



Opinions of Turkish Language Teachers on the Issues of Children's Learning Mother Tongue: A Case Study of Germany

Nazim Dogan
Independent Researcher

Abstract: This study tried to determine the opinions of Turkish language teachers living in Germany on their native Turkish lessons. One of the most critical issues of the children of expatriates living abroad is that they can protect their own culture against the dominant culture. In this context, it is essential for them to learn and use their mother tongue, which is an essential element of culture. The attitudes, behaviors, and motivations of the teachers who provide Turkish lessons are determining factors in learning their mother tongue. The opinions of the teachers on the students' interest in the lessons are essential for understanding the education on mother tongue in the country where they reside. Within the scope of qualitative research, relevant resources were scanned, and a data collection tool was developed based on face-to-face interviews with teachers who are actively involved and by including expert opinions. The data collected from the teacher were analyzed in SPSS program. According to the findings obtained through the opinions of the teachers, it was seen that the significant problems that the children of the teachers living and working in Germany encounter in learning their mother tongue are the situation of their families, the environment and the time in which the lessons were held, and the need for a specialist teacher who will carry out their jobs with devotion. However, the approach of the country of residence towards the lessons in mother tongue indicated how important the interest or indifference of politicians and bureaucrats in this regard and how this affected the future of lessons in the mother tongue. It was also observed that the teachers did not major from the field and did not have adequate knowledge and competence.

Keywords: Germany, Mother Tongue, Learning Turkish, Turkish Language Teacher

Introduction

Germany has been a second home for the Anatolian people and has become the journey of hope to the people who set out in 1961 to obtain an individual wealth and who shouldered their luggage with the intention of returning. Time has passed, plans have changed with unforeseen developments, and intentions have been renewed within these frameworks and have continued to persist until today. Germany has become the world of expatriation and longing that will last henceforward. This being the case, several troubles and problems arose, and solutions related to them were attempted to be introduced. The primary problem that needs to be resolved is especially family reunification and mother-tongue and cultural differences (Pusch, 2014).

“The mother tongue is the language spoken by the mothers and their close circles of the children. The child starts to hear this language since he/she is placed in his/her mother's womb. He/she begins to be

acquainted with that language and, soon, starts to speak it. Language learning in children is inherent, but each child naturally learns the language spoken around him/her through his/her experiences in a family environment” (Yazıcı, 1999: 7-8). Processes of language learning do not differ, no matter wherever individuals are born or live (Meece, 1997). Children begin to acquire their mother tongue and communicate by listening to their immediate environment, i.e., parents, relatives, and neighbors. The environment in which they communicate is a living means.

The family environment in which the children live, social and cultural setting which the family comes from, education levels of family members, duration of stay in Germany, social relations established with Turkey or the Turks around, the environment in which the residence is located, families' involvement in their children's participation to a set of religious, social or cultural events, the language

preference of family members during the linguistic relationship they establish with each other, and the visual-audial media usage habits in the family are not only parts of essential characteristics that do not only determine the acquisition of the second language and the needs of the Turkish children living in Germany to learn their mother tongues but also affect the development of their mother tongue (Cakir, 2002: 51).

Individuals communicate with their immediate surroundings through languages. If language is not accurately used, it may cause psychological problems in these individuals. “Socialization activities in early childhood are essential for the personality and self-development of the child. The effective interaction with the child during the first childhood is critical for the child to gain a healthy personality. Children who are developed in terms of personality and health will easily adapt to the environment they inhabit, and the society they live in” (Temel & Yazici, 2003: 495).

Turkish children, who were born and raised in Germany, began to live in an environment with mother tongue and local language. To preserve their identity, they have to learn their native language and the local language to adapt to the environment they inhabit and to continue their education (Temel & Yazici, 2003).

Over time, the fact that Turkish children started to shift to another culture in front of the eyes of their families mobilized the families of the next generation. Thus, studies on the development of the mother tongue of children started in this way through both personal and official authorities. Determining the needs of Turkish children

living in Germany to learn their mother tongue, the first studies on teaching mother tongue to bilingual children were introduced on an international scale by UNESCO in the early 1950s. In the statement published by UNESCO, it was stated that teaching mother tongue is supported as a tool to increase the quality of education and the necessity of bilingualism and /or multilingualism at all educational levels is revealed as a tool for ensuring social equality in the societies where different languages are used (UNESCO, 2003 as cited by Belet, 2009: 72).

