
Independence or Development?: An Overview of Turkey's Foreign Language Education Policies (Bağımsızlık mı, Gelişme mi?: Türkiye'nin Yabancı Dil Eğitimi Politikalarına Bir Bakış)

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Abstract: *Many countries have long had two sorts of interests; on the one hand, they have had to remain independent via protecting and promoting their official languages as a powerful symbol of their identities, and on the other hand, they have had to enable technological and economic development, which essentially involves international communication, usually by means of a foreign language. These two sorts of interests have often posed a dilemma for those countries and their peoples, because protecting and promoting identities have often implied closed and egocentric policies while international communication has involved more open and other-conscious policies. In today's world, this dilemma is even more highlighted because of the so-called "globalization", which is taking place. In this article, I will present this dilemma by focussing on one country, Turkey, and its foreign language education policies. An historical account of the country's interaction with other languages (than Turkish) will precede a presentation of the recent shape the recurring dilemma took, namely, teaching foreign languages versus teaching in a foreign language, in the daily national papers and publications in the 1989 and 1997 discussions. I will then make personal suggestions of conduct for decision-makers in Turkey and other countries facing the same dilemma.*

Key words: Turkey, foreign language education, language planning

Öz: *Uzun zamandan beri bir çok ülkenin iki tür ilgi alanı olmuştur: bir yandan, kimliklerinin güçlü bir simgesi olarak resmi dillerini koruyup geliştirmek ve bağımsızlıklarını sürdürmek, diğer yandan teknolojik ve ekonomik gelişmelerini genellikle bir yabancı dil aracılığıyla gerçekleşen uluslararası iletişim yoluyla sağlamak zorunda kalmışlardır esas olarak. Bu iki tür ilgi, bu ülkeler ve halkları için çoğunlukla bir ikilem yaratmaktadır, çünkü kimlikleri korumak ve geliştirmek, genellikle kapalı ve ben-merkezci politikaları, uluslararası iletişim ise daha açık politikaları ve başkasının bilincinde olmayı gerektirmektedir. Bu ikilem, "küreselleşme"nin yaşandığı bugünün dünyasında daha da önem kazanmaktadır. Bu ikilem, bu makalede, bir ülkeye, Türkiye'ye ve oradaki yabancı dil eğitimi politikalarına odaklanarak ele alınmaktadır. Türkiye'nin diğer dillerle (Türkçe dışındaki) etkileşiminin bir tarihçesini ise, 1989 ve 1997 yıllarında günlük gazete ve yayınlarda yer alan, tarihte zaman zaman ortaya çıkan ikilemin güncelleşmiş hali olan, yabancı dil eğitimi karşısında yabancı dille eğitim tartışmaları izlemektedir. Son bölümde Türkiye'nin ve aynı ikilemle karşı karşıya bulunan benzer ülkelerin karar vericilerine kişisel öneriler yer almaktadır.*

Anahtar sözcükler: Türkiye, yabancı dil eğitimi, dil planlaması

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1. INTRODUCTION

Many countries in the world have long had two sorts of interests; on the one hand, they have had to protect and promote their independence via protecting and promoting their identities and hence their official languages as a powerful symbol, and on the other hand, they have had to sustain the pace of their technological and economic development, which essentially involves international communication, even if this does not always mean a one-way importation of technology, knowledge and money. However, these two sorts of interests have often posed a dilemma for those countries and their peoples, because protecting and promoting identities have often implied closed and egocentric policies while international communication has involved relatively more open and other-conscious policies. Also, to complicate matters more and quite ironically, often the interest to promote one's own language has not been possible without international communication, that is without the importation or translation of, say, technological terminology, which has been seen necessary, by language planners, to enrich the language of the country in question. Similarly, the interest to engage in international communication, has mostly necessitated a legitimate existence, in the form of countries and unions, which would constitute the parties for the communication. As a result, many countries have been left with indecisive policies that give weight to one or the other of the two interests at different times.

In today's world, this dilemma is even more highlighted because of the so-called "globalization", which is taking place. Today, international communication is not only necessary for development, but also to play political and economic roles in the international arena. That the world is becoming smaller and more unified does not need elaboration. The rapid advances in communications technology, and the post-cold war policies of especially the U.S.A. and the other developed countries are the major contributing factors. However, this *unification*, aiming to encompass all the countries in the world has necessitated a different understanding of this term. The term *unification* can no longer mean uniformity; rather, it has to suggest a gathering of diversities, and even such diversities that were not apparent before the dispersal of the Eastern block countries, or before the multicultural and multilingual design of the E.U. Therefore, the ever-lasting dilemma for countries and people still exists, and perhaps more markedly than ever. In such a world, the teaching of foreign languages, and especially the teaching of English as the lingua franca of our age, has become at least as important as the teaching of the countries' own official languages.

It is based on this observation that I decided to write this article, where I will present this dilemma by focussing on one country, Turkey, and its foreign language policies, not only because it is the country I identify myself with and it will be illustrative of the above-mentioned dilemma, since the people of Turkey have been living this dilemma for more than two centuries now, but also because it is a country which many others can find at least a bit of themselves in. Many others can easily associate with some of its characteristics because Turkey, in its unique geographical location, between Asia and Europe, is one of the odd countries in the world, which has been trying to encompass many dualisms, which are frequently thought to be incompatible elsewhere, and

relatively quite safely for quite a while now¹. On very broad terms, Turkey embraces the following dualisms;

1. *the West and the East* with their values, life styles, customs etc..., where the people are acquainted and happy with both,
2. *Christianity and Islam*, due to the long history of living together, and close encounters with Europeans and later Americans,
3. *pride and modesty*, being the remnant of the once powerful Ottoman Empire and an awareness of the loss at present,
4. *dependence and independence*, having led a successful War of Independence against the so-called colonialist states at the time, and being largely dependent on others today (although perhaps not more than normal in the present state of affairs and not more than others are dependent on Turkey).

