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EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURAL TRANSMISSION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

Foreign language teaching is not to teach grammar and vocabulary of the target language and to gain basic language skills only. Foreign language teaching is teaching of the language's culture at the same time. Because of language and community develop and shape together, learning, understanding and speaking a foreign language literally requires that one is able to think like the society that speaks the language natively. This is only possible with learning the culture that shaped the language. Teaching Turkish to foreigners should be put into practice in an environment that Turkish culture is being explained, reflected and lived because a person who learns a foreign language learns a new culture as well. Due to elements that constitute culture are enormous and multifarious, during teaching period, it is not possible to transmit all the elements that shaped Turkish culture, via course material and lessons only. One of the most important aims of foreign language teaching is to teach culture of the target language. Like all other educational environment, foreign language educational environments are supposed to be organized in accordance with its educational aims. Based on this, providing enriched environment with cultural components in educational environment is important. In this context, structuring educational environment with cultural elements can be used as a tool to confront learners with Turkish culture. In this study, relationship between language and culture is mentioned, cultural transmission and its importance in foreign language teaching are accentuated, the role of foreign language educational environments in cultural transmission is discussed and some suggestions about how arranging educational environment can be used as a tool in cultural transmission are given.

Keywords: Teaching Turkish to foreigners, cultural transmission, educational environment.

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1. Introduction

As a social living being, human need to communicate with those around in order to join in social life. Even though communication can be provided via painting, signs, gestures and facial expressions among human beings, none of these instruments might make the communication as effective as the language. Therefore, one always needs language in order to communicate healthfully with the society that he lives in or with a foreign community. Even if it has several definitions due to it's a versatile system, simply language is a tool which provide communication among people. The use of language as a tool for communication shows that language has social functions; besides it performs the role of setting relations between society that the language belongs to and its culture (Demirel, 2010, p. 2). Culture is sum of behaviors, way of thinking that influence these behaviors, beliefs, traditions, languages, material and nonmaterial accumulations of human. It is way of living briefly (Bölükbaş & Keskin, 2010, p. 222). Elements that shape culture are religion, language, art, history, geography, traditions, ethical rules, economic activities and law.

As relationship between language and culture is taken together, these two notions are intertwined. As well as it is an element of culture, language is carrier, protector, developer and modifier of it. Human beings learn components which form culture and cultural connections among elements by education; continue with language. Just as language reflects the way of thinking of the society that it belongs to, at the same time it is described as the mirror of culture (Abacıoğlu, 2002, p. 5). Sometimes, even one word in a language can give an idea on beliefs, traditions, relationships among individuals, material and moral culture of a nation. Culture is a living style and reflects on language exactly (Aksan, 2009, p. 67). In the light of this information, it can be said that language is the part of culture as well as conveyor of it, cultural components shape the language as getting together, culture cannot be expressed without language, language is the one that bring culture in own identity and there are indissoluble bonds between these two notions. People comprehend this relationship between language and culture without difficulty and unwittingly in the process of language acquisition. However, it is not the same for foreign language learners. For this reason, individuals who try to learn new language, are supposed to make an effort to learn cultural components which are reflected or not-reflected on language during learning process. In this direction, it can be said that aim of learning a foreign language is to discover culture of society that language belongs to and to understand and speak target language better.

Because of language and community develop and shape together; learning, understanding and speaking a foreign language literally requires that one is able to think like the society that speaks the language natively. This is only possible with learning the culture that shaped the language. Endeavoring of learning a foreign language is an effort of understanding and knowing a foreign culture as well. Each new word that students learn, each new sentences that they understand, each new text that they are able to solve provides them new thoughts and new images about people who speak target language natively (Tapan, 1990, p. 55). Therefore, it can be expressed that learning a foreign language is not to find equivalents of words and expressions of native language in that language and use them, or not to learn grammar rules and translate words but from broad viewpoint learning foreign language is an effort to understand worldviews, thinking and value system of other societies on Earth (Demir & Açık, 2011, p. 55).

