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A Country in Focus

Research on foreign language teaching and learning in Turkey (2005–2009)

Cem Alptekin and Sibel Tatar Faculty of Education, Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, Turkey
alptekin.cem@gmail.com, sibel.tatar@boun.edu.tr

This is an overview of research on applied linguistics and foreign language education in Turkey, surveying nearly 130 studies from the period 2005–2009. Following a brief presentation of the history and current sociopolitical situation of foreign language education in Turkey, the article focuses on research that characterizes the most common interests of academics and practitioners in the following areas: foreign language teaching and teachers, foreign language learning and learners, foreign language teacher education, the four language skills, measurement and evaluation, and the relationship between language and culture. Our discussion of each area is based on information extracted from local professional journals, conference proceedings and papers and Ph.D. dissertations. The studies examined reveal that, in general, practical concerns assume priority over theoretical issues, a substantial proportion of research being conducted on EFL learning and teaching.

1. Introduction

The Turks' exposure to Western languages goes back to the eighteenth century, when the Ottomans began to develop their knowledge and skills in military and medical fields through French cooperation and assistance. European-style military and medical schools were founded in which the medium of instruction was French, with advisors and instructors imported from France. The nineteenth century witnessed the opening of a number of missionary schools, most of which offered instruction in French (e.g. 'Saint Joseph'), some in English (e.g. 'Robert College') and a few in German and Italian.

Since the foundation of the Republic of Turkey by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1923, substantive reforms have taken place at all levels of education, affecting foreign language teaching and learning, as well as other aspects of education. One important development involved sending many tertiary-level students to Western countries to study in a variety of academic fields. This not only produced individuals with expertise in specific areas but also acquainted them with European languages, French, English and German in particular. Currently, the number of Turkish students enrolled in graduate and undergraduate programmes in Europe and North America is approximately 45,000, with Germany and the United States being the most popular countries for study.

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Another development was the foundation in 1955 of several 'education colleges' (renamed 'Anatolian lycées' in 1974): prestigious public schools that offered dual-language instruction, with certain courses given in Turkish and others in English.[1] In the mid-1980s, the government allowed the establishment of private Anatolian lycées, in a move to meet public demand for dual-language instruction.

Similar developments have occurred at the tertiary level. Because of the increasing demand for tertiary education, the number of state universities has grown, from a handful in the 1950s, to 97. The medium of instruction in virtually all of these universities is Turkish. However, following the foundation of two English-medium state universities, namely, Middle East Technical University in 1956 and Boğaziçi University (formerly Robert College) in 1971, an English-medium university model was created. In time, this model became very popular and constituted the basis for private universities, the first of which was founded in 1984. Currently, the number of private universities stands at 45, many of which are English-medium. English-medium instruction not only makes it possible to attract international students, including ERASMUS exchanges, but also helps prepare Turkish students for study abroad. Thus, there has recently been a trend among a few Turkish-medium state universities to open English-medium programmes in specific disciplines, parallel to their Turkish-medium programmes in those fields.

The issue of English as a medium of instruction at tertiary level has led to controversies in the educational context. Considering English as a threat to Turkish, some scholars believe that English-medium instruction will adversely affect the status and development of Turkish as an academic and scientific language. They also draw attention to the difficulties of both teaching and learning academic subjects through a foreign language. Others view English-medium instruction as a manifestation of bilingualism in an essentially monolingual country, emphasizing its cognitive and affective advantages for the learner, not to mention its role as an important key to a globalized world in general, and access to the European Union in particular. With the swords drawn on both sides, the controversy is likely to continue for some time.

The growing need for English as the lingua franca (ELF) of our times is reflected by the financial incentives offered by both private and public sectors in Turkey. In a rapidly globalizing world, private companies seek out employees who possess relevant professional expertise alongside a satisfactory command of English and, preferably, another foreign language (e.g. German, French, Spanish or Russian). Similarly, public sector workers receive an increment, albeit a modest one, to their salary for each foreign language in which they demonstrate their competence in one of the nationwide foreign language proficiency examinations. As would be expected, candidates in English far outnumber those in other languages.

[1] Over time, and with the rapid proliferation of dual-language programmes, it became more and more difficult to find qualified subject teachers who could also deliver their lessons in the foreign language, resulting in a relaxation of the dual-language requirement. This also addressed concerns about students' ability to perform at their best on the nationwide university entrance exams, which are in Turkish. Eventually, in 2005, dual-language instruction in public Anatolian lycées was abandoned altogether, with the foreign language being taught in the same way as any other subject. Private schools, however, are still able to offer dual-language programmes.

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Given the predominance of English, it should not be surprising that the research reported here is mainly on ELT, although some consideration is also given to other (European) languages such as German and French. Secondly, rather than highlighting publications and presentations by Turkish scholars in the international arena, the present study focuses on locally published articles, local conference proceedings, local presentations that have an important theoretical stance or that include (quasi-)experimental research, and local Ph.D. dissertations, with the aim of making these available to an international audience. Although the phenomenon of globalization makes it difficult to distinguish between what is truly global and what is local, an effort is made in this study to identify as 'local' any type of research that is published or presented in national (as opposed to international) outlets, thereby excluding papers by Turkish scholars that have appeared in the proceedings of international conferences or in international journals. Thirdly, given the constraints of space, we selected publications, presentations and dissertations whose topics show a certain frequency of occurrence, which points to current areas of interest and activity. Nevertheless, we attempted to cover as many studies as possible in each research category (see below) rather than offering a few selected samples with in-depth analyses. We also chiefly confined ourselves to making selections from conferences that provided electronic or printed proceedings. We did, however, include a number of papers that we deemed theoretically, experimentally and/or pedagogically important even though they were presented in conferences without published proceedings. Finally, with a few exceptions, we limited our selection to publications, presentations, and dissertations written in English, German or French.

One important source of research data was journals published by university faculties of education and those published by semi-independent organizations with a university affiliation. These journals publish (in print or electronically) refereed articles based on research conducted in their own establishments as well as in other universities. They cover a wide variety of educational topics, not simply applied linguistics and foreign language education. Based on the frequency of publications on language and language education, the four education faculty journals particularly active in foreign language teaching and learning are those of Hacettepe University in Ankara (www.efdergi.hacettepe.edu.tr), Uludağ University in Bursa (http://kutuphane.uludag.edu.tr/uufader.html), Çukurova University in Adana (http://egitim.cukurova.edu.tr/efdergi/makaleler.asp) and Onsekiz Mart University in Çanakkale (http://eku.comu.edu.tr). Similarly, the two semi-independent journals that deal with issues in applied linguistics and language studies are *Dil Dergisi* ('Language Journal') (http://dergiler.ankara.edu.tr) and the *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies* (http://jlls.org). In this context, mention should also be made of two newly-established education journals: the *International Journal of Research in Teacher Education* and *International Journal of Educational Researchers* (http://eab.org.tr), one of whose missions is to publish articles in applied linguistics and foreign language education.