One of the most critical needs of children born and raised in Germany and, perhaps, the most important one is to learn their mother tongue well. In this regard, the fundamental duty and primary responsibility fall on to the family, i.e., to parents and then to educational institutions and teachers. Currently, approximately 750 thousand children of Turkish origin go to school in Germany. The number of teachers is approximately 1400, and 526 of them are the teachers appointed by the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Education, and the rest is made up of teachers assigned by the Germany authorities. The number of Turkish students taught by this available staff is about 88 thousand (Gemici, 2019).

A child’s knowledge of his/her mother tongue cannot be measured by his/her speaking ability. This approach is incomplete and wholly inadequate because of the fact that a child knows his native language depends on his/her ability to use four elements consisting of “writing, speaking, reading, and comprehension.” Children of Turkish origin have many shortcomings in these matters. Parents find it sufficient that their children speak Turkish spoken on

the streets. Schools and teachers should be involved in such a situation.

Methodology

Research Method

Qualitative studies are researches that attempt to explain the reason for an individual's behavior in the social environment. Individuals engage in a particular set of behaviors by considering the conditions in which they are involved in any matter. In today's world, the issue of education is as vital as water and air for human beings. People behave as sensitive as they can about it. Arastaman et al. (2018) defined "qualitative research in the light of these discussions as the production of rich and descriptive data that can help us understand people's lives through broad questions about human experiences and realities." Data were collected by interviewing from quantitative research methods. In the interview, the subject to be investigated is dealt with all aspects of its natural environment. Social events are analyzed within the scope of the realities of their environment (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013).

Population and Sampling

The population of the study is the Turkish language teachers working in the German Model and the Consular Model working in Germany. The sampling of the study consisted of 63 teachers selected from the population using the "simple random sampling" method. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews with these teachers. In simple random sampling, the selection of sampled units was conducted entirely random from the population. Therefore, the probability of each unit being included in the sample is equal to each other (Tuna, 2016). "Random sampling has a valid and strong

representation. No method can provide guarantees in terms of sampling, but simple random sampling is stronger in terms of representation." "The random sampling gives an equal and independent chance to all individuals in the population related to the subject" (Ozen & Gul, 2007: 399).

Data Collection

In this study, data was collected through a questionnaire, which is one of the interview methods. The participants were determined voluntarily in terms of the accuracy and reliability of the data collected. Likert type questions (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = partially agree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree) were used in the study. There was eight demographic information in the first section of the teacher questionnaire. There were questions consisting of a total of 19 opinions in the second section. The survey consisted of a total of 27 items. As a result of the factor analysis, the 19-item scale in section 2 was divided into four sub-sections. Sub-sections and item structure of the scale were: Professional Competence (5 items), Professional Reputation (3 items), Curriculum and Functionality (6 items), and System Recommendations (5 items). Yıldız's (2012) study entitled "Yurt Dışında Yasayan Turk Çocuklarına Turkece Ogretimi Almanya Ornegi [Teaching Turkish to Turkish Children Living Abroad: A Case of Germany]" was used in addition to fieldwork and expert opinions while preparing the survey items.

Findings and Interpretations

General Results

As a result of the evaluation of the 19-item scale administered to teachers, the general mean was found to be $=3,25 \pm 0,42$. The level of participation in items was generally "partially agree" (65%). As can be seen

in Table 1, the mean by sub-sections are in order of professional competence ($= 3.76 \pm 0.61$; 75.20%), system recommendations ($= 3.67 \pm 0.75$; 73.40%),

Scale Mean According to General and Sub-Sections

Sub-Sections	N	Min.	Max.	Ss	%	
Professional Competence	63	2,40	5,00	3,76	0,61	75,20
System Recommendations	63	2,00	4,80	3,67	0,75	73,40
Curriculum and Functionality	63	1,50	3,83	2,78	0,62	55,60
Professional Reputation	63	1,00	3,67	2,65	0,69	53,00
General Scale	63	2,05	4,11	3,25	0,42	65,00

Item Means

The teachers participating in the study responded to four of the five items in the professional competency sub-section as “I agree” and to one item as “I partially agree”. The aspects that teachers considered themselves competent professionally were determined respectively as: I also benefit from different sources besides the materials provided to me ($=4,02$), I find myself sufficient in teacher Turkish in Germany ($=3,97$) and I can communicate comfortably with Turkish families and parents ($=3,90$).

