

A DESCRIPTIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF ONLINE NEWS ON THE QUALITY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN TÜRKİYE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes expressed in the news regarding foreign language education, especially English as a foreign language in Türkiye. In the data analysis, the descriptive discourse analysis method was applied to online news about the quality of foreign language education in Türkiye. The study attempts to trace how micro- and macro-level structures were used in the news to construct images of foreign language education. In this study, online news was chosen as the location of the study as a branch of mass media and an important venue for educational discussions. As a result of the analysis, the findings showed that foreign language education practises were heavily criticised in the data, and the key elements widely accused being foreign language education programs and their components involving grammar-oriented teaching

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approaches, curricula and assessment styles along with the so-called low language proficiency of foreign language teachers in Türkiye.

Keywords: *Foreign language education, English language teaching, Online news, Descriptive discourse analysis*

ÖZ

TÜRKİYE'DEKİ YABANCI DİL EĞİTİMİ KALİTESİNE DAİR YAYINLANAN ÇEVİRİMİÇİ HABERLERİN BETİMSSEL SÖYLEM ÇÖZÜMLEMESİ

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye'de yabancı dil eğitimi, özellikle de yabancı dil olarak İngilizce ile ilgili haberlerde ifade edilen tutumları incelemektir. Veri analizinde, Türkiye'de yabancı dil eğitiminin kalitesine dair yayınlanan çevrimiçi haberler betimsel söylem çözümlemesi metoduyla incelenmiştir. Çalışma, mikro ve makro düzeydeki yapıların haberlerde yabancı dil öğretimi imajlarını inşa etmek için nasıl kullanıldığının izini sürmeye çalışmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, kitle iletişim araçlarının bir kolu ve de eğitim tartışmaları için önemli bir mecra olarak internet haberleri çalışmanın sahası olarak seçilmiştir. Analiz sonucunda elde edilen bulgular, verilerde yabancı dil öğretim uygulamalarının ciddi bir şekilde eleştirildiğini ve bu eleştirilerin odağındaki belirli elementlerin dil bilgisi odaklı öğretim yaklaşımları, müfredat ve ölçme- değerlendirme stillerini içeren bileşenleri ile Türkiye'deki yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin düşük olduğu iddia edilen dil yetkinliği olduğuna işaret etmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Yabancı dil eğitimi; İngiliz dili eğitimi, Çevrimiçi haberler, Betimsel söylem çözümlemesi*

1. Giriş

Türkiye is a country that aims to be among the top economies in the world and to participate in the global competition in a wide range (Burma, 2016). Moreover, having a very young population compared to the developed countries, intensifies a need for education compatible with the demands of globalization including the teaching of English as a foreign language (Arik, 2020). Nevertheless, foreign language education, especially in English, has been one of the biggest challenges Türkiye has faced in decades (Oktay, 2015).

Despite the reforms and curriculum changes made throughout the years to overcome this problem, public opinion as well as academic discussions agree that

they have not succeeded. Among the important changes made in the Turkish curriculum targeting foreign language education, the 1997 reform deserves close attention as it required English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching to start from the 4th grade in primary schools (Saricoban, 2012). This act of innovation also meant a significant shift in Türkiye's approach to foreign language teacher education and FLE approaches, both of which moved to a more communicative-based sphere (Kırkgöz, 2017). The public discourse on the quality of foreign language education (FLE) and particularly English language teaching (ELT) in Türkiye has been clearly marked by a theme of failure across national contexts, going beyond the discussion of the academic sphere (Alagöz, 2012; Denkci-Akkaş & Coker, 2016; Genç, 2010; Haznedar, 2010; Kırkgöz, 2005; Kırkgöz, 2008; Kızıldağ, 2009; Ozsevik, 2010; Phipps & Borg, 2009; Solak & Bayar, 2015). Though English seems to be embedded in the Turkish education system at all levels, a substantial number of families are not satisfied with the quality of ELT (British Council & TEPAV, 2013). Allegedly, FLE in Türkiye falls behind on equipping learners with skills to use the target language for real-life tasks. Considering the utmost importance attached to FLE and the negative image it carries, a need to examine the public discourse on the topic seemed relevant. As the direct source of public discourse, the online news was chosen as the scene of investigation in this study because it is among the main sites that construe our understanding of social and political topics (Van Dijk, 2002). As media discourse finds an audience on a wide scope of institutions (Talbot, 2007), what the media comments on FLE can be immensely influential in shaping people's perceptions of the subject for the wide audience in different layers of the society. A close analysis of the discourse on FLE in Türkiye allowed us to decipher what criticisms are made and what expectations are held from the FLE in Türkiye.

