

## The Methodological Bases of Turkish ELT Curricula for Basic Education from 1991 to 2018

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### Abstract

This paper aims to investigate the methodological bases of the 1991 ELT curriculum for the secondary schools (1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades), the 1997 ELT curriculum for the 4th and 5th grades of the primary education, the 2006 ELT curriculum for the primary education (grades four to eight), 2013 and 2018 ELT curricula for the primary and secondary schools (grades two to eight) in Turkey by utilising document analysis as a form of qualitative research. Investigation of the other components of ELT curricula, namely, needs, goals and objectives, syllabus, assessment and evaluation is not the main concern of the study but some of these components will also be mentioned to shed light on the adopted methodology in the mentioned curricula. It is argued that all the curricula investigated present the teachers with an eclectic approach while some of these curricula (e.g. 1991, 2013, 2018 curricula) state it explicitly and some of them (e.g. 1997 and 2006 curricula) indicate it implicitly by suggesting the teachers get benefit from different principles and/or activities from different methods and/or approaches. It is also observed that the principles and/or activities of the communicative approach are present in all these curricula although their dominance varies from one curriculum to the other. In line with this observation, the study indicates that the commonly articulated thesis in the literature that the communicative approach was integrated, for the first time, into the Turkish ELT curricula with the 1997 curriculum is not valid. It is also argued that besides adopting an eclectic approach with more focus on the communicative approach, the 2013 and 2018 ELT curricula, unlike all the previous curricula, claim to adopt the action-oriented approach but in reality, these two curricula are not action-oriented. The reason behind this problem is purported to be the misinterpretation of the action-oriented approach by the developers of the curricula as well as some other ELT researchers in Turkey.

**Keywords:** ELT Curricula, Approaches and Methods, Primary Schools, Secondary Schools

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## INTRODUCTION

The curriculum is a central component of English education in Turkey since it not only sets the goals and objectives for learning English but also predetermines the syllabus to be followed by the textbook writers and teachers. The curriculum also specifies the methodology and directs the teachers' implementation of activities in the classroom, determines the types of materials to be used in English classes, and sets the assessment and evaluation tools to be used by the teachers. Thus, the ELT curricula have a directive role in the English education system of Turkey.

The 1991 ELT curriculum for secondary schools in Turkey was used at the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades of secondary schools in Turkey. At that time, there was no English education in primary schools. In 1997, compulsory education was extended to eight years and English education began at the fourth grade of primary education. Since there was no English curriculum for the 4th and 5th grades, a new ELT curriculum for these grades was developed. The 1991 ELT curriculum, however, was not abolished but continued to be implemented at 6th, 7th and 8th grades of primary education until the 2008-2009 academic year. Thus, the 1997 ELT curriculum was replaced by the 2006 ELT curriculum, which began to be implemented gradually beginning with the 4th grades in the 2006-2007 academic year. The Turkish education system underwent a change in 2012 and the 8+4 education system, in which compulsory education consisted of eight-year uninterrupted primary education, became a 4+4+4 education system, in which compulsory education consisted of an uninterrupted twelve-year primary school (four years), secondary school (four years) and high school (four years) education. Since, in this new system, English education began at the 2nd grade rather than the 4th grade as in the 2006 curriculum, a new ELT curriculum (the 2013 ELT curriculum for primary and secondary schools) was developed for grades two to eight and began to be implemented in the 2013-2014 academic year. The 2018 ELT curriculum for primary and secondary schools for grades two to eight replaced the 2013 ELT curriculum. Since the 2018 curriculum copies many of the theoretical assumptions of the 2013 curriculum, it does not differ much from the 2013 ELT curriculum except the introduction of short theoretical parts such as "values education in the curriculum", "key competencies in the curriculum".

### Research Method

The research question of this study is: What are the methodological bases of the 1991 ELT curriculum for secondary schools (1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades), the 1997 ELT curriculum for the 4th and 5th grades of the primary education, the 2006 ELT curriculum for the primary education (grades four to eight), 2013 and 2018 ELT curricula for primary and secondary schools (grades two to eight) in Turkey. For this purpose, this study utilises document analysis as a form of qualitative research. To Bowen (2009), document analysis is "a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material" (p. 27).

## RESULTS

### The Methodological Bases of the 1991 and 1997 ELT Curricula

When the 1991 ELT curriculum began to be implemented in Turkey in the 1991-1992 academic year, there was a five-year primary school education, three-year secondary school education, and three-year high school education in Turkey. The 1991 ELT curriculum was prepared for secondary schools (for grades one to three) since there was no English education in primary school at that time. The general objectives of the 1991 curriculum are as follows:

1. Within the framework of the situations, functions, notions, and structures that are stated in detail in the specific objectives of the program;

- a) Being able to understand what he/she is listening to in English
- b) Being able to speak English
- c) Being able to understand what he/she is reading in English
- d) Being able to write

2. In the language-culture context, being aware of the cultural values of the native English speaking countries.

3. Being able to tolerate different cultures and cultural values
4. Being willing to communicate in English (p. 9).

In “General remarks about the content of the program, method, and evaluation” section of the curriculum, some of the general explanations about foreign language teaching are as follows:

1. While developing this program, a student-centered approach was taken as a basis. In this respect, the active participation of the student in the teaching process is essential.

2. In learning a foreign language, the principle of utility should be considered as a priority. Accordingly, the language learned should be presented in an arrangement that is likely to be used frequently and which develops from daily needs to long-term needs.

3. In order to teach in this direction, the presentation of the course contents in a meaningful context should be taken as a basis because the use of language is as important as the usage of language (usage vs use).

4. Although the integration of four basic skills in foreign language teaching is taken as a basis, in the light of the collected data, efforts should be made to further develop listening and speaking skills at the secondary school level.

