LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND ELT MATERIALS IN TURKEY FROM THE PATH DEPENDENCE PERSPECTIVE

YOLAK BAĞIMLI KURAM AÇISINDAN TÜRKİYE'DE YABANCI DİL EĞİTİMİ VE YABANCI DİL MALZEMELERİ

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines the role of traditional language teaching methodology on the current language teaching methodology in Turkey from the Path Dependence Theory perspective. Path Dependence claims that the past continues shaping the present. Similarly, traditional approaches still shape foreign/second language education. Turkey has inherited a foreign language education methodology from the Ottoman Empire. It equates language education with studying formal aspects of a target language and consists of mechanical practice of the isolated formal aspects of a target language at the sentence level. To elaborate on the issue, the 4th and 5th grade English coursebooks are evaluated first and then comments are made with reference to Path Dependence.

Keywords: path dependence theory, language education, materials development, materials evaluation, foreign language education in turkey

ÖZET: Bu çalışmada, geleneksel yabancı dil eğitim anlayışının günümüz yabancı dil eğitimi üzerine etkisi Yolak Bağımlı Kuram açısından irdelenmiştir. Geçmişin, günceli şekillendirmeye devam ettiği savına dayanan bu kuram, Osmanlı eğitim sisteminden miras kalan geleneksel yabancı dil eğitim anlayışının, hala günümüz yabancı dil eğitimine yön vermeye devam etmesini de açıklamaktadır. Bu konuyu daha ayrıntılı ve somut olarak incelemek amacıyla ilköğretim 4. ve 5. sınıf İngilizce ders kitapları incelenerek, Yolak Bağımlı Kuram açısından yorumlar yapılmıştır.

Anahtar sözcükler: yolak bağımlı kuram, dil eğitimi, malzeme geliştirme, malzeme değerlendirme, türkiye'de yabancı dil eğitimi

1. INTRODUCTION

Path dependence theorizes that the past continues to shape the present. Institutions, companies, and people tend to stick to the previous practices. Moreover, they may even know that there are better technologies, methods, and systems, than the ones they have been employing, but they do not still carry out radical changes and accordingly the already existing ones continue to exist (Crouch & Farrell, 2004; Page, 2006). As in many other fields path dependence can be observed in foreign language education, although it has not been discussed in the field yet.

To modernize the country Ottomans started the reform movements for which education was considered to be the key. Since the process is called "Westernization", the education system together with teachers and materials were transferred from Europe. Thus Western-style schools were founded and foreign language education became a key for the success of the process. The Ottoman Government also opened new French-medium modern schools at the secondary education level. At the tertiary education level new foreign-language medium universities were founded (Demircan, 1988; Akyüz, 1993). In the Republic Era starting with 1923 the process has continued and new schools and universities with either foreign-language- medium or foreign language emphasis education have been founded (Çelebi, 2006; Demircan, 1988; Demirel, 2003).

Together with this movement a kind of Turkish Foreign language education methodology "a language teaching culture" was formed and has managed to survive. This teaching culture was determined both by European and pro-western Ottoman education systems: When Latin became a dead language it continued to attract the attention of Western aristocracy (Richards & Rogers, 2001).

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To improve the aesthetic feelings and understand books written in Latin, a language teaching methodology emphasizing Latin grammar, word formation, reading comprehension, text analysis, and translation were developed. Foreign teachers and language teaching materials transferred this language methodology, together with Westernization movement, to the Ottoman education system. Likewise the foreign language education methodology in the traditional Ottoman education system consisted of memorization of grammar rules, word formation, word lists of Arabic and Persian and reading comprehension, text analysis, and translation of texts written in these languages. Hence, the language teaching methodology used in traditional Ottoman education was similar to the one used to teach Latin in Europe. These two similar traditions converged and were directly used in teaching the Western Languages. Consequently, a language teaching methodology, which focused on teaching the formal aspects of a foreign language, came into existence and has still influenced the Turkish foreign language. Despite many reforms, curricular and methodological changes, that traditional system has survived in Turkey.