In particular, the inability of teachers from Turkey to speak German or inadequacy of it and, in addition to this, their lack of knowledge of the German education system reduces their efficiency. Before their arrival, they could be given significant seminars in order to prepare them for their assignments, both materially and spiritually. The authorities of both countries need to collaborate on this issue and ensure these teachers’ integration quickly. In this sense, it was understood that teachers were not provided with sufficient in-service training (MEB, 2006).

curriculum and functionality ($= 2.78 \pm 0.62$; 55.60%) and professional reputation ($= 2.65 \pm 0.69$; %53) respectively.

The teachers responded to two of the three items in professional reputation sub-section as “I partially agree” and to one item as “I disagree”. They partially agree with the items like “I find the attitude of German authorities towards Turkish lesson positive” with $=2,94$ and “I believe that there is sufficient sensitivity towards Turkish teaching in Germany” with $=2,56$. However, they stated that they disagreed with the opinion that “ I find the attitude of the Turkish authorities towards Turkish lessons positive” with $=2,44$ (Table 3).

There are differences available between the employee personal rights of the teachers appointed by the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Education and those of the teachers commissioned by the German authorities. Germany authorities regard Turkish mother tongue teachers as second class teachers in schools. This negatively affects the motivation of Turkish language teachers.

Table 2.

Professional Competence Sub-Section

No	Item	N	Ss	Response Level	
1	I also benefit from different sources besides the materials provided to me.	63	4,02	1,01	I agree
2	I find myself sufficient in teacher Turkish in Germany.	63	3,97	1,16	I agree
3	I can communicate comfortably with Turkish families and parents.	63	3,90	1,04	I agree
4	I can communicate comfortably with German school administrations.	63	3,65	0,83	I agree
5	I can overcome problems related to the Turkish language during the lessons.	63	3,27	1,26	I partially agree

Table 3.

Professional Reputation Sub-section

No	Item	N	Ss	Response Level	
1	I find the attitude of German authorities towards Turkish lessons positive.	63	2,94	0,88	I partially agree
2	I believe that there is sufficient sensitivity to teaching Turkish in Germany.	63	2,56	0,95	I partially agree
3	I find the attitude of the Turkish authorities towards Turkish lessons positive.	63	2,44	1,00	I disagree

In the curriculum and functionality sub-section, teachers responded to one of the six items in total as “I agree” and two items as “I partially agree.” They agree with the proposal of “I approve the preparation of the materials used in lessons in Germany” with =3,71. They partially approve the items “I find the curriculum (Lehrplan) I use to be sufficient” with =3,03 and “I find the weekly class hours that I give students to be

enough” with =2,73. They stated that they disagreed with items “I find the materials used in teaching Turkish sufficient” with =2,46, “I perceive the timing of the weekly lesson that I take with students during the day to be appropriate” with 2,44 and “I consider the format of the Turkish lessons (combined -each grade level) given to students to be appropriate” with =2,29 (Table 4).

Table 4.

Curriculum and Functionality Sub-section

No	Item	N		Ss	Response Level
1	I approve of the preparation of the materials used in lessons in Germany.	62	3,71	1,12	I agree
2	I find the curriculum (Lehrplan) I use to be sufficient.	63	3,03	1,15	I partially agree
3	I find the weekly class hours that I give students to be enough.	63	2,73	1,14	I partially agree
4	I find the materials used in teaching Turkish sufficient.	63	2,46	1,00	I disagree
5	I perceive the timing of the weekly lesson that I take with students during the day to be appropriate.	63	2,44	1,06	I disagree
6	I consider the format of the Turkish lessons (combined -each grade level) given to students to be appropriate.	63	2,29	0,89	I disagree

As seen in Table 5, it was understood that although there are Turkish language lessons in schools in Germany, they were far from the desired level. The most important reason for this was that the authorities did not show the necessary sensitivity. For example, the course materials prepared by the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Education (MEB) in Turkey are used in lessons here, and these materials are not suitable for the students here. Students have difficulties in understanding and comprehension. Also, the lessons are held by combining classes and even students from other schools in one school. This was not acceptable for both students and teachers.

In system recommendations, four of the five items in total was responded with “I agree,” and one item was responded with “I partially agree.” Teachers agree with the views of “There is a need for seminars in order to communicate with students for Turkish

teaching in Germany” with =4,24, “Turkish lessons should be included in grade point average in order for them to be more useful” with =3,81, “Turkish lessons should be brought into the status of the compulsory lesson in order for them to be more beneficial” with =3,71, and “I think that students should be tracked outside the school” with =3,63 (Table 5).

