

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF UNDERSTANDING BY DESIGN (Ubd) MODEL IN UNIT DESIGN IN TURKISH
EFL CONTEXT

BY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore English language teachers' and English department heads' perspectives on the implementation of the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework in their Turkish EFL context. UbD is a unit and curriculum design framework which aims for student understanding and its transfer into real life context through three stages: identifying the desired results, determining the evidence, and planning learning activities. A qualitative research design was adopted for the study. The participants of the study were 39 English teachers and five department heads. Data was collected through open-ended questionnaires from teachers and heads, and semi-constructed focus group interviews conducted with teachers. Data was analysed through content and thematic analysis. The results of the study indicated that the teachers who implemented UbD within the context of their school recognized it mostly as a design process. Regarding the implementation of UbD in the Turkish EFL context, the findings revealed some perceived benefits on students' academic achievement and English language skills thanks to its focus on the development of understandings and transferring of skills. The findings also revealed perceived challenges caused by institutional, instructional, teacher related and learner related factors. As for online education during the global pandemic, the findings indicated that teachers benefited from UbD although they found it challenging due to the characteristics of online education. These findings suggest that school administrators should accept the fact that the UbD process can take a long time, and therefore they should develop a plan for the whole academic year without imposing pressure on teachers to cover their content. Hence, teachers can prioritize their students' learning. Schools should also provide their teachers with regular in-service training to ensure the proper implementation of UbD by increasing their professional knowledge of its underlying principles. Besides, conceptualization of such innovations by teachers who are expected to implement them should be taken into consideration. In other words, schools should deploy efforts to form a shared

understanding of the innovative ideas and their ultimate goals that can be verbalized by each member of the team.

Key Words: Understanding by Design (UbD), English curriculum design



ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı İngilizce'yi yabancı dil olarak öğreten İngilizce öğretmenlerinin ve bölüm başkanlarının Anlama Odaklı Tasarım (UbD) uygulamaları hakkındaki görüşlerini keşfetmektir. Anlama Odaklı Tasarım öğrencilerin kendi anlamalarını geliştirmelerine ve bunları gerçek hayatta uygulamalarına odaklanan 3 aşamalı bir ünite ve müfredat tasarımı aracıdır. Bu 3 aşama istenilen sonuçları belirleme, anlama kanıtlarını saptama ve öğrenme aktivitelerini planlama adımlarından oluşmaktadır. Araştırma nitel bir araştırmadır. Araştırmanın katılımcıları 39 İngilizce öğretmeni ve 5 bölüm başkanından oluşmaktadır. Veri öğretmen ve bölüm başkanlarıyla yapılan açık uçlu sorulardan oluşan anketler ve sonrasında öğretmenlerle yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış odak grup görüşmeleri aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Çalışmanın sonuçları okullarında UbD uygulayan İngilizce öğretmenlerinin çoğunlukla UbD'yi bir tasarım süreci olarak tanımladıklarını ve UbD uygulamalarının anlama ve transfer odaklı olması sebebiyle öğrencilerin akademik gelişimine ve İngilizce dil gelişimlerine katkı sağladığını ortaya çıkarmıştır. Çalışma aynı zamanda öğretmenlerin kurumsal, öğretimsel, öğrenci ve öğretmen kaynaklı faktörlerden kaynaklanan zorluklar yaşadığını ortaya çıkarmıştır. Çalışmanın bir diğer sonucu ise pandemi sürecindeki UbD uygulamaları sırasında öğretmenlerin zorluklarla karşılaştığını fakat aynı zamanda bu süreçte UbD'yi faydalı bulduklarını göstermiştir. Çalışmanın sonuçları göstermiştir ki okul yöneticileri UbD tasarım sürecinin zaman alacağını öngörmeli ve öğretmenlere konuları zamanında bitirme konusunda baskı yapmadan tüm akademik yıl için UbD eğitim planlaması yapmalıdır, bu sayede öğrencilerinin öğrenme süreçlerine öncelik verebilmelerine olanak sağlanmalıdır. Okullar UbD'nin doğru uygulandığından emin olmak amacıyla akademik yıl içerisinde düzenli olarak gerçekleştirilen hizmet içi eğitimlerle öğretmenlerin mesleki bilgilerine katkı sağlamalıdır. Aynı zamanda, UbD uygulamaları beklenen öğretmenler arasındaki farklı UbD anlayışları dikkate alınmalıdır. Başka bir deyişle, okullar UbD gibi yenilikçi yaklaşımların amaç ve

hedeflerinin yeterince anlaşılması ve bu amaç ve hedeflerin okulun her bir üyesi tarafından dile getirilebilmesi için çaba harcamalıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Anlama Odaklı Tasarım (UbD), İngilizce Müfredat Tasarımı



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Özet.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Table of Contents.....	vii
List of Tables	viii
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the study.....	1
1.2. Statement of the Problem.	3
1.2.1. The purpose of schooling.	5
1.2.2. Two different concepts: Knowledge and understanding.....	6
1.3. Purpose of the Study	11
1.4. Research Questions	12
1.5. Overview of Methodology	12
1.6. Significance of the Study	13
1.7. Limitations of the Study	14
1.8. Definition of Terms	14
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	17
2.1. Theoretical Background for UbD.....	17
2.2. Understanding by Design	20
2.2.1. Stage 1: Identify desired results.	23
2.2.2. Stage 2: Determine acceptable evidence.....	27
2.2.3. Stage 3: Plan learning experiences and instruction.....	34
2.3. Backward Design	36
2.4. UbD with A Lens on Language	37
2.5. Studies on Understanding by Design	38
2.5.1. Studies on UbD in various disciplines.	38
2.5.2. Studies on UbD in EFL and ESL context.	44
3. METHODOLOGY	48
3.1. Setting	48
3.2. Participants	51
3.2.1. English teachers.	51
3.2.2. Heads of English departments.....	53

3.3. Research Design	54
3.3.1. Data collection process.	54
3.3.2. Data analysis.	57
3.4. Trustworthiness of the Study	60
3.4.1 Credibility.	60
3.4.2. Transferability.	61
3.4.3. Dependability.	62
3.4.4. Confirmability.	62
4. RESULTS	64
4.1. Findings of the First Research Question	64
4.1.1. Conceptualizations of UbD.	64
4.2. Findings of the Second Research Question.....	70
4.2.1. Student-related benefits.....	72
4.2.2. English language learning-related benefits.	75
4.2.3. Teacher-related benefits.	77
4.3. Findings of the Third Research Question.....	80
4.3.1. Institutional challenges.	81
4.3.2. Instructional challenges.....	83
4.3.3. Learner-related challenges.	84
4.3.4. Teacher-related challenges.....	85
4.4. Findings of the Fourth Research Question.....	87
4.4.1. Advantages.	89
4.4.2. Disadvantages.	91
5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	96
5.1. Summary	96
5.2. Discussion and Conclusion	98
5.3. Implications	107
5.4. Limitations and Recommendation for Further Research	109
6. REFERENCES	111
7. APPENDICES	118

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. The W.H.E.R.E.T.O Elements	35
Table 2. Demographic Background of English Teachers	51
Table 3. English Teachers' Teaching Experience in Different Grade Levels	53
Table 4. Teachers' Conceptualization of UbD	65
Table 5. Benefits of Implementing UbD	70
Table 6. Challenges of Implementing UbD	80
Table 7. Applicability of UbD During Online Education	88
Table 8. Advantages of Implementing UbD During Online Education	89
Table 9. Disadvantages of Implementing UbD During Online Education	91

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the Study

An effective learning environment is where students are encouraged to think critically, make connections, question, use high yield strategies, transfer the acquired skills and knowledge and show understanding. Many teachers develop their own ways of creating such a learning environment. Although the process of creating such an environment seems as if it starts in the classroom, it is the planning process that enables this to happen in the first place. Classroom applications and procedures are reflections of a well thought and quality-focused curriculum and unit design. Having students who demonstrate successful outcomes requires more than just having a weekly plan that is generally activity-oriented and far from being related to an overall idea or concept. It requires a well-structured unit design that connects the weekly plans, targeted standards, evidence of success and learning activities all together in a way that leads to larger scale understanding (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Many teachers have had the following kinds of questions from their students in their teaching career: Why am I learning this? Am I even going to use this outside of school? How is this going to help me later in my life? These questions are widespread among students, and even teachers sometimes do not know the answers. Students pose these questions as there has been too much emphasis on memorization at the expense of making sense of the content both in textbooks and curricula. Students are expected to master textbooks without deep learning of the content (Bransford et al., 2000). The necessity of a unit that asserts the importance of deep learning that transfers has become inevitable for institutions and educators. Wiggins and McTighe (2005) recognized this urgent necessity and brought the elements of a well thought good quality design together with their design template *Understanding by Design* (henceforth

UbD). UbD aims for deep learning that is transferred to real life contexts and has its roots in the fields of education and psychology. It emphasizes the significance of understanding as well as content knowledge and provides a solution to disconnection between the classroom and real life. There is no doubt that, to prepare for real life, one should have the required knowledge, skills and experiences, however, too much emphasis has been put on content and knowledge so far. The mission of schooling is not only covering content, but also creating environments where students interact with the content. According to UbD, the entire curriculum must reflect *learning for understanding*. Curricula that are designed with learning for understanding in mind intertwine three academic purposes: acquiring the content, making sense of the content and transferring the acquired knowledge to authentic contexts (Wiggins & McTighe, 2008).

UbD framework is a way of thinking in terms of planning curriculum with helpful tools to enable educators reach their end goal. It empowers students to take what they learn and apply it beyond the walls of the classroom unlike activity or content-related designs. UbD suggests that the best unit design starts from the end, a design model called *backward design*. Backward design emphasizes identifying the outcomes of the unit beforehand and planning toward achieving them. It incorporates three main stages; Stage 1: Desired Results, Stage 2: Evidence of Assessment, and Stage 3: Learning Experiences and Instruction. Most teachers tend to focus on the activities themselves rather than connecting different activities and highlighting big ideas. Unlike randomly chosen activities, UbD connects the areas of education and provides teachers and curriculum designers with a holistic unit in larger context curriculum planning design. As well as equipping students with deep learning, UbD also enables teachers to tackle the challenging questions that they always receive from students regarding the purpose of learning.

1.2. Statement of the Problem.

The field of education has undergone many changes over the past centuries. In the early 1800s, education did not go beyond reading and transcribing oral performances into written ones. Reading mostly composed of fables and reading the Bible. Later in the 1900s the factory model of education was popular in the field of education. Schools were considered as factories, students as products of the factory and teachers as the workers who tried to shape the material in the best way they could (Serafini, 2002). Differences in learning styles or needs of the students were not taken into consideration. The purpose of education at those times was to have students that could run like a brand-new machine out of the factory. This view toward education inevitably caused teachers to prepare standardized tests to assess the quality of the products; in this case, students. People were neither educated to think critically nor to solve sophisticated problems. However, the present day requires them to fully interact with the complexities of life (Bransford et al., 2000). While in the past reciting a poem counted as being successful and the expectation after graduation was not much, today's world that waits for students is quite different than the world hundred years ago. When students in our modern time graduate from schools, the world outside of schools today requires high ordering and organization skills, the ability to think critically, problem solving and collaboration skills, etc. To successfully bring real life to classrooms, teachers need to create an effective learning environment. This environment should be a classroom where students are encouraged to question, to feel free to maintain their learning ways, express their opinions and respect the others (Fogarty & McTighe, 2001).

Although the world has advanced in many ways, a lot of education is still reminiscent of the traditional approaches of years gone by. Even today, students still walk out of schools

with no understanding of the larger concepts and ideas, things that will prepare them for real life challenges.

The main problem is that students do not transfer what they learn at school to new situations to solve problems and tackle challenges. Although schools should be the places that teach how to survive beyond classrooms, a good amount of research demonstrates that people are not capable of applying knowledge they learn at school to new situations (Day & GoldStone, 2012). To illustrate, while educational curricula are composed of an incredible amount of concepts to be taught, Day and GoldStone (2012) show that students cannot grasp the relations of the ideas when they encounter them in their real life, especially when they do not match the way they are presented by teachers. Similarly, McNeil et al. (2009) showed that students were less successful to solve problems about money when they were asked to do it with real bills and coins than they were not. In other cases students who are equipped with skills to solve problems outside of schools fail when it comes to problem-solving at school (Johnson, 1998; Lave, 1988).

Transfer requires understanding which is an abstract phenomenon that is beyond knowledge, hence it is not very easy to evaluate and test. For this reason, understanding of the larger concepts and ideas can be brought out by transferring what is learnt to a new situation. In their book *Understanding by Design*, Wiggins and McTighe also acknowledge the concept of transferring. “The challenge is not to “plug in” what was learned, from memory, but modify, adjust, and adapt an (inherently general) idea to the particulars of a situation” (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 41). Students should not be solving problems by recalling the same solution they had practiced in class. A problem is not new when students are required to remember solutions to the problems they are familiar with. It should be a kind of problem that they can solve without assistance.

Bloom and his colleagues (1956) also mentioned an ongoing discussion in their times; the ability to solve real problems. They witnessed that when adults are presented with a real problem, they usually avoid it when they figure they cannot solve it. Rather than trying to find different ways to approach it, they are keen on applying some limited techniques or they completely escape from it. It is still an issue today's education faces. When students are presented with real problems in the real world, they do not know how to tackle it, hence they escape from it. It is only possible when students are equipped with skills to solve real problems at schools, then they are able to tackle the problems they face in the real world.

The term *transfer* can be regarded as an umbrella term for the main problem. However, there are many factors that prevent transfer from taking place. These factors can be categorized as the purpose of schooling and the two different concepts that are mixed very often.

1.2.1. The purpose of schooling.

Traditional education has failed to equip students with necessary requirements for the real tasks they will face in future outside of schools. For this reason, educators' vision of curriculum should also be adapted into the new necessities. Learners leave classrooms confused when they do not know where the unit is leading, what the bigger picture is, how all the things they learn are connected to one another and what is expected from them at the end of the unit. Traditional ways of planning do not go beyond planning activities and later choosing the objectives of a lesson. Teachers' major role consists of making sure every learner has gained the targeted standards at the end of every unit; however, many have difficulties finding the best way to accomplish that role. Many teachers begin with choosing a topic or following the topics in a course book, plan their activities but not asking themselves the essential questions: Why do I want my students to learn these? What will they do with all this? Most of the time, these activities are neither linked to a big idea nor are learners aware of the point of learning them in

the first place, hence leading to the challenging questions that teachers face and struggle to find answers for. Those challenging questions indeed lead to a bigger question that needs to be addressed: What is the purpose of schooling?

The complexities and dynamism of the modern world have also changed the point of view toward education. Today education should not be considered as something to be produced in the factories, but rather as something that should be shaped according to modern world necessities. McTighe (2018) emphasizes this issue with three essential questions: What should we teach in modern education? How should we assess what we teach? and How can our assessments help learning rather than just measuring it?

The purpose of schooling has been a hot debate among scholars for many years. Bloom et al. (1956) wrote the well-known influential taxonomy because of the problems in education. They realized that the objectives of educational goals were not clear, and teachers had different conceptualizations of the term *understanding* and *knowledge*, hence they created the taxonomy.

John Dewey (1916) also stated that schools waste students' abilities to be used outside of school in their daily lives. He referred to this problem as schools and life being isolated from each other. If the purpose of schooling is preparation for life, then schooling should be a role-play or simulation of real life where students should be partaking in. He also stated in his book *How We Think* (1910) that the purpose of schooling and education is deep learning of big ideas and concepts. These ideas and concepts are such generalizations that should be applicable into different surroundings. If there is no conceptualization, we cannot mention any gain.

1.2.2. Two different concepts: Knowledge and understanding.

Recently, new findings in the science of learning have emphasized the importance of learning with understanding (Bransford et al., 2000). Learning itself alone might not guarantee that understanding also takes place. Change in behaviour or the acquired knowledge are

indicators of learning; nevertheless, it does not mean one knows how and when to show that behaviour or use that information. Understanding is beyond having the knowledge of something. Students that are filled with lots of information about many things are confused when the point of their learning a specific subject is not explained or not connected to a larger concept. Bloom et al. (1956) also stated that knowledge by itself cannot be isolated from application. Students should prove what they can do with their knowledge after all. Knowledge is the first requirement to be able to understand. However, knowledge by itself does not automatically enable understanding. As Bloom et al. (1956) suggest in their taxonomy, recalling all the information given is fairly hard as our memory is limited. Moreover, if the information is given in isolated chunks, then that cannot be called learning. What is necessary is that students know what to do with that knowledge in new situations. The ability to use knowledge appropriately and correctly in a new situation is another skill called *transfer* or *application* by Bloom's definition.

A similar argument could be made in terms of learning the English language. In Turkey, where English is taught as a foreign language in state schools and universities, there are differences with regard to students' level of English proficiency. Although students have intensive English courses during their prep-class and their major classes, it is not very uncommon to have students that cannot communicate well after they graduate. Students graduate from state high schools after having been taught more than 1400 hours of English, however 90 % of students are still at a beginner level in terms of speaking the language (Paker, 2012). A very large scale study conducted by British Council and The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey, TEPAV (2014) across primary, middle and high school state schools with more than 19,000 students indicated that in all of the classes that were observed,

students were not able to communicate in English. The reason for this was mainly the focus on teaching grammar and students not being able to transfer this knowledge into their real lives.

Another large scale study into teaching of English in state universities which was carried out in 2015 by British Council and TEPAV shows that Turkey consistently underperforms to a large extent on communication skills. Turkey ranks 41 out of 60 countries according to the 2013 English Proficiency Index (EPI) (British Council and TEPAV, 2015). It is a very large study that focuses on many different factors that affect the English deficiency of Turkish L1 learners and it identifies two major realities behind the field of English language teaching. It revealed that although more than 80 % of English teachers were qualified to teach English and they created a positive learning environment, more than 90 % of 12th grade Turkish students' English language competency was limited to basics.

In a study conducted to explore 9th graders' speaking problems in L2 in a Turkish EFL context, Tokoz-Goktepe (2014) showed that the main reason why students could not speak and had limited communication outside the classroom in real life was that their lessons were mainly based on grammar knowledge and vocabulary. Another study that focused on challenges of English Language Teaching in high schools in Turkey indicated that even the students who were successful in international exams had problems speaking English fluently (Ayaz et al., 2019). They associated their incompetence with the system of teaching English in Turkey and said that they did not think their English had improved since primary school.

The aforementioned studies' findings support that knowledge-based learning does not guarantee meaningful understanding. It shows that most of the teachers have the competence and qualifications to teach in English. Nonetheless, in the classes, English was taught as a subject where there was a lot of knowledge passed into the students rather than as a communication tool. Students were not able to communicate in English independently.

As the aforementioned examples demonstrate, knowledge and understanding are the two terms that could not potentially be used interchangeably. Knowledge is made of facts, the concrete entities that are verifiable claims. It can be right or wrong and its situation being right or wrong is undebatable. One cannot change a fact by purely interpreting it differently. Water boiling at 100 degrees, sun rising in the east and setting in the west are some examples of facts. Understanding, on the other hand, is interpreting and making meaning of the facts. For example, one might have the knowledge of the fact that the globe has been warming day by day. These days this fact is all over the tv, news, and social media. However, they might not be able to make sense of it. One might not come to understand that some of their daily activities have a potential to contribute to global warming or help decrease it. This fact should be connected to a larger picture and should be a part of one's life. Understanding global warming, its causes and effects is formed through relating these causes and effects into one's life.

Wiggins and McTighe (2005) mention good examples of the lack of understanding in their book *Understanding by Design*. A lot of American students who have Algebra I classes have passing grades. However, National Assessment and Educational Progress (NAEP) (1988) results demonstrate that 5% of adolescents do well when they need to use higher-order use Algebra I.

The authors of the books also demonstrate the Project Zero study that was conducted by Howard Gardner and his colleagues about students who might seem to understand concepts and ideas. However, the study shows that was not the case and that many students lack understanding. The researchers were expecting that a college student would be able to perform well when they were asked to transfer their knowledge of geometry, physics or history of which they excelled in their classes. When the testing circumstances were changed, there was no proof of real understanding of the concepts (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Knowledge and understanding are the two elements that are not mutually exclusive, but rather they complete each other. Just as knowledge is not useful without understanding, understanding also does not take place if there is lack of knowledge of a concept's elements.

Teachers and educators who have a very significant role to prepare students for real life are the most important pieces in this big puzzle game. They are the ones who should be aware of the requirements for survival in the real world outside of schools and prepare students for it. This is not something that could be done through memorization or having pure knowledge about something that does not make sense for students just like it was in the 1800s and 1900s unless the purpose of learning and when students will be using it are made understandable for them. Modern life requires schools to be more than the place where only knowledge and information are taught. It is hard to understand the benefit of knowledge and information that are acquired at school, if students are not able to use them in appropriate contexts and situations. Schools are not places to prepare students to be good at something; they are the places which rather prepare them how to use the knowledge and skills they learn at school in real life, both in and outside of school. Gaining knowledge and skills should enable students to apply them when they face real world problems and issues. Education requires gaining knowledge and skills; however, it does not mean those alone lead to learning and making sense of the content. Wiggins and McTighe (2008) state that "Learning is more than merely taking in; teaching is more than covering content. Meaning must be made and understanding must be earned" (p. 26). Acquiring all the information and skills does not mean much unless they are connected to an end task which would require the knowledge to be applied in a real-life situation. Understanding is revealed when learners are able to apply their learning in new situations (Wise & McTighe, 2017).

