

Evaluation of the 6th, 7th, and 8th Grades English Language Curriculum Content's Spirality

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Abstract: This study intends to evaluate the spiral elements in the content of 6th, 7th, and 8th grades' English Language Curriculum. It is a qualitative study, wherein interviews and document analysis were used to collect data, and content analysis was used to analyze it. The sample of the study consists of 14 teachers working in urban and rural secondary schools in Balıkesir in the 2013-2014 academic year. The main finding of the study is that the English Language Curriculum of 6th, 7th, and 8th grades is spiral to some, yet insufficient, extent.

Keywords: English language instruction curriculum, content component, spiral approach to content organization.

INTRODUCTION

The qualified labor force, a consequence of the recent scientific and technological developments, has been the most important element providing advantages in international competition. As a matter of fact, individuals who can reach, interpret, analyze, and produce knowledge, rather than memorize it, are the major actors in this competition. Knowledge of foreign languages has played a significant role in the development of such competent individuals, thus has been attached increasing importance by national educational policies.

Proficiency in a foreign language directly influences the ability to better adapt to today's world, improve global qualities, and develop a broader perspective of life [1]. Leaving from this very importance and need, Turkish education system has designed programs based on contemporary approaches to language teaching, aiming at the functional learning of language [2].

Whatever approach to curriculum design is adopted, the content should be formulated based on certain criteria. The first criterion to meet, in the process of content formulation, is alignment with objectives. In addition, it should be suitable for the students' level, worthwhile, reliable, valid, useful, meaningful, practical, current, scientifically accurate, and concurrent with the learning principles [3-8].

Content is not just an accumulation resulting from any sequence of input. Upon its selection, the

content should be organized in itself so that it will be presented within a logical structure [9]. According to Bruner [10], the changes in the property of scientific knowledge and the rapid increase in the quantity of knowledge in the last century have led to new approaches to content organization. The major approaches to content organization are linear, pyramid, core, modular, subject matter-project driven, critical and spiral [9].

The essence of the contemporary educational philosophy has been to convert knowledge into meaning and to develop skills. The content organization approach that best fits this purpose is spiral approach [10]. The principle taught in this approach, developed by Bruner, is that new items are built on the previously learned items [9]. Spiral approach involves regular revisiting of items to be learned. Other approaches to curriculum design may also aim to revisit content, but it is the spiral approach that truly entails internalization of content at a far deeper level. Each structure is built on the previous one, allowing for students' learning in their own way [11]. These features of spiral approach to content organization apparently bear elements of constructivist approach [12-13].

According to Henson [14], the advocates of constructivism claim that each item of content knowledge should be linked with the previous one. Association of previous input with the new input makes the learning of content permanent. Re-presenting the input at meaningful points, the spiral approach goes a bit beyond this association.

Content organization according to spiral approach is best for curriculum design for foreign language education because it is in concordance with constructivist approach, student-centered, geared toward real life situations, conducive to repetition and continuous expansion of content, as well as association of new learnings with previous learnings [15]. Therefore, the Turkish National Education System, which follows constructivism, is claimed to have adopted spiral approach to content organization in the English language syllabus in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades [2].

The review of related literature shows that the implementation of spiral curriculum has had positive effects on the effectiveness of learning [16-17], yet no study has been carried out to evaluate the foreign language education in Turkey from the view point of spiral curriculum, which provided the impetus for the present study.

The present research intends to evaluate the English Language Curriculum of 6th, 7th, and 8th grades in terms of its spiral structure, seeking answers to the following questions:

- 1) How do teachers working in the city center evaluate the English Language Curriculum of 6th, 7th, and 8th grades in terms of its spiral dimension?
- 2) How do teachers working in the rural schools evaluate the English Language Curriculum of 6th, 7th, and 8th grades in terms of its spiral dimension?
- 3) How do the teachers working in the city center and those working in rural schools differ, or agree with each other, in their evaluations of the English Language Curriculum of 6th, 7th, and 8th grades in terms of its spiral dimension?
- 4) How is the 6th, 7th and 8th grades English Language Curriculum design content in terms of its spiral dimension?

METHODOLOGY

Research Model

The present study, which intends to evaluate the spiral nature of the content in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades' English Language Curriculum, is a qualitative survey research design.

Study Group

The sample of the study is composed of a total of 14 teachers working in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades of Balıkesir state schools in the 2013-2014 academic year, who participated in the study voluntarily. Of these, 6 worked at rural schools, while 8 work in the city center.

Data Collection Instruments

To probe the spiral elements in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades' English Language Curriculum, two data sources were used: teachers and the program design itself. An interview form was used for the former, and document analysis for the latter. The interview and the document analyses were used for the same purpose in the research, i.e., to increase the reliability and validity of results through diverse data sources and data collection instruments, and to reach more scientific conclusions through the confirmation of results obtained from two different data sources.

