Combining the old and the new: Designing a curriculum based on the Taba model and the global scale of English

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Abstract

This paper explains the process of designing a curriculum based on the Taba Model and the Global Scale of English (GSE) in an intensive language education program. The Taba Model emphasizing the involvement of the teachers and the learners in the curriculum development process was combined with the GSE, a psychometric tool measuring language proficiency in a granular structure to develop a context specific curriculum. The decisions made, the steps taken and the impact of the new curriculum were explained with their rationales in the paper. While the developed curriculum is a context specific one, how the Taba model and the scale were adopted depending on the needs of the context in a bottom up approach can be used as a model for similar language teaching contexts. There might be lessons and strategies to be taken from the experience here, which might be followed in the curriculum processes in other institutions.

1. Introduction

Language learning is a demanding and long lasting process for most people, especially for those living in foreign language contexts. Apart from different materials and strategies used, time allocated, learning contexts, and many other affective factors are highly influential in the language learning process (Harmer, 2015). Turkey, as a Foreign Language (FL) context no different from the other countries, experiences numerous difficulties especially caused by the limited exposure to the foreign language outside the classroom. Turkish students start learning English in the second grade and receive a total amount of 1300 hours of instruction, yet the problem arises when they start their university education with a very low proficiency level, and are expected to pursue their education in an English medium instruction environment. According to a study conducted at Pamukkale University, a state university in Turkey, the students who started preparatory school with A1, the lowest proficiency level in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), (Council

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of Europe, 2001), in 2008-2009, 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 accounted for 94%, 87% and 82% respectively (Paker, 2014). The situation is no different at Anadolu University, another state university in the same country. For the last two years, the students who started their education with a very low proficiency level have made up of 60% of the total number of the students. Having only an 8-month period to become proficient enough to be able to pursue their university education is the source of problems for most of the students. Although there is a chance of continuing language education in the second year, the language learning process becomes a burden because of economic problems and the fear of failure for those students who have passed the university entrance exam with a very high score and have been successful students throughout their education.

The main source of all these problems lies in the lack of standardization in the country, as stated in recent studies and discussions focusing on language teaching issues in Turkey (British Council, 2014, 2015; Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulları Yöneticileri Toplantısı, 2015). As revealed in a recent project (Aydın, Akay, Polat, Geridönmez, 2016) conducted with the directors and the testing unit members of the 12 state universities with the highest total number of students in the Turkish higher education system, the perception of "language proficiency" varies among institutions. For example, although the institutions participating in the study state having CEFR as the basis of their curriculum and determining B2 as their exit level, there is no consensus on what B2 really means. Similarly, the content of the education, the materials, the instruction and the tests deployed all differ from one institution to another. No matter which parameters are taken into consideration, preparing and implementing curricula which will enable low proficiency students to continue their university education in a foreign language in such a short period of time is of great concern for all the institutions.

The aim of this paper is to showcase the process of designing and vitalizing a curriculum aiming to reach the desired language proficiency level problem in such a short period of time. The approach combines one of the oldest models of curriculum development, Taba, with one of the newest psychometric tools, Global Scale of English. While the new curriculum is designed specifically for this context, the process followed and how the Taba model and the scale were adopted depending on the needs of the context in a bottom up approach can be suggested as a model for similar language teaching contexts.

2. Context

Anadolu University School of Foreign Languages (AUSFL), similar to the other schools of foreign languages in 140 universities in the country, is an institution responsible for providing intensive foreign language instruction totaling 22-24 hours per week. In AUSFL, approximately 2,800 students take this intensive language instruction each year before they start their education in the departments of their chosen discipline. In the Turkish higher education system, there are three types of institutions providing university education; the ones with English medium instruction (EMI) throughout their undergraduate education, the ones with Turkish medium instruction (TMI) and the ones combining both EMI and TMI. Anadolu University, the second biggest in the world with its distance education, falls into the third category and has three types of faculties; the ones providing 100% EMI (such as the Faculty of Engineering), the ones with only 30% EMI (such as the Faculty of Communication Sciences) and the ones giving 100% TMI (such as the Faculty of Law).

Established in 1998, the mission of AUSFL is to equip its students with the necessary language skills to be able to cope with the language requirements of their English medium faculties. From 1998

to 2010, the school carried out a skills-based language-teaching program of foreign language instruction. In 2010, the school moved away from a skills-based language teaching program towards an integrated skills program. The curriculum aligned with the CEFR proficiency levels and a modular system were established with five levels. However, this modular-based curriculum was favoured by neither the teachers nor the students for the reasons which will be explained later in this paper. There was therefore, a clear need to renew the curriculum in order to make the necessary changes to solve the problems experienced and have a more realistic and context-specific curriculum.

3. Curriculum Renewal Process

After a change in administration for the 2014-2015 academic year, a curriculum renewal process was put into place. To this end, the first step was a review of the literature on curriculum development and the curriculum models which aim to propose "guidelines to actions" (Lunenberg, 2011). Although there are many curriculum models in the literature, only some are widely known; Taba Model, Tyler Model, Oliva Model, Saylor Alexander & Lewis Model, Wheeler Model, Tanner &Tanner Model, Beauchamp's Managerial Model and Demirel Model (Demirel, 2013; Erişen, 1998; Lunenburg, 2011; Oliva, 2005; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009).

No particular model is better than another and all have their own strengths and weaknesses which may or may not apply to different programs because they vary according to their resources, teachers, students and teaching philosophies. The variety of models in the literature does not mean that these models are very different from each other in terms of what they offer. They have mostly evolved from the existing ones with some changes and additions. Developing a new curriculum model is not an easy task. It requires a great deal of effort and takes a long time with no guarantee of success. Oliva (2005) suggests selecting one they believe will best serve their purposes considering some guidelines:

- major components of the process, including stages of planning, implementation and evaluation,
- the relationship between curriculum and instruction,
- reciprocal relationships among components,
- a cyclical pattern,
- feedback lines,
- the possibility of entry at any point in the cycle,
- an internal consistency and logic, and
- enough simplicity to be intelligible and feasible (pp.137-138).