This is where all students have a point when they ask the aforementioned questions. They are learning it all because that information will help them solve a real-world problem that they may face in future. Educating students of the new world with the old world's techniques will not work. As Nobel-Prize recipient Heubert Simon stated, having the knowledge of something is not reciting it, it is to use it in new and challenging situations (Simon, 1996, as cited in Bransford et al, 2000).

When teachers do not have a clear perspective of what their students will be able to do at the end of a unit, all the technical gains that are composed of pure knowledge and skills do not mean much in learners' minds. Unlike these kinds of unit designs which are activity-oriented, UbD offers an effective way to design a unit or curriculum with a well designed framework that starts with the end results in mind, followed by evidence of learning and learning activities. It offers an effective and systematic way to accomplish this meaningful way of teaching which ensures teaching for understanding and transfer.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The UbD framework is used in some schools in the Turkish EFL context. As the they had worked in one of those schools before, the researcher had a chance to observe the teachers' experiences with UbD and got inspired to work on this topic. The main purpose of this study is to explore teachers' perspectives who have been designing their curriculum with UbD in EFL settings where it has been used as the main curriculum and unit plan design framework. It aims to present an account of teachers' reviews of the UbD framework, benefits and challenging sides during the implementation of it. The study is unique since this topic has not been explored in the EFL or ESL field adequately. Hence it aims to shed light into the EFL field in terms of curriculum, unit, lesson and assessment design. It also strives to contribute to language education by demonstrating to teachers, curriculum planners and program designers

that such an approach to curriculum design can be quite beneficial if it is applied in the right way. The study demonstrates that adopting such a design to develop curriculum helps teachers equip their students with both language skills that are targeted and understanding of the larger ideas and concepts through the medium of instruction, in this case, English. By this way, it aims to spread the implementation of UbD as an alternative framework to unit design.

1.4. Research Questions

The study aims to answer the following questions:

1. How do EFL teachers in K-12 settings conceptualize UbD in unit design?
2. How do EFL teachers and English department heads perceive the role and benefits of UbD implementation in K-12 EFL settings?
3. What are the challenges that EFL teachers and English department heads face during the implementation of UbD in K-12 settings?
4. How do EFL teachers and English department heads perceive the applicability of UbD during online education in K-12 settings?

1.5. Overview of Methodology

The study utilized qualitative research design to investigate the research questions. Participants of the study consisted of 39 English teachers and five English department heads across K-12 levels from five different schools. Data was collected through two separate open-ended questionnaires developed for the purpose of the study to collect data from teachers and department heads. The questionnaires were piloted with two English teachers before the data collection process. After data was collected through questionnaires, seven teachers participated in the semi-constructed focus group interviews to elaborate on their answers. Interviews were

recorded and later transcribed. Collected data was analyzed through content and thematic analysis.

1.6. Significance of the Study

UbD is designed for teaching for understanding, making meaning of the big ideas and concepts, and transferring what is being taught. Although the UbD framework's efficacy has been validated through informal classroom observation and action research (McTighe & Seif, 2003), not much research upon the implementation of the program has been conducted in the English Language Teaching field. One significance of this study is that it sheds light on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the program from teachers' and administrators' point of view through formal research. Since UbD is a very much structured and quality-focused design process that develops student achievement through sophisticated stages, teachers' views and perceptions of this process are crucial. The study aims to explore insights from teachers and department heads who are the main stakeholders in the field of education. If the study shows that teachers' perspectives regarding the efficacy of the design process is in favour of the implementation of it, then some significant implications can be drawn for making use of the UbD framework by schools while developing curricula. Another significance of this study originates from something unique. The UbD design process originated from an English-speaking country, the USA, and it is widely used across the USA. However, there is not much research that has been conducted overseas in different contexts. This study aims to elucidate the implementation of the program in Turkish kindergarten, primary, middle and high school EFL settings. A great amount of research has been done in countries whose first language is English, however, the perspectives of the program that is applied in EFL countries have not been discussed adequately. For this reason, it is important that this study brings out possible as of yet unnoticed issues regarding the implementation of the program with the aim of teaching

and learning for understanding as well as a second aim which is teaching English as a foreign language through the implementation of UbD design process.

1.7. Limitations of the Study

The study has some limitations. First, the UbD design process is widely used across where it originated from; however, there are not many schools that are familiar with the design in the researcher's context, Turkey. For this reason this study was conducted with a limited number of participants in limited numbers of private schools where it was implemented across the levels from pre-kindergarten to grade 12.

Second, the focus group interviews could only be conducted with teachers due to the tight schedule of heads of departments.

Third, due to the global pandemic, face-to-face classroom observation could not be conducted to draw upon teachers' interactions with students based on the UbD framework.

Finally, it is important to consider the fact that the implementation of the program could possibly be different depending on students' English competency in different grades. Hence, the results should not be generalized into other contexts. Moreover, this study included the perspectives of the participants towards the implementation of the program. A longitudinal study that is conducted on student achievement could bring more focused and quality implementation of the program.

1.8. Definition of Terms

- ***Authentic Assessment or Authentic Task:*** Performance tasks that are based on real life events are authentic tasks since they target a real audience with real purposes. Students are expected to use the knowledge and skills they have been equipped with in these performance tasks (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

- **Backward Design:** An approach to curriculum or unit planning that starts with the end result in mind. It plans toward the end result that is targeted for learners (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).
- **Big Idea:** Big idea is the umbrella term for important and enduring ideas of a unit. It is the main focal point that learners should get. Big ideas go beyond facts and knowledge but rather focus on deep learning of larger concepts. They are applied in other contexts and situations that learners are not familiar with in the first place (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).
- **Desired Result:** The end result that learners leave the unit with. It is an achievement goal. It is what teachers want their students to learn or understand at the end of the unit (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).
- **Enduring Understandings:** The understandings that are targeted for the unit. Similar to big ideas, enduring understandings go beyond the classrooms and are applicable to new situations. They last long and do not have a clear cut answer. Every individual builds their understanding during the unit (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).
- **Essential Question:** A question that promotes critical thinking, inquiry and unveiling of a concept. It does not have a straight answer, rather open-ended. It challenges learners to think outside of the box (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).
- **Six Facets of Understanding:** The ways to demonstrate one's understanding. Understanding and knowing are not the same things. True understanding is revealed if one can; explain, interpret, apply, have perspective, empathize, and have self-knowledge (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).
- **G.R.A.S.P.S:** A tool that enables teachers to create performance tasks. They challenge students with a real-world problem in an authentic context with a real

audience. Each letter of the G.R.A.S.P.S represents an element; goal, role, audience, situation, performance, standards (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

- ***Transferability:*** The ability to use knowledge and skills that have been taught within the unit in different context, situations without teacher assistance (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).
- ***Understanding:*** To understand is to manifest it through many ways. It is the ability to explain why something is in the way it is, internalize knowledge and make use of it, and to be able to use it in different contexts (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).
- ***W.H.E.R.E.T.O:*** A design to plan learning processes and activities. Each letter represents an element; Where?; Hook; Explore and Equip; Rethink and Revise; Exhibit and Evaluate; Tailor; Organize (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Background for UbD

UbD bases its foundations and principles on the research from cognitive psychology and neurology (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011). Findings from the cognitive science the UbD principles based on are:

- Superficial coverage of topics does not prepare students for real life challenges and problems. Curricula that are very much focused on knowledge do not give teachers enough time to equip students with deep learning.
- Pure explicit drills and practice of knowledge do not enable students to learn effectively.
- A lot of assessments measure recently taught knowledge and do not require any authentic tasks where students can apply their knowledge in a different context. These assessments that measure pure knowledge do not reflect student understanding and fail to show teachers what their students' needs are.
- Knowledge gained through memorization does not transfer. For transfer to take place, understanding of underlying concepts must be earned and knowledge must be used outside of context.
- Successful students seek to understand big concepts and ideas whereas students who need support are more likely to solve problems through the right formulas and by trusting their intuitions.

UbD's conceptual framework is also based on neuroscience of learning (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011). Research conducted by Willis (2006) who is a neurologist and a middle school teacher shows examples of findings from neuroscience that provides the foundations for UbD.

- For information to be best remembered, students should be exposed to it multiple times and it must be followed by authentic use of that information.
- Patterning in the brain takes place when new material is connected with the old material or when categorizing material into patterns the brain has not previously used.
- Activities that stimulate learning with multiple senses such as hands-on experiences enable learning to become long term memory..

It can be inferred that the theoretical framework for UbD also comes from various paradigms. Wiggins and McTighe were inspired by Benjamin Bloom's, John Dewey's, Jerome Bruner's, Ralph Tyler's and Hilda Taba's works and created UbD in light of them. Taba (1962) stated that facts and skills are the bridges that help students connect larger concepts and ideas. Bloom's Taxonomy categorizes learning into three domains; cognitive, affective and psychomotor. All categories of Bloom's Taxonomy require cognitive abilities which also provide foundations for UbD. Similar to Bloom's Taxonomy, UbD also categorizes learning into three: A (Acquiring), M (Making Meaning) and T (Transfer) (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011). The foundation level for Bloom's Taxonomy is remembering, which can be included in the category of UbD's acquiring. The purpose of Bloom's Taxonomy is to carry students through the top of the pyramid just as in UbD's learning categories. UbD emphasizes the significance of transfer which is revealed through 6 facets of understanding just as Bloom and his colleagues advocated the idea that students should be carried through the top of the taxonomy where they demonstrate the evidence of understanding. When looked at in depth, many similarities between the taxonomy and UbD can be seen. Bloom's taxonomy and the UbD framework are similar in the way that they aim for the same goal: understanding and evidence of it. The UbD framework was conceived as a solution to a problem many teachers face: For a long time, teaching has not gone beyond either activity-based lessons which are planned according to some activities that teachers think students might like or coverage-focused lessons where

teachers only teach topics for the sake of covering the content that has to be covered. What is missing in these kinds of teachings is that there is no meaningful teaching and no plan for real learning.

The focus of the UbD framework, on the contrary, is to teach for understanding which ultimately shows itself through transfer. The National Research Council has also reported that unless the aim is for transferability, much of the effort to teach skills might be considered as wasted (Barnett & Ceci, 2002). Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues were also aware of the important mission to teach for understanding and transfer. In their popular book *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*, Bloom et al. (1956) expressed that knowledge learning is slightly more than remembering or recalling and is distinguished from understanding. Moreover, they suggested that knowledge is not valuable unless it is used in new situations.

John Dewey, who was considered to be the father of progressive education, emphasized the importance of teaching for understanding which aims for making connections in his book *How We Think* (2003). He also believed that education can change society and that education should be life itself. His understanding of education systems and the belief that education should be life itself is one of the main principles of UbD as well.

Jerome Bruner is a pioneer in the constructivist paradigm. Constructivism supports the idea that learning occurs when new information is connected to old information and is not merely taking in information. It also suggests that understanding takes place as learners construct their own understanding by connecting the patterns. This view is very similar to UbD's main foundation, namely understanding. UbD suggests that understanding is more than taking information and cannot be gained if knowledge and skills are not connected and not applied in another context. Bruner (1960) suggested that learning should serve humanity in the future by solving problems. He believed that solving problems should be at the heart of education the same way that the transfer of knowledge and skills into real life to solve problems is at the heart of UbD.

Decades ago, Ralph Tyler (1949), who is considered the pioneer of curriculum design, advocated backward design, which aims for objectives to be identified as a first step as opposed to starting with the content. He stated that objectives serve as the criteria for choosing the appropriate materials, drafting the content, creating learning experiences, and evidence of assessment. In his book *How to Solve It*, Polya (1945) promotes the idea of thinking backwards to solve problems. The UbD framework is built upon backward design, which is a way of thinking that suggests designing the teaching process by starting from the end, which in this case are the desired results. UbD suggests that backward design in curriculum planning is the best approach since it ensures acquisition, meaning, and transfer of the desired results.

In conclusion, it can be stated that UbD's roots come from many different educational philosophies and paradigms. This fact shows that UbD is a combination of progressive educational approaches and significant scientific findings that enable teachers to teach in a more structured and systematic way.

2.2. Understanding by Design

In order to define what it is, it may be better firstly to explain what UbD is *not*. UbD is not a prescribed program, a philosophy of education, a pedagogical system or a set of teaching strategies. It is a framework to design curriculum, assessment and instruction that are focused on deep understanding of important ideas and concepts (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). It was created by Wiggins and McTighe (2005) to bring light upon the issue of the mixing of two different concepts in education: knowledge and understanding. As the name suggests, UbD is based on the idea that understanding is not merely recalling facts and knowledge that have been taught at school, but rather it is “to make connections and bind together our knowledge into something that makes sense of things” (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 7). It is the curriculum design that emphasizes the importance of understanding. The designers of the framework

highlight the problematic absence of big ideas and concepts that guide the teaching plan and ensure understanding.

UbD is founded on eight main principles (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011):

1. UbD is a way of thinking about planning curriculum in the light of objectives, evidence and instruction. It is not a prescribed recipe of a methodology or a program.
2. UbD aims to provide students with deep learning of big ideas and concepts.
3. UbD deconstructs content standards and goals into the desired results and assessments.
4. Understanding takes place when students transfer what they learn into new situations independently and is revealed through the 6 facets of understanding.
5. Efficient curriculum design is planned backwards through a three-stage process. First, desired results are identified, next, assessments that show student understanding are planned, and lastly learning activities are designed.
6. Teachers are not messengers of pure information. Their role is to facilitate meaningful understanding and transfer by the learner.
7. Reviewing curriculum according to the design standards regularly increases quality and effectiveness.
8. UbD provides a continuous development approach to provide students with a better quality design. Its design enables teachers to stop, analyze, and adjust regularly if needed.

According to the founders of UbD, much of teaching is either *activity-oriented* or *coverage-based*, which they describe as *the two sins of traditional design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Many teachers are eager to engage their students with interesting and fun activities, something that makes the teaching look very efficient as students are engaged in fun hands-on activities. However, the activities do not lead students anywhere meaningful.

Although students are engaged, they are not led to think about why they are doing the activity but rather they think the activity is the learning itself. In other words, they think they are doing the activity in order to be better at that activity. Activity-oriented design is neither based on deeper learning nor on understanding of important concepts and ideas. Instead, it is based on randomly chosen fun and interesting experiences. There may be many units which include interesting, fun, and hands-on activities where students feel very engaged and reinforce what they have been learning at school. Although these kinds of units seem to be very interesting and engaging for students, they lack important ideas and deeper understanding. What is the point of hands-on activities if they do not connect to something students can make sense of? Such activities do not go beyond enabling students to have a fun time with their friends and teachers if they are not connected to a larger concept.

The other “sin”, coverage-based design, also does not connect content to meaningful understandings, but rather focuses on the coverage of content which is mostly taken from coursebooks or textbooks. Unfortunately, teaching focuses on content coverage very often (Richardson, 2009). With this design, students are engaged with the content superficially not being aware of why they are being taught it and, in the end, they are expected to recite what has been *covered*. Students scoring high on tests that are based on recalling the necessary knowledge or facts do not always show deep understanding of what has been taught at school. Many students are regarded as successful according to the test results that do not assess students’ understanding of any important concepts, that do not include analysis, synthesis or application of the knowledge and facts. However, coverage of the content cannot be considered as learning because learning is making sense of the content, connecting and transferring what is being taught to one’s own life and experiences. In both designs, teaching is not intellectually scaffolded according to a structured plan, but rather it is random. Such an approach to education has been failing for many years as mentioned earlier. Therefore, UbD proposes an applicable

and supportive way to reconsider what understanding really is, how it can be designed, and how to find evidence of it in student work.

UbD is designed to ensure students make sense of what they learn at school, and how to use it both in and out of school. In this sense, it can be regarded as a useful tool that serves the purpose of schooling: preparing students for real life outside, in other words showing learning in realistic situations (Wiggins & McTighe, 2006). The ultimate purpose of UbD is to equip students with a deeper understanding of the important ideas and concepts which are scaffolded with a view to preparing students for life inside and outside of schools, therefore preparing them for transferring understandings. In the UbD context, teachers play an important role. They are the designers of the whole process, including determining the end goals, the evidence of understanding the end goals, and designing the learning activities. The UbD framework proposes deep understandings of important ideas, promoting transfer of understandings through engaging students in inquiry to help them make sense of discrete knowledge and skills. Designing such a deep understanding has its own complexities since it requires a quality-focused template where every step is clear and focuses on preparing students for the end goal, which later leads to the application of deep understanding of important ideas and concepts. UbD presents a template, which focuses on student understanding, to assist in the design of such curricula and assessments. The design of the framework starts with an end goal. This kind of a starting point encourages teachers to choose their goals before the unit starts. The goals are desired results that teachers want their students to be able to demonstrate at the end of the unit.

The UbD framework has three main stages: Stage 1: Desired Results, Stage 2: Assessment Evidence, Stage 3: Learning Plan. To see the framework, see Appendix A.

2.2.1. Stage 1: Identify desired results.

The best teaching starts with clear end goals in mind before the planning process starts (McTighe & Brown, 2020). Stage 1 can be considered as the big picture of the UbD

framework. It includes what students should know, understand, and be able to do in the end. It is the stage in which enduring understanding of the units, essential questions that lead students to think critically about the topic, and the required knowledge and skills are framed.

Establishing goals for the unit from the start enables teachers to see what their students' destination is. Goals could be regarded as the course objectives, learning outcomes, or maybe standards that are provided by the ministry of education or other institution. Hattie (1999) also emphasized the importance of establishing goals stating that success is very much related to setting and communicating suitable and challenging goals by teachers and students. Setting goals for students also enables them to focus on specifics. The established goals are the standards teachers set for students to be able to demonstrate at the end of the unit. This kind of start to the unit might be similar to content-based teaching or activity-based teaching; however, the steps that come after establishing goals are what makes UbD distinctive from any other curriculum framework.

2.2.1.1. Enduring understandings.

The next step, *enduring understandings*, is the part that connects essential questions, skills and knowledge together. Enduring understandings are the big ideas that teachers want their students to leave the classroom with. Big ideas give meaning to the content and they are the desired transferrable understandings that make learning meaningful rather than arbitrary. As the name suggests, enduring understandings are the kind of understandings that are long lasting and are reinforced through application in real life situations. They are the big ideas that should be fully taken up by students so that when they face similar situations later in their life, they know how to tackle them.

2.2.1.2. Essential questions.

Life outside of school does not have any clear cut truths. Every individual in the world has different understandings of the things around them and has different experiences of the same world. When knowledge-based tests, programs, and curricula are the foundation of

education, it is not likely for students to think critically about the world around them or to establish their own understandings. Education should not be about teaching what is wrong or what is right, but rather should guide students to find why what is right for them might be wrong for someone else. For this reason, inquiry has an important role in education, which is another key principle in UbD under the term *essential questions*. UbD explores what makes a question essential. A question can be regarded as essential if it evokes inquiry, challenges one to think more in depth and to take alternatives into consideration. Essential questions stimulate constant revision of the big ideas and concepts, and enable students to connect them to their own life (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Moreover, a single lesson might not be adequate to truly delve into essential questions as they require time to take in (McTighe, 2021).

Studies show that students who are exposed to inquiry-based learning at their school show a better grasp of important ideas and concepts. A study conducted with students at a variety of grade levels ranging from seven to twelve showed that younger students who were exposed to inquiry-based teaching had a better understanding of the basic principles of physics (White & Fredericksen, 1998).

Another study conducted on developing ninth grade students' language skills through inquiry-based learning in an EFL setting showed that using inquiry-based learning techniques empowered students to improve their language skills as it created an enjoyable learning environment which enabled them to develop positive attitudes toward language learning (Zalloum, 2018).

When students are not exposed to difficult and complex questions, they might assume that there is only one way of doing something particular. Since the world outside of school is very different from what is being taught at school, students realize the real world does not revolve around a limited set of predetermined routes. Asking questions and being given the chance to express their experience enables students to understand that there is no right or wrong answer, only perspectives. Essential questions in the UbD context also do not have a certain

answer. They are thought-provoking questions which cannot be answered with sharp entirety in a short answer. Essential questions function as passages through which learners delve into the important concepts that might be unseen in the content and deepen their understanding. Consider a teacher trying to get her students to understand the idea that people play an important role in protecting our planet for living things. Essential questions that can make learners explore this content can be as follows: How am I a part of the world? How can I help the world stay strong and healthy? How can we share the planet with all living things? How does global warming affect our daily lives, animals, and the planet? Are natural resources unlimited? These kinds of questions which do not have a yes or no answer enable students to understand that they have a voice and they can make a difference to protect the planet.

2.2.1.3. Knowledge and skills.

The Knowledge and skills section in the UbD framework refers to concrete piles of elements that are required to be used when performing an authentic task. Unlike traditional teaching practices where too much focus is on testing accurate information and performing skills that do not reflect any important idea or concept, both knowledge and skills categories are significant elements of the UbD framework since they function as bridges to reach deep understandings of important concepts and ideas. Factual information, concepts, and principles are the focus of knowledge. They are also the realities that learners can explain to others. Considering the aforementioned examples of enduring understandings and essential questions, the following can be categorized as knowledge.

Learners will know:

1. what global warming is.
2. which materials can and cannot be recycled.
3. what facts and opinions are.

