TESTING THE EFFICIENCY OF A CEF-BASED WAYSTAGE (A2-LEVEL) SYLLABUS

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Abstract

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In the last few decades, the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe restructured its efforts to help European citizens learn European languages for survival purposes to facilitate travel and work throughout Europe. With the idea of daily language use and plurilingual competence in mind, it published the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF), with the Common Reference Levels. Among these levels are the Breakthrough and Waystage levels, the latter of which is at the core of this study because the researchers not only aim to design a Waystage reading syllabus, but they also aim to test how different it is from mainstream reading syllabuses in preparing learners for daily tasks and boosting their overall reading proficiency. Two distinct questionnaires were developed to survey learner and teacher ideas about subject headings and text types. Following the validation study and administration of the questionnaires to 87 teachers and 445 learners, the syllabus was designed by taking into account the CEF principles. Then, it was piloted in a quasi-experimental design in which the control group studied texts taken from various elementary course books, while the treatment group followed the CEF-based syllabus prepared. Independent samples t-test results revealed that there was a meaningful difference (two-tailed sig.= ,002 $p<0,05$) between the means of average differences between the groups in terms of utilizing reading skills for survival purposes. However, the difference was not meaningful (two-tailed sig= ,642 $p<0,05$) in terms of increasing reading proficiency. As it is showed by these figures, CEF based syllabuses more successful in preparing language learners to perform survival tasks, and this means that they are more suitable for the needs of those learners with the idea of using foreign languages for tourism and work.

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Introduction

The idea of a common identity throughout Europe made itself clear in several areas, one of which is language teaching and learning. As a result of the thought that citizens of Europe should be able to express themselves in the languages that are currently spoken in Europe, language learning has gained more importance than ever. What one can do in each of these languages, and ways to improve various language skills form the bases of the European Language Portfolio, based on Council of Europe (2001a). The European Language Portfolio is the application of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, which can be defined as a 260-page document describing language skills at six Common Reference Levels along with various other aspects of foreign language teaching and learning.

One of the aims of the Common European Framework, CEF for short, is to help partners to describe the levels of competence required by existing standards, tests and examinations to facilitate comparisons among different systems of qualifications. To reach this aim, the Council of Europe has developed a European Framework with Common

Reference Levels (Council of Europe, 2001a, p. 23). It tries to provide its citizens with extensive opportunities to learn modern languages and to help them in what Boldizsár [On-line] refers to as "becoming a plurilingual European citizen". Being competent in communicating in several languages is the result of the language policy of the Council of Europe. The ultimate aim of the Council of Europe is that it tries "to achieve greater unity among its members" (Council of Europe, 2001a, p. 2). Every cultural activity serves for this overall aim. Among these activities are foreign language studies to which the Council of Europe has a systematized approach through the principles of the CEF.

<u>Background to the Study</u>

The Council of Europe, as a part of its language programs in Strasbourg, has worked on language learning, teaching, language use, and language proficiency. It has worked on levels of language proficiency and proposed the *Threshold* level which was followed by *Waystage* and *Vantage* Levels. Around the mid 1990s, the Council of Europe began to think about setting up a coherent Framework by putting these different levels of proficiency and their related features together. This Framework, which is referred to as the Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment (CEF for short) has been developed by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe. The document is the final product of extensive feedback, systematic discussion and hard work. The publication of the latest versions of the Framework by Cambridge University Press and in French by Didier coincides with the European Year of Languages, 2001 (Council of Europe, 2002a, p. 1).

An official meeting of the ministers of education for 47 countries in Europe in 2001 in Cracow, Poland took place, and the CEF is the natural result of this meeting. The educational authorities in this meeting announced that language learning studies should be portfolio-based, and that language learning and teaching should be standardized with the help of the principles outlined in the reference document for the CEF and language proficiency should be documented by language passport. This announcement was perhaps the most influential effort to teach modern European languages. It was followed by large-scale studies in Europe; that is, various validated portfolios were put into practice in European countries.

The Council of Europe (2001a) has specified six Common Reference Levels: A1 (Breakthrough), A2 (Waystage), B1 (Threshold), B2 (Vantage), C1 (Operational Proficiency), C2 (Proficiency). At each of these Common Reference Levels, there are agreed and well-researched standard expectations in the form of can-do statements. Glover, Mırıcı and Aksu (2005) describe Common Reference Levels as more 'user-friendly' than such traditional terms as beginner, pre-intermediate, upper-intermediate, etc., by which they mean the ease to assess what the learners in each level are expected to do in terms of all skills including spoken interaction (On-line).

