

Integration Of Syrian Students Into Turkish Education System

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Abstract: The necessity of superb education is one of the utmost significant results of the immigrations. The situation in the case of Syrian is even worse than the other immigrants' cases; since, a mass immigration is the matter of issue. When Syrians immigrated from Syria to all over the world, they did it to survive and left behind the war, but surviving is not an optional occasion without overcoming the language related problems. Humans preserve their existence with language. That is the matter of concern for integration of Syrians to the hosting countries. Many countries are proceeding various programs to integrate Syrians to the majority groups via either assimilation or adaptation policies. Turkey has the lion share from the Syrian immigration apple, and in the same vein with this situation, its language education system should be analyzed severely in order to come up with a perfect match program for the integration of Syrians. In the present study, main bilingual education programs and most of the countries bilingual education policies were reviewed critically and suggestions were listed for the Syrian immigrants in Turkey. It is beneficial to utilize the suggested programs all over the world by localizing the practices.

Keywords: Bilingual Education, Structured Immersion Bilingual Education, Submersion Program, Code-Switching.

I. INTRODUCTION

The history of humanity has witnessed plethora of immigration waves all around the world cause of various reasons ranging from economic and political reasons to educational reasons. While the need (most probably obligation) of learning a second language is broadly aroused from changing the homeland, sometimes it happens without changing the place physically cause of the invasions. Invasions have also brought the need of learning a second language in some lands.

In the case of Syrian refugees, political reasons and civil war can be counted among the reasons of the immigration from Syria to all around the world. According to the statistics, Turkey has enormous number of refugees in comparison to the other countries (Ferris and Kirişçi, 2015). It is stated by the European Commission of Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO) in 2016, apart from the other refugees; there are more than 3.1 million refugees from Syria and Iraq who are officially registered in Turkey. Even only registered

Syrian refugees numbered has tripled since 2011, and the number reached to 2.8 million (UNCHR, 2016). In addition to registered refugees in the camps or out of the camps in Turkey, it is estimated that there are one million unregistered refugees in Turkey now (International Human Rights Clinic Report 2015; Disaster and Emergency Management Authority [AFAD] 2016). While the number of the refugees in Turkey was really high, most of the developed countries, especially UK had not shown any tolerance or understanding of the situation and had not accepted the Syrian refugees till the case of 'Aylan Al-kurdi'. As cited in Madziva and Thondhlana (2017)

"After the images of the drowned Syrian boy, Aylan Al-Kurdi, had gone viral in September 2015, then the Prime Minister David Cameron, committed to resettle up to 20,000 Syrian refugees, under the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Program (VPR), within a five year period" (Gower and Cromarty in 2016).

UK and other countries only started accepting refugees after the pressure of the media and publics with the images of

Aylan Al-Kurdi. In contrast to Turkey, other nations demonstrated hostility instead of hospitality towards refugees in the camps though they are popular with their defending human rights (Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017). That is why the number of the refugees in Turkey is really high (Ostrand, 2015).

As the number of refugees is really high, it has brought many challenges with it to the stage, and the most important and challenging one is education. Education of refugees is under discussion by the educational bodies around the world because it requires detecting the situation from various dimensions such as economy, materials, teacher qualification, and the most significant one is the suitable bilingual education program. The aim of this study is to develop the most suitable bilingual education model for the Syrians in Turkey by relying on the evaluation of the applied bilingual education models in other countries.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are a lot of concerns related to the integration of the refugees or immigrants to their new country and these concerns range from social, psychological, linguistic concerns to political ones. However, teaching the language is the primary concern, as without language it is not possible to talk about a perfect and 100% integration (Oikonomidou 2010). This situation is parallel to the case of the Syrians in Turkey. Their education is required to be analyzed in details as it comprises various concerns like economic and political ones.

A. ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

It is estimated that the education of Syrian children is going to be a problem in long term in Turkey. While naturally social and psychological outcomes are going to blossom in the near future, the closest outcome is the economic outcomes of the educational expenditures. Even placing 80% of the Syrian children to the official Turkish schools requires employing 40 thousand teachers and 30 thousand classrooms. Current monthly salary of a teacher employed at a Turkish school is totally average 6.000 TL (1250 €), and when it is calculated yearly, it costs more than 700 million € (Erdoğan, Kavukçuer & Çetinkaya, 2017, p. 11). When the economic situation of Turkey is considered, its eventual picture is not promising.

B. CONSIDERATIONS RELATED TO OTHER PROBLEMATIC ISSUES

Apart from economic considerations, reaching qualified teachers is among the top problems of the educating refugees, since the available teachers are not qualified adequately in terms of giving lessons in bilingual education programs. They need to have special methodological, pedagogical and psychological training to ensure the best approach to the refugee students. Other than academic skills, teachers should be in the conscious of the traumatic perspective of the situation. So, their attitudes towards students should be appropriate considering mainly their psychological health. Khanlou (2008), states that on the ground that teachers lack of

pedagogical knowledge related to sensitivity of the refugee children case, they may damage the children identities, roots and other ethnic realities.

Also with the increased number of the students in the classrooms both teachers and administrators are facing with many problems such as providing sufficient course materials, keeping the suggested size of the classrooms, ensuring valid and reliable assessment and even keeping clean the classrooms and toilets in order to prevent epidemic diseases (Khanlou, 2008).

C. BILINGUAL EDUCATION MODELS

There are various bilingual education models applied around the world in accordance with the considered countries' national policies. Some of the bilingual education models are: Transitional Bilingual Education (Early Exit and Late Exit), Maintenance Bilingual Education, Submersion, Submersion with Pull-out (or withdrawal classes), Immersion, Dual Language Bilingual Education, Bilingual Education in Majority Languages, and Heritage Language Bilingual Education.

SUBMERSION: In a submersion model, immigrant students are placed to mainstream programs with their counterparts from the majority group. The assumption is that immigrants automatically will learn the majority group's language thanks to more exposure rate at the school environment. The main aim in submersion program is assimilation more than pluralism. It is adopted like a Trojan Horse; while the explicit aim is the education, the underlying aim is to assimilate the refugees. As it is believed by the assimilators that national development is only possible with monolinguals. That is why they are in favor of submersion programs. The level of linguistic support in the mother tongue of the immigrants is none.

SUBMERSION WITH PULL-OUT AND SHELTERED ENGLISH CLASSES: Minority group children in mainstream schools may be withdrawn for compensatory lessons in the majority language. Withdrawal classes are utilized as a way of keeping minority children from majority group language. This model is administratively simple and require little or no additional expense.

In Sheltered English model, minority language students are taught the curriculum with a simplified vocabulary but also purpose-made materials and methods in English only.

IMMERSION BILINGUAL EDUCATION: When the bilingual education model are categorized as strong and weak versions, Immersion model is among the strong version models as it runs under the umbrella of parents, teachers, and students collaboration. It put importance on the mother tongue. The level of linguistic support is minimal.

STRUCTURED IMMERSION BILINGUAL EDUCATION: It contains only minority group's home language and only minority group children benefit from this program. There are no majority group children in this program and the language of instruction is the majority language. However, teachers use the simplified form of the majority language, that's why it is the strong version of the submersion program.

CODE-SWITCHING: In code-switching model, teachers benefit from students' mother tongue informally for clarification when needed. Teachers need to share the same L1 with the students in order to code switch. Level of the linguistic support is minimal here.

TRANSITIONAL BILINGUAL EDUCATION: After submersion model, it is a very common type of bilingual education in the USA as aim here is also assimilation of the refugees or immigrants. It only differs from submersion in utilizing home language of the refugees or immigrants. This model give a place to home language of the students until they gain adequate proficiency in the majority language. The duration of the teaching in mother tongue differs from first 3 to 7 years. It consists of Early Exit TBE and Late Exit TBE.

