International Journal of Curriculum and Instructional Studies

Online First Version

www.ijocis.com

English Language Instruction in Public and Private Middle Schools in Istanbul: A Comparative Two-Case Study*

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Keywords

English as a foreign language

Teaching and learning processes

Public school

Private school

Article Details:

Research Article

Received : 07-08-2025

Accepted : 13-02-2026

Published : Online First

DOI: 10.31704/ijocis.1749779

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Abstract

Although centralized education systems mandate uniform curricula, the implementation of these policies varies across institutional contexts. Drawing on a sociocultural perspective of curriculum enactment and teacher cognition, this multiple-case study investigates how English language instruction is conceptualized and enacted in one public and one private middle school in Istanbul, Türkiye, both operating under the same Ministry of National Education (MoNE) framework. Participants included two vice-principals and nine English teachers. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, document analysis (MoNE's 2018 ELT curriculum and institutional documents), and examination of visual representations of school environments. Using inductive qualitative content analysis and systematic cross-case synthesis, the study identified four overarching themes: (1) learning environment as a pedagogical message, (2) institutional conceptions of English instruction, (3) teacher cognition and beliefs about language learning, and (4) curriculum enactment tensions between policy and pedagogy. These findings indicate that although both schools explicitly endorse communicative and learner-centered principles, enactment differs substantially. In the public school, English instruction is shaped by exam-oriented pressures, large class sizes, and pragmatic instructional adaptations. In contrast, the private school enacts the curriculum through enriched programs, process-oriented pedagogies, and institutional support. The study demonstrates that differences in ELT practices stem not from curriculum design but from institutional conditions mediating curriculum enactment, highlighting the need for context-sensitive curriculum policies and leadership practices with implications for curriculum policy, school leadership, and teacher education.

To cite this article: Kerimoğlu, E., & Altun, S. (2026). English language instruction in public and private middle schools in Istanbul: A comparative two-case study. *International Journal of Curriculum and Instructional Studies, Online First*. https://doi.org/10.31704/ijocis.1749779

*Some findings of this study were presented orally at the VIII. International TURKCESS Congress on Education and Social Sciences in Hatay, Türkiye, on the 21st of July 2022 and only a short summary of one paragraph written in Turkish is included in the abstract book of the congress.

Introduction

Most countries, including Türkiye, have recognized the global importance of English as a lingua franca and have integrated it into their education systems, commencing in the early years, as part of their language planning policies. This shift is driven by the recognition of English as both a communicative asset and a marker of social mobility and academic opportunity (Sayer, 2018). Reflecting this global perspective, the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) requires English instruction starting in the second grade under a centrally mandated framework (MoNE, 2012). Notwithstanding this standardized policy framework, the research highlights persistent disparities in instructional quality, learning opportunities, and student outcomes across schools due to contextual differences in resources, leadership, teacher expertise, and institutional culture (Arslan et al., 2006; Dogançay-Aktuna, 1998; Karaköse & Kocabaş, 2006; Kurban, 2021).

These disparities point to a fundamental issue in English language education: while the MoNE English curriculum is centrally designed and uniformly mandated, its enactment varies across institutional contexts. Although both public and private schools are legally obligated to follow the same national curriculum within a centralized education system (Sakız et al., 2025), private schools typically operate with greater organizational autonomy in areas such as staffing, admissions, and internal governance (Koç, 2019). This autonomy has been linked to institutional traits like smaller class sizes, extended instructional time, and supplementary language programs (for example, international curricula or teachers who speak the language natively) (Arık, 2020; Çelik & Yazan, 2024; Gürler, 2020; Kırkgöz, 2007; Metli, 2021; Uztosun, 2017). At the same time, families' preferences for private schooling are frequently shaped by these perceived institutional features, reflecting broader global trends that associate school choice with socioeconomic status and educational aspirations (Erickson, 2017; Park, 2025; Rohde et al., 2019).

Importantly, international comparative research contests the notion that such structural advantages necessarily translate into superior instructional quality or learning outcomes. Studies demonstrate that enrollment in private schools is highly sensitive to economic conditions (Ewert, 2013) and that higher funding or institutional autonomy does not automatically result in better educational outcomes. Likewise, Lubienski and Lubienski (2013) demonstrate that—even with financial advantages—private schools do not consistently outperform public schools. Their findings show that public schools—often operating under greater constraints—can in some cases deliver equal or even superior educational outcomes, challenging the assumption that competition, higher tuition, or greater funding inherently produce higher-quality instruction (Lubienski & Lubienski, 2013).

Cross-national studies further show that once students' socioeconomic background and classroom-level factors are controlled for, public schools often perform at least as well as, and in some cases surpass, private schools in language achievement, as documented in Belgium and Spain (De Fraine et al., 2003; Mancebón et al., 2012). Similar patterns have been observed in English-intensive programs in Thailand, where sector-based differences diminish under comparable instructional conditions (Anchunda, 2023). Recent research in the Turkish context likewise indicates that although private schools might provide relatively better material resources, psychological barriers such as foreign language anxiety do not differ significantly by school type, implying that students in both sectors struggle with affective filters irrespective of the institution's status (Yanık & Ünal, 2025). Public schools—despite structural constraints such as larger class sizes and exam-oriented pressures—remain a key site for promoting equitable

access to English education and typically serve more socioeconomically diverse student populations, making them critical sites for understanding language learning under conditions of inequality (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016; OECD, 2023).

Collectively, this body of research suggests that variance in English may be less determined by school sector per se than by institutional ecology, including leadership orientation, resource allocation, and socioeconomic composition (Bellibaş et al., 2021; Yanık & Ünal, 2025). Accordingly, public and private schools in this study are not approached as hierarchically differentiated provision models but instead are regarded as analytically valuable contexts through which to explore how the same national curriculum is interpreted and enacted under differing institutional conditions.

Within the Turkish context, existing research on English language education has documented challenges in public school settings, emphasizing problems such as curriculum constraints, exam-oriented pressures, overcrowded classrooms, limited instructional time, and restricted opportunities for communicative language use (Aktaş, 2021; Çelik, 2021; Dogançay-Aktuna, 1998; Günbayı et al., 2017; Kizildag, 2009; Ünsal & Çetin, 2019). Research focusing on private school contexts in Türkiye identifies enriched English programs and extended instructional time, while also pointing to institutional pressures stemming from parental expectations, accountability demands, and market-oriented school identities, all which shape teachers' professional agency and instructional decision-making (Çelik & Yazan, 2024; Koç, 2019; Metli, 2021; Uztosun, 2017). Studies drawing on English teachers' and administrators' perspectives in Türkiye converge on common constraints, including a lack of institutional support, subpar facilities, curriculum-driven pressures, and unfulfilled expectations for parental involvement and collegial collaboration (Mehdiyev, 2019; Sevim & Dursun, 2021; Uygur, 2024; Valizadeh, 2021). Additionally, qualitative research indicates that teachers conceptualize English instruction via sociocultural lenses, emphasizing intercultural competence and the inseparability of language and culture (Gedik & Perihan, 2020).

