

# The Opinions of Teachers Regarding the Turkish Education of Bilingual Turkish Children in Greece

## OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 10

Special Issue: 1

Month: August

Year: 2022

E-ISSN: 2582-1334

Received: 12.06.2022

Accepted: 15.07.2022

Published: 18.08.2022

Citation:

Kayadibi, Nuray. "The Opinions of Teachers Regarding the Turkish Education of Bilingual Turkish Children in Greece." *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, vol. 10, no. S1, 2022, pp. 217–31.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v10iS1-Aug.5191>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

**Nuray Kayadibi**

*Kırıkkale University, Turkey*

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9644-1449>

## Abstract

*Turks living in Greece are able to receive education in their mother tongue within the framework of minority rights. The mother tongue education of bilingual children has a significant effect on the development of the other language. The greatest responsibility in this regard lies with teachers. The experiences of the teachers who teach the mother tongue of the Turkish minority in Greece, their in-class activities, identifying problems related to curriculum and the students and finding solutions to these problems are important for the education and future of Turkish children in the region. The aim of this study is to determine the problems encountered in mother tongue education and to offer solutions by seeking the opinions of the teachers who teach Turkish in Greece about the lessons, students, in-class practices, curriculums and textbooks. "Phenomenological design", a qualitative research method, was used in this study. The sample group consisted of 23 teachers who teach Turkish to Turkish students between the ages of 6-15 in Greece. A semi-structured interview form was used. Descriptive analysis was applied to the data obtained from the interviews. The theme, codes and categories were identified. For this study, the theme was determined as "Turkish Teaching in Greece" and the categories were identified as "Language Skills", "Reflections of Bilingualism", "Materials – Tools and Instruments for Lessons", "Classroom Activities which Students Enjoy" and "Problems Related to the Education System". Findings of the research discussed general problems regarding the education of Turkish students in Greece, the impact of bilingualism, teacher proficiency, lack of materials and minority status.*

**Keywords:** Bilingualism, Turkish Education, Greece.

## Introduction

With the changing era and differing needs, communication processes between persons have gained greater significance. Being able to use the language correctly among communication skills is a factor which does not change. The first concept that is a foundation for communication and which organises human relationships is language. People Communicate, comprehend, recognise and understand each other and express their feelings and thoughts through their languages.

Individuals who can use their mother tongue effectively can communicate well with their environment. This is possible with a good mother tongue education. Language ability, which has been coded in the brain of the individual since birth, is indispensable in mother tongue education.

The individual becomes bilingual for various reasons such as immigration, education, extended family or temporary settlement. Bilingualism can be defined as using two or more languages according to the need in daily life (Grosjean, 2010). Human beings have the ability to adapt to different types of environments. Such a characteristic derives from diversity. Linguistic and cultural diversity maximizes one's chances of success and adaptation. New styles, new languages, new cultures cannot keep up with the current rate of destruction.

Bilingualism and its education should be able to evaluate the problems, approaches and opportunities associated with global challenges (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009). One of the factors that make bilingualism compulsory is living in a country as a minority. The Balkan region is a typical example in this regard. In the region, Greece draws attention with its dense bilingual Turkish minority population.

Turkish presence in the region of Greece called “Western Thrace” dates back a long time. “The Turks, who entered Greece in the 1370s during the Ottoman Era, first settled in Vardar and Yannista and moved on to other regions from here. Greece remained under Turkish rule for 460 years until 1829, when it declared its independence.” (Ozkan, 2002). The Western Thrace region, located in the northeast of Greece, has been under rule of Greece since 1920. Around 150,000 Turks still live in the region, and the status of this minority population was essentially determined by the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty (Hatipoğlu, 2005).

Minority education in Western Thrace has been determined within the framework of international and bilateral agreements, with Articles 40 and 41 in the 3rd chapter of the Treaty of Lausanne, where the regulations regarding minorities are included (GNAT, 1923). “On April 20, 1951, Greece and Turkey signed a Cultural Treaty. The two countries applied a reciprocity by sending teachers (contingent teachers) for the purpose of education of minorities. In 1952, the first Turkish high school was opened in Komotini under the name of “Celâl Bayar High School”. The term “Turkish primary schools” was used for the first time in 1954. However, in 1972, the name “Turkish schools” was replaced by the title “minority school”. By law, teachers to be appointed to minority schools were required to pass a Greek exam, and the Thessaloniki Private Pedagogical Academy was opened in 1968 to regulate the education of the Turkish minority.” (Nuredin, 2015). In addition, this academy aimed to reduce the number of Turkish teachers employed in Turkey (Paraskevopoulou, 2002).

