

Globalization And Language: English In Turkey

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ÖZET

Globalleşme ve onun yerel kültürlerle etkileri üzerinde çok farklı görüşler vardır. Bunlardan biri globalleşmeyi batıllaşma veya Amerikanlaşma olarak tanımlar çünkü batılı güçler veya daha da spesifik anlamda Amerika Birleşik Devletleri dünyada ekonomisi, askerî yapısı ve kültürü ile baskın olan tek dünya gücüdür [ve] globalleşmenin en çok bilinen görünür kültürel ifadeleri American-coca cola, McDonald's and CNN de bunu destekler niteliktedir. (Giddens, 2000, 33)

Globalleşmenin diğer bir kültürel ifadesi de İngilizcenin giderek yaygınlaşmasıdır. Bu makale İngilizcenin Türkiye'de yaygınlaşmasını inceler. İngilizcenin Türkiye'de yayılma yolları bir anlamda global kültürün veya Amerikan kültürünün yayılma yollarına işaret eder.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Globalleşme, Türkiye, İngilizce, Amerikanlaşma.

Globalleşme Ve Dil: Türkiye'de İngilizce

There are many different opinions on globalization and its effects on local cultures. One of them is that globalization is westernization or more specifically Americanization since western powers or the United States is “now the sole superpower, with a dominant economic, cultural and military position in the global order [and] many of the most visible cultural expressions of globalization are American-coca cola, McDonald's and CNN.” (Giddens, 2000, 33)

In contrast to this view of globalization, many others consider globalization as a multi-way process. In his study on globalization, culture and identity, Mike Featherstone expresses this point of view as follows:

“We are all in each other's backyard. Hence one paradoxical consequence of the finitude and boundless of the planet and humanity is not to produce homogeneity but to familiarize us with greater diversity, the extensive range of local cultures.” (Featherstone, 1995, 86)

Having defined globalization as “a multi-way, heterogonizing and enriching process allowing local cultures open up to the world and contribute to cultural diversity,” Featherstone suggests in his another study that one avoids describing globalization in “oversimplifying oppositionally conceived” terms that “stress either the manipulation, or the resistance of audiences.” (Feathersone, 1995, 117)

Arjun Appadurai, too, prefers to define globalization as a multi-way process involving “flows of ideas, ideologies, people, goods, images, messages, technologies and techniques.” (Appadurai, 2001, 5). Agreeing with Appadurai and Featherstone, Anthony Smith argues that one should not simply explain globalization is a one-way process that destroys local or national cultures and

overlook the “vital role [that] common historical experiences and memories [play] in shaping identity and culture.” (Smith, 180).

Beginning from 1980s, Turkey has been one of the countries that fell increasingly under global flows in economic and cultural terms. (Friedman, 72). In this paper, I specifically examine how English language that represents global influence in general and American and western influence in specific has become popular in Turkey. In some ways, the increasing use of English, especially in Turkish media and educational system, shows through which channels and ways global influence enters into a country and how it affects local culture.

Research on Turkish media, press and educational system shows that English has become the most commonly used foreign language in Turkey. Throughout its history, in Turkey some other languages, such as French, Arabic and Persian, became very popular from time to time. For instance, from the 15th century to the early 20th century, Persian was popular. However, as scholars point out, their use was limited to the elite. In other words, Persian had never diffused among masses. Similarly, in the 19th century, French became popular and yet its use remained limited to intellectual and governing elite. (Yücel, 1982, 21)

English, on the other hand, enjoys a great popularity not only among Turkish elite, but also among ordinary Turks, especially among the Turkish youth, today. Even though there is no statistical data showing what percentage of Turkish people in general or the Turkish youth in specific use English, it is obvious from the English that one can see in the Turkish press, media and television that English has been increasingly used in Turkey. Many Turks, especially the young ones, speak a language, which is commonly called as *Tarzanca*, a mixture of Turkish and English (Ertan, 6, Sinanoğlu). Even in television, some speakers announce an art exhibition in *Tarzanca*. Instead of *başlamak*—to start—they use “start almak,” which is neither Turkish nor English. Also, younger Turks commonly use English expressions, such as part-time, full-time, prime time, art, cool, etc. Reasons for the increasing popularity of English in Turkey are closely related to the integration of Turkey into globalization process. Beginning from the 1980s, Turkey has increasingly become influenced by forces of globalization. (Robins, 1996, 72). In this, many factors played an important role: the increasing transnationalization of markets, the growth of global media and communications, the mobility of populations (tourism and migration) the end of the cold war [that brought] a sense of engagement and mission [instead of isolationist policies] (Robins, 1996, 73).

