


Investigation of Turkish EFL Teachers' Views about Standard Languages, Dialects and Language Varieties through the lenses of English and Turkish

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Abstract

This study was set out to investigate a small number of Turkish EFL teachers' views about the concepts of a standard language, dialects, and other language varieties concerning their mother tongue (Turkish) and the language (English) they are tasked with teaching at schools. The respondents of this research were 12 Turkish EFL teachers working in a small province of Turkey. The data was collected through a questionnaire consisting of closed-ended and open-ended items about standard language, language varieties and dialects, taking Turkish and English as the focal reference points. The data was analysed through descriptive means and grouped under three main sections as, a) perceptions of a standard language, b) perceptions of dialects and other language varieties, and c) perceptions of Standard English and Standard Turkish. The findings indicated that there is some confusion among the EFL teachers as to making sense of the concept of standard language and the functions and the position of dialects and varieties in the society, particularly when it comes to instructional purposes. It was also found that most teachers acted under the influence of standard language ideology when conceptualising these concepts, with a strong attachment to the use of standard languages in formal settings. Overall, the findings imply that most teachers have a lack of awareness about the current sociolinguistic issues around English and Turkish, thereby not willing to give space to non-standard varieties and dialects in their teaching practices and real-life language use.

Keywords

Standard language; dialects; language varieties; linguistic perceptions

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Introduction

The emergence of languages is still a debatable issue since it is impossible to exactly demonstrate how languages have evolved in the first place (Yule, 2010). It is

known that many languages were developed and spoken by different societies in the distant past, but the lack of substantial written evidence makes it difficult to solve the mystery of languages. Although there is no concrete evidence about the origins of languages, it is inferred from some ancient inscriptions that the oldest languages were Tamil, Sanskrit, Arabic, Chinese, Latin, and Hebrew (Hoad, 2006). Additionally, the only thing that can be true for languages is that they go through a change and are not anymore the same as they were at their embryonic stage. In the course of time, major developments in historical and sociocultural spheres all over the world have affected the emergence and importance of various languages. Some of these ancient languages served as a basis for the emergence of other languages, and some of them are still used but are very different from their original forms.

When the English language is taken for illustration, it is seen that it has gone through very drastic changes in terms of different aspects (e.g. orthography, punctuation, phonology, morphology, syntax, lexis, and semantics) since its emergence (e.g., Hoad, 2006; Lass, 1999; Nevalainen, 1999; Rissanen, 1999; Salmon, 1999). Essentially, modern English has almost no connection to the language spoken a thousand years ago in England. The development of English began with the Nordic invasions on England and had its roots from Germanic languages. These invasions led to the establishment of seven kingdoms, each with communities of people who spoke different dialects. In the ensuing centuries, the languages of these kingdoms were influenced by new invasions, which expectedly impacted on the language used throughout the all kingdoms.

Another change in the English language occurred after the Norman Conquest in England which gave a way to the influence of French on the English Language. French was the language spoken by government, kings, and nobles then (Davis, 2010). During this period, English was regarded as an endangered language. Put more precisely, the social restrictions on English were indicative of a dying language (Melchers & Shaw, 2011). However, in the later years, English gained popularity, giving rise to a need for a unified English language as the language for the government. At that time, Chancery English was chosen as the 'standard' English for written documents in the courts (Davis, 2010). Thus, it would not be wrong to postulate that the emergence of standard

English was closely related to the use of written form language for political, social, religious, economic and educational purposes (Galloway & Rose, 2015).

The standardization of languages began with the increase of manifestation of spoken language. In the 14th century, the major literary developments in Europe were mostly in French, Greek, and Latin, but their nature evolved due to the developments of new technologies. The invention of Gutenberg's printing press caused a great social and linguistic change in Europe and it also resulted in an explosion of publications in vernacular languages, which later raised the question of what variety of vernacular languages to use in mass publication. As Galloway and Rose (2015) put, William Caxton made the decision to settle on the Midlands variety of English with added London inflections and expressions, because, from a business perspective, he wanted to print in a standard that could be most widely understood by those across Britain at that time and the Chancery Standard served as a framework for him (Galloway & Rose, 2015). Today, to no one's surprise, English is considered to have two widely accepted and hegemonic standard forms, i.e. American English and British English.

