

## Reflection of the Accession Process of Turkey to European Union on Doctoral Theses Written About Foreign Language Education in Turkey 1987-2017<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

*The European Union is the most important political and social integration of the 20th century. EU member countries have worked to develop common policies not only in the field of economy, but also in social, cultural, political and educational fields. In the European Union member countries, foreign language teaching is one of the most important topics in the field of education. European Union accepted Turkey as a candidate country in the enlargement process. With Turkey's full EU membership process which started in 2005, importance of foreign language education increased in all educational institutions in Turkey. Ministry of National Education and Universities have carried out and implemented studies on pre-school language education, curriculum, language teaching methods, and foreign language teacher education within the scope of language education. Undoubtedly, academic studies on foreign language teaching play an active role for a successful language education. In this study, how Turkey's EU membership process is reflected in the doctoral theses on foreign language education published in 1987-2017 and how the research topics in doctoral theses changed with the start of the membership process were investigated. Document analysis technique was used in the research. Since the universe was used as a sample in the study, it is a study of complete inventory. 58 doctoral theses were examined. They were analyzed in terms of titles. Practical and concrete proposals related to foreign language teaching in Turkey were presented in accordance with the results obtained in the light of findings of the research. The study shows that with the effect of the Turkey's accession process to European Union full membership, research topics in doctoral dissertations have changed and focal points in PhD theses were determined as foreign language teaching, Creative writing skills, Creative thinking skills, Understanding By Design, Mobile Multimedia Support, Web based Foreign Language Teaching, Detailing Theory, Intercultural Communication.*

**Keywords:** Turkey, European Union, Foreign Language Education, Doctoral theses.

<sup>1</sup> This study is based on my doctoral thesis 'Holistic Analysis of Postgraduate Theses on Foreign Language Teaching in Turkey with Actor Technic Perspective.'

## Türkiye'nin Avrupa Birliği'ne Geçiş Sürecinin Türkiye'de Yabancı Dil Öğretimi Üzerine Yazılan Doktora Tezlerine Yansıması 1987-2017

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### Öz

*Avrupa Birliği, 20.yüzyılın en önemli siyasi ve sosyal entegrasyonudur. AB üyesi ülkeler, sadece ekonomi alanında değil, sosyal, kültürel ve siyasal ve eğitim alanlarında ortak politikalar geliştirmek için çalışmalar yürütmüşlerdir. Avrupa Birliği üyesi ülkelerde, yabancı dil öğretimi, eğitim alanındaki en önemli başlıklardan biridir. Avrupa Birliği genişleme sürecine Türkiye'yi de aday ülke olarak kabul etmiştir.2005 yılında başlayan AB tam üyelik süreci ile beraber Türkiye'deki tüm eğitim kurumlarında yabancı dil eğitimine önem artmıştır. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı ve Yüksek Öğretim Kurumuna bağlı Üniversiteler, dil eğitimi kapsamında, okul öncesi dil eğitimi, müfredat, dil öğretim metodları, yabancı dil öğretmeni eğitimi başlıklarında çalışmalar yapmış ve hayata geçirmişlerdir. Yabancı dil öğretimi konusunda yapılan akademik çalışmalar, hiç şüphesiz, başarılı bir dil eğitimi için etkin rol oynamaktadır. Bu çalışmada, Türkiye'nin AB üyelik sürecinin Türkiye'de yabancı dil eğitimi üzerine 1987-2017 arası yapılan doktora tezlerine nasıl yansıdığı, tezlerdeki konuların üyelik sürecinin başlanması ile nasıl değişiklik gösterdiği araştırılmıştır. Araştırma'da doküman analizi tekniği kullanılmıştır. Çalışmada evren, örneklem olarak kullanıldığından, araştırma bir tam sayım çalışmasıdır. 58 doktora tezi incelenmiştir. Tezler, araştırma konuları açısından incelenmiştir. Analizler doğrultusunda sonuçlar tartışılıp elde edilen bulguların ışığında Türkiye'deki yabancı dil öğretimi ile ilgili araştırma ve uygulamaya dönük somut öneriler sunulmuştur. Bu çalışma, Avrupa Birliği tam üyelik sürecinde yabancı dil öğretimi ile ilgili doktora tezlerinde araştırma alanları değişmiş ve odaklanılan konuların, yaratıcı düşünme ve yazma becerileri, Anlama temelli Tasarım, Taşınabilir Multi-media desteği, Web tabanlı Yabancı Dil Öğretimi, Ayrıntılama Teorisi, kültürlerarası iletişim olduğunu tespit edilmiştir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türkiye, Avrupa Birliği, Yabancı Dil Eğitimi, Doktora Tezleri.

