

## SOME DIMENSIONS IN THE DESIGN OF SERVICE ENGLISH PROGRAMS IN CUMHURİYET UNIVERSITY

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### Öz

*Türkiye'de Yabancı Dil Eğitimi-Öğretimi çağdaşlaşmanın ve medeniyetin gereği olarak görülmektedir. Ancak, "Yabancı Dil" birine vereceğimiz bir demet çiçek, özgeçmişimizi süsleyen bir araç olarak görülmemelidir. Düşünün bir kere, geleceğimiz olan çocuklarımızı herhangi bir yabancı dilde eğitim yapan bir özel okulda okutabilmek için ne sıkıntılara katlanıyoruz. Bu günkü eğitim sitemimizde ilköğretimden yükseköğretime kadar eğitim-öğretimin her aşamasında İngilizce'nin öğrenimi ve öğretimi ile karşılaşmaktayız. Gelişmişliğin göstergesi olarak yabancı dil bilgisinin kabul edildiği ve bunun için zaman zaman olanakların ötesinde insanüstü çabaların gösterildiği ülkemizde gelişmiş ülkelerdeki gibi amaca odaklanan programlar ve bu özel amaçlı programı uygulayabilecek iyi yetişmiş öğretim kadrosuna ulaşmak için daha yapmamız gereken çok şey olduğunu unutmamalıyız. İyi hazırlanmış, başarılı bir yabancıdil öğretimi programı ancak ayrıntılı bir amaç saptaması ve çok iyi sınıflandırılmış bir eğitim-öğretim müfredatı ile mümkündür. Yabancıdil öğretmenlerini yetiştirmekle yükümlü olan kurum Üniversiteler olduğundan, yükseköğretim kurumlarının yetkilileri bu soruna köklü çözümler üretmeli ve etkili, uygulanabilir, ayrıntılı öneriler geliştirmelidir. Bu yazıda görev yapmakta olduğum Cumhuriyet Üniversite'sinde sözkonusu alanda karşılaştığımız sorunları ortaya koyup tartıştıktan sonra bu sorunlara çözüm önerilerinde bulunacağız.*

### Anahtar Sözcükler

*Türkiye'de İngilizce Öğretimi, Üniversitede İngilizce Öğretimi, İngilizce Öğretmeni Yetitirme, Servis Dersler*

*Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi'nde İngilizce Servis Derslerinin Düzenlenmesinin Bazı Boyutları*

### Abstract

*Foreign Language Teaching in Turkey originates and rises as an inevitable requirement for modernization and civilization. To have a foreign language competency should neither be seen as a bench of flowers nor a way to furnish our Curriculum Vitas. Think, for a while, about what difficulties we are having in making our children study in any private school where medium of instruction in any foreign language. Today, we have, in Turkish educational system, teaching and learning English in every educational steps, from primary school to higher education. Turkey, where there is a continuous fight for development, should find a solution to have qualified staff as in the developed countries. Well-prepared and successful foreign language teaching can be realized by detailed syllabus design; detailed and carefully classified curriculum. Since the institutions responsible for training foreign language teachers are universities, the authorities of higher education should find radical solutions and present effective, feasible and detailed suggestions. In this study by stating the problems we are facing in the area in Cumhuriyet University, we will present some suggested solutions.*

### Key Words

*TEFL in Turkey, TEFL at Universities, Training EFL Teachers, Service English.*

### Introduction

This study aims to state the needs of the students learning English at Cumhuriyet University. The most important problem in teaching English to Turkish learners arises from the casual selection of the methods and approaches. Many teachers think that any popular method applied abroad should be successful in Turkey, too. However, a careful study is necessary to be able to

select the most useful method and approach that will be suitable in teaching English in Turkey. To achieve this aim, first we should find out the needs of the learners because different needs require different methods. This presentation is divided into three main parts. The first part is concerned with describing the decision areas (purposes, resources, administration evaluation) where decision makers (clients, designers, teachers, students) have to operate in overall program design. In particular, we will be concerned with problems in deciding program purposes. The second part looks at the levels of decision making for designers engaged in detailed program planning (the specification of aims, goals, objectives in syllabus construction). The third part is concerned with describing the strategies the materials designer can adopt in the light of overall and detailed planning decisions, and the tactics that can be employed in relation to such strategies in the classroom. Moreover, in this study, we will consider in detail the notion of authenticity, and discuss the implications of a functional approach to materials design.

