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The State of EFL Teacher Education in Turkey: From Past to Present

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Abstract

Being a time-consuming practice, EFL teacher education is a prominent issue to be considered while making long-term policies. In such a globalized setting with such a fast-growing technology, this issue is currently perceived to be more than a requirement as a result of the power of English as a global language. As a result, the necessity of a prosperous EFL teacher education depends heavily on a meritorious program. While we see a number of adequate developments in the history of EFL teacher education in Turkey, these developments seem to be insufficient. In a world where EFL continuously promotes significance, nearly every country tries to power up their EFL teachers− based on both their short and long-term needs. Therefore, within this study, the state of EFL teacher education in Turkey is examined in a chronological order. To achieve this, document analysis technique was employed through investigating the existing records and documents. Conclusions and pedagogical implications of the findings are discussed in the study.

Keywords: EFL teacher education, policy, English as a global language, EFL teachers, history of EFL teacher education, language education programs

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Introduction

The universal spread of English language has been the most brilliant instance of language expansion ever as verified by its formal and informal ranking in several countries (De Swaan, 2013; Edwards, 2009; Kaplan &Baldauf, 1997; Phillipson, 1996; Portes&Rumbaut, 2006; Wardhaugh, 1987; Wierzbicka, 2006).English is presently the most promoted foreign language of broader communication across continents while thenumber of its speakers is frenetically boosting to twenty percent of the overall population of the world (Crystal, 2004). The tremendous spread of English language began with the colonization of African and Asian nations by the British Empire, taken after by the American rule. Indeed, just after getting their autonomy, the ex-colonies continued to use English as their second or official language in order to attain the benefit it gives to people, specifically to the ruling class, as well as to their newly founded countries in the global market(De Swaan, 2013; Edwards, 2009; Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Phillipson, 1996; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Wardhaugh, 1987; Wierzbicka, 2006).After the initial spread of English, by means of the development of the British Commonwealth, it was the growth of America that facilitated thisincident in its second stage. Due to sociopolitical and economic developments, English language started to proliferate in even the non-colonised countries following the World War II through careful planning. Then, it progressively succeeded French as the language of universal diplomacy by emerging as the lingua franca of business, media, science, and technology, etc. As a result, with the aim of providing interconnection in such fields, English language was incorporated into education systems all around the world, even in such formally monolingual lands as the Middle East, Far East, and several European countries. The formal foreign language education based on scientific learning theories emerged during and after the World War II with fundamental changes in the pedagogy of language education and was followed by some other developments in 70s and 80s (Cooper, 1989; Yule, 2016).

In order to sustain the required level in the global markets, as well as to catch the level of universal standards in cultural, political, scientific technological fields, Turkey shared a big budget for language education and tried to adapt itself to both European Union and global education standards (Toklu, 2007). Following all these attempts, foreign language teacher education programs were established and tried to be improved for national requirements. In order to balance the foreign language teacher education standards, policy makers asked education faculties to update foreign language departments for adapting to global scales (Coşkun, 2009). The governments in Turkey have recently had great expectations from

foreign language teachers in that there is a rush for English language making it both a national and international market. The policy in Turkey demands foreign language teachers to be equipped with professional qualifications (Aydoğan & Çilsal, 2007; Karakas, 2012). An English language teacher should be a good model for learners in the use of English language. Once being a student, a language teacher should also estimate the problems a student faces while learning English. Besides, it is a requirement for an English language teacher to own the required language skills and knowledge on such aspects as linguistics, phonetics, grammar use, and vocabulary, as well as the related pedagogy or methodology (Brosh, 1996; Kuyumcu, 2003). As a consequence of national requirements caused by international demands, being an EFL teacher in Turkey is so prestigious that ELT departments necessitate the new-comers to have high exam scores to be a student in their departments. It is crystal clear that the related practices and theories in foreign language education in Turkey have improved in time to catch the level of universal foreign language education standards. When YÖK was founded in the early 1980s, foreign language education emerged as a field of science serving the novice teachers for having an academic career. Formerly, it was the duty of the Ministry of Turkish National Education to educate English teachers (Çakır, 2017; Yaman, 2018). All the social, economic, and political changes in Turkey brought about the country's embracing English language in a very short period (Kirkgoz, 2007, 2009; Saricoban, 2012; Ulum, 2015).Indeed, there was not much demand for English language in Turkey just before the World War I and it was not being taught at any school except at only a few institutions. Turkish people used to learn French and German in order to be aware of the West (Çakır, 2017; Gatenby, 1947; Güneş, 2009; Koksal & Şahin, 2012). As it can be concluded from the mentioned points, the success of English in a country goes parallel with EFL teachers' proper occupational education. Investigating the related literature, we aim to bring a light to the historical development of EFL teacher education programs in Turkey in a progressive way.

