

# Are Turkish Teacher Candidates Ready for Migrant Students?

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Received: February 27, 2018

Accepted: March 8, 2018

Online Published: March 20, 2018

doi:10.5539/jel.v7n3p316

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v7n3p316>

## Abstract

The mass migration of Syrians with a high rate of school-age children into Turkey brought together the need for teaching these students Turkish for integrating them into the society and Turkish education system. The Ministry of National Education gave this responsibility especially to Turkish teachers. Therefore, these teachers should have the required pedagogical formation and skills to teach Turkish to these students, as well as intercultural sensitivity and cultural knowledge about them. In this study, 19 newly graduated Turkish teacher candidates from a state university in Ankara from the Turkish Education Department were interviewed with the aim to gather their views about Syrian students, their readiness if they are to teach them and their evaluation of their pre-service education in terms of preparing them to this kind of teaching. The qualitative data were collected via the semi-structured interview form prepared by the researcher and was analyzed with descriptive analysis method. The results show that Turkish teacher candidates do not think they are definitely ready to teach Syrian students. However, they have positive attitudes and believe in themselves that they will do their best to teach them. Teacher training programs should be updated according to the multicultural structure of the schools with Syrian students and these programs should provide the pre-service teachers with the required current information about the student profile in schools.

**Keywords:** Syrian students, Turkish teacher candidates, teaching Turkish to foreigners

## 1. Introduction

As old as the history of humankind, migration has effected the lives of the migrant people as well as the people of the migrated country. In the globalized world, with the disappearance of the boundaries and the effect of migration phenomenon, the concept of monocultural society has lost its importance and countries have started to become multicultural consisting of various languages, religions and communities. Turkey, due to its geographical location, has always been a migration-receiving country. In terms of international migration, before the current Syrian migration, our country has received nearly 2 million migrants in the last 100 years. Therefore, apart from being a transit country, it has become a reason of choice by migrants and refugees due to its tolerant approach to the foreigners (Erdoğan & Kaya, 2015). Especially the Syrian War has been the start of a very intense migration movement with the 252 Syrian citizens' entry to our country in April 29, 2011 through Cilvegözü border gate, which is continuing with the open-door policy of our country (Erdoğan, 2015; AFAD, 2014). Turkey is hosting nearly 3 million Syrian citizens and there is no clear evidence that the war will end indicates that these people will stay more or be permanent settlers in our country. Among the 5.5 million Syrians who escaped the war, 3 million are settling in Turkey and the fact that nearly 1 million is in schooling age points the importance of the educational effects of migration (Arkan, Dama, Toklucu, Emin, & Barkçin, 2017; Coşkun & Emin, 2016). Our country with no previous experience in dealing with such an intense school-age migrants, first founded Temporary Training Centers (TTC) for those living in the camps. Serving Arabic education with Syrian curriculum, these centers were founded also outside the camps in 2013. The Temporary Protection Regulation under the 6458 numbered "Foreigners and International Protection Law" provided the access of all Syrian children to the education, health and social aid services. Educational status of the children was standardized with the circular dated September 23, 2014, numbered 2014/21 and titled "Education and Training Services towards Foreigners" and provided the registration of Syrian students who took foreign credentials to the schools of Ministry of National Education (MoNE). Nevertheless, education was still provided in the TTCs inside and outside the camps as well as at the private schools founded by the Syrians (MEB, 2014; ÇOÇA, 2015; Coşkun & Emin, 2016; Özer, Komşuoğlu, & Ateşok, 2016; Arkan et al., 2017). However, recently it was

decided that all TTCs would be closed within 2 years' time gradually and Syrian students would be integrated into the regular Turkish education system (Kartal, 2018).

MoNE stated that teachers who will be responsible for the Turkish language instruction of the Syrian students, would be employed among the teachers of Turkish, Turkish Language and Culture, classroom teachers and foreign language teachers (Coşkun & Emin, 2016; MEB, 2014). MoNE also aims to provide social and psychological support for the Syrian students via the teachers temporarily working for teaching Turkish to them in TTCs via the project PICTES (Promoting Integration of Syrian Children into Turkish Education System). University lecturers provide 2 weeks of trainings to these teachers by MoNE Lifelong Learning General Directorate (Çoban-Sural & Gürel-Arı, 2017). Yet, via European Union Projects, "Teaching Turkish to Foreigners" formation has been started to be provided to Turkish and Turkish Language and Literature teachers for 2 weeks. MoNE also started to prepare teaching materials for teaching Turkish to Foreigners (Tanrıku, 2017). So, it is seen that Turkey who first founded TTCs to the so-thought temporary guests as an emergency action, now goes towards a direction of integration policies as the situation seems to be permanent (Arkan et al., 2017).

