Bilgisayar ve Eğitim Araştırmaları Dergisi
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Involving Learners as Active Participants in Designing a Course Syllabus: A Sample Research

Ders İzlencesi Oluşturulmasında Öğrencilerin Aktif Olarak Dâhil Edilmesi: Örnek Bir Çalışma

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze and find out the needs of the fifth grade secondary school students for a two-hour elective English course. The population (N=179) comprises the students from five schools in different regions of Turkey. A needs analysis survey form developed by the researchers was administered to the research participants. Results indicate that fifth grade students want to learn English through various instructional materials and techniques that appeal to their interests. This study also reveals that the materials and techniques to be implemented for the elective course need to be designed in accordance with the expectations of the learners. However, more research is needed to determine what the syllabus of the elective course should include, how the students' interests can be fully integrated into classroom activities and how and when the course should be evaluated.

Keywords: Needs analysis, learners, elective course, language teaching, syllabus

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı ortaokul beşinci sınıfta iki saat olarak okutulan seçmeli İngilizce dersi için öğrencilerin ihtiyaçlarını belirlemek ve buna yönelik bir ders izlencesi oluşturulmasına katkıda bulunmaktır. Bu çalışmanın evrenini Türkiye'nin farklı okullarından 179 ortaokul öğrencisi oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmacılar tarafından geliştirilmiş olan anket formu araştırma grubuna uygulanmış ve katılımcılar ders için kullanılan materyal ve yöntemlerin kendi ilgi alanlarına yönelik olması gerektiğini vurgulamışlardır. Ayrıca dinleme ve konuşma etkinliklerinin seçmeli İngilizce dersi izlencesi içerisinde daha çok yer alması gerektiği ortaya çıkmıştır. Çalışma bu derse yönelik izlencenin hazırlanırken dersin nasıl işlenmesi ve hangi materyal ve tekniklerin kullanılması gerektiği ve nasıl değerlendirilmesi gerektiği konusunda da yeni bir çalışmanın yapılması gerektiğini göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İhtiyaç analizi, ortaokul öğrencileri, seçmeli ders, dil öğretimi, izlence

Introduction

It is a fact that one of the crucial components of designing a course syllabus is conducting a needs analysis survey. Needs analysis has been one of the important areas in language teaching, especially with the emergence of various learner needs. For this reason,

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to develop a better syllabus, classroom activities will not be applicable for the teachers if they ignore the learners' needs. In this respect, Long (2005) states that only dealing with the linguistic analysis of the passages in coursebooks will not always be effective for avoiding the past mistakes or taking necessary precautions in teaching practices. Therefore, the analysis which is done to collect subjective and objective information is named as needs analysis which was originated in 1960s as a systematical means (Richards, 2013) for curriculum development. Determining the needs of the course using various components such as learners, practitioners began to come into prominence with ESP (English for Specific Purposes) (Dehnad, Bagherzadeh, Shoaleh, Hatami & Hosseini, 2010; Stufflebeam et al., 1985 as cited in İnceçay & İnceçay, 2010; Richards, 2001). However, it is safe to say that it is for both learners and teachers to come across possible difficulties when general content both in English courses and coursebooks cannot meet the needs of learners, which paves the way for ESP in English language teaching field (Cowling, 2007). That is to say, needs analysis provides true and concrete portrait of the teaching environment, relating "learning as closely as possible to teaching" (Grier, 2005 as cited in Akyel & Ozek, 2010) and can be counted as the first step in curriculum development (Brown, 1995 as cited in Kusumoto, 2008).

Besides learner's needs, teacher as a practitioner, being the centre of the classroom, is the one who observes the learners, plans extra activities related to the syllabus objectives and adapts the materials in accordance with the learners' needs and expectations. In this sense, teachers' implementations for the processes of curricula are the most effective. İnceçay and İnceçay (2010:318) highlight this fact that it is not true to separate these two main elements of education namely; teacher and student when planning, developing and implementing an education curriculum. Long (2005:26) also advocates that when it comes to deciding the content of courses teachers are to undergo, ideally assessed before classes begin, at their inception, and as they proceed.

