LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING WORKSHOP
19—20 October 2018 Ankara

PERSIAN DESK REPORT

Educational Institute

Economic Cooperation Organization

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FOREWORD

In the world today, there are approximately 6,000 languages spoken by 6 billion people. Currently, half of the world's population speaks two or more languages. Linguistic skills have brought significant economic gains for individuals in today's world which is gradually becoming more interconnected with the influence of globalization. The difficulties encountered by the member countries in the field of politics and diplomacy can only be overcome with the assistance of well-educated individuals who know each other's languages well, who have assimilated the other cultures and the mental processes of those nations through language.

If "the limitations of our language are the limitations of our world" as Ludwig Wittgenstein claimed, then we can argue that teaching and learning languages lie at the foundation of several virtues, such as being receptive to other cultures, ability to think flexibly, to look at events and facts from different perspectives and to nourish the sense of sharing as much as the instinct to survive. Even though the languages spoken in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) region each have quite different attributes with their own well-established elements of literature, history, culture, art and civilization, they are connected like a family of individuals and have the capacity to influence each other through many means.

Persian, which is one of the languages spoken in the Economic Cooperation Organization region, is a well-established language of culture and diplomacy that is spoken by more than 100 million persons in Eurasia and the Middle East, particularly in Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and other Central Asian countries. Persian was the international language long before French or English. Persian, which is the official language of Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan today, appears before us as a language that is necessary to learn for those who want to follow and understand the events that have shaped the world in the present-day. Persian has a kinship with the Indo-European languages and as such, is the easiest Middle Eastern language to learn for English speakers. Learning Persian is also an attractive choice for those who want to pursue a career in the fields of diplomacy, international trade and education. The Persian language, which has interacted with Turkish, Arabic, Urdu and Hindu, is the key to fields of architecture, music, literature, and painting, and is a gateway to understand Persian lifestyle and culture both in middle ages and the modern times.

From this perspective, in the present-day world where we have greater need than ever for a shared language of the heart, we decided to publish a series of reports which present the findings of aninternational workshop which aimed to encourage citizens of the ECO member countries to teach and learn languages of each other in a more effective and widespread manner. We are proud to present the problems discussed, and the new models and techniques proposed at the Persian desk for the evaluation of decision-makers, policy makers and implementers, administrators, educators and students.

Prof. M. Akif Kireçci
President
ECOEI

Language Teaching and
Learning Workshop

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Language Teaching and Learning Workshop

INTRODUCTION

This report was prepared for sharing the results of the Language Teaching and Learning Workshop organized in Ankara on 19-20 October 2018 by the Economic Cooperation Organization Educational Institute (ECOEI) in cooperation with the Turkish Language Association (TDK). The Workshop aimed to bring together different stakeholders from the ECO Member States (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) to contribute to the thematic discussions on teaching and learning languages of ECO Member States. The targets of the Workshop can be summarized as follows:

- To discuss the developments, daily challenges and subjects in the field of Language Teaching and Learning,

- To increase the awareness about the best applications and methods, and

- To start dialogue among the participants.

Workshop participants were composed of over eighty academicians, linguists, implementers (language teachers/students) and others who have experience in Language Teaching and Learning or language experts interested in the subject. Participants contributed actively by writing or verbally to the sessions and shared the language teaching materials within the scope of the agenda. The themes discussed contained but not limited to the subjects below:

- The difficulties in the teaching of the Anatolian Turkish, Urdu Language, Persian, Azerbaijani Turkish (Azeri), Kazakh Language, Kyrgyz (Kirghiz, Kirgiz) Language, Turkmen (Turkmen Turkish) and Uzbek Turkish,

- New approaches to language teaching and learning,

- Teacher education,

- To provide quality in language learning,

- Creativity and critical thought in language learning,

- Effective methods in language teaching and learning,

- Language teaching and learning in the digital age, and

- Progressive approaches in language teaching.

Participants of the workshop, who were teachers or active users of Persian, shared their experiences and language learning applications used at university departments teaching Persian and at private institutions. The following problems and subjects related to the teaching of Persian came into the forefront based on the detailed discussions and evaluations made about the teaching of Persian at the Workshop: students' lack of motivation for learning language, students' deficiencies in academic background, problems related to curricula, the problems encountered in the number and competence of instructors, the challenges regarding development of course materials, problems due to widespread use of traditional teaching methods and the use of new teaching methods. The participants discussed concrete applications and policy proposals for each issue which are reported below under separate headings.

Language Teaching and Learning Workshop

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN THE TEACHING OF PERSIAN

Throughout history, Persian and Turkish have influenced each other and have been used simultaneously by many societies, such as the Ghaznavids, Seljukids, Anatolian Seljukids and Ottomans. Most of civilizations founded and human groups who lived in the ECO region frequently used Persian while writing their history and in other sources. A significant portion of the works written during the time of Anatolian Seljukids were in Persian. Ottoman Turkish contained several words that were of Persian origin. The Turks used Arabic and Persian together with Turkish and made use these languages in different areas of life, politics, science and art.

Most of civilizations founded and human groups who lived in the ECO region frequently used Persian while writing their history and in other sources.

Learning Persian is important for researchers who work in the fields of history, culture and language not only in Turkey but also in the wider ECO region, especially for reading and interpreting primary sources and thus for the development of historical research. Translation of the historical texts requires the translator to be acquainted with historical events, facts and names mentioned in the text and the period when it was written, almost like a historian of the era. It is for these reasons that a comprehensive education is given at the Departments of Persian Language and Literature. The Departments of Persian Language and Literature should be opened and run in accordance with an historical and cultural awareness.