These levels facilitate the assessment of what language learners learn or expected to learn and enable both teachers and learners to self-monitor. The main aim of the Common Reference Levels is that they try to deal with "the great complexity of human language by breaking language competence down into separate components" (Council of Europe, 2001a, p. 1). The levels are designed systematically and coherently and they are subdivided into 58 additional categories such as overall written production, creative writing, etc.

Proficiency levels and the skills necessary for each level are determined by the CEF. However, as long as the basic principles of the CEF are considered, the decisions about the nature the activities are left to educational authorities, curriculum designers and teachers to choose best ways to achieve the objectives. As the Council of Europe (2001a) puts forward, those people who are involved in textbook writing and course designing are "obliged to make

concrete, detailed decisions on the selection and ordering of texts, activities, vocabulary, and grammar to be presented to the learners" (p. 141). It is assumed that the activities and tasks produced this way will satisfy the need for course materials to reach the A2-level objectives specified by the Framework. In brief, there is need for course materials to help language learners acquire the skills determined and classified as six proficiency levels in the CEF.

Pilot Studies in the Member Countries

In various parts of Europe, the ELP was implemented through integration into language teaching programs. In the pilot projects, as we learn from Scharer (2000), the curriculum designers and teachers had difficulties in the integration process. To put it another way, the ELP was partly integrated into the curriculum (p. 44). However, it was thoroughly integrated in some pilot projects. For example, Päkkilä (2001) remarks, "The ELP was always integrated with the daily work of our language classrooms. According to our approach, the dossier had a central role in the process. We also made regular use of the self-assessment grid and the CEF to set further aims for learning" (p. 8). In some countries, the ELP worked well since it worked in harmony with existing practices: Scharer (2000) says, "Successful implementation also benefited from the ELP fitting existing practices and reforms; "the didactic and methodological concepts underlying the ELP are in harmony with the Russian psychological-pedagogical school." (p. 55).

Though the integration process experienced many difficulties in most countries throughout Europe, it had some positive effects. That is to say, in some countries like Czech Republic, the project helped the teaching approaches and methods be more communicative, and the activities be more enjoyable. It further helped the teachers to balance their approach according to individual differences in the classroom as it was the case in Slovenia, and the same positive impression was true for Portugal, where the ELP and the mainstream practice throughout the country worked together. In Ireland, it is generally thought that the ELP facilitated learner involvement. It is considered to be a planning and self-assessment tool (Sharer, 2000, p. 34).

As for Turkey, the ELP was put into practice in a number of private and state schools throughout the country after the official approval of the Ministry of Education on October 1, 2001 (Demirel, 2005, p. 75). More than a thousand people were involved in the first phase. The teachers involved were informed about the ELP and the CEF through in-service training programs. In these in-service training programs, validated portfolios in various European countries were examined, language descriptors were scrutinized and the piloting process was discussed in detail (Demirel, 2005, p. 77).

In addition to the studies at high schools, a group of teachers tested the ELP in a preparatory school in an extensive study at Muğla University. The pilot study was launched by a two-hour training session, which aimed at informing the participants about the ELP, the purpose of the study and the method. After the training session, the learners began to study with the help of portfolios. Over six months later, both the learners and teachers were enquired about their experiences, and the findings were as follows:

- In general, the ELP had a positive effect on both learners and teachers, but the use of it gradually became less and less as the course proceeded and the learners began to use their enthusiasm as the time passed.
- Some teachers who tried to integrate it claimed that they did nothing more than talking about the learning experience at the end of the lesson. As for the students, 9

(36 %) of them felt they had done something different. because of the ELP, 10 (40 %) stated they had not, and 6 learners did not answer.

- The participants further complained that they could not give extra materials to the learners because they did not have materials which were designed in connection with the principles of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.
- The ELP was only partly integrated into the curriculum.
- Some reactions and comments are similar to those gained through the pilot projects in other countries throughout Europe. Learners complained about the bulkiness of the ELP (Glover, Mırıcı, and Aksu, On-line).

In short, the pilot project could not get the desired results because of the various factors. As an example, full integration was not achieved. Moreover, the teachers were provided with little training, and the learners did not get any training at all. The lack of quality materials also affected the results in a negative way.

