8

An English Professor's Journey of Teaching Turkish as a Second Language

Ayşe Naz Bulamur

Introduction: A Journeywoman at the Crossroads

As a Turkish professor of English literature at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, Türkiye, I have always felt my identity has transgressed cultural and national borders. As the daughter of a Turkish Air Force pilot, when I was growing up, I lived in various cities from the West to East of Türkiye. Moving back and forth between Türkiye, Italy, and the United States, has expanded my horizons and taught me to respect diverse social practices. The constant geographical change, which I once disliked as a child, now helps me empathize with students from diverse cultural backgrounds. The teachers and classmates I had to leave behind every two years have become a part of who I am. I admire 19th-century American writer Walt Whitman's (1964) poem "Song of Myself": "Do I contradict myself? / Very well then I contradict myself, / (I am large, I contain multitudes)" (p. 582). Crossing cultural and geographical borders has taught me to embrace my own complex identity, which cannot simply be pinned down to being Turkish. I attended elementary, middle, and high schools in my birthplace Istanbul, Türkiye; Malatya, Türkiye; Eskişehir, Türkiye; Naples, Italy; and Montgomery, Alabama, USA. When I was admitted to Boğaziçi University in Türkiye, I was so happy that I no longer had to move with my family from one military base to another. After receiving my BA in English Literature in 1997, unlike my classmates who applied abroad, I insisted on staying in Istanbul to pursue my MA in British Drama at Yeditepe University.

However, my life as a journeywoman did not end despite all my resistance to pursuing my doctoral studies abroad. Having a roommate and a job in Istanbul was a great package. Why would I ask for more? Our former chair, Prof. Dr. Cevza Sevgen, compared me to a lazy old lady, who did not have enough life energy and ambition to change her life. "You speak like an 85-year-old woman!" she yelled, when I shared my happiness in working as a research assistant and starting my PhD at Boğaziçi University's Department of Western Languages and Literatures. I am indebted to all the pressure she put on me to leave my comfort zone and to prepare for the quite challenging

Routledge, Narratives of Non-English L2 Language Teachers **DOI: 10.4324/9781003500377-11**

exams required for the PhD applications in the United States. Thanks to my family's and professors' support, I received a teaching assistantship to pursue my PhD in Literary Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (2003–2010). The classic novels my mother read as a student at İzmir American High School and Ankara University's English literature program traveled with me to Milwaukee. The books record our family history: My mother wrote her maiden name and date on the novels she read as a student. I jotted down my name and date right after hers in the books she has given me over the years. After years of teaching English composition and literature, never had I ever thought of teaching my native language to foreigners in Türkiye. This chapter gives me the opportunity to travel back in time and revisit my 13-year experience of teaching Turkish as a second language.

I started teaching upper intermediate reading and speaking courses at Boğaziçi University's Turkish Language and Culture Summer Program after being appointed as an assistant professor in the Department of Western Languages and Literatures in 2011. Since 1982, the annual summer program has been offering "courses at three basic levels of language instruction taught by university staff specialized in teaching Turkish as a foreign language." Most of the students are American students or students from other countries who are studying in the US. All students take grammar, reading, writing, and speaking courses designed for their level. They are required to take midterm, final, and proficiency exams and submit their assignments to complete the accredited international program. The seven-week intensive program provides adult learners "an opportunity to have first-hand experience with Turkish culture" by participating in cultural events, daily excursions, academic talks, and film screenings.[1]

"Why on earth would Americans learn Turkish?" I wondered when I first taught Turkish. I found that most of the undergraduate and graduate students learn Turkish for academic purposes. They have various research fields such as art and musicology in the Ottoman Empire, Turkish novels, comparative English and Turkish literature, Middle Eastern studies, the clash of Islam and secularism in the Turkish Republic, modernity and Islam, gender studies in Türkiye, and Istanbul's liminal position between Asia and Europe. The linguists are interested in the etymology of the Turkish language, which borrows several words from Arabic and Persian. Students do research in various libraries in Istanbul and travel within Türkiye to collect data or to hold interviews that enrich their field of study. They conduct archive research in Turkish and even read academic books and articles written in Turkish.

