

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

BRIDGING CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION: A
COMPARATIVE POLICY STUDY ON INTEGRATING ART
AND TECHNOLOGY INTO ENGLISH LANGUAGE
TEACHING IN TURKEY

by
KAMAR MOSTAFA EL SADDIK

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ABSTRACT OF THE PROJECT OF

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This study examines how recent English Language Teaching (ELT) policies in Turkey frame the integration of creativity, visual arts, technology, and project-based learning (PBL), and how these policy intentions are reflected in classroom practice. The study adopts a qualitative design, combining document analysis of key policy texts, including the 2018 ELT curriculum, the Education Vision 2023, and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), with a thematic synthesis of empirical studies published after 2018. A PRISMA-informed approach was used to systematically select studies focusing on grades 2 to 8 in the Turkish context.

The findings indicate that policy documents strongly promote learner-centered pedagogy, digital integration, and twenty-first-century skills. However, a persistent gap exists between policy intentions and classroom implementation. Although teachers generally hold positive attitudes toward innovative practices, their application remains limited and inconsistent. Creative and technology-supported approaches are often implemented in intervention-based contexts rather than in routine teaching. Similarly, visual arts are used as supplementary tools, and PBL is rarely applied due to structural constraints such as time limitations and exam-oriented systems.

Overall, the study highlights partial alignment between policy and practice, emphasizing the need for stronger support to translate policy into effective classroom implementation.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ELT	English Language Teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
MoNE	Ministry of National Education (Turkey)
EBA	Education Information Network (Eğitim Bilişim Ağı)
PBL	Project-Based Learning
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
VR	Virtual Reality
4Cs	Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Creativity
PRISMA	Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses
STEAM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of The Problem

English has become the world's leading lingua franca, shaping communication, education, and policy worldwide (Kırkgöz, 2009). Contemporary international educational discussions view English Language Teaching (ELT) not only as a way to improve linguistic accuracy but also as a means to promote twenty-first-century skills, especially the “4Cs”: communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking (Orak & Al-Khresheh, 2021).

Despite widespread acknowledgment that ELT must respond to the demands of the twenty-first century, English instruction in many educational contexts continues to rely on traditional, teacher-centered, and examination-oriented approaches. As a result, learners are often provided with limited opportunities to engage in meaningful learning experiences that support higher-order thinking and creative language use (Orak & Al-Khresheh, 2021).

The Turkish context does not demonstrate more favorable outcomes than those reported internationally. In Turkey, ELT has undergone continuous reform efforts, particularly through alignment with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the Ministry of National Education’s Education Vision 2023. While these initiatives emphasize the development of twenty-first-century skills—such as creativity, innovation, and digital competence—their impact at the classroom level remains uneven. In particular, the integration of art and technology into

ELT practices is still limited, revealing a persistent gap between policy aspirations and instructional realities.

English has traditionally been prioritized among the foreign languages taught in Turkey and is compulsory, unlike French and German, which are generally offered as electives. This prioritization has been largely influenced by globalization and the growing need for international communication (Kırkgöz, 2009). Since the early 2000s, ELT in Turkey has experienced a series of curriculum reforms aimed at modernization and alignment with international standards. Central to these reforms has been the adoption of the CEFR, which provides a comprehensive framework for language learning, teaching, and assessment, with a strong emphasis on communicative competence (Council of Europe, 2001).

Three major curriculum reforms have been particularly influential since the 2000s. The 2005 reform, introduced by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), marked the first systematic attempt to align the national English curriculum with the CEFR (Acar, 2021). This reform signaled a move away from grammar-dominated instruction toward communicative approaches emphasizing listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Nevertheless, exam-oriented assessment systems and limited teacher preparation constrained the effective realization of these objectives in classroom practice (Hazar, 2021).

The 2013 reform further revised the curriculum by introducing age-appropriate CEFR-based learning outcomes (Acar, 2021). Although these changes strengthened curriculum coherence at the policy level, classroom instruction largely remained traditional, suggesting that implementation challenges persisted. The 2018 reform adopted a more explicit alignment with CEFR proficiency levels and incorporated

principles of the action-oriented approach, while also promoting twenty-first-century skills such as creativity and digital competence through project-based learning (Hazar, 2021). However, its effectiveness depended heavily on contextual factors, including teacher readiness, institutional support, and access to resources, which varied across schools and regions.

A further milestone was the launch of the Education Vision 2023 in 2019, which emphasized alignment with international standards and the development of learners equipped with twenty-first-century competencies. Although the document does not explicitly reference the CEFR, its focus on communication, digital literacy, skills development, and teacher professional development closely reflects the framework's core principles (MoNE, 2019). However, while these policies promote creativity, innovation, and digitalization, they offer limited guidance on systematically embedding the creative arts in ELT or on how technology can meaningfully support arts-based language learning. As with earlier reforms, implementation challenges remain, and the gap between policy design and classroom practice persists.

Rationale of The Study

Recent decades have witnessed significant reform efforts in Turkey's education system, reflecting a gradual shift from content-driven curricula toward a more values-based and competency-oriented model (Acar, 2021). These efforts have been consolidated in the Education Vision 2023, which addresses curriculum development, school infrastructure, and teachers' professional growth, while placing particular emphasis on foreign language education, especially English (Aksoy, 2021). Within this framework, technology-enhanced learning environments, interactive and game-based instructional approaches, and differentiated instruction are presented as key components

of effective and inclusive education. At the same time, the Vision underscores the central role of teachers' professional competence in achieving meaningful educational transformation (MoNE, 2019).

Recent ELT research also shows high expectations for English teaching to support the development of 21st-century skills through student-centered approaches, where creativity, innovation, and digital skills are essential. In line with this global trend, Turkey has officially updated its ELT curricula to match international frameworks like the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). National policy documents further highlight 21st-century skills and explicitly promote the integration of technology, innovation, and teacher training as major goals of educational reform (MoNE, 2019).

English Language Teaching (ELT) has therefore occupied a prominent position within these reform agendas. Since the early 2000s, ELT in Turkey has been shaped by the CEFR, which promotes communicative competence and learner-centered approaches to language education (Hazar, 2021). The alignment with the CEFR marked an important departure from grammar-focused instruction, particularly with the 2005 curriculum reform, which prioritized the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills (Acar, 2021). Subsequent revisions in 2013 further emphasized age-appropriate outcomes, while the 2018 curriculum more explicitly adopted the action-oriented approach and incorporated references to twenty-first-century skills such as creativity and digital competence, often through project-based activities (Hazar, 2021).

Despite these progressive policy intentions and strong alignment with international frameworks, classroom practices reported in the literature often remain inconsistent with stated policy commitments. Research suggests that implementation

varies widely across contexts, and that exam-oriented traditions, limited pedagogical guidance, and differences in teacher preparation continue to shape instructional realities. This discrepancy between ambitious policy frameworks and actual classroom practices points to a persistent implementation gap that has yet to be systematically examined.

Within this reform context, creativity has increasingly been acknowledged as a desirable educational outcome. Policy documents frequently refer to innovation, student-centered learning, and skills development; however, they offer limited clarification on how creativity should be understood or enacted in ELT classrooms. In particular, the role of artistic and visual forms of expression in supporting language learning remains underdeveloped at the policy level. While creativity is often mentioned alongside technology and digital competence, there is little explicit guidance on how to meaningfully integrate art-based practices into English teaching to support communicative and action-oriented learning.

Similarly, although technology is strongly emphasized as a driver of educational innovation, its pedagogical role is not always clearly articulated. Digital tools are frequently positioned as instruments of modernization, yet policies rarely explain how technology can be used to foster creative language use rather than facilitate content delivery. As a result, technology integration risks remaining purely technical rather than serving as a means of supporting higher-order thinking, multimodal communication, and creative expression in ELT (Yılmaz, 2011).

Project-based learning (PBL) has been promoted within recent curriculum reforms as a learner-centered approach aligned with communicative language teaching and the development of twenty-first-century skills (Baş, 2011). In ELT contexts, PBL provides a pedagogical structure that encourages meaningful language use through

extended tasks, collaboration, and the integration of multiple language skills, thereby creating conditions for incorporating creativity and technology into classroom practice (Baş, 2011). However, national policy documents often refer to PBL in general terms, without offering detailed guidance on how projects might systematically integrate artistic elements or digital tools in English classrooms. As a result, the potential of PBL to function as a bridge between policy aspirations and classroom practice remains insufficiently articulated.

Given these conditions, it is essential to examine ELT policies not only regarding their stated goals but also concerning how effectively they address the integration of creativity, art, and technology. While existing studies have documented the challenges teachers face when implementing innovative practices, fewer have systematically analyzed policy documents to uncover underlying assumptions, gaps, and areas of ambiguity. A qualitative policy analysis, supported by a review of empirical studies, is therefore suitable for understanding how policy intentions are formed and reflected in reported classroom practices.

This study examines the connection between visual art, technology, and project-based learning in ELT policy, aiming to close the gap between ambitious reform ideas and everyday teaching practices. It is especially relevant now, considering current curriculum updates and ongoing digital transformation efforts, and offers a chance to shape future ELT policies with evidence-based insights from policy analysis and classroom research.

Research questions

Turkey's recent ELT policy reforms have been shaped by adopting international frameworks like the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

(CEFR). In accordance with this framework, the 2018 ELT curriculum was revised, followed by the Education Vision 2023, to ensure alignment with global standards. These reforms place strong emphasis on technology integration, innovation, and the development of twenty-first-century skills. However, despite these policy commitments, a persistent gap remains between policy goals and classroom practices. This situation calls for a systematic investigation into how ELT policies frame creativity, art, and technology, and how these framings relate to reported classroom practices. Accordingly, this study is guided by a set of research questions and utilizes a qualitative policy analysis approach.

The following research questions guide the study.

1. How have Turkey's ELT policies over the last eight years framed the integration of art and technology, particularly through project-based learning (PBL)?
2. How has the implementation of these policies been reported in English language classrooms in Turkey during the last eight years, according to existing empirical studies?

The first research question investigates how ELT policies influence curriculum expectations regarding twenty-first-century skills, with particular emphasis on creativity, technology integration, and learner-centered approaches. The second research question draws on existing empirical studies to assess how these policy goals are reflected in classroom practice and to identify major challenges encountered during implementation following the launch of the Education Vision 2023.

To address these research questions, the study employs document analysis and a review of existing empirical research. The main policy documents analyzed include the Ministry of National Education's 2018 English Language Teaching curriculum, the

Education Vision 2023, and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001; 2020). While earlier curricula (2005, 2013) are discussed in the literature review to provide background context, the primary focus is on the most recent policy framework and its implementation. No new data are collected; instead, the study depends on published research to examine reported classroom practices and teachers' perspectives.

Four key analytical domains guide the analysis: (1) policy objectives, (2) implementation mechanisms, (3) evidence from classroom studies, and (4) identified challenges and gaps. Although challenges and opportunities are not treated as separate research questions, they are embedded within the analysis of implementation to provide a more comprehensive understanding of policy–practice alignment. Examining these domains allows the study to bridge policy discourse with classroom realities, helping to identify areas of alignment and disconnection. Findings are presented thematically to address the research questions and to inform the discussion of integrating art and technology into English Language Teaching (ELT) through project-based learning (PBL).

Significance of the study

This study is important because it addresses a long-standing gap between English Language Teaching (ELT) policies in Turkey and what actually happens in classrooms. Over the past twenty years, ELT reforms have increasingly emphasized innovation, digital literacy, and learner-centered approaches, particularly through alignment with international frameworks such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). These priorities are also part of the Education Vision 2023, which highlights technology integration, creativity, and teacher professional

development as key components of educational improvement (MoNE, 2019). Despite these commitments, research continues to show inconsistent implementation, indicating that policy goals are not always implemented or applied clearly.

At the policy level, this study helps clarify how creativity, art, and technology are addressed in Turkish ELT policy documents. While national curricula and strategic frameworks often mention twenty-first-century skills and digital competence, they tend to be broad and provide limited guidance on how creative or arts-based practices should support English language learning. By analyzing national ELT curricula and policy documents alongside international frameworks like the CEFR, this study identifies areas where policy language aligns, is unclear, or remains silent, offering a clearer view of how creativity and technology are positioned in ELT policy discussions.

The study also remains relevant to classroom practice, especially for English language teachers working within these policy frameworks. Teachers are increasingly encouraged to adopt project-based, technology-enhanced, and student-centered methods, yet they often do so under conditions shaped by exam-focused expectations and limited pedagogical guidance. Previous research has demonstrated that such constraints can affect how reforms are interpreted and implemented at the classroom level (Kırkgöz, 2007; Hazar, 2021). By drawing on existing empirical studies, this research highlights how teachers experience and respond to policy expectations around creativity and technology, without placing the sole responsibility on individual practitioners.

