

A Case Study on the Competencies of the Teachers Assigned Abroad by the Ministry of National Education to Teach Turkish to Foreigners

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Abstract

The profession of teaching is defined in Article 43 of the Fundamental Law of National Education no. 1739 as a specialized profession that undertakes education, training and other related administrative duties of the state, and the qualifications of teachers are evaluated under two sections as general qualifications and special field qualifications. Teacher qualifications are competencies that are required to be possessed by all teachers under training to achieve national education goals. The increasing interest in Turkish, escalating immigration rates and other reasons have caused the importance of teaching Turkish as a foreign language to increase. The Ministry of National Education assigns lecturers and teachers every year in order to meet the demand for Turkish educators from abroad. The aim of this study is to determine the field qualifications of teachers who are awaiting assignment after having passed the exam held by the Ministry of National Education to be assigned abroad. The method in this study was designed as case study. The random purposeful (purposive) sampling method and the purposive criterion sampling method were used to determine the study group. The study group consists of 10 teachers and lecturers awaiting assignment after having passed the foreign lecturing exam held by the Ministry of National Education. The data collection phase of the study was carried out using the interview method. The data were transferred to the MAXQDA 12 qualitative data analysis program and the content analysis technique was used in the analysis of the data. Study results showed that most of the teachers in the study group had low awareness toward their assignment and a lack of knowledge on methods-techniques, material and planning, and that most of the participants lacked training in their fields. According to the results obtained in this study, educators to be assigned abroad by the ministry should be required to graduate from the Turkish teaching undergraduate - graduate or postgraduate programs related to teaching Turkish to foreigners.

Keywords: Teaching Turkish as a foreign language, teacher's competencies, teacher education

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Introduction

The profession of teaching is defined in Article 43 of the Fundamental Law of National Education no. 1739 as a specialized profession that undertakes education, training and other related administrative duties of the state (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1973). According to a statement in the same article, teachers are required to receive special training in their determined field and to possess adequate knowledge and skills in three main areas: general knowledge-general ability, occupational knowledge (pedagogical formation) and field knowledge. Therefore, the profession of teaching is a field of occupation that requires field knowledge, general knowledge and pedagogical knowledge and skill (Çakan, 2004; Şişman, 2009).

"Teacher Qualifications", prepared under three sections as "teaching qualifications", "general knowledge and skills" and "special field knowledge and skills" in compliance with the definition of teaching as clearly stated by the Ministry of National Education in the law no. 1739, went into effect in 2002. According to this, the qualifications of teachers were divided into two sections as general qualifications and special field qualifications. General qualifications encompass 6 fields of qualifications, 31 subfields of qualifications and 233 performance indicators while special field qualifications encompass special knowledge and skills (MEB, 2008).

Teachers play important roles in all stages of education, including the planning, implementation and evaluation of educational activities. Previous studies revealed that student success is directly influenced by the difference created by teachers who possess the aforementioned qualifications (Demirel and Kaya, 2006; Eryaman, 2007; Özer and Gelen, 2015). Therefore, teacher selection directly affects the future of a country. Finland, which receives international acclaim for educational success, accepts only 15% of the applications to teacher training schools. In addition to knowledge tests, communication and social interaction skills are also evaluated in candidate selection through interviews (Şişman, 2009). In addition, teachers are required to have completed a master's degree.

The aforementioned teacher qualifications are required to be possessed by all teachers under training to accomplish national education goals. However, teaching one's native language as a foreign language requires an additional area of specialization. Teachers who teach their native language as a foreign language are required to be able to speak a second or even a third language in addition to their pedagogical qualifications and knowledge of foreign language teaching methods. Foreign language is very important for teachers in terms of efficiency as it is both a tool and a purpose for them (Costa, 2015). Additionally, language proficiency is also important in terms of contributing to the identity development of foreign language teachers as "their teaching experiences are often synchronous with their linguistic development" (Miller and Kubota, 2013). As observed by Chambless (2012), there is a

causal link between the foreign language proficiency of teachers and the level of education in the classroom.

The professional qualifications of teachers are subject to their general knowledge, subject field knowledge and occupational knowledge and skills (Erden, 2005; Eryaman& Riedler, 2010). The "pedagogical education" of teachers who teach their native language as a foreign language is also of importance (Shultz, 2000), and factors such as the emergence of good methods as a result of teacher qualifications, the extent of foreign languages spoken in class and adopted educational approaches directly influence the learning process of all students (Costa, 2015).

Foreign language teaching requires serious preparation. Teachers are required to be capable of conveying knowledge to their students in addition to being knowledgeable about the topics discussed. Additionally, teachers are required to be creative and innovative (Marcelino, 2005).

Questions related to language teaching are generally on what to teach and how. Therefore, teachers are required to be knowledgeable about the essence of the language being taught, or, with a clearer expression, language or linguistics as a whole (Troncoso, 2005). Without this content knowledge, language teachers cannot judge themselves adequately to improve their linguistic proficiency (Kömür, 2010).

The world is in a state of rapid change. Especially with the rapid development of computer and communication technologies in the past 20 years, past knowledge loses validity and gets replaced by new information and methods. The knowledge and skills that were required to be possessed by a second language teacher 20 years ago are insufficient in today's global and rapidly changing world. Although the body of topic knowledge taught under grammar and pedagogy 20 years ago is adequate, second language teachers today are faced with various topic fields (Wilbur, 2007). Therefore, foreign language teachers are required to adapt themselves and possess an accumulation of knowledge and culture in a wide network.