It is crucial for the success of the teachers who are appointed through the German Model or the Consulate model and take Turkish language lessons to receive seminars related to the task. This task should be given to those who achieve competence in these students. The responses given to the second and third items in Table 5 were realized as expected. In Germany, no studies or courses that are not subject to the grading or do not affect grade point average are not taken into account by students and parents. In addition, it is

complicated for students to learn anything with 1-2 hours of lessons per week. Besides, most of the time, lessons take place outside of usual class hours, which

is not welcomed by both the students and the parents, and this negatively affects the lesson attendance.

Table 5.

System Recommendations Sub-section

No	Items	N	Ss	Response Level	
1	There is a need for seminars in order to communicate with students for Turkish teaching in Germany.	63	4,24	0,82	I agree
2	Turkish lessons should be included in the grade point average in order for them to be more useful.	63	3,81	1,24	I agree
3	Turkish lessons should be brought into the status of the compulsory lesson in order for them to be more beneficial.	63	3,71	1,34	I agree
4	I think that students should be tracked outside the school.	63	3,63	1,17	I agree
5	I think the format of the assignment model being implemented is appropriate.	62	2,90	1,16	I partially agree

Although sincere responses are given to the survey questions, it was seen that they do not precisely correspond with the current situation. For example, the number of those who consider themselves competent, even though they are not from the field, is quite high (Doğan, 2019). The answer to the question “I establish communication very well with school administrations” seemed to be “I agree,” but, in reality, the level of Germany, especially of those who are appointed through MEB, is quite weak and is practically not enough to communicate with children. Although the students that they teach are of Turkish origin, the children’s desire to speak German in all areas and everywhere because they grew up speaking the dominant language, German, leave the teachers

who come from Turkey in a difficult situation and sometimes causes students to disregard the teacher (Dogan, 2019). It was observed that the teachers appointed by the German authorities do not possess the competence to teach Turkish, although their German is at the desired level (Dogan, 2019).

The teaching of the mother tongue should not only be limited to school. The environment and the family setting in which the student lives should also be seen as a place of learning (Yol, 2011).

Places used by teachers, the timing of lessons, lack of course materials, or the preparation of existing course materials by taking into consideration the conditions

of Turkey not according to the requirements of Germany stand out as other issues that teachers have to deal with.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Although teachers from outside the field are sometimes employed in mother tongue education in Germany, teachers from the field of Turkish / with Turkish major should be employed from now on. However, it should be noted that teachers possess pedagogical formations.

Considering the changing conditions and situations, in-service training should be performed from time to time, and expectations, problems, and changes should be shared with teachers.

Even if much investment is made in teachers, families should not be neglected. After all, it should not be forgotten that one of the fundamental stones of a healthy education is family and their sensitivity in this regard.

The issue of Turkish and Turkish Culture lessons should be kept on the agenda both at the level of governments and by NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations), and mother tongue lessons should be encouraged by teachers. To this end, programs should be organized, booklets and brochures should be published, and families should be informed about this issue.

To stress the importance of mother tongue lessons, encouraging and motivating activities should be organized for families and children who visit Turkey and go in and out of the country. Children can be presented small gifts that will incentivize Turkey, Turkish and Turkish culture. Informative documents and small presents that stimulate nationalistic feelings can be given to families.

Teachers should put pressure on the German government for Turkish lessons to be committed to the German education system and to be included in the class passing system as a lesson subjected to grading. If this issue becomes more explicit, many problems will disappear by themselves. In this context, Turkish can be taken into the status of a foreign language or be included in the status of the course that must be taken compulsory by the speakers of the mother tongue. Otherwise, teachers who teach mother tongue in the system have no enforcement and are utterly left to the initiative of the family and the child. This reduces the interest in native language lessons. Besides, the fact Turkish lessons are offered outside of the class hours renders the problem completely difficult.

Today, social media is being used by everyone and is being preferred due to the ease of access to the internet by everyone. For this reason, different programs related to Turkish and Turkish Culture can also be provided through this platform.

References

- Arastaman, G. & Fidan, İ. O. & Fidan, T. (2018). Nitel Arastırma Gecerlilik ve Guvenirlik: Kurumsal Bir İnceleme (Validity and Reliability In Qualitative Research: A Theoretical Analysis), *YYU Journal of Education Faculty*, 15 (1), 37-75.

