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# The barrier to Turkey's foreign language teaching is foreign language policy: Macro-and micro-level planning

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## Abstract

When the foreign language policies of the European countries are examined, it is firstly seen that the countries have determined a macro-level policy and then they successfully apply their macro-level policy at the micro-level. The foremost example for this situation is the European Union's defense of teaching the languages of the other small countries as well as English. By looking at this, what the Turkey's macro-level planning of foreign language teaching is and its micro-level efficiency will be examined.

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## 1. Introduction

When the current definition of foreign language policy is examined, it is regarded as the efforts made to construct a realistic and unprejudiced country profile within the framework of foreign language teaching (Bausch, 2007; p. 172). The aim of foreign language policy is to develop foreign language teaching of a country either unilaterally or reciprocally depending on its economic, cultural and educational conditions along with foreign affairs. Foreign language policy is a part of overall language policy. The foremost example to this statement is the political expansions of The Iron Curtain states before 1990s and present.

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The planning used to develop such aims of foreign language policy is determined through macro and micro planning processes.

## **2. The Elements of Macro Planning of Foreign Language Policy**

The institutions related to overall language policy, The Council of Higher Education and the Ministry of National Education take part in this phase of foreign language policy. Besides, the ministries of economy, foreign affairs, internal affairs and private institutions may also attend this phase.

In Turkey, however, it is observed that only the councils which are bound the Ministry of National Education, the Council of Higher Education take their places in determining foreign language policy at macro level along with universities. The European Union (EU) takes financial goals into consideration at macro-level planning. In this sense, economic mobilization involves foreign language policy. Despite that, the EU stated that 11% of 94000 exporting trade companies operating in the EU made loss due to the insufficient foreign language practices (European Commission, 2006).

While planning foreign language policy at macro level, it is required that the concerned private and state institutions should determine economic, political and cultural goals in both national- and international-wide, and should work in collaboration and harmony as well. (Nekvapil, 2006; p.370).

## **3. The Elements of Micro Planning of Foreign Language Policy**

The duty of the units take part in micro planning phase is to apply decisions taken in the macro planning phase. The institutions which attend the micro planning phase are universities, certain branch offices and department of the Ministry of National Education as well as primary and secondary education institutions (Nekvapil, 2006; p.370).

### *3.1. The Decisions Taken in Turkey about Macro Planning of Foreign Language Policy; From Past to Present*

#### *3.1.1. The Law on Unification of Education*

The Law, which passed in an attempt to unify national education in 1924, is a milestone of foreign language policy (Demircan, 1988; p.92). Through this law, English, German and French, regarded as Western languages, were integrated in the educational curriculum.

The Turkish Education Association was founded in 1928 so as to disentail Turkish students from the obligation to attend one of the foreign schools to learn a foreign language (Demircan, 1988; p. 96). To do so, the Colleges of the Turkish Education Association (TED Colleges) were established between the years of 1928 and 1934. The success of the TED Collages and the rising demand on qualified citizens who can speak at least a foreign language paved the way for the establishment to the Maarif Collages in 1932. (Genç & Çetintaş, 2001; p.51). In the 1955-1956 education year, seven Maarif Collages were founded in order to develop foreign language teaching in Turkey. However, in 1976 the Maarif Colleges were converted to Anatolian High Schools, which aimed to give intensive foreign language education; and the number these high schools increased to 193 in 199 and 1993 educational year (Genç & Çetintaş, 2001; p. 52).

### *3.2. The Decisions of the National Education Council*

#### *3.2.1. The Decisions taken for higher education to train foreign language teachers*

### 3.2.1.1. The 14th Council in 1993

The teachers assigned to the institutions of pre-school education are analyzed. The pre-school teachers assigned to abroad are chosen among the successful teachers. These teachers take one year preparation education that involves foreign language learning.