In the increasing use of English in Turkey, a “rise in the intensity of a wide variety of cultural flows which make transnational encounters more frequent” due to closer financial and trade ties, the increasing development of technology to produce more efficient and rapid means of communication play an important role. For instance, internet play an important role in spread of English among Turkish people since 90-95 per cent of information available on internet are in English. (Radikal, Lauffer, 2001, 46). In Turkey, internet use began in April 1993. By the end of 1997, the number of computers with internet

connection was 30,000 and the number of internet users was approximately 250,000 (Bilkent University). Today, the number of internet users in Turkey is 4 million (CIA).

Economic integration of Turkey into global economy also contributes to the increase in the use of English in Turkey. Employment pages in Turkish daily newspapers, such as *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Sabah*, and *Radikal*, and daily-regional newspapers like *Yeni Asır*, show that many companies with international connections require their personnel to have knowledge of foreign languages. Among these, the most required language appears to be English. German and French, and Russian are other languages that some companies require their personnel to have.

Likewise, the increase in tourism income plays an important role in rising popularity of English in Turkey. According to the statistics on share of tourism income in the Gross National Production by years, in 1963, Turkey's tourism income was 7,7 million US dollars. In 1980, it was 326,7 million dollars and in 2000 it was 7 billion, 636 million dollars. (State Institute of Statistics, Share of Tourism Receipts in the Gross National Product, 1963-2000). In many places, especially in touristy places, it is seen that signs in the streets are mostly in English. It seems that to attract tourists to their hotels, shopping places, etc. local people prefer to give their shops, hotels, restaurants, etc. English names. (Ertan, 3) There are also places like Alanya and Antalya, popular touristy sites in Southern Turkey, where it is possible to see many signs in Russian.

Spread of private channels and cable TV in Turkey and the flow of foreign movies, dominantly of American films, into Turkish theaters also seem to contribute to the spread of English in Turkey. There is no doubt that television is a major source of global culture. (Barker, 1999, 3). In Turkey, the first television programs began on January 30th 1968 and first program in color appeared on Turkish television in 1982. From 1968 to October 1986, TRT (Turkish Radio and Television) and its extensions, TRT2, TRT3, TRT 4, TRT GAP and TRTInt were the only channels that Turkish people watched. (Mete, 1999, 3-4). With the opening of STAR TV in October 1986, Turkish television entered into a period of multi-channel programming. From 1986 to the present, the total number of national TV channels in Turkey reached to 14. There are also local or regional TV channels. A research conducted by TRT in 1997 shows that about 82% of Turkish people (compared to 40-59% in earlier years) watched at least 12 national channels. Among these channels, private channels led by ATV, Kanal D and Show TV, were the most watched channels. (Mete, 1999, 19). There also cable TV channels, such as DigiTurk, which has about 800,000 subscribers, and Cine5 that has approximately 400,000 subscribers. DigiTurk offers different packages, such as Sports and movie packages, to its audience. Its all movies and shows consist of foreign movies and shows and many appear in their original language (DigiTurk). Similarly, Cine5 offers foreign movies and shows, such as OZ, Sopranos, and The Mind of Married Man. Each show appears as dubbed and in their original languages. In general, the increasing appearance and the use of

English on all private channels, paid or free, indicate that multi-channels that Turkish people watch more than others play an important role in rising appearance of English in Turkey. This is the case, especially when we consider the fact that foreign shows and films are dominantly American products. Therefore, private channels play a significant role not only in spread of English, but also in increasing familiarity of Turkish people with American culture.