Skills, on the other hand, represent what learners should be able to do with what they know. To expect a learner to find a solution to a hypothetical economic crisis without teaching

them how to read and interpret economic statistics or to order food in a café in English without teaching them the names of the foods and how to form a polite question would be nonsensical. The following can be examples of skills.

Students will be able to:

1. categorize recyclable materials accordingly.
2. explain how global warming effects climate change.
3. identify whether certain sentences are facts or opinions.
4. identify the characteristics of a persuasive essay and write one.

Much more knowledge and skills can be added to the list according to the level of the learners. It can be seen that in a UbD context, knowledge and skills play an important role for learners to construct deep understandings rather than merely aiming for accuracy, something learners do not know what to do with.

2.2.2. Stage 2: Determine acceptable evidence.

Stage 1 in UbD represents the unit goals, understandings, skills and knowledge. After planning out the unit this way teachers might automatically start to create their lesson plans which include a lot of interesting and fun activities that are perfectly connected to Stage 1. Nonetheless, backward design works rather differently compared to traditional teaching. Wiggins and McTighe (2005) state that there are two approaches to assessments; thinking like an assessor, and thinking like an activity designer. When thinking like an activity designer, teachers focus on the fun and engaging activities about the topic they teach. They tend to create assessments that assess their knowledge on the topic generally with an interesting project. However, when thinking like an assessor, the focus is not on the activity. The activities are aligned with the goals in Stage 1 and performance tasks are created according to the goals. Before the learning activities are planned, UbD guides teachers to determine evidence for the desired results in Stage 1. How is it known that the goals in Stage 1 are met? What kind of

performance tasks and other formative assessments can show that students have achieved the desired results?

The UbD framework is designed to help learners obtain deep understandings of significant concepts and ideas that they will encounter when they are out of school. Within this frame it is the deep understanding that is targeted for students. Nevertheless, constructing understandings takes place in a certain period of time with constant inquiry, deep thinking and reflection. Therefore, it requires constant checking by the teacher to ensure that learners' understandings develop towards the desired results and meet the expectations. When constructing such an understanding develops over time, collecting evidence for it also requires time. Assessment of students' understanding in the UbD context should not be assumed to be one-time-testing at the end of a course or unit where learners are expected to meet the targets and standards with one standardized test. It rather is a continuum of assessments which shows the development of student understanding (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Teachers can use many types of evidence such as observations, dialogues with students, vocabulary tests, unit quizzes, and exams to test knowledge and facts that generally have one single answer or are closed to discussion. They can also use academic prompts such as open-ended questions that require students to think critically or problems to be solved by high-order thinking skills such as analyzing, planning, or synthesizing. In addition to these types of assessments, performance tasks can be used as summative assessments to show understanding of big ideas and transfer goals. Assessments are also important in terms of providing students with feedback. Marzano et al. (2001) suggest that teachers should get feedback on student learning regularly across the year as well.

2.2.2.1. Authentic performance tasks.

One of the main purposes of UbD is to transfer what is learned through performance tasks. Studies show that coming to a deep understanding of a concept does not guarantee that students will be able to apply it correctly. Sometimes students know the solution to a problem

but they have difficulties regarding how to solve it. They also need practice connecting the problem and solution at the right time, in the right place, and in the right way (Bloom, et al. 1956).

Failing traditional teaching practices that focus on accuracy leave out the most important criterion for understanding to be revealed: transferability. UbD argues that learners should be assessed continuously during their learning process. While some of these assessments can target the knowledge and skills, some of them should reveal the evidence of student understanding of the targeted important ideas and concepts through authentic performance tasks. What students need is to be in a situation where they need to tackle the problems with what they learn at school. Hence teachers should create authentic performance tasks that students can show their understanding in other words, and apply their understanding in new situations (McTighe & O'Connor, 2005).

Performance tasks are important assessment types in UbD since they function as authentic tasks where student understanding is revealed. With regard to authenticity, UbD defines a task, problem or project as authentic if it (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005):

- reflects reality. The performance should require students to tackle a real problem, with a real audience, in real situations where solving the problem might be messy, demanding and challenging just like they would encounter later in their life in their workplace.
- requires critical thinking and problem solving skills. Students should develop a strategy about how to address the problem and solve it. They should be encouraged to think “How should I tackle this problem?”.
- requires students to perform a task rather than recall some facts or recite some information. Students are asked to use their knowledge and skill to perform the task.
- assesses students’ previously taught knowledge and skills while performing the complex task.

- enables students to practice, collaborate, and reflect over time.

Authentic performance tasks provide evidence that shows that understanding has been achieved. When the process of understanding is such a complex one, creating assessments for understanding can also be challenging for teachers as it brings out other problems. UbD offers a design tool to create meaningful performance tasks that serve the purpose of the desired results: *G.R.A.S.P.S.* is an acronym, of which each letter represents a different element: *Goal, Role, Audience, Situation, Performance, Standards* (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). *G.R.A.S.P.S.* is essentially a set of task design prompts to help teachers create authentic performance tasks that reveal evidence of desired results. The template can be found in Appendix B.

Performance tasks can function as summative assessments to collect evidence of core ideas understood by the learners. However, the demanding complexities of the desired results in Stage 1 pave the way for the same complexities when it comes to collecting evidence. UbD states that collecting such evidence for understanding has its own different facets.

2.2.2.2. Six facets of understanding.

Having a deep understanding of big concepts and ideas is an abstract reflection of the human mind and it is revealed through multiple ways. “It is going beyond the information given to make inferences, connections, and association” (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 86). UbD regards understanding as multi-layered rather than one-time achievement that is assessed at the end of a unit of our course. It is a long process that develops as the new knowledge arrives; therefore, it is revealed through different kinds of evidence. Since the purpose of education is preparation for life, transferring understanding is the key to being ready for real life outside of schools. As mentioned before, students are not able to transfer their skills to real contexts. The problems they are required to solve in classrooms do not reflect the challenging problems they face outside of schools (Dixon & Brown, 2012).

UbD offers a set of evidence that teachers can look for when assessing student understanding. Transfer ability is demonstrated through these six facets of understanding. When learners truly understand, they:

- can *explain*; the reasons for events, concepts, incidents, phenomena or hypotheses.

They can explain how things work and why things work in the way that they do.

The ability to explain something goes beyond recalling facts. The challenging part is rather being able to explain the reasoning behind such a fact. Marzano et al. (2001) also underlines the importance of being able to explain reasonings, which enables students to extend their understanding of the principles they are applying. Research has also shown that the ability to explain the principles of hypotheses students create, the hypotheses they generate from the principles, and why they make sense are powerful in terms of showing evidence of understanding (Lavoie & Good, 1988).

If a student who is learning English as a foreign language in an EFL context can explain why there is -s at the end of verbs when used for present tense, it would demonstrate that the student has the knowledge and can explain the reason behind it. Evidence for this kind of understanding is collected through assignments and assessments that require learners to explain their knowledge and the reasoning behind it.

- can *interpret*; through connecting things to one's own life, reading between the lines rather than focusing on main events. Students are able to read graphics, visualizations, tables and figures.

Understanding is also revealed through being able to infer meaning from past or present events that learners experience, hear or see. Learners coming from different backgrounds with different kinds of understanding of certain experiences also have different points of view which later leads them to inferring different meanings. This kind of understanding is an opportunity

for learners to relate the events to themselves and learn lessons from them. Interpreting graphics in social studies courses can be given as an example of effective interpretation practices.

- can *apply*; use the knowledge and skills one acquired at school in various contexts in and outside of schools

Many studies show that learners fail to apply their knowledge in real life situations although they score high on tests. Schools focusing on measurement of knowledge ignore the effective usage of knowledge (Day & Goldstone, 2012). For this reason, school should be more focused on the application process of knowledge acquired, which is one very important indicator of understanding. This kind of understanding can be revealed in mathematics courses where students are asked to create a monthly budget for their families using the content they have been taught.

- *Have perspective*; look from different points of view thinking critically using knowledge.

People have different experiences in their lives; therefore, they have different points of view, different understandings, different realities, and different values. One person's virtues and truths may be considered vices and falsehoods by another person. Being aware that different perspectives are possible prevents learners from assuming that there is only one dimension and that dimension is only what they can see. For example, consider an environmental activist who regards veganism (plant-based diet that does not include animal products) as the only way to save our planet from decaying. That person is out protesting about it regularly and tries to convince people to stop eating meat and all the animal products. However, if we look from a people's side who live on an island and mainly depend on fish for food, we can understand that trying to convince those people to stop eating fish might cost their lives. Showing learners that there is often no single right answer to something and making

hidden perspectives visible enable them to question norms, understand different sides and respect differences.

- Can *empathize*; put oneself in someone else's shoe, notice hidden lives which can tell different stories that do not have a single ending.

The ability to empathize is being able to walk in someone else's shoes; experiencing what they live through, facing the challenges they have, and being able to understand things that had once seemed weird and unreasonable. Learners who can empathize with others do not only grow up to be more open-minded but also caring for the issues that different people are challenged with in some other parts of the world. A task as following can be good opportunity for students to empathize:

A social sciences teacher asks students to imagine a group of refugees who have escaped from war and come to their country to live. The government provides them food and shelter; however, they ask for jobs to provide for their family and live in better conditions. The permanent residents of the country are not happy with having refugees as they think refugees take their jobs and replace them. They are also violent towards refugees. The teacher divides students into groups of two and has them write letters to their friends explaining the situation and their feelings. Each group both takes their own one side and then replies to the other side's letters. Giving learners the opportunity to empathize with people in different situations assists them in becoming more considerate people.

- Have *self-knowledge*; notice what makes one themselves, capabilities, weaknesses, habits and their effect on one's life.

The ability to be aware of oneself and the relationship between skills, knowledge and effectiveness are often a challenge but a significant advantage as well; a phenomena that is referred to as metacognitive control (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1985, as cited in Marzano, 2001). Research found that the learning process through which students are made aware of how

they learn better had some very large effects on student achievement. (Wang et al., 1993). People who know their weaknesses and strengths, prejudices that might prevent them from making better decisions, and their blind spots that might hide the reality behind the scenes are more likely to progress in their lives and tackle the challenges they come across in their lives. Self-knowledge and reflection are the most significant elements in the path to success. For example, learners who are aware of the study skills that they benefit from are often likely to show progress compared to learners who do not know what kind of learning would work for them the best.

2.2.3. Stage 3: Plan learning experiences and instruction.

Stage 3 is often the stage most teachers start their unit planning with since it includes interesting and fun activities. However, as it was mentioned before, these kinds of learning activities are randomly chosen and most of the time they do not serve any purpose because they are not connected to any deep understanding or an important idea.

Stage 3 assists teachers in determining the learning activities which are built around the desired results and performance tasks and aim at constructing the enduring understandings. This stage of UbD is composed of what teachers experience in the classroom every day; it is the concrete activities that shape student understanding throughout the course. It enables teachers to double check whether the learning activities that are planned guide students to demonstrate understandings and the desired results. It makes the teacher ask questions in the process of planning: What does a learning plan that aims understandings look like? How can students make the most of their time in the class working towards the desired results? What do they need to learn in order to perform the desired results? A good learning plan leads students towards their end goal. According to UbD designers, a good learning plan is both effective and engaging (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). It is effective because it is built around a big focus on understanding which is brought into the light through clear goals. The unit or course goals are made clear to the students at the start so that students know what they are expected to achieve

at the end. Their learning has a purpose which students will show a grasp of. It is also engaging since every learner in the class regardless of their different interests is engaged at a worthy intellectual level.

Moreover, through the UbD framework, teachers can implement the characteristics of the best designs which were formed via the views of teachers and experts across different schools. These characteristics include challenging and real world performance goals, hands on learning experiences, giving feedback, differentiation, teacher role as a facilitator, student-centered classrooms, and activities focused on big pictures (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Taking the characteristics of a good design into consideration, UbD forms a design which guides learners through a purposeful learning process towards the unit goals which are centred around big ideas. UbD presents W.H.E.R.E.T.O. which stands for principles to check the purpose and elements of learning activities. Table 1 below shows the W.H.E.R.E.T.O elements.

Table 1

The W.H.E.R.E.T.O Elements

W—Ensure that students understand WHERE the unit is headed, and WHY
H—HOOK students in the beginning and HOLD their attention throughout
E—EQUIP students with necessary experiences, tools, knowledge, and know-how to meet performance goals
R—Provide students with numerous opportunities to RETHINK big ideas, REFLECT on progress, and REVISE their work
E—Build in opportunities for students to EVALUATE progress and self-assess
T—Be TAILORED to reflect individual talents, interests, styles, and needs
O—Be ORGANIZED to optimize deep understanding as opposed to superficial coverage.

Note. taken from Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 197, 198

2.3. Backward Design

As it can be inferred from its name, backward design suggests that purposeful teaching should be planned from the end. It works if teachers plan the end goals first, next plan assessments for evidence of learning the end goals, then plan the learning activities that are aligned with their end goals and assessments (McTighe & Thomas, 2003).

The destination that students will arrive at should be where the planning of teaching should start from. Designing a curriculum in reverse enables teachers to identify specific purposes of the unit and to clarify the units goals which are also the desired results that they want their students to walk away with. Only in this way can teaching be called purposeful. It is different from having a unit and finding various interesting hands-on activities that are related to the unit yet not connected to a larger idea. Hence, it turns out to be something students cannot make sense of but have fun. A unit that is not planned with an end goal in mind is very likely to turn out to be random teaching which leaves students with random engagements with certain concepts and fails to ensure understandings that are tied together. In other words, it is meaningless teaching that causes students to leave the classroom confused.

Clarifying the knowledge-based objectives in a unit and clarifying the desired results in UbD context are different. Teachers might start off a unit with objectives or standards but still not connect it to a deeper understanding, which students will be expected to demonstrate later. For instance, consider an English teacher in an EFL context choosing the objectives of her unit My Home. At the end of the unit, students will be able to identify the furniture items in rooms of a house, identify house chores at home and use present simple tense when writing about house chores. She prepares some interesting and fun activities that will help her students to gain the necessary knowledge and recall. She also chooses a book that includes all the items and rooms in a house that she aims for. At the end of the unit, she also gets her students to role play or play a game involving household activities, rooms, and items. This type of teaching might sound very familiar. Readers might think what could possibly be wrong with this kind

of approach. Nevertheless when we think about the important ideas and concepts, we find ourselves in a dead end. Why did they learn the rooms and furniture of a house and house chores at home? Is what they learn connected to each other in a larger picture? Why is it important to learn about those things and what are they going to do with that knowledge when they are out of school? UbD suggests purposeful teaching rather than hoping that students come to an understanding and connect all the dots by chance. As well as teaching certain knowledge, students should come to understand points such as: Why do we have responsibilities at home? How am I a part of my family? What is support and why is it important? Are all homes and families the same? These kinds of questions help students to think about their own life and help them understand why they learn such things. They should come to understand that they are a part of the world and everybody has a role in it. Teachers' ultimate role should be coaching the understanding regardless of what books students read or what activities they are engaged in.

2.4. UbD with A Lens on Language

The UbD framework can also be used in culturally and linguistically diverse classes with a specific focus on the language element (Heineke & McTighe, 2018). As the framework mainly focuses on understanding and transfer of skills into real life contexts, it shares a similar ground with language learning. Language is actively used to expand and convey understandings. While students use language actively, they also perform many skills such as negotiating ideas, discussing homework, analyzing texts or simply when they share their feelings. Learning a language cannot be considered separate from using these daily skills. Despite the fact that language has a lot of complexities of its own such as grammar or vocabulary, students do not learn language through discreet drills of knowledge and skills. The UbD framework with a language lens offers the same three-stage backward design; however focusing on each student's language development. As students are exposed to authentic

learning experiences through UbD and deepen their understandings, they automatically improve their language skills. UbD's language lens argues that the design should reach all students from different backgrounds with different language proficiency levels, experiences and needs. During this process, UbD's Stage 1 aims to teach the desired results and transfer goals by pinpointing the fact that students might have different linguistic knowledge and skills. Stage 2 emphasizes that even students with very low language proficiencies can achieve the desired results, hence the suitable assessment can be prepared. At this stage, it is important to take students' background knowledge and language abilities into consideration. Stage 3 enables teachers to ensure that the learning activities are designed with students' different language backgrounds and abilities in mind. At this stage, it is significant for teachers to recognize their students' linguistic needs and target those gaps during the design process (Heineke & McTighe, 2018).

2.5. Studies on Understanding by Design

There are a few studies on UbD that were conducted in different areas of education. Some of these studies focus on the impact of UbD on student achievement in different subjects such as English, Science and Music while some of them focus on the impact of UbD on teacher development and attitudes. Throughout the literature there is a consistent evidence that curriculum design according to UbD practices has a positive impact on student learning (Brown, 2004; Gloria et al., 2019; Noble, 2011; Yurtseven et al., 2013), and on teacher development and teachers' attitude toward curriculum design process through the UbD framework (Boozer, 2014; Kelting-Gibson, 2005; Graff, 2011; Gulsvig, 2009; Yurtseven et al., 2013).

2.5.1. Studies on UbD in various disciplines.

The literature has studies that explore different aspects of UbD in various disciplines. The issue of transfer has been the main focus in these studies. Florian and Zimmerman (2015)

discuss this issue in a study they conducted in a study school established to prepare students to have necessary knowledge and skills to compete on a global scale. The curriculum in the study school was designed according to the UbD principles combined with Moodle and Blended Learning. The study was conducted with 41 15-year-old students to investigate the effect of this curriculum on their academic achievement in the areas of reading, mathematics and science. The results of the study indicated that UbD practices in curriculum planning, combined with Moodle and Blended Learning, enabled the study school students to outperform the students in the United States in PISA scores in the areas of reading, mathematics and science. The results also showed that implementation of UbD enabled students to gain the necessary skills to compete in the global market economy.

A study was conducted by Gloria et al. (2019) to investigate whether there was a difference in student understanding of the content of plant physiology courses through the implementation of UbD's formative assessment stages. The participants of the study included 31 students majoring in Biology at an Islamic college in West Java, Indonesia. The study revealed a significant increase in students' ability to show six facets of understanding through UbD's assessment stage. Out of the six facets of understanding based on UbD, having self-knowledge increased the most. The study showed that students' ability to show six facets of understanding increased by 54.7%.

Rubrica (2018) examined the impact of project-based learning combined with UbD in grade six science classes. Two groups of students were chosen from Sta. Quiteria Elementary School in Caloocan, Phillipines. Group A included 44 students and was taught with lessons planned according to project based learning principles combined with UbD. Group B included 46 students and was taught with a traditional teaching method. Both groups were taught the same lessons for six weeks. The researchers applied pretests and posttests to compare their academic achievement. Five students from Group A were interviewed after the learning process. The results of the study revealed that students who were taught with project-based

learning using UbD outperformed the students who were taught with traditional methods of teaching. There was a significant difference between the two groups' academic achievement scores in science as well as an increase in their motivation and positive attitudes.

Burson (2011) conducted a study with 13 in-service primary school classroom teachers enrolled in Curriculum Analysis and Design course at a private university in the United States to explore their perspectives on the effectiveness of UbD in increasing positive classroom behaviour. The purpose of the course was to teach the participants about UbD. The researcher used questionnaires to investigate their attitudes in terms of their conceptualization of UbD and its impact on student learning. The study showed that participants were comfortable using UbD in their lessons and they believed it had a positive impact on their students' motivation to participate in the lessons and classroom behaviour. The participants also stated that the UbD framework enabled their students to transfer their knowledge into real life.

Focusing on music teachers' perspectives on the implementation of UbD, Johnson et al. (2017) conducted a study with 300 members of the National Association for Music Education who trained music teachers in their undergraduate courses where the program was designed according to UbD. Data was collected through surveys and semi constructed interviews with 13 of the participants. The surveys showed that there was a low level of understanding the principles of UbD and most teachers did not feel comfortable using UbD because it was a learning curve for them and confusing to follow. The results also showed that teachers were confused about the term framework and needed support in terms of application of UbD. The interviews with the teachers showed that implementing UbD made them aware of the fact that they had already been applying essential questions and backward design without realising it was also about UbD. The results also revealed that UbD enabled teachers to see why they teach what they teach. Teachers also reported that students showed a better and deeper understanding of the content.

In her study on curriculum development practices, Kelting-Gibson (2005) compared 59 preservice teachers' performance on unit and lesson plans that were prepared either according to a traditional model or to the UbD framework. The participants were juniors and seniors from the Educational and Planning Management program. They were divided into two groups as experimental and control groups. The curriculum development course in the program was taught by the researcher. The experimental group received instruction and workshops according to the *Understanding by Design* book by Wiggins and McTighe (2005) while the control group received instruction through traditional steps. Two independent raters evaluated a total of 153 lesson and unit plans according to the six elements of Danielson's Framework for Professional Practice (1996); demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy, demonstrating knowledge of students, selecting suitable instructional goals, demonstrating knowledge of resources, designing coherent instruction, and assessing student learning. The results show that the preservice teachers who were taught to design curricula according to UbD principles outperformed the ones who planned their curricula in the light of traditional design in terms of connecting the content to other disciplines and developing plans according to best pedagogical practices. They also demonstrated high performance results in setting more clear learning purposes for students and performed better at connecting their teaching to the instructional goals.