## Introduction

The 20th century witnessed great changes in the social, economic and political lives of countries with the impact of dazzling developments in science and technology. In the balance of power in the world, European countries started economic cooperation after the second world war and established the European Coal and Steel Community. Founded by West Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy and Luxembourg, this community has today transformed into the European Union, a multinational community that includes social, cultural and political dimensions as well as its economic dimension (Sağlam, 2017).

European Union that the way to become a stronger union was through enlargement and accepted 'Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Malta and GCASC' (Çakmak, 2006, p.84) to full membership. Turkey wanted the modernization process inherited from the Ottoman Empire to be crowned with EU membership and political, social, military and took concrete steps in the field of law, policy, military, social life and education. EU desired to see Turkey in this organization with its young population, important geographical position and dynamic economy. EU - Turkey relations which started in 1963 reached a critical stage in 2004. In December 17, 2004 the European Council, at the final declaration of the summit in Brussels, declared that Turkey fulfilled the Copenhagen political criteria to start full membership negotiations (Sayın, 2016, p.48).

One of the issues that the European Union particularly dwells upon is education. The opportunities offered by the EU in the field of education are international education, vocational education, exchange programs, innovative education and training programs, the use of new technologies in education and the mutual recognition of diplomas, a network of academicians and a consultation platform for professional expertise, comparison and policy making (Cansever, 2009). In addition to ensuring economic, social and political integration, the European Union has provided economic support to member countries to implement Comenius School Projects among European Union countries in order to establish common educational goals, to consolidate peace by establishing European Citizenship, and to ensure employment within the Union in the long term (Kulaksız, 2010

P.8) As all other European Union member states, Turkey, to solve the problems of the education system and better quality of discourse globally to establish an educational system and policies, has restructured the education system at all levels with the human and financial support of various supranational organizations like EU, OECD and World Bank, actors of globalization since 2003. First of all, the teaching programs / curriculums were renewed on the axis of constructivism, student-centered education and multiple intelligences (Çelik, 2012). Besides, the competencies and skills aimed to be acquired by students with the curriculum are as follows: communication in mother tongue, communication in foreign languages, mathematics competence, science and technology competence, digital competence, learning to learn, taking initiative and entrepreneurship perception, social and public competencies, cultural awareness (MEB, 2017, p.8).

With the effect of European Union accession process and globalization, Turkey conceived that its social development and progress lie in scientific studies and strong communication with outer world and took concrete steps in higher and secondary, primary education to provide effective foreign language education. It made arrangements in language teaching methods, foreign language teacher training, foreign language course hours and teaching materials. In Turkey's EU accession process, foreign language education program was revised in 2005 and changes have been made in terms of aims, content, teaching-learning process and evaluation. The changes in this program have been influenced by the constructivist philosophy. In this context, subject-based language learning such as mathematics, geography and music, cooperative learning and drama practices, and performance-based assessment programs were encouraged to make foreign language education more effective (Sağlam, 2011).

Various academic studies on language teaching in Turkey have been done in language departments of Turkish universities in order to contribute to language education in Turkey and literature. In particular, with the effect of EU vision, language studies have been given great significance. This study explores what areas doctoral theses on foreign language teaching center upon, what research topics have been given emphasis after 2004, when EU-Turkey full membership process started, what topics can be worked on for further academic studies.

## Literature Review

This section involves recent reviews about Turkey-EU relations and the effects of Turkey-EU relations on Turkish education system.