The format of the article, therefore, will be as follows; initially I will briefly try to describe the country and its people (especially to acquaint the unfamiliar reader with the basic folk culture) before presenting an account of their encounters and interaction with languages other than Turkish, including a history of foreign language teaching in Turkey. Then, I will present the recent shape the above mentioned dilemma took, namely, teaching foreign languages versus teaching in a foreign language (mainly English at present), a recurring issue which took up much space in the national papers and publications in the 1989 and 1997 discussions. And in the final section, I will conclude with my personal suggestions of conduct for decision-makers in Turkey with the hope that this will possibly be of some help to them as well as other countries and groups facing the same dilemma.

2. TURKEY AND ITS PEOPLE

Modern Turkey is the major inheritor of the six hundred year old Ottoman Empire (approximately from 1300 to 1900), which was established on the lands governed by the Byzantians and the Seljuks. It was founded after the War of Independence led by Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk) based on the conditions of the Treaty of Lausanne signed by Britain, France, Italy, Japan, Greece, Rumania, the Serbo-Croat- Slovene State, and Turkey on 24 July 1923. The core of these lands is what is geographically known as Anatolia, or Asia Minor, a peninsula surrounded by three seas, the Black Sea in the North, the Aegean in the West, and the Mediterranean in the South. Modern Turkey also has a small portion of land in Europe, Thrace, which makes the country a natural bridge between the West and the East as well as a cultural one. Turkey has common frontiers with eight countries, Greece, Bulgaria, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq and Syria. The country extends over an area of 774,800 sq. km. (The World Bank website,

¹ To emphasize the significance of this statement for all times, I should note that at the time of the writing of this article the US airforces are bombing Afghanistan after the tragic plane attacks in NewYork and Washington DC. Is the world at the threshold of a brand new division based on the good old religious motive?

<http://www.worldbank.org>), and has a population of approximately 62 million according to the 1997 census (The State Institute of Statistics website, <http://www.die.gov.tr>). 35.3% of the whole population is in the 0-14 year age group, signifying the youthful character of the Republic (ILO website, <http://www.ilo.org.tr>).

Although Turkey, like the Ottoman Empire, is closely associated with the Turks, who came to Anatolia as early as in the 11th century from Central Asia, its unique geographical position and rich history have moulded people of more than 40 different ethnic origins: the Turks, the Abdals, the Kirgiz, the Karachays, the Sudanese, the Yezidis, the Hemshins, the Polonese, the Arabs, the Circassians, the Yoruks, the Azerbaijanis, the Ozbeks, the Kumuks, the Estonians, the Zazas, the Albanians, the Gypsies, the Nusayris, the Georgians, the Turkomans, the Karakalpaks, the Tataris, the Migrants, the Jews, the Ossetians, the Kazaks, the Greeks, the Suryanis, the Laz, the Tahtacis, the Uygurs, the Balkars, the Daghistanis, the Kurds, the Armenians, the "Molokan"s, the Germans, and the Keldanis (Andrews, 1992). The majority of the population of Turkey are Muslims, while the minorities, as defined by the Treaty of Lausanne, are the Armenians, the Jews and the Greeks.

Turkey is rated as a moderately-indebted upper-middle income country by the World Bank (2001 description, The World Bank website). The same source mentions Turkey as the 17th most industrialized nation in the world, but as the 86th out of 180 countries according to the UNDP human development indicators. 65% of the total population live in urban areas while the 35% live in rural areas (1997 census). 38.9 % of the workforce belongs to the agricultural sector, with 17 % to industry, 38.5 % to the service sector, and 5.6 % to the construction sector (figures for the second quarter of 2001, The State Institute of Statistics). Unemployment rate for the second quarter of 2001 is 6.9 % (The State Institute of Statistics). The literacy rate given for 1998 is 85 % (OIC, 2001). School enrolment figures for the 1995-1996 academic year, are 89.03% for primary education, 53.14 % for Middle school, 38.72 % for high school (lycée), and 22.87 % for universities and other forms of higher education (The State Institute of Statistics). The World Bank gives primary school enrolment as 100 % for 2001.

The official language of the Republic is Turkish. However, the following languages are mentioned in Güvenç (1993:242) as the languages spoken in late Ottoman times: Greek, Armenian, Jewish, Spanish, French among the non-Muslims and Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic, Circassian, the Laz language and Georgian among the Muslims.

Since the proclamation of the Republic, the country has been undergoing a quick and painful process of democratization, which includes three military interventions, the last being in 1980². The Republic could mainly be characterized by some of its basic principles such as secularism and social and economic modernization, which will make Turkey a part of the Western political sphere. Turkey has made its decision clear in this respect first with Atatürk's reforms, by becoming a NATO member in the cold war years, and by applying to become a full member of the EC in 1987. The new world order,

² See Boratav (1988) for the anti-statist role of the 1980 coup, Özdemir (1989) and Üskül (1989) for the developmental relationship between the army and the system.

however, is clearly designating new and different roles for Turkey, especially after the Gulf War, mainly as a powerful mediator between the West and the East (see Çiller 1994). For Turkey, it appears, this duty will not even require her to play a role, since Turkey has successfully embraced both the East and the West in its own culture since long before (Güvenç 1993: 49).

