

A Critical Analysis to the Issues of the Turkish classes in Bavaria¹

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Abstract

It is visible that Turkish is facing some problems while the Turks living as the part of multinational societies in various European countries are expected to maintain and develop their multilingualism. In fact, the cause of the problem is not the Turkish language itself, but that of those who speak it. For decades, there has been negligence in the employment of qualified teachers and academicians, inefficient teaching programs, lack of teaching materials, ignorance and arbitrariness, the lack of the awareness of mother tongue of our countrymen and the political preferences made in teaching Turkish. At this point educational policy makers and implementers, families and the teachers in all levels of education have important tasks. The Turkish classes in the state of Bavaria are taught both as the foreign language and the language of origin. However, its implementation is not at a desirable level.

Keywords: Turkish, Mother Tongue, Turkish as a Foreign Language.

Introduction

It was assumed that the children in the biggest state of Germany, Bavaria, would go back to their homelands together with their immigrant families and those children were given education in their mother tongue by the teachers, mainly primary school teachers, from the countries they belonged to so that they could easily be oriented into the schools they would attend. The successful children of the immigrant families, whose level of their German was sufficient enough for them to understand the German classes, would attend the same classes as the students of German origin. In the course of time, the children whose families did not turn back to their homeland and those who were not proficient speakers of German language could not obtain a professional training or attend a higher education institution. In addition, lack of qualification of the teachers sent from Turkey, it became inevitable to take new measures. A decree released in 2003 by the state of Bavaria stipulated that the education given in the mother tongue should be removed gradually from the Bavarian school system and it was decided that the financial source allocated for the mother tongue education should be set aside for teaching German efficiently. Thus, the representatives of the related countries were assumed responsibility for teaching their mother tongue and the education in the mother tongue of the Turkish immigrants was abandoned. As a cultural activity, the consulates coordinate the non-mandatory voluntary mother language teaching classes that are carried out after main classes at schools attended by around 50.000 Turkish students. These classes are defined by the Germans as the classes provided by the Consulates (Konsularische Muttersprachenunterricht - KMU) or shortly consulate class. In the literature, it is referred as complementary class for native language (Muttersprachliche Ergänzungsunterricht - MSU) mother tongue class (Herkunftssprachenunterricht). The Turkish side first named it as the mother tongue class then defined it as Turkish and Turkish Culture class. The latter term is used in formal correspondence. So, a new term began in teaching Turkish (Çakır 2019).

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Consular Courses

In the new term, the Ministry of Education and Culture of the State ensured that it will assist with the opening of the courses by the Consulates. Instead of negotiating with the representatives of the countries at the meetings, they informed about their own practices.

In the evaluations arranged with the participation of diplomats and secretaries rather than educational experts, it was promised that through the cooperation with the school administrations, the announcements would be made about the courses to be planned and implemented by the Consulates. Additionally, it was noticed that this course was not a compulsory class within the German educational system, the students were not within the school insurance and the local administrations could request operating expenses in the schools where the courses were held if required. Thereafter, in accordance with the article 75 of the local government ordinance [Art. 75 para. 3 sentence 1 of the Bavarian Municipal Code], the City Council of Munich, stipulated that those related countries should assume the operational costs in the classrooms allocated for the mother tongue education.

As of December 1, 2004, non-governmental organizations, which are sensitive to the issue, initiated a signature campaign to ensure that the government's decision was not put into practice and that the lessons should be implemented as before.

Petitions signed by 38,700 parents were delivered to the Ministry by hand by a delegation of 15 people, including the President of the Munich Foreigners Assembly, the President of the Munich Turkish School Parent Association and the representatives of the Coordination Committees of the Northern and Southern Bavarian Turkish Associations on 03.08.2005. The officials of the ministry did not come to the appointment they gave before and did not show courtesy to answer the application.

In the meantime, neither the proposal given in the State Parliament in 2012 nor the three separate proposals (two of them in 2013, one in 2015) presented to the city council in 2013 and 2017 changed the result (Department of Education and Sport 2017).