### **Turkey's Accession Process to European Union Membership and its Effects on Turkey's Education System**

European Union was founded in 1993 to integrate European countries to protect, sustain and empower EU member countries' economy in the competitive global economy. Schuller (2009) states that The Lisbon Agenda (2000) established for the European Union the goal to become the most competitive economy in the world in 2010. European people were also concerned about security and defense. So it is also called a political union. The goals and values of the EU can be stated as;

- promote peace, its values and the well-being of its citizens
- offer freedom, security and justice without internal borders
- sustainable development based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive market economy with full employment and social progress, and environmental protection
- combat social exclusion and discrimination
- promote scientific and technological progress
- enhance economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity among EU countries
- respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity
- establish an economic and monetary union whose currency is the Euro (The EU in Brief, 2019).

One of the countries aiming at joining the EU membership is Turkey for its goal, as other EU member countries, is to develop social, economic and cultural lives of the citizens by making improvements in all its organizations and law. The best way for Turkey to make structural and management reforms was to take EU as a model. So, Turkey started negotiations for full membership with EU in 2005.

When Turkey's accession process to EU is analysed, it goes without saying that Turkey has shown a significant performance in adopting EU

membership principles. EU Brussels Summit held on 17-18 June 2004, including comprehensive constitutional amendment held in May, Turkey's reform process, which welcomed the progress made so far and the Turkish government has received the support of their efforts in this direction (Özer, 2009, p.97). Within the context of EU membership, Turkey fulfilled the commitment about the 26th chapter related to education and culture. With this chapter, EU 'envisages to promote cooperation within the framework of common policies such as, increasing the quality of education, educational attainment, employability, cultural dialogue, preserving the cultural richness, common cultural heritage and to strengthen and support cooperation activities between member states' (Chapter-26-Education and Culture, 2020).

European Union aims to have a well educated European youth and community. That is why, this organization produced new policies about education. European Union pinpoints ' the quality and efficiency of life-long learning and mobility, equity and citizenship, innovation and creativity' (Miller, 2017, p.23). As an important EU candidate country, Turkey also took decisive actions to provide good education with its young population in accordance with EU education goals. In that respect, Ministry of National Education and Higher Education 'aims to cooperate in multinational education, training and youth activities, foreign education and exchange opportunities, innovative education and training project opportunities, creating academic and vocational expertise networks, implementing a common vocational education policy and spreading vocational education 'within the framework of relations with the EU' (Kulaksız, 2010 p.76). In particular, foreign language teaching was of crucial importance for The Council of Europe for 'English has an undisputed economic usefulness in the European labour market' (Gazzola, 2016, p.7). European Union dwells on the significance of English language in intercultural communication for 'the teaching of English, and of all linguistic varieties in the same position, should be dealt with specifically, in particular with respect to its functions in plurilingual education and intercultural communication' (Language Policy Division, 2007, p.30). EU also urges member countries to provide foreign language education for preschool

children. It is stated in Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment;

'The Council of Europe recognised the importance of the life-long provision for language learning for all at an early stage. In a series of projects over many years it has provided a forum for all those involved in policy making to come together with teachers, teacher trainers and support services to formulate policies and translate them into concrete objectives and practical ways of achieving them. The Council helps member states to implement reforms and encourages innovation in language teaching and teacher training. In general, it facilitates the pooling of international experience and expertise, and promotes a coherent, learner-centred methodology which integrates aims, content, teaching, learning and assessment in a harmonious approach based on common principles. The Council of Europe attaches considerable importance to promoting linguistic diversity in Europe and has assisted member states in producing planning instruments to promote the teaching of almost thirty national and regional languages' (Bailly, S and Devitt, S and Gremmo, MJ ed.2001, p.7).

