

Teacher Factor in Foreign Language Education Process Le Facteur d'Enseignant dans le Processus d'Apprentissage de Langue Étrangère

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Abstract: When examined carefully the existing problems in the foreign language teaching, it is seen that teacher factor has been in the first order. On browsed to formation of the teachers working in the schools of Turkish Minister of Education and in private ones, the graduated schools of these teachers are very different from each other. In addition to this, out-of branch teachers trying to make the foreign language courses make the situation more desperate. Moreover, these teachers learning the experience as lecturer in the classrooms by method of trial and error not only affect negatively the language acquisition of the students but also decrease their interest on a new language. These facts have been a meaningful reference to many questions to be replied in the foreign language education. Recently, the problems in this field and not to teach enough the four language skills to the students make experts incline on searching new education methods. The researches pointing to the role of teachers which have been done recently in Turkey in the process of effective foreign language teaching emphasis the out-of date of the teachers' teaching methods and the deficiencies of teachers in terms of linguistic and pedagogic. Moving from the publications related to this study, in the process of effective foreign language teaching, many advices related to modern language teachers' duties have been given.

Key words: Effective Language Teacher, Teacher Inefficiencies, Foreign Language Education, Teacher Duties.

Résumé : On voit que le facteur d'enseignant est dans le premier ordre si l'on recherche attentivement les problèmes existants dans l'apprentissage de langue étrangère. Lorsqu'on regarde la formation des enseignants qui travaillent dans les écoles publiques et privées dans le cadre de Ministère de l'Éducation en Turquie, les facultés diplômées par ces enseignants sont très différentes de l'un et l'autre. De plus, on fait le processus d'enseignement plus désespéré par les enseignants parascolaires qui s'efforcent de faire les cours aux élèves. En outre, ces enseignants apprenant la profession dans la classe par la méthode d'essais et erreurs non seulement affectent négativement l'acquisition de langue des élèves mais aussi diminuent leur intérêt à une nouvelle langue. Ces faits sont les références significatives aux plusieurs questions à répondre dans l'apprentissage de langue étrangère. Récemment, les problèmes dans ce domaine et ne pas assez enseigner aux élèves les quatre compétences de langue font les experts incliner sur la recherche des nouvelles méthodes éducatives. Les recherches que l'on fait récemment en Turquie dans le processus d'apprentissage de langue étrangère mettant l'accent sur le rôle des enseignants tirent l'attention aux méthodes obsolètes et aux carences des enseignants sous l'angle de linguistique et pédagogique. En mouvement des publications liées à cette étude, on donne les conseils concernés aux devoirs des enseignants des langues.

Les mots clés: Efficaces Enseignant de Langue, Inefficacités des Enseignants, Apprentissage de Langue Étrangère, Devoirs d'Enseignant.

Introduction

It has long been one of the scientific issues by researchers why not to teach a foreign language completely in the educational institutions in Turkey. Therefore, it needs to investigate the sources of the problems in foreign language education. According to Yiğiter (1988), there have been three factor affecting foreign language education; “*teacher*”, “*student*” and “*method*”. These problems in foreign language education result mostly from these three factors. According to Demirel (1990), the subheadings stated by researchers in foreign language education are like below; traditional education is based on teaching grammar rules, not to renewal of teaching programs, differences in practice, method problems in practice. So far, what has been the contribution of the current methodologies in practice to the foreign language teaching in our country? It is obvious to everyone that the application of these methods could not have an efficient outcome.

Though the methods applied by teachers have a great importance, the founders of these methods could not introduce them according to our criterion and circumstance. Then, methods must be questioned in this context.

Throughout the learning life of a student, that is only foreign language skill that might just work rather than the all subjects in curricula. Education in our schools including mathematic is based on theory. In this way, the only skill is of foreign language. But unfortunately so many years of education is too far to bring in this skill to the students. Any student takes foreign language courses 8 years in Elementary School, 3 years in High School, and 4 years in University totally 15 years of foreign language courses. Why he/she could not succeed in foreign language completely? The students take foreign language courses between 80-100 hours in Anatolian High Schools and in private colleges. But, the majority of them could not be successful in practice. In that case, looking at the teacher side in the educational process between teacher and student is needed.