Despite its noteworthy position in English curricula, little importance has been given to needs analysis in ELT field (Akyel & Ozek, 2010; Long, 2005). Learners are mostly disregarded and their role in designing any instructional element is ignored. Needless to say, as one of the main purposes in education is to enhance students' performance (Akyel & Ozek, 2010), evaluation of the curriculum will probably make education process visible for teachers, principals, students and other stakeholders. Therefore, the reasons why teachers,

curriculum developments and the other related groups of people need determining the learners' needs should be defined clearly. According to Richards (2001:52) the purposes of needs analysis are:

- To find out what language skills a learner needs in order to perform a particular role, such as sales manager, tour guide, or university student;
- To determine which students from a group are most in need of training in particular language skills;
- To identify a change of direction that people in a reference group feel is important;
- To collect information about a particular problem learners are experiencing;
- To identify a gap between what students are able to do and what they need to be able to;
- To help determine if an existing course adequately addresses the needs of potential students

Educational Background of State Secondary Schools in Turkey

As the concern of this paper is to analyze the needs of the fifth grade elementary school learners who take the elective English course in Turkey, it would be better to give brief information about the current situation in teaching English as a foreign language. In Turkish state schools, language learning is not separated clearly according to the specific needs of the learners. Rather, generalized needs have been the core of the foreign language learning, which makes foreign language learning, say English, as 'general English'. English as a foreign language used to be offered to the learners beginning from the fourth grade primary to the end of high school education (twelfth year). However, in the 2013-2014 educational year the age level of the learners and grades have been lowered to the second grades. Thus, the course of English is planned to be compulsory for the second and third grade students who will have a two-hour English course in a week. Beginning from the year of 2013, the fifth grade learners who are included in the new system has started select different types of elective courses; one of them is the English course (two hours in a week) in addition to a four-hour compulsory English class every week.

Before going on to the analysis of the research results it would be better to depict the current syllabuses ant the objectives intended to be achieved. In this vein, the participants of this research are supposed fulfill the objectives specified in the syllabus for the fourth grade

learners by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). To this end, the current syllabuses, the fourth grades are required to learn:

- How to greet and introduce yourself;
- Following and giving classroom instructions(imperatives);
- Identifying family members;
- Identifying clothing items and colors (how to express possession, e.g. have/has got)
- Identifying the parts of the body;
- Identifying furniture and parts of a house;
- Identifying and describing animals (using 'can');
- Asking and giving information about the days of the week/school subjects;
- Asking and telling the time;
- Asking and giving information about months;
- Asking and giving information about quantity;
- Asking and giving information about seasons and climate;
- Describing physical appearance (MoNE, 2012).

Apart from the objectives given above, the participants are also required to achieve the objectives of the compulsory English course for the fifth grades are below:

- Describing geographical features and certain locations
- Asking and giving directions ('where is the …?', prepositions of place, names of certain places)
- Asking and talking about rules (classroom rules)/giving orders and commands
- Identifying category of goods required (using 'how much/how many')
- Asking and talking about abilities (using 'can')
- Asking and talking about likes and dislikes
- Asking and talking about other peoples' likes and dislikes/favourite activities
- Asking and giving information about possessions
- Asking and giving information about health/identifying illnesses
- Asking and giving information about what people are doing at the moment (present continuous tense)
- Asking for help, accepting, refusing (MoNE, 2012).

The purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the fifth grade secondary school students' needs for an elective English course in Turkey. These learners were selected, because beginning from the semester 2012-2013, some fifth grade learners began to take elective English course in the secondary schools. For this reason, this raised a change in the fifth grade elective course syllabus to form the content of a new type of the course. From an overall view, this study can be considered as a new research as many teachers are confused what to teach or what to include in their syllabuses with the emerging of a new elective course, which created some kind of gap in terms of teaching common subjects to all of the fifth grade students in Turkey, as well. What can be added here is that most of the research includes adult learners in colleges or universities (Chia, Johnson, Chia & Olive, 1999; Dehnad et al. 2010), analyzing the teachers' needs to develop a teacher training program (Kusumoto, 2008) or institutions who were looking into their employees' needs (Cowling, 2007; Edwards, 2000; Holliday, 1995; Wozniak, 2010) instead of including a needs analysis for secondary school learners. That is to say, this study was carried out to fill the mentioned confusing gap and vagueness for the teachers and students and to present the views and expectations of the participants.

From these points of views, the research questions are as follows:

1. What are the needs of fifth grade students for an elective course?
2. What type of content should be designed in this elective course?

Method

Participants

Participants (*N*=179) are 11 years old from various secondary schools in Kayseri (Kuşçu Secondary School and Kadir Has Secondary School), Batman (16 Mayıs Secondary School) and Niğde (Ağcaşar Şehit Mustafa Memiş Secondary School). One group of students (Kadir Has Secondary School) (*N*=26) whom the teacher used semi-structured interview, observation and conferencing based on her previous teaching experience to observe and determine the students' needs was chosen from urban areas. The others, who filled the survey form (N=153, consisting of 74 males and 79 females), were from rural areas in which

there were children with low socio-economic status. The teaching experience of the six teachers who carried out the survey in the study ranged from 2 to 13 years.

For the profiles of the students, they can be included to the young learners' category although learners up to ten are accepted as young (Harmer, 2007). One of the features of these learners is that they prefer activities which encourage them to use their imagination and to make them physically active together with the importance of concrete operations. Hence, teachers should expect them: (a) to like working with groups in a short period, (b) to find the abstract subjects difficult, and (c) to be enthusiastic for talking about themselves and their environment (Harmer, 2007). Additionally, games, puzzles and songs are the favourite means for the ten or eleven-year-old students learning English (Moon, 2000; Philips, 2001; Harmer, 2007).

Instruments

A needs analysis survey form developed by the researchers was used to conduct this study. It consisted of 9 questions and was designed according to the requirements of the students' needs, interests and pedagogical aspects by examining the course books in detail. Considering the age characteristics of the participants, the survey form was partly illustrated with colorful pictures, asking questions with multiple options or making options only with 'yes' and 'no' in some questions were terribly recommended by the expert. The selected words in the second question were the ones that are frequently mentioned both in the fourth and fifth grade course books. Two questions were included to find out the students' learning styles. The issue of the Common European Framework, which is one of the goals of the foreign language teaching policy of MoNE, was partly taken into account in the design of the survey. In other words, students were determined to be in A1 level as they have begun learning English in the fourth grade.

When the research instrument, survey, was developed by the researchers with the data obtained from the focus group discussion consisting of teachers to implement the instrument, an expert was requested to review and evaluate it. Depending on the results obtained from the pilot group and expert's view, the survey has been redesigned by the researchers. To analyze the results, mean and standard deviation have been used with the help of the programme SPSS 16.

Data Collection

In the first step, the teachers who would carry out the survey took a two-hours training about the theoretical aspects of needs analysis. Then, they prepared a survey form collectively including many details about the past learning experiences of the students (e.g. what words they remember from their fourth grade courses), about the four skills, about the types of materials and some familiar content in the current syllabus of the compulsory syllabus, concerning with the expected interests of the students. Before submitting the needs analysis survey form, the teachers needed to carry out a pilot study, which was administered to the fifth grade students from the same level, and all of its items were checked by an expert to test the validity and reliability of the survey. Among the items, some of them were excluded, because the expert decided that they were not suitable for the students. Because this course would be taken as an elective course, teachers' needs were reviewed during the preparation of the items, as well.