Despite this growing body of work, existing studies tend to focus either on macro-level policy frameworks such as the MoNE English curriculum (i.e. Çelik, 2021; Dogançay-Aktuna, 1998; Kırkgöz, 2007, 2008) or on single-sector case studies (Civriz & Burakgazi, 2021; Kasimi & Hangişi, 2021; Önalan & Gürsoy, 2020). Therefore, comparative qualitative studies that integrate multiple data sources—particularly those involving teachers, vice-principals, and institutional documents—remain rare at the middle school level. Addressing this gap, the current study adopts a multiple-case design to investigate the conception and enactment of English language instruction in one public and one private middle school operating under the same MoNE curriculum in Istanbul, Türkiye. Within the same metropolitan context, the public school is in the Ümraniye district, while the private school is in the Beşiktaş district. Vice-principals were purposefully selected as leadership participants because they occupy a pivotal role in overseeing daily instructional processes, coordinating curriculum implementation, monitoring classroom practices, and mediating communication between teachers and other stakeholders, positioning them at the intersection of policy, institutional culture, and classroom practice (Heck, 1992; Marks & Printy, 2003; OECD, 2018). English teachers were identified as primary instructional agents in charge of interpreting and enacting curricular intentions in response to contextual demands (Entwistle, 1997; Schunk, 2012). As representations of formal and informal pedagogical goals and institutional discourse, curriculum documents and institutional materials, including publicly accessible school website content, were examined (Alsubaie, 2015; Schmoker, 2011).

Theoretical Framework: A Sociocultural Perspective on Curriculum Enactment and Teacher Cognition

This study draws upon an integrated theoretical framework rooted in sociocultural theory (Lantolf, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978) to critically examine English instruction as a situated enactment mediated by school culture and teacher cognition rather than as a technical execution of the MoNE curriculum. Within this broad framework, the interplay between teacher cognition and curriculum enactment is not merely invoked as an abstract pedagogical concept; instead, these perspectives are selected as analytical tools through which to interpret the intricate, context-sensitive processes by which the national curriculum is reconfigured within distinct school environments.

From a sociocultural standpoint, teaching and learning are socially mediated activities embedded within specific school environments, where curriculum functions as a cultural artifact that is actively interpreted and reconstructed in practice (Johnson, 2009; Lantolf, 1994; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch & Tulviste, 1992). Accordingly, curriculum enactment foregrounds how teachers' pedagogical reasoning interacts with institutional affordances and constraints, resulting in context-specific forms of classroom practice.

Teacher cognition constitutes a complementary analytical lens within this framework. Teachers are conceptualized as active decision-makers whose instructional practices are shaped by their beliefs, prior experiences, perceptions of student needs, and interpretations of institutional expectations (Borg, 2003; Fives & Buehl, 2012; Phipps & Borg, 2009). According to research conducted in the Turkish EFL context, teachers frequently perceive a misalignment between official ELT policies and classroom realities, and that this perceived discrepancy affects their pedagogical decision-making and professional motivation across grade levels (Basok, 2020). Furthermore, institutional context mediates how teachers conceptualize professional responsibility, autonomy, and access to professional learning opportunities, with notable differences across public and private school settings (Babanoğlu & Yardımcı, 2017).

Building on the interaction between context and cognition, the study adopts the concept of curriculum enactment rather than curriculum implementation. Whereas implementation implies linear fidelity to policy texts, enactment stresses the interpretive and adaptive processes through which curricular intentions are translated into classroom practice by teachers as curricular agents (Shawer, 2010; Snyder et al., 1992). From this perspective, curricula are enacted differently across settings through the interaction of situated contexts (e.g., school histories and student intake), professional cultures, material conditions, and external accountability pressures (Ball et al., 2012; Fullan, 2007). The MoNE English curriculum constitutes a shared policy framework, but the way it is implemented depends on the dynamic interplay between teachers' pedagogical reasoning and the distinct institutional conditions of public and private middle schools.

Guided by this framework, the study seeks to illuminate both convergences and divergences in how English teaching and learning are conceptualized and enacted across school contexts. Accordingly, the study is guided by the following research questions:

- How does the school environment influence English teaching and learning in public and private middle schools?
- How do institutional policies and administrative visions shape the conceptualization of English instruction across both schools?

- What are English teachers' conceptualizations of learning and teaching processes in public and private middle schools?
- How is the MoNE's 2018 ELT curriculum enacted by teachers in public and private school contexts?

Method

Research Design

This study adopts a multiple-case study design to examine how English learning and teaching are conceptualized and enacted across two different school types: one public and one private middle school (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). By delving into the natural settings of these schools, we aim to uncover the differences and similarities in their perspectives (Baxter & Jack, 2008). With the help of this design, situated practices can be explored through a triangulated lens that incorporates interviews with teachers and school administrators, as well as document examination, including the MoNE's curriculum, data from the private school's website, and visual materials depicting the school environment.

Since multiple case study research prioritizes depth and analytic replication over sample size, the selection of two cases is theoretically and methodologically justified. Yin (2014) states that a modest number of carefully selected cases (2 or 3) can be suitable when they are designed as theoretical replications, that is, when they are expected to yield different patterns for theoretically predictable reasons. The public and private schools in this study represent differentiated institutional ecologies that permit comparison while operating under the same national curriculum framework, enabling cross-case synthesis grounded in contextual variation rather than numerical comparison.

Case Definition and Selection

Each school is defined in the study as a bounded case, with boundaries determined by institutional type (public or private), level (middle school), location (Istanbul), and discipline (English). Case selection followed a purposeful sampling logic consistent with case study methodology, combining typical case sampling and criterion-based selection. These methods are chosen to facilitate the examination of both differences and similarities between the selected schools (Palinkas et al., 2015). Two middle schools were identified as typical cases reflecting common institutional characteristics of public and private middle schools in Türkiye. Thus, two middle schools reflecting typical experiences in English learning and teaching were selected in consultation with key informants (Kuper et al., 2008; Suri, 2011).

The two schools included in this study are in Istanbul, Türkiye, a metropolitan city with notable socioeconomic and institutional diversity. The public school, situated in the Ümraniye District was established by an association. It boasts nearly 50 years of history and class sizes ranging from 35 to 40 students. The private school, located in the Beşiktaş District, has more than a century of history. Smaller class sizes of 20 to 25 students are a hallmark. Additionally, the private school encompasses kindergarten to high school levels on its campus, whereas the public school offers only middle school education.

Participants and Data Sources

Two vice-principals and nine English teachers made up the participants due to their direct engagement in instructional decision-making and curriculum enactment. Vice-principals were included as key informants because they oversee the daily coordination of instructional processes, teacher supervision, and curriculum implementation within the Turkish education

system. This positions them at the nexus of policy, school leadership, and classroom practice (Heck, 1992; Marks & Printy, 2003).

As the primary agents of curriculum enactment, English teachers were selected because they are responsible for interpreting curricular intentions and translating them into classroom practice. The criterion sampling method is utilized, which ensures quality by examining all cases meeting predefined criteria of relevance (Patton, 2002). This method was chosen because it enables a comprehensive exploration of many viewpoints on English teaching and learning. Teachers of 6th and 7th grades were purposefully included to capture perspectives at different stages of lower secondary education, while excluding 5th graders (transition period) and 8th graders (exam preparation), whose instructional contexts are fundamentally distinct. Table 1 provides demographic details of the participating vice principals and teachers.

Table 1

Demographic Information of the Participants

Codes	*Type of School*	*Duty*	*Gender*	*Teaching Experience*	*Graduation Degree*
Vppc	Public	Vice Principal	Female	20	Master's
Vppt	Private	Vice Principal	Male	11	Master's
Tpc 1	Public	Teacher	Female	17	Bachelor's
Tpc 2	Public	Teacher	Female	18	Bachelor's
Tpc 3	Public	Teacher	Male	20	Bachelor's
Tpc 4	Public	Teacher	Female	19	Bachelor's
Tpt 1	Private	Teacher	Female	9	Master's
Tpt 2	Private	Teacher	Female	6	Master's
Tpt 3	Private	Teacher	Female	16	Master's
Tpt 4	Private	Teacher	Female	16	Bachelor's
Tpt 5	Private	Teacher	Female	22	Bachelor's

As illustrated in Table 1, the study involved one vice principal and four English teachers from a public school, alongside one vice principal and five English teachers from a private school. Both vice principals held master's degrees, but their educational backgrounds were different: the vice principal of the public school studied technology and design, while the vice principal of the private school studied English. While all public school English teachers were undergraduates, three out of five private school teachers were graduates. Furthermore, the public-school teachers had 17-20 years of experience, while their counterparts in the private school had 6-22 years of experience.

