



Yıl: 1, Sayı: 1, Aralık 2014, s. 1-6

INESJOURNAL
ULUSLARARASI EĞİTİM BİLİMLERİ DERGİSİ
THE JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION SCIENCE

İbrahim İLKHAN¹

ABOUT THE VARIABILITY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE: CRITICISM AND ALTERNATIVES

Abstract

The variability of foreign language teaching and policies within the nation state cause quantitative accumulation to turn into a qualitative explosion. We can say that, extremely dominant demands regarding foreign language teaching not only cause an” ideological language teaching” but also weaken intercultural education entirely.

In teaching a foreign language, if learners aren’t alienated from the target language, we can determine the start of language teaching. The variability of a foreign language is, in some ways, in accordance with one’s point of view of foreign language teaching and to base language teaching on only one aspect of a foreign language means breaking up the language into pieces. In this respect, as the piece destroys itself, it also destroys the whole. For instance; teaching grammar apart from a context or a lesson made without considering the effects of the native language are considered as parts of a whole.

Acquisition of semantic functionality of concepts is a combination of a person’s learning strategies and acquisition – using strategies with social and environmental factors. And turning this acquisition into speech act forms the fundamental philosophy of foreign language teaching. Thus, by considering language teaching as a whole, it is necessary to help students to acquire communication strategies using alternative approaches. Criticism, alternative notions and applications are the dynamics of foreign language teaching and are two key concepts that can lead nations to success in foreign language teaching.

Key Words: Foreign Language Teaching and politics, Linguistical and cultural Factors, Variability of foreign language.

¹ Prof. Dr. Selçuk Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Alman Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü Öğretim Üyesi, Konya/Türkiye. ilkhan@selcuk.edu.tr

YABANCI DİLLERİN ÇEŞİTLİLİĞİ ÜZERİNE: ELEŞTİRİ VE ALTERNATİF

Özet

Yabancı Dil öğretimi ve politikalarının ulus-devlet içerisinde değişkenliği nicel birikimlerin nitel patlamaya dönüşmemesine neden olmaktadır. Yabancı dil öğretimi ile ilgili aşırı baskın taleplerin “ideolojik bir dil öğretimine” sebebiyet verdiği gibi, kültürler arası eğitimin zaafa uğradığını da söyleyebiliriz.

Yabancı dil öğretiminde öğretilen dil kişiye yabancılaştırılmıyor ise, dil öğretiminin başladığını saptayabiliriz.

Dilin değişkenliği ise bir bakıma dil öğretimine bakış açısı ile doğru orantılı olup, yabancı dilin sadece bir yönünün öğretime esas alınması, o dilin parçalara bölünmesi anlamına gelir. Bu bağlamda parça kendini yok ettiği gibi bütünü de yok eder. Örneğin bir kontekst içerisinde ele alınmayan salt gramer öğretimi veya ana dilin ders içerisinde etkilerinin değerlendirilmemesi sonucu yapılan bir ders ise bütünün birer parçaları niteliğindedir.

Kavramların anlamsal işlevselliğinin edinimi ise, toplumsal, çevresel faktörler ile bireyin edinim –kullanım ve öğrenme stratejilerinin bileşkesi olup, bu edinimin söz-eylem’e dönüşmesi dil öğretiminin temel felsefesini oluşturmaktadır. Bu nedendir ki dil öğretimini bir bütünlük içerisinde değerlendirerek alternatif yaklaşımlarla öğrencilerin iletişimsel stratejiyi kazanmalarına katkı sağlanması gerekir. Eleştiri, alternatif görüş ve uygulamalar yabancı dil öğretiminin dinamizmi olup, dil öğretiminde ulusları başarıya götürebilecek iki anahtar kavramdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: yabancı dil öğretimi ve politikaları, dilbilimsel ve kültürel faktörler, dil öğretiminin değişkenliği.

1. On the Variability of Foreign Language Teaching

In our globalizing world, I think we should find a solution to the question who we should teach which language and how long in accordance with the expectations of the public and private institutions of states and the free market economy, leaving aside any ideological considerations regarding foreign language teaching. However, experiencing variability in language policies is inevitable as foreign language teaching is indexed to the international system and the foreign policies of countries.

On the other hand, geographical positions and political structures of countries are among the factors that have an impact on foreign language teaching. Today, we generally see the effects of this on people and individuals living on border zones. For example, in the view of linguistic geography in Turkey, the list of languages spoken as mother tongues according to a survey conducted by the Milliyet daily in 2007 through face-to-face interviews with 50 thousand people are as follows:

Turkish: 85.54 %

Kurdish: 11.97 %

Arabic: 1.38 %

Balkan Languages: 0.23 %

About The Variability Of Foreign Language: Criticism And Alternatives

Armenian: 0.07 %

Greek: 0.06 %

Western European Language: 0.03 %

Others: 0.18 % (The Milliyet Newspaper, 2007)

It is inevitable that foreign language teaching in Turkey, which has a multilingual and multicultural structure, will undergo change. We see that there is a language policy stipulating that social needs for foreign languages in Turkey-German, French and English- are met by institutions of secondary education whereas needs for other languages are met by universities or private sector.