Boozer (2014) investigated the attitudes of five pre-service teachers enrolled in the Early Childhood and Early Childhood Special Education program towards the use of UbD in unit planning. Data was collected through questionnaires, field notes after each lesson, two classroom observations by the researcher in each participant's class, reflection notes of each participant after the classroom observations, and one semi constructed interview with all of the participants. The data was analyzed through content analysis. The results of the study showed that the pre-service teachers perceived planning backwards as an effective way to plan curriculum. Participants were able to plan their curriculum according to their students' needs.

The implementation of UbD also helped the pre-service teachers' views about themselves. During the interviews they stated that UbD enabled them to feel more motivated to become a teacher.

Uluçınar (2021) analyzed 12 studies on teachers' and students' experiences with UbD through a qualitative meta-synthesis process which was based on systematical scanning and documentation of the studies. After scanning the studies, the findings indicated that teachers did not have enough experiences with UbD and enough pedagogical knowledge. The study also revealed some challenges teachers faced such as the intensity of their work load and limited time caused by their institutions. They also found it difficult to work with teachers who were unwilling to change and try new teaching methods. Another significant finding of the study was that teachers were not able to connect the assessment with the desired results. They did not come to understand that assessments should be connected to a purpose. The findings also showed that UbD had an effect on students' cognitive development in terms of motivation, understanding the purpose of the lesson, and developing deeper understandings.

Although UbD is not very popular in Turkey, there are some schools that implement it. A study investigated the impact of implementing UbD on 65 eighth grade students' cognitive and sensual development in a History and Kemalism course in Kahramanmaraş, Turkey (Gül et al., 2021). The students were grouped into two as study and control groups. The study group consisted of 33 students and the control group consisted of 32 students. To collect quantitative data, academic achievement tests were conducted for the purpose of comparing the two groups' scores while semi-structured interviews with 10 students with different scores were conducted to collect qualitative data. The results of the study showed that teaching the course according to the principles of UbD improved students' academic achievement compared to their current program. Interviews conducted on students' attitudes towards the course revealed that UbD helped them to develop different points of views and positive feelings towards effective learning experiences.

A study explored the impact of the UbD framework on students' academic achievement in a science course on nutrients in grade four classes (Özyurt et al., 2021). The participants consisted of 40 fourth grade students at two different primary schools in Gaziantep, Turkey. The study included one experimental group with 18 students and one control group with 22 students. Both groups were taught the same topics for five weeks. The experimental group was taught the lessons with UbD principles while the control group was taught with their existing teaching methods. Data was collected through a science achievement test developed by the researchers. The results of the study revealed that students who were taught the topic with UbD principles outperformed the control group who were taught with a traditional design in the achievement test on the nutrients topic. The study also indicated that through UbD's essential questions, students were able to connect their learning to their own lives; hence gaining meaningful learning experiences.

Yurtseven and Doğan (2018) investigated the practices of UbD in a private school in İstanbul. The study focused on students' recipient language age and teachers' professional development. The participants of the study included a teacher and 38 six-year-old students. The students were divided into groups of two: 19 students in the experimental group and 19 students in the control group. The data was collected through the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test which was a test to assess their vocabulary knowledge, reflection notes of the teacher during the implementation of the framework and one-to-one interviews with the teacher. Students were tested through the vocabulary test before the implementation of the process. The teacher was provided with training on UbD by the researchers and then asked to prepare three different units according to the UbD principles. Although the quantitative findings of the study showed that there was no significant difference in favor of the control group, the qualitative findings showed that working with UbD aided the teacher in being more organized while planning their curriculum and improving themselves.

Yurtseven et al., (2013) focused on the impact of differentiated instruction supported by UbD principles on student achievement in science lessons in a private school in İstanbul. The participants consisted of 14 students who were 12 years old and a teacher with 10 years of teaching experience who was trained in UbD. The quantitative data was collected through an academic achievement test before and after the experiment. The qualitative data was collected through interviews with teachers and students, and self-reflection forms of the teacher and observer. The results of the study indicated that there was a meaningful difference between the students who were taught science lessons with differentiated instruction and the students who did not in terms of the academic achievements after UbD-based differentiated instruction. The results were in favour of the former. The interview with the teacher revealed that implementing UbD had a positive impact on the learning environment in terms of student participation, increased motivation, and teacher satisfaction. The teacher also underlined some difficulties they experienced during the process. They stated that Turkey's existing evaluation system was not designed for this kind of instruction and that teachers should be supported with proper training about UbD.

2.5.2. Studies on UbD in EFL and ESL context.

Studies on UbD are quite limited in number in EFL and ESL settings. A recent study conducted by Bodur and Yurtseven (2021) focused on the effects of UbD-based creative drama courses on 7th grade students in English lessons in Turkish EFL context. An English lesson plan according to UbD was created first, then creative drama activities were added to the lesson plan. Students were asked to keep a diary and take notes at the end of each lesson to keep track of their progress. Their diaries were used as data collection tools, and content analysis was conducted for data analysis. The findings of the study indicated that the course designed with UbD enabled students to become more active in speaking English and to show more active participation compared to the lesson plans created according to traditional design.

A study conducted in a Colombian EFL context by Bolivar and Rodriguez (2017) focused on 26 tenth grade students' English speaking skills in a speaking program designed according to UbD principles. The researchers stated that the existing Ministry of Education standards were not sufficient to improve oral proficiency of students at beginner classes. For this reason, they designed a speaking course according to UbD principles with an end goal in mind. The study indicated that all of the participants enjoyed learning English, improved their speaking skills, and found that the lessons were more meaningful compared to the traditionally designed lessons because they were able to connect the lessons into their own lives. The researchers stated that before the experiment, students were not able to improve their oral proficiency due to too much focus on grammar. The students stated that their lessons were more engaging and purposeful. Another significant result of the study was that students were able to show six facets of understanding during authentic performance tasks.

Arslan Buyruk et al. (2018) investigated the effects of UbD combined with a motivational design model, which functioned as a guide for teachers to motivate their students during the lessons, on university preparatory students' speaking skills and motivation. Observation forms and reflection reports were used as data collection tools in this qualitative study. The findings indicated that students improved their speaking skills and were more motivated to use their English to express themselves through the combined design. The students thought that the lessons constructed with UbD helped them to be more active speakers.

To investigate in-service EFL teachers' perspectives on implementing UbD, Anwaruddin (2013) organized three training workshops on UbD and its principles for the 21 EFL teachers in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The purpose of the workshops was to introduce UbD to the teachers, to evaluate their perceptions of using UbD to design lessons and to find whether UbD is applicable to design curricula in Bangladesh. Data collected through open-ended questionnaires, classroom observations and unstructured interviews with the participants

revealed that the participants developed positive attitudes about UbD. During the experiments, they were asking questions about the design and were quite enthusiastic about sharing their experiences with the rest of the group. They believed that they would be able to apply UbD in their EFL context. However, the instructor's interviews with the participants also revealed that teachers had challenges in terms of time management and enduring understandings while applying UbD. They stated that planning UbD units and detailed lesson plans would be time consuming. They also had concerns about finding enduring understandings related to their units in their skills-based program. They believed that it was not easy to find interdisciplinary understandings as they needed to teach the English language skills as well.

Another study conducted by Yurtseven & Altun (2017) investigated the impact of UbD on EFL teachers' professional development and students' English language achievement. The study included 436 students and 10 teachers at the preparatory school of a state university in Turkey. The students were divided into two groups. While one of the groups received UbD based instructions, the other group did not. The results showed that while the implementation of UbD did not make a meaningful difference on the English achievement of A level students who scored the highest and C level students who scored the lowest in the placement test at preparatory school, the B level group students outperformed the other groups in their English achievement scores. Teachers were also interviewed after the process and they stated that implementing UbD aided them to integrate more authentic use of language which was something lacking in their coursebooks. They said that the big idea, essential questions, and performance tasks helped students to improve their speaking skill and increase their interest. Moreover, the teachers noted that they observed students' motivation increased, hence their participation as well. Teachers also added that they had some difficulties during the implementation process. They felt anxiety in the beginning because they were not used to designing units not based on course books and found designing UbD units time consuming as they had a heavy work schedule at their school.

In an experimental study conducted in an Iranian EFL setting, Hosseini et al. (2019) found that the writing classes designed with backward design improved the writing abilities of 100 EFL learners who were aged between 18 and 25 more than the classes with forward model design that starts with planning learning activities followed by assessments.

While there has been a decent amount of research on UbD practices in general fields of education, there is a limited number of studies that were carried out in EFL or ESL settings. Although there are a few schools which implement UbD in Turkey, to the best of my knowledge, there has not been a study that analyzed the perspectives of teachers who have been trained to implement it in terms of the benefits and challenges of UbD design as well as its applicability in online education. Therefore, in an attempt to fill this gap, the present study aims to explore the implementation of UbD from the perspectives of those actively involved in it. The study hence promises valuable suggestions for the institutions, teachers and curriculum designers that plan to use this framework in their settings.

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes the design of the study, setting, participants, data collection instruments and data analysis. This study scrutinizes the perspectives of English teachers and English department heads from K-12 levels who implement the UbD design template in their unit plans during their planning process in private schools in the Turkish EFL context. The insights from the implementers of the design is explored through the research questions below.

1. How do EFL teachers in K-12 settings conceptualize UbD in unit design?
2. How do EFL teachers and English department heads perceive the role and benefits of UbD implementation in K-12 EFL settings?
3. What are the challenges that EFL teachers and English department heads face during the implementation of UbD in K-12 settings?
4. How do EFL teachers and English department heads perceive the applicability of UbD during online education in K-12 settings?

3.1. Setting

This study was conducted across all the levels through K-12 in five private schools in the district of Istanbul, Turkey. As there are only a few schools in which UbD is implemented, the number of participants was limited. The schools are located in different parts of the city. As they are private schools, the socio-economic background of the students is higher compared to the students who study in the public schools across the city.

In all of the schools where the study was conducted, English is taught as a foreign language. In the four schools, UbD is implemented as a school policy, which means that all the subjects are planned according to the UbD principles across all the levels from pre-K to 12th grade. In the other school, UbD is not implemented as a school policy but as an unofficial English department policy across K-12 levels. For this reason, in that school only some high school English teachers and some primary school teachers participated in the study.

The hours of English instruction students from different grades receive differ across the schools. In all of the schools where the study was conducted, primary and middle school students receive English instruction 6 to 8 hours, high school students receive English instruction 2 to 14 hours weekly.

Instructors' teaching load ranges from 20 to 25 hours a week. There are approximately between 20 to 24 students in each classroom. Classes are mostly student-centered and there is a lot of student to student interaction.

In one of the schools, teachers do not use any EFL course book at their grade levels in primary, middle and high school as their main curriculum, but rather each level develops their own curriculum. There are themes chosen for the levels across the academic year and the curriculum is developed under the chosen themes. While preparing their own curriculum, each teacher follows UbD principles. Under the previously chosen themes, teachers start their unit design with UbD's Stage 1. Firstly, the unit's big idea, which is generally an important concept which all students are expected to come to an understanding of, is created. The big idea is also the transfer goal they expect students to show evidence of. Next, the desired results, which can be the English standards, are decided upon. Then the enduring understandings, essential questions, knowledge and skills sections are created which are aligned with the transfer goals and desired results. As the second step, the evidence of learning, in this case assessments are created. During this process, participants are very focused on the aim that they assess what they expect students to show as evidence of learning at the end of the unit. The assessment part has two different types of assessments. While teachers can use quizzes, tests or observations to assess the knowledge part of the course, they assess whether the transfer goals are met through real world performance tasks. In the last stage where learning activities are created, teachers aim to match their learning activities to the desired results. As these activities are the ones which will take students to transfer goals, they are very purposeful. Creating units through UbD is different from traditional unit planning where teachers generally start with learning activities

first and then test the knowledge they need to cover. Most of the time, there is no big idea or a transfer goal to aim for. To see an example of a unit designed according to UbD, see Appendix C.

In the other schools where the study was conducted, teachers follow the same process to create units with UbD. While some schools make use of course books as their curriculum as well as readers chosen according to the topics in the course books, some schools create their own units under chosen themes. Each school organizes training sessions on UbD at the beginning of the academic year and continues to maintain these sessions according to their staff's needs at different time periods across the year.

In the high school where UbD was implemented unofficially, participants do not use course books, they plan their program according to some specific themes that are chosen at the beginning of the year. Students also read novels that align with the themes during their course. In the primary school where UbD was implemented unofficially, participants make use of a course book chosen according to the English level of the students. Teachers use these course books as resources to decide their topics they want to teach across the year.

The design process at different levels in each school does not differ in terms of the principles of the framework but according to students' English proficiency and each level's English curriculum. UbD can be used with any kind of curriculum or program as it is a way of thinking about any curriculum and it offers the same template for any course. However, each grade level has its own characteristics, hence the content of the program can differ according to these unique contexts in which it is implemented. For instance, in primary schools, students might be learning about colours, family members, or animals while in high school students might be learning about writing persuasive essays. Both levels can design their units according to UbD principles; however, the content is very different from each other.

3.2. Participants

Data for the study was collected through purposeful sampling from 39 English teachers and 5 heads of English departments whose teaching experience ranges from Pre- K to 12th grades at different private schools in İstanbul.

3.2.1. English teachers.

Thirty nine English teachers volunteered to participate in this study. As Table 2 shows, 31 participants (79%) were females, eight (20.5%) participants were males. Twenty English teachers' (51%) first language was English while 19 English teachers' (48%) first language was Turkish. All of the participants (100%) had a bachelor's degree from different universities around the world. Seventeen participants (43%) had a master's degree and only one participant (2%) had a doctorate. Eighteen participants (46%) had a teaching certificate from the Turkish Ministry of National Education. Nineteen participants (48%) had a teaching certificate from other institutions (e.g. CELTA) while two participants (5%) had no teaching certificate at all.

Table 2

Demographic Background of English Teachers

Gender	Female	Male	
	31 (79%)	8 (20.5%)	
Education	BA	MA	PHD
	39 (100%)	17 (43%)	1 (2%)
Teaching Certificate	MoNE	Other	No Certificate
	18 (46%)	19 (48%)	2 (5%)

Twenty-nine participants out of 39 (74%) held their BA degree in ELT and language related areas which are English Language Teaching (17%), English Language and Literature (17%), English Language (7%), French and English Language Teaching (5%), English and Education (2%), Translation and Interpreting (2%), Foreign Language Education (2%), and English Literature and Psychology (2%) while the other participants completed their degrees in different areas which are Psychology (5%), Japanese Language and Literature (2%), Resource Planning (2%), Sociology and Politics (2%), Political Science (2%), Geography (2%), International Affairs (2%), and Criminology (2%).

Seventeen of 39 (43%) participants held an MA degree in ELT and English language literature while the others held their degrees in different areas which are, Education Administration and Supervision (25%), Educational Management and Control (12%), MD (12%), German Language and Literature (12%), European Studies (12%), Italo-Iberian Studies (12%), Master of Science in Multidisciplinary Studies (12%) and Music (12%).

One participant out of 39 (2%) held a PHD degree in the area of Sports Medicine Physician.

Total years of teaching experience of the participants since graduation ranged from two to 29. The grade levels the participants taught ranged from Pre-K to 12th grade. At the time of the study, 34 (87%) of the participants were teaching at high school while 24 (61%) and 16 (41%) were teaching at primary school and middle school, respectively. Only 3 (7%) of the participants were teaching at kindergarten. The details are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3*English Teachers' Teaching Experience in Different Grade Levels*

Total (N=39)					
N (%)					
Kindergarten	3 (7%)	Pre - K	K		
		1 (2%)	2 (5%)		
Primary School	24 (61%)	Gr 1	Gr 2	Gr 3	Gr 4
		5 (12%)	6 (15%)	7 (17%)	6 (15%)
Middle School	16 (41%)	Gr 5	Gr 6	Gr 7	Gr 8
		5 (12%)	1 (2%)	6 (15%)	4 (10%)
High School	34 (87%)	Gr 9	Gr 10	Gr 11	Gr 12
		10 (25%)	10 (25%)	8 (20%)	6 (15%)

Thirty-eight participants (97%) had training on unit design and stated that they had been familiar with UbD for time periods that ranged from two months to 15 years.

The demographic section of the questionnaire also included questions about the applicability of UbD across the grade levels. Thirty-five participants (89%) claimed that UbD was applicable at all grade levels. Two participants (5%) indicated that they found it more applicable for grade four and higher levels. One participant (2%) stated that it was applicable at prep level, grade nine and ten. One other participant (2%) said that it could be applicable between the grades two and eight.

3.2.2. Heads of English departments.

Data was also collected from five English department heads from three different private schools in Istanbul. Two participants (40%) were males while three participants (60%) were females. Two participants' (40%) first language was English, two participants' (40%) first

language was Turkish and one participant's (20%) first language was in the other languages category.

All of the participants (100%) held a bachelor's degree from different universities around the world. Three participants (60%) held master's degrees while none of the participants had a doctorate.

Participants' total years of experience ranged from 9 to twenty five years. Total years of management experience at the school they worked at or at the school they used UbD before ranged from one to seven years. Two participants (40%) had a teaching certificate from the Turkish Ministry of National Education, two participants (40%) had a teaching certificate from other institutions while one participant (20%) did not have a teaching certificate at all. All the participants (100%) also taught at their school. All of the participants had training on unit design and the institutions they worked at provided training for new teachers.

All the participants (100%) claimed that it was applicable in all grade levels.

3.3. Research Design

This study was designed as a qualitative study as it seeks to explore the perspectives of UbD implementers in private schools in depth. Fraenkel et al. (2012) describes qualitative studies as investigating a situation or a phenomenon in particular. Qualitative studies seek to answer 'how' questions rather than the questions that have direct answers such as 'yes' and 'no'. They enable participants to reveal and discuss the factors that affect the situation in particular and encourage them to explore their own attitudes as well. For this study, qualitative research design was adopted because it aims to explore the elements that are not on the surface but need to be investigated in depth.

3.3.1. Data collection process.

In order to be able to collect data from teachers and schools in Turkey, permission from the Ministry of National Education was asked. The thesis proposal, all the questionnaires and

other details concerning the confidentiality of the study were asked to be sent to the National Education Directorate in Istanbul. The directorate provided some feedback on some questions and requested for some changes to be made. After the necessary changes were made and quite a few weeks later, the permission to collect data from schools in Turkey was granted by the Directorate. Data was collected over the course of five months from five schools where UbD was implemented.

In this study, the data collection process was two-fold. First, an open-ended questionnaire formed separately for teachers and heads of departments with different questions was sent to the participants after getting the ethical consent, institutional permission and participant consent. These questionnaires were composed of two main parts; demographic data and open-ended questions about their implementation of UbD. These questionnaires were piloted before they were sent to the teachers and heads of department. After the participants completed the questionnaire, the results were analyzed. To have more information about the setting and the implementation of the program, an interview was held with some of the teachers. During these interviews, insights from the teachers were collected by focusing on questionnaires. Moreover, it also enabled the researcher to have detailed and reliable information about the context in which the program is conducted. During the process, data was collected in English, as both teachers and heads of department were very fluent in English. There were some foreign participants, as well. For this reason, the process was conducted in English.

3.3.1.1. Open-ended questionnaire forms.

This study included two different questionnaire forms; one for teachers and another one for heads of departments. The questionnaire for teachers had three parts. The first part was the consent form where participants gave permission for their responses to be used for scientific purposes. The participants were guaranteed that their answers would not be shared with any third parties and kept confidential. The second part included the demographic data of the

participants where they inform the researcher about their age, gender, education level, teaching certificate, the school they worked at, the levels they were teaching at the time, the levels they had taught before, how long they taught at their school and previous knowledge and training on unit design.

The third and last part of the questionnaire included the open-ended questions that would reveal the participants' perspectives and attitudes on the implementation of UbD. All the questions were created for the purpose of the study and aimed to seek answers to the research questions to explore teachers' insight in the best way.

The questionnaire for the teachers was reviewed by the researcher's advisor and necessary changes were made accordingly. After the questionnaire was ready to be sent to the participants, it was piloted by an English teacher who had implemented UbD in middle and high school settings before. After the piloting, the participant was asked to comment on the questions and timing of filling out the survey. Once again necessary changes were made according to the feedback and the questionnaire was sent out to the teachers through their head of department (See Appendix D for teachers' questionnaire).

The questionnaire for the heads of departments also had three parts. The first part included the consent form that would allow the researchers to use the given information for the purpose of the study. The participants were also guaranteed that their answers would not be shared with any third parties and kept confidential. The second part of the survey was about the participants' demographic data. It included information about their age, gender, education level, years of experience in management and teaching English, teaching certificate, the level they had taught before, whether they were teaching at the time and their prior knowledge and training on unit design. The third part included the open-ended questions about both the implementation of the program from a teacher's and manager's perspective. The questions sought answers to explore why the aforementioned program was chosen to be implemented in

their school, the benefits and challenges of it. The questionnaire was reviewed by the researcher's advisor and necessary changes were made accordingly (See Appendix E).

3.3.1.2. Focus group interviews.

In order to have a better understanding of the participants' perspectives and their answers from the open-ended questions, focus group interviews were conducted with teachers. Participants for focus group interviews were selected randomly from five different schools to elaborate on their answers from the open-ended questionnaire. Focus groups interviews are significant in terms of analyzing the participants' perspectives in depth, as participants might answer the questions in a more detailed way than the questionnaire (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

Focus group interviews were conducted with 10 EFL teachers from five different schools. Five participants worked in primary school, one participant worked in middle school and four participants worked in high school. The interviews were scheduled at different times.