Results

The aim of the first question (What do you want to study in English?) was to figure out in what fields and settings the students want to study. Considering their age, the researchers designed the survey form with the illustrations depicting the contents of community, health, work, travel, money and shopping. Therefore, the topic of community included the pictures of bank, school, fire station, library, etc. Among the alternatives offered, students mostly preferred the materials and activities based on the topic of 'travel' ($\bar{X}$= 11,0). On the other hand, it is seen that students are not so keen on working on the topics of community, money and shopping, and health.

Table 1. Types of topics that learners would like to study

	community	health	work	travel	money and shopping
X	6,5	7,5	9,25	11,0	5,5
SD	5,25	3,0	4,78	10,39	2,38

Second question, which aims to get learners' topic preferences in connection with the first question above, analyzes the students' interest areas in English (the question is 'Put a tick if you are interested in the subjects below.' Table 2). The content of this question was

prepared according to the contents that they covered previous year. Of note, the syllabus subjects of the course books were designed in accordance with a ten and eleven-year-old child's interests, hobbies and everyday life. Further, by including some future titles of the fifth grade course books, some of the teachers in focus discussion group stated that they wanted to take part in determining type of content to be included. According to the results, 'sports' and 'cartoon' are the most preferred subjects among the students (X= 15,25 and X= 14,5 respectively). However, 'shopping centers' and 'leisure time' are the least preferred ones (X= 7,75 and X= 5,5 respectively).

Table 2. Tick the topics you are interested in.

	Geographic regions	School rules	Shopping centers	Sports	Leisure time	Farm life	Cartoon	Jobs clothes	Fun at the park	Helping people
X	11,5	8,5	7,75	15,25	5,5	12,75	14,5	10,25	13,75	10,75
SD	8,69	1,91	4,92	6,60	4,04	1,18	1,32	6,94	8,84	3,86

Third question ('which of the following words do you know?') helps teachers or course designers to determine which of the words (or what types of words) were mostly known by the students (see Table 3). Therefore, the aforementioned scores in Table 3 stand for the ticks that the students put for the known words. By finding out the frequencies, in designing a course syllabus it is expected to select the words according to the appropriate contents. In determining the types of words, the researchers regarded the course syllabuses they have experiences in the previous year as a guide. It was admitted that each word represented a specific content, such as strawberry for fruits, brother for family relationship, purple for colours etc. Among them, 'sunny' and 'brother' were generally recognized by the students (X=25,25 and X= 22 respectively). Here the purpose was to design materials in accordance with the learner's lexical backgrounds.

Table 3. Tick the words you know below.

	Friend	Monkey	Classroom	Standup	Strawberry	Clean	Toy	Shoulder	Juice	Brother	Sunny	Purple
X	18,0	23,25	19,75	14,25	10,75	5,75	21,25	13,25	7,75	22,0	25,25	21,5
SD	1,46	1,48	18,76	6,18	9,6	4,92	2,17	8,30	5,25	1,42	2,0	1,27

In order to determine the types of skill-based activities participants were required to mark the importance of language skills with the instruction of *'Please rank the abilities in order of importance to you'.*

Table 4. Please rank the abilities in order of importance to you.

	Speaking	Listening	Writing	Reading
X	4,50	8,75	4,50	20,25
SD	3,31	7,5	1,73	1,72

As is clearly seen, of the four skills reading (X= 20,25, SD= 1,72) is mostly appreciated. The reason may be added here is that course books are rich enough in terms of reading passages, which functions as a preparation to the upper classes, especially to the eighth grade courses. On the other hand, the results prove that they are not so much aware of the importance of writing and speaking skills (X= 4,5 for both). Considering the results obtained from the participants, course designers, teachers, need to pay more attention to these uncovered or partly-discovered areas.

Table 5. Please order the ways you like studying English.

