

# A comparison of Ankara University (TÖMER) and Turkey Maarif Foundation Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language Programs in terms of skill areas, objectives, and assessment practices

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## Abstract

The curriculum constitutes the backbone of a teaching process as a guide that defines and limits. It directs an education process in terms of approach, target, time, scope, stage, evaluation, and outputs. A well-structured curriculum is a must-have requirement for an educational process in which desired outcomes are targeted. In this study, the Turkish as a foreign language teaching programs of the Maarif Foundation, which is claimed to be the product of a long-term study and large-scale research in 2019, and Ankara University TÖMER, which was put into effect in 2015, were compared in terms of purpose, skill, acquisition, and assessment-evaluation. The basics of qualitative research design carried out the research. The data of the research were analyzed by the document analysis method. According to the results of the research, it has been determined that there are significant differences between the two programs in terms of their purpose, objective, target audience, and scope.

## 1 Introduction

Language is the foremost core unit that paves the way to establishing the bond between the past and the present of a nation, as well as the construction of a nation's future. The transfer of the national and sentimental values of a nation throughout generations and the preservation of the heritage of the nation are realized with the potential of their language. In line with this, studies on language teaching are of great importance for a nation so that the nation can preserve its identity and existence in the world of tomorrow.

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Financial, educational, and cultural collaboration strategy exertions nations put into action so that they can exist and survive worldwide, or human mobility that occurs because of wars, natural disasters, or a large variety of reasons, and international mobility of the masses have placed importance on learning and teaching practices. Additionally, the rapid transformation of science and technology made having a good command of multiple languages a necessity, thereby enabling nations to have an intimate relationship with each other (İşcan, 2011).

The history of teaching a language to different nations dates back to ancient times. The Sumerian language learning practices after the Akkadians had conquered the lands of the Sumerians, a more advanced civilization than themselves, in 2225 BC, is the oldest foreign language teaching practice known in history (Hengirmen, 1997, p.3, cited by Er, Biçer, Bozkırlı, 2012, p.52). The history of teaching Turkish as a foreign language also dates back to ancient times. Biçer (2012) states that Turkish has been taught as a foreign language since the periods when Turkish could be followed with documents. In the Orkhon inscriptions and the sources of the Uyghur period, clues pertinent to that Turkish was taught to foreigners by natural methods were obtained; however, there was no evidence that a systematic teaching methodology was followed (Ağar, 2004, p.1 cited by Er, Biçer, Bozkırlı, 2012, p.52).

In recent years, irregular immigrants coming to our country due to war or social reasons such as work, marriage, and education have made it necessary to develop policies on teaching Turkish as a foreign language in Turkey. In addition, Turkish is taught as a foreign language in Turkic countries, Balkans, and African countries for the purposes such as strengthening ties with kinship communities and organizing aid campaigns by non-governmental foundations in Turkey for countries in need.

In teaching Turkish as a foreign language, the transfer of cultural elements is of great importance in bringing nations closer to each other and establishing strategic relations. When foreign students who study in another country return to their own country, they may state the beauties and cultural characteristics of the country they have lived in during their education, which might increase the interest in that country. At the same time, students who obtain important positions in their own countries will be able to play important roles in the economic and strategic relations established between countries. In this respect, it is necessary to evaluate language teaching not only as a teaching process but also as an opportunity for cultures to be familiar with each other.

Language teaching is a planned, programmed, and systematic professional process. The main element of this systematic process is the curriculum (Ari, 2017, Durukan, 2013; Melanlıoğlu, 2008). Process outputs such as the learning-teaching approach, objectives, methods, techniques, assessment, and evaluation approaches are shaped according to the curriculum and are included in it. Therefore, creating a curriculum in line with the designated main purposes appears as a priority.