The interview form was prepared by first building a pool of items, each of which intends to elicit teachers' opinions that would be useful for the research questions. Then, from among these, the items that best serve the purpose of research and research questions were selected. The items were prepared with utmost care to make them clear, understandable, unambiguous, and non-biased.

The tentative interview form was subjected to expert opinion, and revised according to the expert's feedback. It was then piloted in a group similar to the sample group so that the items could be tested in terms of understandability and functionality. The interview form was finalized after these two steps.

The other data collection instrument, document analysis, investigates the English Language Curriculum through the design. The analysis was conducted according to the indicators of the spiral content in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades' English Language Curriculum as prepared by the Ministry of Education.

Data Collection

Informed consent was obtained from the participants before the interviews were conducted with the sample group. The interviews were tape-recorded with the participants' consent so that the reliability of the interviews could be increased and data loss could be prevented.

For the document analysis phase, it was first determined which documents would provide answers to the main and subsidiary research questions, and how to reach them. To respond to the research question, the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades' English Language Curriculum prepared by The Ministry of Education-Board of Education and Discipline was analyzed.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Content analysis was used in the analysis of data. To analyze the data obtained from the interviews, the data digitally recorded was first transcribed and each interviewee was assigned a code. The code UT was assigned to teachers working at urban schools, and RT to those working in rural schools. In the same manner, the urban teachers were assigned numbers from 1 to 8,

and the rural teachers from 1 to 6, according to the order of the implementation of the interviews. For example, the teacher who was working at an urban school, and who was interviewed in the third place was assigned the code UT3.

The researcher reviewed the interview notes several times prior to the actual data coding to have a general idea of the data. This step was followed by the coding of data collected from interviews according to the subsidiary research questions. During this process, all codes that have the potential to answer the research questions were combined under the same code. Then, themes and sub-themes emerged out of these codes. Once the themes were formed, all of them were revised once again, and the sub-themes that look connected were combined. Before the themes were finalized, the quotations that belong to the themes and codes were checked again to make sure that they are appropriate matches. The experts and researchers used the same agreement percentage equation for the same data set and through the same steps, revealing a reliability coefficient of .92.

The analysis of data collected by document analysis was carried out through the steps proposed by Creswell [18]. As part of this process, first the documents obtained were scanned thoroughly. Secondly, visual materials were listed. Thirdly, the data obtained was organized and categorized according to the data type. Then, the data was carefully analyzed to internalize the meaning it conveys. What followed was the coding of data and establishment of themes for the data within the same category. Finally, the descriptions were made by the help of these themes so that the data could be interpreted in a detailed way.

Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research, the validity is related with the truth of scientific results, and reliability with replicability of them [19].

To ensure validity, the data was interpreted based on verbatim quotations taken from the data sources. To enhance the conclusions and uniformity, the data was triangulated. As part of the data analysis, the data was continuously checked for whether they form a whole in themselves and with each other. The data obtained was associated with the existing theoretical structure so that the data could be integrated with the theoretical foundation. The methodology section of the paper elaborates on the research model, the characteristics of the study group, data collection instruments, and data collection and analysis processes.

To ensure reliability, the data obtained from different data sources were interpreted together, and the data was supported by direct quotations. In the same way to ensure reliability the data was transcribed in an unbiased way, and each and every conclusion was derived objectively, based on several evidence.

RESULTS

The data collected in this study, which intends to determine the spiral elements in the content of the 6th, 7th, and 8th graders’ English Language Curriculum, was arranged according to the indicators of the spiral approach: ‘content that can be repeated at appropriate points’, ‘content that expands progressively’, and ‘content that can be related to previously learned knowledge’. The data collected was presented graphically under four headings: the opinions of teachers working in the city center, the opinions of teachers working in the rural schools, comparative analysis of opinions of teachers working in urban and rural schools, and analysis of the curriculum design as regards the spiral approach to content organization.

Urban School Teachers’ Evaluation of the English Language Curriculum Design as Regards the Spiral Approach to Organization of Subject Matters

Figure 1 demonstrates the urban teachers’ responses to the item “How do you evaluate the subjects in the curriculum as regards their being repeated at appropriate points?”