At the Thessaloniki Private Pedagogical Academy, the language of instruction was Greek. Only the Turkish language subject was taught in Turkish; other subjects were taught in Greek. It is

stated that there are difficulties in transferring the knowledge acquired in Greek lessons to the students in Turkish. It is also known that high quality education was not provided by this Academy, and the teachers who graduate are not qualified. It was closed down in 2011 (Field Notes, 2019).

For some time, subject teachers from Turkey were sent to the Turkish minority schools in Greece. Later on, this was banned by Greece. The number of Turkish teachers permitted are equal to the number of Greek teachers in Greek schools in Istanbul. Today, this number has reduced considerably (Field Notes, 2019)

Within a system where Greek is the official language of education, as well as the dominant culture and language, that the Turks of Western Thrace learn their mother tongue and use Turkish as the language of education and transfer the language to the next generations as a way of transferring their culture and identity is a matter of preference (Osman, 2016).

Minority primary schools are gathered in three regions. Each region has a different number of schools. These regions are: Rhodope, Evros and Xanthi (Derntiman, 2017).

In regard to secondary education, bilingual education in Turkish and Greek is provided in two minority secondary schools, one in Komotini and the other in Xanthi, and two madrasas. In minority secondary schools, besides Turkish language and literature subjects, science subjects are taught in Turkish, while subjects such as history and geography are taught in Greek. Textbooks in the Turkish curriculum of all minority schools are sent to the schools from Turkey by the Ministry of National Education (Kelağa, 2007).

In Greece, until the 2007-2008 academic year, compulsory education was organised as nine years and included primary and secondary school. However, with the law enacted in December 2006, pre-school education became compulsory. Thus, compulsory education was extended to ten years. In addition, primary education includes pre-schools and primary schools. The law made pre-school education compulsory. In terms of minorities, this practice started in the 2011-2012 academic year (Chairoula, 2018).

“Greek teachers, who teach the Greek language courses of the curriculum in minority schools, are appointed to minority schools and other public schools in Western Thrace after graduating from education faculties in different universities in Greece, after successfully passing national exams. However, Greek teachers who will work in minority schools do not undergo a special training process on teaching Greek as a foreign language or on minority education” (Kelağa, 2005, p. 126-127). Educators regarding the inclusion of minority students’ language and culture should see it as adding a second language and cultural belonging to the students’ existing foundation, not as changing or removing the students’ mother tongue and culture (Cummins, 1986). When taken from this point of view, it can be considered that there are problems in teacher training.

Teachers who teach in these bilingual schools face many problems. The perspectives of the teachers who teach Turkish in Greece regarding the lessons and students, their practices in the lessons/classrooms, the problems they encounter and their suggestions were evaluated.

### **Aim of the Research Study**

The aim of this study is to ascertain the opinions of Turkish teachers and classroom teachers who teach in minority schools which provide bilingual education in Greece and in the study centres supported by non-governmental organisations in Western Thrace to identify the problems encountered concerning lessons, students, class practices, curriculum and textbooks.

### **Method**

#### **Research Model**

Phenomenological design was used in the study. “The phenomenological design focuses on phenomena that we are aware of but do not have an in-depth and detailed understanding of. Phenomena can appear in various forms such as events, experiences, perceptions, orientations, concepts and circumstances in the world we live in. We can encounter these phenomena in various forms in our daily lives. However, this familiarity does not mean that we fully understand the phenomena. Phenomenology

constitutes a suitable research base for studies that aim to investigate phenomena that are not completely foreign to us but that we cannot comprehend in the same meaning” (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008, p. 72). The semi-structured interview technique was used to ascertain the opinions of teachers about Turkish teaching in Greece. “Interviewing is a technique of collecting data through verbal communication. While the interview is mostly face-to-face, it can also be conducted via live audio and visual instruments, such as the telephone.” (Karasar, 1991, p. 166). Semi-structured interviews are a combination of both fixed alternative responses and being able to go deep in the relevant field (Büyüköztürk et al., 2009). A field study carried out without the limitations of predetermined categories in analysis supports the depth, clarity and elaboration of qualitative research (Patton, 2014).

