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Basic Language Skills in Mother Tongue Curricula Implemented in Turkey and the UK: A Comparative Review

*Mehmet Soyuçok , **Burcu Öztürk 

Abstract The purpose of the mother tongue in force in Turkey and the UK research is to examine the comparative approach to the basic language skills curriculum. It is thought that the comparative analysis of curriculum will contribute to generating new ideas and providing a broad perspective in curriculum preparation and development. The research was carried out in accordance with the qualitative method. Document analysis was performed for data collection and analysis. Working Stage-3 level in the UK is limited to the secondary school level and in Turkey. In this direction, English Programs of Study: Key Stage3 and Turkish Course Curriculum (Secondary School 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th Grades) were examined. Elements related to reading, writing, listening and speaking skills in the programs were examined and interpreted. It was observed that the findings obtained as a result of the study were consistent with the literature. The analysis and evaluation results to the manufacturer in England native language curriculum in language skills (writing and speaking), Turkey's main language curriculum to the receptive language skills (reading and listening) it was determined that important. The ability to persuade the UK program in Turkey is said to be the center of the program, critical thinking and programs of the functional use of language. There is also a strong emphasis on the culture and love of reading in the UK curriculum. Based on these results, it is recommended to conduct more comprehensive studies on curricula and to benefit from these studies in the program development process.

Keywords: Mother tongue, basic skills, curriculum.

* Turkish Teacher, Ministry of National Education; PhD student, Usak University, Turkey

e-mail: mehmetsoyucok@gmail.com

** Assist. Prof. Dr., Kastamonu University, Faculty of Education, Kastamonu, Turkey

e-mail: bozturk@kastamonu.edu.tr

National education policies are directly related to the social, cultural, economic, and intellectual structure of countries. They become concrete through elements such as practices and documents and are reflected in schools, classrooms, and lessons through curricula.

A curriculum is a set of documents containing the objectives of a course, the topics to achieve the objectives, the principles of assessment and evaluation, etc. (Arslan et al., 2001, p. 30; Bozyiğit & Akça, 2017, p. 73; Güven & Aydın, 2017, p. 89). While a curriculum is of primary importance for courses, textbooks come after them in terms of importance (Nunley & Evin Gencel, 2019, p.351). Curricula also have a great role in ensuring that students achieve the learning outcomes, in the success of the learning&teaching processes, and in ensuring that stakeholders achieve satisfaction from educational processes. Therefore, while designing curricula, development characteristics, interests, and needs of the student group, trends of the age, and current technological developments should be taken into consideration.

A mother tongue is a language that individuals learn informally from their immediate surroundings before starting school. It is used intensively at home and in the immediate environment. A mother tongue is the *raison d'être* of a nation: it is a historical fact that nations with a language of their own continue to exist while those that have lost their language disappear (Demir & Yapıcı, 2007, p.78). Also, the ability to use the mother tongue effectively and functionally help individuals to do their daily work and participate in social and democratic life (Deniz & Kan, 2006, p. 102; Güneş, 1992, p.16). Using the mother tongue effectively provides many benefits to individuals in their academic and daily lives. Some studies have shown that mastering basic language skills in the mother tongue leads to success in areas such as mathematics (Göktaş, 2010), foreign languages (Çelebi, 2006), and science (Kaya, 2017). Therefore, mother tongue education is a critically important field with individual, social, and national dimensions.

To use the mother tongue effectively, it is necessary to be good at the four basic language skills (i.e., reading, writing, listening, and speaking). Competence in basic language skills is both the reason for and the result of learning the mother tongue well. For this reason, a holistic approach should be adopted when teaching basic language skills. Improper or weak development of one of these four skills negatively affects other skills. Therefore, mother tongue courses should include all four basic skills equally (Arıcı & Taşkın, 2019, p.193; Yılmaz, 2006, p.103). To do this, there is a need for well-planned mother tongue curricula that can motivate students and ensure that all four basic skills are taught equally.