Teachers who teach Turkish as a foreign language should also possess knowledge and skills on attitudes and values in addition to the aforementioned general occupational qualifications. That is because Turkish teachers represent Turkey, Turkish people and Turkish culture in the eyes of foreigners and Turkish learners from around the world (Karababa and Çalışkan, 2013).

The matter of teaching Turkish as a foreign language has gained high importance in recent years. Certificate programs, undergraduate and graduate courses and scientific and academic publications are important indicators of this situation. The most important reason is the increasing demand for learning Turkish. Turkish is taught prevalently as a foreign language both at home and abroad. The number of foreign students in the country has increased, especially in universities (Mutlu and Ayrancı, 2017), and people living in our country for various reasons study Turkish in Turkish education centers. In foreign countries, Turkish courses are offered in various schools established in

recent years, Turcology departments in universities and in various other departments as elective courses. Additionally, Turkish is also taught in the Yunus Emre Institutes and centers of Turkish Language and Culture. Foreign teacher assignments are mainly done by the Ministry of National Education. Teacher selection and assignment was previously done by the Yunus Emre Institute before the institute transferred this task to the Ministry of National Education. Every year, the Ministry holds foreign teacher and lecturer exams for assignment to Turkish schools abroad, Turkish Community Centers and universities upon demand. In addition to certain main qualifications required from lecturer and teacher candidates, Vocational Qualification Exams (written) and Representative Ability Exams (interview) are also held. The candidates who passed the exam are assigned in line with the emerging needs. The requirements for applying for the foreign lecturer exam are listed below:

a) Being a citizen of the Republic of Turkey,

b) 1- Having completed at least 5 (five) years of service as a teacher and/or academician as of the last day of application and being actively in service as an academician under the Higher Education Personnel Law no. 2914, or

2- Having completed at least 5 (five) years of service as a teacher and/or academician as of the last day of application and being actively in service as a teacher in the urban or rural departments of the Ministry of National Education under the State Officer Law no. 657*

c) Having completed military service or being exempt,

d) Having not been sentenced for crimes against the safety of the State, crimes against the constitutional order and the functioning of this order, embezzlement, bribery, theft, fraud, forgery, abuse of trust, fraudulent bankruptcy, bid rigging, using fraud or trickery in the fulfillment of execution, laundering money originating from criminal activity and contraband, even if pardoned or the sentence is expired according to Article 53 of the Turkish Penal Code dated 26/06/2004, numbered 5237.,

e) Having no obstacle to be assigned abroad according to de information and documents obtained as a result of the security clearance to be performed by the relevant authorities,

f) Not having any bodily and mental illness that would prevent the candidate from performing the duty, not being disabled and not being a carrier of any infectious disease,

g) Having not been sentenced for any disciplinary punishment other than warnings and reprimands,

h) Being in compliance with the graduation and foreign language requirements (50 p.) stated in Article (i) of 1. GENERAL PRINCIPLES,

i) Passing the Vocational Qualification and Representative Ability Exams,

j) To be assigned for a second time, those who have previously been assigned abroad by the Inter-Ministerial Joint Culture Commission must have completed their previous foreign duties successfully and have worked for at least 2 (two) years as of the last day of application,

k) Not to be waiting for assignment after having passed the previous exams held by the Inter-Ministerial Joint Culture Commission,

l) Being in possession of the representative ability required by the service. The candidates are required to have a degree from the departments of Turkish Language and Literature/Turkish and Contemporary Turkish Dialects and Literature in the Faculty of Science and Letters, foreign language departments or the departments of philology, linguistics, translation science, comparative literature, teaching and translation as required by the service (MEB, 2017).

As stated above, teaching one's native language as a foreign language is a task that requires an additional area of expertise. Therefore, it is debatable whether only one additional foreign language can be enough to fulfill this task.

The aim of this study is to determine the field expertise competencies of Turkish lecturers to be assigned abroad by the Ministry of National Education, examine the topic based on the conclusions and develop suggestions. In this context, the study was conducted through interviews with teachers awaiting assignment after having passed the exam held by the Ministry of National Education.

Method

Model of the Study

The present study was designed as a case study. Case studies are among the qualitative study designs used in the exploration and examination of emerging situations in the field of education. Case study is an approach that includes the detailed examination and description of limited systems using multiple data collection in order to obtain systematic information on how the said systems operate (Chmiliar, 2010; Merriam, 2013). In a case study, the researcher thoroughly examines one or more conditions limited in time using multiple-source data collection tools such as observations, interviews, audio-visuals, documents and reports (Creswell, 2007). In the present study, in compliance with the case study design, data were collected from the teachers and academicians in the sample group through interviews before being analyzed and described in detail to determine the field qualifications of the teachers awaiting assignment after having passed the exam held by the Ministry of National Education.

Study Group

The random purposeful (purposive) sampling method was used to determine the study group (Creswell, 2007). Purposive sampling is a method where cases thought to contain situations that are richer in terms of information according to the purpose of the study are evaluated. The purposive criterion sampling method was also used (Büyüköztürk et al., 2015). Therefore, three criteria were determined. These are; having passed the foreign lecturer exam held by the Ministry of National Education, voluntariness to participate in the study and availability to participate in telephone interviews. The study group consists of 10 teachers and academicians awaiting assignment after having passed the exam held by the Ministry of National Education. The teachers were informed about the purpose and contents before the study was initiated. Therefore, the study group was determined on a fully voluntary basis. The participating educators were coded as P₁, P₂, P₃...P₁₀. Table 1 shows the age, gender, seniority and education information of the study group.