EARLY EXIT PROGRAMS: In early exit programs, language of instruction is in the students' mother tongue in first one to three years, while they also receive second language instruction at some classes. The prediction is that students would gain the basic skills in the first three years in L1, and it would be adequate to start academic education in the upper classes. Level of linguistic support is high initially, but none subsequently.

LATE EXIT PROGRAMS: Students' mother tongue is used as the medium of instruction up to the first seven even more years while moving students to a certain proficiency level in L2 (majority language) which means that while the language of instruction L1, students are receiving also L2 classes. The logic behind the late exit program is transition from L1 to L2 is getting easier and stronger (Baker, 1988). Level of the linguistic support is high throughout.

DEVELOPMENTAL MAINTENANCE BILINGUAL EDUCATION: While this model is applied in the US at the public schools with the same name, it is called as 'Heritage Language Education' in Canada. In both Developmental Maintenance Bilingual Education and Heritage Language Education, the aim is to employ minority language as the medium of instruction. There is a difference between static maintenance bilingual education model and developmental maintenance bilingual education model. While in the static maintenance model purpose is not to lose the home language totally, but to improve it only the child level, in the developmental maintenance model the purpose is to develop full proficiency and biliteracy.

HERITAGE LANGUAGE PROGRAMS: Heritage language programs are interpreted as the eclectic miscellany of the bilingual education programs which calls a new (majority) language other than the primary language of the minority group into the class as a subject. This language is the mother tongue has a linguistic relevance to the minority group. Level of the linguistic support is minimal.

DUAL LANGUAGE BILINGUAL EDUCATION: There should be a balance in terms of classroom size between the majority and minority language children. There is a border between languages. Teachers do not switch in this program. Curriculum is established according to the language borders.

D. BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICIES OF THE COUNTRIES

According to Dryden Peterson (2015a), while developed countries have tendency to apply preparation and adaptation process to the refugees, developing countries may place the refugees directly to the mainstream program process. However, Turkey is currently employing submersion programs to the refugees in line with the USA and UK, but it is not a developed country. On the other hand, Sweden and Austria (developed countries) are employing adaptation process to the refugees to teach them the majority language before mainstream education. So, it is possible to conclude that countries bilingual education programs are free from their developmental level.

USA has the biggest number of immigrants from various countries, and insists on monolingual education approach cause of the belief that national development is only possible with mono language. USA perceives multilingualism as a threat to its unity, and oppose to the possibility of diversity along with unity. They interiorize the 'Melting Pot' metaphor, and belittled immigrants' mother tongue and identities (Zimmerman, 2010).

Austria gives importance to adaptation process in order to give opportunities to the immigrants to get used to their new home, culture and language. Austria utilizes early exit programs, tries to give equal rights to the immigrants with the local citizens. As suggested by Ruiz (1984), Austria perceives language as a right rather than a problem, second language is not perceived as a threat for their national unity like in the case of Québec in *Canada*. Canada applies immersion programs successfully. However, the situation in *Germany* is vice versa, Germany perceive second language as a problem like a threat to their unity, and they give limited social, economic and educational rights to the immigrants (Castles & Miller, 1998).

UK demonstrates hostility towards refugees, and is in favor of monolingual country and does not tolerate bilingual education though it interiorizes 'Education for all' and 'A Language for Life' metaphors (Baker, 1988). On the one hand, it adopted various types of bilingual education in the past (transitional bilingual education, heritage language programs), today it provides minority groups with only submersion education since there are a lot of minority groups.

Ireland has variety of bilingual education programs and tolerates various type of schooling in terms of freedom of choice in bilingual education program under its official frame. It is possible to come across heritage language programs, immersion programs, dual language programs among schooling systems. English and Irish is widely spoken all around the country (Baker, 1988).

Sweden's approach to refugees' education is lukewarm to positive. Sweden aims to prevent loose of identity and mother tongue of the immigrants. It adopts the metaphor of 'Language Mosaic' for the bilingual education (Saklan, 2018). Although it has one official language, there are more than 5 other languages spoken in the various part of the Sweden. Five national minority languages are also recognized by Swedish law: Finnish, Yiddish, Meänkieli, Romani and Sami.

