

Full Length Research Paper

# Evaluation primary school students' achievement of objectives in English lessons

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The problem statement of this survey is 'How far are the specific objectives of English courses achieved by the primary students (4-5 grades) recently in Istanbul?' "Does the first stage state primary school students' achievement level of the specific English courses differ according to students' personal characteristics? Survey method was used in this study. Data collection instrument was a Personal Information Form with 6 items (gender, grade, mother's and father's education level, family income level, existence of a family member who can speak English) developed by Senem Seda Sahenk Erkan. 'Evaluation of Primary School Students' Achievement of Objectives in English Lessons' was prepared by the researcher. A 5-point Likert-type scale [(1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree Slightly Agree (3) Slightly Agree (4) Agree (5) Strongly Agree] was used. This scale, which tests the specific objectives of the English courses that students study at the state primary school, included 30 items.

**Key works:** EFL, primary schools, students, specific objectives.

## INTRODUCTION

Today, English is neither the language of kings and queens nor the patrimony of the Anglo Saxons but a global language. Obviously, "*it is now a universal public property. By the British colonial train, it travelled almost the entire world, came in touch with myriad people and their languages, and enriched itself as the world's number one language*" (Askari, 2010). Of the 4000 and 5000 living languages, English is by far the oldest widely used. As a mother tongue, it ranks second only to Chinese, which is effectively mutually unintelligible dialects little used outside China. On the other hand, the

300 million native speakers of English are to be found in every continent, and an equally widely distributed body of second language speakers, who use English for their day-to-day-needs totals over 250 million. Finally, if we add those areas where decisions affecting life and welfare are made and announced in English we cover one-sixth of the world's population. Because of these reasons, the increased learning and teaching of English throughout the world during recent years in both states and commercial educational institutions has produced a new cadre of professionals: teachers of EFL (Broughton

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et al., 1980). English, with its status as a global contact language, has received prominent attention in this respect; more than 100 countries worldwide currently provide instruction in English as a FL (EFL) as part of the compulsory public education process (Crystal, 2003).

EFL education in primary level has become widespread in Turkey as it has in many other European and Asian countries. In most of the European Union countries teaching a FL in primary level requires professionalization, and it is a discipline which falls into different departments at universities. Similarly, EFL teaching in Turkey is an important occupation which necessitates experts at this stage of education. In order to carry out English language courses successfully, it is very crucial to develop FL programs and methods appropriate for these schools and to educate qualified FL teachers.

English, which is one of the most commonly taught languages all over the world, is a recognized and popular language in our country too. Nowadays, teaching English at an early age has gained importance. FL is a compulsory lesson in primary schools. Students are more successful in pronunciation and they develop their listening, reading, speaking and writing abilities better when they start learning a FL at an early age. In many countries all around the world, both parents and educational institutions have shown an interest in initiating FL (FL) instruction in primary school or before (Muñoz, 2006).

In the case of Turkey, after the establishment of Turkish Republic in 1923, modernization and westernization movements resulted in strong relation with Europe particularly with French language. After 1950s, American power with respect to economy and military started to have great impact on Turkey. As a result, English language started to spread in Turkey. Nowadays, as a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and an associate member to the European Union (EU), learning of English as the main language of international communication has become particularly important for Turkish citizens (Kırkgöz, 2005). English language instruction has likewise been emphasized in Turkish education, particularly in the decades following the Second World War. During this time, numerous measures have been carried out in Turkey, including reviewing educational curricula and creating new course books in 1968; preparing FL curricula for Turkey's Anatolian high schools in the early 1980s; implementing intensive FL programs at the high school level in the early 1990s; adopting 8-year compulsory primary education and introducing language education at the 4th-grade level in 1997 (Akdoğan, 2004); and adopting the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and integrating its principles into the FL curriculum, teaching materials and assessment tools in

the 2000s (MoNE, 2005).