5. The importance of the affective domain in learning is emphasized more and more every day. In this regard, it should be helped to ensure that the student's desire and motivation to learn are continuous and that he/she values permanent language learning.

6. In organizing the content of the program, the determined needs of the students; frequency of use, learnability, and functional values of language units are taken into consideration.

7. Regarding the approach, basically, an eclectic approach should be preferred but the following points should not be overlooked:

a) The eclectic approach, which is thought to consist of the good sides of every method, can also create confusion. For this reason, rational integration is important.

b) Useful arrangements should be made in the methods in accordance with the educational conditions of our country.

c) Considering the characteristics of crowded classes, efforts should be made to use group work techniques.

d) The teaching of the foreign language consists of preparation, presentation, practice, and evaluation stages in an interwoven manner. It should not be forgotten that only presentation or practice-based teaching will be incomplete.

e) As a factor that increases interest in teaching, different forms of activity, technique, and presentation should be included.

f) Especially in the communicative activities, mistakes made by the students should be approached with tolerance (p. 6-7).

The 1991 curriculum clearly states that it adopts an eclectic approach. The principles and activities of the communicative approach are also clearly observed in the curriculum: “student-centered approach and active participation of the student”, “the students’ daily language needs”, “the presentation of the course contents in a meaningful context”, the principle “the use of language is as important as the usage of language”, “the determined needs of the students; frequency of use, learnability and functional values of language units”, “the use of group work”, “communicative activities”, “focus on functions and notions” and “tolerating the students’ mistakes”. The most distinguishing principle which indicates the presence of the communicative approach in the curriculum is the adoption of the principle that “the use of language is as important as the usage of language”. It seems that the curriculum developers adopt the principle put forward by Hymes (1972) “There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar are useless” (p. 278.). In the specific objectives listed in the curriculum, the objective stated as “communicating by using functions and notions appropriate to specific situations” (p.15) also reflects this principle. Considering that Hymes (1972) and his theory of communicative competence is the cornerstone of the communicative approach, the influence of the communicative approach on the 1991 curriculum is evident.

The other striking influence of the communicative approach on the 1991 curriculum can be observed in the syllabus it suggests. 1991 curriculum argues that “In the content part of the program, a list of “Functions”, “Notions (vocabulary)” and “Structures” belonging to I., II. and III. grades of secondary school are listed separately” (in the report section). Thus, there is an attempt to incorporate functional-notional elements into the syllabi as shown in table 1 below:

**Table 1.** A Sample Part from the First-grade Syllabus of the 1991 Curriculum

ORTA I FUNCTION	STRUCTURE	VOCABULARY
a) Greetings & Introducing one self/someone. Meeting people b) Asking & saying where someone is from. c) Asking for & giving personal information sit down, stand up, come e) Giving classroom instructions	Present form of verb "to be" What's your name? My name is..... Personal pronouns. Hi, hello. Good morning/afternoon How are you? I'm fine thanks He is.... She is.... Where are you from? I'm from. What's he/she? How old are you? Imperatives.	Good, Sorry, Excuse me. Occupations. Nationalities The names of some countries Neighbouring countries Numbers (1-12). years old Sit down, stand up, come give me, tell me etc.
a) Describing objects b) Talking about personal belongings c) Counting d) Denying/Confirming	What's this/that? This is a/an That is... more numbers (12-20) Or questions these/those are Plurals (regular, irregular) Objective pronouns I'm/I'm not. Yes/No Questions I agree, I'm sure. O.K. All right.	Colours Some adjectives (descriptive adjectives) Classroom objects a/an regular/irregular Plurals Alphabet
a) Identifying your family b) Talking about environment. (school/classroom/house/garden.) c) Giving negative classroom instructions	How many? Have/has got Possessive adjectives But Haven't/hasn't got Question form of Have/has got...? More adjectives. Don't.....	Personal objects/belongings Do you understand? Things in a room/classroom instructions. school/garden.
a) Asking and answering about ability. b) Describing a geographical location	Can/Can't (ability & inability) Some verbs	food & drink, breakfast, lunch, dinner speak, read, write, play

Functional, notional as well as structural elements are present not only in the syllabus design but also in the specific objectives for the first, second and third grades as “knowledge of functions and notions used in daily communication” (p. 12, 19, 28), “to be able to use the structures, functions, and

notions in the language correctly /appropriately” (p. 15, 22, 31). Thus, both knowledge and use of functions and notions alongside grammatical structures are heavily emphasised in the 1991 curriculum. There is even an explicit articulation of a “jigsaw activity” (p. 44) in the curriculum as well as a focus on speech acts in the objective “Understanding the structure/speech act values of imperative sentences” (p. 13). What is more, the presence of “information gap” and “opinion gap” tasks (Prabhu, 1987) is evident in the curriculum as stated in the objectives “completing the missing information in the material (text) that they have by asking questions (information gap, opinion gap)” (p. 22). Thus, the 1991 curriculum also incorporates the elements of task-based language teaching, which “constitutes a strong version of CLT” (Ellis, 2003, p. 30).

Considering the Council of Europe’s studies in the 1970s, which led to the development of the communicative approach and Turkey’s ongoing cooperative studies with the Council of Europe before and during that period, it is not surprising to see the attempt to incorporate the elements of the communicative approach in the 1991 ELT curriculum for secondary schools in Turkey. During that time, the Council of Europe’s studies led to the emergence of the functional-notional syllabi in foreign language teaching. Thus, the 1991 curriculum adopts an eclectic approach, and the principles of the communicative approach as well as the suggestion for the use of communicative activities and tasks are observed in the curriculum.