While most of my students learn Turkish to conduct academic research in Türkiye, many join our summer program because of their Turkish family heritage. Unfortunately, many Turkish

couples submit to the hegemony of English and stop speaking their native language after they move to the USA. Vietnamese writer Trinh Minh-ha (1989) points out the politics of language in *Woman Native Other*: "And language is one of the most complex forms of subjugation, being at the same time the locus of power and unconscious servility" (p. 52). Wittingly or not, many immigrant families around the world lose their heritage language due to cultural assimilation. In the US, Turkish families' reluctance to speak Turkish even with one another shows how they have subjugated to the supremacy of American culture. Many internalize the common association of modernity with Westernization and speak exclusively English. Unfortunately, many Turkish children in the USA are strangers to the Turkish language. As they grow up, many hope to improve their Turkish and connect with their ethnic roots and relatives by joining our Turkish program.

I have always been impressed with the students' intellectual depth and knowledge of politics and history. Even the first timers in Istanbul easily adapt to the new cultural environment. As world travelers, they know how to enjoy different cuisines, visit historical sites, and make new friends. I have never heard them complain of traffic, unreliable taxi drivers, or unexpected power cuts in Istanbul. Neither terrorist attacks nor COVID was able to stop our students from studying in Istanbul and traveling across Türkiye from Edirne to Eastern Anatolia.

As brilliant and hardworking students, they successfully complete the seven-week program that consists of grammar, speaking, writing, and reading classes every weekday from 9 am to 1 pm. Having endured four hours of class in Istanbul's humid weather, they often attend intellectually stimulating lectures about Turkish art, economics, history, and architecture. After a busy day of classes, they barely have time to rest because of their daily homework, which they almost always turn in on time and even ask for more! I have always been impressed with these students' ability to keep up with such an intensive program.

In reading classes, the students try to understand every single word in the readings that are specifically designed for their level. On the contrary, my purpose is to teach them how to identify the central argument or the theme despite their lack of vocabulary. From my experience in learning English and Italian, I know how searching for the meaning of every single foreign word can be overwhelming. Students tend to lose interest as they dive into the dictionary instead of the assigned passage. My goal is to teach them how to understand the assigned readings by focusing primarily on the words they know. The terms they are familiar with often provide enough clues for them to discover the key idea. As they give up their desire to comprehend every word and instead focus on the ones they are familiar with, they tend to understand the general framework of the passage and hence regain their confidence.

As in the reading class, my purpose in the speaking course is to challenge the students' desire for perfection and to help them speak within their vocabulary range. As ambitious university students, their goal is to speak in grammatically correct sentences with flawless pronunciation. However, their aim for excellence often hinders them from speaking Turkish. The fear of making mistakes mutes them in class discussions. My purpose is to create a friendly classroom environment where students are not afraid of making mistakes. They overcome their initial fear as they express themselves despite their grammatical errors and mispronunciations. To boost their confidence, teaching assistants hold conversation hours in the afternoons and plan social activities for students to speak Turkish among themselves.

When the directors of the Turkish Language and Culture Summer Program first asked me to join their team, I was thrilled to get the chance to be the native speaker of the Turkish language that was spoken in class. After years of speaking English in a classroom environment, I could finally claim my position of authority as a native Turkish speaker.

As a student of English, I often lacked confidence due to my long and steep journey of learning English. Although I started learning English at the age of ten and got tremendous help from my English major mother; I hesitated and even refrained from speaking English. Attending American schools was not enough to boost my confidence. As a freshman at Boğaziçi University, my nightmare started as the Survey of English Literature class began with the 8th-century Anglo-Saxon epic *Beowulf*. Like the hero fighting against the monster, I was literally in combat with the awkward words on shields and swords. Unlike Beowulf, I was the loser of the battle. Not being able to understand more than two lines in the text, I even considered changing my major and hence leaving behind the horrors of old English.