	Role playing	Watching videos	Drawing pictures	Listening to songs
X	19,75	3,25	9,0	6,75
SD	17,72	1,50	7,11	4,50

When asked the participants to state the types of learning activities, it was found out that they tend to like and do role playing more in English (X= 19,75). There may be some pedagogical reasons for that: younger learners are more likely to love role playing in their courses and the teachers in the survey observed this in most of their teaching experiences

(Philips, 2001). When this fact was questioned in an informal interview and focus group discussion, most of the teachers put forth that students generally do not like listening activities. In addition, they stated that they do not have enough opportunity to watch English videos, which can explain the lower scores in 'watching videos' and 'listening to songs (X= 3,25 and X= 6,75 respectively)'.

Table 6. Attitudes towards doing homework, assistance in doing homework and group work.

Statement	Yes	No	X	SD
Do you like homework?	17,0	7,39	21,25	2,28
Do you need help with your homework?	24,50	1,69	13,75	1,075
Do you like group work or not?	26,50	1,76	11,75	9,74

Table 6 shows the means and standard deviations of sixth, seventh and eighth questions. As indicated, the students do not like homework contrary to the frequency of giving homework after classes. Indeed, not surprisingly, they need someone ($\bar{X}$= 24,5) to get better progress in their homework and general English activities which pave the way for the success in their written exams. The results indicate that the activities and materials to be included in the course syllabus should lead learners to use the class time effectively rather than working at home.

Table 7. Frequencies of Language Abilities the Participants Possess

Statements		Yes	Not Sure	No
1.	I can understand cartoons in English.	17	66	94
2.	I can say what I like and what I do not like.	95	63	24
3.	I can introduce and describe my family, friends, and myself.	92	63	24
4.	I can describe my street, city or village.	66	73	44
5.	I can talk about colors, shapes and sizes.	94	53	30
6.	I can talk about my hobbies.	92	51	36
7.	I can write an invitation to my birthday party.	83	52	44

The other question (see Table 7) sought responses to both linguistic and communicative competences of learners. In this respect, they were required to specify to what extent they are efficient in the given topics. Each item has the function to determine what types of abilities students have in English according to the familiar topics that they have covered both during the fourth grade education and the new topics from the fifth grade classes which they already follow. Generally speaking, responses to the frequencies show

that they marked the option of 'yes' of the items. For example, for the first item, which is '*I can understand cartoons in English*', most of the students (*n* 94) said 'no'. For the second statement 95 students said 'yes' whereas 24 participants stated as "No". The number of respondents who are good at introducing and describing their families, friends and themselves (n 92 yes, n 63 not sure) reveal that they mostly have learned the patterns and topics to be covered and need to be developed with various activities. For the fifth statement, 94 students said 'yes' for *'I can talk about colours, shapes and sizes'*, which is one of the highest score among the other items. For the 'not sure' option, 61 students said 'not sure' for the fourth item '*I can describe my street, city or village'*. Although they had English courses about geographical places and the names of places in a city at the beginning of the term, it is clear that these units are harder for some of the students. Similarly, 54 students said 'not sure' for the seventh item *'I can write an invitation to my birthday party'*. The number of students who said 'yes' for the same item is 52 and 44 students said 'no'.

Table 8. Ways of learning the target language

	Seeing	Repeating	Listening	Moving	Singing	Discovering	L1
X	19,75	26,25	21,00	20,50	22,25	20,25	37,66
SD	1,76	1,70	1,96	1,09	2,18	1,81	3,00

The next question (see Table 8 and Appendix B) is an open ended question beginning with *'I learn best when ...'*. It is noticed that students need L1 explanation much more than the other learning style ($\bar{X}$= 37,66). Interestingly, they do not learn best from 'the information written on the board or on the screen (seeing)' ($\bar{X}$= 19,75) and learning by 'listening' to something in English ($\bar{X}$= 21,0). Therefore, it will be better for teachers to pay attention to the importance of mother tongue in classes and to use more multimedia devices which address all types of five senses more in teaching practices.