There are Departments of Persian Language and Literature at six universities in Turkey and a Department of Persian Language Translation and Interpretation at one university. The permanent teaching staff and curricula at these departments should be structured according to the educational requirements of students. This part of the report discusses the problems encountered most frequently by instructors that hinders teaching of language at these departments.

a. The Motivation Problem of Students

Among Turkish people, there is considerable interest in Persian, which is expected due to the historical and cultural commonalities. Yet, the students who are placed in the departments giving Persian education in Turkey have rather low scores and many of the students only acquire the right to education in these departments with limited scores.

Most of the time, students who attend the Persian department, are those who could not attend the department they had wanted. As such they registered in the departments with the sole objective of studying at a university regardless of the field. In time, one-third of the students who attend the department drop out. Consequently, the number of students in the departments have been gradually decreasing. Compared to the past years, the number of students who newly register at universities has also decreased significantly. Previously, while students who lived in the surrounding provinces and regions preferred these departments, in recent years, students are coming to these departments from the entire country.

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Students frequently set forth that their primary reason for choosing to learn Persian is because Persian is the language of poetry. However, there is poetry in all languages and the poetical form of all languages is beautiful. Students experience disappointment when they start at the department due to this naive perception of students related to the Persian language.

Most of the time, the students who are placed with low scores in the departments, also have less than ideal competencies in their native language. Students who attend classes are constrained in speaking and writing Turkish, hence cannot even express themselves in their native language. These deficiencies make it more difficult for students to learn Persian.

Incoming students' knowledge about the Persian language and culture is extremely limited. Most students are reserved and introverted.

Language learning is slow and unreliable since students are rather afraid of making mistakes. Consequently, it can be necessary to take an interest in students like their parents most of the time and to engage in counseling and mentorship in a manner that would increase their motivation.

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The deficiency in the motivation of students appears before us as an important problem in the learning of language. Due to this deficiency, students do not show much interest and participation in the activities related to the Persian language and culture organized by departments, are reluctant to commit themselves to participating in the available exchange programs, and remain distant from being included in platforms where they could establish interactions with Iranian students in Turkey.

b. Problems Related to Curricula

Since most of the students coming to the Departments of Persian Language and Literature do not know the Persian alphabet, the teaching of the alphabet comes in as the first step in the teaching of language. There is no preparatory class in the literature departments, and it can take a long time for students who do not know the alphabet to learn it. Students proceed to language learning after they learn the alphabet and reach a certain stage. The other stages of language learning are interrupted due to the length of this period.

Different from the Departments of Persian Language and Literature, there is a preparatory program at the Kırıkkale University's Department of Persian Language Translation and Interpretation. Students who attend the department take an adequacy examination immediately after registration. If students are not successful by obtaining a score of seventy on this examination, then their compulsory registration is made for the preparatory program. The preparatory program is two-staged with the A and B level courses, each level corresponding to one semester. Students who attend A level courses during the first semester and reach a score of seventy at the end of the semester and in

the short examinations held during the semester can proceed to the B level courses. After obtaining a score of seventy in the B course, they can start the first year. Students who do not complete the preparatory courses in a total of two years drop out from the department. Therefore, students who start the department have at least an intermediate level of competence in the language.

Preparatory program consists of twenty-two hours of classes per week. In the six-hour part set aside for grammar, students learn the alphabet and introductory subjects. Eight hours is allocated for speaking classes. Subjects taught in grammar classes, are also repeated in speaking classes with simple sentences. In the writing and spelling classes, students acquire the skills of both listening and dictation as well as to write legibly. In this manner, students who have acquired the basic grammar skills and become acquainted with alphabet in the preparatory program can start studying their major at an immediate level and thus can graduate having equipped with a satisfactory level of language skills.

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The existing courses and curricula in the departments of Persian Language and Literature are not conducive to foreign language teaching. Since it takes a long time to learn the alphabet and language in the departments of Persian Language and Literature, it is challenging to successfully orient students to the field of literature. It is only in the third and fourth years that courses such as literature subjects, prosody, and history of Persian literature courses can be taught. It is necessary to introduce a preparatory program in these departments as well so that there is sufficient place in the curricula for students to develop an expertise in specific fields. If a preparatory program is adopted, it could give the students the opportunity to focus on subjects of their own interest by taking elective courses in specific fields, such as sports, law, commerce and politics.

c. Problems Related to the Teaching of Instructors

Students who graduate from the Departments of Persian Language and Literature are not allowed to receive pedagogical formation training, which is required for being employed as a teacher of Persian language. Since students who do not receive pedagogical formation, do not have the opportunity to be teachers and their work possibilities are slight after graduating, they orient towards being a researcher or an academic. This orientation creates a supply pressure on the available academic posts and causes deficiencies in the education of Persian teachers.

