

## **English Language Teaching and Language Teacher Education in Turkey- An Evolutionary Overview**

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### **Abstract**

This study provides a much-needed socio-political perspective on language teaching in Turkey and identifies key influences and orthodoxies past and present and their impact on current practices of language learning. The researchers provide a refreshing critique of successive cycles of policies and how they have variously sought to secure starting with imperial, nationalist, and contemporary populist ambitions of language teaching in the classroom and beyond. Almost 150 years of such efforts have frequently shoehorned teaching practices with inevitable consequences for language acquisition from primary education to university. Along with the contemporary educational changes before and after the foundation of the Turkish Republic, the researchers aim to shed light on the chronological records of language teacher education by drawing parallelism between general teacher education and language teacher education in Turkey. The paper concludes with suggestions for improving our understanding of present-day challenges in a field that remains fundamental to the future of the country.

**Keywords:** Language Teacher Education; The Ottoman Empire; Turkish Republic Era; Language Policy in Turkey; Curriculum Reform

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## INTRODUCTION

Educational policies have a long background and have been influenced in various ways for mercantile reasons, and by their geography, religious and sociological circumstances. For this reason, understanding a current policy requires analysis of its history (Pennycook, 1998), and care should be taken for a deeper understanding of the socio-historical context when studying policy changes in language teacher training programs (Brown, 2000; Crystal, 2003; Hu, 2005; Hamid, Nguyen, & Baldauf, 2013; Nunan, 2003; Özdemir, 2006). A notable example that can be used to exemplify this assertion is the famous proposal made by the United States President John Adams to the American Academy in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As the second president of the United States, he was unequivocal in his opinion that ‘English is destined to be in the next and succeeding centuries, more generally the language of the world, than Latin was in the last, or French is in the present age’ (“From John Adams to the President of Congress”, 1780). He went on to state the reasons for this as the population increase in America, the undeniable global influence of Britain, and the benefits that would accrue from corresponding with many nations in the medium of English.

### Literature Review

Today we know that under conditions of a global liberal economy and aided by technological developments, English has become the universal language of communication far outweighing the number of native speakers in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and several Caribbean countries (Bayraktaroğlu, 2015; Crystal, 2001; Graddol, 1997; Kachru, 1990; Kramsch & Thorne, 2002). English has gained more status in the countries where it functions as a means of communication in various contexts such as the government, the law courts, the media, and the educational system. Located at the intersection of Asia and Europe, Turkey is one of the countries influenced by the political, educational, and cultural role of English. This chapter displays an evolutionary overview of the historical development of language teaching in Turkey, and how English is embraced in language teacher education programs. Turkey has been a member of NATO since 1952 and has more recently committed itself to acquire membership of the EU. Throughout the history of the Turkish education system, religion and politics have played a prominent role in language instruction. Arabic, French and German were early examples of foreign language instruction in certain educational institutions (Altundiş, 2006; Aygün, 2008; Bektaş-Altıok, 2006; Kartal & Başol, 2019; Nergis, 2011 and Tok, 2006).

## METHODOLOGY

The current study is based on a qualitative method of research and on government documents, analysis of primary and secondary sources published in the literature and posted on official websites, using the method of historicism.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Foundations of Language Teaching in Turkey

Until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the teaching of western languages was not promoted as the Ottoman Empire was often in conflict with European powers and pursued Islamophile foreign relations in an effort to counter the influence of its predominantly Christian opponents. The Westernization movement regarding language teaching had its origins mainly in The Tanzimat Period (Reform Period in administration, law and social order between 1839-1876). In a limited way, French teachers, materials, and methods were introduced as part of a desperate effort to modernize the Ottoman military. As a consequence, science and French appeared on the curriculum of elite military training schools. This was followed by the founding of the first French-medium medical school by Sultan Mahmut II which became part and parcel of what became known as the Reform Movement, which sought to introduce western methods and ideas selectively to Ottoman society.