Table 1. Study Group Characteristics

#	Gender	Age	Working Year	Educational Background	Educational Field
K1	Male	36	12	Doctoral Degree	Turkish Language and Literature/Modern Turkish Literature
K2	Female	29	6	Master's Degree	Turkish Language and Literature /Modern Turkish Language
K3	Male	35	13	Master's Degree	Turkish Language Teaching/Turkish Education
K4	Male	36	11	Doctoral Degree	English Language and Literature /English Education/English Linguistics
K5	Female	44	20	Doctoral Degree	English Language Teaching/English Education/English Education
K6	Female	36	12	Doctoral Degree	Turkish Language and Literature/Modern Turkish Literature
K7	Female	33	9	Master's Degree	Turkish Language and Literature/Folk Literature
K8	Female	33	9	Master's Degree	Turkish Language Teaching/Turkish Education
K9	Female	29	6	Master's Degree	Turkish Language and Literature Teaching/Modern Turkish Literature
K10	Female	32	8	Master's Degree	Turkish Language and Literature/Modern Turkish Literature

Data Collection Tool

The data collection phase of the study was performed using the interview method, which is common in qualitative studies (Silverman, 2013). Therefore, an eleven-question interview form was used, including questions on the awareness of the teachers toward teaching Turkish to foreigners, their educational background and the educational process of teaching Turkish to foreigners. A question pool was established to create the form and the questions were evaluated in accordance with the views of three expert academicians. After the necessary corrections (clarity and purposefulness) were made, expert opinion was referred to again and the interview form was finalized in accordance with these opinions.

Data Collection

Interviews with the participating teachers and academicians were conducted by telephone due to the geographical distance (Creswell, 2015). Pre-interviews were conducted with the participants, in which explanations were made regarding the content, purpose and importance of the study. Their questions were answered and it was explained that their opinions were important and necessary to detect and eliminate the problems in the field. A pilot study was conducted before the interviews and interview times were determined for each participant. The participants were again warned that the conversations would be recorded and their permission was obtained. Afterwards, the questions in the form were directed at the participants and the interviews began with the following phases:

- introduce yourself (with prestigious titles),
- identify the sponsor of the study,
- give the general topic of the study,
- relay the confidentiality of their responses,
- explain how the information will be used, and
- give an estimate of the interview's length. (Burke and Miller, 2001)

After the interviews were concluded, the audio recordings were transferred to the MS Word program as separate files for each participant and prepared for analysis.

Data Analysis

The data obtained through phone interviews were transferred to the MAXQDA 12 qualitative data analysis program and the content analysis method was used in the analysis of the data. The creation of codes and categories in MAXQDA is controlled by the user, who can create codes before, during or after the material is analyzed. The codes are presented in a hierarchical, treelike, structure that allows several levels of codes to be indexed (Oliveira et al., 2015). The main processes in the content analysis are gathering similar data within the framework of certain concepts and themes, arranging them in a manner that is comprehensible for the reader and interpreting them (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). Among the content analysis types, the categorical analysis was used in the study. The data were coded first in the categorical analysis. Codes are symbols used to classify or categorize word groups and concepts related to study questions (Robson, 2001). The codes were categorized around certain themes. The views of the teachers and academicians on the emerging codes were referenced. The analyzed data were presented with visuals obtained through the program and interpreted. It was aimed to increase the clarity of the visuals by differentiating the colors while categories were coded from general to specific. Therefore, the sequence of colorization is as follows: Red > Green > Yellow > Blue > Khaki.

Findings

The data obtained in the study were analyzed in the form of code - category in the MAXQDA qualitative analysis program, and the results were presented with graphics. Figure 1 shows the awareness of the participating teachers towards their duty and field knowledge.