Purpose and Importance of the Study

Curricula assume the role of a direct guide in education. Since all learning&teaching activities in classes are carried out according to the procedures and principles specified in curricula, they have an important role in the success or failure of the educational processes. Therefore, curriculum development is a field that needs to be constantly improved by educational sciences. Furthermore, comparative analysis of curricula implemented in different countries is thought to contribute to generating new ideas and developing a broad perspective for curriculum development. Mother tongue education in schools aims to develop receptive language skills (listening-reading) and expressive language skills (speaking-writing) in children. Taking these as a starting point, this research aims to comparatively examine the approach to basic language skills adopted in mother tongue curricula implemented in Turkey and the UK.

Method

The present study employed the document analysis approach, one of the qualitative research methods. Qualitative research “uses qualitative data collection techniques such as observations, interviews, and document analysis to reveal perceptions and phenomena in a realistic and holistic manner in the natural environment” (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008, p.39).

Analyzed Documents

The data were collected from mother-tongue curricula currently implemented at the middle school level in Turkey and the UK. These programs are English Programmes of Study: Key Stage 3 (Department for Education, 2013) and Turkish Language Teaching Program (For Middle School 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th Grades) (Turkish Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2018). For this study, an academician who previously conducted research on the education systems of Turkey and the UK was consulted, and it was determined that the Stage-3 level in the UK was the equivalent of the middle school level in Turkey. Relevant curricula were accessed through the websites of the ministries of education of both countries.

Data Collection

The document analysis method was used to collect data. “Document analysis incorporates collecting data by analyzing written documents containing information about the facts and phenomena related to the research subject” (Karataş, 2015, p. 72). In accordance with this method, the headings related to the basic language skills in the Turkish and English curricula were determined,

and these parts were examined comparatively by the researchers. Moreover, the study examined all the other parts addressing basic language skills regardless of whether they were under the headings related to skills. Experts were also consulted on the parts to be examined. For example, an academician was consulted about the comparability of the goals in the English curriculum (EC) and the specific objectives in the Turkish curriculum (TC), and these parts were also included in the study.

Data Analysis

While analyzing the data, firstly, the related headings in both curricula were matched, and then these headings were compared in detail. Items and headings included in one curriculum but not in the other were also emphasized, and necessary explanations were made. To obtain the findings, firstly, the two curricula were examined, and then the descriptions were classified and listed based on subject areas. Then, both curricula were compared in terms of the themes included or not included. The findings were finalized after the researchers controlled them and expert opinions were received. Then, the findings were presented in tables under related headings. In each data analysis phase, we consulted three experts: two graduate Turkish teachers and one academician who previously researched the mother tongue curricula implemented in the UK and Turkey.

Results

First, the relevant parts of the curricula that included the descriptions related to basic language skills were determined. Later, it was decided to address the aims and parts related to reading, writing, and spoken English in the EC, and specific objectives and parts related to reading, writing, speaking, and listening in the TC. The findings are presented below under headings and interpreted based on the relevant literature.

Results Obtained from the Comparison of the Curricula in Terms of General Aims

It was determined that the “goals” heading in the EC was the equivalent of the “specific objectives” heading in the TC. The heading of “goals” in the EC consists of seven items, while the heading of “specific objectives” in the TC consists of ten items. The findings obtained from the comparison of the stated goals and aims are presented in the table below:

Table 1.

Comparison of Curricula in terms of General Aims

Theme	English Mother Tongue Curriculum	Turkish Mother Tongue Curriculum
All of the basic language skills	-	+
Awareness of the language	-	+
Acquiring an understanding of grammar rules	+	-
Acquiring a wide vocabulary	+	+
Reading comprehension	+	+
Reading with purpose	+	-
Cursive writing and reading	+	-
Information literacy skills	-	+
Functional literacy skills	-	+
Developing a love of literature through reading for enjoyment	+	-
Writing clearly, accurately, and coherently	+	+
Writing appropriately for the target audience and in line with the rules of the language	+	-
Speaking and writing fluently and confidently	+	-
Thinking skills	-	+
Critical thinking skills	-	+
National and spiritual feelings and thoughts	-	+
Artistic perspective	-	+
Appreciating literary heritage	+	-
Communicating and defending your ideas effectively	+	-
Presentation Skills	+	+