Turkish education policy, curriculum design and foreign language education have undergone remarkable changes for the last two decades. Second language teaching in Turkey started to be taught at fourth grade in 1998 and lowered to second class at primary school in the 2013-2014 academic year. The weekly course schedule of the primary education institutions (elementary and junior high schools) was changed with the decision of the Board of Education of Ministry of Education, dated 25 June 2012 and numbered 69. The weekly course schedules of primary education institutions (primary and secondary) started to be applied gradually starting from the fifth grade (Demir, 2020). With the acceptance of the lifelong Learning Strategy, Bologna Process, National Youth and Sports Policy Paper, UNESCO Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, Bologna Process, Multilingualism and Cultural Right, Institute of Living Languages, Turkey has transformed its education system in the positive way. Turkish students, teachers and academics have had the chance to join Erasmus programmes. In that way, they broaden their horizon in different European countries by interacting with the teaching staff and students from different parts of the world.

## EU Membership and Turkish Higher Education

Global economy demands innovation, knowledge, know-how, well-informed students from universities in the world. European Union has made considerable investment in education from pre-schooling to university and doctoral levels to secure its position in the competitive global economy and implemented Bologna process which 'has expanded into a number of areas to promote the European Higher Education Area. It is also now linked to the "Lisbon Strategy" or "Lisbon Agenda", which was signed in 2000 by the heads of governments of the European Union during the Portuguese presidency, and which aims to promote growth and employment in Europe in order to transform the European Union into the most competitive economy in the world by 2010' (Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association, 2008). Higher education is crucial for European Union for production of knowledge brings prosperity. Mazza (2008, p.49) stresses that having traditionally been at the core of knowledge production within nation states, they are expected to play a role tomorrow in the ambitious move towards a European knowledge economy. Bologna process is so significant for the improvements of higher education in all European countries and EU member countries in terms of producing knowledge and students and academics' interaction with EU students and academics as Navracsics (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice,2015) states;

'Education has a pivotal role to play in helping them find their place in the labour market and society as a whole, and the Bologna Process must contribute to that. Its continued development, especially of its social dimension, is essential to the future prosperity, wellbeing and sustainability of our higher education systems and societies. The Bologna Process has created a space for dialogue and cooperation which reaches far beyond Europe' (Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association, 2008).

Turkish National Education and Council of Higher Education determined their education strategy in EU Bologna process and took concrete steps to meet the expectations of Turkish state, the young generation and companies. For the last decade, when the financing of higher education in Turkey is analysed, it is noteworthy that Turkey has made great effort to



support tertiary education as it is emphasized in Bologna Process implementation report: 'Countries that have different levels of GDP per capita and annual expenditure per student make a similar relative financial effort towards tertiary education. For instance, Turkey spends slightly more than 50 % of its GDP per capita on each tertiary student which is nearly as much as Denmark and slightly more than Sweden while its GDP per capita and annual expenditure per student are less than half of the one in these two countries in 2011' (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015, p.44).

Turkey's accession process to EU membership also affected language course contents and academic research areas in foreign language education at master's and doctoral levels. This study examines how research topics in doctoral theses have changed by years, in particular, from 2005 to 2017 and what topics are placed more emphasis in these theses.

## **Methodology of the Research**

Document analysis technique was used with the support of quality research technique. Document analysis is a qualitative research method used to diligently and systematically analyze the content of written documents (Wach, 2013, as cited in Kiral, p.4 2020). Document analysis is a systematic method used to examine and evaluate all documents, both printed and electronic materials. Like other methods used in qualitative research, document analysis requires the analysis and interpretation of data in order to make sense, create an understanding about the relevant topic, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, as cited in Kiral, 2020). YOK (Higher Education Council of Turkey) Thesis Database was be used for data collection. Population is comprised of 58 doctoral thesis on foreign language teaching published between 1987-2017. As the thesis study started as of the end of 2017, it is aimed to determine the changes in the historical process of doctoral theses subjects and academic studies in the field of foreign language education by considering a 30-year period from the most recent data back to 1987. Research is a study of complete inventory for population sample in this study. Sample properties are shown in Table 1. Research is a study of complete inventory for population sample in this study. Sample properties are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Sample Properties**

Years	PhD Thesis
2017	2
2016	3
2015	3
2014	2
2013	5
2012	3
2011	4
2010	4
2009	3
2008	3
2007	1
2006	1
2005	0
2004	3
2003	5
2002	3
2001	3
2000	0
1999	5
1998	1
1997	0
1996	1
1995	1
1994	0
1993	1
1992	0
1991	0
1990	0
1989	0
1988	1
1987	0
Total	58

As shown in Table 1, 58 doctoral theses on language teaching were conducted between 1987 and 2017. According to the table, it is seen that the number of doctoral theses on language teaching increased significantly between 2004 and 2017. This situation can be associated with the increase in importance to higher education and doctoral studies with the start of the EU process.