Research Questions

In the framework of this study, the researchers formulated the following research questions:

1. Is the reading syllabus prepared in connection with the basic principles of the CEF more effective than the mainstream reading syllabuses in teaching how to deal with real life situations like understanding street signs, notices, and instructions and understanding the language as used by people carrying out simple communicative tasks like conversing about daily matters?
2. Is the same syllabus more effective than mainstream syllabuses in helping the learners to move forward in terms of proficiency?

Data Collection and Analysis

Before choosing the texts, as an instrument of needs analysis of content and process needs, a questionnaire was used. It had two versions: the teacher and the learner questionnaire. Click the hyperlink to view them [http://efl-zone.tripod.com/id7.html] the two versions of the questionnaires, respectively administered to the teachers and learners, facilitated the selection of interest-arousing texts. After the administration process, the results are analyzed by using SPSS 12.0.

When preparing the activities for the compiled texts finished, the resulting syllabus was studied with a group of students, and the results were examined in detail. Moreover, the same software helped the researchers to analyze the pre-test and post-test scores and to interpret them. A proficiency test was given to determine the levels of the subjects. This test, originally taken from the web site of DIALANG, an official organization developed by more than 20 major European institutions, consists of 30 items of various length, and scope. (Visit the web site [http://www.dialang.org/english/index.htm] for these tests. Note that you should download and install the DIALANG software onto your system from this web site to view the tests.). In addition to the proficiency test, a testing tool serving as both pre-test and post-test is used to contrast reading proficiency levels of the subjects before and after the piloting phase.

Participants

The teacher version of the questionnaire surveyed 87 teachers, while the learner version was administered to 445 learners. The learners were chosen randomly from various schools in Ankara. Most of the learners were at the age of 15 though some of them were 14 or 16. The number of female students was higher at each age group (See the figures below below).
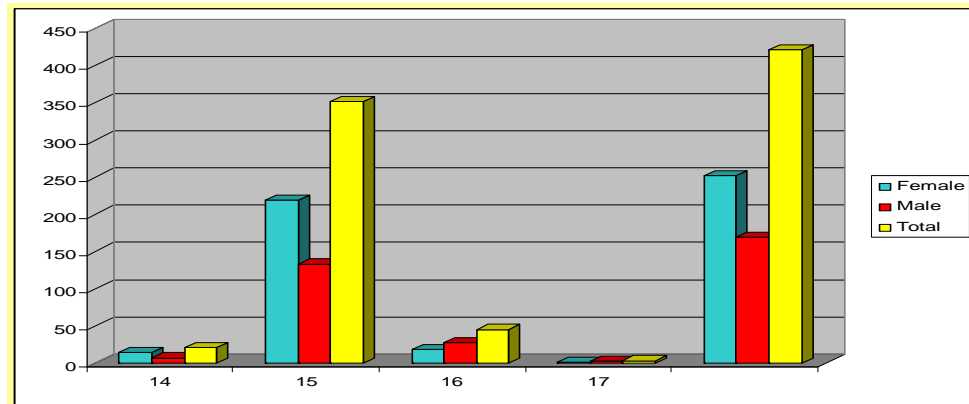

Figure 1. Sex and age distribution of the learners surveyed
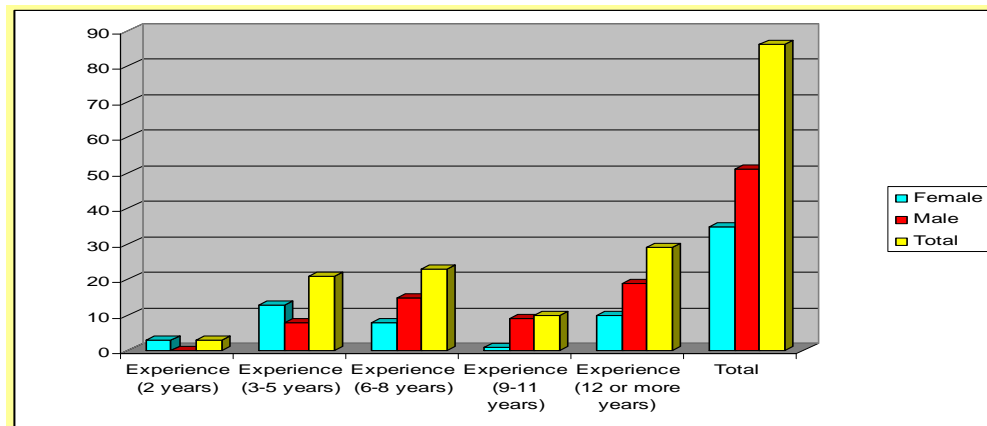