As can be inferred from the table, a total of twenty items are included as general aims in both curricula. Of these, seven are included only in the TC, five only in the EC, and three in both curricula. While the items in the TC are more general and abstract, those in the EC are more specific and functional. For example, “expressing feelings and thoughts and opinions or thesis on a subject in oral and written form effectively and clearly” in the TC is a general statement, while “being competent in the arts of speaking and listening, making formal presentations, demonstrating to others and participating in debate” in the EC is a more specific statement. So, generally, the statements in the EC are more specific and plainly stated. The reason for this can be that other parts of the TC address learning outcomes in greater detail whereas the EC only gives an overview of the goals and aims. It is, therefore, thought that the developers of the TC did not need to go into details in the “specific objectives” section.

The EC does not put forward a general statement about basic language skills, instead, each skill other than listening is addressed specifically in separate items. It is also noteworthy that the EC addresses the listening skill together with the speaking skill, and does so in just one sentence. Four of

the seven aims in the EC are related to expressive language skills (writing, speaking), whereas four of the ten specific objectives in the TC are related to receptive language skills (reading, listening). Therefore, the EC attaches greater importance to speaking and writing skills, while the TC attaches greater importance to reading and listening skills, at least considering the stated aims. The EC emphasizes the purposes and functions of the language. On the other hand, the TC underlines the cultural and intellectual aspects of the language more. Language is definitely an art, but it is also an important element in life that assists humans in all their activities. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to adopt a functional approach in mother tongue education. Soyuçok (2017) stated that Turkish curricula are weak in terms of functional reading, which is consistent with the present study that found that a functional approach is still missing in the Turkish mother tongue curriculum. In this respect, the TC should be strengthened because dysfunctional mother tongue skills cannot be used effectively in daily life and cannot provide the desired benefit to both the individual and the society (Güneş, 1992, p.13).

While the “general aims” section of the TC emphasizes critical thinking and information literacy skills, the same is not true for the EC, which focuses on the ability to express oneself rather than thinking processes. The EC underlines the goal of reading for information, but this does not fully meet the concept of information literacy, which includes knowing how to access information, using resources effectively, using the obtained information in different ways, and sharing the information by ethical principles. On the other hand, the TC focuses heavily on thinking skills, which is a positive finding since teaching a language includes teaching how to think. In fact, language is a way of thinking (Gündoğan, 2002, p. 1), and there is a strong link between thoughts and language (Gül & Soysal, 2009, p. 68). In this regard, the TC approaches basic language skills in the axis of thinking skills. On the other hand, the EC emphasizes self-expression, discussion, and persuasion skills, which can be considered a positive feature of the EC. However, the TC does not include these skills in the “specific objectives” section. Indeed, self-expression, discussion, and persuasion skills are quite important because people are in a constant process of persuading/being persuaded in daily life (Hogan & Speakman, 2012, p.14; Packard, 2007, p.8). Therefore, these skills should be given enough weight in curricula, since the overarching purpose of education is to prepare students for life (Göçer, 2016, p. 188).

Results Obtained from the Comparison of the Curricula in terms of Reading Skills

While examining both curricula in terms of reading skills, we compared the reading-related learning outcomes for four grades in the TC with the “reading” heading in the EC. The following findings were obtained:

Table 2.

Comparison of Curricula in terms of Reading Skills

Theme	English Mother Tongue Curriculum	Turkish Mother Tongue Curriculum
Developing an appreciation and love of reading	+	-
Reading contemporary and classic literature books	+	-
Choosing and reading books independently for challenge, interest, and enjoyment	+	-
Re-reading books encountered earlier to provide a basis for making comparisons	+	-
Learning new vocabulary	+	+
Understanding new vocabulary with the help of context and dictionaries	+	+
Knowing the audience for the writing	+	-
Recognising a range of poetic conventions	+	+
Studying a range of authors (at least two authors) in depth each year	+	-
Understanding how the work of dramatists is communicated effectively through performance	+	-
Studying setting, plot, and characterisation, and the effects of these	+	-
Knowing the purpose and context of the writing	+	+
Knowing how sentences present meaning	+	+
Reading fluently	+	+
Producing solutions for what they read	-	+
Visual literacy	-	+
Being information literate	-	+
Knowing how to read different spelling features	-	+
Making critical comparisons across texts	+	+
Making inferences and referring to evidence in the text	+	-

When both curricula are examined, it is seen that the EC briefly touches on different dimensions of the reading skill, while the TC deals in detail with certain aspects of the same subject. Although the TC contains a large number of learning outcomes, these are repeated at different grade levels in the same way. This indicates that the Turkish mother tongue curriculum adopts a spiral progression approach while the English mother tongue curriculum adopts a frame teaching program.