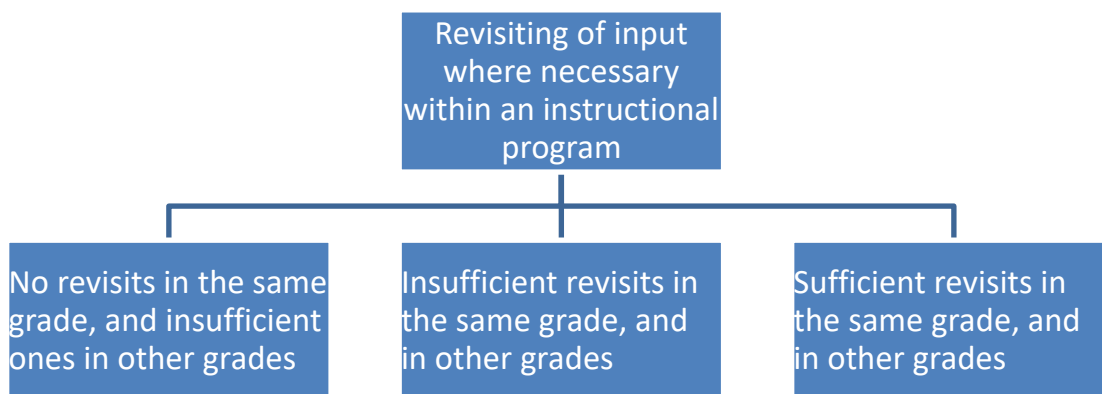


Fig-1: Revisiting of input where necessary within an instructional program

The participants generally stated that the subjects are either not revisited at all or revisited quite insufficiently throughout a year. In other years, they said, the subjects are not revisited sufficiently, either. This is how UT4, UT5, UT6, and UT7 expressed their opinions:

“No revisits within the same grade. Revisits are made in different years; for example, a 6th grade subject comes up again in the 7th grade. Similarly, we deal with ‘if clause’ in the 6th grade, and in the 7th grade.”(UT4)

“There are grammatical repetitions across different grades, but there is no such repetition throughout the same grade. The subjects should be repeated more frequently, or else the students tend to forget them easily.”(UT5)

“The grammar stuff comes up again. I myself again explain the verb tenses, which they learn at the beginning, over a time chart. There are repetitions in other grades, but they do not suffice.” (UT6)

“There is this spiral thing partially. We can see it in the 7th grade subjects. We occasionally refer back to the 6th grade subjects. However, we can’t really say subjects are repeated within the same grade.”(UT7)

UT1, however, agreed with the teachers who talked negatively about this matter, but admitted that there are especially repetitions of grammar subjects.

“If we look at it from the viewpoint of grammar, say, ‘simple present tense’, and ‘present continuous tense’, the students encounter it both in the same grade and in other grades. Functions, say, ‘expressing feelings’ are done only once, and that is it. In other grades, as I said, the grammar subjects are repeated. For example, the first theme in grade 8 is ‘horoscopes’. For this topic to be covered, the students need to have mastery of future tense. The students have learned future tense in the previous years already, so when they do horoscopes, they somewhat revisit it and do not have any difficulty.”(UT1)

The overall results show that the majority of the teachers believe the repetitions do not take place within the same grade, but in higher grades, with them being limited to grammatical rules. Thus, it can be concluded that these repetitions are not sufficient.

Figure 2 presents the urban teachers’ responses to the item “How do you evaluate the subjects in the curriculum as regards their expanding progressively?”

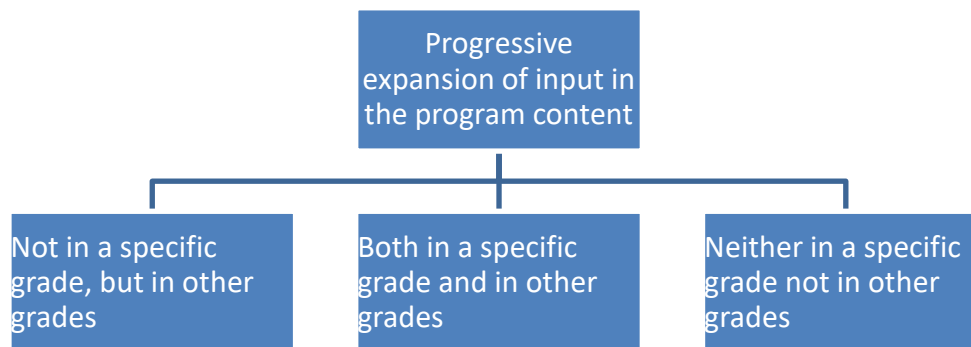


Fig-2: Progressive expansion of input in the program content

As can be seen in Figure 2, the teachers’ responses to this item are threefold. The great majority stated that the progressive expansion does not take place in one grade, but in different grades. UT2, UT5, and UT8 expressed this as follows:

“Yes we can talk about a progressive expansion for different grades. That is, it progressively expands across different grades, but such an expansion does not take place within the same grade.”(UT2)

“Yes, the subject matter expands in higher grades. The students study ‘can’ in the 6th grade, ‘could’ in the 7th grade, and both in the 8th grade. The

students construct single sentences in the 6th grade. The construct compound sentences or longer sentences using connectors. However, as these two do not happen in the same grade, students lose interest in the subject matter.”(UT5)

“Yes subject matters expand in higher grades. For example, they learn simple present tense in the 6th grade, and they study it more intensely towards the 8th grade. This is the same for other grades, but the scope subject matter may not get broader within the same grade.”(UT8)

UT7 indicated that the subject matters build on each other both in the same grade and in higher grades.