Additionally, the study is significant for curriculum development and teacher training. Teacher preparation programs and professional development efforts often depend on national curricula and policy documents to set instructional priorities. When

policy guidance on creativity, art, and technology is limited or unclear, it can influence teachers' ability to design and implement innovative, project-based learning activities in ELT. By pointing out gaps between policy intentions and actual classroom practices, this study offers insights that may help better align curriculum planning and teacher education with current ELT objectives (Acar, 2021; Aksoy, 2021).

From a research perspective, this study contributes to ELT scholarship by focusing on policy analysis rather than classroom intervention. While many studies examine technology use or creativity at the classroom level, fewer examine how these concepts are framed in ELT policy documents and how those framings relate to implementation. By combining qualitative policy analysis with an empirical review, this study offers a broader understanding of the connection between policy discourse and practice, especially concerning creativity, art, and digital competence.

Finally, the study is timely given ongoing curriculum revisions and continued investment in digital technologies in Turkey's education system. As reforms continue to evolve, there is a need to reflect on how existing policies have been interpreted and enacted before further changes are introduced. By examining ELT policies and reported classroom practices together, this study provides a foundation for more informed discussion around future ELT reforms and the role of creativity and technology in language education.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the literature on English Language Teaching (ELT) policies and practices, focusing on the integration of technology, creativity, visual arts, and project-based learning (PBL). It begins with an overview of ELT policy developments in Turkey and the influence of international frameworks such as the CEFR, followed by key thematic areas related to pedagogy and classroom practice. Drawing on both international and Turkish studies, the review highlights how these concepts have been understood and implemented in different contexts. Particular attention is given to the policy–practice gap, which reveals discrepancies between policy intentions and classroom realities, and informs the research questions guiding this study.

Educational Policies and ELT in Turkey

Since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, educational policy has been shaped as a key driver of national modernization and westernization, with each curriculum reform reflecting shifting priorities in national identity, values, and pedagogical goals (Kırkgöz, 2007). Early curricula emphasized content-heavy instruction to foster civic identity and transmit national culture and democratic values (Aksoy, 2024). The 1926 curriculum stressed agricultural production and local context, the 1936 curriculum aimed to develop republican and secular citizens, and the 1948 curriculum continued to advance national culture. A significant change emerged with the 1968 curriculum, which clarified educational aims and teaching methods through a more interdisciplinary and systematic approach (Aksoy, 2024).

This historical overview illustrates that early curricula in Turkey were largely content-driven and ideologically influenced, reflecting the nation-building priorities of the Republic's formative years. The 1968 curriculum, however, signaled a significant new era for the new transition toward a more systematic and modern educational framework.

The change from content-based to competency-based instruction is apparent in English Language Teaching (ELT). As Acar (2021) notes, curriculum reforms from 1991 to 2018 shifted from grammar-translation and teacher-centered methods to more communicative, constructivist approaches. The 2005 reform marked this shift, later reinforced by the 2018 curriculum, which included digital competence and creativity as key skills. Aksoy (2024) also highlights the focus on digital skills, creativity, and problem-solving.

A key part of these reforms is the changing role of teachers. Teachers are now seen more as guides or facilitators rather than just transmitters of knowledge. They are expected to organize curricula, learning environments, and materials to meet students' needs and support their development (Aksoy, 2024). This aligns with constructivist principles and learner-centered approaches in global language education.

These curriculum reforms were further supported by the introduction of the Education Vision 2023, published by the Ministry of National Education in 2018. The Vision offers a comprehensive policy framework that emphasizes skills-based education, digital transformation, innovation, and teacher professional development. In the context of foreign language education, Vision 2023 underscores the importance of communicative competence, technology-enhanced learning environments, and learner-centered approaches as key elements of educational quality (MoNE, 2019).

English now takes a central role in Turkey's education system. Kırkgöz (2007) notes that English is the only compulsory foreign language. This reflects globalization and Turkey's goal to integrate with Europe (Kırkgöz, 2009).

Since the early 2000s, ELT reforms have followed the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which guides curriculum and assessment. Instead of detailing the CEFR as a framework (which is covered in the next section), this subsection highlights how CEFR principles have been adopted in Turkish ELT policy. Turkey's initial alignment with the CEFR began with the 2005 curriculum reform, which introduced outcomes emphasizing communicative skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Hazar, 2021). Later revisions in 2013 and 2018 further strengthened this alignment by adopting an action-oriented approach and referencing twenty-first-century skills, such as creativity, collaboration, and digital competence (Acar, 2021). These priorities closely align with the goals outlined in the Education Vision 2023, which position technology integration, creativity, and skills development as key aspects of future-focused education.

Despite formal alignment with the CEFR, a key challenge persists: research consistently reveals a gap between policy objectives and classroom practice in Turkey. Although communicative competence is incorporated into policy, its practical implementation faces systemic barriers, including inadequate teacher training and a persistent, exam-focused culture that emphasizes form-centered instruction despite policy guidelines (Kırkgöz, 2007, 2009; Hazar, 2021). Consequently, traditional methods still dominate classroom practices, limiting the full achievement of CEFR's pedagogical aims.

To better understand how these policy reforms in Turkey have been shaped and constrained, it is important to consider the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) within its broader international context. Therefore, the following section explores the global principles, pedagogical orientations, and implementation challenges related to the CEFR in English Language Teaching.

CEFR in English Language Teaching: A Global Perspective

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has become a key reference point in English Language Teaching (ELT) worldwide, influencing curriculum design, teaching practices, and assessment methods across various educational settings (Figueras, 2012). At its core, the CEFR offers a standard system of proficiency levels (A1–C2), supported by action-oriented “can-do” descriptors that describe what learners can achieve with language in real-world communication situations. This system has helped education systems define learning outcomes more clearly and promote transparency and comparability across different contexts (Council of Europe, 2001).

Globally, the CEFR has been adopted not only as an assessment framework but also as a guide for teaching and learning. In many national education systems, it has influenced curriculum development, materials design, and examination specifications, promoting a shift toward learner-centered instruction and communicative competence (Figueras, 2012). When used as a comprehensive framework, the CEFR supports progress through level-appropriate tasks and highlights meaningful language use rather than mastery of isolated grammatical structures.

The global literature highlights several pedagogical strengths associated with CEFR-aligned practices. Studies examining the CEFR Action-Oriented Approach suggest that

CEFR-aligned pedagogy supports meaningful language use through task-based, goal-oriented activities that position learners as active participants in communication (Supunya, 2022). Within the CEFR, 'can-do' descriptors are intended to clarify learning progress and strengthen the connection among learning objectives, instruction, and assessment, particularly regarding communicative language use. Additionally, the framework's focus on formative assessment and portfolio-based approaches reflects a learner-centered orientation that promotes learner reflection and autonomy (Nikolaeva, 2019).

Despite these strengths, research consistently highlights challenges in implementing the CEFR across various contexts. One common issue involves teacher understanding and preparation. Although many teachers are familiar with the CEFR as a reference framework, they often lack enough training to apply its descriptors effectively in lesson planning, classroom teaching, and assessment (Supunya, 2022). For instance, several studies describe situations in which CEFR alignment primarily appears in curriculum documents and assessment benchmarks but does not fully translate into classroom planning, teaching methods, or instructional materials (Kassim & Harwati, 2023; Sahib & Stapa, 2021). In some national and local settings, global standards like the CEFR risk functioning as policy labels rather than active pedagogical tools, especially when contextual constraints, limited resources, and gaps in teacher training prevent a deeper integration of the framework's communicative and learner-centered principles into daily instruction (Kassim & Harwati, 2023; Sahib & Stapa, 2021). These patterns suggest that while CEFR levels provide a functional shared language for describing proficiency, they do not automatically transform classroom practices unless supported by ongoing professional development and curriculum support.

Another common challenge discussed in the literature is the tendency to view the CEFR merely as a tool for assessment. In many contexts, CEFR levels are closely tied to standardized tests and certification, while the framework's broader pedagogical and action-oriented aspects receive far less attention (Figueras, 2012; Nikolaeva, 2019). Such narrow perspectives diverge from the CEFR's original purpose, which is to support teaching, learning, and assessment in an integrated, learner-centered approach (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020). When high-stakes exam requirements mostly drive CEFR alignment, its emphasis on communicative language use, learner participation, and meaningful social actions risks being undervalued, especially in education systems where assessment pressures significantly influence classroom practice (Hazar, 2021; Sahib & Stapa, 2021).

The literature also highlights the importance of adapting the CEFR to specific contexts. Although the framework offers a common reference point, its descriptors and principles are meant to be customized to local curricula, learner profiles, and sociocultural environments (Council of Europe, 2001). Without such customization, a top-down approach to adopting the CEFR may lead to discrepancies between policy aims and classroom realities, thereby reducing its educational effectiveness.

Recent developments further underscore the CEFR's importance in global English-language teaching. The CEFR Companion Volume specifically addresses modern communication methods by including descriptors related to online interaction, digital mediation, and technology-based communication. These updates show that language use in the 21st century increasingly occurs in digital spaces such as online platforms, collaborative tools, and virtual discussions (Council of Europe, 2020).

Overall, the original CEFR and its Companion Volume offer a complete foundation for learner-centered, action-oriented, and technology-savvy approaches to teaching English.

Technology Integration in English Language Teaching

The integration of technology into English Language Teaching (ELT) is a key focus in modern educational reform and pedagogical discussions (Orak & Al-Khresheh, 2021). Continuous technological progress and the digital shift in communication have prompted education systems to reassess how they teach and learn languages (Council of Europe, 2020). In ELT, technology is frequently associated with innovation, better access to resources, and the development of skills needed for the twenty-first century. However, research indicates that the educational value of technology depends more on how it is integrated into teaching practices than on its mere presence in the classroom (Orak & Al-Khresheh, 2021; Aksoy, 2024).

Conceptualizing Technology Integration in ELT

Integrating technology into education has become increasingly essential in response to what Delgado et al. (2015) describe as the “digital revolution.” Continuous technological advancements have transformed not only how education is delivered but also where and under what conditions learning occurs. In this context, a growing body of research indicates that well-designed online and technology-supported learning environments can provide significant benefits in K–12 education, especially when technology aligns with pedagogical goals rather than serving as a mere supplement.

In the ELT literature, this distinction is often expressed as the difference between technology use and technology integration. While technology use might involve the occasional application of digital tools (Pakpahan, 2024), technology integration refers to the intentional incorporation of digital resources in ways that

support learning objectives, student engagement, and instructional coherence (Orak & Al-Khresheh, 2021). Since students today are already exposed to large amounts of information in their daily lives, educational technology influences not only the amount of information learners have access to but also its quality, especially when it promotes higher-order thinking and meaningful learning processes (Sukmawati & Harlita, 2018). In this way, technology does more than just provide access to information; it transforms learning by fostering analysis, interaction, and knowledge building across various contexts.

Within this broader shift, Orak & İnözü (2021) place technology within learner-centered and constructivist pedagogical approaches that emphasize active engagement and skill development. From this perspective, technology functions as an essential part of modern pedagogy rather than a neutral instructional tool. In language education, the focus shifts toward using technology to support learning through communication, creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration, rather than solely on content transmission (Orak & İnözü, 2021). Technology integration in ELT is most effective when it is embedded within pedagogical frameworks that prioritize meaningful language use, interaction, and learner participation (Orak & Al-Khresheh, 2021).

Technology and Communicative Language Learning

A main reason for integrating technology in ELT is its ability to support communicative language learning. Digital tools and online environments can provide learners with opportunities to use authentic language, interact with peers, and negotiate meaning beyond the physical classroom, thereby broadening opportunities for communicative practice across various contexts (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020). These practices align with communicative language teaching, which emphasizes meaningful

language use and interaction rather than isolated grammar drills and form-focused lessons (Council of Europe, 2001; Orak & Al-Khresheh, 2021).

These expectations for teacher roles are also reflected in international policy frameworks like UNESCO's ICT Competency Framework for Teachers (ICT-CFT). The ICT-CFT views technology integration not just as the development of technical skills but as a pedagogical and professional ability that enables teachers to create learner-centered, collaborative, and innovative learning environments (UNESCO, 2018). In this framework, teachers are expected to use technology to promote higher-order thinking, communication, and knowledge building, rather than simply transmitting information. This view supports the idea that successful technology integration in ELT relies on teachers' pedagogical choices and their capacity to match digital tools with instructional goals (UNESCO, 2018).