There were five different interviews. The interviews included two participants in each group and they were held separately. As the participants in the interview knew each other, they felt comfortable being included in a group interview. The interviews were video-recorded and audio-recorded with the permission of the participants. Both kinds of interviews were transcribed by the researcher later.

Focus group interviews enabled the researcher to have more insight from the participants. They elaborated on their answers in a more detailed way. This allowed the researcher to analyze the data more purposefully.

3.3.2. Data analysis.

Unlike quantitative, qualitative data presents more intangible data that does not rely on statistical numbers, figures and tables. As qualitative research seeks to explore a phenomenon which does not have clear cut answers, its data analysis process includes digging into the depth of the phenomenon and seeks answers to bring uncovered sights into the light.

Marshall and Rosman (2006) define qualitative data analysis as the process of scrutinizing statements about relationships and underlying themes. It includes analyzing a lot of words and statements generated during interviews or surveys. Qualitative data analysis examines the relationships between the generated chunks of speech and seeks to come up with meaningful themes.

For this study, qualitative design was adopted. Data was analyzed through content analysis and thematic analysis. The purpose of content analysis is to examine the data in a systematic way to understand the relationships between concepts, themes and codes in a thorough way (Saldana, 2011). It was conducted for this study by developing codes and later categorizing them. Coding is an important step in content analysis through which the smaller meaningful units can be connected to the bigger picture of the data. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe coding as analyzing itself and they think that it accelerates the process. Codes can be words, phrases or sentences that can be connected to a specific theme. For this study, each answer for the survey questions was analyzed for codes that could be related to the theme.

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that thematic analysis provides rich and detailed analysis of the data. Attride-Stirling (2001) offers thematic networks to conduct thematic analysis of qualitative data. Thematic networks are tools to uncover hidden themes in a text and include three levels:

- Basic theme: The lowest order and simplest characteristics of the data. It cannot be interpreted or analyzed without the next level theme. Once a group of basic themes are withdrawn from the text, they are grouped together under the organizing themes. Coding is the first step of revealing basic themes. After several analyses, codes are grouped together to form basic themes.
- Organizing theme: The middle order theme that encompasses the basic themes and enables them to make sense. A group of organizing themes form global themes.

- Global theme: The highest order theme that acts as an umbrella term for all the other levels. They tell the reader what the text is mainly about. The other levels are sublevels of global themes.

Thematic analysis through thematic networks was implemented for this study because of the characteristics of the data as the open-ended questions seek answers for certain experiences, ideas and views. When data was analyzed according to the research questions, four different global themes emerged. These themes were chosen according to the open ended survey questions as they directly seek answers to the research questions. Then organizing themes were identified from these global themes. Afterwards, the organizing themes were broken down to smaller units, codes and later categorized.

The global themes were:

1. Conceptualizations of UbD
2. The Benefits of UbD
3. The challenges of UbD
4. The Applicability of UbD During Online Education

When data is analyzed by different people, it is possible that different understandings of the data occur. There might be a disagreement on the definition or meaning of the data. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that more than one person analyze the data. By this way, if there is a disagreement, the data can be further reviewed and the explanations can be expanded. More than one person analyzing the data is also important as it is also a reliability check (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For this reason, the coding process was conducted by two raters to make sure that the same meaning is inferred from the same piece of unit.

3.4. Trustworthiness of the Study

The purpose of all research is to bring reliable and valid results to the field. Especially for practitioners of a field, it is important that they are convinced a practice is worth trying as long as it is proven to be effective. Unlike quantitative studies where the results can be trusted with numbers and statistics and the scope of the study is more likely to be expanded, qualitative studies seek answers to issues by exploring the insights of a phenomena through observing and interviewing. For this reason, one might suggest that it is not possible to prove that a qualitative study can give trusted results as in a quantitative study. Moreover, qualitative studies might have the researcher's bias, as the results of the study are filtered through the eyes of the researcher. However, Merriam (2009) suggests that in qualitative studies, the issue of trustworthiness of a study can be analyzed in terms of its internal validity and reliability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that trustworthiness of a qualitative study can be ensured through four different elements; credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability. The data analysis for this study was conducted through these four different categories.

3.4.1. Credibility.

Fraenkal and Wallen (2012) state that credibility in a qualitative study equals internal validity, instrument validity and reliability in a quantitative study. Validity in a study refers to the reality of the results; how truly the data shows what the researcher wants to show. It enables researchers to ensure that they are measuring what they think they intend to measure. Reliability refers to the consistency of the results over a specific period of time.

In qualitative studies, there is a concern about researcher's bias. As the researcher is the one who bases the conclusions on observation and open-ended questions, the study is analyzed through the researcher's eyes. Some researchers interpret things differently than others. Therefore, qualitative researchers ensure the credibility of their study through some check points. To ensure the credibility of this qualitative study, triangulation of data was conducted as suggested by Fraenkal et al. (2012).

3.4.1.1. Triangulation.

Triangulation is referred to as collecting multiple data from participants. For this study, the participants were presented with an open-ended questionnaire firstly. Then some of the participants were asked to be interviewed to elaborate on their answers to avoid any misunderstandings and to explore the phenomena in a more detailed way. This enabled the researcher to ensure that the first set of data did actually mean what it was understood to be by the researcher. Using audio and video recordings enabled the researcher to review the data multiple times during the interview process to ensure that right and meaningful conclusions were drawn by the researcher. Some interviews were recorded through video conferencing, while some interviews were completed through audio recording by the researcher. Both types of interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants. Moreover, piloting of both questionnaires was conducted for the clarity of the statements and wording.

3.4.2. Transferability.

While the rationalistic paradigm identifies transferability as generalizations of the results, therefore, applicability of the study in different contexts and situations, the naturalistic paradigm suggests that rationalistic generalizations are not possible because they are context and time dependent (Guba, 1981). However, this does not mean that it is not possible to make generalizations in qualitative studies. Lincoln and Guba (1986) suggest that it is possible through thick description. Thick description refers to a very detailed description and interpretation of a situation by the researcher. If thick descriptions describe similarities between two contexts, then it is possible to assume that findings will also be similar in the two contexts (Guba, 1981). Guba further suggests that the naturalistic approach strives to create hypotheses that can be transferred from one context to another via the fitness between them. Therefore, to ensure transferability for this study, very detailed descriptions of the situation were made. Moreover, the open-ended questionnaires included a lot of demographic data from the participants so that a more descriptive explanation of the situation could be made. To find about

the settings where UbD is implemented, the researcher did informal interviews with some teachers and heads of the English departments from different schools.

3.4.3. Dependability.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify reliability as dependability or consistency in qualitative studies. Reliability in its own sense refers to the idea that if the study was conducted again, it should repeat the same results. However, since qualitative studies deal with human behaviour in social sciences, there has been a concern about whether reliability can be expected in qualitative studies as human behaviour is always changing. Meriam (2009) suggests that repeating the study will not generate the same results, but this does not mean that results of qualitative studies cannot be reliable. In qualitative studies, the consistency between the results and the data is more important. Similarly, Guba (1981) argues that some kinds of observed change is “real”. He further suggests that dependability in qualitative studies is not about having various results, but about having trackable various results that are caused by the sources, instruments and so on.

Meriam (2009) presents some strategies to ensure dependability in qualitative studies. One of them is triangulation. This concept was explained in the credibility section of the paper as well; it refers to collecting data via more than one way. To ensure dependability for this study, the participants were presented with an open-ended questionnaire first, then some of the participants were asked to elaborate on their answers through focus group interviews.

3.4.4. Confirmability.

Confirmability in qualitative studies refers to the researcher being objective and not employing bias. As there might be trackable variables in qualitative studies, Guba (1981) suggests changing the objectivity from the researcher to the data as it is a known fact for researchers to have bias when they use data and instruments. This means that it is important for the data to be confirmable rather than the researcher and their methods being certifiable. Guba (1981) argues triangulation to ensure confirmability for a qualitative study. This method

was conducted for the present study. Patton (2002) suggests an ethical issues checklist to ensure credibility for the researcher in qualitative studies; explaining the purpose of the study, promises and reciprocity, risk assessment, confidentiality, informed consent, data access and ownership, interviewer mental health and advice. These issues were taken into consideration during getting an ethical committee report from the researcher's university.

Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that two raters working on specific data can eliminate researcher's bias. For this study, two raters analyzed the data independently. Miles and Huberman also suggest that 70% agreement on the data is sufficient (1994). For the present study, two coders analyzed the data multiple times and they came to a consensus on the themes.

4. RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the content and thematic analysis conducted to explore the perspectives of EFL teachers and heads of English departments implementing UbD in K-12 Turkish EFL settings. During the data analysis process, Attride-Stirling's (2001) thematic networks were used. Four different global themes originated according to the research questions; conceptualizations of UbD, Benefits of Implementing UbD, Challenges of Implementing UbD and Applicability of UbD during Online Education. After multiple reviewing of the data, organizing themes related to the global themes were grouped together. All the themes are shown in tables in this chapter. Moreover, the percentages and frequency of the obtained data were calculated and are also shown in tables in this chapter.

4.1. Findings of the First Research Question

In order to answer the first research question, *How do EFL teachers in K-12 settings conceptualize UbD in unit design?*, content analysis was conducted on the data obtained through open-ended questionnaires. The answers to the first question came from the first and fourth questions from the questionnaire and focus group interviews with teachers. Different conceptualizations of UbD by EFL teachers obtained through the data were categorized under the global theme of *Conceptualizations of UbD*. These conceptualizations were later grouped under five different organizing themes as *a design process*, *a framework*, *a platform*, *an approach* and *a model*. Basic themes related to the organizing themes were grouped together, as well.

4.1.1. Conceptualizations of UbD.

For the conceptualization of UbD, five organizing themes emerged: UbD as a *design process*, *a framework*, *a platform*, *an approach* and *a model*. Categories related to these themes are shown below in Table 4 along with the number and percentages of the participants who stated them.

Table 4*Teachers' Conceptualization of UbD*

	Teachers (N= 39)
	N (%)
Design Process	25 (64%)
Planning backwards	18 (72%)
Purposeful	5 (5%)
Efficient	1 (4%)
Understanding-based	1 (4%)
Framework	7 (17%)
Purposeful	7 (100%)
Structured	7 (100%)
Holistic	6 (85%)
Flexible	5 (71%)
Platform	2 (5%)
Model	2 (5%)
Flexible	1 (50%)
Based on backward design	1 (50%)
Approach	1 (2%)

Twenty-five participants (64%) conceptualized UbD as a design process which included planning curriculum, units and lessons. Eighteen of these 25 participants (72%) stated that it is a design process based on backward design which included a way of planning units

starting from the unit goals, standards and objectives then planning the rest of the unit from that point. Five participants out of 25 participants (5%) stated that it is a design process with a purpose, meaning that it is not randomly designed according to some topics. One participant out of 25 participants (4%) said that it was a very detailed process but very efficient for students. One participant out of 25 participants (4%) stated that it is a process that is based on student understanding. Participants stated that planning backwards enables them to focus on standards (desired results), skills and goals of the unit. The following quote is an example of UbD as a design process: “Using standards to inform construction of assessment and working backwards to have standards and assessment inform/create scaffold lessons.” (Teachers’ Questionnaire, T23)

Seven participants (17%) conceptualized UbD as a framework to plan curriculum and units. Under the framework category, all of these seven participants (100%) stated that it was a purposeful framework which enabled teachers to plan their units towards specific targets. The quote below is an example for this:

Before UbD, our units had less focus and teachers added in activities unrelated to the goals. Units were often a list of separate activities rather than a coherent unit with activities connecting with one another. At times exams were created based on what had been taught, but not necessarily on what the unit goals should/might have been. After UbD, exams and other assessments were planned at the start of the unit, so the end goals for all became much more standard. (Teachers’ Questionnaire, T33)

It was also stated that it helped teachers plan for success and ensure that students were moving in the right direction. The quote below explains the process very well:

The other schools I have worked at haven't really had a set template and majority of the planning was based on open ended themes and textbooks. This is why I think UbD is an excellent template because it has clear stages that help the teacher plan for success

and these steps ensure the student is moving in the right direction. (Teachers' Questionnaire, T4)

These seven participants also stated that it was a structured framework as it had clear stages for teachers to direct them, more detailed and addressed possible gaps. Six of these seven participants (85%) thought that it was a holistic framework as UbD gave them the chance to plan at a unit level rather than a lesson level. Five out of seven participants (71%) stated that it enabled them to be flexible as it can be adjusted according to students' needs.

Two of all participants (5%) conceptualized UbD as a platform. One participant out of these two (50%) stated that it was a platform for teachers to add and share lesson plans with their colleagues while the other participant (50%) described UbD as a platform that helped teachers map and align their curriculum with the unit plans that were uploaded onto the platform previously.

Of all participants, two (5%) conceptualized UbD as a model. One (50%) of them described it as a model which was based on backward design to create a curriculum where they started with the final academic goal and worked backwards from that point. The other participant (50%) stated that as the model is flexible, teachers had the freedom to design and shape the model according to their students' needs.

Finally, one (2%) of 39 participants conceptualized UbD as an approach to design curriculum that addresses specific student learning targets by starting with the end goal. The quote below explains the difference between a traditional design and UbD:

Most of the design that I have worked with before is content based, basically getting through a text book and the goals are already written and there is no flexibility to put in what I want the students to learn. Another one is where I was given the standards and goals that would be taught to students and then content would be created according to those goals, it meant that lots of grammar was taught and the content was shoehorned in, students would learn about waste or recycling or other topics and then go on to the

next thing without internalizing the knowledge and the whole school would be superficial in its approach. (Teachers' Questionnaire, T19)

The analysis also revealed that 37 teachers (94%) and all the department heads (100%) claimed that it was applicable in all grade levels as it was a framework to design units, not a program with specific content to be taught. One teacher (2%) out of 39 thought that it was applicable for grade 4 and due to language restriction. One teacher (2%) out of 39 stated that it was applicable in preparatory, grade 9 and 10 in high school without specifying any reason. The interviews conducted with some teachers revealed some details about UbD's applicability in grade levels as in the next quote:

I would say it's harder in higher levels. I've always found it's easier to plan curriculum for the lower levels. You have to higher in Bloom's (Taxonomy) with the higher kids, with the more advanced kids so it's often more difficult to plan the types of extension questions and activities they will need because whereas with the younger students it's a little bit easier to align because it's not as abstract, it's not as higher level. (Interview on November 22, 2021, T28)

Another teacher stated:

... if I think about UbD, what UbD focuses on like real world skills and often like assessments being as close to possible as like a real world task and maybe it's just my personal experience but I feel like the higher up you go it's easier to find performance tasks that match something closer to the real world. The younger they are, maybe it's just that I haven't done how to think more creatively for younger levels but there are more options available for real world or real world like tasks that you can assess them in when they are at a higher age or at a greater English ability. Because I think when they are younger, they are more restricted to the kind of real world tasks they would actually do at that age but once they get higher, you can get closer to imagining tasks outside of school that you can sort of replicate. But then again I haven't had experience

going between grades to figure that out but that was always my sense. At least between going 5th, 6th and 7th grades, it always felt like that to me. So if you wanna create a real world performance task for a younger grade, you are sort of more stuck to their children's world of real tasks. Whereas the older they get you can get close to the adult real world. (Interview on November 22, 2021, T9)

A high school teacher stated: "It's just a framework by which you think about organizing instruction and when I think about it applies to any grade level. It's just how you go about thinking about designing units." (Interview on November 10, 2021, T25)

Another high school teacher stated:

I really think it is very difficult to teach in kindergarten or primary because in high school students have a concept of school, the lessons, the courses. They have an understanding of the world. They have their opinions but kids I think it is difficult to teach something related to the courses without teaching them what happens outside of the classroom. So you have to give them a bigger sense of what you are teaching. So I think that's why it is difficult teaching in kindergarten or primary school. (Interview on November 10, 2021, T15)

A primary school teacher stated:

I feel like the older they are, it is easier for me only because English is their 2nd language. I think if I was teaching something in their mother tongue, it wouldn't make a difference. I feel like a struggle more because it is ESL. I think the older they get, it is easier. (Interview on November 9, 2021, T4)

A middle school head of department stated:

I don't think there should even be a discussion about UbD and grade levels. UbD can apply to any grade level and course because it is more than just curriculum design. It is a philosophy that places at its core life-long learning, enduring understandings and big questions that cannot be answered within the span of one unit or lesson. There are of

course differences in e.g. how EUs or EQs are worded to fit the level of understanding of a very young learner. Big ideas need to be framed in a way students can grasp them, depending on their age and developmental stages. (Department Heads' Questionnaire, DH3)

4.2. Findings of the Second Research Question

In order to answer the second research question, *How do EFL teachers and English department heads perceive the role and benefits of UbD implementation in K-12 EFL settings?*, thematic analysis was conducted on the data obtained through open-ended questionnaires and focus group interviews from teachers and department heads. The answers to the second question came from the second, fifth, seventh and eight questions from the teachers' questionnaire; third, fifth and twelfth questions from the department heads' questionnaire and focus group interviews with teachers. Benefits of implementing UbD were categorized under the global theme *Benefits of Implementing UbD*. Seven categories were identified by the themes of *student-related* and *teacher-related benefits*, and 16 subcategories emerged under these categories as shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Benefits of Implementing UbD

	Teachers	Dept. Heads	Total
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Student-Related Benefits	33 (82%)	5 (100%)	38 (86%)
Transferring skills	13 (39%)	2 (40%)	15 (34%)
Increased awareness	11 (33%)	1 (20%)	12 (27%)

about the unit			
Deeper understanding	7 (21%)	2 (40%)	9 (20%)
of big ideas			
Increased motivation	5 (15%)	-	5 (11%)
Reflecting	3 (9%)	-	3 (6%)
Asking questions	2 (6%)	-	2 (4%)
Thinking critically	-	1 (20%)	1 (2%)
Being autonomous	-	1 (20%)	1 (2%)
English Language Learning-Related	28 (71%)	-	28 (71%)
Benefits			
Using English for	9 (32%)	-	9 (32%)
real purposes			
Meaningful learning	7 (25%)	-	7 (25%)
Becoming confident	5 (17%)	-	5 (17%)
speakers			
Increased awareness	5 (17%)	-	5 (17%)
about the unit			
Active use of English	4 (14%)	-	4 (14%)
Going beyond	3 (10%)	-	3 (10%)
technicalities of the			
language			
Increased motivation	3 (10%)	-	3 (10%)
Thinking critically	2 (7%)	-	2 (7%)
Teacher-Related Benefits	30 (76%)	5 (100%)	35 (79%)
Being more organized	20 (66%)	3 (60%)	23 (52%)
Focusing on the	13 (43%)	1 (20%)	14 (31%)
outcome first			

Focusing on student learning	7 (23%)	2 (40%)	9 (20%)
Clear stage-planning	7 (23%)	-	7 (15%)
Monitoring student success	5 (16%)	1 (20%)	6 (13%)
Reflecting regularly	-	1 (20%)	1 (2%)
Resource for Teachers	1 (3%)	-	1 (2%)

4.2.1. Student-related benefits.

Thirty-three of 39 teachers (82%) and five department heads (100%) stated that implementing UbD in their contexts was beneficial to students' overall success in terms of transferring skills, increased awareness about the unit, showing deeper understanding of big ideas, increased motivation, reflecting, asking questions, thinking critically and being autonomous. Participants also verbalized that implementing UbD enabled students to have a road map for their learning. They stated that students were aware of what was expected from them and the purpose of their learning. A teacher explained this in the quotation below:

When they understand and know what they have to learn, they have the responsibility.

UbD also helps them to plan their learning process and make up their weakness too. In my opinion, if someone can retell what they've learned with their own sentences it shows that the topic is understood. UbD helps them use their own sentences. (Teachers' Questionnaire, T13)

Thirteen teachers out of 33 (39%) and two department heads out of five (40%) explained that implementing UbD enabled students to apply their knowledge in different situations by transferring their learning. The quote below explains this element:

The other important thing is that it is aiming toward real world skills rather than pure academic things that have been tested but what might not actually be what students are asked to do either when they go to university or in the real world. For me that is the biggest benefit. Because one of the biggest problems is that kids do not think about why they are learning things at school. It is just something they have to get through, they have to master the things that the teacher is giving them to get good grades, to get to a university, to get a good job. But they do not know what they are actually going to do with that thing they are learning most of the time. One of the first things UbD asks you is to decide that firstly. What do you actually want the kids to be able to do in the real world and that is your starting point of your backward design. (Interview on December 20, 2021, T9)

Eleven teachers out of 33 (33%) and one head of department out of five (20%) stated that students being aware where the unit was going, what was expected from them and what knowledge and skills they would be learning at the end of the unit helped them be successful. The following quotes are examples of this: “Students know what the goal of each unit is from the beginning. There are no surprises in terms of expected outcomes. Knowing what they are working toward helps them feel secure and gives them a target that is reachable.” (Teachers’ Questionnaire, T33). “It minimizes incidental learning. It supports learners because they know where they will be going. It is not an activity-oriented design so it focuses on student learning. With your UbD you switch to an active, student-centered classroom.” (Teachers’ Questionnaire, T1)

Seven teachers out of 33 (21%) and two department heads out of five (40%) who thought that implementing UbD was beneficial to student success in general claimed that students showed deeper understandings of the big ideas and concepts with the help of UbD. Showing deep understanding of big ideas and concepts in an UbD context can be explained as transferring what is being learnt to real life situations, which is the fundamental purpose of

UbD or showing understanding through UbD's six facets of understanding. The quotes below from teachers are an example for transfer. "It reminds them that everything is connected in the real world and keeps them asking themselves "How can I use this in the real world?".