The EC emphasizes the love and importance of reading. This is also reflected in the practices: great importance is attached to the reading habit and the love of reading in the British education

system, and many activities are organized on the subject (Öztürk, 2020, p. 2119 - 2121). On the other hand, although the Turkish mother tongue curriculum contains many reading-related learning outcomes, it does not put a special emphasis on the subject. Therefore, it can be said that the TC should be revised to develop in students a love of and appreciation for reading. Critical reading is included in both curricula, but the ability to “know the audience for the writing” specified in the EC is not present in the TC. This skill should be included in the TC, too, since the target audience is an element that shapes how a text is produced. Also, “re-reading books encountered earlier to provide a basis for making comparisons” and “studying a range of authors, including at least two authors in-depth each year” specified in the EC can be interpreted as a contribution to the efforts of cultivating a love of reading in students.

The visual literacy skill included in the TC is not present in the EC, which points to the strength of the TC. The visual literacy skill, frequently used both in school and in daily life, is defined as performing mental activities on various visuals such as making meaning, thinking, interpreting, etc. (Çifci, 2013, p. 86; Güneş, 2013, p. 2). Visual literacy, the earliest reading form, has increased its importance compared to the past with the increasing technological tools. Today, visuals play a major role in areas such as communication, news, and learning. Understanding and using visuals can provide many benefits to individuals. The same is also true for information literacy. In the TC, the information literacy skill is both included in the “specific objectives” section and mentioned under the reading-related learning outcomes. On the other hand, the EC addresses this skill under the heading of neither “reading” nor, as mentioned above, “aims.” The reason why neither visual nor information literacy is included in the EC can be attributed to the fact that these skills are addressed in previous grades.

In the EC, special attention is paid to the genre of drama. Drama is an art in which higher-level language skills are exhibited. It can help develop higher-level language and thinking skills in students (Altunbay, 2012, p. 751). Therefore, it is an appropriate approach to include the drama genre in curricula. In this respect, the EC mentions Shakespeare, who is one of the most important writers of English literature. “However, what makes Shakespeare Shakespeare, who is known by primary school students all around the world, is not only his extraordinary works but also later writers who analyzed, criticized, interpreted his works from other perspectives, and tried to make them known to the world” (Dönmez, 2017, p. 115). It would be appropriate to adopt this approach in the TC, as well. The Turkish language has a rich accumulation of both great books and great writers. It is, therefore, recommended to include in the TC successful Turkish writers and their works appropriate for children.

Results Obtained from the Comparison of the Curricula in terms of Writing Skills

While examining both curricula in terms of writing skills, we compared the writing-related learning outcomes for four grades in the TC and the heading of “writing” in the EC. The following findings were obtained:

Table 3.

Comparison of Curricula in terms of Writing Skills

Theme	English Mother Tongue Curriculum	Turkish Mother Tongue Curriculum
Writing expository essays	+	+
Writing narrative essays	+	+
Writing poetry	+	+
Functional writing (filling out forms, writing process steps, etc.)	-	+
Writing scripts	+	-
Taking notes	+	+
Summarising and organising material (using ways to improve thinking)	+	+
Writing in accordance with the language and text structure (applying vocabulary, grammar, and text structure to their writing and selecting the appropriate form)	+	+
Drawing on rhetorical devices	+	-
Re-writing	+	+
Paying attention to accurate grammar, punctuation, and spelling	+	+
Using words in their mother tongue while writing	-	+
Writing accurately, fluently, and effectively	+	-
Writing for a wide range of purposes and audiences in different genres and styles.	+	-

When the two curricula are examined, it is seen that both generally focus on the same themes related to writing skills. There is also a difference in the lengths of the contents here, but when the description and learning outcomes are compared, it can be said that both curricula emphasize more or less the same things. The reason for the difference is that the TC is more detailed.