- Belet, Ş. D. (2009). İki Dilli Turk Ogrencilerin Ana Dili Turkceyi Ogrenme Durumlarına İlişkin Ogrenci, Veli ve Ogretmen Gorusleri : Fjell İlköğretim Okulu Örneği, Norveç (Students', Parents' And Teachers' Views On Bilingual Turkish Students' Learning Of Mother tongue :Fjell Primary School Case, Norway), *Selcuk University Journal of Social Sciences Institute*, 21, 72
- Cakir, M. (2002). Almanya'daki Çok Kulturlu Ortamlarda Turkcenin Anadili Olarak Kullanimi (The Use of Turkish as the Mother Tongue in Multicultural Settings in Germany), *Anadolu University Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(1), 40
- Dogan, N. (2019). *Almanya'da Yasayan Turk Çocukları'nin Anadili Ogrenimi ve Ogretimi Uzerine Veli-Ogretmen-Ogrenci Gorusleri (Opinions of the Parents, Teachers and Students About Learning and Teaching of The Mother Tongue of the Turkish Children Living in Germany)*, Yayinlanmamis Doktora Tezi, Uluslarasi Burc Universitesi, Saraybosna.
- Gemici, B. (2019). Almanya'da Turkce Dersleri ve Oneriler (Turkish Lessons and Suggestions in Germany), <https://www.muhabirce.de/bahattin-gemici/2019-02-19/almanya-turkce-dersleri-ve-oneriler> (Erişim tarihi:01.04.2020)
- MEB, (2006). *Yurt Dısındaki Turk Çocukları İcin Turkce ve Turk Kulturu Dersi Ogretim Programi (1-10. Sınıflar) Turkish and Turkish Culture Course Curriculum for Turkish Children Abroad (Grades 1-10)*, Milli Egitim Bakanlıđı Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu Başkanlıđı, Ankara : MEB
- Meece, J. L. (1997). *The Communicative Competence of Young Children. The United States of America* by Addison Wesley Longman Inc. New York.
- Ozen, Y. & Gul, A. (2007). Sosyal ve Egitim Bilimleri Arastirmalarında Evren-Orneklem Sorunu (Population-Sampling Issue On Social And Educational Research Studies), *KKEFD*, 15:399
- Pusch, B. (2014). Richtungswechsel: Deutsche Frauen Am Bosporus, *Marmara-Zeitschrift für Türkisch-Deutsche Studien*, 3(1-2), 31-50.
- Temel, Z. F. & Yazici, Z. (2003). İki Dilli ve Çok Kulturlu Ortamda Yetisen Çocuklar İcin Anadilinin Gerekliligi (The Necessity of Mother Tongue for Children Growing in Bilingual and Multicultural Environments), 30/5000 *Journal of Turkish Language and Literature*, TDK Publications, 622, 495-505.

- Tuna, F. (2016). *Sosyal Bilimler için İstatistik (Statistics for Social Sciences)*, Ankara: Pegem Akademi
- UNESCO, (2003.) Education in a Multilingual World. UNESCO Education Position Paper. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001297/129728e.pdf>, (Erişim Tarihi: 07.03.2009).
- Yazici, Z. (1999). Almanya ve Türkiye’de Anaokuluna Devam Eden 60-76 Aylar Arasındaki Turk Cocuklarının Dil Gelistimi ile Okuma Olgunlugu Arasındaki İlişkinin İncelenmesi, Gazi Üniversitesi: Basılmamis Yüksek Lisans Tezi.
- Yildirim, A. & Simsek, H. (2013). *Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri (Qualitative research methods in the social sciences)*, Ankara: Seckin Yayıncılık.
- Yildiz, C. (2012). *Yurt Disinda Yasayan Turk Çocuklarına Turkce Ogretimi :Almanya Ornegi (Turkish Education for Turkish Children Living Abroad)*, Ankara: Yurtdisi Turkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Baskanligi Yayinlari.
- Yol, A. (2011). Yurt Disindaki Türk Çocuklarına Türkçe Öğretimindeki Sorunlar (Problems in Teaching Turkish to Turkish Children Abroad), *G.U. Journal of Turkish Studies Academic Student*, 1(1), 117-131

Corresponding Author Contact Information:

Author’s Name and Surname: Dr. Nazim Dogan

E-mail: dogannazim66@gmail.com

Please cite: Dogan, N. (2020). Opinions of Turkish Language Teachers on the Issues of Children’s Learning Mother Tongue: A Case Study of Germany. *Journal of Research in Turkic Languages*, 2(2), 89-98. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34099/jrtl.221>

Received: March 1, 2020 • **Accepted:** June 27, 2020