



## TEACHING AT EARLY AGE AND THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN TURKEY

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**Abstract-** The main reason for teaching English in Turkey can be shown as trying to explain the terms written in foreign languages in the textbooks and to improve English teaching methods. The English expressions seen in the textbooks and other educational tools written to be used in lessons in some private schools, public schools and especially in colleges, and in some private books published within the borders of Turkey have led to the need for the use of this language. With the widespread use of foreign languages from the Ottoman history, some important steps have been taken to improve the teaching of foreign languages, especially English, in the fields of trade, politics and education. At the beginning, with the training that scholars received from teachers brought from abroad, English learning methods were started to be developed for children who started language learning at an early age in Enderuns and schools. In the books translated from Ottoman Turkish into Turkish, it is mentioned that trade was carried out in a common language. This common language is English. Since the common language used in most of the world's countries is English, it has spread very quickly. In the following years, the development of technology, the increase in exports, the fact that the language of most of the TV and internet channels (YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.) is English is that it is necessary for parents to teach a foreign language for their children and themselves, and it is a privilege to start these trainings when you are still a baby. It has given birth to a belief to be both to be and to use all social media tools correctly.

With this study, it is aimed to have a detailed analyzes of the general history of foreign language teaching in Turkey from the ground up to the present. The study also tries to explain the historical development of English from the first sources to the ones used today, the positive development of learning English from infancy in a person's life and how the characteristics of these people can change with the development of their language learning.

*Keywords: Foreign Language Teaching, Education, Language Learning.*

## I. INTRODCUTION

The only way to establish a bond between people is communication. Communication also plays an important role in changing and maintaining established ties and human relations. If we look at communication as an activity, it takes place through the notifications that participants send and receive from each other. Language comes into play when the attendees accept and understand the statement. Language is also at the center of ideas, correct communication and intellectual creativity. The first language learned from the mother's womb is the mother tongue, and the languages learned later are accepted as second or third languages. Second and third languages start to be defined as foreign languages on the grounds that they are different from the mother tongue over time. The mother tongue is learned completely under the influence of the subconscious, but there are unconscious effects in the learning of foreign languages. These unconscious effects are mostly directly related to human interaction. A person has to learn foreign languages, that is, languages spoken and written in international environments, in order to establish correct and understandable relations in many areas of his life, in his work, in his private life, in his education life. Science and education play the most important roles in determining these foreign languages. If a nation finds it appropriate to learn a second or third language, it means that it has adopted that the language it requests is a superior language of science and culture. When you think of foreign languages during the Ottoman period, the first language that comes to mind is Arabic. In Turkey, the second foreign language is primarily English, followed by German and French as third and fourth languages. The most learned language in foreign language teaching in Turkey is English, but the first language learned is French in the sources. Teaching English in educational institutions in Turkey is not very old, it has a recent history. Before the Second World War, foreign language teaching was only available in secondary schools and high schools, but after the war, it started to be included in the curriculum of kindergarten and primary school. Before the education period was determined as 8 years, Secondary Schools started to receive Foreign

Language education in 1998-99. Then it is given partially in kindergartens and today at all levels. There are reasons why foreign language education processes differ in time. The most important of these is that those who fought on the opposite fronts during the war did not understand each other's languages, causing significant disagreements. After the war, it was decided to start foreign languages education from the 4th and 5th grades in primary schools in order to complete this deficiency process, which was fixed by experience. Later, Foreign Languages started to be used as a tool between states in order to indicate that different lifestyles are a symbol of wealth.

The mindset of people who are in direct contact with education for foreign language teaching differs from other languages. 92% of parents state that children exposed to foreign language teaching at an early age learn more easily than adults. As demanding as learning a foreign language for adults, it is quite simple for children under 8 years old. Assuming that the child learns the language in a play environment or in an environment where adults are constantly talking, the learning process accelerates because he is constantly exposed to the language. Moreover, children constantly ask questions while communicating with adults and question while trying to understand the feedback. They often do this with a think-aloud system, which makes their work easier in both needing and learning.

### **1- Historical Processes Of Foreign Language Teaching In Turkey**

The historical development of language teaching within the borders of Turkey shows differences due to the differences in the characteristics of the Ottoman Period and the Republican Period. Therefore, language teaching is examined in two groups as language teaching in the Empire period and language teaching in the Republic period.