3. A HISTORY OF INTERACTION WITH OTHER LANGUAGES

3.1. Translation to Start With

The earliest records of the interaction of Turkish with other languages is in the form of translation work. Bozbeyoğlu (1991) and Boztaş (1991) in their articles reviewing the history of translation and interpretation work in Turkey write that religious books on Buddhism and Manichaeism during Uygur times, in the 8th century, are the first samples of translation. They also mention the religious translations made during Selchuk and Ottoman times from Arabic and Persian. Bozbeyoğlu (1991:55) later claims that translation had been institutionalized by the Ottomans since the 14th century, but that learning a foreign language was never acceptable; instead it was preferred to teach the foreigners Turkish. According to Karal (1983:181) it was even illegal for the Muslims to learn a foreign language.

If the teaching of Arabic and Persian is left aside, indeed, *foreign* language teaching/learning is not seen in the Ottoman Empire until the 19th century³. Between the years 1600-1700, 40 or more 9-10 year old French boys (*jeune de langues*) were brought to Istanbul to be trained as translators. This attempt, however, failed. The next attempt was when the children of the Christian community were sent to Paris to a school called *Louis-le-Grand* run by a Jesuit priest; however, these youngsters became tradesmen and not translators. In 1721, ten boys were selected among the families of French tradesmen, and after they were taught Turkish, Arabic and good handwriting, were brought to Istanbul with their families (Bozbeyoğlu 1991:58). During these years, the Grand Vizier İbrahim Pasha also formed a translation committee made up of members of the Greek and Jewish communities (Bozbeyoğlu 1991:10). The situation of translation as an enterprise of the non-Muslim communities (of especially Greek families) was put an end to in 1820, after the Greek revolt, and a translation bureau was established at the Palace. This was also the time when foreign language teaching and learning became important, and the time when many foreign missionary schools as well as state schools began teaching in a foreign language in Istanbul. Translation work was continued in institutionalized form, run by the same sort of committees under various names until 1966, and 891 books are reported to have been translated during this period (Bozbeyoğlu 1991:60 and Boztaş 1991:11). Translation is still important today, though no longer centrally controlled. There are about eight translation and interpretation departments at

³ I need to point out here that there was much private tutoring of Arabic and Persian but this instruction needs to be treated as second language teaching. This issue will be taken up again when discussing the languages of education in another section.

the various state and private universities in Turkey, since the 1983-1984 academic year, when the first two opened at Bogaziçi and Hacettepe universities.

3.2. The Languages of Education and the Introduction of French

The languages mostly translated from, until the end of 19th century, were Arabic first and French later. We should, however, beware of treating Arabic as a foreign language in those times because the lands where Arabic and Persian languages were spoken as the first language, were a part of the Empire, and education in all of the Ottoman schools, except for the military *Enderun*⁴, was in Arabic or Persian (Demircan 1988a:28 and 63). We should also note that language was not the binding factor in Ottoman society. It was only in the end of the 18th century that we see language being made an issue in a nationalistic sense. Ortaylı (1983:63) states that the Turks were among the last groups to meet with nationalism, and also notes that Turkish first became a prestigious language when the Turks gained prominence in state administration. Turkish was accepted as the official language in the Ottoman Constitution (article 18) in the 19th century (Kuran 1994:67). Therefore, we can claim that French, being the only language bearing the status of the language belonging to another, is the first foreign language with which the Ottoman- Turkish rulers had relations. The first higher schools, where the medium of instruction was French, *Mühendishane-i Bahr-i Hümayun*, an engineering school for the Navy, and *Tıphane-i Amire*, a military medical school, were set up in 1827⁵. In 1839, *Mekteb-i Tıbbiye-i Şahane*, another medical school, and *Mekteb-i Sultaniye* (Galatasaray), a French-medium secondary school followed⁶. The first foreign language was French because the country with which the Ottoman Empire was in closest contact with at the time was France (Demircan 1988a:51). French was also the lingua franca in Europe at the time.

The Turkicizing of the education system which began in the second half of the 19th century, however, brought a new dimension to the dilemma. Although it was decided that education would be in Turkish and not in Arabic or Persian any longer, the lack of books in Turkish and Turkish teachers, caused French to replace Arabic and Persian as the medium of instruction (Demircan 1988a:51, Kuran 1994:67). This situation was to be temporary until Turkish books and teachers were made available; however Demircan (1988a:51) complains that the situation was still the same in 1930 with the medium of instruction at Istanbul University being German and not French this time. We will see that this dilemma still exists for Turkey, and hence the topic of this article.

4 A school located inside the Sultan's Palace usually for non-Muslim children who were separated from their families and brought up to be high-ranking soldiers of the Empire.

5 The same year another academy, *Cerrahhane-i Mamure*, a school for military surgeons was also set up but the medium of instruction there was Turkish (Akyüz 2001) (n.b. Kırımsoy 1991 writes the reverse; i.e. that the school for surgeons was French-medium).

6 Galatasaray has recently founded the only French-medium university in Turkey, with much support from the French Government, while its secondary school still continues education together with a few other private ones.

