A comparative study on teaching Turkish and English as a foreign language at the postgraduate level

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Abstract

Due to the fact that English language has been widely used as a lingua franca during the last fifty years, it has established a strong base to teach English as a foreign language (FL). In Turkey, however, such studies have increased in the last decade. The aims of this descriptive study are to compare the postgraduate programmes on teaching Turkish and English as a FL and to evaluate the similarities and differences between Turkish (Istanbul University, Dokuz Eylul University, Yildiz Teknik University) and British (Lancaster University, Newcastle University, University of Birmingham) universities in terms of course names, course credits, and course variation.

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1. Introduction

Due to the effects of globalization and intercultural relations in the last five decades, the need for learning languages in addition to the mother tongue has increased dramatically. In this framework, teaching programmes, which can meet such expectations, are needed. Since the negotiations between Turkey and European Union have taken place in 2000s, Turkish language has gained credence in being taught as a foreign or second language. English language, on the other hand, has gained the status of world language in last fifty years due to many reasons. This status has formed a strong base to teach English as a foreign language. Prominent linguistic studies, which took place firstly in Europe then in the States, led the way in teaching languages. After the birth of applied linguistics, studies on teaching English both as the mother tongue and as a foreign language have improved substantially. TOMER (Centre for Turkish language teaching), which was established by Ankara University in 1984, has offered the first programme in teaching Turkish for foreigners. In the following years, more TOMER centres have been
established by different Turkish universities. These TOMER centres have been mainly used to teach Turkish dialect used in Turkey to citizens of other Turkic countries.

The numbers of thesis (Kaya, 1994; Yilmaz, 2004; Kose, 2005) and articles (Hengirmen, 1993; Aydin, 1997; Yuce, 2005; Ungan, 2006, Celebi, 2006) on teaching Turkish to foreigners have increased since 1990s. One of the reasons for this increase may be the administration of European Language Portfolio in 1989. The European Language Portfolio was developed and piloted by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, from 1998 until 2000. European language portfolio is a document in which those who are learning or have learned a language - whether at school or outside school - can record and reflect on their language learning and cultural experiences (Broeder, 2001, p. 1; Yuce, 2005, p. 85). Two criteria have been developed in this project: European language portfolio and European language criteria. Another technique initiated by the Council of Europe is the Europass Language Passport.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research questions

The main research question of this study is “Are there any similarities and differences between the Turkish and English postgraduate programmes on teaching Turkish and English as a FL?”

The sub research questions are:

- In what ways the postgraduate programmes are similar in teaching Turkish and English as a FL?
- In what ways the postgraduate programmes are different in teaching Turkish and English as a FL?
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- In what ways the postgraduate programmes are similar in teaching English as a FL?
- In what ways the postgraduate programmes are different in teaching English as a FL?

2.2. Data collection procedures

In this study, the postgraduate programmes on teaching Turkish as a FL at Istanbul University, Dokuz Eylul University and Yildiz Teknik University and the postgraduate programmes on teaching English as a FL at Lancaster University, Newcastle University and University of Birmingham are studied. The postgraduate programme on teaching Turkish as a FL is not offered by any other Turkish universities. Three British universities, whose postgraduate programmes on teaching English as a FL are investigated, are nominated according to their research assessment excellence (RAE) results.

2.3. Data analysis

This study is a descriptive. It compares the postgraduate programmes of six universities in terms of the course names, course credits, and course variation.

3. Research Findings
Table 1. Course Names and Credits of Teaching Turkish as a FL Programmes in Turkish Universities

| Courses                                                                 | Yildiz Teknik (YT) | Istanbul (I) | Dokuz Eylul (DE) |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|------------------|
| History of Turkish Language                                           | 3                   | 3            |                  |
| Foreign Language Teaching Programmes                                  | 3                   |              |                  |
| Research Methods                                                      | 3                   | 3            |                  |
| Foreign Language Teaching Methods                                      | 3                   | 3            |                  |
| Structure of Turkish Language                                         | 3                   | 3            |                  |
| Turkish Literature in the Republican Period                            | 3                   |              |                  |
| Written and Spoken Discourse in Language Teaching                     | 3                   |              |                  |
| Language Skills in Language Teaching                                  | 3                   |              |                  |
| Testing                                                                | 3                   |              |                  |
| Approaches and Methods in Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language       |                     |              | 3                |
| Coursebook Design                                                      |                     |              | 3                |
| Written discourse in teaching Turkish as a FL                          |                     |              | 3 3              |
| Language Development in Turkish                                        |                     |              | 3                |
| Methods in teaching literature                                         |                     |              | 3                |
| The Fundamental Concepts and Principles of Linguistics                 |                     |              | 3                |
| Turkish Vocabulary/Lexicography and its teaching                       |                     |              | 3                |
| Teaching Turkish Grammar                                               |                     |              | 3                |
| Applied Linguistics                                                    |                     |              | 3                |
| Comparative Grammar (303)                                             |                     |              | 3                |
| Instructional Planning and Evaluation                                 |                     |              | 3                |
| Learning and Teaching Processes                                        |                     |              | 3                |
| Semiotics and Turkish                                                  |                     |              | 3                |
| Teaching the Listening and Speaking Skills in Teaching Turkish as a FL |                     |              | 3                |
| Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language to Young Learners              |                     |              | 3                |
| Materials Preparation and Development for Teaching Turkish as a FL     |                     |              | 3                |
| The Principles and Methods of Teaching                                 |                     |              | 3                |
| Teaching the Reading and Writing Skills in Teaching Turkish as a FL    |                     |              | 3                |
| Discourse Analysis and Turkish as a Foreign Language I-II              |                     |              | 3                |
| Turkish Culture and Civilization                                       |                     |              | 3                |
| Analyses of the Curricula of Teaching Turkish                          |                     |              | 3                |
| Online Teaching Turkish as a FL                                        |                     |              | 3                |
| Microteaching and Peer Teaching                                        |                     |              | 3                |
| Games, Songs and Competitions in Teaching Turkish as a FL              |                     |              | 3                |
| Selections from Contemporary Turkish Literature                        |                     |              | 3                |

In all of the three Turkish universities’ MA programmes, Turkish phonetics and phonology, morphology, and syntax have been emphasised in courses such as “The structure of Turkish language” and “The developmental stages of Turkish language”. In each programme language teaching methods are covered theoretically. All of the programmes have courses both on teaching four language skills and teaching grammar.