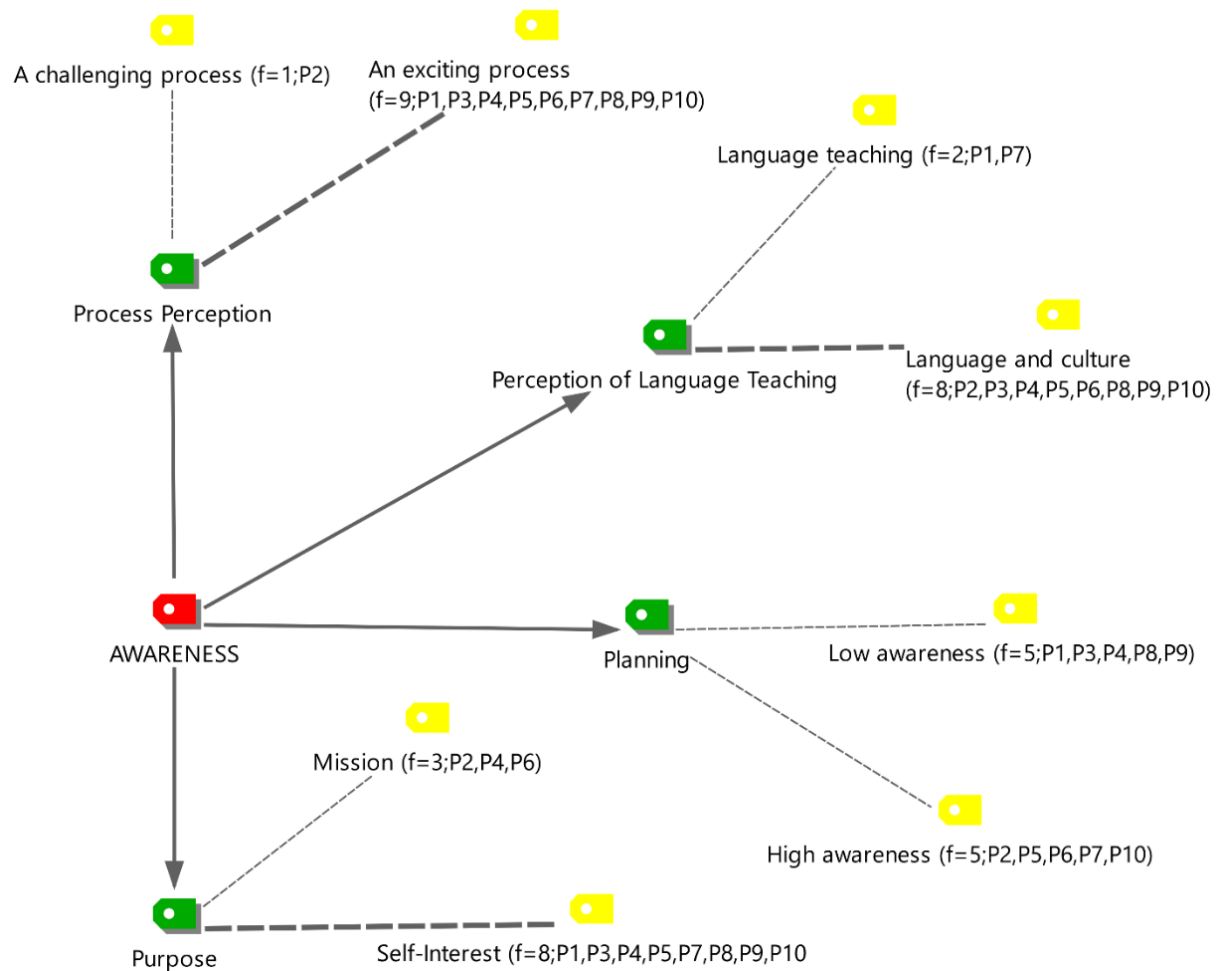


Figure 1. Awareness

Purpose

The participating teachers were first asked the question "What is the primary aim in your desire to go abroad?". 7 of the participants stated their aim as self-improvement and education of themselves or their children. 2 of the participants stated their aim as learning about different cultures and helping the Turks living abroad. 1 teacher responded with both self-development and a sense of duty. Some of the answers given by the teachers are listed below.

Self-Interest: *"My main motivations in going abroad are the good of my children, personal education and gaining experience. (K3)" "It is mostly about living a different experience and learning a foreign language, and I think that it would be beneficial for my personal development as I lived*

abroad before. (K10)" "I applied to work abroad for personal development and an opportunity to become an academician. (K9)"

Mission: *"My primary aim is to promote my own culture, learn about different cultures and get in touch with the Turks living abroad to understand the problems they face. (K6)"*

Planning

In order to reveal their awareness towards their profession and field knowledge, the study group was asked the questions "What kind of planning do you intend to make when you start working?" and "Did you review the curricula related to teaching Turkish as a foreign language?". It was revealed that 5 of the participating teachers were informed about the curricula while 5 of the teachers did not study any Turkish curricula before and had no plans for the process. The findings revealed that the average field knowledge awareness of the participants was low.

Low awareness: *"I have not thought about it, I think that we will be given books in our workplaces. (K3)" "I have not reviewed them in detail, but I have done some research. (K9)"*.

High awareness: *"I haven't thought about this issue as my place of duty is not determined yet, but I have a plan regarding the course content for different proficiency levels. My primary plan is to engage in fun activities with the students. My immediate aim is to improve myself in classroom activities. I do not want to overwhelm the students with grammar knowledge afterwards. (K6)" "I will make my plans based on course hours, I will implement the program I have been using in TÖMER. I will plan the topics I will be teaching at different levels. If they have learned Turkish before, I will hold a number of language proficiency exams. (K10)"*

Perception of Language Teaching

In order to reveal their perception of the close relationship between culture and foreign language teaching, the study group was asked the question "Will you prioritize culture teaching or language teaching?". 8 of the participants emphasized that culture was a part of language and could not be considered as a separate concept while 2 participants stated that they would prioritize language teaching. Based on these results, it can be said that the teachers generally had high levels of perception towards language teaching. Some of the answers given by the teachers are as follows.

Language and culture: *Language is a tool of culture, language cannot exist without culture. I think culture is a very important concept, I will emphasize the promotion of Turkish language and culture without imposing the culture related to the language that we are teaching as there are different cultures in the world. Turkish culture will be included in language education by nature. (K5)" "Culture and language are inseparable, cultural education facilitates language education. (K3)"*

Language teaching: *"Language teaching will be prioritized. (K1)"*

Process Perception

In order to reveal their expectations from the assignment, the participants were asked the question "What are your expectations from the process you will go through?". 8 of the participant stated that the process would be exciting while 2 of them stated that it would be challenging. According to the study data, the participants generally expect positive outcomes from this process.

