




A Comparison of English Language Teacher Education Programs in Poland And Turkey¹

Polonya ve Türkiye'deki İngilizce Öğretmeni Yetiştirme Programlarının Karşılaştırılması

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Öz. Günümüz dünyasında İngilizce'nin iletişim dili olarak rolü ve önemi tartışılmaz bir boyuttadır. Ancak ülkemizde İngilizce'nin iletişim dili olarak kullanımı hala istenilen uluslararası standartlara ulaşamamıştır. Ülke genelinde İngilizce yeterlik düzeyinin düşük olmasında, İngilizce öğretmeni yetiştirme sistemimizdeki bazı eksikliklerin rolü bulunmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye ve Polonya'daki İngilizce öğretmeni yetiştirme sistemlerini tartışarak, benzerlik ve farklılıkları ortaya çıkarmak ve her iki ülke için önerilerde bulunmaktır. Bu amaçla, Türkiye ve Polonya'da İngilizce öğretmeni yetiştiren iki üniversitede hâlihazırda uygulanmakta olan öğretmen yetiştirme programları karşılaştırmalı olarak ele alınmıştır. Çalışmanın ilk bölümünde, İngilizce'nin Polonya ve Türkiye'deki statüsü sosyal ve eğitimsel bağlamda tartışılmıştır. Çalışmanın ikinci bölümünde, Türkiye'den Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, İngilizce Öğretmenliği bölümü öğretmen yetiştirme programı ile Polonya'dan Adam Mickiewicz Üniversitesi'nin İngilizce öğretmen yetiştirme programları tartışılmıştır. Son bölümde ise her iki ülkede uygulanan sistemler karşılaştırmalı olarak ele alınmıştır. Bu incelemenin, iyi uygulamaların ortaya çıkmasına ve her iki ülkede, özellikle ülkemizde, uygulanan İngilizce öğretmen yetiştirme programlarının iyileştirilmesine yardımcı olacağı düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İngilizce öğretmenliği, Eğitim sistemleri, Türkiye, Polonya

Abstract. In today's world, the English language has secured its role as a lingua franca. Yet, it is hard to claim that the English proficiency level in Turkey has reached the international standards. It is clear that some weaknesses of English language teacher education programs in the country have a role in these low levels of English proficiency. The aim of the current study is to discuss English language teacher education programs in Turkey and Poland, with a focus on the similarities and differences of the educational systems. The first part of the study discusses the social and historical background of the status of the English language in society and in the educational system in both countries. In the second part of the study, the current English language teacher education programs at Dokuz Eylul University in Izmir, Turkey and Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland are presented. The objective of the third part of the study is to compare and contrast the main differences and similarities between the programs and define the potential factors influencing the programs in both countries. It is expected that the best practices identified will lead to better English language teacher education programs for both countries, especially for Turkey.

Keywords: English teachers, Education systems, Turkey, Poland

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Introduction

The role of the teacher in every community is vital. After all, the teacher is the person who is responsible for presenting knowledge to future generations. In many cases, such as the study of foreign languages, the teacher is the only person who represents a foreign language and culture to students. In this sense, quality teacher education is of vital importance for better generations and an essential part of the preparation of future teachers for their profession.

The current study discusses English language teacher education from two different perspectives, Polish and Turkish, and focuses on similarities and differences in order to find good experiences and learn from each practice. The study is the result of the cooperation of two scholars representing two different universities from two different countries: Dokuz Eylul University in Izmir, Turkey and Adam-Mickiewicz-University in Poznań, Poland. The study consists of three parts. In the first part, the social and historical background of the status of the English language in society and in the educational system in both countries is highlighted. This foundation is the basis for reflection in the second part of the paper, where the example of the English language teacher education program at Dokuz Eylul University in Izmir, Turkey and Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland are presented. The objective of the third part of the paper is to compare and contrast the main differences and similarities between the programs and define the potential factors influencing the programs in both countries. In the conclusion, the best practices of the education programs from both countries will be highlighted, as will the future perspectives for both programs.