Although my long battle of studying English was rewarded with my acceptance to the PhD in English-language Literary Studies, I questioned my authority to teach English research and composition to freshmen students as an international teaching assistant at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. I was overwhelmed as a TA, the only foreigner in the English class. I discredited my ability to teach composition while I was struggling with my own writing. Despite my lifetime education in English, I felt awkward correcting American students' grammar or punctuation errors. In a competitive work environment, I had to prove my ability to teach English composition as a non-native speaker. I always felt the white privileged eye watching over me and wondering how I got a teaching assistantship whereas many native English speakers didn't. After years of worrying about my accent in English as an international TA, I was excited to finally claim my position of authority by teaching my own native language.

What motivated me to teach Turkish was my presumed position of authority, which I soon realized to be as fictional as a fairy tale. I was naïve enough to assume that being a native speaker would miraculously provide me with the necessary skills to teach Turkish to foreigners. I make grammar mistakes and mispronounce words in my own native language, too! Speaking error-free Turkish or English was an unreachable dream. I was still the minority in a class of mostly American students. The linguists in class often challenge me with their knowledge of etymology and explain the roots of some Turkish words better than I do! Ironically, I enrich my own Turkish vocabulary as I converse with the upper-advanced students. I embrace my imperfections as a native and non-native speaker by continuously learning and correcting my mistakes.

Taking a PhD course on how to teach English composition and seven years of teaching experience at UWM helped me create a student-centered environment in Turkish classes. My teaching developed tremendously over the years. I play the role of the facilitator as I write comments on students' assignments, lead class discussions, and help students engage with the reading material. This collaborative climate helps me emphasize the fact that the transmission of knowledge in class is reciprocal rather than one-way and that both parties are "simultaneously teachers and students" (Freire, 1970, p. 72). Like Edeleva (this volume), "I depart from the image of the teacher as a 'Ms-Know-All', the purveyor of the ultimate truth." I agree with her that students build their self-confidence as they regard themselves as a source of information and hence learn from each other.

Contextual Information: Dynamics of Reading and Speaking Courses

The official language of Türkiye "represents the southwestern arm of the community of Turkic languages within the Ural-Altay linguistic family that slowly evolved over time." Among many dialects of Turkish in Türkiye and neighboring countries—Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Macedonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Iraq, Cyprus, etc.—my colleagues and I teach the standardized Turkish that is influenced by Persian and Arabic.[2]

What students primarily need is course material that sparks their interest enough to learn a foreign language at 9 am. Tackling difficult passages or preparing short presentations will be fruitful only if the students are genuinely curious about the subject matter, such as art, health, food, politics, or sports. The selection of resources is at the heart of creating a classroom environment where students unwittingly learn as they enjoy the course. When preparing my syllabi for reading and speaking courses, I select resources that are suitable for the students' research field and their

level of Turkish.

My syllabus for the reading class includes short stories by famous Turkish authors as well as newspaper articles on recent social and political developments in Türkiye. The articles I choose cover a wide range of topics that are relevant to university students, who major in Middle Eastern art, religion, and politics. For example, we read about the history of Grand Bazaar, COVID's effect on education, Syrian refugees in Türkiye, Women's Day celebrations, shanty houses, and Türkiye's UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The selected short stories also engage with sociopolitical issues such as child workers, class dynamics, and the generation gap. Every article covers a different aspect of Turkish culture and history. As astute readers and researchers, students are often willing to discuss articles that improve their knowledge of the Turkish language and culture.

In the reading class, I also use visual materials that are relevant to the assigned texts. For example, before reading the article on the Grand Bazaar, I show its map and photos, and ask whether students have visited the world's first covered market. This short introduction helps students share their experience in bargaining in the bazaar and visiting Istanbul's old town, Sultanahmet. I also show William Henry Bartlett's (1809-1854) engravings and Warwick Goble's (1862-1943) paintings of the Bazaar, which are discussed in the article. Comparing the artworks in terms of both form and content gives students the chance to use the new vocabulary in the article. I also show movie stills from *Skyfall* (2012), in which James Bond rides a motorcycle on the Grand Bazaar's historical roof. Discussing the orientalist depictions of the market from the 19th-century to the present helps students remember the new vocabulary and boosts their confidence in their ability to discuss politics in Turkish.