In 1997, the Turkish educational system changed. Compulsory education, which was five years up to that time, was extended to eight years and English teaching began in the fourth grades of public primary education institutions. Since there was no English curriculum for the fourth and fifth grades before that time, a new curriculum was developed to compensate for this gap and began to be implemented in the 1997-1998 academic year. There was no change, however, in 1997, in the ELT curriculum for the sixth, seventh and eighth grades of primary education in Turkey, that is, the 1991 ELT curriculum for secondary schools (for the first, second and third grades of secondary schools at that time) continued to be implemented at the sixth, seventh and eighth grades of primary education during and after 1997. To investigate the methodological basis of the 1997 curriculum, it is necessary to investigate “the remarks” section as well as the sections “approach and techniques”, “general objectives” and “syllabus”.

Some of the principles indicated in the remarks section of the curriculum are as follows:

1. In our world where communication technologies are developing at an unprecedented pace, it must be accepted that foreign language is an indispensable means of communication.

2. In the education and teaching of this course:

a) Foreign language activities that are interesting and intriguing should be included.

b) The situations to be prepared in the classroom environment should mainly be game-based, and the dimension of learning while having fun should be given.

c) Language activities that the students will deal with should be handled in a way that will gain intensity in the form of oral interactions by creating the situations in item b.

d) The language structures that the students will use should be handled in accordance with the direct method, especially for the 4th grade.

e) General notions and topics which the students will work on should be dealt with in relation to the environment rather than abstract approaches.

f) Care should be taken to use authentic audio-visual documents within the existing facilities of the school.

3. As stated before, it is essential that the units must be treated as game-based. It should be taken into account that the child encounters lessons based on knowledge transfer such as Social Studies and Science in the 4th grade of primary education, and care should be taken to ensure that the foreign language lesson is based on "The Direct Method". This method should be able to create an environment where children can feel good and which can continuously improve their desire to learn. Foreign language lessons should be student-centered. In these lessons, the teacher assumes the role of facilitator and guide and transfers knowledge, and children form the center point of the lesson. The teacher ensures that the student is active by applying new practice techniques (p. 1).

General objectives of the curriculum are stated as follows:

1. Being able to realize that there are other languages than Turkish
2. Being willing to learn a foreign language
3. Being willing to communicate in a foreign language
4. Being able to understand that the foreign language he/she has learned has different sounds than Turkish
5. Being able to understand the intonation and pronunciation of the foreign language he/she has learned
6. Being able to use the patterns of the foreign language he/she has learned in accordance with the rules
7. Being able to use the foreign language he/she has learned in daily life
8. Being able to read the dialogues appropriate to his/her level in the language he/she has learned
9. Being able to understand the dialogues appropriate to his/her level in the language he/she learned
10. Being able to write words and sentences in the foreign language he/she has learned (p. 2).

In the section, "APPROACH and TECHNIQUES", on the other hand, such techniques are suggested:

1. Question and answer
2. Dramatization
3. Presentation
4. Listening and speaking
5. Memorization
6. Demonstration
7. Repetition (p. 16).

While it is suggested that the foreign language lesson is based on the Direct Method in the remarks section of the curriculum, such principles as "a foreign language is an indispensable means of communication", "oral interaction activities in game-based situations", "the use of authentic audio-visual documents", "student-centered lessons", "the role of the teacher as facilitator and guide" indicate the presence of the communicative approach in the 1997 curriculum. In the general objectives of the curriculum, the items "being willing to communicate in a foreign language", "being able to use

the foreign language he/she has learned in daily life”, and in the syllabus of the curriculum, the presence of functional elements also indicate the presence of the communicative approach although the curriculum never articulates the name ‘communicative approach’.

Unlike the case of the communicative approach, the name of the direct method is clearly articulated in the curriculum but it cannot be claimed that the 1997 curriculum is totally based on the direct method since in a curriculum which adopts the direct method, the syllabus does not incorporate functional-notional items, let alone the structural elements, which are present in the syllabus of 1997 curriculum. Besides, functional/notional as well as structural items are also stressed in the specific objectives of the 1997 curriculum as “ understanding the structures, functions, and notions in the language” (p. 3). “Dramatization”, which is a popular technique in the communicative approach, and which is also employed by the 2006, 2013 and 2018 curricula is also suggested in the section “approach and techniques”. The techniques of the direct method, on the other hand, such as “question and answer”, and “dictation” (p. 1), as popular techniques, are suggested in the curriculum. Among the suggested techniques in the section “approach and techniques” in the curriculum, however, are “repetition” and “memorization”, which show the traces of the audio-lingual method. The presence of the direct method and the trace of the audiolingual method in the curriculum show that the methods once popular in Turkey during the 1950s (Demircan, 1988; Demirel, 1999) still show their effect in the curriculum. Along with these methods, however, the communicative principles and activities also take their place in the curriculum. Thus, just like the 1991 curriculum, the 1997 curriculum presents the teachers with an eclectic approach. It should also be noted that there is not any difference between the syllabus types adopted by the 1991 and 1997 curricula, both of them adopt the same syllabus design (function, structure, vocabulary) as seen in table 2 from the fourth-grade syllabus of the 1997 curriculum:

**Table 2.** The fourth-grade syllabus (unit 1) of the 1997 curriculum

UNIT ONE		4. Sınıf	
FUNCTION	STRUCTURE	VOCABULARY	
a) Greetings Teaching personal pronouns present form of verb "to be"	Hello ! Good morning - Good afternoon I'm Mr. / Mrs..... How are you ? Fine thanks and you ? I'm fine, thank you . A SONG AND A GAME	hello, Hi morning, afternoon mr. /mMrs. I, you, he, she, it, we, you, they	
b) Introducing oneself / someone	What is your name ? My name is Mine . Her name is Zeynep . His name is Mert .	my, your, his, her, its,	
c) Counting Asking and saying the age	Numbers (1-10) A SONG AND A GAME ( Happy birthday) How old are you ? I'm .....years old .	numbers (1-10) years old birthday	
d) Giving classroom instructions	sit down / stand up . open the door / shut the door. draw a ball/ clean the board. draw a cat bring your pencil. take it back	sit down / stand up open / shut draw / clean bring / take back	