Poland – the status of the English language in society and education

The English language has reinforced its position in Poland after the transformation period of 1989. Therefore, after years of isolation and the strong influence of communism, Poland finally gained the opportunity to open its borders to Western culture and goods. The most visible sign of this trend took the form of the rising popularity of Western music, films, and literature, especially from English-speaking countries. Along with this intellectual property, the English language also started to spread immediately, partially as a sign of protest against the former system (Kasztalska 2014, p.242).

Since then, the use of the English language both in private and professional life has increased dramatically. According to the figures published by Główny Urząd Statystyczny (2016), 95% of students attending primary and secondary schools in Poland learned English in the school year of 2015/2016. According to the EF English Proficiency survey, Poland has been ranked ninth out of 26 countries in Europe for knowledge of and proficiency in the English language (with a score of 61.49 points out of 100). The results of the survey also indicate the immediate relationship between quality of life and knowledge of the English language. Interestingly, there is still a discrepancy between teaching languages in villages and in bigger cities, which is visible in the example of the results of the English-language exam that is obligatory for twelve-year-old middle-school students. The results varied from 62-74 points (out of 80).

In Poland, as a result of the free flow of human resources in the European Union, many people have migrated to foreign countries. For many Poles, Great Britain has become a new home. In 2013, the number of Polish migrants in Great Britain numbered 650,000 (Byczek 2014, p. 127). This factor has also contributed to the growing interest in learning English among adults in Poland, both to have a better start in a foreign country and also to be able to visit one's relatives abroad. English also dominates the professional sector. First of all, this is a consequence of globalization and the fact that many international companies have set up their premises in Poland. In many Polish companies, English has become the official internal corporate language, not only for verbal communication, but also for written communication. Second, the EU accession has resulted in a density of international contacts and trade exchange with foreign companies that has forced the business sector in Poland to extend its use of English. Finally, it is worth mentioning that the latest inventions and technological novelties function mainly in English. So logically, understanding English means having access to the best

technology. All of these reasons have laid the foundation for the increasing specialization of English learning needs in Poland, which are not only limited to institutional education, but are also extended to life-long learning.

In Poland, compulsory education starts at the age of seven. Pupils stay in primary school for eight years (a new reform introduced by the Polish government in 2017). The obligatory foreign language class starts in the first class with two units forty-five minutes a week. The minimum number of hours in the three-year period is 190, and this has been compulsory since 2015 (Smoczyńska 2014, p. 34). Starting from the fourth grade, school children have three units of forty-five minutes in a foreign language. The compulsory skills that must be acquired in order to complete primary education are “communication skills in the mother tongue and in a foreign language, including both speaking and writing skills” (Smoczyńska 2014, p. 31). Currently, the Polish educational system is in the middle of a transformation as it is resigning from the lower secondary school (lasting three years with the minimum number of foreign language classes being 290 and external assessment based on the national examination standards).

From 2017, the enrolment in mid-secondary schools has been discontinued, and this institutional form is gradually being closed down. Lower secondary school ended with an obligatory written final examination which could be taken at either the A2 or A2+ level of proficiency. The results of this high-stakes examination played an important role in the upper secondary school enrolment procedure. The number of hours foreseen for two foreign languages in the mid-secondary school for the three-year period was 450. Interestingly, the number of units for each language was up to the headmaster’s discretion. The lower secondary schools will be replaced by a longer primary school lasting eight years, with the secondary school prolonged to four years (when it used to only last three years). Foreign language courses are an obligatory part of students’ curricula at the universities in Poland. Students choose a foreign language (the most popular is English) and attend the course focused on the specific field for the faculty they are studying. Foreign language courses usually cover thirty units per semester (the length of each unit is forty-five minutes) during three terms. The level of the students finishing the course should be B2.

Turkey– the status of the English language in society and education

As the main language of contact throughout the world, the English language is increasingly important on a macroeconomic as well as on an individual level both in the world and in Turkey. Besides its function as a means of communication among different cultures, it is vital for a country’s innovation capacity, academic advancement, exports, and key sectors such as tourism. Consequently, with the educational reform in 1997, English has become a compulsory school subject in schools from 4th grade onwards (Bayyurt, 2006). Today, more families in Turkey most likely aspire to send their children to private school than anywhere else in the country for a better English language learning environment (Bayyurt, 2013).

