

INVESTIGATION ON IRAN, TURKEY AND AZERBAIJAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING ON SCHOOL GRADES

Sonia Valizadeh

Foreign Language Institute Ondokuz Mayis University Samsun, Turkey

Soniavalizadeh29@gmail.com

Prof. Dr. Rifat Gunday

Foreign Language Institute Ondokuz Mayis University Samsun, Turkey

rgunday@omu.edu.tr

ABSTRACT:

In this article, the system of teaching English as a foreign language in Iran and Turkey and Azerbaijan is reviewed. English language teaching in the school period of these three neighboring countries, the latest developments in English as well as changes in English language teaching in these countries have been studied due to the geographical location of these three countries and the need of these communities to learn English as a language of instruction and communication is one of the reasons for this research. This research is qualitatively designed and the data is collected from the websites of the Ministries of Education of all three countries and their curriculum.

Keywords: Teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), comparison of countries, Educational system.

INTRODUCTION:

In recent years, especially after 2010, the tendency to introduce English as a subject in Asian primary schools has strengthened. This tendency has been met with many pros and cons, and critics believe that this has harmed students' learning of their mother tongue and strengthened their national culture. The fact is that every student needs his mother tongue in the first place and then it is an international language for communication with the world

and that is why determining the start time of foreign language teaching in schools is still a matter of debate.

Iran is one of the most ancient civilizations in human history and due to its special geographical and geopolitical position, commercial position, and many other things have always been considered by the and people of other lands. Different ethnicities and nations have existed throughout history. The English language has survived until today despite being perceived as the

"language of enemies" (Borjian, 2013) by the governments for the past four decades. It has also been seen as a "tool for progress" (Riazi, 2005) for the period 1950-1979. Apart from Persian, which has always been used by different ethnic groups living in Iran to communicate with each other, over time, various foreign languages, especially English, have become popular in Iran. Due to the importance of the English language around the world, besides their mother tongue, they are familiar with English as a second language.

The status of the EFL program in Iran was described by carrying out two further analyses: (1) a comparative study of Iranian and Middle Eastern examinees' TOEFL scores from 2002 to 2007, and (2) a review study of problems of teaching and learning English in Iranian high schools (Rahimi, and Nabilou, 2009).

In the English language teaching

system in Iranian schools, students are trained only to accumulate information in the mind and its application in everyday life is not important. Most students who have spent at least 6 years learning English will not be able to meet their daily English language needs after completing this course.

The authors of the National Curriculum Document have given a six-year primary school opportunity to strengthen the official language and literature of the country to foreign languages in the seventh grade. English language teaching in Iran starts from the seventh grade, but the reality is that the English language teaching system in Iranian schools uses the most backward and inefficient way possible for teaching students, and with a mere emphasis on grammar-oriented method, graduates learners with English literacy at the basic level.

Turkey is the only country located in Asia and Europe, and English language teaching has been an important issue in this country since the Ottoman ages. Before the Second World War, German and French were the second languages of the Turkish people. With globalization and the increasing demands of national and international competitive job markets, EFL instruction at universities has to provide more than general proficiency in English (Genc, 2011). The Ministry of National Education in Turkey is about to roll out a new national curriculum in all subject areas (Mirici, 2006). The language policy of Turkey regarding the evaluation phase of the English language education issue was investigated following the comments on the issue from a diverse point of view. Nowadays, Turkey's language policy seems to have been much more improved since the education reform in 1997 bringing a rise in curriculum development, coursebook design, and teacher development programs (Ulum, 2015).

English language instruction enters the curriculum from the second year of primary school and continues until the end of high school. In Turkey, despite the increase in English language classes and the decrease in the age of teaching English, the increase in private English teaching centers has not yet reached an acceptable quality level. Drowns in English and believes that teaching English is a very difficult path and refuses to continue on this path.

The acquisition of foreign languages has always been in demand in Azerbaijan. Recently, with the advancement of science and technology, this demand has increased more than ever. Post-imperial societies, such as Azerbaijan, tend to have a more open attitude to the realities of a global language since they feel more secure in their cultural identities (Mammadova, Mammadova, 2021).