Having reviewed and studied the different curriculum models and following the considerations Oliva proposes above, the administration of AUSFL decided to adopt the Taba Model. The main reason underlying this decision was the philosophy Taba held that "the curriculum should be designed by the teachers rather than handed down by higher authority" (Oliva, 2005, p.134). Having a learner and teacher centred and a bottom up approach were the main rationale of selecting Taba as the basis of the curriculum development process.

Taba, unlike her contemporaries, notably Tyler, who are closely associated with each other in the literature, brought a new approach to curriculum development which is known as the grassroots approach. Although the steps of the two models resemble each other, Taba's model differs from Tyler's and other models in terms of the amount of teacher involvement and participation in developing the curriculum. Other models generally apply an administrative approach in which the decisions are made in a top-down manner (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). Taba believed that the curriculum should be developed by its real practitioners rather than imposed by superior levels.

Instead of creating a macro-level curriculum, Taba advocated a micro-level curriculum in which teachers start with the design of specific learning-teaching units and move to a broader design. Therefore, the Taba model is regarded as one of the inductive curriculum models in contrast with the more common deductive models (Oliva, 2005; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). The model may seem to be dated, but Taba was as Ornstein & Hunkins put it "far ahead of her time" and was a pioneer in curriculum development with her unique and still highly valid ideas about education (Fraenkel, 1992; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). Indeed, her model is still followed and applied in many contexts. Krull & Kurm (1996, as cited in Läänemets & Ruubel, 2013, pp: 6-7) listed the principles behind the logic of Taba's philosophy in curriculum development:

1- Social processes, including the socialization of human beings, are not linear, and they cannot be modelled through linear planning.
2- Social institutions, including school curricula and programmes, are more likely to be effectively rearranged if they follow a well-founded and co-ordinated system of development from bottom to top instead of the common way of administrative reorganization from top to bottom.
3- The development of new curricula and programmes is more effective if it is based on the principle of democratic guidance and on a well-founded distribution of work. The emphasis is on competence and not on administration.
4- The renovation of curricula and programmes is not a short-term effort but a long term process lasting years.

These are the general principles of Taba's model, all of which apply to our context as explained below. The following steps suggested by the Taba model were followed in the design of our curriculum (Taba, 1962):

1. *Diagnosis of needs*: The teachers or curriculum developers identify the needs of students for whom the curriculum is designed. The program should identify not only the achievements of students but also their initial level when they start learning and the program should aim to close the proficiency gap between students.
2. *Formulation of objectives*: Following the diagnosis of students' needs, teachers specify the objectives of the course. Taba advocates specifying both the destination and its beyond while determining the objectives. Thus, defining what students will be doing in their lives as they achieve the desired objectives is necessary.
3. *Selection of content*: The content of the curriculum is informed by the objectives. The significance and validity of the content are also taken into consideration. One of the distinctive features of the Taba model is that it emphasizes depth over breadth. Taba believed that it is impossible to cover everything since there will always be something missing or some details will be left out. The content should be more realistic, meaningful and achievable with fewer details and objectives.
4. *Organization of content*: Teachers decide on the delivery sequence of the content at each level by keeping students' readiness, needs and interest in mind. The content, with necessary time to digest the knowledge, is conveyed through a variety of different tasks in order to address all types of learners.
5. *Selection of learning experiences*: Teachers select the instructional methods that will keep students engaged with attitudes, knowledge and skills that will help students not only in their current but in their future studies as well.
6. *Organization of learning experiences*: Teachers put the learning activities into an order to ensure the continuity of learning. Teachers also determine the teaching strategies that will fit best for their students.
7. *Determination of what to evaluate and how to do so*: This is the step in which teachers determine whether the intended learning objectives have been achieved. Continuous evaluation is carried out in different ways to get rich and relevant feedback about students'

progress. As part of this process, a student's initial level is taken into consideration in order to obtain a realistic picture of the effectiveness of the program and the amount of progress made by a student within a certain time period. (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009; Oliva, 2005; Smith, 2013).

The following sections discuss each stage of the Taba model in detail as implemented at AUSFL explaining the diagnosis of needs, the formulation of objectives as well as the selection and organization of content, learning experiences and evaluation. As seen below, steps 3,4,5,6 and 7 were taken simultaneously, since they are all related to each other and cannot be thought as separate steps. How they were taken and the logic behind them were also explained in the following section. The whole process and each step taken were explained in Figure 5 at the end of this session.

3.1. Diagnosis of needs: The Starting Point

Both the teachers and the learners at AUSFL were involved in diagnosing the needs of the learners. During the 2014-2015 academic year, weekly meetings were held with the teachers and student representatives from each level to diagnose the needs of all the stakeholders from different perspectives. The main purpose of those meetings was to identify the problems in the system. The issues raised by student representatives were not significantly different from the issues reported by the teachers. First and foremost, both groups identified low motivation of the students which affected teacher motivation in turn. They also complained about the modular system carried out in the school, the high exit proficiency level required to be accepted as successful in the language learning program, and most importantly, the mismatch between the content presented to them during the course and what was assessed in the tests. Along with the practical difficulties of implementing an eight-week modular system, the students who started preparatory school with a low proficiency level tended to lose faith early in a system that was supposed to take them to the exit level of B2+. Motivation sometimes dropped as early as the first mid-course exams in the fifth week, which usually resulted in negative washback. When the students had low grades in the first exams, they did not have any change of finishing the program in one year. In addition, the final examination to measure student proficiency levels was purchased from a different institution in Turkey. Consequently, neither the students nor the teachers were necessarily aware of the expectations of the test and how to study for it. This was the main reason of the mismatch between what was taught and tested. In summary, the needs analysis of student responses revealed a need for a system which would clearly demonstrate course expectations to students and constantly encourage them throughout the learning process, focusing on achievements rather than discouraging them by highlighting failures. The teachers also stated a need for a system in which they would have a voice in the decisions taken which directly affected them and their students.

