

Öğretim Üyesi Yetiştirme Programı Strateji ve Uygulamaları: Selçuk Üniversitesi Örneği

The Faculty Development Program Strategies and Practices: Selçuk University

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ÖZET

Yirminci yüzyılın ortalarından itibaren çeşitli nedenlerden dolayı, İngilizce dünyanın neredeyse yaklaşık üçte biri tarafından birinci ya da ikinci dil olarak konuşulmaktadır. Uluslararası diplomasi, denizcilik, havacılık, bilim dünyası, medya, uluslararası ticaret gibi çeşitli alanlarda hâkim dil olması nedeniyle, İngilizce bilmek iletişim çağında yer almak isteyenler açısından önem taşımaktadır. Bilim dünyasında düzenlenen uluslararası etkinliklerin ortak dil olarak İngilizceyi seçmeleri, eser ve çalışmaların uluslararası yayın dili olarak çoğunlukla İngilizce yayınlanması akademik dünyada da İngilizceyi ön plana taşımaktadır.

Yabancı dil eğitiminde yirminci yüzyılın ortalarından bu güne dilde yeterlilik ve dilde yetkinlik kavramları üzerinde çeşitli araştırmalar yapılmıştır. Chomsky (1965) dilde yetkinliği ideal bir ortamda konuşan ve dinleyen tarafından gerçekleştirilen zihinsel bir kapasite olarak tanımlamasının ardından, farklı görüşler ortaya atan Hymes (1972) dilde yetkinlik ve işlevselliğin birbirleriyle bağlantılı olduğu savını ortaya sürmüştür. Bu savın yabancı dil öğretiminde yansımaları gecikmemiş, yabancı dil öğrenmenin sadece temel gramer kurallarını bilmek değil, ayrıca o dili anadili olarak konuşan kişilerin dil becerilerine sahip olmak olduğunu öne süren iletişimsel öğretim yaklaşımı gelişmiştir (Savignon, 1972; Rivers, 1973). Bu yaklaşımın sonucunda iletişimsel yetkinlik (communicative competence) kavramının kapsamı gramer yetkinliği, sosyo-linguistik yetkinlik ve stratejik yetkinlik şeklinde genişlemiştir (Canale and Swain, 1980). Canale (1983) daha sonraki çalışmalarında iletişimsel yetkinliğe tutarlılık ve bütünlük kavramlarını ilave etmiştir. İletişimsel yetkinlik yabancı dilin nasıl ölçülüp değerlendirilmesi gerektiği hakkında da çeşitli araştırmalara konu olmuş (Cooper, 1968; Jacobitz, 1969; Bierie, 1971; Canale and Swain, 1980), Avrupa Topluluğu Ortak Çerçeve Dil Programının (2001) bilimsel temeli oluşturmuştur. .

Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce eğitimi Türkiye’de istenen başarı düzeyine ulaşamamıştır. Gerek yurt içi gerekse yurtdışında Türkiye’nin yabancı dil eğitimi sorunu çeşitli platformlarda dile getirilmiştir (Demirel 1999; MEB, 2006; Işık, 2008, Education First, 2011). Konu ile ilgili yetkililerin uğraş ve çabaları ne yazık ki sorunun çözümünde şu ana kadar istenen sonucu sağlayabilmiş değildir (European Commission, 2006). Uygulamaya konulmaya çalışılan çeşitli eğitim programlarına rağmen öğretmen merkezli geleneksel öğretim anlayışının hâkimiyetini sürdürmesi, çeşitli planlama hataları bu sorunun nedenleri arasında ifade edilmiştir (Demirel, 1999).

Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu 26 Mart 2010 tarihinde aldığı kararla Türkiye’nin çeşitli bölge ve illerinde yeni açılmış üniversitelerde görevlendirilecek geleceğin öğretim üyelerini yetiştirmek amacıyla Öğretim Üyesi Yetiştirme Programı (ÖYP) adlı bir program başlatmıştır. Bu karara göre belirli ölçütlere göre seçilen öğretim üyesi adayları Türkiye’de lisansüstü eğitim veren çeşitli bölge ve illerdeki üniversitelerde yüksek lisans ve doktoralarını tamamladıktan sonra kadrolarının bulunduğu üniversitelerde görevlerine başlayacaklardır. ÖYP aynı zamanda adayların İngilizce eğitimine de öncelik vermiş ve bu amaçla

KPDS, ÜDS ve bu sınavlara denk olarak kabul edilen çeşitli uluslar arası sınavlardan yönetmelikçe belirlenen puanların altında alanlara Türkiye’deki belirli üniversitelerde yabancı dil olarak İngilizce eğitimi almaları hususunda gerekli kaynak ve imkânları sağlamıştır. YÖK ve ilgili üniversiteler arasında yapılan protokole göre Yabancı Dil eğitimi hedeflerinin arasında öğrencilerin dört dil becerisini kullanabilmeleri ve ayrıca KPDS, ÜDS ve bunlara denkliği tanınmış diğer sınavlardan geçerli notu alabilmeleri hedef davranış olarak programda yer almıştır.

Selçuk Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu yürüttüğü yabancı dil eğitim programı süresince öğrencilere iletişimsel yetkinlik kazandırmak amacıyla okuma, dinleme, yazma ve konuşma gibi becerileri geliştirmeye yönelik çoklu medya araçlarıyla desteklenmiş bir eğitim programı uygulamıştır. Kasım 2010 ve Mayıs 2011 tarihleri arasında 25 hafta süren eğitim sürecine 48 öğretim üyesi aday katılmıştır. Yabancı dil bilgi ve beceri düzeyi belirleme sınavı ve yapılan mülakatlar sonucunda ihtiyaç analizi yapılmış ve öğrencilerin üç farklı seviyeye ayrılarak eğitim almaları uygun görülmüştür. Eğitim materyali olarak öğrencilerin okuma, yazma, dinleme ve konuşma becerilerini geliştirmelerine yardımcı olacak kitaplar seçilmiş ve yansıtım makinesi ile desteklenmiş sınıflarda eğitim gerçekleştirilmiştir. Ayrıca öğrencilerin ders saatleri dışında faydalanabilmeleri amacıyla çeşitli yabancı dil etkinliklerini içeren programların yüklendiği 50 bilgisayardan oluşan iki derslik hazırlanmıştır.

Bu çalışmanın araştırmacıları Selçuk Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu ÖYP Yabancı Dil eğitim programının hazırlayıcısı ve yürütücüsü olarak program ekibi arasında yer almışlardır. Programın değerlendirilmesi amacıyla yapılan bu çalışma nitel bir araştırma olup, programda yer alan yirmi dokuz katılımcı ve dört öğretmenin görüş ve düşüncelerini tespit etmeye çalışmıştır. Araştırmacılar tarafından hazırlanan anket formu yeterlilik (proficiency) ve yetkinlik (competence) hakkında on dört açık uçlu sorudan oluşmuştur. Bu soruları öğrenciler yazılı olarak cevaplamışlardır.

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Elde edilen verilerin değerlendirilmesi sonucunda iki önemli nokta dikkat çekici bulunmuştur. Bunlardan ilki öğrencilerin akademik dil becerileri bir başka deyişle dilde yetkinliklerini değerlendirirken okuma becerileri ve gramer bilgilerinin arttığını, bununla birlikte konuşma, dinleme ve yazma gibi becerilerinin ise gelişmediğini ifade etmeleridir. Öğrencilerin dünyayla iletişime geçebilmek için konuşabilmeyi ve yazabilmeyi istemeleri de dil yetkinliği konusunda farkındalıklarını bildirmeleri açısından dikkat çekici bulunmuştur. Diğer bulgu öğrencilerin programın hedefleri nedeniyle düştükleri ikilemi ortaya koymaktadır. Öğrenciler bir taraftan Öğretim Üyesi Yetiştirme Programının şartlarından biri olan KDS ve ÜDS'yi geçmeyi hedeflerken, diğer taraftan bu sınavların sadece kelime ve gramer bilgisi ile okuma becerilerini ölçer olması nedeniyle akademik hayatları için şart olan konuşma, yazma ve dinleme becerileri ihmal etmelerinden dolayı duydukları rahatsızlığı ifade etmişlerdir.