Since the 1997 curriculum was developed for the fourth and fifth grades, raising the students’ language awareness forms the center of its attention as stated in the goals section of the curriculum:

“Being able to realize that there are other languages than Turkish” (p. 2). To realize this goal, the teachers are presented with an eclectic approach, as in the 1991 curriculum for secondary schools, which continued to be implemented in primary education during and after 1997 alongside the implementation of the 1997 curriculum. As discussed earlier, some of the principles and techniques as well as the functional elements (in the syllabus) of the communicative approach are present in both the 1991 and 1997 ELT curricula though the name of the communicative approach is never articulated in either curricula.

Both the 1991 and 1997 curricula were abolished with the development of the 2006 Turkish ELT curriculum for primary education for grades four to eight. In this respect, Kırkgöz’s (2020) following argument, which claims that the 1997 curriculum was implemented for grades four to eight, is wrong:

The second change in the ELT curriculum was introduced in 2005. Unlike the 1997 curriculum, which was implemented nationwide for grades four to eight concurrently, the new implementation is introduced progressively; starting from grade four and gradually proceeding to upper grades (p. 35).

The 1997 ELT curriculum was published with the title “Primary education school 4th and 5th grades foreign language (English) curriculum”, which also indicated that it was only prepared for the 4th and 5th grades and that it did not include the 6th, 7th and 8th grades since 1991 ELT curriculum was still used at these grades. Similarly, Kırkgöz, Çelik & Arıkan (2016) argue that “as a means to address these issues, the ELT curriculum was revised in 2005 in order to improve the English language teaching program prescribed by the 1997 curriculum” (p. 1201). This statement also ignores the fact that the 2006 curriculum not only replaced the 1997 curriculum for the fourth and fifth grades but also the 1991 curriculum for the sixth, seventh and eighth grades. The authors, thus, ignore the continuous implementation of the 1991 curriculum alongside the 1997 curriculum.

A similar mistake is made by Ekşi (2017), who argues (in her book chapter under a section titled ‘English Language Syllabus in Primary and Secondary School Education’) that “The first curriculum change was introduced in [sic] implemented nationwide in 1997 and the second renewal was done in 2005 to improve the previous implementation and to adapt the curriculum content to the European Union language teaching standards (Kırkgöz 2013:24)” (p. 55). She further confirms her assertion with another sentence arguing that “from the first curriculum innovation in 1997 onwards in primary and secondary education, however, there have been some problems” (p. 58). These remarks also ignore the continuous implementation of the 1991 curriculum in 1997 and onwards in primary education for grades six to eight and indicate a misleading assumption that in 1997 there is a curriculum innovation covering the grades four to eight in the eight-year compulsory primary education. Ekşi (2017), in her book chapter, never refers to the continuous implementation of the 1991 curriculum for the sixth, seventh and eighth grades during and after 1997. Indeed, the 1991 curriculum is never mentioned in the whole study. Contrary to Ekşi (2017), Kırkgöz (2020) and Kırkgöz, Çelik & Arıkan (2016), Demirel (1999) argues correctly that

The program prepared for the 4th and 5th grades of the foreign language lessons to be taught during this period was approved by the Ministry of National Education Board of Education in 1997 and put into practice. The foreign language program for the 6th, 7th and 8th grades was accepted in 1991 with resolution 265 and was still in effect (p. 27).

Topkaya & Küçük (2010) also argue correctly that “the 6th, 7th and 8th grade teaching programs that had been renewed in 1991, however, continued to be implemented without any changes” (p. 54).

Most of the curriculum-related studies in Turkey, which evaluate the ELT curricula of Turkey before the 2006 ELT curriculum, focus on the 1997 curriculum while neglecting the 1991 ELT



curriculum, which forms the basis of the 1997 curriculum in terms of the type of syllabus adopted, the presence of the communicative principles and techniques, and the eclectic approach as an approach presented to the teachers. It is the result of the ignorance of the 1991 ELT curriculum that led some researchers (Bayyurt, 2012; Kırkgöz 2007) to conclude that the communicative approach was presented, for the first time, in the ELT curriculum of Turkey with the 1997 ELT curriculum, which is a very misleading assertion. Kırkgöz (2007), for example, argues that “the 1997 curriculum stands as a landmark in Turkish history because, for the first time, it introduced the concept of the communicative approach into ELT (Kırkgöz 2005)” (p. 221). Regarding the 1997 curriculum, Bayyurt (2012) also argues that

The curriculum was innovative for that period. It was the first time that the communicative approach was recognized and integrated into the curriculum for the purpose of developing students’ communication skills through various hands-on activities. With this approach the focus shifted from teachers to students; the classroom activities became learner-centered (p. 305).

