

## Comparison of Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Turkey with Denmark, Hungary, and Portugal

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**Abstract:** In this study, systems of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) in different countries were compared. The focus country was Turkey, which has low achievement in English. Other countries compared were Denmark, Hungary, and Portugal, which had considerably higher achievements in teaching English. The selection of these countries was based on the mean scores for five years of Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and Education First Proficiency Index. The study was designed as a qualitative research. The data related to targeted countries were gathered from the web sites of the studied countries' ministries of education and governments, curriculums, Eurydice and OECD resources, and published articles. The data were analyzed using document analysis technique. The comparisons were made in terms of general educational systems, aims and goals, content, teaching and learning process, and evaluation. As a result of the study, Turkey's more centralist structure was observed among countries. Moreover, Turkey's primary objective in primary school is the positive attitude towards English. Finally, the system in Turkey views the language as a combination of four skills while other countries emphasize the communicative aspect of language.

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### 1. Introduction

Situated at boundaries of both Europe and Asia, Turkey has a strategically important geographical position. This strategic and geopolitical position of Turkey makes learning English, which is the lingua franca, a necessity so that the country could catch up with ongoing progresses in a variety of fields such as technology, education, and business (Kırkgöz, 2007). However, there are doubts about the success of teaching English in Turkey, and the general opinion is that education system has failed to teach English to kids despite its importance in keeping up with developed countries and developments (Karahan, 2007; Mirici, 2003; Paker, 2012). One of the ways of understanding the reasons behind this setback is to examine the systems of other countries, which are successful in teaching English. By this means, the different practices in Turkey and other countries can be revealed, and some insights about what to do to improve teaching English in Turkey can be gained.

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The countries, which were compared with Turkey in this study, are Denmark, Hungary, and Portugal. These countries were selected for the study since they are successful at teaching English according to the reports of Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and Education First Proficiency Index. The detailed information about the selection criteria can be found in the method section of the current study. Moreover, all of these countries are located in Europe like Turkey. As a result, both the geographical position and achievement in teaching English made these countries a part of the current study.

Neighbouring Middle East and Europe, Turkey formally applied for membership of European Union in 1987. Negotiations began in 2005. Since then, a variety of reforms have undergone in Turkey, including education. Two of these reforms were made in 2005 and 2013. The main idea of these reforms was to implement Constructivism as the basic philosophy in curriculums. This was a dramatic change since the earlier curriculums were based on teacher-centered approaches. On the other hand, constructivism is highly student-centered and requires teachers to facilitate engagement, active learning, cooperation, and reflection (Pardamean and Susanto, 2012). As a result of 2013 reform, English courses are implemented starting from the second grade level, which started in fourth grade level earlier. At each grade level, there are English courses through secondary and high school (Ministry of National Education [MONE], 2013). A centralist structure is significant in Turkey. Curriculums are prepared centrally by MONE. The only change that can schools can make is selecting among elective courses, whose syllabuses are also prepared by MONE (Eurydice, 2015a).

Situated in Northern Europe, Denmark has been a member of European Union since 1973 (EU, 2016). Education for all, lifelong learning, self-governance, and projects are among the specific features of Danish education (Eurydice, 2016a). Teaching English starts at first grade and continues until the end of 12<sup>th</sup> grade level. Curriculums aren't centrally developed. Instead, schools implement their own curriculums within a general framework (Eurydice, 2015b).

The other country selected for the study is Hungary. It is located in Eastern Europe and has been a member of European Union (EU) since 2004 (EU, 2016). Teaching English starts at fourth grade and continues until the end of 12<sup>th</sup> grade level. In contrast with Denmark, the central government prepares curriculums in Hungary. The schools can make limited changes on them (10%) (Eurydice, 2012).

Finally, Portugal is located in Western Europe and has been a member of EU since 1986 (EU, 2016). Teaching English starts at third grade and continues until the end of 11<sup>th</sup> grade level (Eurydice, 2016b). A central curriculum is prepared by the government in Portugal, but the school can make minor changes on it (Eurydice, 2016c).

Within this framework, this study aimed at comparing the system of TEFL in Turkey with Denmark, Hungary, and Portugal. Accordingly, the research questions are as follows:

- (1) What are the basic characteristics of educational systems in given countries?
- (2) What are the similarities and differences in the aims and goals of TEFL language in given countries?
- (3) What are the similarities and differences in the content of TEFL in given countries?
- (4) What are the similarities and differences in the learning and teaching process of TEFL in given countries?