Bulguların değerlendirilmesi sonucunda araştırmacılar öğrencilerin dilde yetkinliğin önemini kavramış olmalarını olumlu bir sonuç olarak tespit etmişlerdir. İletişimsel yetkinlik bireylerin yazılı ve sözlü metinleri sadece anlamaları değil aynı zamanda üretebilmelerini de gerekli kıldığı için, geleceğin öğretim üyelerinin bu yetkinliğin öneminin farkında olmaları ve bunun geliştirilmesi konusunda kendilerini sorumlu hissetmeleri bu sonucun olumlu olarak değerlendirilmesinin bir sebebidir. Bu noktada önem arz eden husus öğretmen merkezli eğitim sürecinden geçmiş yetişkin bireylerin özerk öğrenebilmeleri için gerekli eğitim programlarının hazırlanması gerekliliğidir. Araştırmacılar özerk öğrenme yetisinin kazanılabilmesi için ileri düşünme becerilerinin yabancı dil eğitimine aşılması, bilişsel akıcılık, iletişimsel akıcılık ve bu ikisi arasındaki ilişki hakkında kuramsal ve deneysel araştırmalar yapılmasını önermektedirler.

Bir diğer bulgu değerlendirmesi sonucuna göre Öğretim Üyesi Yetiştirme Programında ölçme aracı olarak konulan KPDS ve ÜDS isimli sınavlar dört dil becerisinin hepsini ölçmedikleri için programın hedefleriyle çelişmekte ve katılımcıların ikileme düşmesine yol açmaktadır. Bireylerin düşünme becerilerini ve farklı öğrenme stillerini dikkate alan sınavlarla ölçme ve değerlendirme yapılması araştırmacılar tarafından ortaya konulan bir diğer öneridir. Araştırmanın konusu olan dilde yetkinliğe ulaşmada önemli yer tutan sınavların aynı zamanda uluslararası bilim dünyasında geçerliliği olan sınavlar olarak tespit edilmesi geleceğin öğretim üyelerini olası yurtdışı eğitim süreçlerine geçişlerine imkân sağlamaları açısından da önem taşımaktadır.

Bu çalışma nüfusunun yansı gibi büyük bir oranda genç nüfusa sahip olan bir ülke olan Türkiye'de son yıllarda yabancı dil eğitimi ile ilgili atılmış kapsamlı bir adım olan Öğretim Üyesi Yetiştirme Programı ile ilgili veriler sunması açısından önemlidir. Programın değerlendirilmesi ve geliştirilmesi sadece yabancı dil eğitiminde değil, yetişkin eğitimi, lisansüstü eğitim, hayat boyu öğrenme gibi konular ve bunların yansımaları üzerinde de etkiler yaratacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İletişimsel yetkinlik, öğretim ve ölçme, program değerlendirme.

Çalışmanın Türü: Araştırma

ABSTRACT

Academicians in Turkey are among the groups who have most problems with learning English as foreign English. The Higher Education Council (HEC) launched a comprehensive program called ÖYP (Öğretim Elemanı Yetiştirme Programı) to train prospective academic staff in Turkey, which requires research assistants to get an acceptable score from the language proficiency exams. However, it is also a fact that language competence is another challenge for academicians to carry out their studies efficiently in their academic life. The researchers in this study, who took part in the language education of these prospective academicians, aim to show how performance and competence have interacted during the educational process. The qualified data gathering method was used to present the opinions of both the participants and the teachers. The finding that the participants feel themselves in dilemma between competence and performance is significant in terms of curriculum development.