### **Sample Group**

The sample group of the research study consisted of teachers who teach Turkish to Turkish children aged between 6-15 years in Komotini and Xanthi, Greece. While some of the teachers work in state-affiliated minority schools, some of them teach Turkish in study centres supported by Western Thrace non-governmental organisations. The aim of these study centres is to improve the mother tongue skills of Turkish students studying in minority schools and Greek public schools (Greek monolingual education). Certain demographic characteristics of the teachers participating in the research were collected with a personal information form. The data obtained with the Personal Information Form are presented in below in Table 1, Table 2, Table 3, Table 4, Table 5 and Table 6.

As can be seen in Table 1, of the teachers in Greece, who constitute the sample group, 35% (8) are female and 65% (15) are male. Male teachers make up the majority.

**Table 1 Gender Distribution of Teachers in the Sample Group**

Gender	f	%
Female	8	35
Male	15	65
<b>Total</b>	23	100

**Table 2 Distribution of Teachers in the Sample Group According to Education Level**

Education Level	f	%
Education Institute	3	13
Undergraduate	17	74
Postgraduate	3	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100</b>

As seen in Table 2, 74% (17) of the teachers are undergraduates, 13% (3) are post-graduates and 13% (3) are graduates of an education institute (2-year programme). As a result of bilateral agreements, Turks in Greece were able to receive education in higher education institutions in Turkey. These teachers who graduated from the education institute were assigned to minority schools in Western Thrace.

**Table 3 Distribution of Teachers in the Sample Group According to Their Country of Graduation**

Country of Graduation	f	%
Turkey	22	96
Greece	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 shows that 96% (22) of the teachers graduated from Turkey, while 4% (1) graduated from an education faculty in Greece.

**Table 4 Distribution of Teachers in the Sample Group According to Their Faculty of Graduation**

Faculty of Graduation	f	%
Faculty of Education	11	48
Faculty of Arts and Sciences	7	30
Open Education Faculty	2	9
Education Institute	3	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100</b>

When Table 4 is examined, it is understood that 48% (11) of the teachers graduated from the faculty of education, 30% (7) of the faculty of science and literature, 13% (3) from the education institute, and 9% (2) of the open education faculty.

**Table 5 Distribution of Teachers in the Sample Group According to the Department from which they Graduated**

Department of Graduation	f	%
Turkish Teaching	2	9
Turkish Language and Literature Teaching	1	4
Turkish Language and Literature	7	31
Classroom Teaching	10	44
Geography Teaching	1	4
History	1	4
Sociology	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 5 shows that 44% (10) of the teachers are graduates of classroom teaching, 31% (7) of Turkish language and literature teaching, 9% (2) of Turkish language teaching, 4% (1) of Turkish language and literature teaching, 4% (1) are geography teaching, 4% (1) history, and 4% (1) sociology graduates. Graduates of geography teaching, history and sociology departments attend classes in the study centres.

**Table 6 Distribution of Teachers in the Sample Group According to Years of Vocational Seniority**

Vocational Seniority	f	%
0-10 Years	14	61
11-20 Years	3	13
21-30 Years	2	9
31-40 Years	4	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100</b>

According to Table 6, it can be seen that 61% (14) of teachers have 0-10 years of vocational experience, 17% (4) have 31-40 years, 13% (3) have 11-20 years and 9% (2) have 21-30 years of experience.

**Collection of Data**

In order to obtain the opinions of Turkish teachers in Greece, a semi-structured interview form was prepared. Before the form was developed, the relevant literature was reviewed. A draft interview form was developed. The form created was finalised by editing some questions in line with

the feedback of three subject area experts and one testing and assessment expert. In the first part of the interview form contained questions to collect personal information about the teachers and in the second part, there were open-ended questions about Turkish teaching in Greece and lesson teaching and problems encountered. Interviews were held with 23 teachers working in minority schools in Greece and study centres supported by Western Thrace non-governmental organisations. To begin, the purpose of the research was informed and it was explained to the participants that their names would be kept strictly confidential. In line with the wishes of some teachers, a recording device was not used. However, necessary notes were taken by using the interview form developed by the researcher. Necessary spaces were left after each question in the interview form, and the answers given by the teachers were written in these areas. Each interview lasted an average of 15-20 minutes.