One of the important obstacles that prevents the formation of intensive language teaching and preparatory classes in the departments of Persian Language and Literature is that the educated manpower in this field is not used productively. It is observed that although there are experts who have completed their doctoral education in the field of Persian Language and Literature in Turkey, there are a great number of professors, associate professors and persons with doctoral degrees who cannot assume duties in the existing Departments of Persian Language and Literature or the Department of Persian Translation and Interpretation. There is one professor, one doctoral degree lecturer and two researchers at the İstanbul Medeniyet University; one doctoral degree lecturer and three researchers at the Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University; one doctoral degree lecturer at the Van Yüzüncü Yıl University; a doctoral degree lecturer and a researcher at the Ağrı İbrahim Çeçen University; a lecturer and two researchers at the Dicle University; two researchers at the Çankırı Karatekin University; three researchers at the Karamanoğlu Mehmet Bey University; a doctoral degree lecturer and two researchers at the Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University; and a lecturer and researcher at the Ardahan University. Since these departments of Eastern Languages and Literature or departments under other names where these experts work, do not currently take in students, there is no educational activity in these places at present.

It is expected from students who want to take up an academic position to receive a certain score in the Academic Personnel and Postgraduate Education Entrance Examination (ALES) after graduating from the Departments of Persian Language and Literature. This examination determines to a great extent whether participants would be accepted into master's degree programs or whether they would be appointed as a researcher, yet it is only a general competence examination which does not measure their adequacy in the field of the Persian language. It is necessary to test candidates' language skills and adequacies with face-to-face interviews before accepting them into the permanent positions or for master's degree education. Only then, can the adequacies of these students in the field be understood and their capabilities be used in a more productive manner.

Persons who complete the doctoral degree in the field of Persian Language and Literature are educated as language and literature experts. Even if they assume duties as language instructors in the departments of translation and interpretation or in the departments of literature, they are compelled to continue this task without having taken any academic course related to the methods of language teaching. Consequently, it is expected that instructors would teach language in these departments without receiving an academic education about the teaching of language. Instructors are learning how they would teach language skills such as speaking and listening only with their own personal efforts and as the result of special research.

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In the Departments of Persian Language and Literature, on the one hand, academics are trying to teach the Persian language, and on the other hand, they are engaging in research, giving courses related to their own fields of expertise and fulfilling other administrative duties. However, teaching language should be the principal expertise and duty of the language instructors, rather than academics. Academics, who are experts on various subjects of language and literature, should not be expected to teach language in addition to doing research and writing articles.

> *The provision of pedagogical formation education, besides increasing students' interest in the department, would also contribute to their being educated as instructors.*

From the start, career preferences of students in these departments, i.e. whether they want to receive education to become a researcher, as an expert or as a teacher should be determined and the education of students should be shaped according to this preference. For those who would be language teachers would receive education for teaching students by taking courses in education and pedagogy, for those who are educated as researchers or experts should acquire the research skills so that they could engage in all kinds of research in the fields of literature, history and culture. The provision of pedagogical formation education, besides increasing students' interest in the department, would also contribute to their being educated as instructors.

Persian teaching is not formed according to the pre-existing competencies of students, since level determination examinations are not made for students entering departments. One of the important stages of educational planning should be to prepare for determining levels. An analysis of needs should be made based on native language skills and alphabet knowledge of the first-year students. Students' objectives for choosing to learn Persian and the fields they want to advance should be investigated. A more efficient and pleasurable language teaching could be realized if students are presented with differentiated course tracks. Being able to choose from different course tracks could alleviate lack of motivation, which is one of the most important obstacles that prevents language learning. Language learning realized within the framework of subjects for which students feel an interest would also facilitate the learning of language.

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d. Problems in the Number and Development of Quality Teaching Materials

One of the greatest difficulties in teaching the Persian language is the absence of teaching materials that are differentiated according to levels and that could be used jointly in all departments in a standard manner. A text which is used at Ankara University in the B1 level course for those who know Persian at an average level, can be used for students at the A2, i.e. the beginner level, at Kırıkkale University. Therefore, it is necessary for the chairs and the academicians who engage in duties at the departments that teach Persian language, to come together and determine which types of educational materials would be used at which levels from the first year through the final year. Separate tasks could be given to the departments at each university for the development of materials suitable to different levels. In the preparation of the audiovisual materials, samples can be obtained from departments which are more experienced on teaching language such as the English department, and these samples could be adapted to the Persian language teaching.

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With the formation of a collective curriculum, a detailed program as well as the disclosing of the teaching materials, students can know what they will learn, when, at which lesson, and how. They can come to the classes prepared with the given audiovisual materials. A more efficient language education can be realized by directing various questions to students who are expected to come prepared for the subject.

Some of the physical facilities required for language teaching are available at the Department of Persian Language Translation and Interpretation. There are smart boards in the classrooms and language laboratories are also being formed. It was set forth as a basic target to be able to make applied speaking courses and simultaneous translation courses at the language laboratory in this department. Audio materials should also be used actively in classrooms. Simultaneous translation courses are given as a fourth-year course and can be made in applied translation cabins. In this manner, students can acquire simultaneous translation experience actively before graduation.

METHODS OF LANGUAGE TEACHING

First, it is necessary to set forth the methods and approaches still used prevalently in the departments of Persian Language and Literature and Persian Translation and Interpretation in order to search for the methods that could be used for making these departments more efficient in language teaching. In this part of the report, the participants in the Workshop made an evaluation of the traditional grammar-translation method used mostly in the Departments of Persian Language and Literature and the communicative method preferred in the Department of Persian Translation and Interpretation.

a. Grammar-Translation Method

Persian teaching in Turkey is based mainly on grammar teaching and translation, which is one of the traditional teaching methods. This method involves teaching the language by directly imparting the grammar rules and by exemplification of the rules through translation.