1. Mediatisation of educational policy

Wallace (1995) asserts that education policy is highly influenced and shaped by the media discourse, which is marked by simplified language addressing ordinary readers. The media acts as a multifunctional source that not only shapes public opinion about the quality of education in a given country but also informs educators and policymakers about the public's concerns in this regard (Wallace, 1995). Mediatisation of educational policies, which is done by

publishing news about whether an enacted educational policy should be considered a complete failure, or what educational reforms are needed, is a very common practice (Rawolle, 2013). There have been numerous works with various foci on the mediatisation of education and educational policies (Alhamdan et al., 2014; Blackmore & Thorpe, 2003; Rawolle, 2013). In the Turkish context analyses have also been conducted on media coverage of various educational issues, such as the image of teachers (Polat & Ünişen, 2016) or educational content highlighted in media channels (Yüce & Çoban, 2018). However, there has been no systematic analysis of news published about the quality of FLE in Türkiye. Thus, the objective of this study is to describe the features of discourse used by media in Türkiye's foreign language education. Considering that FLE has an important place in the Turkish educational curriculum and that the media is a powerful tool in shaping people's perceptions of any given topic (Viswanath, Ramanadhan, & Kontos, 2007), to explore how FLE in Türkiye is portrayed in mass media has particular significance. This study attempts to address the following research questions:

What kind of image is drawn for Türkiye's FLE practises in written news released in online news platforms in Türkiye?

- a. What kind of cohesive markers are salient in the data set?
- b. What kind of themes are prevalent in the data set?
- c. What values are identifiable in terms of readers and writers?

2. Methodology

Given that the media intentionally leads us to prioritise some aspects of a topic rather than others, mass media appears to be a tool for shaping our attitudes (Ott & Mack, 2010). This study begins with this assumption and uses descriptive discourse analysis as the method to reveal how Turkish FLE has been painted by online news as a division of mass media. In order to achieve descriptive discourse analysis in this study, cohesion, the overall discourse organisation, and contextualizing signals, as named by Gee (2008) proved to be suitable elements for the researchers' analysis. Accordingly,

- Cohesion is a means of deciphering the linguistic structure of the text and can be achieved via a range of linguistic units from pronouns to conjunctions,

any linguistic ‘device that causes two lines (clauses) to be related (linked together)’ (Gee, 2008, p. 123).

- The Overall Discourse Organization stands for any collection of sentences that altogether functions as a unit of argument signalling a stance on a given issue (Gee, 2008).

- Contextualization Signals cover cues that help to construct the context around the following points: ‘What sort of person the speaker takes (or wants) the hearer to be (for this communication); what sort of person the speaker takes herself to be (for this particular communication); what the speaker assumes the world (of things, ideas and people) to be like (for this communication) (Gee, 2008). Since the data in this study are purely of descriptive data, the term ‘speaker’ is replaced with ‘writer’ and the term ‘hearer’ will be replaced with ‘reader’. In order to appreciate what roles were assigned to writers, readers and the world, a set of news values described by Caple and Badnerek’s (2015) was used. Caple and Badnerek (2015) provide a set of criteria widely used in journalism to determine whether a news item is worth disseminating. Caple and Badnerek (2015) state that ‘these aspects influence both what gets reported and how it gets reported’ (p. 5). Even though Caple and Badnerek (2015) referred to a longer list, they selected a few of them. Negativity, timeliness, proximity, superlativity, elitism, impact, novelty, personalisation and consonance were selected as they were the ones directly related to the components of contextualization signals. Accordingly, negativity promotes ‘the negative aspects’ in a given event; timeliness refers to the degree to which an event is topical; proximity stands for geographical closeness; superlativity stands for the scope of the people to whom it relates to; elitism stands for the inclusion of well-known names as part in the discussion; impact refers to widespread influence; novelty corresponds to previously unknown but recently uncovered sides; personalisation requires the addition of some personal accounts from readers or writers themselves; consonance is associated with presenting readers with what they would most like to learn (Caple & Badnerek, 2015).

3. Data Collection

The initial step of data collection was to select a dataset that would provide adequate coverage of FLE in Türkiye in online news sources. Online sources that

fall within the scope of this study were selected based on several criteria: They have a strong national presence which increases their influence on a wider community across the country; they are broadcast on online websites that are regularly updated and archived; and they are active and in service. The list of online news platforms that met these criteria was compiled from a recent report by Yanatma (2017), which compiled Türkiye-specific data. This report pointed to online web sources as the second most popular source of information for the Turkish people, followed by TV channels, and offered a list of the most popular online news outlets in Türkiye. Accordingly, the 16 online news agencies mentioned in this report were also selected as the site of data collection (see Appendix A for the list). The researchers then scanned each website's archives using the the following keywords: '(Foreign) language education in Türkiye', foreign language learning in Türkiye, ELT in Türkiye'. The search processes yielded in a collection of 29 pieces of news that was comprised of the standard form of news, opinion columns, and interviews, all of which were released between the years of 2015-2019. No news that was found on the topic after 2019, which may be because of a major shift in the agenda due to the COVID-19 pandemic. After having searched all the target media sites, the researchers became familiar with the content of each data by reading it thoroughly to achieve a careful analysis. Though all pieces of news were originally in Turkish, the excerpts provided in this study were translated by the back-translation process before their inclusion as examples.