However, according to ETS statistics, with an average TOEFL score of 77 in 2011, Turkey is ranked 34th, which is not sufficient enough for Turkish academics to follow the recent developments in the literature in their area of expertise. Let alone academia, more than 30% of jobs in Turkey require a working knowledge of English (British Council, TEPAV Report, 2013). Besides, as the sixth most popular tourist destination in the world, attracting more than 30 million tourists annually (<http://www.invest.gov.tr>), Turkey needs more and more English speaking individuals to employ in the tourism sector.

Turkey is constantly ranking very low on various measures of English language speaking. For instance, according to the 2015 English Proficiency Index (EPI) developed by English First, Turkey, with very low proficiency, ranks 51st out of 72 countries (<http://www.ef.com.tr/epi/>). Sadly, more than 95 percent of Turkish students cannot respond to questions spoken in English, even after almost 1,000+ hours (estimated at the end of grade 12) in the classroom to learn the language. This disappointing picture mainly results from the case that English is taught as a subject, not as a language of communication in state schools. Students do not learn how to communicate and function

independently in English in the present “grammar-based”, “teacher-centric” and “exam-oriented” approach (British Council, TEPAV Report, 2013).

Considering the potential and dynamism observed across the nation of Turkey and the worldwide status of English today, the government has taken some radical steps in order to make a difference in the current status of English language education in the country. With the introduction of 12-year compulsory education (4+4+4) in 2012 along with the early introduction of foreign language instruction from the 2nd grade, rather than the 4th grade, the efforts have increased to review and reform the teaching and learning of foreign languages, especially English, in the Turkish state school system.

In July, 2017, the program for English language education was revised in accordance with the general objectives of Turkish National Education as defined in the Basic Law of the National Education No.1739, along with the main principles of Turkish National Education. Basically, the previous program was updated in line with the pedagogic philosophy of both basic skills and values education with a basic focus on language use in an authentic communicative environment. Based on an action-oriented approach, an eclectic mix of instructional strategies has been adopted to enable learners to learn English as a medium of communication, rather than a school subject. The new program serving both young learners and adolescents has been prepared in accordance with the cognitive and social characteristics of both groups, with special emphasis on speaking and listening in the beginning level.

All in all, as a country recognizing the importance of the English language as a lingua franca of the world languages, Turkey has implemented various methods and approaches and revised curricula many times to teach it more effectively to its citizens. Yet, the efforts so far have not resulted in expected success. Therefore, it is crucial to explore, understand and reflect upon the components of the English language education system in Turkey in order to overcome the long-standing challenges.

Method

The following research is based on the comparative analysis of the formal documents, that is, the programs designed for English language teacher education in both countries. This forms the starting point for the comparative analysis and the formulation of conclusions for examples of the best practices. According to Glaser and Straus (1967, as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 182), the documents offer a fantastic range of comparison groups, if only the researcher has the ingenuity to discover them. Therefore, we did a qualitative content analysis of the programs in order to assess the nature of the data grounded in the real world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The crucial part of the analysis is the background information concerning the teacher education systems in general. Therefore, the study inquires the following research questions:

1. Are there common points in English language teacher education programs in Turkey and Poland?
2. What differences are to notice in both programs?
3. How can both countries representing different educational systems learn from each other?

Findings

English language teacher education in Poland

English teacher education in Poland is carried out at universities, mainly in the Faculties of English Philology. Yet, it is also offered by other faculties at the Department of Philology, such as Applied Linguistics at Adam Mickiewicz-University in Poznań. The two mentioned options will serve as a basis for the analysis of the structure of teacher education curriculum in Poland, which is regulated

by the Ministry of Higher Education. Both possibilities prepare the graduates to teach English at school, but differences can certainly be observed between the two.