Keywords: Communicative competence, teaching and assessment, program evaluation

Type of the study: Research

1. INTRODUCTION

On March 26, 2010, the basis and procedures related with the “Faculty Development Program” or ÖYP the Turkish acronym were released by the Higher Education Council (HEC) in Turkey. The aim of the program is to regulate the core procedures related to educating the research assistants to be appointed at various faculties and departments of the newly-opened universities. The regulation stipulates that the prospective lecturers have their post graduate education at some other Turkish universities which are qualified to administer Masters and PhD programs. Article seven of the regulation clearly states that the research assistants whose foreign language proficiency exam scores are below sixty-five percent will be given language education at one of the universities determined by the Higher Education Council for up to six-months (YÖK, 2012). According to the Law on Higher Education (Law no: 2547) and Regulations on Graduate Education, it is a requirement for academicians to obtain valid scores from the language proficiency exams to advance in their academic life (YÖK, 2011)

The foreign language proficiency examinations cited in article seven are defined as UDS and KPDS, and other equivalent exams which are approved by Assessment, Selection and Placement Centre (OSYM) in Turkey. The exams can be categorized into two groups: the first group is the KPDS and UDS examinations held in Turkey, and the second group is TOEFL, IELTS and the TOEIC examinations held in the U.S.A, Australia, and England. The main difference between these two groups is that the former is a multiple choice exam that assesses vocabulary, grammar, and reading skills, while the latter is based on

testing the four skills. Some changes were made by OSYM in the equivalent scores of the international exams (OSYM, 2012). In the latest list, TOEFL IBT, TOEFL CBT, TOEFL PBT, IELTS, CAE, FCE AND CPE are cited as equivalent to KPDS and UDS.

The agreement prepared by HEC stipulates that the program is to be implemented in all classes and should aim at improving the participants' proficiency in the English language, and also help them achieve higher scores on the KPDS and UDS or other equivalent exams. It also states that the classes should be organized with the aim of improving the four language skills of the participants.

In this study, the researchers aim to present the stages followed thus far in the program conducted at the School of Foreign Languages, Selçuk University; as well as the results of a semi-structured qualitative survey prepared to determine the views of the trainees and teachers who have been included in the program. The researchers of this study will address two concepts: competence and performance. The researchers define competence as a learner's ability to use the English language for its natural purpose – interaction. Performance is defined as evidence of an appropriate level of learning as determined by a standardized test score (KPDS and UDS).

This study will attempt to answer two research questions:

1. How has competence in the English language been affected by the specifically designed HEC curriculum?
2. How has the requirement of successful performance on the KPDS and UDS examination affected the trainee assistants' overall development of their English language skills?

1.1. Literature Review

Since Chomsky (1965) initiated the debate over differing competence as an idealized capacity from performance as the production of actual utterances, competence versus performance has been discussed from different perspectives. According to Chomsky, competence is the knowledge we subconsciously possess about how to speak a language while performance is real world linguistic output we produce. However, Hymes (1972) criticized his theory for being inadequate in clarifying the distinction between competence and performance and coined a linguistic term “communicative competence” to indicate the ability to not only apply the grammatical rules of a language to form correct utterances, but also to know when to use these utterances appropriately.

Pioneered by Hymes's approach that include “communicative form and function in integral relation to each other”, communicative competence has been found to be a particularly relevant idea to those interested in second language learning (Savignon, 1972; Rivers, 1973). In view of the communicative teaching approach, a second language learner must acquire not only the capacity to use the basic grammar of the sentence but also the communicative skills of the native speakers. In a paper by Canale and Swain (1980), communicative competence is said to consist of grammatical competence (words and rules), sociolinguistic competence (appropriateness) and strategic competence (appropriate use of communication strategies). In the redefinition of their model above, Canale (1983) added “cohesion” and “coherence” as discourse competence (cohesion and coherence) to the components of communicative competence. In other words, communicative competence was summarized as the question of knowing when and how to say what to whom in an appropriate way (Saville-Troike, 2006).

In fact, communicative competence, which is referred to in linguistics as social knowledge about how and when to use utterances appropriately as well as the language user's grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology, phonology and the like, has gained importance since the late 1900s. . Communication strategies, described by Faerch and Kasper (1983) as “potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal”, have been recommended to language learners as a method to resolve their linguistic problems and communicate more comprehensibly (Bialystok, 1990; Faerch and Kasper, 1983, Widdowson, 1983).