Whereas I prepare the reading list in advance, I plan the speaking course syllabus on the first day of classes with students. I inquire about their major concerns while planning the speaking course. Like Edeleva's (this volume) Syrian students learning German, my students take the "center stage" as they prepare the syllabus by choosing the issues they hope to discuss in class. The most popular topics are Turkish cuisine, music, gender studies, economics, education, and crime. Every week, students prepare a three-minute presentation to discuss a photograph of their choice that is relevant to the subject matter. I also bring photos, short videos, or cartoons to foster class discussion. Students are willing to participate in a class they design with the teacher. We learn from each other as every presenter introduces new vocabulary and provides a new perspective on the weekly topic.

In addition to visual texts, I make use of handouts that address students' major concerns in daily conversation. Students often need help in giving directions, making hotel and flight

reservations, telling the time, expressing their health concerns, and describing their needs while shopping. Vocabulary lists, maps, and role-playing help students practice new vocabulary and overcome their difficulties in self-expression.

The dominance of English as a second language in Türkiye can be detrimental for students, who can easily continue their daily lives by just speaking English. They can go shopping and travel without uttering a Turkish word. Movie screenings are in original language with Turkish subtitles, museums provide English explanations, and restaurants have English menus. Almost all classes at Boğaziçi University are conducted in English and hence our students can interact with Turkish students in English.

English is an important language of education in most public and private schools in Türkiye, where children learn English in kindergarten if not in daycare. Upper-middle-class families often hire private tutors, sign up for online English classes, or send their children to summer language programs in England. English is essential for finding a job, especially in Western Türkiye, where almost everyone speaks English. Wittingly or not, we internalize the common association of modernity with Westernization and regard English as a prerequisite for progress and enlightenment. It is presumed that English is the language that is required to climb upward on the ladder of modernity.

The predominance of English in Istanbul does not match our goal to provide students an opportunity to practice their Turkish. The program demands that its participants speak Turkish not only with the locals but also with each other. The availability of English speakers and translations makes the students' but not the Turkish instructors' lives easier. The teaching assistants often accompany students in social gatherings and city tours to make sure they speak Turkish, not English.

Overcoming Challenges with the Art of Close Reading

Teaching Turkish can be quite challenging because it is hard to remember all the grammar and punctuation rules I studied in high school. As an English major, all my articles and conference presentations are in English. I had never delivered a speech in my native language before I joined the Turkish program as a reading and speaking instructor. I still have difficulty explaining the rationale behind the arbitrary grammar rules. Many of my advanced students can explain conjunctions in Turkish better than I do! Multilingual students can even trace the roots of certain

Turkish verbs to Arabic, Persian, or French.

I have taught myself and my students several techniques to decipher long and complex sentences, which are common in Turkish. In the reading course, I write a confusing sentence on the board and ask students to identify the verb, subject, and object. Bringing the three together often reveals the main idea. However, focusing on several adjectives that describe the subject may not tell us what the sentence is about. Eliminating the wordy descriptions and tracing the subject-object-verb sequence help students understand long sentences. I realize how much I have benefited from teaching Turkish as I write official administrative letters at Boğaziçi University and my weekly art reviews for an online Turkish newspaper.

I compensate for my "lack" in linguistics with my expertise in literature. I do not intend to be a grammar instructor. Like Edeleva and Nitu (this volume), I do not follow my own foreign language learning experience through grammar exercises. Instead, I focus on what I can do best, which is treating written or visual texts as literary texts. I conduct Turkish reading and speaking classes as if I am teaching literature. Incorporating literary analysis techniques—close reading, discourse analysis, character analysis, and writing—into language classrooms helps students engage texts through critical thinking. Students regard themselves as art critics as they comment on dominant ideologies of race, gender, and class in the texts.

The major pedagogical practice I integrate into my Turkish reading course is the close reading technique, which was invented by I. A Richards and T. S. Eliot in the 1920s. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), Eliot (1982) compares the literary text to a compound, where multiple and even contradictory chemicals blend and clash. Like scientists, literary critics provide textual evidence for their argument. Hence, they base their ideas not on abstract theories, such as the author's emotions, but on the text itself. Close readers treat the text as a laboratory where they carefully study literary devices such as metaphors, punctuation, alliteration, and rhyme. Word choice often reflects the sociopolitical climate in which the text was written. For example, William Shakespeare's reference to London as a seaport reflects the rising trade in the Renaissance; Ezra Pound's poem "In a Station of the Metro" (1913) portrays technological advancement. Close reading is a scientific method that analyzes words in light of their cultural environment.