4. Data Analysis

After compiling the data set, the researchers collaborated on each of the selected texts. First, the researchers got familiarized themselves with the selected articles (29 in total) and worked together on the texts by relating each clue to a component of the analysis. Next, they got engaged in peer debriefing with a colleague who had a PhD degree in ELT. Peer debriefing was held at intervals. After completing the analysis of texts, which were categorised by the year of broadcast, the researchers randomly selected one piece of news from each data set and invited their colleague to a peer debriefing session, which in total yielded in 5 texts to be analysed also by the second rater.

Cohesion: In this study, the researchers used Martin’s formulation of cohesion as ‘a set of discourse semantic systems’ (2001, p.38) since it provides a clearer picture of textual systems. Though Martin (1992) proposes four components of cohesion- *identification, negotiation, conjunction, and ideation*- we narrowed our focus to identification as a tool for tracking the cohesion of all the texts in our data set. We chose identification as it enables us to examine lexical cohesion as the most salient feature that indicates the ideology of the news in the data set. Thus, it is useful to decipher the potential ideological features woven into the texts as readers are likely to construct their perceptions on the frequency and familiarity of collocations in the text (Stubbs, 2001). In this study, we identified nominal groups (including people, places and things) that ‘...have the potential to participate as Agent or Medium in clause structure at some point or other in a text’ (Martin, 1992, p. 156). In order to make sense of the results of the identification process, we first grouped similar references under umbrella terms. Thus, we could identify the frequent lexical categories that shaped the discussion around FLE in Türkiye, as can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Categorization of References Found via Identification

Reference	Frequency in 2015 (4 pieces of news)	Frequency in 2016 (7 pieces of news)	Frequency in 2017 (3 pieces of news)	Frequency in 2018 (7 pieces of news)	Frequency in 2019 (8 pieces of news)	Total (29 pieces of news)
Various educational levels	97	93	6	65	97	347
Foreign language	36	87	9	71	79	282
Program Components (Teaching	81	46	16	43	66	250

methods & curriculum & grammar & 4 skills & assessment)						
English language	69	62	27	46	35	239
Authorities	31	70	6	25	66	198
Other Countries	33	58	15	23	20	149
FL Teachers	19	34	1	10	50	104
Negative concepts (problem, chaos, failure, nonsense, etc.)	13	36	10	14	9	78
Projects/ improvements	7	4	2	2	20	35
Parents	6	1	-	-	17	24
Technology	8	-	2	1	9	18

As can be seen in Table 1, the numbers of news released on the topic changed over the years, which led us to conduct a general discussion instead of providing a yearly comparison. Expanding on the most frequently identified references in Table 1, FLE practice in Türkiye covers almost all components of

the education system: students at all levels of education, teachers, schools, and curricula, teaching methods, assessment systems etc. Another point is that the evaluations targeting FLE concepts were done in EFL rather in other foreign languages. Additionally, the references to FL teachers generally refer to a specific language, though if an example was to be given, it was only through the cases of EFL teachers. Moreover, there was a significantly high number of references to authorities (N= 198 in total). Another salient feature of the data set was the existence of negative concepts such as problems, wrongdoing, nonsense, and chaos. The negative attitudes towards FLE practice expressed by these concepts were so consistently and frequently maintained that negativity seemed to be an endemic element of the discussion surrounding this topic.

The overall discourse organization: The second step in performing descriptive discourse analysis of the texts in the data set was achieved by focusing on the overall discourse structure to decipher the thematic organization of the texts. As suggested by Gee (2008), we split each message into a series of stanzas- ‘identifiable sets of lines around a particular perspective on a given concept, which may be a character, place, time, or event’ (p.120). In our study, we treated discussions as a stanza if they consisted of at least two or more sentences related to the content or topic. We first examined the news categorised on a yearly basis to check common themes. We then grouped them into categories under more representative themes. As also shown in Table 2 below, we could come up with a list of themes, some of which were consistently repeated across the years (see Appendix B for the identification process made across the data set).

