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Bilingualism and bilingual educational model suggestion for Turkey

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Abstract

The aim of the research is to discuss what the bilingual education is and to suggest a model for performing this education in Turkey. There are many nations whose mother tongues are different in Turkey. Today, educating children whose mother tongue and official language are different is the basis of some problems. It is observed that in case of education is performed just with official language, the children whose mother tongue is different than official language are strained as educational and they face serious social problems in the first years of the school. Bilingual education means to perform educational activities in two (or more) different languages. However it is hard to suggest a bilingual education model in Turkey owing to various reasons foremost laws. By considering conditions in Turkey, that can be said; the optimal model is "Transition Model" if mentioned problems are overcome. In transition model, it is aimed that after the children complete the early stages of their education process, they complete the remainder of their education with the official language.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, bilingualism, bilingual education.

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1. Introduction

No country in the world consists of one nation, has one official culture and in no country only one language is spoken. Therefore societies which have multiple ethnic groups, different cultures, different languages have a multicultural specialty. Multiculturalism is to realize race, ethnic structure, language, sexual orientation, gender, age, disability, social class, education, religious orientation and other cultural dimensions (APA, 2002). Also multiculturalism is used to express a politic form and the center of multiculturalism is summarized with other three principles. These are: to recognize cultural diversity, social equality and social integration (Vermeulen and Slijper, 2003). Multiculturalism minds recognizing the cultural diversity in a country and building a political and social atmosphere which these cultures can live and grow. The main goal is not to remove or annihilate the cultural diversity, the main goal is to allow it to live and develop (Reitz, 2009). In this sense, it is seen from requirements of modern state conception that the states which have multicultural societies should service individuals in the best way, should recognize and protect diversity by respecting dissimilarities and should provide integration. One of these requirements is the education right that will be given to individuals and to take their language rights under protection. It is thought the way of this is that states should follow policies with an attitude which multiculturalism require and a multicultural education system thereupon should be carried out.

It is emphasized that individuals take education coequally in multicultural education. One of the parameters to ensure equal access to education is the condition that individual takes education in his mother tongue. Because of that there are multi languages in multicultural societies, millions of people learn his mother tongue, which is the language of culture group that his family belongs to, before he learns the official language. He recognizes the world with his mother tongue and develops minds and mindscapes in his culture language (Ergil, 1995). In this context, the development of individuals' mother tongue and taking education in this way is an important case; it can trigger several problems if they don't take that education. Because the child's mother tongue; beyond being a tool used for the aim to express his feelings, thoughts and wishes; by making him a member of the society he is in, mother tongue identifies him with the society and bring him personality (Kelaga Achmet, 2005). All links between the society and the child, who is a member of the society, are provided with his mother tongue. To achieve these conditions, governments should build their education system on multilingualism and recognize individuals' right of taking education in own mother tongue. Because language rights were considered an important human right and secured by international treaties (Kaya & Aydin, 2014).

Education is a communicative (especially requiring oral language skills) activity that is developed mutually between teacher and student. Language is the heart of the education. Because language, that is a reflection of the culture on the individual, is the most important tool of communication. It is thought that the instructiveness performance of teachers will increase depending on their language and communication skills that they can set up with their students.

Dandy (1991) utters that teachers will have the capability to form the students' future if they establish a strong and powerful communication, otherwise they won't be able to have that capability. Structures of various languages mirror different cultural forms and values and whereat this situation affects individuals how to understand the social events and react (Gay, 2010; Whorf, 1952). Besides, it is said that the language is not only a re-production mechanism which vocalizes the ideas; on the contrary it guides individuals to analysis their mental activities. In this sense, the power of the language in thinking and mental development of the individual can't be denied. The language, that thoughts and ideas are enlivened in, is main component of educational dimension. It is known that individuals face some difficulties due to the difference between mother tongue and the educational language in official institutions. It can be said one of the steps that can be taken to overcome these difficulties is "bilingual education fact".

1.1. Bilingualism and bilingual education

As well as at the present time the compass of bilingualism term causes debates in a different direction, the importance of the subject is accepted and the subject becomes a wide research area. It is seen that the term "bilingualism" is mentioned in disciplines as sociology, psychology, pedagogy, anthropology and linguistics. Bilingualism, in the most general sense, is the usage practice in alternative forms of two languages and the person, who practices that, is called bilingual (Weinrich, 2005). Mackey (1970) defines bilingualism as that use of two or more languages in alternative forms. Bilingualism, due to various reasons and under different conditions, is that people have more than one language and use them or learn a second language at a level close to his mother tongue (Aksan, 1998). According to Kelaga Achmet (2005) when school-age children of the people who speak a different language than the official language that majority speak join formal education, serious educational problems take place. It is thought that the solution of these education problems is the education approach which individuals' mother tongue is protected. Bilingual education means to carry out education activities in two (or more) languages (Cummins, 2001).