(Teachers' Questionnaire, T9)

Students can gain a deeper understanding of a subject and can demonstrate and pass that knowledge on into their lives. They are given a chance to get a better understanding and not whizz through a unit and get facts but do things that can make a better impact, they are not doing for doings sake but are learning about life and becoming critical citizens who can make balanced choices. (Teachers' Questionnaire, T19)

I think UbD is a very natural and logical way of thinking about learning and transfer of knowledge. We all apply UbD principles to things we do in our everyday lives. We set a goal and work towards it, be it health, fitness, job, hobbies, etc. We keep ourselves in check in order to assess how we are doing. So why not apply this to learning and education? Students who are raised to think about 'big questions' and seek answers outside the boundaries of one course, course book or unit of study are inevitably set for better success, as they possess the ability to interpret, apply, change perspective and self-evaluate. (Department Heads' Questionnaire, DH4)

Five teachers out of 33 (15%) thought that implementing UbD in their classes made students more motivated to learn because they were aware of what they were working toward and knew what big questions they would have to answer at the end of the unit of work. They also claimed that it was motivating for students to see how the work they did was connected to the overall goals they want to achieve. Three teachers out of 33 (9%) claimed that students were able to reflect on their work and progress with the help of UbD as it gave students a chance to be aware of their learning goals and expectations at the end of the unit. Two teachers (6%) out of 33 and one head of department (20%) claimed that UbD enabled students to ask questions as it ensures students think about the big picture and essential questions. One

department head (20%) claimed that implementing UbD enabled students to think critically as illustrated in the following quote:

They have the big picture, they know what they are learning, it makes a difference when they think, write and share, which creates a different understanding among students; their abilities in transferring improve, the materials that we use in order to ensure understanding make a difference, using hook at all times make them wonder, making them deduce something makes the lessons more understandable and permanent.
(Department Heads' Questionnaire, DH1)

One head of department (20%) said that implementing UbD in their classes helped their students become more independent.

4.2.2. English language learning-related benefits.

As Table 5 shows, 28 of all teachers (71%) claimed that implementing UbD in their classes helped their students improve their English language skills. Nine out of these 28 teachers (32%) mentioned that their students were able to use English language for real world purposes, which can be regarded as UbD's transfer goal. They stated that UbD helped English language skills because of its focus on what students were able to do in real life. The quote below is an example of this phenomenon.

I think the stages in UbD help English language skills because there is a focus on what students understand and what they are able to do. When you have clear stages that include student skills and understanding as a part of the process, students display evidence of their learning. Essential questions and enduring understandings in UbD also pushes teachers and learners to move beyond the nuts and bolts of language and push students to use their language skills in more realistic settings. (Teachers' Questionnaire, T4)

Seven teachers out of 28 (25%) claimed that implementing UbD helped students have meaningful learning experiences in terms of learning the English language. They stated that

their units gave students the chance to make connections between the lessons and their personal lives. Using the English language skills in different environments enabled students to see there was a purpose for learning what they had been learning.

It's one of my calls and I keep telling them learning should be relevant and personally meaningful to you and transferable. Actually it is one of the things I write on their feedback. I always make a point of telling them that. I tell them this is transferable and there could be so many other contexts you could apply it. I also teach them the theory of knowledge. And it's all about how learning is transferable. (Interview on November 10, 2021, T25)

Five teachers out of 28 (17%) claimed that implementing UbD in their classes enabled students to become confident speakers in English as it gave them a chance to be aware of what was expected of them in terms of performing in English. They stated that they were more open to expressing themselves.

Five teachers out of 28 (17%) stated that UbD was beneficial for their students' awareness of the unit. Their students knew the purpose of their unit and where the unit was headed which also helped them to be more positive about language learning.

Four teachers out of 28 (14%) claimed that UbD helped students to use the English language actively as it focused on transferring what had been learnt to new and complex situations in real life. Students need to do research, organize findings and persuade an audience in different settings in English, which are the tasks that they are expected to perform in real life. The quote below exhibits an example for this:

UbD has positive contributions to students' English achievement. Planned activities give opportunities to the students about active use of English, and transferring knowledge into new learning situations. My students could make connections between real life experiences and our lessons. It was good to see how they improved their note taking skills before speaking or while listening. They learned how to think critically

about content area topics and asking questions that led to more learning. (Teachers' Questionnaire, T13)

Three teachers out of 28 (10%) claimed that students were able to go beyond the technicalities of just learning the language by using the English language in realistic settings.

You teach for understanding and you are not teaching a bunch of bodies that will turn into the same robots that know the same information. So your kids are actually learning a deeper level of understanding which stays with them. It is an enduring process. It is not just memorizing and moving on once you are done with the exams and tests. It is forever building. Regardless of whenever you start, it is building blocks on top and so on. In a way it models how they can make inquiries, not just at school but ask questions or do the research. It models a healthy way of thinking and looking at reality basically. (Interview on November 9, 2021, T4)

Three teachers out of 28 (10%) stated that UbD helped their students increase their motivation to use English as they did not feel threatened or tested, so they were enthusiastic about speaking and learning English. They also said that knowing their learning goals at the beginning of the unit made them motivated, as well.

Two teachers out of 28 (7%) explained that their students' critical thinking skills improved thanks to the lessons planned according to UbD principles. They stated that UbD gave their students room to go beyond their limits hence improving their thinking skills.

4.2.3. Teacher-related benefits.

Thirty teachers (76%) and five department heads (100%) claimed that teachers also benefited from UbD by implementing it in their grade levels. These benefits included being more organized in terms of focusing on the outcome first, focusing on the student learning, monitoring student success, clear stage-planning, and reflecting regularly (See Table 5).

Twenty of these 30 teachers (66%) and three department heads (60%) stated that teachers were able to be more organized with the help of UbD as it was designed as a tool to

organize their teaching procedures as teachers. Specifically, 13 teachers out of 20 (43%) and one head of department (20%) stated that UbD helped teachers to focus on the outcome first rather than focusing on a lot of fun and engaging activities. It helped them to stay focused on what they wanted for their students to get out of the unit. The quote below can be regarded as an example for this.

When teachers are planning lessons, they often focus on activities rather than targets of that lesson / unit. UbD design directs you to focus on your target/outcome first and plan your unit accordingly. Once your desired outcomes are identified, it is easier to plan your activities / instruction accordingly. We as teachers focus more on learning rather than teaching with this system. (Teachers' Questionnaire, T1)

Seven teachers out of 20 (23%) and two department heads (40%) claimed that adopting UbD as their planning framework helped them to focus on student learning directly. The quote below shows this aspect of UbD.

I worked at a school where everything was given to me. I wouldn't be a teacher, I would be passing on information. You are just kind of the middle man because you are not really creating anything, you are not making decisions based on the minds in your classroom or their interests or their level. So almost like a puppet to some degree. But with UbD, you are in charge of the planning part as a teacher, but the exciting part is as soon as you hand it over to the students, there have been so many times that our focus and big questions, the kids are like on completely tangent, UbD lets you go with them. So even on a simple level, just ask the right question to ignite the kids to start thinking and then for them it is this massive journey of where are we going to go next and what are we going to learn. (Interview on November 9, 2021, T4)

Seven teachers out of 20 (23%) stated that applying UbD enabled them to ensure that there were no steps skipped during the planning process. As UbD has three stages to make

planning easier for teachers, it helps teachers to be on track with their plan and purpose. The quotes below are an example for this aspect of UbD.

In the long run, a lot of time is saved as overall planning is done that encompasses whole units in advance. Finally, it encourages continual self-improvement in teachers by asking them to critically assess their planning and regularly reflect. (Department Heads' Questionnaire, DH4)

I think it is very useful in the sense that I get to plan what I am going to teach in the next couple of weeks or months. I know what I am going to do today and in two or three months. I have that sense of plan. It's definitely more planned. (Interview on November 10, 2021, T15)

Five teachers out of 20 (16%) and one head of department (20%) claimed that they were able to monitor student success easily by applying UbD with the help of its focus on Stage 2, evidence of learning. The quote below exhibits an example for this.

UbD focuses on the outcomes of learning before the learning even takes place. There is a continuous and strong focus on understanding and application of knowledge, rather than just memorizing information. Formative assessment and use of data to improve instruction help both teachers and students keep on track and make meaning of knowledge and skills. (Departments Heads' Questionnaire, DH3)

One head of department (20%) claimed that implementing UbD helped teachers to reflect regularly on their planning process as the framework worked as a checklist for teachers to question themselves in terms of why they were doing what they were doing.

One teacher out of 30 (3%) claimed that UbD was a resourceful place where teachers could add their standards and lesson plans and were able to see what had been done by the previous teachers. they stated that by this way, there could be consistency among all teachers.

4.3. Findings of the Third Research Question

In order to answer the third research question, *What are the challenges that EFL teachers and department heads face during the implementation of UbD in K-12 EFL settings?*, content analysis was conducted on the data obtained through open-ended questionnaires. The answers to the third question came from the sixth question from and the teachers' and department heads' questionnaire and focus group interviews. Challenges of implementing UbD were categorized under the global theme *Challenges of Implementing UbD*. All the challenges stated by the teachers and department heads were categorized under the organizing themes as *Institutional Challenges*, *Instructional Challenges*, *Teacher-Related Challenges* and *Learner-Related Challenges*. Basic themes were grouped together related to these organizing themes as seen in Table 6.

Table 6

Challenges of Implementing UbD

	Teachers	Dept. Heads	Total
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Institutional Challenges	13 (33%)	1 (20%)	14 (31%)
Time limitations	6 (46%)	1 (100%)	7 (50%)
Insufficient training	4 (30%)	-	4 (28%)
Expectations from admins	2 (15%)	-	2 (14%)
Lack of school policy	1 (7%)	-	2 (14%)
Workload	1 (7%)	-	2 (14%)
Instructional Challenges	11 (28%)	1 (20%)	12 (27%)
Designing authentic assessments	3 (27%)	-	3 (24%)

Keeping track of purposeful teaching	2 (18%)	1 (100%)	3 (24%)
Concerns about content coverage on time	2 (18%)	-	2 (16%)
Differentiation	2 (18%)	-	2 (16%)
Confusing to follow	2 (18%)	-	2 (16%)
Learner-Related Challenges	8 (20%)	-	8 (18%)
Different English levels	5 (62%)	-	5 (62%)
Behaviourally challenging learners	2 (25%)	-	2 (25%)
Different classroom dynamics	1 (12%)	-	1 (12%)
Teacher-Related Challenges	5 (12%)	3 (60%)	8 (18%)
Unwillingness to change	2 (40%)	3 (100%)	5 (62%)
Different interpretations of UbD	2 (40%)	-	2 (25%)
Inexperience with UbD	1 (20%)	-	1 (12%)

4.3.1. Institutional challenges.

The category *Institutional Challenges* refers to those caused by the institutions where participants worked. Thirteen teachers (33%) and one department head (20%) stated that they faced challenges caused by their workplace. Time limitations were uttered the most, by six teachers out of 13 (46%) and one department head out of one (100%). Participants complained about the fact that most of the time they did not have enough time to spend on UbD planning. Two teachers stated this challenge very clearly below:

... in terms of the amount of time it takes and the amount of time we are given, I feel like if I had so much more time to plan, then everything would work so much more smoothly. I think the challenge is more logistic as opposed to not being able to complete a stage or do something in the class. It has got more to do with the workload, wanting to do more and being more thorough, but then having to cut corners when there are deadlines and you do not have that much time. (Interview on November 9, 2021, T4)

Due to lack of time ... and having lots of hours and levels, it is sometimes difficult to think about the lesson plan and design it thoroughly. (Teachers' Questionnaire, T15)

Insufficient training was the second most uttered institutional challenge by the participants. Four teachers out of 13 (30%) stated that they did not get enough training about UbD and there was a lot of training that was required to implement UbD properly. A teacher explained the situation like this:

I feel like the only factor that is challenging is if the other teachers you are working together with do not completely understand how UbD works. I feel there is a lack of education on how to implement UbD and this means teachers are trying to use it but unable to use it properly. (Teachers' Questionnaire, T4)

Two teachers out of 13 (15%) acclaimed that they faced some challenges because of the expectations from their admins. 1 teacher stated:

There are existing programs that we have to follow. They force us to do UbD retroactively! So we look at what we have to do, and we try to find some long-term transfer goals from the existing expectations, then UbD from there. (Teachers' Questionnaire, T39)

One teacher out of 13 (7%) stated that they faced challenges due to the lack of official school policy to implement UbD. The quote below is an example for this challenge:

It is challenging ... if your department and institution do not support this method or if the standards implemented are only focused on language / skills without concern for conceptual understanding and real world knowledge and interdisciplinary based. (Teachers' Questionnaire, T22)

One teacher out of 13 (7%) stated that implementing UbD was challenging because of the heavy schedule of the school.

4.3.2. Instructional challenges.

The category *Instructional Challenges* refer to the challenges that were caused by the teaching process itself. Eleven teachers (28%) and one department head (20%) stated that they faced some challenges during the process of teaching. Specifically, three teachers out of 11 (27%) claimed that they had some difficulties in designing authentic assessment tasks for their students, which was a part of stage two in the UbD framework. Designing authentic assessments to uncover transferable skills were also referred to as a challenge by the teachers. A teacher stated: "I find assessment difficult and I think it is especially because of the varying levels of where the kids are at. Practically as a teacher we make changes and differentiate and UbD allows that." (Interview on November 9, 2021, T4)

As UbD is a framework to enable teachers to ensure that their teaching is purposeful and directed somewhere, two teachers out of 11 (18%) and one department head (100%) stated that they had difficulties in keeping track of purposeful teaching. One teacher specifically suggested that making sure standards were aligned with lesson plans was challenging. Another teacher stated that even though the tasks might be good, it did not necessarily mean that they were aligned with the objectives.

Two teachers out of 11 (18%) stated that they had concerns about covering the content they were supposed to do on time was challenging. They complained about the limited time they were given and the extent they needed to teach with UbD.

Two teachers out of 11 (18%) claimed that differentiation was challenging especially when implementing UbD was not a school policy. A teacher stated: “Currently, . . . the lack of differentiation in planning which doesn't take in the needs of a differing academic demographic.” is challenging. (Teachers’ Questionnaire, T37)

Two teachers out of 11 (18%) stated that following the UbD framework’s principles and stages were confusing. One of them claimed that remembering the codes and stages were difficult.

4.3.3. Learner-related challenges.

The category *Learner-Related Challenges* refers to the challenges that were caused by the students themselves. As Table 6 shows, 8 teachers (20%) accepted that they faced some problems related to students during the implementation of UbD in their classes.

Five teachers out of eight (62%) claimed that it was difficult to implement UbD with students who had different proficient levels in the English language.

I feel like the older they are, it is easier for me only because English is their second language. I think if I was teaching something in their mother tongue, it wouldn't make a difference. I feel like a struggle more because it is ESL. I think the older they get, it is easier. (Interview on November 9, 2021, T4)

A high school English teacher explained the situation like this:

You have to build in ELL skills regardless of the curriculum. So ELL standards have to be the part of the UbD instruction. The issue running to UbD in English as a medium of instruction and other disciplines is you have got Turkish equivalence of all the ideas and concepts, so you get to the academic language, the instruction for ELL students, you get real problems with EMI (English as a medium of instruction) in regards to UbD. (Interview on November 22, 2021, T28)

Two teachers out of eight (25%) found some student behaviour hard to control. They stated that some students were not willing to actively participate in the activities that were planned according to UbD principles.

One teacher out of eight (12%) stated that they had difficulties implementing UbD in different classroom dynamics. As each class had different characteristics of their own, it could never be ensured that the same plan would work in the same way in each classroom. A primary school teacher stated: “I have been teaching fourth grade for four years now. I believe you need to make extra preparations for them. Even now we have to do lots of differentiated activities. So I believe it will be harder.” (Interview on November 9, 2021, T2)

4.3.4. Teacher-related challenges.

The category *Teacher-Related Challenges* refers to the challenges that were caused by the teachers themselves (See Table 6). Five teachers (12%) and three department heads (60%) stated that they faced some challenges that were sourced by the teachers. Two teachers out of five (40%) and three department heads (100%) stated that some teachers were unwilling to change their teaching style and were not open to improving themselves professionally. A department head stated:

Trying to merge expectations that arise from traditional curriculum designs that unfortunately still shape and govern summative assessment (exams) with an approach that goes beyond just exams and puts emphasis on purposeful learning and application thereof. To many teachers out there UbD is very new and they find it very challenging to switch their teaching mindsets when they first start working with UbD. There is natural resistance and failure to understand and adapt. It takes time for UbD to really take effect, both in the case of schools and teachers. (Department Heads' Questionnaire, DH3)

Another department head explained: “Some new teachers are unsure how to implement the use of EQs and Understandings. Our (English teachers) attitude seems to be, “Well, I have my own way and it's close enough.” (Department Heads Questionnaire, DH5)

Another department head claimed:

Many teachers don't seem to take the time to understand it. I have supervised many courses for teachers and the attitude from the beginning is either "This is foreign and can never work for Turkey" or "I don't have time for this" and so there is never a real attempt to understand or implement it. They never say these things IN a seminar or course, but on lunch breaks and smoke breaks and in private, I see there was never a real attempt to implement UbD among a certain type of teacher -- mostly veterans, older, who feel that any attempt to "better" their practice is a suggestion that they are bad teachers. (Department Heads' Questionnaire, DH5)

Two teachers out of five (40%) stated that there were different interpretations of UbD's principles and this fact was a challenge for them. A teacher stated:

People teach differently. They have different ideas about what they wanna do, and to talk and discuss about what those projects are going to be. I think that's sort of challenging because we do have this idea about standardization and I think that that's great, but I also do think that multiple routes can lead to wrong. We have our goals of course but multiple roads can lead to wrong. And the issue with standardization is that it gets rid of that sort of individual teacher freedom to find the path that is differentiated enough for their class to get them where they need to be and matches their teaching style. (Interview on November 10, 2021, T23)

One teacher out of five (20%) stated that teachers needed experience and deliberate enhancement with UbD to implement it properly.

4.4. Findings of the Fourth Research Question

In order to answer the fourth research question, *How do teachers and department heads perceive the applicability of UbD during online education in K-12 settings?*, content analysis was conducted on the data obtained through open-ended questionnaires. The answer to this research question came from the ninth question from the teachers' questionnaire, tenth and eleventh questions from the department heads' questionnaire and focus group interviews with teachers. Applicability of UbD during online education was categorized under the global theme *Applicability of UbD During Online Education*. The data revealed that thirteen teachers (33%) and five department heads (100%) stated that they were fully able to apply UbD during online education (Table 7). They suggested that they were able to adjust their plans according to the requirements of online education thanks to some online educational tools, such as Google Classroom. They also emphasized that UbD was applicable both in person and online as it was a planning framework that could be used in any situation or setting. A head of department explained:

It is still education at the end of the day so there should be no doubt about why UbD couldn't apply. Online education provides even more opportunity for AofL and collecting and analyzing data. There are ample opportunities to differentiate online instruction as well. (Department Heads' Questionnaire, DH4)

Ten teachers (25%) stated that they were partially able to apply UbD during online education and the reason for that was mostly related to the fact that they had no actual control over the student work. A teacher explained:

The framework was just a bit empty because sometimes I just couldn't see if the kids were doing the work or if they were writing. You put a question to the kids and normally when we were in the classroom when we would have twenty hands going in the air, online you were struggling to get kids attention because they had another window open. I feel like that loss of engagement made us not be able to go deep. It stayed on the

surface. And you spend more time trying to get kids attention and to make sure cameras are on and things are working and that takes less time actually implementing the program. (Interview on November 9, 2021, T4)

Nine teachers (23%) stated that they were not able to apply UbD during online education at all mostly because it was something completely new and a learning curve for everyone.

Table 7

Applicability of UbD During Online Education

	Teachers	Dept. Heads	Total
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Fully Applied	13 (33%)	5 (100%)	18 (40%)
Partially Applied	10 (25%)	-	10 (22%)
Not Applied At All	9 (23%)	-	9 (20%)

Another detailed analysis was completed and the global theme was also analyzed according to the participants' answers. As a result, the applicability of UbD during online education was also grouped under two main organizing themes: *Advantages* and *Disadvantages*. Then the subcategories *Technology-Related Advantages* and *Remote Working-Related Advantages* were grouped under the first category *Advantages*. The subcategories *MoNE-Related Disadvantages*, *Instructional Disadvantages*, *Student-Related Disadvantages* and *Technology-Related Disadvantages* were grouped under the second category, *Disadvantages*.

4.4.1. Advantages.

The advantages of implementing UbD in online platforms during the pandemic are as listed in Table 8.