The picture depicted above about the Turkish foreign language education system is compatible with the claims of Path Dependence. To elaborate on the effects of everlasting traditional language education methodology on the current foreign language education in Turkey, and to exemplify the issue more specifically 4th and 5th grade English coursebooks prepared in Turkey are evaluated and

2. METHODOLOGY

The 4th and 5th grade English coursebooks prepared in Turkey are evaluated with respect to the topics mentioned in the "Results" section.

3. RESULTS

The English coursebooks, prepared for the 4th and 5th grades by the same team of authors for the Ministry of National Education, are based on the same criteria and reflect the same language teaching philosophy. In the following section a brief evaluation of these coursebooks is presented. The syllabi, coursebooks and sample activities can be examined from "http://yayim.meb. gov.tr/cd.html".

3.1. Language Teaching Philosophy: The foreign language teaching philosophy expressed under the title ***"English Language Curriculum"*** (http://yayim.meb.gov.tr/cd.html) is well prepared and reflects the recent ideas and research findings about language education.

3.2. Needs and Context Analysis: In any foreign language program, economic, political, social, cultural factors, national and international conjecture, national education policy, needs and interests of both individuals and society, resources are analyzed scientifically and then program goals, syllabus, and materials are designed. (Bax, 2003; Belcher, 2006; Byram & Grundy, 2002; Kramsch, 1993, 2002; Tomlinson, 2003, 2008). However, no such analysis was mentioned for the language teaching program and the 4th and 5th grade English coursebooks (http://yayim.meb.gov.tr/cd.html).

3.3. Approach: An approach, based on a theory of language and language learning, provides the framework for ELT materials. It determines the methodology serving to fulfill the goals of a language program (Canagarajah, 2006; Bax, 2003; Krashen, 2003; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Ponniah & Krashen, 2008). Although the theory of language is not clearly stated in the coursebooks, when the materials are examined (see book 4 unit 7 part 6 and 8, book 5 unit 1 part 6 and 7) it can be observed that they are based on a structural approach (Brown, 2007; Ellis, 1994; 1997; 2002, 2006; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; McKay, 2003; Richards, 2002). Similarly there seems no clear language learning theory shaping the materials (http://yayim.meb.gov.tr/cd.html). However, it can be inferred that although in some tasks a few crumbs of humanistic learning (see book 4 unit 6, book 5 unit 7) and constructivism (see book 5 unit 2) can be observed, the books mainly reflect the principles of structuralism and behaviorism.

3.4. Using Language as a Means of Communication: Language is a means of communication and learning. In real life people do not talk about language rules but use them for communicative purposes. In the classroom the language should be treated likewise, its natural function should be emphasized, and the classroom activities should cater for teaching through a language, not teaching about it (Harmer, 2003; Hiep, 2007; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; McKay, 2003). In this sense, since each unit is specified to teach predetermined target forms and using isolated language forms accurately, these coursebooks mainly focus on teaching about language (see book 5 unit 10 part 4 and 7). They are far from providing communicative language use.

3.5. Cross-Curricular Aspect: Teaching a language in connection with other school subjects is advised to make language content more purposeful and meaningful. Since the focus is on the content as well as language, a kind of communicative classroom atmosphere in which a target language is used as a means of learning and communication can be created (Canagarajah, 2006; Echevarria, Vogt & Short; 2000; Met, 1994; Mohan & Beckett, 2003). Although the cross-curricular aspect is clearly stated in the language teaching philosophy of the coursebooks, there are no activities realizing and utilizing it (see English Language Curriculum for Primary Education Grades 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 from (http://yayim.meb.gov.tr/cd.html).

3.6. Functions: Including relevant functions of language in language materials are necessary to model how language is used and for what purposes it is used. It also attracts the attention of learners since they help them meet some of their communicative needs (Mohan & Beckett; 2003; Nault, 2006; Richards, 2006). Nevertheless the coursebooks are not designed well in this sense. Functions are not planned and stated. It is not clear at which function it is aimed. As in other activities, functions are not the primary focus and they are subordinated to practice target language items (see Book 4 Unit 13, Book 5 Unit 5).