Mother tongue is the language that individual takes from his parents and expresses himself/herself ideally with it. Therefore, it is hoped from the individual to learn his mother tongue and use it in the best way. Mother tongue education starts in the family, it is kept on with environment experiences and school life. Education in mother tongue has a great importance in terms of that individual carries on his education life successfully and keeps on his culture, abilities, specific characteristics alive. In the situation individual doesn't take education in his mother tongue or in the language he finds close to himself, he can live identity crisis and he isn't able to be integrated with the language which he studies in (Kaya & Aydin, 2014). In this context, education in the mother tongue is; beyond being a right to take education; essential of being respectful to the individual's identity, culture, language, religion, shortly to that individual. It is hoped from governments to have this respect for their societies and recognize the required education right. According to Cummins (2001), denying the mother tongue of the child in school education means denying the child. Whether either directly or in a roundabout way, if the child is told "leave your language and culture at the school gate and then enter", the child will leave his basic structures and identities at the school gate and then will enter. In consequence of such unjustness, it is unavoidable for children to live crisis. In this sense, it is thought that seizure of individual right will be prevented by carrying out educational systems with bilingual models.

Development of child's mother tongue helps development of child's skills in second language therewithal, not only mother tongue. Development of children's concept and thinking abilities are related each other in both languages. Children can transfer what they learn in mother tongue to the second language, and what they learn in second language to mother tongue. Learning mother tongue by children supports them in their development mental beside in development of their language skills; and that helps them to use also second language functions relevantly (Erdil, 2012). That is denoted it is easier for the individual to learn reading in a language he understands and it is stated to learn reading in mother tongue affects skills to gain second language in a positive way (Krashen, 1997). Besides, at the same rate of that the education taken in the first language increases the adequacy of language, transferring the competence acquired in this language to the second language will also increase. In addition to this, the individuals who show competence will have more advantage in terms of linguistic and conceptual flexibility. Insufficient individuals in both languages will face deficiencies in terms of comprehension (Ana, 2010).

When Gay (2010) tells about the positive results of bilingual educational practices directed to the students that are different as cultural, results state that bilingualism should supported in education. In the light of the results obtained in the research, it is said literacy skills with well-developed mother tongue supports development of literacy in the second language, affects learning performance in a positive way, increases devotion to class, motivation and attendance to lesson (Cummins, 2001; Slavin & Cheung, 2005). In brief, it is thought that the interaction of the individual's mother and education languages with each other supplies the individual's cognitive and affective development.

1.2. Bilingual educational models

It is necessary both mother and education language is used as the education tool of curriculum content to consider a program as bilingual. That means lessons such as Mathematics, History or Geography will be taught in both mother and official language. In this regard, instructing a minority language, for example Kurdish, as optional course, is not bilingual education or education in the mother tongue. Naturally, meaning of bilingual education is not only to teach the language of the minority, it also means to use it for learning other subjects or areas (Kaya & Aydin, 2014).

Bilingual educational models differ depending on ethnical, cultural and political situation of countries. In spite of these differences that vary from country to country, there are three main models which are called transition model, maintenance model and enrichment model. In addition to these, there is heritage model which is performed to keep alive the languages that are not common and almost perished (May, 2008; Hornberger, 2005 in Kaya & Aydin, 2014). In transition model it is aimed that the students, who have minority language (D1), complete their mother tongue in the first periods and then complete the rest of their education in the official language (D2) as soon as possible. In other words, it is used to provide the transition of a student from D1 minority group to D2. Transition model is usually an early exit model and it can continue until two or three years in the first periods of a student who comes from minority group. It is purposed that student takes some parts of the contents of education curriculum in mother tongue (D1) and the other part in official language (D2). After that period, the education is given totally in official language (D2). Because of the most of transition models are in the form of early exit model, they are accepted as the leanest models. The aim is that student learns his mother tongue at basic level and then he passes to official language entirely. In the maintenance model it is aimed that student keeps his mother tongue (D1), strengthens his linguistic and cultural identities and expresses his ethnical identity. It is possible to say that it is more powerful, cumulative tongued educational model. In this model, student takes most of his education, at least %50, in his mother tongue. So the percent of the use of official language (D2) is under percent 50 in this model. In this model it is aimed that student takes an important part of his education in D1 and by this way he obtains academic authority and aptitude. In enrichment model it is aimed the language of minority group grows up in the wider parts of the society, not only to protect and keep on the mother tongue of a student who belongs to minority group. For example, an education program that will ease and universalize learning minority language is designed for an individual who belongs to official language. In this model, that is also cared to accept and embraced pluralism widely in the society. It is argued that educational and social inequalities can be reduced, and the loss of different cultures can be prevented by providing cultural autonomy with this model. One last model is heritage language educational model which aims to prevent the loss of a local language that disappeared or is being lost by teaching it as a second language. This model takes attention as a model that aims to enliven the less spoken and disappeared languages of regional tribes and ethnical groups in USA, Canada, Australia and Norway (Kaya & Aydin, 2014).