Another source of information was the conference proceedings of national conferences hosted in Turkey. Unlike the TESOL symposium on dual-language learning and teaching in an EFL context (Istanbul 2005) or the 16th Annual Conference of EUROSLA (Antalya 2006), national conferences are normally organized by a university on a rather broad theme, with a few plenary speakers invited from abroad, with the aim of making the conference 'international'. These provide a forum for Turkish academics and doctoral candidates to

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present their research in an intellectual framework. Presenters also solicit feedback, which plays a major role in developing their research. Onsekiz Mart University in Çanakkale is perhaps the most active institution in organizing ELT conferences, having hosted its first in 1999. Other universities that have organized ELT conferences within the last five years are the Middle East Technical University (Ankara 2006), Bilkent University (Ankara 2007), Sabancı University (Istanbul 2007), Dokuz Eylül University (İzmir 2009) and Maltepe University (Istanbul 2009).

A third source was INGED (http://inged.org.tr). As the English Language Education Association in Turkey, with affiliations to both IATEFL and TESOL, INGED has been active in organizing local ELT conferences since 1995. Normally, there is one major conference each year, hosted by a university. The most recent venues have been Selçuk University in Konya (2006), Ankara University (2007), Anadolu University in Eskişehir (2008) and Gazi University in Ankara (2009). It is not easy, however, to access the proceedings of INGED conferences, as there is no systematic policy of making them available after each conference.

The last source was doctoral dissertations. A number of universities offer doctoral programmes in foreign language education with a focus on ELT. These begin with graduate coursework, followed by a research-based doctoral dissertation. Our investigation reveals a number of interesting dissertations, yet these are few and far between, and are not always accessible as full texts, although their abstracts are often available in English, German or French.[2]

Drawing from these four sources, our article focuses on research conducted in Turkey between 2005 and 2009. We concentrate on articles, presentations and dissertations in the following broad categories:

- foreign language teaching and teachers
- foreign language learning and learners
- foreign language teacher education
- listening and speaking
- reading and writing
- measurement and evaluation
- language and culture

2. Foreign language teaching and teachers

Quite a number of ELT studies focus on the effectiveness of various teaching approaches and methods such as content-based instruction (CBI), task-based instruction, cooperative learning and content and language integrated learning (CLIL). Kızıltan & Ersanlı (2007) compare the achievement of two 6th-grade classes, one of which was taught English through CBI for fifteen weeks. Not surprisingly, the findings confirm that students receiving CBI through a topic-based approach scored higher on all L2 skills than the control group, which was exposed to a traditional grammar-based type of instruction. Despite its pedagogical advantages, CBI,

[2] Only about one-third of all Ph.D. dissertations registered with the National Thesis Center are electronically available in full text (http://tez2.yok.gov.tr). Access to the others is subject to the special permission of the author.

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the authors suggest, is not viewed by students and teachers as a legitimate instructional approach. Elsewhere, Çelik & Uzun (2006) and Kurt (2005) find that topic-based and task-based instruction increase student motivation, student participation and reading and writing performance at primary and secondary levels. Şahan (2005) compares two groups of tertiary-level EFL students, one of which receives conventional instruction while the other works through cooperative learning activities. The author concludes that cooperative learning was beneficial for students in terms of academic achievement, communicative competence and knowledge retention, although it did not bring about more positive results in critical thinking skills, student motivation or favourable attitudes towards learning English. Cooperative learning activities are also said to create a more natural learning environment where students feel more at ease in interacting with each other. No mention is made, however, of what types of cooperative learning activities students engaged in, nor what the conventional instruction actually comprised. In brief, novel approaches to language teaching remain suspect in the eyes of many, irrespective of their contribution to learning.

Starting from the premise that foreign language teaching in Turkey largely ignores the improvement of aural-oral skills, Aydın's (2005) study makes a case for the use of communicative language teaching (CLT) in French instruction. The study uses a 45-minute episode of a TV series that involves both linguistic (e.g. slang) and paralinguistic (e.g. body language) features of natural communication with which students become familiarized. Aydın argues that TV series acquaint learners with linguistic diversity, showing them the contribution of register, context and body language to communication. Similarly, Erton (2007) emphasizes the importance of pragmatic competence for effective communication in English and highlights certain pedagogical points to be incorporated into any ELT programme. These include identifying students' communicative needs, designing materials to engage students in communicative activities, teaching grammar in context and raising students' pragmatic awareness. It is rather difficult, however, to integrate communicatively oriented aural-oral practices into predominantly teacher-centred contexts where students memorize vocabulary, do grammar drills and read dialogues without much concern for meaning. Hence, rather than focusing on the development of aural-oral skills, Atay & Kurt (2008) incorporate a reading-based language module into the traditional primary school curriculum, with a view to improving learners' vocabulary and reading skills in English. In a relatively short instructional period of eight weeks, the students in the experimental group, who were exposed to the reading-based programme, are said to have outperformed those in the control group in such areas as reading, writing and vocabulary.

One area which receives relatively little attention in CLT practices is pronunciation, despite its crucial role in comprehensibility. Two studies exploring the teaching of pronunciation are worth mentioning. Emphasizing the role of phonology in intelligibility, Çelik (2008) suggests a specific framework for the teaching of pronunciation to Turkish learners of English. Based on analyses of language data from Turkish-English bilinguals, teacher educators and advanced level L2 learners, he describes a Turkish-English phonological model that reduces the number of phonemes from a total of 23 phonemes in Received Pronunciation to 15. This seems to be in tune with the spirit of Lingua Franca Core (LFC) in phonology, as suggested by Jenkins (2000) in the teaching of English as an international language. In a similar study, Özçelik (2008) focuses on the pronunciation difficulties of Turkish learners of French. The identification of

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pronunciation mistakes made by Turkish learners reading French texts aloud shows that both the production of nasal vowels (at the segmental level) and word and sentence level stress (at the prosodic level) tend to be particularly problematic. The author suggests increasing the number of courses in French phonetics in French departments across universities in Turkey.

In addition to methodological issues, the evaluation of textbooks and other classroom materials from different perspectives is another major concern of several researchers. Certain studies deal with gender stereotyping and sexism in EFL materials and approaches. Aksu (2005), for example, presents an activity for in-class use to raise student awareness of stereotypical gender roles and provides some guidelines for parents and teachers for coping with gender discrimination. Similarly, Ersöz (2006b) provides several examples from the in-class discourse of pre-service teachers that include strong sexist language. As for textbooks, Arıkan (2005) makes a critical analysis of the biased way EFL instructional materials illustrate age, gender and social class. Stating that visual input is as effective as verbal input, if not more, in shaping learning, he analyses two textbooks according to a checklist developed by Cunningsworth (1995). He claims that both books project middle-class values and images. For example, the elderly are assigned traditional roles. Almost all of them happen to be grandparents taking care of their grandchildren. In addition, there is said to be a prevailing gender discrimination against women, which manifests itself in sports, jobs, clothing and shopping habits. Arıkan therefore makes a plea for less biased textbooks.

Looking at textual content from a different perspective, Yılmaz (2008) criticizes the EFL textbooks used in Turkish high schools for being mainly grammar- and reading-based, with little emphasis on verbal communication. He therefore calls for the development of a 'local version' of CLT that would cater to the aural-oral needs in English of Turkish learners in their native context. Likewise, Altınmakas (2006) questions the appropriateness of cultural content of American and British textbooks used in all EFL contexts. Based on interview data from Syrian, Omani and Turkish teachers of English, she states that there are considerable differences of opinion between Turkish and Middle Eastern teachers' perceptions of cultural content. Whereas Turkish teachers do not find American and British textbooks of EFL culturally threatening, Syrian and Omani teachers express concern about the possible negative effects of the same cultural content on their students. Altınmakas concludes that the local context is a determining factor influencing the perceptions of teachers. In a similar study, Kayapınar (2009) investigates the views of university EFL instructors concerning the quality of ELT materials published by international companies. Instructors' views generally reveal a negative opinion about the coursebook packages used in their courses. What is needed, they curiously suggest, is the development of local course books that meet the needs of the learners in the national context, as if the global spread of English were not a reality.