In this regard, it is necessary to transfer cultural components in the process of foreign language teaching. Although several studies on cultural transmission in the scope of teaching Turkish as foreign language have been carried out by researchers who are aware of this necessity yet we couldn't find any studies that take the role of educational environment in culture transmission and use of educational environment in culture transfer process by enriching it with different materials as research subjects.

Based upon the lack of studies which aim to research mentioned subjects, in this study it is tried to determine what can be done to organize educational environment with cultural components in foreign language teaching, in the example of Turkish. In the sections of this study, language and culture notions are handled; the importance of cultural transmission in foreign language teaching is mentioned; the role of foreign language education environments in culture transfer process is dwelled on and suggestions on how educational environment can be used as a cultural transmission tool in teaching Turkish as foreign language by organizing it with accurate materials and design. We believe that our study will steer and provide insight to directors and educators of institution assigned in foreign language teaching about formalizing training environment by equipping it with Turkish cultural components.

2. Cultural Transmission in Foreign Language Teaching

If foreign language learners desire to avoid misunderstandings and to make an effective communication in that language, they need to learn culture of the language as well as the equivalences of concepts. As Demircan (1990, p. 26) stated, a person who learn foreign language should learn at least basic cultural essentials that are necessary for communication and should develop communicative skills in target speech. Because above all, language is a tool for communication and people learn and use it for that reason. When real life conditions are considered, communication cannot happen without context. Because of all contexts include one cultural component at least; communication cannot be separated from culture. In order to be successful in learning a new language, learners should have knowledge of the culture of language that they learn. For example, having knowledge on culture while reading text in foreign language helps readers to comprehend faster and easier what they read (Tseng, 2002, p. 2).

Language teaching is an activity that proceeds with cultural transmission in the same plane. As teaching vocabulary and improving basic language skills, cultural transfer also happens during these activities (Akkaya, 2013, p. 179). However, it is not possible to transmit cultural elements entirely in the training process only because culture is a comprehensive phenomenon. In this sense, we should give primacy to cultural components which would help learners to understand language better in foreign language instruction.

Byram and Risager (1999, p. 93) indicated that the topics, suitable to teach foreign language learners as part of culture, are history, daily life, routines, shopping, foods-drinks, youth culture (fashion, music etc.) school and education, geography, family life, social conditions, festivals, traditions, business life, tourism and travel. According to Brooks (1968, p. 124), some cultural elements, necessary to present to foreign language learner, are.

- Greeting, taking leave, dialogs among friends, introducing new person,
- Statements and word expressions according to age, sexuality, level of closeness, social status and formality,
- Possible multifarious mistakes while learning new language and impressions of these mistakes in target culture,
- Words that shouldn't be said and questions that shouldn't be asked,
- Traditions, legends, stories, games, music, telephone conversations,
- Writing letter,
- Inviting someone, making appointment, hours,
- Eating and drinking habits
- Climate conditions, transportation, traffic etc.

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It is also stated in the very well-known text named Common European Framework of Reference for Languages prepared by European Council in 2001 that the sociocultural knowledge of a foreign language should be given primarily to learners. These sociocultural elements are (CEF 2001, p. 102-103):

- Everyday living (food and drink, meal times, table manners, public holidays, working hours and practices, leisure activities like hobbies, sports, reading habits, media)
- Living conditions (living standards, housing conditions, welfare arrangements)
- Interpersonal relations (class structure of society and relations between classes, relations between sexes, family structures and relations, relations between generations, relations in work situations, relations between public and police, officials, race and community relations, relations among political and religious groupings)
- Values, belief and attitudes (social class, occupational groups, wealth level, traditions and social chance, religion, national identity etc.)
- Body language
- Social conventions (punctuality, presents, dress, refreshments, drinks, meals, behavioral and conversational conventions and taboos, length of stay, leave-taking)
- Ritual behaviors (religious observances and rites, birth, marriage, death, celebrations, festivals, dances etc.)