Communicative competence was described by Savignon (1983) as “the ability to function in a truly communicative setting –that is, in a dynamic exchange in which linguistic competence must adapt itself to the total informational input, both linguistic and paralinguistic, of one or more interlocutors”. Likewise, Canale and Swain (1980), Stern (1986), and Bachman and Palmer (1996), also believed the nature of

competence is not static but dynamic, more interpersonal than intrapersonal, and relative rather than absolute. In their opinion, competence can be observed, developed, maintained, and evaluated only through performance.

According to Bachman and Palmer (1996), organisational knowledge is composed of abilities engaged in a control over formal language structures, like grammatical and textual knowledge. Several independent areas of knowledge such as: knowledge of lexis, morphology, syntax, phonology, and graphology make up grammatical knowledge and enable recognition and production of grammatically correct sentences as well as comprehension of their propositional content. On the other hand, textual knowledge enables comprehension and production of spoken or written texts. It is made up of knowledge of cohesion, knowledge of conversational organisation and knowledge of conventions to combine sentences or utterances into texts.

In a similar discussion on communicative competence, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which was developed to provide a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, and textbooks across Europe, embodies an action-oriented approach to language that can be summarized as follows (Council of Europe, 2001):

- People use language to perform communicative acts, which may be external and social (communicating with other people) or internal and private (communicating with themselves).
- Communicative acts are made up of four kinds of language activity: reception, production, interaction, and mediation.
- In order to be involved in language activity, people make use of our communicative language competence.
- As people must cope with unpredictable contextual features, their communicative language competence has sociolinguistic and pragmatic components.
- Language activity is composed of the performance of tasks, and those tasks require us to use strategies in order to understand and/or produce spoken or written texts.

Communicative competence has also been in consideration from the view of testing. When Canale and Swain (1980) needed to develop language proficiency tests, they became interested in communicative competence and stressed its relevance to both language teaching and testing. The relevance of a theory of communicative competence to language testing had been noted before by Cooper (1968), Jacobovits (1969) and Briere (1971) along with the criticism over the inadequacy of existing tests and emphasize on the necessity of developing instruments to assess communicative competence.

The vital question raised by Spolsky et al. (1968) is a case in point to embody the discussions about the testing of communicative competence: 'Fundamental to the preparation of valid tests of language proficiency is a theoretical question: What does it mean to know a language?' The answers given to this question presented some contradictory approaches to the language, which can be summarized as those describing language as the form of grammar and lexicon, some others assuming language as structural use of grammar and lexicon, and the ones who set a more holistic to include the subject's ability to carry out linguistic functions, each of which has various limitations in testing the language competence (Spolsky, 1989).

1.2. Curriculum Design at Selçuk University

Considering the objectives determined by HEC, it was determined that an intensive program should be followed to teach prospective academicians English as a foreign language. The steps followed by the School of Foreign Languages at Selçuk University to conduct the program can be summarized as follows:

Since action-oriented approach to language was adopted, it was aimed to help the participants to perform receptive, productive and interactive language activities with a final aim that learners can achieve communicative competence. As a first step, a placement test was held to assess the trainees' reading, writing, listening and speaking skill levels, as well as their vocabulary and grammar background. The students were divided into three levels according to the results of the test, and the teaching hours were determined as thirty hours a week for the beginner group, twenty-eight hours for the elementary group, and twenty-six hours for the pre-intermediate group.

The Language Leader Elementary Coursebook (Lebeau, Rees and Hughes, 2008), The Language Leader Pre-Intermediate Coursebook (Lebeau and Rees, 2008), and The Language Leader Intermediate Coursebook (Cotton, Favley, Hughes and Kent, 2008) were chosen as a main course material. In addition, a TOEFL writing handbook with extensive reading, vocabulary and grammar exercises compiled by teachers was used as a supplementary material. The classrooms were equipped with projectors and computers for interactive learning, as well as a computer library equipped with various extra materials to aid the trainees to study in their leisure hours. The teachers also tutored the participants according to their specific needs.