One important aspect of textual content is its genre. There is a tendency among some university instructors to make use of literary texts in teaching the L2. Özsoysal & Balcıoğlu (2006), through the illustrations they provide, show literature to be a useful medium for developing not only foreign language skills but also critical thinking abilities. In this respect, literary analysis in particular is found to be a *sine qua non,* as it leads to a better understanding of the target language culture in addition to a different conceptualization of reality (Arslan & Yıldız 2006; Tutaş 2006). Elsewhere, Kırkgöz (2008) advocates the use of poetry in EFL classes as a result of feedback from her students' journals and the interviews she conducted with

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them. She believes that using carefully selected poems provides opportunities for vocabulary enrichment, effective and meaningful practice of grammatical knowledge, and even creative writing. Similarly, Korkut (2007) calls for the use of poetic texts to teach French as a foreign language, with a view to exposing learners to aesthetic and creative language content. By analyzing two of Paul Verlaine's poems with regard to form, meaning and diction, she demonstrates how learners can develop an awareness of the genre-specific differences between narrative and poetic texts. Unlike narrative writers, she says, poets are less interested in cohesion and coherence because their concern lies more with perlocutionary effects. Therefore, so that the learner can have an idea of the overall aim of a piece of discourse, she advises foreign language teachers to emphasize perlocutionary effects as much as they emphasize cohesion and coherence. Özmut (2006) is another proponent of the use of poetry in teaching skills in the L2. He presents a sample German lesson in which the students study a poem by Ernst Jandl. They start with a warm-up in which the teacher introduces the target vocabulary. Then they are asked to analyze the poem to identify its major linguistic features, such as word associations. The lesson ends with their writing an essay on a topic related to the theme of the poem.

3. Foreign language learning and learners

One area which receives considerable research attention in foreign language learning is the role of cognitive, affective and social factors in the acquisition process. Alptekin (2007a), for instance, examines the relationship between learners' choice of strategies and the type of acquisition they experience. His experimental study investigates the tutored learning of English in a formal setting and the simultaneous non-tutored acquisition of Turkish in a non-formal setting by international students in an English-medium university in Turkey. The findings point to compensation as a frequently used direct learning strategy, irrespective of the learning context. In terms of indirect learning strategies, on the other hand, learners make more use of social strategies in non-tutored acquisition, in contrast to their preference for metacognitive strategies in tutored learning. These findings are in tune with those of Arsal & Özen (2006), who show that university students in ELT departments in Turkey prefer to use compensatory and metacognitive strategies in learning EFL, largely disregarding affective strategies. The important role played by metacognition in tutored foreign language learning is also discussed in a critical survey (Öz 2005) which urges teacher education programmes to deal in detail with ways to develop metacognitive awareness in learners. On another level, Florio-Hansen (2006) examines learning strategies from the perspective of the L2 learner. In an interesting case study revealing her own self-directed acquisition of Turkish as a foreign language outside the classroom, she demonstrates how learner autonomy can be a powerful tool in the learner's progressive development in the L2. She then stresses the links between learning strategies and styles, mentioning in addition the important role played by learning tasks in the selection of strategies and styles. One striking aspect of her non-tutored acquisition of a foreign language is her need for cooperation with her interlocutors, corroborating Alptekin's (2007a) finding concerning L2 learners' propensity to deploy social strategies in non-formal learning contexts.

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Using social strategies to improve one's proficiency in the target language is basically an attitudinal issue. Positive attitudes towards the target language culture are said to lead to progress in L2 learning. In an experimental study, İnal, Evin & Saracaloğlu (2005) investigate the relationship between secondary school students' attitudes towards the English language and its culture(s) and their achievement in English, taking into account the gender factor as well. In line with the generally held notions in the field, their findings indicate a significant relationship between learners' academic achievement in English and their positive attitudes towards the language and its culture(s). Interestingly, the authors suggest, female students tend to have more positive attitudes than males.

In a similar study, Demir & Erten (2005) examine attitudes and motivation in relation to age in foreign language learning. Focusing on 4th-grade (age 9–10) and 8th-grade (age 13–14) students, their experimental research shows that younger learners have higher motivation, both extrinsic and intrinsic, to learn English than older learners, and that one important variable that fosters learners' positive attitudes towards the target language and its culture is the enthusiastic attitude of the parents towards the foreign language learning experience.

Kırkgöz (2005) analyzes the insatiable demand for learning English at the tertiary level from the viewpoint of socio-psychological factors. Most Turkish students, she indicates, have a high interest in graduating from an English-medium Turkish university, based on a mix of integrative and instrumental motives. Nevertheless, Kırkgöz argues, they also feel that English-medium instruction leads to their alienation from their own society, which they somewhat resent. In a similar study, Sayarı (2007) examines whether learning English as part of their tertiary education has a positive effect on university students' attitudes towards Western cultures in general and English-speaking culture(s) in particular. Her findings do not reveal a significant change in attitude although the participants tend to ascribe greater importance to the role of acculturation in learning English as their proficiency develops.

An area where attitudinal change is manifest is that of learner autonomy. With primary and secondary education characterized by teacher-centred and rote memorization-based instruction, Turkish university students normally expect to be the recipients of information, putting few questions to their instructors (Özkan & Kesen 2008). Thus, attempts to foster learner autonomy through ELT are taken up by several academics who view it as a remedy to almost all the ills of traditional education. ELT, in fact, becomes not only a conduit for learning the language but also a way of approaching reality in a critical manner. Kırkgöz (2006), for example, discusses ways of promoting autonomy in university-level technical courses taught in English through the application of problem-based learning principles. She illustrates a number of problem-solving procedures, through the use of which a technical course in English was designed cooperatively by students and staff in a Turkish state university, associating problem-solving with the enhancement of learner autonomy. In the same vein, Yıldırım (2008) deals with learner autonomy from the perspective of learner perceptions about the degree of responsibility to be assumed by university students in relation to the instructor in EFL syllabus design and course implementation. Interestingly, despite their mainly traditional upbringing and learning background, students appear to be ready to take some responsibility in a number of areas of the foreign language learning process. In particular, they wish to act more autonomously in areas of English where they feel they have

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greater ability. In fact, the author indicates that the more responsibility students are willing to take, the more confident they feel about their language learning ability.