Table 9. Which aids below help you learn better?

	Visual aids	Audio aids	Real	Photocopiable	Software	Mimes
X	23,25	22,25	25,25	22,50	24,50	17,75
SD	18,40	17,61	2,28	20,22	2,17	1,57

The last question is *'Which aids below help you learn better?'*. As can be seen on the Table 9, students like using software and online activities (X=24,50), because they are familiar with DynEd software program which is freely offered to the use of teachers and students at state elementary schools. As is shown in the table, learners are in favour of using the materials 'visual aids' and 'audio aids' (X= 23,25 and X= 22,25 respectively).

Discussion

Kusumoto (2008) stated in his needs analysis study which was carried out among teachers that there was a gap between the institutional (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) objectives and the teaching practices in classes and that these different practices could vary from school to school. For instance, in one school among 25 students, only 9 of them prefer mimes and gestures; however, 31 of the 61 students prefer the same learning style in the other school. Similarly, 11 of 25 prefer (44 %) 'software and online activities'; 43 of 61 students (nearly 71 % of them) prefer the same devices. As a result, describing the vocabulary or sentences depends on the audience in classrooms.

Long (2005:3) pointed out that learners could not be expected to learn how they were taught "language learning … is a gradual, cumulative, often non-linear process. It involves zig-zag developmental paths, U-shaped behavior". Therefore, they will not possibly learn inter-dependently structured patterns in a demotivating way, which, to some extent, can be found in the current results of the fifth grade learners. For this reason, this survey is designed to plan the syllabus not according to the expected teacher or student perceptions but according to the current situations of the schools.

In accordance with the survey results, a new syllabus need to be developed or the existing one needs to be redesigned. This phase is also outstanding process for the needs analysis study as Long (2005:5) emphasized that the language components should be reordered, improved and designed according to learners' interests:

Equally, if structures or other linguistic elements (notions, functions, lexical items, etc.) are not to be the units of analysis in a syllabus, it throws into question the relevance of continuing to conduct needs analyses - the output of which will be the input to syllabus design - in terms of the structures or other linguistic forms most likely to be encountered in the domains of interest to a particular learner group.

In response to the research questions, for the first question, fifth grade students in the survey need learning English with visual aids, role playing, need to learn in collaboration, need L1 in classroom explanation, like reading activities much more but in fact need listening and speaking skills (X= 8,75, SD= 7,5, X= 4,50, SD= 3,31 respectively) and need help for their homework as the scores of the both mentioned skills are low compared to reading skills and most of them (X= 24,50) said 'yes' to the question 'Do you need help with your homework?'. For this reason, speaking was preferred together with reading activities and videos and role plays were especially selected according to students' preferences. As for vocabulary, both syllabuses include some parts of the content in previous class. The second one includes writing activity, which was the least appreciated skill by the participants, in contrast, the first syllabus comes speaking and reading activities into prominence as the first is one of the least preferred skill and the second one is the most preferred one. Hence, planners think of the potential areas that students perceive themselves well enough and target areas that students should improve in these syllabuses.

For the second research question, as mentioned, fourth grade course book contents as a prerequisite learning and to follow the sequence 'from simple to complex' (Richards, 2001), which were taken into account in detail. For example, there are grammatical sequences in both of the syllabus, therefore, 'have/has got' and 'like/dislike' were not taken as together in the contents, such as health, seasons and cartoon characters.

Conclusion

From the scope of the study, it can be stated that teachers should select their course books or other materials according to the daily practice of English. According to the survey findings, higher means of the items 'travel', 'cartoon characters' and 'role playing' indicates that course books should have a slightly different content and learning and teaching methods from the students' current course books, that is, contents, grammaticality and methods should support the supplies of the elective course as a secondary source.

Besides, students' attention should be increased towards some areas. For instance, results indicated that they do not like studying English with videos. In fact, they do not know the impact of videos to their learning process in English as well as in their other

lessons. Therefore, students, especially from rural areas, should use plenty of devices in harmony to make a better development in English.

