CEFR Proficiency Levels of Secondary School English Textbooks' Word Lists in Türkiye

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Abstract

Textbooks are crucial in foreign language classes, especially in young learners. It is almost impossible to observe a foreign language class conducted without a textbook. The quality assessment of younger learners' textbooks is, therefore, vital considering their importance as language teaching materials. In this sense, this study sets out to investigate the accordance of the vocabulary list of purposefully selected up-to-date secondary school (5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grade) English textbooks in the 2023-2024 academic year from 'The Ministry of National Education Publishing' approved by the Board of Education in accordance with the proficiency levels of CEFR. All the vocabulary lists of four books were subjected to a web-based analysis program called Text Inspector to determine their CEFR proficiency levels and compare the results to the intended level in the English Curriculum. The web-based program was used to analyze the English Vocabulary Profile of the books examined ad polysemous words were manually verified to ensure correct level assignment. According to the English Curriculum Model approved by MoNE, stage 2, comprising the 5th – 6th grades, equals A1 level (Breakthrough) of CEFR and stage 3, compromising 7th – 8th grade, equals A2 level (Waystage) of CEFR. Thus, similar material types and language functions are given to the students, corresponding to their CEFR levels. The results obtained from the data show that the vocabulary listed for 5th and 6th grade exceeds intended A1 level by 66.10 percent and 72.89 percent respectively. In 7th grade, the vocabulary exceeding the intended A2 level is 63.80 percent and in 8th grade it reaches 70.80 percent. Thus, it is possible to conclude that the vocabulary in the textbooks published by MoNE is quite above the students' comprehension skills based on the premises designated by the Ministry following the CEFR. The results matter for textbook and curriculum design. Limitations include the exclusion of context usage of the vocabulary as well as in-text frequency. Therefore, future research could include data based on student performance and teachers' perception of the vocabulary. It is to further research by incorporating the skills and grammar components.

Keywords: CEFR; textbooks; word list; English Vocabulary Profile.

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1. Introduction

Textbooks play a crucial role in foreign language classes (Hutchinson & Tores, 1994) as they provide structure and a guide for both students and teachers (Jordan & Gray, 2019). The quality assessment of textbooks is, therefore, vital considering the pervasiveness of them as language teaching materials. Secondary School English Curriculum developed by the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in 2018 openly states that "the principles and descriptors of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) were closely followed." (MoNE, 2018, p. 3). As such, it is expected that English textbooks developed by MoNE to be followed in secondary schools in Türkiye would align with the proficiency levels described in CEFR.

This study sets out to investigate whether the vocabulary included in secondary school English textbooks for grades 5, 6, 7, and 8 published in 2023 by the Turkish MoNE and approved by the Board of Education in Türkiye aligns with the proficiency levels outlined in the CEFR. According to the Secondary School English Curriculum, 5th and 6th grade students are expected to be at Stage 2 which corresponds to A1 level (Breakthrough) according to CEFR. This implies that 5th and 6th grade students can understand very simple expressions and use them to meet their needs in everyday life. They can introduce themselves or someone else and they can ask simple questions (for example, place of residence, relationships, things they have, etc.) and answer the same questions (MoNE, 2018). The students at this level can carry out simple conversations when their interlocuter speaks slowly and clearly. 5th and 6th-grade students have 3 hours of English classes each week and the curriculum suggest that the main focus would be on developing listening and speaking skills, while limited attention will be given to developing reading and writing skills at these levels.

The 7th and 8th grade students, on the other hand, are at Stage 3 which corresponds to A2 level (Waystage) in CEFR. They have 4 hours of English classes each week at these levels and the primary objective of English teaching is defined as developing students' listening and speaking skills while developing reading and writing skills remains as the secondary aim in the curriculum (MoNE, 2018). Students at the A2 level are expected to understand simple expressions and expressions that are frequently used in areas that are essential for communication (e.g., simple and personal information, family information, shopping, close circle, and work). They can communicate during easy and common activities with a simple exchange of information about familiar topics. They can describe their education and their immediate environment in simple ways and explain the subjects that correspond to their basic needs (MoNE, 2018).

Given the centrality of vocabulary in language learning, it is crucial to ensure that the vocabulary presented in textbooks is appropriate for the intended proficiency level of the

students. Thus, this study aims to investigate the degree to which the textbooks match the language competence expected at each level according to CEFR in the vocabulary presented in secondary school English textbooks in Türkiye.