3.7. Basic Linguistic Element: While traditional language teaching methodology considers sentence as the basic linguistic element, modern approaches focus on discourse, use, and the context in which language is used (Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Rose & Kasper, 2001). A language use involves more than the accurate production of sentences. Nevertheless the coursebooks consider sentence as the basic organizing element of language. In that sense, they do not provide students with enough correct guidance about communicative use of language.

3.8. Skills: In language teaching skills are to be included in their own sense, not as a means of teaching target language forms. Related with the aims of students they should be included in the program in a systematic and integrated way (Kalekin-Fishman, 2005; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Richards, 2006). When the content page and activities are examined it can be concluded that there is no systematic teaching of skills and subskills. The coursebooks mainly deal with reading skill but not in its real sense. Reading texts do not look like reading texts but compilations of several sentences to present target forms (see Book 4 Unit 13 part 1). In other words, reading has a subservient role to teach grammar. Writing is also treated in the same manner to practice language forms at the sentence level (see Book 5 unit 8 Part 6). Although there are some good listening activities, there are again ones used to present/practice target forms (see Book 5 Unit 6 Part 4). Speaking is no different from the other skills; it is also exploited for the consolidation of new structures (see Book 5 Unit 8 part 2). In short, the coursebooks are problematic with respect to four-skill treatment, integrated skills approach, and taking skills in their real sense.

3.9. Topic Choice: The topics of ELT materials are to be relevant to the needs and interest of learners (Angell, DuBravac & Gonglewski, 2008; Csölle, 2002; McGrath, 2006; Tomlinson, 2008). As can be seen in the index pages of Book 4 and 5, which function as table of contents, the topics chosen in these coursebooks are very common ones that have been addressed in many language materials. Moreover, they are not used in a real sense to exemplify language use but to create a context to present

and practice language forms. Hence, they do not aim at enlarging students' schemata on the topics they need in their lives.

3.10. Student Motivation: The degree to which the topics and tasks fit the expectations and wants of students directly affects student involvement in the language learning process (Davies, 2006; Hart, 2003; Krashen & McField, 2005; Kenning, 2001; McGrath, 2006; Stewart, 2007). As stated above, students deal with similar topics over and over again during their foreign language education; hence they are far from motivating students (see Book 4 Unit 13 Part 10). In addition the same types of activities are repeated throughout the coursebooks (see Book 4 Unit 10 Part 4, Book 4 Unit 10, Part 7 Book 5 Unit 3 Part 7, Book 5 Unit 13 Part 13 for "put the words into the correct order"; Book 4 Unit 2 Part 9, Book 4 Unit 3 Part 4, Book 4 Unit 4 Part 2, Book 4 Unit 5 Part 9, Book 4 Unit 9 Part 11, Book 4 Unit 12 Part 9, Book 4 Unit 14 Part 13, Book 5 Unit 1 Part 10, Book 5 Unit 11 Part 7 for "color the picture"). The coursebooks are not well prepared enough to motivate students.

3.11. Density: The texts and tasks in language learning are to be of medium density. Too many texts and tasks, and bombarding students with too much information create boredom and cognitive difficulty; on the other hand inadequate ones create no challenge and sense of achievement (Harmer, 2003; Stewart, 2007; Tomlinson, 2003, 2008). Generally speaking the density of the coursebooks with respect to the content, target vocabulary items and structures is appropriate. However, in some units too many new target vocabulary items are presented at once (see Book 4 Unit 4 part 1). Similarly, in some units new structures are presented with its all forms. For example, when the simple present tense is presented first, its affirmative, negative, and interrogative forms are presented altogether (see Book 5 Unit 7). Thus, these can be too confusing and challenging for the students.

3.12. Presentation: To get students adapted to and familiar to the new language system they have just started to learn, the activities at the early stages are designed to familiarize students with the phonology, prosodic, suprasegmental and structural features of a target language (McGrath, 2006). Thus, early activities are to focus on receptive skills more and cater to provide comprehensible input (Krashen, 2003). However, the 4th grade coursebook requires production from the very first page. It does not provide enough time for students to get familiar with the segmental and suprasegmental features of English. It may cause failure in production and learners may develop a negative self-image about learning a foreign language, which is hard to eradicate and impedes language learning. Thus the coursebooks favors production over the activities, which involve learners physically and mentally in the language earning process.