In order to transmit cultural components effectively in foreign language teaching, it should be given primary importance to transferring of cultural elements just as teaching grammar rules and vocabulary as preparing course curriculum; courses should be arranged that they are able to provide enough time to transmit culture actively or new and separated courses should be created for that aim; the subject of culture should be emphasized in the teacher training programmes and as selecting course books for foreign language teaching, it should be considered carefully that whether cultural components take place enough in course books or not (Dunnet, Dubin & Lezberg, 1986, p. 157-160).

Learner should know geographic features of country that the language is spoken natively; should have knowledge about historical events which are important for the society, should be familiar with music, literature and other arts in the target language; should be able to use the cultural expressions which are being used in certain circumstances such eating, introducing, shopping, birthday etc.; should act properly in daily activities and should know the gestures and facial expression that are common in that society, in order to reach cultural sufficiency level in target language.

It is very significant to have cultural components of target language in the educational environment and using them in the teaching process in order to make foreign language learning easier, more enjoyable and more interesting. According to Tomalin and Stempleski (1993, p. 89), the aims of transferring cultural elements in foreign language courses are to help learners;

- To find out that culture has influence on human behaviors,
- To understand that factors such as age, sexuality, social classes have impacts on human conversation and acts,
- To realize that there are same and different reactions and behaviors in common situations,

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- To recognize that some words, statements and expressions always come one after another regularly as a result of culture,
- To reconsider generalizations related to target culture objectively,
- To develop empathy with people who live in target society and culture as increasing interest and curiosity towards that culture.

Moreover, by the way of cultural transfer in foreign language teaching, it is aimed to inform learners about target culture; to break down the prejudices and enhance their tolerance level, to help them to see resemblances and differences among countries; to help them to develop positive attitude related to social and cultural issues; to assist them to recognize their own cultures and to make learning of foreign language more incentive (Byram & Risager, 1999, p. 100).

In order to fulfill these purposes, the education and instruction that learners get, should reflect the social and cultural structure of target language, value judgement and worldview of the society (Okur & Keskin, 2013, p. 1624); teaching materials that are qualified enough for cultural transferring should be prepared and educational environment should be arranged in this direction.

When cultural components take place in the language teaching process as it should be, foreign language learners will want to learn new life style different than their own living; will increase their interest in lessons, will compare cultures, will realize some points in own culture that they haven't recognize before and won't face with misunderstandings in communication. As the result of proper transferring cultural components of target language, it is determined that learners enhance communicative competence that they need to use in conversations; create awareness to the nature of language; view the culture in target language and develop positive attitudes to people living in target society (Cortazi & Risager, 1999, p. 196).

3. Educational Environment as Cultural Transmission Factor

Educational environment is the area that educational elements such as field, staff, equipment, institution and organization come together in order to educational communication and interaction (Başaran, 1982, p. 17). These elements need to be organized for students' achievement. The factors such as number of students, arrangements of array of school desks, students' sitting styles, entrance side of light, lightening conditions, temperature and noise status, cleaning level of environment, instruments, painting and outlook of the classroom, affect physical environment which has a direct impact on success of students (Korkmaz, 2007, p. 270). The arrangement or control of physical environment basically requires effective organization of desk and chairs, teaching instruments, equipment used in applied courses, devices that have sound and video features, activity corners, panels and boards (Cohen, Manion & Morison, 1996, p. 343).

Educational environment has an important impact to fulfill objectives of instruction. Each factor partaking in this environment supports or hinders for education. Not only has the existing stuff in educational environment, but also arrangement and appearance of them have influence over students. Therefore, it is necessary to constitute intentional environments by taking effects of environment on education into consideration in order to actualize aims of instruction. Because a well-structured educational environment;

- Helps students to be motivated easier and increases their achievements.
- Assists students to learn some of the knowledge without paying attention and to remember easier what they have learnt.
- Gets students to adopt collaboration habit and encourages them to work together.

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- Contributes students to join interclass activities and to benefit from them.
- Backs up teachers to increase their control and effectiveness on classroom.
- Plays an important role in the realization of educational goals.