## FL Education in Primary Schools

In 1997, through act 4306, the period of compulsory education was extended to eight years (MEB, 2005). FL courses in first and second stages of primary schools must be practice-based. During FL courses in these schools using a variety of teaching techniques which will support students' language learning will contribute to class performance. Moreover, the activities listed below can be included. Kids and adults can improve both their language skills and creativity by means of singing, playing games, poetry, doing puzzles and craftworks during English classes. In primary level, English courses must include a communicative functional type of content which supports inclination for music and imagination (Pekmezçiler and Durukafa, 1997).

The principals of the education and teaching programs of the courses, which will be taught in English, are determined by Ministry of National Education for primary, high and common-public education, and by The Council of Higher Education for higher education. After 8-year compulsory education was implemented, teaching of the first FL (English, German, French, and Arabic) in 4<sup>th</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> grades was initiated. In addition, the second FL course was introduced as an elective course from the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Department of National Educational Research and Development of Education in Ministry of National Education developed programs and prepared teaching materials for FL courses (Journal of Tebliğler (Official Bulletin of Ministry of National Education) October 1997, September 2011, volume 141). In volume 2481 (October 1997) of Official Bulletin of Ministry of National Education the justification to start teaching FL in grades 4 and 5, general and specific objectives, course content, method and techniques were published.

According to Table 1, FL program in the first stage of the primary school includes 3 h of teaching per week in one academic year. On the other hand, in the second stage of the primary school (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades), 4 h a week is allocated for the teaching of the first FL course. The selective second FL course is programmed to take 2 h weekly.

Objectives of ELT curriculum for primary education are defined with respect to grades 4-8. The stated objectives for grades 4 and 5 are to:

- “- raise pupils' awareness of a FL;
- Turkey's FL policy at primary level:
- promote a positive attitude towards the learning of English language;
- increase pupils' interest and motivation towards English language;

**Table 1.** Weekly program for FL course in primary schools.

English	4 <sup>th</sup> grade	5 <sup>th</sup> grade	6 <sup>th</sup> grade	7 <sup>th</sup> grade	8 <sup>th</sup> grade
Compulsory	3	3	4	4	4
Selective	2	2	2	2	Second FL: 1

The organisation of Turkish educational system 2008/09, [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/Eurydice/documents/orts/TR\\_TR.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/Eurydice/documents/orts/TR_TR.pdf), [http://eurybase/eurybase\\_full\\_rep](http://eurybase/eurybase_full_rep)

- establish classroom situations in the context of games so that pupils can be entertained while learning English;
- set up dialogues and meaningful contextualized learning activities, and
- help pupils to develop appropriate strategies" (Kocaoluk & Kocaoluk, 2001).

In 2005, the CEFR was introduced for teaching EFL. In 2012-2013, the compulsory education increased to 12 years (4 years in primary+ 4 years in secondary+ 4 years in High school) and the EFL lesson was introduced with 2 compulsory hours in 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> grades.

### English teaching in the first stage of primary schools

Teaching program of English courses in primary schools (4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades) was renewed after a commission decision on March 2, 2005. The specific course objectives of the English course for 4<sup>th</sup> grade were announced in volume 2481 in October in 1997 of Official Bulletin of Ministry of National Education (Turkish Official Journal, 1997). The students are expected to be able to understand the meaning of the terms appear in an appropriate level of sentence, answer a clear and short question, communicate on simple daily topics at basic level, utter basic sounds, use intonation and stress patterns, understand and build up simple sentences used in everyday life, identify different sentence structures, recall numbers, commands, classroom objects, days of the week, colours, clothes, rooms of a house, pronouns and use all these in correct sentences, ask questions with question words such as who, what, where, how many, introduce Ataturk and his family in English, use singular and plural nouns, ask questions with plural nouns, use simple and common adjectives and possessives, enjoy learning English and practice simple daily conversations. The specific course objectives of the English course for 5<sup>th</sup> grade were announced in volume 2481 in October in 1997) of Official Bulletin of Ministry of National Education. These are to be able to understand the terms used in appropriate level of sentences, build up accurate sentences, greet others, answer the questions asking for name and surname, age, hometown, answer simple questions used in everyday life, use "there is/are", build up sentences with

singular or plural words, talk about the occupations, tell the time, days of the week, talk about the weather, use "where" in questions, use some simple adjectives appearing in everyday conversations, ask questions, use simple adjectives in sentences, use "can/can't" in sentences to talk about ability, understand simple present and present continuous tenses, build up sentences and make up simple dialogues in these tenses, count by tens up to 100, be eager to learn English.