By 1848 a program to train French language teachers was underway locally, soon followed by the 'Darulmuallimin-i Aliye' (Teachers' College) syllabi for raising school teachers according to notions of western educational philosophy. However, these were frequently amended not least to reflect the Ottoman Empire's shifting alliances with competing European powers (Demircan, 1988). They were also influenced by the sentiments of Western backers of missionary schools in Anatolia such as Robert College and Galatasaray Imperial Lycée, established in 1863 and 1869 respectively (Özdemir, 2006; Selvi, 2011). During the early years of the Tanzimat Period, young and promising people were selected by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE from now on) to be sent to France to learn French and teach French in Turkey when they returned. However, little success was achieved concerning this attempt which led to the opening of a foreign language teacher training school by the government through demanding assistance from the French government in 1867. The Enderun Schools were established to train government officers under the name of Galatasaray Sultanisi (Galatasaray Imperial Lycée) which is a landmark in foreign language teacher education history of Turkey, and soon earned a reputation for its quality education in Europe.

Located in İstanbul, an American School was founded outside the United States of America, in 1863, first for boys and eight years later for girls entitled as 'American College for Girls'. Both schools were unified under the name Robert College operating as a high school. The American merchant Christopher Rhineland Robert supported the school economically which led to moving to a more extensive campus and increasing reputation and prestige in the region together with the grants from individuals. Robert College was the first English medium educational institution, founded by Cyrus Hamlin to provide American style education. In the early stages of their education, Armenian, Bulgarian, Jewish and Greek students were enrolled in the programs (Demircan, 1988; Sariçoban, 2012). A curriculum designed during the height of World War I in 1915 became the basis for teacher training in the first years of the Turkish Republic in the 1920s. This was followed by a certified program based on the methods of the École Normale Supérieure, the French Teacher Training School (Tok, 2006).

### **The Republic Era- From 1923 onwards**

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish Republic was founded in 1923. During the early years of the young Republic, non-formal basic education was given priority. Major cultural, financial and social changes accompanied the pursuit of modernization, purification and authentication of education which was made equally accessible to all citizens. The founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, influenced the vision, mission and educational goals of teaching the Turkish language to reduce illiteracy in society. Tevhid-i Tedrisat Law (Unification of Education) was enacted in 1924 to unify all religious schools called 'Tekke, Zaviye and Medrese' and minority groups' schools as a part of the secularization movement in education. In the same year, the American educational expert John Dewey was invited to Turkey to analyze and make recommendations for restructuring the system. His two reports recommended redefinition of the educational system and improved teacher training along with the transformation of schools to serve as community centers, improved hygiene in schools and management of discipline (Dewey, 1924; Küçüköğlü, 2012; Turan, 1997).

The Arabic alphabet was replaced by the Latin alphabet in 1928. During this period 'public courses' were given in 'national schools' in an effort to support the drive for literacy. The Turkish Language Association was established in 1932 to set the vision, mission and goals of teaching Turkish and to produce language policy. With Dewey's visit to Turkey, 16 students started their teacher training in Konya (a city in Central Anatolia). The school was then moved to the capital, Ankara (Dewey, 1929).

By the 1940s, demand for teachers of German, French and English saw the first foreign language teaching institutions established in Ankara Gazi and İstanbul Çapa Educational Institutes. French Language Teaching Department started in 1941-1942 academic year, English Language Teaching Department in 1944-1945 and German Language Teaching in 1947-1948

