

An Evaluation of English Textbooks in Turkish Primary Education: **Students' and Teachers' Perceptions***

Yasemin Kırkgöz*

Suggested Citation:

Kırkgöz, Y. (2011) An evaluation of English textbooks in Turkish primary education: Students' and teachers' perceptions, *Egitim Arastirmalari-Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 44, 167-184.

Abstract

Problem Statement: Textbooks play a crucial role in language education; thus, an investigation into the responses of the students and teachers to the textbook in use facilitates an understanding of the extent to which curriculum objectives are implemented at the teaching level through the agency of textbooks.

Purpose of Study: This research aims to evaluate four English textbooks that have been approved to be used in grade-4 and grade-5 classes by the Turkish Ministry of National Education in state primary schools after the 2005 curriculum renewal process.

Method: Participants were 816 fourth- and fifth-grade students and 124 teachers, selected with a cluster sampling technique from 54 schools in Adana, Turkey. Data were collected through a textbook evaluation checklist—a Smiley Questionnaire—and complemented with interviews. Descriptive statistics and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and the Scheffe-test were used in evaluating the perceptions of students and teachers to the fourth-grade textbooks. In addition, the independent-samples t-test was used in analyzing the perceptions of students and teachers to the fifth-grade textbook. The interview data were subjected to content analysis.

* This article was presented at Actions and Words. The 13th International INGED ELT Conference at Gazi University, Ankara, Turkey, October 23-25, 2009.

** Assoc. Prof. Dr., Çukurova University, Faculty of Education, Department of ELT, Adana-Turkey, ykirkgoz@cu.edu.tr

Findings and Results: It was found that fourth-grade students considered *Trip1* as the most appropriate textbook, followed by *Texture English* and *Time for English*. A similar finding was obtained from the teachers, except that no difference was observed in the opinion of the teachers on the 'skills' subscale of the questionnaire. Interview findings with the students and the teachers confirmed that each grade-4 textbook is designed to meet the MNE curriculum objectives and the students' needs. Analysis of the fifth-grade textbook indicated that the students had a more favorable perception than the teachers on 'layout,' 'language content,' 'subject content,' and 'overall' subscales of the smiley questionnaire. Yet, on the 'skills' and 'methodology' subscales, no significant difference was observed between the perceptions of both groups. Most grade-5 students interviewed were pleased with using *Time for English*. Whilst the teachers interviewed expressed several favorable aspects of the grade-5 textbook, two shortcomings were identified: complexity and learnability of the language items.

Conclusions and Recommendations: Findings demonstrate that the four English textbooks are well-designed to serve as *potential agents* for curriculum change. Three implications are suggested for the future textbook policy of the Ministry. First, the grade-5 textbook needs to be revised to achieve a better sequencing of language items. Second, to increase cost-effectiveness of the textbooks, the necessary revisions need to be made on the available textbooks based on such research findings. Finally, pronunciation should be integrated through developing specialized activities in future published English textbooks.

Keywords: Perceptions, primary education, textbook evaluation, textbook as agent of curriculum change, grade 4, grade 5.

The volume of research in the use of textbooks indicates that school textbooks play a pivotal role in providing the necessary knowledge in many language teaching contexts (Allwright, 1981; Haycroft, 1998; O'Neill, 1982). Sheldon (1988) points out that "textbooks represent for both students and teachers the visible heart of any ELT program" (p. 237), providing the basis for the content of the lessons and the kinds of language practice in which the students take part. Similarly, Davison (1976) notes that, for learners, textbooks are the most important source of language input apart from contact with the teacher. Hutchinson and Torres (1994) maintain that "the textbook is an almost universal element of [English language] teaching" and continue to note that "no teaching-learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbook" (p.315). Cunningsworth (1995), in agreement, suggests that textbooks have the potential to serve as an effective resource for self-directed learning, a resource for presentation of materials, and a syllabus where they reflect pre-determined learning objectives.

In addition to functioning as a basic teaching tool, a somewhat smaller body of research has documented textbooks as *agents of change*. Hutchinson and Torres (1994) argue that “the importance of the textbook becomes even greater in periods of change” (p.315). Kennedy (1996) recognizes the greater importance of the textbook in periods of change, noting that “the textbook should not be excluded as a possible powerful agent for change in educational innovation” (p.87). Textbooks may function as a potential “agent for change” during educational innovation due to several reasons; first, textbooks can support teachers through potentially disturbing change processes (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994), functioning as the most powerful device for the transmission of ideas. Second, textbooks reflect the methodologies espoused by the innovation by *mediating* between the target language and the learner (Cunningsworth, 1995). Finally, textbooks can introduce change gradually, helping to scaffold teaching and learning by offering teachers a framework of guidance and psychological support (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994).

In many countries where English is used as a foreign or a second language, e.g., China and Korea, the Ministry of National Education prescribes the use of locally produced, ministry-approved textbooks, particularly in state primary and secondary schools. Likewise, the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MNE) encourages the use of locally produced and Ministry-approved textbooks in state primary and secondary schools. The main reason for this decision could be attributed to easy availability of the locally published textbooks and the assumption that such books are written specifically to meet the objectives laid out by the Ministry. An additional benefit would be to help standardize instruction, since the use of the same set of textbooks in a program can ensure that the students, nationwide, receive similar content. Furthermore, unlike commercial textbooks that may often represent a financial burden for students, locally published textbooks are cost-effective. As justified by Richards (2001), commercial textbooks will never be a perfect fit for a given language program; since they are often written for global markets, they may not reflect the interests and needs of students in a particular local context.