Figure 2. Sex and age distribution of the teachers surveyed

49 students took the pre-test, and 37 of them were considered to be suitable for the course since they scored between 16-23 points out of 30. 11 of the testees scored at A1 level; that is, 15 or less, while 1 of them did 24. Note that the testees who scored very high (over 23) or very low (fewer than 16) were not assigned to neither of the groups; in other words, they were excluded from the study; there are 14 testees of this type. During the piloting process two the subjects did not attend the courses regularly, and they did not take the post-test. Therefore, they were mislaid. There were totally 17 subjects in the treatment group, whereas the control group contained 18 subjects. All subjects were chosen among a group of voluntary students.

Method

This section informs the reader about the method followed in the research, participants, description of the assessment tools, and the analysis of the data. Needs analysis promoted the selection process, and it helped the designer choose texts that will easily arouse interest. In order to carry out validation studies, the questionnaires were piloted by administering them to a group of 50 learners and 10 teachers. The questionnaires were re-examined for potential mistakes in terms of lexical and structural choice, lay-out, etc. As the final step of the piloting process, a tabulation sheet, outlining the method of how to tabulate and interpret the data, was pre-constructed before the final form of the questionnaire is decided upon.

What learners want to read seems to be a significant aspect of designing a reading syllabus along with some others like difficulty and the length of the texts, source and the authenticity of the texts. Being able to take sound decisions about all of these aspects of text selection will certainly provide the syllabus designer with a highly successful reading syllabus. This success largely depends on how good the designer is at taking into account learner needs and preferences about texts types to subject headings.

The genres proposed by the CEF differ from traditionally accepted genres, most of which are of fictional nature. The former mostly reflects what we encounter in our daily lives unlike the traditional ones. They can easily be incorporated into general themes such as 'education', 'sports' 'cinema', etc. without getting any opinions from neither teachers nor students. "Narratives about everyday things dealing with topics *which are familiar to me*" (Lenz and Schneider, 2004, p. 37, italics added) is another phrase from self descriptors that tells us how important it is to select texts within the boundaries of interest for the targeted learners. Without using an appropriate data collection tool, making preferences on behalf of the learners would be nothing more than just prophesying about what is interesting and what is not for them. Such an approach would certainly be beyond the acceptable limits of scientific research.

When choosing the general categories of themes, the subjects were listed beginning from the most frequently chosen to the least frequently chosen one; both teacher and learner preferences were taken into consideration by calculating and ordering the average frequencies of the broad topics. Since there is somehow a parallelism between some topics like TV and cinema, it was thought that they could form clusters with some others. For example, the topics *computers* and *technology* can be handled in a single unit more efficiently though their frequencies are not equal or consecutive.

After choosing the general topics, the next step was to choose different types of texts which are traditionally referred to as *genres*. An approach to foreign language teaching based on the CEF entails the use of a great variety of text types so that learners can easily understand the reading stuff which is frequently encountered in everyday life of an ordinary person (Council of Europe, 2001a, p. 95). Some examples of genre types can be seen in the can-do statements of the CEF (See Appendix 2 for the frequency of the genres.). Surveying learner and teacher preferences about genre types does not imply that those text types which have not been chosen should not be included in the syllabus. In other words, almost all genre types were included in the syllabus. However, passages of lower frequency items were seen less often than others. It was of great value to choose passages which are directly or indirectly related to many topics.

Almost no simplification was made in the texts because abridging a text can result in more severe problems. For instance, there is a possibility of having a more difficult text when it is simplified because, in Grellet's (1981) words, "simplifying a text often results in increased difficulty because the system of references, repetition and redundancy as well as

the discourse indicators, one relies on when reading are often removed or at least significantly altered" (p. 7). It is possible to say that difficulty of the suggested activities for a text is far more important than that of the text itself. The activities prepared for authentic texts, which are generally difficult, focus on overall understanding rather than working out the meaning of each sentence or expression. This is aimed to make the students more self-confident (Grellet, 1981, p. 6). In sum, instead of simplifying texts, easier activities focusing on overall comprehension were preferred.

Upon selecting general subject headings, the researchers collected a number of texts of various type and length, and carried out readability analysis to determine the difficulty level, and key vocabulary items. In order to provide a few examples, reading texts taken from published KET papers were examined in terms of grammatical structures, vocabulary items by using Advanced Text Analyzer, an on-line text analysis program. This advanced analysis program uses various readability analysis tests. For example, lexical density, which is a readability test, is designed to show how easy or difficult a text is to read. Mean figures in the table below indicate that texts chosen for the syllabus are similar to those in KET examination papers, especially in terms of average words per sentences for each text, the lexical density and the fog index (Cambridge University, 2003a).