### Problem

The problem sentence of this study can be expressed as "How far are the specific objectives of English courses achieved by the first stage state primary school students (4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grades) recently in Istanbul?"

### Aim

The aim of this study is to determine first stage state primary school students' achievement level of specific objectives in English courses and to identify if there is a difference in achievement level in terms of students' personalities.

Within the framework of this aim, the answers for the following two questions are tried to be answered. According to students' English language abilities;

[1] How far are the specific objectives of English courses achieved by the first stage state primary school students (4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grades)?

[2] Does the first stage state primary school students' achievement level of the specific English courses differ according to students' personal characteristics (gender, grade, mother's and father's education level, income level, existence of at least one family member who can speak English)?

### METHOD

#### Study design

General survey method is used, that is a data collection tool

**Table 2.** Frequencies and percentages of the demographic and socio-demographic characteristics of primary school students.

Variables		f	%	Variables		f	%
Gender	Girls	213	53.2	Existence of member speaking English	Yes	320	80.0
	Boys	187	46.8		No	80	20.0
	Total	400	100.0		Total	400	100.0
Grade	4 <sup>th</sup>	194	48.5				
	5 <sup>th</sup>	206	51.5				
	Total	400	100.0				
Mother's Education Level	Primary	93	23.2				
	High school	141	35.2				
	University	166	41.5				
	Total	400	100.0				
Father's Education Level	Primary	76	19.0				
	High school	130	32.5				
	University	194	48.5				
	Total	400	100.0				
Income Level	Low	10	2.5				
	Middle	289	72.3				
	High	101	25.3				
	Total	400	100.0				

mostly used in larger populations to make generalization about the population from drawn samples (Karasar, 2008).

### Sampling design

The population of this study is students inscribed in the first stage (4<sup>th</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> grades) of state primary schools in Kadıköy, Istanbul.

410 students answered the scale but 10 students did not fill completely their scales; that is why 400 scales were considered for the analysis. These scales were distributed in 8 primary schools in Kadıköy in Istanbul in Turkey. These eight schools were selected randomly. The frequencies and percentages of the demographic and socio-demographic characteristics of primary school students are shown in Table 2.

According to Table 3, 213 (53.2%) of the students who participated in the study were girls while 187 (46.8%) of them were boys. 194 (48.5%) of the students who participated in the study were in 4<sup>th</sup> grade while 206 (51.5 %) of the students were in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. 93 (23.2%) mothers were primary schools graduates while 141 (35.2%) of them were high school graduates. The number of university graduates was found to be 166 (41.5 %). On the other hand, 76 (19%) fathers were primary school graduates while 130 (32.2%) of them were high school graduates. The number of university graduates was 194 (48.5%). 10 (2.5%) students who participated in the study were from low-income families while 289 (72.3%) of them were from middle-income families. The number of students from high-income families was 101 (25.3 %). 320 (80%) students who participated in the study have at least one family member who can speak English. The number of students without a family member who can speak English was 80 (20%).

### Procedures

#### Personal information form

To collect data about the subjects a personal information form including 6 items (gender, grade, mother's and father's education level, income level, existence of a family member who can speak English) was developed by the researcher in 2011-2012.

#### First stage state primary school students' achievement level of specific objectives in English Lesson Scale

The scale for assessing the first stage state primary school students' achievement of objectives in English lessons was developed by Senem Seda SAHENEK ERKAN, 2011-2012. A 5-point Likert-type scale (Strongly disagree (1), Disagree (2), slightly agree (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5)) was used. This scale, which tested the special objectives of English courses taught in the first stages of primary schools, included 30 items. It is often used to measure respondents' attitudes by asking the extent to which they agree or disagree with a particular question or statement.

#### Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability tests of the study included 200 students of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades, 118 of which were girls while 82 of which were boys. 112 of the students were 4<sup>th</sup> grade students whereas 88 of them were 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. In order to assess the validity of the research exploratory factor analysis was used. To assess whether the number of sample group is appropriate to carry out

**Table 3.** KMO coefficient.

<b>KMO</b>	<b>.829</b>
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approximate Chi-Square 11076.551
	sd 435
	p .000

**Table 3a.** Factor Loading.

Items	1. Factor	2. Factor	3. Factor	Items	1. Factor	2. Factor	3. Factor
Item 11	.954			Item 17	.891	.301	
Item 20	.949			Item 8	.883		
Item 9	.933			Item 16	.882	-.327	
Item 6	.932			Item 15	.880		
Item 18	.931			Item 1	.875		
Item 25	.926			Item 24	.872		
Item 21	.918			Item 7	.871		
Item 27	.904			Item 13	.866		
Item 12	.863			Item 29	.761		
Item 5	.854			Item 4	.753		
Item 10	.843			Item 19	.752	.316	.426
Item 28	.838			Item 23	.704		.487
Item 26	.814			Item 14	.621		.381

exploratory factor analysis on the data, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test was applied.

In Table 3, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin result was 0.829. Since the result is over 0.50, it indicated that it was appropriate to apply exploratory factor analysis. To determine the number of factors to extract Bartlett's test was used. Bartlett's test result was  $x=11076,551$ ,  $sd=435$   $p=0.000$ . This result indicated that it was appropriate to apply factor analysis (Büyüköztürk, 2002).

When it was determined that the sample group was large enough and the instrument was applicable to factor analysis, factor analysis was applied. 4 factors were extracted. The factor load of the first factor was 20.008 explaining 66.695 of the variance. The factor load of the second factor was 1.907 explaining 6.385 of the variance. The factor load of the third factor was 1.389 explaining 4.629 of the variance. The factor load of the last factor was 1.197 explaining 3.991 of the variance. Except for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> items, all the other items loaded above .60 on the first factor. Item 22 loaded on both the first and the second factor and the difference between the two was less than .10. Items loading on two factors with a difference less than .10 were eliminated (Büyüköztürk, 2007). Item 30 loaded on all three factors. Since the first factor had load of 10 times greater than the other factors, and except two items all the other items loaded on the first factor, there could have been one dimension. There for items 2, 3, 22, and 30 were eliminated and factor analysis was repeated. In the second factor analysis, the result obtained by Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test was .891. Bartlett's test result was  $x=9767,988$ ,  $sd=325$   $p=0.000$ . It was determined that the sample group was large enough and the instrument was applicable to factor analysis, factor analysis was applied. 3 factors were extracted. The factor load of the first factor was 19.233 explaining 73.972 of the variance. The factor load of the second factor was 1.112 explaining 4.135 of the variance. The factor load

of the third factor was 1.017 explaining 3.910 of the variance. Factor load of each item is shown in Table 3.

As it is shown in Table 3, all items had a factor load of over .60 on the first factor. Some other items (17, 15, 28, 26, 19, 23, 14) were included into the first factor since they had a factor load over .60 on the first factor and the difference with others was higher than .10. As a result, only one factor was retained. Cronbach Alpha Coefficient was conducted in order to test the reliability of the instrument with 26 items. The result of this reliability test was .98. This was a very high result which was very close to the ideal result (Tezbaşaran, 1997).

## RESULTS

The t-test analyses were realized for these 3 variables: "gender", "grade" and existence of member speaking English." The results t-test analyses for these 3 variables are given in Table 4.