Language Policy on Textbooks in Turkish Primary Education

At the primary level education in Turkey, following the introduction of the first ELT curriculum innovation in 1997, the second round of curriculum innovation was introduced in 2005. Studies conducted (Kırkgöz, 2006, 2007) into the teachers’ perceptions of the use of textbooks published after the first curriculum innovation revealed that the textbooks, while having several favorable aspects, had a number of shortcomings: (1) Textbooks did not support the communicative language teaching as proposed by the Ministry; (2) activities were not ‘authentic’ in that they were not contextualized in situations meaningful to learners; (3) textbooks did not adequately recycle the information, and the layout was not well-organized.

In 2005, to overcome the gaps resulting from the earlier policy implementation, the MNE revised the previous curriculum, emphasizing the following points (MEB, 2006): (1) to promote learners’ communicative proficiency in English by fostering integrated development of language skills through student-centered learning; (2) to

address learners' multiple intelligences through presenting lessons in a variety of ways; (3) to introduce content- and language-integrated learning (CLIL) into the curriculum to allow for certain non-language cross-curricular subjects, e.g., geography, to be learned in L2, and (4) to promote experiential learning and creativity in learners through art and craft activities.

A textbook-writing team, consisting of experienced ELT experts, assumed the responsibility of writing textbooks under the leadership of the MNE, the responsible body for coordinating the production of textbooks in primary schools. The three textbooks, *Texture English* (Pakkan, 2007), *Time for English* (Ersöz et al., 2006), and *Trip1* (Öztürk, 2007), after approval from the MNE, were introduced to be used in grade-4 state primary schools in 2005, and a single-textbook *Time for English* for grade 5 (Ersöz et al., 2007) in 2006. The MNE also started to finance the books for all recipients of compulsory education.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the extent to which ELT textbooks published following the curriculum renewal process in 2005 for grade 4 and 5 students in Turkish state primary education act as *agents of change* in meeting the MNE's curriculum objectives and students' learning needs by addressing the research questions:

(1) What are the students' and the teachers' perceptions of grade-4 English textbooks?

(2) What are the students' and the teachers' perceptions of the grade-5 English textbook?

Method

Participants and Procedures

The participants were 816 fourth- and fifth-grade, primary-school students (aged 9-11) and 124 teachers (aged 25-36) selected by a cluster sampling technique from 54 schools in the province of Adana, Turkey. Fifty-four schools, representing 35% of the primary schools were randomly selected from the state primary schools; each school (cluster) sampled was a small-scale representation of the total population of grade 4-5 schools. For each selected cluster, one or two fourth- and fifth-grade classes and 1-3 teachers were included in the study. Each class was comprised of 25-35 students. Prior to the study, consent of the administrators of the selected schools was obtained. Then the schools were visited by the researcher for data collection.

Instruments

The two primary sources of data were the smiley questionnaire and interviews.

Textbook Evaluation Checklist. A textbook evaluation checklist, called a smiley questionnaire, adapted from several standardized evaluation checklists (Cunningsworth, 1984, 1995; Sheldon, 1987, 1988; Williams, 1983) and developed after a review of the literature on young learners and in light of the MNE curriculum objectives, was used to guide the systematic data collection. Two sets of the smiley

questionnaire were specifically developed—one for the students (SQ) and the other for the teachers (TQ).

The SQ was comprised of six subscales and 36 items. **The first subscale ‘layout and design’ comprised** three statements evaluating such physical features of the book as the quality of the visuals, how attractive and clear the layout was (Sheldon, 1988). Seven statements in the **‘language content’** subscale evaluated whether the book supplies ‘appropriate’ models of English in dialogues and texts, which are **authentic and learnable at the students’ level of proficiency**. **Nine statements in ‘subject content’** aimed to evaluate if the textbook contains sufficient materials of genuine interest to learners and a variety of topics, whether the cultural and gender aspects are well-represented and organized, and if proper sequencing of the content is **achieved considering “complexity” and “learnability”** (Cunningsworth, 1995). **Six statements in the ‘skills’** subscale analyzed whether the skills covered by the textbook are consistent with curriculum requirements (Harmer, 1991) and whether the **materials are “authentic” in that they are well-designed to equip learners for real-life interactions**. The **‘methodology’ subscale addressed** eight statements comprising whether “the methodology of the textbook addresses the objectives of the curriculum” and whether **the textbook “meets the needs of the learners to the highest degree”** (Cunningsworth, 1995, p.7). Finally, the **‘overall’ subscale** comprised three statements inquiring if “the language used in the book is appropriate for **students’ level,**” whether “students like learning English with that particular book,” and whether “the textbook and the practice book are compatible with each other.” A parallel questionnaire was developed for the teachers (TQ) comprising the same set of 36 statements and six subscales. Participants were requested to indicate their responses out of a **5-point Likert scale from 1 (“I strongly disagree”) to 5 (“I strongly agree”)** by coloring the appropriate smiley face.

Interviews. To gain further insights into the participants’ perceptions of the textbooks, focus group interviews were held with 253 students; and individual, semi-structured interviews were carried out with 86 teachers. Interviews, conducted in Turkish, were audio-recorded, transcribed, and translated in English for data analysis. The interview questions were also piloted before being implemented to determine whether the questions were reasonable and clear.