#### **1.1. Pre-Republican Period Language Learning (Imperial Period)**

This period, which covers a period of 624 years, constitutes the period from the establishment

of the Ottoman Empire in 1299 to the establishment of the Republic in 1923. In this period, it is divided into two as before and after the Tanzimat. Among the reasons why foreign language learning was divided into two as before and after the Tanzimat during the Ottoman period, the fact that language education was a public duty was based on after the Tanzimat. Another of these reasons is that the education system, which was carried out with religion until the Tanzimat period, started to be carried out according to the West after the Tanzimat. (BİLGİSU)

### **1.1.1. Foreign Language Teaching in the Pre-Tanzimat Period**

Since the education system was based on religion during this period, education was given in Sibyan Schools, Neighborhood Schools, Enderun and Madrasahs. Sibyan Schools is the first school where education is given. In the education given in primary schools, mostly religion-oriented lessons were given to children. It was not very important to give Turkish as the mother tongue. The most important thing was to give priority to Arabic, the language read in religious books. In other words, they did not receive Turkish education completely with a focus on grammar, nor did they learn Arabic as it is today. They were learning as they were in religious books. The Enderun Schools, which belonged to the palace itself, were established to keep the knowledge and manners of the people serving in the palace fresh. Although Turkish was taught primarily, after Arabic was taught as a second foreign language, French, another important language in trade, was taught. Children of foreign origin educated in Enderun were taught Turkish as a second foreign language.

### **1.1.2. Foreign Language Teaching in the Post-Tanzimat Period**

Some of the first training places opened in the Ottoman Empire between 1773-96 are Mühendishane-i Bahrii Hümayun and Mühendishane-i Berri-i Hümayun. Since it was difficult to find children under the age of 8 to teach at that time, children between the ages of 13 and 16 began to be taught French as the first foreign

language education in Western style. The people who teach here are foreign experts with a license. The most important mathematics and engineering science experts of the period were also giving lectures in these schools. One of the first steps taken towards westernization in Turkey is to give French as the language of literacy and use it as a commercial language. Later, with Sultan II. Mahmut, it was obligatory to use a foreign language in medical sciences. According to him, foreign language had to be compulsory to be taught and learned in medical sciences, since the sources from the west made it difficult to understand. Although it became the focus of criticism, this decision was implemented.

The Sultani, which was opened after the Tanzimat, form the basis of the introduction of foreign languages into the curriculum of today's high schools. The opening of Galatasaray Sultanisi in 1868 can be accepted as a turning point in terms of teaching foreign languages in Turkey. Another important feature of this Sultani is that it is the first public school to offer foreign language education at the secondary level. Galatasaray High School is known for educating public officials, some distinguished administrators and even the first statesmen in Turkey. On this subject, Lewis said:

Several schools of this kind, especially the Protestant American College, had already been opened by foreign missions. But the Galatasaray Sultanisi is the first serious attempt by a Muslim government to provide a moderately modern education in a western language. Another new feature was that Muslim and Christian students studied side by side, a step towards the abolition of religious separation.

The language that Galatasaray High School gives priority in foreign language education is French. This proves how active the French played an active role in education during the Ottoman Period. This important influence continued with the arrival of the Germans in Turkey in 1914. From here, we come to the following conclusion; The development process of foreign languages in Turkey is related to the duration of the stay of the educators who enter the country and the permanence of the current language. As can be seen, after the

proclamation of the Tanzimat, French became a foreign language due to the French, who were influential in the education of the country, German with the declaration of the Constitutional Monarchy, and English since the Second World War. (BOZAVLI) With the Tanzimat, foreign language education, which was seen as a public service, started to be considered as a state job by Saffet Pasha. Keeping foreign language education in the hands of the state was included in the documents of the state as a rule until the Second Constitutional Monarchy. With the existence of Galatasaray High School until 1869 and then the opening of new educational institutions under the name of İdadi and Sultani, foreign language was included in the curriculum as a normal course for the first time in the Ottoman Empire in the same year. French has been made compulsory in the curriculum since the 1908 Revolution and foreign languages such as English and German have been added to the curriculum so that they can be learned optionally.