Data were obtained from multiple data sources to enable methodological triangulation. One of the data sources utilized in the analysis was the MoNE's 2018 English curriculum for the sixth and seventh grades. In addition, institutional documents outlining the vision and mission of both the public and the private school were examined to discern their perspectives on learning and teaching. The private school's publicly accessible website provided information regarding its primary–secondary education model and stated educational priorities were also examined. However, publicly available institutional documents for the public school were limited to formal statements of vision and mission, with no additional documents on its website detailing instructional practices. Moreover, visuals depicting the school environment (e.g., classrooms, corridors, learning spaces, and symbolic displays) were viewed as contextual artifacts that reflect institutional priorities and the implicit curriculum.

Data Collection Instruments and Process

The data collection required multiple steps. The first researcher started by observing the environment of a public school. The researcher took pictures of the school environment and took field notes throughout the observation. The private school environment was examined through the 360° virtual tour available on its website, and the researcher took notes. The study acknowledges the limitations of virtual observation and website-based data, including restricted researcher control over the visual field and the potential for curated institutional representations. To mitigate these limitations, visual data were triangulated with interview transcripts and curriculum documents, and analytical findings were based more on convergent evidence from several data sources rather than isolated observations.

Afterwards, the researcher scrutinized the 2018 English curriculum of the MoNE and pertinent information from the private school website. Then, participants were briefed on the study's objectives and invited to participate in interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the vice principals and teachers to explore their perspectives on learning and teaching. Prior to the interviews, the researchers developed semi-structured interview protocols, which were refined after receiving feedback from two experts. According to the experts' views, a main question ("What do you do to keep students motivated?") and a follow-up question ("Do you explain the topic first or do you want the student to do research on the topic first?") were added to the teachers' interview form. No changes were made to the interview form for vice principals. As a result, the interviews comprised two parts: the first part focused on demographic information, and the second part included open-ended and follow-up questions about English learning and teaching. The second part of the teachers' interview form included seven main open-ended questions and follow-up questions such as "What do you pay attention to while teaching?" and "How do you think students learn?". The second part of the vice principals' interview form included five main open-ended questions and follow-up questions such as "How is the English teaching in your school planned?" and "What kind of educational implementations and opportunities are offered to students in your school?". With participants' consent, the interviews were recorded to ensure accurate data capture for subsequent analysis.

Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the data, allowing for a systematic examination of meaning units across interviews, documents, and visual materials. The analysis followed an iterative and inductive logic, allowing categories and themes to arise from the data instead of imposing a priori (Merriam, 2009). Firstly, all data sources were read repeatedly to attain immersion. In the initial coding phase, open coding was employed to identify meaning units related to English teaching and learning. For instance, visual components such as English phrases on classroom doors, student products displayed on boards, or learner-profile posters were coded as indicators of institutional messaging concerning language learning and learner identity. Similarly, interview references to practices such as exam preparation, Model United Nations (MUN) debate activities, games, or reward systems were coded under preliminary labels including instructional priorities, student motivation, and learning support strategies.

In the second phase, codes were refined both within and across data sources. Codes derived from vice-principals' accounts of curriculum planning (e.g., conformity with the MoNE curriculum, school policy) were systematically compared with teachers' descriptions of classroom practices and institutional representations contained in curriculum documents and

website materials. This process enabled the identification of consistencies and tensions between policy discourse, institutional vision, and enacted practice.

To strengthen analytic rigor, the analysis proceeded to systematic cross-case synthesis (Yin, 2014). Categories generated for the public and private schools were compared to identify patterns of convergence and divergence in how English instruction was conceptualized and enacted. For instance, while both schools emphasized student participation and communication, cross-case analysis revealed that the operationalization of motivation differed: public school teachers more frequently mentioned extrinsic rewards, whereas private school teachers emphasized intrinsic interest and curiosity.

Through pattern coding (Saldaña, 2016), analytically coherent categories (e.g., learning environment, institutional vision, teacher cognition, instructional practice) were synthesized into four cross-case themes, aligned with the sociocultural framework of curriculum enactment and teacher cognition. Throughout the analysis, triangulation across interviews, documents, and visual data was used to ensure analytic credibility. The findings section includes verbatim quotes to illustrate how themes were grounded in participants' narratives and contextual data.

Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

Two researchers with complementary academic backgrounds conducted this study. The first author, a research assistant in Curriculum and Instruction with an MA in English Language Education, managed the data collection and analysis, drawing on professional training in ELT and qualitative research. This background supported an emic orientation, enabling close attention to participants' language, meanings, and practices, while reflexive memo-writing and ongoing analytic reflection were used to critically examine and bracket potential assumptions. The second author, a professor in Curriculum and Instruction, made contributions through theoretical framing, methodological guidance, and critical interrogation of emerging interpretations. Reflexivity was preserved through continuous researcher dialogue and the use of reflexive memos, which documented emerging interpretations, analytic decisions, and potential assumptions throughout the research process. These practices helped balance insider understanding with analytic detachment, thereby enhancing rigor and credibility.

Trustworthiness

The study employed methodological triangulation by using multiple data sources and methods to gather information. This included observations, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews. To strengthen content validity, the interview protocols were reviewed and refined based on feedback from two experts in the field of educational research. Their suggestions ensured that the questions were relevant, clear, and capable of eliciting in-depth responses about the participants' perspectives on English language teaching. Semi-structured interview protocols, refined after expert review, were applied uniformly across all interviews to maintain consistency in questioning. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim. This ensured that the data used for analysis accurately reflected the participants' responses, thereby enhancing the reliability of the data. Transferability is supported by providing detailed explanations of the study's context, participant demographics, and educational contexts.

Ethical Issues and Limitations

The researchers informed the participants about the purpose of the study and that they were free to attend the interview. All data were anonymized to protect participants' privacy. In the final report, identifiers such as names and specific job titles were replaced with codes. The

study uses pseudonyms to represent participants, ensuring that individual identities are not disclosed. Data were stored securely, and access was limited to the research team. Any identifying information was eliminated during transcribing to maintain confidentiality. Furthermore, the study received approval from the Yildiz Technical University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee under the number 20230502108 on May 3, 2023.

This study is based on a multiple-case qualitative design involving one public and one private middle school in Istanbul, which enables in-depth context-sensitive analysis but limits statistical generalizability. Although analytic generalization is appropriate within a sociocultural and curriculum enactment framework, institutional ecologies vary across regions and school types; therefore, the findings should be interpreted as illustrative rather than representative. In addition, while the study employed methodological triangulation through interviews, document analysis, and visual observations, student perspectives were not directly included, and classroom observations in the private school relied partly on website-based virtual tours, which may reflect curated institutional representations. Additionally, while the private school provided extensive publicly available documentation on instructional practices, the public school's institutional documents were limited to formal vision-mission statements, creating unavoidable data asymmetry. These limitations were mitigated through cross-source triangulation, yet they nonetheless delimit the scope of inferences regarding lived classroom interaction and learner experience.

Results

The qualitative analysis of interviews, observations, institutional documents, and website data yielded four main themes illustrating how English instruction is conceptualized and enacted across the two cases.

