young learners, spoken language is the medium through which the new language is encountered, understood, practiced and learnt" (p. 18). Therefore, activities involving reading and writing are limited to the word level (e.g., learners see a picture of a cat and write the word "cat" underneath). On the other hand, skills marked as limited are used for no more than 25 words at a time for the grade level indicated; accordingly, at the 5th and 6th grade levels, as students continue to develop their language skills, exposure to reading is upgraded to the sentence level. In the 7th and 8th grades, older students who have formed the necessary foundation for an understanding of literacy issues will then be exposed to reading and writing as an integral aspect of language learning.

∞ Theme-based instruction is characterized by the following: a highly contextualized language learning environment; language usage and lexis centered around the topic; and skills and activities integrated by the theme selected, with the topic of instruction (e.g., scientists, geography, responsibilities at home, etc.) serving as a connecting thread and targeting meaningful, situation-based learning.

All of the foreign language skills [Reading (R), Listening (L), Speaking (S¹), and Writing (W)] were addressed throughout the new program for English language, yet little emphasis is given to reading and writing in the second and third grades. The learning outcomes specified within the program were coded with regard to the course name, grade, unit title/theme number, language skill and the number of the learning outcomes. Language skills were also coded to pinpoint the place of a given objective throughout the syllabus. These codes were then assigned to each learning outcome, as follows:

Course and Grade

Theme

E6. 1. SP1.

Students will be able to use a series of phrases and simple expressions to express repeated actions.

Language Skill and Learning Outcome