Table 1

Results of the Lexical Analysis of the Texts in Sample KET Papers

Analysis Criteria	The Number of Texts Analyzed	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Total Word Count	20	115,00	203,00	156,7500
Number of Sentences	20	7,00	18,00	11,6000
Average Words per Sent.	20	9,83	19,34	13,8395
Hard Words	20	2,00	11,00	6,7500
Lexical Density	20	52,54	73,50	62,5735
Fog Index	20	5,34	9,70	7,2255

Because of the need for variety, a wide range of activities focusing on survival English were designed to improve reading skills at the A2 level in this syllabus. The instructor is free to choose whatever approach he/she thinks is best for his/her class. The important point to keep in mind is that the syllabus is designed to be flexible. This syllabus keeps its consistency and offers plenty of possibilities for development in various ways. The reading instructor should try to use this flexibility as it is one of the key strengths of the syllabus.

In short, this syllabus was designed with the idea in mind that it is not enough for students to deal with grammatical and vocabulary items, and simply to answer comprehension questions in order to improve reading skills. Texts with interesting topics and a number of motivational activities that accompany them contribute to the overall aim of mastering necessary reading skills at this level. The learners should be able to transfer these skills and strategies that they gained in the classroom into their daily lives. In other words, they should be able to put their knowledge into practice. The success of the reading course depends on this. Click the address below view the suggested syllabus [http://efl-zone.tripod.com/id7.html]

In this study, a quasi-experimental design with two groups; namely, the control and

treatment group, was followed. That is to say, the syllabus was piloted by studying the suggested units with a group of learners who volunteered to take part in the study at an intensive summer course. Since the course was free of charge, both it was quite easy to get the necessary permission from the authorities concerned, and most learners were willing to attend the course.

As pointed out earlier, the study by Glover, Mırıcı and Aksu [On-line] did not give the expected results since the learners took no informative introductory courses though teachers received a two-hour initial training on the ELP. To avoid such an undesirable situation which may interfere with the reliability of the piloting process, the researchers held a three-hour introductory course to introduce the CEF and the ELP to the students. The learners got information about basic features of the CEF. No information that reveals their groups was given. However, they were informed about the experimental design. After the introductory sessions, the piloting process started.

Despite the high-level of interest in the course, not all learners were chosen as the course attendees because the syllabus was specifically designed for those learners at the A2 level of the CEF. In order to determine the level of the prospective course attendees, a thirty-item reading proficiency test, which was gained from the official testing site of DIALANG, was administered to all students who wanted to be one of the attendees at the course (See Appendix 10 for this test.). No reliability or validity analyses were carried out since the test was taken from a highly reliable source which makes use of validated tests to provide the language learners throughout Europe with proficiency tests in 14 different languages for all language skills, and areas except for speaking and spoken interaction.

The proficiency test was used to determine the general reading proficiency of the learners so as to decide whether a learner can be a subject in the pilot study or not. Each learner had to score at least 16 out of 30 to be able to conclude that he/she was at the A2 level. In addition, those learners who scored more than 23 out of 30 were not considered appropriate for the course since they had almost progressed through B1 level. The following table shows the intended scores for each level proposed by the DIALANG.

Table 2
Intended Scores for CEF Levels

Level	Expected Score (Out of 30)	Suitability
A1	1-15	Not Suitable
A2	16-23	Suitable
B1 or Higher	24-30	Not Suitable

The test is the simplest of the three reading proficiency tests in the site, so making a clear distinction between the levels higher than B1 by only looking at the results of this test can lead to misleading judgments though the site labels those learners who scored, for example, 30 as C2 level learners or 26 as B2 level learners. In order to make clear distinctions among the levels over B1, longer and more difficult tests are needed. This test, however, excellently serves the purpose of distinguishing between A1, A2, and B1-level learners.

After administering the DIALANG test, the subjects who did between 16 and 22 out of 30, were randomly assigned to either the experimental or control group. On the one hand, the students who were assigned to the experimental group followed the suggested syllabus. On the other hand, the students who were in the control group studied various texts piled up by

the researchers from various course books during the same period.