To carry out this study, a comprehensive corpus of all the vocabulary used in the selected textbooks was compiled. The vocabulary was extracted from the end-of-book wordlists for each unit of the textbooks. The vocabulary in these wordlists is the primary focus of each unit and align with the themes of these units. The vocabulary from the wordlists is extensively used in each unit to ensure comprehension. Each word in the corpus was analyzed using a web-based program called Text Inspector based on English Vocabulary Profile (EVP). Each type (unique item) and token (their frequency) were manually verified to match the correct CEFR levels. The vocabulary lists were then compared to the descriptors provided in the CEFR for the A1 (Breakthrough) and A2 (Waystage) levels, which correspond to 5th-6th and 7th-8th grade, respectively. The analysis aimed to identify whether the vocabulary in these textbooks is consistent with the expected proficiency levels. This study seeks to assess the extent of alignment or misalignment of learners' proficiency level and identify potential impact on comprehension by comparing the frequency and complexity of the words used in the textbooks with the CEFR guidelines.

1.1. Literature review

Textbooks play a fundamental role in language classrooms, serving as essential tools for both teaching and learning (Brown, 2001). As the most common instructional materials, textbooks provide structure and support for language instruction, making them indispensable in the educational process. Cunningsworth (1995) emphasizes that textbooks serve multiple functions, they provide a source for activities and ideas, a resource for learning and teaching as well as a support and a syllabus for teachers with less experience. Despite the emergence of innovative digital tools and resources (Littlejohn, 2011), textbooks remain a core component of the curriculum, facilitating the learning process and enhancing students' understanding of the language (Besser et al., 1998; Jordan & Gray, 2019). English textbooks have always played a pivotal role in supporting students' language acquisition and their ability to apply new knowledge (Besser et al., 1998; Brown, 2001; López-Barrios & de Debat, 2014). Their value lies in providing a structured environment conducive to learning.

Textbooks, as central resources in language learning, not only provide structure and support for teaching but also shape the language input that students receive (Richards, 2001; O'Neill, 1982). Among the various components of textbooks, vocabulary holds particular significance, as it directly influences learners' ability to understand and use the language effectively (Criado, 2009). Nation (2001) emphasizes that sufficient vocabulary knowledge leads to language use, and language use over time increases

vocabulary knowledge. Vocabulary knowledge is also essential because if learners do not have a sufficient amount of vocabulary, they will not be able to use the structures and functions (Rivers, 1983; Uchihara & Harada, 2018) which will result in a lack of proficiency in reading, writing, speaking and listening skills.

As such, the way vocabulary is presented in textbooks—its selection, frequency, and context—plays a crucial role in language learning. Since vocabulary is foundational to communication and comprehension, how often and in what contexts words appear in textbooks can determine how well students retain and apply them in real-life situations (Criado, 2009; Lessard-Clouston, 2013). According to Cameron (2001) "The amount of mental work done by learners affects how well a new word is engraved in memory; the more learners have to think about a word and its meaning, the more likely they are to remember it" (p. 85).   For that reason, the frequent and repeated use of newly encountered words is a necessary component of word knowledge for language acquisition and processing (Ellis, 2002). Repeated exposure to key vocabulary, particularly in meaningful and varied contexts, helps reinforce word knowledge and promotes its integration into learners' active language use. (Criado, 2009; Lessard-Clouston, 2013). Therefore, it is essential that textbooks provide a well-balanced and structured approach to vocabulary, ensuring that words are introduced and revisited with sufficient frequency and in relevant contexts (Criado, 2009). More importantly, vocabulary included in textbooks should align with students' proficiency levels.

Numerous frequency-based studies have examined the vocabulary presented in various textbooks to investigate to what extent they include high-frequency vocabulary in English. For instance, a study by Matsuoka and Hirsh (2010) investigated the New Headway Student's Book Upper-Intermediate coursebook using the computer program Range. Their findings revealed that the coursebook covered 93.4% of the 2000 words from the General Service List (GSL) by West (1953), and when combined with the Academic Word List (AWL) by Coxhead (2000), this coverage increased to 95.5%. A similar study by O'Loughlin (2012) analyzed the New English File coursebook series (three books), spanning levels from Elementary to Intermediate, using the lexical program VocabProfile. The study found that learners completing the series would be exposed to 1435 words from the most frequent 2000 words in English, thus ensuring substantial exposure to high-frequency vocabulary throughout the coursebooks.