The EC mentions “drawing on rhetorical devices” while the TC does not. Rhetoric is defined as the art of speaking well. However, speaking well is not always within the scope of rhetoric: the purpose of the speaker should be to persuade the other person. Rhetoric includes the rules required to express feelings and thoughts effectively (Gülsevin & Boz, 2009, p. XIV), and the use of rhetoric differs depending on the type of the text (informative, narrative, poetry) (Kaplan, 2005, p.10). As noted in the initial findings, one of the issues that the EC focuses on is persuasion. Rhetoric is also a

part of the art of persuasion, which shows the importance the EC attaches to persuasion. This approach can also improve students' critical thinking skills. The student who learns to persuade others also develops an idea about how others can persuade him/her, and, while taking precautions in order not to be persuaded easily, uses critical thinking processes. Critical thinking is a means of struggle against persuasion attempts (Eipstein, 1999, p. 7). Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that students develop persuasion and rhetoric skills. So, the Turkish mother tongue curriculum needs to be improved in this regard.

“Writing for a wide range of purposes and audiences” is included in the EC, but not in the TC. This shows that the target audience, which is one of the basic elements of the purpose of writing, is neglected in the TC. The reader's culture and prior knowledge of the subject directly affect the effectiveness of the text. Readers may interpret or analyze the same text differently and draw different conclusions. Moreover, analyses, interpretations, or conclusions may vary depending on the cognitive and affective characteristics as well as intellectual levels of readers (Erden, 2009, p. 6). Many features, from sentence structures to word preferences, from text styles to narrative forms, directly affect the reader's comprehension process. A narrative text and academic work cannot be produced with the same words, the same style, or the same approach. It is important to make students aware of this. Otherwise, the texts they produce fail to reach the purpose, no matter how skillful they are in writing. Also, the ability to write scripts is included in the EC, but not in the TC. Writing scripts can help students develop creative thinking and writing skills as well as learn various grammar rules (Yaman & Süğümlü, 2009, p. 69). Therefore, it is necessary to include in the TC “writing scripts,” which has a wide range of applications in the teaching of a mother tongue.

While the TC emphasizes “using words in the mother tongue instead of loanwords while writing,” the EC does not. This might be due to certain historical and cultural features. Since Turkish is the language of a nation that has always been in close relations with other nations, it has borrowed many words from foreign languages. Similarly, as a natural result of cultural interactions, many Turkish words have also passed to foreign languages. These words have been used both in written language and in colloquial language for many years. However, the extensive use of loanwords in Turkish has caused much debate over time. Indeed, the debates on which words can be counted Turkish have been going on for more than a century. Language experts can reveal which words are Turkish and which are not; nevertheless, we believe that it would be correct to regard the words extensively used in colloquial language as Turkish. “If a word is understood and used by the users of a language, that word is the property of that language. That is, the criteria is not the origin but usage”

(Ercilasun, 2015, p. 12). Moreover, another question comes to mind here: “How effectively can Turkish students distinguish real Turkish words from loanwords?” This skill, which is necessarily included in curricula, should be supported with at least basic knowledge of Turkish etymology and the sociology of the Turkish language. However, when the learning outcomes were examined, no statement related to this subject could be found. From this, it is understood that the relevant learning outcome is tried to be turned into a skill only through students’ intuition and teachers’ feedback.

Another skill included in the TC but not in the EC is functional writing. It is stated under the heading of “writing,” not as one of the specific objectives. Since skills such as filling out forms and writing the process steps may be needed in daily life, they should be taught to students or they should be reinforced if taught previously. Doing so not only benefits students both at school and in daily life but also helps them relate the learned knowledge to daily life. This, in turn, positively affects students’ attitudes towards school, teachers, and lessons. Various studies have shown that when teaching Turkish both as a mother tongue and as a foreign language, using texts related to daily life increases motivation and success (Bölükbaş, 2004; Güneş, 2013). These skills are not included in the EC but they are included in Stages 1 and 2 of the EC. For, as discussed in the initial findings, the EC is a frame program, not a spiral one.