## Findings Related to the Titles of Doctoral Theses

The findings related to the titles of PhD theses on foreign language teaching in Turkey between 1987-2017 are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Titles of PhD Theses on Foreign Language Education by Years.**

Year	Title
1988	Programmatic Teaching in Second Language Teaching
1993	Comparison of the Principles and Techniques applied in Foreign Language Teaching in Private Secondary Education Institutions in terms of some Variables
1995	New Trends in Second Language Teaching and Teaching French in Turkey
1996	Communicative Approach to Foreign Language Teaching and Effect of Grammar-Translation Method on Student Achievement
1998	Literature Teaching with Deconstruction and Semiotics Approaches in the Classes of Foreign Language Education: Short Stories and Two Novels of D. H. Lawrence
1999	Teaching EFL Through English or Content: Implications for Second Language Learning
1999	Comparison of the Effect of Modular Teaching Method and Second Language Teaching on the Success of Students in Second Language Teaching (F.Ü. Technical Education Faculty)
1999	Acquisition of Reading Comprehension Skills in Second Language Teaching
1999	The Problem of Educational Policy in Second Language Teaching and a New Approach
1999	Causes of Anxiety in Speaking and Writing Lessons in Second Language Learning
2001	Research on the Effect of Anxiety on Foreign Language Teaching
2001	An Evaluation of Foreign Language Teaching in terms of some Variables at an Early Age
2001	The Relationship between Collaboration and Professional Development: Possible Effects of EFL Student Teacher/Supervising Teacher Dialogue on the Belief and Instructional Practices of the EFL Supervising Teachers
2002	Textbook Proposal for Teachers and Students for the Lesson, 'Approaches in Second Language Teaching in English Language Teaching Departments of Education Faculties.'
2002	Short Story Analysis with Structuralist Method in Foreign Language Teaching
2002	Learning Strategies and Foreign Language Teaching at an Early Age in Turkish Education: The Case of Galatasaray
2003	Foreign Language Teaching and Reflections after Structuralism
2003	(in German) Computer Usage Areas and Possibilities in Second Language Teaching
2003	The Place and Importance of Drama in Foreign Language Teaching
2003	Case Study about an Autistic Child Learning a Foreign Language
2003	Action-Oriented Approach to Children in Foreign Language Teaching
2004	Relationship between Personality and Language Learning and Teaching
2004	The Linguistic Examination of Idioms in Modern Arabic and its Place in Foreign Language Teaching

**Table 2. Titles of PhD Theses on Foreign Language Education by Years.**

Year	Title
2004	Learning Styles of Student-Teacher in English Language Teaching Departments in Some Faculties of Education with respect to Foreign Language Learning and Teaching
2006	The Effects of "Clustering" Written Expression Technique on Student Attitude and Success in Achieving Second Language Teaching
2007	Implications of Second Language Learning in terms of Turkey's Cultural Integration into the EU: A Survey Study on EFL Learners in Turkey
2008	Application of Alternative Methods in Foreign Language Teaching with German Literary Texts
2008	Foreign Language Learning at early ages: A Study on Factors Affecting Foreign Language Learning of Preschool Children
2008	French Text and Discourse Analysis in Foreign Language Teaching: Reading Methods for Non-Literary Texts
2009	The Effect of European Union Accession Process, the EU General Education Policy and EU Foreign Language Policies on Second Language Education and Policies in Turkey
2009	The Effects of Creative Writing on Success and Writing in Foreign Language Teaching
2009	According to Detailing Theory, the Effect of Materials on Students' Academic Achievement and Retention of Learning in Foreign Language Learning
2010	The Effect of Mother Tongue on Foreign Language Learning and Success as a Motivation Factor
2010	The Effect of Foreign Language Education and Mother Tongue Education Starting at the Same Time on the Basic Language Skills of Primary School First Grade Students
2010	The Effect of Formative Assessment on Learners' Test Anxiety and Assessment Preferences in EFL Context
2010	Speech Act in Foreign Language Teaching
2011	Level of Realization of Affective objectives of Primary School First Grade Foreign Language Teaching Programs about Foreign Language Education to Students
2011	Evaluation of Design and Application Process of Computer Programs Used in Foreign Language Teaching
2011	Learning Objects in Web-Based Foreign Language Teaching (Effect on Achievement, Persistence and Attitudes)
2011	An Investigation into the Implementation of Alternative Assessment in the Young Learner Classroom