Another language, which has gone through a variety of great changes in history, is the Modern Turkish language as it is known today. Actually, Turkish takes place in the Altay branch of the Ural-Altaic language together with Finnish and Hungarian sharing the same historical background, but today these languages are rather different from one another (Lewis, 1999). Throughout history, Turkish people spread across and lived over a wide geographical area which also influenced the development of the language. Due to this wide diffusion, various dialects and accents have emerged in the course of time. The initial roots of Turkish were found many years ago in Asia in the Orhon (Orkhon) scripts, but as with old English, the oldest version of Turkish is also relatively different from today's modern Turkish. The roots of modern Turkish language were set in Anatolia during the reign of the Ottoman Empire. The historical development of the Turkish language is divided into three main categories: Old Turkish, Mid-Turkish and Modern (New) Turkish. In the Ottoman Empire, three languages were used to serve different functions. For example, Arabic was the language of religion, Persian was the language of art, literature, and diplomacy, and the Ottoman Turkish was used for the administration of the government (Lewis, 1999). During this period Arabic and Persian words invaded the Turkish language and it actually became

a mixture of these three languages. Ottoman Turkish not only borrowed vocabularies from Arabic and Persian, but also transferred entire expressions and syntactic structures out of these languages and their effects on current Turkish can still be seen today. In time, these multiple linguistic influences on Ottoman Turkish caused difficulties in spelling and writing. The major reason for this was the use of the Arabic script in the spoken and written modes of the language.

Confronted with these difficulties, in the 19th century, authorities decided for a reform of the language. There was a need for a language that would be easier to read and write. After the foundation of the new republic by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the new language reform started and firstly the Arabic alphabet was replaced by the Latin alphabet. Furthermore, the Arabic words and Persian loan words were removed from Turkish and new Turkish equivalents were created or western counterparts were borrowed from modern European languages, such as French (Binnaz, 1981). The purpose was to produce a language that was more Turkish in content, more modern, precise, practical, and less difficult to learn. This reform was actually the first attempt to standardize the Turkish language within the scope of Turkey's modernization or westernization efforts to make it a more practical and modern-looking language. This language reform has paved the way for the birth of the dialect of Istanbul, which is also regarded as the "Modern Standard [upon which] Turkish is based" (Campbell, 1995, p. 547). As noted by Karakaş (2016), "[s]ince the 1930s, it was this dialect which became the officially recognised form of Turkish used throughout the country seeing as it was widely used in both print media and the Turkish education system" (p. 4).

Problem statement and the importance of research

Having a long history, both Turkish and English are spoken by many people today. Even, English has become a global language and expanded its usage all over the world as a lingua franca. Although both languages have a determined standard version, their spoken forms show variations due to the deviations in use in different geographical regions. Also, there is now a heated debate about the perceived status of these regional varieties in different domains, primarily education, when compared to the standard versions. It is because language is no longer seen as something stable. Rather, it is always changing and developing, the use of the different geographical variations is a stark reality, and more and more scholars are inclined to the view that languages should

not be restricted to standard versions from a sociolinguistic point of view (Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey, 2011; Seidlhofer, 2011). So, considering the fluid and dynamic nature of languages, this paper aims to investigate Turkish EFL teachers' views about standard language, dialects and language varieties for the English language and the Turkish language, as they are the actual users of both languages in their everyday life. Investigation of their views on these concepts is relatively noteworthy as their views are likely to inform their daily practices as well as instructional practices. That is, in a sense, whether they are willing to introduce diversity to their classes or not depends on their stance towards these linguistic issues and how they think of them. To this end, we seek answers to the following research questions in this study:

1. What are EFL teachers' overall views about the notions of the standard language, dialects and language varieties in relation to Turkish and English?
2. Do these EFL teachers favour standard forms of language over non-standard forms in terms of their introduction to the school environment? Why/why not?

Key concepts and previous research on standard English and Turkish

When it comes to the term 'standardization' of languages, many different studies were conducted to determine what the standard form is and what advantages and disadvantages of standard languages are thought to enjoy. It seems like there is not an accurate specified definition of standard languages. Beginning with the dictionary definitions, The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Hornby, 2010) defines "standard" as "believed to be correct and used by most people", and the online dictionary Dictionary.com defines it as "something considered by an authority or by general consent as a basis of comparison; an approved model". In a similar fashion, MacMillan English Dictionary (Rundell & Fox, 2002) defines "standard" as "generally used or accepted as normal". As it can be seen from the dictionary definitions, there is always a benchmark while defining the standard language, used as a basis to highlight that standard language is correct, commonly accepted as normal or possessing prestige and ascribed to an authority. Perhaps, the most encompassing and oft-cited definition is that of Lippi-Green (2012) who describes it as follows while talking of the ideology surrounding the term 'standard language':

an abstracted, idealized, homogeneous spoken language which is imposed and maintained by dominant bloc institutions and which names as its model the written language, but which is drawn primarily from the spoken language of the upper middle class (p. 67).