Bayyurt (2012), in the above quote, does not cite Kırkgöz (2007) so it is her assertion and Bayyurt (2012) bases her thesis on that fact that “with this approach the focus shifted from teachers to students; the classroom activities became learner-centered”. Learner-centered teaching, however, was not introduced, for the first time, into the ELT curriculum in Turkey with the 1997 curriculum but it was already present in the 1991 curriculum. As stated earlier in this article, in the “General remarks about the content of the program, method, and evaluation” section of the 1991 curriculum, the following principle indicates this: “While developing this program, a student-centered approach was taken as a basis. In this respect, active participation of the student in the teaching process is essential” (p. 6). Kırkgöz, Çelik & Arıkan (2016) also argue that “the 1997 reform laid the foundations for a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach to the instruction of English” (p. 1201), ignoring the fact that the principles and activities of the communicative approach are also present in the 1991 ELT curriculum. It should also be noted that neither the 1991 curriculum nor the 1997 curriculum explicitly articulates the name of the communicative approach but incorporates the elements of the communicative approach as discussed in this article. It is important since both 1991 and 1997 curricula are not truly communicative but present an eclectic approach, in which communicative elements are present along with other elements belonging to other methodologies. What is common to Bayyurt (2012), Kırkgöz (2007), and Kırkgöz, Çelik & Arıkan (2016), on the other hand, is the fact that none of them analyses the 1991 secondary schools ELT curriculum (which continued to be implemented during and after 1997 in primary education in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades) let alone mentioning the presence of the communicative activities and principles in it. Their ignorance of the 1991 ELT curriculum led them to the misleading assertion that the communicative approach was introduced, for the first time, into the ELT curriculum in Turkey with the 1997 curriculum.

Haznedar (2004) examines the 1997 curriculum (for grade four) and argues that “The program consists of 7 sub-units such as *general objectives, specific objectives, units and their distributions, sample lesson plan, tools and materials, methods and techniques, and sample assessment questions*” (p. 17). The content of the 1997 curriculum, however, also includes the sections “remarks,” “syllabus,” “topics,” and “evaluation”. The remarks section of the curriculum is particularly important to understand the methodological basis of the 1997 curriculum. Thus, in her study, regarding the methods and techniques, Haznedar (2004) argues that the curriculum suggests “question and answer, dramatization, presentation, listening and speaking, memorization, demonstration, and repetition” (p. 18). Under the sub-title of her article “Teaching Methods and Techniques in the Program”, Haznedar (2004) analyses just the sample lesson plan in the program and concludes that the lesson is completely teacher-centered and that it requires the teacher to present the relevant grammatical structure with pictures and drawings and to reinforce it with mechanical exercises. She criticizes this lesson plan since it does not give importance to the student-student interaction, which is the main characteristic of communicative oriented courses. The methodological principles listed in the remarks section of the curriculum, however, are completely ignored by Haznedar (2004), which causes her to miss such

methodological points listed in this section: “foreign language is an indispensable means of communication”, “oral interaction activities”, “the use of authentic audio-visual documents”, “Foreign language lessons should be student-centered. In these lessons, the teacher assumes the role of facilitator and guide”, “The teacher ensures that the student is active by applying new practice techniques”. Thus, Haznedar’s (2004) analysis of the methodological basis of the 1997 curriculum is incomplete. It was possible for a teacher who followed the 1997 curriculum to give place to oral interaction communicative activities in his/her lessons and to have the role of facilitator to make the lesson student-centered as suggested by the remarks section of the curriculum. The 1997 curriculum is not truly communicative since it presents an eclectic approach but it also has communicative principles along with such techniques as memorization and repetition as is natural from an eclectic perspective.

It is also interesting to note that Haznedar (2004) does not claim that it was the first time that the communicative approach was recognized and integrated into the curriculum with the 1997 curriculum unlike Bayyurt (2012), Kırkgöz (2007), Kırkgöz, Çelik & Arıkan (2016). On the contrary, she claims that the curriculum is not communicative oriented. Thus, they are not in agreement with each other regarding this issue. Again, contrary to Bayyurt (2012), Kırkgöz (2007) and Kırkgöz, Çelik & Arıkan (2016), who claim that the 1997 curriculum is learner-centered since it introduces the communicative approach, Haznedar (2004) claims that the 1997 curriculum is completely teacher-centered. Regarding the 1997 curriculum, Topkaya and Küçük (2010) argue that

The 1997 4th and 5th Grades’ ELTP, similar to the general principles of the standardized curriculum, had a more traditional approach to teaching English. Although it upheld the ideals of communicative language teaching and emphasized the importance of student-centered, game-based way of instruction, in which language was used as a medium of communication, it largely depended upon the transfer of knowledge which was later recapped through exercises and games (see MEB İköretim Kurumları İngilizce Dersi Öretim Programı, 1997) (p. 54).

Contrary to Haznedar (2004), Topkaya and Küçük (2010) claim that the 1997 curriculum had the ideals of communicative language teaching and emphasized the importance of student-centered instruction but in line with Haznedar (2004), they argue that it had a more traditional approach to teaching English. Thus, contrary to Bayyurt (2010), Kırkgöz (2007) and Kırkgöz, Çelik & Arıkan (2016), Topkaya and Küçük (2010) do not agree that the 1997 curriculum is truly communicative oriented.

As discussed in this article, “raising the students’ language awareness” is the main goal of the 1997 curriculum and an eclectic approach is presented to the teachers to reach this goal. Whether adopting eclecticism is a correct stance or not is another topic of discussion but the main aim of this article is to investigate the methodological bases of the mentioned ELT curricula of Turkey. To discuss the validity of methodological positions of ELT curricula, it is, first of all, necessary to define correctly the methodological positions of these curricula. The failure to define fully the methodological basis of the 1997 curriculum is the main cause of the conflict among Haznedar (2004), Kırkgöz (2007), Bayyurt (2012), Kırkgöz, Çelik & Arıkan (2016) and Topkaya and Küçük (2010). Thus, the problem in analyzing the methodological basis of the 1997 curriculum is that each researcher touches upon some of the methodological points indicated in the 1997 curriculum and tries to reach a conclusion about its overall methodological position. The eclectic mixture of methodological elements presented to the teachers in the 1997 curriculum is the main cause of the different and even opposing views about the methodological analysis of the 1997 curriculum. Since the 1997 curriculum did not replace the 1991 curriculum but rather was developed in addition to it, the developers of the 1997 curriculum seem to have sought parallelism between the 1997 curriculum and 1991 curriculum as is evident of their adoption of the same syllabus design with the 1991 curriculum (function, vocabulary, structure). Thus, the 1997 curriculum, just as the 1991 curriculum, did not stick to a single approach or method but held the same eclectic position just as the 1991 curriculum. The communicative elements in the 1997 curriculum, on the other hand, are also present in the 1991 curriculum so the assertions put