Validity and Reliability

Each questionnaire was initially designed in English. Then it was translated into Turkish and back-translated into English with the assistance of two ELT experts to check the consistency and reliability of the translation. In administering the questionnaires, the Turkish version was used. To obtain validity of the instruments, TQ was piloted by consulting the opinion of seven experienced teachers teaching English to grade 4-5 students to ascertain the comprehensibility and appropriateness of each statement. Likewise, SQ was piloted with 102 grade 4-5 students, and minor changes were made **based on the pilot teachers’ and students’ responses**. Furthermore, for every item in the questionnaire, reliability was checked. The Cronbach Alpha for the entire SQ was found to be $\alpha=.82$ and $\alpha=.80$ for TQ.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected from March to May in 2009. From the sample, 816 students responded to the SQ during regular classes: 212 using *Trip1*, 99 *Time for English*, and 95 *Texture English* as grade-4 textbooks, and 410 grade-5 students used *Time for English*. In the data collection, 124 teachers responded to TQ, of whom 16 were using *Texture English*, 21 *Time for English*, and 23 *Trip1* as a grade-4 textbook, and 64 grade-5 teachers were using *Time for English*.

Focus group interviews were conducted by the researcher with a sample of students ($n=276$) from each class, each group consisting of 5-6 students. Of the 276 students, 94 were using *Trip1*, 43 *Time for English*, 61 *Texture English*, and 78 students used the grade-5 textbook. Individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 86 volunteer teachers from different primary schools to gain access to **participants' experiences with the use of textbooks**: 12 using *Trip1*, 14 *Time for English*, 15 *Texture English*, and 45 students *Time for English* - the grade-5 textbook. Each interview lasted 10-15 minutes.

In this research, a two-stage data analysis was performed:

(1) The first stage involved analyzing the data from grade-4 students' and the **teachers' questionnaires**. A descriptive statistics and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was undertaken to see if there were any statistically significant differences in the perceptions of the students and the teachers regarding the three grade-4 textbooks concerning the six subscales in the questionnaire. A post-hoc Scheffe-test was run to see where these differences were (Tables 1 and 2). The statistical software package used was Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows 10.0.

(2) In the analysis of the grade-5 textbook, an independent-samples t-test was used to compare perceptions of the students and the teachers for *Time for English*, which is illustrated in the same table (see Table 3).

The interview data were **subjected to content analysis to obtain "systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns"** (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). The audiotapes of the interviews were transcribed prior to analysis. Initially, the researcher analyzed the interviews using iterative coding by repeatedly reading the responses given to each interview question by the research participants. Analysis of the data revealed emergent themes and categories. One month later, post-analysis interviews were performed as a means of member checking (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993) to verify the interpretations with both the teachers and the students.

Findings

1. Findings concerning the **students' and the teachers'** perceptions of the grade-4 textbooks

Table 1

ANOVA Results of the Smiley Questionnaire Administered to Students

Subscales	Textbooks	N	Mean (M)	F	Sig.	Scheffe
Layout and Design	<i>Texture English</i>	95	10,4842	27,547	.000*	<i>Trip1</i> > <i>Texture English</i> <i>Trip1</i> > <i>Time for English</i>
	<i>Time for English</i>	99	9,9091			
	<i>Trip1</i>	212	12,2736			
	Total	406	11,2783			
Language Content	<i>Texture English</i>	95	26,3895	28,075	.000*	<i>Trip1</i> > <i>Texture English</i> <i>Trip1</i> > <i>Time for English</i> <i>Texture</i> > <i>Time for English</i>
	<i>Time for English</i>	99	25,4343			
	<i>Trip1</i>	212	29,3302			
	Total	406	27,6921			
Method.	<i>Texture English</i>	95	32,6211	16,514	.000*	<i>Trip1</i> > <i>Texture English</i> <i>Trip1</i> > <i>Time for English</i> <i>Texture</i> > <i>Time for English</i>
	<i>Time for English</i>	99	32,3838			
	<i>Trip1</i>	212	35,4141			
	Total	406	34,0222			
Subject Content	<i>Texture English</i>	95	29,5474	32,165	.000*	<i>Trip1</i> > <i>Texture English</i> <i>Trip1</i> > <i>Time for English</i> <i>Texture</i> > <i>Time for English</i>
	<i>Time for English</i>	99	31,9495			
	<i>Trip1</i>	212	35,6321			
	Total	406	33,3103			
Skills	<i>Texture English</i>	95	25,1474	8,134	.000*	<i>Trip1</i> > <i>Time for English</i> <i>Texture</i> > <i>Time for English</i>
	<i>Time for English</i>	99	23,3333			
	<i>Trip1</i>	212	26,0660			
	Total	406	25,1847			
Overall	<i>Texture English</i>	95	13,2316	18,169	.000*	<i>Trip1</i> > <i>Texture English</i> <i>Texture</i> > <i>Time for English</i>
	<i>Time for English</i>	99	12,1313			
	<i>Trip1</i>	212	13,7075			
	Total	406	13,2118			

Significant differences are marked with an asterisk *.000 at **.05 level ($p < .001$).

As indicated by Table 1, the results of one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences ($p < .001$) among the mean scores of the three grade-4 textbooks. To determine where the differences among these textbooks were, the statistical analysis of post-hoc comparison using the Scheffe-test was conducted.

Layout and design. *Trip1* rated the highest ($M=12,27$), as having “the most appealing cover and design”, “well-produced and colorful illustrations,” and “students found the quality of the print interesting.” *Trip1* was followed by *Texture English* ($M=10,48$) and *Time for English* ($M=9,90$). The results of the Scheffe-test identified *Trip1* as significantly better than *Texture English* and *Time for English*.

Language content. The students perceived that *Trip1* ($M=29,33$) had “the most interesting and well-presented vocabulary,” “clear and understandable instructions,” and “the presentation of vocabulary through pictures make the learning of English easier.” They also thought that *Trip1* met the criteria of authenticity in that “the language used in dialogues and reading texts exemplify real-life situations” and “the book provides a good model for the students to follow.” *Trip1* was followed by *Texture English* ($M=26,39$) and *Time for English* ($M=25,43$), as indicated by Scheffe results (*Trip1*>*Time for English* and *Texture English*).