3.13. Activating or Building Up Schemata (Warm Up Activities): Education is developmental. Considering and relating new items to the ones students have already known can make comprehension and learning easier, and provide smooth transition from known to unknown. Dealing with something familiar also helps students decrease their anxiety (Kalekin-Fishman, 2005; Mackey & Gass, 2005; McGrath, 2006; Richards, 2006). The activities in the coursebooks neglect what students bring to class and do not have enough activities to activate or build up students' schemata, which help students relate what they will learn to what they have already known. In short, they are not good enough in terms of guiding and preparing students mentally for the units they study.

3.14. Activities: The activities in ELT materials should help students fulfill their language learning goals and be relevant to their real-life needs (Davies, 2006; Ihde, 2000; Kalekin-Fishman, 2005; Kenning, 2001; Mackey & Gass, 2005; McGrath, 2006). The activities in the coursebooks provide enough practice on the target structures, however, these activities are mechanical and do not guide students about how to use them for communication. They hardly involve "information gap" activities with a communicative end (Book 5 Unit 5 Part 2). Besides, there is no integration among those activities and they are treated as independent, individual, isolated ones (Book 5 Unit 11 Parts 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7). They look like a pile of form-focused practice. The same type of activities about the

same target structures are repeated so much that it reminds of behaviorism and habit formation (see Book 4 unit 11 which focuses on "has got and have got").

3.15. Application: The activities in ELT materials should be easily undertaken. They should optimize the linguistic and cognitive challenge, and foster cognitive and affective involvement of students. They are required to serve language learning and have a communicative value, which exemplifies how language is exploited in real life (Davies, 2006; Ihde, 2000; Krashen & McField, 2005; Mackey & Gass, 2005; McGrath, 2006; Nault, 2006). The applications in the coursebooks mainly deal with accuracy, they are not demanding with respect to content and communication (see Book 5 Unit 5). Since the focus is at the sentence level and no real appropriate context is provided for activities, it is likely that students just pay attention to the form and carry out tasks even without reading the sentences. For example, in an activity practicing "to be" in present tense, students provide "am" whenever they see "I", "is" something singular, and "are" something plural. To do this activity there is no need to read the sentence, what is needed is the knowledge of which auxiliary goes with which subject. In the coursebooks there are activities such as "paint the picture" (see Book 5 Unit 1 Part 10), combine the dots" (see Book 4 unit 13 part 6) which have no language learning purpose and language use. It can be said that with respect to application the coursebooks are problematic.

3.16. Comprehensible Samples of the Target Language: Language teaching materials should provide rich comprehensible input by using relevant and interesting topics, tasks, and texts which are suitable for the linguistic, cognitive, and academic levels of learners (Krashen, 2000; 2003; Krashen & McField, 2005; Murphy & Hastings, 2006; Ponniah & Krashen, 2008; Truscott, 2005). However, the coursebooks do not aim at providing rich comprehensible samples of language rather they mainly focus on presenting new language items in very short texts and having them practiced in several activities. Especially the 4th Grade Book is expect to be dominated by receptive skills to provide enough comprehensible samples of English which can help students to get familiar with English. On the contrary, it starts with production activities and forces students to produce in English from the very beginning. The coursebooks are weak in providing comprehensible input and optimizing and maximizing language acquisition.

3.17. Student Participation: To enhance student participation, tasks, which suit the nature of a language, should be designed and a language learning context which fosters student participation via a variety of materials and different means of communication should be created. The degree to which student participation is provided helps students own the tasks and invest their time and energy in the learning process (Hart, 2003; Kalekin-Fishman, 2005; Richards, 2006; Stewart, 2007). Nevertheless, the coursebooks offer generally stereotype, mechanical, sentence level practice and are far from realizing desired student participation.

3.18. Variety: Students love variety. That is why various tasks and texts and materials are to be employed in language education to break the boredom and foster student motivation (McGrath, 2006). When the coursebooks are evaluated with respect to variety, it can be concluded that in terms of activity types and texts, the books repeat themselves and they are not satisfactory.

