DİL ÖĞRETİMİNİN TEMEL DAYANAKLARI

Öz

Dil öğretiminin temel dayanaklarını konu alan bu makale, önem sırasına göre; öğrenci öğretmen, metot ve dil öğretiminde kullanılan araç-gereçler olarak tespit ettiği dört unsurun mevcut şartlarda işleyişini ortaya koyduktan sonra, hedeflenen amaçlar doğrultusunda en fazla verim elde etmek için yapılabilecekleri ele almaktadır. Bu alanda yapılan çalışmalar daha çok dil öğretiminde kullanılan metotların değerlendirilmesi ekseninde dönerken, makale yazısı 24 yıllık öğretmenlik tecrübesinden kaynaklanan birikimle, “güdülenmiş öğrenci” ve tiyatro sanatına telmihen kullandığı “tahtanın tozunu attıran öğretmen” ifadeleriyle dil öğretiminde bu iki unsurun birlikteligiine vurgu yapmıştır. Öğretmenin hem hedeflenen dilde hem de kendi dilinde yeterlilik kadar, öğretmenlik formasyonu, diksiyonu ve birikimiyle bir duruş sergilediği sınıf sahnesinde hoşgörü ve güven duygusuyla oluşturduğu atmosfer, öğrencilere motivasyonunun arttıracaktır. Makalede, öğretmenlerin bu donanımı kazanacak şekilde yetiştirilmesine dikkat çekilirken, devlet okullarında okutulan ders kitapları başta olmak üzere dil öğretiminde kullanılan araç ve gereçler irodelenmiştir. Kendi alanı olması itibariyle yazar Arapça öğretiminde yapılan hatalarla, eksikliklere de temas etmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Yabancı dil, öğretmen, öğrenci, metot, araç-gereç
MAIN FOUNDATIONS OF LANGUAGE TEACHING

Abstract

This article on the main foundations of language teaching discusses what can be done to get the most efficiency in line with targeted objectives, after revealing the functioning of four elements in present conditions, which in the order of importance include student, teacher, method and tools used in language teaching. While studies in this area are mostly centred on the evaluation of methods used in language teaching, using the expressions like “guided student” based on her 24 years of teaching experience and making a reference to the theatre “the teacher shining at the board” the author of this article stressed the togetherness of these two elements in language teaching. As much as the teacher’s competency both in the target language and mother tongue, the atmosphere that the teacher created in the class with feelings of tolerance and trust and the attitude formed with the teacher’s initial teacher training and diction will increase students’ motivation. While remarking the need for teachers’ training to be in the direction to gain this capacity, the language teaching tools, especially textbooks, used in public schools have been addressed in the article. Since it is her profession, the author has pointed out the mistakes and deficiencies in Arabic language teaching.

Keywords: foreign language, teacher, student, method, tools

Introduction

It is a fact that audio-visual media’s ability in creating common feelings, the screams heard after falling bombs, and smiles given while handing out aid supplies are more effective than words in our globalized world. Therefore the language skill that we do not need very often in face to face communication is of great importance due to the possibility of some expressions’ and shared feelings’ getting lost in literary, political, and cultural domain translations. The most direct way to avoid this situation is, without any doubt, dealing with them in the original language.

Before determining the methods and techniques in language teaching which may differ in accordance with academic purposes such as interpreting different countries’ literary works about cultural values, lifestyles, religion philosophy and ways of thinking in language teaching; it is rather crucial to identify the language level and thus prepare a curriculum in line with language acquisition goals.

Otherwise, the targeted result will be much lower than anticipated. The students who are placed in Arabic Language and Literature departments in Turkey with English, French or German Language exams are the best example for that case. The students who are not required to have a certain level in order to have education in the relevant department mostly –of course personal efforts can change this- graduate without having the needed capacity to analyse literary works. However, those interested in Arabic Language and Literature know that this literature, which dates back a long time, embodies an immense number of documents even merely with the modern and classical outlines. If the objective of language teaching is recognising the au-
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thors and poets of the target language, evaluating and commenting on the literary works, students should be expected to have a certain language level.

Each language has its own consistency, which is more than words aligned according to grammar rules. Languages reflect the culture of a society in many ways. That is why anthropologists stress the importance of learning the local language while examining other societies. Languages show how communities classify and examine their surroundings in a manner to include kinship relations, animal world, colours, food and natural world. It is substantial to understand the cultural meaning as well as the linguistic meaning of the language used so as to avoid misunderstandings. Consequently, the effort to make culturally formed notions and opinions clear for the members of another society is a significant criterion while evaluating the success of translation from a foreign language.