Theme 1: Learning Environment as a Pedagogical Message

This theme addresses the first research question regarding how the school environment influences English teaching and learning. Responding to the sociocultural framework, the analysis focuses on the affordances of the physical space and the linguistic landscape. Table 2 presents a comparative analysis of these shared and divergent features.

Table 2

Environmental Affordances for English Language Learning

Analytical Category	*Shared Features (Similarities)*	*Divergent Features (Differences)*	*Implications for English Instruction*	*Primary Data Source(s)*
Instructional Spaces & Interaction	• Both schools rely on classroom-based instruction as the primary locus of learning. • Both utilize standard boards and visual aids.	**Public School:** High student density and cramped desks restrict movement. **Private School:** Enough distance between desks allows for flexible reconfiguration.	The physical layout acts as a barrier to interactive tasks (mingling, drama) in the public school, whereas it supports the interaction required by the curriculum in the private school.	Visual Observation, Website / Virtual Tour

Table 2 ***(Continued)***

Analytical Category	*Shared Features (Similarities)*	*Divergent Features (Differences)*	*Implications for English Instruction*	*Primary Data Source(s)*
English Exposure in Common Areas	• Presence of concrete gardens limits outdoor language activities in both contexts	**Public School:** Wide and bright corridors are utilized for social interaction (chess) rather than English. **Private School:** Narrow corridors are compensated by utilizing walls for Art Streets and English displays.	A significant spatial asset (wide corridors) is disconnected from English practice in the public school, while spatial constraints are mitigated to provide passive English input in the private school.	Visual Observation, Website / Virtual Tour
Visual Messages & Learner Profile	• The dominance of mandated national values (e.g., Atatürk's principles) and L1 symbols frames the learner primarily as a national citizen in both contexts	**Public School:** Profiles emphasize moral values. English is invisible in shared spaces. **Private School:** Profiles emphasize global citizenship. English is visible via publicly displayed student projects.	English is framed as a distinct academic subject for exams in the public context, contrasted with its positioning as a medium of communication and self-expression in the private context.	School Websites (Profile Analysis), Visual Observation, Institutional Documents

Theme 2: Institutional Conceptions of English Instruction

This theme addresses the second research question regarding how institutional policies and administrative visions shape English instruction. The cross-case analysis of vice-principal interviews, curriculum documents, and school websites reveals that while both schools are bound by the same MoNE curriculum, they adopt different institutional visions. Table 3 presents a comparative analysis of these shared and divergent features.

Table 3

Institutional Conceptions of English Instruction

Analytical Category	*Shared Features (Similarities)*	*Divergent Features (Differences)*	*Implications for English Instruction*	*Primary Data Source(s)*
Official Curricular Foundation	• Both adhere to MoNE's 2018 ELT Curriculum. • Both consider parents' demands. • Adoption of a constructivist approach promoting learner autonomy and self-assessment • Goal of positive attitude toward English • Focus on 21st-century skills (creativity, communication) and values education • Prescription of an eclectic mix of techniques (drama, authentic sources) and process-oriented testing	**Public School:** Enactment is constrained to the MoNE framework, heavily influenced by central examinations and tailored to students' social and academic needs. **Private School:** The MoNE curriculum serves as a baseline. It is driven by the school policy (raising global citizens) and layered with enrichment programs (UbD [Understanding by Design], TOEFL Junior, MUN—an academic simulation where students debate global issues) and international standards.	The official ELT curriculum serves as a standardized framework adapted to local needs in the public school, whereas it serves as a launchpad for global proficiency in the private school.	Interviews (Vice-Principals), Institutional Documents, MoNE Curriculum

Table 3 ***(Continued)***

Targeted Learner Profile	• Communication skills and working collaboratively • "Learning to learn" and analytical skills	**Public School:** Profile emphasizes national and moral values and being beneficial to humanity. English is not explicitly highlighted in the core profile. **Private School:** Profile explicitly lists using native and foreign languages effectively and being a responsible digital citizen.	English is positioned as an academic subject within a moral education in the public context, contrasted with being a central communicative medium for digital/global citizenship in the private context.	School Websites, Institutional Documents (Vision/Mission)
Administrative Vision for Teachers (The Ideal Teacher)	• As a guide for student development	**Public School:** Teachers are viewed as a humanist: empathetic, tolerant, experienced, and capable of instilling moral values (e.g., love for people and animals). **Private School:** Teachers are viewed as a coach: focused on close guidance, getting to know the student deeply, and spending time with them outside of class hours.	Administrative vision prioritizes the teacher's relational role (nurturer) in the public school, versus their instructional/ strategic role (language coach) in the private school.	Interviews (Vice-Principals)

Regarding the *Official Curricular Foundation*, the analysis shows that although both schools adhere to the MoNE curriculum, institutional visions differ. In the public school, the curriculum is tailored to students' social and academic needs but is heavily constrained by high-stakes testing. The Vice-Principal (Vppc) explicitly stated, *"Practice exams are held academically."* The enactment is shaped by a holistic concern for student development alongside exam pressures. Vppc articulated this dual focus, stating, *"...we do not expect academic success only. We want them to be able to communicate well, engage in social activities, express themselves, and have many traits so that they can be successful individuals in life."* This suggests that the curriculum is tailored to students' social and academic needs while acknowledging the reality of national central examinations. In contrast, the private school treats the MoNE curriculum as a baseline. The Private School Vice-Principal (Vppt) noted, *"We already use the curriculum of the MoNE. Apart from this, it is planned in line with... our policy to raise global citizens."* He further noted that *"students also have an active role in the planning,"* supporting the integration of enrichment programs (e.g., UbD, MUN—an academic simulation where students debate global issues) to achieve global proficiency. This distinction extends to the *Target Learner Profile*; the public school foregrounds internalized national and moral values, limiting English to an implicit academic requirement. Conversely, the private school prioritizes linguistic capital, framing English as an essential medium for the digital citizen. Finally, the *Administrative Vision for Teachers* shapes the professional expectations regarding ELT delivery. Vppc defined the ideal teacher through a humanist lens, stating, *"Our teachers are humanists first and foremost... understanding, tolerance, and empathy are more important to us."* She further emphasized the teacher's role in instilling a love for people and animals, prioritizing the creation of a safe, nurturing environment over aggressive academic tracking. On the other hand, Vppt mentioned the school's coaching system, explaining, *"We have a coaching system in our school. We try to*

follow, support, and guide the student... spending time with them outside of class." This reflects a performance-oriented culture where the teacher is viewed not just as a nurturer, but as a strategic guide responsible for closely monitoring the student's academic and social trajectory.

Theme 3: Teacher Cognition: Conceptualizations of Learning Processes

This theme addresses the third research question regarding English teachers' underlying conceptualizations of how learning occurs. Drawing on Borg's (2003) Teacher Cognition framework, the analysis explores the epistemological beliefs driving instruction. Table 4 compares the teachers' underlying conceptualizations of how learning occurs.