3.3. The Situation of English

Although French was the most legitimized of the foreign languages, English found itself a way into the Ottoman Empire through a missionary called Cyrus Hamlin, who after seven or eight years of struggle with the Ottoman bureaucracy could open a school at the Bosphorus, Robert College, in 1863, with the 30,000 dollars a New York businessman, H.R. Robert, had given him. Hamlin, who had left the mission in 1854, taught the children of the non-Muslim communities in their own languages and English in the beginning, and later only in English to a wider range of students, including the children of the Muslims who had grown an interest in the school (Demircan 1988a:77). Ulubelen (1967:32) writes that Bulgaria today owes its existence to the Bulgarian graduates of this school who later led their independence movement. During this period, The American Girls' College was also opened. In 1912, the senior college section of Robert College was opened, and the school had the reputation of being the first American college founded outside the U.S.A. in the world, until 1971 when the Turkish Government converted the college into Bogaziçi University, to make it one of the two English-medium state universities in Turkey. Demircan (1988a:74) writes that the influence of this school had not been seen in other educational institutions until 1908 when English was made a compulsory and French an elective course at the Ottoman Navy School. Today, just like many other countries in the world, English has its place as the most widely taught and learnt foreign language in Turkey.

3.4. The Times of the Republic

With the proclamation of the Republic, Turkish became more important as the language of education. Arabic and Persian were forbidden in 1927, but the dominance of French could not be avoided. From this date onwards, however, "foreign languages" in a Turkish context came to mean German, French, English, Italian and Latin (Demircan 1988a:92). I should note here that recently Japanese and Spanish have begun to gain prominence.

After 1950, we see the return of Arabic as an equally important foreign language as French and German, due to the demand of domestic politics, while English takes its place as first. Today, there are modern Arabic courses such as those taught at the Arabic Department of Gazi University, as well as the classical Koranic Arabic taught at the religious Imam-Hatip lycees⁷ and the Religious Studies departments of universities (Demircan 1988a:13).

The 1950s is the period when the state opens secondary schools called *Maarif Kolejleri* in order to compete with the Lausanne-based foreign colleges (the Ottoman missionary secondary schools). These schools have been protected in the Lausanne Treaty, which was signed after the War of Independence. The first of these *Maarif* schools, *Yenişehir Lisesi*, was opened in Ankara in 1932 as part of the Turkicizing project and the medium

⁷ *Imam-Hatip* lycees are vocational secondary schools whose primary aim is to educate *imams*, or Muslim preachers, but whose number drastically inflated for a period until 1997 when compulsory primary education was extended to eight years. These schools caused much political controversy.

of instruction was Turkish until 1953, when the school was made a “college” together with the other *Maarif* schools. In all of these schools, science and mathematics have been taught in a foreign language in addition to the intensive language and literature teaching as a separate subject, to this day, since according to the Treaty of Lausanne humanities cannot be taught in a foreign language in these schools. The *Maarif* colleges are now run by a national foundation, The Turkish Education Foundation (T.E.D.-Turkish acronym).

In 1956, Middle East Technical University, where the medium of instruction is English, was opened in Ankara with a view to attracting foreign students from especially the Middle East. This university is still one of the two English-medium state universities in Turkey, the other one being Boğaziçi University in İstanbul. Today there are many other English-medium private universities, mostly situated in the big cities⁸. Bilkent University (founded in 1983), Koç University (since 1993) and Sabancı University (since 1997) are the most prominent of such institutions. There are also some state universities, such as Hacettepe, Marmara and Çukurova, which offer education in a foreign language (mostly in English) in certain departments.

Therefore, teaching in a foreign language, of some or all of the courses, is seen in the following types of institutions;

1. most private, or foundation-owned, secondary schools and universities,
2. the two English-medium and one French-medium state universities,
3. other state universities where some departments have chosen to teach in a foreign language (mostly English),
4. the Lausanne-based foreign secondary schools⁹.

In these institutions, in addition to the teaching of subjects in a foreign language, intensive foreign language (and sometimes literature) instruction is also seen in the form of preparatory year courses (with 20-25 hours of foreign language teaching a week) and service language courses distributed to the whole period of the higher education.

Foreign Language Teaching per se, however, is seen in all types of state schools for approximately 4-6 hours a week¹⁰, preparatory year and service courses in some Turkish-medium state universities such as Yıldız Technical University, and private, foreign or state-owned adult language centres.

⁸ "Private" means foundation-owned since no individual can officially own a university; however, foundations can be and usually are established by individual entrepreneurs.

⁹ The 1997 decision to extend compulsory primary education to eight years has caused the closing down of the middle school sections of these schools. The effects of this decision on especially the foreign language education at these schools will be seen in the future. For a discussion of concerns see Belge (1997).

¹⁰ There was a period when the Ministry set up Anadolu secondary schools where the science subjects were taught in a foreign language (mostly English), but this practice was stopped in 1997, mainly due to a lack of teachers qualified in both their subjects and the foreign language and due to nationalistic concerns. However, foreign language teaching in these schools is still more intensive than the general state secondary schools.

3.5. A History of Aims and Methods in Foreign Language Teaching

The only statement of aims in foreign language teaching in the historical literature is the aims that were in effect between the years 1949-1972 for foreign language teaching in secondary schools. The aims were as follows;

“Foreign Language Teaching aims to make the learners able to speak in simple sentences within a vocabulary range of 1500 words, and to comprehend what is read at an appropriate level, with the help of a dictionary.” (Demircan 1988a:130)¹¹.

Though not satisfactorily achieved, it has always been the general aim to teach a foreign language, or even two foreign languages at secondary school level so that the student comes to university with knowledge of a foreign language (see the National Education Congresses in Demircan 1988a:129 and Ortaylı 1990).

The aims of Foreign Language Teaching at secondary school level today are as follows¹²;

1. Being able to comprehend the learnt foreign language when spoken at normal speed,
2. Being able to speak comprehensibly,
3. Reading and comprehending what has been read easily,
4. Enabling the expression of thoughts in writing,
5. Helping the learners to become useful citizens in the area of tourism, and in terms of international relations by developing the power and desire to improve their learnt language skills on their own after school” (MNE 1973 in ÇYDD 1991:119 and Demircan 1988a:133)¹³

The aims stated for higher education are the same as the secondary school aims; however, additionally there are two more items. One is the aim “...to make higher education more efficient”, and the other is related to the ability “...to keep up with foreign publications” (Demircan 1988a:131-133).