successively. During the 3<sup>rd</sup> National Education Council in 1946, it was decided to open a number of foreign language teacher training departments in several educational institutes. However, it was not until the 1962-1963 academic year that language teacher education was prolonged to three years. As years passed the need for foreign language teachers increased, which led to the opening of more language teaching departments in educational institutes. Trainee teachers would be recruited from the graduates of secondary schools. As English came to replace French in areas of diplomacy, science, and business and as Turkey became a member of international organizations such as NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization founded in 1949) under the influence of the USA, French-medium instruction schools gave way to English-medium ones (Büyükkantarçioğlu, 2004). This trend saw the Turkish Education Foundation offer English-medium instruction with the opening of its well-regarded TED Ankara College in 1952 ('college' in the common understanding of the term in Turkey referring to private high schools where the medium of instruction in some courses is English). Turkish remained the sole medium of instruction in all schools at all state schools until the opening of Maarif Schools in 1955 where instruction in science and mathematics could be given in a foreign language. Regarding language teacher education, in the same decade, the first teacher training courses were taught by distinguished academics of the time until 1946 when a law was enacted that would curtail university faculty from teaching at other institutions, and a very enlightening era for teacher training came to a halt. The professors who offered courses at these programs before the change in the law were called 'müzakereci' (negotiators encouraging discussions and debate), which refers to their open-minded approach. Their involvement had served both to ease the overcrowding of classrooms in education faculties and to increase the quality of teacher training programs. Their withdrawal was accompanied by an acceleration of industrialization in the 1950s and significant growth in urban settlements whose new populations tended to favor the acquisition of technical skills. Observing this trend, educational reformist Hakkı Baltacıoğlu reiterated the importance of the profession and encouraged teachers to develop critical awareness, partly through the acquisition of higher education and obtaining a culture of philosophy (Güngör, 2008). For these reasons in the 1959-60 academic year, graduates of language teacher training programs were given the opportunity to be candidates for university-level education. The criteria for selecting promising candidates were a dramatically modern one: that the students were intelligent and hardworking, but also questioning, analyzing, and idealistic. These three features stood out as traits of a model teacher. Hence teacher training curricula today too is to have objectives that help develop critical awareness for students to think more highly of their profession's potentials.

In the 1950s teacher training schools in Turkey were distributed around the country with the intention of reaching out to its remote corners. In the 1958-59 academic year, 75% of the students attending 52 elementary school education programs were from rural towns (Eşme, 2001). Equality of opportunity was further facilitated by preservice teachers being able to attend their classes free of boarding and tuition fees. The program on offer at these schools resembled the one that was taught in the Village Institutes, which in the period between 1940 and their recent closure had produced about 16000 transformative, intellectual teachers (Tezgiden-Cakcak, 2019, p. 104). The Village Institutes aimed to teach theory in direct relation to practice. Practicality mattered most. Hands-on teaching was the common methodology and students were encouraged to be responsible and autonomous. Above all, the common good of society was the target and teachers were expected to empower their students passionately.

The advent of higher education entry to teaching was brought a step closer when Ankara University opened its 'Education Faculty' in the 1965-66 academic year. By 1973, a university degree was required to be able to teach at elementary, secondary and high schools. Teachers were given the social responsibility to transform Turkish culture into a modern, Western society, that is to say, teachers bore a sacred and nationalistic mission to help advance the country, teaching the values of enlightenment. The 3-year-educational institutes were transformed into 4-year-teacher training schools and based on İstanbul University Foreign languages teacher training program; certain language examinations were administered to teachers to be recruited as language teachers. Also, the graduates of teacher training institutes were given the opportunity to be recruited as a language teacher by taking the examination but without obligatory attendance to formal education at the educational institutes.

Regarding secondary and high school language education, between 1975 and 2002, state-run Anatolian High schools gave intensive English classes and science courses were taught in English (Doğançay-Aktuna & Kızıltepe, 2015). Today, English-medium instruction prevails especially at the tertiary level and in foundation universities. Robert College was transformed into Boğaziçi University in 1971 and became one of the most prominent English-medium universities in Turkey. English-medium instruction was then written into The Higher Education Law enacted in 1981 which also made English courses compulsory in Turkish educational institutions (Demircan, 1988). As in most countries, education policy in Turkey tends to be set by the government of the day and political fluctuations have generated some structural problems too. While the public common good of the nation-state was emphasized in education after the Turkish Republic was founded, in the 1950s single-party regime conservative social practices were emphasized at schools (Değirmenciöglü, 2012). A 1960 coup brought about a progressive constitution that reflected itself in education as well. Until the 1980s the practices at schools were rather more fitting to a socialist ideology, private schools were limited in number. There were no teacher education programs, and no private or foundation universities. With the 1980 coup, the Turkish political arena was divided between leftist authoritarian republicans and the more conservative rightist wings. The military was a limiting force in any democratic practice (Değirmenciöglü, 2012; Doğan, 2010).