Such definitions undeniably make the concept of 'standard' more confusing and vague in terms of by whom the actual standard form of language is spoken/used and what exactly it refers to concretely speaking. To clarify the concept, Jespersen (1925) puts forward the view that standard is related to regional neutrality of a language. From another point of view, Stewart (1968) listed four general characteristics of a standard language as vitality, historicity, autonomy, and standardization. Adopting a similar approach, Haugen (1966) and Van der Wal and Van Bree (2008) preferred to designate the standard language on the basis of stages in its development: selection, codification, elaboration, and acceptance. Similar to the above definitions, Hartveldt (1978) claimed that the sociolect, i.e. the standard variety, is generally known as correct, so there is a need for ordinary speakers before it can be accepted as standard. As can be clearly understood, despite not having a clear-cut definition unanimously embraced by scholars, standard languages are defined by ascribing to some properties, such as correctness, authority (believed to be held by the educated), prestige and legitimacy (Bex & Watts, 1999; Gal, 2006; Milroy & Milroy, 2012).

Furthermore, it is also claimed that the standardness of a language is closely related with the country's history due to wars and other circumstances, which also plays an important role in the positioning of defining a standard. Based on these understanding, it was stated that the standard language is a powerful force in sustaining a national ideology as shared language is important in providing a unity (Anderson, 1991; Gellner, 1983). This standard language ideology proposes that homogeneity of language in a country symbolizes the socio-political unity of that community. Prescriptivists try to uphold rules that preserve and impose a 'correct' form of a language whereas descriptivists attempt to describe how people actually use language and are welcoming of change and adaptation (Cook, 2003; Curzan, 2014). Nordquist (2018) defines 'prescriptivism' as the belief or attitude that there is one language that is superior and should be constantly promoted, such as Standard English or Standard Turkish. This imposition and promotion of standard language ideology have also

political and economic grounds in the background. A language without rules would not be described as a whole language but languages must have basic rules in order to be comprehensible. However, to prescribe constant rules would be against the nature of language evolution.

As far as previous studies into the notion of standard languages are concerned, it is seen that standard and nonstandard varieties elicit different evaluative reactions along with the status, prestige, and solidarity dimensions. It is often standard English guises and accents that receive more favourable reactions from participants than non-native guises and non-standard accents (e.g., El-dash & Busnardo, 2001; Pilus, 2013). Studies investigating attitudes towards standard and non-standard English varieties and accents demonstrated that British English and American English are favoured more than the others, such as New Zealand and Australian voices (e.g., Bayard et al., 2001). Nonetheless, there are also rare cases in which participants showed greater solidarity with speakers of non-standard English with heavily foreign accents, especially when they judge speakers sharing the same L1 with themselves (e.g., McKenzie, 2008). Status attributions are based primarily on perceptions of socioeconomic status. The reason is that standard varieties, as discussed above, tend to be associated with dominant socioeconomic groups within a given society, standard speakers are typically attributed higher status than nonstandard speakers (Dragojevic, 2017). Another line of research has indicated that standard languages are also preferred over their non-standard counterparts in assessment, particularly in higher education institutions and by international examination boards, such as IELTS and TOEFL (e.g., Jenkins, 2014; Karakaş, 2018). The notion of standard language also permeates people's perceptions about what constitutes 'good English', since most individuals equate 'good English' with the standard form of the language, downgrading its non- or sub-standard versions and dialects (Karakaş, 2017). It also emerged in previous research that standard versions of languages are considered to be more intelligible than non-standard forms (Karakaş, 2016).

Albeit the scarcity of research into standard Turkish, the existing research into teaching Turkish as a foreign language and teaching Turkish as a mother tongue has demonstrated that as far as educational contexts are concerned, the standard version of Turkish is preferred over the non- and sub-standard forms, especially in relation to

teaching (academic) writing (e.g. Azizoğlu, Tolaman & Tulumcu, 2019; Alyılmaz & Alyılmaz, 2018; Demir, 2010). As regards the writing skill, Alyılmaz and Alyılmaz (2018) go as far to claim that conforming to writing conventions and ensuring correctness in written Turkish leads to maintaining a standard of writing in Turkish and enables it to be the norm for anyone. From this, one can conclude that even if there is not a clear-cut definition of good Turkish in the scholarly circles, it is, as in the case of English, associated with 'correctness', i.e. the standard version of Turkish. However, acknowledging the role of standard Turkish in educational milieus, Pehlivan (2012) argues for raising language awareness of the prospective teachers of Turkish, especially with respect to speaking, noting that "the standard dialect is not the only dialect used by the members of a speech community" (p. 332).

A favourable approach to standard versions of languages is not always the case because some countries do not have a long history of independence within the same community or in countries where a variety of different languages are spoken. The reason is that it is difficult to provide a shared language in such countries. Hence, the standard language has its own unique position in each individual country. As can be seen in countries where the national languages are taken from somewhere else, attitudes towards standard languages are likely to be different from those, which have historically developed their own languages. In these countries, the emphasis on dialects is more on the foreground as each dialect represents a relatively recognizable and tangible community of speakers. Dialects are forms of languages symbolizing the old social attachment amongst those who are next of kin, those who live in the same neighbourhood or tribe, or those who share a social or ethnic class (e.g., Britain 1997; Mesthrie et al., 2010; Thomason & Kaufman, 1988). In such cases, it is hard to speak of a whole unit; rather, there is a division into groups.