Alagözlü (2005) traces the issue of autonomy to its origins and complains of a 'deficit' in the instruction of critical thinking skills in primary and secondary education, as shown by the results of PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) in 2004. In fact, the 2004 findings, based on the evaluation of four reading comprehension strategies among 150,000 children of nine to ten years of age in European countries, show that Turkey, along with Cyprus, Slovenia and Norway, is at the lower end of the scale. According to Alagözlü (2006a), ELT in tertiary education could be a way to compensate for the deficiencies of the traditional educational system at primary and secondary levels. She thus advocates the need to boost critical thinking skills in ELT courses in tertiary education, with a view to developing learner autonomy. Her article offers practical suggestions for encouraging students to express their own thoughts, to judge ideas before making decisions, and to make use of problem solving in learning English, much in the spirit of Kırkgöz (2006). Other suggestions for fostering learner autonomy come from Balçıkanlı (2008), Üstünlüoğlu (2009) and Eyre (2008). Balçıkanlı treats the issue from a macro-level perspective and advises educators to incorporate learner autonomy training into teaching materials and in-service courses for instructors, in addition to instituting self-access learning centres. Balçıkanlı's thesis is that L2 acquisition should not be confined solely to formal L2 instruction in the classroom. Otherwise, as indicated by Üstünlüoğlu in a comprehensive study conducted with 320 learners and 24 teachers of EFL, university students fail to take responsibility for their language learning in the classroom, instead leaving the whole experience to the guidance of their instructors. Üstünlüoğlu thus advocates the inclusion of autonomous learning as a core component in the foreign language curriculum. Finally, Eyre describes her micro-level action research in which, as an EFL class teacher at the tertiary level, she was instrumental in improving learner autonomy through her students' keeping of vocabulary journals. She argues that the very act of deciding what to include in one's vocabulary journal is an important indicator of the emergence of learner autonomy, as it is associated with the language learner's critical thinking.

Köse (2006) and Ersin (2005) explore how learner autonomy may be enhanced by the use of portfolios. Based on focus group data, a set of individual interviews, written data and an autonomy and critical reading checklist, Köse shows how the use of portfolios at tertiary level can contribute to increased learner autonomy and to the quality of ELT in general. Similarly, Ersin's examination of qualitative and quantitative data from 18 tertiary-level students reveals that the experience of preparing portfolios on their own has a positive effect on students' attitudes towards foreign language learning.

Foreign language acquisition is also examined from the perspective of learning problems such as anxiety. Çubukçu (2008) probes the relationship between learners' self-efficacy levels and foreign language learning anxiety levels with a group of university students studying EFL. Contrary to her expectation – that learners with higher degrees of anxiety are likely to exhibit lower levels of self-efficacy – she fails to find any meaningful link between the two constructs. Öztürk & Çeçen (2008), on the other hand, in a qualitative study conducted with five highly anxious university-level EFL students, corroborate the general research findings by showing that their participants' foreign language learning anxiety is related, above all, to

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their lack of self-confidence, which is connected with what they deem to be their insufficient level of English proficiency.

Two studies focus on the role of input in overcoming learning problems. Operationalizing Sharwood Smith's (1993) input enhancement construct, Özkan (2007) uses an experimental design to examine the effectiveness of consciousness-raising (e.g. increased noticing, selective attention and raised awareness) in tackling a specific parametric clash between Turkish and English. Her findings indicate that input enhancement overcomes learning problems stemming from different parametric settings and enables EFL learners to retain the target form in their long-term memory. Similarly, Oruç (2007) is interested in the most beneficial type of input/output handling for adult EFL learners. Inspired by Swain's (1985) focus on the positive role of output in L2 acquisition, she investigates whether, in addition to receiving input, the learner must also be 'pushed' to produce language, as this allows for such learning opportunities as noticing and processing (Swain & Lapkin 1995). Moreover, she examines whether it is the type of input presentation (e.g. visually enhanced input) or, alternatively, the input processing technique (e.g. explaining and practicing input data) that is more effective with tertiary-level students. Her results suggest that both 'pushed' output and input processing techniques are effective in the acquisition of the target form, but that input processing instruction is by far the most efficient procedure in terms of long-term memory retention of the target form.

4. Foreign language teacher education

There is considerable interest in pre-service and in-service teacher attitudes, beliefs, values and perceptions. Research in this area offers valuable insights for the improvement of teacher training and in-service training programmes. Gürsoy & Karatepe (2006), for example, investigate the attitudes of 117 pre-service teachers towards the collaborative and student-centred teaching of a content course at tertiary level. Their data, collected through a survey, a questionnaire and interviews, indicate that pre-service teachers find collaborative activities motivating compared to teacher-centred instruction. One important dimension of teacher-centred instruction is its focus on explicit grammar teaching, which is believed to be a prevailing trend among Turkish teachers of EFL. However, when Saraç (2007) explores instructors' attitudes towards grammar teaching, the teachers participating in her study express their dissatisfaction with the over-emphasis on explicit grammar instruction in the Turkish educational context. Interview data also reveal that the participants do not favour explicit grammar instruction and that they make use of pedagogical techniques directed towards the activation of contextual and functional elements in teaching grammar (e.g. discovery learning). It should perhaps be pointed out, however, that what teachers say is not always what they do in the classroom. What they express to a researcher is often what they think a modern teacher should be saying, but the reality is often something else altogether.

Shifting the focus from teachers' perceptions of instructional approaches to their self-perceptions, Şanal-Erginel (2006) examines pre-service teachers' reflections about their teaching practice, which leads her to conclude that the reflective process contributes to teachers' perceptions of themselves as professionals; yet learning to become reflective takes

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time. Perhaps one way of accelerating the process of becoming a reflective teacher lies in portfolio development, with a view to connecting theory and practice, as suggested by Koçoğlu (2006).

Given that teaching is an inherently moral activity, one study that analyzes the value orientations of teachers is worth mentioning. By analyzing data based on 91 questionnaires, Ok, Önkol & Tan (2006) show that, with regard to five sets of value orientation, pre-service teachers value self-actualization and ecological integration more than the other three categories (disciplinary mastery, learning process and social responsibility). In particular, participants' social responsibility scores turn out to be quite low, contrary to the researchers' expectations.

Two studies focus on teachers' beliefs regarding professional practice. Akbulut (2007) investigates whether there is any discrepancy between thirteen novice teachers' beliefs and their actual practice once they start teaching. The data, collected through belief inventory and semi-structured interviews, indicate that the participants believe in the value of CLT and learner-centred classrooms, yet they find it difficult to adhere to their beliefs, due to the logistical challenges of the classroom situation. Akbulut maintains that in their first year of professional experience, many novice teachers are concerned about managing their class, fulfilling the demands of the curriculum and preparing students for exams. Arıoğul (2007), with a similar focus, investigates the sources that have shaped and influenced three teachers' professional knowledge and teaching skills. These are prior language learning experiences, prior teaching experience and pre- and in-service training. The study suggests that the more rewarding these experiences are, the more competent the teachers feel in their professional practice. Based on the limited findings of these two studies, it is possible to conjecture that, ironic as this may be, ELT theory seems to play only a limited role in professional practice.

In the literature surveyed, some research is available on language policy and planning issues, in terms of their relationship to language teacher education. As a case in point, Arıkan (2006) draws attention to the implications of the post-method era for teacher education programmes. He suggests that the changing needs and demands of the post-method era require language planners and policy makers to design teacher education programmes by taking into consideration local rather than global factors, and prepare teachers for the immediate needs of their local context. Similarly, Küçüksüleymanoğlu (2006) criticizes the in-service teacher education programmes designed by the Turkish Ministry of National Education because, in her view, they ignore local needs and fail to take into consideration the heterogeneity of the trainees. Also focusing on teacher training, Altan (2006) discusses ways to prepare teachers for curriculum renovation, changes in student profile and new technologies in language teaching. He points to the need to increase the quantity and quality of in-service training and professional development activities for teachers. Likewise, Sabuncuoğlu (2006), based on the results of a survey study of 250 instructors in various EFL foundation programmes at universities in Istanbul, concludes that traditional teacher training models fall short of preparing EFL teachers for the profession. The author proposes constructive and inquiry-based instructional models along with lifelong-learning paradigms.