While the reforms in education continued at this time, foreigners established Robert College, which was affiliated to the Ottoman State. The school was opened in 1863 by the American Missionaries who came to help the Turks, with the help of Robert from New York, first in a small house and later in its building in Bebek. Robert, who spent all his wealth on founding this school, died in 1878. Before Robert's death, it was an American College, and after his death, it was renamed Robert College. While the main purpose of the school is to accelerate foreign language teaching, they also want to spread American culture and the language of instruction is English. Although the school was opened by the Missionaries who came to help the Turks, Sultan Abdulhamid forbade anyone who is a Muslim to study in this school. According to a known information, it is stated that only two Muslim girls graduated from Üsküdar American College. After the Young Turks took power, this rule was bent and 5 male students were allowed to study at Robert College and 5 female students at Üsküdar American College for Girls. With the proclamation of the Republic, these restrictions were completely removed.

The opening of private schools by foreigners increased gradually after the Reform Edict. After the

Americans, the French, Italians and Germans also opened schools providing education in their own language. These schools continued their education processes in tolerance with other schools opened by minorities and state schools, but remained under the supervision of the state. With the successful conclusion of foreigners' attempts to open a private school and their considerable contribution to education, the Turks also attempted to open private schools. Darüşşafaka is the first private high school opened in Istanbul and started classes in 1873.

## **1.2. Foreign Language Teaching in the Republican Era**

With the enactment of the Law of Unification of Education (Tevhid-i Tedrisat) in 1924, which is considered as one of the most original innovations of the Republican Period, it was decided to combine the education processes and the madrasahs were closed. With the opening of the schools where education is given today, the education system has also changed automatically. This period covers the development of the educational process from the proclamation of the Republic in 1923 to the present day. The rule that the Ottoman Empire should prioritize Arabic and Persian as the main courses in foreign language education was abolished, and Western languages began to be included in the programs as priority courses. Only today, in the education programs of Imam Hatip High Schools, Arabic continues to be given as a vocational course. Since the proclamation of the Republic, education in English, French and German as the basic foreign courses facilitates the understanding of commercial, scientific and medical documents, so rapid progress has been made in the field of technology and science. One of the most important steps in the development of a society is the correct language learning and language itself. With the correct learning of the language, relations between countries and states have developed and nations have come closer to each other. Today, the biggest advice that experts and scientists can give to young people is to learn second and third languages other than their mother tongue. In order to meet these demands, institutions and courses providing foreign language education continue to be opened in Turkey.

The Colleges mentioned today and the schools that would later become Anatolian High Schools began to be established quickly after 1956. By 1974, the number of schools providing education in a foreign language was 12. In 1982-83, this number reached 23. In 1986-87, 103 Anatolian High Schools were established, and 2,845 teachers and 40,715 students were continuing their education and training lives. Private schools providing education in foreign languages were not closed during the Republican Period, but their numbers did not increase. Atatürk explained his views on this issue as follows: “We want your schools to stay. However, we can doubt the religious propaganda there. But we cannot accept that foreign schools have the privileges that even our schools cannot obtain in Turkey.”

In the opening speeches of the legislative period of the Turkish Grand National Assembly in 1925, Atatürk appreciated the outstanding efforts of the parents in the education life of their children. While he promised that the state would do its best to support the education of children in order to keep up with the developing technology and science, he wanted the parents to support the state in this effort to keep up. Families were also partners in this event, which Atatürk brought a solution to in his own way, and in time, the attempt of the Turkish State to open its own private schools led to success. However, in order to support Atatürk, the people established the Turkish Education Association, and thanks to this association, the effort to establish a school continued to increase day by day. In the light of these efforts, Yenışehir High School (Ankara College) was established with the establishment of the first school in 1932, the middle school in 1934 and the high school in 1937. The establishment of this school, which is a precedent for the Turkish State, continued with the opening of private schools in cities such as Istanbul and Ankara. It should not be forgotten that the basis of opening and increasing these schools is to ensure that they learn a foreign language from childhood. As a result of the need for a foreign language, the compulsory duration of foreign language courses has been increased from 3 hours to 10 hours in middle school and from 5 hours to 8 hours in high school. From the view of education as a public duty, we can see that Atatürk's proclamation of the Republic led to significant developments in reforms in education. In today's

Turkey, all private, state, minority and foreign educational institutions operate under the Ministry of National Education, Department of Private Education Institutions.