Table 8

Advantages of Implementing UbD During Online Education

	Teachers (N=39)
	N (%)
Technology-Related Advantages	9 (23%)
Using Web 2.0 Tools	7 (77%)
Regular monitoring of student learning	3 (33%)
Adjustable	2 (22%)
Motivating	1 (11%)
Remote Working-Enabled Advantages	1 (2%)
More Time to Work	1 (100%)

As Table 8 shows, 9 teachers (23%) stated that they benefited a great deal from technology. Specifically seven teachers out of nine (77%) found using Web 2.0 tools during online education enabled them to apply UbD principles in an easier way. A teacher said:

Web 2.0 tools for education encouraged both teachers and students during online education and I could apply many principles of UbD. Just pair and share was not possible at first, but instead of pair and share activities they could read their friend's ideas and write comments or compare their ideas with friends. They could make mind

maps at the end of the units to show what they remember and had exit tests at the end of the lessons. (Teachers' Questionnaire, T13)

Three teachers out of nine (33%) stated that they were able to monitor student learning more easily during online education. As following student learning closely and regularly was emphasized in UbD, this was easier for teachers to monitor this process online. A teacher explained:

I have applied UbD to all of my lessons during online education. My lessons are planned and my students are well informed about the lessons. Thanks to UbD, I would adapt my lessons easily and I would check my students progress in time. (Teachers' Questionnaire, T12)

Two teachers out of nine (22%) stated that they were able to apply UbD during online education because it was adjustable. A teacher explained: "Larger projects (GRASPS) have been a bit more difficult in general, but we have been able to adjust our activities and assessments to online learning easily." (Teachers' Questionnaire, T33)

One teacher out of nine (11%) stated that studying online for students was more fun during the application of UbD. The participant explained:

In fact being online helped me better personally. I enjoy using the web 2.0 tool in my lessons, but it wasn't possible during traditional education since our school doesn't allow any technological devices in the classroom (for students obviously). But with online education, my lessons were more attention grabbing and motivating for students. (Teachers' Questionnaire, T18)

One teacher out of 39 (2%) found it more advantageous to work online because they had more time to work on planning better units with UbD.

All of the department heads (100%) stated that UbD was applicable during online education as it was a framework that could be adjusted in any kind of teaching and learning

form. However, they did not specify any advantages or disadvantages about its implementation during online education.

4.4.2. Disadvantages.

Teachers who tried to implement UbD during online education have encountered the challenges tabulated in Table 9.

Table 9

Disadvantages of Implementing UbD During Online Education

	Teachers (N=39) N (%)
Instructional Disadvantages	7 (17%)
Lack of assessments	4 (57%)
Unreliable assessments	3 (42%)
Not easily adaptable	1 (14%)
MoNE-Related Disadvantages	4 (10%)
Shortened exam time	4 (100%)
Student-Related Disadvantages	2 (5%)
Lack of motivation and discipline	1 (50%)
Lack of participation	1 (50%)
Technology-Related Disadvantages	1 (2%)
Internet reliability	1 (100%)

Seven teachers (17%) accepted that they experienced certain instructional disadvantages. Specifically four teachers out of these seven (57%) mentioned that it was more difficult to assess student learning during online education. A teacher stated:

The biggest disadvantage with online education has been the lack of assessments. It is very difficult to get students to complete assessments, especially summative assessments. Not being able to implement assessments face to face and not see them doing the work makes student work unreliable. In online education there is less of an opportunity to have spontaneous conversations among students and collaboration, which means students aren't able to practice and use the skills they have as much as they could in a classroom. (Teachers' Questionnaire, T4)

A primary school teacher explained:

For some of the skills it may have worked but for example for writing, it was difficult to see how the kids' spellings are and so on. Plan wise, yes we planned it but I don't know how much the kids actually get the benefit and how much they learned basically because we couldn't see the other side of the screen. (Interview on November 9, 2021, T2)

Three teachers out of seven (42%) stated that it was difficult to trust the assessment results since the assessment process was unreliable due to students being able to cheat. A teacher explained the situation: "It's been much, much harder - determining the validity and reliability of an assessment is always difficult when students can cheat and there is less oversight on performance." (Teachers' Questionnaire, T28)

One teacher out of seven (14%) suggested that they did not find some tasks which were really beneficial for students to be exposed to face-to-face easily adaptable during online education.

Four teachers out of 39 (10%) said that the shortened exam time, which was required from the Ministry of National Education because of the pandemic conditions, made it really difficult to assess student learning properly. A teacher stated:

The most recent one (disadvantage) is the covid testing time limit, because we try to get them to write synthesis essays. The last unit we did *Catcher in the Rye*, and

incorporated non-lit texts and had them engaged in an analysis of intertextual themes like the first thing we showed them was Pink Floyd's Another Brick in the Wall and had them analyze the extent to which both texts we are making commentaries on the role of educational institutions, on the formulations of individuals in the society. And that was great but we only had a forty- minute exam time. That is an hour and a half long essay, right? So in order to augment the assessment you have to almost do like a double backwards planning system. So you plan for internal summative assessment as well as the internal summative assessment. That is difficult. (Interview on November 22, 2021, T28)

Another teacher explained how the official grading system and reality of assessment was different:

Obviously UbD's ask is giving a framework on how you are assessing the kids and how you set up the assessments, but assessment is different from the school's official exam and grading system. Those two come into conflict. So for example, you can do all the assessment you want within the UbD framework and just have it not count towards any of the official grading that goes on the report cards. But then something does have to go on there like report cards or what has to be the official exam. It is very hard to keep those two completely separate, but then they are not completely separate. If you do your assessments under UbD you are asking certain things from the kids and they get used to those expectations. But then the expectations of the grading system, it is a different incentive for them. It is very hard to resolve those two, I think. You have got to have the official grading system that will somehow come into line which is probably never going to. So you have to find some pretty creative ways to resolve that. A real world skill cannot always be assessed within a forty- minute exam. (Interview on November 22, 2021, T9)

A high school teacher stated that the constant last minute changes required from MoNE made it really hard for them to assess their students.

You had to change certain things and of course assessments kept disappearing. We would prepare for this assessment, and then the night before we found out that the exams were canceled, or it is not gonna happen, or the exams were no longer seventy minutes but they have to be forty minutes and we had to come up with a whole new type of assessment. We did multiple choice exams in English which we had never done just because they had to fit with the forty minute time. We were trying to be creative with the multiple choice. This was challenging because you never knew how things are going to change. It was not really authentic, it was fake. (Interview on November 10, 2021, T25)

Another high school teacher explained:

I think we had our goals we wanted them to meet, we had the activities we could implement that were connected to those goals. But the assessment could not fit into the whole framework because of the pandemic conditions. So the issue was that did the kids really meet the goals we intended them to meet? We didn't have a real summative assessment. I think now too because we have time constraints for exams, we also have a similar situation. For us traditionally, our summative assessment where we assess whether or not they hit these goals has been an essay. Consequently, you can't write an essay in a forty-minute period, it's not even possible. So we have to then think about especially the idea of thinking about two different ways to assess whether or not they have met these goals. The summative assessment has been difficult to work on. (Interview on November 10, 2021, T23)

Two teachers out of 39 (5%) stated that they experienced some disadvantages related to students while applying UbD during online education. Specifically one teacher out of two (50%) explained that they experienced problems related to student motivation and discipline.

Due to the characteristics of distance education, it was harder to motivate students and discipline them even though they digitalized all the activities. The other teacher (50%) said that they had some students who were not very willing to participate in the lessons.

One teacher (2%) mentioned that they had students who had technical issues such as internet strength which made online education very difficult to be consistent and uninterrupted. They stated that no matter how good the unit design was, it did not mean anything if students had no access to the internet.



5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this section, the findings will be discussed according to theoretical background and literature review. The results will be interpreted and evaluated according to the findings of the studies on UbD, which were cited in the literature. Pedagogical implications, limitations and suggestions for further research are also included in this section.

5.1. Summary

The present study aimed to seek perspectives of English teachers and department heads who implemented UbD in the schools they worked at. The study was conducted with 39 English teachers and five English department heads who taught English as a foreign language at grade levels across pre-K and 12. The data was collected from the participants who worked at five different schools in the city of Istanbul, Turkey. The schools where participants worked implemented UbD either at a school level or a grade level. Qualitative research design was adopted for the study. The data was collected through open-ended questionnaires and semi constructed interviews and analyzed through content analysis. Firstly, main themes were identified and these themes were subcategorized through codes. The analysis was conducted by two raters via a code book created by the researcher to ensure trustworthiness of the study.

Despite the fact that UbD has been around for many years, its application in Turkish EFL context is limited. This study aimed to present the English teachers and department heads experiences with UbD in terms of its conceptualizations, benefits on students and teachers, challenges that participants faced during the application process and applicability during distant education.

The results for the first research question, *How do EFL teachers conceptualize UbD in unit design?*, showed that the teachers conceptualized UbD as five different terms. The first term was a design process, which included planning backwards. This type of conceptualization of UbD was verbalized the most by the participants. The second one was a framework which

was regarded as purposeful, structured, holistic and flexible by the participants. The third one was a platform where materials were uploaded, the fourth one was an approach and the last one was a model.

The results for the second research question, *How do EFL teachers and English department heads perceive the role and benefits of UbD implementation in K-12 EFL settings?*, showed that benefits were mainly about two categories; student-related benefits and teacher-related benefits. The first main category, student-related benefits included subcategories as benefits on general student success and benefits on English language learning. Purposeful learning experiences was the most verbalized subcategory in the category of benefits on general student success. Participants associated student awareness about the unit and acquiring real life skills with purposeful learning experiences. This subcategory was followed by showing deeper understanding which was attributed to transferring, reflecting, asking questions and thinking critically. Lastly, being motivated was also verbalized as benefits on students in general. The second subcategory benefits on English language learning included using English for real world purposes which was the most verbalized benefit, meaningful learning, becoming confident speakers, active use of English and going beyond technicalities of language. The second main category, teacher-related benefits, two subcategories emerged. First one was being more organized in terms of focusing on the outcome first, focusing on student learning, clear stage planning, monitoring student success and reflecting regularly. Second one was a resource for teachers.

The results for the third research question, *What are the challenges that EFL teachers and English department heads face during the implementation of UbD?*, showed that the challenges the participants experienced was mainly related to four categories. The first category, institutional challenges included the problems such as time limitations, lack of training, expectations from admins, lack of school policy and workload. The second category, instructional challenges was mainly about the problems in terms of designing authentic

assessments, keeping track of purposeful teaching, concerns about content coverage on time, differentiation and UbD being confusing to follow. The third category, learner-related challenges included problems about students being at different English levels, behaviourally challenging students and different classroom dynamics. The fourth category, teacher-related challenges included problems such as unwillingness to change, different interpretations of UbD and inexperience with UbD.

The results for the fourth research question, *How do EFL teachers and English department heads perceive the applicability of UbD during online education?*, showed that some participants fully applied it while some were either partially or never able to apply it. Two main categories emerged in terms of applicability of UbD. The first category, advantages, included two sub categories; technology-related advantages which was related to using web 2.0 tools, regularly monitoring student learning, being able to adjust it and motivating. The second sub category was related to distant working during which participants found more time to work. The second main category, disadvantages, included four sub categories. The first one, instructional disadvantages, was related to lack of assessments, unreliable assessments and UbD not being easily adaptable. The second one, MoNE-related disadvantages, included problems caused by shortened exam times. The third one, student-related disadvantages, was related to lack of motivation and discipline. The fourth one, technology-related disadvantages, included problems caused by internet reliability.

5.2. Discussion and Conclusion

Although there are not many studies on UbD in EFL or ESL contexts, the studies conducted on UbD have similar findings as this study. In comparison with those studies, this study presents consistency and some new findings that are not comparable to any study.

Wiggins and McTighe (2005) define UbD as a 3-stage design process which helps teachers design their units or curriculum accordingly. This design process is based on designing

units backwards which requires teachers to decide on their end goals beforehand and prepare students according to those goals. This definition of UbD is consistent with the present study's results in terms of the first research question. Most participants in this study conceptualized UbD as a design process emphasizing that it was based on backward design.

Participants also conceptualized UbD as a framework which is purposeful, structured, holistic and flexible. Wiggins and McTighe (2005) also identified UbD as a framework officially. They also stated that the UbD framework is a purposeful way of thinking about curriculum planning in the sense that both teachers and students are aware where the unit is going. Anything planned according to UbD principles cannot be random and without a purpose. Moreover, UbD's 3 stage-design offers a structured and holistic way of planning which means that teachers know what comes next and what each principle in the framework represents. It is holistic because all 3 stages are connected to each other rather than being independent. Each stage follows each other with a backward design process (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005). It is flexible because it can be shaped according to students' needs. This finding is also consistent with the framework's approach to differentiation which is aiming to reach all the students with different proficiency levels at any subject. McTighe and Tomlinson (2006) stated that instructions that are differentiated according to students' needs and the UbD framework provide similar tools for the most effective learning.

Some participants identified UbD as a backward design model which enabled them to start their units with end goals in mind. Although backward design has been around for many years and UbD is based on it, it is not specific to the UbD framework. However this definition is still consistent with McTighe and Tomlinson's definition of the framework (2006). They stated that UbD is mainly a curriculum design model focusing on "what" and "how".

The participants who conceptualized UbD as an approach also defined it as designing curriculum by starting from the end goals. Although UbD is not an approach per se, the

participants' definition of it is consistent with Wiggins and McTighe's description of the framework (2005).

Some participants verbalized that UbD was a digital platform which was similar to a digital storage platform where they shared their lesson plans. This finding is not consistent with the way that the designers of the framework described it. These participants might not have understood what the UbD framework exactly was and the purpose of it. UbD is generally used with a digital platform; which is something that can be confused with the framework itself. This finding is consistent with Johson et al.'s (2017) findings on teachers' low level of understanding the principles of UbD and Yurtseven et al.'s (2013) findings on teachers' need to be supported during the design process and Uluçınar's study (2021) on teachers lacking enough pedagogical knowledge about UbD. This finding shows that institutions that are responsible for UbD users to have a full grasp of the framework so that they can apply it should revise their in-service training or their staff.

As for the second research question, the participants stated that applying UbD during their planning process helped their students' success and teachers' on many levels. This finding is consistent with the literature (Boozer, 2014; Gloria et al., 2019; Graff, 2011; Gulsvig, 2009; Kelting-Gibson, 2005; Noble, 2011; Yurtseven et al., 2013). Most of the participants emphasized that implementing UbD had a positive impact on students' general academic achievement in terms of purposeful learning experiences, which is being aware of the expectations from themselves, where the unit is headed to and connecting what is being learnt to their own lives, being able to apply their knowledge and skills into real life and being motivated. These results are consistent with Florian and Zimmerman's study (2015). Their study revealed that a curriculum designed according to UbD contributed to students' ability to compete in the global market. Their finding is consistent with this study's finding on transferring skills into real life to tackle problems and challenges. The participants in this study stated that students improved their motivation to participate in the lesson due to their awareness

of the unit and the expectations from them. Similarly, Rubrica's (2018) and Uluçınar's (2021) studies on student motivation to participate more in the lessons because they felt that it was the first time they were aware of the purpose of their projects, assignments and lessons as well as Burson's (2011) and Yurtseven et al.' (2013) studies on increased student motivation to participate, and Gül et al.'s study (2021) on meaningful experiences to make connection with their own lives. Moreover, Özyurt et al.'s (2021) study showed that UbD's essential questions enabled students to connect what they learn at school to their real life. The results for this study also revealed that students gained meaningful experiences as they connected the content they learned at school into their real lives thanks to UbD. Gloria et al.'s (2019), Johnson et al.'s (2017) and Uluçınar's (2021) studies revealed similar results in terms of developing student understandings about the content. The participants of the study also believed that students developed better understandings of deep ideas and concepts.

Most participants also expressed that students benefited from the implementation of UbD in terms of their English language skills. According to the participants, students were able to use their English language skills for real life purposes, which is a main principle that UbD dwells upon. They were also able to become confident and active speakers of English, go beyond the technicalities of the language and have meaningful learning experiences. These results are consistent with the studies that were conducted in EFL or ESL contexts. Arslan Buyruk et al., (2018) found that students were more active speakers of English when the course was designed according to UbD. Hosseini et al.'s study (2019) on EFL students' writing skills showed that UbD applied with backward design enabled students to improve their writing skills further. Bodur and Yurtseven (2021) also found that UbD-based creative drama courses had a positive impact on students' active use of English. Similarly, Bolivar and Rodriguez's study (2017) on UbD's positive effect on speaking skills indicated that students had meaningful learning experiences in terms of learning English because they were able to use their language skills in their own lives. Yurtseven and Altun's study (2017) revealed that students who were

exposed to UbD-based instruction during their English lessons performed better compared to the students who were not taught with UbD-based instruction in the English achievement test. Their study also showed that students' motivation to use English actively increased. These findings are also consistent with the UbD framework's focus on students' language development in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. Heineke and McTighe (2018) suggested that the framework was also appropriate to be utilized in classrooms where different language proficiencies were encountered because of its focus on the convey of understandings and transfer of knowledge and skills. Many participants in this study stated that implementing UbD helped students to have meaningful learning experiences and active use of English just like UbD's principles offered. Teachers designing their units with UbD with a lens on language provide language development for all students recognizing their students' different language abilities and needs (Heineke and McTighe, 2018).

The participants stated that they also benefited from UbD as teachers in terms of being more organized. UbD enabled them to focus on the outcome first, rather than starting with planning engaging activities. They were able to plan their units more clearly, monitor their students' success and reflect on their teaching regularly. In the light of these findings, it can be said that implementing UbD helped teachers improve themselves professionally. These findings are consistent with Johnson et al.'s study (2017) on being aware of the purpose of the unit that teachers planned, Graff's study (2011) on developing skills to plan curriculum, Kelting-Gibson's study (2005) on teachers setting clear purposes for their students and focusing on the outcome first, Gulsvig's (2009) on teachers designing purposeful units, and Yurtseven and Doğan's (2018) on teachers being more organized and improving themselves in curriculum design.

It can be inferred from these findings that UbD has a positive impact on students' general academic achievement, their English language abilities, their motivation to participate and teachers' professional development.

The results of the third research question provided evidence that implementing UbD can be challenging and very demanding for teachers. Some teachers said that they had difficulties while applying UbD during their unit design. Institutional challenges in terms of time limitations, lack of training, expectations from admins, lack of school policy and workload were the most verbalized difficulties. Specifically, time limitations were uttered the most by the participants. These findings concur with the findings of Anwaruddin's study (2013) which revealed that teachers in other EFL contexts also struggled with time issues while designing their units and with Uluçınar's study (2021) on intense workload and time limitations caused by their institutions. Yurtseven and Altun's study (2017) also revealed that teachers found implementing UbD in their classes time consuming as they were worried about the coverage content on time. The findings are also consistent with Uluçınar's study (2021) on inadequate school policy, inadequate professional knowledge, and Johnson et al.'s study (2017) on confusion about the term framework and support to develop teachers' professional development about UbD. Yurtseven et al.'s study (2013) also revealed certain challenges faced by the teachers during the implementation of UbD in terms of the necessity for proper training about UbD. When teachers are not trained enough about the framework, the administration should not expect them to implement UbD properly. Participants also stated that these expectations from their admins put them in a difficult position. McTighe (2016) was also aware of these challenges and touched on them. He stated that if UbD is not to be killed, then a long term professional development training should be organized rather than training teachers with one or two training sessions and expecting them to fully implement it with a full grasp of it. He expressed that admins must realize that it is a long term process and will take time.

The participants also stated that they faced some instructional challenges in terms of designing authentic assessments, keeping track of purposeful teaching, concerns about content coverage on time, differentiation and following the framework during the UbD design process. These findings are consistent with Wiggins and McTighe's concerns about coverage as

well. Wiggins and McTighe (2005) stated that a lot of teachers complained about the content they had to cover on time hence approaching UbD in a hesitant way. However, this concern teachers had should be a reason for them to be more willing to apply UbD as it is such a framework that helps teachers prioritize their main focus and improve their design for the benefit of their students. Teachers having difficulties designing authentic assessments is something that the researcher was expecting to find out through this study. Working in the field applying UbD with other teachers, the researcher observed that UbD's assessment stage was the most challenging one for the teachers to design as it was unconventional and a new way of thinking about assessments. Since they had issues designing authentic assessments, keeping track of purposeful teaching was also hard for them. The stages are all connected to each other, for this reason when a step is skipped, teachers should question themselves whether they are following their purpose of teaching or not. Having difficulties about designing differentiated lessons were also expected to be revealed from this study. The concept of differentiation can be interpreted differently by different teachers and administrators. Although differentiation is a part of UbD's design process and it is emphasized greatly, it was not a priority for the teachers. Teachers underlined that the process was confusing to follow as the framework has a lot of steps. Similarly, the teachers in Johnson et al.'s study (2017) found the framework confusing. In other words, they did not understand what the framework meant.

Many participants stated that they had some difficulties related to students in terms of different English levels of students, behaviourally challenging students and different classroom dynamics. These findings are not consistent with McTighe and Tomlinson's (2006) argument which supported that UbD and differentiation go parallel and feed each other. Indeed, UbD allows for each student to reach their potential and improve their skills as the framework focuses on each student individually. For different classroom dynamics and different levels of English, the framework can be shaped according to students' needs.

The participants claimed that they faced some challenges due to their colleagues in terms of their unwillingness to change, different interpretations of UbD among teachers and inexperience with UbD. These findings are consistent with Uluçınar's study (2021) on teachers' unwillingness to try new teaching methods and lack of adequate experience with UbD. It is very hard to make a difference in any field if some team members do not want to change and get out of their comfort zones. Different interpretations of UbD can lead to inconsistency across the school hence causing teachers to be confused about the purpose of their teaching. When there is inconsistency among the teachers and admins, it cannot be good for students, either. This means that every teacher has their own priorities about what and how to teach and this could affect student success across the years. As McTighe (2016) emphasized, teachers should be encouraged to work as a team and UbD should be owned by every member of the school to work efficiently.