Foreign Language Education From Past to Present in Turkey

When evaluated the current situation of foreign language education in Turkey since the declaration of Republican era, the first and most important step in the Republican period is the occurrence of the Unification of Education (Teaching of the Consolidation) Act, No. 430 dated March 3, 1924.

Taught for a long time as foreign languages in the educational institutions of the Ottoman Empire Arabic and Persian in this period were revoked and instead of them western languages; German, French and English were taken in schools' curricula.

After the declaration of Republic our country has given more importance to the foreign language education for not to stay away from the rapid advances in technology over the world. And it can be said that in this issue Turkey has reached a more willing level. Hence, western languages (German, French and English) have been taught compulsory in the schools. But the deficiencies of methods and backgrounds practiced in public schools make inefficient foreign language education. It does not seem possible to teach a foreign language in such an environment and so it could not be trained qualified foreign language teachers. This deficiency is resulted in one another and the chain is going on so. Moreover, the state could not attract the qualified language teachers with its inefficient opportunities (Göktürk, 1983).

In later years, new schools under the name of Anatolian high schools based on foreign language education in their curricula were opened. According to 1974-75 school years, the high number of high schools based on foreign language education in their curricula has increased twelve and this figure has reached in 103 Anatolian high schools totally to 40.715 students and 2845 teachers in 1986-87 school years (MEGSB 1986).

The Current Situation of Foreign Language Teaching in Turkey, Teachers and Problems

Foreign language education in Turkey is basically dealt with elementary schools, yet in public high schools foreign language lessons are only given in the first grade. For this reason, the problematic situation in elementary schools is the point at issue in this study. And we handled with this problem as a main concern.

Before the application of stepped rate system in general education put into practice in 1988-89, foreign language had being taught in secondary schools and high schools totally six years, that is to say, at least three hours per week. But it was not possible for the graduated students to speak three to five words. Then, stepped rate system was in practice and foreign language was not compulsory from then on in those schools. However, the stepped rate system was removed after one year and then English has been a compulsory lesson in the school curricula. But this lesson was removed from the curricula of second and third grade of high schools. Today, foreign language lesson starts firstly in the fourth grade of primary schools. But it is not possible for the students to speak effectively foreign language.

One of the serious problems experienced in foreign language education is the lack of qualified teachers. Language teacher should consider the educational aspect of foreign language (knowing the culture of the country whose language is learnt, interacting with the people whose language is learnt, orienting the students to the main aim). Teachers have two tasks in foreign language education process. Thus, they should be a linguist and must integrate this skill with pedagogic skills. In our schools “*grammar*” that is to say, “*about language*” is given to students. And the students think that the main purpose is so. However, it is considered that one person has learned the foreign language if he/she succeed in understanding and using the sentences that he/she heart (Songün, 1983).

One of the most important functions of education is to discover and to cultivate the existing capacity of the student (Hoşgörür & Taştan, 2009). The teachers in traditional education process do not include the students actively to the process and they apply the teacher-centered methods in their application. So, they do not need to update themselves. Today, it has been tried to apply the constructivist approach in all field of education including language education but it is too difficult to apply new methods and techniques with the teachers having no language skills and being inefficient in terms of pedagogy (Kömür, 2007). In Turkey’s conditions one or more primary school teachers in some schools in small towns or villages have been forced to practice all the lessons. The out-of branch teachers have been practicing the foreign language lessons and most of them are primary school teachers (Ünal, 2007). It is required to the out-of branch teacher to develop themselves in this field and to participate in in-service training programs.

Foreign language lessons are generally practiced by out-of branch teachers (Primary school teachers) in Primary schools. In Europe, these lessons are practiced by these types of teachers too. Only in seven countries (Czech Republic, Greece, Spain, Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania) these lessons are practiced only by branch teachers. In Germany, the semi-specialists are relinquishing by and by their position to the primary school teachers (Eurydice, 2005). In Turkey, foreign language lessons were being practiced by the out-of branch teachers in Primary schools. The system based on practicing all the lessons by the primary school teachers in the first five years of primary schools was removed in 2006. Ministry of Education has agreed with the branch teachers’ practicing, instead of Primary school teachers, the branch lessons in fourth and fifth grade in Primary schools (MEB Notification of Ministry Magazine, 2005).