From a CEFR-focused perspective, technology can support important aspects of language use, including reception, production, interaction, and mediation (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020). Online platforms, collaborative tools, and digital communication spaces enable learners to participate in spoken and written interactions, respond to authentic texts, and engage in communicative tasks that reflect real-life language use (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020). The CEFR Companion Volume further broadens this view by recognizing online interaction and digital mediation as key parts of modern communication (Council of Europe, 2020). In this way, technology can improve communicative competence when used to promote meaningful interaction rather than merely deliver content.

Technology, Learner-Centered Pedagogy, and Teacher Roles

The integration of technology in ELT is closely linked to wider pedagogical shifts toward learner-centered instruction. Technology-supported environments can promote differentiated learning, offer opportunities for self-paced study, and enable learners to assume greater responsibility for their learning, all of which are commonly associated with increased learner autonomy and engagement (Orak & Al-Khresheh, 2021). These features are also highlighted in educational policy discussions as essential components of effective and inclusive learning environments (MoNE, 2019).

At the same time, integrating technology has important implications for the teacher's role. Instead of mainly acting as transmitters of knowledge, teachers are increasingly seen as facilitators and designers of learning experiences. Aksoy (2024) emphasizes that modern reforms position teachers as guides who organize learning environments, select appropriate materials, and support students' intellectual and communication skills. However, research also reveals challenges in turning these expectations into actual classroom practice, especially in settings where curriculum demands, assessment pressures, and limited professional development hinder pedagogical innovation (Hazar, 2021; Kırkgöz, 2007, 2009).

Technology Integration in ELT Policy Discourse

Technology integration is heavily emphasized in educational policy discussions, where it is often seen as a sign of modernization and innovation. Policy documents frequently highlight digital literacy, access to technology, and the use of digital tools as vital parts of improving education. In the Turkish context, the Education Vision 2023 promotes technology-enhanced learning environments and stresses the importance of developing digital skills among both teachers and students (MoNE, 2019).

Despite this emphasis, policy documents often describe technology integration in a broad and aspirational way. They tend to provide limited guidance on how to use technology effectively in ELT classrooms. As a result, technology is often seen more as an infrastructure or technical issue instead of an integral part of teaching strategies. Research on ELT reform repeatedly highlights this ongoing challenge: the gap between policy language and clear pedagogical guidance (Aksoy, 2024).

Challenges and Constraints in Technology Integration

Although technology integration is widely promoted, research consistently shows uneven implementation across educational settings. Common challenges include differences in teachers' digital skills, limited access to resources, inadequate professional development, and assessment systems that prioritize exam performance over communicative language use. In exam-focused systems, technology is often used to reinforce traditional methods rather than to support interactive and student-centered approaches (Hazar, 2021; Aksoy, 2024).

Hazar (2021) notes that such constraints can result in technology being used superficially, without significantly altering instructional practices. Similarly, Kırkgöz (2007, 2009) highlights the influence of systemic assessment pressures on classroom decision-making, suggesting that innovation may be constrained by long-standing educational traditions. These findings indicate that technology integration alone does not guarantee pedagogical change unless it is accompanied by coherent curriculum design, sustained teacher support, and alignment between learning objectives and assessment.

Positioning Technology in Relation to Creativity and Project-Based Learning

While technology integration is often discussed alongside creativity and project-based learning, the literature doesn't always treat these as fully connected components of teaching methods. Technology is usually seen as a means to support innovation, communication, and learner-centered approaches, but its direct link to creativity and extended project-based learning isn't always clearly outlined in policies or research (Figueras, 2012; Hazar, 2021). As a result, the following sections explore creativity and project-based learning as separate yet related aspects of ELT pedagogy. Analyzing technology in these contexts allows for a more targeted discussion of how digital tools can foster creative expression and project-based language learning, especially concerning policy aims and actual classroom practices.

Creativity and Visual Arts in English Language Teaching

Creativity has long been recognized as an essential part of effective language education, boosting both student motivation and deeper mental engagement. In this broader framework, visual art plays a particularly important role in English language teaching (ELT), as it provides learners with tangible, expressive ways to create, interpret, and share meaning. Research indicates that arts-integrated methods foster the development of critical twenty-first-century skills like creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving, while also increasing student involvement and participation (Gullatt, 2008). When used in language learning, visual art can function not just as a helpful illustration but as a meaningful context for language use and creative expression.

From a cognitive perspective, visual art enhances language learning by engaging different modes of representation and meaning-making. Building on Gardner's (1999) theory of multiple intelligences, Udhayashankar (2020) showed that incorporating

visual arts into English classes increased student participation and enthusiasm, especially among those with strong spatial intelligence. Activities like drawing, designing, or interpreting images allow learners to access language content through non-verbal means, which can be especially helpful for students who struggle with text-heavy instruction. In this way, visual art encourages more inclusive classroom practices by accommodating diverse learning styles and abilities (Udhayashankar, 2020).

Research in the Turkish context also emphasizes the importance of visual learning in language education. A study examining Turkish ELT students found that visual learning styles and visual-spatial intelligence were the most common preferences among participants, indicating that visual materials and representations may significantly influence language learning processes (Samsun, 2022).

The role of visual creativity in education has also been reinforced through interdisciplinary frameworks, most notably STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics). Yakman (2008) argues that including the arts enhances STEM education by emphasizing creativity, design thinking, and communication, thus fostering learning that is more tied to real-world problem-solving. However, as Liao (2019) warns, the arts—especially visual art—are often seen as supplementary or decorative within STEAM efforts rather than recognized as core disciplines with their own pedagogical importance. In the context of ELT, this difference matters: when visual art is meaningfully integrated into language tasks, it can promote authentic communication, conceptual understanding, and creative production rather than merely a superficial addition.

Despite the acknowledged benefits of creativity and visual art in education, their inclusion in ELT curricula remains inconsistent. Although Turkey's recent curriculum

reforms highlight learner-centered methods, creativity, and innovation, there is limited empirical research on how visual art is implemented in English classrooms. The 2018 ELT curriculum reform and the Education Vision 2023 explicitly promote project-based learning (PBL), the use of technology, and creative student output (Aksoy, 2024). Nonetheless, these policy documents tend to discuss creativity broadly, offering little guidance on how to systematically integrate visual art into English-language instruction. (Palabıyık, 2021)

Within this context, project-based learning emerges as a particularly relevant pedagogical approach for connecting creativity, visual art, and language learning. PBL offers structured opportunities for learners to participate in extended tasks that lead to tangible products, such as posters, digital designs, presentations, or visual narratives. Kemaloğlu-Er & Şahin (2022) emphasize that PBL in ELT promotes learner-centered environments where students actively explore topics, analyze information, solve problems, and produce work while using English for authentic communication. Similarly, Baş (2011) found that project-based instruction positively affects students' motivation and attitudes toward English and helps develop higher-order thinking skills.

Taken together, the literature indicates that visual art, when integrated into project-based and learner-centered teaching methods, provides a practical and pedagogically effective way to foster creativity in ELT. Visual art projects help learners connect language use with creative design and meaning-making, aligning with current curriculum goals that focus on communication, creativity, and real-world application. This research highlights the potential of visual art-supported PBL to connect policy goals related to creativity with actual classroom practices in English language teaching.

Project-Based Learning in English Language Teaching

Project-Based Learning (PBL) has gained increasing attention in English language teaching as an instructional approach that addresses the limitations of traditional pedagogical models. Conventional ELT practices have often faced criticism for their focus on rote memorization, grammar-translation methods, and exam-driven instruction, which can limit opportunities for meaningful language use and higher-level thinking. In contrast, recent research views PBL as a pedagogical alternative that supports both language development and the cultivation of essential cognitive skills.

A growing amount of research emphasizes the role of PBL in developing critical thinking and creativity, which are increasingly seen as vital parts of language ability. Song et al. (2024) claim that higher-level thinking skills, especially critical thinking and creativity, are closely connected to fluency and communicative ability in ELT. Using empirical evidence, the authors show that PBL benefits EFL learners' critical thinking skills by engaging students in inquiry-based tasks requiring analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information. Likewise, Sedubun & Nurhayati (2024) highlight that higher-level thinking skills, especially critical thinking and creativity, are closely connected to fluency and communicative ability in ELT. Beyond cognitive outcomes, PBL has been shown to promote communicative competence. By involving learners in extended projects rooted in real-world themes, PBL provides opportunities for genuine language use across all four skills. Sedubun & Nurhayati (2024) report that students engaged in project-based instruction show improved speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills, as projects require sustained interaction, negotiation of meaning, and purposeful communication. These results support the principles of communicative language

teaching, which emphasize meaningful language use rather than isolated practice of individual forms.

Learner motivation and engagement also frequently appear as key themes in the PBL literature. Sedubun & Nurhayati (2024) note that PBL boosts student motivation by allowing learners to work on projects that relate to their interests and experiences. The sense of ownership and autonomy associated with project-based tasks encourages active participation and sustained effort, leading to more positive attitudes toward language learning. These emotional benefits are especially important in EFL settings, where limited exposure to real-life language use can otherwise decrease learner engagement (Sedubun & Nurhayati, 2024).

From a theoretical standpoint, PBL is rooted in constructivist and social constructivist learning theories, which see knowledge as actively built through interaction, collaboration, and reflection. Song et al. (2024) point out that PBL aligns closely with these theories by involving learners in authentic tasks that simulate real-world problem-solving. In ELT contexts, this connection is strengthened further by PBL's compatibility with communicative language teaching, as students use language as a tool to complete meaningful tasks and create tangible outcomes such as presentations, reports, videos, or campaigns.

Despite its documented benefits, the literature also highlights ongoing challenges in implementing PBL. Time constraints, assessment difficulties, and insufficient teacher preparation are often cited as obstacles, especially in exam-focused educational systems (Sedubun & Nurhayati, 2024). Designing, managing, and evaluating projects requires significant pedagogical planning and assessment literacy, which may surpass the support structures available to many teachers.

Recent reviews further highlight gaps in current research on PBL in ELT. Kurt & Beck (2023) emphasize the inconsistency in technology use across K–12 PBL studies, noting that digital tools are often under-theorized or unevenly applied. They also underline the need for more cross-cultural research and a clearer focus on balancing communicative meaning and linguistic form, as explicit instruction in form and function is often underexplored in PBL-focused studies.

Overall, the literature indicates that PBL has strong potential to improve language learning by fostering communicative competence, critical thinking, creativity, and student engagement. However, successful implementation relies on contextual factors, such as curriculum alignment, assessment methods, teacher training, and pedagogical support. These issues are especially important when addressing the gap between policy goals and classroom practice, which is discussed in the next section.

Policy-Practice Gap in ELT

A recurring concern in the literature on English Language Teaching (ELT) reform is the gap between policy goals and classroom realities. Curriculum documents and strategic frameworks often outline ambitious objectives, including communicative competence, learner-centered instruction, creativity, and the use of technology.

However, many studies show that these policy goals are not consistently achieved in everyday teaching practices. This difference, known as the policy–practice gap, emphasizes the disconnect between policy aims and actual teaching implementation.

At the policy level, ELT reforms commonly outline broad and future-oriented goals. International frameworks like the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), along with national curriculum reforms, focus on meaningful

language use, interaction, and the development of twenty-first-century skills. In Turkey, these priorities are clearly reflected in recent curriculum updates and strategic documents that emphasize innovation, digital literacy, creativity, and student-centered learning (Acar, 2021; Aksoy, 2024; MoNE, 2019). In this context, English is seen not only as a school subject but also as a tool for global communication and social participation.

However, research on classroom practices shows a more detailed picture. Several studies indicate that English instruction in Turkey remains influenced by exam-focused assessment systems and traditional teaching methods, with a strong emphasis on grammar, accuracy, and test prep (Kırkgöz, 2007, 2009; Hazar, 2021). Although policy documents often mention communicative approaches, technology, creativity, and project-based learning, their actual implementation varies and remains limited in scope. Technology integration clearly illustrates this disconnect. Although policies strongly endorse technology-enhanced learning environments, classroom research indicates that digital tools are often used in ways that do not significantly change teaching practices. Instead of fostering interaction, collaboration, or creative language use, technology is sometimes employed to reinforce traditional methods, such as delivering content or preparing students for exams (Hazar, 2021). Similar patterns can be seen regarding creativity and visual art, which are widely valued at the policy level but rarely implemented as concrete instructional strategies in ELT classrooms.

Project-based learning (PBL) highlights a gap between policy goals and classroom realities. The research shows various positive outcomes associated with PBL, including increased student motivation, improved communication skills, and the development of higher-order thinking (Baş, 2011; Kemaloğlu-Er & Şahin, 2022).