When it comes to language teaching, 1970s was an important decade in Turkey with the number of teacher institutes rising from 10 to 18 institutes by the end of the decade (Aydm, 2007; Dursunoğlu, 2003). The quality of teacher education was to be enhanced and candidate teachers could receive up to 4 years of training from 1978. With the establishment of HEC (Higher Education Council), all 4-year teacher training institutions and 3-year foreign language high schools were transformed into 4-year faculties of education following higher education law numbered 2547 (Deniz & Şahin, 2006).

The historical background of language teacher training programs in Turkey bears significance when trying to understand the standards and objectives expected today from teacher training departments at Education Faculties, and the social status attached to teaching and teaching English since the decisions made by MoNE and HEC had triggering factors rooted in social, economic and political realities of the time (Girgin, 2013). While in the era between the 1960s and 80s emphasized the 'revolutionary teacher' role, after the 1980s, the teacher identity was not that of an idealist one, but a rather 'technician-like' role in Turkey (Yıldız, Ünlü, Alica & Sarpkaya, 2013). The technician teacher image which was maintained in the 1990s as well was expected to transfer a body of knowledge to the students rather than transforming students to be modern and rational individuals. Yıldız, Ünlü, Alica and Sarpkaya (2013) summarize the new role of teachers very effectively when they state that teaching was perceived as an individual act divorced of its responsibilities (as cited in Tezgiden-Cakcak, 2015)

Leaving behind the idealistic teacher identity which had more responsibilities attached to it in addition to teaching content, teaching in Turkey meant mostly doing the expected transfer of information. Yıldız, Ünlü, Alica and Sarpkaya (2013) define this role as 'robotic' which is an expression that reveals the limited role of the teacher (as cited in Tezgiden-Cakcak, 2015). Following the exam-oriented path in teaching, preparing students for exams replaced the romantic mission of considering and contributing to the well-being of society at large (Giroux, 2012). Teacher autonomy was very limited because teachers did not have a say in designing the curriculum or choosing their own course materials (Apple, 2001; Büyüköztürk, Akbaba-Altun & Yıldırım, 2010). Yıldız and his colleagues underscore the fact that under these circumstances, teachers have become hopeless about the future of their professions (Yıldız et al., 2013). Today teaching is not a profession that is regarded as highly as it used to be in the early years of the Turkish Republic, and idealist teachers with a mission to foster a modern and developed society are hard to find.

Currently, Foreign language teacher education has shifted its focus to teaching of the language, teaching methods, teaching materials development, foundations of learning and teaching, teaching practicum, measurement and evaluation, research skills, advanced reading, writing, speaking

and listening skills (Doğan, 2020; Seferoğlu, 2004). After the 1997-1998 academic year, it was announced by the MoNE that receiving teaching certificates given by educational centers in universities was also accepted to be able to work as teachers in public schools. Teaching certificate programs contain a training program of 31 study hours a week and around 34 universities all over Turkey offer these kinds of programs (Bektaş-Altıok, 2006). It is necessary to consider the special interest in teaching and learning the English language in Turkey, because English language teaching bears a unique significance for several reasons inherently adherent to Turkey. To start with, Turkey is a strategically important trade crossroad located between Asia and Europe. Having a young workforce population, Turkey has had intense relationships with Asian, Middle Eastern and European countries using English as the means to communicate for international affairs. Never having been a colonial country, English language teaching policy plans were independently made by the Turkish Ministry of Education responding to the global influence of English after the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 (Bayraktaroğlu, 2015; Kırkgöz, 2017). Today, English is a compulsory course at all levels of education in state schools in Turkey which is a self-explanatory indicator of the prominence attached to the teaching of English. The Turkish Ministry of National Education administers the compulsory English courses offered at state schools. Just as an 'ideal' teacher meets the needs of their teaching circumstances, policymakers consider the needs of their country when determining the requirements for teacher training programs. Compulsory English courses offered at all levels of education required significant changes to the curriculum of undergraduate English Language Teaching departments. English language teacher training programs at Turkish universities have had a dynamic past, with significant educational reforms, changes in the curricula depending on global affairs, and the changes in the understanding of the concept of education, language education, and English language education, the personnel and funding available, and advances in information technology, computer-assisted learning and the spread of the internet. The undeniable importance of English in today's globalized world has made it an indispensable part of education. The demand for English language classes fueled the growth of private schools and the need for qualified English language teachers increased which triggered some inevitable central changes in English language teacher education. After the Higher Education Council was established in 1982, higher education was centralized, and a standard curriculum was determined for all Foreign Language Education (FLE) departments.