Many studies in the field (Criado, 2009; Tsai, 2015; Criado, 2017; Mai, Lien, & Trang, 2024) focus on frequency and whether or not they teach the most frequent 1000, 2000, and 3000 vocabulary list by Nation (2001). Mai, Lien, & Trang (2024) observed 8 different 10th grade English textbooks taught in Vietnam for differences in their lexical demand and features, length and diversity. They observed the lexical demand to be high and lower the vocabulary learning and the length of these textbooks to differ from each other significantly. They calculated that the optimal comprehension of these textbooks requires

98% coverage and students need to know 3000 to 4000 word-families to achieve this comprehension level.

Criado (2009) analyzed lexical frequency and distribution of a B1 level commercial English textbook taught at the university level in Spain. The number of unique words in the book is 3,225. Criado (2009) specifically mentions how students have 100 hours in the academic year and this would mean students should learn 32 new words every hour of English classes from the textbook. However, even though the textbook includes a lot of distinct words (types), these types are from different most frequent wordlists there are beyond the first 1000. Criado (2009) concludes the types that belong to low occurrence frequency could hinder memorization and acquisition and ignoring the most frequent wordlists could also diminish the communicative potential of the vocabulary learned. In another study Criado (2017) investigated the lemmas of three commercial textbooks (Elementary level, Pre-Intermediate level and Intermediate level) from the same series which ranges from A1 to B2 according to CEFR, targeted at adult learners. The results showed that the analyzed textbooks did not have an adequate distribution of words for the ranges of most frequent words suitable for each textbook's assumed CEFR level. These books again like the previous study exceeded the requirements of CEFR and students learning rates.

Vocabulary knowledge requires guidelines for effective learning and acquisition (Lessard-Clouston, 2013). Wordlists play a critical role in supporting the vocabulary learning and acquisition process (Schmitt,1997; Hoshino, 2010; Schmitt & Schmitt, 2020; Hirsh and Coxhead, 2009; Laufer & Nation, 2012; Yamamoto, 2014). They serve as an essential resource (Kwary & Jurianto, 2017; Lessard-Clouston, 2013) and a valuable tool for improving learners' comprehension and facilitating their exposure to language (Durrant, 2016) in the form of a more focused learning material (Kwary & Jurianto, 2017). Wordlists are known to help ESL/EFL students to learn the language (Kwary & Jurianto, 2017; Lessard-Clouston, 2013; Yamamoto, 2014).

Wordlists require attention to the needs of the students, and creating a wordlist without attention to the needs of the students might not bear high effectiveness (Kwary & Jurianto, 2017). Therefore, English teachers might not be sure which wordlist to use. They can use the wordlists in their own coursebook created by their government which is usually locally published and is supposed to focus on specific vocabulary the students need to acquire to learn the language easily. However, it is not certain whether the wordlists in the textbooks are indeed the vocabulary the students should focus and learn.

The proficiency level of the students can help determine which vocabulary to be included in the wordlists for students to learn (Towns, 2020). Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) organises language proficiency in six levels, A1 to C2 (Council of Europe, 2001) and also includes vocabulary lists that corresponds to each of the levels (What is the CEFR?, n.d.). Therefore, wordlists created

in accordance with the CEFR, might be beneficial for vocabulary knowledge and acquisition (Towns, 2020).

One prominent example of a wordlist is the English Vocabulary Profile (EVP), an online resource that categorizes vocabulary into six CEFR levels, including words, phrases, phrasal verbs, and idioms (Capel, 2012). By aligning vocabulary with the CEFR proficiency levels, the EVP offers insights into the vocabulary knowledge required at each stage of language development, helping learners and educators track progress and target appropriate vocabulary for further study (Yusoff et al., 2022).

Towns (2020) observed the university level course called "Academic Reading and Writing" which uses Pathways 3 (CEFR level B2) in Thailand. The vocabulary lists in the textbook was analyzed using EVP. The results showed that the textbook was intended for B2 level of CEFR and the the intended level was achived. But learning additional B2 level vocabulary would be helpful for the students.

Studies about the accordance of the level of the vocabulary presented in the textbook with CEFR are scarce. In fact, the researchers were able to find only one similar study. Arslan & Eraslan (2019) observed the vocabulary activities in the 8th grade English textbook prepared and approved by MoNE in Türkiye. According to the curriculum, the 8th grade textbook, called Mastermind, is in accordance with CEFR and is at A2 level. The analysis of the words and phrases in the vocabulary activities were analyzed using Text Inspector and it was observed that the vocabulary in the textbook covers a small amount of words which correspond to A2 level of CEFR.