3.2. Formulation of objectives: A shift from CEFR to GSE

In order to determine the objectives of the curriculum, an initial analysis of the curricula of 140 institutions providing foreign language education was carried out, looking at their materials, testing systems, and exit levels. This analysis revealed that all institutions were facing more or less the same problems. The most significant result of this analysis was the fact that they all claimed they based their curriculum and proficiency levels on the CEFR, yet there was no consensus among them on how to interpret the CEFR levels. Similarly, we noticed inconsistencies in the interpretations of the CEFR levels in the textbooks being used even in the textbooks from the same publishers. The wide proficiency ranges covered by each of the 6 CEFR levels (from A1 to C2) made it difficult for everybody to agree on the exact nature of each proficiency level. Considering the nature and

difficulties of the language learning process, especially in a foreign language context, the inability to demonstrate how much progress has been achieved and how much more remains might be a demotivating factor. The time it takes for students to move up from one level to another varies greatly depending on their starting level, the amount of exposure to the language, their context, mother tongue, age, abilities and a range of other factors. For this reason, it is difficult to estimate how much time is needed to pass from one CEFR level to the next, especially in a context where input is mainly limited with the classroom boundaries.

These limitations, in addition to the lack of clarity on how to interpret the CEFR levels, required searching for a different proficiency framework which resulted in the discovery of the Global Scale of English (GSE), a psychometric tool. As shown in Figure 1 below, the GSE is a proficiency scale from 10 to 90, which is aligned to the CEFR, enabling a more granular measurement of proficiency within a single CEFR level. In order to support a more granular scale, over 1,400 new GSE Learning Objectives ("Can Do" statements) were developed and rated for each level by over 6,000 teachers from more than 50 countries. These new GSE Learning Objectives were created with reference to a number of sources, including the CEFR itself, the British Council Core Inventory, and both British and American English course materials (http://www.english.com/gse).
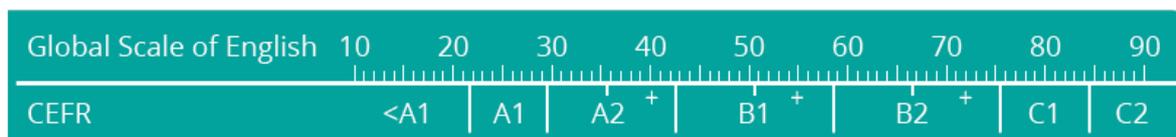

**Figure 1.**Global Scale of English aligned with CEFR

The key difference between the GSE and other proficiency scales stems from its granular structure, which presents a more precise picture for teachers and students around proficiency and progress and helps them make more conscious choices about teaching and learning. The GSE defines what a learner can do at each point on the scale across four skills (speaking, listening, reading writing) as well as vocabulary and grammar. It shares the same formative assessment goals as the CEFR, enabling students to see their improvement step by step (learning objective by learning objective) and showing what they need to study next to take them to the next level. GSE enables placing students in appropriate levels and selecting and preparing materials according to the precise learning outcomes needed by their learners. As David Nunan states, "The Global Scale of English represents the most significant advance in performance-based approaches to language learning, teaching and assessment since the development of the Common European Framework of Reference" (Introduction to the GSE Learning Objectives, Pearson, 2015).

For the reasons cited above, GSE was decided to be used as the starting point for the curriculum development which included a revision of all teaching and assessment components. Language learning is inherently not a linear process. It has its fluctuations depending on such things as proficiency level, individual differences, tendencies and aptitudes, affective factors and so on. The new input or knowledge base does not necessarily have to be built on the previous one. Furthermore, a student can be more competent at one skill than another or lack particular grammar or vocabulary knowledge. Consequently, there is a need to break down a learner's proficiency and to demonstrate their granular progress to them across each skill no matter how slow it is. Otherwise, they may feel that they are not learning enough and may eventually disengage. Stigmatizing them as being "unsuccessful" after a formative assessment also impacts students negatively. What happens when students do not have the necessary competence to pass to the next level? Does it mean that they have not made any progress at

all? Probably not. Even if they have not progressed enough in order to move up to the next level, they might have at least made some tangible progress. It is important to communicate and demonstrate this to students in order to motivate them to stay in the course. Since the GSE enables us to monitor and show granular progress, it became the basis for our new curriculum.