forward by Kırkgöz (2007), Bayyurt (2012) and Kırkgöz, Çelik & Arıkan (2016) that the communicative approach was introduced, for the first time, into Turkish ELT curricula with the 1997 curriculum and that it “laid the foundations for a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach” are not correct. Haznedar’s (2004) assertion that the 1997 curriculum did not incorporate either the communicative elements and student-student interaction is also not correct since she ignores the remarks section of the 1997 curriculum. Ekşi (2017), on the other hand, did not even notice that the 1997 curriculum did not cover the grades four to eight in the eight-year compulsory primary education but just the grades four and five, while for the other grades (from six to eight) the 1991 curriculum was still being implemented alongside the implementation of the 1997 curriculum.

### **The Methodological bases of the 2006, 2013 and 2018 ELT curricula**

When the 2006 ELT curriculum was developed in 2005 and began to be implemented in 2006-2007 academic year gradually beginning with the fourth grades, there was no change in the eight-year uninterrupted compulsory primary education and English teaching still began at the fourth grades of public primary education institutions as in the time when the 1997 curriculum (for grades four and five) began to be implemented alongside the 1991 curriculum (for grades six, seven and eight). Thus, Haznedar’s (2018) assertion that English teaching began at the second grade of primary education in 2006 is wrong.

Regarding the methodological basis, the 2006 ELT curriculum for primary education, which replaced both the 1991 and the 1997 ELT curricula, also adopts an eclectic approach while the communicative approach dominates the curriculum. Under its section titled “What are the insights that we can get from different approaches and methods?”, the curriculum gives a brief explanation about the grammar-translation method, the direct method, the audiolingual method, suggestopedia, the silent way, integrated approach, communicative language teaching, brain-based learning, neuro-linguistic programming and the theory of multiple intelligences. While the curriculum, in this section, has a critical stance towards some aspects of such methods such as the grammar-translation method, the direct method, the audiolingual method, suggestopedia, the silent way, it considers integrated approach (task-based, content-based, and communicative approaches), communicative language teaching, brain-based learning, neuro-linguistic programming and the theory of multiple intelligences as beneficial learning approaches. Indeed, one of the authors of the 2006 ELT curriculum, Gül Peker (2018), excellently summarises this section as follows

The discussion in this section not only draws attention to the learning approaches and techniques that hinder learning, such as the GTM, but also emphasizes the new and beneficial learning approaches such as CLT, BBL and NLP...Finally, it is important that instructional approaches address learners’ different intelligences (MI) (Gardner, 2011). Following the precepts of the *CEFR*, the concept of methodology proposed in NEC centered around the main principles of communicativeness and learner-centered learning (Çelik & Gül Peker, 2018).

The 2006 curriculum also suggests the use of total physical response (TPR) besides story-telling/reading and art and craft activities for young learners. All of these methodological suggestions characterise the eclectic approach in the 2006 curriculum. The eclecticism adopted is also reflected in the syllabus design in the 2006 curriculum as it argues that

A complete syllabus specification will include all aspects: structures, functions, situations, topics, skills, tasks... The mixed syllabus we aim to design will have elements taken from the grammatical/structural syllabus (grammatical structures), the situational syllabus (the context in which interaction occurs), the topical/theme-based syllabus, the notional/ functional (communicative) syllabus (Usage / Notions + Syntactic Structures and Use/ Functions in Coherent Discourse), the procedural/task-based syllabus (tasks that are relevant to the real world language needs of the student) and the skills-based syllabus (language or study/academic skills) (p. 23).

While the 2006 curriculum suggests getting insights from different approaches and/or methods such as communicative language teaching, brain-based learning, neuro-linguistic programming and the theory of multiple intelligences, the dominance of the communicative approach in the curriculum is observed in the suggested activities such as tasks, games, pair work and group work activities, drama and dramatization, role-plays, etc. The syllabus design (functional/notional items and tasks in the syllabus) and the presence of non-conventional ways of assessment named as "alternative assessment" or "authentic assessment" also indicate the dominance of the communicative approach in the curriculum. The presence of ELP (European Language Portfolio) in the curriculum as well as the reference to CEFR by Çelik & Gül Peker (2018) also show that Turkey's ongoing cooperative studies with the Council of Europe are reflected in the curriculum. Regarding ELP, the curriculum argues that "The ELP supports any foreign language curriculum that aims to develop learners' communicative proficiency. Hence, the communicative aspect (functions and notions) should be included" (p. 23). The dominance of the communicative approach in the curriculum is, thus, also observed here.

Regarding the 2006 curriculum, Kırkgöz (2009) argues that "the revised curriculum is still communicative oriented, but it is a much more comprehensive and coherent version of the previous one" (p. 676) and Haznedar (2010) argues that the curriculum is student-centered and in terms of methodology, it gives place to teaching techniques that will realize the functional use of language in daily life. While the arguments of Kırkgöz (2009) and Haznedar (2010) relating the 2006 curriculum are correct, they both avoid defining the methodological basis of the 2006 curriculum as eclectic and hence their diagnosis related to the methodological basis of the 2006 curriculum is not complete.