While most of these studies highlight the importance of frequent exposure to high-frequency vocabulary in language textbooks, there remains a gap in research specifically focusing on the alignment between vocabulary presented in textbooks and the proficiency levels outlined in the CEFR, particularly in the context of secondary school English textbooks in Türkiye. The current literature primarily examines established coursebooks with a focus on high-frequency vocabulary coverage, but little research has been conducted on how well these textbooks align with the CEFR's specific vocabulary descriptors, especially in relation to the vocabulary presented in textbooks approved by national educational bodies such as the Turkish Ministry of National Education. This study fills this gap by evaluating the vocabulary presented in selected MoNE-approved English textbooks for grades 5, 6, 7, and 8, analyzing their alignment with CEFR levels, and exploring whether the vocabulary is appropriately tailored to the proficiency levels of learners. This research is crucial for ensuring that textbooks provide learners with the right vocabulary exposure for their proficiency level because misalignment in the intended CEFR level of textbook wordlists could interfere with comprehension due to excessive difficulty which could further affect motivation and proficiency poorly. Thereby this study offers a chance to enhance the effectiveness of language learning in the Turkish educational context.

2. Method

2.1. The textbooks

The purpose of the English Curriculum (MoNE, 2018) is to increase the attention of students to learn the target language and provide the opportunity for learners to use the language in real life. It is aimed to help students learn the related basic vocabulary with the correct pronunciations through the use of themes. For clarity themes are in Table 1.

Table 1. Themes of MoNE textbooks for secondary school

Grades	CEFR Level	Themes
5		The city students live in, health issues, daily chores, hobbies, social activities, emotions and sports activities
6	A1	Professions, food, personal tastes, daily lives and weather, emotions, planets, environment and democracy, and holidays
7		appearance and personality, sports, biography, wild animals, television programs, celebrations, dreams, public buildings, environment and planets
8	A2	friendship, youth, cooking, phone calls, Internet, adventure, tourism, housework, science and natural disasters

The English textbooks created by MoNE doesn't have a specific name besides the 8th grade textbook which is named "Mastermind", the other textbooks share the common name "English Coursebook". All the English textbooks have 10 units related to the themes previously presented and include a consolidated wordlist.

Table 2. Units of MoNE textbooks for secondary school

Grades	CEFR Level	Units
5		Hello!, My Town, Games and Hobbies, My Daily Routine, Health, Movies, Party Time, Fitness, Animal Shelter and Festivals.
6	A1	Life, Yummy Breakfast, Downtown, Weather and Emotion, At the Fair, Occupations, Holidays, Bookworms, Saving the Planet, Democracy.
7		Appearance and Personality, Sports, Biographies, Wild Animals, Television, Celebrations, Dreams, Public Buildings, Environment, Planets.
8	A2	Friendship, Teen Life, In the Kitchen, On the Phone, The Internet, Adventures, Tourism, Chores, Science, Natural Forces

2.2. English Vocabulary Profile

In this study, the English Vocabulary Profile (EVP) was used to analyze the vocabulary presented in selected secondary school English textbooks published by the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE). The EVP is a comprehensive resource that is based on extensive research using the Cambridge Learner Corpus (CLC) and Cambridge

English Corpus (CEC) (Compiling the EVP, n.d.), and aims to assign CEFR levels to vocabulary and their individual meaning (Capel, 2010). It includes British, American and other variations of English as it draws from real-world language data, providing an accurate representation of the vocabulary learners are likely to encounter and use at various proficiency levels.

The EVP extract categories from CEFR and organizes vocabulary into six proficiency levels, ranging from A1 (Beginner) to C2 (Proficient), and includes not only individual words but also phrases, idioms, and collocations from corpus-based evidence and provides a holistic view of learners' language use and comprehension (Compiling the EVP, n.d.). The developers of EVP make sure any word or phrase they draw from the corpuses previously mentioned matches with the meaning and the use by EFL learners (Capel, 2012).

Therefore, with an investigation and criterion tools such as EVP, it is essential to use it to examine whether the textbooks created and approved by the Ministry of National Education are exposed to a sort of selection for the lexical content of the vocabulary in the English textbooks. By examining the vocabulary in the textbooks against the EVP's CEFR-aligned corpus, this study ensures that the vocabulary is appropriately leveled for the intended learners, allowing for a direct comparison between textbook content and the CEFR descriptors.