“There is this component both within a specific grade and in higher grades. The coverage of subject matters expands.”(UT7)

Some other teachers, however, (UT1 and UT4) did not agree with the statement above.

“There are occasional inconsistencies in the content. Sometimes more challenging topics precede less challenging ones. This obstructs learning. The theme ‘physical appearance’ focused in one of the units in a particular grade introduces so many new things

that the students get confused. The student has to learn so many rules at the same time, which shows that progressive introduction of topics is not given enough of importance. It is the same for other grades.” (UT1)

It can be concluded that, according to the teachers in the study group, the subject matters do not get complex progressively neither in the same garden nor in higher grades.

Figure 3 displays the urban teachers’ responses to the item “How do you evaluate the subjects in the curriculum as regards the new knowledge being built on the prior knowledge?”

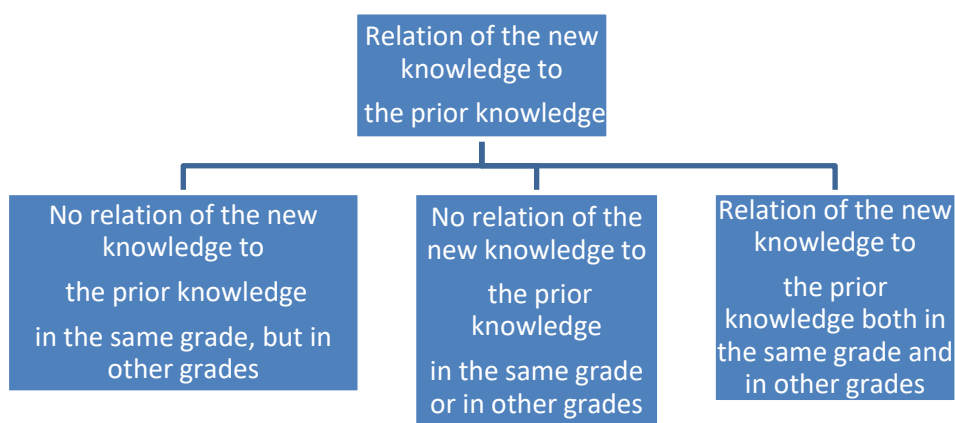


Fig-3: Relation of new subjects in the curriculum to the prior knowledge

As can be seen in Figure 3, the teachers’ opinion on this issue are threefold. The majority of the teachers indicated that the relation of new learnings to the prior learnings does not take place in the same grade but in higher grades. UT2, UT7, and UT4 expressed their opinions as follows:

“This is not a significant curriculum element within the same grade. For example, ‘modals’ can intervene while our focus is ‘simple present tense’, which distracts the students. It creates gaps here and there. But there are connections across different grades.” (UT2)

“As to different grades, they are not so detached; the progression has a logic. But it is not possible to say the same thing for the presentation of topics in the same grade.” (UT7)

“The subject matters are connected in the same grade. For example, in the 7th grade, the topic ‘horoscopes’ is related with ‘future tense’. ‘If clause is divided into three to be covered across three different grades, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades.

It does not necessarily apply to all topics of course, I am talking about grammar.” (UT4)

UT1 and UT3, on the other hand, indicated that new learnings are related to previous learnings neither in the same grade nor in other grades:

“As an English teacher, I don’t really believe that the subjects are introduced in the from the known to unknown order. If there were such an order, it would me who would remember it; even I myself have confusion about the content I teach. There are no links between the subject matters; they are arranged randomly.” (UT1)

“What I have observed is that the principle of building new learnings on prior learnings is not observed in the same grade and in other grades. Sometimes a totally irrelevant topic intervenes, causing conceptual confusion for the students. Just as they have grasped the previous topic, they are distracted by a totally irrelevant one, making it all the more difficult for us to relate it with the previous topic. The students experience confusion.”(UT3)

As regards this item, the only positive comment belongs to UT5:

*“They are ordered from the familiar to the unfamiliar in a grade and in higher grades. They are consecutive. Students first see the familiar input; then, they proceed to unfamiliar content.”*UT5

To sum up, according to the majority of teachers, the organization of the content is not effective in terms of the relation of new learnings with the prior learnings.

Rural school teachers’ Evaluation of the English Language Curriculum Design as Regards the Spiral Approach to Organization of Subject Matters

Figure 4 demonstrates the rural teachers’ responses to the item “How do you evaluate the subjects in the curriculum as regards their being repeated at meaningful points?”