### 3.2.1.2. The 11th Council in 1982

Each candidate teacher should have common world knowledge. For instance, the courses such as Turkish, Turkish, the history of Turkish revolution and foreign language are common and compulsory courses that aim to give general perspective to teachers. These teachers should have a good command of Turkish as a mother tongue and thus they are required to gain necessary skills for the teaching of reading and writing.

### 3.2.1.3. The 12th Council in 1988

Decision 8: In the institutions that give foreign language education teaching, Turkish language should sensitively and elaborately be emphasized and the structures of Turkish language should be taught.

Decision 11: Workshops for teacher trainers that focus on the various ways of foreign language teaching should be organized in collaboration with the Council of Europe (CoE) and the related countries.

As mentioned above, the decisions taken by the National Education Council mostly focus on training of all teachers and their competences in foreign language (the 11th and the 14th Councils).

In the 8th decision of the 12th council, on the other hand, the role of mother tongue in training foreign language teaching is emphasized. The 11th decision of the same council is related about workshops for foreign language teachers that focus different aspects of foreign language teaching.

## 3.2.2 The Decisions of the Council that affect foreign language teaching and The Decisions of Council about general foreign language teaching

### 3.2.2.1. The 15th Council 1996

Öğretimde yabancı dille eğitim yerine, yabancı dil öğretimi yapılmalı ve yabancı dil öğretimine önem verilmeli, zorunlu yabancı dil öğretimi, isteğe dönük hâle getirilmelidir. İlköğretim sekiz yıla çıkarılmalı

### 3.2.2.2. The 18th Council 2010

Compulsory education should last 13 years. In this sense, age groups and individual differences of students should be considered and the 13-year compulsory education should be divided into 4 parts. The first part should be 1-year pre-school education, the second part should be 4-year basic education, the third part should be guided preparatory education to secondary education and the fourth part should be 4-year secondary education. All courses should be given Turkish and thus some courses given in foreign languages should be given in Turkish as well.

### 3.2.2.3. The 12th Council in 1988

Decision 14 (the 1st Vocational and technical common decision): The studies on the effectiveness of foreign language teaching should be continuously and consistently maintained.

Decision 2: In foreign language teaching, Graded Proficiency Level system should be applied in general secondary schools, general and vocational high schools in the 1988-1989 educational year.

Decision 3: Different units for the development of foreign language teaching will be founded. These units are;

- Assessment and evaluation unit,
- Collection of authentic documents unit,
- Material development unit (especially for coursebooks and workbooks),
- A documentation library,
- Communication management unit for language teachers,
- Curriculum development unit,
- In-service education unit
- Educational research and development unit

Scientific and vocational interaction will be developed with the similar centers of various countries, international institution and universities. A centre of foreign languages that will be guide the preparation of teaching methods of Turkish as a foreign language, coordinate nation-wide foreign language teaching practices, and develop and apply new methods and techniques about teaching foreign languages will be founded.

Decision 4: A legislative arrangement will be made about the application of graded proficiency level system.

Decision 5: In the application of graded proficiency level system, a mobilized team will be assigned to follow the developments in foreign language teaching, to observe classroom applications of these developments and to provide guidance about foreign language teaching.

Decision 6: A Thousand of English and French experts in will be provided to attend in the studies about English and French languages teaching. These experts will be provided by the help of English and French governments and will be a long-time part of foreign language teaching development process.

Decision 7: The necessary support will be provided to the schools which apply the graded proficiency level system in order to establish bilateral agreements with the English and French schools. In this way, it is aimed to develop foreign language teaching in Turkey as well as introducing Turkish culture to different people.

Decision 8: Special teaching techniques will be developed for foreign language teaching in compulsory cases and in crowded classrooms.

Decision 9: Foreign language curriculum of the schools in which graded proficiency level system is not applied will be reviewed and enhanced. A new framework curriculum will be prepared for the additional foreign language courses and second foreign language courses.

Decision 10: A sufficient number of cassette players, videos and monitors will be provided for foreign language courses instead of establishing foreign language laboratories.