3.19. Page Layout: Physical appearance of materials is necessary for affective reasons (Aziz, 2003). The page layout of the coursebooks is appealing; it is not squeezed. Moreover color pages and other visual elements make the coursebooks attractive.

3.20. Individual Differences: Students are different with respect to their learning styles, personality traits, rate of learning, interest, and learning and communication strategies. That is why language materials are to be comprehensive enough to address individual differences. They should also include alternative and extra texts and activities students can select (Hart, 2003; Kalekin-Fishman, 2005; Kenning, 2001; Richards, 2006). The cousebooks, however, are inadequate meeting individual differences. Since the books repeat themselves, variety cannot be managed. Different learning styles

and strategies are not given priority. The coursebooks have weakness in addressing individual differences.

3.21. Native and International Culture: When learners learn a language they come across with two types of burden, the target language itself and the target culture accompanying it. It is likely to eliminate the cultural one. When language materials include topics about native and international culture, students are likely to comprehend more, experience less cognitive difficulty, and feel themselves more affiliated with them since they themselves are the part of the culture embedded in materials. Besides, dealing with international culture may raise their students' awareness about other cultures and become more sensitive to cultural differences (Banks, 2001; Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002; Dlaska, 2000; Fenner, 2000; Kramsch, 1993; 1998; 1998b; 2002; Nault, 2006). The coursebooks include Turkish names and places from Turkey but lack international aspect. Even including Turkish ones does not really create a cultural context. There seems to be no deliberate attempt to embed culture in the language program. They are just used as means to present and practice target forms. The coursebooks need to emphasize local and international culture more in a real sense.

3.22. Holistic Approach to Learners: It is the responsibility of any language programs to contribute to the linguistic, social, academic, affective, and cognitive development of learners as well (Genesee, 1994; Hart, 2003; Ihde, 2000; Nault, 2006). In the coursebooks the focus is mainly on the linguistic aspect and they neglect the others.

3.23. Holistic Approach to Language: It is generally accepted that language is a whole that cannot be broken into its constituents. Isolating certain parts or skills of language and presenting and practicing them are not approved any more (Brown, 2007; Canagarajah, 2006; Genesee, 1994). A natural composition of language forms and skills are suggested. In the books the language forms and skills are isolated and practiced mechanically. Focusing only formal features of a language, or one of its specific skills, impedes efficient language learning and causes learners to form an incorrect image of language learning. Learners think language learning is equal to learning grammar rules and vocabulary items or covering reading texts. Unfortunately the coursebooks have a limited scope: formal aspects of language. In this respect the coursebooks are far from being satisfactory.

3.24. Instructions: The quality of instruction directly affects the degree to which learners perform the intended tasks. They should provide enough information to set the scene and guide learners about what to do and how to do it (Tomlinson, 2003). They are expected to be concise and clear and have a friendly voice. In the coursebooks, an authoritarian manner can be observed in the instructions. However, they clearly guide the students about the required tasks (see Book 5 unit 11).

3.25. Classroom Management: Language teaching materials should include a variety of tasks and texts to address individual differences and different needs and interests of learners. When learners find materials appropriate, they do not get bored and there will be fewer management problems in the classroom. Similarly, individual, pair, group, and whole class activities are exploited to avoid boredom (Davies, 2006; Graham & Prigmore, 2009; Nie & Lau, 2009; Smith, 2009). The coursebooks, on the other hand, are not adequate with respect to the choice of texts and tasks and classroom organization (see Book 4 Unit 13).

3.26. Periphery: To support language education and provide variety through various modes and medium of language, posters, flash carts, audio and video CDs, DVDs, computer software, additional self-study materials, and teacher resources are to accompany main language materials (Johnson, et al, 2008; McGrath, 2002; Tomlinson, 2008). The coursebooks have only audio CDs. They provide limited variety through the use of different supporting materials.

