

CONTEMPORARY ELT PRACTICES ACROSS EUROPE AND IN TURKEY¹

Avrupa ve Türkiye’de Çağdaş İngilizce Öğretimi Uygulamaları

İsmail Hakkı MİRİCİ²

Abstract

The European policy oriented national implementations in English language education in Turkey are basically CEFR focused, which requires three educational principles such as self-assessment, cultural diversity and learner autonomy in a lifelong learning perspective, and based on an action oriented approach. In such a system students in the classrooms are expected to be considered as independent users of the language for their personal communication needs both inside and outside of the school settings. Therefore English language is not considered as “a lesson” to study but “a language” to speak and use for communication purposes especially with the representatives of other cultures. Teachers are suggested to be the most reliable language partners of their students, course designers are suggested to consider descriptive and prescriptive implications of the CEFR, testers are suggested to remember the CEFR descriptors when developing test items, and the learner/users of languages are suggested to develop their metacognitive learning strategies through self-assessment practices (keeping an ELP model) in a self-directed learning process.

Key words: *EFL in Turkey, CEFR, ELP, self-directed learning, self-assessment.*

Özet

Türkiye’de İngilizce dil eğitimindeki Avrupa politikasına dayalı ulusal uygulamalar temel olarak, hayat boyu öğrenme perspektifinden öz değerlendirme, kültürel çeşitlilik ve öğrenci özerkliği gibi üç eğitimsel prensibi gerektiren ve eylem odaklı bir yaklaşıma dayanan ADÖÇEP odaklıdır. Böyle bir sistemde sınıftaki öğrencilerin okul ortamları içindeki ve dışındaki kişisel iletişim ihtiyaçları için bağımsız dil kullanıcıları olarak görülmesi beklenmektedir. Bu yüzden İngilizce dili çalışmak için “bir ders” olarak değil, özellikle diğer kültürlerin temsilcileri ile iletişimsel amaçlar için konuşma ve kullanmaya yönelik “bir dil” olarak kabul edilmektedir. Öğretmenlere öğrencilerinin en güvenilir dil partnerleri olmaları önerilmekte, dersleri tasarlayanlara ADÖÇEP’in betimleyici ve kuralcı uygulamalarını göz önünde bulundurmaları tavsiye edilmekte, sınavları hazırlayanlara sınav sorularını geliştirirken ADÖÇEP’in tanımlayıcılarını hatırlamaları önerilmekte ve dil öğrenici/kullanıcılarına öz yönlendirmeye dayalı bir öğrenme sürecinde öz değerlendirme uygulamaları aracılığıyla (bir ADP modeli tutarak) üst bilişsel öğrenme stratejilerini geliştirmeleri tavsiye edilmektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: *Türkiye’de İngilizce öğretimi, ADÖÇEP, ADP, kendi kendine öğrenme, öz değerlendirme.*

¹ An earlier version of this study was previously presented in Çukurova International ELT Teachers (CUELT) Conference: An Insider View into Practice, in Adana, Turkey, May 21-22, 2015.

² Prof. Dr., Hacettepe University, e-mail: hakkimirici@gmail.com

Introduction

Since educational goals are similar across Europe, the European Commission works closely with policy-makers to support the development of education policies in Europe in line with the Education and Training 2020 strategy (ET2020). The modernization agenda for education fixes some key priorities for the European education system such as increasing the number of higher education graduates; improving the quality and relevance of teaching and learning; promoting mobility of students and staff and cross-border cooperation; strengthening the "knowledge triangle"; and linking education, research, and innovation. In order to ensure that these aims are met the European Commission is also developing and supporting tools to promote mobility in primary, secondary and higher education (such as joint projects, ECTS and the Diploma Supplement), and increase the recognition of skills and qualifications.

Governments are responsible for their education and training systems and individual universities organize their own curricula. Therefore Turkish Ministry of Education adapts the European education policy in its system including the foreign language teaching practices. For this purpose the Board of Education used the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as a guideline in the designing of English language programs; introduced the European Language Portfolio (ELP) oriented self-assessment via its website at adp.meb.gov.tr; foreign language teacher training departments are encouraged to use the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL) for their students' self-evaluation; and the government promotes the use of Europass as a tool to reflect personal, linguistic and professional abilities.