The proficiency test actually showed the initial proficiency level of the learners. However, a different test, a sample KET paper, was used as the pre-test and post-test of the study. Necessary written permission was obtained from Research and Validation Group of the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations. Using one of the DIALANG reading proficiency tests as a pre-test and post test is not sensible on the account of the fact that even the easiest of the three tests of the DIALANG contains some items which were highly difficult for A2-level learners. These items, the difficulty indices of which were high, were included to distinguish between higher level learners like those at the B1 or B2, etc.

Thus, before and after the course, the subjects in both groups were given the same test, a 35-item reading test by Cambridge University (2003b). The test contained the following parts: (1) Five matching items (matching sentences with street signs or labels) (2) Five multiple-choice test items that want the learners to choose the best word for the gaps in individual sentences. (3) Five multiple-choice items that want the testees to choose the best sentence to complete conversations (4) Five matching items (matching sentences to complete conversations) (5) Seven multiple-choice test items about a given reading text (6) A multiple-choice cloze of eight items (Click the hyperlink below to reach the test [http://www.cambridgeesol.org/support/dloads/ket/KET_HB_sampleRW.pdf]. After the administration of the post-test, the scores were analyzed. The following section explains data analysis, and discusses the results in detail.

Data Analysis and Results

The KET test was administered before and after the pilot study to compare the levels of the subjects in terms of two aspects. The first one is testing the learners for the first 20 items, which are directly related to daily language use, while the second one is testing their overall reading proficiency. As noted earlier, two research questions were formulated, and answers to these questions are explained respectively below.

Research Question 1: "Is the reading syllabus prepared according to the CEF more effective than the mainstream reading syllabuses in teaching how to deal with real-life situations like understanding street signs, notices, instructions, etc., and understanding the language as used by people carrying out simple communicative tasks like conversing about daily matters?" In search of a reliable answer for this question, the answers given to the first twenty questions in the testing tool were considered. For this research question, mean scores and standard deviations of the pre-test for the answers given for the first 20 items were calculated. Mean difference between the control and treatment group was analyzed by t-test. Statistical data about the t-test are given in the table below.

Table 3
Group Statistics for the First 20 Items

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test	Experimental Group	17	12,7647	2,16591	,52531
	Control Group	18	12,0000	1,97037	,46442
Post-test	Experimental Group	17	16,5194	1,84112	,44654
	Control Group	18	13,9444	2,07144	,48824

Upon examining the statistical data the about pre-test and post test scores of the groups, it is possible to see that there is little difference between the average scores of the two groups

in the pre-test, while this difference increases in the post-test. Mean differences of the groups are given in the table.

Table 4
Mean differences and standard deviation for the first 20 items

Group	N	Mean Differences	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental Group	17	3,7647	1,88843	,45801
Control Group	18	1,9444	1,25895	,29674

As it is seen in the table above, mean score for the post-test of the experimental group ($\overline{X}$=16,5194) is higher than that of the control group ($\overline{X}$=13,9444). There is an increase in the mean score of the treatment group. The same goes for the control group, but the difference is much smaller in this group. The significance level gained out of the independent samples t-test score (two tailed sig.= ,002 p<0,05) indicates that there is a meaningful difference between the mean differences of the groups. Note that two-tailed significance testing was used since it is a more powerful statistical procedure than one-tailed significance testing. See the table below.

Table 5
Independent Samples t-test Results

	t	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	3,373	,53959	1,82026	,002

This variance is probably the result of the treatment in the pilot study. Thus, the null hypothesis, which can be formulated as 'The suggested syllabus is no different from the mainstream syllabuses in helping the learners to gain necessary reading skills which are used in their daily lives for communicative purposes' was rejected. In the light of these data, the syllabus proved effective in terms of preparing the learners for communicative purposes. It can be said that the syllabus proved to be successful in preparing the learners for daily life as far as reading skills are concerned. As a result, pedagogically speaking, such a syllabus is suitable for those learners who want to use the foreign language they learn in practical situations.

Research Question 2: "Is the same syllabus more effective than mainstream syllabuses in helping the learners to move forward in terms of reading proficiency?"

As it is seen in the table below, mean scores of the groups in the pre-test and post-test are almost the same though there is a relative increase in the overall scores of both groups.