Methodology. *Trip1* had the highest ranking ($M=35,41$), followed by *Texture English* ($M=32,62$) and *Time for English* ($M=32,38$). The students perceived that the “presentation of the words and grammar through pictures, songs, and games makes the learning of English easier”; “students enjoy songs, games, and the activities in the textbook,” and as a result, “they do not get bored.” The book helps them “to speak English with their teacher and friends,” and “pair and group work activities make the learning of English more entertaining.” It seems clear that all grade-4 textbooks, as required by the Ministry, promote student-centered learning, as indicated by the students’ responses to the statement “our teacher sometimes informs, sometimes guides, and sometimes monitors us.”

Subject content. The students found the topics “interesting, appealing, entertaining, and containing sufficient variety”; “they learn about both the Turkish and the British cultures”; “content is appropriately sequenced from easy to complex,” and the recycling effect is achieved, as indicated by the statement “grammar items and vocabulary learned in previous units are repeated in further units.” As specified by the MNE, cross-curricular selection of topics was performed; hence, “students can learn English through relating it with other subjects, e.g., geography.” *Trip1* ($M=35,63$) rated highest followed by *Time for English* ($M=31,95$) and then *Texture English* ($M=29,55$).

Skills. For the criterion that most appropriately addressed the students’ perceptions (“the book promotes a balanced development of four language skills”; “the listening activities in the textbook are interesting”; “with the help of writing activities, they can write better”; “speaking activities are enjoyable,” and “the activities in the book promote students’ creativity”), *Trip1* ($M=26,06$) rated significantly higher, followed by *Texture English* ($M=25,15$), and *Time for English* ($M=23,33$).

Overall. The students perceived that “the textbook is consistent with the practice book”; “the language used in the book is appropriate for their level of English,” and “they like learning English with that particular book.” *Trip1* ranked first ($M=13,71$) followed by *Texture English* ($M=13,23$) and *Time for English* ($M=12,13$).

The students were posed three interview questions: (1) whether they like learning English through that particular book, (2) what they like most about the book, and (3) whether the subjects are clearly explained. All grade-4 students interviewed ($n=198$) stated that they liked learning English through the books they studied. They unanimously agreed that each grade-4 textbook was colorful, well-illustrated, and appropriate for their own level. The students’ response to what they liked most in the books included hands-on activities, colorings, drawings, songs, and games. The students expressed that subjects were clearly taught through illustrations, all making the learning of English easier and entertaining.

Table 2

ANOVA Results of the Smiley Questionnaire Administered to Teachers

Subscales	Textbooks	N	Mean (M)	F	Sig.	Scheffe
Layout and Design	<i>Texture English</i>	16	10.1875	8,261	.001*	<i>Trip1> Time for English</i>
	<i>Time for English</i>	21	8.4762			
	<i>Trip1</i>	23	11.6957			
	Total	60	10.1667			
Language Content	<i>Texture English</i>	16	25.2500	7,115	.002*	<i>Trip1> Time for English</i>
	<i>Time for English</i>	21	22.3333			
	<i>Trip1</i>	23	28.1304			
	Total	60	25.3333			
Method.	<i>Texture English</i>	16	29.8750	5,789	.005	<i>Trip1> Time for English</i>
	<i>Time for English</i>	21	27.7143			
	<i>Trip1</i>	23	32.8696			
	Total	60	30.2667			
Subject Content	<i>Texture English</i>	16	30.6250	9,944	.000*	
	<i>Time for English</i>	21	26.2381			
	<i>Trip1</i>	23	33.9565			
	Total	60	30.3667			
Skills	<i>Texture English</i>	16	21.3125	3,064	.054	
	<i>Time for English</i>	21	19.0476			
	<i>Trip1</i>	23	22.4348			
	Total	60	20.9500			
Overall	<i>Texture English</i>	16	10.9375	12,367	.000*	<i>Trip1> Texture Trip1> Time for English</i>
	<i>Time for English</i>	21	10.0476			
	<i>Trip1</i>	23	13.1304			
	Total	60	11.4667			

Significant differences are marked with an asterisk -*.000 at the **.05 level.

Layout and design. The teachers thought that “the cover and the design of the book was appealing for the students,” “pictures are well-produced and colorful,” and “the use of pictures makes the learning of English easier.” *Trip1* ranked first ($M=11,70$), followed by *Texture English* ($M=10,19$) and *Time for English* ($M=8,48$), and a significant difference was observed between *Trip1* and *Time for English* according to Scheffe results (*Trip1> Time for English*).

Language content. The teachers, like the students, perceived that *Trip1* ($M=28,13$) has “the most interesting and well-presented vocabulary,” “clear and understandable instructions,” “contains authenticity in activities and subject content,” “illustrates how to use appropriate English in different social situations,” and the “language used in the book provides a good model.” *Trip1* was followed by *Texture* and *Time for English*, and a significant difference was noted between *Trip1* and *Time for English*.

Methodology. *Trip1* was the most appropriate textbook ($M=32,87$), followed by *Texture English* ($M=29,87$) and *Time for English* ($M=27,71$) in “presenting grammar inductively through songs and activities,” by “adopting a student-centered methodology,” by “making the students active in the learning process,” and in

“promoting students’ communication skills through pair and group work activities.” The teacher’s role was perceived “to take on different roles; sometimes a guide, a facilitator, and sometimes a mentor.” Furthermore, the teachers thought that “the book recognizes different learning and teaching styles.”