2.3. Text Inspector

Text Inspector is an online text analysis tool developed in 2011 by Stephen Bax, a distinguished professor in applied linguistics. This tool generates detailed statistical information about the analyzed text, including data on sentence count, token count, type count, syllable count, and type/token ratio, among other metrics. For the purposes of this study, which focuses on the vocabulary lists of secondary school English textbooks, the token and type counts were utilized (Statistics and Readability Scores, n.d.)

The token count refers to the total number of words in the text, including repetitions, while the type count represents the number of unique words. For example, as illustrated by Text Inspector, in the sentence "The cat sat on the mat," there are six tokens (one for each word) but only five types, as "the" is repeated. This distinction between tokens and types is crucial for understanding the frequency and diversity of vocabulary used in the textbooks.

Moreover, Text Inspector provides a detailed breakdown of how the tokens and types align with the CEFR proficiency levels, ranging from A1 (Breakthrough) to C2 (Mastery). In addition to these CEFR levels, the analysis includes an "unlisted" category that accounts for proper nouns, numbers, and misspellings. This comprehensive analysis allows for a precise evaluation of the vocabulary in the textbooks, offering insights into

how well the language content corresponds to the expected proficiency levels of students and helping assess the overall appropriateness of the textbooks used in secondary school education.

2.4. Data Analysis Procedure

The end-of-the book wordlists for each unit from each textbook were transcribed into four documents, each corresponding to a grade. The transcription included every vocabulary in all of the wordlists, no words, phrases or expressions were excluded. The documents were proofread and ensured to have no differences than the textbooks. The documents were separately uploaded to Text Inspector for the assessment of the appropriate level of the vocabulary using EVP. The system the Text Inspector use assumes the lowest CEFR level for a word or a phrase. However, as is known, words have more than one meaning. To ensure accurate analysis, the website offers a manual 'Update' option which allows the researchers to choose the correct level based on the meaning. For instance, the word 'hunt' has more than one meaning. The following figure shows the process of how meaning-based level choosing occurs.

Figure 1. Manual data update (English Vocabulary Profile (EVP), n.d.)

After the manual update is completed by the researchers, the program assigns CEFR levels to the vocabulary input based on EVP. The results of the analysis illustrate the appropriateness of the levels of each textbook's end-of-book wordlists for each grade of English learners.

Limitations of the CEFR level alignment based on end-of-book wordlist to the intended level of learners include the exclusion of context usage of the vocabulary as well as the in-text frequency. The four skills activities and grammar points are not included in the study which might contribute to the full analysis of the textbooks' intended level.

This study aims to investigate whether the vocabulary in the end-of-book wordlists align with the CEFR levels as claimed by the curriculum designers of the secondary school English textbooks approved by MoNE in Türkiye. This investigation is conducted through the Text Inspector, explained in detail previously, and the results are presented in the next section.

3. Results and Discussion

According to the English Curriculum Model approved by MoNE (2018), there are 3 stages for young learners. At stage 2, which corresponds to A1 level of CEFR, the course is conducted for 3 hours a week, comprising "the 5th – 6th grades, similar material types and language functions are given" (MEB, 2018, p.9).

Following is the results taken from the analysis from Text Inspector based on the EVP. Figure 2 represents the breakdown of the vocabulary for the 5th grade textbook and it shows the number and percentage of vocabulary assigned to each CEFR level and the unlisted vocabulary based on the type and token information. Since the study does not focus on frequency, the types (unique words) are described following the figure.

Word List	Types	Tokens	cumul% Types	cumul% Tokens
A1	100 (33.90%)	121 (37.93%)	33.9%	37.9%
A2	77 (26.10%)	78 (24.45%)	60.0%	62.4%
B1	72 (24.41%)	72 (22.57%)	84.4%	85.0%
B2	19 (6.44%)	19 (5.96%)	90.8%	90.9%
C1	1 (0.34%)	1 (0.31%)	91.2%	91.2%
C2	1 (0.34%)	1 (0.31%)	91.5%	91.5%
Unlisted	25 (8.47%)	27 (8.46%)	~100%	~100%

Figure 2. MoNE 5th Grade English Textbook Vocabulary List Statistics

The 5th Grade English Textbook published by MoNE includes in total of 10 units. A word list is included at the end of the textbook and divided into the units in the textbook. The vocabulary list introduces us to 295 unique vocabularies (types) in total. On the other hand, the total token count of the reading texts is 319. This numerical difference between types and tokens shows the repetition of words like a, the, my, and so on.