The grammar-translation method does not put much emphasis on the pronunciation, listening and speaking skills since reading skill is the basic skill targeted to be developed when teaching language in this method. Consequently, while advancement is observed in the reading and writing skills of students in this method, unfortunately, the listening and speaking skills are left behind. Students who remain

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behind on subjects of pronunciation and listening, since they experience communication problems, are having difficulty in using the language actively. Beside these problems encountered in pronunciation, listening and speaking, learners experience problems stemming from learning the language through reading formal Persian which is not completely compatible with the daily spoken Persian in Iran. Even those who learn the language at a certain level in Turkey, when they go to Iran, they speak in a completely stilted manner that

does not have an equivalent in the daily life of Persians. When students who learn Persian with the official language rules, speak in this manner, native language speakers can understand them, yet the learners have problems in deciphering what was spoken and can have difficulties in communication. For instance, the word hâne, which is also used in Turkish, is pronounced in a manner that approaches huni in Persian. Since students do not pick up this difference at school from their teachers, they are compelled to use a dictionary when they first hear the word in Iran, as though they had encountered a word that they did not know at all.

The use of grammar-translation method results in deficient learning as it skips the teaching of novel uses, expressions and patterns in the daily language.

Unfortunately, daily spoken Persian is not taught at the universities in Turkey, neither in the courses nor in the texts. The use of grammar-translation method results in deficient learning as it skips the teaching of novel uses, expressions and patterns in the daily language. Since language is a dynamic entity, students trained in this method remain limited in their access to new words and uses that enter Persian that is continuously renewing itself.

There is not an established consensus on some subjects in Persian grammar, which from time to time puts the grammar-teaching method into a deadlock. The Iranian grammar experts, under the influence of new approaches and new methods, have been reinterpreting some of the Persian grammar conceptualizations. For example, the structures that were known as pronouns in the past, can be described as adjectives in the new grammar books. A word that has a final suffix can be called a compound word by some experts. These differences of opinion or innovations should not be kept in the forefront enough to constitute an obstacle in the learning of language. The objective of teaching grammar should be to provide learners of the language with the capability of generating words when necessary. When students encounter a nonfamiliar word in a text, they should be able understand and later utilize it without recourse to a dictionary with the assistance of grammatical knowledge.

The objective of teaching grammar should be to provide learners of the language with the capability of generating words when necessary.

Development of pronunciation and speaking skills in students have only recently been given priority in the Persian Language and Literature Departments. Curricula were mostly formed in line with the aim of developing the students' knowledge base in the fields of culture, history and literature. Even though many academics received their doctoral degrees in Iran, their priority was not for students to acquire practical speaking skills. In the present-day, it is necessary to improve these curricula in a manner that would provide room for using current educational technologies aiming at more practical applications. Teaching the Turkish words taken from Persian or those that are shared in Turkish and Persian would increase the interest of students in Persian. Students can watch short films as a class activity after which they could discuss the words that they understood and heard. Subsequently, they could examine these words one-by-one.

The traditional teaching methods based on grammar and translation should be changed with modern methods based on audiovisual materials.

When a student translates a film, the other students could listen to the translation with earphones. The traditional teaching methods based on grammar and translation should be changed with modern methods based on audiovisual materials.

As online tools for translation have gained pace, some academics reported an opinion in favor of removing the Turkish to Persian translation courses from the curricula. Rather than translation courses, information should be given on how students could use the existing digital dictionaries and tools in a productive manner.

b. Communicative Method

According to the communicative approach applied by the most prominent language teaching centers throughout the world, the teaching of language should move away from the traditional methods based on memorization of words and patterns. Instead, language teaching programs should be shaped around building effective communication skills, which is the real purpose of learning any language. The method in this approach is based on encouraging students to convey their

knowledge and feelings at every skill level with the help of available tools. Consequently, besides texts, all kinds of audiovisual materials are also included in language teaching. For example, a text that narrates tourists' experience while visiting Tehran is supplanted with visuals that depict various scenes of the narrative to support communication. The visuals about being in an airplane, being in an airport, being in a taxi, being in the Hotel Abbasi and at the Tehran University can be presented to the students in parallel with the text.

Another dimension of language teaching in Turkey is that the primary purpose of most of the language learning is studying literature in that language. Of the programs carried out actively at six universities in Turkey, five are the Persian Language and Literature. The curriculum of these departments is organized in a way that the more advanced literature courses are offered at the third and fourth years. That is, it is assumed that the language competency acquired within the first two years provides students with the ability to work in the field of literature.

One of the most pressing challenges in the teaching of modern Persian language is development of the speaking skills and pronunciation. The worldwide consensus for overcoming this challenge is the use of communicative approach. Communicative approach prioritizes development of listening and speaking skills, whereas grammar is treated as a means, not a goal of language teaching. many methods were set forth in the communicative approach. Here the method starts with listening and speaking. There are texts, but direct grammar education is not given to students in any text.

Another dimension of language teaching in Turkey is that the primary purpose of most of the language learning is studying literature in that language.

Rather than giving direct information to students, students are first expected to hear parts of the text. This is called form-focused teaching. These parts in the text were written in bold letters. In this formalization, students say that "there is something different in this text; today I will learn something different." Thus, students first perceive a rule or a word but they do not have the slightest idea of what this is. The priority in these texts is for students to acquire skills in speaking and listening and subsequently to apply

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them. At some universities in England and the United States a technology-based language education is given for speaking and listening with the remote access method.