It should be noted that variability of foreign language teaching could be ideological as well as linguistic, sociological or teacher-student oriented.

The concept of variability is a subjective phenomenon and concretization of this concept is possible through an analysis of synthetic and analytical propositions.

2. Paradigmatic variations in foreign language teaching in Turkey from past to present and scientific results of this

In our global world, all scientific disciplines are in a state of constant change. This change should not always be regarded as a scientific development. We can say that although no progress is made in the scientific field, the information inventory is expanding and though a theory may not be developed, explanatory hypothetical models can be formed. In this context, an evaluation of the relationship between politics and foreign language, and scientific data about “variability of foreign language teaching” and/or formation of language policies show us the paradigmatic change regarding foreign language across the country. The contact between the “foreign” and the Turks after they settled in Anatolia and the pressure to establish communication with other tribes required an exchange of languages and cultures. As a result of this, Persian gained importance in communicating with the Persians and the Abbasids during the Seljuk Era, and learning of Arabic became important when the Turks converted to Islam. When the Ottoman Empire was founded in 1295, Ottoman Turkish became the official language while Arabic became the language of science and Persian served as the language of literature (Sağlam; 2000:45).

With the Tanzimat (Reforms) era, French began to be taught at Enderun schools in addition to Arabic and Persian (Demirel, 1990: 7). The language of instruction at Galatarasay High School was French until 1514.

The Translation Office, which was established in Istanbul, became the “Language School” in 1864. At this school, where foreign language teachers received education, German, English and Russian began to be taught besides French, Romanian and Bulgarian in 1892 by virtue of an edict by Sultan Abdulhamid.

Inclusion of foreign languages in Madrasah programs took place as a result of the madrasah reform which was implemented in 1914 thanks to the efforts of Sheikh-ul-Islam and Minister of Foundations Hayri Effendi (See, Önen 1974:256-258).

With the Law on Unification of Education (Tevhid-I Tedrisat) passed in 1924, Arabic and Persian were removed from curricula and instead German, English and French were included. In

accordance with the Westernization Movement, which began with the Tanzimat (Reforms), one of the Western languages gained priority over others in certain periods. While French was in the foreground during the Tanzimat era, German was prioritized during the Meşrutiyet (Constitutionalism) era, but English stood out after World War II (See, İnandı 1997:64).

In time, French and German were removed from schools gradually and students were encouraged to learn English. From the 1990s to today, we see the dominance of English as a foreign language almost everywhere and at our schools.

When seen from a historical perspective, we can say that this change regarding foreign languages is indexed to the Middle East by virtue of Turkey's geographical location, and to the West by virtue of its cultural and linguistic policies. Habermas explains Europe's cultural structure as "explosion of multiculturalism on the inside, and the pressure by the question of globalization on the outside" (Habermas 1996:141). If we assess language policies and changes in the light of this view, we see that Turkey does not contradict this idea. However, Turkey is a multicultural and multilingual country due to its geographical location and position. According to a report on Turkey by ethnologue.com, which includes extensive research on world languages spoken in Turkey, 36 languages are spoken in Turkey besides Turkish. It is thought that motivation is quite high for foreign language learning in a multilingual culture. In this context, however, the assumption that individuals can acquire all the foreign language skills is not born out in practice. Reasons for failure to teach foreign languages may stem from the political, economic and hegemonic structures of countries as well as linguistic factors. When we take into consideration all these factors, we can argue that just as it is easy to learn the languages of neighboring countries due to a need for communication, so it is to learn the languages of hostile countries because our people do not want to learn the languages of countries that have a hostile attitude towards Turkey. A reaction arose in Turkey against France and French when a draft law on denial of the so-called Armenian Genocide hit the agenda of France during the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy in 2011. The fact that there are fluctuations in our language policy indicates that our approaches are subjective. We should generate, on the basis of objective criteria, objective suggestions to the questions: Do we have to learn foreign languages? Do we want this? And can we teach them? We must definitely have a unique national foreign language education policy aimed at bringing up students who can communicate in foreign languages and use critical thinking skills because "tomorrow, a state system with a personality will not arise from an education system that has no personality today"(Cumhuriyet, 3 March 1982:2).

3. Linguistic Factors

Tape records involving examples of practical use of foreign languages by students, our notes based on observation and interviews show us that students find it difficult to initiate and maintain communication. In short, we see a huge lack of motivation on the part of students and a change of attitude towards foreign language. For example, it was found that the culture of the mother language was dominant in students because after greeting, they usually continued the communication with the question "how are you?" (See, İlkan 1995: 76).