Results Obtained from the Comparison of the Curricula in terms of Speaking Skills

While examining both curricula in terms of speaking skills, we compared the speaking-related learning outcomes for four grades in the TC with the “spoken English” heading in the EC. The following findings were obtained:

Table 4.

Comparison of Curricula in terms of Speaking Skills

Theme	English Mother Tongue Curriculum	Turkish Mother Tongue Curriculum
Speaking confidently and effectively	+	-
Using the mother tongue confidently in a range of formal and informal contexts, including classroom discussion	+	-
Giving short speeches and presentations, expressing their own ideas and keeping to the point	+	-
Participating in discussions, summarising and/or building on what has been said	+	-
Using gestures to add impact	+	+
Using silence and stillness to add impact	+	-
Reading poetry	+	+
Participating in formal debates	+	-
Using words in the mother tongue instead of loanwords	-	+
Using speaking strategies	-	+
Improvising, rehearsing, and performing play scripts	+	-

When both curricula are examined, it is seen that the EC has a more comprehensive content in terms of speaking skills. “Speaking confidently” specified in the EC indicates the importance of self-confidence. Self-confidence is defined as one’s trust in one’s own abilities, and it increases motivation (Bénabou & Tirole, 2012, p. 871). In fact, a lack of self-confidence is the cause of most problems encountered while speaking. Since there is a significant, strong correlation between self-confidence and speaking skills (Gürler, 2015, p. 14), the motivation that emerges through self-confidence positively affects speaking skills. Another point that draws attention in the EC is the emphasis on persuasion. As stated above, the EC places great importance on the persuasion process. The concept of self-confidence emphasized under the “spoken English” heading is directly related to persuasion. Individuals with low self-confidence are more easily persuaded (Cox & Bauer, 1964, p. 453). Therefore, the emphasis on self-confidence in the EC is thought to be related to persuasion skills as well as the ability to speak effectively. On the other hand, there is no such emphasis in the TC. Using the mother tongue confidently and with “language awareness” is as important as being able to use it properly. For this reason, it can be said that the TC should also include the ability to speak confidently. Another skill that is included in the EC but not in the Turkish one is “participating in formal debates and structured discussions, summarising and/or building on what has been said.” This skill is of great importance for students to adopt the culture of debate and learn to exchange ideas

in a democratic manner. On the other hand, some researchers have claimed that summarising what has been said is related to reading or listening skills rather than speaking skills (Doğan & Özçakmak, 2015; Kintsch & Kozminsky, 1977). Therefore, it can be said that in the TC, the relevant skill is just not present in the part related to the speaking skill. For, this skill brings to mind participatory listening as it includes summarizing ideas and what has been said as well as gives the listener an active role.

Using gestures is included in both curricula. Indeed, using gestures increases the impact of the speech and can further clarify what has been said. The EC states “using silence and stillness to add impact.” Indeed, short silences while speaking can increase curiosity and interest and direct the listener to think on the subject (Özdemir, 2008, p. 180). We believe that the TC should also include this skill. “Using words in the mother tongue instead of loanwords” is included in the TC but not in the EC. Since this issue was dealt with extensively in the section related to the findings on writing skills, it will not be further discussed in this part. Another item included only in the TC is “using speaking strategies.” This is an appropriate approach because asking the student to speak beautifully, effectively, or convincingly does not necessarily lead to effective speaking. To be able to speak effectively, the student must know which strategies can be used for which topics. On the other hand, one item that is included in the EC but not in the Turkish one is “improvising, rehearsing, and performing play scripts.” The fact that play scripts are not used enough in the teaching of Turkish, which has a rich culture of curtain theatre, needs to be addressed. This subject will not be discussed further as it was covered enough in the section related to speaking skills.