English Philology at Adam Mickiewicz University

The studies of English Philology are designed in a module form, which means students have a common module for each specialisation, including, among other things, integrated skills (first and second years: 120 hours each semester, split into writing, reading, communicative practice, and grammar; sixty hours in the first semester of the third year [integrated skills and writing] and ninety hours in the second semester of the third year [integrated skills, writing, and grammar]). Linguistic subjects like history of the English language and general linguistics, as well as cultural aspects of English-speaking countries, such as the history of England and the United States and the history of literature, also belong to the common module. Future teachers also participate in classes on translation theory. An important part of teacher education is to practice in different kinds of schools, providing students with practical knowledge about teaching. Practice is compulsory for each semester. Teacher education can also be continued by students during the MA program, the completion of which is necessary to receive the full rights to teach at every level. On the whole, teacher education does not only refer to developing teaching strategies and gaining experience in teaching at different educational stages, but also provides future teachers and educators with knowledge about voice emission and legal aspects of the job. In the teaching program at the English faculty, teaching English at the first stage of education is not included. (see Appendix 1 & 2)

Applied Linguistics

As an answer to multilingualism, which belongs to the main guidelines of the European Union, studies of applied linguistics prepare teachers of two foreign languages (German and English). Studies are also divided into modules. (see Appendix 3 & 4)

In summary, the specifics of the teaching program in Poland are as follows:

1. Theoretical knowledge is accompanied by practical knowledge as the result of pedagogy and teaching practice at different kinds of schools.
2. The teaching program involves not only teaching subjects, but also information about, for example, the legal aspects of the teaching profession, which should prepare students for the challenges of their future profession.
3. In order to answer the changing needs of the labor market, which is experiencing growth in the need of learning Languages for Specific Purposes, the subject of Teaching Languages for Specific Purposes has been introduced.

English language teacher education in Turkey

“When an educational system seems to fail in educating students with proper skills and of good level, the cause is often seen as being the quality of the education that teachers provide, which in turn, is also seen to reflect the quality of the education that these teachers have received” (Musset, 2010, p.12). Therefore, Turkey’s long-standing challenges of teaching English to its students seem to be strongly connected to the teacher education programs applied in the country.

There are 185 universities, 112 state and 68 foundation universities, in Turkey as of the 2016-2017 academic year. The number of education faculties is 89 and there are more than 60 education faculties that have the English Language Teaching (ELT) programs (<https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr>). Graduates of this program can work as English teachers in public schools if they get a sufficient score in the Civil Servant Selection Exam (KPSS). In this exam, prospective teachers are required to answer some questions from fields like mathematics, history and geography. In the second step, the ones successful in this exam are to do well on an oral exam to be teachers. Graduates of this four-year

program can also work in private schools, either at primary, secondary or high school levels. Besides ELT graduates, graduates of some programs such as English Language and Literature, American Culture and Literature, English Translation and Interpretation, and English Linguistics can be appointed as teachers if they hold a pedagogic formation certificate.

In Turkey, the length, course credits, course titles and general content of teacher education programs, including the ELT program, is set by the Higher Education Council (HEC). All ELT programs follow the same standardized curriculum, with some independence on the determination of courses, coursebooks, course materials and assessment systems. The current program which was prepared in accordance with the European Union teacher education policies has been in use since 2006. The ELT program, like other teacher education programs, includes courses on content knowledge and skills (50-60%), pedagogical content knowledge and skills (25-30%), and general knowledge ((15-20%) (HEC, 2006).

The first year in the program is mainly focused on improving language skills of pre-service teachers who have to adapt to the university life. This first year does not include any courses related to the English language teaching profession specifically. There are courses like Introduction to Education and Educational Psychology conducted in Turkish. Students who have just survived an extremely difficult and theory-based exam, that is, university entrance exam in Turkey, are expected to improve their language skills in this specific year. The second year in the program presents more professionally-oriented courses to acquaint pre-service teachers with subjects like English Literature, Language Acquisition and Linguistics. Besides courses on general knowledge and content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge is also partly developed through courses like Materials Design and Development. In the third year, pre-service teachers take courses like Testing and Evaluation, Classroom Management, Teaching English to Young Learners, Special Teaching Methods, Teaching Language Skills and Literature and Language Teaching, which are professionally oriented and contribute to their pedagogical content knowledge. Within this year, a course on Drama in Language Teaching is also offered as a compulsory course for students who may take advantage of using drama in the language classroom. At the senior level, pre-service teachers are required to observe classes at various levels (primary, secondary or high school) in various state schools. In the first term, they do not have to teach, but observe and report their observations to their supervisors in university. In the second term, they do teaching practice under the supervision of their mentors in school and supervisors in university. This one-term course (Teaching Practice) is the only course that allows them to see the classroom realities awaiting them.