According to Table 4, there is no significant difference between boys and girls in terms of achievement level of the specific objectives in English courses. Additionally, There is a significant difference between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades students in terms of achievement level of the specific objectives in English courses ( $p<0.05$ ). The mean of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade students was 95.8 while it was 85.2 for 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. 4<sup>th</sup> grade students were more successful in achieving the specific course objectives in English courses than 5<sup>th</sup>

**Table 4.** Results of the independent sample t-test of the mean scores obtained in “first grade primary school students’ achievement level of the specific objectives in English Course” Scale by “Gender”, “Grade” and “Existence of member speaking English”.

Variables		N	Mean	sd	t	p
Gender	Girls	213	89.3	29.7	.781	.435
	Boys	187	91.5	26.1		
Grade	4 <sup>th</sup>	194	95.8	25.5	3.819	.000*
	5 <sup>th</sup>	206	85.2	29.5		
Existence of member speaking English	Yes	80	28.2	19.7	14.356	.000*
	No	320	98.5	35.5		

Legend:\* ( $p < 0.05$ ) statistical test: Independent Sample T-Test

**Table 5.** ANOVA result of the mean scores obtained in “first grade primary school students achievement level of the specific objectives in English course” scale by mother’s education.

Mother’s education level	N	Mean	sd	F	p
Primary	93	71.6	27.7	93.629	.000*
High school	141	81.0	27.1		
University	166	108.7	15.8		

Legend:\* ( $p < 0.05$ ) statistical test: One-way ANOVA analysis.

**Table 6.** Scheffe Test of Significance on the Mean Scores Obtained in ‘First Grade Primary School Students Achievement Level of the Specific Objectives in English Course’ Scale by Mother’s Education.

Mother’s education level	N	Mean difference	p
Primary school	High school	-9.4	.003*
	University	-37.1	.000*
High school	University	-27.7	.000*

Legend:\* ( $p < 0.05$ ) statistical test: Scheffe Test.

grade students. Also, there is a significant difference between the students with and without a family member who can speak English. The mean score of the students who have a family member who can speak English is 98.5 while it is 57.5 for those who do not. As a result it is determined, that students who have a family member, who can speak English, are more successful in achieving the specific course objectives in English courses.

For measuring the influences of “Mother’s Education Level” and “First Grade Primary School Students Achievement Level of the Specific Objectives in English Course”, one-way ANOVA Analysis was used. The results of this analysis are demonstrated in Table 5.

According to Table 5, mother’s education level has a

significant influence on the student’s achievement level of the specific objectives in English courses ( $p < 0.05$ ). Scheffe test was conducted in order to determine the differences between the groups. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 6.

According to Table 6, the mean scores of the students whose mothers are graduates of primary school are significantly lower than those whose mothers are graduates of high school or university ( $p < 0.05$ ). Similarly, the mean scores of the students whose mothers are graduates of high school are significantly lower than those whose mothers are university graduates ( $p < 0.05$ ). As a result, it is determined that as the education level of the mothers gets higher, the students’

**Table 7.** ANOVA result the mean scores obtained in 'first grade primary school students achievement level of the specific objectives in English course' scale by father education level.

Father's education level	N	Mean	sd	F	p
Primary	76	66.7	25.2	130.253	.000*
High school	130	77.6	26.9		
University	194	108.1	15.9		

Legend:\* (p<0.05) statistical test: One-way ANOVA analysis.

**Table 8.** Scheffe test of significance on the mean scores obtained in 'first grade primary school students achievement level of the specific objectives in English course' scale by fathers' education level.

Father's education level	N	Mean difference	p
Primary school	High school	-10.9	.003*
	University	-41.4	.000*
High school	University	-30.5	.000*

Legend:\* (p<0.05) statistical test: Scheffe Test.

**Table 9.** Kruskal Wallis test results of the mean scores obtained in "first grade primary school students achievement level of the specific objectives in English course" scale by income level.

Income level	N	Mean	sd	Mean Rank	$\chi^2$	p
Low	10	9.3	5.2	69.35	120.890	.000*
Middle	289	170.8	41.7	168.20		
High	101	75.4	20.8	305.90		

Legend:\* (p<0.05) statistical test: Kruskal Wallis

performance to achieve the specific course objectives in English courses get better.