2. METHOD

This study used the applied qualitative method for its research. This method was chosen by the researchers because qualitative research involves the collection, analysis, and interpretation of narrative data typically through intensive case studies, in-depth interviews, or focus groups (Gay, Mills and Airasian, 2009; Merriam, 2001, Maxwell, 1996; Glesne, 1999; Kirk and Miller, 1986). This method is assumed to permit learners and teachers to fully express their point of view regarding competence and performance. Also, applied qualitative research addresses the current teaching environment and allows for a later shift in focus to facilitate change within a particular educational context (Creswell, 2007; Bogdan and Biklen, 2007). There are three categories of applied qualitative research in education: evaluation and policy research, action research, and practitioner research. This study engaged the third category-practitioner research because the researchers of this study believe the findings will benefit both the teachers and learners.

Additionally, this study is expected to allow the researchers to identify how academic success is currently defined in the national discussion and properly situate it within the broader Turkish educational perspective. It is also anticipated that the findings of the study may contribute to further discussion of the issue and begin the process of determining whether a new definition is beginning to take shape as a result of the HEC program.

2.1. Sampling

The sample consists of a random selection of twenty-nine HEC trainee assistants from different academic disciplines from all regions of Turkey. The trainees were chosen based on participation in a weekly information session. All trainees that attended week twelve's session were given a qualitative survey. The sample represents more than fifty-percent of the current HEC trainee assistant population at Selçuk University. This is important because there is considerable educational variability in primary, middle, high school, and university education in Turkey and this informed much of the trainees' English language learning experiences. Also, four teachers and one administrator were selected. All of the teachers taught English to the trainee assistants and followed the curriculum. The administrator had direct oversight of the HEC program at Selçuk University. The teachers' years of teaching experience ranged from seven to twenty years.

2.2. Data Analysis Processes

The trainees from this point on called participants were given a qualitative survey in English, which consisted of a set of fourteen questions designed to provide answers to the questions on competence and performance. The participants were asked the following biographical information: age, field of study, the highest degree attained, gender, and marital status. Gender and marital status were not considered as variables in this study. However, they contributed to the credibility of the process in that the participants felt more comfortable when gender and marital status were noted by the researchers. Although the participants were encouraged to provide as much narrative explanation as possible, all yes – no responses were accepted by the researchers.

Four teachers and one administrator were interviewed. Two of the interviewed teachers are the researchers of this study; consequently their interviews were conducted by another faculty research

lecturer not currently affiliated with the HEC program. The teachers were asked a set of fourteen questions that also addressed the researchers' questions on competence and performance.

The researchers compiled all of the qualitative surveys, interview transcripts, and personal reflection memos and began the process of identifying major themes that addressed the research questions. These major themes were then assigned coded categories. These categories helped the researchers organize the data in a useful and meaningful way (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007). The themes that addressed competence were assigned the code CPT, and the themes that addressed performance were assigned the code PFM.

3. FINDINGS

The survey form was written in English and the participants were asked to write their responses in English. The statements made by the participants will be presented here as they are on the papers to give some idea about their language competence. The participants were also interviewed in English.

The interviews and qualitative surveys revealed several recurrent themes. The first theme, *academic language ability*, addresses the issue of competence. The majority of the participants stated that their best language skill was reading because that skill would help them prepare best for the KPDS and UDS examinations and their worse language skill was speaking followed by writing, listening, and grammar. These participants all expressed concerns about their academic language ability.

For example P19 stated, "I don't speak and I can't writing", P2 said, "I can't speak English with other people here." P3 commented, "I've neglected listening and writing." P5 said, "I would like to improve most writing and speaking because I want to speak people and write essays." Finally, P4 said, "I want to speak with world people. I am always reading text"

It was found that all of these participants realized the view (Rivers, 1973) that learning English requires more than just the ability to read graded texts, participate in teacher-directed speaking activities, listen to structured dialogues, and practice writing grammatically correct sentences on academic content. It was obvious from the answers that they value the ability to go beyond this level in order to synthesize, evaluate, classify, compare, and infer academic content. Their self-monitoring process exhibited their eagerness to gain the ability to take risks with the language and manipulate it for creative and spontaneous use and interaction.

The second theme is *the student's dilemma* and this addresses both performance and competence. The participants are experiencing a double-edged sword. They realize they must receive passing scores on the KPDS and UDS examinations but they also must demonstrate an improved level of mastery in all their English language skills. Their frustrations are made clear in the following statements:

"I feel like I have forgotten to speak."