Finally, as it can be seen from the plentiful previous studies, it is difficult to make a single definition of the standard language. According to Daan (1969), the notion of standard norms lies not in rules or prescriptions, but primarily in the head of people. As the definition of a standard language varies depending on the country and the individuals themselves, this study aims to explore the way Turkish EFL teachers view and conceptualise standard languages, dialects and language varieties in relation to Turkish and English.

The study

Research design

In this study, a descriptive survey design was used to examine Turkish EFL teachers' views about standard language, dialects and language varieties by relating these notions to their first language, i.e. Turkish, and the language they are teaching as part of their profession, i.e. English. Our purpose is to delve into EFL teachers' views and perceptions about such notions as a standard language, dialects and varieties, about which little is known empirically in the Turkish context. Thus, we do not aim to generalise or study any relationships but describe the frequency of occurrences of participants' perceptions and views about the sociolinguistic concepts. Namely, we are dealing with the 'what' question rather than how, when and why relating to our sample.

Participants

The participants of the study were 12 Turkish EFL teachers from a small province in Turkey. In terms of their gender breakdown, seven participants were female and five were male. Participants were conveniently sampled through personal communication and involved in the study on a voluntary basis. Their age range varied between 23 and 35. All participants were working as EFL teachers in different schools and levels of education at the time of data collection. Before data collection, the participants were advised that the data they provided would be used for research purposes only, and their identity would remain anonymous and confidential.

Data collection and analysis

The instrument, used to collect the data for the study, was developed after a thorough review of the previous studies. A structured email questionnaire, including closed-ended questions with probes (why/why not), was used to gather data. It consisted of two parts. The first part contained items about the participant's personal information and the second part included the main questions of the study. In total, there were 15 questions asking for static responses with each being followed with *why/why not* questions to allow for further commentaries on the static responses of the participants. The last part of the questionnaire includes an open-ended question where the

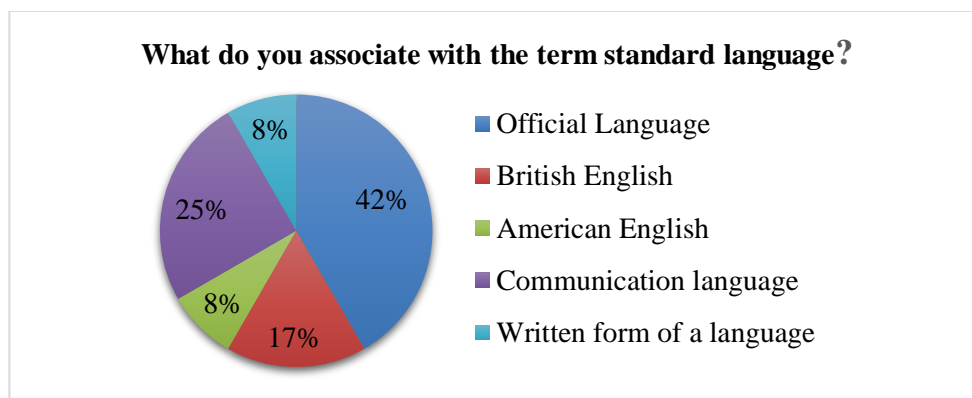
participants can express and share their own comments on issues that are not addressed in the questionnaire. Prior to the administration of the questionnaires, they were examined by two experts for content validity. Finally, revisions and necessary modifications were made in accordance with the experts' feedback. The questionnaire was conducted online for the advantages of an easier application process and to get faster results. The questionnaire was converted on an online form via Google forms and the link of the questionnaire was sent to the participants by e-mail and WhatsApp and they were free in answering in terms of time limitation. The collected data were grouped under three main sections as, a) perceptions of a standard language, b) perceptions of dialects and other language varieties and c) perceptions of Standard English and Standard Turkish. Our analysis was descriptive in nature, as well, presenting the findings in the form of frequencies and percentages, supplemented with quotes by participants who responded to why/why not questions for clarification of their responses to the closed-ended items (yes/no).

Findings

Perception of standard language

The findings of the study are presented in figures according to participants' answers to each item in the questionnaire. The first group of answers we analysed were related to the participants' perceptions about standard language. The first question they answered was about what standard language meant to them, i.e. their perceptions of the notion of the standard language. The responses to this question are presented below:

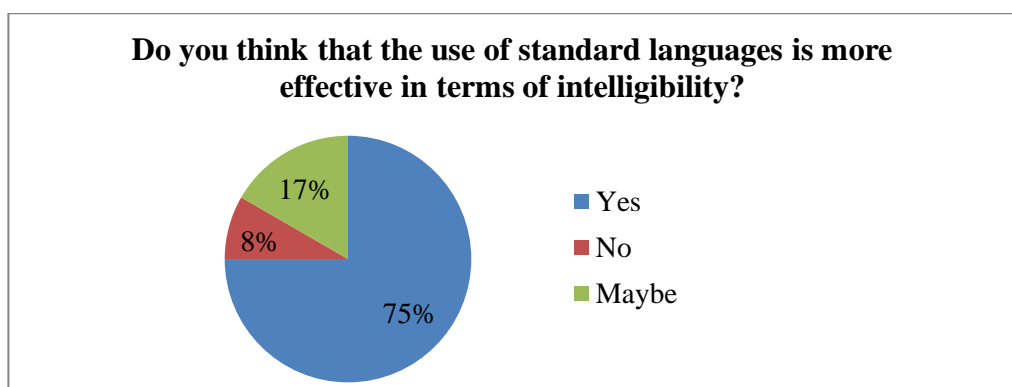
Figure 1. Participants' views about the notion of the standard language



It can be seen from Figure 1 that there is not a clear conceptualisation of standard language in the participants' minds as in the case of its definitions by different scholars (e.g., Hornby, 2010; Lippi-Green, 2012; Rundell & Fox, 2002). The majority perceived standard language to be the official form of language used in any country. Three participants considered that the language used for daily communication is the definition of the standard language. However, surprising only one participant associated the written form of a language with its standard form. This finding is intriguing in that scholars often refer to a written form of any language while talking about standard forms (e.g., Lippi-Green, 2012). Similar results were found in the study of Anderson (1991) and Gellner (1983) who observed that standard language is believed to be essential to provide a national unity. Not surprisingly, a few participants associated the term 'standard language' with British English or American English. We can infer from these findings that these two dominant varieties brought standard forms of English into their minds most probably because of the impact of their previous educational experiences on their perceptions. This may be explained in part by the language education policies of countries, including Turkey, in which either standard forms of British English or American English is picked as the main norm, especially in listening and speaking activities.

Another item in the questionnaire relating to standard language was concerned with the issue of 'intelligibility and social stability'.

Figure 2. Participants' views about the relationship between intelligibility and communicative effectiveness



The majority of the participants indicated that the existence of a standard language is more effective in terms of intelligibility and it was further stated that standard versions of languages are important in providing social stability. For instance,

six out of seven teachers who further commented on why they support the use of standard languages made the following remarks in respect to the intelligibility issue:

T1: In my opinion, it [standard language use] is more effective because it makes it easier to understand each other.

T3: It makes communication between people more intelligible for both sides.

T4: It provides unity in the country and everyone can understand each other better.

T5: For example in countries like India people living in different regions have problems in communication.

T6: It would be difficult to understand each other when encountering always speakers of language varieties.

T7: Peoples language use differs based on the region or culture and some features or units may not be familiar to other speakers, so a standard version is more effective for clear communication.

A similar finding was also reported by Karakaş (2016, 2017) who found that individuals cling to the ideology of the superiority of standard forms of languages to non-standard forms of languages in respect of intelligibility. This entrenched belief among participants translate into verbal utterances as shown in the above excerpts. The excerpts actually revolve around the belief that whoever speaks/uses standard language renders himself/herself more intelligible. This strong adherence to standard forms and denial of non-standard versions and dialects of languages are likely to be related to their previous education experiences where they almost receive no exposure to regional native Englishes, dialects, accents and non-native Englishes. To put simply, what lies behind their favourable view of the standard language is most possibly their lack of awareness about non-standard forms and regional dialects in actual use and their functional roles in a given society. Only one of the teachers did not see non-standard language use or regional variations as a threat to intelligibility, reporting that “the only important thing is to understand each other it doesn't matter if standard or not” (T2).