Even though there has been a law (Law of Radio and Television) from the very beginning and a separate council, RTUK (Higher Council of Radio and Television), to control and regulate TV programs since 1983, there are no limits or control on the extensive use of English in television. RTUK, which is responsible for supervision of TV and radio programs in Turkey, consists of total twelve members. Three out of twelve are chosen and appointed by the President. Two of the rest are suggested by the Higher Education Council and three of them by Higher Council of Turkish Culture, Language and History. One member is chosen by the Security Council and is appointed by the Council of Ministers. Each of the last three members must be prominent people from the press and education and economy sectors. According to the RTUK law, these twelve persons are responsible for supervision and control of TV and radio programs in accordance with RTUK rules. Some of the general principles of RTUK related to language and culture are as follows:

- 1-The constitutional language, which is Turkish, should be the language used in programs.
- 2-In programs, the elements of Turkish-Islamic ethics and Turkish-Islamic world view will be given a significant place.
- 3-On Turkish history, historical values, Turkish way of life, thoughts and feelings, interesting and convincing programs will be made (Sarmaşık, 2000: 100-101)

It seems that for RTUK members, the increasing use of English and the increasing number of foreign, especially of American shows, such as Sex and City, Sopranos, Ally Macbeal, and American movies that prominently show American way of life are not a threat to Turkish language and culture. RTUK, like many other “higher councils” in Turkey, are mostly concerned about programs that threaten “the unity of the state and its people, basic characteristics of Democracy, public order, general ethical norms and security.” (Sarmaşık, 2000, 74)

Due to RTUK’s tolerance or indifference toward the increasing appearance of English in Turkish television, in number-one shows, such as “İkinci Bahar” (Second Spring), “Asmalı Konak” (Old House) and “Çocuklar Duymasın” (Don’t let Children to Hear), many characters, which speak English, appear on TV channels (AGB). For instance, in “İkinci Bahar,” a melodrama appeared on ATV during the spring of 2000, one of the main characters was a young American man, Tim (played by a real-life ballet, Tan Sağtürk). Having come to Istanbul for a visit, Tim extends his stay in Turkey for he needs to work and earn money for his return ticket to the US. He speaks “*Tarzanca*.”

Similarly, in *Asmalı Konak*, which still continues to appear on ATV, two main characters, Seymen and Bahar, speak English at the beginning of the show for they play a young Turkish man and woman who live in New York city. They meet each other in a café in New York City and fall in love. They later stop speaking English for they go back to Turkey and start living there. In the last, yet the most popular show ever, *Çocuklar Duymasın*, there is a character Mary, who in her real life, received graduate education in the US and therefore speaks English fluently. In the show, Mary appears almost in every episode for she is the manager of an American-Turkish company where the main male characters of the show, Haluk and Selami, work. Since Mary cannot speak Turkish, but English, her Turkish secretary translates what she says into Turkish.

All these examples do not imply that English is used more than Turkish in Turkish television, but suggests that English is increasingly used on TV shows and programs. In this phenomenon, there is no doubt that the appearance of multi-channels, carriers of global influence, is an important factor. Another equally, even more, important factor is the dominance of American products in television. In fact, American products dominate not only the Turkish television, but also western and world television (Mutlu, 1999, 47-49, Barker, 1999, 51).

Tolerance or indifference of local governments or of their institutions in charge of the supervision and control of TV programs is also a significant factor in rising appearance of English on TV screens. In France, for instance, the government applies some protective policies to prevent too much flow of English and American culture into France. All foreign commercials that appear in French television need to be translated into French. Similarly, to balance American films with French films, the government established a fund to support French producers and directors. 10 per cent of box office grosses in France goes to this fund. Also, cultural products of France do not take place among the products that need to be sold to private sectors. The State and governments pursue protectionist policies toward French language in specific and French culture in general (Vernet, 36).

As far as movies shown in theaters in Turkey go, the situation does not change: American movies dominate theaters in Turkey as in many other countries in the world. From the 1950s to 2001, 80 per cent of films shown in theatres through the world consists of American films (Pells, 2001, 22) According to the reports of Box officemojo, during 2001, first forty movies, except for *Amelie*, a French movie, with the highest international grosses, were American movies. From 1989 to 2002, number-one movies with the highest gross rates were again American movies (boxofficemojo). It was the same for Turkey. Box office reports for Turkey for 2002 and 2003 show that Turks watched American films more than any other foreign or Turkish films (boxofficemojo). In 2001, three most watched Turkish films; *Vizontele*, *Komser Şekspir*, and *Hemşo* were only ahead of the top sixth movie in international box office, *The Mummy Returns* (Maxxcine). It means that top five American movies were still seen more than top three Turkish movies.