In the age of globalization, migration-receiving countries have transformed into multicultural societies. Multiculturalism is a concept mainly accepted in Australia, Canada and Sweden which respond to the cultural and ethnical differences in the society with economic, social, linguistic and educational components (Inglis, 1996). It also took the place of assimilation that was prominent in 1970's which advocated that the migrants should leave aside their identities and totally integrate to the country migrated socio-culturally. Assimilation advocates that as long as the migrants preserve their connections with their homelands they won't have the sense of belonging to the new country. However, seeing that this isn't a correct phenomenon, multiculturalism policies have become prominent since the 80's. Therefore, institutionalization and identification of cultural differences under the responsibility of the state became prominent (Öner, 2016). Today's societies are multicultural; even Europe is totally multicultural. These countries could maintain and preserve multiculturalism via intercultural dialogue by the intercultural competence provided with education. Attaining people intercultural competences via education is of great importance in migration-receiving countries to sustain social integration. Education could be starting from compulsory education as well as language education, which introduces people the cultures of others. Integration of various cultures and their features into the curriculum would also be guiding in providing intercultural communication and competence (Byram, 2009). In this respect, teacher, the main agent to attain this education should have been trained with this cultural sensitivity and graduate as ready for the multicultural classes s/he will confront. Therefore, updating the teacher training programs accordingly is very important. Taking into account that teacher-training programs in Europe and America attach importance to training teachers culturally sensitive and include "multicultural education" in curricula is an exemplary situation (Çoban, Karaman, & Doğan, 2010).

Among concepts important in migrant education are; bilingualism, multicultural and intercultural education. Multicultural education aims at being aware of different cultures, accept and tolerate them whereas intercultural education goes one-step further and aims the respectful living of different cultures with dialogue. It even sees this dialogue not just as an insertion to curricula but the application in a wider area such as teacher training, teaching methods and material development (UNESCO, 2006; Allemann-Ghionda & Consulting, 2008). Bilingualism has various definitions; being competent in the both languages is "advanced bilingualism" whereas competence in only one language is "one-way bilingualism", but incompetency in both languages is defined as "semi-bilingualism" which is seen as nearly knowing no languages (Yıldız, 2012).

As MoNE has newly encountered such a mass school-age migrants, precautions have been taken, some laws and regulations were enacted, it implemented many projects and still continuing with projects. The fact that TTCs will be closed soon, attaches importance to the Turkish teachers who will teach Turkish to Syrian students who mostly came to our country with an incomplete education from Syria and who will be trained in the Turkish education system. The researches indicate that Syrian students being educated with Turkish students encounter communication problems due to lack of Turkish competence which in turn prevents them from academic success (Arkan et al., 2017; Tanrıku, 2017; Coşkun & Emin, 2016). Learning a language is related to "language teaching" and the most important reasons of the problem stem from the fact that the teachers working with these students don't have adequate "Teaching Turkish to Foreigners" formation. Apart from the teacher problem, lack of material and method are also the other reasons (Coşkun & Emin, 2016).

What makes the integration of Syrian students to our education system possible is their competence in Turkish language, which will provide their communication with the school as well as their academic achievement. Learning Turkish without forgetting their mother tongues will prevent them from being marginal and be a part of

a lost generation. Therefore, Turkish teachers who will teach them Turkish should be competent in this field. Taking into account that the most important determinant of integration to the migrated country is to learn the language of that country, the important roles of the Turkish teachers that will teach these students who will be educated in the Turkish curricula with Turkish students confronts us. In this respect, the aim of this research is to examine the Turkish teacher candidates' trainings in terms of teaching Turkish to foreign students and what kind of a roadmap they will follow in the classes with Syrian students through their views. With this aim, the views of teacher candidates who have just graduated from an education faculty of a state university in Ankara, were taken in terms of how ready they are to teach Turkish to Syrian students when they are appointed and what their competences in this respect are was investigated. In accordance with this general aim, the sub-questions of the research are as follows:

- 1) How do the teacher candidates evaluate the presence of Syrian migrants in our country?
- 2) What are the teacher candidates' knowledge about the Syrian students who are trying to be integrated into the Turkish education system?
- 3) When the teacher candidates' undergraduate programs are investigated, did they take the selective courses based on teaching language for foreigners/migrants? If yes, what are their views about the necessity of these courses?
- 4) What are the teacher candidates' knowledge and awareness about the concept and terms about teaching language for foreigners/migrants?
- 5) What will the attitudes of the teacher candidates be when their classes would include Syrian students when they are appointed?
- 6) What kind of strategies will the teacher candidates plan to use in classes with Syrian students in teaching Turkish to them?
- 7) How do the teacher candidates evaluate their undergraduate programs in terms of training them with the competency of teaching Turkish to foreigners?
- 8) What are the suggestions of the teacher candidates on the integration of Syrian students into the Turkish education system?

Even though Syrian people are referred to as "refugees" or "people under temporary protection", the terms "migrant" and "migration" was used in this research. Because International Organization of Migration (IOM, 2011) defines people groups' place changing movement as "migration" no matter what the reason, type or duration is.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1 Research Model*

This is a descriptive research in survey model based on the views of teacher candidates, who have just graduated from the Department of Turkish Teaching about how ready they are to teach Syrian students. Karasar (2014, p. 77) defines survey method as "one of the research approaches in which a situation, event or individuals in past or present are described as they are".