An exciting process: Gaining experience in Turkish education and teaching language at a basic level, adopting different perspectives, self-improvement, learning about foreign cultures, meeting different people. (K3)" "First of all, I think I will be greatly educated on the Russian language, so this experience will benefit me in the area of foreign language. I want to be a good role model in terms of representing Turkish culture and restoring our reputation abroad. I don't think I will have a problem with this in Russia, but maybe in Europe. My goals are to promote our culture, learn about different cultures, complete the PhD program and improve myself in the field of education as I work at a high school level and aim to get into the academic environment. I think I will be benefited greatly and my vision will expand. (K7)" "A great experience, access to knowledge, doctorate education, learning a foreign language. (K8)"

A challenging process: "First of all, I know that I will be facing challenges but I will focus on my work, I have expectations for myself as well, of course, I want to conduct studies on my field and improve myself. However, my priority will be my students and teaching them in the best way possible. (K2)"

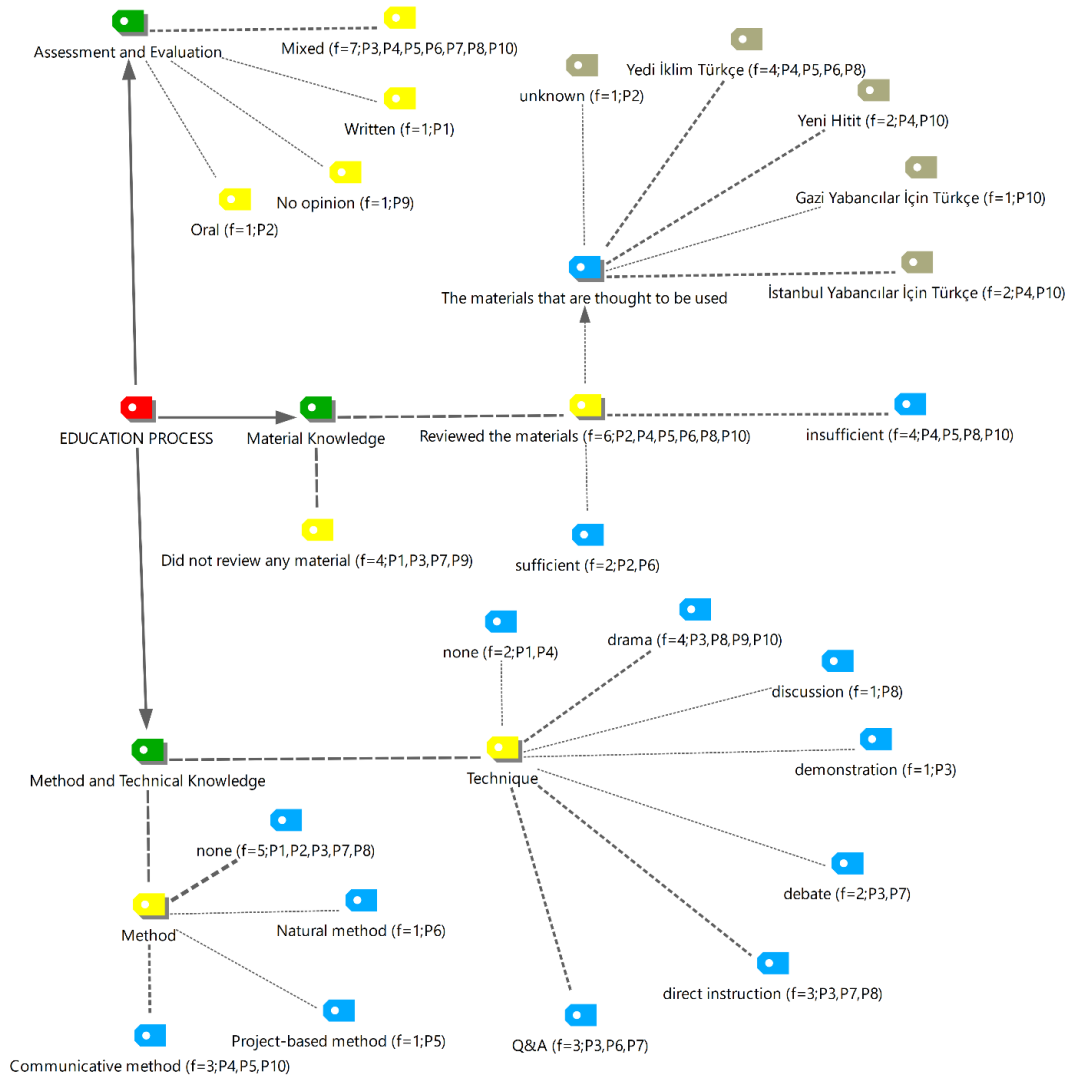


Figure 2. Education Process

Questions on methods-techniques, material-planning and assessment-evaluation phases were directed to the teachers awaiting assignment after having passed the exam held by the Ministry of National Education to be assigned abroad in order to reveal their field knowledge qualifications.

Method and Technical Knowledge

In order to reveal their method-technical knowledge on the field, the participants were asked the question "What methods and techniques do you intend to use in the classroom?". It was determined that the participants preferred to use the communicative method (3), natural method (1) and project-based method (1) while 5 of the participants did not intend to use any method. Regarding technique, drama (4), Q&A (3), direct instruction (3), debate (2), demonstration (1) and discussion (1) techniques were preferred while 2 of the participants did not state any technique.

Views on the method preferences were presented below:

Natural method: *“Technically, I aim to teach student-oriented lessons in the form of dual Q&A. My main priority is to stay in constant communication with my students, making sure that they are actively engaged, teaching student-oriented lessons and creating an environment of active participation and natural life, which can be summarized as the natural method. (K6)”*

Communicative method: *“I will mostly use the communicative language method as I think that this method would be beneficial in emphasizing student skills in connection with each other. (K10) “I aim to use a communication-based process assessment, a formative evaluation that is enriched by materials. We can call this the communicative method but it includes various other aspects such as the integration of technology. (K4)”*

Project-based method: *I want to use a method that integrates technology-based projects. That is because even if I engage with the class for six hours, what students do outside the classroom will still be very important as they learn Turkish in the environment of a foreign language. I want to give them assignments such as instead of intense homework. (K5)”*

Sample quotations were not presented for the views related to technique preferences as one-word answers were given by the participants.