3.3. Selection and organization of content, learning experiences and evaluation: The construction process

All of the selection and organization work was carried out by a voluntary group of language teachers. Our hypothesis was that involving language teachers in the process would increase their sense of ownership. Adopting a bottom-up approach where the actual users of the curriculum take the initiative and decide on the content through constructive meetings and discussions was thought to be a more productive and effective means than implementation of a top-down approach. As the first step, all language instructors were invited to take part in the curriculum designing process, and 25 language instructors formed the core curriculum development group on a voluntary basis. The second major step was raising the awareness of GSE among the group members, including the rationale of the scale and the research behind it. A series of meetings was conducted with the GSE experts and group members in order to ensure full understanding of the scale. The group then carried out a detailed analysis of each outcome (GSE Learning Objectives) associated with the scale. The curriculum was then designed based on the answers of the questions shown in Figure 2:
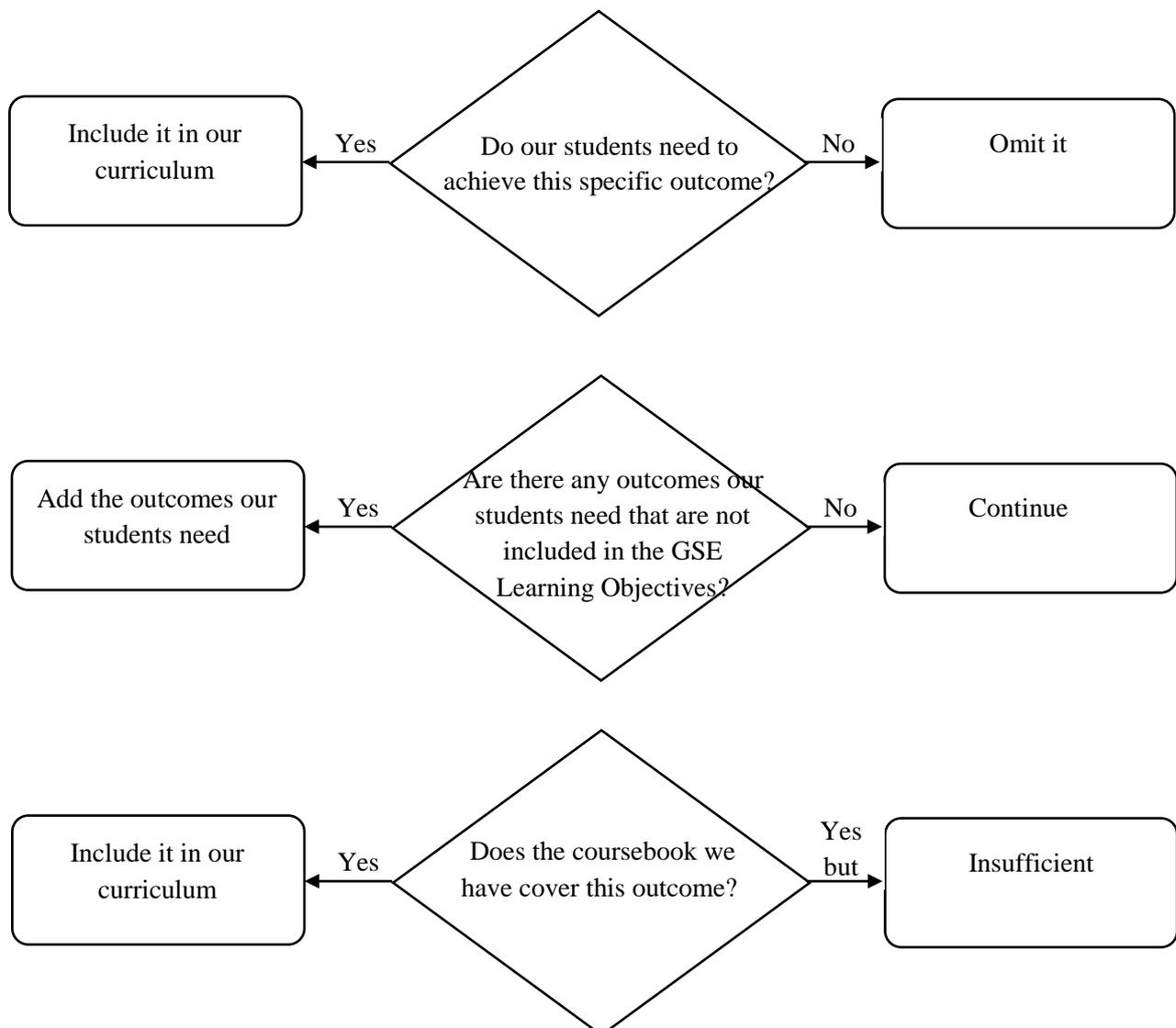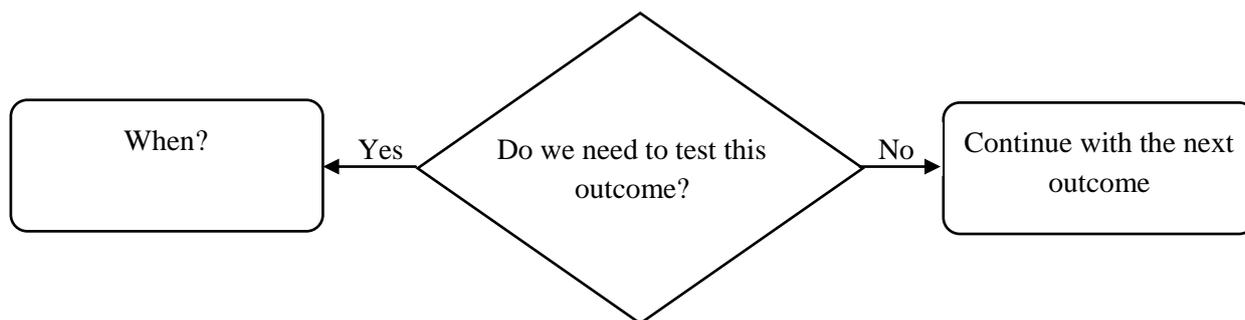
Figure 2. Curriculum Development Process

These questions provided guidance in the process of deciding on a realistic set of outcomes for an eight-month intensive language program in a foreign language setting. Rather than developing a wider curriculum that covers many topics and structures without allowing learners enough time and practice to digest the knowledge, we adopted a more conservative approach covering fewer topics, but studying them in depth to allow students to internalize what they have covered and provide them with opportunities to apply the knowledge in different situations and task types, thus creating an environment for meaningful learning as suggested by Taba (1962). The answer of each question above formulated our learning outcomes, selection and organization of our content including all the materials we would be using. How this content would be taught and the necessary time required for the selection and organization of learning and teaching experiences were the focus of these discussions.

After discussing each GSE Learning Objective in the light of the questions listed above, 66 on the GSE was established as the optimum point to be reached by the end of the program. This corresponds to the mid-level of B2 (GSE 59-75). At the heart of the discussions around the exit level was a definition of what it meant to be at B2 level, which was given as the desired language proficiency of learners for English-medium instruction by the Turkish Council of Higher Education. Some language teachers defined being at B2 as achieving all the Can Do statements at the B2 level and going beyond, which would correspond to somewhere in the 70-76 range on the GSE scale; whereas, others defined being at B2 level as achieving all the outcomes of B1 level and operating fully and comfortably at B1-related language skills and tasks. A number of studies have shown that the higher the learner moves in proficiency, the slower the pace of improvement (Richards, 2008; Skehan, 1998; Yi, 2011). Therefore, considering the entry level and the length of time available for both in and out-of-class study, 66 was determined to be an achievable point on the GSE.

One of the mistakes frequently made during the curriculum renewal or development processes is that institutions tend to adopt ready-made programs without necessarily considering the capacities, resources, and teacher and student profiles of their own schools. Each school is idiosyncratic and has its own unique internal dynamics. No matter how solid a program is or how developed teaching and curriculum principles are, they all need contextualization. As Biggs (2003, p.6) states "*Wise and effective teaching is not…simply a matter of applying general principles of teaching according to rule: those principles need adapting to your own personal strengths and to your teaching context.*"

When deciding on what to evaluate and how to carry it out, and eclectic design was adopted with both formative and summative assessment procedures considered and implemented in the curriculum design. The students need tangible evidence of the improvement in their language proficiency, as well as an understanding of their weaknesses and areas for improvement. Therefore, the assessment elements consisted of quizzes, out-of-class tasks, and laboratory tasks, as well as mid-course and end-of-course tests. A wide range of learning activities aimed at addressing all types of learners and styles were introduced in order to create as fair an assessment as possible for all students. This also allowed

language instructors to monitor their students' progress with the inclusion of different types of evaluation at different points during the program, thus enabling both the teachers and students to plan and adapt learning activities to meet their objectives.