Until today, graduated schools of teachers have been very different from each other. The sources of foreign language teachers pointed before 1982 are like below (Demircan, 1988);

- Those studying a type of X, Y, Z language courses after graduated from different departments,
- Those graduated from institutions of education as open-university,
- Those graduated from institutions of education as Higher Education Summer School in common,
- Those graduated from accelerated institutions of education (1 or 2 months instead of 1 year, 1978-80),
- Those succeeded in the exam of assistant teacher organized sometimes by Ministry of Education.

Like seen above, it does not seem possible to consider the schools, which these types of teachers have graduated, are the institutions which educate people in terms of foreign language. These types of teachers

graduated from any kind of schools out-of faculty of education practice the language courses with the method of “*we have learnt like that*”. Especially, the teachers having no professional knowledge and working in many schools have been trying to learn their job with the method of trial and error. Though Ministry of Education has been trying to carry on this situation thanks to in-service education courses for teachers, the products cultivated by the teachers are evident. The students not understanding what is said, having no words for speaking, not expressing his/her feelings and thoughts. The findings of Enginarlar (2003) related to the language teachers in Turkey working in many different schools has a great importance. According to him, many language teachers throughout their primary and secondary schools’ lives;

- Have never taken any foreign language courses by native teachers
- Have never gone to the target country whose language has been learnt
- Have not used foreign language out of classes because of no opportunity and communication needs.
- Have never watched any foreign movies without subtitle.
- Have never used to read permanently any magazine or newspaper in foreign language
- Have generally used their mother tongue(Turkish) as a teaching tool

When examined the teaching process, classroom practices and the measurement and evaluation of the teachers, it is seen the main reason of the problem. Either the teachers do not know modern language teaching methods and techniques or they do not use them in classroom even if they know them. For this reason, it results in coming into being the faulty students. Demirel (1990) explains ten tasks for the language teachers;

1. Developing four language skills
2. Planning teaching activities in advance
3. Teaching from the simple to the complex and from concrete to abstract
4. Using Audio-visual tools
5. Using mother tongue if it is needed
6. Presenting only one sentence pattern at a time
7. Trying transferring the data to daily life
8. Trying integrating the students actively to the lesson
9. Paying attention to the individual differences
10. Motivating and encourage the students

These principles should be adapted to the age and readiness level of the students and the students should be faced with orally and writing of target language. However, on browsed the classroom activities, homework and the exams, it is seen that all activities are full of grammar. The teacher generally focusing on grammar in all activities gives this message unconsciously to the students: “*The student who knows the grammar learns language.*” This thought creates this equation in minds of teachers and students; learning foreign language means learning grammar rules. This is very inaccurate and incomplete information because language is learnt with its all skills. Besides, speaking fluently a foreign language does not mean knowing its grammar rules. Especially, it has not any great importance knowing all grammatical rules for a child in language learning process (Ellis, 1990). These rules only take advantage to the adults in language learning process.

By a Hungarian researcher Nikolov (2001), in her study based to the unsuccessful students, it is stated that the teachers’ classroom activities has been the failure reason of the students. In another study related to Israeli students Arabic learning success, the quality of teaching program is the most affecting factor to the success of students (Donitsa, 2004).

Like in all field of life, the reasons resulted in being unsuccessful of students in language learning process; ones arising from the student, ones arising from the environment and ones arising from the teacher. Primarily, high motivation of the person will increase the chance of success (Dörnyei, 2005).

The attitudes and behaviors of foreign language teacher being willing to teach in the classroom has a great importance affecting the motivation of students. It is unavoidable for a teacher coming to the class with a down faced, tired and reluctant to find the teaching environment as if it were his/her self reflection. This situation results in communicate fear in the students. According to a study related to the communicate fear of student, approximately 35% of students said that they could not dare to speak in the classroom because of

teachers' down faced and temper (Ergin, 2005). Foreign language education should considerably be based on communication and the students should learn foreign language in an environment having no communication fear. Here, the primary task is up to the foreign language teachers.