### *2.2 Study Group and Data Collection Tool*

19 teacher candidates who have just graduated from a Faculty of Education, Turkish Education Department of a state university in Ankara and who have accepted to voluntarily participate in the research composed the study group. 15 out of 19 teacher candidates were women. Teacher candidates were asked whether they themselves had an internal migration as it was thought that a migration experience would help them feel empathy with the migrants in our country. An important number of teacher candidates (15) experienced internal migration especially when they entered university in Ankara, a city other than their family residence. This is thought to help them to empathy with migrants.

In migrant education; the knowledge of the teacher of the migrant's mother language even a little, would help in making comparative studies with the language of the migrated country, which would help the migrant students learn the language better as well as feel themselves more close to the country migrated psychologically (Arslangilay & Özdemir, 2016; Nakipoğlu-Schimang, 2004). Therefore, teacher candidates were asked whether they know Arabic or not. 14 teacher candidates didn't have any Arabic knowledge, whereas 5 of them knew their alphabet or read the Quran, which would help them make comparative studies with the both alphabets

(Nakipoğlu-Schimang, 2011) and therefore help the students. None of the teacher candidates have attended a course on “Teaching Turkish for Foreigners” in addition to their graduate courses.

Semi-structured interview form prepared by the researcher was used to gather the views of teacher candidates. After an extensive literature research and taking into account the aims of the study, expert views were taken on the prepared interview questions. According to the feedbacks, some modifications were made and after Turkish language expert’s views were taken, the final version of the form was applied to the volunteered participants. The interviews were recorded by taking the participants’ permissions with a voice recorder. In the form; gender, internal migration experience, Arabic language knowledge, whether they attended a course on “Teaching Turkish for Foreigners” were asked. Then what they know about the Syrian students and how they evaluate the presence of Syrians in our country were asked. Teacher candidates were also asked whether they took the selective courses on teaching language for foreigners/migrants and if yes, how these courses would contribute to their Turkish teaching to Syrian students. What kind of an attitude will they have when they are appointed to the schools with Syrian students and what kind of strategies they will plan to use in these classrooms with Syrian students were also asked. Finally, how the undergraduate education they took will help them with teaching Turkish to Syrian students and what their views or suggestions on how to integrate the Syrian students into Turkish education system were asked.

The volunteered teacher candidates were signed an interview consent form in which the date, hour and place of the interview as well the guarantee that the data will be used only for this research was written. The interviews lasted for 7 to 10 minutes and all the interviews were done by the researcher herself.

### 2.3 Data Analysis

For the analysis of the data collected via the semi-structured interview form, the voice recordings were transcribed and were analyzed via descriptive analysis. In the descriptive analysis process, based on the research questions, the summary and interpretation of the data according to themes were aimed. Data that were organized according to the framework were re-organized after the elimination of the unnecessary data and direct quotations were presented to support the data. After two expert views were taken, all the data were presented under the findings section (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, pp. 239-240). In the findings section, for determining which direct quotation belongs to which participant, codes have been given. For instance, TC1 was used for the first teacher candidate interviewed, whereas TC5 referred to the fifth teacher candidate.

## 3. Findings

### 3.1 The Knowledge of the Teacher Candidates about Syrian Students and Their Evaluation of Syrian Presence in Our Country

Teacher candidates who have just graduated from Turkish education department and waiting to be appointed by KPSS (Selection Examination of Public Personnel) stated that they don’t have much information about the Syrian students but they could learn something from their previously appointed friends from their department:

*“... Yes, I know, but because of my friend who is serving in Kilis, she started this year. She teaches Syrian children. She tells me, so I know a little... Actually, my friend is having a bit of a hard time, which is because Syrians talk about their lives, my friend’s upset about it of course, and when she tells me, I feel sad, and we’re incredibly sorry, but we can’t do anything. They live in containers and how much of the education they receive is enough for them, it is also unknown...” (TC10)*

Another teacher candidate stated that she knows a little just from the previously appointed graduates from their department, but she has no contact with them, so she just guesses about them:

*“... I know those who were appointed as teachers to Syrian students, they are from our department, but I never met them. I think Syrians are like students in TÖMER (Turkish Language Teaching Centers), they come without knowing the language. I don’t know much...” (TC16)*

The other teacher candidates stated that they don’t have information about Syrian students but know something as much as they hear from the news or newspapers:

*“... As far as I know from the news. Turkish teachers indicate that they have difficulties ... In fact, nobody knows how to teach Turkish to them, because teachers are trying to get a source book or something, and I know that they are experiencing a lot of trouble in practice ...” (TC5)*

*“... I mean, I don’t have much knowledge, except that we read from newspapers or something...” (TC15)*

When asked about how they evaluate the presence of Syrians in Turkey, some teacher candidates stated that they see it as something temporary and compulsory so we are doing what we have to do as a nation:

“... Unfortunately there is a lot of war all over the world, we can't prevent them, one of them is our neighbor, Syria, hence, while they are living there like that, I don't think you can exclude them...” (TC2)

“... The closest and safest country is Turkey, and because of Turkey's aid to refugees, I find it normal, actually. They're coming to our country because they have no choice. Therefore, there is no odd situation, in fact ...” (TC12)

Although she evaluated it something requisite, when the stay period is extended the teacher candidate stated her discomfort:

“... Because they are in a difficult situation, it is acceptable to a certain point, but now I think it has passed such a limit ...” (TC15)

Another teacher candidate emphasized the unity of religion:

“... I was approaching positive in the beginning, in fact I'm still positive, but sometimes it is possible to encounter such undesirable situations, I wish the war was over and they'd go back to their country, I say, too. However, of course, I feel sad again, so ultimately, Turkey is taking an important role here, and no other country else will help but us, so we must unite. They are not Turkish but we share the same religion, so hopefully soon the war is over, I hope they return to their country...” (TC10)

One of the teacher candidates was worried that such a high population would cause problems in our society:

“... They came from necessity, but it is a terrible thing for our country. Because, for example, they get so much involved in fights, they're disrupting the society. For instance, if I asked an address to a Syrian, s/he would be more comfortable than me... They're disrupting the society, so I heard there were Syrians going to other countries, but they're like doctors, teachers, as professions... I don't know how we can integrate them...” (TC6)

Two teacher candidates stated that Syrians who have found a shelter in our country from the war, are now limiting our rights:

“... It was right for me to accept at first because they were in a difficult situation... However, now I see that instead of citizens of our own country, we see them moving to the forefront. For example, at the job search rate, I see that they are ahead. Honestly, I don't see that appropriate...” (TC16)

“...In fact, it's hard when you think emotionally, people escaped from the war, I empathize, what would I do if I were them?... I think with a mother instinct probably, they're in a really tough situation... They came to our country, but I think they're more advantageous than we are in some matters. For example, in the scholarship, my friends cannot receive scholarships, not just to generalize with Syrian students, foreign students receive two times the scholarship. It is a little unfair to me... They were put on a salary, of course let's help, but we have the hunger of our own people, and let us not turn our backs on our own... I feel sorry for them, but since they came here, I hope they can adopt to the rules of this place and work like our citizens...” (TC3)

In contrast to other teacher candidates, two of them stated that this situation opened a door for them with new job opportunities:

“... Because they are so much, the need arises, because we study Turkish Teaching, especially in our field, it can be considered as a job opportunity. Many of them I mean, I'm a little uncomfortable, but of course there is a new job opportunity ...” (TC18)

“... How do I say ... I mean, I'm uncomfortable with this much, but there are problems in their country, but in one way, it's another job chance for Turkish teachers...” (TC19)

Only one teacher candidate stated negative views on the presence of Syrians in our country:

“... It would be really better if they don't come. In terms of our education, because it is a very big problem, in terms of population, it is also not pleasant, at least I think so...” (TC4)

Teachers candidates do not have very clear information about Syrian students; they are often informed by the experiences of their appointed friends or the news they hear from the news on TV and read from newspapers. It is observed that the teacher candidates are not in a negative attitude, as long as the stay of the Syrians does not extend. However, some even see the situation as a new job opportunity.

### 3.2 Teacher Candidates' Knowledge and Awareness about the Concept and Terms about Teaching Language for Foreigners/Migrants

Due to the importance that teacher candidates being trained for multicultural educational environments during pre-service training, gaining awareness in this regard, knowing the characteristics of bi/multilingual students; teacher candidates participating in the research were asked what they know about multicultural education, intercultural education, bilingualism, and bilingual student concepts.

Almost all teacher candidates, although they took one of the selected courses referring to these issues, couldn't give a complete definition, or said they didn't know, and many of them said they would explain it by guessing from their names. It was observed that teacher candidates explained the concepts of multicultural education and intercultural education more in terms of bilingualism:

*"... I can explain it more through bilingualism ... Having two different languages, able to switch between speaking and writing skills in any of the 2 languages ..."* (TC1)

*"... Multicultural education, I think the training given to the ones coming from abroad. For example, can we regard the training given at TÖMER? I went there as part of a course, there were people who spoke different languages from different countries, wanted to learn Turkish; I think it's intercultural training. For example, I learned a recipe from an Afghan student. A student who can speak two languages. Has a mother tongue, plus a another language at the level of the mother tongue ... Being bilingual should be a nice thing, because they master two languages... I think it's cool..."* (TC3)

*"... I do not know... bilingual, it covers the children who have taken two languages other than native language, but I think it is multilingual like me, trying to improve the foreign language, then trying to learn different languages..."* (TC4)

*"... I obviously want to guess; while we are training, we are also giving foreign students something from his culture, as well as the issue texts of his culture while studying with the Syrian culture or German culture, otherwise the student will struggle, will remain foreign... For example, Turkish students living abroad have both Turkish native tongue and are trying to learn German... In fact, they are native speakers, but not complete, they are trying to learn..."* (TC5)

*"... I do not know... bilingual; his parents are people of different languages. Or, like, they're going to emigrate from here, try to learn the language of the country they are going to, bilingual is so. In multi-lingual, I think I would learn more languages with my own efforts..."* (TC6)

*"... I can guess from the name ... I can say interactions ... Interactive education of different societies to each other ... I think bilingual students can think fast, the connections in the brain are very powerful, they can use the language very well, I think so..."* (TC9)

*"... I haven't heard in the name of intercultural education or multicultural education, but for example, if the training at TÖMER is about this, I've prepared such a experience by myself. I've prepared a course plan at level B2, with a friend, and we've presented it to four students. I had a hard time. If the multicultural education is on that basis, it's very difficult..."* (TC11)