- (5) What are the similarities and differences in the evaluation of TEFL in given countries?

## 2. Method

In this section, information regarding the research desing, sampling, data collection, and data analysis are presented.

### 2.1. Research design

Document analysis was used in this qualitative study. It is a systematic procedure like other techniques in qualitative research and demands the data to be examined and interpreted to extract meaning, understanding, and develop knowledge (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). In this direction, the websites of the studied countries' ministries of education and governments, curriculums, Eurydice and OECD resources, and published articles were reviewed.

### 2.2. Sampling

Selection of Denmark, Hungary, and Portugal for comparison was based on TOEFL (2015; 2014; 2013; 2012; 2011; 2010) and Education First Proficiency Index (2015; 2014; 2013; 2012; 2011) results. Although there are other international tests such International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), TOEFL and Education First Proficiency Index were chosen in this study since their yearly reports were available to anyone, which allowed to make comparisons among countries. Having an international recognition, TOEFL is a test for measuring English language competency of individuals. It is conducted in many countries every year. Education First English Proficiency is an initiative aiming at ranking the countries in accordance with adults' English levels. For the selection process, average scores of countries for six years were obtained from TOEFL reports. At this stage, countries whose average scores were missing for at least two years were excluded from the study. Then an average score for each country was estimated using average scores of six years. The countries were ranked in terms of these average scores. A similar process was conducted for EF English Proficiency results. Yearly average scores of countries were obtained from EF English Proficiency results. An average score for each country was estimated using average scores of five years. Then the countries were ranked in accordance with their average scores. Finally, both TOEFL and EF English Proficiency rankings were examined, and countries in top 20 were determined. Rankings for both tests are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Countries in top 20 and Turkey for EFEP and TOEFL rankings**

Countries	EF English Proficiency Ranking	TOEFL Ranking
Sweden	1	12
Denmark	3	1
Norway	4	7
Belgium	8	9
Germany	9	8
Singapore	10	4
Hungary	12	3
Switzerland	13	6
Portugal	14	20
Argentina	15	11
Spain	18	18

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India	20	15
Turkey	32	80

As can be seen in Table 1, countries from Northern Europe were observed to be successful in teaching English. When both rankings were considered, Denmark, Hungary, and Portugal were chosen for the study as representatives of Northern, Eastern, and Western Europe. Although there are countries from other continents in the top 20 such as Singapore and Argentina, these countries weren't selected due to the language limitations. On the other hand, most of the documents of the countries in European continent were available in English.

### **2.3. Data collection**

The documents and curriculums that were obtained from the websites of countries' ministries of education were the primary sources in this study. Additionally, Eurydice and OECD resources and published articles were used. A total of 25 websites and pages were used to gather information that could answer the research questions. Much more web pages were scanned while seeking the necessary information. The only criterion was the availability of the required information and the trustworthiness of the source. The data collection period lasted for two months.

### **2.4. Data analysis**

The documents were examined by one author in accordance with the research questions. During this examination, the sentences or information that could be used to answer any research question were extracted and used. This process was repeated by the other author. The results were compared, and it was observed that the findings were quite similar.

## **3. Findings**

In this section, findings related to research questions are presented under headings respectively.

### **3.1. Findings regarding general education systems of the countries**

When the general education systems of countries were examined, various similarities and differences were observed among countries. Educational structure apart from higher education in Denmark is organized as 6+3+3, and the compulsory education lasts for 10 years (Danish Ministry for Children, Education and Gender [DMCEG], 2016a). Danish central government decides on educational policies, and schools can develop and implement their own curriculums (Eurydice, 2015b). Hungarian education system is shaped as 4+4+4 (Eurydice, 2014). Similar to Denmark, duration of compulsory education is 10 years (OECD, 2015). Unlike Denmark, Hungary has a centralist structure. Educational policies and national curriculums are determined by the central governments. School administrations can make limited changes (%10) on curriculums (Eurydice, 2012). The schooling system is organized as 4+2+3+3 in Portugal (Eurydice, 2016d). Duration of compulsory education is 12 years (OECD, 2015). It can be stated that the role of central government is effective also in Portugal. Curriculums are prepared centrally; however, schools can make minor changes on them (Eurydice, 2016c). In Turkey, school organization is shaped as 4+4+4, similar to Hungary, and duration of compulsory education is 12 years as in Portugal (MONE, 2012). Educational policies and curriculums are prepared by central governments (Eurydice, 2015a). Neither provincial directorates nor schools

are authorized to make changes on them. In other words, it can be expressed that Turkey has the most centralist structure while Denmark has the least among the countries studied. Summary of information about general educational systems of countries can be viewed in Table 2.