However, studies also highlight practical challenges that hinder its ongoing use. Time limitations, assessment requirements, and insufficient teacher training often make it hard for teachers to implement project-based approaches effectively and consistently. Several interconnected factors explain why this gap persists. Teacher education and professional development are crucial because many teachers feel unsure about how to implement broad policy goals related to creativity, technology, or learner-centered teaching (Hazar, 2021). Assessment systems that focus on standardized testing further limit teaching flexibility, reducing opportunities for extended projects, creative tasks, or taking risks in communication (Kırkgöz, 2007, 2009). Additionally, policy documents often use vague and aspirational language, offering little practical guidance on adapting innovative strategies to specific classroom settings.

Overall, the literature indicates that the policy–practice gap in ELT should be viewed as a systemic issue rather than a classroom failure. The challenges identified are influenced by curriculum design, assessment methods, institutional contexts, and the support available to teachers. This gap is especially evident in areas such as technology use, creativity, and project-based learning, where expectations are high but implementation is inconsistent.

Recognizing this gap is central to this study. Instead of directly examining classroom practices, this research explores how ELT policies conceptualize creativity, visual art, technology, and project-based learning, and how these ideas align with patterns found in the literature. By closely analyzing policy documents and empirical studies, the study aims to shed light on the underlying assumptions and priorities in ELT policy discourse and clarify ongoing implementation challenges. This approach

provides a foundation for considering how future policies could more effectively support meaningful and sustainable pedagogical changes.

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by a conceptual framework that combines key perspectives from English Language Teaching (ELT), educational policy, and pedagogy to analyze how creativity, visual art, technology, and project-based learning are integrated into Turkish ELT policies. Because policy documents often address these concepts broadly or in scattered ways, a conceptual framework is needed to clarify their relationships and to offer a clear lens for analysis. Instead of testing a single theory, this framework relies on established international frameworks and pedagogical approaches to systematically examine policy goals and their implementation in classroom practice.

At the heart of this framework is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which guides current ELT reforms in Turkey. Surrounding this core are interconnected concepts central to the present study: learner-centered and constructivist pedagogy, creativity with an emphasis on visual art, project-based learning (PBL), and technology as a facilitative tool. Together, these elements form a structured framework for analyzing how ELT policies understand teaching and learning in relation to twenty-first-century skills.

The CEFR as a Pedagogical Anchor

The CEFR serves as the primary pedagogical foundation of this study, significantly influencing language education policy and curriculum development both globally and in Turkey. Introduced by the Council of Europe (2001), the CEFR promotes an action-oriented, learner-centered approach to language learning, emphasizing what learners can do with language in real-world contexts rather than just

focusing on grammatical rules. This approach closely aligns with communicative language teaching and provides a common framework for curriculum development, instruction, and assessment.

Within the CEFR, language use is understood through four modes of activity: reception, production, interaction, and mediation. These categories support teaching methods that involve collaboration, meaning-making, and purposeful communication, which are essential in creative and project-based approaches in ELT. The CEFR Companion Volume (Council of Europe, 2020) expands this view by including descriptors related to online interaction and digital mediation, emphasizing the role of technology in modern communication. In this study, the CEFR offers a framework for examining whether and how ELT policies encourage communicative, action-oriented, and learner-centered principles.

Learner-Centered and Constructivist Pedagogy

Closely related to the CEFR is the idea of learner-centered and constructivist teaching. Constructivist views see learning as an active process where students build understanding through interaction, reflection, and engaging with meaningful tasks. In ELT, this method shifts the focus from teacher-centered instruction to learning settings where students actively use language to communicate, solve problems, and share ideas.

Recent ELT research highlights the connection between learner-centered teaching and the development of 21st-century skills, including creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration (Orak & Al-Khresheh, 2021). Turkish curriculum reforms have also focused on learner-centered instruction, especially through CEFR alignment and project-based activities (Acar, 2021; Aksoy, 2024). In this framework, learner-

centered pedagogy serves as the educational foundation that links policy goals with classroom practices.

Creativity and Visual Art in Language Learning

Creativity is a recurring theme in modern education policy and ELT discussions, but it is often defined vaguely or broadly. In this study, creativity is seen as intentional and meaningful language use that includes originality, expression, and communication within a specific context. Visual art is a form of creative expression that can aid language learning by offering learners alternative ways to create meaning and communicate.

Research indicates that visual art can boost engagement, motivation, and participation in language classrooms, especially by supporting various learning styles and multimodal expression (Rahmanu & Molnár, 2024). When incorporated into ELT, visual art activities—such as drawing, design, visual storytelling, and multimodal projects—serve as scaffolds for language use rather than just decorative elements. In the conceptual framework, creativity and visual art are viewed as pedagogical tools that align with the CEFR’s focus on mediation and communicative action.

Project-Based Learning as an Integrative Approach

Project-based learning plays a key role in the conceptual framework as an instructional method that combines language use, creativity, collaboration, and technology. Based on constructivist and social constructivist theories, PBL focuses on learning through long-term tasks that involve investigation, problem-solving, and the production of tangible outcomes. In ELT settings, PBL offers chances for real-world language practice across listening, speaking, reading, and writing, while also encouraging learner independence and participation.

Research in ELT shows that PBL can improve communication skills, motivation, and higher-order thinking (Baş, 2011; Song et al., 2024). Recent updates to the Turkish curriculum explicitly support project-based activities to develop twenty-first-century skills, although guidance on designing and carrying out these projects remains limited. In this context, PBL is viewed as a useful tool for incorporating creativity, visual art, and technology into ELT in meaningful ways.

Technology as a Mediating Tool

Technology is seen in this study not just as an end goal but as a supportive tool that enhances communication, creativity, and learning processes. From a CEFR-oriented perspective, digital tools can facilitate reception, production, interaction, and mediation, primarily through online platforms, collaborative environments, and multimodal resources (Council of Europe, 2020). Technology also enables learners to interact with language beyond the physical classroom, promoting self-paced learning, collaboration, and access to various forms of expression.

Policy documents often emphasize technology integration as part of educational modernization; however, research shows that technology is frequently used to reinforce traditional practices rather than support learner-centered and creative approaches (Hazar, 2021). In the conceptual framework, technology is examined in relation to its role alongside creativity, visual art, and PBL in ELT policy discourse.

Integrating the Framework

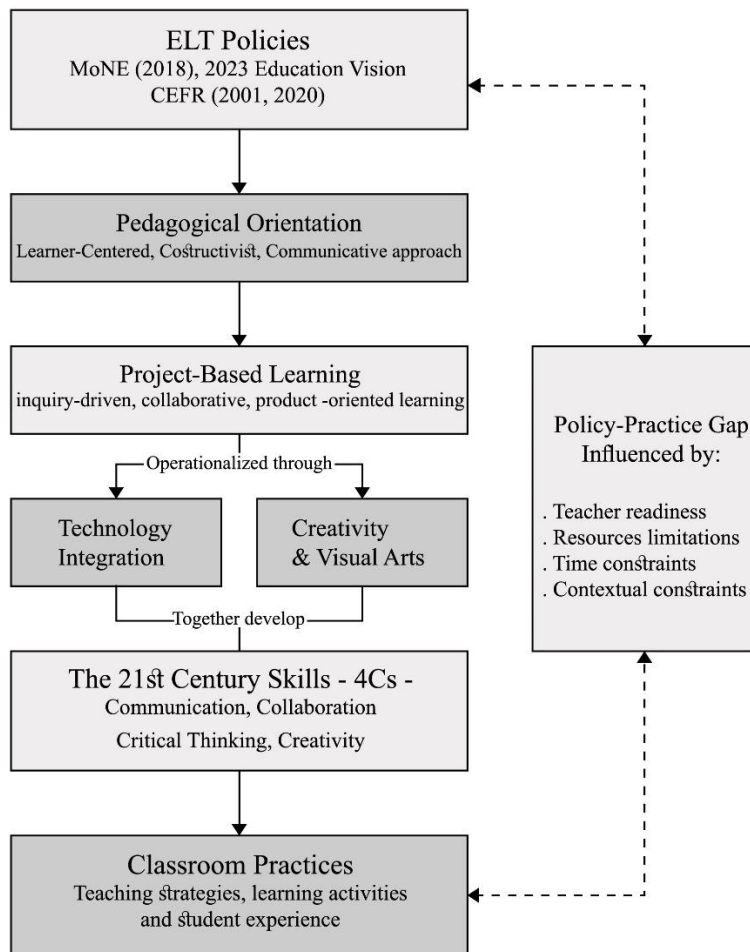
Taken together, the conceptual framework places the CEFR at its center, supported by learner-focused teaching, creativity through visual art, project-based learning, and technology as a facilitating resource. These elements are not viewed as separate ideas but as connected aspects that collectively influence current ELT policy

and practice. The framework guides the qualitative analysis of policy documents by showing how these concepts are expressed, linked, or underdeveloped in ELT policies.

Using this framework, the study explores how Turkish ELT policies provide a clear vision for integrating creativity, visual arts, technology, and project-based learning, and how this vision matches reported classroom practices in the literature. This conceptual base also guides the analytical categories in the methodology chapter and connects policy discourse with educational practice, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework Guiding the Analysis of ELT Policy and Practice



Chapter Summary

This chapter surveys the literature on English Language Teaching (ELT) policy and pedagogy, with a focus on technology integration, creativity and visual arts, project-based learning, and the policy–practice gap in the Turkish context. Overall, the literature shows a clear shift in Turkey’s ELT reforms from grammar-centered, teacher-focused instruction toward a competency-based model aligned with communicative language teaching and 21st-century skills. This change reflects global trends in language education and has been heavily influenced by international frameworks.

Central to these reforms is aligning Turkish ELT policies with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which promotes a learner-centered and action-oriented approach to language learning. By emphasizing meaningful communication, interaction, and mediation, the CEFR has shaped ELT curriculum goals and teaching priorities. Technology integration fits within this framework as a way to support communicative competence, increase opportunities for interaction, and enhance learning in digital settings. These directions are further strengthened by the Education Vision 2023 and the adoption of UNESCO’s ICT Competency Framework for Teachers, both of which emphasize digital skills, innovation, and ongoing teacher professional development as key parts of educational reform.

Although this aligns well with national and international policy documents, the literature consistently highlights uneven implementation in classroom practice. Challenges such as teacher readiness, differences across schools, limited instructional time, and exam-focused assessment systems continue to hinder the integration of

technology and creativity in ELT. As a result, innovative teaching methods are often not fully realized in ways that match policy intentions.

Within this context, creativity—especially through visual arts—emerges as a significant yet underdeveloped aspect of ELT policy and practice. Although creativity is often mentioned in reform discussions, guidance on how to effectively incorporate it into language teaching is limited. Project-based learning is recognized as a teaching method that can integrate language use, creativity, and technology cohesively. Based on constructivist principles, PBL encourages authentic communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and the production of meaningful work.

Taken together, the literature reviewed in this chapter provides a basis for examining how Turkish ELT policies conceptualize the integration of technology, creativity, and project-based learning, and how these policy goals relate to reported classroom practices. This synthesis informs the conceptual framework and guides the methodological approach outlined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research design, study context, data sources, selection criteria, data collection procedures, and analytical methods. It examines how English Language Teaching (ELT) policies in Turkey integrate visual arts (creative forms such as drawing or painting), technology (digital tools and resources), and project-based learning (PBL; methods in which students explore real-world challenges). It also considers how these policy intentions appear in classroom practices. The methodology is justified in relation to the research questions and the study's broader aims.

Research Design

Educational reforms often promote innovation, creativity, and technology integration as central goals of contemporary schooling. In English Language Teaching, policy often highlights these through communicative competence, learner-centered pedagogy, and project-based learning. Yet, research shows that such reforms are not always consistently implemented in classrooms, especially in centralized systems (Kırkgöz, 2007; Kırkgöz, 2009; Hazar, 2021).

This study uses a qualitative, comparative policy analysis to explore how Turkish English Language Teaching (ELT) policies define the integration of visual arts (drawing, painting, visual presentations) and technology (computers, digital tools, multimedia resources), especially through project-based learning (where students actively explore real-world challenges to gain deeper knowledge). It then examines how these policy definitions relate to reported classroom practices. Rather than evaluating policy effectiveness through measurable outcomes, the study focuses on policy

intentions, pedagogical orientations, and implementation conditions. This qualitative approach suits these aims.

The study adopts an interpretivist research paradigm. This approach views educational policies and classroom practices as socially constructed and influenced by context, institutions, and pedagogy. (Nickerson, 2024) Policy texts depict educational priorities, while classroom practices documented in empirical studies show how these policies are responded to in specific situations. (Young & Lewis, 2015)

The research compares policy discourse with reported classroom realities to identify areas of alignment, partial implementation, and disconnection between national policy goals and classroom enactment.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How have Turkey's ELT policies over the last eight years framed the integration of art and technology, particularly through project-based learning (PBL)?
2. How has the implementation of these policies been reported in English language classrooms in Turkey during the last eight years, according to existing empirical studies?