In the light of the information above, it is very necessary to organize foreign language education environment in the direction of educational targets of itself like the other entire training environments. Based on the reality that the most important aims of teaching foreign language is to teach culture of the target language, it is quite significant to offer a sphere that is enriched with cultural elements for educational environment. Because it is found out that use of cultural components in classroom increases students' motivations towards the language that they are learning (McKay, 2000, p. 7).

Due to the fact that a person learning a foreign language also learns a new culture, teaching Turkish as foreign language should be carried out in an environment which Turkish culture is told, reflected and kept alive. Because of the elements shaping culture are wide and several, it is impossible to transfer all the components, constituting Turkish culture, during lessons with teaching tools only. In this context, structuring educational environment with cultural components can be used as an effective tool in order to get students face with Turkish culture as much as possible.

4. Tools That Can Be Used in Organizing Educational Environment

There are a lot of instruments which can be used in the teaching of foreign language process such as course books, dictionaries, pictures, music, literature works, computer, newspaper, journals etc. These can be classified as visual, audial, audiovisual and technologic tools. In the frame of foreign language teaching, it can be benefitted from videos, reading texts, internet, stories, newspapers, songs, interviews, guest speakers, anecdotes, photographs and field surveys in the process of culture transmission (Cullen & Sato, 2000, p. 1-2). In this paper, it is tried to determine which tools can help to shape educational environment and to transfer cultural elements to students. The main ones of tools are wallboards, posters, pictures and paintings, handcraft goods, maps, loudspeaker and bookshelves. In this study, we are trying to give some suggestions on possible arrangements by using these tools in educational environment in teaching Turkish as foreign language:

4.1. Wallboards

One of the leading tools that can be used for organizing educational environment is wallboards. These boards might be placed by naming them differently to corridors and common use areas separately according to physical conditions of training environment:

The corner of proverbs, idioms and formulaic expressions: In this wallboard, proverbs, idioms, formulaic expressions and their meanings can be presented to learners as visualizing and coloring them by paying attention to language level of learners. Simple texts that include proverbs or idioms, occurrence story of idioms, usage areas of formulaic expressions and caricatures and funny stories which contain one of these or more may be hanged to this corner.

The corner of cities and touristic places: In this wallboard, information, particularly the city that language teaching process takes place, the other cities which have importance in terms of historical, cultural, economic and touristic features, can be given. This information should be simple, short and explanatory and should be enriched by visuals. In order to hold students' attention in this board, some interesting titles can be written on it such as "İstanbul Days" Bursa Month" etc. and one month can be reserved to specific city. Besides, advertisement brochures that

are prepared by the ministry of culture and tourism, governorship and municipality may be attached to one corner of the board by augmenting them.

The corner of red-letter days and weeks: Visuals and texts that are suitable to level of learners related to national and religious holidays and historical events which are important for Turkish nation can take place in this wallboard such as republic day, national sovereignty and children's day, Gallipoli victory, newroz festival, ramadan and sacrifice feast etc. It is very crucial that anything that may disturb other nations, religions or beliefs and cultures shouldn't exist on the materials.

The corner of poets, writers and artists: Photographs, detailed biographies, information that why they are important for Turkish culture and short examples from their works of the poets, writers and artists who are intended to introduce learners can have a place in this wallboard. We believe that presenting interesting anecdotes of these people's life in here encourage learners to get know them closely and to read their books.

The corner of foods: In this wallboard, visuals, recipes and ingredients of deserts, foods and drinks such as baklava, ayran, kebab etc. which are prepared in different parts of the country especially starting from the city where learners live in. Mentioned materials of foods and drinks, particularly served in holidays and feasts, weddings, religious ceremonies and other special days, should be given in this corner.

The corner of amusement: In this corner, short fun jokes, stories, tongue twisters, caricatures and riddles that reflect Turkish sense of humor. Local and Nasreddin Hodja jokes not including any unfavorable items, funny true life stories that reflect daily life slices, caricatures which are not politic and aggressive, simple tongue twisters and riddles are the appropriate materials that might be used in this wallboard.