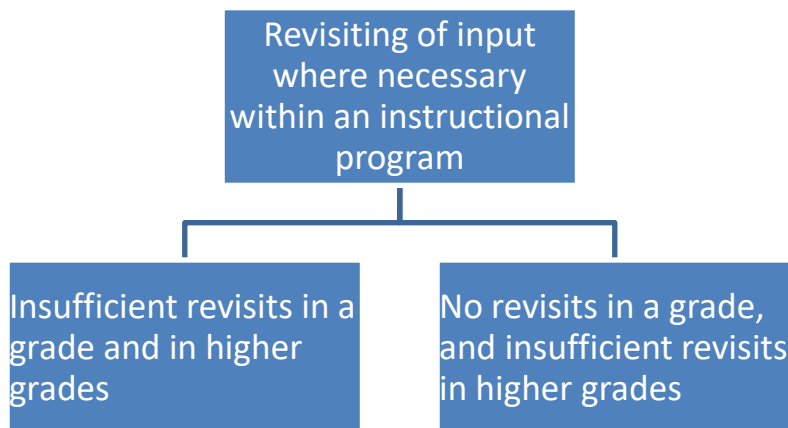


Fig-4: Revisiting of input where necessary within an instructional program

As can be seen in Figure 4, teachers’ responses to this item are twofold. Some of them (RT3, RT4, and RT5) indicated that the revisits are not sufficient in a particular grade or across grades.

“There are no repetitions of subject matters within a grade except for verb tenses. The students’ progress also shows that revisits should be more often and they should not be restricted to grammar topics. It should be the same for other grades. I mean only grammatical input is revisited in one grade and in higher grades.”(RT1)

“It is not sufficient in the rural schools neither in the same grade nor in other grades. The repetitions should be more often, otherwise students tend to forget.”(RT3)

“The repetitions of the subject matter are not sufficient in a grade or in the higher grades. It is often us who do the repetitions ourselves. These repetitions should be more regular. Otherwise the students forget whatever they have learned.” (RT4)

“Neither for the same grade nor for higher grades are the repetitions sufficient. This is a rural

school. The students’ performances in English courses or in other courses are not very high. To compensate for this discrepancy, more revisits need to be made.”(RT5)

Some other teachers (RT1, RT2, and RT6), on the other hand, stated that there are no revisits in one particular grade, but in higher grades with them being limited to grammatical topics.

“Grammar topics are repeated in higher grades. For example, ‘simple present tense’ occasionally comes up in the syllabus. I cannot really say that it is repeated throughout the same grade. Considering the level of students in rural schools, it does not really work.”(RT6)

To sum up, according to the majority of teachers, the organization of the content is not effective in terms of the repetition of subject matters. For them, there are no repetitions in a grade and in higher grades, and they are limited to grammar topics, if any.

Figure 5 presents the rural teachers’ responses to the item “How do you evaluate the subjects in the curriculum as regards their expanding progressively?”

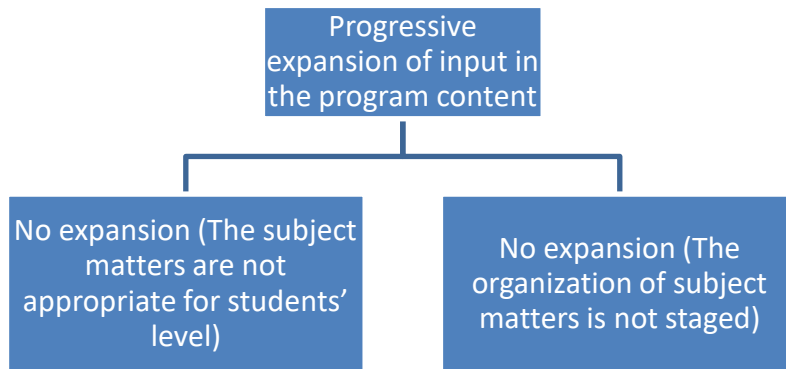


Fig-5: Progressive expansion of input in the program content

In brief, the majority of the participants (RT1, RT2, RT4, and RT5) indicated that the organization of the content is not effective in terms of their expansion throughout the syllabus. They attribute this to the presentation of content, which is not appropriate for the students' level, in particular.

"This is just a village school. The students' level is not very bright. The expansion of the topics in a grade or in higher grades does not really take place satisfactorily."(RT1)

"The subject matters start with relatively easier ones in a grade and in higher grades, but when it comes to delving deeper, students again have difficulties."(RT2)

"Continuous expansion is not very fruitful for students at rural schools. The simple should be the start point, and the more challenging subject matters should not be introduced very soon. The expansion of subject matters should occur in the units that come much later. Otherwise the students are perplexed, having difficulty understanding."(RT4)

"The topics should be tackled in simpler terms both in the same grade and in higher grades. They

should progressively expand. These topics may be quite easy for the students at urban schools, but are quiet challenging for the rural school students."(RT5)

Some teachers (e.g.RT3) associated progressive expansion of subject matters with the existence of stages among them.