The close reading technique is highly beneficial for me to turn the foreign language class into a literature course, where students engage the assigned texts through critical analysis. They improve their vocabulary not by memorizing the new words but by discussing their ideological or thematic significance.

For example, when we read Turkish author Sait Faik Abasıyanık's short story "The Silk

Handkerchief" (1934), they underline the words that portray the silk factory in Bursa as uncanny. I write their selected words—moonlight, knife, trashcan, and nail—on the board and ask students to interpret them within the context of the story. Students describe the horror they feel in the factory that seems deserted at night. Once we move to the next two paragraphs, they identify the words that enlighten the setting that initially seems dark and scary. They notice how the rising sunlight or the narrator's friendly smile challenges our prejudice against a young boy who wants to steal a silk handkerchief for his lover.

The narrator's word choice—farm, chestnuts, trees—helps students feel the factory worker's nostalgia for Bursa's untrodden nature. They interpret his longing for nature as his desire to free himself from the claustrophobic workplace. Exploring specific words helps them visualize the rural Bursa that has changed due to air pollution. American students even compare the narrator's and their own parents' dream for a golden age, which has never existed. Hence, paying attention to adjectives that describe the factory, the narrator's childhood memories, and the handkerchief creates a fruitful class discussion on Türkiye's changing social climate due to industrialism.

The uneventful short story, which students initially describe as boring and incomprehensible, becomes the highlight of the course. They discover their potential to discuss literary devices and even contemporary debates on class, urbanization, or nostalgia in Turkish. They enjoy the class where they are treated as scholars instead of L2 students. As Eliot would suggest, the students act like scientists as they study grammar usage and even analyze the interplay between the text's form and content. They interpret each character—the middle-aged narrator and the young thief—in relation to the class dynamics.

I apply the close reading technique not only to literary texts but also to newspaper articles. Focusing on specific words initiates discourse analysis, which often reveals the writer's political stance. For example, I ask them to compare two different responses to the attempted military coup in Türkiye on July 15, 2016. The author's word choice mirrors religious or secularist approaches to the attempted coup. The text becomes a puzzle as students connect the words to figure out the author's main argument. Discourse analysis helps them learn the essential vocabulary to discuss law, politics, and religion.

I also use the close reading technique in my speaking class, when students discuss the social and political significance of a photograph they present in class. For example, we examine how the American photographer Barbara Kruger's choice of primarily black and white colors may stand for the traditional duality between femininity and masculinity. In her artwork "You Are Not Yourself" (1981), students closely read the woman's face, which is reflected through a shattered mirror. They

often argue that the broken mirror reflects the broken self of the woman, who tries to fit into her domestic roles. The students feel as if they are in an art class as they observe the juxtaposition of words and images, tone, and perspective in the photographs. Many students feel that "they do not feel themselves" as they follow society's beauty standards. Inspecting Kruger's art helps us narrow down the broad topic of gender inequality to a middle-aged woman's fragmented identity in a male-dominated society.

As close reading paves the way for a fruitful class discussion, I use another pedagogical practice, which is not to finish the students' sentences for them. Their vocabulary range and grammar knowledge may not be sufficient to elaborate on the politics of art. If not a well-developed argument, they can express their opinion in simple sentences. When a student starts speaking, I patiently pause and wait. I give students the chance to reflect their opinion in their own words. Finishing the sentences for them discourages students from speaking and delivers the wrong message that they cannot speak without the instructor's help. I interfere only if the student asks me the Turkish word of an English term. Even in that instance, I encourage them to speak within their vocabulary range instead of translating English words into Turkish. Their ability to utter several words—East, West, art, and prejudice—is more productive than the teacher's desire to take charge and deliver a lecture on Orientalism. Students who utter three random words at the beginning of the semester can speak in short but coherent sentences at the end of the course. The patience of the instructor becomes a virtue as students believe in their capacity to express themselves in Turkish.