For measuring the effects of "Father's Education Level" and "First Grade Primary School Students Achievement Level of the Specific Objectives in English Course", one-way ANOVA Analysis was realized. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 7.

According to Table 7, there is a significant mean difference between the students whose fathers are primary school, high school or university graduates in terms of the achievement level of specific course objectives in English courses. In order to determine where the mean differences lie, Scheffe test was conducted. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 8.

According to Table 8, the mean scores of the students whose fathers are graduates of primary school are significant lower than those whose fathers are graduates of high school or university (p<0.05). Similarly, the mean scores of the students whose

fathers are graduates of high school are significant lower than those whose fathers are university graduates (p<0.05). As a result, it is determined that as the education level of the father increased, the performance of the students improved.

For measuring the influences of "Income Level" and "First Grade Primary School Students Achievement Level of the Specific Objectives in English Course", Kruskal Wallis

According to Table 9, there is a significant difference between the students from families from different income groups (p<0.05). In order to determine the differences between groups, Mann Whitney-U test was conducted. The results of this analysis are seen in Table 10.

According to Table 10, the mean scores of the students from low income families are lower than the students from middle or high-income families. Similarly, the mean scores of the students from middle-income families are lower than the students from high-income

**Table 10.** Mann Whitney-U test results of the mean scores obtained in "first grade primary school students' achievement level of the specific objectives in English lesson" scale by income level.

Income level	Mean rank	z	p
Low	66.0		
Middle	152.91	3.152	.002*
Low	8.85		
High	60.67	4.977	.000*
Middle	160.30		
High	296.23	10.503	.000*

Legend:\* (p<0.05) statistical test: Mann Whitney-U.

families. As a result, as the income level of the families gets higher, the students' achievement of the specific course objectives in English courses improves.

## DISCUSSION

In Turkey, teaching EFL becomes more important after the introduction of compulsory education to 8 years in 1997. In every stage of school especially in primary schools, the constructivist approach influences all the lessons. The primary is divided into two stages and teaching EFL begins with 3 compulsory hours in 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grades and it continues with 4 compulsory hours in 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades (from 1997 to 2011). In 2005, the CEFR was introduced for teaching EFL. In 2012-2013, the compulsory education increased to 12 years (4 years in primary+ 4 years in secondary+ 4 years in High school) and the EFL lesson was introduced with 2 compulsory hours in 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> grades.

Since 1998 children have begun learning their first FL in Slovenia (English or German) as an obligatory subject in the fourth grade at the age of nine. Young learners should reach A2 at the end of the ninth grade (age 14) in their first FL, in accordance with the Common European Framework (CEF) for Languages. At the age of 12, in the seventh grade, they may choose to begin a second FL. Many children, however, begin learning a FL in lower grades, in optional extra classes funded by the local community or by fees (Cagran and Brumen 2004, 126). In Croatia, since 2003 children have begun to learn their first FL (mostly English, but also German, French, Italian or any other language) as an obligatory subject in the first grade at the age of seven (Table 2). At the age of 11, in the fifth grade, they may start to learn a second FL as an elective subject. Children study the first FL for two hours per week in the first four years and three hours per week in the next four years of their primary school education. If they choose to study a

second FL at school, they will have two additional classes per week. According to the Croatian National Educational Standard (2005) young learners should reach A1 at the end of the fourth grade (age 10) and should reach A2 at the end of the eighth grade (age 14) in the first FL and A1+ level (elective subject) according to CEF (see <http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?sec=2501>). However, many children begin to learn FLs in kindergarten, or when it comes to their second FL, before the age of 9 or 10, a situation which creates a problem for FL teachers who then have to work with heterogeneous classes (Pavicic and Bagaric 2004). In the Czech Republic the curriculum for schools was changed in 1998, and currently children start learning English in the fourth grade of primary school. In September 2004 a new school Act was approved, which was implemented in the year 2007. Within this new Act, a new Framework for basic education was introduced. According to this Framework, young learners start learning the first FL (English is recommended) in grade 3 at the age of 8, the second FL in grade 8 at the age of 13. At the end of compulsory education, children who began learning English in grade 3 should have reached level A2 (in accordance with the Common European Framework for Languages); those who began learning English in grade 8 will have achieved level A1. Many children begin learning a FL in lower grades, in optional extra classes for which fees are payable (Brumen et al., 2009). However, as indicated in the study, in Turkey, teaching EFL has some problems because of the other teachers (science, mathematic, music teachers, etc...but not English teachers) who teach EFL in some primary schools.