The corner of handicrafts: In this wallboard, information of handicrafts that are performed such as paper marbling, miniature, wood engraving, pottery etc. in Turkey especially close environments of language centers and cities that learners may travel can be given. In this corner, visuals of handicrafts and information about where these outputs are used, construction phases and their raw materials can be put in seen.

The corner of cultural activities: In this corner, photographs of cultural activities such as museum tours, interviews, poem reading and theatre performances, making traditional foods etc. conducted by learners all together can be presented.

4.2. Posters

Posters which are prepared for foreign language teaching, generally consist of words and their visuals in the headings of alphabet, animals, occupational names, vegetables, fruits, foods, drinks, vehicles, seasons, hours, organs and parts of house etc. Then these written forms of words and their visuals are brought together for getting large photo that we call poster. Although usage of posters is mostly in this way, posters can be comprised of only one word or one picture.

Within the scope of designing educational environment by cultural components, for example, a striking quotation of different poets or writers selected from Turkish literature written on her/his enlarged photograph in background of poster can be hanged on walls of corridors and classrooms. It is believed that these quotations of artists get learners to start taking interest in Turkish literature especially specific to the artist. Especially works that these quotations get from, the works of artists, who are introduced in this corner, must be available in the library of language learning center. Therefore learners can find them easily and read whenever they want.

4.3 Pictures and Paintings

We believe that use of pictures reflecting Turkish culture has positive effects on transmitting cultural components in shaping educational environment in addition to pictures being used in course and work books. Therefore, pictures of natural beauties, culturally important buildings, historical and touristic places of Turkey, moments that show Turkish traditions such as weddings, feasts, ceremony of sending boys to army and visiting girl's family for marriage, naming a baby etc., and picture of folk dances can be placed in or out of suitable places of learning centers. Besides, paintings which are drawn by famous Turkish artists might be also hanged on the proper walls.

4.4. Handcrafts

Artificial materials which are prepared in accordance with plans and purposes of teaching can never substitute for real and authentic ones when especially considered in terms of culture transferring. Therefore, it will be more useful and effective to exhibit authentic materials within the bounds of possibility. In this regard, authentic materials such as baglama, carpet, evil eye talisman, patterned coffee cups, wooden clock etc. which reflect Turkish culture can be presented at the suitable corner of language learning centers in organizing educational environment with cultural elements.

4.5. Maps

Maps are also among tools that can be used in introducing Turkish culture. For example, prominent features of Turkish cities are placed in some maps already. It is easy to find and bring them to lessons. These maps can be used for introducing historical and touristic places. These maps can be varied according to geographic and touristic features, goods that are produced, road maps etc. In all language learning centers, intercity map of the city that the center lands should be available for sure.

4.6. Loudspeakers

Loudspeaker is a tool that is being used in making learners to listen music reflecting Turkish culture as well as listening activities. In the process of foreign language teaching, teachers put songs and ballads in use by speakers in order to get students to do word completing exercises and to relieve them sometimes. Apart from these, we can benefit from speakers for having Turkish music in lunchbreaks and break times during teaching process. Therefore, speakers shouldn't only be placed in classrooms for listening competence activities yet every suitable places of language learning centers like corridors, canteen or schoolyard; and Turkish songs and ballads should play in proper sound level in every possible time.

4.7. Bookshelves

Creating bookshelves in foreign language teaching environment is quite important in many aspects. Learners cannot determine mostly which books are appropriate for their level and interest in foreign language. Besides, they have difficulty to find and have access to books very much. Moreover, quality and level of reflecting Turkish culture is another question about these books that learner procure to read. In order to annihilate all mentioned problems, it necessary to constitute bookshelves carefully including books in every level in foreign language learning centers by professionals. In the bookshelves, the books of poets and writers who are introduced in wallboards and posters must exist. As choosing books for this small intentional library, selectors must be careful and pay attention to convenience for language level and cultural reflectivity of the books.