What Has Writing Got to Do with Reading and Speaking?

I integrate writing into both reading and speaking classes to improve students' Turkish vocabulary and grammar. I genuinely believe in the power of writing to help us articulate our ideas in a foreign language. The more we write, the better we remember the new words or sentence structures.

In the reading class, I ask students to summarize the main argument or theme of the assigned article in a short paragraph. This writing assignment encourages them to read the text several times until they grasp its central idea. Their efforts to summarize the article in a few sentences generate a fruitful class discussion in which students share their ideas, ask questions, and clarify the confusing paragraphs. When I read their short reviews, I focus more on their reading comprehension rather than their spelling errors. Pointing out their grammatical mistakes pushes them away from the article and hinders their self-confidence in reading Turkish. Being able to

summarize a text in a few sentences proves their ability to have a sense of a text in a foreign language.

In addition to the weekly short paragraph assignments, I also ask students to answer reading comprehension questions that are available in the course packet. Some require short answers, and some are open to interpretation. For example, short story questions ask students to comment on the role of the narrator, interpret the characters, or discuss the setting. The questions that require critical thinking do not have a singular response. The students' multiple and even contradictory responses generate an intellectually stimulating class discussion that enhances their reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge.

I provide writing tasks in my speaking class as well. For example, a week before a debate, I distribute a list of phrases in Turkish that help students express agreement or disagreement. They write a sentence for each argumentative phrase in the list. The assignment motivates them to study the handout and learn how to formulate sentences that start with expressions, such as *seninle aynı fikirdeyim ama* (I agree with you but), *ancak* (however), *diğer taraftan* (on the other hand), *başka bir deyişle* (in other words), *araştırmalar gösteriyor ki* (research shows that), and *sonuç olarak* (in conclusion). The writing assignment teaches them how to start an argument, provide evidence for their case, counter another's stance, and to end the discussion by summarizing the main points.

The students also write as they get ready for the class discussion. I divide the class into two groups and ask them to persuasively support their case for or against, for example, online education. They jot down their discussion points in Turkish as they get ready for the debate. The group members read each other's notes and make additions to effectively build their argument. The collectively taken notes become a text with multiple authors and ideas. As Edeleva (this volume) writes, "Collaborative rather than individual writing activities might therefore prove more useful as a means of integrating writing in a more inclusive way." Even simple tasks such as taking notes or writing sentences with argumentative phrases help them articulate their ideas more efficiently.

The writing component also helps students. Weekly readings or discussion topics—Arabesque music, modern art, immigration, etc.— require special terminology. Even writing the new words on the board enhances their vocabulary. Sometimes I ask students to write a short paragraph based on three terms they randomly choose from the weekly vocabulary list. A causal connection between the three terms is not required. Reading out loud these short and incoherent paragraphs that recall the absurd theatre can be entertaining and rewarding. Wittingly or not, students learn the new terminology as they laugh at one another's creative ways of linking the three words.

In addition to giving short writing assignments, I often collaborate with the program's writing instructor by sharing my syllabus for the reading and speaking classes. Sometimes the writing instructor gives assignments that address the topics that we cover in class. Hence, the students have the opportunity to practice the words they have learned in their short essays.

Key to Success: Empathy and Transcendentalism

I attribute my success in teaching Turkish to incorporating the techniques I have developed over the years as a professor of English literature. I help students engage with the course material through critical analysis that involves them reading texts closely, analyzing characters, and undertaking related writing tasks. Treating students not simply as L2 learners but as scholars paves the way for fruitful and enjoyable class discussions.

Here is an anonymous student's comment on the Turkish reading course evaluation on August 9, 2016:

> I think there is a consensus that Naz is a phenomenal professor. She taught us how to read difficult sentences without getting caught up in the technicalities, we were seriously challenged, and I feel that I got the most rigorous discussion lessons in this class because she constantly prodded us to talk about the text by posing provocative questions. Naz's pedagogy is phenomenal, and, in many ways, I wanted to take more classes with her because I felt I was learning so much from her.

My advice for L2 teachers is not to be discouraged by negative criticism. When I first joined the Turkish program, many doubted my authority as an L2 instructor due to my lack of pedagogical background.