Foreign language teaching is regulated in the curricula of the educational system. Since Azerbaijan was part of the Soviet Union, today the people of Azerbaijan use Russian alongside their mother tongue, but since Russian is not a universal language, the people of Azerbaijan want English as a universal language. Foreign language teaching is done in two directions of the main and second foreign language. The main foreign language is taught from the first grade and the second foreign language from the fifth grade. Parents have the right to choose both the main and foreign languages. They are free to choose between English, French, Russian, Arabic, and Persian. Since English is the main language of the international community, English is the main language of instruction in foreign languages in Azerbaijan, and ninety to ninety-five percent of English schools are taught as the first foreign language. In the Soviet age, language teaching promoted grammar. It used to be a language and its vocabulary, but today teachers and educators

are promoting a spoken language.

In 2004, by the order of the Minister of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Curriculum Center was established in order to ensure the establishment of an integrated and effective system for the development of curricula. The curriculum is prepared and approved. The necessary items related to the curriculum and its activities are determined by the curriculum center. During the establishment of the curriculum center, it was considered expedient to have two sections (primary and secondary education departments). Later, the structure of the curriculum center was gradually improved and in 2009, the pre-school curriculum department was added to this institution. In 2006, for the first time in the history of education in Azerbaijan, the concept of public education in the Republic of Azerbaijan was approved by the government. This document, which was later improved and used in 2010, has been completely updated in terms of content and structure. Duration of study in fully updated schools Students are for 4 years in primary school and 7 years in middle school. Studying in this country is completely free.

The ultimate aim of any EFL program is to promote long-life language development in learners and prepare them for language use in real-life communicative situations (Safari, Rashidi, 2015). Major developments in education after the Islamic Revolution of Iran from 2001 onwards are more prominent. The peak of these developments in 1390 has shown itself. After drafting the national education document, the governments decided to divide the training courses into primary and secondary sections. These two courses last for 12 years (6 primary and 6 secondary years). The educational system of Iran in 1391-92 was changed from 5-3-4 to 6-6. The length of the training course in Iran is free and compulsory.

The Educational Research and Planning Organization is one of the departments of the Ministry of Education and Processing, which is responsible for providing, producing resources and educational materials needed by students. Schools have no role or involvement in producing and changing content.

After the 2012 reform of the Turkish education system, students in this country will study for 4 years in primary school, 4 years in the middle or junior high school, and 4 years in part-time secondary school. In the second year of elementary school, English language teaching becomes mandatory. 12 years of study in Turkey is free and compulsory.

Research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of the education system in Iran, Turkey and Azerbaijan?
2. What is the content of the TEFL language in these countries?
3. What are the similarities and differences in the learning and teaching process of TEFL in Iran, Turkey and Azerbaijan?

METHOD:

A. Research Design

In this qualitative study, documents were analyzed for this goal. The data is gathered from the websites of 3 countries, Iran, Turkey, and Azerbaijan Ministries of Education and curriculums.

B. Sampling

Due to the proximity of Iran, Turkey, and Azerbaijan and their regional location, the need for English language teaching in all three countries is significantly increasing. According to the changes in the educational system of all three countries, the increase in school hours, and the establishment of private schools, there is still a weakness in teaching this language, and students, after spending significant educational hours,

continue to have weaknesses in communication and other skills. These reasons have led the researcher to choose these three neighboring countries to study and research their foreign language teaching system.

C. Data Collection

The information and charts that were obtained from the websites of the countries' ministries and other government websites were the primary sources in this study.

D. Data Analysis

The information collected from the websites is controlled by English language experts and this research is qualitative research that relies on the quality and not statistics.

FINDINGS:

A. Language reform in Iran, Turkey and Azerbaijan

1) Iran

In 1978, the Pahlavi dynasty collapsed following the Islamic Revolution and was replaced by the Islamic Republic. In the first years after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, due to the revolutionary conditions prevailing in the bipolar world of that day, the acceleration of Iranian language learning and especially their learning of English by them was somewhat reduced. As a result, the previous process and the supply of foreign language teaching were resumed as one of the effective factors in expanding the process of Iranian language learning in this period.

- a) Continuation of the process of sending students abroad, expansion of the number of universities
- b) Schools
- c) Foreign cultural institutions and schools
- d) Continuation of the process of sending students abroad, expansion of the number of universities

The emigration of Iranians who went abroad as students continued during the Islamic period and, like the Pahlavi period, most students went to countries such as the United States and Britain. Also, the increase in the number of universities and students led to the growth of foreign languages, especially the English language in Iran. First, due to the compulsory passing of general English language units in all fields, as well as the creation of English language courses at the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels.