**Table 2. Overview of education systems of the countries**

	Denmark	Hungary	Portugal	Turkey
Basic education	6+3	4+4	4+2+3	4+4
High school	3 years	4 years	3 years	4 years
Compulsory education	10 years.	10 years.	12 years.	12 years.
The role of central government	The central government determines educational policies and general framework. School administrations can implement their own curriculums.	The central government determines educational policies and national curriculums. Schools can make minor changes (10%).	The central government determines educational policies and national curriculums. Schools can make minor changes on condition that they are suitable for national curriculums.	The central government determines educational policies and national curriculums. Schools can't make changes on them.

Apart from education systems, information about the systems of TEFL was obtained. These findings are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Overview of TEFL in the countries**

	Denmark	Hungary	Portugal	Turkey
Starting year of teaching English	Teaching English starts at 1 <sup>st</sup> grade level (Eurydice, 2015b).	Teaching English starts at 4 <sup>th</sup> grade level (Szabó, 2008).	Teaching English starts at 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade level (Eurydice, 2016b).	Teaching English starts at 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade level (MONE, 2013).
Weekly English course hours or duration	1 course hour in 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> grades; 2 course hours in 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> grades; 3 course hours in 5 <sup>th</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> , 7 <sup>th</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup> and 9 <sup>th</sup> grades (Ministeriet for Børn, Undervisning og Ligestilling, 2016). A total of 200 hours in 10 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> and 12 <sup>th</sup> grades (DMCEG, 2016b).	2-6% of total course hours in 4 <sup>th</sup> grade; 12-20% of total course hours in 5 <sup>th</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> , 7 <sup>th</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup> , 9 <sup>th</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup> grades; 13% of total course hours in 11 <sup>th</sup> and 12 <sup>th</sup> grades (Nemzeti Erőforrás Minisztérium [NEM], 2007).	2 course hours in 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> grades; weekly 500 minutes in 5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> grades for languages and social studies (including Portuguese, English, Geography, and History); weekly 270, 225, and 225 minutes for English and an additional language in 7 <sup>th</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup> and 9 <sup>th</sup> grades, respectively (Eurydice, 2016b); weekly 150 minutes in	2 course hours in 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> , and 4 <sup>th</sup> grades; 4 course hours in 5 <sup>th</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> , 7 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup> grades (MONE, 2013). 6 course hours in 9 <sup>th</sup> grade; 4 course hours in 10 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , and 12 <sup>th</sup> grades (MONE, 2014).

As can be seen in Table 3, teaching English starts earlier in Denmark compared to other countries. It starts in second grade in Turkey while it begins in third grade in Portugal. At this point, it is necessary to state that the starting year of teaching English in Turkey was fourth grade until 2013. In primary schools, weekly English course hours range from 1 to 2 in relevant countries. It is 3 or 4 hours on an average in secondary schools. In high schools, weekly course hours range from 3 to 5.

### 3.2. Findings regarding aims and goals of teaching English in the countries

When the countries were compared in terms of their aims and goals of TEFL, important similarities and differences were observed. Basic goals are summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4. Basic goals of teaching English in the countries**

Denmark	Hungary	Portugal	Turkey
<p>For 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades: short and simple dialogues about daily topic.</p> <p>For 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grades: participating in short dialogues and giving short information about familiar topics and situations.</p> <p>For 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> grades: participating in long and spontaneous dialogues and arguing own opinions (Styrelsen For It Og Læring [SIL], 2016a).</p>	<p>For 4<sup>th</sup> grade: introduction to learning a language, providing a basis for language learning within the context of receptive skills, and laying the foundations of language learning strategies (NEM, 2002a).</p> <p>For 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades: improving productive language skills in addition to receptive, and communicative skills (NEM, 2002b).</p> <p>For 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> grades: asking for and giving information about real life events.</p> <p>For 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades: exchange of extensive knowledge both in written and oral form (NEM, 2002c).</p>	<p>For 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades: providing a basis for future language learning (Ministério Da Educação [MDE], 2014a).</p> <p>For 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> grades: direct interaction with different languages and cultures, awareness of own lingual and cultural identity, and a balanced development of cognitive, social, affective, aesthetic, cultural, and psychomotor aspects (MDE, 2014b; 2014c).</p> <p>For 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades: acquiring and systematizing key competences of receptive and productive sides of English, interactions in different sociocultural context using English, developing study habits and learning skills (MDE, 2001).</p>	<p>For 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> grades: developing positive attitude towards learning a foreign language.</p> <p>For 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades: increasing interests in learning a language and using it in real life contexts (MONE, 2013).</p> <p>For 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades: providing a motivating and entertaining learning environment so that the learners could speak English fluently, effectively, and accurately (MONE, 2014).</p>