The vocabulary includes all levels. When looking at the types (unique words), 33.90% of the total vocabulary which equals 100 words is A1 level and 26.10% of the vocabulary with 77 types is A2 level. However, the rest of the vocabulary includes words that are in B1 level with 72 types (24.41%), B2 level with 19 types (6.44%), C1 level (Advanced) with 1 type (0.34%) and C2 level with 1 type (0.34%) as well as some unlisted words (25 types, 8.47%) reaching proficient user level vocabulary. Words put into the unlisted part include misspellings, proper nouns and numbers. The vocabulary that is above the intended A1 level and unlisted vocabulary, consists of 66.10% of the vocabulary listed in the textbook article.

Following is the results taken from the analysis from Text Inspector based on the EVP. Figure 3 represents the breakdown of the vocabulary for the 6th grade textbook and it shows the number and percentage of vocabulary assigned to each CEFR level and the

unlisted vocabulary based on the type and token information. Since the study does not focus on frequency, the types (unique words) are described following the figure.

Word List	Types	Tokens	cumul% Types	cumul% Tokens
A1	45 (27.11%)	51 (29.14%)	27.1%	29.1%
A2	43 (25.90%)	43 (24.57%)	53.0%	53.7%
B1	42 (25.30%)	45 (25.71%)	78.3%	79.4%
B2	13 (7.83%)	13 (7.43%)	86.1%	86.8%
C1	9 (5.42%)	9 (5.14%)	91.6%	92.0%
C2	2 (1.20%)	2 (1.14%)	92.8%	93.1%
Unlisted	12 (7.23%)	12 (6.86%)	~100%	~100%

Figure 3. MoNE 6th Grade English Textbook Vocabulary List Statistics

The 6th Grade English Textbook published by MoNE includes a word list at the end of the textbook divided into the units in the textbook. The reading texts introduce us to 166 unique vocabularies (types) in total. On the other hand, the total token count of the reading texts is 175.

The vocabulary includes all levels. When looking at the types (unique words), 27.11% of the total vocabulary which equals 45 words is A1 level and 25.91% of the vocabulary with 43 types is A2 level. However, the rest of the vocabulary includes words that are in B1 (42 types, 25.30%), B2 (13 types, 7.83%), C1 (9 types, 5.42%) and C2 (2 types, 1.20%) levels as well as some unlisted words (12 types, 7.23%) reaching proficient user level vocabulary. The vocabulary that is above the intended A1 level and unlisted vocabulary, consists of 72,89% of the vocabulary listed in the textbook.

According to the English Curriculum Model approved by MoNE (2018), the 7th and 8th grades are stage 3 which corresponds to A2 level of CEFR, the course is conducted for 4 hours a week, and "additional materials and functions are used along with those applied at stages 1 and 2" (MEB, 2018, p.9).

Following is the results taken from the analysis from Text Inspector based on the EVP. Figure 4 represents the breakdown of the vocabulary for the 7th grade textbook and it shows the number and percentage of vocabulary assigned to each CEFR level and the unlisted vocabulary based on the type and token information. Since the study does not focus on frequency, the types (unique words) are described following the figure.

Word List	Types	Tokens	cumul% Types	cumul% Tokens
A1	24 (14.72%)	26 (15.38%)	14.7%	15.4%
A2	35 (21.47%)	35 (20.71%)	36.2%	36.1%
B1	60 (36.81%)	63 (37.28%)	73.0%	73.4%
B2	24 (14.72%)	25 (14.79%)	87.7%	88.2%
C1	12 (7.36%)	12 (7.10%)	95.1%	95.3%
C2	2 (1.23%)	2 (1.18%)	96.3%	96.4%
Unlisted	6 (3.68%)	6 (3.55%)	~100%	~100%

Figure 4. MoNE 7th Grade English Textbook Vocabulary List Statistics

The 7th Grade English Textbook published by MoNE includes a word list at the end of the textbook divided into the units in the textbook. The reading texts introduce us to 163 unique vocabularies (types) in total. On the other hand, the total token count of the reading texts is 169.