According to Eurobarometer 65% of the Europeans learn their foreign language at school, 56% of all Europeans can speak at least one foreign language, majority of them want to learn a foreign language to be able to use it when they are on holiday or during their business travels. A research conducted by the British Council reveals the fact that by 2020 about 2 billion adults will be trying to learn English as a foreign language. And according to the data presented by Education First (EF) Turkey is among the countries where English Proficiency Index (EPI) is not high (www.ef.com/eipi). Therefore adapting the European foreign language teaching policy introduced in the proceeding section of this paper is considered to be helpful to increase the expected success in the foreign language education system.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

The CEFR was created by the Council of Europe to provide 'a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe' (Council of Europe 2001a). It has both descriptive and prescriptive implications. It is descriptive because it describes language levels and skills in a comprehensive manner. In the CEFR all language competences (linguistic, communicative and intercultural) are valued and described at six levels from A1 to C2 level for five skills namely, listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production and writing. In addition, the content for each level is given in the related resources developed by Van Ek and Trim (1990a, 1990b, 2001).

The CEFR based language proficiency levels are divided into three coherent, broad reference levels- A, B and C as shown below and the proficiency levels of language users are described in a global scale as given in Table 1:

Reference levels:

A		B		C	
Basic User		Independent User		Proficient User	
A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
(Breakthrough)		(Threshold)		(Mastery)	
		(Vantage)		(Effective Operational Proficiency)	

Table 1. The Global Scale of Proficiency Levels

Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of proficient meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express himself/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and Independent disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate Basic need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce himself/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Council of Europe 2001a

The European Language Portfolio (ELP)

The ELP is a self-assessment tool based on the CEFR. It was developed by the Language Policy Unit of the Council of Europe to promote plurilingual and multicultural European citizenship identity through supporting learner autonomy, plurilingualism and intercultural awareness and competence. It allows its holders to keep the record of their linguistic and intercultural achievements and experiences gained both inside and outside of the classroom environment (Council of Europe 2001b, Mirici2000, 2008). It comprises three main sections such as Language Biography, Language Passport and the Dossier.

- Language Biography helps language users to plan, reflect upon and assess their own learning process and progress via some subsections such as **“self-awareness” (learning to learn), “intercultural experiences”, and “can do” statements (self-assessment)**.
- Language Passport is the summary of the biography section of the ELP and is used to reflect some personal information such as languages spoken and levels of these languages, certain indicators established by the Modern Languages Division of CoE.
- Documents such as certificates, diplomas, samples of projects, articles, letters, diaries, etc. are kept in this part of the ELP in order to illustrate the achievements or experiences recorded in the Language Biography.

There are about 127 accredited and registered ELP models across Europe.

The European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL)

The EPOSTL is a reflection tool for academic competences gained during undergraduate level at language teacher training departments in Europe. It was developed and has been introduced by the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe. It aims to encourage student teachers of languages to reflect on their own didactic knowledge and skills necessary to teach languages. As well as student teachers of languages it can also be used by practicing teachers to analyze and reflect on their knowledge and skills needed to teach a foreign language (Newby 2012). It aims to address the content of teacher education with a view to identifying ‘core competences’; to formulate corresponding didactic competence descriptors relating to language teaching; to embed these in a portfolio to help student teachers reflect on their knowledge, skills and values.

The EPOSTL consists of three components – a personal statement, self-assessment and a dossier. These components are also supplemented by an introduction, glossary of terms, an index and a user’s guide (<http://epostl2.ecml.at/>). Since its publication in 2007, the EPOSTL has been widely used at universities and teacher education institutions in Europe and in other continents and has been translated into 14 languages, including Japanese and Arabic. The EPOSTL is accessible on the ECML website: <http://epostl2.ecml.at/> in most European languages.

The Council of Europe Language Policy Division in Strasbourg, France (<http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/>), and the Council of Europe Center for Modern Languages in Graz, Austria (<http://www.ecml.at/>) collaborate and coordinate foreign

language learning and teaching practices, projects, and related events and activities across Europe (Mirici 2014).

The Europass

The Europass is an initiative aiming at helping individuals make their skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood across Europe in order to facilitate the mobility of both students and workers. The Europass helps individuals chronicle their skills and competences in a coherent manner. Europass consists of a portfolio of five documents such as Europass CV, Europass Language Passport and Europass Mobility and Diploma/Certificate Supplements (<http://www.europass.ie/europass/what.html>).

The language competences are also certified through some standard examination systems which are members of two European associations called;

ALTE-The Association of Language Testers in Europe (<http://www.alte.org>) and **EALTA-European Association for Language Testing and Assessment** (<http://www.ealta.eu.org>)

The CEFR and the ELP Oriented Practices in Turkey

The Ministers of the member states to the Council of Europe held their 20th meeting in Krakow, Poland between the dates of 15-17 October 2000. In their meeting they agreed to adapt and disseminate the CEFR and ELP oriented foreign language implementations in their education system. As a result Turkish Ministry of Education Board of Education designed the English language curricula in accordance with the CEFR principles and guidelines in 2002, 2011 and 2013. The last curriculum introduced through the ministry website has the following introduction section (www.meb.gov.tr).