E. TURKEY AND BILINGUAL EDUCATION

When it comes to Turkey, although there are various minority groups in Turkey for example: Kurds and Circassians, there is only one official language, and mono lingual education is favored since bilingualism or multilingualism is perceived as a threat to the national development like in the case of UK, USA and Germany. All of these countries together with Turkey adopts the ‘Melting Pot’ metaphor and applies submersion programs for Syrian refugees (Baker,1988).

When all of the bilingual education models, and research studies are evaluated together with their outcomes by experts and scholars, it is concluded that the result is generally failure in the countries which adopts either mono lingual approach instead of bilingualism and multilingualism, or prioritize mono lingual education (Berry, 1996; Baker, 1988; Castes & Miller, 1998; Cummins, 2000a; Cummins, 2000b; Krashen, 1999; Wei, 2000;). These programs are omitting mother tongue of the minority groups, and making them cognitively disabled. As a result, students’ identity, national feelings, self-concepts and self-efficacies are damaged which ends up with higher drop-out rates. Generally heritage language programs, late exit bilingual education, dual bilingual education programs, and structured immersion programs are advised by scholars for the successful bilingual education and integration process (Berry, 1996; Baker, 1988; Castes & Miller, 1998; Cummins, 2000a; Cummins, 2000b; Krashen, 1999; Lam, 1992; Wei, 2000)

F. CURRENT SITUATION IN TURKEY FOR EDUCATION AND INTEGRATION OF SYRIANS

Turkish Education system is monolingual, and Syrian students are having difficulty in adopting to Turkish in mainstream classes, and local municipalities are trying to solve the problem to a certain degree in terms of presenting Arabic, Turkish and Kurdish courses for both children and adults together with vocational training courses (Madziva & Thondhlana, 2017). Turkey does not have a long history of designing education programs to educate and integrate immigrants in such a big numbers at once and emergently.

In 2013, MoNE urgently combined all of the unofficial Syrian schools operated by Syrian NGOs that first step enable MoNE to place Syrian students at Turkish schools mainstream programs. At present, 66.875 students are registered to the schools at the camps, and it is informed that 223.528 students are registered to Turkish schools out of the camps (Emin, 2019). Out of 625.000 refugee children only half of them (290.403) are receiving education. ECHO (2016) reports that a lost generation is on the door in a close future. MoNE (2013) reports that curriculum at the camps are modified to Syrian curriculum in Arabic via the national education system. This education model can be named as early exit bilingual education, and is available only in the camps, but the refugees out of the camp are placed into the mainstream programs.

III. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

A. SUGGESTED BILINGUAL EDUCATION MODEL FOR SYRIANS IN TURKEY

When the sample bilingual education models and their eventual outcome reports were analyzed, it was observed that the models which ignores immigrants’ or refugees’ mother tongue ends up with failure. The stated reasons are refugees become disabled as they do not know the language, their success level decrease in the curricular subjects, and drop-out rates increases as their identities, self-concept, roots, ethnic identities, and culture are damaged. This proves that the bilingual education model for Syrians should place also Arabic to a certain degree apart from Turkish. Additionally, it is beneficial to keep in mind educational integration goes hand in hand cultural and social integration, and at this step it is advisable to adopt Tikly’s language education frame.

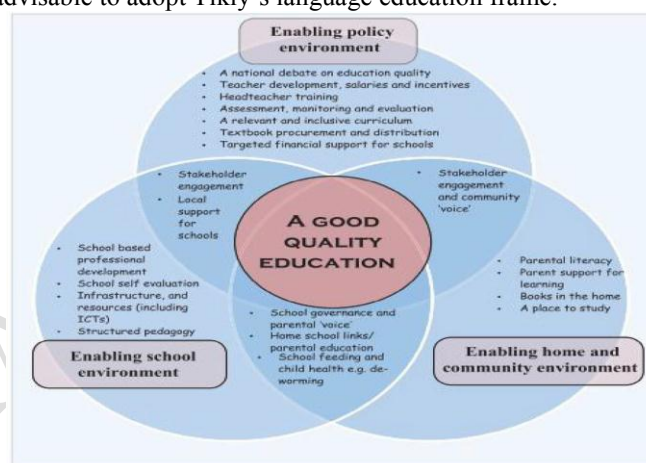


Figure 1: Context-led framework for implementing education quality. Source: Adopted from Tikly (2011, 17)