The key to success is putting ourselves in the shoes of L2 learners. We have all been there! Most of us have been taking foreign language lessons since primary school. Remembering all my efforts in learning English and Italian, I ask myself: "Which teaching practices help me improve my vocabulary? What were the assignments I mostly benefited from? Which pedagogical tactics were helpful or useless? Would I benefit from the readings or discussion topics I assign to my students?" Reflecting on my learning process always helps me understand whether my pedagogical tactics are useful or not.

I never give an assignment that I would not enjoy doing myself. For example, I have always abhorred recipe writing tasks. Since I do not enjoy cooking, I have felt miserable in writing recipes

for almost all foreign language courses. I cannot describe how to cook meatballs in Turkish, much less in Italian. The cliché of the recipe writing assignment, which has been persistent over the years, may not be as educational as many assume. If the students in the speaking course are interested in gastronomy, we choose a topic that intertwines food and culture: advertising McDonalds in the Olympic Games, the parallels between Turkish and Greek cuisine, and organic but expensive food markets that are trendy in Istanbul. Hence, we learn vocabulary sufficient to talk about food while we discuss contemporary debates on health, capitalism, and cultural interconnectedness. I will also follow Edeleva's (this volume) strategy to ask students to bring their favorite treat to class and comment on its ingredients.

The L2 teacher's intuition might be more helpful than theory, which may not apply to all foreign language learners across time and space. In "The American Scholar," 19th-century transcendentalist writer Ralph Waldo Emerson (2000) asks Harvard students not to be bookworms. Instead of blindly pursuing theoretical information, he advises them to follow their hearts and rely on themselves. Following the path of Emerson, I believe the key to success in an L2 course lies in our own experience as lifetime students. Self-reflective questions—"What would help me understand the reading passage?, "How can I overcome my shyness and raise my hand?"—can help us understand students' needs and plan the course accordingly. For example, I know that I cannot practice my Italian in a speaking course where the teacher cannot stop talking. I know that my role as a speaking instructor is not to lecture students on Turkish culture, but to let the students be the primary speakers. The question of "How would I learn?" paves the way for fruitful teaching strategies and breaks the resistance some students might have for the L2 class.

Professional Support from UWM and Boğaziçi University

I learned the strategy of thinking as if I were a student when I first started teaching English composition at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. "English 701: Teaching College Composition" was a prerequisite for those who were both pursuing their graduate degrees and teaching freshman composition. The course lecturer, Dr. Bruce Horner, treated us like freshman students, who were struggling to write academic essays. He created a student-centered classroom environment, which TAs should model while teaching composition. He taught us how to teach writing by putting his theories into practice. For example, instead of lecturing on the benefits of group work, he put us into groups and motivated us to learn from each other and not just from the professor. He made us prepare handouts, syllabi, and class activities that helped us create a friendly

classroom environment that enabled students to overcome their difficulties in writing essays.

Class observations helped me realize the mistakes I was unwittingly making while teaching composition. Once, an observer kindly noted how I often repeated my sentences, talked too fast, and never paused after asking a question. I was responding to my own inquiries because I did not give students the chance to think and speak. The constructive criticism I received decades ago helped me to slow down and not be scared of short pauses. The seemingly uncomfortable pauses when the teacher and students stare at one another lead to fruitful discussions. The teacher's silence with a smile builds up students' confidence in their ability to meaningfully express themselves.

This short pause technique I have learned helps me manage conflicts that arise due to clashing political and religious views in Turkish reading and speaking classes. For example, while reading an article on the Istanbul Convention, a human rights treaty that aims to prevent domestic violence, one of my students expressed his disbelief in gender equality and defended Shariah. His belief that women should stay home instead of pursuing education and career made female students uncomfortable. Despite my strong disagreement with his views, I did not respond right away. Instead, I took a moment to cool down. A two-minute silence enabled me to control my anger before speaking. Calmly but firmly, I shared my disagreement with the student and expressed my belief in free speech as long as we respected each other. Then we continued reading our weekly article and discussed domestic violence in Türkiye and the United States. Without the pause, I would have lost my temper, which I believe, a reliable and confident teacher should never do. The pause helped me provide a short but effective response to the student and gain students' trust in my capability to handle conflicts.