*"... Yes, we know a few things from courses in Turkish teaching to foreigners. And from the Turks living in Germany, for example, they are experiencing a mess. I know a little something about multicultural education from there... Bilingual students are usually students who have tried to speak two languages, who are half-aware of a language. Moreover, they're experiencing cultural complexity, mostly. That's why there are problems in school. Especially in Germany, Turkish children are exposed to it and are experiencing problems such as mental incompetence. Although there is not such a problem, they're considered that way..."* (TC13)

*"... I have no idea, but I can guess. Intercultural education; you know, the world is now a globalized village. It requires the different cultures to live together. Hence, it may be a newly opened area..."* (TC15)

A teacher candidate, who stated that she also started as a bilingual student within the Turkish education system, emphasized that she was empathizing with bilingual students:

*"... I know it well. It's a very difficult process. Many of my classmates start to study, already knowing this language. Syrians or migrants start without knowing the language, the most important thing is to know the language already, how can you learn something without knowing the language..."* (TC17)

It is seen that the teacher candidates are not very familiar with the multicultural education and intercultural education concepts; although incomplete, they have knowledge about bilingualism and bilingual students.

### 3.3 Teacher Candidates' Views on Their Attitudes If Their Classes Would Include Syrian Students When They Are Appointed

The interviewed teacher candidates were asked, "You have been appointed and entered the class, but there are some Syrian students in your class. How would you feel?" Almost all of the teacher candidates have answered this question with "anxiety", "fear" and "excitement" on how to teach Turkish in this kind of a classroom.

*"... Sure, I'd panic, I'd be thrilled... I could not know what to do; frankly, I do not know their language ..."* (TC5)

*"... It is very difficult, God! I heard from my friends, many of the students don't know Turkish, they have difficulties. I'm going to have a hard time but it's still nice ..."* (TC11)

*"... I thought about that this year, as my friend told me. I mean, I'll probably do something, but I have to change myself. I'd get excited... Or it would be bad to be unable to communicate..."* (TC14)

*"... Fear, excitement, all could be. Because we're Turkish teachers, middle school teachers, you know. We are not the teachers who teach reading and writing, it may not be the comfort of a classroom teacher, but of course it's a nice feeling to teach a person a language, to teach them Turkish, instead of being antisocial in society, to integrate them into society would of course give us pleasure..."* (TC1)

*"... Of course, I'll be nervous first. Now, I took these courses, but I don't really know how to approach them, so I'll be nervous first. Then I try to approach to them in a humanistic manner and try to connect them to the Turkish education system in a kindly way ..."* (TC2)

*"... It's going to stress me out, because I'm not talking a common language with them, but I have to give them information. It'll stress me, and I'll work harder, I guess, on what I should do..."* (TC3)

In addition to all the fears and concerns, it is seen that the teacher candidates will be in an endeavor to be beneficial to these students.

### 3.4 Teacher Candidates' Views About What Kind of Strategies They Will Plan to Use in Classes with Syrian Students in Teaching Turkish to Them

The teacher candidates who participated in the research were asked how they would feel about the presence of Syrian students in their classrooms, then what strategies they intend to use to teach them in this situation was asked. Teacher candidates stated they didn't have clear knowledge on this issue and reported what they thought at the moment of interview.

Teacher candidates who stated that they would like to consult their instructors in the university or competent people in this field expressed their opinions on this subject as follows:

*"... I can consult competent people. Then I think I'll start teaching in accordance with their levels in Turkish. I will make it adapted to the classroom..."* (TC13)

*"... I would consult my instructors, via e-mail. I would rather ask them for help, we do not know what to do in practice..."* (TC5)

*"... I probably get advice from my instructors about what I'm supposed to do. It's likely to move forward as it was done at TÖMER, like A1, A2, B1, B2. I'd like them to help with the source books, I suppose..."* (TC18)

A teacher candidate stated that if she is to be appointed to such a school, she plans to get a training and improve herself :

*"... If it is clear that I'm to be appointed, I really think I'm going to go to the courses for teaching Turkish to foreigners. Read something, learn. Because I would like to be useful to them..."* (TC14)

Teacher candidates are likely to refer to methods such as individualized teaching, even if they do not know the name:

*"... It would be very difficult to teach at the same time with the entire classroom, because the students in the class come with a certain background, a certain Turkish language, But Syrians come without knowing anything, If I'm addressing 5th and 6th class students, they are like 1st class students to me. Therefore, a little more focus can be given to extracurricular activities. In the course, if there are one or more students, they can be divided into groups, while a task is given to that group, another task may be done with the other group..."* (TC1)

*“... They are somehow like inclusion students, just like you prepare separate program or activities... Maybe after the course is over, I don't know, half an hour, one hour, I'm thinking something can be done at their level, especially before the class. But extracurricular activities are absolutely necessary...” (TC10)*

Some teacher candidates stated that they will approach the situation emotionally, after establishing an emotional bond with these students first and then move on to the teaching dimension:

*“... I don't know what kind of strategy I'm going to use professionally, I guess I'll approach them a little emotional. Speaking in the mood of conversation outside the course, not much in the course of the students, it would be primarily to teach the language, by talking slowly...” (TC17)*