Certainly, one way to enhance the quality of teacher education programmes in ELT is to identify clearly the roles and responsibilities of the three major players in the teaching

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practice experience, namely, university supervisors (mentors), cooperating teachers and pre-service EFL teachers. The next step should be to improve the interaction between all three relevant parties. In this sense, mentors' observations, both before and after the teaching practice experience, are important. İlin, İnözü & Yıldırım's (2007) case study, which examines four language teacher supervisors' pre- and post-lesson conversations, is quite revealing in this respect. It shows that, apart from its academic and professional content, what makes supervisory talk successful can be found in its inclusion of positive speech acts such as reporting, acknowledging, complimenting and mitigating. Looking into teaching practice from a broader perspective, Akyel & Demirkol (2009) investigate the expectations of university supervisors, cooperating teachers and pre-service teachers in relation to their roles and responsibilities. Based on the analysis of data from 17 university supervisors, 116 cooperating teachers and 238 pre-service teachers from four universities, the researchers suggest that the members of the three groups are uncertain about each others' roles. Nevertheless, the university supervisors and cooperating teachers differ in their expectations of pre-service teachers, depending on the university they attend.

Notwithstanding its professional and academic accomplishments, however, in the final analysis, a teacher education programme is essentially assessed in terms of the English proficiency of its graduates, for which (ironically) it is not responsible. Focusing on this problem, Gürbüz (2006) looks at how pre-service teachers in a teacher education programme perceive their own English language proficiency. A total of 120 pre-service teachers were given questionnaires with open-ended items and were asked to list their strengths and weaknesses. The findings demonstrate that 47% of the participants, in tune with the entrenched views of the vocational market, perceived proficiency in English as the most important component of language teacher competency. Interestingly, 67% of them thought that they were not competent enough to teach English, as they perceived themselves weak in speaking, pronunciation, fluency and grammar. Gürbüz rightly concludes that there is an urgent need to improve the English language proficiency of pre-service teachers.

5. Listening and speaking

Compared to research in reading and writing, research into speaking and listening is relatively scant, and what there is concerns L2 instruction at the tertiary level. As a case in point, Kaçar (2005) explores the nature of listening comprehension difficulties experienced by four university EFL students as well as the kinds of strategies they use to cope with these problems. She uses questionnaires, retrospective self-reports and think-aloud protocols. The participants of the study had completed an intensive year of English instruction at a university foundation programme and are described as relatively unsuccessful based on their low achievement in listening tests as well as their judgement of their own performance on various listening comprehension tasks. Adopting Anderson's (1995) three-phase model of comprehension, namely, perception, parsing and utilization, Kaçar maintains that, despite high awareness of their comprehension problems, learners do not seem to be making effective use of the necessary strategies to overcome them. That is, although they use some cognitive and metacognitive strategies, they fail to employ them systematically and regularly.

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With speaking largely neglected in foreign language instruction in public schools, studies show that the majority of EFL learners feel extremely concerned about their oral production when they reach the tertiary level. This leads to an anxiety-provoking state when conversing in the L2. Both Sevingil (2008) and Zerey (2008) examine in detail the role of anxiety in L2 speaking. The former investigates the speaking anxiety of seven students in a graduate ELT programme. Using a standardized L2 speaking anxiety scale, she finds that the most frequent source of anxiety for the participants is speaking in class. It can be argued that this problem has more to do with preserving one's self-esteem in the presence of the teacher and one's classmates than with speaking anxiety as a trait. Looking at the anxiety issue from a pedagogical perspective, Zerey explores whether a teaching approach using drama can reduce the speaking anxiety of second-year ELT majors. Measuring the anxiety of the learners at the beginning and end of the semester through a standardized foreign language classroom anxiety scale, she finds a significant decrease in the participants' anxiety levels after they rehearse and perform a play in English. Her qualitative data corroborate her quantitative findings that drama reduces learners' anxiety.

Admittedly, effective listening and speaking are, among other factors, based on one's level of pragmatic competence in both L1 and L2. One comparative study that examines the L1 and L2 pragmatic competence of 100 Turkish EFL learners (Işık 2005) shows that learners experience difficulties in understanding conversational implicature not only in the L2 but, surprisingly, also in their L1. Nevertheless, they seem to have more difficulty in interpreting highly formulaic and conventionalized implicature in English compared to Turkish. In both languages, learners score well when the utterances do not involve irony or metaphor or when they fit their cultural schemata. It is concluded that L1 pragmatic competence should not be taken for granted and that implicature training in L1 might contribute to learners' pragmatic competence in the L2.

6. Reading and writing

In general, and for various reasons, research tends to focus more on reading than writing. To begin with, composition as a creative process of expressing oneself in line with rhetorical norms has always been neglected in Turkish schools, where the focus has often been on the surface-level grammatical, lexical and mechanical features of writing. Second, university English placement tests often lack a writing component, due to problems associated with scorer reliability and test practicality. Finally, Turkey, like many other countries, has been subject to the technological effects of globalization, one of which has been the replacement of the written culture with a visual one in which individuals have become cut off from written production. These are some of the ideas put forth by Göç (2005), who deplores the relegation of writing to secondary status in foreign language instruction.

Reading, on the other hand, is an integral part of all levels of the educational context in Turkey, including the nationwide foreign language exam for admission to foreign language and literature programmes in higher education. One salient area of interest in reading instruction is that of reading strategies. Sallı (2006) looks into the preferred reading strategies of first-year students in an English-medium university. Her research reveals that, of the three

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basic types of reading strategies, the participants primarily use strategies associated with problem solving (e.g. guessing the meaning of unknown words from context) and global reading (e.g. making predictions about the topic by looking at the title of the text), yet seldom make use of support strategies (e.g. paraphrasing) in reading English texts. In a similar study, Kesen (2006) sets out to determine the differences in the choice of reading strategies used by first-year and fourth-year university students in reading English short stories as part of their ELT curriculum. She also explores whether there are significant differences in reading strategy use in processing short stories in Turkish. Her findings suggest that, owing to a better command of English and more academic experience, fourth-year students are more successful in both problem solving and global reading strategies than the first-year group, which makes more use of such support strategies as translating the English text into Turkish with the help of a bilingual dictionary. Both groups, however, make a conscious effort to deploy a wider variety of reading strategies in processing short stories in English rather than in Turkish.

Processing short stories in a foreign language is certainly no easy task. It requires deciphering the multiple layers of meaning inherent in the text. A thorough comprehension of a story would require the reader not only to possess an adequate command of its language but also to be knowledgeable about the culture of its speakers. Only then can one appreciate the particular literary effects created by the author through the choice of specific words, the use of particular structures and the formation of key semantic relationships. In a study identifying foreign language learners' views of short story analysis, Kesen (2005) indicates that Turkish university students reading short stories in English often utilize global reading strategies, which are not necessarily adequate for processing literary texts. As a result, she claims that they fail to analyze the theme, characters and tone of a story sufficiently for a thorough understanding of the text. She thus concludes that advanced proficiency in a foreign language and its culture, along with efficient use of reading strategies, may not be sufficient to tackle literary texts in full. What is further needed, suggests Kesen, is familiarity with genre-specific strategies.