While the pedagogical practices I mastered at UWM shaped my identity as a teacher, my mentors at the Turkish summer program helped me develop teaching strategies according to the L2 learners' needs. For example, I have learned how to adjust my speaking velocity according to students' level. I always ask students to interrupt me if I speak too fast or too slowly. I even make sure the grammar structures I use or the length of my sentences are in line with their level. Developing eye contact with students is the best way to understand if the students and I are on the same page. I read wandering eyes as a sign that I should slow down for everyone to follow the class. Glances on cellphones or sleepy faces also warn me that I need to regain students' attention by telling a funny story. Listening to the personal experiences of my colleagues, who have been teaching Turkish for several years, helped me read the students' body language and readjust my teaching style.

The weekly meetings with the program coordinators and teachers have also been valuable in raising my awareness of student concerns or pedagogical practices that may not be working. The teachers of the same class regularly meet to share the students' progress in all classes. We identify their problems and develop strategies to address their needs. For example, we ask assistants to tutor students or hold office hours. Communication between the summer program staff helps us solve the problems in advance. Meetings over coffee or lunch also help us build a friendly and supportive community of teachers, on whom I can always rely. We also celebrate our collegiality as we end the Turkish summer program with a Bosphorus boat tour and enjoy Istanbul's beautiful scenery that brings together Europe and Asia.

Final Reflections

Overall, Turkey's imperial and multicultural history plays a major role in my students' decision to attend the Turkish Language and Culture Summer Program at Boğaziçi University. They too embody Istanbul's liminal geographical position between two continents due to their familiarity with the Turkish language and culture as American students. French writer Roland Barthes (1994) argues that the body is never authentic but consists of an "image-repertoire" of socially constructed stereotypes (p. 38). Especially the upper advanced students complicate their "image-repertoire" as their "modern" Western identity does not match their near-perfect Turkish. They challenge orientalist stereotypes by conducting academic research in the "magical" Istanbul and by traveling to the "backward" Eastern Anatolia, where many tourists regard to be dangerous. I truly enjoy being part of the Turkish program where diverse cultural and ethnic identities blend and clash.[3] Teaching Turkish has indeed improved my grammar and punctuation and has been tremendously helpful in writing articles in my own native language. I hope I can continue to be a part of the Turkish summer program in which I expand my horizon while teaching reading techniques. Accompanying students' journey of learning Turkish and witnessing their progress in reading and speaking are priceless.

Acknowledgment

This chapter is financially supported by Boğaziçi University Research Fund (BAP) Grant Number 19867.

Notes

1 https://tlcp.bogazici.edu.tr/node/12.

2 According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism website, “Ever since the very earliest times, Turkish has influenced various dialects of Middle Persian, and turned the Caucasus and Anatolia away from the Indo-European group of languages. With the acceptance of Islam, Arabic on the one hand and Persian on the other had a clear influence on the Turkish language. Since the end of the 19th century, such modern Turkic written languages as the Turkish of Türkiye itself, Azerbaijan and Kazakh Turkish, based on Turkish dialects, have emerged.”.

3 In this volume, the chapters of Edeleva (a Russian professor teaching German to Syrian refugees in Germany) and Nitu (a Romanian who teaches Portuguese in Bucharest) show how L2 classroom connects different cultural and religious identities.

Reference List

Barthes, R. (1994). *Barthes by Barthes*. Trans. R. Howard. University of California Press.

Eliot, T. S. (1982). Tradition and the Individual Talent. *Perspecta*, 19, 36–42. https://doi.org/10.2307/1567048

Emerson, R. W. (2000). The American Scholar. In J. Myerson, *Transcendentalism: A Reader* pp. 195–212. Oxford University Press.

Freire, Paulo. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Continuum.

Minh-ha, T. T. (1989). *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Indiana University Press.

Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism. (n.d.). *Language*. https://www.ktb.gov.tr/EN-117846/language.html

Whitman, W. (1964). Song of Myself. In G. Moore, *American Literature: A Representative Anthology of American Writing from Colonial Times to the Present* pp. 538–582. Faber & Faber.