Subject content. The teachers perceived *Trip1* ($M=33,96$) as significantly more appropriate in “presenting content in an interesting way,” “relating content with other subjects,” and “in dealing with gender issues, e.g., girls and boys are given equal social roles in the textbook.” The teachers also perceived that “Turkish and British cultures are presented in a balanced manner”; “students learn through entertaining”; “reading texts are interesting, authentic, and promote students’ reading comprehension”; “pictures and activities are authentic in that they can be related to real-life situations,” and “the textbook provides an appropriate grading and sequencing.” *Trip1* was followed by *Texture English* ($M=30,62$) and *Time for English*, ($M=26,24$).

Skills. No significant difference was observed ($p>.054$) in the teachers’ opinions concerning the three textbooks. The teachers perceived that each book “promotes a balanced development of four language skills”; “students feel themselves comfortable and active in speaking activities”; “the listening activities are interesting for the students”; “with the help of the writing activities, students can write better”; “students find the speaking activities interesting,” and “activities in the book promote students’ creativity.”

Overall. *Trip1* was the most appropriate textbook ($M=13,13$), followed by *Texture English* ($M=10,94$) and *Time for English* ($M=10,05$) in that “the content of the textbook is appropriate for the language learning aims and needs of this level of students,” “learning English with this book is entertaining,” and “the textbook is consistent with the practice book.”

The individual interviews asked teachers to describe their opinion concerning (1) the extent to which the books met the MNE’s curriculum objectives and the students’ learning needs, (2) how they found the methodology underlying the designing of the books, (3) what the positive and negative aspects of the books were, and (4) whether the teachers thought that the students could adequately learn English through these textbooks.

Interview findings revealed substantially common agreement in the opinion of teachers concerning grade-4 textbooks. The teachers ($n=41$), like the students, had positive opinions of the three grade-4 textbooks. The teachers expressed their agreement that each book met the MNE curriculum objectives, and each book is well-designed considering young learners’ interest and learning needs. The teachers added that they would like to continue using the books in their lessons while also pointing out the need of making the necessary adaptations to match the specific needs of their students, which was confirmed by Cunnigsworth (1984), who noted that published materials provide the initial framework, which must be adapted by each individual teacher to match the needs of their students.

A teacher using *Trip1* reflects the opinions of most teachers interviewed:

“Trip1 meets the Ministry’s objectives and provides a good foundation for students of this age. The book is designed taking young learners’ needs and interests into account. Games, songs, colorful pictures, and a variety of interesting activities capture students’ interests and help them develop a positive attitude towards English. Students of this age need to learn English through being entertained. I believe that the book contributes greatly to this process.”

Regarding the methodology, most grade-4 teachers ($n=40$) interviewed welcomed the presentation of English inductively through games, activities, and illustrations as being the most appropriate method for cognitive development of learners of this age (9-11). Another positive aspect of the book’s methodology was its emphasis on student-centered learning. The teachers considered their role as a guide and a facilitator in the learning process. Interview data with a teacher using *Texture* demonstrates a general understanding of most teachers concerning the underlying methodology of all grade-4 textbooks:

“I approve the book’s emphasis on inductive teaching as it contributes greatly to helping students acquire the target objectives and the necessary grammar knowledge, indirectly. The book provides contextualized examples, from which the learners are expected to hypothesize the underlying rules. Students are entertained and learn at the same time.”

The teachers ($n=41$) expressed several points concerning positive aspects of the textbooks: They agreed that puzzles, songs, and art and craft activities were the best aspects of the books, helping students develop positive attitudes towards learning English and avoiding students’ boredom. As students were engaged in such activities, they were highly motivated and learned English indirectly. Teachers agreed that each book introduced the topics through interesting illustrations, subjects were organized appropriately, and recycling was done effectively. One pitfall of the books, however, was a lack of focus on pronunciation. Teachers suggested that this component be added in the future revision of the textbooks.

2. Findings concerning the **students’ and the teachers’ perceptions of the grade-5 textbook**

Table 3

Independent Samples t-test Results of Smiley Questionnaire Administered to Students and Teachers

Subscales	Participants	N	Mean	SD	T score	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)
Layout and Design	Students	410	11,8512	2,53770	5.934	.025	.000
	Teachers	64	9,7656	3,06926	5.167		
Language Content	Students	410	26,4683	4,84430	4.611	.026	.000
	Teachers	64	26,4683	6,17270	3.868		
Methodology	Students	410	30,7195	5,88578	3.249	.524	.001
	Teachers	64	28,0938	6,77699	2.932		
Subject Content	Students	410	34,7000	5,35765	6.888	.000	.000
	Teachers	64	29,4531	7,36773	5.476		
Skills	Students	410	21,4976	4,27951	2.924	.112	.004
	Teachers	64	19,7656	5,16011	2.552		
Overall	Students	410	7,0220	2,07842	-9.963	.000	.000
	Teachers	64	9,9531	2,80266	-8.029		

Table 3 illustrates the analysis of the independent-samples t-test, used to obtain perceptions of the students and the teachers concerning the single grade-5 textbook (*Time for English*). As seen in the table, there is a significant difference between perceptions of the students and the teachers in 'layout,' 'language content,' 'subject content,' and 'overall' subscales, as indicated by the results of one-way ANOVA ($p < .001$ significance score). A higher rating of the students than the teachers suggests that students have more favorable perceptions of these components of the textbook compared with the teachers. As for the 'skills' and 'methodology' subscales, no significant difference was observed ($p < .112$, $p < .524$ respectively), which suggests that students and teachers perceive that *Time for English* is able to meet these criteria to the same degree.