Table 4

Teachers' Conceptualizations of Language Learning

Analytical Category	*Shared Features (Similarities)*	*Divergent Features (Differences)*	*Implications for English Instruction*	*Primary Data Source(s)*
Mechanisms of Acquisition	• Active participation and communication	**Public School:** Learning is attributed to exposure, picking it up, and studying and researching. **Private School:** Learning is attributed to learning by doing, experiencing the language, and learning from mistakes.	Learning is conceptualized as an osmotic process (absorbing input through exposure) in the public school, whereas it is a heuristic process (active construction via trial) in the private school.	Interviews (Teachers)
Drivers of Learning	• Willingness to learn as a prerequisite	**Public School:** Learning depends on readiness, positive feelings toward the teacher and a warm/friendly environment. **Private School:** Learning depends on real-life relevance.	The driver is framed as affective readiness (liking the teacher) in the public context, contrasted with a focus on pragmatic necessity (needing the skill) in the private context.	
Nature of Knowledge	• As a skill to be used, not just known	**Public School:** Knowledge is solidified through studying and expressing yourself. **Private School:** Knowledge is solidified through transferring to different contexts and hands-on learning.	Knowledge is viewed as academic mastery in the public school, while it is viewed as transferable competence in the private school.	
The Role of the Learner	• As the central agent of the process	**Public School:** The learner is defined by solving a problem, expressing yourself, and studying. **Private School:** The learner is defined by individual differences, talent, and experiencing engagement.	The learner is positioned as a cognitive task-solver in the public school, versus a unique individual/experimenter in the private school.	

The analysis highlights differences in *Mechanisms of Acquisition*. Public school teachers largely conceptualize acquisition as an osmotic process dependent on exposure and studying, and Tpc 1 articulated, *"They learn by exposure. The more they hear the language, the more they pick it up."* In contrast, private school teachers articulate a heuristic view where learning results from active construction (learning by doing) and trial-and-error. Tpt 3 emphasized this hands-

on approach, stating, *"Students learn by trying, they learn by doing,"* which aligns with the code learning from mistakes. Concerning *Drivers of Learning*, the focus shifts from affective readiness (liking the teacher) in the public context to pragmatic necessity (real-life relevance) in the private context. Tpt 5 explicitly argued for the necessity of the skill itself: *"If you make the child feel that s/he truly needs it, only then can s/he learn."* Furthermore, the *Nature of Knowledge* is viewed through divergent lenses: as academic mastery to be demonstrated in the public school, versus a transferable competence for novel contexts in the private school. Ultimately, *Role of the Learner* is positioned as a cognitive task-solver navigating exam rigors in the public school, whereas the private school learner is viewed as a unique experimenter whose individual potential is unlocked through experience.

Theme 4: Curriculum Enactment: The Tension between Policy and Pedagogy

This theme addresses the fourth research question regarding how the MoNE's ELT curriculum is enacted in practice. The analysis reveals how structural realities and cultures transform the official curriculum. Table 5 presents this comparative analysis.

Table 5

Curriculum Enactment and Instructional Practices

Analytical Category	*Shared Features (Similarities)*	*Divergent Features (Differences)*	*Implications for English Instruction*	*Primary Data Source(s)*
Instructional Methodologies/ Techniques	• Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles • Eclectic techniques (e.g., Q&A, games, pair/group work)	**Public School:** Eclectic mix often leans on teacher-led or manageable tasks: Direct Method, Read Aloud, Demonstration, TPR, knowledge competitions, and standard exercises (matching, information, computer-assisted instruction). **Private School:** Standardized, high-prep process-oriented frameworks: UbD, Task-Based Learning, Drama, and collaborative critical thinking activities.	Instructional methods are eclectic and pragmatic in the public school, whereas they are uniform and process-oriented (e.g., UbD) in the private school.	Interviews (Teachers)
Remedial Support Strategies (Achievement)	Repetition and extra homework Communication with parents regarding failure Changing the teaching technique or activity type when students fail to understand	**Public School:** Strategies rely on external referrals (guidance service), L1 recourse (applying to Turkish), and autonomous tasks (research/presentation assignments, drill-based examples). **Private School:** Strategies rely on personalized intervention (one-to-one instruction, small group work), differentiation, and affective scaffolding (making the students relax).	Remedial support is traditional and externalized (relying on L1, homework, or guidance referrals) in the public school, contrasted with being adaptive and institutionalized (via etude/coaching and emotional support) in the private school.	

Table 5 ***(Continued)***

Analytical Category	*Shared Features (Similarities)*	*Divergent Features (Differences)*	*Implications for English Instruction*	*Primary Data Source(s)*
Motivation Practices	Games and verbal reinforcers	**Public School:** Heavy reliance on tangible rewards (sweets/chocolate, rewarding with grades) and behaviorist systems (blue/red cards). Motivation also relies on public recognition (star of the week, Instagram sharing, being a champion). **Private School:** Heavy reliance on affective factors (smiling, positive atmosphere, good relationship) and cognitive triggers (arousing curiosity, interesting subjects/TED talks, attractive materials).	Motivation is operationalized as a transactional exchange (rewards/status for compliance) in the public school, contrasted with a relational and intellectual process (engagement through interest) in the private school.	Interviews (Teachers)
Programmatic Enactment & Enrichment	• Practices related to exam preparation (practice exams, weekend courses) • Competitions to engage students	**Public School:** Enrichment focuses on cultural and artistic pursuits. ELT enrichment is limited (Programs for reading comprehension, practice exams). **Private School:** Enrichment focuses on global academic skills and English integration: MUN debates, TOEFL Junior, English magazine, Content-based learning, and UbD training.	English enrichment is treated as an episodic performance or drill in the public school, whereas it is an immersive academic culture in the private school.	Interviews (Vice-Principals)

The analysis of *Instructional Methodologies/Techniques* reveals that while both groups claim adherence to CLT and eclectic methods, enactment differs markedly. Public school teachers employ a pragmatic eclectic mix (e.g., Direct Method, knowledge competitions) primarily for classroom management. Tpc 1 described her practice as relying on demonstration and writing new sentences, effectively utilizing teacher-led techniques like the Direct Method and knowledge competitions to maintain control. In contrast, private school teachers operate within systematic, process-oriented frameworks. Tpt 3 noted, *"We use task-based methods when appropriate,"* and others frequently referenced Understanding by Design (UbD). *Remedial Support Strategies* further reflect this divide; public schools tend to externalize support (referring to guidance or L1 translation). Tpc 2 mentioned strategies like giving research-based assignments, "*At the end of that lesson, I'm trying to give them an assignment that they can do by doing internet research and trying to make them discover it themselves.*" Conversely, the private school institutionalizes support through adaptive interventions like etude hours. Tpt 5 explained their approach to struggling students: *"If s/he doesn't understand... I teach it to the kids, and I keep going until they understand it,"* explicitly referencing one-to-one instruction and making the students relax. *Motivation* is similarly bifurcated: public school teachers heavily rely on transactional and tangible rewards to secure compliance. Tpc 3 provided a vivid example of this behaviorist approach: *"I say that I will give a blue card, and I also give candy... Once I have shown the candy, the situation changes."* On the other hand, private school teachers focus on cognitive and relational triggers. Tpt 4 explained, *"We use current TED Talks... We*

motivate students by attracting their attention," shifting the focus from behavioral control to intellectual curiosity. Finally, *Programmatic Enactment & Enrichment* reveal a contrast between episodic drills for exam readiness in the public sector and the construction of an immersive, global academic culture in the private sector. Vppc described a utilitarian approach focused on skills remediation and testing, stating, *"We have activities to improve speed reading and comprehension skills... Practice exams are held academically."* In contrast, Vppt highlighted the integration of international standards and student agency: *"We have MUNs... We participate in international competitions... [and] TOEFL Junior exams."*

Discussion

This study investigates the comparative conceptualization and enactment of English language instruction in public and private middle school contexts. It examines how environmental affordances, institutional visions, teacher cognitions, and curriculum enactment interact to shape the language learning experience. While both schools operate under the shared regulatory framework of the MoNE curriculum, the findings reveal that pedagogical realities are mediated by distinct institutional ecologies. Interpreted through sociocultural theory and teacher cognition, the findings confirm that English instruction is enacted not as a technical implementation of policy but as a situated social practice shaped by physical space, institutional priorities, and professional beliefs.