When the existing and widely used curricula in teaching Turkish as a foreign language are examined, Ankara University TÖMER Turkish as a Foreign Language Teaching Program, published in 2015, and the Maarif Foundation Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language Program, published in 2019, can be recognized. Scientific examination and analysis of these teaching programs are important in obtaining the desired quality level in these teaching processes. This situation constitutes the rationale behind the research.

## **1.2 Purpose of the research**

The research aims to compare the Turkish as a Foreign Language Teaching Program of the Maarif Foundation and Ankara TÖMER in terms of general purposes, skill areas and levels, objectives, and assessment-evaluation processes.

## **2 Method**

### **2.1 Research design**

In this study, which was prepared according to the qualitative approach, the basic qualitative research study design was used (Merriam, 2013). This study, which aims to investigate the research subject in-depth in terms of detail, scope, and differences (Creswell, 2013), has been prepared to reveal the similarities and differences between the Turkish as a Foreign Language Teaching Program of the Maarif Foundation and Ankara TÖMER. First of all, the related literature was reviewed. Following that, the programs of the Maarif Foundation and Ankara TÖMER were analyzed separately in terms of skills, objectives, and assessment-evaluation processes. The data obtained were presented in tables, and the number of objectives, skill areas, and assessment-evaluation processes of these programs was compared.

### **2.2 Research material**

The study materials of the research consist of Turkish as a Foreign Language Teaching Program of the Maarif Foundation and Ankara TÖMER.

### **2.3 Data collection**

The data collection method used in the study is the document review method. Turkish as a Foreign Language Teaching Program of the Maarif Foundation and Ankara TÖMER were examined in detail and compared regarding general purposes, skill areas, grade levels, objectives, and assessment-evaluation processes.

### **2.4 Data analysis**

The Turkish as a Foreign Language Teaching Program of the Maarif Foundation and Ankara TÖMER were examined electronically. The results were compared in terms of general purposes, skill areas, grade levels, objectives, and assessment and evaluation processes. The obtained data were analyzed through the content analysis method.

## **3 Findings**

### **3.1 Comparison of programs in terms of general purposes**

The general objectives of the Turkish as a Foreign Language Teaching Program of the Maarif Foundation are expressed as follows. Thanks to the Curriculum of Turkish as a Foreign Language, putting students at the center, it is aims:

1. To develop Turkish comprehension skills through listening/watching and reading,
2. To develop Turkish speaking skills through oral production, oral interaction, and writing,
3. To enable them to use their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in a holistic manner and accordance with the rules, consciously, correctly, and carefully,
4. To improve their nonverbal communication skills in Turkish and to enable them to use them correctly in interaction,
5. To enrich the Turkish vocabulary knowledge,
6. To make them culturally sensitive through interaction,
7. To enable them to recognize the distinguished works of Turkish language and literature,

8. To develop lifelong learning skills,
9. To enable them to acquire/develop 21st-century skills with an interdisciplinary approach,
10. To improve their academic and special purposes Turkish language proficiency.

The reason for the preparation of Ankara University TÖMER's Turkish as a Foreign Language Teaching Program is the lack of an international program in this field that is suitable for the modern curriculum development approach. It has been stated that this program has been prepared to issue an internationally acceptable language document, prepare a suitable textbook, and create an examination system accordingly.

While it is observed that the general objectives are given with ten items-list below a single title in the Turkish as a Foreign Language Teaching Program of the Maarif Foundation, it has been determined that the general objectives are not clearly expressed in the program of Ankara University TÖMER, the purpose of the program is briefly mentioned in the reasoning section yet.

### 3.2 Comparison of programs in terms of skill areas

The Turkish as a Foreign Language Teaching Program of the Maarif Foundation includes the skills of "listening and watching," "oral interaction," "oral production," "reading comprehension," and "writing." Ankara University TÖMER's program includes "listening and comprehension," "oral expression," "collaborative interaction," "reading comprehension," and "written expression" skills.