### **ELT Curriculum Reform at the Turn of the 20th Century**

Turkey's Teacher Education Programs were reconstructed under the auspices of university Education Faculties in 1997. The Ministry of National Education and Higher Education Council were provided with World Bank funding to combine the Education Faculties with the Teaching Practicum Schools, (Hismanoglu, 2012; Ulum, 2015). With the 1997 ELT curriculum reform, more methodology-related courses were offered at language education programs at universities with the intention to harmonize with the EU. The number of practicum opportunities was also increased to provide the opportunity for prospective teachers to experience their profession firsthand. Also, teaching English to Young Learners courses was added to the curriculum (Kırkgöz, 2005). An open teacher education program was offered by Anadolu University because there was an English language teacher shortage with the 1997 reform, which was later closed. In 2004 an EU project in collaboration with MoNE which involved 7000 teachers was initiated, which also coincided with the start of EU exchange programs (Kırkgöz, 2017). A follow-up revision to ameliorate for insufficiencies emerging during the implementation of the 1997 curriculum reform took place in 2006-2007. Several changes were made in the type of compulsory and elective courses required to be undertaken for field knowledge (linguistic competence), teacher education (pedagogic competence), general knowledge (Altundiş, 2006; Nergis, 2011) and teaching practice. The revisions sought improvements in teaching methodology and practice and to improve all four language skills, as part of a period of adaptation to the new curricula (Karakaş, 2012). Now spread across sophomore, junior and senior levels, courses were to be more varied and more professionally oriented to equip language teachers with general and pedagogic knowledge alongside linguistic competence. At the senior level, trainee teachers would be required to observe classes either in primary or secondary schools and conduct actual teaching practice under the supervision of mentors from faculty and the placement school.

In May 2018, the contents of 25 undergraduate teaching departments were updated and the new version was put into practice in September 2018 at the beginning of the academic year. As an impact of the Bologna process in education, there was a time shift for some courses in the program (Public Service, Turkish Educational System, School Management); some new courses were introduced in the curriculum (Ethics in Education), some courses were unified and added as a one-semester course (English Structure, English Education Programs, Translation, Approaches and Methods). Although the courses increased in number, the fall in the number of credits resulted in fewer course hours. The wide variety of courses for future language teachers could be considered as enrichment in alternatives. On the other hand, several foundation courses; namely, Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching, Measurement and Evaluation in ELT could be one of the drawbacks of the newly introduced curriculum. 25 % of the obligatory courses were replaced with the elective courses to substitute for any provisional weaknesses concerning the content of the courses in the program (Yaman, 2018). Following the principles of Constructivism, learner autonomy has gained central focus while the teacher's role moved towards a facilitator rather than the sole information source in the classroom. However, the new role required more qualifications on behalf of the teachers. The update in language teacher education curriculum aimed to equip the teachers with necessary skills to qualify for their profession in the best way. Mentored micro-teaching tasks might help to bridge the gap between theory and practice and improve teaching skills, they do not allow for effective feedback as the students are in their own classroom setting and working together with their peers. (Coşgun-Ögeyik, 2016; Balbay et al., 2018). Therefore, it would be better if more importance is attached to practicum for the students to be able to start integrating themselves into the school community through receiving immediate feedback and acting accordingly.