The lack of emphasis on the characteristics of the listener in the speaking skills-related part of both curricula is considered a major deficiency. Speaking effectively depends not only on the content and the performance of the speaker but also on the characteristics of the listener. A speech to be made without considering the listener’s mood, intellectual background, health status, and moral values will fail to reach the intended goal even though the content is impressive or the speaker is very skillful. Therefore, the speaker should plan and deliver the speech by considering the age, profession, cultural background, knowledge level, and gender of the audience being addressed (Özdemir, 2008, p. 34-36). For example, a speech about the COVID-19 pandemic to doctors and to ordinary people with limited medical knowledge should naturally differ in terms of content and style. Otherwise, experts may get bored, or ordinary people may fail to understand what is being said. Another missing point in both curricula is the lack of emphasis on the physical environment. The physical environment is a factor that directly affects the atmosphere of the speech. Style, gestures, and the words of the speech should be suitable for the environment. A speech delivered indoors to twenty people and a speech

delivered to twenty thousand people at an outdoor rally must be different in terms of style, gestures, etc. Therefore, we think that giving place and attaching importance to these two areas within the scope of speaking skills can strengthen both curricula in terms of speaking skills.

Results Obtained from the Comparison of the Curricula in Terms of Listening/Watching Skills

While examining both curricula in terms of listening/watching skills, we compared the listening/watching-related learning outcomes for four grades in the TC with the descriptions related to listening/watching specified under other skills in the EC. The EC does not include a specific heading of “listening,” so listening remains a “neglected skill” in the EC. As a result of the examination of the relevant parts, the following findings were obtained:

Table 5.

Comparison of Curricula in terms of Watching/Listening Skills

Theme	English Mother Tongue Curriculum	Turkish Mother Tongue Curriculum
Listening to learn to speak fluently	+	-
Listening to formal conversations	+	-
Listening for discussions	+	-
Understanding how staging allows for different interpretations of a play	+	-
Understanding the impact of different performances on the play	+	-
Drawing on the rhetorical tools used in what has been listened to in other opportunities	+	-
Improving vocabulary through listening	+	+
Improving grammatical knowledge through listening	+	-
Summarizing what has been listened to	+	+
Acting out what has been listened to	-	+
Listening from a critical perspective	-	+
Understanding implicit meanings in what has been listened to	-	+
Understanding the speaker's non-verbal messages	-	+

As can be inferred from the table, although the EC does not include a specific heading related to listening skills, it contains many elements that emphasize listening. However, these elements generally consider listening as a tool. The table also demonstrates that listening skills are regarded as a tool to improve speaking fluency, discussion skills, vocabulary, and grammatical knowledge. When the descriptions about drama and performing arts and rhetoric are evaluated together with other skills, it can be said that the EC is consistent because there is an emphasis on performing arts and rhetoric

in other skill areas, as well. This indicates how much importance the EC attaches to these two skills. On the other hand, the TC does not place the same emphasis on these skills.

One item that is included in the TC but not in the EC is “acting out what they have listened to,” which is quite noteworthy. Given that the EC places so much emphasis on performing arts, we think that the EC, too, should include the ability to “act out what has been listened to.” Therefore, listening skills seem to be neglected in the EC. Two other items included in the TC but not in the EC are “listening from a critical perspective” and “understanding implicit meanings.” Critical listening incorporates using critical thinking skills, which is one of the requirements of the twenty-first century. The implicit meaning, on the other hand, is the meaning that is not explicitly said but somehow conveyed to the listener (Onan & Tiryaki, 2012, p. 224). These skills, both of which are related to critical thinking, should be included in the curricula.

Another skill included in the TC but not in the English one is the ability to “understand the speaker’s non-verbal messages.” The ability to understand non-verbal messages is an important sub-skill of listening because it enables one to understand the reliability of the speaker, unspoken words, and even implicit messages (Sönmez, 1990, p. 121). Therefore, we believe that it should be included in the EC, as well. On the other hand, “improving grammatical knowledge through listening” is included in the EC but not in the TC. It is possible to see the most beautiful and accurate, busiest, and liveliest uses of a mother tongue in written and audio texts. When learning the mother tongue, the child first uses various grammatical rules (without knowing, unwittingly) and then learns about these rules in mother tongue classes (Aytaş & Çeçen, 2010, p. 78). In other words, grammar rules that are tried to be taught to the child in grammar lessons are already used by the child. The child simply does not know what this rule is called. Therefore, rich learning environments about grammar, especially suitable for the developmental stages and interests of the students, can be presented with examples in the listening texts.