Table 2. Themes Identified in the News across Years

Theme	f	Theme	f
Low education quality in EFL	17	Use of authentic and real-life tasks in FLE	4
Problems with EFL program (Limited class hours, curriculum, assessment)	15	FLE as an intricate concept	4
Changes, projects regarding FLE in Türkiye to be done by Ministry of National Education (MoNE) or Higher Education Board (HEB)	15	Limited FL background to be able to study at EMI universities	4
Grammar centred teaching as the decisive factor in the low success of FLE	14	Turkish students’ low mother tongue proficiency as a reason of failure in FLE	3

Communicative language teaching as the panacea for FLE	13	Comparison of other countries with Türkiye in EFL training quality	2
Inefficient FL teacher qualities & Limited proficiency levels of English instructors.	13	Teaching a second FL along with English	2
High importance of learning English	9	FL learners' concerns	2
Importance of early age as the onset of FLE	7	Importance of technology integration into FLE	2
Learners' individual characteristics in shaping FL success	5	The mutual clash of expectations between parents and teachers about their roles	1
Heavy workload of EFL instructors in crowded classrooms	4		

Table 2 shows the themes that belong to across the period from 2015 to 2019 in the order of frequency. The themes of the stanzas indicated that the plots of the news items investigated were relatively repetitive over the years. The main argument embedded in the news appeared to be the blaming of FLE's prevalent failures at all stages of education, from elementary school to university level (N=17). Grammar-centred instruction and an inadequate scoring system (N=14) were often blamed among the range of elements causing this failure. Still, the high frequency of attributions given to program changes (N=15) gave the message that efforts were being made to repair the system, as shown in the excerpt below.

MoNE will launch a project it has been working on for two years. MoNE aims to improve the quality of FLE in Türkiye via this change. Accordingly, the 5th grade is assigned only to Turkish her one foreign language education (Internethaber, 06.10.2016).

Regarding FL teachers, with the emphasis on EFL teachers, two specific claims were repeated across the news. Firstly, EFL teachers were targeted for their predominantly grammar-centred teaching methods which required lengthy explanations from teachers and reduced learners' opportunities to communicate in the class (N= 14). Secondly, they were portrayed to lack the desired level of language proficiency (N=13). In line with criticisms of grammar-centred teaching, there was a consistent promotion of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) that was depicted among the remedies on the prescription for better FLE (N= 13). Evidence of the great attributes given to CLT is as follows:

The students ... find a chance of learning English well by engaging in dialogues in that school corridor which has been designed as a small city (Hürriyet, 11.02.2019);

We cannot claim to teach a foreign language as long as we teach speaking, writing, reading, and listening comprehension altogether (Hürriyet, 20.04.2019);

... thanks to new approaches to FL teaching, we aim for an exact process of language learning rather than memorisation-based approach (Internethaber, 2.12.2019).

Contextualization signals: Contextualization signals include any kind of cues that lead the readers to construct the context of the target in their minds in a particular way (Gee, 2008; Gumperz, 1982). The analysis of contextualization signs was based on the following questions by Gee (2008, p.124): 1- what sort of person does the *writer* take the *reader* to be? 2- what sort of person does the *writer* take herself to be?; 3- what does the *writer* assume the world (of things, ideas, and people) to be like for this communication? In order to reveal these hidden/implicit roles, we used the news values listed by Caple and Bednarek (2015) as our tool of analysis.

1- What sort of person do writers take readers to be?

The range of values attributed to readers are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Values for Readers

Values for Readers	Negativity	Novelty	Proximity	Superlativeness	Consonance	Impact	Timeliness
<i>f</i>	19	7	4	2	1	1	1

Table 3 shows us that for readers, the value most frequently brought forth was negativity. The primary role given to readers was to acknowledge the FLE's negative situation in general. The most commonly expressed negative message was the widespread failure of Turkish learners in FLE, particularly in English. An example of how negativity was embedded into the news is visible in the following news heading:

English language training is a difficult process in Türkiye. Even though people spend years learning English, they may still not speak it fluently and they lack self-confidence in speaking English (CNN Türk, 05.04.2017).

The structure of news in journalism is built on the concept of an 'inverted pyramid', in which the most prominent items are presented at the top, influencing readers' attitudes to the rest of the news at hand (Teo, 2000; Van Dijk, 1988). In the leading piece above, negativity was pushed into the reader's mind. Thus, the reader was guided to interpret the rest of the text on the assumption that Türkiye failed in ELT. In another piece of news, the severity of the negativity was increased with the emphasis on the time allocated to ELT:

Though Türkiye offers students more than 1000 hours of English course until their graduation from high school, it still takes place among the countries which show the lowest success in speaking English. Türkiye ranks the 50th among the 70 countries listed (Habertürk, 07.10.2016).