The vocabulary provided includes all levels. When looking at the types (unique words), 14.72% of the total vocabulary which equals 24 words is A1 level and 21.47% of the vocabulary with 35 types is A2 level, combined they make 36.2% of the total vocabulary. However, the rest of the vocabulary includes words that are in B1 (60 types, 36.81%), B2 (24 types, 14.72%), C1 (12 types, 7.36%) and C2 (2 types, 1.23%) levels as well as some unlisted words (6 types, 3.68%) reaching proficient user level vocabulary. The vocabulary that is above the A2 level and unlisted vocabulary, consists of 63.80% of the vocabulary listed in the textbook.

Following is the results taken from the analysis from Text Inspector based on the EVP. Figure 5 represents the breakdown of the vocabulary for the 8th grade textbook, and it shows the number and percentage of vocabulary assigned to each CEFR level and the unlisted vocabulary based on the type and token information. Since the study does not focus on frequency, the types (unique words) are described following the figure.

Word List	Types	Tokens	cumul% Types	cumul% Tokens
A1	51 (11.04%)	71 (14.12%)	11.0%	14.1%
A2	84 (18.18%)	91 (18.09%)	29.2%	32.2%
B1	148 (32.03%)	154 (30.62%)	61.2%	62.8%
B2	92 (19.91%)	98 (19.48%)	81.2%	82.3%
C1	30 (6.49%)	30 (5.96%)	87.7%	88.3%
C2	14 (3.03%)	15 (2.98%)	90.7%	91.2%
Unlisted	43 (9.31%)	44 (8.75%)	~100%	~100%

Figure 5. MoNE 8th Grade English Textbook Vocabulary List Statistics

The 8th Grade English Textbook published by MoNE includes a word list at the end of the textbook divided into the units in the textbook. The reading texts introduce us to 462 unique vocabularies (types) in total. On the other hand, the total token count of the reading texts is 503.

The vocabulary provided includes all levels. When looking at the types (unique words), 11.04% of the total vocabulary which equals 51 words is A1 level and 18.18% of the vocabulary with 84 types is A2 level, combined they make 29.2% of the total vocabulary. However, the rest of the vocabulary includes words that are in B1 (148 types, 32.03%), B2 (92 types, 19.91%), C1 (30 types, 6.49%) and C2 (14 types, 3.03%) levels as well as some unlisted words (43 types, 9.31%) reaching proficient user level vocabulary. The vocabulary that is above the A2 level and unlisted vocabulary, consists of 70.80% of the vocabulary listed in the textbook.

To clarify the results, for 5th grade, we observe that two-thirds of the vocabulary from the end-of-book wordlists exceeds the A1 level of CEFR expectations which is the target of 5th grade textbook and the wordlists in it. This excessiveness suggests a potential overexposure to higher-level vocabulary. The other grade with a supposed intention of AI level teaching is the 6th grade which includes an even higher item percentage than 5th grade textbook which clashes with the A1 level intend of focusing on simpler expressions in the curriculum. The A2 level focused 7th and 8th grade textbooks' wordlists vocabulary also shows a similar pattern with 7th grade vocabulary being over the intended A2 level by two-thirds and 8th grade vocabulary in the wordlists being even higher than the previous. This misalignment between the intended level and the actual level of vocabulary in the wordlists of these textbooks could result in the limitation opportunities for scaffolding.

The present study focused of the appropriateness level of wordlists in the secondary school English textbooks used in Türkiye based on CEFR. Wordlists based on CEFR are one of the key ways to create vocabulary learning materials to increase vocabulary

knowledge and acquisition (Towns, 2020). Studies about the accordance of the level of vocabulary presented in the textbook with CEFR are scarce. Many studies in the field (Criado, 2009; Tsai, 2015; Criado, 2017; Mai, Lien, & Trang, 2024) focus on frequency of the words used. However, coverage is as important as the frequency. If the correct level of vocabulary is not chosen learners might still not be able to acquire the frequent vocabulary since it directly influences learners' ability to understand and use the language effectively (Criado, 2009). Vocabulary knowledge is also essential because if learners do not have a sufficient amount of vocabulary, they will not be able to use the structures and functions (Rivers, 1983; Uchihara & Harada, 2018) which will result in a lack of proficiency in reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. Mai, Lien, & Trang (2024) calculated optimal comprehension for textbooks requires 98% coverage. The present study shows that the coverage for A1 and A2 level in the wordlists of the textbooks never exceeds 37 percent, far below the minimal comprehension threshold.