Material Knowledge

In order to determine their material knowledge, the study group was asked the questions "Did you review the material related to this field? Do you think they are sufficient? What materials do you intend to use?". It was concluded that 4 of the participants did not review any material, 6 of the participants reviewed the materials, that 4 out of 6 participants found the material to be insufficient and the other 2 found them sufficient. Additionally, the books *Yedi İklim Türkçe* (4), *İstanbul Yabancılar İçin Türkçe* (2), *Yeni Hitit* (2) and *Gazi Yabancılar İçin Türkçe* (1) were considered to be used while one participant did not state any book set.

Participants who did not review any material: *“No, not exactly, I briefly examined some of the books of the Yunus Emre Institute after a seminar I attended. (K1) “I only examined the book prepared for Syrians. I have no knowledge about the others. (K3)”*

The views of the participants who reviewed the materials are presented below:

The participant who found the materials insufficient: *“Certainly not. There are issues of authenticity and currentness. Also, I consider the materials and method studies of Turkish education as a new field. In this sense, I think that a very different teaching method, that can also be harmful, was designed. It appears to be directly grammar-based. I find it insufficient in this sense. (K5)”*

The participant who found the materials sufficient: *“Yes, I think they are sufficient, although the extent of application should be broadened. I do not have an opinion on what the most beneficial book is. (K2)”*

Assessment and Evaluation

In order to determine their assessment and evaluation knowledge, the study group was asked the question "What kind of assessment-evaluation phase do you intend to carry out in the field of teaching Turkish to foreigners?". 7 of the participants stated that they would carry out the process in a mixed way while 1 participant stated oral, 1 stated written and one participant did not state an opinion.

Direct quotations regarding the codes generated according to the assessment and evaluation preferences are presented below:

No opinion: "I am not well-informed about the practices as I am inexperienced. (K9)"

Mixed: "First, I will get information from the other teachers, then I plan to make assessments through written exams and interviews. I will obtain more information on topics such as written exams, pre-tests and individual interviews. (K8)" "I can use assessment-evaluation tests. Regular exams will be held anyway. Applications will be made towards reading, writing and speaking. I am planning to make my assessments in this manner. As for assessment tools, I plan to review articles in different fields and prepare unique questions based on them. (K7)"

Written: "I will hold written examinations and make assessments based on textbooks (K1)"

Oral: "I plan to make assessments through conversation. (K2)"

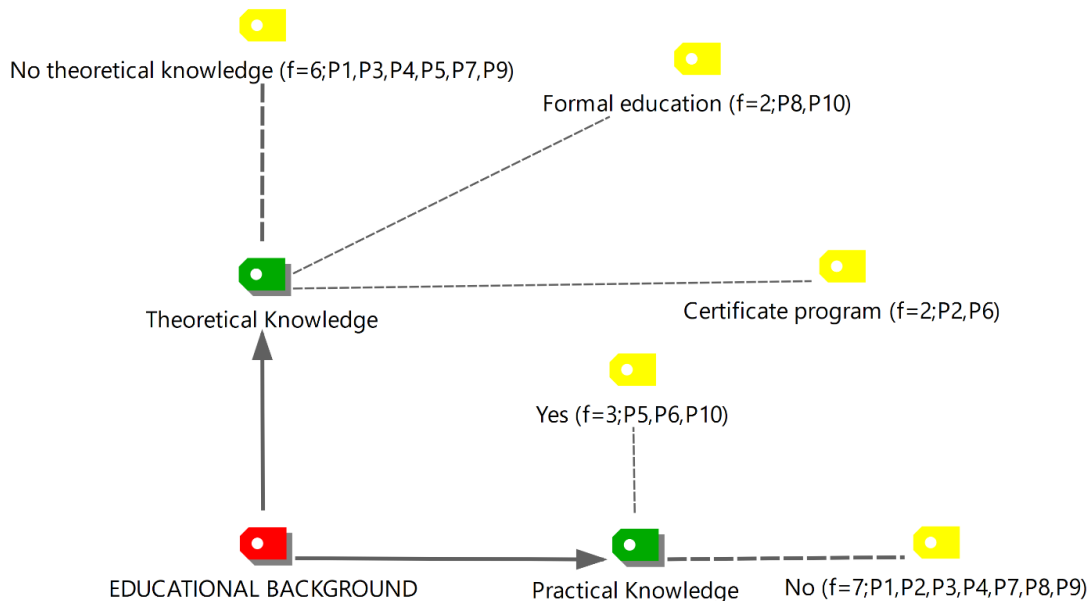


Figure 3. Educational Background

In order to reveal whether they were trained in their field, the participating teachers were asked the question "Did you take any undergraduate/graduate/postgraduate classes or attend a certificate program in the field of Turkish as a foreign language?"

Theoretical Knowledge

According to the study findings, 2 of the participating teachers took classes related to the field in formal education (graduate, postgraduate, doctorate), 2 of them attended certificate programs and 6 of them did not take any classes or attend a certificate program. Based on these findings, it can be said that the teachers to be assigned abroad generally lack theoretical knowledge about the field.