"Only reading but I must do it my university wants UDS or KPDS point."

"I focus on exams and not improve speaking and listening."

When asked what effect the requirement to pass the KPDS and UDS exams has had on their English language development two participants responded:

"Badly, because I don't study about speaking."

"I worried because I am not speaking English."

An important subtext should also be noted here and that is the emotional impact that the preparation process has had on the participants. Only four participants commented, but the researchers believe that all of the students were experiencing some degree of stress and anxiety over the examinations. Four of the participants stated:

"You are excited and stress in the exam so you can't be successful."

"The exams make students angry during the preparing period."

"I neglect speaking and listening I am stressed."

“Very bad effect because I am stress.”

The final and the most revealing theme that addresses performance is *test sophistication*. The majority of the participants were very aware of the fact that the KPDS and UDS in particular are tests of strategy not an assessment of English language skills. Here are some of the participants' views:

“I solved last years exams there are tell tale sign about the exam.”

“I think the exams are not effective because some tell tale signs help students who are not know about English language enough.”

“We are competing in time and sometimes we read some exam techniques because even if we don't understand what they ask us in the question we can make it by reasoning.”

This view is supported by interviews with the teachers:

“This [UDS] exam is only on testing.”

“Reading and answering the test questions are their best skills.”

“The assistants can do the test very well because in the Turkish system we are all engaged with tests and answering in such a way. It is something that we already know it's not something new.”

“It has to be urgently more defined it doesn't put out an honest score because we do have professors that have received quite high scores but they can't talk and they don't understand, but they are good at answering multiple choice questions.”

Teachers were also asked whether the KPDS and UDS are effective ways to measure English language skills. Here are a few insightful responses:

“The KPDS and UDS exams don't have a speaking and listening evaluation. It doesn't really measure all of the skills which are essential and work together. They have to be integrated.”

“I don't think it will improve the development of the language or the person in that language.”

“It doesn't measure the culture in the right sense even if it seems it does. It's really an exam based on tests. I don't believe tests will lead anyone that evaluates how a person would really score in their field.”

Finally, both teachers and participants were asked about the current curriculum and its helpfulness or usefulness. The responses demonstrated a new awareness for both teachers and participants. Views of the teachers:

“The students themselves personally come [to me] and realize their own improvement and they express themselves in that they are discovering how to learn by themselves and develop their skills. I think that the textbooks that we are using are appropriate. They are using the right sort of material for the right sort of purpose.”

“The entire process has been a language awareness process because many of my students constantly comment about the fact that they didn't know a word or phrase could be used in a particular context or that it's only used in spoken form and never written.”

The views of the participants were also significant in that they revealed the willingness to learn English. Another point in their responses is that the participants mentioned the teachers as helpful in their learning but disregard the materials that were available for their learning independently. Views of the participants:

“Yes, it works. I try to do whatever my teachers say. They are very experienced people. If I did everything what they say I could improve my language a lot.”

“Yes, instruction help me exam.”

“Yes, very much; I think our teachers are very professional and patient also twenty-five hours in a week very available for improve English. Our teachers make an effort for us.”

“I've been reading English articles.”

“Yes, because I can read better, I can understand English songs better.”

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Following the domination of Latin as a lingua Franca for almost 1000 years in Europe, English spread under the influence of the British Empire and the post-war economic expansion of the United States. Following the urbanization and radical changes in social life of developed and developing countries, the speedy growth of globalization along with the spread of the Internet has made English a global language due to the need to find a common language in the newly-shaped multi-lingual and multi-cultural world. As Crystal (1997) claimed English is the language of science and technology and is dominant in various socio-cultural arenas, such as international organizations, media, international trade, and the Internet. That English is the most widely spoken language throughout Europe (European Commission, 2006) is also another fact displaying the prevalence of English among European Community countries. The number of people speaking English is estimated to reach three billion in this decade (Graddol, 2000). The following quotation from McKay (2002) summarizes the role of English in the near future:

The evidence clearly suggests that the use of EIL (English as International Language) will continue to grow, an international language that belongs, not just to native speakers, but to all of its users. Given this shift in ownership, the time has come for decisions regarding teaching goals and approaches to be given to local educators so that they can take their

rightful place as valid users of English. For, in the end, they are in the best position to understand what their students need to know, and to encourage them to learn and use English fully to participate in our growing global community.