The main difference between three MA programmes is that we can see courses on literature and teaching literature. For instance, “Turkish Literature in the Republican Period” in YT’s programme, “Methods of teaching literature” in I’s programme and “Selections from Contemporary Turkish Literature” in DE’s programme can be regarded as differences. Moreover, the courses in DE’s programme are based on linguistics.
| Courses                                                                 | Lancaster (L) | Newcastle (N) | Birmingham (B) |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Introduction to Language Teaching I                                   |               |               |                |
| Introduction to Language Teaching II                                  |               |               |                |
| Classroom Language Assessment                                          |               |               |                |
| Research Issues in Applied Linguistics                                | No credits    |               |                |
| Background to Applied Linguistics for Language Teaching                |               |               |                |
| Researching Language Classrooms                                       |               |               |                |
| Expertise in Language Teaching and Learning                           |               |               |                |
| Second Language Learning                                               |               |               |                |
| Managing Innovation in Language Education                              |               |               |                |
| Communicative and Pedagogical Grammar                                 |               |               |                |
| Culture and the Language Learner                                      |               |               |                |
| Researching Oral Language Pedagogy                                     |               |               |                |
| Introduction to Language                                               |               |               |                |
| Discourse for Teachers                                                |               |               |                |
| Introduction to Translation                                            |               |               |                |
| Teaching Young Learners                                                |               |               |                |
| Teacher Training                                                       |               |               |                |
| Syllabus and Materials Design                                          |               |               |                |
| Media Literacy                                                        |               |               |                |
| Management of Innovation                                               |               |               |                |
| Language and Literature                                               |               |               |                |
| Genre Analysis                                                         |               |               |                |
| Forensic Linguistics                                                  |               |               |                |
| English for Specific/Academic Purposes                                 |               |               |                |
| English as an International Language                                  |               |               |                |
| Discourse and Ideology                                                |               |               |                |
| Computer Assisted Language Learning                                   |               |               |                |
| Business English                                                       |               |               |                |
| Advanced Lexicography                                                 |               |               |                |
| Advanced Translation Studies                                          |               |               |                |
| Social and Psychological Aspects of Language                          |               |               |                |
| Language Description                                                  |               |               |                |
| Introduction to Lexicography                                          |               |               |                |
| Testing                                                               |               |               |                |
| Introduction to TESOL                                                 |               |               |                |
| Core issues in SLA                                                    |               |               |                |
| TESOL theory and practice                                             |               |               |                |
| Task based language teaching and assessment                            |               |               |                |
| Corpus linguistics                                                    |               |               |                |
| Bilingualism                                                           |               |               |                |
The programme offered in L is for those interested in developing a career in teaching English as a FL (TEFL), but who have less than three years (or no) TEFL experience. The programme consists of four core courses, including TEFL classroom teaching and testing methods. A further two courses are taken from among the following: Second Language Learning, Managing Innovation in Language Education, Communicative and Pedagogical Grammar, Culture and the Language Learner, and Researching Oral Language Pedagogy. A third is chosen from a wide range of additional modules.

The MA in TEFL offered in B is intended for teachers of English with at least two years' English teaching experience who wish to upgrade their professional standing. It is most suitable for teachers whose interests lie mainly in classroom practice. Students on the MA in TEFL take six taught modules. The first three modules are taught in the September-December term, the other three modules are taught in the January-March term.

The MA degree offered in N is especially designed for those who wish to gain expertise in the new approaches and techniques for teaching English as a FL. A number of modules are specially designed for graduates who are experienced language teachers and who wish to acquire the knowledge, understanding, skills and aptitudes necessary to develop their careers in language teaching in an international context. For language graduates with little or no teaching experience, the degree offers introductory modules which will provide you with a thorough grounding in the practical skills and knowledge which are of interest and importance to language teaching and learning.

4. Conclusion

The study compares the postgraduate programmes on teaching Turkish and English as a FL and evaluates the similarities and differences between Turkish and British universities. There are three main differences between the programmes. The first difference between two programmes is the course credit system. In Turkish universities, 3 credits are assigned for each postgraduate course. However, in British universities, the course credit system is based on the accomplishment of written assignment for each taught module. Under the guidance of a supervisor, MA candidates produce a 12,000 word dissertation on an area of interest of their own choice. The dissertation carries 60 credits. They will select two optional 20 credit modules from the course list. They take compulsory and optional taught modules to a total of 120 credits. The second difference is related to the duration of the programme. In British universities, the MA programme lasts for 12 months full time and 24 months part time. In Turkish universities, however, the MA programme lasts for 24 months full time. The third difference is that Modern Turkish Literature has a leading role in MA programmes of Turkish universities; whereas, in British universities the relationship between language and literature has been emphasised.

Although some similarities are noticed in course variation between two programmes, only three Turkish universities offer MA programme in teaching Turkish as a FL. This is the limitation of the study. If more Turkish universities offer such an MA programme, it will enable the programme to be taught as a BA degree and thus expand the scope of teaching Turkish.

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