The "listening and watching" skill area in the program of the Maarif Foundation was named "listening and comprehension" in the program of Ankara TÖMER, and the skill area of "oral production" in the program of the Maarif Foundation was called "oral expression" in the program of the Maarif Foundation. The "oral interaction" skill in the program of the Maarif Foundation was defined as "collaborative interaction" in the program of Ankara TÖMER. The "reading and comprehension" skill field in the program of the Maarif Foundation is named with the same term as the program of Ankara TÖMER, and the "writing" skill field in the program of the Maarif Foundation is named "written expression" in the program of Ankara TÖMER. It has been observed that there are small differences in the naming of skill areas, but these tags express the same skill areas.

### 3.3 Placement of objectives in programs by grade levels

There are A1, A2, B1, B2, and C1 levels in Turkish as a Foreign Language Teaching Program of the Maarif Foundation. Ankara University TÖMER's Turkish as a foreign language curriculum includes A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2 levels.

**Table 1** The objective table of the Maarif Foundation Turkish as a Foreign Language Teaching Program

Skill Areas	Levels					Number of Objectives
	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	
Listening/watching	43	63	64	46	44	260
Oral interaction	32	41	46	43	36	198
Oral production	29	47	50	47	41	214
Reading comprehension	48	65	70	58	50	291
Writing	51	74	65	63	56	309
Number of objectives by levels	203	290	295	257	227	1272

According to Table 1, there are 1272 objectives in the Maarif Foundation Turkish as a Foreign Language Teaching Program. There are 260 objectives in "Listening /Watching skill, 43 at A1 level, 63 at A2 level, 64 at B1 level, 46 at B2 level, and 44 at C1 level. In the "Verbal Interaction" skill, there are 198 objectives, 32 at A1 level, 41 at A2 level, 46 at B1 level, 43 at B2 level, and 36 at C1 level. There are 214 objectives in the "Verbal Production" skill, 29 at A1 level, 47 at A2 level,

50 at B1 level, 47 at B2 level, and 41 at C1 level. In the "Reading-Comprehension" skill, there are 291 objectives, 48 at A1 level, 65 at A2 level, 70 at B1 level, 58 at B2 level, and 50 at C1 level. In the "Writing" skill, there are 309 objectives in total, 51 at A1 level, 74 at A2 level, 65 at B1 level, 63 at B2 level, and 56 at C1 level. This program has 1272 objectives, including 203 objectives at A1 language level, 290 at A2 level, 295 at B1 level, 257 at B2 level, and 227 at C1 level.

**Table 2** Ankara University TÖMER Turkish as a foreign language curriculum objectives table

Skill Areas	Levels						Number of Objectives
	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2	
Listening Comprehension	13	13	8	17	12	6	69
Oral Expression	5	5	12	9	9	5	45
Collaborative Interaction	16	14	12	4	7	1	54
Reading Comprehension	19	23	12	12	15	9	90
Written Expression	10	9	8	13	9	9	58
Number of Objectives by Levels	63	64	52	55	52	30	316

According to Table 2, there are a total of 69 objectives in the "listening and comprehension" skill of Ankara University TÖMER in Turkish as a foreign language, 13 at A1 level, 13 at A2 level, eight at B1 level, 17 at B2 level, 12 at C1 level, and six at C2 level. In the "Oral Expression" skill, there are 45 objectives in total, five at A1 level, five at A2 level, 12 at B1 level, nine at B2 level, nine at C1 level, and five at C2 level. There are 54 objectives in the "Collaborative Interaction" skill, 16 at A1 level, 14 at A2 level, 12 at B1 level, four at B2 level, seven at C1 level, and one at C2 level. There are 90 objectives in the "Reading Comprehension" skill, 19 at A1 level, 23 at A2 level, 12 at B1 level, 12 at B2 level, 15 at C1 level, and nine at C2 level. In the "Written Expression" skill, there are 58 objectives, ten at A1 level, nine at A2 level, eight at B1 level, 13 at B2 level, nine at C1 level, and nine at C2 level. This program has 316 objectives in total, including 63 objectives at A1 language level, 64 at A2 level, 52 at B1 level, 55 at B2 level, 52 at C1 level, and 30 objectives at C2 level.