Methodology

Formal reports or documents have been some of the most fundamental tools in qualitative research studies for a long time. Recently, a growth has been detected in the number of scientific articles that point out document analysis as part of their methodology (Xu & Croft, 2017). It is quite conspicuous that the lack of satisfactory data in most documents may be compensated by other documents. Furthermore, it is evident that

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document analysis has not constantly been utilized adequately in research areas, even by competent researchers (Bowen, 2009).

Document analysis is a standardized process for revising or analyzing document or reports—both paper-based and online materials. Just like other analytical methods in qualitative research design, document analysis also necessitates that the data is analyzed and explained to obtain interpretation, understanding, and practical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Based on a qualitative research design, this study utilizes document analysis technique through which the researchers investigated the existing scientific articles, records, or documents (Karasar, 2012). In other words, the researchers utilized the document analysis technique with the aim of giving a word about the topic (Peute, 2013).

The Recent EFL Teacher Education

What EFL teachers have to learn in teacher education and how this learning affects their teaching practices are both indispensable dimensions in foreign language teacher education process. Recent research has focused on this fundamental issue as it is pivotal for language teachers to develop both pedagogical and field knowledge (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2017). Normally, it is viewed that a language teacher needs to have specific domains of knowledge, such as pedagogical abilities and linguistic competence (Freeman, 1998). However, this view has recently been revised to evoke awareness in that the learning process of EFL teachers is established in a context and built by individuals since they collaborate with the social and professional circumstances of the settings in which they learn and teach (Johnson, 2009). The practice of teaching covers such reciprocal dimensions as the teacher-learner, the social context, and the pedagogical development (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). In brief, the current approach in EFL teacher education is highly context dependent (Johnson, 2009).

The notion of foreign language teacher education is a recent issue, although programs training teachers have been established for a long time. At language institutions, depending on the facilities, EFL teachers may be the native speakers of English or the professional non-natives (Cook, 1999; Day, 1993). Currently, since non-Turkish citizens cannot work at primary and high schools, English Language Teaching Departments educate professional Turkish EFL teachers in Turkey(Aldemir, 2010; Can, 2005). Educating these Turkish EFL teachers takes four years unless the program necessitates one-year English prep-class. Each ELT department adopts an approved and compulsory program during the education process,

while employing optional courses, materials, course-books and exams (Karakas, 2012; Yavuz & Zehir Topkaya, 2013). As a result of the educational reforms that occurred in 1998 and 2006, several reforms were put into practice in pre-service teacher education programs in Turkey, just like in the European Union countries. These reform movements ended up with the need of inquiring teacher education programs by the researchers in the related fields (Dereobalı & Ünver, 2009). Therefore, a demand for the assessment and evaluation of the existing programs has inevitably emerged (Yavuz & Zehir Topkaya, 2013). The last innovation conducted by the Turkish Council of Higher Education in which 25 undergraduate teacher education programs were renewed was in May, 2018. In this innovation, the main item that was discussed was the issue of teacher competencies (The Council of Higher Education, 2018).

The History of Teacher Education in Turkey

The past of general teacher education in Turkey goes back to Darulmuallimin− a school for educating teachers, which was opened in the middle of the 19th century(Bilir, 2011; Tarman, 2010). Regardless of the fact that several diverse forms of teacher education have been practiced since then, the major shift in the Turkish teacher preparation system emerged in 1981 when all the duty and burden of teacher education were passed on universities from the Ministry of Turkish National Education(Akyuz, 2004; Guven, 2008). The aim of transferring teacher training to the universities was to enhance the quality of teacher education, research, and projects (Tercanlioglu, 2004). The reform movement in 1981 transformed 4-yearteacher training institutes and 3-year foreign language high schools into 4-year education faculties. At present, the majority of education faculties in Turkey include programs for educating kindergarten, elementary school, secondary school, and high school teachers who are hired by both Ministry of Turkish National Education and private institutions (Guven, 2008).Novice teachers, who are placed with reference to both their choices and scores of the university entrance exam in diverse teacher training departments, were trained for the teaching job by means of courses basically in three diverse areas: I) Skills and knowledge related to general culture, II) Specific subject knowledge, and III) Pedagogical formation and methodology (Gursimsek, Kaptan, & Erkan, 1997).