In the lead above, in fact little evidence was provided on the criteria used to assess how poor the English proficiency of Turkish students was. No more statistics were provided in the rest of the text other than the repetition of the same ranking. Still, this small amount of information promoted the image that Türkiye lagged too behind the desired level of academic success in EFL. Following negativity, novelty –a positive value- was the second most frequent news value attributed to readers' perspective. It was assumed that the readers were eager to learn about novelties that could lead to improvements in ELT. They were presented with several promising cases that heralded a cure for the situation. These cases were comprised of either: a promising improvement project in the current education system (Habertürk: 02.05.2019; Internethaber: 18.09.2019; Milliyet: 05.09.2019; Anadolu Ajansı: 06.06.2017); or an inspiring story exemplifying the worthiness of individuals' efforts (Hürriyet: 12.11.2015, 02.11.2019; Internethaber: 27. 04.2019; Sözcü: 05.04.2016);

2- What sort of person do writers take themselves to be?

In order to reveal what identity text producers undertook, we looked at values assigned to writers in the texts and the results are displayed in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Values for Writers

Values for writers	Eliteness	Personalization	Negativity	Novelty	Impact
<i>f</i>	20	9	8	2	1

Table 4 shows the news topics that belong to across the period from 2015 to 2019 in the order of frequency. The themes of the stanzas indicated that the plots of the news items investigated were relatively repetitive over the years. As can be seen from Table 4, Eliteness was the dominant value that the writers based their arguments on. Caple and Bednarek (2015) describe Eliteness as ‘the high status of an individual, organization, or nation involved in an event or issue’ (p. 5). Accordingly, Eliteness in the target news was tracked via the involvement of evaluations made by high status people or organizations as shown in the following excerpt:

Prof. Dr. Yasemin Bayyurt (Boğaziçi University, Department of Foreign Language Education): there is a need to revise the teacher training programs that have been constructed improperly. There is a need to increase the number of quality teachers and academics. One of the biggest problems is that people studying these topics do not have any connection to each other and do not know what each other is doing (Hürriyet, 04.02.2016).

The excerpt above was used as the first line under one of the subheadings, which functioned as the highlights of that specific evaluation written by a columnist. The highlight was ‘this is a problem in planning’, a phrase aptly taken from Bayyurt’s speech. The function of Eliteness overlaps with that of

‘heteroglossic engagement’, which briefly refers to writers’ inclusion of other names as the voices or reference points with the purpose of consolidating their own claims (Fryer, 2013). In the following excerpt, the so-called failure claims made for FLE is being strengthened on behalf of the then Minister of National Education:

...Minister of Education Ziya Selçuk said that the issues about FL teaching cannot be solved with a standardized approach and asked ‘Why is FL compulsory for all students though it may be perfectly optional for some students?’ (Habertürk, 26.10.2018).

One other frequent value utilized by writers was Personalization. Personalization is defined as the employment of ‘the personal or human face of an event or issue; including eyewitness reports’ (Caple & Bednarek, 2015, p. 5). This case was illustrated in the extract taken from an opinion column, below.

A few days ago, I mentioned my observations in a parents’ meeting I joined in person. Today, I am going to report impressions of parents who were present both in that meeting with me (Internethaber, 02.12.2019).

In the lead above, the author acts on common ground with the reader, and through the implicit message that he too is deeply affected by the bad situation, which gives him the right to judge the case. As for the many of the news in the dataset, the news blamed the Turkish education system for not providing the students with the desired level of academic success in FLE.

3- What does the writer assume the world (of things, ideas, and people) to be like for this communication?

Context can be defined as the social setting that sets the boundaries for understanding a particular issue. Each context setting should be viewed differently, as there are factors that influence interpretation by different participants and observers. Table 5 shows the values embedded in the context image in the dataset.

Table 5. Values for Context

Values for context	Proximity	Timeliness	Negativity	Superlativeness	Novelty	Consonance	Impact
<i>f</i>	23	18	18	15	8	4	3

Multiple values can be identified together in a message to provide context, as shown in Table 5, it is possible to identify multiple values penetrated into the news together for creating the context: Proximity, Timeliness, Negativity and Superlativeness. All of these values are important in creating the desired contextual picture to which the writer and reader values to fit. Proximity simply refers to the geographical proximity of an event and it is well known that the closer an event is to the reader, the more attractive it is (O’neill & Harcup, 2009). Consistent with this basic newsworthiness criterion, the analysis showed that the success of FL education was only discussed in relation to Türkiye. Along with geographical proximity, proximity is also maintained in a temporal sense by the value of timeliness, and the quality of FLE continues to be depicted as ‘still important’ on the current agenda of Türkiye.

Our failure in FL teaching/ education has transformed into an officially confirmed, chronic problem (Cumhuriyet, 27.04.2016).