The first research question guides a qualitative analysis of policy documents, while the second guides a thematic synthesis of empirical research. Together, they enable a comprehensive examination of the relationship between policy discourse and classroom practice.

Context of the Study

English-language teaching in Turkey operates within a highly centralized system. Curriculum design, learning outcomes, and assessment priorities are determined

nationally by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE). This structure means that national curriculum reforms and policy documents decisively shape classroom practices, teacher expectations, and instructional priorities across public schools (Kırkgöz, 2007; Kırkgöz, 2009).

Over the past twenty years, Turkey has repeatedly reformed ELT. The goal has been to improve communicative competence, promote learner-centered pedagogy, and align curricula with frameworks like the CEFR. ELT leaders began this alignment in the early 2000s. Authorities revised curricula in 2005, 2013, and 2018, each revision emphasizing communicative teaching, skill integration, and task-based activities (Kırkgöz, 2007).

The Education Vision 2023, published by MoNE in 2019, further reinforced the integration of technology, innovation, and teacher development. The document does not explicitly foreground the visual arts in ELT, but it does promote interdisciplinary learning, creativity, and the use of digital tools. This creates conceptual space for art- and project-based pedagogies (MoNE, 2019; Aksoy, 2024).

Within this policy context, policymakers increasingly view teachers as facilitators and designers of learning experiences, rather than merely as transmitters of knowledge. However, research shows that the uneven implementation of these reforms is influenced by factors such as exam-oriented systems, limited professional development, and varying digital readiness among teachers (Kırkgöz, 2009; Hazar, 2021).

Globally, integrating technology (referring here to digital tools such as computers, tablets, and online platforms) and the arts (which, in this context, primarily indicates the visual arts, such as drawing, painting, and the use of images) into language

education has been associated with increased learner engagement, creativity, and opportunities for meaningful communication. Digital tools enable multimodal expression and collaboration, while visual arts offer alternative pathways for language production and meaning-making, particularly for young and diverse learners (Gullatt, 2008). In the Turkish ELT (English Language Teaching) context, technology integration is increasingly emphasized at the policy level, yet guidance on systematically integrating the visual arts remains limited. Project-based learning (PBL) is frequently presented as a pedagogical approach that can operationalize creativity and technology use; however, its classroom implementation often depends on individual teachers' initiative rather than on structured policy support (Kırkgöz, 2009; Hazar, 2021; Aksoy, 2024). This contextual background underscores the relevance of the present study.

Data Collection Tools, Procedures, and Analysis

Data Sources

The study draws on two primary data sources: policy documents and empirical research. Policy documents include national frameworks such as the Ministry of National Education's English Language Teaching Curricula (2005, 2013, 2018) and the Education Vision 2023, as well as international reference frameworks including the CEFR (2001), and the CEFR Companion Volume (2020). These documents were selected for their authority and influence on ELT policy and practice in Turkey.

In addition, the study examines empirical studies on ELT classroom practices in Turkey, especially regarding technology integration, project-based learning, creativity, and arts-based approaches.

The research focuses on English language teaching in primary and lower secondary education, specifically covering grades 2 to 8 in public schools. Studies conducted at other educational levels (such as preschool, upper secondary, or higher education) and in private schools were excluded to maintain consistency in scope.

Criteria for Selection of Policies and Articles

Policy documents were chosen for their official status, relevance to ELT, and influence on curriculum design and pedagogy in Turkey. Empirical studies were selected if they were peer-reviewed, published in the last eight years, relevant to Turkey, and focused on classroom practice, teacher perspectives, or implementation issues related to technology, creativity, or project-based learning. The selection also includes several intervention-based studies, which offer insights into the potential impact of structured instructional approaches under controlled conditions.

Data Collection Procedures

Policy documents were retrieved from official MoNE and international organization websites. Empirical studies were identified through systematic database searches using keywords related to ELT, technology integration, project-based learning, creativity, and visual arts.

Data Analysis Procedures

Policy documents were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. This involved repeated readings to identify key concepts and patterns related to visual arts, technology, project-based learning, and teacher roles. Relevant excerpts were coded and organized into themes aligned with the research questions.

Empirical studies were analyzed using thematic synthesis. The analysis focused on identifying patterns in classroom practices, teacher agency, and related opportunities

or constraints. Themes emerging from the literature were then compared with policy findings to determine areas of alignment, partial implementation, or disconnection between policy aims and classroom realities. The study selection process followed a PRISMA-informed approach and is illustrated in **Figure 2**.

The selected studies were further examined based on their methodological design, focus, and contribution to the research questions. **Table 1** provides an overview of the included studies and highlights their added value in understanding the implementation of ELT policies in classroom practice.

Figure 2

PRISMA Flow Diagram of Study Selection Process

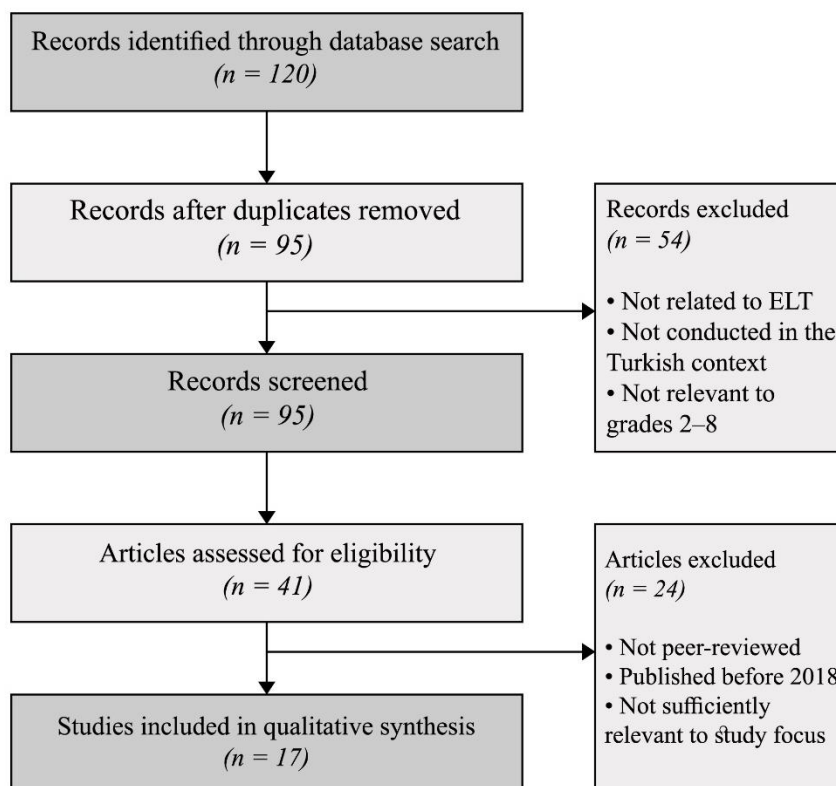


Table 1*Characteristics and Contributions of Selected Studies*

Study	Type	Focus	Method	Key Contribution (Added Value)
Çelik & Tümen Akyıldız (2021)	Quantitative	Creativity	Survey	Reveals mismatch between teachers' beliefs and classroom practices
Akyıldız & Çelik (2020)	Qualitative	Creativity	Interviews	Shows limited conceptual understanding of creativity and reliance on activities
Gursoy & Bağ (2018)	Intervention	Creativity	Experimental	Demonstrates that structured training enhances creative thinking skills
Azak (2020)	Intervention	Creativity	Quasi- experimental	Shows effectiveness of inquiry-based learning for creative writing
Dölek (2025)	Intervention	Creativity	Experimental	Highlights impact of drama-based learning on motivation and achievement

Hol & Aydın (2020)	Quantitative	Technology	Survey	Identifies infrastructural barriers despite positive teacher attitudes
Aşık et al. (2020)	Mixed	Technology	Survey + analysis	Reveals gap between technical skills and pedagogical integration
Zengin & Yılmaz (2021)	Intervention	Technology	Experimental	Shows technology improves learning outcomes modestly
Krasnov (2025)	Intervention	Technology	Quasi-experimental	Demonstrates that engagement increases, but performance gains are limited
Güngör et al. (2024)	Qualitative	Technology	Interviews	Shows teachers adapt materials to compensate for curriculum limitations
Baykal (2019)	Qualitative	Visual Arts	Discourse analysis	Highlights role of visual elements in meaning-making
Alpan & Mart (2020)	Intervention	Visual Arts / PBL	Quasi-experimental	Shows visual production enhances engagement and retention

Veyis et al. (2025)	Meta-analysis	Visual Arts / Technology	Meta-analysis	Demonstrates effectiveness of digital storytelling in language learning
Güngör & Fişne (2020)	Qualitative	Visual Arts	Classroom observation	Shows visuals used as supplementary rather than structured pedagogy
Kimsesiz (2023)	Qualitative	PBL	Interviews	Identifies lack of teacher training and limited classroom implementation
Kemaloğlu-Er & Bayyurt (2020)	Qualitative	PBL	Case study	Shows institutional constraints limit PBL implementation
Kurt & Beck (2023)	Review	PBL	Systematic review	Highlights limited and inconsistent research on PBL in Turkish ELT

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter outlines the policy analysis results and reviews empirical studies, connecting them to the study's research questions and conceptual framework. It is divided into three main parts. The first part examines relevant policy documents, focusing on how Turkish ELT policy frames creativity, technological innovation, visual arts, and project-based learning. The second part analyzes recent empirical research to see how these policy goals are reflected in classroom practices. The third part summarizes the overall findings, comparing the policy aims with actual classroom experiences, highlighting areas of agreement, conflict, and gaps.

Policy Analysis

Policy Objectives: Communicative Competence

Communicative competence is the main goal of modern English Language Teaching (ELT) policy in Turkey. This focus is clearly shown in the 2018 English Language Teaching Curriculum published by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE, 2018) and is supported by its alignment with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020).

The 2018 curriculum emphasizes English as a vital skill in an increasingly connected world. In this framework, English is seen not just as an academic subject but as a means of communication that allows students to engage in meaningful social situations (MoNE, 2018). As a result, the curriculum focuses on developing all four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—together, rather than treating each as a separate part (MoNE, 2018).

The restructuring of the education system under the 4+4+4 model further emphasized the need for updating the curriculum. Since English instruction now starts in Grade 2, the 2018 curriculum recognizes the first three years of primary education (Grades 2–4) as essential for language development (MoNE, 2018). At these levels, the curriculum highlights exposure to language through communicative classroom environments that encourage active participation and meaningful interaction. The initial focus is mainly on listening and speaking, reflecting age-appropriate teaching methods (MoNE, 2018). Reading and writing skills are gradually developed in later grades based on students' developmental readiness.

CEFR Alignment

The communicative focus of the 2018 curriculum aligns closely with the CEFR's concept of communicative competence, which encompasses linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic aspects necessary for effective language use (Council of Europe, 2001). The curriculum takes an action-oriented approach inspired by the CEFR, positioning learners as language users involved in meaningful communication while also recognizing national cultural contexts within a global framework (MoNE, 2018).

In terms of communicative language activities, the CEFR distinguishes among reception, production, interaction, and mediation (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020). The 2018 ELT curriculum reflects these categories to varying extents. Reception (listening and reading), production (spoken and written expression), and interaction are explicitly incorporated into grade-level learning outcomes and classroom activities (MoNE, 2018). Especially in the early grades, listening and spoken interaction are prioritized, while reading and writing become more prominent in later stages.

Mediation, as described in the CEFR Companion Volume (Council of Europe, 2020), is more explicitly addressed in the 2018 curriculum. Although some activities—such as summarizing information or explaining ideas to peers—may reflect mediation processes, the curriculum does not systematically treat mediation as a separate part of communicative competence. Therefore, while the 2018 ELT curriculum clearly emphasizes reception, production, and interaction, mediation is less explicitly outlined.

Overall, communicative competence serves as the essential foundation of the 2018 ELT curriculum. Later objectives—such as creativity, digital skills, and project-based learning—are incorporated within this communicative framework rather than replacing it.

Creativity

The 2018 ELT curriculum positions English proficiency as crucial for Turkish citizens to participate effectively in a more connected global environment (MoNE, 2018). In line with this goal, the curriculum adopts a communicative approach that emphasizes meaningful language use in real-life situations. In this context, learners are encouraged to actively participate in classroom interactions rather than being passive recipients of knowledge. Although creativity is not explicitly outlined as a separate key competence within the curriculum, it is incorporated pedagogically through communicative, task-based, and learner-centered practices.