Unlike in France, in Turkey, the ministry of Culture that is in charge of

control of imported cultural products including films is far away from pursuing any protectionist policies against dominant flow of American movies (Law of 3527 regarding Cinema, Video and Music Productions, Information Bureau of the Ministry of Culture in Turkey). It pursues some policies, however, to encourage Turkish producers and directors to make Turkish films. Article 10 in the Law of 3329 on Cinema, Video and Music Productions states that to contribute to the development of Cinema industry and Music sector and to support those who work in cinema and music sectors and to contribute to the representation of Turkey in the world through its cultural products, under the roof of the Ministry of Culture was founded “The fund for Art of Cinema and Music.” In related article, it was also stated that fees revenue stamps of both local and foreign products, fees on copy of local and foreign films and donations would go to the fund. Also, the article states that the fund will be able to obtain credit with low interest rate for a five-year period from a state bank (Ministry of Culture).

There is no statistical data to what extent this fund contributed to the production of Turkish films, but relatively lower box office grosses of Turkish films compared to American films indicate that Turkish films yet do not attract as many audience as American films do. Pells explains the huge success of American films with the creativity and heterogeneity of American films, and the use of imagination and visual effects in them. There is no doubt, however, that better technology of American films and higher rate of their commercial expenses also play an important role in higher box office rates of American films in Turkey and in the world.

In addition to the influence of global developments, such as internet, global economy, tourism, American movies and the emergence of multi-channels, educational policies of the Turkish government also is a major player in the rising popularity of English in Turkey. Even though there were schools, which were initially called kolej (college) in Turkey, that give education in foreign languages from the 19th century on, the number of these schools increased dramatically beginning in the 1980s. In the history of Turkey, the first school with foreign language education, Robert College, was opened in 1863 and Üsküdar American College in 1871. There was also Galatasaray Imperial Lycée that was opened in September 1869. Its education was completely in French (Shaw, 1977, 109). In the same period, Italians, British and Germans founded their own schools too. After the end of the Ottoman Empire and the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, new Turkish government declared a new law of education on March 3rd 1924. According to this law, French, English and German replaced Arabic and Persian as foreign languages in school programs. Until 1956, Galatasaray Lycée was the only school that gives education in a foreign language. In 1974-75, the number of schools with education in foreign language, which are called Anadolu Lycées, was 12 and it reached to 23 in 1982-83 (Hacettepe University). After this date, the number of Anadolu lycées dramatically increased. With the Law of Foreign Language Education, no 2923, dated October 14th 1983, foreign language education was legally accepted and set legal ground for the

foundation of new Anadolu lycées (In order to enter into these schools, students either have to pass a nation-wide examination after the fifth grade and earn scholarship that available in limited numbers or have to pay fee.) Almost all of these schools give education in English. In addition to these schools, the Ministry of Education, with a new law on foreign language education in secondary and high schools on April 12th 1994, accepted the opening of additional foreign language lycées within regular Turkish high schools. These schools, called as “super lycée” among people or as “Foreign Education Lycées” in official papers, have played an essential role in the blooming of English in Turkey. Since students have to have a 4.0, the highest, secondary school GPA to apply, these schools are called as “super lycées” among people. According to the data provided by the Ministry of Education, today there are 770 super lycées and 426 Anadolu lycées in Turkey. In both schools, during the first—preparatory--year, students take weekly 24 hours of English compared to 4 hours of Turkish language. On the 9th grade, they receive 8 hours of English compared to 4 hours of Turkish language. In the 10th and 11th grades, they receive equally four hours of English and Turkish. In addition to these hours, students in Anadolu lycées receive their all courses, except for Turkish history and Turkish language and Literature, in English. Besides these private and “super” schools, the Ministry of Education require all high school students in the rest of high schools numbered 1852 to have four hours of English and Turkish in the 9th, 10th and 11th grades. (Ministry of Education).

In addition to secondary and high schools, the Ministry of Education commenced foreign language education in primary schools. After the beginning of eight-year primary and obligatory education in May 1997 (Law on Primary Education dated May 12 1997, no. 21226), the ministry of education issued another law announced on 26 August 1998 in Official Gazette (Official Organ of the government). According to this law, in the fourth and fifth grade, students have to take two hours of English compared to six hours of Turkish. In the sixth, seventh and eighth grades, students are required to take 4 hours of English and 5 hours of Turkish language courses. These hours of English and Turkish show that Turkish language courses are naturally more than English language courses in primary schools where students learn how to write and read Turkish. Despite this, considering longer hours of English in high schools and education in English in Anadolu lycées and Super lycées, many Turkish intellectuals and academicians see increasing ratio of English in Turkish education system as a threat to Turkish language and culture.