The texts and sections in the textbooks used in the teaching of foreign language are organized for developing specific skills of students. At first glance, a text appears like a single activity only for the reading skill, and if lecturers follow the traditional approach, then it is first read by instructors in classrooms. Next, instructors translate the text to Turkish. In the new teaching approaches, however, students engage in preliminary preparation activities before even reading the text. In other words, there can be three to four sub-activities related to the text, before making any direct study of it, including reading. One of these sub-activities, for instance, could be the grammar activity. An activity such as the much-complained-about grammar translation method can also be embedded in this new approach.

Since there is no textbook by Turkish experts written from the perspective of communicative approach intended for those whose native language is Turkish, the task of designing and organizing good class activities remains completely under the responsibility of instructors. Having studied the text and its content beforehand, the instructors must first familiarize the students with the words and phrases that would come up in the text. Teachers can convey these words to students aurally by engaging in active conversations in Persian with students. Only then, the class passes on to reading the text. As such, the speaking skill would be the first language skill targeted in line with the communicative method.

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PROPOSALS

Besides discussing the problems encountered and the methods used in the teaching of Persian, participants at the workshop also made some policy proposals for improving language education. Participants' proposals on this subject can be summarized in general as increasing the visibility of the language by supporting the departments of Persian Language and Literature, encouraging the learning of Persian by students, developing new course materials, educating Persian language instructors, renewing curricula and using the digital technologies more prevalently in language teaching.

a. Proposals for Supporting the Departments of Persian Language and Literature

It was emphasized that a more efficient language education at the departments of Persian Language and Literature is dependent upon the competence and interest of the incoming students above all else. It is indeed possible to adopt some policies to increase the motivations and interests of existing students, yet it is paramount to take measures which are intended to draw more interested and capable students to the departments from the get-go and raise the profile of the departments in the opinion of students who make university preferences.

The first of these preventive measures could be giving students attending the departments the opportunity to study abroad to through a shared program or diploma. Students who acquire sufficient background knowledge of the language during the first and second years, could study in Iran or Tajikistan during their third and fourth years through inter-university agreements.

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Staying in the country where the language is spoken -even if for a short time- is extremely fruitful in terms of language learning.

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terms of language learning. In certain programs, students undergo an examination and if they pass, they are given the opportunity to visit the country. Students with a certain level of reading, speaking and grammar in Persian could be sent abroad with a scholarship. Saadi Persian Teaching Institution allocate language scholarships of this sort that involve six-month visits. All students who stay in Iran and receive education with this scholarship eventually work in a field such as intelligence, migration agencies or in foreign affairs where they actively use their language skills. Consequently, the curricula of these departments can be supplanted by a requirement for students to study or live abroad for a certain period of time, which would both attract more interested and competent students to the departments and guarantee the language competence of the graduates.

It should be emphasized that Persian is a contemporary and popular language used actively in every field imaginable, not only in literature and art. The concrete contribution that the learning of a language would create towards the establishment and development of political and economic relations with the countries where that language is spoken should be highlighted.

Another important criterion that would attract students to the department, is the extent of economic possibilities and work opportunities that the students would have after their graduation. To make this assessment, students should be able to foresee where they would be able to work if they studied in what manner, at what level and concentrated on which areas. Students naturally expect to acquire a certain profession and good work opportunities at the end of their education. Students should be able to find reliable responses about how they could make their living when they learn this language, which is imperative for increasing the popularity of the departments. For these responses to be consistent, there is also a need for larger scale employment planning.

An example about the problematic results of the deficiency of employment planning was observed by the academicians at the Atatürk University, Department of Persian Language and Literature in Erzurum. The administrators of the Regional Research Hospital in Erzurum, where there are many Iranian and Azerbaijani patients, engaged in an initiative for having the fourth-year students at the Atatürk University Department of Persian Language and Literature work as guides for these patients. However, they could not pay a fee to students since the hospital budget did not have an allocation for this purpose. One can presumably argue that such cooperation that would be beneficial both to students and to the hospital and to patients, was not realized due to lack of planning and incentive rather than a lack of resources. This cooperation could have been put into practice by evaluating options such as previously planning and budgeting for the fee that would be given to students, obtaining donations from philanthropists, companies, associations or foundations, or well-to-do patients. If students can experience that they could have the opportunity to be a translator with a fee even before graduation, it would also increase the motivation of students to learn speaking well.

Similar planning problems are also experienced related to training opportunities at institutions, such as the Turkish Radio Television Institution (TRT) and Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA). Graduates of the Department of Persian Translation-Interpretation, who take positions at institutions which manage projects for the Afghans such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Immigration Department, can have difficulty in understanding the Afghan Persian or Tajik Persian dialects since the education they received in the department was based on Iranian Persian. The needs at these institutions should be determined so that education can be planned according to their projected employment needs in five years. Students, who are selected for future employment in these institutions can be encouraged to learn different dialects during their education

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and sent to Iran or Tajikistan for experience. One they graduate, they can be summoned for obligatory service.

Study abroad requirement can also be adopted for academics. In such a scheme, persons who work at the Persian departments would be required to spend a set period in Iran, in Tajikistan or in Afghanistan, depending on the security conditions. Engaging in educational activities or research projects at foreign universities could be included as a condition for extension of academics' employment contracts. If these exchanges are organized on a continuous basis, then the cooperation among universities would increase, and students and faculty members could find more opportunities to go abroad for educational and research purposes thanks to extension of their networks.

b. Proposals for Overcoming the Problem of Motivation of Students

Use of more interactive and interesting techniques while teaching language and encouraging students to socialize and talk in person would be beneficial for students' development. For example, Iranian students who speak Turkish could be invited to participate in the Persian courses or a speaking club as a part of a shared initiative. Presenting and explaining the shared Turkish and Persian words in courses and the Turkish words that were borrowed from Persian could establish a feeling of familiarity with the language and could increase students' interest.