1) Schools

Although the school education system underwent several changes during the Islamic Republic, English was still one of the main subjects in schools, and high school students across the country were required to study for a few hours per week each school year.

2) Foreign cultural institutions and schools

In the first years after the establishment of the Islamic Republic, the activities of foreign institutions in Iran were limited, but today there are public and private centers and schools that play a significant role in teaching English today.

2) Turkey

In Turkey, from 1960 onwards, due to the increase in the number of students and the lack of schools, there were problems in education, that is, due to the increase in the number of students in each class, the quality of education decreased. The growth of foreign language education is divided into Ottoman and republican periods. During the 624 years that the Ottoman Empire ruled, foreign language education was divided into two periods: the period up to the settings and the post-adjustment period before the settings. In the post-imperial reform period, Western-style public and private schools began to emerge with the Reformation. The first and

most important action of the Republic of Turkey in the field of education was the adoption of the Education Unification Law in 1924, which combined educational activities throughout the country under one roof. During the Republic, the teaching of Arabic and Persian was abolished, and the Western teaching of English, German, and French was used. The years that passed after the proclamation of the Republic were years of rapid progress in the field of science and technology. To adapt to this speed, schools, and institutions offering foreign language education increased. In 1956, Anatolian high schools were opened and foreign language teaching, especially English, became more popular. Unfortunately, language teaching in schools is insufficient, so foreign language courses are needed. As a result, foreign language courses opened and increased.

3) Azerbaijan

During the Soviet era, Russian was the main language of the people of Azerbaijan, but some people also used the Azerbaijani language. The use of English in this country was very limited. In 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the only official language of the country became Azerbaijani. During this period, English gradually entered schools and universities, but Russian was always considered by the Azerbaijani people and English was not well received.

B. Findings regarding general education systems of countries

When we examined the education system of the two countries, many similarities were observed in these two systems. Iran, whose education system is 6-6, which is compulsory for a total of 12 years. In the Iranian education system, the curriculum is communicated to the schools of the whole country by the education and training of the whole country and the schools have no change

in the curriculum and this is all under the supervision of the general education. Turkey has a 4-4-4 education system that, like Iran, schools can not make any changes in the contents and lessons.

TABLE 1.

Overview of education systems of the countries	Countries		
	Iran	Turkey	Azerbaijan
Basic education	3-3	4-4	4-5
High school	6	4	2
Compulsory education	12	12	11
The role of central government	Government determines educational and general framework administratio cant with curriculum	Government determines educational and general framework administratio cant with curriculum	All the years are compulsory, like two previous contries schools can't make any change in the program that Ministry of Education determines

The information that obtained about the system of TEFL are presented in Table 2

TABLE 2.

Overview of TEFL in the countries.	Countries		
	Iran	Turkey	Azerbaijan
Starting year of teaching Englishs	Teaching English starts at 7 th grade level.	Teaching English starts at 2 nd grade level.	Teaching English starts from 5 th grade level.
Weekly English course hours and duration	Two hours in 7 th 8 th and 9 th grades. Three hours in 10 th , 11 th and 12 th grades.	2 course hours in 2 nd , 3 rd and 4 th grades. 4 course hours in 5 th , 6 th , 7 th , and 8 th grades. 6 hours in 9 th grade; 4 course hours in 10 th , 11 th , and 12 th grades.	3 hours in 5 nd , 2 hours in 6 rd , 7 th and 8 th , 3 hours 9 th grades. 2 hours in 10 th and 11 th grades.

According to Table 2, English language teaching in Iran starts 5 years later than in Turkey and 2 years later than Azerbaijan, and also there is a difference in weekly English hours. Iran has fewer weekly hours in its curriculum than both Turkey and Azerbaijan.

C. Findings regarding aims and goals of teaching English in the countries

TABLE 3.

Basic goals of teaching English in Iran ,Turkey and Azerbaijan	Countries		
	Iran	Turkey	Azerbaijan
	For 7 th , 8 th and 9 th grades short and simple dialogue about daily topic introducing themselves For 10 th , 11 th grades long dialogues expressing their ideas about the topic	For second, third, forth and fifth grades stimulating their motivation toward learning English and teaching single vocabulary in the 7 th and 8 th grades stimulating learning English as a need among students encouraging them in to make dialogues in real life context in 9 th , 10 th , 11 th , and 12 th grades, define problems and find solutions. making good communication skills, developing English language oral speech skills	Make students familiar with English language, picture cued teaching. In middle and high schools, improving communication skills, participating in dialogues, multicultural diversity, define problems and find solutions.