Table 6
Group Statistics for the Pre-test and Post-test

Test	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test	Experimental Group	17	22,5294	2,26709	,54985
	Control Group	18	22,4444	1,29352	,30489

Post-test	Experimental Group	17	25,5294	1,69991	,41229
	Control Group	18	25,2778	1,56452	,36876

Note that there seems to be a relative increase in the mean scores since the mean score for the experimental group increased to ($\overline{X}$=25,5294) from ($\overline{X}$=22,5294). Similarly, the same score for the control group increased to ($\overline{X}$=25,2778) from ($\overline{X}$=22,4444).

Table 7
Group Statistics

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Group	Experimental	17	3,0000	1,00000	,24254
	Control Group	18	2,8333	1,09813	,25883

Mean difference for the experimental group is 3,000. This increase is statistically is not important since significance level is above the critical significance level (two-tailed sig= ,642 p<0,05) (See the table below for significance testing.). This shows that the suggested syllabus is no different from the mainstream syllabuses in increasing the learners' overall reading proficiency.

Table 8
Independent Samples t-test Results (Items 1-35)

		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	469	,16667	,35568	,642

Although the subjects liked and supported the idea of self-monitoring, they had difficulties during the piloting process when asked to evaluate the day's work or to fill out the self-assessment form at the end of each unit. This was due to their being unaccustomed to carrying out such a procedure. However, they became more familiar with self-monitoring as they reached the end of the course. The testees expressed their enthusiasm when trying to self-assess themselves because they said self-monitoring was something new and enjoyable for them. The self-assessment forms and informal talks about the learning experiences revealed that learners found the texts different from those which were merely articles or similar texts.

Though it was highly useful to record text by using appropriate text-to-speech software, a significant problem remained unsolved. That is to say, machine-read texts were not good enough to motivate most of the learners on the account of the fact that in spite of the use high-quality software, the recorded texts somehow had the negative quality of machine-like voice. Because of this, various text-to-speech programs were trialled to get the best results. As the quality of the recording software such as 'Read Please', 'Text-to Speech', etc. increased, this negative quality seemed to be less effective, but it persisted. As a sensible solution for this problem, these texts were recorded by using the software 'Arial Sound Recorder' as read by a genuine human voice. After the recording process, the oral versions of the texts were edited by using one of the most powerful audio editing software available on the market.

Although readability analyses revealed that almost all texts are suitable for A2-level learners, several texts somehow posed problems in terms of structural and lexical difficulty or cultural elements. In addition, some of these texts did not receive much attention though they were closely related to the general theme of the units. Therefore, these texts were replaced with easier and more understandable ones to boost comprehension.

Another significant finding of the piloting process was that some of the instructions for the reading exercises and integrated tasks were fairly complex or difficult to handle for A2-level learners. At times, the subjects expressed that they were having difficulties understanding these instructions unless they refer to a dictionary. Therefore, they mostly sought further explanation in such cases. As a sensible solution for this problem, those instructions which were reported to have posed difficulty were noted by the researchers for moderation. The wording of such instructions was simplified by using vocabulary of high frequency and fairly simpler grammatical structures.

Consequently, it was found out that syllabus design and experimental studies conducted to test the suggested syllabuses should direct their focus to CEF-based syllabus design since this study demonstrated that such a syllabus is more effective in helping the learners to use their reading skills on a daily basis. Though the syllabus proved successful in terms of teaching reading skills on a daily basis, CEF-based syllabus design in Turkey is in its infancy. Therefore, more studies are needed because Turkey is a part of the pedagogical studies and projects launched throughout Europe. However, it is better if the prospective studies include larger samples and accordingly larger populations and longer time. In this way, the strength of the results can be boosted.

Conclusions

It will be useful to remark that an action-oriented approach has been adopted in the syllabus designed. That is to say, learning activities has been designed around tasks of frequent everyday use. This is because specific skills related to reading for each level were determined in the text of the CEF. Therefore, it was easier to follow these skills when preparing the reading syllabus. We cannot say that we have produced a successful negotiated syllabus; we, instead, had the chance to discover potentials of a learner-centered syllabus produced through negotiation thereby putting the learners at the centre of attention. It is possible to note that the syllabus helped the learners to move forward within the boundaries of the A2 level, but not necessarily making them jump from the initial stages of the A2 level to the B1 level or higher. This is because the A2 level is so wide that there are numerous sub-levels within this one.

Though this syllabus in its current form is the product of considerable effort and time, it has some weaknesses. The syllabus was piloted in a limited time; that is, within a month by means of three to five-hour intensive periods each day. It would have been better if this instructional period was extended to a term or so. In this way, more reliable results could have been obtained. Supposing that the study has been done under the best conditions, we cannot expect it to give extraordinary results since though ELP-based teaching and testing seem useful, they should not be considered as magical tools to teach modern European languages with minimal effort, particularly on the part of the learner.