For instance, if we consider the importance of coffee in getting family and friends together and heating the conversation other than the way it is prepared in big pots and drunk like tea in Arabic culture, we will see that the meaning behind the offer “Shall we have some coffee?” has a greater number of meanings than the number of the words forming the sentence. In a culture where people start the day by listening to Feyruz and drinking coffee, it is essential to “know” the meaning attributed to that beverage in order to understand and use the symbol of coffee in its true sense.

Additionally, the way the family gathering for a barbecue at mid-afternoon consume their coffee and the significance of these hours in family life in Necip Mahfuz’s Trilogy will be comprehended better when you know the meaning ascribed to coffee by Arabic nation.

Thus, determining a starting line in accordance with students’ objective of learning the target language and the right method to reach that objective, will make it easier to achieve a high level of language acquisition. The use of “acquisition” term here is not accidental, as according to the author of this article, language is to be “learned” rather than “taught”. After the targeted level is specified, student, teacher, language teaching methods and tools constitute the main variables of a high level language acquisition:

Student

The most important variable to affect the success of language teaching among four foundations mentioned is student. The most significant experience the author of the article has had during her 24 years of teaching life is that language can be taught only to those who want to learn it. Especially, what is needed for a high level language skill is being able to interpret the meanings attributed to symbols, evaluate the target language through its own culture, that is to say being willing to learn. “Only the curious will learn and only the resolute overcome the obstacles to learning. The quest quotient has always excited me more than the intelligence quotient.” (Eugene S. Wilson)

When language teaching institutions are separated into two as private and public, and the massive place public schools hold among government institutions taken into consideration, students’ attitudes to language lesson, which is just one topic among the others in their curricu-

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4 Necip Mahfuz’s famous Trilogy consisting of three novels: Beyne’l-Kasrayn (Palace Walk, 1956), Kasru’ş-Şevk (Palace of Desire, 1957) and es-Sükkeriye (Sugar Street, 1957).
lum, forms the key point in language teaching. It will be teacher’s mission to maintain students’ active participation by highlighting the practical implications, keeping students motivated at a certain level and increasing their interest to the lesson instead of seeing it as a part of the curriculum that they need to take.

**Teacher**

Although the teacher element was coming second in the order that we mentioned to be forming language teaching foundations, the direct relation between those two variables generally causes them to replace each other.

Whilst explanations on the importance of foreign language learning and appraisements on the culture of the target language might be effective in heightening students’ interest to the subject during the first lessons, for the permanence of their motivation the need for an actor-like teacher who “shines at the board” will never diminish.  

In order to advance, it is rather crucial to get feedback in language lessons which share almost the same fate with maths and science courses. As we cannot expect high level arithmetic operations from a student who does not know four operations, if we do not intervene with a student who got lost in the noise of the class and successful students and had gaps in the chain of knowledge, it will be hard to compensate for the loss later on.

Crosschecking the previous lesson in the present one will ensure that targeted behaviours are acquired, and thus increase both students’ attention and participation in the lesson. Giving the needed time for each student to learn, reassuring the students to ask questions when they do not understand something, and making use of games in activities done with younger age groups will influence their success in a positive direction too.

While stressing the importance of teacher in increasing students’ motivation, whether higher education institutions perform their duties in training a teacher who has the qualifications required and a command of language is yet another question to be asked. Whereas Language and Literature students’ graduating, without certain readiness, before reaching the targeted level as discussed above is forming the bad side of inefficiencies in teacher training, crowded languages classes are justifying the teacher.

Just like the cast and crew bringing a film scenario into life, a teacher should give life to the methods and techniques used in foreign language teaching. Right methods and techniques that are getting together with the teacher’s competence and student’s motivation, create a flawless integrity.

We can summarise the teaching methods coming third as below:

**Language Teaching Methods**

**Grammar Translation Method**

Grammar Translation Method, which has been used since middle ages, was introduced by Karl Plötz (1819-1881) in the 19th century and his techniques have been adopted until the beginning of 20th century. In this method, it is fundamental to teach the rules of the target language. Learning of grammar usually takes place through the analysis of given texts. Generally,

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6 To increase student motivation see. Yolcu, *ibid*, p. 29.
7 We can give examples of the games to play with classes in secondary schools as “Guess who?” and “Bingo” “Guess who?” game: In a lesson where personal features are taught, one student chosen by the teacher describes a friend in the class. Whoever finds the mentioned student replaces the student at the board. “Bingo” game: In a lesson where sports activities are taught, one student is asked to write the names of different sports branches in the six boxes that he drew. The teacher starts calling them out randomly. Students cross the sports branches that the teacher has said. The student who gets all the branch names crossed first shouts “bingo”.