Despite the above-mentioned reforms, graduates of English Language Departments “do not have the time or the will to update their professional knowledge mainly because self-development may not have an effect on their future hiring as teachers” (Diaz & Arıkan, 2016, p. 158). Moreover, the courses offered by different English language teacher training programs at universities continue to vary considerably depending on the faculty staff employed at the departments and their areas of expertise (Balbay, Pamuk, Temir & Doğan, 2018; Çınar & Doğan, 2019). For the standard courses required by HEC, especially for the first-year language proficiency courses, the content is elusive. Also, introducing students to the multiple aspects of language teaching for the development of their professional vision at the most opportune moment was lacking from the objectives of the courses. This is widely recognized when they commence their training. At first glance, the teacher training undergraduate program is not found to be motivating critical thinking and reflection. In a recent study conducted at a prominent state university in Turkey, it was observed that the curriculum did not prepare teachers as reflective practitioners although there are some “reflective dimensions to the program” (Tezgiden-Cakcak, 2015). There may be several reasons for the future teachers being less critical and reflective. The first reason could be the academic background of students coming to receive language education. They are mostly graduates of Vocational/Technical, Anatolian, Science, Social Sciences, Fine Arts, Sports, Imam Hatip, and Medical Vocational High Schools. The so-called high schools provide extra courses added into their curriculum besides the core curriculum depending on their mission, however, this diversity does not hinder their graduates to take the centralized exam for attending language departments by having the equal chance with all high school graduates. On the other hand, the extra curriculum covered at an Anatolian High School is different from a Vocational High School regarding students' foreign language competences. In order to be placed at an undergraduate program that would later lend itself to become an English language teacher, students take several multiple choice high stakes central exams: The TYT (Temel Yeterlilik Testi: Basic Proficiency Test on courses that are not English language oriented) and YDT (Yabancı Diller Testi: Foreign Language Test on English language proficiency) This exam is on mostly reading comprehension skills. Listening, writing and speaking skills are not evaluated in this exam). Both exams are used for university program placement and the generic name used for both is YKS (Yüksek Öğretim Kurumlar Sınavı: Examination for Higher Education Institutions). After receiving the required scores from the so-called centralized exam, the candidates may make their preferences among the following programs: English Language Teaching Department (at Educational Faculties), English Language and Literature, American Language and Literature, Translation and Interpretation and

Linguistics Departments (at Faculty of Letters and/or Social Sciences). There are around 120 English Language Teaching Department programs, graduates of which have the right to be recruited as English language teachers in Ministry of National Education schools and higher education institutions in Turkey (İngilizce Öğretmenliği Programı Bulunan Tüm Üniversiteler, n.d.). If the teacher candidate is not a graduate of the Education Faculty affiliated language teacher education undergraduate program but is a graduate of a literature, translation or linguistics oriented undergraduate program, operating under Faculties of Letters and/or Social Sciences, the graduate students have to receive pedagogical formation certificates from the Educational Faculties to be able to start teaching languages in MoNE schools. The diversified content of the faculty programs could be the second reason for attributing less attention to developing higher order thinking skills through reflective teacher training practices focusing on the actual circumstances of real-life teaching settings. Except for English Language Teaching graduates, the remaining departments' graduates have to take extra pedagogical formation courses to become language teachers (Cephe, 2014; Taneri, 2016). This gives way to inequality regarding teacher competencies. What is more, after graduation Public Personnel Selection Examination (KPSS), Test of Teaching Professional Knowledge and interviews have to be taken to be eligible as a language teacher to work at state schools in Turkey. As for positions at higher educational institutions, the credentials to become a language instructor or a research assistant in language departments in general are taking Academic Personnel and Postgraduate Education Entrance Examination and Foreign Language Examination. The undergraduate grade point average teacher candidates and interview results are also integral parts of the evaluation process when applying for instructor or research assistant positions at higher education institutions. The examination-oriented structure to become a language teacher distracts departmental focus and puts less emphasis on raising critical and reflective teachers.