As for the fourth research question, participants expressed their perspectives about applying UbD during online education. Teachers all over the world were challenged by this new notion of online teaching. It was a learning curve for teachers and administrators as well as students. Some of the participants in this study were fully able to apply it stating that it was only a framework and could be applicable in every platform. Some were partially able to apply it and stated that they did their best. However they also acknowledged that there were some steps skipped in the framework. Some were not able to apply it at all stating that it was something new and they did not have a chance to focus on it.

Participants verbalized the advantages and disadvantages applying UbD during online education, as well. As for the advantages, they stated that they benefited from technology using Web 2.0 tools and that applying UbD enabled them to monitor their students' learning regularly. They also claimed that it was advantageous because UbD was an adjustable framework and it motivated students in a very difficult period of time. Some participants also expressed that they benefited from remote-working conditions as they had more time to work.

This made the participants fully focus on UbD and designing their units in a better way. As for the disadvantages, the participants expressed the difficulties they had during online education in terms of instructional disadvantages which were lack of assessments, unreliable assessments and the framework being not easily adjustable. As the education process could not be done face-to-face, teachers were never sure of the reliability of the assessments. Since they could not see the other side of the screen, they had to assume that their students were honest and provided their teachers with the true results. For these reasons, some teachers were not even able to conduct assessments. Moreover, the framework itself was too much for some teachers. As mentioned before, online education was a learning curve for many teachers, so focusing on the UbD framework's principles was asking too much from them. Their concern was mainly about getting through the lessons ensuring students were motivated enough to attend the lessons. The framework was not their primary concern.

MoNE also caused some problems in terms of shortening the exam time for students which put teachers and students in a very difficult position. Teachers complained about the true reflection of student learning via these shortened exams. They stated that it was not fair on the students to be expected to show evidence of learning in 40 minutes. Assessments designed according to UbD should barely fit in 40 minutes unless questions with yes or no answers are presented. This was an issue for all the teachers who had to conduct the exams. This finding is consistent with Yurtseven et al.'s study (2013) on challenges teachers faced during the implementation of UbD. The teachers stated that Turkey's existing assessment system was not appropriate for this kind of design.

Due to online education and its characteristics, this period of time was not easy for students, as well. Participants stated that they had problems with lack of student motivation and participation. These might come from the fact that the Covid 19 breakout could have affected anybody in our society. Teachers were never sure why students were not very motivated and did not attend the lesson as they could have lost their parents, friends, or the

people they loved. Simply the whole situation might have been very concerning for them, that alone might be the only reason that was demotivating for them. When young people's psychology is taken into consideration, these findings are not very surprising.

Another issue teachers faced was the internet unreliability. Teachers and students had never needed the internet to be very reliable and strong, more than during the time of Covid19. Every student and teacher in the county was expected to join online lessons. However, some teachers and students had some problems with their internet including technical issues, logging in problems or they had problems simply because they were not very good with technology. This caused a problem for the continuum of the lessons.

In conclusion, the study is coinciding with relevant literature on some levels. However, some of the findings are unique as, to the best of my knowledge, there has not been a study conducted on UbD during online education. For this reason, the present is significant as it shed light on the conceptualization, benefits, challenges of UbD from teachers' and department heads' perspective as well as its application during online education which had never been explored before.

5.3. Implications

In the light of this study's results, many implications about the implementation of UbD can be made. Although many participants were successful in defining UbD in their own terms, there were enough participants that did not know what exactly UbD was about and could not describe it as it was outlined by its creators. This issue indicates that schools must provide more in-service training about UbD and teachers should improve their professional knowledge about something that they are required to implement properly.

Both schools and teachers should acknowledge that the design process required by UbD can be challenging for many teachers. For this reason, administrators should ensure that they provide their staff with sufficient training sessions about UbD across the year rather than one-

time training. Teachers should not be pressured into covering their content on time so that they can prioritize their student learning. School administrators should accept the fact that the UbD process can take a long time and they should develop a plan for the whole academic year.

Different interpretations of UbD among teachers should also be taken into consideration. Schools should have purposes that can be verbalized by each member of the team. To avoid different interpretations and applications, administrators should provide their staff with adequate professional development sessions about UbD. Even more importantly, there should be regular follow up to see how teachers' understandings of UbD differ. Some teachers may simply emphasize some elements of UbD more than others while some may have such differing takeaways from trainings that they need to be bridged.

School administrators should help teachers realize that UbD is needed in order to bring about a positive change in the curriculum design process. They should have their teachers recognize this need and internalize it, which will help them to own UbD. If UbD is forced upon teachers, it might cause teachers to continue to teach in their traditional way and not be able to see the need for this change. In spite of all the opportunities for teachers to improve themselves and be a team member, if teachers are still unwilling to change and make a difference, then schools should revise their hiring process and improve the quality of teaching and learning processes.

The demographic data of the study indicated that there were many teachers who had not graduated from the English Language or English Language Teaching related BA programs of universities. This might cause insufficient professional knowledge about the field and it is something that school administrators should consider. If this is the case, then it is the schools' responsibility to train their staff about the fundamentals of teaching. In-service training about their staff's inadequate professional knowledge should be provided regularly for these teachers.

The findings of the study indicated that the big majority of the teachers and all of the department heads were aware of the main purpose of UbD which was the importance of

understanding and transfer of skills. Most teachers found curricula designed according to UbD beneficial in terms of student achievement and teachers' professional development as well as its challenges. The findings are important in the sense that using a framework during designing a course or a unit is helpful in terms of teachers designing their units or curricula purposefully.

The findings of the study also revealed that UbD is applicable in all grades across K-12 levels. These findings should help other schools who consider to utilize UbD as they provide detailed insights from active users of UbD. Knowing the challenges and their solutions might be helpful for schools to take precautions and plan their professional development plans accordingly.

According to the findings of the study, it can be stated that UbD fills a really important gap in terms of planning units and curriculum. Schools should invest in UbD on a greater scale so that their students are equipped with the skills they will need to persevere with the challenges of real life.

5.4. Limitations and Recommendation for Further Research

The findings of the study are valuable in the sense that there is a very limited number of studies on the implementation of the UbD framework in a Turkish EFL context. It brings light upon authentic implementation of the framework through participants' voices. However the study has some limitations, as well. Since the number of schools in Turkey where UbD was officially implemented was very limited, the study was conducted with a limited number of participants, especially in terms of department heads. For further research on the topic, the study can be conducted with more participants from teachers and department heads. Moreover, the focus group interviews could only be conducted with teachers due to the tight schedule of heads of departments.

Covid19 break out also affected the study. Due to the global pandemic, lessons in Turkey were conducted through distance education for a long time. For this reason, face-to-

face classroom observation could not be conducted to draw upon teachers' interactions with students based on the UbD framework. For further research, classroom observations and interviews with students can be implemented to explore the student aspect of the design process, as well.

The present study only focused on Turkish EFL context, however UbD is not specific to English, it can be used in any other subject. A broader study on the implementation of UbD in different subjects can be conducted. Moreover, this study only explored teachers and department heads' perspectives about UbD, therefore the benefits on the student achievement are perceived benefits. There is a need for experimental studies with students to investigate if UbD process does actually have benefits on students' academic achievement and English language skills. Interviewing with students can also bring light upon real benefits of UbD. A study with school administrators to explore their insight about implementing UbD at their schools across all levels and subjects can also be conducted.

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7. APPENDICES

Appendix A: The UbD Framework

Stage 1 – Desired Results	
Established Goals:	
Enduring Understandings: <i>Students will understand that...</i>	Essential Questions:
<i>Students will know... (Knowledge)</i>	<i>Students will be able to... (Skills)</i>

Stage 2 – Assessment Evidence	
Performance tasks: - Through what authentic performance tasks will students demonstrate the desired understandings? - By what criteria will performances of understanding be judged?	Other evidence: - Through what other evidence (e.g. quizzes, tests, academic prompts, observations, homework, journals.) will students demonstrate achievement of the desired results? - How will students reflect upon and self-asses their learning?

Stage 3 – Learning Plan
Learning Activities: What learning experiences and instruction will enable students to achieve the desired results? How will the design... W = help the students know where the unit is going and what is expected? Help the teacher know where the students are coming from (prior knowledge)? H = Hook all the students and hold their interest? E = Equip students, help them experience key ideas and explore the issues? R = Provide opportunities to rethink and revise their understanding and work? E = Allow students to evaluate their work and its implications? T = Be tailored (personalized) to the different needs, interests and abilities of learners? O = Be organized to maximize initial and sustained engagement as well as effective learning?

Appendix B: G.R.A.S.P.S Task Design Prompts

Goal

- Your task is _____.
- The goal is to _____.
- The problem or challenge is _____.
- The obstacles to overcome are _____.

Role

- You are _____.
- You have been asked to _____.
- Your job is _____.

Audience

- Your clients are _____.
- The target audience is _____.
- You need to convince _____.

Situation

- The context you find yourself in is _____.
- The challenge involves dealing with _____.

Product, Performance, and Purpose

- You will create a _____
in order to _____.
- You need to develop _____
so that _____.

Standards and Criteria for Success

- Your performance needs to _____.
- Your work will be judged by _____.
- Your product must meet the following standards _____.

Appendix C: Sample UbD Unit

Subject: ENGLISH	Theme: My Family and Friends
Grade: 2	Unit Duration: 5 WEEKS
Stage 1 – Desired Results	
Established goals: Cambridge English 2nd language Standards ● Reading ○ Understand the main points of short, simple texts on a limited range of general and curricular topics. ○ Understand, with support, some specific information and detail in short, simple texts on a limited range of general and curricular topics. ● Speaking ○ Use basic vocabulary for an increasing range of general and curricular topics. ○ Provide basic information about themselves at sentence level on a limited range of general and curricular topics. ● Writing ○ Use upper- and lower-case letters accurately when writing names, places and short sentences when writing independently.	

Enduring Understandings: <i>Students will understand that...</i> ● All families and friendships are different and special. ● Being different is okay. ● We all have responsibilities because we are all a part of something bigger.	Essential Questions: ● What is a family? ● What is friendship? ● What makes a good friend? ● What are responsibilities? ● Why do we have responsibilities? ● Are all families and friendships the same? ● How are families and friendships different?
<i>Students will know...</i> (Knowledge) ● responsibilities at home ● rooms in a house ● family members ● story elements; title, characters, setting, problem, solution	<i>Students will be able to...</i> (Skills) ● use upper and lower case letters properly ● write basic sentences about family members ● identify the rooms in a house ● identify responsibilities at home ● write about their friend

Stage 2. Assessment Evidence	
Performance tasks: - Students will imagine that they are going to have a differently-abled sibling. Students will write a letter/prepare a poster to their sibling that shows that their sibling is welcomed to their family. The letter is expected to contain the taught vocabulary of family members, rooms in a house and understandings of the unit. The task will be prepared according to G.R.A.S.P.S - The task will be evaluated by the rubric prepared according to the desired results.	Other evidence: - Students will be tested through observation, comprehension questions and vocabulary quizzes throughout the unit. - At the end of the unit, students will be completing a unit feedback sheet explaining what was the most interesting thing they've learned throughout the unit. They will also be completing a self-assessment sheet.

Stage 3. Learning Activities

- Ask students if any of the families in the pictures are the same as theirs. Ask, 'Is this like your family?' Have students think about the components of each family and find similarities and differences. Point out that all families have things that are the same and things that are different, and that every family is special **(H), (Bilsborough, 2018)**
- Introduce the essential questions by showing the pictures of different families. Talk about the performance task they are expected to present at the end of the unit and show an example of it. **(W)**
- Introduce the necessary vocabulary items (family members) by showing a picture of your family. Have students draw their family members and present it in pairs. Make sure the structures they are expected to use are up on the board for them to look when necessary. **(E1)**
- Brainstorm about responsibilities. Write responsibility on the board in a cloud and elicit answers. Discuss examples of responsibilities and how different people contribute to society by being responsible.
 - Parents provide a safe home, food, love
 - Teachers teach critical skills you need when you grow up
 - Children keep themselves clean, do their best in school, help around the house
 - Our school principal keeps us safe in our school.

Discuss: What would happen if people did not have responsibilities. What if they did not think about the consequences of their actions? (e.g. your parents did not feel like working anymore; the garbage men stopped picking up the trash; policemen did not care about keeping

people safe; you do not bother to study in school or brush your teeth or feed the dog) **(E1)**

- Have students play a flyswatter game about responsibilities **(E1)**
- Introduce different homes and parts of the house. Play a song about homes and have students talk about their own homes. **(E1)**
- Have students complete a worksheet to assess their knowledge of parts of the house. **(E1)**
- Introduce the topic of friendship. On the board, draw yourself as a stick person. Ask, ‘Who’s this?’ Elicit an answer. (It’s you!). Then draw another stick person next to you. Ask, ‘Who’s this?’ Elicit an answer. (Your best friend) **(E1)**
- Start a classroom discussion about what makes a good friend. Write the following question on the board: What makes a good friend? e.g. A good friend is kind to you. Have students write the question in their notebooks. **(E1)**
- Have students explore the concept with the book “Stick and Stone” and discuss the kind of relationship they witness in the book. Have students talk about their relationships with their own friends. **(E1, R)**
- Revise story elements based on the book they have read. Have students complete the story elements independently. **(E1)**
- Have students complete the friendship survey and evaluate themselves according to the results. **(E2)**
- Have students draw and write about their best friend. They share their work with their friend for peer assessment and edit their work based on feedback. **(E2)**
- At the end of the unit, students prepare a poster as a performance task to welcome their differently-abled sibling to their family. Some students who need to be challenged can write a letter to their sibling. Students exchange their work

for peer assessment and make necessary changes based on feedback. Then students present their poster/letter with a walk-and-talk activity. **(E2, T)**

Note. taken from Bilsborough, 2018



Appendix D: Questionnaire For Teachers

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF *UNDERSTANDING BY DESIGN* (UbD) MODEL IN UNIT DESIGN IN TURKISH EFL CONTEXT

Dear Participant,

The study that you will participate in is for a thesis titled *English Language Teachers' Perspectives on the Implementation of Understanding by Design (UbD) Model in Unit Design in Turkish EFL Context* conducted by Gülşah Çelikman Hanratty. This survey was created for the purpose of exploring the perspectives of EFL teachers implementing Understanding by Design unit design template in their unit plans in private schools. The study aims to provide insights from the teachers and managers who are working with the UbD unit design template on a daily basis. The study is conducted with the permission of The Turkish Ministry of National Education and participating school administrations. Participating in the study is completely voluntary. The responses you give will only be used for the purpose of the study. They will also be kept confidential and will not be shared with any third parties.

Your contribution to the study and honest responses to the questions would be greatly valued and appreciated. Completing this survey should take approximately 15 - 20 minutes. The participants will be contacted later for further online interviews if necessary. After the study is completed, you may call or email me to find out the results.

Below you can find my contact information should you have any questions.

Thank you for your contribution.

Gülşah Çelikman Hanratty

• Email address:

• I have read and understood the conditions of participating in this study. I am voluntarily participating in this study and I accept that the answers I give may be used for scientific purposes.

☐ Yes☐ No**I. Demographics**

1. Gender:

2. Education:

Bachelor's Degree

The university you graduated from: _____
The program you graduated from: _____
Year of graduation: _____

Master's Degree

The university you graduated from: _____
The program you graduated from: _____
Year of graduation: _____

Doctorate

The university you graduated from: _____
The program you graduated from: _____
Year of graduation: _____

Other (certificate programs, etc.):

The institution you graduated from: _____
Year of graduation: _____

3. Total years of teaching experience since graduation:

4. Do you have a teaching certificate?

- ☐ I have a teaching certificate from Turkish Ministry of Education
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I don't have a teaching certificate

5. What grade level(s) you teach at the moment:

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| ☐ Pre-K | ☐ 3 rd | ☐ 7 th | ☐ 11 th |
| ☐ K | ☐ 4 th | ☐ 8 th | ☐ 12 th |
| ☐ 1 st | ☐ 5 th | ☐ 9 th | |
| ☐ 2 nd | ☐ 6 th | ☐ 10 th | |

6. The grades you've taught before:

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| ☐ Pre-K | ☐ 3 rd | ☐ 7 th | ☐ 11 th |
| ☐ K | ☐ 4 th | ☐ 8 th | ☐ 12 th |
| ☐ 1 st | ☐ 5 th | ☐ 9 th | |
| ☐ 2 nd | ☐ 6 th | ☐ 10 th | |

7. How long have you been teaching in your current school?

8. Have you had any training on unit design?

(If yes, when and where was it held and who delivered it?)

9. How long have you been familiar with UbD?

II. Please answer the questions below.

1. How would you define UbD?

2. What is the role of UbD in unit design?

3. To what extent and at which grade level(s) do you think UbD principles can be applied in your current school context? (You may wish to specify differences between grade levels.)

4. How does UbD compare to other designs / templates you have worked with before?

5. What are the benefits of implementing UbD?

6. What are the challenges that you face during the implementation of UbD?

(Please explain if there are any factors that prevent you from implementing it fully.)

7. How do you think UbD improves your students' English language skills?

8. How do you think UbD affects your students' success in general?

9. To what extent have you been able to apply UbD during online education?

(Please explain the advantages and disadvantages.)

Appendix E: Questionnaire For Department Heads

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNDERSTANDING BY DESIGN (UbD) MODEL IN UNIT DESIGN IN TURKISH EFL CONTEXT

Dear Participant,

The study that you will participate in is for a thesis titled English Language Teachers' Perspectives On The Implementation Of Understanding By Design (UbD) Model In Unit Design In Turkish EFL Context conducted by Gülşah Çelikman Hanratty. This survey was created for the purpose of exploring the perspectives of EFL teachers implementing Understanding by Design unit design template in their unit plans in private schools. The study aims to provide insights from the teachers and managers who are working with the UbD unit design template on a daily basis. The study is conducted with the permission of The Turkish Ministry of National Education and participating school administrations. Participating in the study is completely voluntary. The responses you give will only be used for the purpose of the study. They will also be kept confidential and will not be shared with any third parties.

Your contribution to the study and honest responses to the questions would be greatly valued and appreciated. Completing this survey should take approximately 15 - 20 minutes. The participants will be contacted later for further online interviews if necessary. After the study is completed, you may call or email me to find out the results.

Below you can find my contact information should you have any questions.

Thank you for your contribution.

Gülşah Çelikman Hanratty

· Email address:

· I have read and understood the conditions of participating in this study. I am voluntarily participating in this study and I accept that the answers I give may be used for scientific purposes.

☐ Yes

☐ No

I. Demographics

1. Gender:

2. Education:

Bachelor's Degree

The university you graduated from: _____
The program you graduated from: _____
Year of graduation: _____

Master's Degree

The university you graduated from: _____
The program you graduated from: _____
Year of graduation: _____

Doctorate

The university you graduated from: _____
The program you graduated from: _____
Year of graduation: _____

Other (certificate programs, etc.):

The institution you graduated from: _____
Year of graduation: _____

3. Total years of teaching experience since graduation:

4. Total years of management experience in your current school:

5. Do you have a teaching certificate?

☐ I have a teaching certificate from Turkish Ministry of Education

☐ Other

☐ I don't have a teaching certificate

6. Are you currently teaching in your school?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐

6.1. How long have you been teaching in your current school?

6.2. What grade level(s) you teach at the moment:

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| ☐ Pre-K | ☐ 3 rd | ☐ 7 th | ☐ 11 th |
| ☐ K | ☐ 4 th | ☐ 8 th | ☐ 12 th |
| ☐ 1 st | ☐ 5 th | ☐ 9 th | |
| ☐ 2 nd | ☐ 6 th | ☐ 10 th | |

7. The grades you've taught before:

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| ☐ Pre-K | ☐ 3 rd | ☐ 7 th | ☐ 11 th |
| ☐ K | ☐ 4 th | ☐ 8 th | ☐ 12 th |
| ☐ 1 st | ☐ 5 th | ☐ 9 th | |
| ☐ 2 nd | ☐ 6 th | ☐ 10 th | |

8. Have you had any training on unit design?

(If yes, when and where was it held and who delivered it?)

II. Please answer the questions below.

- Does your school provide teachers with any training on UbD? (If yes, please explain the process.)

2. How does UbD compare to other designs / templates?

3. What is the purpose of implementing UbD in your school?

4. To what extent and at which grade level(s) do you think UbD principles can be applied in your current school context? (You may wish to specify differences between grade levels.)

5. What are the benefits of implementing UbD?

6. What are the challenges that you face during the implementation of UbD?

(Please explain if there are any factors that prevents you from implementing it fully.)

7. Do you get feedback from the teachers on their implementation of UbD?

☐ Yes

7.1. What kind of feedback do you get?

7.2. What steps (if any) do you take when you receive such feedback?

☐ No

8. To what extent do you think teachers who are under your supervision are successful in implementation of UbD? (Please explain in detail.)

9. Do you have a method of monitoring and/or ensuring that teachers apply UbD?

(Please explain in detail.)

10. Do you think UbD is applicable in online education? (Please explain in detail.)

11. Have you had any feedback on applying UbD during online education?

☐ Yes

11.1. What kind of feedback have you had specific to online education?

11.2. What steps (if any) have you taken when you received such feedback?

☐ No

12. How do you think UbD affects students' success in general?