As shown in the frame, roughly teachers’ training, cost of the teaching, national education policy, parent-teacher-administrator collaboration, psychological and mental health of the target group, physical handicaps, and immediate context should be paid attention while designing the bilingual education program. It is not beneficial to touch the bilingual education only at school, because real exposure, authentic language usage especially out of the school ultimately will foster the second language learning.

From my perspective, Syrian education should be divided in to three categories for the whole integration: 1) education in refugee camps, 2) education out of refugee camps, and 3) education for adults. I strongly believe that Syrians’ first language which is Arabic should have a place in all of these categories. As aforementioned, successful bilingual education, in Syrian case, can be reached if Syrians observe that their language, nationality, or culture is valued by Turkish citizens, teachers, and classmates. Only on this condition their motivation and attitudes towards learning Turkish can be canalized in a positive way.

B. EDUCATION IN REFUGEE CAMPS

As there would be only Syrian students there, language of instruction should be Arabic in the first three years. However,

at the same time they need to have Turkish classes as a subject at school at least 3 hours a day, and after school again 2 hours intensive Turkish courses in a day. After this first three years, when the students' proficiency level in Turkish language is enough (students' should undergo a Turkish Test), students should take both Syrian curriculum and Turkish curriculum in Turkish at schools in the camps by Turkish native speakers. In a half of a day Arabic curriculum and in the other the half of the Turkish curriculum subjects can be taught. Thanks to learning both of the curriculums' subject, they will keep up with their counterparts both in Syria (if they go back) and in Turkey (if they continue their life out of the camps). The weaker students should get intensive Turkish courses again for a year, while they are getting curricular subjects in Arabic, and after they get the Turkish Test again, they can start getting education in Turkish in both Syrian curriculum and Turkish curriculum. As there are already Arabic teachers at camps, they can be employed as teachers in turn of a small salary in order to work at the schools of the camps which can decrease the amount of budget necessary for the Syrians education at camps.

C. EDUCATION OUT OF THE REFUGEE CAMPS

Syrian students should not be directly placed to the mainstream education. MoNE should specify 1 pilot school or even 1 classroom in each city, in accordance with the population of the Syrians, so students are going to be educated with only their Syrian counterparts in the same class. In the first three years, they are going to get Turkish and Arabic curriculum in Arabic, and get Turkish lessons as a subject 3 hours a day at school, and after school they are going to be obliged to attend intensive Turkish courses every day. When they get the adequate proficiency level in basic interpersonal communicative skills, they can be placed in mainstream classes with their counterparts in order to get cognitive /academic language proficiency level (CALP) (Baker, 1988).

D. ADULT EDUCATION

No matter the age of the adults, they are required to learn Turkish in order to continue their daily life and for the whole integration to Turkey. Adults should be provided Turkish lessons at night classes at some pilot schools, or Public Education Centers. They need to learn the basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS), and Baker (1988) states that 2 years would be enough to gain these language skills for the adults. However, university students need CALP more than BICS, so they need to have proper Turkish proficiency both in BICS and CALP. In my opinion, when the Syrian students are accepted to the universities, they should get both Turkish lessons and Turkish history, culture and geography lessons in the first 2 years with their Syrian counterparts. In these classes code-switching should be tolerated, or simplified clarifications can be utilized by teachers. That is why Arabic-Turkish bilingual teachers should be employed preferably for these classes. If students pass the Turkish proficiency Test, they can be accepted to start from the first grade with Turkish students.

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