Introduction

Learning Model for English 2nd-8th Grades 2013

In designing the new English language teaching program, the principles and descriptors of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR)* were closely followed. The CEFR particularly stresses the need for students to put their learning into real-life

practice in order to support fluency, proficiency and language retention (CoE, 2001); accordingly, the new curricular model emphasizes language use in an authentic communicative environment.

Besides the ELP models for the students at state schools is accessible at the Ministry website <http://adp.meb.gov.tr>

Some data about the English language teaching and the CEFR oriented system in Turkey is as follows:

1. The number of EFL teachers in the State schools is 62.393. Out of this number 62.300 of them are teachers and 93 of them are serving in various administrative position.

2. The number of students who are using one ELP Ministry model is about 40,000.
3. EFL teachers feel that they need to develop their lifelong learning competences (Selvi 2011).
4. EFL teachers feel that they need to develop their language competences in English and they point out that they do not apply what they believe should be done during planning their classes and administering assessment tools (Cesur 2012).
5. EFL teachers reflect their needs for regular in-service teacher training programs (Aydođdu 2007, Arıkan 2010).
6. Some other information is given in the following table:

Table 2. The CEFR and the ELP Practices in Turkey

Number	Institution/ Organization	CEFR & ELP Based Implementation
1	Ministry of Education	Two ELP models for 10-14 and 15-18 years of age groups are accessible at the Ministry website. EFL programs have been developed through the CEFR principles. Several in-service training programs have been conducted.
2	Council of Higher Education	Foreign language teacher training programs of Education Faculties were redesigned and the CEFR was placed in the related programs as one of the topics in the Special Teaching Techniques 1 courses. In addition preparatory class students at some universities such as SüleymenDemiel University, Cukurova University and Usak University are using an ELP model to self-assess their progress.
3	Private college schools	Most private schools adapted CEFR based EFL curricula in their system and promote the use of ELP in their schools. E.g. Sınav schools, American Culture schools, Maya schools, etc.
4	Private Language Schools	The Association of the Private Language Schools in Turkey has started to promote the use of ELP in their CEFR oriented programs.
5	Professional Competency Organization	CEFR descriptors have become standards in determining professional language proficiency and the language passport has become a requirement as a standard document.

Table 3. The Accredited ELP Models in Turkey

Number	Institution/Organization	CoE Acc./Reg. Number
1	Ministry of Education (15-18)	47.2003
2	Ankara University TOMER (Adult)	56.2004
3	Bilfen Schools (10-14)	79.2006
4	Ministry of Education (10-14)	80.2006
5	Bilfen Schools (5-9)	85.2007
6	ITU (7-9)	114.2010
7	ITU (10-14)	115.2010
8	Maya College (7-9)	2013.R008

References

- Arikan, A. (2010). Effective English language teacher from the perspectives of prospective and in-service teachers in Turkey. *Electronic Journal of Social Sciences*, 9(31), 209-223.
- Aydođdu, E. (2007). *EFL teachers' perceptions of foreign language teaching competences*. Unpublished Master Thesis, Trakya University, Edirne.
- Cesur, K. (2012). Examining competencies of prospective English teachers through their Pedagogical content knowledge: A case study. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Gazi University: Ankara.
- Council of Europe (2001a). Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment, Cambridge: CUP.
- Council of Europe (2001b). European Language Portfolio (ELP), available online: www.coe.int/portfolio
- Little, D and Perclova, R (2001). European Language Portfolio: A guide for teachers and teacher trainers, Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Mirici, İ. H. (2000). "European Language Portfolio: A tool for a common language education policy in Europe". *Journal of Interdisciplinary Education*, 6 (1): 161-166.
- Mirici, İ. H. (2008). "Development and Validation Process of a European Language Portfolio Model for Young Learners". TOJDE. April 2008, Volume: 9 Number: 2, Eskişehir: Anadolu University.
- Mirici, İ. H. (2014). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the European Language Portfolio (ELP) in S. Çelik (Ed.) *Approaches and Principles in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Education*. Ankara: Eđiten.
- Newby, D. (2012). Insights into the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL) Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Selvi, K. (2011). Teachers' lifelong learning competencies. *UluslararasıEđitimProgramlarıwe Öđretim Çalıřmaları Dergisi*, 1(1), 61-69.
- vanEk, J A and Trim, J L M (1990a). Threshold 1990, Cambridge: CUP.

vanEk, J A and Trim, J L M (1990b). Waystage 1990, Cambridge: CUP.

vanEk, J A and Trim, J L M (2001). Vantage, Cambridge: CUP.