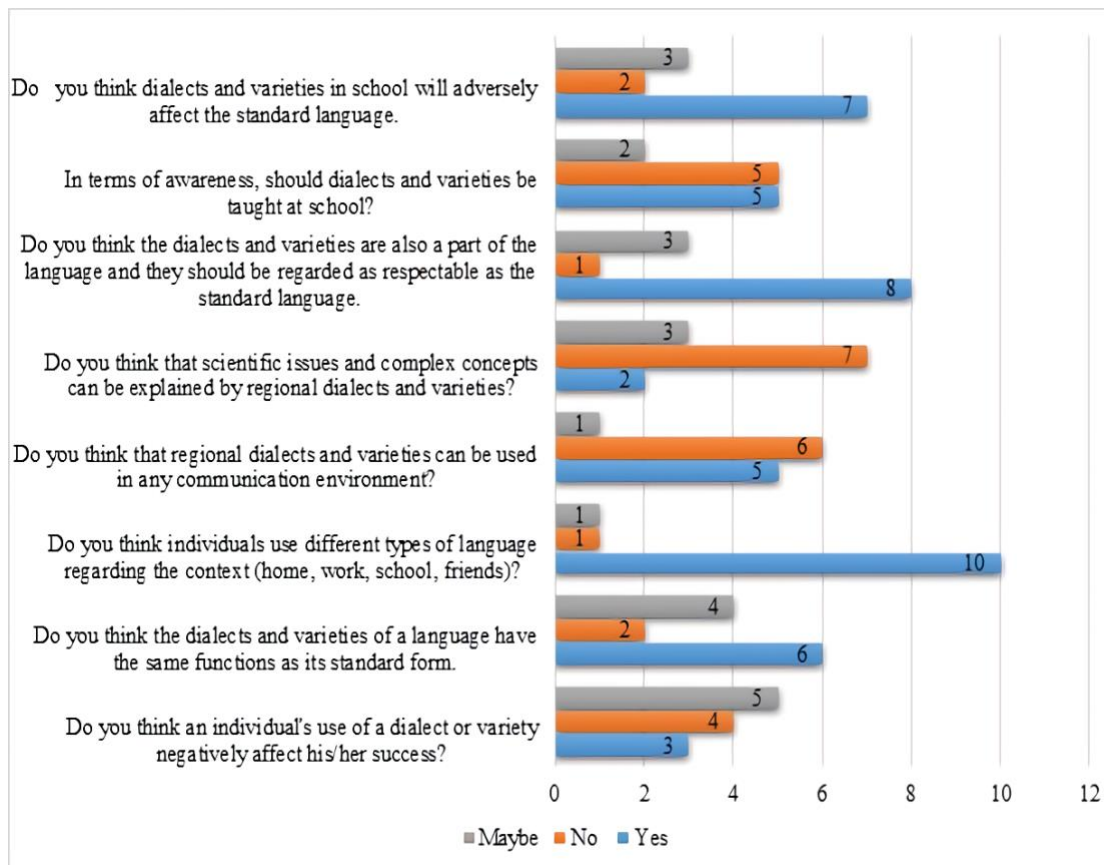
Perceptions of dialects and other language varieties

Overall, the analysis of the items on participants' perceptions about dialects and language varieties showed that language varieties are mainly associated with the spoken forms of languages in different geographical regions of a country. That is, it can be

concluded that the participants have awareness about the existence and status of dialects in their own context and in relation to the language they are teaching at schools.

The degree of agreement with each item showed variations depending on the topic of items. More detailed analysis of each item is given in the following figure.

Figure 3. Participants’ views about dialects and language varieties



The results showed that most teachers had some concerns with respect to the adverse impact of dialects on standard languages in the school contexts. This concern is also manifested in participants’ views about the place of dialects and varieties when it comes to making students’ aware of such linguistic issues. There was not a clear-cut tendency among participants as five participants supported the inclusion and the other five were for the exclusion of dialects in language teaching. On this issue of raising students’ awareness, four teachers raised serious concerns in their accounts about the likely detrimental impacts of exposure to different varieties and dialects, as can be shown below in their own words:

T1: I think it can be effect [affect] the current learning process in a negative way.

T3: In my opinion, it will only confuse the students to focus on varieties before learning one type of it.

T4: It is already difficult to teach English with the given curriculum. Teaching other varieties would make it more difficult in terms of time.

Unlike these four teachers, two of them were not exactly against or for teaching different varieties and dialects of English apart from the standard ones. On one hand, these teachers appear to see the value of making students aware of different varieties and dialects and to want them to show genuine respect to differences. On the other hand, they emphasize that too much concentration on differences and divergent uses of English may not achieve the target of language teaching. The voices raised regarding this issue are as follows:

T6: It may be effective in terms of engaging students' awareness towards other dialects or varieties but it is already stressful to teach one variety.

T7: Maybe it should not be taught with all details but students should be aware of dialects and varieties and they should learn to respect them because it is not a sign of inferiority or superiority when speaking varieties.

Two of the teachers strongly supported the introduction of linguistic diversity into EFL classrooms by presenting the following arguments:

T2: Students will be aware about other types of languages and they will not be surprised when they hear it for the first time. They will respect other speakers and it will have advantages in terms understanding every speaker.

T5: The students should be able to handle with all types of languages they encounter and they should know that there exist different forms.

Once it comes to the status of dialects and varieties in a given language, Figure 3 illustrates that eight participants considered them as part of the language and have equal status with its standard version. This means that the participants are aware of the reality of dialects and varieties in a given society, but not all think of them to be fit for inclusion in the domain of education, as is evident in quotes by T1, T3 and T4. This conclusion is further evidenced in participants' responses to the use of dialects and varieties for scientific purposes since most participants see dialects and varieties in scientific discourse as being deficient to clarify about theoretical and complex issues around science. Their reservation may be related to the context of language use. Since

scientific information is mostly distributed in written form, the field of science can be viewed as a formal context where standard versions of any language are supposed to be the norm. Some teachers maintained their stance on this matter by advancing such claims as:

T1: Because using the standard version minimizes the chance of misunderstanding of speakers and provides a clearer communication.