Another featured issue in bilingual education is to give the bilingual education in same or different classrooms. These are classified as unidirectional and bidirectional practices. In unidirectional practices, students who speak different languages are take education in different educational environments. The purpose of this practice is to provide the student gains competence in both official and mother languages (Lindholm-Leary, 2001). In bidirectional practices, students who speak different languages take education in the same classroom in two different languages (Perez, 2004). For example, if the mother tongue of a group is Spanish and other's is English, they take education in both Spanish and English language in the same classroom. In this case, students can take different lessons in different languages. For example, they can see history lessons in English and Geography lessons in Spanish. Another practice, the same lesson can be explained in two languages. For example, Mathematics can be explained by same teacher in both English and Spanish in the same environment. In this case, it is expected teacher has language skill that he can explain the lesson in both languages.

This practice is a powerful bilingual education practice and it is defined as additive bilingual practice (Kaya & Aydin, 2014).

The ethnical composition of countries, their historical experiences, their political attitudes, the status of migrants and minority groups are the primary source of the differences in the form of bilingual education practice (Baker & Prys Jones, 1998 in Kaya & Aydin, 2014). Each country has developed different models according to its own social, cultural, historical and political situation. In this sense, it is not possible to talk about a standard. Because the historic memory of each country, the individual's former experience and cultural characteristics change. It seems possible to develop bilingual educational models by considering these changes.

1.3. Why bilingual education in Turkey?

The official language is Turkish in Turkey. But due to cosmopolitan nature of our country, which houses various cultures together, different languages (Kurdish, Arabic, Laz language, Zaza language) are spoken. According to a research that Konda made in 2013, approximately 13 million and 261 thousand Kurds live. Therefore, discussions about education in mother tongue are mostly made through Kurdish nation and Kurdish language. The children who are born and grow in these societies learn Kurdish language as mother tongue, which is spoken by their parents and immediate environment, not Turkish language. The child, who speaks Kurdish at home and in the immediate environment, takes education in Turkish at school. Therefore, the child faces difficulties in terms of following lessons. He can hardly speak Turkish as required when he finishes primary school. This situation begets inequality of opportunity for him compared to the regions spoken Turkish. Because, the child will obtain only Turkish speaking skill while his contemporaries in other regions enter the phase of learning information. Therefore, this situation affects his success adversely in the future learning phases (Tezcan, 1997). However, such discussions weren't made in the time of Ottoman Empire. Because after Ottoman State established domination on the regions where mainly Kurds lived, it was careful not to interfere their education and socio-cultural life. The East Madrasas (religious schools), which were formed in accordance with the form culture and language, were the primary education institutions of Kurds. The education language in East Madrasas was usually Kurdish. Lessons in madrasas were given in Turkish, Arabic, sometimes and Zaza language besides Kurdish. That is to say, the lesson was given in the language that student could understand easily and teacher knew (Celik, 2009 in Kaya & Aydin, 2014).

Discussions made on multilingual education in Turkey are as old as the history of Republic. Turkish Republic, founded as a remainder of Ottoman State that was a multinational Empire, was built on the idea of nation-state. The building of education system on the idea of nation-state, even making it instrumentalize for that, prevented various ethnical groups, mainly Kurds, to take education in their mother tongue. Therefore, it is expressed that one of the main reasons behind Kurdish problem is restrictions on the language. Banning usage of Kurdish language in education and social life caused identity and belonging problems among Kurds and that brought sense of inequality (Kaya & Aydin, 2014). Besides, it is necessary to provide children enrich the values of the country by caring them and making them obtain the sense of belonging to their country instead of assimilating bilingual ones. Because the children, who have two languages, are the mineral ores which should be processed. Bilingual children have a more productive intelligence, a more flexible cognitive structure, a more productive critical thinking (Kabadayi, 2008). It is determined that the children who take education in two languages are successful, open to other cultures; they obtain the ability of cultural relativity, tolerance and to listen to others (Groux, 1996; Krashen, 1997).

Individuals' mindset develops depending on their mother tongue and culture. It is educated by the culture they were born in before they start the education process at schools. Turkey is a country where different languages are spoken and the people who have different cultures live together in. In this respect it is an obligatory to establish education system based on the characteristics, language and culture of the place lived in our country. Because it is foreseen an education separates the individual

from his cultural elements and debars him from social basic won't service to the growth of individuals in desired quality. Therefore, it is seen necessary to base every education phases on the cultural values, from the aims of education programs to teacher attitudes, from content to learning experiences. It is thought that the students who experience such an education formation will service to the cultural unity and solidarity without considering race, religion, language, gender when they become the adult of the future.