*“... I do research; try to get more involved with them also apart from the class. I try to talk to their parents if I have to, I don't know how much possible... You know, first of all, I'd show that I'd rather admit that I love them rather than teaching...” (TC6)*

*“... One of our instructors told us: “give them a greeting from their language to earn their hearts”. I accept that, but I'm probably going to have a clear line on this: this is the Turkish course, you live in Turkey, our native tongue is Turkish. Turkish language is required. In this context, we need to speak Turkish in my class. I'll explain it properly and try to move on...” (TC15)*

Another teacher candidate emphasized being aware of the cultural differences and reducing these by making common activities:

*“... There is probably a teaching program on this; I would probably adopt a lot of it, the techniques there, what I learned at school... I'd try to figure it out... I'd try to introduce more course plans. I try to get to know them, what kind of cultural difference we have, first I determine these differences, and then I do activities to socialize with the students. They don't know me either, and I don't know them; in every class environment this is already there, but now that there will be cultural differences when they are Syrian, I try to reduce this cultural difference...” (TC3)*

It is observed that teacher candidates don't know all of the strategies but they will use some of the right strategies even if they do not know their names.

### *3.5 Teacher Candidates' Views on Their Undergraduate Programs in Terms of Training Them with the Competency of Teaching Turkish to Foreigners*

Teacher candidates were asked whether they had taken any courses on migration, bilingualism, multicultural education during their undergraduate education and whether they find the courses necessary. They stated that they were offered elective courses in this regard. All of the teacher candidates interviewed had taken at least one of these courses. However, when asked if these courses are necessary and how they will benefit when they have immigrant students in their classes, the answers usually state that these courses are necessary but insufficient in number and in terms of providing practical skills:

*“...The courses I took will not be enough; I will have a lot of questions in my head. If we had practice instead of theoretical, in schools... If we had met a foreign student, we just watched how to, or our teacher could have made us practice in class and showed books... I wish they could have given us a tour of Yunus Emre, if they had made us an internship at summer school, students from many different cultures come...” (TC5)*

*“...I wish there were more courses... We do not know Arabic either ... The closest example in our country is the Arab geography. Teaching Turkish to Arabic children could have been a course. Language features of Arabic, how they can better understand, what sounds are better to say... If I knew these kinds of features, it would have been better. This is not an issue of 1-2 years, it has a 5-6-year history, and the undergraduate programs can be revised accordingly... There's a teaching program for Syrian students, but I didn't see it, maybe if I get a job there... However, other than that, it's not coming up, as a Turkish teacher, I don't know that. Such programs could be shown more to us... The school could open a certificate program in itself...” (TC3)*

*“...I enjoyed the course on “Teaching Turkish to Turks Abroad” the most ... The courses had to provide more practical training, but there is also a problem with it; there is already a lot of courses, and teaching practice, too. It is harder for us to go to TÖMER, it is not possible to apply, but it would be better if we could practice between us and explain the course...We are lucky in terms of our university in that aspect, because I know that other universities do not have such courses...” (TC6)*

*“...They were necessary; they offered us another branch, so that we could do such a profession...” (TC8)*

*“... Even this internship practice should start from the moment we entered the school. Last year, when I’m stuck, should I consider the KPSS, or should I do them? In the process, something could be taught in a practical way. They only introduce us in theory... With practice, would not I be more comfortable when I’m appointed or gone abroad?...” (TC14)*

It is seen that the teacher candidates think that the number of courses is not enough, more practical information should be given and they are trained in Turkish language teaching for Turkish students and they don’t have the required skills to teach immigrant students. However, they feel themselves luckier than other universities’ students, as their department provided them with such courses.

### *3.6 Teacher Candidates’ Suggestions About the Integration of Syrian Students into the Turkish Education System*

Teacher candidates who have participated in the research offered suggestions that are very rational and scientifically beneficial for Syrian students’ adaptation to the education system of our country, despite the fact that they are not very informed about the situation of the Syrian students in our country and don’t feel themselves competent in migrant education.

A few of the teacher candidates stated that it is important for the immigrant students to be included in the Turkish classes after they are prepared for the Turkish Language and Culture first, and they pointed out that it is important both for immigrants and for Turkish children to study in a harmonious way:

*“...I think it’s wrong to put the students in the classroom immediately, because they’re going to have a culture shock, for this, they first need to move to a stage about Turkish language and culture in different educational environments... After receiving a general background, they should be placed in the national education system... Now, if we put them in the classrooms as soon as we get out of Syria, they will have a lot of trouble, our own students will suffer, and they will suffer, the peace of the school will be disrupted...” (TC1)*

*“...For example, a preparatory process at first. They could have been through a preparatory process before they came to our country. Without separating them, slowly, with close friends, they can join the other students, because they can be strangers when they stay alone. When they have a friend with them, they can adapt to the environment...” (TC19)*

Teacher candidates made suggestions as to know the culture and language of the migrants, which is an important component of multicultural and intercultural education, to value it and to include it in the education process and even the child’s family:

*“...Teachers should not see these students as foreign, they should learn their cultures and attract the child from that point, and the child should say “s/he knows my language, knows my culture”.... Otherwise, it would be like imposing just Turkish...” (TC5)*