"I think that there is an overwhelming number of subject matters for students to learn in each grade. Instead, the number of subject matters should be reduced, greater space should be gained for more practice activities, and the subjects' difficulty level should increase stage by stage. This would bring higher performance at school. The subject matter should be organized through stages both in one particular grade and in other grades."(RT3)

The overall results demonstrate that the content of the curriculum is not very effective as regards progressive expansion of subject matters.

Figure 6 displays the rural teachers' responses to the item "How do you evaluate the subjects in the curriculum as regards the new knowledge being built on the prior knowledge?"

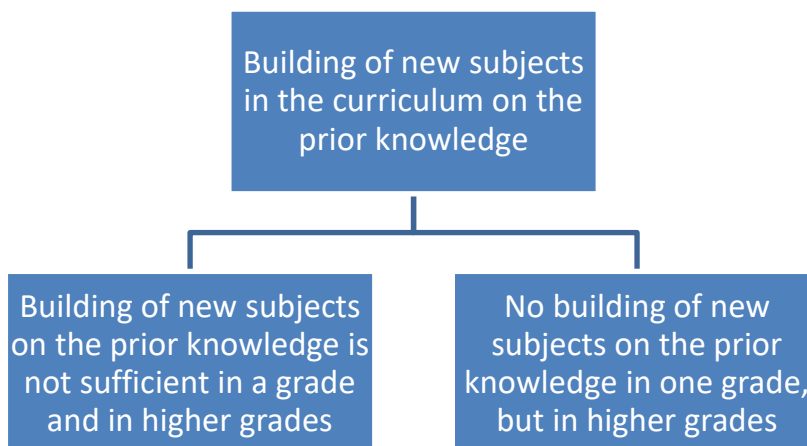


Fig-6: Building of new subjects in the curriculum on the prior knowledge

To conclude, majority of the participants find the organization of the content ineffective in terms of the building of new subjects in the curriculum on the prior knowledge. Below are opinions of RT2, RT3, and RT4 on this issue:

“Grade 7 starts with ‘future tense’ and is followed by the theme ‘tourists’. There is no connection between them. The connections are not strong across grades, either.”(RT2)

“There are some, if not rich, connections in one grade and in different grades. The connections among subject matters should be given greater importance.”(RT3)

“I cannot really say that the subject matters bear the feature of being connected to each other. I mean it both for one grade and for higher grades. I think the subject matters should be connected to each other. The students’ level is low; they have difficulty comprehending.”(RT4)

RT6, who stated that new learning are not linked with prior learnings within the same grade but in higher grades, expressed his views as follows:

“In my opinion, the relation of new knowledge with the prior knowledge feature does not exist in one grade, but there are connections across different grades. I mean, yes, we can say that there is an order from the known to the unknown across different grades.”(RT6)

The great majority of the participants indicated that the content of the curriculum is ineffective as regards the relation of new learnings with prior learnings. The teachers expressed that the students have difficulties in learning just as the teachers have difficulty in establishing relations between the new and prior learnings because there are weak, if any, connections between them.

A Comparative analysis of the way urban and rural school teachers evaluate the English Language Curriculum design as regards the spiral approach to organization of content

The way urban and rural school teachers see the English Language Curriculum design as regards the spiral approach to content organization differs from each other in one important aspect. The urban school teachers believe that the major spiral elements such as repetition, progressive expansion, and relation to prior knowledge do not lack across grades but it does within the same grade, whereas rural school teachers think that these elements lack both within the same grade and across different grades.

“Not much repetition in the same grade. There are repetitions in other grades. For example, a 6th grade topic is again dealt with in the 7th grade, ‘if clause’ is studied in both 6th and 7th grade.”(UT4)

“There are not enough of repetitions within the same grade and in different grades. We have to arrange for these repetitions ourselves. The content should be organized in a way that there should be more repetitions. Otherwise, students tend to forget what they have learned.”(RT4)

The fact that the participant teachers work under different conditions is reflected in their varying responses. Indeed, the different working conditions in urban and rural teachers lead to differences in their viewpoints.

There is a consensus between teachers working in urban and rural schools in that they both believe that the spiral feature of English language curriculum content is not effective. However, the majority of urban school teachers indicated that the curriculum does not spiral in the same grade whereas the rural school teachers indicate that it spirals neither in the same grade nor in other grades.