T4: It is the determined language in the country as official and which should be used in formal settings.

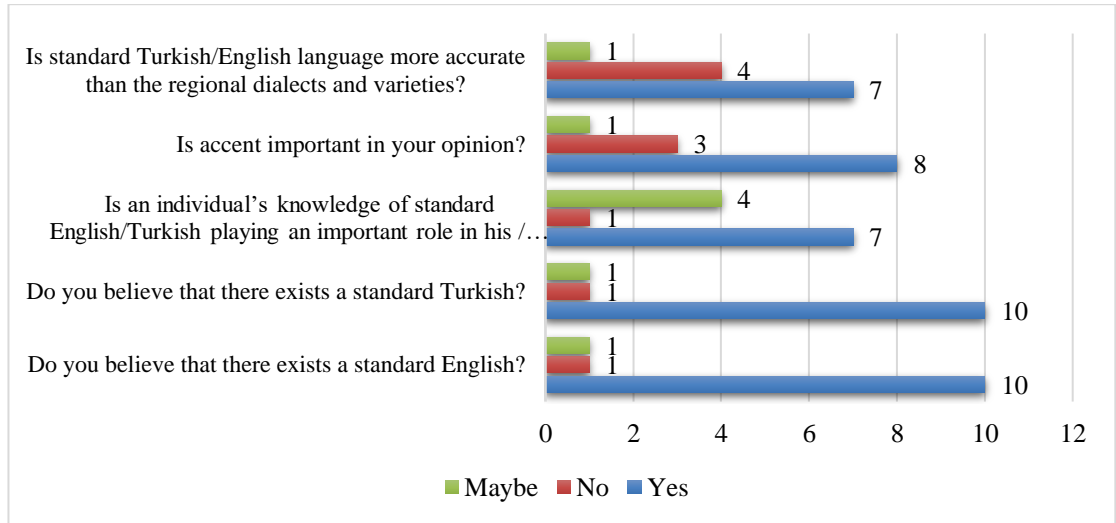
T6: In my opinion, standard versions should be preferred in a formal setting and in business life ... the usage may vary according to the context but standard versions are more prestigious and should be preferred in specific settings because it is more appropriate.

As for another domain, i.e. communication, the situation is more blurry than the others as there seems to be no exact agreement on whether dialects and varieties can be used in any communicative situations. However, as is seen in the above excerpts, greater awareness exists among participants on the issue of people's context-dependent language use. For instance, a person may prefer the standard version of their mother tongue in formal situations, like at meetings, but they can switch to non-standard versions or dialects when visiting their family members in a rural area or a village and while having informal meetings with friends for purposes of showing solidarity with these people. As for the functional roles of dialects and language varieties, most teachers perceive them to have equal status with the standard version. Finally, it emerged that when evaluating the likely impact of using dialects or varieties on one's success, most participants were straightforward about their views, yet most saw their impact within the bounds of possibility, opting for 'maybe' out of the given choices.

Perceptions of Standard English and Standard Turkish

In terms of perceptions of Standard English and Standard Turkish, the study revealed more concrete results, as can be seen in the following figure.

Figure 4. Participants' views about Standard Turkish and English



To start with the items that had the highest agreement from participants, Figure 4 reveals that most teachers believe in the existence of standard forms of Turkish and English, displaying their linguistic awareness about regional and divergent uses of English and Turkish. When they were asked how they described standard versions of Turkish and English, they associated Standard Turkish with mainly Istanbul Turkish. This finding lends support to Campbell's (1995) observation that there is a type of Turkish called Istanbul Turkish favourable to other forms of Turkish due to its recognition as the standard form of Turkish by the elite and educated. In the follow-up accounts as regards these close-ended questions, several teachers considered standard Turkish to have higher prestige than its non-standard forms, by claiming:

T1: It is used by everyone or most of the people living in the country try to use it.

T2: It is the official language of Turkey.

T3: It is the language spoken officially in the country.

T5: It is accepted as standard by the society in terms of writing and official language.

T7: In terms of prestige, Standard Turkish has the highest prestige because it is the official language of the country, it is spoken by the majority and it is the language in official institutions.

Nevertheless, for Standard English two major terms were used, i.e., American English and British English. From these results, it can be seen that there appears to be

a benchmark in the minds of participants against which they define standard forms of languages as being similar to the dictionary definitions (e.g., Hornby, 2010; Rundell & Fox, 2002). It is also evident from Figure 4 that using standard forms of language are perceived to affect individuals' success and that standard forms ensure more accuracy than dialects or language varieties. Backing the use of standard languages, two teachers put forward their ideas on the connection between using standard Turkish and success as follows:

T5: Yes for example those whose work is based on communication will certainly have an advantage when speaking standard Turkish or like in our situation speaking in a standard and clear form is important in being a role model.