It is also a fact that international communication among researchers, scholars and scientists is indispensable for information sharing and collaborative research between countries. According to the report released in EPI English Proficiency Index by Education First (2011), the United States publish by far the most scientific papers every year and the U.K. ranks third in publication numbers, after China, while countries with low English proficiency demonstrate quite low levels of international collaboration on research. The finding that only 15% of scientific papers in 2009 published in China cited an international collaborator reveals the inability of some countries lacking English skills to contribute to international innovation.

Turkey with more than 35 million people, nearly half of the population, under the age of 30 years old, is cited as a country with very low level English proficiency in the report released by Education First (2011), a privately held language and culture education company working in collaboration with the University of Cambridge Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics. The European Commission statistics also show that, in terms of speaking foreign language, Turkey is at the bottom of the European Community member states (European Commission, 2006).

The problems in ELT have also been stated in various publications in Turkey. According to Demirel (1999), despite comprehensive efforts and programs, ELT in Turkey has not been able to achieve the desired results in terms of language proficiency. It has been stated that the traditional methods and language teaching/learning habits and the defects in language planning are some of the main causes of the problem (Isik, 2008). The Ministry of Education and the Higher Education Council of Turkey are particularly interested in the issue, for which the program in this article is an example (MEB, 2006).. However, the results of the study shows that despite the comprehensively devised curriculum and education materials, communicative competence of the participants is not keeping pace with the proposed objectives and goals of the curriculum.

The analysis of the responses given by the participants and teachers suggest that the participants are really eager to have communicative competence in English language, and they all are aware of the fact that language is a communication tool, not only to receive but also to convey messages in both written and spoken language. The dilemma of the participants seems to derive from the fact that they know they will be required to pass the Turkish national exams KPDS and UDS, which assess only the reading, vocabulary and grammar competence, to be appointed as research assistants. The participants are confused as they struggle to find the correct way to learn English.

This study was concluded in mid-May 2011. What the researchers have uncovered thus far is that language acquisition takes time and is typically influenced by many factors such as: motivation, aptitude,

native language and educational background, attitude, learning strategies, environment, culture, and access to the target language. Besides, the requirement to succeed in language proficiency exams is another factor that influences the academicians in Turkey in various ways (Mirici, 2003). The HEC program has given this group of participants a rare opportunity to focus exclusively on their English language development. Overall, the participants are learning to be better students as one participant stated: “Yes, but not superficial because at beginning I ignore listening and speaking but now I realize those are very important.”

The researchers agree that the discovery process for these participants has been the real benefit. Although, they are fully aware that their English language skills are not being assessed in the best way, they now realize that it is their responsibility to become active participants in their learning. The significant point here is that some further studies should be conducted on how adult learners with teacher-dependent academic backgrounds can be active learners and achieve learner autonomy. Designing curricula that will help learners to improve their higher-order thinking skills through the teachers who were trained to function as mediators can play a crucial role in moving from a passive learning environment to an interactive learning process. Both theoretical and experimental studies into cognitive fluency, utterance fluency and their relation may contribute to the research as well. In addition, comparative studies about learners’ thinking skills levels in L1 and L2 seem to shed light onto the questions in the literature.

Given the findings of the study, it could also be suggested that exams which test the four major linguistic skills rather than those which do not, may enable candidates to considerably improve their language proficiency. As exams are methods used to test successful completion of objectives in curricula, it appears that thinking skills and learner styles should also be taken into consideration in order to obtain maximum benefit from the learning process. An additional benefit of using exams which are accepted in other countries as assessment criteria is that prospective learners may use the scores for further studies at universities abroad.

The Faculty Development Program, put into practice by the Higher Education Council in Turkey, is a significant initiative in terms of the objectives in question. The evaluation of the program from a wider perspective and with a greater number of participants from different universities seems to contribute to important developments in foreign language teaching.

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