Analysis of the English Language Curriculum Design as Regards the Spiral Approach to Organization of Content

An analysis of the curriculum design prepared by the Ministry of Education reveals that the repetition of the subject matters is restricted to grammatical topics only. The ‘connectors’ are dealt with throughout the 6th grade, from the first to the last unit. However, the fact they come up in every unit is not in concordance with the principle of ‘repetition where appropriate’. Except for the ‘connectors’, the repetition of the subject matters is not given enough of attention in grade 7, either. The same problem applies to Grade 8; while ‘connectors’ are revisited in every unit, other subject matters are not repeated at all. Grammatical topics are repeated to a limited extent in the same grade, so are they in higher grades. ‘Family’, the first theme in Grade 6, is revisited through the theme ‘cooperation in the family’ in Grade 8, ‘different lifestyles’ in Unit 16 of grade 6, and ‘changing life styles’ in Unit 12 of Grade 7. Similarly, ‘Stories and Legends’, which is the 9th unit of Grade 7, is somewhat revisited through ‘Success Stories’ in the 9th unit of Grade 8.

Spiral curriculum does not merely involve repetitions. It also entails increasing depth achieved by addition of new aspects to the material [21]. The findings of the study show that the expansion of material like this does not take place within the same grade. It does take place in higher grades but with only limited extent. For example, in the 6th grade, the theme ‘family’ is studied in the very first unit, and as part of it,

a series of language skills exercises is carried out. In the listening part, the students are required to comprehend a listening text about 'family'. In the reading part, they are required to 'elicit the main idea of a text about family'. In the writing part, they are required to 'write simple vocabulary', as well as 'use simple connectors such as *and*, *but* to combine statements', and in the speaking part, they are required to 'ask and answer simple questions'. In the 7th grade, the topic of 'different believes' is covered in the first unit. In the listening part, the students are asked to 'identify the topic and main of a simple authentic listening text', and 'listen for specific information'. In the reading part, they are to 'understand a text about daily life', 'locate information about horoscopes in the text', and 'locate information about horoscopes enumerated in a chart'. In the writing part, the students are to 'combine phrases and clauses using *and*, *but*, and *because*'. In the speaking part, the students are expected to use the following skills: 'discuss families, life standards, and educational infra-structure', 'talk about people, places, and possessions, and introduce oneself and others', 'ask questions and elicit answers', 'interact in a structured discussion', and 'ask questions and collect opinions about daily situations'. It can be seen that quite advanced skills are expected of students in the first units of both grades. Similarly, 8th grade starts with intensive topics. Then, the topic turns out to be 'fun reading' in the 10th unit. Here, in the listening section, the students are asked to identify the mood of the story by attending to the 'melody'. In the reading part, they 'read the short story', 'guess the unknown vocabulary items', 'understand the relations between events and characters', and 'draw the storyline'. In the speaking part, they are asked to use the skills of 'making simple definitions', 'inquiring the meaning of unclear key words', and 'making simple discussions about the topic'. These skills appear in the first units, rather than in the last units, and the skills required from the students in earlier units are more difficult, which shows that the principle of progressive expansion of subject matters is not observed in the same grade.

An analysis of the curriculum design as to the progressive expansion of subject matters has revealed that the expansion that takes place across grades is restricted to grammar and that other subject matters are presented and covered in the same way all the time. In the first unit of grade 6, students are expected to make sentences by using the connectors 'and' and 'but' while in the second unit, they are expected to make sentences by using the connectors 'and' 'but', and 'then'. These connectors are given the same degree of importance in the other units. The students are expected to combine sentences in the first unit, and they are expected to use a skill at almost the same level of difficulty. What is more, the number of these connectors is increased a little by the addition of one connector, 'because'. The students are expected to use the same skills with the

same connectors throughout grade 7. The very same connectors remain in the content of 8th grade curriculum with a little higher level of difficulty.

The analysis of the content from the viewpoint of 'relation of new learnings with the prior learnings' demonstrate that the links between the subject matters do not exist in the same grade. The 6th grade topics are in the following order: 'family, tastes and interests, food and drinks, daily life and routines, school, weather, hygiene, party, living things, games and sports, safety, different places, holiday, mathematics, and laboratory work'. The first theme 'family' could be followed by 'school', which would help students better connect the two. Similarly, the 'party' theme could be followed by 'food and drinks'. Presenting relevant topics one after the other may help students grasp the topics more easily. By the same token, presenting the topics of weather, living things, laboratory work, and math detached from each other may adversely affect the learning process.

The themes in the 7th grade are in the following order: 'different believes, touristic attractions, natural inheritance, computer, fashion, TV programs, the old days, inventions and discoveries, stories and legends, history, talents, life styles, technology, ecology, modern medicine, and internal realm'. The detached places of 'different believes, life standards, and inner life' in this order make it difficult to draw connections in between them. Similarly, the topics of 'the old days' and 'history' should be presented in a connected way. Placing 'natural inheritance, and touristic attractions' after 'inventions and discoveries' may help build stronger link between topics.