Two studies examine the role of graphic organizers in the comprehension of English literary texts. Karakaş (2005a) compares the performance of two upper-intermediate level groups processing a literary text. The control group reads the text, following their reading with question-and-answer, group discussion and summarizing activities. The experimental group reads the same text with the support of graphic organizers for such aspects as characters and events. The results of her research reveal that graphic organizers not only contribute to a better comprehension of texts but also reduce the cognitive load of reading culturally unfamiliar texts. Similarly, Alagözlü (2006b), in a theoretical discussion of the topic that also includes pedagogical implications, defends the view that the use of graphic organizers tied in with the story grammar of a given short story enhances learners' textual understanding in particular, and their cognitive development in general.

Different pedagogical procedures are recommended by different researchers to foster textual comprehension. Çekiç (2006), in comparing the reading performance of adult EFL readers who do extensive reading in addition to following a conventional reading programme with those who simply conform to the requirements of the conventional programme, argues that extensive reading paves the way for significant improvements in readers' performance,

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irrespective of the nature of the text, that is, narrative or expository. He thus recommends the inclusion of an extensive reading component in the curriculum. Büyükyazı's (2007) research findings corroborate Çekiç's belief in the importance of extensive reading in L2 instruction. She looks into the effects of web-based reading activities, used as extensive reading materials, on the reading motivation and language proficiency of pre-intermediate-level EFL learners in university foundation programmes. Results show that the group of learners who did online extensive reading show significant improvement in L2 proficiency compared with the other two control groups, one of which used graded readers while the other simply received conventional reading instruction. Karakaş (2005b), on the other hand, investigating the effects of pre-reading activities on EFL readers' comprehension of short stories, comes to the conclusion that a combination of previewing and brainstorming activities contributes more to the comprehension of short stories than brainstorming alone, and can be used to help readers digest new stories. Finally, İçmez (2009) recommends the adaptation of a number of critical reading practices to conventional EFL reading lessons: based on the results of her study, she argues that critical reading techniques, such as decreased external control, recognition of students' own realities in classroom procedures and optimal arousal, lead to increased motivation, which in turn enhances the reading experience.

Clearly, one of the key components in textual understanding is lexical access. Four studies address the role of vocabulary in comprehension from different angles. Kaçar (2006) focuses on the relationships between vocabulary learning strategies on one hand and L2 learners' proficiency levels and learning styles on the other. The findings of her experimental study point to a general lack of meaningful relationships between these constructs, even though there is some variation in strategy choice related to proficiency level. Aktekin & Güven's (2007) findings, however, point to exactly the opposite result: that strategy training for lexical acquisition improves vocabulary learning in the L2 irrespective of learners' proficiency levels, a result that is more in tune with intuitive expectations. In a similar study, İstifçi (2009) finds the relationship between proficiency level and lexical inferencing of interest: more proficient L2 learners appear to make use of not only more numerous, but more correct, lexical inferencing processes. İstifçi's research findings show that, while more proficient learners deploy relatively more top-down reading strategies, less proficient learners rely on bottom-up processes, trying to decode vocabulary items on their own rather than through contextual cues provided by the text. Finally, Eşit (2007) investigates vocabulary acquisition through two different approaches, comparing a conventional reading programme focusing on morphological knowledge, lexical meanings and lexical usage with one involving an intelligent computer-assisted language learning (ICALL) programme. He shows that the experimental group following the ICALL programme outperformed the control group in all aspects of vocabulary acquisition, not to mention the positive influence of computer technologies on student motivation.

Although lexical access is important in comprehension, reading as a cognitive and linguistic process entails much more than mere vocabulary knowledge. In fact, it is a multicomponential construct that involves the activation and interaction of readers' competencies underlying their communicative competence, as described by Canale & Swain (1980). This is the approach taken by Bayraktar (2008), who examines the L2 reading comprehension processes of university-level EFL students from the perspectives of linguistic, strategic, sociolinguistic and discourse competencies. His findings demonstrate that the most problematic reading

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areas are related to discourse and sociolinguistic competencies. L2 readers seem to suffer from text-boundedness, moving with difficulty beyond the confines of literal understanding with a view, for example, to inferring the overall meaning of the text. Although they are able to give successful answers to questions whose answers could be derived directly from the text, they experience difficulties in responding to questions of an inferential nature. In this interesting study, Bayraktar offers further evidence that L2 reading is not simply a language problem and that the role played by discoursal and sociolinguistic properties should not be underestimated, yet he does not go on to demonstrate the effects of such crucial factors on reading comprehension.

Viewing reading from an attitudinal perspective, Erten, Topkaya & Karakaş (2008) report the results of their large-scale study assessing L2 readers' affective reactions to processing texts in a foreign language. Having developed and pre-tested a questionnaire using a Likert-type scale, the authors argue that their experimental research conducted with 580 Turkish university students studying English, German or Japanese has yielded four different factors accounting for almost 60% of the variance in learners' beliefs and attitudes towards reading in a foreign language. These, they report, are the intrinsic and extrinsic values of reading, reading efficiency, and the utility of reading as a vehicle to improve one's proficiency in the L2.

Moving from studies on reading to those that deal with writing, one which probes the interaction between writing and writers is of particular interest. In her research, Ürkel (2008) takes L2 writing ability as a dependent variable and examines how it is influenced by such independent variables as learners' writing anxiety levels and self-perceptions of their writing skills. Her quantitative findings suggest that the more anxiety the learners experience in their writing classes, the lower they perceive their own writing skills to be. Ironically, the results on the learners' actual writing performance fail to show any meaningful relationship with their perceptions of their own writing ability.

Cognizant of writing anxiety as a common problem in EFL classes, a number of academics offer remedies to tackle the problem. For example, Öztürk & Çeçen (2007) propose the building of portfolios by students as a solution to writing anxiety. In the same vein, Üğüten (2009) advocates the use of portfolios in ELT writing courses to promote learner autonomy, based on the findings of her longitudinal research with a group of EFL writers. Likewise, Erice's (2008) research shows that portfolios, e-portfolios in particular, contribute to the development of L2 writing skills and computer literacy, while alleviating anxiety.

Another issue that seems to preoccupy researchers is the contribution of feedback to writing. As a case in point, Kurt & Atay (2007) compare the role of teacher and peer feedback on student essays. Their findings point to the significance of peer feedback not only in improving writing but also in alleviating writing anxiety. The role of feedback in writing is further examined by Kaçar (2008), who describes teachers' and learners' preferences in the types of feedback used in EFL writing classes. Her in-depth case study reveals that both teachers and learners on the whole prefer thorough and detailed error feedback, with learners being generally too reliant on teachers' corrections. However, some teachers, says Kaçar, not only provide inappropriate feedback but seem to be oblivious to the long-term effects of feedback itself. The notion of appropriate feedback is taken up by Demirel & Enginarlar (2007), who demonstrate experimentally that, in the case of peer feedback, only those questions

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that motivate learners to analyze each other's essays (as opposed to those that are purely evaluative) generate more feedback as well as more revisions.