### **I. Background To The Study**

Needless to say that English, which is most widely used language all over the world, has become a universal language nowadays. English is considered and taught as a foreign language, like in Turkey, in most of the countries of the world. Learners deciding to study a foreign language have two main kinds of motivation, namely instrumental and integrative. University students, for example, are motivated to learn English instrumentally because they need to be able to read written materials in the foreign language and to communicate to the native speakers. As known learning and teaching a foreign language covers 4 basic skill, such as listening, speaking, reading, writing. While listening and speaking are used in oral communication, reading and writing are used in written communication. However, a foreign language student does not cover these four major language skills perfectly when the syllabus is designed so that the learners could reach their needs. That is the emphasis should be on certain skills required for their specific needs.

### **II. Problem**

It is an unfortunate to say that because of the casual selection of the methods and approaches, most of the university students in Turkey can neither speak nor read and write properly in the foreign language they are supposed to be learning nor translate from the native language and the target language, or vice versa. Most of the foreign language teachers, who are not well trained and ready to act in the profession, think that any popular method being applied abroad should successfully be applied in Turkey as well. It is very well known by every logical person that different needs require different methods. Therefore, to be able to be a good teacher and learner, we should carefully analyze our specific needs in learning and teaching a foreign language. Because most of the university students are, unfortunately, illiterate to read even in their native language, they need to learn how and what to read.

The learners at Cumhuriyet University are not in process of learning of reading English for interest or pleasure. While some of our students are in need of English for their future careers, some others are in hope to find a well-paid job

or need to follow the scientific literature in their own field. Therefore, supplying texts with various subjects and concepts will create motivation and help them to build reading skills as well as encourage them to read for different purposes.

### **III.Purpose of The Study**

The primary purpose of this study is to provide foreign language teachers of service courses at Cumhuriyet University with a framework which will help them to make effective decisions on the needs of their students. After stating various definitions and explanations of some reading skills, we will make suggestions for the benefit of the students.

### **IV.What Should Foreign Language Teachers Know About Their Students?**

We, as foreign language teachers, should know a considerable amount about our students. Who the students are, what the students need will give us a good idea about how to prepare a curriculum which is appropriate to the students' needs.

Kellerman (1981: 56) states that the most important factor is the ages of the students. Their level of maturity requires the point of departure of any reading, both in native and foreign language. It has been observed children can learn foreign languages more easily than adults. Since our students are adolescents or young adults, they are at the age of being able to express their thoughts and feelings effectively. Teachers should be aware of the fact that their students are not immature and should not expect them to express their thoughts and feelings in the foreign language. Another point that the teachers should know about their students is their sex difference. It is seen that in younger learners, girls tend to develop their language earlier than boys. On the other hand, boys are less motivated to read because, perhaps, it is not considered to be a masculine activity. Social background is another factor affecting the process of learning a foreign language. Children coming from low socio-economic level of the community had sufficient opportunities to develop their reading abilities. Some of the students are not able to understand the language used by their teacher and express their ideas in words.

Answers to the questions like; Do the students really want to learn English? How do they feel about learning English? What is their attitude to their English teachers? should give clues to the teachers about how they have to motivate the students and how to create a positive attitude towards the foreign language. Gardner mentions, "... the motivation to learn a second language has been conceptualized as a combination of a positive attitude (desire) to learn the language and effort expended in that direction" (in Els and others, 1984: 115). Educational background and experience of the students are also important factors in learning a foreign language. That is if they were unsuccessful in their previous education, they might need more encouragement. On the other hand, it is easy for students to become good readers in English if their parents enjoy reading books to their children and encourage them to read because the students have the background of concepts and ideas in their mother tongue on which good reading skills can be built in the foreign language, too.