As can be viewed in Table 4, goals in each level in Denmark and Hungary emphasize the cognitive aspects of individuals. In Portugal, it was observed that both cognitive and affective goals are focused. Similarly, the goals of primary school are related to affective aspects in Turkey. In secondary school, both cognitive and affective goals are present. In high school, the focus is on cognitive aspects mostly. It is necessary to express that these goals are the basic ones, written in general statements. More specific objectives related to both cognitive and affective

aspects can be found in curriculums. Other than the general aims and goals, targeted skills were also examined. They can be seen in Table 5.

**Table 5. Targeted skills in teaching English in the countries**

Denmark	Hungary	Portugal	Turkey
From the start to the end of teaching English, written and oral communication are emphasized. The four skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) aren't focused separately (SIL, 2016b).	For 4 <sup>th</sup> grade: listening and reading skills are primary, limited level of speaking and writing (NEM, 2002a). For 5 <sup>th</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> , 7 <sup>th</sup> , and 8 <sup>th</sup> grades: Listening, reading, speaking, and writing (NEM, 2002b). For 9 <sup>th</sup> , 10 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , and 12 <sup>th</sup> grades: in addition to four skills, communicative aspect of language is emphasized (NEM, 2002c).	For 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> grades: oral aspects and vocabulary knowledge are emphasized (MDE, 2014a). For 5 <sup>th</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> , 7 <sup>th</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup> , and 9 <sup>th</sup> grades: oral and written communication is focused (MDE, 2014b; 2014c). For 10 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , and 12 <sup>th</sup> grades: Communicative competence in addition to four skills (MDE, 2001).	For 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> , and 4 <sup>th</sup> grades: listening and speaking skills, quite limited levels of reading and writing. For 5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> grades: listening and speaking skills, limited level of reading and quite limited level of writing. For 7 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup> grades: primary skills are listening and speaking, secondary skills are reading and writing (MONE, 2013). For 9 <sup>th</sup> , 10 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , and 12 <sup>th</sup> grades: focus on the integration of four skills (MONE, 2014).

As can be seen in Table 5, the language isn't separated into different skills, and the communicative aspect is emphasized in Denmark. In all school levels, oral and written communication skills are determined to be the main focus of curriculums. In Hungary, listening and reading skills in primary school, listening, reading, speaking and writing skills in secondary school, and communicative aspect of language in addition to four skills in high school are emphasized. In Portugal, oral skills and vocabulary knowledge in primary school, oral and written communication in secondary school, communicative competence in addition to four skills in high school are focused. In Turkey, listening and speaking skills in primary school, four skills in secondary school, and integration of four skills in high school are emphasized.

### **3.3. Findings regarding content of teaching English in the countries**

General information about content of curriculums in the studied countries can be seen in Table 6.

**Table 6. Content of teaching English in the countries**

Denmark	Hungary	Portugal	Turkey
No topic lists. Teachers are expected to prepare their content encouraging oral and written communication based on their experiences (SIL, 2016b).	For 4 <sup>th</sup> grade: topics about the immediate environment of children such as “Me and My Family”, “Weather Forecast”, and “The School” (NEM, 2002a). For 5 <sup>th</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> , 7 <sup>th</sup> , and 8 <sup>th</sup> grades: similar but broader topics to those of 4 <sup>th</sup> grade (NEM, 2002b). For 9 <sup>th</sup> , 10 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , and 12 <sup>th</sup> grades: broader topics such as “Human and Society” and “Scientific and Technical Literacy” (NEM, 2002c).	For 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> grades: topics related to daily lives of children such as “Me and my Friends”, “My School”, and “My Country and Other Countries” (MDE, 2014a). For 5 <sup>th</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> , 7 <sup>th</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup> , and 9 <sup>th</sup> grades: there are three dimensions of content: “Themes”, “Me” and “Us” (MDE, 2014b; 2014c). For 10 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , and 12 <sup>th</sup> grades: the content is divided into three dimensions: “Interpretation and Producing Texts”, “Sociocultural Dimensions”, and “English Language” (MDE, 2001).	There are 10 interrelated themes for each grade level. For 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> , and 4 <sup>th</sup> grades: there are topics such as food and drink, colours, numbers, leisure activities, and jobs. For 5 <sup>th</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> , 7 <sup>th</sup> , and 8 <sup>th</sup> grades: Similar topics are broadened (MONE, 2013). For 9 <sup>th</sup> , 10 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , and 12 <sup>th</sup> grades: broader scopes such as “Studying Abroad”, “Wild Life”, and “Intercultural Issues” (MONE, 2014).