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native language is used while teaching with this method. Very detailed and long explanations of complex and difficult grammar rules are presented since learning a language is possible mainly by learning the sentence patterns, in other words by grammar.9

**Direct Method**

It emerged as a reaction to Grammar Translation Method in 1950s, and was adopted largely in the World and Turkey.10

Based on Plato’s “direct understanding theory”11 which explains meaning as the perception of the signified object and the conception of that object, Direct Method’s baseline is the connection of the word and object. Teaching words occurs through visual tools, demonstrations or miming. Translation to native language is not allowed in the classroom. This method quite clearly grounds on forming a direct link between the target language and the corresponding notion12.

**Audio-Lingual Method**

When current methods were not successful in teaching American soldiers the languages spoken in the countries with their military bases, the USA started to apply a programme developed by the help of universities which was named as ASTP (Army Specialized Training Programme). This method is centred on generating student’s automatic habit through doing pattern repetition drills and making sentences similar to the memorized patterns.13

This method has 5 main principles. These are:

- Language is not writing, but talking.
- Language is a set of habits.
- You cannot teach ideas about a language, but just the language
- Language is not what its native speakers need to say, but what they do say.
- Languages are different from each other.

**Cognitive Learning Theory**

This theory expresses that language is a creative process. Accordingly, the teacher is not the person who makes you do the repetition drills, but the guide who makes learning with thinking easy. Namely, students try to understand the logic of the pattern while trying to make a sentence with the given example. The most significant aspects of this method are as below:

- Use of four main skills equally in the order of importance,
- Use of target language and translation is allowed,
- Using auditual and visual tools while teaching everything in coherence,
- Aiming for competence in both the native and target language and in their cultures.14

**The Natural Approach**

It is a method advocating that foreign language should be taught similarly to native language. The Natural Approach is aiming to teach the “living” language rather than the language of old classics, and “spoken” language rather than “written” language. Teachers are na-
tive speakers of the target language. The negative side of this approach is the problem of finding native speaker teachers.

Main aspects of the method are given below:

- Student must repeat what he heard even though he did not understand it completely and speak as much as possible without minding his mistakes
- Language learning is vocabulary learning in the first place. Therefore frequently used words in target language should be elicited and taught to the students

**Communicative Approach**

In Communicative Approach, that was developed by social scientists, the objective is to help students gain the necessary language skills, in other words communication skills, by underlining the social aspect of language instead of teaching grammatical rules.

Supporters of Communicative Approach suggest that students will be far more motivated once they realise their Communicative skills are progressing.

Teaching in Communicative Approach is student centred. Teaching activities are mostly based on dialogues, group work, simulation, problem solving and learning through educational games. Authentic materials, that are used in daily communication and written in target language, are utilised for teaching.

**Eclectic Approach**

Eclectic Approach is used to signify a combination of methods or plentitude of methods. The teacher can use the best sides of all methods in different situations in the classroom. When teaching vocabulary, it concentrates on “Direct Method”, while teaching grammar rules “Cognitive Learning Theory”, and with speaking skills it concentrates on “Audio-Lingual Method” and “Communicative Approach”.

Considering the motivated student that is featured, educational experiences consisting of a competent teacher in his branch and his right choices of methods, the age of the target group and targeted level in this article, the subject of which is “The Main Foundations of Language Teaching”, it will be possible to maintain the highest level of output in language acquisition.

Target group’s expectation is the key point for choosing the method. As much as native speaker teachers’ lecturing with the Natural Approach is not sufficient on its own, it is insufficient to teach using only Grammar Translation Method as is the case in most public schools.

Teacher’s reviewing the methods he/she chose, evaluating the success according to the followed curriculum in the light of the planned education’s objectives and expectations is rather crucial too. After learning experiences that a teacher with a full command of target language and his/her mother tongue has generated with various methods, the frequency of spoken and written examinations to support learning should not be overlooked either. Considering that learning experiences are organised in certain durations, it is necessary to give homework to the students so that they do not forget what they have learnt in the meantime and also to check the homework and correct their mistakes in order to give feedback. No matter what method is used in education, separating learning experiences into fragments and proceeding before the subject

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15 Demirel, *Yabancı Dil Öğretimi*, p. 47.
18 Demirel, *Yabancı Dil Öğretimi*, p. 52.
is learnt without the use of various reinforcers will only make the students detached from the lesson as mentioned previously.