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Building a system with several scholarships and job opportunities could motivate and draw the interest of more students. These opportunities could be effective for attracting quality students to the departments.

Providing the students with the opportunity to pursue a minor and/or double major degree in addition to Persian language and literature could also motivate students to select these departments. On the other hand, some workshop participants

noted that students of the Departments of Persian Language and Literature who are included in double major and minor programs, could sometimes direct their attentions and energies to these other fields and may eventually change their field. Therefore, minor or double major programs sometimes present a risk of losing the relatively few good students for these departments, which already experience difficulties in terms of student interest.

One of the reasons for the lack of motivation of students coming to these departments is the ignorance towards the Persian language and culture. The presentation and explanation of different languages at the high school level could be effective in eliminating the lack of knowledge of the society with respect to the Persian language and culture.

Students should be encouraged to participate in exchange programs, such as Erasmus, Farabi and Mevlâna; and special exchange programs and training opportunities in the field should also be introduced. Social sciences and humanities should also be added to the Mevlâna Exchange Programs made with Iran and arrangements should be made that would give priority to students in the Departments of Persian Language and Education. Turkish universities could establish partnerships with Iranian universities for the formation of dual diploma programs. Students enrolled in Turkish universities can receive education at a university in Iran during their third and/or fourth years and could receive diplomas from both universities.

> *The presentation and explanation of different languages at the high school level could be effective in eliminating the lack of knowledge of the society with respect to the Persian language and culture.*

Another means to motivate and support successful and intelligent students is through providing scholarships. Turkish Board of Higher Education (YÖK) provide scholarships in the fields of physics, chemistry and biology, for which there is a need to draw more students. These can also be provided for the departments of Persian Language and Literature. Taking into consideration the strategic importance of Persian in the region, a YÖK scholarship could be provided to high quality, studious and productive students preferring to study at the departments of Persian Language and Literature as their first three university preferences on

the condition that they continue to be successful after being placed in the program. Giving scholarships to students who pick departments of Persian Language and Literature as a priority preference at the university examination would be an encouragement to more successful students to select these departments.

Internship opportunities at the TRT, TİKA and Anadolu Agency can be opened to develop the translation skills of students and to present and explain their professional prospects. Students who come for internships at these institutions from various Departments of Persian Language and Literature in the country should be supported to the extent possible. They should be entrusted with consequential tasks throughout their internships, even if their language skills are less than desired. In accordance with the need in these agencies, departments should allocate enough time to teach the Afghan and Tajik dialects as well.

Students in the Departments of Persian Language and Literature should be given the opportunity to receive pedagogical formation and become Persian language teachers.

No pedagogical formation has been provided in the Departments of Persian Language and Literature. Consequently, the only academic path that students have is to become researchers or academics. This situation is also influential in the (non)selection of this department by students. Students in the Departments of Persian Language and Literature should be given the opportunity to receive pedagogical formation and become Persian language teachers. Pedagogical formation may attract students to these departments, since pedagogical formation is usually students' number one reason for preferring other language departments.

c. Proposals Related to Course Resources and Material Development

One of the greatest problems in the learning and teaching of language is the problem of developing teaching materials. There is no material written by experts in the field in Turkey that would teach Persian as a foreign language. The extant textbooks are not based on scientific

knowledge on language teaching and learning. All the printed books and the materials used at the institutions teaching the Persian Language and Literature or Persian as a foreign language are of Iranian origin. There are no units that prepare materials with the audiovisual methods in the departments of Persian Language and Literature. Generally, resources coming from Iran or resources prepared for modern courses at the Iranian Cultural Center are used. It is necessary to examine whether these materials and applications are productive from the aspect of teaching Persian to Turks and to evaluate their adaptations in the context of language-culture relationships.

It is necessary for experts in the field to come together and work for the development of texts, which would be supported with audiovisual materials. There is a need for the formation of teams for material development, which is one of the most difficult fields in the science of education. The experiences of the departments of English Language and Literature could be benefited from when creating audiovisual materials, since they have more experience in this field. Materials used in English could be adapted to Persian.

It is necessary for experts in the field to come together and work for the development of texts, which would be supported with audiovisual materials.

Another issue that is at least as important as the development of materials is the productive use of digital materials whose numbers and varieties are increasing naturally due to the developing and spreading technology. Most of the time, this depends on the initiative of lecturers. The use of digital resources recently accelerated due to student demand as well.

Sound recordings of programs, such as news clips or discussions with cultural content were are used in oral translation courses. Instructors should determine and attempt to use text and sound files that the students would be able to listen to on their own, attempt to transcribe, and perhaps test themselves with by taking into consideration several characteristics of the recording, such as tone of the voice and recording. These types of files, used more frequently in the Department of Translation and Interpretation, are usually in the form of four-to-five-minute speeches by Iranian statesmen. In these sound files, sometimes

there can be the intervention and interpretation of TV announcers or the speech of speakers in another language may slip in the recording. Consequently, they are far from being ideal course materials.

Books can be used for creating sound files, which could make teaching more effective. Texts can be separated into paragraphs, in the form of four-to-five-minute pieces and can be recorded and used for the oral translation of students. On the other hand, when books are used for oral translation, problems can also be experienced, such as the subjects being remote and not drawing the interest of students.