When the content was examined, it was observed that topics covered in English lessons were similar. Apart from other countries, topics aren't listed in curriculum of Denmark. Instead, teachers are expected to prepare their content encouraging oral and written communication based on their experiences. In the other countries, topics related to children's environment are involved in primary school. As the grade level increases, the scope of topics is broadened. This seems appropriate in terms of teaching principals.

### ***3.4. Findings regarding learning-teaching process of teaching English in the countries***

How teaching and learning process is handled can differ depending on the paradigms or approaches adopted by countries. In overall, the countries in this study demonstrated similar characteristics about teaching and learning process. The summary of teaching and learning processes can be seen in Table 7.

**Table 7. Learning and teaching processes in the countries**

Denmark	Hungary	Portugal	Turkey
For 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> grades: activities involving games, addressing to imagination and body language of children. For 5 <sup>th</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> , 7 <sup>th</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup> , 9 <sup>th</sup> , and 10 <sup>th</sup> grades: activities that require students to use language as a tool, encouraging oral and written communication, independent use of language (SIL, 2016c).	For 4 <sup>th</sup> grade: natural language acquisition process (NEM, 2002a). For 5 <sup>th</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> , 7 <sup>th</sup> , and 8 <sup>th</sup> grades: language is seen as a tool rather than the goal itself (NEM, 2002b). For 9 <sup>th</sup> , 10 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , and 12 <sup>th</sup> grades: supporting self-directed learning, making them engage in language outside the school (NEM, 2002c).	For 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> grades: activities requiring active participation and focusing on oral aspects of language such as songs, games, and drama (MDE, 2014a). For 5 <sup>th</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> , 7 <sup>th</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup> , and 9 <sup>th</sup> grades: student-centered activities conducted by students, who are aware of their own learning process (MDE, 2014b; 2014c). For 10 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , and 12 <sup>th</sup> grades: using multiple teaching techniques, making use of students' entry behaviours and sources, student-centered activities requiring active participation (MDE, 2001).	Communicative aspects for each grade level. For 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> , and 4 <sup>th</sup> grades: Total Physical Response, handicrafts, drama, songs, and games. For 5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> grades: drama and role play. For 7 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup> grades: thematic teaching is focused (MONE, 2013). For 9 <sup>th</sup> , 10 <sup>th</sup> , 11 <sup>th</sup> , and 12 <sup>th</sup> grades: role play, reading and writing, short and oral presentations, drama, dialogues (MONE, 2014).

Similarities in teaching-learning processes of studied countries were observed. Basically, student-centered activities which require students to be active during the courses and encourage using the target language for communicative purposes are mostly recommended in curriculums and other governmental documents. Drama, role play, singing songs, and games are among these activities. Moreover, activities requiring students to use English outside the classroom are emphasized.

### 3.5. Findings regarding evaluation of teaching English in the countries

When the countries were compared in terms of evaluation, a number of differences were observed. These can be seen in Table 8.

**Table 8. Evaluation in teaching English in the countries**

Denmark	Hungary	Portugal	Turkey
Teachers conduct observations, product analyses and interviews with reference to learning goals (SIL, 2016b).	Evaluation techniques aren't expressed explicitly; however, self-evaluation techniques are recommended (NEM, 2002c).	Summative evaluation is emphasized for basic education (Direção-Geral da Educação, 2015). Both summative and formative evaluation techniques are recommended in secondary	In primary and middle school: project files and portfolios, self and peer-evaluation, teacher observations, paper and pencil tests are recommended (including

schools (Direção-Geral da  
Educação, 2012).

listening and speaking)  
(MONE, 2013).  
For 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup>  
grades: paper and pencil  
tests, teacher observations,  
discussions, e-portfolios,  
and video blogs (MONE,  
2014).