Aligned with the CEFR, the 2018 curriculum highlights communicative language activities like role-plays, dialogues, storytelling, and real-life simulations (MoNE, 2018). These activities encourage learners to use language creatively and contextually, indirectly fostering creative expression. In the early grades (2–4), students participate in songs, games, arts and crafts, and storytelling, which support exploratory

and expressive language skills. In higher grades, activities such as drama, presentations, and structured task-based productions become more common, providing more opportunities for creative involvement.

Assessment practices within the 2018 curriculum also reflect a dual structure. In addition to alternative and process-oriented evaluation methods, such as self-assessment and performance-based tasks, formal evaluation is carried out through written and oral exams, quizzes, homework assignments, and projects to provide an objective record of students' achievement (MoNE, 2018). The testing methods are based on communicative competence frameworks and aim to measure language use in meaningful contexts. Importantly, the curriculum differentiates assessment practices by developmental stage. In Grades 2 and 3, summative testing is not used; instead, formative methods are prioritized to foster positive attitudes toward learning English. From Grade 4 onward, both formative and summative assessment techniques are used to evaluate students' communicative competence and overall proficiency (MoNE, 2018).

This balanced assessment framework offers a nuanced space for creativity. While summative exams and quizzes reflect the need for standardized measurement within a centralized education system, project work and performance-based tasks enable students to demonstrate language use in more open-ended and potentially creative ways. Therefore, although creativity is not formally assessed as an independent measure, the curriculum provides structural opportunities for creative language production within its communicative framework.

Education Vision 2023 further strengthens the broader reform discussion around student-centered learning. The vision encourages learning environments where students are active participants rather than passive recipients of knowledge (MoNE, 2019).

Teaching methods are expected to adapt based on students' developmental stages and cognitive abilities, ensuring that learning experiences are age-appropriate and context-sensitive.

The vision explicitly emphasizes developing 21st-century skills as a key reform goal. These skills are described as vital for helping students solve real-world problems, engage meaningfully with their surroundings, and maintain intellectual curiosity (MoNE, 2019). To support these goals, the document highlights the importance of providing rich learning resources, especially digital materials aligned with curriculum themes. In the context of ELT, such resources include multimedia content—animated films, videos, games, and songs—primarily for younger learners, as well as online storybooks, writing activities, and vocabulary exercises for upper primary and lower secondary levels. This strategy aims to go beyond traditional textbook-centered teaching by incorporating multimodal and technology-enhanced materials.

Although creativity is often linked to 21st-century skills, it is not always clearly defined or measurable in Vision 2023. Instead, creativity is part of broader reform ideas like innovation, problem-solving, interdisciplinary learning, and design thinking (MoNE, 2019). The Vision promotes interdisciplinary connections among subjects, including potential links between ELT and visual arts. Additionally, its focus on inquiry-based learning, questioning, and design-oriented thinking naturally fosters creative and critical engagement with knowledge.

Overall, the 2018 ELT curriculum embeds creativity within communicative pedagogy and structured assessment practices, while Education Vision 2023 highlights creativity and innovation as broader reform priorities. However, in both documents,

creativity remains implicitly integrated rather than systematically defined and measured as a distinct, assessable curricular objective within ELT.

Innovation

The 2018 ELT Curriculum adopts a reform-focused approach to English language teaching aligned with international standards like the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (MoNE, 2018; Council of Europe, 2001, 2020). While it does not explicitly highlight “innovation” as a separate goal, it includes innovative features through its adoption of the CEFR’s action-oriented methodology. This approach views learners as active language users and social participants engaged in meaningful communication rather than passive recipients of grammatical rules (Council of Europe, 2001). Such a pedagogical shift signifies a type of methodological innovation, prioritizing real-life tasks, interaction, and purposeful language use.

Within this CEFR-aligned framework, technology serves as a potential facilitator of communicative and action-oriented learning. Although the 2018 curriculum does not present digital transformation as a core structural reform, it encourages the use of multimedia materials, interactive resources, and performance-based tasks that may include digital tools (MoNE, 2018). In this context, innovation within the ELT curriculum appears as pedagogical modernization supported by technology, rather than a technology-driven redesign. Digital tools act as mechanisms that can enhance communicative competence, task-based learning, and learner engagement, but they remain part of the established communicative paradigm.

Education Vision 2023 clearly promotes innovation at a systemic level. The document highlights digital transformation as a key reform focus and stresses

incorporating technology into teaching and learning processes (MoNE, 2019). Through efforts such as building digital infrastructure and expanding platforms like the Education Information Network (EBA), technology is seen as a catalyst for modernization and knowledge creation (MoNE, 2019). Students are encouraged to use information technologies to solve real-world problems, collaborate, and generate knowledge, supporting broader 21st-century skills discussions.

The CEFR Companion Volume (Council of Europe, 2020) further emphasizes the innovative potential of ELT by expanding descriptors related to mediation, collaboration, and online interaction. These updates support learning environments in which digital tools can enable communication across diverse contexts and platforms. However, while Vision 2023 strongly links innovation with digital transformation, the 2018 ELT Curriculum reflects a more moderate integration of technology within CEFR-based communicative pedagogy.

Overall, innovation in Turkish ELT policy operates on two interconnected levels. At the pedagogical level, innovation is based on the CEFR's action-oriented and communicative framework. At the systemic level, Vision 2023 frames innovation as digital modernization and competency-based reform. Technology thus acts as a key operational mechanism of innovation, yet its implementation within ELT remains guided by communicative and curricular traditions.

Visual Arts (interdisciplinary practices)

The 2018 ELT Curriculum includes elements of visual arts and interdisciplinary learning mainly through teaching methods and assessment practices, rather than as explicitly stated curricular goals (MoNE, 2018). Especially at the earliest levels (Grades 2–4), the curriculum focuses on listening and speaking skills and encourages language

learning through songs, games, Total Physical Response (TPR), arts and crafts, and drama activities. These methods reflect research-based understanding of young learners' developmental needs and promote enjoyment and engagement in language learning (MoNE, 2018). Arts and crafts and drama are not presented as separate artistic goals; instead, they serve as communication tools that support language development through hands-on and experiential learning.

The integration of visual and creative production becomes more apparent in assessment practices. The curriculum adopts a balanced approach by combining formative and summative methods. In Grades 2 and 3, summative testing is not used; instead, formative techniques are employed to foster positive attitudes and motivation toward learning English. Starting from Grade 4, both formative and summative methods are introduced to evaluate communicative competence (MoNE, 2018). In this framework, students may be asked to create posters, develop visual dictionaries, describe pictures or videos, prepare mind maps, summarize texts, or report events. Alternative assessment methods—including portfolio assessments, project evaluations, creative drama tasks, and class newspapers or social media projects—further broaden opportunities for multimodal and interdisciplinary expression (MoNE, 2018).

Such practices show that visual and creative production are part of communicative and performance-based assessment. Students are encouraged to create materials that can be shared within the school community or beyond, highlighting an emphasis on authentic communication and real-world engagement. However, while visual arts and interdisciplinary elements are included in teaching, they are mainly used as supportive tools for developing communicative competence rather than as fully developed parts of ELT goals. The curriculum thus allows for art-based and

interdisciplinary practices, but their implementation remains within the framework of communicative language teaching rather than as a separate interdisciplinary model.

Education Vision 2023 explicitly encourages an interdisciplinary approach to foreign language education, stating that disciplines such as mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, and visual arts will be integrated with English language instruction to help students use the language across different areas (MoNE, 2019). This statement clearly recognizes visual arts as a potential part of ELT at the policy level. However, while the Vision identifies interdisciplinarity as a reform goal, it does not include specific curricular frameworks or subject-specific mechanisms to guide how visual arts should be systematically incorporated into English language classrooms. Therefore, interdisciplinary integration remains more of a policy goal than a fully developed instructional model.

The inclusion of arts-based tasks, collaborative activities, and student-produced materials indicates project-oriented learning. However, it is important to examine whether these elements form a clearly defined Project-Based Learning (PBL) framework or if they primarily serve as supportive strategies within communicative language teaching. The next section, therefore, examines how PBL is presented in the curriculum and whether it functions as a consistent approach for integrating creativity, interdisciplinarity, and innovation in ELT policy.

Project-Based Learning (PBL)

Although the 2018 ELT Curriculum does not explicitly define Project-Based Learning (PBL) as a formal instructional model, several of its pedagogical and assessment components reflect project-oriented and task-based principles consistent with PBL (MoNE, 2018). Based on the CEFR's action-oriented approach, the

curriculum encourages meaningful communication, learner autonomy, and problem-solving skills from the earliest grades. Language learning is considered a lifelong process, and the curriculum aims to create enjoyable and motivating learning environments that promote active engagement rather than passive memorization.

Students should participate in authentic communicative activities, such as collaboratively creating and playing games, rather than rehearsing scripted dialogues or reciting isolated grammatical structures. This emphasis on peer interaction, genuine communication, and hands-on activities represents a shift from form-focused instruction to experiential and learner-centered methods. At the primary level (Grades 2–4), the “play world” approach—using songs, games, drama, and arts and crafts—supports experiential learning and encourages active language use within meaningful contexts.

The curriculum further incorporates project-based elements through its assessment framework. Based on CEFR principles, evaluation procedures focus on alternative and process-oriented techniques, including self-assessment, portfolio assessment, performance tasks, and project assessments (MoNE, 2018). From Grade 4 onward, summative assessments involve projects such as creating a visual dictionary over the semester, in addition to more traditional exams. Formative tasks might include designing posters, summarizing content, or producing materials that are shared within the school community or beyond. These practices align with key PBL characteristics, including extended tasks, tangible products, authentic audiences, and the integration of multiple skills.

Furthermore, the curriculum highlights transversal skills such as learning how to learn, initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness, and creativity, which align with competencies usually developed in project-based settings. Coursebook authors are

encouraged to create materials that reflect real-world situations familiar to learners, thereby strengthening authenticity and relevance.

However, despite these project-focused features, the curriculum does not provide a clear framework outlining the stages, structure, or ongoing inquiry processes typical of fully developed PBL models. Projects mainly serve as assessment tools or communication extensions rather than as comprehensive instructional frameworks that organize entire units of study. As a result, while the 2018 ELT Curriculum includes several principles compatible with Project-Based Learning—such as collaboration, authentic tasks, learner autonomy, and product-oriented outcomes—PBL is suggested rather than officially integrated within the policy document.

Education Vision 2023 demonstrates a clearer and stronger connection to Project-Based Learning principles than the 2018 ELT Curriculum (MoNE, 2019). One of the main goals of advanced education systems, according to the Vision, is to prepare students from an early age to develop innovative solutions for real-world problems. This focus on problem-solving and innovation aligns closely with core PBL principles, especially sustained inquiry and real-life application.

The Vision also highlights classroom environments that encourage questioning, design thinking, conceptual understanding, and both individual and group work. These learning settings support the student-centered and inquiry-based principles of PBL. Instead of seeing students as passive receivers of information, the document envisions them as active participants involved in exploration, discussion, and creation.

Furthermore, Vision 2023 emphasizes real-world connected content and interdisciplinary assessment. It highlights the use of interactive experiments, simulations, animations, and large-scale projects that involve integrating multiple

disciplines. These references point to a pedagogical approach that values extended tasks, authentic contexts, and cross-disciplinary collaboration—key features of project-based learning.

Assessment reform also supports this approach. In primary education, evaluation should emphasize skills-based activities more than just exam scores. This shift toward competency and performance-based assessment fosters an environment that encourages project-based methods, where process, product, and practical skills are valued over memorization.

Furthermore, the Vision encourages activities that help students explore local culture, arts, geography, and regional production capacity, integrating these themes into both classroom and extracurricular settings. Students are also introduced to social entrepreneurship and motivated to develop solutions for social issues. These components reflect an educational philosophy rooted in authenticity, real-world relevance, and community involvement—key aspects of PBL.

However, despite these strong alignments with project-based principles, Vision 2023 describes PBL mainly at a conceptual and systemic level. The document encourages interdisciplinary projects and problem-solving environments but does not include subject-specific models that show how project-based learning should be organized in ELT classrooms. As a result, while PBL principles are clearly part of the reform discussion, how they are put into practice in English language teaching still depends on curriculum interpretation and local application.

Empirical Studies Reflecting Real Classroom Implementation

Creativity

Research in Turkish ELT settings reveals that creativity is regarded as a vital educational goal; however, its implementation in classrooms varies greatly in both scope and depth. Survey data show that, although teachers generally view creativity positively, they do not consistently implement creative teaching methods. In a large study of 200 secondary school EFL teachers, Çelik & Tümen Akyıldız (2021) found high overall scores on the importance of creativity in teaching English. Still, fewer than 20% of teachers reported regularly using discovery-based learning, real-world communication activities, or technology-supported tasks to foster creative thinking. Additionally, only a small number of teachers often allow students to choose their own projects or turn routine activities into creative tasks. These findings highlight a gap between teachers' perceptions and their actions, suggesting that a desire to promote creativity does not always lead to consistent classroom practice.