Most grade-5 students interviewed ($n=70$) stated that they liked learning English through *Time for English*, as illustrated in this interview extract: "*We like learning English through this book because it is very entertaining. Sometimes, there are difficult sections, but our teacher explains them, and we understand it better.*" To the questions of what they liked most about the book and whether the subjects were clearly explained, the students stated that they liked pictures, drawings, games, characters, and dialogues, agreeing that some dialogues were similar to real-life situations. The students reported that there was not much that they did not like about the book.

The teachers' interview findings revealed several issues. Concerning the first interview question asking teachers to what extent *Time for English* met the MNE's curriculum objectives and the students' learning needs, all grade-5 teachers interviewed ($n=45$) agreed that the textbook met the MNE curriculum objectives. In response to the second interview question asking how teachers found the methodology underlying the designing of the book, the teachers welcomed the presentation of English inductively through games, activities, and colored-

illustrations as the most appropriate method for the learners of this age, and they ($n=48$) agreed that the book promoted student-centered learning.

Despite the positive aspects of the book, two shortcomings were identified—**“learnability and complexity”**—making it quite difficult to implement the grade-5 textbook at the micro-teaching level. Cunningsworth (1995) suggests that one of the ways in which textbooks help the learners is by selecting the items to be learned (e.g., grammar and skills), breaking them into manageable units, and sequencing them from easier to more difficult items in terms of learnability. As noted by the teachers ($n=40$), the first couple of units of the grade-5 textbook were well above the level of the students, suggesting that there is not a smooth transition between grade-4 and grade-5 textbooks. Yet, the teachers stated that this difficulty eased out in further units in the book. Another difficulty was related to the sequencing of the contents and the amount of vocabulary presented. The teachers complained that some units contained many words beyond the capacity of the students to acquire them effectively. As emerged from the interview findings, pronunciation, as in grade-4 textbooks, was a neglected component of the grade-5 textbook.

Discussion

The results obtained from the smiley questionnaire indicated that the **students’** and the **teachers’ perceptions of grade-4** textbooks were to a large extent consistent. As revealed by the results of ANOVA and the Scheffe-test, the students perceived *Trip1* as the most appropriate textbook, followed by *Texture English* and *Time for English*. A similar finding was obtained from the teachers, except that the teachers **perceived no significant difference in the ‘skills’ subscale** of the smiley questionnaire. Interview findings revealed substantially common agreement in the opinion of the students and the teachers concerning grade-4 textbooks. Both the students and the teachers were highly satisfied with using grade-4 textbooks. The students confirmed that each textbook was colorful, well-illustrated, and appropriate for their needs and interests. The teachers agreed that each book met the MNE curriculum objectives, helped develop the **students’ communicative skills through realistic and meaningful situations**, and addressed the **students’ individualized learning styles through embodying a wide variety of activities**. The teachers also added that cross-curricular selection of the topics was well-established, and the books promoted student-centered learning. The teachers also welcomed the presentation of **English inductively, and the use of arts and craft activities in promoting young learners’ creativity**.

Analysis of the independent-samples t-test used to obtain the **students’ and the teachers’ perceptions of the grade-5** textbook suggested that the students had more favorable perceptions on most subscales (layout, language content, subject content, and overall) of the textbook than the teachers ($p<.001$). Yet, no significant difference was observed between the perceptions of the **students and the teachers on ‘skills’ and ‘methodology’ subscales on the smiley questionnaire**. Interview findings with grade-5 students revealed that most students ($n=70$) were pleased with using *Time for*

English. Although the teachers interviewed expressed several positive aspects of the grade-5 textbook, two issues were identified: complexity and learnability of the language items. As agreed upon by most interviewed teachers ($n=40$), the first couple of units in the textbook were well above the level of the students, suggesting that there was not a smooth transition between the grade-4 and grade-5 textbooks.

The teachers' overall opinion of the four English textbooks was that the textbooks well served the requirements of the curriculum and the students as long as the teacher made the necessary adaptations according to the needs of his/her students.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the students' and the teachers' perceptions, the purpose of the present study was to evaluate the four English textbooks utilized in Turkish state primary schools to find out to what extent they affected curriculum objectives. The results indicate that all textbooks are carefully designed in accordance with the intended level of the students and are consistent with the MNE curriculum objectives, suggesting that the textbooks serve as the *potential agents* for curriculum change. The results also reveal that the new set of textbooks meet many of the shortcomings of the previous ones, indicating a noticeable improvement over the earlier textbooks designed for fourth- and fifth-grade students. Amongst these are a better provision of communication skills (e.g., listening and speaking); an improved design of the activities in terms of variety, authenticity, and meaningfulness; an improved organization and layout of the units; and a more effective recycling as well as a rich variety of songs, games, arts, and craft activities.

Based on the results of this study, it can be suggested, for the future textbook project of the MNE, that (a) the grade-5 English textbook should be revised in order to achieve a better sequencing of the language items, both linguistically and cognitively, which would make it more effective for the teachers and the students to use the book and help maintain a better continuity between grade-4 and grade-5 textbooks; (b) the necessary revisions on the available textbooks should be made in accordance with the research findings rather than publishing entirely new textbooks to increase the cost-effectiveness of the MNE's textbook project; and (c) attention should be given to integrating a pronunciation component, which was found to have largely been ignored in the evaluated textbooks, through developing specialized activities on articulation of sounds, stress, and intonation in future English textbooks to be published for students studying English at the primary education level.