Decision 13: In common-public education institutions, adults will be encouraged to learn a foreign language. The needs of target groups will be determined, and new curricula and course materials for these institutions will be prepared.

Decision 14: Foreign language exams will be reorganized to assess student's communicative skills (Committee Report, n. d.; p. 10).

Decision 15: An official institution that mainly focuses on the assessment of foreign language proficiency will be founded (Committee Report, n. d.; p. 10).

Decision 16: Both short- and long-term exchange systems will be established so as to promote and develop foreign language teaching system. Within the scope of this system, teachers, students, course materials, foreign language curricula will be exchanged with various countries (Committee Report, n. d.; p. 10). In certain schools in which some courses are taught in foreign languages, a-year foreign language preparatory class will be founded.

#### 3.2.2.4. *The 9th Council in 1974*

Within the scope of “The Project of Developing Foreign Language Teaching”, the studies will be maintained with the CoE and the related countries. Within the scope of the Project, coursebooks, visual and audio materials will be developed in four level; beginners, elementary, intermediate and advance levels. Besides, teachers’ books will be evaluated and qualified ones will be disseminated and applied (The Decision 95)

#### 3.2.2.5. *The 6th Council in 1957*

The course hours of foreign language courses will be increased.

#### 3.3. *The Regulation of Foreign Language Teaching of the Ministry of National Education 2006*

It is stated in the 5<sup>th</sup> article of this regulation that the aim of Formal, informal and distance education institutions is to develop students’ listening, reading, speaking writing skills and communicative skills as well as positive attitudes toward foreign language teaching.

#### 3.4. *The Results of the Decisions of National Education Councils, the Regulation of Foreign Language Teaching of the Ministry of National Education and Foreign Language Policy at Macro and Micro Level*

- These decisions are negatively influenced by the constant changes in education, and thus process and permanence which are the most important elements of foreign language teaching are interrupted.
- These decisions taken at macro level do not have any units that supervise foreign language teaching at micro level.
- In the decisions of National Education Councils, the overall aim of foreign language teaching is not determined.
- There are not any decisions that support the substructures focusing on the preparation of our own course materials.
- The decisions lack long-term, realistic and viable aims in order to train foreign language teachers.
- The decisions do not promote and support any effective structures based on the competences of foreign language teacher.

#### 3.5. *The Decisions of the Council of Higher Education about Foreign Language Teaching 2008*

The most important regulation that the Council of Higher Education introduced involves the principles about foreign language teaching. The aim of foreign language teaching is stated in the 4<sup>th</sup> article of the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of this regulation. According to the 4<sup>th</sup> article the aim of foreign language teaching is to teach basic rules of the target language; to enrich students’ vocabulary, to develop students’ listening, reading skills and self-expression in the target language. In the 7<sup>th</sup> article, the profile of foreign language teachers

is described. According to the regulation, language teachers that give foreign language courses in the institutions of the higher education Yabancı dil derslerini verebilecek öğretim elemanı profili

- a) The medium of instruction, apart from Turkish, should be the mother tongue of teachers.
- b) Language teachers should have their postgraduate educations (MA and/or PhD) in the countries where the target language is spoken; or they should have their postgraduate education in the departments in which the medium of instruction is the target language (English, French, German etc).
- c) Language teachers should have at least 80 points out of 100 in the foreign language examinations stated in the 5th article of this regulation.
  - The other articles of this regulation are related to the issues given below;
  - The issues about foreign language preparatory classes,
  - The issues about the undergraduate courses given in a foreign language
  - The issues about foreign language courses given in the other departments (apart from preparatory classes),
  - The issues about the inspections of foreign language courses; including the courses given in preparatory classes, the courses given in the departments and the major area courses whose the medium of instruction is a foreign language

#### 4. Foreign Language Teacher Training

Before 1982, the demands on foreign language teachers had been met by the two types of institutions; One of them was the schools of foreign languages which were dependent of the Ministry of Education, and the other was the faculties of letters of certain universities such as Hacettepe University, Ege University, Ankara University, Boğaziçi University and Selçuk University (The Council of Higher Education, 2007; p.34).