The evaluation above indicates that the 4th and 5th English coursebooks reflect a traditional language teaching approach, which equates language learning to learning the formal features of a

target language. Hence, the context in which English is presented has almost no relevance to real life context and language is far from real life functions. Certain target forms are isolated, presented and practiced with no or little concern with their actual use and meaning. Thus activities do not meet the real-life needs of learners. In other words, studying English with these books helps learners talk about the rules of English, not use them as means of communication and learning. Activities are "teaching" oriented not learning. The role of learners in language teaching is defined as the recipient of knowledge taught by teachers. Furthermore, skills are not treated as whole and there seems to be no systematic plan to teach skills. All skills have subservient role and are exploited for teaching formal aspects of language. The traditional methodology still dominates the language teaching/learning issue despite numerous improvements, recent ideas, and some globally accepted principles, such as communicative role of language, learner autonomy, learners differences, holistic view of langue and learner, including variety and enriching language education context through various materials, accepting discourse not sentence as the basic organizing element of teaching/learning activities, language awareness, contextualization of language forms, exploiting authentic materials and relevant texts and tasks, organizing language education with the help of the data obtained from needs and context analysis, organizing purposeful and meaningful activities, providing comprehensible input, focusing on learner strategies. In short, the result of the evaluation of the 4th and 5th Grade English coursebooks revealed that there has been no big difference between the approach adopted in these coursebooks and traditional one dated back to the Ottoman era in foreign language education. These results support the claims that were put forth by Path Dependence Theory.

4. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Despite the current research and novel ideas about foreign language education, the traditional approach still manage to survive as claimed by the Path Dependence Theory, which may explain, why the Turkish foreign language education system has been far from efficient. When the current literature about foreign language teaching and the ELT programs at universities are taken into consideration, most of the ideas and practices related with the traditional approach are criticized severely. However, these efforts have not created the expected results yet, and practitioners are still affiliated with the traditional ones as it can be observed in the 4th and 5th grade ELT coursebooks.

To reflect innovations to foreign language materials, the first thing to do is to raise the awareness of language teachers about the everlasting effects of the traditional approach on language education. At every level of training (undergraduate, post graduate), practical techniques, which help transfer recent findings and ideas to the language teaching context, should be emphasized. Providing teachers with well-prepared coursebooks, which determine the classroom applications and also serves teachers training indirectly, could be an efficient way of guiding teachers about implementing novelties in the field. Teacher training is of utmost importance to modernize and optimize language education.

Secondly, the materials development issue must be taken more seriously. It is to be realized that materials development is a special issue, which requires special training. There is a misconception that every English teacher can develop foreign language education materials. It must be realized that materials development is not every English teacher's business. It is a particular field in ELT, which can only be undertaken by materials writers who are educated and trained in it. It can be carried out at the special level in MA or Ph.D. programs. However, to the knowledge of the author, there is no such a special ELT program at the graduate level in Turkey. Another solution could be forming a professional unit at universities or in the Ministry to train teachers about materials development. Again to the knowledge of the author, there exist no such professional units. Then comes the next question: Are there any academicians or teacher trainers who are specialized about materials development and who can train teachers? Unfortunately it is difficult to answer these questions positively. There are professional institutions, like MATSDA at Leeds Metropolitan University, which provide professional training about materials development. Professional training and guidance can be obtained from these institutions. Professional training about materials development is a must to start materials development process. Maybe the best solution is to start with training the trainers first.

Thirdly, it must be realized that materials development is a scientific, professional process which is bound to specific requirements and prerequisites such as studying the goals of foreign language education and foreign language education policy, gathering information about national and international context, undertaking needs and context analysis, forming the blueprints (draft) of syllabus, producing sample units, piloting, eliciting the ideas of both teachers and students about the samples, revision, forming the blueprint of the whole syllabus, producing materials, piloting, eliciting the ideas of teachers and students, revision, final evaluation, production. The ELT materials development process can be summarized as follows:

Data collection

      Studying the goals of foreign language education

      Studying foreign language education policy

      Collecting information about national and international context

      Carrying out needs and context analysis

Initial production

      Preparing blueprints

      Producing sample units

Initial data collection (field research)

      Piloting

      Eliciting the ideas of both teachers and students

      Revision of blueprints and sample units

Comprehensive planning and production

      Preparing the blueprints of the whole syllabus

      Producing materials

Data collection

      Piloting the materials

      Collecting data from teachers and students

      Revision

Final evaluation

Production

For a successful and relevant coursebook publishing, the steps summarized above must be fulfilled. It should be kept in mind that materials developers are not only developing materials but implementing a language teaching methodology and syllabus that are followed by English teachers. Thus the careful handling of the steps mentioned above determines the success of foreign language materials to a great extent.