Books can be used for creating sound files, which could make teaching more effective.

A pool of materials could also be formed by giving project assignments to students for their completion theses. The assignments can include finding or creating files that would be used for oral translations. As such, students would provide materials that could be used in the subsequent terms. Even though some of these assignments will not be usable, the best ones could be shared with all the departments by collecting them in a pool. The texts and materials that could be used in courses could also be formed by making recordings in studios. There are books and independent studies, which also include sound files that were formed with this objective in mind. However, most of these texts are classical texts or animal tales in the fable genre. Since these books are monotonous, classical genres and didactic texts, they are far from stirring student interest.

d. Proposals for Teaching of Instructors

Many of the researchers and lecturers do not have the skills to give Persian lessons in the modern sense or do not have competence in the Persian language. To guarantee teacher competence, it is necessary for all the lecturers and officials to receive a minimum score of 75 on the Foreign Language Examination. It is also necessary for the YÖK to encourage lecturers to reach these levels in the shortest time.

Researchers who are placed into employment within the scope of the Faculty Member Training Program, are not sufficiently knowledgeable and self-confident about language teaching and language speaking.

In the hiring of researchers, priority should be given to science and the Persian language examinations. In academia, the most important employment criteria for the Persian Language and Literature is the ALES score. To ensure competence and efficiency of teachers, the employment procedure should also include an interview of the teacher candidates where their speaking skills could also be vetted.

Every faculty member, before receiving the title of associate professor, should stay in Iran with the purpose of research for a minimum of nine months and up until one year. It would be appropriate that faculty members in other language departments to spend the same periods in countries relevant for the languages they teach. It may not even be necessary to provide additional payments and travel allowances other than their salaries for this program.

To ensure competence and efficiency of teachers, the employment procedure should also include an interview of the teacher candidates where their speaking skills could also be vetted.

There are many cultural-educational agreements by Iran made about the exchange of teaching staff and lecturers. These agreements should be implemented and teaching staff from Iran should be appointed to the departments of Persian Language and Literature in Turkey for two or three years with the salaries and emoluments to be paid by the Iranian government. The universities in Turkey could hire those whose native language is Persian and persons who are experts in the field of teaching Persian to foreigners. It could sometimes be appropriate for universities to hire directly rather than employing the instructors sent from Iran through exchange programs to ensure lecturers full time commitment.

At present, the bachelor's degree, master's degree and doctoral programs are carried out by a small number of faculty members. Besides language teaching, academicians continue to do research, write books and articles, engage in student supervision, writing reports, and refereeing for articles and books. It is almost impossible for academicians, who have such a burden and responsibility and do not have a specialty in the field of language teaching to be useful in the teaching of Persian. It is necessary to separate from each other the

duties and positions of the researchers who have specializations from the departments of Persian Language and Literature, and instructors who have a pedagogic formation and are experts in the teaching of the Persian language. The existing shortcomings related to the use of audiovisual methods in classrooms stem from academics who were taught with the classical, traditional methods and have difficulty in educating themselves in using more modern methods. If a separation could be made between language teaching staff and researchers, the first group, equipped with the new language teaching methods, could focus on the practical command of the speaking language and the second group could focus on research.

The number of academics who actively teach courses in the departments is very small, both for Urdu and for Persian. The government and YÖK should act more generously for educating Persian teaching staff. Academicians who graduate from the departments of Persian Language and Literature work at universities where there is not such a department. In a similar manner, academicians who study Persian in Iran and later receive postgraduate education in Turkey and who have become Turkish citizens, work in departments different from Persian. Academicians who graduated from the departments of Persian Language and Literature, but who are not assuming active duties in these departments should be distributed to those universities with the need. If this were done, then the course burden of the existing academicians would be decreased and they can perform new duties, such as preparation of course contents and preparation of audiovisual materials.

It would be useful for academicians at the Persian departments, department chairmen and faculty to hold meetings every year for discussing the teaching problems.

There is no mutual support, unity and platform among teachers and experts of Persian in Turkey. Regular meetings could be organized for the formation of a platform and for discussing the various problems in language teaching. The best applications and methods should be shared among universities. It would be useful for academicians at the Persian departments, department chairmen and faculty to hold meetings every year for discussing the teaching problems.

e. Proposals Related to Curricula

It is necessary to develop a curriculum which covers the long-term expected outputs of the courses. At present, there is a rough draft for instructors divided into fourteen weekly lessons. If all lecturers would record the texts, video and sound files they used in their courses and their goals in using them in a file, then they can transfer this collection over to the next teacher who would take over the course. The new teacher could make additions and removals to these rough drafts. Instead of relying on competency of instructors and students in implementing language teaching methods and materials, it is necessary to design the curricula in accordance with a teaching framework and to develop more planned, adaptable, transparent, and sharable systems.

Another dimension of the task in Turkey is the literature dimension. Five of the programs carried out actively at six universities in Turkey are on Persian Language and Literature. The curricula of these departments consist of literature courses after the first four semesters. It is debatable whether the language competencies that could be acquired by students within the first two years provide a sufficient background for people who would work in the field of literature.