In sum, the research on writing is more in tune with the analysis of learner and teacher variables in relation to writing ability than with linguistic and cognitive processes in composing in the L2. As such, it deals more with surface-level features of writing than writing as a process of planning, composing, revising and producing a text with regard to specific rhetorical conventions. In this respect, two exceptions (Altunay 2009; Yağız 2009) are worth mentioning. Despite their seemingly shallow perspective of associating coherence with cohesion, they focus on the important issue of how EFL writers misuse cohesive devices in English academic discourse, thereby creating texts lacking in coherence and comprehensibility.

7. Measurement and evaluation

Turkey is among the countries where high-stakes foreign language testing is an area of concern. There are several centralized tests designed and administered nationwide for admission to foreign language and literature programmes, promotion or tenure in academia and salary increments for public sector workers. In addition, universities are known to develop their own foreign language tests, almost all of which are in English, to assign incoming students to classes based on proficiency level. The fact that none of these tests, centralized or university-based, has undergone any scrutiny for external validation is a serious issue. In a critical review, Alptekin (2007b) exposes the reluctance of the educational authorities to validate their English tests against internationally accepted proficiency tests such as the TOEFL or IELTS. He questions the putative validity of the subjectively designed scorings intended to demonstrate the equivalence of locally-developed tests to internationally recognized tests of English as a foreign language. The international tests themselves, however, come under scrutiny in a paper by Uysal (2008a), who provides a descriptive and evaluative review of the IELTS writing component by focusing on various reliability and validity issues. With regard to the former, she finds fault with the single marking of papers, readability of test prompts and comparability of writing topics. As far as validity is concerned, she criticizes the IELTS adherence to the inner-circle norms of written English and points to a need for the test to address the norms of the expanding and outer circles, given the variations involving culture-specific rhetorical conventions and, in particular, cultural differences in conceptualizations of coherence, cohesion and logical argument. In another paper, Uysal (2008b) examines the issue of validity in testing from a theoretical perspective, presenting a historical account of the different notions of validity and explaining their inadequacies in terms of generalizability across various social contexts. She thus emphasizes the need for ethnomethodological research to be conducted in validity studies in order to determine the complex constructs underlying reading comprehension and to secure generalizability of scoring irrespective of the social setting where testing happens to take place.

Another area where construct validity is discussed is lexical competence with regard to foreign language knowledge. Öztürk (2007) argues that, while all multiple-choice tests of foreign language vocabulary measure the recognition of word meanings, they differ with respect to whether they measure recognition in ways that are receptive or productive. Equally important, she maintains, is whether the tests measure abstract knowledge of vocabulary or

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lexical ability. Receptive knowledge formats are said to measure recognition of word meanings in isolation, while productive knowledge formats measure recognition of word forms for specific meanings in isolation. On the other hand, receptive ability formats are said to tap word comprehension in context, while productive ability formats tap the ability to use words in given contexts. The article offers several interesting examples based on the author's own taxonomies and proposes ways of turning receptive formats into more productive ones while adhering to word frequency as an index of difficulty in the choice of the target item and the distractors.

Selvi (2005) addresses the issue of measurement from the specific perspective of test anxiety. Taking test anxiety as a situation-specific factor, he questions whether there exists a meaningful relationship between test-takers' anxiety levels and their scores on formal examinations. He further questions whether the test-taker's degree of L2 proficiency plays a role in the (assumed) relationship between anxiety and performance. His research findings reveal an unexpected relationship between test-takers' anxiety levels and their actual performance on tests. It appears that the more anxious the L2 learners become about the test, the better their scores are. This relationship increases as the test-taker's proficiency level in the L2 improves – an odd outcome, which Selvi attributes to the growing concern among advanced L2 learners about the tests becoming more difficult at higher levels of proficiency. Although it is perplexing to find anxiety associated with higher test scores, particularly at higher levels of instruction, alternative explanations exist for this peculiar outcome. For one thing, Selvi's findings should be analyzed within the framework of different forms of tests generating major differences in anxiety, even resulting in a biasing effect against certain types of students with respect to their L2 proficiency level. For another, as Scovel (1991) indicates, it may not be correct to reduce the construct of anxiety merely to an affectively debilitating factor. Facilitating anxiety is known to improve test performance, as it motivates the test-taker to tackle the task rather than exhibiting avoidance behaviour. In sum, the issue is quite intricate, because there are several variables that may intervene in language anxiety in general and test anxiety in particular.

8. Language and culture

The traditional Humboldtian view that there is an inextricable link between language and culture is no longer adequate, given the advent of English as a lingua franca (ELF). As an international language, English has, in fact, become culturally deracinated, used in a multitude of diverse settings, and characterized by linguistic and cultural fluidity, heterogeneity and dynamism. As a result, native-speaker norms of accuracy and appropriacy have become redundant in many contexts of use. Consequently, Alptekin (2009) points to the need for the ELT profession to question some of its deeply rooted convictions in foreign language pedagogy. For instance, should the profession continue to adhere to native-speaker linguistic and pragmatic norms in light of the reality of ELF, or should it prioritize mutual intelligibility in cross-cultural contexts? Should the profession still take as its pedagogical model Chomsky's (monolingual) ideal speaker-hearer, or should it perhaps adopt the successful bilingual speaker as model? Should the profession continue to subscribe

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to its subjective preference for native English-speaker teachers (NESTs) over non-native English-speaker teachers (NNESTs), irrespective of context of learning and use? Should the profession still insist on exposing learners to 'Standard English' with a static, reductionist and, at times, irrelevant depiction of its culture(s), or be more open to varied uses of English around the globe, enriching the language itself and enabling its users to express both local and multicultural identities? Some of these issues are addressed in two position papers. Acar (2009) argues that the conventional notion of communicative competence, as operationalized by Canale (1983), is no longer adequate, and advocates a pedagogy that caters to the development of ELF competence by including intercultural competency in the repertoire of linguistic, pragmatic, strategic and discourse competencies. Acar claims that a new notion of communicative competence should involve standardized native-speaker and emerging non-native-speaker norms as well as negotiation strategies to cope with the variability of English as used in diverse sociocultural contexts, not to mention cross-cultural awareness. Mete (2009) takes Acar's view one step further by arguing for the inclusion of ELF as an instrument of intercultural communication in all types of ELT syllabi, thereby expanding the conceptual and formal boundaries of communicative competence.

Acknowledging the international status of English from the perspective of critical pedagogy, Türker (2006) illustrates how the ELT profession caters to the political and economic interests of inner circle countries like the USA and the UK. Some benefits he cites come from the marketing of ELT products, the employment opportunities provided for NESTs, the expanding role of English and its culture(s) in both public and private business and education circles and the promotion of ELT through conferences organized by universities and other educational institutions – with plenary speakers almost always invited from the USA or UK. Türker finds this type of dependence on inner circle countries excessive and offers a number of suggestions to reduce it. He maintains that teacher education programmes in ELT should make an effort to produce more qualified NNESTs who would be able to meet the demands of the local context. He also recommends the establishment of a national foreign language education centre to identify the various academic, technical and vocational needs of the country in relation to foreign languages, with a view to designing appropriate instructional programmes in tune with local demand. Finally, he favours more investment in educational technology to help Turkish university students become more competent in English.