In the semi-structured interview, the following questions were asked to the teachers who taught Turkish lessons in Greece:

- What is the most common problem you encounter in Turkish lessons?
- If you compare the students' interest in Turkish and Greek, what would you say?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of students being bilingual?
- What can you say about the quality of the textbooks used in Turkish lessons? What are the features of a quality textbook?
- Do you follow a certain curriculum? Please provide details.
- What are the activities in Turkish lessons that students listen and participate with interest?
- In which of the basic language skills (reading, listening, speaking, writing) does students' knowledge of Greek have a greater impact in Turkish lessons? (positive and negative aspects)

### Analysis of Data

The data obtained from the interviews were analysed with the “descriptive analysis” technique. “The data obtained in the descriptive analysis

are summarised and interpreted according to predetermined themes. In the descriptive analysis, direct quotations are frequently used in order to reflect the views of the individuals interviewed and observed in a striking way” (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were analysed by considering the descriptive analysis stages (creating a framework for descriptive analysis, processing the data according to the thematic framework, defining the findings, interpreting the findings).

The data obtained from the interviews were first transferred to an electronic environment. The data which was entered into a computer were analysed for rater variability in order to ensure the reliability of the research. The data were read several times by 3 subject area experts, including the researcher. The data was discussed at different times. As a result of these discussions, the theme, categories and codes were determined by the same 3 experts. In qualitative research, data is coded to create themes, patterns, processes, make comparisons and develop theoretical explanations (Glesne, 2013). The coding process includes collecting text or visual data into small categories of information, searching for evidence for the code from different databases used in a study, and then giving the code a label (Creswell, 2013).

The categories and codes under the identified theme were explained and interpreted in relation to each other. The findings were supported by exact quotations from the answers given to the questions in the interviews. Following the quote, the participant in parentheses was given with an abbreviation such as T1, T2, T3.

### Findings

The findings of the study were undertaken in relation to the categories identified as “Language Skills”, “Reflections of Bilingualism”, “Materials – Tools and Instruments for Lessons”, “Classroom Activities which Students Enjoy” and “Problems Related to the Education System”. The theme, categories and codes are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7 Theme, Categories and Codes Identified According to Opinions of Teachers**

Theme	Category	Code
Turkish Teaching in Greece	Language Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problems in reading comprehension</li> <li>• Articulation problems when speaking</li> <li>• Poor punctuation and spelling, problems in writing</li> <li>• Weak vocabulary</li> </ul>
	Reflections of Bilingualism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problems in sentence structure and grammar</li> <li>• Confusing Turkish-Greek letters, suffixes, words</li> <li>• Not using Turkish suffixes</li> <li>• Weak Turkish language skills of Pomak students</li> <li>• Not having a command of Greek</li> </ul>
	Materials –Tools and Instruments for Lessons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient reading books and supplementary textbooks</li> <li>• Problems related to textbooks</li> <li>• Lack of materials</li> </ul>
	Classroom Activities which Students Enjoy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debate topics/popular topics</li> <li>• Vocabulary activities</li> <li>• Drama</li> </ul>
	Problems Related to the Education System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lessons containing national culture/aspects are in Greek</li> <li>• Compulsory pre-school in Greek</li> <li>• Too few Turkish lesson hours</li> <li>• Inadequacy of the Pedagogical Academy of Thessaloniki graduates</li> <li>• Existence of combined classes in primary education</li> <li>• Teachers do not receive in-service training</li> <li>• Families preferring education in Greek</li> <li>• Lack of a Turkish curriculum</li> </ul>

**Theme: Turkish Teaching in Greece**

**Category: Language Skills**

**Code 1: Problems in Reading Comprehension**

Reading comprehension is a language skill that develops during schooling. Individuals in a bilingual environment experience comprehension and interpretation problems, especially due to difficulties in word recognition.

*I wouldn't say it as foreign words, but they have some difficulty in understanding the text they read. Because they can't understand some of the words. For example, children have some difficulty in understanding the relayed emotion and the main idea. (T23)*

*Because a child who can't read can't do anything. They can't even understand what the test question means. First, they have to learn to read. This is one of our biggest problems. (T18)*

*It would be better for children to take part in topics that increase their understanding and comprehension and their own skills a little more. This is my opinion, in terms of understanding and expressing themselves better. Because one*

*of our biggest problems is these children have difficulties in expressing themselves, they are shy about asking questions and lack self-confidence. (T5)*

**Code 2: Articulation Problems when Speaking**

Articulation related problems are common in bilingual children. Rumelian dialect features are seen in Western Thrace. As a result of both dialect features and negative reflections of bilingualism, articulation problems are observed in the speech of Turkish students in Greece.