No theoretical knowledge: *"No, I did not take classes or attend a program. (K1)" "I attended seminars. I did not attend any certificate, undergraduate or graduate program. (K5)" "No, I have not attended any program on Turkish in years, I only participated in a study conducted by the Ministry of National Education on Syrian students. (K3)"*

Formal education: *"I study English Teaching as a second graduate program, I took a class on teaching Turkish to foreigners at the graduate level and attended two certificate programs. (K10)" "I took classes during undergraduate and graduate education. I applied for a certificate program but did not hear back. But I would like to attend one as soon as possible. (K8)"*

Certificate program: *"Sure. I took French classes up to the advanced level during my graduate education. I have an intermediate French certificate from Galatasaray University. I attended a German course but could not progress beyond the beginner level. Last year, I took a one-month English course at Oxford. I have a B2 certificate. I attended the TÖMER certificate program at Sakarya University. (K6)" "I attended a certificate program, I have a certificate. (K2)"*

Practical Knowledge

In order to determine whether they have previous experience in their field, the study group was asked the question "Do you have any previous experience in this field?". It was revealed that 7 of the participants had no previous experience while 3 of them worked in the field before. According to the study findings, it can be said that the teachers to be assigned abroad are generally inexperienced in the field. The answers given by the study group are as follows.

Yes: *"I do not have any experience abroad. I teach Turkish to foreigners in Turkey. I work at TÖMER. (K6)" "I do. The University of Maryland has a program in İncirlik Air Base in Adana. I taught Turkish to Americans for two years in addition to academic writing. I also worked at a private teaching institution. I taught Turkish for approximately a year there. (K5)"*

No: *"I have no previous experience. (K2)" "No, I did not work in this field before. (K7)" "I do not. (K9)"*

Discussion and Conclusions

In this section of the study, results based on the findings obtained as a result of the analysis of the field qualifications and perceptions of the teachers to be assigned in the field of teaching Turkish as a foreign language are presented. Discussions were made based on the study results. First, in order to reveal the duty awareness of the educators to be assigned abroad, questions on their purpose to be in

this mission and perception towards the foreign mission, teaching their native language as a foreign language and planning were directed to them.

Based on the findings obtained in the study, a significant part of the educators stated that they wanted to be included in this mission for motivations such as self-interest or self-improvement, economic reasons and the education of their children. Only 2 out of the 10 teachers in the study group stated that they wanted to be in this duty for a certain sense of mission. On the other hand, according to the study results, the educators interpreted this duty as an exciting process and thought that it would benefit them in various ways (language learning, postgraduate education, cultural diversity, cultural interaction, new perspectives). The main objectives in teaching and learning a foreign language are; interacting with different societies and individuals through language, increasing the importance of the specific language among world languages, cultural promotion, increasing the number of international students and integrating the foreign elements in the society (Gün and Memiş, 2019; Vigner, 2001). Therefore, educators that will serve abroad with this mission are required to adopt the aforementioned objectives. Otherwise, the educational process cannot produce a healthy outcome and go beyond the self-improvement of teachers.

According to the study results, half of the educators had a general idea of what methods to follow, what programs to implement and the content of their planning phase at the beginning of their duty. The other half did not have any prior knowledge and idea on their planning phase. Preplanning assessment and evaluation practices are among the main principles of foreign language teaching (Gün and Memiş, 2019). Additionally, the course content and material should be prepared in the planning phase. However, the study results indicate the opposite situation. It was observed that half of the participants were unaware of the contents of the planning phase.

The majority of the participating educators stated that culture and culture education cannot be separated from foreign language education. This result shows that the educators have low language teaching perceptions. Language is the reflection of the civilization and culture of a nation. Culture is reflected to ideas and gets expressed with language, therefore language is the tool used to express the ideas and culture of a nation (Humbolt, 1903, Trans. Akarsu, 1998). According to Erdal (2018), learners of a language learn the culture associated with that language, even if they are foreigners, so language and culture are inseparable twins much like language and ideas. In the study titled "Intercultural Sensitivity of the Turkish as a Foreign Language Teachers" by Saygılı and Kana (2018), it was found that language and culture together formed a whole, and this finding supports the results of the present study.

The knowledge levels of the participating educators on the educational processes they plan to implement in their duties were examined. These can be listed as method and technical knowledge, material knowledge and assessment and evaluation processes. Half of the participants stated that they

had no method knowledge. According to the findings obtained in the study, it was concluded that the technical knowledge of the participants was weak. Two of the participants did not state any techniques while certain participants stated that they would use techniques that are very hard or impossible to implement in foreign language teaching. Additionally, the levels where the techniques can be used were overlooked in the answers. One of the most important aspects of foreign language teaching is the determination of methods. Student preparedness, language skills emphasized by textbooks and student needs are some of the factors that influence method selection (Uysal, 2019). Learning strategies include the integrative features of the process. The strategy is related to the implementation of learning activities in the application phase and learning, activity and material selection in the process of acquiring knowledge and skills. Not only the learners, but also the educators should implement strategies that facilitate learning and increase success in order to achieve educational goals (Günday, 2015). The competencies of teachers and the methods and techniques they use enable students to experience an interesting learning process. From this aspect, the competencies of teachers and the methods and techniques they use are shaped by teacher cognition, and when this is reflected in the classroom, the lessons become more interesting for the students. Teachers are individuals who direct teaching processes and act as guides to learning. Teachers can make the process of teaching the educational schedules they prepare in line with the learning outcomes successful (Kurudayıoğlu and Sapmaz, 2016). However, study results show that the participants had weak method and technical knowledge related to their field.

When the participating educators were asked whether they reviewed the material, it was observed that six of them reviewed the material while four of them did not. Some (f=4) of the educators who stated that they have reviewed material emphasized that they reviewed the "Yunus Emre Institute, Yedi Hitit Türkçe" set that was introduced by the Ministry of National Education in a briefing seminar. This set also stood out as the source that the said educators planned to implement. Although digital environments have gained popularity due to technological developments, textbooks are still valid in terms of carrying out educational activities in a planned way (Özkan, 2010). Therefore, teachers are required to read, study and learn about the textbooks they will be using in the educational process.