We believe that lack of proficiency in English poses a big threat for individuals’ career promotion in today’s globalizing World, where English is very close to be the main medium of instruction. (Hürriyet, 13.09.2018)

Regarding Negativity, the image of FLE was presented as if FLE was the only subject in which learners failed. Superlativeness was one other common value, established to refer to all academic levels from elementary through university level. The scope of the discussions was set as the whole country and the newsworthiness of the problem was sure to increase for readers when the problem was such invasive. Many headlines clearly displayed the engraving of

Superlativeness and Negativity together as the most salient point in the news as shown in the following samples:

Why can't Turks learn English? (Habertürk, 07.10.2016)

We take 1296 hours of English course throughout our education but we can't speak it, why? (Hürriyet, 26.02.2015)

Why is Türkiye unsuccessful in teaching foreign language? (Internethaber, 23.09.2018)

5. Discussion

This study investigated FLE quality through descriptive discourse analysis conducted around cohesion, general discourse organization, and contextualization in a series of news articles published in Türkiye between 2015 and 2019. Even though the data analysis was conducted on an annual basis, the results did not show significant differences for any component of the analysis on an annual basis. The results are comprehensively discussed below in the order of subsections of the research question.

a. What kind of cohesive markers are salient in the data set?

The first step of the analysis, identification, revealed that *foreign language* was the most dominant nominal group tag followed by *English*. This led us to the conclusion that FLE news was constructed mainly around the English language teaching practice in Türkiye. This is consistent with the status of English as the most preferred second language in Türkiye (Doğançay-Aktuna & Kızıltepe, 2005; Karakaş, 2013; Kırkgöz, 2009). This finding suggests that English served as a benchmark for FLE quality in Türkiye. At this point, we emphasized the need for a more objective attitude towards FLE assessment, rather than just blaming those involved with the English language. As for educators, quite a few attributes have been connected to foreign language teachers, who were systemically exemplified by English teachers. The professional competence of FL teachers was repeatedly mentioned as the most important determinant of teaching quality. The striking point was that in the target news, FL teachers' professional competence was equated with their language proficiency, which constituted their subject knowledge. However, knowledge of educational content, including other aspects of a teacher's professional competence, is not addressed (Richards, 2010; Sanchez

& Borg, 2014; Thoonen et.al., 2011). This kind of partial evaluation suggested that news producers were not properly informed about what constituted FL teachers' professional repertoire.

b. What kind of themes are prevalent in the data set?

Transition from micro-structural analysis to macro-structures was achieved by examining the entire overall discourse organization through theme-based stanza recognition. The most common introductory theme picked up in the news was the poor quality of EFL training in Turkish education system, which was portrayed as a chronic problem. Generally, there are many stanzas in the data set that cause this error, mostly due to widespread use of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM). It has been criticised for requiring grammar-based assessment, degrading language proficiency and eventually rendered all the investments done in FLE counterproductive. CLT was proposed as an immediate solution to academic stagnation in FLE and presented as a panacea for the current negative situation surrounding a flawed and widely condemned assessment system. While we agree that using the CLT will result in more proficient language users, to portray a quick and complete switch to the CLT as easily achievable is rather simplistic and away from the realities of Türkiye.

According to a recently published report from the Turkish Education Association (TEDMEM, 2018), several important steps need to be taken to improve the quality of FLE in Türkiye. Therefore, rather than addressing problems with a central, unified attitude, Türkiye needs to approach to the problem with an individualized approach. FLE is a highly individualized learning process with various social, cognitive, and emotional factors in action (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003; Elis, 2004). Moreover, task-based learning opportunities for students working together in small groups are more productive than crowded classrooms where teachers have to take charge of classroom management. The Turkish education system does not yet have the optimal physical infrastructure to create this kind of individualized and small-group learning environments (Cihan & Yıldırım, 2014; Demir & Demir, 2012; Özer & Korkmaz, 2016). Second, there is a widespread need to reduce the workload of teachers to create space for their in-depth lesson preparation and engage in in-service professional development activities (TEDMEM, 2018). One intriguing finding of this study was that the news in the data set ignored all these points and they carried the discussion mainly

blaming FLE teachers for lacking the desired competency in the target language by downplaying language teachers' professional competency just into their language proficiency. Furthermore, a fairly comprehensive study by the British Council and TEPAV (2013) refuted the claim that FLE teachers did not have the desired level of language proficiency. Therefore, the majority of EFL instructors teaching at various educational levels from elementary school to higher education had the satisfactory level of language proficiency in using the CLT method. Assessments of teacher qualifications should therefore be organized on the basis of other teacher characteristics, and not just language proficiency. It is hoped that the steps taken to cause an expansion of the knowledge base of FLE teachers will improve their ability to create communicative learning environments (British Council & TEPAV, 2013).

c. What values are identifiable in terms of readers and writers?