In both Norway and the Netherlands, English has high status in society and the educational systems. It is at present the only compulsory FL for the entire student population in both countries at the primary and secondary levels (Bonnet, 2002). The total number of hours assigned to English during compulsory education



in Norway and the Netherlands is 527 and 400 hours respectively. However, pupils start learning English in each country at completely different stages of the curriculum: in Norway English was introduced into grade 1 in 1997, whereas in the Netherlands it was introduced into grade 5 in 1986. In both countries lowering the starting age was considered to be a radical move. In Norway it meant lowering the onset age from 10 to 6, a drop of 4 years. In the Netherlands it meant introducing English at the primary level for the first time, although the actual starting age was only lowered by two years from 12 to 10. Introducing EFL at the primary level in the Netherlands has been especially controversial. In addition to a relatively late start, the status of the subject is vaguely defined, it is only taught for 50 hours in total at the primary level, and is not subject to a prescribed curriculum. Pupils are not formally tested in English at the end of the primary level, as they are with a CITO test in the mother tongue and in maths. As a consequence, the Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO) initiated a long-term project between 2003 and 2005, whose objective was to facilitate the transition from the primary to secondary level. In Norway, in contrast, the teaching of English is subject to national curriculum guidelines. Thus the transition from the last grade of primary (grade 7) and the first grade of secondary (grade 8) is facilitated through the general and specific aims of the curriculum, providing secondary school teachers with a strong indication of pupil proficiency levels when they start secondary education. However, as in the Netherlands, there has until recently been no formal testing of English at the end of primary education. In addition, questions have been raised about the limited time designated to primary English, especially in the earliest grades (95 lessons in total from grades 1 to 4), and the failure to adapt the system of teacher training to account for the greater needs of teacher competency created by the new reforms (Drew et al., 2007). In contrary, teaching of EFL leaves problems of failure in primary school because of the high population of students.

The research findings indicate that English teachers find the program appropriate to the level of pupils and the program helps pupils develop positive attitude to language learning. Besides, they find themselves proficient at teaching young learners. However, the findings also show that English teachers experience some challenges in implementing the curriculum due to inappropriate textbook, overcrowded classrooms, insufficient time allocated for the program and lack of in-service training (Yıldıran and Tanrıseven, 2015). In the subject of teaching English in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade of primary school students, the necessity of the revision of the goals and aims, the inadequacy of the familiarization of the curriculum to the teachers and the need of development of schools' facilities were determined

(Alkan and Arslan, 2014). Language teachers supporting teaching FL at an early age put an emphasis on cognitive and personal characteristics of 6-7 year-old children studying in 2<sup>nd</sup> year of primary school. At this age children are quite curious and eager to learn a FL and do not forget what they learn as long as the teaching methods are appropriate. It is observed that students interrogate various dimensions of teaching and that readiness level of some of them and technological resources in schoolrooms are insufficient for teaching FL in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of primary school (Bozavlı, 2015).

How every, this research investigated the objectives of EFL according to students in 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grades in primary schools in Kadıköy in Istanbul.

"Perceptions of primary school English teachers on English teaching program" developed a survey about the general characteristics of the English teaching program of grades 4-5, analyzed the data collected through this survey and discussed the results (Büyükduman, 2005). Both in previous research and in this study, it was determined that students studying at grades 1-5 could not achieve the desired objectives. In addition she stated in her study that the primary school English teachers complained that the students could not achieve the desired objectives.