When Tables 1 and 2 are examined, it is seen that while there are 5-grade levels in the program of the Maarif Foundation, there are 6-grade levels in the program of Ankara TÖMER. When the number of objectives by levels is compared, there are 203 objectives at the A1 level, 290 at the A2 level, 295 at the B1 level, 257 at the B2 level, and 227 at the C1 level in the program of the Maarif Foundation. In contrast, the program of Ankara University TÖMER has 63 at A1 level, 64 at A2 level, 52 at B1 level, and 55 at B2 level. There are 52 objectives at the C1 level and 30 at the C2 level. It is seen that there are 1272 objectives in total in the program of the Maarif Foundation and a total of 316 objectives in the program of Ankara University TÖMER. It has been determined that there are great differences between these two programs in terms of the number of objectives.

In the program of Ankara University TÖMER, there are A1, A2, A3, B1, B2, and B3 levels in the table given at the beginning of the objectives. Still, it has been determined that this table is incorrect, and the objectives are allocated to A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2 levels. In the objective chart of the Maarif Foundation's program, the number of "oral interaction" skills, which is 41 at the A2 level, is shown as 40. The total number of objectives at the C1 level, which is 227, is shown as 226. While the total number of objectives in the "Writing" skill should have been 309, it was shown as 209. The number of objectives, which was 1272 in general, was shown as 1271.

### 3.4 Comparison of programs in terms of assessment and evaluation process

It was stated that in the assessment and evaluation part of the Maarif Foundation's program, no formal assessment was made in the pre-school period, and an assessment and evaluation process

was designed to observe and support the learning process. It has been stated that the development of children can be analyzed in two dimensions: assessment-evaluation techniques based on external observation and process-oriented methods. Observation and its principles, detailed observations, anecdotal records, samples of incidents/behaviors, checklists, rubrics, product files, and evaluation through play were given. Afterward, syllabus tables for 36-48 months, 49-60 months, and 61-72 months are presented. The objectives used jointly in the skill areas at each stage of the syllabus are reflected on tables. Next, 7-10 age syllabus tables are specified. Curriculum tables up to this level are shown as A1 level. The following syllabus tables are presented at the A2 level with "domestic." These syllabuses' 7, 8, and 9 themes include the term "9 years old". The following syllabus tables are given at the A2 level with the term "domestic." What is next, primary education 2nd stage (11-14 age group) A1 and A2 level syllabus tables are listed. Then, secondary school B1 level syllabus tables are highlighted with the term "domestic." Lastly, syllabus tables for secondary education A1, A2, B1, B1+, B2, and C1 levels are illustrated.

In the assessment and evaluation section of Ankara University TÖMER's program, firstly, the number of questions given as examples according to skills and objectives are presented on a chart. Afterward, examples of these questions are listed. The basic principles of evaluation are given in Appendix 2. Next, the qualities that should be present in the measurement tool are listed. Then, the types of assessment are listed in terms of purpose and interpretation of the process. Information was provided about performance evaluation, performance assignment, projects, self-assessment, peer evaluation, product file, rubric, test preparation stages, short-answer items, long-answer items, matching type items, multiple-choice items, and items that require verbal responses. What is next? Rubric examples suitable for different skill areas were presented. Lastly, self-evaluation scales suitable for different skill areas were illustrated.

The existence of syllabus tables suitable for all levels from pre-school to the end of secondary education in the curriculum of the Maarif Foundation is a feature that will facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of the process. It has been observed that there are no syllabus tables according to age and level in the program of Ankara University TÖMER. While performance and project assignments, self-evaluation, and peer evaluation scales, which are prominent in the constructivist approach, are included in the program of Ankara TÖMER, it has been observed that these are not included in the program of the Maarif Foundation.