In 2012, there was another change in the Turkish education system. Compulsory education became twelve years and the 8+4 education system was transformed into a 4+4+4 education system. While English education began in the fourth grade both in the 1997 curriculum (in 5+3+3 education system) and in the 2006 curriculum (in 8+4 education system), it began in the second grade in the 4+4+4 education system. Thus, a new ELT curriculum for primary and secondary schools was developed and began to be implemented in 2013.

The methodological basis of the 2013 ELT curriculum will be investigated along with the methodological basis of the 2018 ELT curriculum for the primary and secondary schools since the 2018 curriculum does not suggest anything new as different from the 2013 curriculum regarding methodology. Besides as Acar (2019b) already points out, the 2018 ELT curriculum copies many of the theoretical assumptions of the 2013 ELT curriculum without citations. 2013 curriculum argues that

As no single language teaching methodology was seen as flexible enough to meet the needs of learners at various stages and to address a wide range of learning styles, an eclectic mix of instructional techniques has been adopted, drawing on an action-oriented approach in order to allow learners to experience English as a means of communication, rather than focusing on the language as a topic of study (2013 ELT curriculum, p. II).

The 2013 curriculum clearly states that it adopts the action-oriented approach and the eclectic approach but the curriculum misleadingly conceptualises the action-oriented approach as adopting communication as a goal. In the action-oriented approach, however, communication is not the goal but a means, that is, communication is put at the service of social action on the way to train social actors. The 2018 ELT curriculum copies the above quote (in its third page) from the 2013 curriculum (without any citations) so it also misidentifies the action-oriented approach. The problematic treatment of the action-oriented approach is also observed in other publications of the developers of the 2013 curriculum. Kırkgöz, Çelik & Arıkan (2016), for example, argue, regarding the 2013 curriculum, that

The newly developed curriculum, in accordance with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching and the CEFR, gives primacy to spoken language in grades two through four, with the main emphasis on the development of oral-aural skills (p. 1207).

Thus, they can not draw attention to the difference between the communicative approach and the action-oriented approach, which the curriculum claims to be based on. In fact, the action-oriented approach is never mentioned in their whole article, which aims to explain the procedures that took place in preparing the 2013 curriculum by “focusing on the political, pedagogical and contextual factors affecting the implementation” (p. 1199).

Similarly, Zorba & Arıkan (2016) argue that “task-based learning has a significant place in the CEFR. In fact, the action-oriented approach that the CEFR adopted is based on tasks” (p. 18). Zorba & Arıkan’s (2016) definition of the action-oriented approach as task-based learning is again another misidentification. Indeed, Puren (2002, 2004, 2006, 2014b, 2014b, 2020) argues repeatedly that the social-action perspective (the action-oriented approach) is neither the communicative approach nor task-based learning since the main goals of both the communicative approach and task-based learning, which is a development within the communicative approach, are to train successful communicators while the goal of the action-oriented approach is to train social actors. Puren (2020) also indicates that the characteristics of action in the CLT and TBLT are quite different from those of the action-oriented approach. Following Puren, Acar (2019a, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c) also explains in detail the differences between the communicative approach, as well as task-based learning, and the action-oriented approach both at a theoretical level and at the level of textbook implementation. Similarly, following Puren, the authors of the CEFR companion volume (2018), Piccardo & North (2019) also explicitly state that “the action-oriented approach cannot be seen as synonymous with TBLT” (p. 276). Nunn (2020) also rightly and explicitly argues that “tasks are not projects” (p. 52).

Yeni-Palabıyık & Daloğlu (2016) can not observe the misinterpretation of the action-oriented approach in the 2013 curriculum and title their article as “English language teachers' implementation of curriculum with action-oriented approach in Turkish primary education”. Indeed, both the 2013 curriculum and the 2018 curriculum claim to adopt the action-oriented approach but neither is action-oriented. It is also interesting to note that Yeni-Palabıyık & Daloğlu (2016) use the action-oriented approach in the title of their study but avoids explaining it in their article. In fact, the mention of the action-oriented approach in their article is restricted to a quote from the CEFR.

Just like Yeni-Palabıyık & Daloğlu (2016), Ekşi (2017) also fails to notice that the action-oriented approach is misinterpreted in the 2013 curriculum. Ekşi (2017), regarding the methodological basis of the 2013 curriculum, shares the following link with the claim that the video in the link provides information about the underlying methodology of the 2013 curriculum.

<https://www.eba.gov.tr/video/izle/565078d9024d45f704eadb6466176d14122ea81ed6001>

In the video, one of the authors of the 2013 curriculum, Arda Arıkan, presents the 2013 curriculum but never mentions the action-oriented approach that the curriculum adopts, which Ekşi (2017) also did not notice while sharing the video link in her book chapter. Arıkan, however, explicitly mentions, in the video, the communicative approach as well as such basic techniques that the curriculum adopts such as techniques of total physical response, arts and crafts, drama, role play. The avoidance of explaining the action-oriented approach by Yeni-Palabıyık & Daloğlu (2016), Ekşi (2017) and even Arıkan (in the video), as one of the developers of the 2013 curriculum, show how hesitant they are in dealing with the action-oriented approach. Besides, even when there is an attempt to define the action-oriented approach between the lines as Zorba & Arıkan (2016) do, a mistake immediately arises, that of characterizing it as task-based learning, with which both Puren (2004, 2014a, 2020), Piccardo & North (2019) and Nunn (2020) do not agree.