Another qualitative study by Akyıldız & Çelik (2020) explored teachers' perceptions of using creativity in their teaching practices and whether Turkish ELT teachers recognize the importance of creative activities such as brainstorming, storytelling, drawing tasks, and game-based activities. However, the study also identified some constraints in implementing creative practices due to curriculum load, limited time, and an exam-focused assessment system. This suggests that creativity is not consistently applied in classrooms and that a gap exists between policy and practice. Additionally, the study indicates that teachers lack a clear conceptual understanding of creativity, and their classroom practices are confined to activities rather than pedagogical frameworks.

Intervention-based studies, however, show that creativity can be effectively put into practice when supported by structured instructional design. Gursoy & Bağ (2018) conducted a six-week creative thinking training program integrated into the regular English curriculum for middle school students. Their results showed statistically significant gains in students' creative thinking scores, especially in originality and elaboration. The intervention focused on fluency, flexibility, and divergent thinking through communicative and task-based activities, suggesting that creative ability can be intentionally nurtured within ELT classrooms when explicitly aimed for through teaching methods.

Similarly, Azak (2020) examined the effects of a process-oriented, guided-inquiry-based learning approach on eighth-grade students' creative writing skills. Using a quasi-experimental design, the study found notable improvements in creative writing performance and more positive student attitudes toward English in the experimental group compared to the control group. The instructional model focused on collaboration, idea generation, revision processes, and reflective thinking, aligning with constructivist principles promoted in national curriculum documents. These results suggest that creativity becomes measurable and pedagogically feasible when instruction moves beyond traditional grammar-focused methods toward inquiry-based and process-oriented learning.

At the primary level, Dölek (2025) demonstrated similar findings through the use of creative drama in third-grade English classrooms. Over a ten-week period, students who participated in drama-based instruction showed significantly higher academic achievement, motivation, and more positive attitudes toward English lessons compared to peers who received traditional teaching. The results indicate that

experiential and arts-based teaching methods can effectively enhance both the cognitive and emotional aspects of language learning in early grades.

Overall, these studies provide a detailed view of creativity in Turkish ELT classrooms. While teachers generally support the concept of creativity, its systematic use often depends on structured interventions rather than everyday practice. Creativity appears most effective when integrated into inquiry-based, drama-based, or task-focused teaching methods. However, relying on experimental or specially designed interventions suggests that creative teaching methods are not yet fully embedded in mainstream classrooms. This pattern shows partial alignment with national policies that promote learner-centered, communicative, and skills-based education, but it may lack clear mechanisms to ensure widespread adoption in classrooms.

Innovation

National policies influence innovation in ELT mainly through digital transformation. Both the 2018 ELT curriculum and Education Vision 2023 highlight the importance of integrating technology as a way to modernize teaching and learning environments. Despite this clear policy focus, research shows inconsistent application in classrooms. The findings highlight the need to explore differences among teachers' beliefs, preparation, and actual practices.

Hol & Aydın (2020) found that Turkish EFL teachers see technology as important in ELT classrooms and report fairly high usage. This shows that teachers generally have positive attitudes toward digital integration. However, aside from professional training, barriers to adopting technology mainly stem from infrastructural and contextual limitations. Factors like gender, age, and educational background did not show significant differences, indicating that resistance isn't related to demographics.

Instead, the main challenges arise from systemic and institutional conditions. This reveals a gap between the policy-level assumption of digital readiness and the actual structural realities teachers face in schools.

Similarly, Aşık et al. (2020) found a moderate level of ICT competence in English language teacher education programs in Turkey. While pre-service teachers are introduced to technological tools, instructional design training, and systematic integration remain weak. Institutional constraints and limited pedagogical modeling hinder deeper innovation training. These findings show that effective innovation depends on pedagogical design skills rather than just technical familiarity. In other words, knowing how to use technology is not the same as knowing how to create meaningful, technology-supported learning experiences.

At the classroom level, experimental evidence provides a more detailed picture. Zengin & Yılmaz (2021) examined the impact of educational computer games on vocabulary learning among Turkish 5th-grade EFL students within the 2018 ELT curriculum framework. The results showed that students who learned vocabulary through digital games scored significantly higher on post-tests than those who used traditional teaching methods, although the effect size was small. Retention scores measured one month later were also notably higher in the experimental group, indicating that technology-assisted vocabulary instruction can lead to more lasting learning outcomes. These findings support the push for digital transformation in education; however, the modest effect size suggests that technology alone does not significantly improve learning outcomes. Instead, it serves as a supportive tool when systematically integrated into instruction.

A quasi-experimental study by Krasnov (2025), involving second-grade Turkish EFL learners, investigated the use of fully immersive VR for vocabulary learning. While both the VR and teacher-led groups improved, there was no statistically significant difference between them. However, qualitative results indicated that students found VR lessons highly motivating and enjoyable, despite some minor usability and classroom management issues. These findings suggest that although digital innovation supports national reform efforts, its educational impact largely depends on how it is implemented and the specific classroom context, rather than the technology alone.

Recent studies indicate that teachers often try to address the limitations of national coursebooks by adapting teaching materials. GÜNGÖR et al. (2024) found that Turkish secondary school EFL teachers frequently modify coursebook activities by adding digital tools, communicative tasks, and interactive materials. Teachers reported that national coursebooks often lack engaging and communicative activities, particularly those integrating digital resources. As a result, teachers adapt materials to create more interactive and meaningful learning environments for students. However, this also creates an additional challenge for teachers, as they must search for and select appropriate materials to supplement the curriculum while simultaneously addressing the broader challenge of developing sufficient pedagogical preparation to effectively integrate technology into language teaching.

Taken together, these studies show that technological innovation in Turkish ELT happens at multiple levels. Teachers generally favor digital integration, and classroom efforts demonstrate measurable benefits. However, infrastructure, institutional support, and pedagogical training remain inconsistent. Innovation is not opposed in principle but is limited by structural and implementation challenges. While policy talks position

digital transformation as a key part of educational reform, actual classroom practice relies heavily on local conditions and ongoing professional development. Vision 2023. Nonetheless, the small effect size indicates that technology mainly serves as a supportive tool rather than a fully transformative innovation.

Visual Arts

Visual literacy has become an increasingly important part of language learning, especially for young students who interact with multimodal texts in educational materials. A study analyzing English textbooks used in Turkish primary schools examined visual elements through multimodal discourse analysis based on Kress and Van Leeuwen's visual grammar framework. The findings showed that visual elements such as color, object placement, and gaze contribute to ideational, interpersonal, and textual meaning, thereby supporting students' visual literacy and meaning-making processes (Baykal, 2019). These results indicate that visual elements play a significant role in ELT materials used in Turkish classrooms.

A quasi-experimental study by Alpan & Mart (2020) explored the effect of virtual literacy activities on third-grade primary school students who are ELT learners receiving visual arts-based instruction, such as freehand drawing, logo type design, and storyboard creation. The study found that students performed well on post-tests, with retention rates remaining stable after a month and a significant increase in their ability to retain information. This research shows that visual activities improve academic achievement and increase engagement and motivation. The study demonstrates that visual arts-based ELT boosts engagement and short-term performance, as students not only see visuals but also create them. Turkish ELT policies promote visual literacy, game-based activities, and arts. However, since these are not implemented

systematically and are limited to local contexts, the long-term effects of incorporating visual arts cannot be determined, as they rely on ongoing use. These interventions highlight the effects of using visual arts in ELT through external programs, rather than demonstrating how policies are implemented in practice.

Technology-enhanced storytelling activities blend linguistic and visual forms of expression, enabling learners to build narratives using images, audio, and text. A meta-analysis of 29 quasi-experimental studies shows that digital storytelling significantly boosts students' language skills development. These results indicate that multimodal methods that include visual components can aid language learning by engaging multiple ways of making meaning (Veyis et al., 2025).

Empirical classroom research also shows that visual and creative materials are commonly used in Turkish primary EFL classrooms. For instance, Güngör & Fişne (2020) reported that teachers frequently use visual tools such as puppets, flashcards, pictures, and arts-and-crafts activities when teaching young learners. These practices support the communicative and activity-based principles of the ELT curriculum. However, the study also indicates that such activities are mainly used as supplemental language tools rather than as a structured integration of visual arts as an interdisciplinary approach to language teaching. This suggests that the practices align with policies recommending arts and crafts, especially for lower grades.

Meanwhile, research on integrating visual arts in ELT is limited in the Turkish context. Although international studies have investigated the role of visual arts and visual literacy in language learning, very few studies in Turkey examine visual arts as a disciplinary or pedagogical framework within ELT.

Project-Based Learning (PBL)

Empirical research on project-based learning in Turkish EFL classrooms reveals a gap between curriculum goals and actual classroom practice. A study involving 77 EFL teachers in Turkey found that many had limited understanding of project-based language teaching and lacked formal training to implement it (Kimsesiz, 2023). Teachers recognized the educational benefits of PBL, such as increasing motivation, promoting collaboration, encouraging learner independence, and fostering more interactive language use, yet its use in regular lessons was uncommon. Major challenges included large class sizes, limited classroom time, inadequate textbook materials, and the pressures of exam-oriented teaching. These findings indicate that although project-based learning aligns with the learner-centered principles of the Turkish ELT curriculum, practical obstacles often hinder its consistent application.

Alpan & Mart (2020) examined PBL through visual literacy activities. Although they did not explicitly identify it as PBL, they observed that learning happens through active production, such as drawing, creating storyboards, and visual tasks. This method encourages creative and collaborative learning aligned with project-based principles. However, their approach remains within task-based practices rather than fully implementing a structured project-based approach, reflecting only a partial achievement of policy goals in Turkish EFL classrooms.

Kemaloglu-Er & Bayyurt (2020) also studied how teachers implement PBL. Their findings show that project-based learning effectively translates educational innovations into practice through hands-on, reflective, and context-specific methods. However, its adoption remains limited by institutional norms, constrained teacher

independence, and stakeholder expectations. This emphasizes a ongoing gap between innovative teaching methods and actual classroom conditions in Turkey.

Although the PBL approach is a significant topic in international literature, there are limited empirical studies in Turkey exploring how PBL is integrated into ELT. Most existing research tends to focus on PBL within STEM subjects or at higher education levels.

Discussion

This study aims to compare how Turkish ELT policies conceptualize art, technology, and PBL, and how these ideas are reflected in classroom practices, based on empirical research from the past eight years since the 2018 curriculum and the 2023 Education Vision. The discussion is organized around research questions that focus on policy framing and classroom implementation, including the opportunities and challenges identified in the literature.

Firstly, Turkish ELT policies include art, technology, and PBL. The MoNE (2018) curriculum and the Education Vision (2023) promote the use of visual materials and arts-and-crafts activities, especially in lower grades. These policies encourage students to create and share materials within the school community. Combining visual and linguistic modes supports meaning-making and enhances language comprehension, while multimodal learning increases learner engagement and motivation, particularly through visually rich and meaningful content (Eisenmann & Summer, 2020). However, this is primarily viewed as pedagogical support rather than as an interdisciplinary approach to foreign language learning, and the structural mechanisms for implementation are not clearly outlined. In contrast, technology is more explicitly defined within policy documents.

The policies also highlight the importance of integrating technology and digital skills to align with global digital transformation and foster 21st-century skills (MoNE, 2018; MoNE, 2019). This is reflected in the use of multimedia resources, digital tools, online learning platforms, and interactive materials that support the communicative approach. Overall, technology is positioned as a more explicit and central driver of innovation than art.

In addition to art and technology, project-based learning is also embedded within the policy framework. Policies support PBL as a method that promotes student-centered learning and active student involvement. This is further reflected in competence-based assessment methods and the emphasis on real-world tasks and problem-solving. However, while PBL is conceptually included in policy documents, its pedagogical structure and implementation mechanisms remain unclear.

Overall, Turkish ELT policies promote creativity, technology, and student-centered methods that align with PBL principles. However, art is primarily viewed as a supportive component, and PBL is mentioned implicitly rather than being systematically operationalized. Consistent with international frameworks such as the CEFR, which endorses a communicative approach, these policies reflect global trends but leave ambiguity regarding how these approaches are enacted in practice.

To examine how these policy intentions are reflected in practice, empirical studies were reviewed. The available research is limited, particularly in documenting classroom practices at the primary and lower secondary levels (grades 2–4), as most studies focusing on creativity, innovation, and visual arts tend to target older students or higher education contexts. Despite this limitation, several insights emerge regarding how policy is translated into practice.