Turkish course did not begin in the centre of Munich as the Turkish side did not agree to pay the operating expenses and school responsibility insurance premiums for the classrooms. It was not an acceptable practice, not impossible, though, to meet the astronomical expenses that would arise in the states and the whole country because it was thought that the request did not have valid reasons as the students were German students and their families were taxpayers. Since then, Turkish and Turkish Culture courses are not held in Munich. However, some NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) either offer classes in their own premises or rent classrooms from municipalities, city libraries. Those teaching here are not qualified enough to teach and the content of those course is out of control. Some of these associations receive support from the municipal social affairs fund, the umbrella association and from the funds of the Ministry of Culture, Foreign Turks and Relative Communities Presidency (YTB) funds. In addition to these incomes, they receive the course fees such as registration and stationary expenses from the students. As a result of this disagreement with the municipality, the Turkish lesson has become an occupation for a specific group.

The announcements sent by the Consulate General of Education to the schools through the education directorates in cooperation with the Ministry of Education are not delivered to the parents and there is difficulty in reaching sufficient number of students due to insensitivity of some parents. Besides, some schools have full time education teaching, some school principals put forward that there are no suitable classrooms for different reasons. Therefore, despite the demand for the Turkish course, the course cannot be opened. The countrymen that do not oppose this practice seem to have not heard Cemil Meriç's saying "Kalam is completely dignity".

In the bilateral talks with the Germans, it was honestly stated that the students' priority was not Turkish, but German. The Turkish side does not suggest the otherwise; on the contrary, they support bilingualism and put forward that the Turkish course does not interfere with learning German. Many research studies by international independent linguists argue that multilingualism has a positive effect on the development of an individual. However, it does not seem possible to change the stereotypes of the Germans regarding the Turks from today to tomorrow (Çakır 2012); it takes time and patience to separate the reality accepted without questioning from the scientific knowledge.

The people who want to take advantage of this situation and those who do not favour cooperation with the Turkish officials, as stated by Alev Alatlı in her Nasihatname; “The coward refuses to face the reality; becomes combative, the ignorant cannot comprehend the truth; s/he underestimates it. The traitor falsifies the truth in pursuit of his own interests; diverting it”

Applications Related to Turkish Language Course in Bavarian Schools

In its decisions, the Council of Europe instructed the member states to take and implement the necessary measures to teach the language of origin to the children of immigrants in their countries.

In secondary schools (Mittelschule), Although Turkish courses are not practiced in the curriculum, the students in these schools have the opportunity to attend Turkish and Turkish culture courses. Besides, the students who are required to take qualification exams and those who are not native speakers of German can take the exam in another foreign language or their mother tongue, thus in Turkish course. This practice is defined as a precautionary practice to be applied in extraordinary situations in order to overcome the problems that immigrant students face as they lack of German language, not originating from academic failure.

In Realschule schools (high level middle school), there is a group of elective courses opened to ensure the attendance of students to upper vocational high school (BOS / FOS). In these schools, there are 15 hours French, Spanish and Czech classes in a week in the compulsory second foreign language course group in grades 7, 8, 9 and 10; however, either there is no demand for Turkish class or even if there is demand for Turkish classes, they cannot be met as there is not enough teacher. The cooperative suggestions with Turkey are not adopted either.

As for the vocational high schools, in these type of schools (BOS/FOS) students receive diploma in the end of 13th grade. If they prove that they are proficient enough in an additional language, they can be entitled to have general high school diploma, as well (§ 73 Md. 1 FOBO). However, Turkish class is not among those additional languages such as French, Latin, Italian, Russian or Spanish.

In the reply to the written question proposal to the Bavarian State Assembly on 03.02.2012, It was stated that putting Turkish among these courses is not taken into consideration². If a student can prove that s/he has taken Turkish class in the middle school (Mittelschule/Realschule) and is proficient in Turkish; if s/he takes a foreign language class in the 12th and 13th grades of the vocational school, succeeds in a completion test given in those terms, has an internationally valid language proficiency certificate indicating the level of the student, the ministry then accepts it.