The findings indicate that the learning environment functions as a pedagogical message that actively shapes how English is enacted in practice rather than merely supporting instruction, consistent with a sociocultural perspective on learning environments as semiotic and material mediators of pedagogy. Both schools display shared environmental symbols—such as patriotic imagery, awards, and student work—reflecting a common national and cultural ethos that foregrounds academic achievement and citizenship, a pattern also observed in studies of school culture emphasizing symbolic coherence (Deal & Peterson, 2016). However, consistent with research emphasizing institutional ecology, these surface similarities obscure deeper differences in how space and material conditions are pedagogically mobilized (Ball et al., 2012) to support English learning. Classroom density and spatial rigidity in the public school constrain communicative language teaching, while spatial flexibility in the private school enables interaction-rich practices, illustrating how curriculum enactment is structurally enabled or constrained by institutional affordances (Ball et al., 2012; Johnson, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). These findings parallel Turkish studies reporting that middle school English teachers frequently experience overcrowded classrooms, limited physical resources, and restricted opportunities for communicative use of English, leading to more controlled and teacher-led practices (Günbayı et al., 2017; Sevim & Dursun, 2021; Valizadeh, 2021). Beyond classrooms, the differential use of shared spaces further illustrates how architectural assets are translated into sustained language exposure, with the private school's linguistic landscape providing ongoing English input consistent with research framing school signage and displays as implicit language policy tools (Backhaus, 2019; Cenoz & Gorter, 2006). These environmental differences contribute to the construction of divergent learner identities, positioning English as an exam-oriented subject within a civic-national frame in the public school, and as a medium of global communication and self-expression in the private school, echoing sociocultural accounts of identity and language learning (Duff, 2013; Norton & Toohey, 2011). These identity constructions are corroborated by the alignment between visual semiotic analyses of school spaces, institutional learner profiles published online, and vice-principals' articulated educational goals, strengthening the interpretive validity of the identity-oriented findings. The

findings highlight that environmental affordances play a constitutive role in shaping pedagogical possibilities and learners' orientations toward English under a shared curriculum.

Despite adherence to the same MoNE 2018 ELT curriculum, English instruction is conceptualized through markedly different institutional visions, reinforcing sociocultural accounts that curriculum functions as a policy text that is interpreted and reconstructed in context rather than uniformly implemented (Ball et al., 2012; Johnson, 2009). Triangulation across vice-principal interviews, institutional documents, and school website representations reveals that while the policy remains constant, its institutional interpretation is reshaped by divergent administrative priorities and school missions. In the public school, the curriculum is enacted within the constraints of high-stakes national examinations and a strong moral–civic mission, resulting in English being positioned as a bounded academic subject integrated into holistic student development. This aligns with extensive research showing that centralized assessment regimes tend to narrow curricular priorities, constrain teacher autonomy, and limit opportunities for higher-order thinking, even when constructivist principles are formally endorsed (Borg, 2006; Farvis & Hay, 2020; Kılıçkaya, 2016; Ömür & Bavlı, 2020).

By contrast, the private school treats the national curriculum as a baseline, layering it with enrichment programs and international benchmarks in line with an institutional vision of global citizenship. This pattern reflects broader neoliberal dynamics in education, where market-oriented schools extend curricular aims beyond national prescriptions in response to parental expectations and competitive pressures (Aypay et al., 2025; Erickson, 2017). Similar dynamics have been observed in international contexts, where private schools adapt curricula to signal global readiness and symbolic capital (Aguiar & Nogueira, 2012; Park, 2025). The private school's emphasis on linguistic capital, digital citizenship, and a coaching-oriented teaching model contrasts with the public school's relational and moral conception of education, which prioritizes care, ethical development, and social responsibility (Aloni, 2011; 2013). These findings reinforce the argument that within the two cases examined, school leadership and institutional vision play a decisive role in shaping what English is understood to be "for," even under a common policy framework. Importantly, the central role attributed to vice-principals in mediating curriculum enactment aligns with studies emphasizing vice-principals' instructional leadership functions in coordinating daily practices and balancing policy demands with institutional priorities (Karaköse & Kocabaş, 2006; Uygur, 2024).

Teachers' conceptualizations of language learning further reflect the situated nature of teacher cognition, aligning with Borg's (2003) framework that conceptualizes beliefs as mediators between context and practice. While teachers in both settings endorse active participation and communication, public school teachers tend to conceptualize learning through exposure, repetition, and an orientation consistent with input-based views of acquisition (Krashen, 1992) and exam-driven accountability structures. In contrast, private school teachers emphasize learning by doing, learning from mistakes, and real-life relevance, aligning with constructivist and sociocultural theories that frame learning as active meaning-making through interaction (Lantolf, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978). Differences in perceived drivers of learning—affective readiness and teacher–student rapport in the public school versus pragmatic utility and authenticity in the private school—mirror distinctions between affective-filter explanations of learning (Krashen, 1992) and motivation theories emphasizing utility value (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005). Divergent views of knowledge as either academic mastery or transferable competence further suggest that teachers' beliefs are shaped by accountability structures and institutional expectations, particularly the influence of high-stakes examinations in public schooling (Ball et al., 2012; Borg, 2006; Ömür & Bavlı, 2020). These findings confirm

that teacher cognition is not an individual attribute, but contextually co-produced within specific institutional and accountability conditions, including curriculum demands, assessment regimes, and school cultures.

The findings illustrate curriculum enactment as a contextually mediated process rather than a uniform implementation of the MoNE ELT curriculum, confirming sociocultural and enactment-oriented views of curriculum policy. Teachers in both schools reported employing communicative activities—such as games, pair and group work, and question–answer techniques—consistent with the eclectic, reflecting the eclectic orientation promoted in national curricula and observed across international ELT contexts (Nguyen, 2013). This apparent consistency may be partly attributed to the standardized MoNE national curriculum, which serves as a foundational framework for all K-12 educational institutions in Türkiye (Bümen & Holmqvist, 2022). This suggests that teachers closely follow the national curriculum, employing instructional methods and an eclectic approach that mirrors the guidelines outlined in the MoNE's 2018 curriculum. Similarly, Süer and Kinay (2022) found that primary teachers tend to rely heavily on the curriculum components related to learning and teaching activities, particularly in core subjects. In the public school, eclecticism functions as a pragmatic adaptation to large class sizes, limited instructional time, and accountability pressures, resulting in teacher-led practices prioritizing manageability over pedagogical coherence (Remillard, 2005; Shawer, 2010; Ünsal & Çetin, 2019). In contrast, the private school's enactment is characterized by standardized, high-preparation frameworks such as UbD and task-based learning, illustrating how curricular coherence is contingent upon organizational capacity and institutional investment (Ball et al., 2012).

Differences extend to remediation and enrichment practices. While both schools rely on repetition, additional practice, and parental communication to promote student achievement, as noted in prior research on teacher support and student motivation, the public school externalizes remediation through homework, L1 mediation, or guidance referrals, whereas the private school institutionalizes support via differentiated instruction, one-to-one tutoring, and affective scaffolding. Accordingly, Affuso et al. (2023) discovered that parental monitoring and teacher support had a direct positive influence on motivation and self-efficacy over time, which in turn had a positive impact on academic achievement. Regarding motivation practices, behaviorist reward systems dominate in the public school; relational and cognitive engagement is foregrounded in the private school. This finding resonates with Inngam & Eamoraphan's (2014) observation of higher levels of intrinsic motivation among private school EFL students than among those in public schools. Games and verbal praise serve as common motivational tools, likely stemming from standardized preservice teacher education materials in Türkiye. However, while these strategies appear uniform, their implementation and effectiveness may vary. For instance, private schools, with their smaller class sizes and greater resources, may be able to implement these strategies more effectively than public schools, leading to potentially different outcomes.