How to be an Effective Teacher?

It is not an easy concept to describe the term of "*effective teacher*" because the term "*effective*" can be interpreted differently by different people. Depending on the criterion used to judge effectiveness, an "*effective teacher*" can mean a teacher who always produces a class of high-achievers, or a teacher who generally receives positive evaluations from supervisors and administrators (Stronge, 2002). However, if the focus is on the teaching process and not on the end result, then it is possible to define an effective teacher as a person who "provides information to students in a way that is clear, understandable, and motivating" (Benson et. al., 2001). In another study, Young and Shaw (1999) found that teacher effectiveness is linked with qualities such as "effective communication, a comfortable learning atmosphere, concern for student learning, student motivation, and course organization." Whereby; the quality which distinguishes ineffective teachers from the effective ones is the latter's ability to make the most boring course interesting and important to the students. According to Clark & Walsh (2002), some of the common features which described the qualities of effective teachers like these; Strong discipline content knowledge, Pedagogical skills appropriate to the environment and discipline, Personal knowledge which included: the ability to forge strong relationship with the students, a concern for individual students and a firm moral code, Intimate knowledge of the context in which they were teaching.

Research on teacher effectiveness in Turkey has shown that there are a number of qualities attached to an effective foreign language teacher (Demirel, 1990; Saraç-Süzer, 2007) among which having personal strategies to teach, creating a positive classroom atmosphere, to be able to a model teacher, being knowledgeable on target cultures, possessing positive personal characteristics, having correct pronunciation of the English sounds, teaching with effective classroom materials and using technology are the most common. Taşkafa (1989) found that giving positive reinforcement and being friendly were the most desirable qualities that were expected from a teacher. Similarly, Telli, den Brok, and Çakıroğlu (2008) found that students gave much importance to the quality of positive teacher-student interaction although other characteristics (such as subject-matter knowledge) were mentioned at lesser degrees.

According to Alkan (1984), a teacher should be in accordance with specifications as follows:

"A teacher should determine in what extent successful his/her each student, should help each student to understand how he/she has reached this success, should know what kind of support he/she will provide for each student for reaching to the top, should encourage each student to learn more and should help them to take much more responsibility for their wellness".

According to a research practiced by Prodromou in 1991 over 40 students by the aim of determining how a teacher students desire, these results revealed;

A desired language teacher is a person who is proud of his/her students, behaves friendly, explains everything, makes students take notes, knows how to behave the students sitting on the desk, behaves as if he/she were a student, asks their opinions, has lots of experiences, speaks of individual problems, has a moderate personality, pays attentions to unsuccessful students, knows about physiology, believes and trust in students, communicate with students (Prodromou, 1991).

Conclusion and Suggestions

The teachers should be a qualified instructor using new educational approaches, being update to the era and being aware of their tasks for to make more effective the foreign language education in Turkey. It will be possible for them to have these skills and to function in a good way only if the problems faced by them in the process are removed. The first step is to determine the problems in detail.

The reasons of not attaining to the desired level in foreign language education are the lack of teacher posts, out-of branch teachers and the other professional groups practicing language courses in the schools and the language teachers themselves using out-of date language teaching methods and techniques. Instead of out-of branch teachers taking only 2 hours of language courses in university or high school, it is possible for the students studying in the foreign language departments to teach foreign language only by taking the second foreign language as an auxiliary field and by taking methodology courses. Thus, it can be reached to the measure of professional formation in some extent.

The teachers should practice their profession by adopting positive and negative aspects of their profession not because of its obligation. A teacher should have knowledge, skills and attitudes required in his/her profession. The teachers should update and renewal themselves and integrate technological developments to the class. An effective teacher in the same time should be aware of his profession without compromising from his national and moral values. And he/she could not forget that next generation has been commended to them. Finally, with words of Mevlana, “A teacher must be a person whose one foot is on his national root, the other one is that is turning like a compasses across the world, that is to say, a person who modernizes without alienating, a person who reaches to the era without breaking off from his root”.

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