5. Conclusion

Learning a foreign language means learning culture of target language as well. This is one of the most important aims of foreign language teaching either. Therefore, language teaching programs and process should be planned by taking cultural components into consideration and teaching materials should be enriched with cultural elements. Like all other educational environment, foreign language educational environments are supposed to be organized in accordance with its educational aims. Based on this, providing enriched environment with cultural components is quite important for language teaching. In this context, structuring educational environment with cultural elements can be used as a tool to confront learners with Turkish culture. When learners get in the environment which is structured with Turkish culture during lessons, break times and after lessons, they will get in contact with Turkish culture both consciously and unconsciously. This environment will enhance students' knowledge and interest to Turkish culture; increase their desire to learn Turkish; and influence their lingual and communicational competences in Turkish positively. Consequently, designing foreign language teaching environment in a planned way with cultural components helps learners to gain culture of the language that they try to learn.

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STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

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Endeavoring of learning a foreign language is an effort of understanding and knowing a foreign culture as well. Each new word that students learns, each new sentence that they understands, each text that they are able to solve, causes to develop new thoughts and images about people speaking target language natively and the world these people live in the minds of students. Learning foreign language is not only learning the grammar rules of that language and translating the words to mother language or finding the meanings of expressions, but somehow learning foreign language is an effort to understand worldviews, thinking and value systems of other societies on Earth. In this regard, it is necessary to transmit culture also together with the language via various ways to people who learn Turkish as foreign language.

Educational environment has an important effect to fulfill instruction objectives. Each factor partaking in this environment support or hinder to education. Not only the existing things, but also arrangement and appearance of them have influence over students. It is necessary to constitute intentional environment by taking effects of environment on education into consideration in order to actualize aims of education.

A well-structured educational environment;

- Helps students to be motivated easier and increases their achievements.
- Assists students to learn some knowledge by paying no attention and to remember what they have learnt.
- Gets students adopt collaboration habit and encourages them.
- Contributes students to join interclass activities and to benefit from them.
- Backs up teachers to increase their control and effectiveness on classroom.
- Plays an important role in the realization of educational goals.

In the light of the information above, it is very necessary to organize foreign language education environment like the other entire educational environments in the direction of educational targets of itself. Based on the reality that is the most important aims of teaching foreign language is to teach culture of target language, it is quite significant to offer a sphere that is enriched with cultural elements for educational environment.

Due to the fact that a person learning a foreign language also learns a new culture, teaching Turkish as foreign language should be carried out in an environment which Turkish culture is told, reflected

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and kept alive. Because of the elements shaping culture are wide and several, it is impossible to transfer all the items constituting Turkish culture during lessons with teaching aids only. In this context, structuring educational environment with cultural components can be used as an effective tool in order to get students face with Turkish culture as much as possible.

There are a lot of instruments which can be used in the teaching of foreign language such as course books, dictionaries, pictures, music, literature works, computer, newspaper, journals etc. These can be classified as visual, audial, audiovisual and technologic tools. In this paper, it is tried to determine which tools can help to shape educational environment and to transfer cultural elements to students. These are wallboards, posters, pictures and paintings, handicraft goods, maps, loudspeakers and bookshelves.

When students can be in the environment which is structured with Turkish culture during lessons, break times and after lessons, they will get in contact with Turkish culture both consciously and unconsciously. This environment will enhance students' knowledge and interest to Turkish culture; increase their desire to learn Turkish; and influence their lingual and communicational competences in Turkish positively.

Researchers who are aware of this necessity have done some studies handling this topic from different viewpoint over transmitting culture in the teaching Turkish as foreign language. When these studies analyzed, it is seen that there is no study over the role of educational environment in transferring culture specifically in the field of teaching Turkish as foreign language. In this study, relationship between language and culture is mentioned, cultural transmission and its importance in foreign language teaching are accentuated, the role of foreign language educational environments in cultural transmission is discussed and some suggestions about how arranging educational environment can be used as a tool in cultural transmission are given.