The History of Foreign Language Teacher Education in Turkey

Teaching foreign languages in the Ottoman Empire was simply represented for religious intentions. Specifically, the morphological and syntactical structures of Arabic and

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Persian were instructed to read and comprehend religious texts. Nevertheless, once the Ottoman Empire was defeated at the wars against westerners and had hard times in formal communication with other nations, significant changes to catch up with the western countries were initiated. Therefore, as a part of the renovation movements, language schools were established to teach different foreign languages rather than only Arabic and Persian. The popularity of learning French started as a consequence of these movements. Indeed, let alone foreign language teacher education, even general teacher education was not perceived as an urgent need during that time (Soruc & Cepik, 2013). The following table represents the chronological change in priorities given to foreign languages in Turkey, as adapted by Dogancay-Aktuna (1998) from the study of Demircan (1988).

Table 1

Chronological Change in Priorities Given to Foreign Languages in Turkey

Order	Pre 1773	1773–1923	1923–1950	1950–1980	After 1980s
1	Arabic	Arabic	French	English	English
2	Persian	Persian	English	French	German
3	Turkish	French	German	German	French
4		English	Arabic	Arabic	Arabic
5		German		Persian	Persian

The founders of Turkish Republic opened modern schools as well as renovating the already existing institutions of teacher education only after taking over the authority from the Ottoman Empire (Bilir, 2011).The need of language teachers in the middle-scaled schools was met by a foundation in Konya in 1926 for a short period of time. Afterwards, this foundation was transformed into "Gazi Orta Muallim Mektebi". In 1946, this school was called "Gazi Education Institute" and served only for pedagogical formation. Then, it opened science and literature faculties. Furthermore, in order to train foreign language teachers, these faculties included such fields as French in 1941, English in 1944, and German in 1947. Formerly, Galatasaray High School, Foreign Schools, and Philology Departments of Universities were utilized to serve for the need of foreign language teachers in the newly founded Turkish Republic. Within this scope, the philology departments of Ankara University and İstanbul University - Language, History and Geography Faculties equipped

teacher candidates with pedagogical formation and these pre-service teachers were then appointed as state teachers (Demircan, 1988).

Lawrence Faucett worked as an ELT consultant for 15 months in Turkey in 1933. With the aim of training foreign language teachers, a school of foreign languages−educating novice teachers for two years was opened in Beyazit, İstanbul in 1938. 60 students were recruited in this school in order to educate German, French, and English teachers. These students were trained in Turkey in their first year, while they were sent abroad for the next year. The graduates of this school were also given pedagogical courses since they would work at high schools (Ergin 1977). This school was closed in 1944 and the students were transferred to the newly founded Gazi Education Institute (Altuna 2006). In 1939, Hasan Ali Yücel, the Minister of Education in Turkey, stated that the number of foreign language teachers in Turkey is 287. Besides, he added that the country needs 256 more foreign language teachers. So, the country could not find 543 foreign language teachers at that year. Foreign language departments in higher teacher education schools were opened in 1940 and closed in 1978. The graduates of these schools were only employed at high schools and they were not appointed to secondary schools (Altuna, 2006,Gelişli 2006).

In brief, since the number of students highly increased in 1930s, there was a huge demand for foreign language teachers in Turkey. Thus, Gazi Orta Muallim Mektebi educating novice teachers for two years started training 16 novice teachers in Konya, which was called Gazi Education Institute upon moving to Ankara in 1940s, with the support of John Dewey. So as to educate more skillful foreign language teachers, the 4thNational Education Council was assembled in 1949. In this council, it was approved that the education process of foreign language teaching departments was extended to three years, although this decision was put into practice in 1962. It was the year 1978 when the three yearperiod was increased to four years of education. It was only after 1982 that the language teaching departments were taken over by education faculties which brought modernization practices in these institutions (Demircan, 1988).

The 2547 numbered High Education Law, which was published in the Official Gazette No: 17506; Date: November 6, 1981, states its aim as (The Council of Higher Education, 2000):

> ‘’The aim of this law is to define the goals and principles pertaining to higher education and to establish principles, related to the functioning, duties, authority,

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and responsibilities in connection with education, research, publication, teaching staff, students and other personnel of institutions of higher education and their governing bodies.''