**Table 2: Titles of PhD Theses on Foreign Language Education by Years.**

Year	Title
2012	The place of Idioms in Turkish and German in Daily Communication and their Reflections on Foreign Language Teaching
2012	Relationship Between Anxiety, Shyness, Strategy and Academic Success in Second Language Learning
2012	The Effect of Mobile Multimedia Support for Printed Materials on Vocabulary Learning and Motivation in Second Language Teaching
2013	Function of Translation in Second Language Teaching
2013	The Place of Written Expression in New Approaches to Foreign Language Teaching in French: Implementation of Common European Framework of Reference for Language Education and Action-Oriented Approach for Languages
2013	Intercultural Reading and Developing Reading Skills in Intercultural Interactive Second Language Teaching
2013	The Effect of Differentiated Second Language Teaching on Achievement, Critical Thinking and Creativity in Gifted Students
2013	Improving Preservice English Language Teachers' ICT Skills and Developing Positive Attitudes towards the Use of Technology in Language Teaching Through an Online Course
2014	Silence in Foreign Language Learning: Analysis of Risk Taking Behaviors of Students of English Class as a Foreign language education: A Case Study of Atatürk University English Language Teaching Program
2014	Anxiety on Learning Turkish as a Second Language and The Effect of Anxiety on Foreign Language Achievement
2015	An Investigation into the Applicability of Chomsky's Cognitive Language Approach to Foreign Language Education
2015	The Effect of Model-Based Lesson on Writing Skills in Foreign Language Teaching
2015	The Effects of Vocabulary Building with Emotion- Based Memory Strategies and Practices on Performance and Acquiring Levels of Students in Foreign Language Teaching
2016	Investigation about the Effects of Ubd (Understanding Based Design) Practices Based on Action Research in Foreign Language Teaching on Teachers and Students
2016	Investigating Factors Related to the Use of Self-Regulated L2 Learning Strategies in a Second Language Education Context
2016	Investigation of the Effect of Authentic Task Oriented Applications on Foreign Language Education
2017	Intercultural Communication in Foreign Language Teaching: Examinations of Teachers' Views in Turkey and France Case Studies
2017	Teaching and Learning of Vocabulary in Primary Schools for Teaching French as a Second Language according to EU Common Application Text

According to Table 2, when the titles of the doctoral theses prepared in the foreign language education are examined, foreign language education and foreign language learning are the concepts clearly presented in all of the titles of the dissertations prepared between 1987 and 2003. However, these concepts are not seen in all of the titles of

the doctoral theses prepared between 2004-2017. On the other hand, teaching methods and techniques, current approaches in foreign language education and new trends, what students benefit from foreign language learning, foreign language education in early age, second language education for individuals in need of special education, culture in second language education, factors affecting learning, foreign language learning, anxiety, personality, learning styles and shyness concepts are used in the titles of doctoral theses. It is observed that in doctoral theses, studies on the transition process to European Union in foreign language education started to be conducted in 2005. The issues that are examined in doctoral theses have changed with the effect of Turkey-EU membership negotiations. These issues are;

- Creative writing skills
- Creative thinking skills
- Understanding By Design
- Mobile Multimedia Support
- Web based Foreign Language Teaching
- Detailing Theory
- Intercultural Communication

