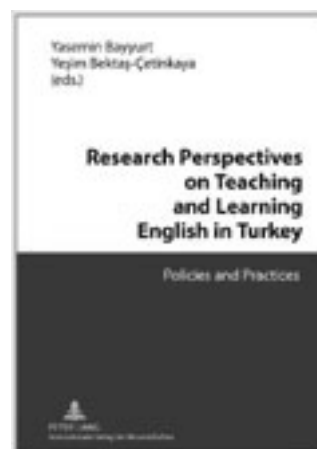


Research Perspectives on Teaching and Learning English in Turkey: Policies and Practices

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Author:	Yasemin Bayyurt & Yeşim Bektas-Çetinkaya (2012) (Eds.)		
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The field of English as a Foreign Language must be properly contextualized within the culture in which the English instruction occurs. Accordingly, this book offers an extensive picture of English language teaching in Turkey by describing the inception of English language teaching and contributing empirical studies to document current practices in English language teaching in that country. This comprehensive volume would be of benefit to teacher practitioners in Turkey as well as World Englishes scholars who seek to expand their view of how cultures influence English instruction.

This book has four different sections are broken down into 16 different chapters that are written by a variety of authors. The volume begins with a section on teacher education in Turkey, followed by a section on English language learning in that country. The book then continues with a section on instructional technology in EFL teaching there, followed by concluding portion that provides a widening perspective on a model for English language teaching in Turkey. While there have been previous articles published about ELT in Turkey, this book is unique in that provides a deeper examination of the issues and practices that are prevalent in Turkish ELT. This review is designed to portray how the historical development of ELT in Turkey has resulted in the present day practices in the field.

The first section provides the sociocultural foundations of teacher education in Turkey, and then narrows to English language teaching in particular. Underlying these tenets of teacher education are the sociopolitical forces in Turkey which have mandated how teacher education is to occur. Although the book offers a chronological perspective of the changes in foreign language education, Akyl focuses her attention on two critical educational reforms in 1980 and 2010 which have served as the guidelines for modern day curriculum for English teacher education curriculum with a renewed emphasis on a practicum so that teacher candidates can apply their theoretical knowledge to classroom experiences. After this historical foundation, the second chapter proceeds to present an overview of the present day practices of English language teachers in present day Turkish elementary schools. This article shows that the most frequently used methods are the Audiolingual method and the Communicative Language method, while grammar translation still is prominently featured. One concern that the article voiced is that teacher candidates aren't properly instructed in the principles of child development and language acquisition. In Chapter 4, the author argues that Turkish teachers do not have enough knowledge or skills to engage in self-directed professional development; therefore reflective teaching should play a bigger role in pre-service teacher education.

Beyond pedagogical knowledge, several chapters highlighted the need for Turkish pre-service teachers to have more instruction in intercultural competence because teacher candidates had a lack of knowledge about British culture outside of major British icons like the royal family. The candidates in the study reported that they didn't feel that cultural knowledge was needed in order to teach the English language. Accordingly, chapters 6 and 7 pushed for more cultural content to be incorporated into pre-service teacher education. The issue of culture was also raised in chapter 10 where it found that cultural familiarity of translated stories was outweighed by the elimination of Turkish norms in writing which increased the difficulty of the reading.

The second section of the book examines the research and practices involved in English language learning in Turkey. The first chapter in this section outlines the research that have been completed in the four skill areas in Turkey, and finds that reading and writing have received more of an emphasis than research on oral skills, which is not that surprising for an EFL context. The author calls for more research to be conducted in a K-12 context, because of the dearth of ESOL research on K-12 children. The next author delivers a promising outlook that reading strategy training in English was able to be transferred to Turkish as well. One of the more recent trends in English language teaching has been content-based instruction. Yalçın addressed this issue in a chapter that described a study that compared a course that integrated content based instruction with a course that focused more on language based instruction. While the different foci did not result differences in language proficiency, the content-based course yielded higher scores on content assessment. This study stressed that content-based instruction offered a more motivational curriculum to promote academic achievement than previous models practiced in Turkey. The last chapter in this section addressed teacher beliefs about reading

strategies. The study indicated that the participants believed that pre-reading strategies were more important than both while reading and post reading activities. This research had a follow-up component where the participants were assessed to see if their classroom practices matched their previously stated beliefs. The chapter offered a practical solution of using more engaging texts to increase students' motivation to use reading strategies in their everyday learning.

The third portion of the book focused on the use of technology in English instruction in Turkey. General findings from the first chapter in this section indicated that most of the participants viewed technology as an important complement to instruction in a foreign language classroom. However, roughly only one quarter of the participants reported that they received computer assisted language learning training from their school. One of the significant issues raised was the lack of access to technology in a school setting. The next chapter made a convincing argument that instructional technology is critical if Turkish educators want to prepare their students to participate in a global society. In spite of this forward looking goal, the reality of instructional technology practice has lagged behind because schools have not embraced the changes that are needed to fully integrate the technology into instruction. Multiple chapters in this volume stated that reluctance to use technology was primarily based on the lack of experience using technology and the lack of understanding the benefits that technology could bring to their students. Furthermore, a later chapter explored how email exchange could contribute to language development. This study found that the students improved as far vocabulary usage and grammar as they learned to negotiate meaning through their on-line interaction.

To conclude this volume, Bayyurt offers a paradigm for English language education in Turkey. She argues that English as an International Language principles should be central to the curriculum so that Turkish speakers of English are able to use English in multiple global contexts while still being respectful of the local norms in Turkey.

Research Perspectives on Teaching and Learning English in Turkey: Policies and Practices provides a rich picture of the historical context of English instruction in Turkey before exploring research into current practices to advance the field for teachers and students of English alike. This volume would be a must read for English educators in Turkey and other English as a foreign language contexts.

Reviewed by

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