On the one hand, when it comes to classroom communication in teaching English, L1 explanation should not be ignored and revised again in terms of its benefits and negative outcomes as most of the students think that L1 explanation is one of the best learning styles in English courses. We can add the detail, using and learning the target materials by 'real objects' here as it directly addresses to the effect of age in learning processes and outcomes. The students clearly stated that they tend to learn English by real objects together with visual aids. On the other hand, group work and collaboration among the young students should be extremely important for elementary school teachers. The reason is that even if group works are better in some activities, there are some drawbacks that some teachers are not in favor of it: unable to control the classrooms as young students behave impatiently towards long durations during classroom activities due to the limited attention span. In short, teachers should take the pros and cons of the audience into consideration.

This study is different from some other studies in needs analysis literature: it dealt with secondary school students instead of employees (Cowling, 2007), university students (Chostelidou, 2011; İnceçay & İnceçay, 2010) or alumni (Lehtonen & Karjalainen, 2008). The number of students can be increased to make a clearer picture of the real needs of fifth grade learners. Indeed, the number of schools can become more than five as well to make the sample wider and to determine some clear-cut points much more. In brief, more research is needed to determine what the syllabus of the elective course should include, how the students' interests can be fully integrated into classroom activities and teaching practices and how and when the course should be evaluated. Besides, this study may shed the light on the other future studies concerning the needs of secondary school learners' needs and their analyses.

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Extended Summary

Involving Learners as Active Participants in Designing a Course Syllabus: A Sample Research

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Introduction

Needs analysis has been one of the important areas in language teaching, especially with the emergence of various learner needs. It provides true and concrete portrait of the teaching environment, relating learning as closely as possible to teaching. Besides learner's needs, teacher as a practitioner, being the center of the classroom, is the one who observes the learners, plans extra activities related to the syllabus objectives and adapts the materials in accordance with the learners' needs and expectations. Learners are mostly disregarded and their role in designing any instructional element is ignored. Therefore, the reasons why teachers, curriculum developments and the other related groups of people need determining the learners' needs should be defined clearly.

The purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the fifth grade secondary school students' needs for an elective English course in Turkey. These learners (N=179) were selected, because beginning from the semester 2012-2013, some fifth grade learners began to take elective English course in the secondary schools. For this reason, this raised a change in the fifth grade elective course syllabus to form the content of a new type of the course. This study was carried out to fill the mentioned confusing gap and vagueness for the teachers and students and to present the views and expectations of the participants. The aim was to find responses to the following research questions: (1) What are the needs of fifth grade students for an elective course? (2) What type of content should be designed in this elective course?

Method

A needs analysis survey form developed by the researchers was used to conduct this study. It consisted of 9 questions and was designed according to the requirements of the students' needs, interests and pedagogical aspects by examining the course books in detail.

Findings and Conclusion

In accordance with the survey results, a new syllabus needs to be developed or the existing one needs to be redesigned. In response to the research questions it can be concluded that fifth grade students in elective English course would like to learn English through visual aids, role playing, working in collaboration, and using L1 in classroom when necessary. Furthermore, the participants expressed that they liked reading activities, but listening based activities should also be integrated into course syllabus, and they want to be encouraged to speak in class by teacher. Put another way, higher means of the items 'travel', 'cartoon characters' and 'role playing' indicates that course books should have a slightly different content and learning and teaching methods from the students' current course books, that is, contents, grammaticality and methods should support the supplies of the elective course as a secondary source. Considering the fact that this is a pilot study, the number of students and schools can be increased to make a clearer picture of the real needs of fifth grade learners. In brief, more research is needed to determine the type of syllabus of the elective English course depending on the students' interests that can be obtained from the needs analyses. Then, the course would be more challenging, supportive, interesting and motivating for the students at secondary schools.