Particularly in formal education, in order to address all the students with different types of intelligence (visual intelligence, auditory intelligence) it is obligatory to use these methods accordingly. Since a substantial language method is based on four cornerstones, which are reading, writing, understanding and speaking, educational experiences applying only one method will not reach their goals.

**Language Teaching Tools**

Among the tools such as books, board, cd and visual materials, the most important ones to centre education upon are language books.

While making our choice as “Eclectic Approach” instead of the others, it is crucial for language teaching books to have texts, exercises and audio records applicable to use particular methods combined.

There are existing options for choosing source books with the mentioned properties in certain languages, except in Arabic. Despite the religious and scientific importance of Arabic, which has a long history in this land, the difficulty of finding a decent book to build the language on with a modern line among the limited number of books to opt for, results from the targeted language education’s being confined to understanding classical texts up until today. It is still an issue that the incidents in the story books we advise to the students of Arabic language are lacking an up-to-date context and the subject and the vocabulary in textbooks being isolated from living Arabic. The students, who are suffocating in texts prepared according to a grammar based curriculum, stay away from the language due to teachers’ incompetence to use certain language teaching methods.

In teaching other languages with sufficient number of tools, the teacher or student centred dilemmas should be not be ignored either. Among the subjects taught in primary and secondary schools, in order to improve the most crucial language lessons which need the highest teacher-student interaction, the two properties (motivated student-competent teacher) of these variables emphasized in the article must be featured.

Whereas supplying the students, who have difficulty in understanding what they hear, with infrastructure such as lab and sound system seems like a far possibility for mainstream schools fighting with monetary issues, personal solutions such as teacher’s creating groups on electronical media equipment (e.g. whatsapp) and sending voice recordings will be helpful.

For a more systematic solution, handing out voice records along with the textbooks in public schools would increase the motivation of the generation, that is fond of communication instruments, and as a consequence the videos and short films suitable for the curriculum will add to the success too.

To improve four components of language teaching, which we named as student, teacher, method and tools, a variation of lesson materials will make learning a language easier other than studies to increase student motivation and teacher quality. Thus, we can find a way to interact with the lives and cultures of foreign elements that we impress with gestures and hereby it will be much more enjoyable to construe life with literary, political and social sciences that we have learnt from first hand.

**Result**

Language, which is a communication tool among nations around the World, keeps having the public opinion of “hard to learn” particularly in the minds of people in our region. Main
foundation of language teaching, student being in the first place, teacher, methods and techniques used and tools are the most important components forming this opinion.

It is fundamental for World nations consisting of different cultures to purify themselves of hostile feelings and understand each other in a brotherhood atmosphere for maintaining World peace. As much as communication is substantial for establishing national peace and togetherness, adopting a policy by acknowledging behaviour patterns resulting from the religion and cultures of nations is crucial too.

Reading and commenting on literature, which is the culture and opinion treasure of nations, is the most important element serving this purpose. Evaluating and commenting on the meanings ascribed to a language within that culture may strengthen communication and thus set the ground for true politics.

Knowing a foreign language, has a feature that forms a basis for primary and secondary School students to meet other cultures besides a couple of remote outcomes mentioned before. This article revealing the main variables in language lessons, puts the student in the first place and the teacher, who is responsible for the student’s motivation, in the second place. As underlined in the article, it is not possible to teach someone who does not want to learn. It is the teacher that can make the students, who are stuck at some point due to various life factors, open for communication and motivate them.

If we conceive the classroom as a theatre stage, the teacher strives to direct students to the target behaviour with the play he/she stages every day, and yet he/she writes and stages it from the beginning all the time. It is the teacher again who chooses the methods and tools to be used appropriately with regards to the target behaviour and regenerates them.

Speech patterns and grammar rules in books are just made up of a few items. These items come into life and turn into objects with the teacher’s acting, and students try to touch and shape them. Surely it is not possible for a student to internalise each object, recognise and use it at the first step. The teacher understands which object to highlight more thanks to the feedbacks he/she gets and stages her play in accordance.

Especially textbooks used for Arabic language lessons in our country need to be updated and sustained with a modern outline and up-to-date curriculum urgently. The voice records to be included in textbooks must be transferred into a format that is easy to reach and visibility should be increased through short videos so as to support the target behaviour, consequently the quality of language teaching will be improved.
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