As Van Dijk (1995) argues, news reports should be treated as a specific genre that is framed around a genre-specific use of language. Relying on this understanding, we treated language use as a feature shaped by the values embedded into the text and we commented on the ideology formation through these values. As such, we searched for recurring values, if any, to reveal salient properties of the language use specific to essential dimensions of news formation practice: readers, writers and the context. Our inspection showed that readers were aptly positioned to employ a Negativist perspective in the majority of the news. It is commonly argued that negative news create a stronger impact on readers than positive news do because people are naturally inclined to attend more to negative points in life and take their guard against them as a requirement of their survival process (Baumeister et al., 2001; Nguyen & Claus, 2013) Thus, it appeared that the news producers must have chosen the low academic success in FLE as the most common theme because it was a negative message that could guarantee not only the attention of more readers but also a long-lasting impact on the minds of those readers. There were only 2 positive messages in the data set. It shows how individual efforts of EFL instructors can lead to desired FL learning success. We argue that the FLE situation in Türkiye could be significantly improved through the school-specific projects if the media emphasized the value of these individuals' efforts rather than the poor-quality education.

As for the values attributed to the authors of the news in question, it was shown that the arguments presented in the news were largely supported by the employment of Eliteness. The underlying reasons for the poor quality of FLE have been generally discussed with reference to the comments of academics and policy makers. This strategy may have been chosen to give the impression that the news was constructed based on solid arguments. This result is consistent with the comments of Yılmaz and Adıgüzel (2016) who interpreted the inclusion of comments of academics and bureaucrats as valuable and informative on Türkiye's educational issues. On the other hand, our results contradicted those of Berkant and Cömert (2013), who reported a significantly lower number of ideas in the news from academics, policy makers and experts included in their data set.

6. Conclusion

This study was completed using a sophisticated methodology. The challenge arose from a comprehensive and analytical approach. We attempted to integrate analysis at both micro and macro-levels, which required a thorough review of all texts within the dataset. For us, the mainstream features summarised above highlight the need for a reconsideration of news production on FLE.

First, policy-makers should consider ways to scale up educational activities and improve teacher education and training. This allows us to find realistic and concrete solutions to recurring problems (i.e. extensive use of GTM, educational background of language teachers, language proficiency of teachers). Throughout the data set, we noticed that each time a different country was mentioned, it was depicted as superior to Türkiye in terms of FLE quality and as readers we have never been told about what created the difference between us and those countries offering significantly better FLE. As such, practitioners (academics & teachers) need to report more on practical steps to improve the situation while discussing the reasons of failure and designating the optimum situation nationwide rather than comparing Türkiye with other countries through a simplistic and product-based approach. FL teachers need to be empowered to display their enthusiasm through projects that promote learners' communication skills, as teacher motivation has been shown to be critical in contributing to learners' academic success (Han & Yin, 2016). For us, it is the small scale and context-specific success stories that can bring long term success in FLE.

This study is the result of an innovative attempt as it proposes a novel interpretation of Gee's (2008) method of discourse analysis. Unlike other similar studies, to the researchers' knowledge, this was the first time Gee's notion was used in news. It is also preliminary in that it integrated the notion of news values into Gee's notion of contextualization. This study also has its own limitations. First, the data set consists of only online news released in a 5 year-time-span. As such, it is time-bound and provides only a snapshot of the situation. A broader dataset can be formed and analysed in further studies. Second, the findings are delineated by the methods and research focus. Other studies have focused on grammatical features, components of cohesion, or the thematic organization of texts with a particular focus on headlines and images accompanying news, which is labelled as 'less studied/less focused on, so a bit ignored in discourse studies' (Gee, 2008, p.142). Future studies may analyse what images were used in the news about FL endeavours in Türkiye. Next, formal sources describing policy makers' general attitude towards the topic, documents announcing improvements, revisions, new regulations made by the Ministry of National Education and Turkish Council of Higher Education on the topic can be analysed with a critical approach. Finally, close scrutiny of texts on individual teacher stories in online FLE environments, suggestions from experts on adaptations to online learning, and justifications for actions taken by policy makers are relevant to distance learning that tell us a lot about how FLE is depicted in relation to distant education.

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APPENDIX A

The list of online news platforms included in this study (Yanatma, 2017)

- 1- CNN Türk
- 2- Hürriyet
- 3- Mynet
- 4- NTV
- 5- Sözcü
- 6- Sondakika
- 7- Milliyet
- 8- Haberler.com
- 9- Habertürk
- 10- Internethaber
- 11- Cumhuriyet
- 12- Ensonhaber
- 13- AA (Anadolu Ajansı)
- 14- ONeDio
- 15- TRT News
- 16- Sabah