Teachers tend to value creativity (Çelik & Tümen Akyıldız, 2021), recognize the importance of technology (Hol & Aydın, 2020), and appreciate PBL (Kimsesiz, 2023); however, their implementation of these elements remains inconsistent. This indicates a general alignment between policy goals and teacher beliefs, but a gap at the level of classroom practice.

Creativity appears in activities such as brainstorming, storytelling, drawing, and game-based tasks (Akyıldız & Çelik, 2020). However, it is not embedded within formal teaching methodologies and is often constrained by curriculum demands, limited time, and exam-oriented systems (Akyıldız & Çelik, 2020). As a result, practices tend to prioritize task completion rather than inquiry-based learning. Creativity is therefore often addressed superficially, reflecting policy influence without substantial pedagogical transformation. Research shows that explicitly structured creative instruction can improve outcomes: Gursoy & Bağ (2018) observed increased originality when teachers were trained to incorporate creativity; Azak (2020) reported improvements in creative writing; and Dölek (2025) found higher motivation through drama-based learning. These findings demonstrate that policy goals are achievable when instruction is carefully designed. However, these results largely emerge from intervention-based studies rather than everyday classroom practice, highlighting a lack of system-wide implementation mechanisms. While creativity is often superficially implemented, findings from art-integrated approaches suggest that creative practices can significantly enhance language production, engagement, and emotional involvement when thoughtfully designed (Hashiwaki, 2024). Still, these outcomes depend heavily on instructional structure and classroom conditions, indicating that the issue is not only the absence of creativity but also the lack of pedagogically grounded implementation.

Research also shows that teachers generally hold positive attitudes toward technology integration. However, actual classroom implementation remains limited (Hol & Aydın, 2020). Challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, institutional constraints (Hol & Aydın, 2020), and limited training in instructional design—resulting in only moderate ICT competence (Aşık et al., 2020)—restrict the effective use of ICT. This suggests that technology functions mainly as a supportive tool rather than a transformative one (Zengin & Yılmaz, 2021; Krasnov, 2025). In addition, existing national initiatives demonstrate that access to digital tools is increasingly supported at the institutional level. For example, collaborations between the Ministry of National Education and digital design platforms (e.g., Canva) provide teachers and students with free access to curriculum-aligned materials through EBA. This indicates that the technological infrastructure necessary to support multimodal and project-based learning is already in place; however, the presence of such tools does not automatically lead to their effective pedagogical integration into classroom practice.

In terms of visual arts, empirical studies indicate that tools such as flashcards, puppets, drawings, and arts-and-crafts activities are frequently used (Güngör & Fişne, 2020). However, these are typically employed as supplementary aids rather than as part of a structured pedagogical approach. Visual production has been shown to enhance engagement and retention (Alpan & Mart, 2020), yet such practices are often limited to isolated or intervention-based contexts. This aligns with findings from art-integrated language instruction, where improvements in participation, confidence, and language use were observed, but these effects were context-dependent and not always sustained (Hashiwaki, 2024). This suggests that the gap between policy and practice is not only

due to teacher resistance, but also reflects the difficulty of sustaining innovative approaches in routine classroom conditions.

A similar pattern appears in the adoption of project-based learning. Teachers acknowledge that PBL can boost motivation, learner independence, and teamwork (Kimsesiz, 2023); however, it is rarely put into practice, exposing a gap between policy and actual classroom experience. This gap mainly stems from inadequate teacher training, limited instructional time, large class sizes, and pressure from exams (Kimsesiz, 2023). For example, art-based group tasks aimed at fostering creativity were shown to increase student anxiety when constrained by time limits and performance demands (Hashiwaki, 2024). This indicates that structural limitations not only hinder implementation but might also weaken the pedagogical benefits of innovative methods when they are not aligned with their fundamental principles. Part of the problem is that PBL is often reduced to task-based activities rather than being conducted as a structured process involving inquiry, collaboration, and reflection (Arnold et al., 2018). Moreover, effective PBL requires more instructional time and ongoing support, which are often limited by curriculum requirements and exam-focused systems. Another challenge involves assessment, since PBL depends on process- and performance-based evaluation, which can conflict with standardized testing practices. Additionally, the shift in teacher roles from merely delivering knowledge to facilitating learning may not be fully realized in traditionally structured classrooms, thereby limiting the practical application of PBL principles (Arnold et al., 2018).

These patterns are further supported by research on multimodal literature, which emphasizes that combining visual and linguistic modes enhances meaning-making, learner engagement, and communicative competence. Multimodal texts, such as picture

books and graphic narratives, provide rich, meaningful input that supports language development while accommodating different learning styles (Eisenmann & Summer, 2020). However, the literature also highlights that the effective integration of such materials requires structured pedagogical guidance, including task-based approaches and scaffolding. In the absence of clear methodological frameworks, multimodal and visual practices risk being used as supplementary activities rather than as part of a systematic instructional approach. This reflects a broader gap between theoretical potential and classroom implementation, which is also evident in the Turkish ELT context.

Overall, the findings indicate that Turkish ELT classrooms partially reflect policy objectives—through the use of communicative activities, visual materials, and digital tools—but these practices often remain fragmented and lack coherence. Creativity tends to be limited to isolated tasks; technology serves mainly as support rather than as a driver of transformation; visual arts are used functionally; and PBL is rarely implemented. Policy reforms, therefore, rely heavily on individual teacher effort, highlighting a persistent gap between policy discourse and classroom practice. Although integrated approaches to language and visual arts are theoretically well-established and pedagogically justified, their implementation remains inconsistent and highly dependent on teacher competence and contextual factors (Frumkina, 2021). This suggests that the policy–practice gap reflects not only issues of adoption, but also the complexity of translating interdisciplinary models into structured classroom practice. Moreover, the continued dominance of traditional, knowledge-based teaching approaches limits the development of integrated and creative practices. Even when innovative methods are introduced, their effectiveness depends on task design,

classroom environment, and assessment practices, raising concerns about sustainability and pedagogical quality.

Table 2

Findings on Creativity in Turkish ELT Classrooms

Study	Focus	Key Findings	Relevance to Policy
Çelik & Tümen Akyıldız (2021)	Teacher perceptions of creativity	Teachers value creativity but rarely implement creative teaching practices	Clear gap between policy emphasis and classroom practice
Akyıldız & Çelik (2020)	Creativity in teaching practices	Creativity limited to activities; constrained by exams and curriculum load	Superficial implementation of learner-centered policy
Gursoy & Bağ (2018)	Creativity (intervention)	Structured training improves creative thinking (originality, flexibility)	Policy goals achievable under guided instruction
Azak (2020)	Creative writing (intervention)	Inquiry-based learning improves writing skills and student attitudes	Supports constructivist and communicative policy aims

Dölek (2025)	Creative drama (intervention)	Improves motivation, achievement, and engagement	Effective but limited to controlled settings
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Table 3

Findings on Technology Integration in Turkish ELT Classrooms

Study	Focus	Key Findings	Relevance to Policy
Hol & Aydın (2020)	Teacher use of technology	Positive attitudes but limited implementation due to infrastructure	Structural barriers hinder policy implementation
Aşık et al. (2020)	ICT competence	Moderate skills; weak pedagogical integration	Gap in teacher preparation
Zengin & Yılmaz (2021)	Digital tools	Improves learning outcomes slightly; supports retention	Technology is supportive, not transformative
Krasnov (2025)	VR learning	High motivation but no significant performance difference	Effect depends on implementation quality
Güngör et al. (2024)	Material adaptation	Teachers adapt materials using digital tools	Teachers compensate for

			curriculum limitations
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Table 4

Findings on Visual Arts in Turkish ELT Classrooms

Study	Focus	Key Findings	Relevance to Policy
Baykal (2019)	Visual literacy in materials	Visual elements support meaning-making and comprehension	Aligns with policy emphasis on multimodal learning
Alpan & Mart (2020)	Visual arts (intervention)	Visual production improves engagement, retention, and performance	Effective but limited to intervention contexts
Veyis et al. (2025)	Digital storytelling	Multimodal storytelling enhances language skills and engagement	Supports integration of visual and linguistic modes

Güngör & Fişne (2020)	Visual tools in classrooms	Visuals used mainly as supplementary tools rather than structured pedagogy	Partial and surface-level alignment with policy
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Table 5

Findings on Project-Based Learning (PBL) in Turkish ELT Classrooms

Study	Focus	Key Findings	Relevance to Policy
Kimsesiz (2023)	Teacher perceptions of PBL	Teachers value PBL but rarely implement it	Strong policy–practice gap
Kemaloglu-Er & Bayyurt (2020)	PBL implementation	Effective but constrained by institutional norms	Implementation limited by systemic factors
Alpan & Mart (2020)	PBL-related practices	Encourages collaboration but remains task-based	Partial realization of PBL principles

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Summary of findings

This study aimed to explore how Turkish ELT policies shape the integration of art, technology, and project-based learning (PBL), and how these policy goals are reflected in classroom practices based on research conducted over the past eight years.

The results show that Turkish ELT policies promote creativity, learner-centered approaches, digital tools, and communication skills, all of which align with project-based learning principles. Visual arts are mainly included through references to visual resources and arts-and-crafts activities, especially at the primary level. Meanwhile, technology is emphasized more clearly as a driver of innovation, particularly in digital transformation initiatives and 21st-century skills. Despite this alignment, the policies lack clear pedagogical frameworks and implementation strategies, particularly regarding interdisciplinary integration and the practical use of PBL.

Empirical research shows some alignment between policy goals and actual classroom practices. Teachers generally view creativity, technology use, and project-based learning positively; however, these elements are not always smoothly integrated into everyday lessons. Creativity often appears as isolated activities rather than being part of a broader pedagogical approach. Technology is mainly used as a support tool rather than a transformative element, and visual arts are often seen as supplementary rather than essential parts of an interdisciplinary approach. Similarly, although PBL (project-based learning) is valued for its benefits, its adoption is still limited by various contextual challenges.

Overall, the findings show that the gap between policy and practice in Turkish ELT goes beyond simple adoption issues, involving challenges in pedagogical design, teacher readiness, and structural barriers. Even with innovative methods, their success depends on the classroom setting, instructional planning, and sustainability over time. This indicates that while policy reforms are theoretically sound, their practical implementation remains underdeveloped, often relying more on individual teachers than systemic support.

The 4Cs—critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication—are essential in 21st-century English language teaching. These skills complement each other to foster meaningful learning. Project-based learning and multimodal activities create opportunities for learners to work together, think critically, and communicate effectively, thus practicing the 4Cs. Creativity specifically allows learners to develop and share ideas in various ways. The effective work relies not only on policy goals but also on supportive pedagogical structures, suitable assessment methods, and well-prepared teachers.

Therefore, closing the gap between policy goals and classroom implementation requires promoting innovative methods while also ensuring they are practical, pedagogically clear, and sustainably incorporated into the education system.

Limitations of the study

A limitation of this study is its dependence on existing empirical research rather than original data collection. Consequently, results are influenced by the availability, scope, and quality of published studies. Additionally, since the focus is solely on the Turkish ELT context, the findings may have limited generalizability to other educational systems. The analysis revealed a small number of empirical studies on

integrating visual arts and project-based learning in ELT, particularly at primary and middle school levels, which restricted the depth of interdisciplinary analysis. The study considers only literature from the past eight years to maintain relevance, though this may exclude earlier foundational research. Some reviewed studies are intervention-based, potentially not reflecting typical classroom settings. Limits to grades 2-8 in public schools mean these findings might not apply to upper secondary, higher education, or private schools, where instructional practices and policies could differ.

Recommendations and implications

Policy documents should offer clearer guidance on implementing project-based and interdisciplinary methods by incorporating specific examples, models, and assessment strategies. Greater focus should be placed on making creativity and visual arts central to learning rather than merely supplementary activities. Teacher training must cover both technological skills and pedagogical design, emphasizing the incorporation of creativity, visual arts, and project-based learning. Ongoing professional development is crucial for helping teachers turn policy objectives into effective classroom practices. Teachers need support in adopting inquiry-based, structured, and project-oriented activities that foster meaningful language use.

Viewing visual arts as a pedagogical framework rather than as isolated activities can boost engagement, creativity, and communication. Future research should investigate how to systematically integrate visual arts, digital tools, and project-based learning into ELT, especially at the primary level. More classroom-based, long-term studies are necessary to find sustainable implementation methods.

Overall, this review highlights the need to shift from policy aims to practical, coherent, and sustainable strategies for integrating creativity, technology, and interdisciplinary approaches in English language teaching.

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