The order of topics in grade 8 is as follows: 'friendship, path to success, physical appearance, dreams, Atatürk, detective stories, personal experiences, cooperation in the family, success stories, fun reading, personal objectives, personality types, language learning, measures against risks, and preferences and empathy'. As can be seen here, such an order as 'personality types, personal objectives, and personal experiences' would make greater sense as learning the personality types, and then talking about determining personal objectives, followed by personal experiences would make the learning experience more meaningful. This meaningful order could further be consolidated by 'path to success', and 'success stories', a food example of which would be 'Atatürk'.

It was observed that the language content does not deepen across years to a sufficient extent. The students learn the first form of adverb of manner in grade 6, and having revised the first form in grade 7 and 8, they learn the second form. An overall analysis of the topics did not point to any connection between the topics.

The analysis of the elements of a spiral approach in the content of the English language Curriculum Design demonstrated that the content is quite insufficient in terms of this aspect. Generally, the analysis of the elements based on the results of the evaluation of the design, it can be concluded that the program content is not effective as to the spiral dimension.

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, AND SUGGESTIONS

The study found out that, according to the urban school teachers, the content of English language curriculum is not spiral in the same grade, but it is in other grades. They stated that the three spiral elements of repetition, progressive expansion, and relation of new learnings with prior learnings do not exist in the same grade, but in other grades. Henson [14] states that spiral curriculum, a constructivism based approach to content organization in language curriculum, should not merely involve repetition of subject matter. In an attempt to further spiral curriculum, he claimed that the scope of the subject matters should progressively be broader and the connection between them should be established; the new subject matter should be built on the previously learned subject matter. His point is that spiral curriculum can be efficient provided that these are achieved. Based on the data collected from the participants, it can be concluded that the English language curriculum is spiral to a certain extent, yet it is not sufficient.

The data collected from the rural school teachers showed that the spiral elements are not sufficient in one grade or in higher grades. Even if they seem to be included in the curriculum, the teachers, in practice, cannot implement them truly because of loaded content and inappropriate difficulty level. Bruner [10], who asserts that the subject matters continually expand in the spiral approach, highlights that presenting the subject matters to the students in a complicated and unconnected way will only cause conceptual confusion.

The overall results show that the spiral elements in the English language curriculum are not sufficient although the teachers working at the urban schools and rural schools have varying opinions about the existence of spiral elements in the same grade and in different grades.

The English language curriculum design prepared by the Ministry of Education was also analyzed. It was observed that the curriculum only partially possesses the features of spiral curriculum approach laid down in the guidelines for the instructional program. Although the content has the repetition element of the spiral curriculum in different grades, it was observed to be limited by grammar topics

and the topics are not repeated in general. A study carried out by Efe [21] demonstrated that students regard English language as a goal and thus, are willing to receive student-centered education rather than teacher-centered education. The present study also found out that the language is used with deliberate focus on grammar and not much importance is attached to communicative approach. In their study, Rhodes and Ashcroft [17] focused on the effects of spiral program. They presented skills to the participants in the study group through progressive expansion and repetition methods to find out in the end that their performance increased dramatically.

The study also revealed that the progressive expansion of content feature hardly exists in the same grade and is limited to grammar in other grades. The same problem applies to the feature of relating new learnings with prior learning. Cadavid [16] studied topical curriculum and spiral approach to content organization and found out that they have positive impact on both students and teachers.

The study showed that the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade English language curriculum is spiral to some extent, which is restricted to grammar only, and that this is highly ineffectual especially for a program claimed to be designed according to the principles of spiral curriculum. Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are made:

- In the process of curriculum development, opinions of teachers working in urban and rural areas, and different regions should be collected.
- A diligent content analysis should precede content selection and content organization in the curriculum design process.
- The number of subject matters in English language curriculum should be reduced, and stronger links between the subject matters should be established.
- The content of the curriculum should be reorganized considering students' level of readiness and individual differences.
- The content should be restructured with a spiral approach to curriculum, which is accepted to be the content organization approach most conducive to language learning, making sure that the content deepens progressively, is revisited at appropriate points, and the new learnings are related with prior learnings.
- The necessary curriculum redesign should be made considering teachers' opinions pertaining to the practical problems in the implementation of the program.
- The present study was conducted in secondary schools; it should be replicated in the broader

context of secondary education and higher education.

- Further and more extensive research should be conducted on eclectic approach and mixed method, which are accepted to be the most suitable approach and method for language teaching. In addition, the transition from grammar teaching to communicative teaching should be explored.

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