The first step in the evaluation process was to determine what to assess, when to assess and how to assess each learning outcome. The team sought the most effective ways of testing each particular learning outcome. For productive learning outcomes, out-of-class tasks were considered more appropriate; whereas for receptive skills, vocabulary and grammar, short quizzes, mid-course and end-of-course tests were thought to be more effective. This does not necessarily mean that the productive skills were only assessed through language tasks. They were also assessed during the mid-course and end-of-course tests. Having decided on the "how" and "what" of assessment, the curriculum team then determined when to assess a particular learning outcome. As part of these discussions, the team thought about which assessment tool would be most appropriate to assess the outcomes. Finally, the team decided that some outcomes should be tested through tasks, some through quizzes and some through mid and end-of-course tests.

3.4 Building the operational structure in AUSFL

After completing the selection of GSE Learning Objectives, and adding new ones where required, the next step was to engage other stakeholders in the program to ensure successful deployment of a smoothly functioning system. In order to ensure that the new curriculum was transparent to all stakeholders, handbooks for both students and teaching staff, both in Turkish and English, were developed as a further step in the curriculum development process. The handbook for the teaching staff included information about the mission and vision of the school; the organizational functioning and responsibilities of each body in the organization; the policies, namely curriculum, quality improvement, assessment, cheating, complaints and decision making policies; the duties of teaching staff such as record keeping and working hours; disciplinary issues, and procedures to be followed in the school when they miss a class, attend a conference or carry out a research study with their colleagues or students. The handbook for the students, on the other hand, aimed to inform prospective and current students about the organizational structure of the school; the requirements of the program; the assessment procedures; the expectations of students on the program; the channels of communication with the university administration; the facilities of the school, and a section on frequently asked questions as well as the sample petitions were also included in the handbook.

For the effective process of the whole system, the units listed and described below were formed from the volunteer teaching staff and a unit leader was elected by the unit members at the beginning of the academic year.

- **Coordinator Unit** - responsible for maintaining effective communication with and among the teachers and other units, and making sure that the learning outcomes of the curriculum are covered by the teachers at each level by organizing meetings with them on a regular basis.
- **Materials Development Unit**- responsible for preparing supplementary materials and activities in line with the curriculum; making necessary arrangements to share the newly prepared activities and materials with teachers and students; and getting feedback and updating the supplementary materials continuously.
- **Testing Unit** - responsible for writingthe test specifications for all the achievement tests in accordance with the outcomes of the curriculum; developing an item bank for these tests; organizing the editing, administration, standardization, grading and feedback sessions of the tests; and analyzing the results of the tests and revising the items accordingly.

- **Proficiency Test Unit** - responsible for developing the Placement and the Proficiency tests for AUSFL. The Placement test is given at the beginning of each academic year to place the students in appropriate classes; and the Proficiency Test is administered three times a year in order to exempt successful students from AUSFL. Both tests are prepared based on GSE outcomes. The unit is responsible for writing the test specifications; developing an item bank for both tests; organizing the editing, administration, standardization, grading and feedback sessions of the tests; analyzing the results of the tests and revising the items accordingly.
- **Professional Development Unit** - responsible for organizing and carrying out in-service training programs for the teachers; identifying the needs of teachers with regard to professional development; organizing and carrying out in-service development activities addressing the needs of all teachers, and keeping records of the training and development activities planned, carried out, and evaluated. In-service trainings to ensure that all the teachers in the system have the same perception of the new curriculum are prepared by this unit.
- **Technology Integration Unit** - responsible for analyzing, evaluating and choosing the appropriate online programs and Web 2.0 tools available to best deliver the curriculum outcomes; providing help and guidance to teachers related to chosen online platforms and Web 2.0 tools; organizing in-service training activities on technology integration with teachers.
- **Student Unit** - responsible for organizing curricular and extracurricular student activities (e.g. Speaking Games, Writing Practice, How to Learn New Vocabulary Items, How to Make Effective Presentations, etc.), and maintaining the communications around and continuity of these activities.
- **Project Unit** - responsible for planning and carrying out various infrastructure projects to enhance language learning and management in our school; counseling teachers who are planning to conduct projects by organizing small-group and experience-sharing meetings; and organizing meetings with ARİNKOM (The Project Unit of the University) with regard to the types of projects and how to conduct them.

At the beginning of the 2014-2015 academic year, a series of meetings with teachers and students was organized to introduce the new system to the whole group. Throughout the academic year, in order to maintain a healthy communication among all participants, Wednesday afternoons were kept free to hold regular meetings with all the teachers, within and among the units (see Figure 3 below).
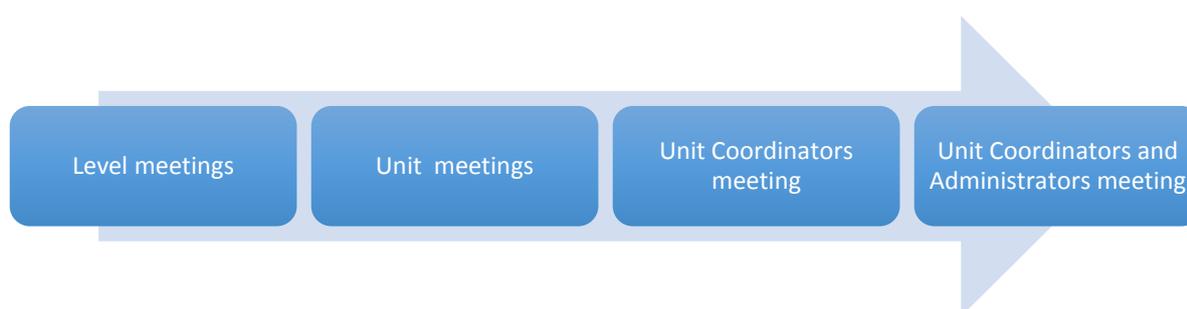

Figure 3. Flow of meetings

Initially, all teachers teaching at the same level gathered under the responsibility of the level coordinator in order to discuss the issues, evaluate the past and current week, disseminate information and share experiences. In these meetings, it was also aimed to ensure that all teachers were up to date with the syllabus and with the necessary outcomes intended to gain and keep the implementation standard for all the classes at the same level. After level meetings were conducted, the unit members gathered to discuss and evaluate the issues or the activities that had been carried out in the program or raised in the level meetings, and ensured that any required action was taken. Next, the unit

coordinators came together to ensure consistency across units and to verify that the teaching and other related activities were conducted in alignment with the outcomes and that all units had the same understanding of the logic behind the implementation. Finally, the administration gathered with the unit coordinators to discuss any issues raised in meetings and ensured that any required action was taken.