If we consider *vakıf* universities mushrooming since 1984, continuing and possible threat of English to Turkish language and culture appears to be greater. The first *vakıf* university, Bilkent University, was founded in 1984. With the opening of new ones in late 1980s and especially in 1990s, the number of *vakıf* universities became 22. Also, there are two state universities, Middle East Technical University and Boğaziçi University that give education in English. His dramatic rise of education in English naturally concerns many Turkish

intellectuals and academicians. Many argue that since education occupies a significant place in development of a culture, Turkish education must be in Turkish. Education in a foreign language can gradually harm and destroy Turkish language, education and culture.

For instance, Oktay Sinanoğlu, a prominent Turkish scientist that was nominated for Nobel prize, argues that having initially been missionary schools, *kolejs*—or currently Anadolu lycées—turned into local missionary schools serving imperialist goals of foreign powers. Similarly, Sinanoğlu criticizes *vakıf* universities, “copies of American universities, in Turkey and considers them as a means of destroying Turkish culture and thus Turkey (Sinanoğlu). Referring to Atatürk’s words on Turkish language, which underline the connection between the independence of a country and independence of its language from the dominancy of foreign languages, Ömer Karabulut argues that under the influence of private university and “kolej” lobbies and imposition of IMF and World Bank, Turkish politicians extended education in language from pre-schools to universities. However, as a result of some Turkish scientists, academicians, and intellectuals, Turkish parliament passed a law presuming the annulment of education in foreign language between years 2000-2005. Karabulut further asserts that despite the shortage in English teachers and failure of education in foreign language, it is useless to insist on education in English. According to a research on “Evaluation of Education in Anadolu Lycées,” Karabulut adds, 82.4 per cent of students prefer to receive their science courses in Turkish rather than in English. 83.9 per cent of students complain that they cannot understand their courses well in English.

Likewise, Ahmet Duman, an academician, asserts that Turkish students have to take English education courses, but their education must be in Turkish. Even though Turkish governments consider education in language as a means of Turkey’s integration into European Union, in fact language education serves as a tool in the hands of western countries to exploit Turkey. Referring to Altbach’s “theory of psychological dependency,” Duman argues that with spread of English in Turkey, Turkish people under the influence of western cultures will begin to see western countries or more specifically the US as the only place with civilization, modernity and quality. And this, he continues, strengthens dependency on western countries, instead of –as a reaction--consolidating local culture.

Atilla Aydın, another academician, points to the criteria that Higher Education Council (an institution established in 1982) requires academic staff in university for academic recognition and promotion. In these criteria, articles published in foreign journals and papers presented in international conferences bring greater points that an academician needs to receive promotion in university. With these criteria, Aydın continues, Higher Education Council discourages reading and writing articles Turkish. Instead of encouraging writing and reading in English, science and social science organizations such as TUBA and TUBITAK should initiate an extensive translation program and thus provide

people with no English or any other language knowledge with Turkish translations of foreign articles or publications.

In contrast to these overtly critical view of education in foreign language, there are some people that see education in English, especially in “super lycées,” as an opportunity for successful students from lower-class families, which cannot afford paying school fees in private schools, to compete with students in Anadolu lycées at the university entrance examination that they have to take to go to college (Milliyet)

Whether it is a result of “imperialistic plans of western powers over Turkey” or it is a natural consequence of globalization, it is certain that English is increasingly becoming popular in Turkish media and education. In this, there is no doubt that Turkish governments’ educational and cultural policies play as an important role as global and local developments and changes in media, communications and economy. To analyze better whether or not the increasing use of English is detrimental to Turkish language and culture in the long run, a further and detailed research needs to be conducted on the extent of the use of English in Turkish society and its effects on Turkish educational system and culture.

Also, having noted that the spread of English is an indication of globalization process, the analysis of who supports and who opposes to the spread of English in culture in general and in education in specific, one can draw some conclusions who supports and who rejects globalization.

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