The earliest method used in the teaching of Arabic noted in the literature is translating vocabulary. Later in 1882, we see Hadji İbrahim Efendi applying the grammar-translation method for the teaching of Arabic in his private school, the *Darüttalim*, then known as the *Hadji İbrahim Efendi style Arabic* (Demircan 1988a:52). Demircan (1988a:22) writes that until 1941 the method for teaching languages was the grammar-translation method, based on “reading comprehension and translation”. However, Yücel (1938:188) reports the use of “the direct method” or “the Berlitz method” after 1919. In the 1940s at the Village Institutes the method was radically different. There was much emphasis on groupwork and the functions of language (see Demircan 1988a:148)¹⁴.

¹¹ All quotations from Turkish sources are my translations.

¹² Demircan (1988a) sees these aims as a statement of the approval of the audio-lingual method.

¹³ The word by word translation belongs to me; the inconsistency to do with perspective, such as the statement of aims from the learners' perspective in some items, and from the policy-makers' in others, is present in the Turkish as well.

Between the years 1944 and 1952, E.V. Gatenby, who was appointed to set up the English Department at the Gazi Education Institute, which later became Gazi University, spread the use of the "direct method" in the teaching of English throughout Turkey (Demircan 1988a:148). In the years 1955-1965, J. E. Pierce, who also worked at the same institution, introduced the Georgetown English Language Program (GELP), which was a version of "the audio-lingual method" (Demircan 1988a:149). After this date, two coursebooks are mentioned as having influenced the type of teaching: *A Linguistic Method of Teaching Languages* (1968 by Pageant Press) based on "the comparative linguistics method", and *An English Course for Turks* (1970 by the Ministry of National Education- MNE) based on "the audio-lingual method" (Demircan 1988a:150, see also ÇYDD 1991 for a critical review and MNE 1991 for the description and use of this book). Demircan (1988a:151-152) also states that "the audio-lingual method" has been the dominant method for the teaching of French as well. The Council of Europe, which has been encouraging the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching, has also been guiding Turkey in its foreign language education decisions since 1966 within this framework (Demircan 1988a:112); however, it has not been prescriptive in the implementation of these decisions¹⁵. Therefore, it would not be wrong to state that, today, in most foreign language classrooms, the methods suggested by the imported foreign coursebooks are made use of, combined with the intuitive decisions of teachers.

Finally, on the issue of method, I should note the teaching of science lessons in a foreign language as a subconscious (perhaps), but a historically powerful strategy to teach foreign languages. This fact seems to have been underestimated in Demircan's (1988a) comprehensive review¹⁶. Alptekin (1989) and Bear (1989) also point to the significance of this phenomenon in Ottoman-Turkish history, and claim that this type of teaching as a method is indispensable today, in the debate that the above mentioned dilemma stirred in the national papers recently. Teaching Foreign Languages as opposed to Teaching in a Foreign Language was the recent shape of the long-lasting controversial debate between the protectionists and the westernists¹⁷, and this issue is worth discussing in detail separately in the following section.

¹⁴ This is an interesting Turkish experiment to promote literacy and adult education in the early years of the Republic. Ever since the beginning of the project it has attracted a lot of criticism until finally it was put an end to in the 1940s. Basically the influential movement had the slogan *Education for work, education through work and education at work*. The project could be crudely summarized as the practice of choosing a couple from every village to be educated in the cities and sent back to their villages to set up and manage these institutes which would be the cultural, educational and work centres for the villagers who would also live in these schools. See Tanilli (1988) for a thorough analysis of this practice, for other literacy campaigns, village reading rooms, People's Homes (*Halkevleri*) and People's Rooms (*Halkodalari*).

¹⁵ See the recent publication of The Council of Europe (2000) for the introduction of two new concepts, "plurilingualism" and "pluriculturalism" (as opposed to multilingualism and multiculturalism) in the field of language teaching and learning in Europe, which has led to the announcement of 2001 as the European Year of Languages.

¹⁶ See Demircan (1988b:30) where he blames the Treaty of Lausanne for education in a foreign language. He claims that because it was stated in the Treaty that all culture-bound lessons had to be in Turkish, this implied that the others could be taught in another language.

¹⁷ In this article, by the terms *protectionists* and *nationalists*, I mean those emphasizing independence in the dilemma, while by *westernists* and *internationalists* I mean those emphasizing development; internationalism has almost always meant relations with the West, or the developed world, in Turkish history.

4. THE DILEMMA AGAIN: FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING OR TEACHING IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The dilemma, presented in the introductory section, has long been existent for the Turkish decision-makers, in the various forms outlined in the historical account. On the one hand, there has been the interest and the need to protect the Turkish language from the harmful influences of foreign languages and to promote Turkish as a scientific language, and on the other, there has been the interest and the need to achieve scientific and technological progress in order to reach the contemporary level at least as quickly as possible, in accordance with Atatürk's wishes, and to take part in international communication. Recently, though, once in 1989 then in 1997, when it sparked off much controversy in the daily papers, this dilemma has manifested itself in another form¹⁸. Currently, the protectionist position accepts the value of teaching foreign languages per se and rejects the teaching of any other courses, especially the science courses, in a foreign language¹⁹. The internationalist position argues that foreign language teaching through the teaching of other subjects has been an effective way to teach foreign languages historically and is beneficial. This new discussion might be worth looking into in more detail. In this section, the specific arguments put forth by the two positions will be presented in the left hand side column, while I will present my immediate reactions on each in the right column;