On the whole, the program adopts an “applied-science model” since it first aims to introduce theoretical knowledge based on research findings and then expects pre-service teachers to absorb, apply and practice this knowledge in their teaching (Karakas, 2012). However, this model is rather context-free and tends to overgeneralize principles of teaching with limited hours allocated to classroom observation and teaching practice. There seems to be only one course that aims to develop pre-service teachers’ technological pedagogical content knowledge, which is a serious gap in the program. Another weakness of the program is that it lacks a component that allows for reflection and/or reflective practice. It is important that especially in the final year pre-service teachers are given the opportunity to reflect on their teaching practice experiences together with peers and supervisors. Furthermore, there is only one course focused on classroom management which is a serious obstacle novice teachers face in school (For detailed info about the program, please see the link http://bef.deu.edu.tr/ydi/?page_id=1307&lang=en).

Discussion and Conclusions

The comparison of the English language teacher education systems in Poland and Turkey is an interesting example of two different attitudes towards teaching, rooted in two different traditions. The value of the analysis is the common benefit resulting from the principle of learning from each other. Some of the common and contrasting points in both programs are presented in the table below.

Table1. Some common and contrasting points in English language teacher education programs in Turkey and Poland

	Poland	Turkey
Length	3-year program, starting with choice of specialization after the second year	4-year program
Rights to teaching after graduation	After BA, primary school and lower high school After MA, all types of schools	All types of schools
End of the program	MA written on subject connected with FLA teaching	Graduates of this program can work as English teachers in public schools if they receive a sufficient score in the Civil Servant Selection Exam followed by an oral exam
Compulsory practice in different types of schools	Yes	Compulsory practice is a one-term course at one type of school.

The analysis of the Polish and Turkish teacher education systems provides information on how English teachers are prepared for their work in both countries and highlights cultural and social factors influencing education in both countries. The implications that are worth considering for English language teacher education in Poland are:

- The introduction of a general exam like the Civil Servant Selection Exam (KPSS) in Turkey, which assesses the complex knowledge of the prospective teachers, seems to be valuable for the completion of the education program and to improve the quality of teaching standards.
- Implementing classes on School Management, as in Turkey, could be very useful, especially considering the different career paths of graduates of teacher education.
- There seems to be a good balance between the development of language skills and pedagogy skills in the English language teacher education program in Turkey. It is interesting how there are a variety of aspects offered in the form of separate courses, such as Special Education, which seems to be a very important field in each community. In addition, literature courses which combine teaching with literary analysis could be a good background for the preparation of educational materials based on authentic literary texts.

The implications that are worth considering for English language teacher education programs in Turkey are:

- In Turkey, English language teacher education program includes courses on content knowledge and skills (50-60%), pedagogical content knowledge and skills (25-30%), and general knowledge (15-20%) (HEC, 2006). The first year in the English language teacher education program in Turkey is almost completely devoted to developing English proficiency of prospective teachers. However, the program at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poland puts more emphasis on developing pedagogical content knowledge and skills through courses offered at the very beginning of the program than on developing content knowledge and skills.

This early focus on pedagogical content knowledge and skills in the program results from the fact that the education system in Poland, on the whole, already develops proficiency and literacy in English before prospective teachers start their university education.