*“...We need to talk their language, a little bit us, a little bit them, and I think we can slowly get close by stepping in this way... We can investigate their cultures a little, how they are, what they like, I think we can gain them if we approach them that way...” (TC7)*

*“...Family is very important... As long as you can’t change the student’s family and can’t adapt them to the environment, the student won’t be able to adapt to the environment. I think we should include families in education... Adding our culture to theirs, we need to think of it as a gain... I think in a universal way, to approach in the humane way, to include families, students and Turkish children in education...” (TC2)*

A teacher candidate emphasized that teachers working with migrant children should also be willing and motivated by providing motivation and facilitating the harmony process by giving children the sense that they belong to this society:

*“... Integration is a very difficult thing. The other side must be motivated. As teachers, it’s important that we provide motivation. And the sense of belonging, as teachers we need to create this environment... Teachers are being appointed and they are taking an education, I think in Antalya ... I think the features of the students, should be explained there... I think the teachers have to really want that job, that’s your student now, not a way to make money... Students don’t feel they belong there anyway. Should be given a sense of belonging... It’s also hard for the teacher... It looks like; multi-grade classes in the villages...” (TC3)*

Similarly, two teacher candidates emphasized that exclusion and negative thoughts should be abolished and we should give priority to these students to love our country and language:

*“...I mean, first of all, I think that the perspective of the society, the one against the Syrians. First, we have to break that point of view. As we look at them like that, so they look at us ... I put myself in their place, they seem to be excluded right now. But I don't think they wanted to come here very willingly. They're in trouble. Nobody leaves her/his country...” (TC14)*

*“...First of all, it's important to understand them, not to exclude them. So we need to make them feel like they belong in our class, and then, as I said, I think it's important to look at their levels and what language level they're on, give an education based on their level. S/he can't learn anything without love, there will be no motivation, so we need to get them love the Turkish language. With various activities, like activities to bond students to each other, we can play games. After adapting in this way, I think they will want to learn already. That request will occur. After that, we can continue their education in our classroom...” (TC13)*

A teacher candidate stated that MoNE's two-week in-service trainings to educate the Turkish teachers are not adequate:

*“... I think MoNE should develop a special program for them. I don't know whether there is a program... I mean, explaining what kind of training will be given to them. There are also in-service trainings; I think it's for those who teach them Turkish. I didn't hear that those trainings were very qualified, so according to what we hear... And I think that in-service training is not something to do in two weeks...” (TC12)*

It is seen that suggestions of teacher candidates seem to be concentrated on cultural sensitivity, provide support to students away from exclusion and prejudice by extracurricular activities.

#### **4. Result, Discussion and Suggestions**

The successful integration of the large number of Syrian students into our education system is very important. Language competency is the first stage of integration as well as the key for academic success. MoNE appoints especially Turkish teachers for this important mission.

Today among the most important responsibilities of pre-service teacher training is to prepare the teacher candidates for migrant education (Heckmann, 2008). Therefore, teacher candidates need to be informed and trained in this respect. In this study, it was aimed to investigate the knowledge and attitudes of 19 newly graduated teacher candidates from Turkish Teaching Department towards Syrian students. It was also aimed to reveal their views on how they evaluate their undergraduate education and the selective courses about teaching language for foreigners/migrants in terms of preparing them to this situation. Their awareness about the concepts and terms about teaching language for foreigners/migrants, what would they do if there were Syrian students in their classrooms and what strategies they plan to implement and their suggestions about the integration of Syrian students were examined.

In this study, both the readiness levels of teacher candidates towards teaching Syrian students as well as their undergraduate education were evaluated with their views. Evaluating teacher training in fact means evaluating the curricula implemented, too. For training effective teachers; all subjects, information and skills they would need throughout their professional lives should be made experienced to them. Therefore, the required new courses should be added to the current curricula or some courses should be given more emphasis (Eret-Orhan, 2017). In this study, teacher candidates stated that the number of the selected courses for teaching language for foreigners/migrants were few, they provided theoretical knowledge but less practical knowledge to help them use for teaching the Syrian students. In countries like ours, in which migrant student population is very high, all teacher training programs should be designed to attain the required competencies to teacher candidates. However, in the university the research is conducted, the teacher candidates are pleased to have such courses in the curriculum. The number of the courses should be increased and the courses should provide the candidates with more skills and information to be used in their classes. More emphasis should be given on methods and techniques to be used in the teaching process. Yet, these courses should be made compulsory in the curriculum instead of being selective courses.

Teacher candidates think about what kind of an attitude they will have with the Syrian students whether during the interview or from their previously appointed friends' experiences. However, the Syrian subject is nearly for 7 years on the agenda and these teacher candidates most of whom will work with them aren't aware about the situation. Although it is an important attempt that courses on teaching Turkish for foreigners/migrants were integrated in the curricula to attain this awareness, the evaluation of the courses haven't been made. Taking into account that the very important aspect in curriculum development is to develop and renew the content and

methods in accordance with the needs of the time, the required changes in the curriculum should be made more effective. It is observed that curriculum development and evaluation studies are needed in this respect.