The individuals who don't have speaking ability in their mother tongue don't have enough speaking ability also in the official language. Another term, which rises when the support is not enough in both two languages, is two half-lingualism (Alleman-Ghionda, 2011). According to İleri (2008), due to half bilingualism that affects thinking ability, children can't be successful in school and social life because they can't set a complete thinking system. According to Göksen, Cemalcilar and Gurlesel (2006), one of the most important arbiters in terms of families and children to abandon school is the problem of education in mother tongue; it is determined that especially in the first periods of schools, the main reason which student is unsuccessful in his lessons and makes him stay away from school is that they can't understand and use Turkish. Turkish being the second language in the area of South-East of Anatolia causes students to have troubles in the activities of comprehension, expression, problem solution; the problems in comprehension-understanding make themselves be felt in every process of education (Sonmez-Akbey, 2006). As is seen, it can be submitted that in case of mother tongue and official language are carried out together with adopted bilingual educational approach, many troubles can be prevented and existing ones can be solved.

It is an unquestionable fact that language is one of the most important tools for human communities to live their cultures. Firm bridges should be built between mother tongue and official language. The one who will build these bridges and provide transitions between languages is educational institution. It is foreseen that this function can be accomplished with adopted bilingual educational approach and designed bilingual educational program in the educational institutions. According to related body of literature, in no bilingual educational model, not to teach official language or teaching only in minority language is out of question (Kaya & Aydin, 2014). Both minority and official language is used as education language in all education models. Therefore it will be beneficial if discussions on education are made in a true channel and multidimensional way. As well as the countries which perform bilingual education were not divided, the countries which use only official language as the education language couldn't solve their division problems. Quite the contrary, bans and restrictions have made the development of the sense of belonging to country difficult and have eased separatist ideas to proliferate and find a ground in the society. In this sense, evaluating bilingual education practices well and discussing them accurately by eluding from prejudice is necessary to understand educational system of today's multicultural and multilingual world and its reflections on children. The discussion format of bilingual education subject in Turkey is mostly political and its educational dimension is ignored. The pedagogic, cultural and social dimensions of education in one or more languages are not discussed; the advantages and disadvantages of bilingual education aren't evaluated. In many researches, it was determined that bilingual education provides a positive contribution to the academic performance of students who speak minority languages (Slavin & Cheung, 2005) and decreases social and cultural inequalities (Cummins, 1991). In this regard, while subjects as education in mother tongue or bilingual education are discussed in Turkey, they should be evaluated in terms of various dimensions.

It is hard to suggest a bilingual education model for Turkey, because there are constitutional and legal obstacles in front of this situation. So firstly, the laws which obstruct this situation should be changed. Then a more long-termed planning special to Turkey should be thought by considering models and studies made about bilingual education in other countries. This planning should be divided to periods. It can be steadily passed to a bilingual educational model in accordance with the conditions of Turkey. "Transition Model" can be suggested as the best model by considering the conditions of our country. In Transition Model it is aimed students, who have mother tongue, complete their mother tongue in the first periods of educational process and complete the rest of their education in official

language as soon as possible. In other words, it is used to provide a student, whose mother tongue and official languages are different, to pass to the official language. Within this model, students take their first education in their mother tongue, but it shouldn't exceed three years. In this process, they learn also official language at the same time. For student this situation facilitates to comprehend lessons as Mathematics, Social Studies and Science. Researches made show that owing to such an education student who take education in mother tongue can easily use the skills, which they obtain, in official language (Kaya & Aydin, 2014). This brings equality of opportunity for the students who have a mother tongue different from official language. In addition, it is provided children to unite by socializing mostly in terms of linguistic and cultural and to integrate shared culture in time.

2. Results and suggestions

In this study, facts of bilingualism and bilingual education are tried to be introduced, the necessity of the practice of bilingual educational models are discussed in the context of the cultural structure and educational system of Turkey. It is thought language and culture shouldn't be left in the background in the educational process; rather cultural factors should take an active role in it. The establishment of cultural unity and solidarity in peace brings respectfulness to different cultures with itself. The importance of educational institution in the formation of this situation can't be ignored. For this reason, it is important to embed cultural values into each phase of educational system especially educational programs.

Besides, regulations about giving education to teacher candidates in the teacher training institutions can be made. Also bilingual teacher candidates who come to education faculty should be considered as ready sources, and when they graduate, they should be encouraged financially and morally by government to take active role in providing bilingual education in the educational institutions in the areas needed.

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