However, Türker's critical perspective of the ELT scene in Turkey does not address how the new reality of ELF affects the country. His recommendations are more in tune with localizing the ELT establishment in order to emancipate it from the hegemony of the inner circle countries, yet the pedagogical paradigm is still inner circle-bound, that is, 'standard' target language- and culture-oriented. This is to be expected, given that many ELT professionals in Turkey still take for granted the idea that knowledge of the target language culture must be fully incorporated into English language instruction, since learners without it are not believed to be communicatively competent. Sarıgül & Ashton (2006), for example, go so far as to preach the use of native speakers of English as 'cultural resources' in ELT courses, to enable learners to become thoroughly familiar with the target-language culture, even to the degree of adopting the body language of native speakers.

In an interesting study, Öztürk, Çeçen & Altınmakas (2009) show how Turkish pre-service teachers of EFL view English as an inner-circle phenomenon, with its idealized American or

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British culture. Through case studies, the researchers explore the participants' perceptions of the status of English, the ownership of English, the issue of normative standards in ELT and what it takes to be a successful Turkish-English bilingual. The results suggest that most pre-service teachers lack familiarity with the linguistic and cultural implications of ELF, even though they have some nebulous notions about English being a *sine qua non* of ongoing globalization. Their perception of English does not go beyond the confines of EFL, with inner-circle linguistic and cultural norms constituting the backbone of the communicative framework. Hence, it is not the successful bilingual, operating in both Turkish and English with fluency and accuracy, who is taken as the pedagogical model in ELT, but the (monolingual) native speaker of English. The researchers appeal for new pedagogical paradigms that cater to the development of awareness-raising and critical thinking regarding ELT, given the lingua franca status of English.

It is no surprise, then, that when Önalan (2005) examines Turkish NNESTs' perceptions of the role of the target language culture in ELT, he disregards the emerging implications of ELF for a completely new approach to culture. As expected, Turkish teachers of English pay lip service to the idea of incorporating cultural information into their teaching. That is, they want their students to know more about the cultures of inner-circle countries. However, not only do they exhibit a reduced and restricted sense of culture for the ELT context, they also disclose, perhaps reluctantly, their concerns about potential problems such as topical irrelevance, which may lead to learner boredom, or being instrumental in the spread of linguistic and cultural imperialism. In the final analysis, culture seems to be a low-priority feature on their list of teaching aims. Taking up the matter of culture in foreign language teaching from the viewpoint of NESTs and NNESTs, Şahin (2005) reports that NESTs contribute better than NNESTs to the creation of positive attitudes towards the target language community, which he claims improves learner achievement in ELT. Nonetheless, Şahin's study should be taken with some reservations, given the high socioeconomic status of the participants, the fact that they are private school students receiving a type of bilingual education. Tertiary education, in fact, seems to offer different insights. Yılmaz (2007), for example, presenting the results of his research on the role of culture in ELT classes, states that university students want their syllabus to include more international topics (as against topics on the target language culture); he further indicates that students' major motives for English language learning are instrumental; finally, he points to the students' desire to have their native culture represented in instructional materials. Obviously, these are areas where there is little need for NESTs.

Irrespective of the pedagogical model chosen, one issue that interests academics is raising the intercultural awareness of foreign language learners. Ünver (2007) describes an induction course taught in German on intercultural awareness designed for ERASMUS students. The aim of the course, which comprises a didactic module that is followed by an application module, is to enable students to understand the importance of intercultural communication, to develop insights into cross-cultural differences, and to become sensitive towards different behaviour patterns. The application phase involves, she says, studies and simulations that test the participants' intercultural efficiency in cases involving critical incidents. Similarly, Ekşi (2009) focuses on intercultural awareness with a view to broadening language learners' conceptual horizons. She states that learners should be taught not to see their own cultural

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norms as the only natural and correct modes of behaviour. The ability to critically examine the source and target language cultures should be an integral part of every foreign language syllabus. To this end, she offers several classroom activities that are designed to compare and contrast the source and target language cultures in terms of normative behaviour patterns and value judgements.

9. Conclusion

There are a number of caveats that need to be mentioned in the context of this review. One deals with the nature of the local conferences. As most of the research is done by university-based academics and practitioners, the focus in these conferences tends to be on the restricted scope of tertiary education issues. In addition, *ad hoc* solutions to specific problems are often preferred over attempts to tackle broader issues in a principled way, particularly by reference to theory. This inevitably leads to a plethora of theoretically weak presentations with shallow pedagogical implications. As such, local conferences are a long way from providing a good forum for future publications in national and international journals.

Another is the fact that academics' shy away from publishing in local journals for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, the preference for getting published internationally stems from the fact that there are promotional and financial incentives for publishing in refereed and indexed international journals, especially those listed in Thomson Reuters databases. Moreover, promotions in the academic world necessitate a specific number of refereed international publications, varying from one discipline to another. On the financial side, grants from EU funds, TÜBİTAK (The Turkish Academy of Sciences and Technologies) funds and the research funds of universities themselves encourage academics to produce international publications. Consequently, publications appearing in refereed international journals have a higher status than locally published articles.

There are other reasons for the drive to publish internationally. First, it must be admitted that the national journals in the field are, unfortunately, few for a country the size of Turkey and contain articles mostly in Turkish and occasionally a foreign language. The number of publications in a foreign language thus remains limited, leading to a skewed presentation of the Turkish foreign language education context. Next, mention should be made of the national journals' publication criteria, which, except for those which have reached international status, are less demanding than their refereed international counterparts. Finally, national journals are not easily accessible. What Porte (2003: 118) said with regard to Spain holds true for Turkey as well: that there is 'an unfortunate and conspicuous absence of many national publications in several university libraries, although key international journals are comparatively well represented'.

All in all, even though there have been major developments in the last decade, there is still a need for improvement in foreign language education in the Turkish context. What renders educational reform ongoing and necessary is the significant increase in the number of EFL learners, not to mention thousands who are in the process of learning another European language in view of Turkey's aspirations to join the European Union. Given, then, the pressing demand for English and other foreign languages, the profession has been obliged

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to enhance the quality of educational standards in language teaching and learning, and has therefore begun to look to research for answers to some of its practical concerns.

It is thus not surprising that the number of national publications and conferences dealing with research on foreign language teaching and learning has increased over the last ten years. While conference organizers are setting up screening criteria for proposed papers, local journals are also becoming more aware of the need to apply more serious screening policies to submissions. Elsewhere, the number of research projects on foreign language education funded by TÜBİTAK and the universities is on the rise, paving the way for a significant increase in the number of publications on foreign language education and applied linguistics in internationally indexed and refereed journals. In sum, the state of the art in Turkey is upbeat, with the expectation that research findings are likely to lead to pedagogical insights and applications.

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CEM ALPTEKIN is Professor of Applied Linguistics and Foreign Language Education at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, Turkey. He has published internationally in various journals, including *TESOL Quarterly, The Canadian Modern Language Review, Second Language Research, Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, International Journal of Applied Linguistics, Journal of Research in Reading, System*, and *ELT Journal*. His current research interests involve the effects of long-term memory and working memory on L2 reading comprehension; the interactions between eye movements, working memory processes and L2 reading comprehension; and the conceptualization of bilingual and multicultural competence in the context of English as a lingua franca.

SIBEL TATAR is Assistant Professor of Foreign Language Education at Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, Turkey. She received her Ph.D. in Language Education from Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. Her research interests include intercultural communication, foreign language teaching methodology and language teacher education. She has published in the *Journal of Studies in International Education, Teacher Development*, and *Language and Intercultural Communication*.

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