4. Evaluation of the New Curriculum

Since the Taba Model is based on the views of stakeholders and revision, continuous feedback from learners and teachers have been collected on the revised curriculum since the beginning of 2014-2015 academic year. Each academic year both learners and teachers have been asked to indicate their opinions on the curriculum mainly including;

- the materials (coursebook and extra written and online materials)
- the methodology (activities, teachers, teacher-student interaction)
- the lab classes (online platform, Web 2.0 tools and lab tasks),
- extracurricular activities (program related and fun oriented activities),
- assessment (tasks, written and spoken exams)

Various online surveys have been given to both learners and teachers to gain insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the program. With each survey gathered from approximately 2700 students and 180 teachers, necessary adjustments have been made regarding various components of the curriculum. In order to gather information on the effectiveness of the intensive language program, the first year students continuing their education in their departments and having had the language education the previous year were also asked to indicate their opinions on the various topics related to the program mainly including;

- the language skills and areas that are necessary for their courses
- the language skills and areas they have difficulties in following their courses
- their overall satisfaction of the language program they attended, and
- their suggestions for the improvement of the program.

Focus group interviews were also carried out with the learners and the teachers to identify any issues mentioned above in these groups.

While it is not possible to give the results of each of these surveys and the interviews in the scope of this paper, it is possible to conclude that as recommended by Byrne, Downey, & Souza (2013), the involvement of the teachers and the students in the decision making and curriculum development process created positive outcomes and facilitated a better learning environment. The program was perceived to be more student-centered than the one used in the previous years and this increased their motivation. Some of the learners appreciated asking about their opinions as seen in the following examples;

-"Thanks for asking about and valuing our opinions".
-"Thanks for your qualified education".

As pointed out by West (2016), aligning the materials, teaching and testing with the learning outcomes has made expectations clear for all the stakeholders. Preparing the new curriculum considering this was perceived to be the biggest strength of the new program. Students expressed their positive perceptions on this as in the following example;

-"The quizzes, the exams, tasks, everything we do are aligned with each other."

Moreover, making the learning outcomes visible for the learners with self-assessment checklists helped them monitor their own language learning progress. The most obvious outcome of the new curriculum has been the increase in success rates of the students, as measured by the passing grades from the exit exam. As seen in Figure 4 below, increase in students' passing rate of the Proficiency Test from 29% to 42% can be shown as the indication of the positive impact of the new curriculum.
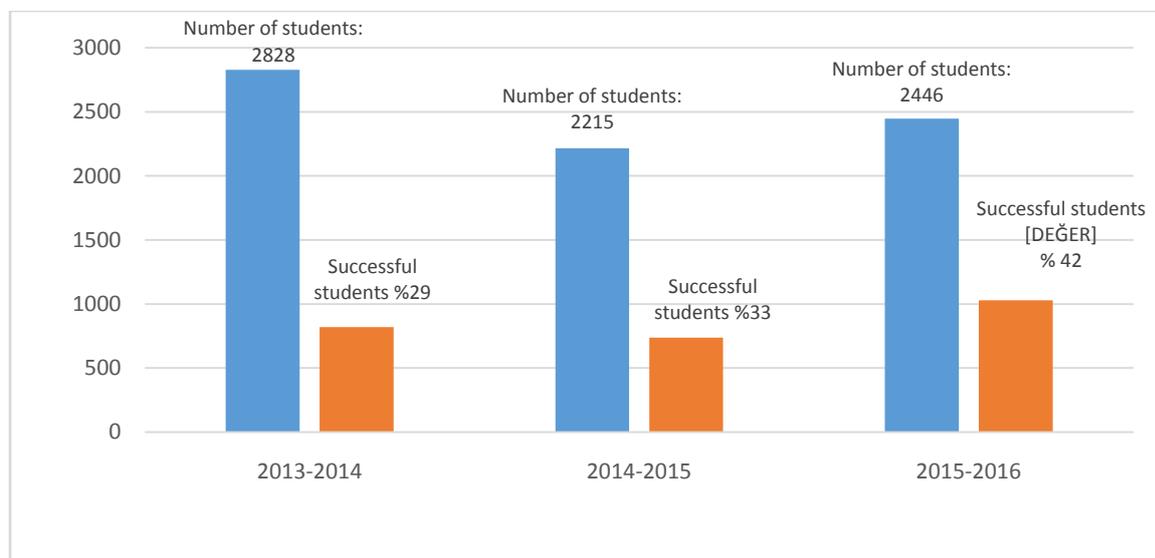
Figure 4. Success rates between 2013-2016

Feedback gathered from the graduates of the new curriculum revealed their overall satisfaction of the language program they followed. When they were asked to indicate if the language program improved their language proficiency or not, they rated each skill as following (on a scale out of 5);

- Grammar (3.93)
- Writing (3.75)
- Reading (3.67)
- Listening (3.37)
- Speaking (3.28)
- Vocabulary (2.40)

According to students' ideas, the new curriculum taught them grammar and prepared them to be able to write, read, listen and speak in the foreign language well. However, it was not found to be satisfying in equipping the learners with the desired vocabulary knowledge. They explained that they needed to learn vocabulary specific to their departments. The following statements from the graduates can be presented as examples of students' opinions:

-"The education we had during the preparatory year was very efficient, the curriculum was very good, the teachers were very qualified, but is not sufficient to follow the education in our department".
-"There are too many unknown vocabulary items in the lessons. I am having difficulty in following the lessons".
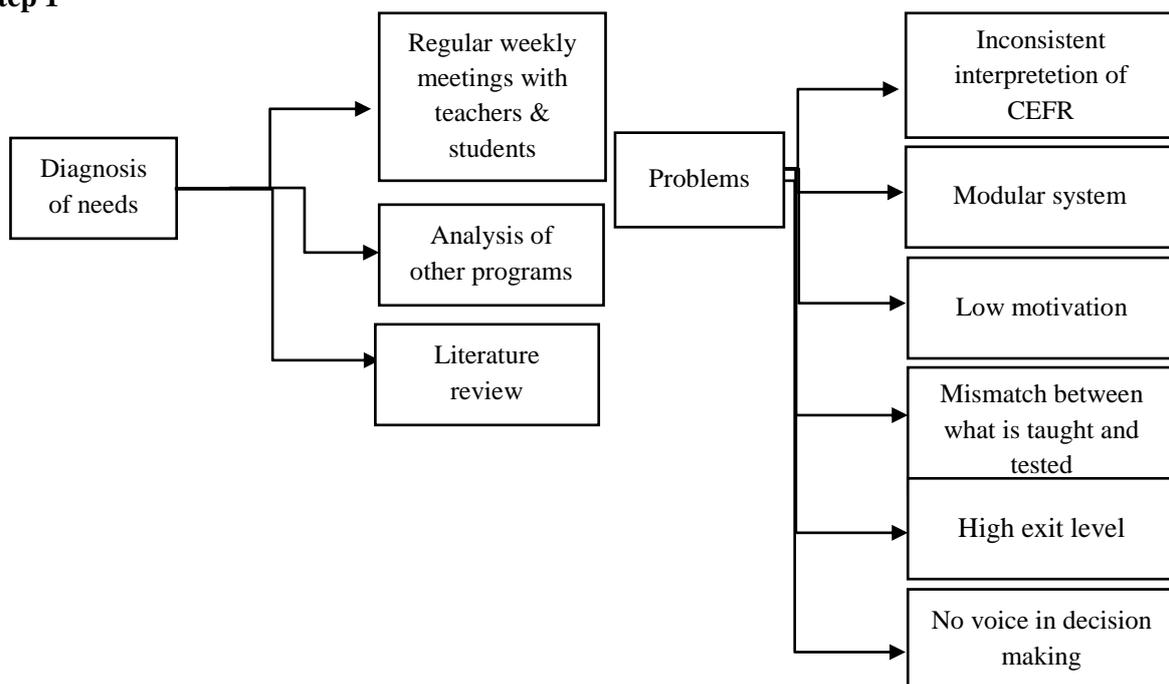-"Education we had is quite sufficient, especially considering the amount of time we had. It is the student who needs to improve himself out of the class. Everything depends on how much a student studies".

Language education during the preparatory year aims to equip the students with the necessary skills and strategies to be able to follow the academic education in their departments. Considering the profile of the learners, the majority of whom are the complete beginners or elementary learners, and the amount of time available, the program is designed to give general English and help learners to be able to reach 66 in the GSE scale which is equal to the initial stages of B2 in the CEFR. It is therefore quite normal for the students to experience difficulties with vocabulary specific to their academic fields.
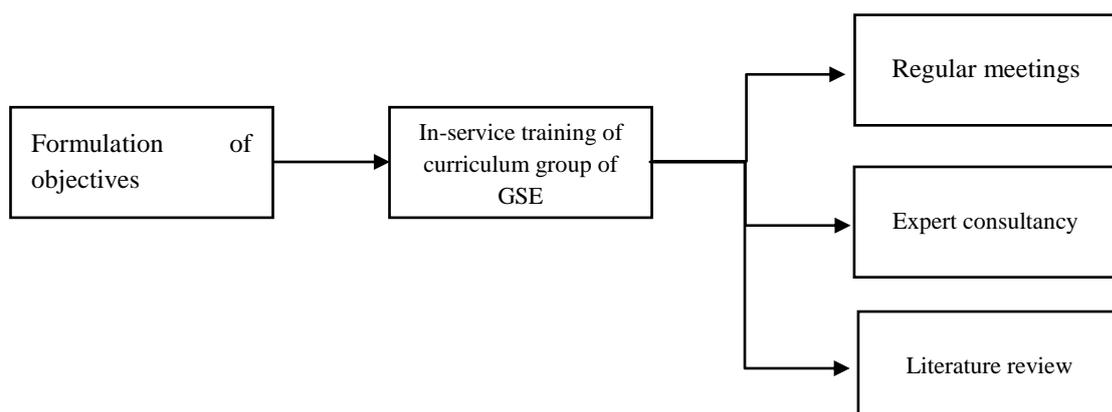
For the teachers, the whole curriculum renewal process served as an in service training activity; being involved in all the decisions made helped them to be more conscious of the teaching and learning process and increased their satisfaction in the teaching profession, as pointed out by Shaver (2010). Deciding on the learning outcomes and developing materials, aligned with these outcomes helped them to take the ownership of their teaching. It helped to raise teacher awareness of what they were doing, where their students were in the process and how they could guide them to make further improvement. As also suggested by Banegas (2011), involving teachers in the curriculum development process encouraged them to be critical and reflective of their own belief systems. As argued by Elliot (1994), professional development of teachers is an inseparable component of curricular development process.
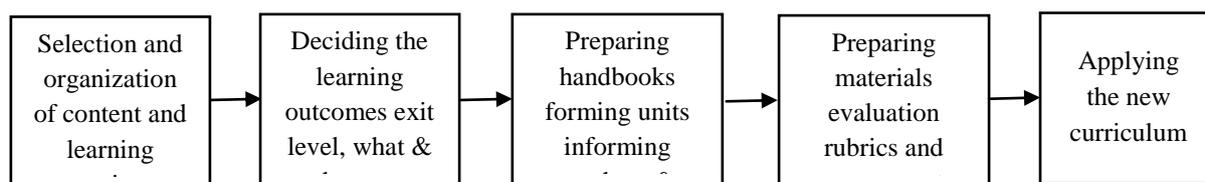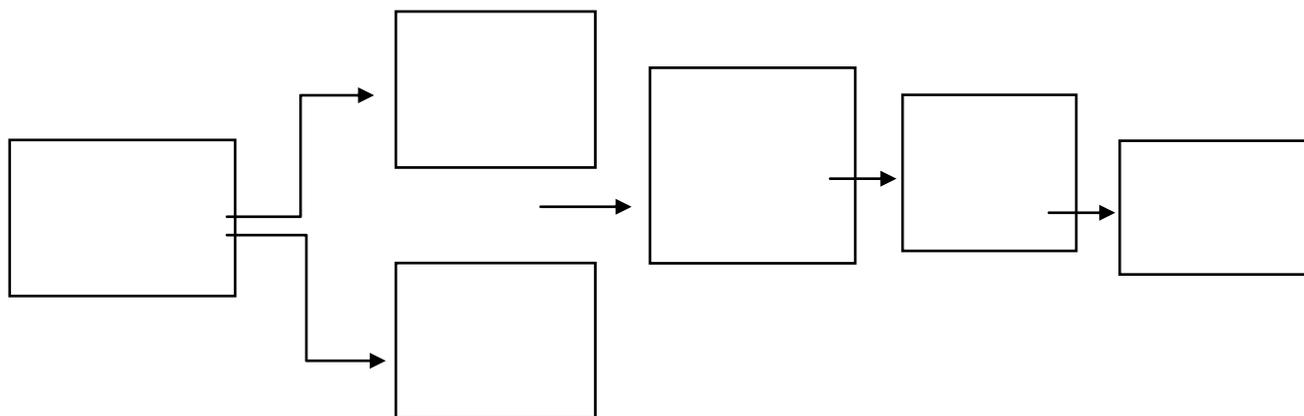
Figure 5 summarizes the whole process and each step taken during the curriculum development process.