Discussion and Conclusion

Considering the overall findings, both curricula have similar and different features. Both have their own strengths and weaknesses. It can be said that the TC is stronger in terms of critical thinking and information literacy skills. The EC, on the other hand, places special emphasis on the reading habit and the love of reading. The TC, albeit many reading-related learning outcomes it contains, does not address the reading habit and the love of reading, which attracts attention as a major missing point. Moreover, the emphasis on Shakespeare in the EC shows the importance given to the reading

habit and English literature. While the TC approaches the writing skill from the perspective of functional writing, the EC addresses writing as a persuasion tool. Neither curricula mention the “listener” dimension under speaking skills, which is something that needs to be addressed in both curricula. It is also noteworthy that the EC does not contain a separate heading for listening. Nevertheless, both curricula include listening-related skills and descriptions. When both curricula were examined in general, it was determined that expressive language skills (writing and speaking) were given more importance in the EC, while receptive language skills (reading and listening) were given more importance in the TC. In addition, it can be said that the EC focuses on persuasion skills, while the TC focuses on critical thinking skills and functional language usage.

Our findings are consistent with those reported in the literature. Karacaoğlu and Çabuk (2002) compared the Turkish and English education systems and concluded that the English education system aimed to continue the traditions while the Turkish education system aimed to prepare students for life. Similarly, the present study found that the EC attached more importance to Shakespeare and classical English literature while the TC focused more on functionality. In this regard, the results of the two studies are consistent. Çetin and Uzun (2010) found that literature teaching in the UK was aimed at culture, while in Turkey it was aimed at maturing students’ personalities. Similarly, the present study determined that the EC highlighted cultural richness while the TC highlighted the skills needed in life. The fact that the two studies were conducted at different educational levels but yielded the same results shows that high school education is a continuation of middle school education, and the same approaches are adopted at both levels. It can, therefore, be said that the results of the two studies are consistent. Topçuoğlu (2011) stated that the English mother tongue curriculum focused on self-expression, reading social, historical, and cultural texts, writing confidently, and listening to presentations and discussions. Similarly, the present study determined that the EC focused on the same skills. Therefore, the findings of both studies are consistent. In his doctoral dissertation, Çelebi (2012) compared Turkey’s primary school-level mother tongue curricula with the UK’s Key Stage 2 English curricula. The author concluded that the TC included more goals and learning outcomes and was more detailed. Although the educational levels and curricula examined in the mentioned doctoral dissertation are different than those in the present study, the findings of the two studies overlap. This situation shows that both countries have their own approaches towards mother-tongue teaching.

Recommendations

In light of these findings, the following recommendations can be made for curriculum developers and researchers working in the related field:

- Further studies can be conducted on basic language skills in the context of curricula at different education levels.
- Further studies can be conducted on basic language skills in the context of curricula of different countries.
- Further studies can be conducted on different aspects of mother tongue curricula.
- Curricula should be prepared in line with the basic principles of mother-tongue teaching and by considering current trends and developments.
- Curricula should be culturally rich, functional, and relevant to everyday life.
- Relevant studies in the literature should be taken into consideration during the development of curricula.

About Authors

First Author: Mehmet Soyuok works as a Turkish teacher at the Ministry of Education. He completed his undergraduate education at Kastamonu University. He took his master degree at Uşak University. He continues his doctoral studies at Uşak University. He has works on Turkish education, Turkish teaching programs and teaching Turkish to foreigners.

Second Author: Burcu ztürk studied Turkish Language and Education at Gazi University and took her a PhD degree at Gazi University. She worked as a Turkish lecturer between 2015-2019 at the University of Exeter. She is working as an academician at University of Kastamonu. She has works on Turkish education, teaching Turkish to foreigners and children’s literature.

Conflict of Interest

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Ethical Standards

We have carried out the research within the framework of the Helsinki Declaration

ORCID

Mehmet Soyuok  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8388-2130>

Burcu ztürk  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4087-3370>

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