These differences culminate in divergent enrichment and programmatic enactment, where the enacted curriculum extends beyond formal policy texts. In the public school, English functions primarily as episodic skill reinforcement linked to examinations, whereas in the private school it is constructed as an immersive academic culture oriented toward global competence. Through international benchmarks and extracurricular initiatives, English becomes a sustained institutional priority rather than a supplementary subject, reflecting patterns widely associated with private schooling and parental expectations (Arslan et al., 2006; Nguyen, 2013; Ünsal & Çetin, 2019). This divergence echoes research demonstrating that

enrichment and global competencies are more readily institutionalized in contexts where schools possess the capacity to expand curricular aims beyond national prescriptions (Ball et al., 2012; Bümen & Holmqvist, 2022).

Viewed through a triangulated analysis of curriculum documents, school websites, and teacher and vice-principal interviews, these patterns illustrate how the same policy text is recontextualized through distinct institutional priorities rather than uniformly enacted. Taken together, the convergence of research data enables the analysis to move beyond individual perspectives and identify structurally patterned differences in how English is positioned, taught, and experienced across the two school contexts. Collectively, these findings highlight that within the studied school contexts, the tension between policy and pedagogy is not rooted in teachers' resistance to the curriculum, but in structurally patterned conditions that shape what kinds of enactment are pedagogically and institutionally possible.

Conclusions and Implications

This study demonstrates that differences in English language instruction between public and private middle school contexts are associated with how a common national curriculum is implemented within different institutional ecologies. Based on triangulated data from interviews, observations, and institutional documents, the findings show that curriculum enactment is a sociocultural process shaped by leadership vision, material affordances, accountability pressures, and teacher cognition rather than a technical implementation of policy. Theoretically, the study contributes to curriculum enactment and teacher cognition literature by illustrating how a single centrally prescribed curriculum generates multiple enacted curricula, co-constructed through the interaction of teachers' pedagogical beliefs and institutional conditions. From a practical perspective, the findings underscore that policy-level reforms promoting communicative and learner-centered pedagogy are unlikely to succeed without systemic support addressing class size, instructional time, spatial flexibility, and professional autonomy. By challenging sector-based assumptions and reframing inequality as a function of contextual affordances rather than school type, the study offers a nuanced understanding of policy–practice tensions in English language education and highlights the need for context-sensitive leadership and policy approaches to achieve more equitable curricular outcomes.

Future research could deepen these findings by incorporating student voice and long-term in-situ classroom observations to more fully capture how learners experience enacted curricula. Expanding comparative studies to include a broader range of socioeconomic contexts, or schools with similar profiles but differing leadership orientations, would further clarify the role of institutional ecology in shaping curriculum enactment. Longitudinal or mixed-methods designs could also explore how different enactment patterns relate to learners' language development, motivation, and educational trajectories over time. Lastly, cross-national research conducted under varying policy regimes would extend the theoretical contribution of this study by situating sociocultural and enactment-oriented insights within broader international debates on equity and English language education.

At the school level, leadership practices that recognize curriculum enactment as a context-sensitive process—rather than a matter of policy compliance—appear critical for expanding teachers' pedagogical agency under centralized curricula. In teacher education, future efforts should prioritize cultivating teachers' capacity to critically interpret curricular intentions and adapt communicative pedagogies to structurally constrained classrooms. At the policy level,

future directions involve aligning curricular aspirations with the material, temporal, and organizational conditions of schools, acknowledging that learner-centered and communicative reforms require systemic support to become practical rather than symbolic.

Declarations

Author Contributions

The first author: Literature review, methodology, data collection, data analysis, writing original draft, validation and interpretation.

The second author: Conceptualization and planning research, methodology, writing-review and editing, validation and interpretation.

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Disclosure of Artificial Intelligence or GenAI Use

We used AI (ChatGPT) for grammar and language editing. No artificial intelligence (AI) or generative AI (GenAI) tools were used to generate the scholarly content of this manuscript.

Availability of Data and Materials

The datasets are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Funding

This research received no funding.

Ethics Committee Approval

This study was approved by Yildiz Technical University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee under the number 20230502108 on May 3, 2023. Written informed consent was obtained from the participants for their anonymized information to be published in this article.

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TÜRKÇE GENİŞ ÖZET

İstanbul'daki Devlet ve Özel Ortaokullarda İngilizce Öğretimi: Karşılaştırmalı İki Durumlu Bir Çalışma

Giriş

Merkeziyetçi eğitim sistemlerinde öğretim programları tüm okullar için ortak biçimde tanımlansa da bu programların okul düzeyinde nasıl hayata geçirildiği (Shawer, 2010; Snyder vd., 1992) okulun kurumsal yapısı, fiziksel ve maddi olanakları, liderlik anlayışı ve öğretmenlerin pedagojik inançları doğrultusunda farklılaşabilmektedir (Ball vd., 2012; Borg, 2006; Ömür & Bavlı, 2020; Uygur, 2024). Türkiye'de Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı (MEB) tarafından uygulamaya konulan 2018 İngilizce Dersi Öğretim Programı, tüm devlet ve özel okullar için ortak bir çerçeve sunmasına rağmen (Bümen & Holmqvist, 2022) öğretim uygulamaları ve öğrencilerin dil öğrenme fırsatları okul türleri arasında farklılık göstermektedir (Arık, 2020; Çelik & Yazan, 2024; Koç, 2019). Bu doğrultuda, devlet ve özel okullar bu çalışmada, hiyerarşik olarak farklı hizmet sunum modelleri olarak değil; aynı ulusal öğretim programının farklı kurumsal koşullar altında nasıl yorumlandığını ve uygulamaya geçirildiğini incelemeye olanak tanıyan analitik açıdan değerli bağlamlar olarak ele alınmıştır.

Bu çalışma, İstanbul'da aynı ulusal program çerçevesine tabi olan bir devlet ortaokulunda ve bir özel ortaokulda İngilizce öğretiminin nasıl kavramsallaştırıldığını ve nasıl uygulandığını karşılaştırmalı olarak incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma, okul ortamının sunduğu pedagojik olanakların, kurumsal politikalar ve yönetimsel vizyonun, öğretmen bilişinin İngilizce öğretiminin niteliğini nasıl biçimlendirdiğini ve İngilizce öğretim programının öğretmenler tarafından nasıl hayata geçirildiğini ortaya koymayı hedeflemektedir. Kuramsal çerçeve olarak sosyokültürel yaklaşım benimsenmiş; öğretim programı, öğretmenlerin ve kurumların etkileşimleriyle bağlam içinde yeniden inşa edilen kültürel bir araç olarak ele alınmıştır (Vygotsky, 1978; Johnson, 2009). Böylece çalışma, öğretim programının hayata geçirilmesi (Shawer, 2010; Snyder vd., 1992) ile öğretmen bilişi (Borg, 2003; 2006) arasındaki ilişkiyi merkezine almıştır.

Yöntem

Araştırma, nitel çoklu durum çalışması deseninde yürütülmüştür (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014). Çalışmanın durumlarını İstanbul'da bulunan bir devlet ortaokulu ve bir özel ortaokul oluşturmaktadır. Katılımcı olarak öğretim süreçlerinde karar verici konumda bulunan iki müdür yardımcısının ve dokuz İngilizce öğretmeninin görüşlerine başvurulmuştur. Öğretmenlerin seçiminde ölçüt örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak 6. ve 7. sınıf düzeylerine odaklanılmış; 5. sınıfın uyum süreci, 8. sınıfın ise sınav odaklı yapısı nedeniyle dışarıda bırakılmıştır. Ayrıca MEB'in 2018 İngilizce Dersi Öğretim Programı, okul dokümanları ve okul ortamına ilişkin görsel materyaller bu çalışmanın veri kaynaklarını oluşturmuştur.