As we can see in Table 3, in Iran there are no English courses in primary schools, so students in middle school directly enter to cognitive aspects of the English language. While in Turkey and Azerbaijan English course starts in primary schools, so at the first level they focus on affective aspects, then in higher levels they focus on cognitive aspects.

D. Findings regarding content of teaching English in these countries

This table represents the content of EFL materials of the countries for different grades that the researcher studied. Readers should consider that the Ministry of Education of countries will make some minor changes annually or some major changes periodically.

TABLE 4.

Content of teaching English in Iran, Turkey and Azerbaijan	Countries		
	Iran	Turkey	Azerbaijan
	<p>Middle school:</p> <p>Greeting, Family, Appearance, Talking about Address, Number, Time, Food, Lifestyle.</p> <p>High School:</p> <p>Past Experience, Shopping, Handicraft, Talking about Conditions and Futur results.</p>	<p>Primary School:</p> <p>Body, Colours, Family, Food and Drink, Weather.</p> <p>Middle School:</p> <p>Life Occupation, Holiday, Saving the Planet, Democracy.</p> <p>High School:</p> <p>Culture, Social Media, Invitations and Celebrations, Facts from Turkey, Values and Norms.</p>	<p>Primary school:</p> <p>Food, drink, parts of house, colours, family</p> <p>Middle school:</p> <p>Jobs, Daily Routine, Free Time, Wearing.</p> <p>High school:</p> <p>My soul, Friendship, Tourism, Teen Life.</p>

As it is depicted in Table 4, the content is similar in all three countries. At the beginning levels, the topics include basic information like family, numbers, colors, and in higher levels, they talk about cognitive topics like culture, social acts, and their countries.

E. Findings regarding evaluation of teaching English

Each country has its own methods of assessing learners' achievements. In this way, the researcher tried to study evaluating methods and instruments of the Ministry of Education of all these three countries. Countries will consider different methods of evaluation as it is shown in table 5.

TABLE 5.

Evaluation system of mentioned Countires	Countries		
	Iran	Turkey	Azerbaijan
	In both elementary and highschool levels paper and pencil tests are just recommended (MOE).	In primary and elementary level mostly portfolios, self- evaluation, and sometimes paperand pencil tests are recommended. In high school level, mostly paper and pencil teste, discussions and video blogs are recommended (MONE).	At the basic education level (5-9), there are annual paper and pencil promotion examination. At the end of grade 9 students had to sit threepaper and pencil examinations (MOE).

Also, there are methods and instruments for assessing learners, by making changes in teaching methods or other factors, like a pandemic, the Ministry of Education will consider up-to-date methods for evaluation. Besides, assessment techniques will also be different for different grades.

CONCLUSION:

According to the studies conducted and the results obtained from English language teaching in the three countries of Iran, Turkey, and Azerbaijan, it is clear that all three countries have almost the same methods and content. In the two countries of Iran and Turkey, there are twelve years education, which is free and compulsory for all twelve years, and in Azerbaijan, general education is 11 years, and all 11 years are free and compulsory.

In all three countries, the curriculum is determined by the Ministry of Education of the countries and the schools do not interfere in the content. The only significant difference is in the year of starting English language teaching in schools, which in Turkey and Azerbaijan starts

from the second year of elementary school, while in Iran it starts from the seventh grade. The table 4 shows us that the curricula of the three countries are not much different from each other and have the same educational content due to the neighborhood of the three countries and having close relations and culture. Table 3, which shows us the goals of English language teaching, states that the goal of all three countries is to strengthen speech skills and the focus of education is more on the ability to communicate in English. But students still have trouble communicating in this language.

Although in recent years these countries have taken steps to solve this problem, according to the statistics obtained at www.eurodic.com, which is according to the TOEFL test, we see that Turkey and Azerbaijan are among the 33 EU countries in the last ranks. Also, according to the site www.collegedunia.com, we see that Iran has surpassed Turkey by gaining the rank of 83 but has not yet reached a significant level. By examining the methods of successful blind teaching in this language, we find that in these countries, schools are not allowed to change the curriculum, in which case being able to make changes, teachers can teach according to the educational environment and the ability of students with the appropriate curriculum and content. And we still understand from the evaluation section that all three countries consider the main method of evaluation as paper and pen. To succeed in this method, students have to focus more on grammar and fall behind the main goal of having an acceptable conversation in everyday life.

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