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3 – 7

Selection and organization of content and learning	Deciding the learning outcomes exit level, what &	Preparing handbooks forming units informing	Preparing materials evaluation rubrics and	Applying the new curriculum

Evaluation of the New Curriculum

Figure 5. Steps of the Curriculum Renewal Process

5. Conclusion and Implications

Although we experienced some challenges at the beginning of the revision process, such as the lack of appropriate materials for teaching and testing that were aligned with the GSE or the introduction of a new scale for curriculum development and the need to get teachers on board with it, the result was a context-specific curriculum which was designed for and by our students and teachers using a bottom-up approach based on their needs and characteristics. Helping learners to understand how they are progressing, how much they have improved and how much more they need to progress in their learning journey increased their success in parallel with their motivation. The abstract learning process has become more concrete in the minds of students and resulted in success.

There are numerous implications of the whole curriculum development process for the other institutions planning to go through a similar process. The main ones to be included in this never-ending process can be listed as following;

- involving all the stakeholders in the decision making process and valuing their voices,
- making the learning process visible for the learners and the teachers,
- placing the learning outcomes in the center of the curriculum and aligning the materials, teaching and testing with the learning outcomes,
- establishing a transparent communication policy among all the stakeholders,
- getting feedback on the new implementations,
- making necessary adjustments based on their feedback and reporting it back to them,
- continuously monitoring the whole process, and
- most importantly, making it specific to the teaching context.

No document is discussed more than the curriculum, as pointed out by Läänemets and Kalamees-Ruubel (2013). The revision of the curriculum is a long and a never-ending process, taking years, and constantly being revisited and revised based on the feedback of the users. The experience outlined in this paper, combining the old Taba Model and the new GSE framework in the design of the new curriculum led to positive results. What we have experienced in our institution can be considered as a standardization process. If we take Erişen's (2003) definition of a standard as 'the quantity and quality level needed to realize a goal', we would argue that the GSE helped us to ensure that all of the stakeholders share a common perspective in reaching a common goal: to increase the quality of the education we provide. This facilitated healthier and more effective communication between all parties; test developers, material writers, learners and teachers. Establishing a curriculum which enabled us to monitor students' progress more preciselyhelped us to take sound steps in making necessary editions. The next stage of this process should be not only to improve our own curriculum, but also to develop a nationwide standard which will help everyone to reach the same quality of language teaching in the country. Developing a curriculum aligned with the GSE and vitalizing a psychometric instrument in real life go beyond being an interesting experiment – it becomes a necessity for the country. The feedback we received from teachers and students was valuable in helping us determine the learning objectives that we think will be beneficial and necessary for our students. This feedback and set of learning outcomes developed by AUSFL should be expanded to include teachers and students from other institutions so that we can establish a solid understanding of the goals to be achieved at all levels of language teaching in Turkey. As Taba herself stated, curriculum development is an ongoing process.

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Eski ve yeniyi birleştirme: taba modeli ve evrensel dil ölçeği üzerine bir program geliştirme

Öz

Bu çalışma yoğun yabancı dil eğitimi veren bir programda Taba Modeli ile Evrensel Dil Ölçeği (GSE) temel alınarak geliştirilen programın hangi aşamalardan geçerek geliştirildiği sürecini anlatmaktadır. Öğretmen ve öğrencilerin program geliştirilme sürecine dahil edilmesi gerekliliğini savunan Taba Modeli, dil yeterliliğini granül bir şekilde ölçen psikometrik bir ölçme aracı olarak geliştirilmiş GSE ile birleştirilerek kurumun ihtiyaçlarına özgü bir program geliştirilmiştir. Bu süreçte alınan kararlar, atılan adımlar ve geliştirilen programın etkisi, gerekçeleri ile çalışmada anlatılmıştır. Geliştirilen program her ne kadar kuruma özgü olsa da, Taba modelinin ve ölçeğin kurumun ihtiyaçları doğrultusunda nasıl uyarlanarak kullanıldığı bir model olarak alınabilir. Bu çalışmada anlatılan deneyimden çıkarılabilecek dersler vekullanılan stratejiler başka bir program geliştirme sürecinde kullanılabilir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Taba Modeli, Evrensel İngilizce Ölçeği, program geliştirme, tümevarım süreci, yabancı dil öğretimi.

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