One study which was familiar to the present study was conducted by Arslan & Eraslan (2019). They observed the vocabulary activities in the 8th grade English textbook in Türkiye. The results showed that the 8th grade vocabulary activities which were intended for A2 level were actually not suitable for students and they were beyond students' understanding. The present study extended to all grades in secondary schools but focused on wordlists rather than vocabulary activities. The vocabulary activities in the textbook are there to increase the acquisition of the vocabulary from the wordlists provided for each unit since the textbooks have thematic units. The results of the present study revealed that the misalignment of the vocabulary to the intended level begins as early as the beginning of secondary school, well beyond the last grade of secondary school.

When vocabulary is too advanced or excessively difficult, the classroom engagement of language learners might be reduced due to frustration and lack of motivation. However, this does not indicate that learners should not be exposed to vocabulary above their current understanding and comprehension level. Here, we should first introduce core A1 and A2 level vocabulary, followed by higher-level vocabulary which could be considered challenging for learners; thus, achieving scaffolding. If the repetition of higher-level vocabulary is spaced between practices, it could benefit the vocabulary acquisition (Ellis, 2002).

A possible ratio for curriculum developers could include a recalibration of the wordlists so that around 80 to 90 percent of the vocabulary could align with the intended CEFR levels which would leave around 10 to 20 percent portion for challenging higher-level vocabulary.

It should be mentioned that the present study focused only on the end-of-book wordlists and not on the contextual usage or teacher and student feedback. Furthermore, four skills and grammar activities were not included in the scope of the study. Therefore,

future studies could examine the vocabulary in skill-based activities and grammar alignment. Studies including learner performance linked to the textbook used could also provide a more comprehensive curriculum evaluation.

4. Conclusions

The analysis has revealed that a significant portion of the vocabulary included in the textbooks exceeds the intended proficiency level and included difficult vocabulary for the students at secondary school in Türkiye. Specifically, in the 5th grade textbook 66.10 percent of the vocabulary in the word lists is above the A1 level. In the 6th grade, this percentage rose to 72.89 percent. Similarly, in the 7th-grade textbook, 63.80 percent of the vocabulary exceeds the A2 level, and in the 8th-grade textbook, the percentage increases to 70.80 percent. At the highest rate, the CEFR level of vocabulary does not even reach 40 percent, which is far lower than the comprehension threshold. This misalignment could hinder comprehension and the motivation of the learners due to cognitive burden since learners now must struggle with a heavy load of higher-level vocabulary which in turn could also hinder their progress with four reading, writing, speaking and listening, and grammar.

The learning of the language cannot only be achieved through teaching young learners the intended level and scaffolding students to build on the knowledge they have is important since introducing higher-level vocabulary can stimulate learner growth. However, the results obtained from the data indicate that the textbooks approved and published by MoNE are quite above the students' comprehension skills. All things put aside, the levels which are seen as appropriate by MoNE are A1: Basic Level User (Breakthrough) for 5th and 6th grade, A2: Basic Level User (Waystage) for 7th grade and 8th grade. It can be observed that all of the textbooks fail to achieve what was aimed. When given a heavy load of vocabulary from each proficiency level beyond their understanding, it is inevitable for students to feel lost when exposed to the mentioned vocabulary. It leaves one in wonder, which procedures the textbooks went under before they were approved as the official English secondary school textbooks across the country.

A more effective design for curriculum developers and textbook authors could include a recalibration of the wordlists to match the target CEFR levels by prioritizing target-level coverage of roughly 80 to 90 percent and leaving a 10 to 20 percent for carefully selected challenging items of higher-level vocabulary to provide scaffolding. Such balance would allow learners to be exposed to essential language knowledge before encountering more complex structures, thereby, sustaining motivation to learn the target language, English.

It is important to remember that this study focused only on the end-of-book wordlists of secondary school English textbooks of 2023-2024 academic year in Türkiye. Therefore, this study does not reflect upon previous materials as well as any vocabulary or other skill-based, and grammar activities from the analyzed textbooks, and contextual use.

Nevertheless, curriculum designers and textbook authors should revise the vocabulary presented in the textbooks.

Beyond the vocabulary profile examination, future studies should investigate the vocabulary activities in the textbooks along with activities related to reading, writing, speaking, listening, and grammar to have a more contextual examination. Future research should also incorporate textbooks from primary school and high school for a comprehensive analysis, and research about student performance and teacher insight would be invaluable to real-world impact of vocabulary.

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