According to this law, the High Education Schools with a four-year educating period were transformed into Education Faculties while the Education Institutes with a two years educating period were transformed into Educational High Schools. Further, Foreign Languages High Schools and Sports Academies were contained by Education Faculties. After the responsibility of training teachers was given to universities in 1982, the most significant regulation made on Teacher Education Programs was the reformation of the Education Faculties in 1997. Within this scope, the cooperation between Education Faculties and Application Schools was organized by the Ministry of National Education and Education Faculties (Hismanoglu, 2012). By the year 2000, teacher education and employment policies could not respond to the needs of teachers and the employment of teachers has been carried out by KPSS (State Personnel Selection Exam) results since 2000 (Bilir, 2011). The following regulation about Education faculties was fulfilled in 2006-2007, through which the inadequacies of the 1997 reforms were mitigated. Therefore, some plans were made in English Language Teaching Programs in 2006-2007, which contained both compulsory and optional courses.

Discussion and Conclusion

In her study, Kirkgoz (2007) makes an overview of the progress of English as a foreign language by outlining the related policy changes in the Turkish education system. Initially, she presents a historical overview of the policies conducted up to the 1997 education reform, while the second part represents the 1997 education reform. She also examines the impact of the 1997 macro policy on local research findings. Finally, she states the government's most recent education reforms which mirror the enhancing significance of English as Turkey desires and works to be a member of the European Union. In her study, Kirkgoz (2007) found out that Turkey has to resolve existing discrepancy between the idealized macro policy aims and their realizations in practice at micro level teaching situations.

Besides, in his study, Çakır (2017) includes the main improvements in the procedures or methods for teaching foreign languages, mentioning the models practiced at schools which were common in 1960s. Within this scope, he discusses the borders of English Language

Teaching as a separate field while containing subjects, courses and research topics emerged in language and teacher education, and the implemented research.

Furthermore, in her study, Dogancay-Aktuna (1998)evaluated the development of English language in Turkey from a social and historical dimension. In other words, she evaluated the present sociolinguistic portrait of English language in EFL context by judging its role, scope, and intensity, by means of an inquiry of its function in education and job market. At the end of the study, she suggests that meticulous language planning and policy-making are needed in Turkey to make English reachable for people from every socioeconomic background.

While Ata (2000) examines the effect of John Dewey's views on Turkish educational system in his study, Tarman (2010) provides a concise history of teacher education in Turkey and explains how teacher education programs appear at present. Tarman (2010) also investigates the function of such universal actors as World Bank and Europe Union in teacher training as well as suggesting what modifications could be realized to develop the program. They both emphasize on the continuous development struggles in Turkish education system.

While Gursimsek, Kaptan, and Erkan (1997) investigate the teacher education system in Turkey by providing an overview of the history of contemporary teacher education in the country and summarize the present system, Guven (2008) hint on the view of spontaneous innovation provided by educators as well as discussing its implications for teacher education. In other words, in his study, Guven (2008) examines such dimensions as the recent teacher education in Turkey; the changes in educational practices and school-based attitudes, and the appearance of more integrated forms of accountability of teacher proficiency. They clarified the issue by suggesting that the theories, practices and popular research areas in foreign language education in Turkey have changed over time in line with the progress in the world.

It is quite essential to educate and empower English language teachers, and currently more than a requirement. Therefore, utilizing an adequate program to educate English language teachers is the way to achievement in language teacher education process. Although we can see a number of development struggles in the historical process of foreign language teacher education, these struggles are not sufficient enough to supply the needs of pre-service EFL teachers in Turkey. The main reason of this problem may be due to the fact that teacher education in Turkey has experienced a lot until now, but it has generally focused on quantitative problems such as the duration of teacher education programs. That’s to say, it

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constantly worked on whether teacher education should be 2, 3 or 4 years. Another issue is that Turkey thoroughly dealt with the number of teachers to employ in state schools. Hence, the history of EFL teacher education in Turkey clearly mirrors the fact that Turkey should focus mainly on qualitative developments, rather than focusing on quantitative improvements. Educating pre-service EFL teachers is a progressive practice that should be closely designed and thoroughly evaluated. Although the current pre-service EFL teacher education program in Turkey is undoubtedly more proper than the old ones in the past, it should be empowered continuously. Within this dimension, a critical perspective through evaluating the former achievements and failures are of great importance to sustain highly sufficient EFL teacher education programs.

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