"An Evaluation of English Curriculum in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Primary Schools" evaluated the objectives, content, teaching, learning and assessment process of English teaching programs of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades. In Er's (2006) and the present study it was determined that students studying at grades 1-5 could not achieve the desired objectives. In addition, he stated that teachers and the inspectors complained that 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades students could not achieve the desired objectives. For instance, students had great difficulty in achieving some of the objectives such as 'intonation and pronunciation in English, "phonetics", and "building up sentences" to practice the structures they have learned'. Inspectors stated that students could not achieve some of the objectives at all such as 'understanding language structure, functions and concepts', 'imperatives', 'building up dialogues'. On the other hand, teachers participated in the study stated that students could achieve the objectives such as 'counting in English', 'telling the time' and 'days of the week'.

"Teachers' Perceptions of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade English Course Curriculum" investigated the perception of the teachers on the English teaching program of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade in primary schools. In Güneş (2009)'s study and the present study, it was stated that 5<sup>th</sup> grade students could not achieve most of the English specific objectives and English teachers were aware of that situation. The study, which was conducted by Egel (2009), aimed at investigating several dimensions of primary school students' language learning styles and the ways in which certain styles are shaped and favored by teachers' teaching

styles. In this study, the students prefer to study English through these activities: games, songs and dialogue. In addition, they have some difficulties in listening, writing and reading, but they find speaking activities easier than the other activities like writing, listening and reading.

The study, which was conducted by Altunay and Bayat (2009), aimed at investigating the relationship between autonomy perception and classroom behaviors of students learning English as a FL. In this study, both the primary students and the university students are unwilling to speak in the target language during the class hours and do not prefer reading magazines or books in the target language or making use of individual learning opportunities.

### **Recommendations**

The recommendations for the Ministry of National Education are listed below:

[1] In order to be able to improve the efficiency of English teaching in primary schools, the class size should be lowered to international standards.

[2] English teaching in primary schools should start in grade 2.

[3] English courses in primary schools should be at least 5 h a week.

[4] Course books, materials, audio-visual equipment used in primary schools should be enriched.

[5] Professional development programs must be organized for language teachers so that they can follow the latest innovations in teaching English, and national and international trainers should be invited to these programs to train teachers.

[6] In light of this study, the followings are recommended for the other researchers who study in that field.

[7] Researchers should work on the specific course objectives determined for English courses in the first and second stages of the primary school.

[8] Researchers should work on the specific course objectives determined for English courses in the second stages of the primary school.

[9] Researchers should improve subjects in teaching English to the first stage primary school students and carry out research in this subject.

[10] Researchers should work on teaching of different FLs in their studies.

### **Conclusion**

There is no significant difference between boys and girls in terms of achievement level of the specific objectives in English courses. There is a significant difference between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades students in terms

of achievement level of the specific objectives in English courses. Mother's education level has a significant influence on the student's achievement level of the specific objectives in English courses. The mean scores of the students whose mothers are graduates of primary school are significantly lower than those whose mothers are graduates of high school or university. Similarly, the mean scores of the students whose mothers are graduates of high school are significantly lower than those whose mothers are university graduates. As a result, it is determined that as the education level of the mothers gets higher, the students' performance to achieve the specific course objectives in English courses gets better. Father's education level has a significant influence on the student's achievement level of the specific objectives in English courses.

The mean scores of the students whose fathers are graduates of primary school are significant lower than those whose fathers are graduates of high school or university. Similarly, the mean scores of the students whose fathers are graduates of high school are significant lower than those whose fathers are university graduates. As a result, it is determined that as the education level of the father increases, students perform better.

There is a significant difference between the students from families at different income levels. The mean scores of the students from low income families are lower than the students from middle or high-income families. Similarly, the mean scores of the students from middle-income families are lower than the students from high-income families. As a result, as the income level of the families gets higher, the students' achievement of the specific course objectives in English courses improves. There is a significant difference between the students with and without a family member who can speak English. As a result it is determined that students who have a family member who can speak English are more successful in achieving the specific course objectives in English courses.

### **Conflict of Interests**

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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