References

- Allwright, R. L. (1981). What do we want teaching materials for?. *ELT Journal*, 36 (1), 5-18.
- Cunningsworth, A. (1984). *Evaluating and selecting EFL teaching materials*. London: Heinemann.
- Cunningsworth, A. (1995). *Choosing your coursebook*. London: Macmillan.
- Davison, W. F. (1976). Factors in evaluating and selecting texts for the foreign-language classrooms. *ELT Journal*, 30 (4), 310-314.
- Erlanson, D. A., Harris, E. L., Skipper B.L., & Allen S. D. (1993). *Doing naturalistic inquiry. A guide to methods*, Newbury Park: Sage Publications.
- Ersöz, A., Çakır A., Özkan, N., Cephe, P. T, Demir, G., & Peker, B.G. (2006). *Time for English, Student's Book. Grade 4*, Ankara: Ministry of National Education Publications.
- Ersöz, A., Çakır A., Özkan, N., Cephe, P. T, Demir, G., & Peker, B.G. (2007). *Time for English, Student's Book Grade 5*, Ankara: Ministry of National Education Publications.
- Harmer, J. (1991). *The practice of English language teaching* (2nd ed.), London: Longman.
- Haycroft, J. (1988). *An introduction to ELT*, London: Longman.
- Hsieh, H. F. & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15 (9), 1277-1288.
- Hutchinson, T. & Torres, E. (1994). The textbook as agent of change. *ELT Journal*, 48 (4), 315-328.
- Kennedy, C. (1996). Teacher roles in curriculum reform. *ELTED*, 2 (1), 77-89. Retrieved August 25 2009 from eltd.net/issues/volume-2/kennedyc.pdf
- Kırkgöz, Y. (2006). Teaching EFL at the primary level in Turkey, In M. Lou McCloskey, J, Orr and M. Dolitsky (Eds.), *Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Primary School*, (pp. 85-99). Alexandria: TESOL Publications.
- Kırkgöz, Y. (2007). Language planning and implementation in Turkish primary schools. *Current issues in language planning*, 8 (2), 174-191.
- MEB (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı) [Turkish Ministry of National Education] (2006). *English language curriculum for primary education Grades 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8*, Ankara: Ministry of National Education Publications.
- O'Neill, R. (1982). Why use textbooks?". *ELT Journal*, 36 (2), 104-111.
- Öztürk, S. A. (2007). *Trip 1 Student's Book*, Ankara: Anıttepe Yayıncılık.
- Pakkan, G. (2007). *Texture English*, Ankara: Doku Yayıncılık.

- Richards, J. C. (2001). *The role of textbooks in a language program*. Retrieved August 12 2008 from <http://www.professorjackrichards.com/pdfs/role-of-textbooks.pdf>.
- Sheldon, L. E. (1987). (Ed.) *ELT textbooks and materials: Problems in evaluation and development. ELT Documents 126*, London: Modern English Publications and the British Council.
- Sheldon, L. E. (1988). Evaluating ELT textbooks and materials. *ELT Journal*, 42 (4), 237-246.
- Williams, D. (1983). Developing criteria for textbook evaluation. *ELT Journal*, 37 (3), 251-255.

Türkiyede'ki İlköğretim Okullarında Kullanılan İngilizce Ders Kitaplarının Değerlendirilmesi: Öğrenci ve Öğretmen Algıları

(Özet)

Problem Durumu: Ders kitaplarının kullanımı dil eğitiminde büyük önem taşımaktadır. Bu nedenle, öğrenci ve öğretmenlerin ders kitapları ile ilgili görüşlerini incelemek, eğitim programı hedeflerinin ders kitapları yoluyla ne derece gerçekleştiğinin belirlenmesi açısından önem taşımaktadır.

Araştırmanın Amacı: Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türk Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı tarafından onaylanan ve 2005 yılı eğitim programı yenileme sürecinden sonra İlköğretim 4 ve 5. sınıflarında uygulanmaya başlanan İngilizce ders kitaplarını öğrenci ve öğretmenlerin görüşleri doğrultusunda değerlendirmektir.

Araştırmanın Yöntemi: Bu araştırma betimsel özellik taşır. Araştırmanın örnekleminde yer alan katılımcılar, 2008-2009 öğretim yılında Adana ilindeki 54 devlet ilköğretim okullarından küme örnekleme yöntemi ile seçilen 4 ve 5. sınıf öğrencilerinden meydana gelen toplam 816 öğrenci ve 124 öğretmenden oluşmaktadır. Araştırma verileri, araştırmacı tarafından bu araştırma için gerçekleştirilmiş ders kitabı değerlendirme ölçeği olan anket yoluyla elde edilmiş ve görüşmelerle tamamlanmıştır. Araştırmada paralel sorulardan oluşan öğrenci anketi ve öğretmen anketi olmak üzere iki tür anket kullanılmıştır. Araştırmada kullanılan anketler öncelikle İngilizce olarak hazırlanmış, daha sonra araştırmacı tarafından Türkçe'ye çevrilmiş ve alandaki iki uzman aracılığıyla da tekrar-çeviri yöntemi uygulanarak ölçeğin Türkçe eşdeğerlik çalışması tamamlanmıştır.