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www.yok.gov.tr for the foreign language courses at the university level

Genişletilmiş Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Batılılaşma süreci ile başlayan, Batı tarzı yabancı dil eğitim anlayışından da etkilenerek ortaya çıkan geleneksel Osmanlı yabancı dil eğitim sisteminin, Türkiye'deki yabancı dil eğitim sistemi üzerindeki etkilerini Yolak Bağımlı Kuram açısından incelemektir. Yabancı dil eğitim sistemini tarihsel açıdan ele almak amacıyla alan taraması yapılmış ve geleneksel Osmanlı yabancı dil eğitiminin nasıl ortaya çıktığı açıklanmıştır. Bu geleneksel yöntemin Türkiye'deki yabancı dil eğitim anlayışını daha somut olarak ortaya koymak ve örneklendirmek amacıyla, Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı tarafından hazırlattırılan ilköğretim 4 ve 5nci sınıf İngilizce ders kitapları 26 başlık altında incelenmiş ve değerlendirilmiştir.

Yolak Bağımlı Kuram (Path Dependence Theory) daha çok ekonomi ve işletme gibi alanlarında rastlanan ve geçmiş anlayış ve uygulamaların günümüz anlayış ve uygulamalarını şekillendirdiği savı üzerine kurulu bir kuramdır. İnsanlar ve kurumlar hali hazırda daha etkili kuramlar, yöntemler ve uygulamaların olduğunu bildikleri halde, eskilerden, eski alışkanlıklardan vazgeçememektedirler. Bir şekilde eski günümüzde egemenliğini sürdürmektedirler. Bir başka deyişle, insanlar "Biz böyle gördük, böyle yaptık, böyle devam edeceğiz" diyerek eskinin yani geleneğin egemenliğini sürdürmesine ve değişimin engellenmesine neden olmaktadırlar. Benzer şekilde geleneksel anlayış, güncel yabancı dil yöntem, uygulama ve malzemelerinde de kendisini hissettirmekte ve yabancı dil eğitimini şekillendirmeye devam etmektedir.

Türkiye'deki güncel yabancı dil uygulamalarını etkileyen geleneksel anlayış, Avrupa'daki Latince eğitimi ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki yabancı dil eğitim uygulamalarına dayanmaktadır. Latince ölü bir dil olduğu ve günlük yaşamda kullanılmadığı için, Avrupa'da Latinceye özgü bir dil öğrenme anlayışı ortaya çıkmıştır. Latince eğitiminde, dili bir iletişim aracı olarak kullanmak değil, estetik, dini ve bilişsel açılardan Latince eserlerin anlaşılması amacı güdülmüştür. Sonuç olarak, Avrupa'da Latince metinlerin okunup incelendiği, tercüme edildiği ve Latince dil bilgisi kurallarının ezberlenip, bu kuralların iyi öğrenilmesi için bol mekanik alıştırmanın yapıldığı bir yabancı dil öğrenim yöntemi kullanılmaya başlanmıştır. Ölü bir dil için bu tür bir yabancı dil anlayışı akla uygun düşmektedir. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda kullanılan yöntem de, Avrupa'da kullanılan yöntemden