According to the findings, it is seen that knowledge and awareness of the teacher candidates on Syrian students stem from secondary resources or media. Here it is important that if the teacher candidates are effective media-literate people, then they could eliminate the negative messages of the media and not take all messages presented passively. So long as our teacher candidates don't have media literacy skills, they will be wrongly effected by the biased or negative messages especially on the social media. Therefore, especially in teacher training programs media literacy courses would be beneficial for the teacher candidates who need to have positive attitudes toward cultural differences (Karaman & Karataş, 2009). It is also important that undergraduate teacher training programs should always inform the candidates about the recent developments, current affairs and situations to increase their awareness.

Teacher candidates emphasized that they were trained for teaching Turkish for Turkish people whereas the limited number of the selective courses about teaching language for foreigners/migrants just gave them theoretical knowledge but less practical skills. It should not be forgotten that if the teachers haven't been trained to attain the required basis in pre-service and also in-service education, they won't be able to adjust the teaching environments suitable for the migrant students. A culturally sensitive curriculum should be applied and it's the duty of teacher training programs to prepare the teachers for multicultural classroom environments. This could be actualized by multicultural teacher education courses that are implemented not just with theoretical information but the skill to implement them. In addition, internships could be arranged in schools with migrant population for seeing the reality in its own environment (Başbay & Bektaş, 2009).

The reason that the teacher candidates state that their attitudes would be fear, worry and panic if they have Syrian students in their classes stem from the fact that they were just trained for teaching Turkish to Turkish students and they have no experience in teaching to foreigners/migrants. However, the strategies to be used for migrant students are similar even if the countries, education systems and migrant groups are different. Some strategies are being in contact with the families of students with low achievement; support students outside the school such as study time groups and provide them with guiding services (Janta & Harte, 2016; Heckmann, 2008; Menchaca & Ruiz-Escalante, 1995). Teachers can also use teaching strategies to teach the language of the migrated country, have knowledge on the social and cultural lives of the migrant students, know their cultures, and if needed use additional resources and even translators from the migrant language (Vocke, 2009). As it is important to sustain intercultural dialogue and communication in multicultural educational settings, differences and similarities of the cultures should be presented. By this way, the students and the teachers will be able to identify and understand both her/himself as well as those culturally different from them (Byram, 2009). Teacher candidates in this study stated the strategies they would use as; supporting students with extracurricular activities, provide emotional support and try to know the culture of the migrant. Although they aren't aware of the entire strategies, it is pleasing to see that they know some of them. Adding courses that will help them to learn these strategies in pre-service teacher training courses would contribute considerably.

The fact that teacher candidates have focused on KPSS exam instead of allowing time to "Teaching Turkish for Foreigners" courses or certificate programs, may require these kinds of teaching language for foreigners/migrants subjects to be included and asked in the field education questions category. As research demonstrate especially graduates of education faculties who have been appointed to the teaching profession, attach importance and are successful in terms of field education questions in KPSS exams (Üstündağ, Yalçın, Birbudak, Güneş, & Safran, 2016; Safran, Kan, Üstündağ, Birbudak, & Yıldırım, 2014), shows the necessity of including questions on education for foreigners/migrants in this exam.

Again, taking into account the contribution of teachers' even little knowledge of the migrant's mother tongue, some cooperation with the Arabic teaching department could be made and selective Arabic courses should be provided. Knowledge of even a little Arabic words and the structure of Arabic language could contribute so much to a teacher teaching language for Syrian migrants as s/he will know the differences and similarities between the two languages, s/he will apply them to her/his teaching. This would in return make the student's learning process easier without any confusion between the differences of the languages and prevent semi-bilingualism (Nakipoğlu-Schimang, 2009, 2011).

It was seen that the teacher candidates mentioned TÖMER (Turkish Language Teaching Centers) in many questions, indicates that this center within their university made them aware about the existence of foreign students. This center could be used more effectively with its capacity of foreign students learning Turkish, could also help the teacher candidates the presentation of the methods and techniques more functional. Again, the

internship practices, a part of pre-service teacher education, could be made in schools where Syrian students are present, so that the candidates could see the situation live. Another suggestion could be keeping in touch with the previous graduates who have been working with Syrian students, so that candidates would have an awareness about the problems encountered, as well as supporting the appointed teachers with additional materials or other kinds of contribution.

The findings of this study and others like this could be evaluated as a need analysis and the problems defined here could be beneficial in enhancing the pre and in-service teacher training programs. In addition, a continuous communication and cooperation between teacher training faculties that are training teachers for MoNE and MoNE could help the current requirements be integrated into pre-service curricula.

The training of teacher candidates in Turkey would be organized such as that they know the other cultures, be sensitive to them and be beneficial for effective student-teacher relationships and effective teaching-learning environments (Başbay & Bektaş, 2009). In this respect, the finding that teacher candidates' suggestions are concentrated on cultural sensitivity and their awareness about it is very important. The other suggestions such as prejudice-free attitudes, educating students by taking into account all cultures are in fact important as these reflect the strategies that should be used for migrant language education. As this is a qualitative study with only 19 teacher candidates in one of the universities, other studies with more teacher candidates could be made in order to attain more findings and generalize the results.

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