#### **4 Conclusion and discussion**

When both programs are examined in terms of general purposes, it has been determined that while the general objectives of the Maarif Foundation's program of teaching Turkish as a foreign language are clearly stated in ten items-list, there is no such section in the program of Ankara University TÖMER. The purpose of this program is briefly mentioned in the "Justification" section. According to Erişen (1998), curriculum development denotes the dynamic relationship between the curriculum's purpose, content, learning-teaching process, and evaluation elements. Many curriculum-development models such as Tyler, Taba, Tyler-Taba, Saylor, Alexander & Lewis Model emphasize that the objectives should be clearly stated in the first step. Therefore, considering the dynamic relationship between the program elements, it can be said that the objectives should be clearly stated in the program.

It has been observed that the naming of skills in the two programs is different from each other. The Turkish as a Foreign Language Teaching Program of the Maarif Foundation includes the skills of "listening and watching," "oral interaction," "oral production," "reading comprehension," and "writing." Ankara University TÖMER's program includes "listening and comprehension," "oral expression," "collaborative interaction," "reading comprehension," and "written expression" skills.

It was observed that the skill areas in the two programs did not differ in terms of quantity and content, except for naming.

There are five levels in the Turkish education program of the Maarif Foundation: A1, A2, B1, B2, and C1. Ankara University TÖMER's Turkish language teaching program for foreigners has six levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2. When both programs are examined in-depth, it is seen that the C1 level is defined as C1+ in Ankara University TÖMER program; in other words, the C2 level is included in C1. Therefore, it is impossible to talk about any objective or lack of level.

There are 1272 objectives in the program of the Maarif Foundation and 316 objectives in the program of Ankara University TÖMER. In line with this, it can be claimed that there is a huge difference between these two programs in terms of the number of objectives. However, the most important reason for this difference is that the Maarif Foundation program covers all primary, secondary, and high school levels, starting from the pre-school level, and defines objectives for each level separately. When the objectives are examined in detail, it is seen that in the Ankara University TÖMER program, skill acquisition is met with more than one objective in the Maarif Foundation program. Therefore, considering both programs' target audiences, it is impossible to say whether this result is a deficiency or a mistake for Ankara University TÖMER program.

There are syllabus tables suitable for all levels from pre-school to the end of secondary education in the curriculum of the Maarif Foundation. However, there are no syllabus tables according to age and level in the program of Ankara University TÖMER. While performance and project assignments, self-evaluation, and peer evaluation scales, which are prominent in the constructivist approach, are included in the program of Ankara TÖMER, it has been observed that these are not included in the program of the Maarif Foundation. In line with this, it is possible to say that Ankara University TÖMER program is more explanatory and facilitative for practitioners.

In both programs, speaking skills are discussed below two headings as collaborative interaction and presentation, and the objectives are stated separately. Speaking skill is the most difficult skill to develop in language teaching. Kan, Sülüsoğlu, and Demirel (2013) found that almost all of the students had difficulty developing their speaking skills the most in their study on the views of the instructors and students about the Turkish as a Foreign Language Teaching Program. Students suggested that more time should be devoted to speaking during the teaching process, that it would be more beneficial if the instructors explained the course in Turkish, and that students' communication with other students in the course would contribute to the development of speaking skills. Therefore, both programs can be evaluated positively in this respect.

#### **4.1 Recommendations**

In terms of a more intelligible understanding of what the teaching process aims at in program studies; clearly expressing the objectives under the heading of "General Objectives,"

Including syllabus tables according to levels in terms of assessment of the teaching process,

To facilitate the process-oriented assessment of teaching practices, specifying the methods used to assess the process can be suggested.

#### **5 Statement of researchers**

**5.1 Researchers' contribution rate statement:** Researchers contributed equally to the study. Decisions were taken together at every stage of the research, and the study was carried out.

**5.2 Conflict statement:** Authors declare no conflict of interests for this article. The publication rights of the article have been transferred to the Pedagogical Perspective Journal.

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