¹⁸ I should add that after the settling of the 1989 discussions, in 1997, it got into the agenda again, after the Ministry of National Education announced their intentions to stop the use of foreign languages (mainly English) in science lessons in all schools at secondary school level (Altunay and Uyguntürk 1997, Öztürk 1997). Later, because of strong reactions from the school owners and parents, the Ministry had to retreat and leave the private secondary schools out of their decision (Göktürk 1997). At the moment, it appears that the *Anadolu* lycees are included in this decision, mainly due to another pressing problem: a lack of teachers qualified to teach science lessons in mostly English. In addition, 66 MPs from the far right-wing National Movement Party have handed in a law proposal towards a re-Turkicizing of all subjects taught in schools and universities and towards the jurisdiction of the Ministry of National Education and the Council for Higher Education on this matter, on 5 December 2000 (no. 2/642- Turkish Grand Assembly records, on <http://www.TBMM.gov.tr>). The proposal is still in process at the time of the writing of this article.

¹⁹ There appears to be no view suggesting that foreign languages should not be taught at present; rather, there are suggestions, mainly coming from the protectionists, that foreign language teaching be more limited by making such courses elective and abolishing private colleges. These suggestions are seemingly for the sake of quality; i.e. the suggestion is to teach fewer and more interested people within the state system.

The protectionist position has the following specific arguments;

ARGUMENTS	COMMENTARY
1. Teaching in a foreign language is elitist and anti-democratic since all scientific findings need to be shared with the common people and a foreign language is hindering this information flow (Uğur 1990, Yücel 1990).	Yes, it is elitist and anti-democratic but in a country with a population of 62 million, it is almost impossible to teach everyone a foreign language and there really may not be a need to. However, it should be within the responsibility of these elites to share their knowledge with the common people in the official language of the country.
2. Rejecting the capacity of the Turkish language as a scientific language is a revival of the old Ottoman inferiority complex (Yücel 1989 and 1990).	Producers of knowledge and technology label them in their own languages. As long as Turkish people are not the producers of knowledge and technology, the Turkish language will be in need of supplementation. No language is incapable of becoming scientific.
3. We need to protect Turkish as a symbol of our identity because we are not a colonized nation (Soysal 1988, Kula 1989, Özel 1989, Develi 1990, Göktürk 1990, Kocaman 1990, Kuleli 1990 and Serin 1991).	I agree. It is the responsibility of every Turkish citizen to do so. We also need to be aware of economic colonization in our age. There is really no need for political colonization any more. But protecting and promoting the Turkish language is a separate issue from teaching a foreign language or even from teaching in a foreign language unless it is spread widely.
4. It is a basic human right to be educated in the mother tongue (Kilimci 1989).	I agree. But it is also among the basic human rights (declared in the United Nations Document, too) that individuals be given the opportunities to develop their potential to the full through proper education. This individual potential may sometimes exceed the limitations of a country. In fact, it is a part of the leader responsibilities of the elites to go beyond the general capabilities of the country.
5. Education in a second language hinders cognitive development (Kocaman 1989 and Sankur and Usluata 1990).	I am not so sure about this. There seems to be a good deal of research against this assertion, too. See, for example, Cummins and Swain (1986) for research suggesting that bilingual children are intellectually more able.

<p>6. Teaching in a Foreign Language is a waste of resources, such as through preparatory courses for private secondary schools and universities (Demircan 2001a and b)</p>	<p>Yes, foreign language teaching and teaching in a foreign language are both costly. It is a question of whether the advantages outweigh the disadvantages or not.</p>
<p>7. Teaching in a Foreign Language has not made Turkey an international centre of higher education (Soysal in Kırımsoy 1991 in reaction to the prevalent argument behind the foundation of Middle East Technical University).</p>	<p>We need to look at statistics here. Perhaps by comparing the number of foreign students studying at Boğaziçi University and Middle East Technical University with those studying at other universities over a time span. However, Soysal seems to be more concerned with academic quality than financial income. If so, what else could I do but agree. I wish every Turkish university would be so good as to attract foreign students. This way they would need to learn Turkish first.</p>
<p>8. Teaching in a foreign language is a means to exercise imperialism, and it leads to either brain drain or the education of local people working in favour of foreign interests. (İlhan 1997, 2000, Sinanoğlu 1999, 2000)</p>	<p>Belge (1997) has a worthy quotation on this issue; "In Ottoman times, there was a 'fair play' situation. They (foreign countries) wanted to educate people who were sympathetic to their ways; we wanted to educate intellectuals with a Western formation, who would work for us. As a result, one party's gain was the other's loss. But on this seesaw, naturally, we were winning more".</p>
<p>9. Teaching in a foreign language leads to teacher dominance and student passivity in the educational context, which has undesirable social implications (based on an empirical study at Middle East Technical University, Okan 1997)</p>	<p>Just as Atay and Ünalı (1997) point out, there may be many other factors influencing this educational picture. A reasonable next step would be to compare these findings with similar Turkish-medium contexts. I also have reservations concerning the research design as presented, but this is outside the scope of this article.</p>
<p>10. Scientific research in Turkey is not so developed as to introduce new theories to the rest of the world; therefore, there is no need to communicate Turkish research findings in a foreign language (an anonymous academic during personal communication).</p>	<p>This is a very dangerous view since it is limiting the few future possible researchers potentials by definition, and discouraging all researchers' efforts from the start. Hope is essential for the development of a country too. And this view also implies a receptive position in international communication, on our part. I am afraid this then suggests a passive acceptance of the dominance of the more developed countries, and such an argumentation would mean hoisting with our own petard.</p>