Daha sonra anketin geçerlik ve güvenilirlik çalışmasına geçilmiştir. Öğretmen anketinin geçerliğini sağlamak için İlköğretim 4 ve 5. sınıflarda İngilizce ders vermekte olan deneyimli yedi öğretmenin görüşüne başvurulmuştur. Öğrenci anketinin geçerliğini sağlamak için ise, 4 ve 5. sınıflarda öğrenim görmekte olan 102 öğrenciye anket uygulanmıştır. Öğrenci ve öğretmenlerden alınan dönütler doğrultusunda her iki ankette gerekli değişiklikler yapılmıştır. Anketin her bir

maddesinin güvenilirliği tespit edilmiştir. Öğrenci anketi için Cronbach Alfa değeri $\alpha=.82$, öğretmen anketi için ise Cronbach Alfa değeri $\alpha=.80$ olarak hesaplanmıştır. Geçerlik ve güvenilirliği sağlanmış olan anket, toplam 36 madde ve altı alt-ölçekten oluşmaktadır. Anketin alt-ölçekleri sırası ile 'tasarım ve düzen', 'dil içeriği', 'yöntembilim', 'konu içeriği', 'dil becerileri' ve 'genel' bölümlerinden oluşmaktadır. Anket, beş seçenekli Likert tipi soruları içermektedir. Uygulama 2009 yılının Mart ve Mayıs aylarında, öğrencilere ve öğretmenlere sınıflarında, araştırmacı tarafından yapılmıştır. Anketin uygulamasından sonra, araştırmacı tarafından her sınıftan 5-6 öğrenciden oluşan öğrenci grubuyla görüşme yapılmıştır.

Görüşmelere katılan toplam öğrenci sayısı 253 olup bunların 94 tanesi *Trip1*, 61'i *Texture English*, 43 öğrenci 4. sınıf ders kitabı olan *Time for English* ve 78 öğrenci 5. sınıf ders kitabı olan *Time for English* İngilizce ders kitaplarını kullanmaktaydı. Görüşmelere gönüllü olarak katılan toplam 86 öğretmenden 12 öğretmen *Trip1*, 15 öğretmen *Texture English*, 14 öğretmen ise 4. sınıf ders kitabı olan *Time for English* ve 45 öğretmen 5. sınıf ders kitabı olan *Time for English*'i kullanmaktaydı. 4. sınıf ders kitapları ile ilgili öğrenci ve öğretmenlerin görüşlerini değerlendirmek amacıyla tek yönlü varyans (ANOVA) analizi ve Scheffe testi, 5. sınıf ders kitabının analizinde ise bağımsız t-test kullanılmıştır. Elde edilen veriler Sosyal Bilimler İstatistik Programı olan SPSS kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Araştırmada, görüşmelerden elde edilen verilerin değerlendirilmesinde nitel içerik analiz yöntemi kullanılmıştır.

Araştırmanın Bulguları: Anketten elde edilen araştırma bulgularına göre, 4. sınıf öğrencileri *Trip1* kitabını en uygun ders kitabı olarak belirlemişler, bunu *Texture English* ve *Time for English* adlı kitaplar takip etmiştir. Araştırmanın bu bulgusu, öğretmenlerden elde edilen bulgularla uyumlu bir bulgudur. Ancak, ankette yer alan 'dil becerileri' alt ölçeğinde öğretmenlerin değerlendirilen üç ders kitabı arasındaki görüşlerinde anlamlı bir farklılık bulunmamaktadır. 5. sınıf ders kitabının analizinde, öğrencilerin ve öğretmenlerin görüşleri karşılaştırıldığında, öğrencilerin anketin 'tasarım ve düzenleme', 'dil içeriği', 'konu içeriği', ve 'genel' alt-ölçek bölümlerinde öğretmenlere kıyasla daha olumlu baktıkları belirlenmiştir. Ancak 'beceriler' ve 'yöntembilim' alt ölçekleriyle ilgili olarak, öğrenci ve öğretmenlerin algısında önemli bir fark olmadığı tespit edilmiştir. Öğretmenler ve öğrencilerle yapılan görüşmelerden elde edilen bulgular 4. sınıf İngilizce ders kitaplarının Milli Eğitim Bakanlığının eğitim hedeflerini ve öğrenci ihtiyaçlarını karşılamaya yönelik düzenlendiğini doğrulamıştır. Görüşme yapılan 5. sınıf öğrencilerinin birçoğu *Time For English* adlı kitabı kullanmaktan memnun olduklarını belirtmişlerdir. Öğretmenler görüşme sırasında 5. sınıf ders kitabının birçok olumlu yönünden bahsetmişlerdir. Ancak, kitabın *dil yapılarının karmaşıklığı* ve *öğrenilebilirlik* konusundaki yetersizliğini ifade etmişlerdir. Bunun sonucu olarak, 4 ve 5. sınıf kitapları arasında kolay bir geçişin olmadığı ortaya çıkmıştır.

Araştırmanın Sonuçları ve Önerileri: Elde edilen bulgular, incelenen dört İngilizce ders kitabının İngilizce eğitim programındaki değişikliklere uygun olarak düzenlendiklerini ve bu değişiklikleri gerçekleştirebilen potansiyel birer araç olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Araştırmanın bulguları doğrultusunda, Milli Eğitim Bakanlığının gelecekteki ders kitabı politikasına ışık tutmak amacıyla üç öneride

bulunmaktadır. İlk olarak, 5. sınıf İngilizce ders kitabının dilbilgisi ve sözcük dizimi açısından tekrar gözden geçirilmesi ve etkinliklerin daha dengeli bir biçimde sunulması gereklidir. İkinci sırada, ders kitaplarının fiyat uygunluğunu artırmak amacıyla, gerekli düzenlemelerin bu ve benzer araştırma bulgularından elde edilen sonuçlara göre mevcut ders kitapları üzerinde yapılması gereklidir. Son olarak, gelecekte yayımlanacak İngilizce ders kitaplarına sesletim konusunun, özelleştirilmiş etkinlikler yoluyla ilave edilmesi uygun olacaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Algılama, ilköğretim, İngilizce ders kitabı değerlendirilmesi, eğitim programı değişikliği, 4. sınıf, 5. sınıf.