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Member countries of European Union have common educational objectives. In the membership process to EU, Turkey took decisive steps and made regulations in all areas, such as science, research, financial control, food security, energy, foreign policies, agriculture, laws of companies. Education is a primary issue for EU countries and Turkey for being a society of knowledge is the key of prosperity and civilization. Turkey has made significant improvements in all the organizations to meet the requirements of EU education chapter and made rearrangement in the lesson programmes. The pivotal points of EU education policies are critical thinking, creativity, competence in digital education, use of technology, communication skills, entrepreneurship, constructivism, student-centered education and multiple intelligences theory and foreign language education. As stated in this study, ministry of Turkish national education and

higher education took these concepts into consideration and scheduled new courses in the new Turkish educational program. In particular, foreign language teaching in Turkey as in EU member countries is a significant issue which the educators, academics, and the ministry of National Education work on. Turkey changed curriculum and rearranged weekly language course hours. Lifelong Education programmes have been implemented by Higher Education and Ministry of National Education, which give teachers and student opportunities to learn European culture and practice English and other European languages.

Postgraduate studies on foreign language education in Turkey have gained more importance for these studies bring solutions for the problems in foreign language education in Turkey and provide useful insight for effective foreign language education. When the reflections of Turkey's accession process to EU membership on doctoral theses related to foreign language education are analysed, the published doctoral theses on foreign language teaching in Turkey after 2004 center upon the learner, the use of technology, current approaches, alternative methods and techniques for better and more effective second language learning and teaching, and communication. European Union gives importance to the use of communication in learning a foreign language, intercultural communication and foreign language education for preschool children. In the study, it is found out that there are doctoral studies on intercultural communication and language education at early ages.

Pre-school education is a crucial period in terms of language acquisition. In this period, children should receive foreign language education for they can learn more quickly, easily and permanently. It can be seen that the child's being in an environment full of language rich stimuli, the interaction of peers and playing various games help him/her easily acquire language. This study shows that there is one doctoral thesis on foreign language learning in preschool education in Turkey, which was published in 2008 'Foreign Language Learning at early ages: A Study on Factors Affecting Foreign Language Learning of Preschool Children.' It is obvious that there have not been any academic research on the proficiency and motivation of language teachers in pre-school education.

Successful foreign language teaching lies in using creative and critical thinking skills effectively. In foreign language classes, students tend to avoid asking questions. Learners' being critical thinkers help them activate their communicative competence and performance. As mentioned in the article, one of the main points in foreign language education European Union attaches importance is critical thinking in foreign language education. In this study, it was found out that the when doctoral theses published in Turkey are examined, there is one doctoral thesis on critical thinking in foreign language education, which was published in 2013: 'The Effect of Differentiated Foreign Language Teaching on the Effect of Learning Level, Critical Thinking and Creativity of Gifted Students.' There is a need to explore foreign language acquisition with critical thinking technique at the primary education level. Doctoral theses on foreign language education in Turkey are focused only on undergraduate students, gifted students and high school students.

In conclusion, this study specifically explored how Turkey's EU full membership process affected doctoral studies on foreign language education and what research topics in doctoral theses related to foreign language education academics worked on between 1987 and 2017. It is clear that the number of doctoral theses on language teaching increased significantly between 2004 and 2017. This situation can be associated with the increase in importance to higher education and doctoral studies with the start of the EU process. This study shows that In Turkey's transition process to EU membership, the research topics in doctoral theses on foreign language teaching mostly focused on are creative writing skills, creative thinking skills, Understanding by design, Mobile Multimedia Support, Web-based Foreign language teaching, Detailing Theory, Intercultural Communication.

The following topics can also be suggested for further academic studies:

- The effects of Lifelong Learning Programmes on the language acquisition of Turkish students and teachers.
- The effects of Bologna process on English proficiency levels of University students in Turkey



- Comparison between foreign language education of EU member developing countries and Turkey in terms of actors ( students and teachers)
- Transformative language learning In Europe and its applicability in Turkey
- Digital language education in Europe and Turkey.

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