The internationalist position has the following arguments;

ARGUMENTS	COMMENTARY
1. Teaching a foreign language by means of teaching in a foreign language as a method has deep roots in our history and this system should not be upset (Bear 1989, Belge 1997, Kırca 1997).	Yes it does and perhaps yes it should not be upset. But it could be controlled. Teaching in a foreign language, especially if it is so widespread, does hinder the use and, therefore, the dynamism and development of the Turkish language in some important domains.
2. Acculturation will happen no matter what we do, and it may be politically and personally beneficial (Alptekin 1989).	No doubt about it, but this should not suggest that we should lie back and watch what is happening. I think there are things countries like Turkey can do to tailor acculturation to fit their own needs and interests; i.e. to turn a supposedly negative thing into positive. I also agree with the second part of the statement as long as the benefits are additive to my identity and interests and not subtractive.
3. Foreign language teaching has been more successful in schools where the instruction is in a foreign language (Sebüktekin 1981:115, Karakaş 1997, Kırca 1997).	Yes, this is a fact.
4. It is an inferiority complex to reject Westernization, which has always benefitted us, and teaching in a foreign language is an act of Westernization (Dumanlı 1989, Özüm 1989).	It is true that Westernization has benefited us; however, I cannot see the direct connection between teaching in a foreign language and Westernization.
5. Teaching in a foreign language provides a real context where the students can use the language (Bear 1989, Kocaman 1997).	This is why it seems to be successful as a foreign language teaching method.
6. Foreign language learning leads to a more conscious use of the first language; therefore, it develops the first language (Karakaş 1997).	I agree that foreign language learning will lead to a linguistic awareness, which will then enhance Turkish use. However, this is not an argument for teaching in a foreign language. Foreign languages can be taught well without teaching other courses in a foreign language, too. Some people seem to confuse the two.
7. Practising science in a foreign language saves us time in terms of information flow (Bilhan 1991).	This is the most important reason why teaching in a foreign language should continue in a few institutions ²⁰ . And this argument seems to be getting more and more important as communications technology is improving and the flow of information is speeding up continuously. Alpaydın (1996) claims, "it is easier and less costly to translate a book than to teach a crowd of people enough foreign language to make them able to read that book". Today we are possibly talking about access to hundreds of books with the touch of a button. Can we wait?

²⁰ Although Bilhan and others usually use the phrase "information flow" to mean one-way communication i.e. from the more developed countries to Turkey, I would like to use it for two-way communication. I think the world today requires that people frequently engage in face-to-face interaction in many domains, such as through student and teacher exchange programmes, academic conferences, tourism, and business. I would think that teaching in a foreign language also eases such interpersonal relationships; in such contexts, the Turkish people will also have a lot to communicate to others.

5. CONCLUSION

The parties who represent the above views have mainly offered the solution of establishing the use of Turkish in the science lessons in all schools for the former group, or a continuation of the present practice for the latter group. Only a few have suggested the teaching of social science subjects in a foreign language (mainly English), as opposed to the teaching of science subjects, so as to minimize the deprivation of the Turkish language from scientific and modern terminology (Demircan 1988b, Başkan 1997). This situation, however, is currently banned by the Treaty of Lausanne, and appears to have the potential to arouse strong opposition by those concerned about raising national consciousness.

In this section, I will sum up my views by pointing to the general weaknesses of both these positions, and make practical suggestions for decision-makers based on the comments made in reaction to each of the presented arguments in the previous section of this article. My suggestions and thoughts, however, are not more authorized than the others' at this moment because any vital decision, such as those concerning language, should be based on long-term research, good thinking and discussion, carried out without being affected by the short-term ambitions of the politicians.

In my opinion, the major wrong assumption of the nationalist position is that Turkish is a scientific language and that it can achieve scientific progress on its own and just as quickly. Countries like Turkey have to admit that as long as they are in a position to mainly import knowledge and technology, they will have to face threats to their official (or other) languages and will have to deal with the advancement of their own languages by making use of their own means systematically and purposefully. The only conclusive solution, though quite utopic at present, appears to be to reach a development level that can enable international collaboration on more or less equal terms, by being able to produce and name at least some of the world's technology and knowledge locally. Allocating much more funding for education, and encouraging individual and collaborative national and international research projects seem essential to reach this developmental level. Meanwhile, countries in need of importing knowledge and technology from abroad should refrain from paranoid and sentimental approaches, and try to use the situation to fit it to their national interests, such as by enjoying the quality offered by the already existing English-medium universities and by encouraging (perhaps even obliging) them to share their knowledge and expertise with the other universities and the general public²¹. However, it is vital that the number of foreign language-medium schools and universities (both state and private) be kept limited.