Although the informal talks focused on how the learners viewed the ELP and its principles as applied in teaching situations during the piloting process, no attitude scales were used in this study since it mainly aims to test the syllabus that is prepared according to the principles of the CEF. Future studies on the issue can unearth student and teacher attitudes towards the ELP. Such studies are expected to get more reliable results because the ELP is

becoming more and more popular among teachers and learners each day. Effective dissemination of the ELP will probably help the future researchers in this area do better research.

Though the leading approaches to foreign language teaching change continuously, some elements like communication and interaction seem to preserve their importance. That is, what we crave for is more communication and interaction among students in a foreign language class. In this respect, as an attempt to teach modern European languages through an action-oriented approach thereby promoting learner autonomy, the ELP can provide useful insights into foreign language teaching profession. Though physical dimensions of such a language learning project is obvious, there still remains much to be challenged due to the fact that there is still not a consensus among language teaching experts and regular class teachers about the degree of usefulness of it. It seems that these methodical disputes will go on.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Frequency of the Subject Headings Chosen by both Groups

No	Item No	Subject Heading	Learner		Teacher		Average	
			Freq*	*(%)*	*Freq***	*(%)*	*Freq*	*%*
1	74	Sports	251	59,3	61	70,1	156	64,70
2	24	Entertainment	244	57,7	55	63,2	149,5	60,45
3	45	Love	191	45,2	63	72,4	127	58,80
4	16	Computer	211	49,9	58	66,7	134,5	58,30
5	14	Cinema	206	48,7	59	67,8	132,5	58,25
6	78	Teenagers	229	54,1	54	62,1	141,5	58,10
7	50	Music	214	50,6	55	63,2	134,5	56,90
8	35	Hobbies	217	51,3	54	62,1	135,5	56,70
9	86	TV	181	42,8	57	65,5	119	54,15
10	36	Holidays	209	49,4	50	57,5	129,5	53,45
11	3	Animals	204	48,2	51	58,6	127,5	53,40
12	28	Fashion	151	35,7	60	69	105,5	52,35
13	43	Life Styles	192	45,4	51	58,6	121,5	52,00
14	81	Tourist Places	196	46,3	47	54	121,5	50,15
15	77	Technology	193	45,6	47	54	120	49,80
16	40	Inventions	214	50,6	42	48,3	128	49,45
17	70	Shopping	144	34	55	63,2	99,5	48,60
18	26	Explorations	212	50,1	40	46	126	48,05
19	88	World Records	219	51,8	38	43,7	128,5	47,75
20	53	Natural Life	119	28,1	57	65,5	88	46,80
21	30	Food and Drinks	144	34	50	57,5	97	45,75
22	54	Occupations	219	51,8	33	37,9	126	44,85
23	12	Celebrities	158	37,4	45	51,7	101,5	44,55
24	68	Science	195	46,1	37	42,5	116	44,30
25	73	Special Days	162	38,3	38	43,7	100	41,00

* Out of 423 learners   ** Out of 87 teachers

Appendix B

Genre types chosen by both groups

No	Genre Types	Learner		Teacher		Average	
		Freq*	%	Freq**	%	Freq	%
1	Fictional	257	60,8	77	88,5	167	74,65
2	Cartoons, caricatures	258	61	71	81,6	164,5	71,3
3	Conversations, speeches, etc.	117	27,7	53	60,9	85	44,3
4	Inventories	193	45,6	33	37,9	113	41,75
5	Diary entries	199	47	31	35,6	115	41,3
6	Letters, e-mail messages, postcards	167	39,5	31	35,6	99	37,55
7	Ads	141	33,3	30	34,5	85,5	33,9
8	Recipes	102	24,1	20	23	61	23,55
9	Memos		25,1	16	18,4	61	21,75
10	Maps manuals menus brochures	70	16,5	21	24,1	45,5	20,3
11	Synopses	96	27,7	7	8	51,5	17,85
12	Notices Announcements	79	18,7	13	14,9	46	16,8
13	Simple written Rules	63	14,9	13	14,9	38	14,9
14	Timetables for planes, trains, etc.	80	18,9	8	9,2	44	14,05
15	Non-fiction	64	15,1	10	11,5	37	13,3
16	Other Types	7	1,7	0	0	3,5	0,85

* Out of 423 learners   ** Out of 87 teachers