T7: Yes, if someone uses appropriate language or has the knowledge of where to use standard Turkish it will be important in terms of success, for example in professions like teacher or lawyer using standard Turkish is accepted as more prestigious.

The rest of the teachers did not establish a direct link between achieving success in life and using standard versions of languages. Their focal concern was about the requirements of a particular career area and one's individual performance in the workplace rather than whether they are able to use language in a certain fashion. In this respect, several teachers said that:

T1: I can't say something certain because it can change depending on the type of career.

T2: My answer for this question is neither yes or no because there are successful or unsuccessful people using standard Turkish.

T3: I can differ according to the situation or the type of job the person is working but when the job is based on active communication it can be important.

T4: No. Success is depending on performance in a specific field and not on how a person is speaking.

T6: No because someone can also achieve success without being able to speak or have knowledge about the standard versions of language but in some professions it will definitely play an important role.

Moreover, the participants also mentioned that accent is a vital linguistic element for oral communication. More than half of the EFL teachers deemed that their own accents are close to American English accent, yet those identifying their accents with British accent users were in the minority. In addition to these, it was indicated that standard forms of both languages are related to higher prestige as was discussed above.

It also turned out in our analysis of their further accounts to open-ended questions that another benchmark was set in their perceptions in terms of how speaking like a native English speaker should be taken. Some participants noted that the phrase, 'speaking like a native speaker', primarily hinges on the skilful use of vocabulary and fluent pronunciation of words like someone from the English community, that is, someone who was born in Britain, America or like any citizen of these countries. Additionally, the participants explained that the Turkish Language is degrading in due course, while the English language is enriching and thriving day by day. In the last section of the questionnaire about their personal comments about the study, one participant mentioned: "language is a communication tool which changes constantly, therefore it is hard to define concepts like standard language which represents uniformity and fixedness."

Conclusion

This study emerged from the query of how a small group of language teachers perceives some sociolinguistic concepts in regards to their own mother tongue and the language they teach as part of their profession. The key results of the study about Turkish EFL teachers' perceptions about standard languages, dialects, and language varieties showed that there is not a clear conception of the terms in the minds of the individuals. Especially, the term standard language is often associated with different forms of languages. Moreover, the results showed that the use of standard language is perceived as being more effective in terms of intelligibility.

Furthermore, the results revealed that regional dialects or other language varieties were also accepted forms of language in the society and their use is thought to not have any negative effects regarding users' success. It was also seen that dialects and language varieties are perceived to have the same function with its standard norms and should be considered as respectable as standard languages because it is believed

that it is in the nature of individuals to use different languages depending on the context or region. On the other hand, there is negativity when it comes to teaching different dialects and varieties in schools because most teachers are of the opinion that teaching these deviant forms would adversely affect the standard language and the quality of the language teaching process. Therefore, there is enough evidence to advance the claim that there is respect among teachers for regional and non-standard varieties as well as dialects in principle, yet such respect does not translate into practices, especially in the matter of inclusion of these varieties and dialects in language teaching milieus.

Another highlighted point is that both standard forms of Turkish and English are believed to exist in prevalent usage and it is believed that the standard form of a language is more accurate than their regional alternatives. Moreover, in the case of regional versions, it was noticed that the use of standard languages is considered to play a more effective role as for the success of individuals and that a correct accent of spoken language is an absolute must. Considering the results summarised so far, the concept of standard language differs according to each individual and is outlined in many distinctive ways. The perceptions about dialects and language varieties also showed a difference in terms of their perceived functions and status.

As a limitation of this study, we should note that the results reflect only a small group of Turkish EFL teachers' general attitudes towards standard languages, language varieties, and dialects. Different results may have emerged had the data been collected from a larger sample across different cities. Therefore, further research into EFL teachers' perceptions in different contexts with a larger study group can be carried out by researchers. It is because, as put by Daan (1969), standard norms lie not in rules or prescriptions, but primarily in the head of people. Due to its small sample size, the generalizability of the results is subject to certain limitations. For instance, we did not consider the impact of certain variables on ELF teachers' perceptions. This would be a fruitful area for further work, especially if the data is collected from a large group of teachers. A further study could also investigate pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions about standard languages, dialects and varieties, as their previous educational experiences can also be a decisive factor guiding their perceptions towards a particular direction.

Lastly, a few implications can be drawn from the findings, the major of which is about the teacher education programs, which seem to be inadequate in respect to familiarizing teacher candidates with the sociolinguistic reality of real-world language use and diverse speaker profiles of languages whose practices are more divergent rather than uniform. We suggest that courses on sociolinguistics and/or Global Englishes should be introduced into teacher education programs. Finally, further research can be conducted in a longitudinal manner with a larger sample to better analyse the long-term impacts of teachers' perceptions about sociolinguistic issues on their ground practices in classes.

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