Putting Turkish as a second language class alongside with French, Italian, Russian, Spanish and Latin classes in the curriculum of Vocational High Schools that Turkish students mostly attend, giving students opportunity to have dual diploma both from the Vocational high schools and general high schools will have a broader perspective in the type of the schools that students attend.

In the **General High schools**, a strategic planning was made based on the advantage of multilingualism. In this regard, students learn German in the primary school levels and thereafter they can learn their mother tongue as a foreign language (See: Walter 2008). Thus, the graduates from these schools can have contributions to the relations between Turkey and Germany and meet the demands for Turkish classes.

In High schools, “Foreign Language Turkish for Late Beginners” as an elective foreign language class was included in the curriculum as of 9th grade. However, the class begins as of 10th grade as there is shortage of teachers³. The applications are received in Spring term of grade 9 and the students are registered in the courses based on the Turkish level test determining whether they can attend the Turkish classes in the 10th grade. So;

a) The students can take Italian and French classes as late beginners instead of the Latin class that they should take in grade 10. They have to attend these classes in 11 and 12 grades. Turkish class is given in total seven

²Bavarian state parliament, 16th parliamentary term. Written question by Margit Wild SPD from 03.02.2012 https://www.bayern.landtag.de/www/ElanTextAblage_WP16/Drucksachen/Schriftliche%20Anfragen/16_0011956.pdf (15.09.2019).

³The current curriculum of the 2011-2012 academic year is available at http://www.isb-gym8-lehrplan.de/contentserv/3.1.neu/g8.de/id_27427.html, (15.09.2019).

institutions, three in Munich, one in Augsburg, two institutions in Nuernberg and one in Efferen. These classes are given four hours a week in 10th grades and three hours a week in 11th and 12th grades.

b) In graduation, a student has to take exams in five classes. Students must take written exams in German and Mathematic classes; they must take either written or oral exam in the first foreign language and Geography, they must take either written or spoken exam in Law class and oral exam in the late beginner foreign language. The oral exam and the level of it are discussable.

Latin is important for Turkish students as well as the second foreign language taken in the high schools. There are two diplomas showing the level of proficiency in Latin. If a 9th grader student takes 4 points or below, s/he gets a small diploma and if s/he gets 4 points or below 4, s/he gets a big diploma. Furthermore, Latin class can be taken in connection with the university education and Language certificate in Latin can also be received via an exam. In Bavaria State; a high-level Latin is required in Greek teaching, Theology of Catholics and Evangelic, in PhD programs of philology in all languages and in some programs of Law. Additionally, a low-level of Latin is required for teaching German, History, English, French, Spanish and Italian in High Schools. Among the individuals of the European Turkish society, there are successful doctors, lawyers and those with various jobs. However, there is a need for well trained teachers as role models in the society. Training of the teachers that will present a role model for the children and youngsters and give life to the Turkish society is extremely important.

Turkish in Universities and Colleges

It is perceived that some restrictions are imposed on Turkish courses and student quotas at universities and colleges in Bavaria. While the Turkish courses offered in foreign language centres or modern foreign language departments are in "Course" status, English, French, Chinese and Spanish have credits. The reason put forward for this is that there is not an international criterion measuring the knowledge as a foreign language.

While the institutions such as Ankara University, TÖMER (Teaching Center for Turkish a Foreign Language), Yunus Emre Institute, Maarif Foundation in our country have different programs to teach Turkish as a foreign language, they do not agree on an internationally valid standard exam. To prepare a standard exam testing German proficiency, four countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Liechtenstein) agreed on a standard exam, Profil Deutsch (Globaniat et al. 2012) (Quetz 2010 - GER A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2)

The sustainability of the German Language and Literature, German Teaching Programs that are opened without qualified instructors and teacher trainers should be revised; the foreign language classes in the schools of Ministry of Education and the quotas for the undergraduate students in German teaching departments should be reconsidered.

The label that Turkish teachers attributed appointed by the Turkish Ministry in Germany should be investigated in terms of the German teachers sent to Turkey and further issues of developing a new policy should be reviewed and the asymmetrical relationship between the two countries should be normalized by the efforts of both parties (Çakır; Yıldız 2016).