### V. Needs for the Analysis Of The Students Learning English At Cumhuriyet University

Since we are familiar that to be a good and effective teacher we should know what the students want to learn, and their needs, we observed and interviewed a number of students learning English and some teachers teaching English not only at Cumhuriyet University but also in other universities. Some of the findings are as follows:

1. Students state that their English classes are held mainly on Saturdays or after 6.00 in the evenings.

2. The number of the students in the classroom is around 60-70, sometimes more than 70.

3. Most of the students admit that their present level of English is "zero". Moreover, we observed that a significant percentage of the students are "false beginners".

4. Among the hundreds of students we interviewed, only 5 or 6 stated that they had native speaker friends and had the opportunity to go to the countries where the foreign language they are learning is spoken.

5. When we asked that to put the given language functions in order, starting from the most important, we had the following result:

- a. Speaking
- b. Knowing Grammar
- c. Reading and Translating
- d. Writing

6. All the students said that they had no chance to put English to immediate use.

7. Nearly 40 % of the students stated that they could learn best through oral practice, written materials and explanations. The rest believed that they learnt better through only written materials.

8. While 45 % of the students claim that they are taking English courses because English is necessary to get a well-paid job, the others were taking English courses just because it is required.

The important point which is a great mistake is that methods and approaches which are popular in other countries are being used without questioning. However, it is well known that teaching methods and approaches are changing in accordance with the various objectives of foreign language teaching and learning which is closely related with the needs of the learners. According the findings it is almost impossible to use communicative approaches in the classroom because the classes are overcrowded and the class hours are limited. Since the students are used to learning better by written materials, it is rather difficult to change their learning habits and use communicative and conversational materials. Observing that they are mostly "false beginners" although they are accepted to have studied English at least 6 years during their secondary and high school education before coming to university made us feel uneasy.

Since most of the students claim that they are learning English to get a well-paid job we should emphasize the importance of translation more because it is a main ability to be accepted for a good job. However, another important

question to be asked here is that Is it possible to translate the whole text if the students cannot understand it? Supposing that the students will use English for the academic purposes, they need to read the publications especially in their specific fields. That is, for the students reading ability has more importance than speaking. The students state that they want to learn grammar and writing along with reading. However, having what materials are being used in English teaching at Cumhuriyet University, we can immediately state that the students have no chance to improve their reading abilities adequately with the unspecified and non-standardized materials.

At Cumhuriyet University there is no unity and coherence in materials used in teaching English. In general, the books fail to provide the learners with an adequate knowledge of grammar and never deals with improving writing abilities. There are no reading texts or long dialogues in the books. The books consist of a series of disconnected sentences which can be used to practice the skill of decoding, but practicing any higher level skills are impossible.

#### **VI.Strategies And Tactics For Designing Reading Focused Service English Programs**

A reading focused program could be designed as a programmed self study set of readings where the teacher should function as a consultant and a monitor, helping the students with difficulties as they arise and monitoring progress as they move through the program. In most situations, however, the teacher is required to teach in front of a class with a set of printed materials. Although the focus of such materials may be to develop reading skills, there has to be by tradition and expectation. Thus, such a program has both oral and reading competence with the inclusion in the material of writing exercises of both a pattern repetition for reinforcement and note-taking/diagram labeling for relevant supporting skills. In addition, such a program should have as one of its phase objectives the development in students of the ability to follow basic patterns reasoning in English. The outline what the syllabus goals of such program might be is as follows:

- 1.Developing a critical attitude to texts so that arguments are questioned and judgements suspended;
- 2.Developing the conceptual ability to follow scientific and mathematical reasoning and recognize procedures for defining and solving problems;
- 3.Systematic training in such rhetorical skills as
  - a.interpreting choices from the grammatical systems of conjunction and adjunction that mark the patterns of argument and the way information is used to support it;
  - b.interpreting the cohesive devices of reference and lexical equivalence as signals marking the information flow in text;
  - c.interpreting the choices from the grammatical systems of sentence syntax as cues for understanding the rhetorical functions of particular sentences (conjectures, concessions, consequences, corollaries, conclusions, etc.).
- 4.The systematic acquisition of technical vocabulary in notional sets such as naming of shape, color, size, density, etc.; naming of parts of objects;

specification of properties; description of processes, explanation of changes of state, and so on.

The overall program aim would be to develop critical reading skills so that actual textbooks can be consulted and the information extracted with a speed and efficiency approaching that of a native speaker of comparable intelligence and educational status.

In our suggested program a distinction between recall, application and transfer skills is useful. By recall we mean simply that students are required to produce in a test situation, in response to suitable cues, items and forms that a unit has explicitly practised. Application is meant that students are given cues to apply the items and forms that have been practised to parallel and related situations. Transfer means that students can use the items and forms practices appropriately in new, unrelated situations with a minimum of cueing. It is recognized that many students may only be able to recall and apply, but are insufficiently confident in their use of language and write about novel situations. Drawing the syllogistic argument out of an authentic text, for example, is an excellent testing device. However, we should bear in mind the difference between testing and exercising. The main focus of teaching should be on exercising not testing because there is a danger to over-test while testing. We believe that just as one needs to exploit previous student learning practices and styles before these can be overturned in favour of more useful strategies, so the tactics required of teachers by a particular set of materials should similarly call on familiar teaching techniques. We take a gradualist approach to changing teachers' styles and methodologies. This is not to suggest that we are against new ways of organizing learning experiences, but that we feel that teachers are more likely to accept a new strategy if the tactics are relatively familiar.

There are 3 tactical aspects namely drills, rehearsal, media resources. In our approach we make use conventional drill techniques which are of the pattern repetition type, frequently requiring the relating of two or more sentences in coherent discourses. Such drills can be done orally (by individuals or in groups) before they are written out. We suggest that practice of language patterns have to follow a fairly detailed rehearsal stage during which the lexis of properties and uses is presented in order to establish conceptual areas (notional and functional) described in the unit. Such a rehearsal involves of course a good deal of teacher-student interaction. In our suggested program the use of realia, tape sequences, video and activities are specified before the text material itself is studied. We believe that such a tactic of introducing the same items and patterns by means of different media realizations is of great motivational value in reducing the teachers' and students' dependence on textbook allowing it to be used as a record, and only as a script for the various texts that integrate and consolidate the language practised.

### **Conclusion**

Unfortunately most of the students, after completing their university education, are neither in a position to speak nor to read and write English properly. The selected approach and method should be in harmony with the reality of the Turkish society. It is a fact that none of the methods seem to be the

best one in every situation. However, an eclectic approach based on a reading method seems to be the best one for the students of Cumhuriyet University.

As a concluding remark we would like to make some suggestions which may be useful to the foreign language programs at Cumhuriyet University in-service courses:

1. Most of the reading takes place outside the class in real life, so the students must develop the ability to read by themselves. That is, the reader must struggle to achieve this skill.

2. An independent reader must be able to read texts which s/he has never seen before because in real life we read novel texts.

3. The reading skill is useless unless it enables the students to read texts for specific purposes.

4. The students need training to use different speeds for different texts and purposes. We should train the students to grasp only the needed parts of the texts.

5. Since the classes are mostly crowded, silent reading should be encouraged and emphasized.

6. Because most of the students cannot read efficiently even in their mother tongue, it is a problem to develop the efficient reading in the foreign language. Therefore, attention to mother tongue reading may be useful to develop better habits in the foreign language.

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