farklı değildir. Osmanlı yabancı dil eğitimi de, o dönemin iki önemli dili olan Arapça ve Farsçanın iletişim amaçlı öğrenilmesinden daha çok, bu dillerdeki eserlerin incelenmesi ve anlaşılması üzerine yoğunlaşıyordu. Genel olarak Arapça ve Farsça dil bilgisi kurallarının ezberlendiği, bunlarla alıştırmaların yapıldığı, bu dillerde yazılan metinlerin incelendiği bir yabancı dil eğitim sistemi uygulanmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Arapça ve Farsça eğitiminde kullanılan sistem ile Batılılaşma ile birlikte benimsenen Avrupa tarzı yabancı dil eğitim sisteminin harmanlanmasından bir yabancı dil eğitim sistemi ortaya çıkmıştır. Yabancı dilin yapısal özelliklerinin incelenmesi, dil bilgisi kurallarının ve sözcüklerin öğrenilmesi ve ezberlenmesi, o yabancı dildeki metinlerin incelenmesi, tümce düzeyinde bol bol mekanik alıştırma yapılarak dil bilgisi kurallarının pekiştirilmesi, yabancı dilin gerçek yaşam ve ortam içinde değil, yapay bir bağlamda ele alınması gibi özellikleri taşıyan bu geleneksel yöntem, günümüz yabancı dil eğitim sisteminde varlığını etkili bir şekilde devam ettirmektedir. Yabancı dil eğitimi alanında araştırmalar ve kuramsal tartışmalar ciddi anlamda yenilikler içermesine, bu alanda yetişmiş akademisyenler olmasına, çok sayıda akademik çalışmalar yapılmasına, birçok üniversitede yabancı dil eğitimi programlarında lisans ve lisansüstü çalışmalar yapılmasına ve yabancı dil eğitimindeki yenilikler konusunda hizmet içi eğitim ve sertifika programları verilmesine rağmen, yabancı dil hakkında bilgi vermeyi yabancı dil eğitimi ile eş tutan bu geleneksel yabancı dil anlayışı varlığını sürdürmektedir. Ölü bir dil (Latince) ve amaç dillerdeki (Arapça, Farsça) metin inceleme ve anlama üzerine kurulu bir yabancı dil eğitimi için, yukarıda anlatılan geleneksel yabancı dil anlayışı uygun olabilir. Fakat, yabancı dilin bir iletişim ve öğrenme aracı olarak öğrenildiği günümüz Türkiye'sinde, bu geleneksel anlayışın hala etkili olması, yabancı dil öğrenme amaçlarına hizmet etmemektedir.

Bu çalışmadaki tartışmalar bir bakıma Yolak Bağımlı Kuram tarafından ortaya konan savlar yabancı dil eğitim sistemimizde de geçerliliğini sürdürmektedir. Bu bağlamda daha somut örnekler sunmak amacıyla Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı tarafından hazırlattırılan ilköğretim 4 ve 5nci sınıf İngilizce ders kitapları incelenip değerlendirilmiştir. Değerlendirme sonucunda, yabancı dil eğitim kuramı, öğrenme kuramı, dil kuramı, yöntem ve teknikler, öğrenci rolü, öğretmen rolü, dil becerilerine yaklaşım gibi temel konularda bu kitapların geleneksel yabancı dil eğitim anlayışın etkisinde hazırlandıkları sonucuna varılmıştır.

Ortaya çıkan bu sorunun giderilmesi ve yabancı dil eğitim sisteminde yeni anlayışın yerleştirilebilmesi amacıyla, yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin, lisans ve lisansüstü düzeyde ve hizmet içi eğitimde alandaki gelişmeleri takip edecek, her ortam ve öğrenci gereksinimlerine göre programı şekillendirecek öz güven, bilgi ve beceri ile donanımlı bir şekilde eğitilmeleri gerekmektedir. Ayrıca, kullanılan yabancı dil ders kitaplarının, sundukları yabancı dil eğitim anlayışı ve yöntemiyle aynı zamanda bir yabancı dil öğretmeni eğitimi rolü de üstlendikleri anımsanmalıdır. Bu durum özellikle yeni mezun öğretmenler ve yabancı dil öğretmenliği programı dışında başka akademik programlardan mezun olan ancak yabancı dil öğretmeni olarak görev yapan yabancı dil öğretmenleri için daha geçerlidir. Bu açıdan, yabancı dil eğitim anlayışı, yöntem ve uygulamaları açısından güncel araştırma ve fikirleri içeren ve alanında uzman akademisyenlerce hazırlanmış yabancı dil ders kitaplarının, öğretmenleri yönlendireceği ve en azından geleneksel uygulamaların etkilerini azaltarak, öğretmeleri bilinçlendireceği düşünülebilir.