Conclusion

Turkish and Turkish culture teachers who teach under the name of "Consular teachers" are not respected by the school administration, German colleagues and employees in many schools for various reasons (Akman 2017). Turkish and Turkish Culture classes are obstructed and other alternatives are put forward by the non-governmental organizations to fund the obstacles. The teachers appointed by the Turkish Republic are left helpless. "A coward rejects to face the truth, becomes combative. The ignorant cannot comprehend the truth, looks down on it. The traitor is after his own interest, falsifies the truth diverting it. In such times, the society takes the reference point from the sophisticated people." (Alathi 2019). It seems that although not impossible, it is not easy to find the profile of the sophisticated person.

Considering the kindly regarded teachers of German origin in Turkey, it is engrossing to see that the teachers of Turkish origin in Germany do not receive the necessary respect they deserve. The German side prefers to stall off the solutions in bilateral talks. The students that need educating are not only the children of Turkey; they are also an important source for the future of Germany.

While Turkey is investing in the education of the Turkish children, who are also the German citizens, it also invests in the future of Germany. Directly or indirectly, this effort is interrupted because of the obstacles mentioned.

While the scientific research studies show that multilingualism is an advantage to individuals and societies, there is an effort to push the Turkish language out of the modern language programs by ignoring it. Some people in Germany oppose to the children of Turkish origin learning Turkish and keeping in touch with their relatives in Turkey. The bilingual students of Turkish origin are stigmatized as “These children still turn to their aunts and grand fathers’ land”.

The traitors preferring the estrangement to the national identity to the honour of being Turkish refuse to cooperate with Turkey, try to attribute negative connotation to learning Turkish and marginalize the people insisting on Turkey and Turkish language. Despite these setbacks, the Turkish youth in Europe, whose roots are in Turkey, are becoming mature and gain the strength to struggle by paying the price of being Turkish. The solution to the problems is not possible with the style of thought forming it. The problem of the European Turks is not the limited educational opportunities but the lack of awareness about education and confusing relationships between Turkey and Germany.

In our Turkish culture, condemnation and appreciation are not personalized. As a scientific researcher and a live witness to the discriminatory attitudes towards Turkish and Turkish students performed by some teachers and school administrators in Germany, I would like to note to date and attract attention to the fact that the state governors, counsellors and policy makers are supposed to be against those expressions that spread, encourage or justify any racist, xenophobic, antisemitic and intolerance-based hatred.

Anywhere in the world, the people governing states are supposed to act with consciousness and consciousness of its duties and responsibilities using reason so as not to mediate the spread of discourse of hatred to people in terms of race, ethnicity, language, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation and mental/physical disability. Therefore, it should not be forgotten that it is possible with developing and practicing reasonable policies to solve the problems of immigrants and help individuals integrate with the society, instead of putting bans on original cultures. As long as the immigrant children and young people see their original cultural objects within the social life in their schools, they will reinforce the feeling of belonging to the environment they live in; otherwise, they will turn to the societies and countries of their original culture.

Evidently, Germany is a country where naturalized global foreigners, unable to transit from never ending residency to host status, live as a part of the German society and share joy and sadness, having problems with making a living, accommodation, health and education in difficult conditions. While the Turks are struggling with the hardships of daily life, they are vulnerable to racist and neo-Nazis attacks. The local governors give a clue how much importance they give to the problems of the people they live together under the same sky and in what level of the society they want to see them by ignoring the problems avoiding cooperation with their interlocutors to produce solutions. They are not expected to be doing their best, but they are supposed to be considering the issues from the perspective of the foreigners.

The Turks living the ancient Anatolian culture in Europe, as Mevlana stated; “The source of a snub is not because of the letters that make it, the bitterness of the sea water is not because of the bowl which it is put in.” (Mesnevi, 306). The teachers are those to be blamed for the education of the writers issuing political and racist discourse. Nevertheless, I do not give up the expectation that the future will be bright and conclude with Cengiz Aytamov’s words: “Be whatever, but do not lose your humanity!”

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