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In Denmark, observations, product analyses, and interviews are recommended in the curriculum. In Hungary, self-evaluation techniques are emphasized. No evaluation technique is recommended in curriculums in Portugal; however, it is suggested to use summative or formative evaluation techniques depending on situations. In Turkey, evaluation techniques are explained in curriculums in detail. Project files or portfolios, self and peer-assessments, observations, and paper and pencil tests are among the recommended techniques.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

Educational systems of the studied countries are similar in terms of structure. The biggest difference among them is between Turkey and Denmark. The duration of primary school in Turkey is 4 years while it is 6 years in Denmark. Primary school has a crucial role in subsequent stages. This difference may have an impact on English achievement of individuals. Another important difference is about the strict centralist structure in Turkey. Denmark and Portugal also have central curriculums; however, the schools or teachers are allowed to make changes on them. In Hungary, it is also possible to make changes on curriculums even if it is limited (10%). On the other hand, teachers are obliged to implement the curriculums prepared centrally. This situation creates an obstacle in determining local needs, priorities, problems and solutions (Kurt, 2006). Therefore, a partial localization can lead to an increase in success of education in Turkey.

Students in studied countries begin learning English at similar grades. They also keep taking English courses in similar durations. However, it should be stated that students in Turkey began learning English in second grade in 2013. Before that time, teaching English started at fourth grade (MONE, 2013). Therefore, it can be expressed that the reflections of this change in 2013 have still years to be seen on TOEFL or EF English Proficiency results. As a result, this change is thought to be reflected on the success of Turkish students positively in the future.

Positive attitude towards learning English is emphasized in Turkey as the main goal of teaching English in primary school. However, other countries focused on cognitive goals for the same grade levels. It can't be argued that having a positive attitude has a crucial role in learning English (Khan, 2016; Sadighi and Zarafshan 2006); however, it is recommended to involve cognitive goals as well since the duration of primary school is too long to focus on only affective goals. Moreover, English Language Curriculum in Turkey targets listening, speaking, reading and writing skills as if they were separate parts of a language. On the other hand, other countries in this study mainly focus on gaining communicative competence or communication skill. It seems that language is perceived as a mechanical tool that is composed of different parts in Turkey. The priority should be determined precisely. Do we need students who are good at four skills or who can communicate in real life situations? Therefore, major emphasis should be on the communicative aspects of language from the beginning of language learning.

Content and teaching processes of studied countries are similar. A pattern of content starting from close environment of students becomes broader as the grade level increases in all of the countries. This situation is among the favorable points in curriculums. Moreover, student-

centered activities requiring active participation is another positive situation in all curriculums. However, writing something in curriculum doesn't mean that it is implemented in the classroom. Especially in Turkey, there are questions about full implementation of curriculums in classrooms after the 2005 paradigm change (Çiftçi, Sünbül, and Köksal, 2013; Dinç and Doğan, 2010). A complete reform on curriculums was made in 2005. Constructivist paradigm was the foundation of new curriculums, and especially experienced teachers had difficulty in complying with this paradigm shift. Therefore, it is recommended to involve observations in future studies.

Contemporary evaluation techniques such as self and peer evaluations and portfolios are recommended in all of the countries. However, the implementation of these techniques should be investigated further especially in Turkey similar to learning activities.

In conclusion, the biggest differences between Turkey and other countries are determined in centralized-decentralized structures, basic goals of teaching English and perception of language as composed of four different skills vs focusing on communicative aspects. Improvements are recommended at these points in Turkey so that Turkey could reach the success rates of other countries.

The main data source of this study was composed of countries' curriculums, ministry's web pages, and Eurydice resources, which were reached online. This situation creates an important limitation. Additional data collection techniques such as observations and interviews are recommended in future studies to increase validity and reliability. In addition, during the selection of sample, TOEFL and EF English Proficiency results were used since there is no international initiatives such as Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) for basic or secondary education students. Although these results give clues about the success degrees of countries, they may not yield the absolute scores of countries for basic or secondary education levels. This situation is another limitation of the study. Finally, it should be kept in mind that important curricular and paradigm shifts were made in Turkey in 2005 and 2013. The data of current study were composed of up-to-date inputs. However, it may take years to observe the reflections of curricular changes on individuals. Therefore, the changes in 2005 and 2013 may already be improving the quality of TEFL in Turkey.

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