The curricula in the teaching of Persian take Persian spoken in Iran as the reference. Tajik and Afghan Persian dialects should also be introduced to the curricula.

f. Proposals Related to Language Teaching Methods

The priority in the teaching of the Persian language should be to determine the most effective approach and method. Currently, there seems to be no standard because every faculty member gives courses in their own idiosyncratic methods. According to the communicative approach, which has been adopted

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at the important language teaching centers throughout the world, it is necessary to teach the language in a way that targets effective communication, setting aside the traditional teaching methods. It is necessary to use audiovisual equipment, to build classrooms with such facilities, and to conduct courses interactively with students.

In speaking classes, instructors prevalently prefer to use texts prepared in the form of dialogues, which is an unproductive method. Dialogue-based texts induce memorization which makes it impossible for students to shape the narrative and fill in the blanks according to their own purpose and knowledge background. They also direct instructors to put translation into the forefront instead of meaning and scope.

In speaking classes, rather than using ready-made dialogues, the instructor should only give the beginning of a story to students and ask them to continue the story, hence giving them an active role. These methods which involve participation of other students in the story started by teachers, leaves room for the active involvement in the classroom, increasing the interest of students.

It is necessary to use audiovisual equipment, to build classrooms with such facilities, and to conduct courses interactively with students.

An example of a good practice that work towards the improvement of students' speaking skill is to encourage students to speak about visuals, rather than text. A text corresponding to these visuals can later be formed together with the students. Learners can make an oral presentation related to the collectively manufactured text before they return to the sample text set forth in the book at the end of the lesson. This method makes use of authentic texts, i.e. texts about situations that one can encounter at any moment in daily life. Its main purpose is for students to re-write these texts.

Boarding is a widely adopted language teaching method in some Western countries. In this method, students who go abroad to learn a language, stay with a family who speaks that language while continuing the language courses. This way, it is possible to learn to speak in a fluent manner within a relatively short period, such as six months.

Learning the language by living within the society should also be encouraged in the teaching of Persian. Learn the language through boarding could also solve problems about learning to speak the daily Persian. As an alternative, the possibilities and opportunities could be presented for those who are learning Persian in Turkey to interact with Iranian students studying in Turkey, whose number is close to six thousand. There are currently one million Iranians living in various cities in Turkey who came after the Iranian Revolution and their numbers are growing. There are also many Afghans and Tajiks. Formation of physical or virtual environments which bring together these persons can create areas and opportunities for Turkish and Iranian student groups to establish communication with each other as advocated by the communicative approach to language learning.

Boarding is a widely adopted language teaching method in some Western countries.

g. Proposals Related to the Use of Digital Technologies

It is possible to benefit from the digital resources developed by institutions that make studies and publications for the teaching of Persian in Iran, such as the Payam Nur University, Dehhoda Language Teaching Center, Iran Language Institute and the Sadi Persian Teaching Institution. For example, there is a rather beneficial mobile application existing called Mina, which was developed by the Sadi Persian Teaching Institution for learning Persian words. This resource can be used in departments in an active manner. Persian language is also taught on a great number of online platforms, some with charges and others free of charge, such as Rosetta Stone, Busuu and Learn101.org. It is necessary to include these digital resources in language teaching in an intensive manner.

Besides these, a digital dictionary of verbs project, that could involve dissertation research of several doctoral degree students was planned by some researchers at the Kırıkkale University Department of Persian

Translation and Interpretation. Through this application, 2000-3000 Persian synonymous, antonymous and near-synonymous verbs can be taught by matching them with photographs and gamified with questions. Developing and implementing these projects requires the contributions and supervision of experts in the computer and mobile technologies that have experience on developing software that would be used in the teaching of language

One of the most important of the developing and spreading digital materials are online dictionaries. Although looking up words in classical dictionaries develops certain language capabilities, it is neither possible nor necessary to ban or limit the use of digital dictionaries by students. In classrooms, especially in the Turkish to Persian translation courses, the use of digital dictionaries on cellular phones is very common. On the other hand, students can be advised to use the online resources for learning the uses of words, rather than using the translation programs or the online dictionaries to find the direct dictionary meanings of words. Online tools could be more beneficial for learning how words are used in sentences, for grasping their secondary meanings and learning their pronunciation. Rather than using an online dictionary, students can make an internet search for that word, read the sentences that emerge, and watch and listen to videos.

One of the most important of the developing and spreading digital materials are online dictionaries.

It is also especially important to orient new master's and doctoral candidates in the departments of Persian Language and Literature to write their dissertations in the field of utilization of the digital technologies in the teaching of language. It is the only way to build expertise in this field prior to implementing the proposals for the updating of curricula or for the educating of teaching staff.

Telegram is a mobile application used frequently in Iran. Students could be encouraged to establish communications with Iranians through this application. Furthermore, groups could be formed on WhatsApp or Telegram that include academics and students where audiovisual materials are shared. With the proposals of these groups, the materials could be transferred to a web platform and made open for the use of everyone.

The departments could cooperate with the TRT in a coordinated manner for the formation of digital resources. For example, Persian stories and theaters, by listing them from simple to complex, could be sound recorded by the TRT and transferred to a digital environment. Recordings could be made by reading the same sentence at three different speeds for different levels. TRTs radio theaters could be translated to Persian, enacted at various skill levels and shared. Selection of texts can be done based on recommendations by scholars and the sound files could be shared on a common platform. A poetry channel could be formed on YouTube where the gazels (lyric poems of a certain form) are recited from Hafız or from Şehriyar.

A "Survival Kit in Iran," aimed at the use of tourists or students who would go to Iran, could be prepared that could be glanced at in two hours and that could be downloaded to a cell phone or a computer.

LANGUAGE TEACHING AND
LEARNING WORKSHOP