In the Discussion on “Doing Diversity” in Education, How do English Language Teaching Programs Measure Up?

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Diversity in Education: Discourse vs. Practice

• European Union educational policies currently encompass issues such as:
  • Awareness of diversity;
  • Mutual respect;
  • The development of intercultural skills.

• However, the reality in schools is often far different. For example:
  • In Dutch public schools, minority students have been penalized or even expelled for speaking their native language (Yağmur, 2015);
  • In German education, poor academic performance among non-native students is frequently assumed to be the result of their cultural and linguistic upbringing (Karakaşıoğlu, 2015).
Diversity in Education: Turkey’s Case

• In Turkey, as in the EU, issues relating to diversity have been emphasized from a rhetorical standpoint;
• BUT – few specific policy objectives have been set in this regard (Tarman, 2010; Tongal, 2015);
• Classroom instruction is generally assimilative and does not account for cultural or other differences in learners (DG-EAC, 2017).
Addressing Diversity through Culture in English Language Education

• Unlike other aspects of education in Turkey...
  • The national English language programs for elementary and secondary students contain explicit recommendations for addressing culture (Çelik & Karaca, 2014; MoNE, 2013).

• Who is responsible for carrying out these objectives?
  • English language teachers!

• The problem:
  • Most pre- or in-service teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Turkey lack well-developed intercultural skills of their own (Bektaş-Çetinkaya & Çelik, 2013; Yazıcı, Başol, & Toprak, 2009).
Are We Preparing Turkish EFL Teachers for their Role in Dealing with Diversity?

• The core English language teacher education curriculum is defined by the Yükseköğretim Kurulu (Council of Higher Education, or CoHE).
  • The CoHE does not currently prescribe any content that addresses intercultural skills (CoHE, 2014; Karakaş, 2012 Yüksel, 2012).
  • The decision to include culture-related courses is left to individual ELT departments – such courses may be included as electives.

• What we don’t know in this situation:
  • How widespread are current efforts to engage EFL teacher candidates with culture-related elective courses;
  • What types of diversity-oriented courses are being offered in Turkey’s ELT preparation programs;
  • Which intercultural skills are being addressed.
Purpose of the Study

• This study was designed to explore how diversity is addressed in the ELT programs at Turkish public universities.

• The findings may serve two purposes:
  1. To highlight the current efforts of individual ELT programs to prepare future teachers of English to address cultural diversity in their practice.
  2. To call attention to a need for a more coherent and uniform approach to incorporating culture and intercultural awareness in Turkey’s ELT programs.
The study was conducted as a systematic survey of the elective courses offered in each English language teaching department in Turkey.

Data collection took place in Fall, 2016, and Spring, 2017, academic semesters as follows:

- The official websites of the public universities in Turkey were reviewed to determine whether they supported an English language teacher education program.
- The course catalogues of the targeted ELT departments were then examined through content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004; Neundorf, 2002).
- Courses related to cultural diversity were identified and indexed in terms of the course titles and descriptions.
- The data were categorized in terms of (1) the total numbers of courses identified; and (2) the aspects of culture that were encompassed.
A total of 38 ELT programs were identified among all of the universities surveyed. Among these programs, only 14 included courses related to cultural issues. Eighteen individual culture-oriented courses were distributed among the 14 programs as shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Name</th>
<th>Course Code/Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Anatolian University</td>
<td>KÜL199: Cultural Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Balıkesir University</td>
<td>S2024: Language and Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Dicle University</td>
<td>ELT221: Cultural pluralism and education in Turkey and Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ELT223: Culture and Intercultural Education in Turkey and Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ELT227: British and American Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Düzce University</td>
<td>İÖP211: Intercultural Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Erciyes University</td>
<td>İÖP211: Intercultural Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Gazi University</td>
<td>Yİ414AA: Pragmatics and Language Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Hacettepe University</td>
<td>İDÖ484: History of British Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Karadeniz Technical University</td>
<td>SIDE222: British Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SIDE223: Intercultural Communication and Foreign Language Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SIDE224: American Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Istanbul University</td>
<td>INOG4064: Cultural Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Mersin University</td>
<td>İDE4504: Intercultural Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University</td>
<td>ID320: American Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Ondokuz Mayıs University</td>
<td>İNO407: British Cultural History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Pamukkale University</td>
<td>İNO404: Intercultural Communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The courses offered fell into 5 different categories, including general culture, direct instruction in a foreign culture, culture as it relates to language learning, intercultural communication, and context-specific cultural issues; as was the case with Dicle University, which maintains partnerships with a number of universities in Germany (http://www.dicle.edu.tr/).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Type</th>
<th>Course Title/University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| General culture                                 | • Cultural Activities – Anatolian University  
• Cultural Studies – Istanbul University  |
| Direct instruction in a specific foreign culture | • British Cultural History – Hacettepe University  
• History of British Culture -- Ondokuz Mayıs University  
• British Culture – Karadeniz Technical University  
• American Culture – Karadeniz Technical University & Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University  
• British and American Culture – Dicle University  
• History of American Culture – Süleyman Demirel University  |
| Culture as related to language learning         | • Language and Culture -- Balıkesir University  
• Pragmatics and Language Teaching – Gazi University  
• Intercultural Communication and Foreign Language Education – Karadeniz Technical University  |
| Intercultural Communication                     | • Intercultural Communication -- Düzce University, Erciyes University, Mersin University, Pamukkale University |
| Context-specific Cultural Issues                | • Cultural pluralism and education in Turkey and Germany --- Dicle University  
• Culture and Intercultural Education in Turkey and Germany – Dicle University  |
Discussion

How widespread are current efforts to engage EFL teacher candidates with culture-related content?

• Among the 38 ELT departments identified, only 14 offer courses that address cultural concerns, representing fewer than 37% of Turkey’s ELT programs.

• Only 18 culture-related elective courses were identified in total, distributed among these 14 programs.
Discussion

What types of diversity-oriented courses are currently being offered in Turkey’s ELT preparation programs, and which intercultural skills are being addressed?

• About half of the courses relate to intercultural awareness, focusing on intercultural communication or on specific English-speaking cultures;

• Little emphasis is placed on the relationship between language and culture, or on approaches to teaching about culture, with only 3 of the 18 courses addressing these concerns.

• The remaining courses involved either very general cultural topics or highly context-specific concerns.
Conclusions

What the findings tell us:

• The efforts of English language teaching programs to support future EFL teachers’ intercultural competence are both highly limited and inconsistent;
• While some attention is given to intercultural awareness, pedagogical skills related to teaching about culture are minimally addressed.

The takeaway:

• The Turkish education system is not yet doing enough to promote intercultural awareness and culture-related skills, as with the concerns raised by Bektaş-Çetinkaya and Çelik (2013) Yazıcı, Başol, & Toprak (2009), Tarman (2010) and Tongal (2015).
Limitations of the Study

• The present study provides only a basic overview of the culture-related courses being offered in ELT programs in Turkey.

• In-depth analysis of the content of these courses and of learners’ experiences is needed to understand whether individual courses are effective in developing intercultural skills.

• Similar studies in future academic years may yield different results, as programs revise their course offerings.
Recommendations

• To support Turkey’s ELT programs in preparing future teachers to deal with culture in the classroom, it is necessary to:
  • Encourage ELT program designers to include meaningful culture-related courses throughout their four-year degree programs;
  • Call on policy-makers (e.g., the Council of Higher Education) to making policy-level provisions to support the development of intercultural awareness.
References

- T.C. Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu Başkanlığı [Republic of Turkey, Ministry of National Education (MoNE)]. (2013). İlköğretim kurumları (ilkokullar ve ortaokullar) İngilizce dersi (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 ve 8. sınıf) öğretim programı [elementary (primary and lower secondary) English language teaching program (grades 2-8)]. Ankara: T.C. Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı.
Thank you!

For more information, please contact:

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