According to the analysis data of the assessment - evaluation processes that the participants plan to implement, most of the participants stated that they would carry out the process using both written and oral assessment methods. One participant stated that they had no idea about the process. Assessment and evaluation, which are the complementary elements of the education process, are implemented with different methods and techniques in all fields. The methods and techniques used in language teaching in particular are very different from other fields. That is because assessment and evaluation towards linguistic proficiency are on the forefront. Therefore, the plan to hold both written and oral exams would indicate a lack of professional knowledge in the field. Understanding whether

goals are achieved and coming up with solutions to potential problems are very important in the process of language education.

The reason why the aforementioned study results are generally negative can be associated with the theoretical knowledge and field knowledge results presented below. The levels of theoretical and practical knowledge of the participating educators in the field of teaching Turkish to foreigners were examined. According to the findings obtained, it was concluded that most of the educators did not receive theoretical training in the field while some of the participants took field classes in formal education and some participants attended certificate programs. It was determined that most of the participants were inexperienced in terms of practical knowledge. The results in this section constitute the main section of the study. That is because the most important qualification of a teacher is field knowledge, therefore field competency. In the report titled "The General Qualifications of the Profession of Teaching" published by the Ministry of National Education (2017), teacher qualifications were stated under three main items as occupational knowledge, occupational skills and attitudes and values. Field knowledge and field training were stated below occupational knowledge. The cognitions formed by the experience and training of Turkish as a Foreign Language teachers affect the educational process. The process of language teaching can be completed successfully with qualified teachers (Kurudayıoğlu and Sapmaz, 2016). Preparation for the profession of teaching is done with general knowledge, special field knowledge and occupational knowledge (Demirel, 1999, p. 192). It should be acknowledged that teaching Turkish as a foreign language effectively is an area that requires expertise (Metek and Gürsoy, 2013). In the literature, there are studies that show the importance of experience alongside field knowledge. According to the data based working years, teachers with 0-5 years of experience who recently joined the field have higher sensitivity and awareness towards the issue of teaching Turkish as a foreign language. Teachers who have been in the field for 16 years or more are knowledgeable about the issue after years of experience (Metek and Gürsoy, 2013). It was observed that teachers who lacked experience were inadequate in time management, classroom management and planning (Kara, Öztürk and Dağıstanoğlu, 2017). According to the results of the present study, only three of the educators had occupational experience. In this context, it would be more appropriate to assign experienced individuals for a serious task such as teaching a foreign language in foreign universities. On the other hand, there are also educators who were not trained in the related field as part of undergraduate or graduate education but attended certificate programs for training. The most important cause of this situation is the fact that graduates of departments such as Turkish Language and Literature, English Language and Literature etc. are also accepted. Eight of the ten educators included in the study group of the present study were graduates of Turkish Language and Literature and English departments. The majority of these educators completed their graduate education in fields such as Modern Turkish Literature and Folk Literature. There are no courses related to teaching Turkish as a foreign language in these departments. The adequacy of

certificate programs in such a serious field is also questionable. According to Yüce (2016), Turkish cannot be taught to foreigners with short-term certificate programs and it cannot be overlooked that this task requires skill and a strong structure. Özbay and Bahar (2016) emphasized the importance of reducing the number of such applications as they are problematic in terms of education. In addition, it was observed that almost all of the participants of these paid certificate programs are certified as successful (Barın, Çangal and Başar, 2017). Findings that support the results of this study were found in the similar studies conducted in the field (Kurudayıoğlu and Sapmaz, 2016; Kalfa, 2015; Mete and Gürsoy, 2013; Göçer, 2009)

Recent international studies have revealed that the quality of teachers was a critical factor in student learning results (Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, Consulting Report, 2013). The qualifications and competencies of teachers are the most important factors in the success of educational activities (Büyükkaragöz, 1998). “Teachers’ knowledge and skills are the most vital in-school factors influencing children’s learning.” (Leigh and Mead, 2005).

Peyton (1997) listed the qualifications required to be possessed by foreign language teachers as follows:

“In addition to demonstrating competencies in the general areas of education, interpersonal skills, and professional education (Met, 1989, p. 177), good foreign language teachers need the following:

- A high level of language proficiency in all of the modalities of the target language--speaking, listening, reading, and writing.
- The ability to use the language in real-life contexts, for both social and Professional purposes.
- The ability to comprehend contemporary media in the foreign language, both oral and written, and interact successfully with native speakers in the United States and abroad (Phillips, 1991).
- A strong background in the liberal arts and the content areas.
- Understanding of the social, political, historical, and economic realities of the regions where the language they teach is spoken.
- Pedagogical knowledge and skills, including knowledge about human growth and development, learning theory and second language acquisition theory, and a repertoire of strategies for developing proficiency and cultural understanding in all students (Guntermann, 1992).
- Knowledge of the various technologies and how to integrate them into their instruction.”

Based on the results obtained in the study, the following suggestions were developed:

- Educators to be assigned abroad by the ministry should be required to graduate from the Turkish teaching undergraduate graduate or postgraduate programs related to teaching Turkish to foreigners.
- Experienced teachers who are experts in their field should be prioritized in educator selection if experienced academicians are inadequate.
- The widespread presence of institutions that operate in the field of teaching Turkish to foreigners such as the Yunus Emre Institute and Ankara TÖMER and the assignment of lecturers abroad based on the increasing demand shows that teaching Turkish to foreigners is an active field. Therefore, with a more professional approach, the number of academic departments should be increased instead of certificate programs to meet this emerging demand.

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