APPENDIX B

Identification process of themes across the data set

Theme	<i>f</i>	Source & Date
Low education quality in EFL	17	Sabah , 20.06.2018; Internethaber , 02.12.2019; 23.09.2018; CNN Türk , 05.04.2017; Onedio , 05.04.2016; Hürriyet , 26.02.2015; 04.02.2016; 07.04.2017; Anadolu Ajansı , 06.06.2017; Habertürk , 07.10.2016; Cumhuriyet : 27.04.2016 x 3; Milliyet , 12.05.2015 x 2; Internethaber , 23.09.2018; Hürriyet , 26.02.2015
Problems with the EFL program (Limited class hours, curriculum, assessment)	15	Hürriyet , 20.04.2019; 10.12.2018; CNN Türk , 05.04.2017 x 2; Habertürk , 07.10.2016; Milliyet , 09.06.2019; Habertürk , 07.10.2016; Internethaber , 06.10.2016; Hürriyet , 26.02.2015 x 3; 20.04.2019 x 2; 08.06.2018;

- Changes, projects 14 **Habertürk**, 02.05.2019; 26 10.2018;
regarding FLE in Türkiye **Internethaber**, 18.09.2019 x 2;
to be done by MoNE or 06.10.2016; **Cumhuriyet**, 14.04.2015;
Higher Education Board **Hürriyet**, 02.11.2019; 10.12.2018;
04.02.2016; **Onedio**, 05.04.2016; **Milliyet**,
09.06.2019 x 3; **Internethaber**,
18.09.2019; 23.09.2018
-
- Grammar centred teaching 14 **Hürriyet**, 20.04.2019; 13.09.2018;
as the decisive factor in the 12.11.2015; 26.02.2015 x 2; **Sabah**,
low success of FLE. 20.06.2018; **CNN Türk**, 05.04.2017;
Onedio, 05.04.2016; **Habertürk**,
02.05.2019; 07.10.2016 x 2;
Internethaber, 27.04.2019; 13.03.2018,
Milliyet, 08.02.2016
-
- Communicative language 13 **Hürriyet**, 20.04.2019; 02.11.2019;
teaching as the panacea for 10.12.2018; 13.09.2018; 12.11.2015 x 3;
FLE. **CNN Türk**, 05.04.2017; **Sabah**,
20.06.2018; **Anadolu Ajansı**, 06.06.2017;
Sözcü, 05.04.2016; **Internethaber**:

27.04.2019; **Milliyet**, 09.06.2019

Inefficient FL teacher qualities & Limited proficiency levels of English instructors. 10 **Hürriyet**, 20.04.2019 x 2; 26.02.2015, 04.02.2016; **Onedio**, 05.04.2016 x 2; **Milliyet**, 08.02.2016 x 2; 09.06.2019; **Habertürk**, 07.10.2016; 02.05.2019; **Internethaber**, 23.09.2018; 18.09.2019

High importance of learning English 9 **Hürriyet**, 13.09.2018 x 2; 08.06.2018; **Sabah**, 20.06.2018; **Hürriyet**, 07.04.2017; **Anadolu Ajansı**, 06.06.2017; **Onedio**, 05.04.2016; **Cumhuriyet**, 27.04.2016; **Habertürk**, 02.05.2019

Importance of early age as the onset of FLE 7 **Hürriyet**, 20.04.2019 X2; 10.12.2018; 3.09.2018 x 2; 12.11.2015; **Cumhuriyet**, 14.04.2015;

Learners' individual characteristics in shaping FL success	5	Internethaber , 23.09.2018; Habertürk , 26.10.2018 x 2; Hürriyet , 12.11.2015 x 2; Milliyet , 09.06.2019
Heavy workload of EFL instructors in crowded classrooms	4	Hürriyet , 04.02.2016; 26.02.2015; Onedio , 05.04.2016; Habertürk , 07.10.2016
Use of authentic and real-life tasks in FLE	4	Hürriyet , 02.11.2019 x2; Internethaber . 27.04.2019 x2
FLE as an intricate concept	3	Habertürk , 26.10.2018; Hürriyet , 04.02.2016; Milliyet , 08.02.2016; Onedio , 05.04.2016
Limited FL background to be able to study at EMI universities	4	Milliyet , 08.02.2016 X 2; Internethaber , 23.09.2018; Hürriyet , 08.06.2018

Turkish students' low mother tongue proficiency as a reason of failure in FLE	3	Milliyet , 08.02.2016 x 2; 12.05.2015
Comparison of other countries with Turkey in EFL training quality	2	Internethaber , 23.09.2018; Hürriyet , 26.02.2015
Teaching a second FL along with English		Internethaber , 02.12.2019; Hürriyet , 13.09.2018
FL learners' concerns		Hürriyet , 12.11.2015; Sözcü , 05.04.2016
Pre-service training of FL teachers	1	Habertürk , 02.05.2019;
Importance of technology integration into FLE	1	Hürriyet , 20.04.2019; 07.04.2017

The mutual clash of expectations between parents and teachers about their roles 1 **Internethaber**, 02.12.2019