In 1983, the schools of foreign languages, which had been depended on the Ministry of Education before, became dependent on the faculties of educations of universities, and these schools were assigned to train language teachers (The Council of Higher Education, 2007; p.38).

In 1994, within the scope of reorganization, the faculties of education were divided into 3 departments; the department of social sciences, the department of sciences and the department of foreign languages.

At present, graduates from two kinds of faculties can be foreign language teachers.

1. Graduates of the department of foreign languages of the faculty of education
2. Graduates of the department of western languages and literatures of the faculty of letter (Graduates of the department of western languages and literatures are required to have the certificate of English language teacher given by the faculties of education)

Graduates of both departments are required to have a 6-month internship in primary or secondary schools. Students' of both departments have to have language proficiency examinations carried out by the schools of foreign languages. The ones do not pass the exam take one-year foreign language preparatory class. (The Council of Higher Education, 2008).

Before 1982, the demands on foreign language teaching were met through;

1. The students from other departments who completed the grades A, B and C in foreign language learning,
2. The students completed the department of foreign languages of the institute of education through taking correspondence courses.
3. The students attended to and successfully completed the summer schools of the institute of education,
4. The students took one-year intensive education in the institute of education

5. The students passed the “teacher assistant” exam carried out by the Ministry of Education.

## 5. Conclusion

In order to develop realistic foreign language policy each institution should answer the questions focusing on determination of needs. These questions are given as follows;

1. Which foreign languages are needed?
2. As an institution, at which fields are foreign languages needed? For instance, marketing
3. Should the staff have foreign language for general purposes or specific purposes (e.g. academic or vocational foreign language knowledge)?
4. How many staffs who can speak a foreign language are needed?
5. Which skills of foreign language are needed? (For instance, speaking or writing)

These questions can be multiplied in order to determine the needs more clearly. In this sense, institution should receive support and guidance in order to prepare their own foreign language plans in terms of their needs. The support and guidance is provided by the institutions that direct the micro planning of foreign language policy.

The micro-level planning of foreign language policy should be directed through such question given above. In this sense, various materials should be developed or prepared in term of learning culture and the needs of students. Besides, realistic and profound foreign language curricula should also be developed. These curricula should be consisted of reliable, valid and measurable elements so that necessary examinations based on these curricula can be developed.

To have a good command of a foreign language does not mean to teach it effectively. Therefore, an effective education is necessary for foreign language teaching. The most important factors in training foreign language teachers are given as follows;

1. Departments of Foreign language teaching should be reorganized according to the schools that pre-service teacher will assigned to such as teaching English to secondary school students and teaching English to primary school students.
2. Semester and summer vacations in primary schools, secondary schools and universities should not last too long since students are tend to forget the knowledge of foreign language in a vacation more 6 weeks.
3. The Council of Higher Education should select these students more attentively and the university entrance exam should be more selective. Students’ of the departments of foreign language teaching and the western languages and literatures are considered as candidate teachers. Thus, these students who registered to the schools of foreign languages of universities should be at the B1 level of the Common European Framework (CEF) at least. Besides, these students should take at least 20 hours of foreign language course weekly, and in total they should have at least 600 hours to get to the C1 level. In this way, these students are likely to have less difficulty in their departments.
4. Two-year internship period after four-year undergraduate education is necessary. (For instance, Germany “Referenderiat”)
5. Foreign language curriculum and materials should be prepared considering learning culture.

Macro and micro level planning of foreign language policy should be a part of state policy rather than government policy. Foreign language policy should be taken into consideration as the sub-element of the language policy. The aims of foreign language policy at macro- and micro-level should be systematically

and realistically planned within the scope of lifelong learning. In addition, foreign language policy is a means to reach a goal, and this goal can be variable depending on individuals and institutions. In macro and micro level planning of foreign language policy, process, permanence, aims and goals should be examined through scientific research methods.

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