## **2- FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AT EARLY AGES**

It is seen that foreign language teaching in Turkey started long after America and Europe. Accordingly, the foreign language education process in educational institutions started later than in other countries. At the beginning of the foreign language education process, foreign language education was given only in secondary schools and high schools, but later in 1997, education in a foreign language started to be given from the 4th grade when education became compulsory and it was increased to 8 levels. Among the reasons for starting foreign language education at an early level are to arouse affinity for foreign languages in children, to improve their awareness, to make them realize the existence of other languages in Turkey and in the world, to enable them to communicate in foreign languages and to be willing to do so. Starting foreign language teaching at an early age teaches children to respect other cultures. They respect the traditions of that culture and learn to be tolerant of his people. Since it will establish communication more easily, it does not have difficulty in understanding and instead of ignoring individuals, it gives meaning to their existence. We can see this feature more clearly in children growing up in Europe when it was adapted to the foreign language education system at an early age in 1945. However, due to the change in geographical conditions and the regression due to wars after 1987, pauses in this tolerance and systemic order occurred. After a series of defeats in Europe, it led to the strengthening of America and Russia and caused clusters between these two countries. The United Nations Organization was established in order to calm down any conflict that may arise after the war and to prevent conflicts. After the establishment of the United Nations, there was a need for re-agreements, mergers and, most importantly, communication between countries. The language culture, which was about to disappear with the war, started to rise again thanks to the situations caused by the war. Here we can deduce: After the Second World War, the need

to learn a foreign language and learn a foreign language at an early age increased. In order to meet this need and to re-establish unity, togetherness and order, the World Sister Cities Federation was established in France, and in this way, foreign language teaching to children at an early age was tried to be encouraged.

Some experts have tried to prevent the beginning of language education at an early age by saying that they may have difficulty in understanding because their children are very young and their maturity is not developed. However, there are some who say that the child's brain is like a blank slate and has the capacity to immediately receive any information that will be given, so it will not have any difficulty in understanding and they can learn more easily than adults. When the International Meeting of Education Ministers was held in Hamburg, representatives from 16 countries accepted the compulsory foreign language education in primary education. Afterwards, UNESCO and other institutions talked about children's neurological, educational, psychological, economic, social and political readiness, and they were convinced that foreign language should be taught at an early age. Knowing a language other than their mother tongue at an early age also causes behavioral differences. They begin to approach and accept the culture of the second language they have learned. They try to show that they are different by applying the traditions of foreigners in the home environment or school. This behavioral situation, which is mostly positive, also plays a positive role in the development of the child's self-confidence. This feature specifically covers children aged 0-12. In summary, every language learned is a knowledge and skill for the child. Annick Comblain states the following about language education at an early age: "From the point of view of psychological development, it is seen that learning a language at an early age develops creativity, is a source of motivation for learning other languages, raises awareness about linguistic and cultural diversity; It contributes to better understanding of the social and cultural structures of communities where different languages are spoken, to accepting the importance of languages."

The beginning of education in a foreign language at a young age and the fact that the child receives this education with people who teach and speak the language correctly provides a great advantage for the child. Considering that one of the biggest problems in our country today is the deficiencies in foreign language teaching, which is the first stage of education, it is not correct to say that the only culprit is the teacher. The effort of parents who speak a foreign language in the family is also very important. It will also be a very important step for the child who does not know a foreign language to encourage the child to learn the foreign language. As a result, teaching a foreign language at an early age by the right method and by the right people has a positive effect on the child. Mzali has a saying that I think is very important in this regard: "To learn a foreign language is to open up to the world and others and then return to yourself enriched." (Mzali, 2011)

## CONCLUSION

Learning a language at an early age alone is not enough to learn a language and that starting foreign language learning in adulthood does not prevent language learning. Although language teaching basically depends on the age factor, each individual who starts learning the language may have advantageous and disadvantageous situations. These situations can create difficulties or facilitate language learning. The important thing is to enable the individual to use these advantageous situations to his advantage and to keep up with the system by compensating for the disadvantageous situations.

When we look at the foreign language education processes from the Ottoman Period to the present day, it is possible to say that the language plays a decisive role in the level of development of a country, although it seems that the language was mostly used as a compulsory communication tool caused by trade and wars. Language is the mirror of a state. ; Based on the phrase: 'A language, an individual; two languages, two individuals', the development of the individual, which is one of the cornerstones of the state, also affects the development of the state. This study has focused on a brief description of the importance of language learning at an early age, its behavioral and cognitive

effects in children, the historical processes of foreign language education in Turkey and the role of these processes in the development of the state.

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