Yüce & Mirici (2019) are also among the researchers who misinterpret the action-oriented approach since they also reflect their perception of the action-oriented approach as the communicative approach in their study. They “investigated the participants’ perceptions about whether the EFL program for 9th grade students comprises ‘action-oriented approach’” (p.1176) and argued that

Based on the responses, it can be stated that the EFL program presents activities for language learners to overcome their communicative problems which may arise in their daily lives. According to the responses, the course materials which were designed in line with the program provide communication activities for students to prepare them for the real life situations. Thus, it can be concluded that the EFL program involves action-oriented approach principle of the CEFR (Yüce & Mirici, 2019, p. 1177).

The findings of this study show that both the researchers who conducted this study and the participants (EFL teachers) who participated in this study think that the action-oriented approach is the communicative approach, which is certainly not true.

All the studies of the researchers (Ekşi, 2017; Kırkgöz, Çelik & Arıkan, 2016; Yeni-Palabıyık & Daloğlu, 2016; Yüce & Mirici, 2019; Zorba & Arıkan, 2016) indicate how the action-oriented approach is misinterpreted in the Turkish ELT studies. Thus, it is not surprising that both the 2013 and 2018 ELT curricula also misdefine the action-oriented approach and are far from being action-oriented.

While the 2013 ELT curriculum claims to adopt the eclectic approach and the action-oriented approach, dominance of the communicative approach is evident from its remarks as follows:

The communicative approach entails use of the target language not only as an object of study, but as a means of interacting with others; the focus is not necessarily on grammatical structures and linguistic functions, but on authentic use of the language in an interactive context in order to generate real meaning (LarsenFreeman & Anderson, 2011; Richards, 2006) (p. III).

A focus on developing the students' communicative competence, authentic materials, drama and role play, and hands-on activities, the use of tasks are some of the items that indicate that the 2013 curriculum adopts the communicative approach. The 2018 curriculum also incorporates these elements and it repeats the quote above (without any citations) on its page four. Thus, just as the 2013 curriculum, the 2018 curriculum is also dominated by the communicative approach.

## CONCLUSION

All the curricula investigated in this study incorporate an eclectic approach while some of these curricula (e.g. 1991, 2013, 2018 curricula) state it explicitly and some of them (e.g. 1997 and 2006 curricula) indicate it implicitly by suggesting the teachers get benefit from different principles and/or activities from different methods and/or approaches. What is also common to all the curricula investigated is the fact that all of them incorporate the principles and/or activities of the communicative approach to a greater or lesser extent, which are more dominant in the 2006, 2013, and 2018 curricula. It is not surprising given the fact that Turkey's cooperative studies with the Council of Europe continued before and during the development of all these curricula. A common mistake in the literature is the assumption that the communicative approach was integrated, for the first time, into the ELT curriculum of Turkey with the 1997 curriculum (Bayyurt, 2012; Kırkgöz, 2007; Kırkgöz, Çelik & Arıkan, 2016). This article indicates that the principles and/or activities, as well as objectives and syllabus of the 1991 curriculum, also incorporate the elements of the communicative approach. Besides, such an objective in the 1991 curriculum as "completing the missing information in the material (text) that they have by asking questions (information gap, opinion gap)" (p. 22) also indicates the presence of task-based language teaching in the 1991 curriculum. Both the 1991 and 1997 curricula claim to adopt student-centered English teaching and learning where active participation of the students is stressed. The 1997 curriculum did not replace the 1991 curriculum but rather was developed in addition to it and parallelism can be seen between the two curricula in terms of their adoption of the same syllabus design (function, vocabulary, structure) and in terms of

presenting an eclectic approach as a methodological basis. The other parallelism is also observed to be the presence of the communicative principles and/or activities in both curricula.

With the development of the 2006, 2013, and 2018 curricula, the dominance of the communicative approach in the Turkey ELT curricula has increased. The methodological basis of the 2013 and 2018 curricula, however, is problematic since both of them claim to be based on the action-oriented approach but this approach is misinterpreted as having a goal of enabling the learners to communicate in English, which is certainly not the goal of the action-oriented approach. Communication, in the action-oriented approach, is not the goal but just a means for training social actors, which is the goal of the action-oriented approach. Thus, it can be said that both the 2013 and 2018 curricula claim to adopt the action-oriented approach but they are not action-oriented. Indeed, the action-oriented approach is not even given a separate explanation in these two curricula but mentioned between the lines and even in this case, it is misrepresented. Actually, whichever Turkish ELT researcher treats the action-oriented approach between the lines in the ELT field in Turkey either can not explain it or misidentifies it (e.g. Kırkgöz, Çelik & Arıkan, 2016; Yeni-Palabıyık & Daloğlu, 2016; Yüce & Mirici, 2019; Zorba & Arıkan, 2016). What is also common to all these studies is the fact that these researchers can not deal with the action-oriented approach under a section but just mention it between the lines, which also shows that they are not sure what the action-oriented approach is but still they feel compelled to incorporate it not only into the Turkish ELT curricula but also in their other studies but do it the wrong way.

Thus, despite the developments (e.g. the goal of training social actors) indicated both in the CEFR (2001) and CEFRCV (2018) and Puren's (2002, 2004, 2006, 2014b, 2014b, 2020) development of this approach in detail, both the 2013 and 2018 curricula still stick to the communicative approach and fail to be action-oriented curricula mainly because (1) The ELT researchers in Turkey promote the communicative approach as well as task-based learning with their studies which either focus on the communicative approach (Demirezen, 2011) or propose a task-based syllabus (Bayyurt, 2020). (2) The curriculum developers and the researchers misinterpret the action-oriented approach by equating it with the communicative approach or task-based learning (Kırkgöz, Çelik & Arıkan, 2016; Yeni-Palabıyık & Daloğlu, 2016; Yüce & Mirici, 2019; Zorba & Arıkan, 2016). The result is the development of the 2013 and 2018 Turkish ELT curricula, which claim to be based on the action-oriented approach but, which, in reality, are far from being action-oriented curricula.

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