Veriler, yarı yapılandırılmış müdür yardımcısı ve öğretmen görüşmeleri, öğretim programı, kurumsal dokümanlar ve okul ortamına ilişkin görsellerin incelenmesi ile elde edilmiştir. Görüşme formları uzman görüşü doğrultusunda geliştirilmiş ve tüm görüşmeler ses kaydı alınarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veri analizi nitel içerik analizi yoluyla gerçekleştirilmiş; açık kodlama, kodların karşılaştırılması ve örüntü kodlama aşamaları izlenmiştir (Saldaña, 2016). Ardından çapraz-durum sentezi yapılarak iki okulda ortaya çıkan benzerlikler ve farklılıklar sistematik biçimde karşılaştırılmıştır. Araştırmanın geçerliği metodolojik veri çeşitlemesi ve uzman görüşleriyle; güvenirliği ise ayrıntılı betimlemeler ve doğrudan alıntılarla sağlanmıştır. Araştırma için etik kurul onayı alınmıştır.

Bulgular

Analiz sonucunda dört ana tema ortaya çıkmıştır. Birinci tema, öğrenme çevresinin pedagojik bir mesaj olarak işlev görmesidir. Her iki okulda da sınıflar temel öğretim mekânı olsa da devlet okulunda yüksek sınıf mevcudu ve mekânsal engeller, hareketli ve etkileşim temelli etkinlikleri sınırlandırmaktadır. Buna karşılık özel okulda daha esnek oturma düzeni ve görsel-dilsel düzenlemeler, İngilizceye sürekli maruziyeti desteklemektedir. Ortak alanların İngilizce öğretimiyle ilişkilendirilme biçimleri de farklılaşmaktadır. Devlet okulunda bu alanlar ağırlıklı olarak sosyal etkileşim amaçlı kullanılırken, özel okulda dil girdisi sunan alanlar olarak da değerlendirilmektedir.

İkinci tema, kurumsal politika ve yönetim vizyonudur. Her iki okul da MEB'in 2018 İngilizce Dersi Öğretim Programı'nı resmî çerçeve olarak benimsemektedir. Ancak bu çerçevenin okul düzeyinde nasıl yorumlandığı farklılaşmaktadır. Devlet okulunda İngilizce öğretimi, merkezî sınavlar ve öğrencilerin sosyal-akademik ihtiyaçları arasında denge kurma etrafında yapılandırılmaktadır. Özel okulda ise aynı program, okulun kurumsal vizyonu doğrultusunda zenginleştirilmiş uygulamalarla genişletilmektedir. Bu farklılaşma, İngilizcenin her iki bağlamda da önemli görülmesine rağmen dersin okulun genel eğitim anlayışı içindeki konumunun değişmesine yol açmaktadır.

Üçüncü tema, öğretmen bilişi ve öğrenme anlayışlarıdır. Her iki okulda görev yapan öğretmenler, iletişim ve öğrenci katılımını önemsediklerini ifade etmektedir. Ancak devlet okulunda öğrenme, daha çok maruz kalma, tekrar ve çalışma yoluyla gerçekleşen bir süreç olarak kavramsallaştırılırken; özel okulda deneyimleme, hata yapma ve gerçek yaşamla ilişkilendirme üzerinden tanımlanmaktadır. Bu farklı kavramsallaştırmalar, öğretmenlerin öğretimsel kararlarını yönlendiren bilişsel çerçeveleri yansıtmaktadır. Benzer biçimde, devlet okulunda öğrenci; problem çözen, görev ve sorumluluk odaklı bir öğrenen olarak tanımlanırken, özel okulda bireysel farklılıkları ve ilgi alanları dikkate alınan, sürece deneyim yoluyla katılan bir aktör olarak kavramsallaştırılmaktadır.

Dördüncü tema, öğretim programının hayata geçirilmesine ilişkindir. Her iki okulda da iletişimsel yaklaşımlar ve eklektik yöntemler rapor edilmekle birlikte, bu yaklaşımların sınıf içi uygulamalara yansıması bağlamsal koşullar doğrultusunda farklılaşmaktadır. Devlet okulunda öğretmenler, zaman ve sınıf yönetimi gereklilikleri nedeniyle daha yönetilebilir ve öğretmen yönlendirmeli uygulamalara ağırlık vermektedir. Özel okulda ise görev temelli öğrenme ve geriye dönük tasarım gibi yapılandırılmış öğretim tasarımları daha sistematik biçimde uygulanmaktadır. Ayrıca motivasyon ve destek uygulamaları da bağlama özgü biçimde şekillenmektedir: Devlet okulunda ödül ve not temelli stratejiler, özel okulda duygusal destek ve merak uyandırmaya yönelik uygulamalar öne çıkmaktadır. Bu bulgular, öğretim programının

uygulanışının pedagojik tercihlerden ziyade, okulun kurumsal ve yapısal koşullarıyla yakından ilişkili olduğunu göstermektedir.

Tartışma, Sonuç ve Öneriler

Bu çalışmanın bulguları, MEB tarafından merkezî olarak belirlenen İngilizce Dersi Öğretim Programı'nın okul düzeyinde tek tip biçimde uygulanmadığını; aksine, okulun kurumsal ekolojisi, olanakları, liderlik anlayışı ve öğretmen bilişi doğrultusunda farklı biçimlerde hayata geçirildiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu durum, öğretim programını teknik bir uygulama süreci olarak değil, bağlam içinde yeniden yorumlanan kültürel bir uygulama olarak ele alan sosyokültürel program anlayışıyla örtüşmektedir (Ball vd., 2012; Johnson, 2009). Devlet ve özel okul arasında gözlenen farklılıklar, öğretimsel niteliğin yalnızca öğretmen niteliğiyle açıklanamayacağını; sınıf mevcudu, fiziksel öğrenme ortamları, zenginleştirme kapasitesi ve kurumsal önceliklerin pedagojik karar alma süreçlerini belirgin biçimde şekillendirdiğini göstermektedir (Backhaus, 2019; Sevim & Dursun, 2021; Valizadeh, 2021). Bu bağlamda, bazı özel okul bağlamlarında İngilizcenin daha bütüncül ve zenginleştirilmiş bir öğrenme alanı olarak konumlandırılması, okul türünden ziyade, programı genişletmeye olanak tanıyan kurumsal koşullarla ilişkilidir (Ewert, 2013; Koç, 2019). Sonuçlar, devlet okullarında İngilizce öğretiminin niteliğini artırmaya yönelik politikaların yalnızca program metinlerine odaklanmak yerine, okul liderliğinin pedagojik vizyonunu güçlendirmeye, öğretmenlerin bağlama duyarlı uygulama kapasitelerini desteklemeye ve öğretmen eğitiminde programı eleştirel biçimde yorumlama becerilerini geliştirmeye yönelmesi gerektiğine işaret etmektedir. Gelecek araştırmalar, farklı sosyoekonomik bağlamlarda daha geniş örneklemlerle benzer karşılaştırmalar yaparak, programın hayata geçirilmesine ilişkin kurumsal örüntüleri ve bu örüntülerin öğrenci öğrenme deneyimleri üzerindeki etkilerini daha kapsamlı biçimde inceleyebilir.