The major wrong assumption of the second position is that it underestimates the dangers of teaching in a foreign language. The nationalists' view that the prevention to use one's own language in those domains where the language is desired to be enriched is a

²¹ Quality should never be exchanged for quantity; it is always easy to upset existing systems and pull down the standards of the developed few, for the sake of public interest, with overnight standardization policies, but it takes ages to achieve quality (especially true for universities) and in the end the general public usually suffer again.

detriment, seems plausible, because languages need to be used to maintain their vitality. The fate of many historical languages, such as Latin, or the migrant variations of languages can be examples to support this view here. However, I do not think that we should change the present foreign language policies. Although, I agree with the protectionists view that foreign languages can be taught well in foreign language classes alone (i.e. without having to teach other subjects in those foreign languages), abolishing teaching in a foreign language altogether would require a complete rethinking of the present educational system; the quantity of foreign language teaching at both secondary schools and universities would have to be increased, and the quality raised. Such a change would have serious implications for the whole of the school curricula and department programmes. It would mean more teachers, more funding and so on. Given the short life of governments and lack of resources, if such a decision is taken, I am afraid we will end up with having destroyed a working way- though with its deficiencies without being able to set up a new one. In addition, teaching in a foreign language does have its merits as presented in the above section. I should mention the old Ottoman strategy to reduce the dangers of linguistic imperialism, at this point. Just as the Ottomans had done, and just as the “Francophones” seem to base their arguments on these days (see Erdoğan 1997), we could promote internationalism by supporting the teaching of more than one foreign language so as to prevent one-sided interaction (while acknowledging that the most important world language today is English). Today there are many more important foreign languages to learn (for Turkey), such as Japanese, Spanish, Russian and Chinese, than in the Ottoman times.

The second problem with the views of those advocating teaching in a foreign language seems to be the disregard of one important reason for initially implementing such a policy in the 19th century. The original rationale for teaching in a foreign language was the time-saving factor for the information flow. If, at least, some people in the country were proficient enough in the language of the knowledge or the innovation, this would enable its importation and use quickly; that is without having to wait for its translation. This time factor seems to be getting more and more important with the recent increase in the pace of communications technology. However, when teaching in a foreign language was first implemented, as we shall see below, it was part of a bigger package and there was an additional obligation, for students educated in such schools, to transfer this information coming from the more developed countries, into the Turkish language and hence offer it to the service of Turkish people. This seems necessary for the survival of a nation as well as for enabling the man-in-the-street to benefit from the services offered (via this information flow) in a more conscious and therefore more democratic way. The English-medium universities in particular, and Turkey in general, seem to have neglected the second part of the package. This appears to have created a group of elites, who have both received and used the knowledge among themselves, and hence got more and more separated from the interests and needs of the rest of the population. It seems reasonable to suggest that an emphasis on the second part of their responsibilities is essential in the future.

Specific policies to enable the information flow from the elites to the general public could be;

1. Strengthening the Turkish language departments of universities so that they can produce better students and engage in useful research to promote the Turkish language, perhaps in collaboration with especially the other departments in those fields where Turkish needs most supplementation.
2. Setting up language centres, which would accommodate researchers and experts, who would continuously and rapidly produce equivalents of the newly imported terminology in the countries' own language, such as the Académie Française in France, or the Turkish Language Institute (TDK), set up by Atatürk in Turkey in 1932. The Institute made many contributions in this direction, between the dates 1978-1981 especially, when they published many dictionaries in almost every discipline.
3. Encouraging closer communication between academics and experts, and the general public in the form of publications in the country's own language, national conferences, seminars, and collaboration between universities and workplaces.
4. Teaching foreign languages to as many people of the population as possible although this seems a difficult option for countries, such as Turkey, with a high population and scarce resources.
5. Increasing the quantity and quality of both Turkish and foreign language education in all schools and universities, and encouraging the two sorts of language teachers to collaborate with each other and the other subject teachers where necessary. For example, there could be school projects for the purpose of explicit focusing on the Turkish equivalents of scientific terminology.

To sum up, independence and development are equally important attributes of a country, and countries cannot afford to sacrifice one or the other. In addition, protecting and promoting the country's own language(s) is not at odds with promoting foreign language education. In fact, they may complement each other with careful planning and practice. Therefore, decision-makers should try to balance the two sorts of policies in a way most appropriate for their situation. The solution to the problems posed by this dilemma still lies in the speech of the Ottoman Sultan Mahmut II addressed to the students, at the opening ceremony of the Galatasaray Medical School, which was to carry out education in French, in 1838²²;

²² The translation is mine. The original is in Ottoman-Turkish and typically is a sample of a very elaborate code, characteristic of the educated Ottomans; I eliminated some of the unnecessary words and the translation bears only the essence.

“My Sons,

Here you are going to be educated in the science of Medicine. I know that a question appears for you to pose to my office. The question is this; is there not the science of medicine in our language or in our books that we are spending the time and effort to be educated in a foreign language? Although I agree with the assumption behind this question and hope for the elimination of the present situation, I am authoritatively also obliged to announce the inherent difficulties and the sources of this present situation. Although we have many books on the science of Medicine and although even the early Europeans have once acquired and interpreted the science of Medicine from these books, the books have originally been written in Arabic and have not been studied for a while by the intellectuals of Islam, who have gradually decreased in number and slowly lost touch with scientific developments. These books having been neglected for a while are in need of care and interest in the form of translations into our true language, which is Turkish. But this is a process which requires a long period of time. The Europeans, on the other hand, have transferred this science into their own language, and have based their own studies on this knowledge for more than a hundred years... We, however, need to educate men of medicine and make use of them on our magnificent lands, while at the same time transferring the whole of the knowledge into our language. My desire in teaching you in French is not to teach you the French language. It is only to teach you the science of Medicine so that step by step we can acquire the science and mould it into our own language. And then publicize this knowledge in every corner of my glorious country...(Since I am not happy about the fact that many mysterious individuals are coming from foreign countries with the title of medical doctor, and are poked here and there). I have provided for all your needs during your stay at this school, and in your stock there is everything available from hot kebabs to cold strawberries.” (from Ergun 1990:910)²³.

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²³ It should be noted that there have been doubts concerning the author and date of this speech (İhsanoğlu and Kaçar 1990). However, whatever the truth is concerning this text, it is still thought representative of the prevailing mentality at the time.

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