- Although the focus on general knowledge in English language teacher education programs in Turkey is something positive, important issues that are handled in Poland such as Voice Emission, Legal Aspects of the Teaching Profession, Health and Safety in the Teaching Profession are not introduced to prospective English teachers in Turkey. The inclusion of similar courses into the program can enhance the quality of English language teaching practices in Turkey and contribute to better teaching and learning atmospheres in general.
- An important part of teacher education in Poland is to practice in different kinds of schools, providing students with practical knowledge about teaching in various contexts. Also, practice is compulsory in each semester. Yet, the program in Turkey is rather context-free and tends to overgeneralize principles of teaching with limited hours allocated to classroom observation and teaching practice. There is only one teaching practice course in the final term, which is a serious gap in the program, as supported by Akdemir (2013) and Şendağ and Gedik (2015).

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Appendices

Appendix 1. BA Program for English Philology at Adam Mickiewicz University

Year/Semester	Subject	Number of hours	ECTS
1/1	Psychology	30	2
1/1	Pedagogy	15	1
1/1	First aid	3	1
1/1	Legal aspects of the teaching profession	5	
1/1	Health and safety in the teaching profession	2	
1/2	Psychology at the second stage of education	30	2
1/2	Pedagogy	25	2
1/3	Language acquisition and learning (common subject for all specialisations)	30	3
1/3	Pedagogy at the second stage of education	30	2
2/1	Introduction to teaching	30	3
2/1	General pedagogy practice	30	1
2/2	Teaching English at the second stage of education	30	2
2/2	Voice emission	20	2
2/2	Teaching practice	30	1
3/1	Teaching English at the second stage of education	30	2
3/1	Teaching practice	45	2
3/2	Teaching English at the second stage of education	30	3
3/2	Teaching practice	45	2

Appendix 2. MA Program for English Philology at Adam Mickiewicz University

Year/Semester	Subject	Number of hours	ECTS
1/1	Psychology at the third and fourth stages of education	30	2
1/1	Pedagogy at the third and fourth stages of education	30	2
1/2	General pedagogy practice	30	1
1/2	Teaching practice	30	1
2/1	Teaching English at the third and fourth stages of education	60	5
2/1	Teaching practice	45	2
2/2	Teaching English at the third and fourth stages of education	30	3
2/2	Teaching practice	45	2

Appendix 3. BA Program for Applied Linguistics at Adam Mickiewicz University

Year/Semester	Subject	Number of hours	ECTS
2/1	Psychology	30	2
2/1	Pedagogy	30	2
2/1	Voice emission	20	
2/1	Legal aspects of the teaching profession	5	
2/1	First aid	3	
2/1	Health and safety in the teaching profession	2	
2/1	Psychology at the first and second stages of education	30	2
2/2	Pedagogy at the first and second stages of education	30	2
2/2	General didactics	30	2
2/2	Methodology of research in teaching	30	2
3/1	Multilingual education	30	3
3/1	English teaching at the first and second stages of education	30	3
3/1	English literature (the subject is accomplished only by students of the teaching specialization, as in the basic module only the development of integrated skills is planned; this field is accordingly named Applied Linguistics)		
3/1	Pedagogy practice	30	3
3/2	English language teaching at the first and second stages of education	30	3
3/2	Teaching practice	60 - English 120 - German	
3/3	Literature of English-speaking countries	30	2

Appendix 4. MA Program for Applied Linguistics at Adam Mickiewicz University

Year/Semester	Subject	Number of hours	ECTS
1/1	Psychology	30	2
1/1	Pedagogy	30	2
1/1	Teaching at the third and fourth stages of education	30	4
1/1	Psycholinguistics	30	4
1/1	ESP (English for Specific Purposes) for teachers	30	2
1/2	Translation in teaching	30	2
1/2	Teaching at the third and fourth stages of education	30 - English 30 - German	4 4
1/2	German for Specific Purposes for teachers	30	2
2/1	Teaching at the third and fourth educational stages	30 - English 30 - German	4 4
2/1	German for Specific Purposes for teachers	30	3
2/2	Teaching Language for Specific Purposes	30	3
2/2	German for Specific Purposes for teachers	30	4
2/2	Pedagogy practice	30	1
2/2	Teaching practice	120 - German 30 - English	3 1