The Turkish education system passionately promoted a monotype homogenous national identity especially in the post-republic era until the minor changes in certain regulations and requirements taking place recently in the 2000s acknowledging the existence of the other cultures living in Turkey. Çelik, Gümüş, and Gür (2017) explore the changes towards a more democratic attitude in the Turkish education system and analyze them in three different categories: "ethnolinguistic, religious and cultural domain". In their article, they define the mono-cultural education system in Turkey as a system with nationalistic and militaristic discourse, exclusionary and discriminatory toward the Non-Sunni Turkish" (Çelik, Gümüş & Gür, 2017, p. 104). In monoculture education systems, there is a centralized institution that schools are affiliated with which decides on the pedagogical policies agreeing with the dominant culture (Nieto, 1994). In the Turkish centralized system, the MoNE is responsible for a central arrangement of financing state schools in Turkey and appointing teachers, deciding on the common curriculum to be followed in all schools and providing course books and materials. According to the OECD research conducted on countries who participated in the PISA 2012 survey, Turkey ranks among the countries which give the least autonomy to schools when it comes to preparing the curriculum (OECD, 2013). Turkey is home to several minorities including, but not limited to Kurds, Armenians, Arabs, Circassians, Lazs, Assyrians, from different races and cultural backgrounds, speaking different mother tongues than Turkish. In the democratization project of the current government in Turkey, an elective course to teach languages other than Turkish, English, French or German was introduced as an inclusive policy to respect the existence of the languages of ethnic minorities, such as Kurdish, Laz language and Georgian, in Turkey, in 2012 (Çelik et al., 2013). In 2013, places on such elective courses for learning languages "conventionally spoken by Turkish citizens in daily life" were taken up by 43 thousand students in middle school (Çelik et al., 2017, p. 109).

English language teachers use materials that represent different cultures when teaching English. Many textbooks address an international audience, a multicultural class, global values rather than locally accepted ones. The Turkish education system has also come under increasing socio-political pressure in part from the forces of globalization, in part from demands for greater acceptance of minority languages, culture, and religions, which requires many procedural changes in practice at Turkish schools. In fact, today, many developed or developing countries face a rapid change in their rather monolithic, homogenous culture and the growth of mobility of people from one country to the

other. It has been observed that students in multicultural classrooms are disadvantaged when their language, culture, and religion are absent from the curriculum or the course materials. A multicultural education that is more fitting to the classrooms of 21st-century schools requires restructuring education to provide equal opportunities to students of different genders, social classes and ethnic backgrounds' (Banks, & Banks, 2010, p. 446). Bearing these afore-mentioned idiosyncratic characteristics of the Turkish context, raising, educating and training English language teachers bears even more significance since English language courses are an opportunity for students to perceive themselves as global citizens, introduced to global values with the intention to prepare students to survive in the international arena when using English as a means for communication. As stated in the TALIS (2019) report, teachers who participate in systematic professional development activities add to their professionalism especially when they are given the opportunity to address their contextual needs through systematic reflection. Hence, English language teachers should no doubt be reflective human beings, rather than just being transmitters of the structure and vocabulary of the language that they are teaching.

## CONCLUSION

Teacher education and language teacher education came a long way, shifting focus depending on the national and international politics of the time. While focus was a unified education system in the nationalist era, as was the case all over the world, the focus has shifted to a more democratic and inclusive system much later on. MoNE is still a context for many European Court of Human rights cases when it comes to meeting the demands of the minorities. For the monoculture system to gradually fade away without the presence of appropriate changes to curricula, for more democratic, pluralistic and inclusive education, teachers should practice and internalize being open-minded and accepting, ridding themselves of prejudices and biases, developing a critical awareness of the dynamics at play in the particular culture they are teaching in.

The recent COVID 19 outbreak is a challenge transforming educational practices drastically around the world. Language teaching has also been affected by the transition to online or hybrid education. According to the digital age educational plan of the European Commission (2020), digital technology can facilitate more personalized, flexible and student-centered learning, help learners and educators access, create and share digital content. It can also allow learning to take place beyond the lecture hall walls, classroom or workplace, providing more freedom from the constraints of physical settings and timetable. Although it provides the ease of reaching many from the comfort of home, equipping all learners and teachers with digital competencies and the technological tools, the infrastructure, the inclusion of online learning into curricula, it is still the policymakers who will shape the educational agenda. The crisis is an accurate display that digital education is no longer an island of its own but considered an integral part of education. The survey conducted by the European Union reveals that digital technology should be integrated into education and a consistent set of quality standards and guidelines should ensure an appropriate mix of digital and face-to-face learning experiences. It is still too early to conclude on the long-term consequences of online education on language teaching, yet the preliminary experience published in the most recent literature seems to be promising. Hence, the new issues introduced by online education are on the agenda of countries to stay. All in all, paying a visit to Turkish educational history may inspire educators to take the proper steps and invest in the future education policies of Turkey.

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