In addition to greeting, there are other contactive forms of communication hat may replace greeting. These are usually situational and take place between people who know each other (See, Searle 1971: 99). The fact that concepts are expressed in words while ideas are expressed in sentences indicates the relationship between the concept and the word in the foreign language

and the acquisition of linguistic strategies. In this context, a person who learns a language does not only learn a foreign language but he also learns to establish communication in a foreign language and communication strategies.

Communication can also be established through a ritualistic question which we might regard as our social customs. For example, a form of question such as “What is your hometown? Or Where are you from?”, which is a part of our cultural values, may take the place of greeting.

People’s expression of themselves in a foreign language is possible when the barriers laid before them by their cultural boundaries are removed or when the two cultures are associated with each other (for further information, see Hammer 1987:304). The opposite case leads to a breakdown in communication and causes cultural components to be subjective. I would like to cite Özgür Savaşçı’s story titled “Am Freitagabend” (On Friday Evening) as an example of the differences between cultural codes and prevention of communication:

The girl did not speak at all and nor did we. I wanted to tell something, anything, but what? If we were in a situation like this in our country, we would have a lot to tell. First, we would learn each other’s names and then ask about our hometowns. Once we started, the rest would follow. Yet, the situation is different here because we are in Germany. If we asked her name, she would definitely think “is it your turn to start this now?” and say “Erika, why did you ask?”. If we asked her where she was from, she would look in astonishment and respond “Memmingen, but why?” or “You are very funny, you have just helped me in a difficult situation and now you are asking me where I am from. What is its relevance?” The question of how I will start a talk is a problem that I encounter on a daily basis. After all, they did not teach anything other than “Excuse me” here:

-Excuse me, could I get some change?

-Excuse me, where can I find.....?

To be honest, I could achieve nothing with such patterns. (See, Savaşçı 1983:94. Translated by the author)

Another factor that affects language learning is that there is overemphasis on grammar in classes because grammar involves information about a language but it is not the language itself. Students with good knowledge of grammar are expected to learn how to encode grammar rules in language use. This requires a two-step effort. The fact that grammar serves as a tool causes it to be a barrier in language learning. Language learning takes place if language is the tool and grammar is the goal. Otherwise, changes occur in language teaching.

On the other hand, it is necessary to deal with language teaching as a whole. The components that constitute the whole are linguistic and pedagogical factors, physical infrastructure and technical criteria. If the criteria contradict one another or if one factor is considered non-existent, then the factor may eliminate itself or the whole. This will lead to a failure to teach and learn languages.

4. Conclusion and Evaluation

The fact that the variability of the foreign language and teaching is linked to political formations of countries is a parameter that shows us to what extent the language taught to us is

associated with the political structure and culture of the mother language. As a result of the foreign language teaching policies that changed with the Tanzimat, cultural changes also took place. Linguistic changes as well as cultural changes lead to differentiation of people. However, a model where individuals first acquire their cultural values, then get to know other cultures, internalize them and finally return to their own cultural values should be followed. Yet, we can establish sociologically that unlike such a model, in Turkey we experience a model where modernity, the culture of the foreign language and a cultural point of view based on worldly perspective are dominant.

Language teaching practices and policies that can not respond to linguistic and sociological expectations on a micro and macro level will be of no use mentally other than accuracy because language teaching is built by foreign forces and established by internal dynamics. In a sense, the variability of language teaching reveals itself here.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- DEMİREL, Ö. (1990): *Yabancı Dil Öğretimi*. Ankara.
- HAMMER, G. (1987): *Kulturaustausch und Sprache*. Fremdsprachendidaktiker-Kongress. İçinde: HARTMUT Melenk, JEAN Fingers, GÜNTER Nold et. al. (Hrsg). Tübingen: Günter Narr Verlag.
- İLKHAN, İ. (1995): *Türkler için yabancı dil olarak Almanca Öğretiminde Sosyo-Kültürel etkenlerin rolü*. İçinde: Ankara Üniversitesi. Dil ve Tarih –Coğrafya Fakültesi Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Cilt III. Ankara. 73-78.
- İNANDI, B. (1997): *Kültürler arası İletişimde Yabancı Filologların Yeri*. Ankara.
- SAGLAM, M.Y. (2000): *Ein geschichtlicher Überblick über das fremde Wortgut im Türkischen*. İçinde: Hacettepe Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi , 17/2 S.41-56
- SAVAŞCI, Ö. (1983): *An einem Freitagabend*. In: In zwei Sprachen leben. Irmgard Ackermann (Hrg.) München.
- SEARLE, J.R. (1971): *Theorie der Sprechakte*. Frankfurt/M. Suhrkamp
- ÖNEN, Y. (1974): *Cumhuriyet Devrinde Türkiye’de Almanca Öğretimi ve Germanistik*, İçinde: Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Yayını No .239. Ankara
- Yabancı Kültür ve Edebiyatları Türkiye’de Öğretimi ve Türk Kültürü. içinde: Türkiye Yazarlar Birliği, Ankara.
- <http://www.cumhuriyetarsivi.com/monitor/index.xhtml>
- <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2007/03/22/guncel/agun.html>