*The minority has dialect characteristics which are unique to Thrace affect speech. (T7)*

*There are articulation problems in speech. (T13)*

*They speak an additional language, but I wish they spoke it properly too. There are problems with their articulation and also their writing. (T22)*

**Code 3: Poor Punctuation and Spelling, Problems in Writing**

Writing is the last skill to develop and is known

to be the most difficult skill. It has to be developed within a framework of certain rules. It is important to be able to express yourself, correctly use spelling and punctuation and abide by a writing framework. Errors in spelling and punctuation can especially be observed in bilingual children. Children may not be interested in writing as it is necessary to activate cognitive and physiological aspects. It is observed that bilingual Turkish children in Greece have problems in their written expression.

*Although knowing another language is an advantage, children can confuse words when they compare the languages in their minds, and since the intonation is different in Greek, it can be confused with Turkish. (T20)*

*We are faced with students who make spelling mistakes, who confuse Greek and Turkish letters, and cannot express themselves. (T3)*

*Although it is not too apparent when speaking, they have more problems when writing. For example, because they cannot write very well, they do not want to read. (T15)*

*Another problem is writing compositions. They are also not fluent in their speech. (T16)*

#### **Code 4: Weak Vocabulary**

Bilingual or multilingual students have problems arising from their social and family environment. The reason for this could be shown as a lack of effective communication. One of the most important factors hindering communication is having a weak vocabulary. Turkish students in Greece having a limited vocabulary also leads to a misuse of language in many cases (Paraskevopoulou, 2002).

*The vocabulary of the children is not sufficient, they communicate with very few words. Writing is also challenging; they are inadequate in expressing themselves. (T1)*

*Vocabulary is weak. (T11)*

*Students have a weak vocabulary and have difficulty in using words correctly. (T13)*

*Inadequate vocabulary is seen in 90% of the students and this is the cause of students not being able to understand of what they read. (T21)*

### **Category: Reflections of Bilingualism**

#### **Code 1: Problems in Sentence Structure and Grammar**

There may be code confusion in bilingual individuals. There may be confusion when trying to switch between mother language and the other language. While this situation sometimes occurs in a simple manner, other times it can lead to a much bigger problem. There may be confusion in sentence formation and grammatical rules between the two languages in Turkish children in Greece.

*Greek sentence structure is used. (T6)*

*While speaking, Greek words and grammatical structures are used more often. The Greek influence is also observable in writing, but we see this situation most often when speaking. (T7)*

*Turkish is an agglutinative language and the suffixes are always added to the end of the word. In Greek, the affix is added to the start of the word. There are articles. (T19)*

*While writing, if you try to write while thinking in Greek, you have to put the verb at the beginning or the structure and pattern of that sentence are completely obvious. (T5)*

*For example, the thought process for sentences has now shifted to the Greek way of thinking. Because they think in Greek and translate in to Turkish. (T15)*

*Students who are not at a sufficient level in either language use the rules of one language for the other language and make grammatical errors. (T21)*

#### **Code 2: Confusing Turkish-Greek Letters, Suffixes, Words**

It is seen that the grammar system and the vocabulary of both languages are used in a mixed manner in children in bilingual environments. Turkish children in Greece also unconsciously use the Greek word when they cannot think of the Turkish word while speaking. The Turkish and Greek language structures are different from each other. While suffixes have no gender in Turkish, they do in Greek. Teachers stated that students made mistakes, especially in the use of suffixes, and that this has a negative impact on the development of Turkish language skills.

*It's nice to be bilingual, but when speaking and they want to say 'yes', they say the Greek Word for "what" which means "yes" in Greek. (T1)*

*They misread letters when reading. (T6)*

*Greek and Turkish words are confused with each other. What is used in Turkish grammar, may not be the case in Greek. The child cognitively seeks something that does not exist in the other language, and this leads to forming wrong sentences. (T20)*

*They definitely include Greek in their speech. They also use Greek when writing. It's there while you're reading. They also always use inverted sentences. (T22)*

*Introducing Greek grammar rules into Turkish. This is the biggest problem. The incorporation of Greek grammar rules into Turkish when speaking and writing Turkish. (T2)*

*Even if not consciously, children automatically include Greek in their daily speech. (T4)*

*Some even write their own names mixed. Some letters of their names are Greek and some letters are Turkish. We encounter this very often. (T3)*

### **Code 3: Not using Turkish suffixes**

Turkish is an agglutinative language. Turkish children in Greece do not use suffixes at the end of words in order to be faster when speaking and writing. This is apparent in their speaking and writing skills. It was stated that this is more commonly observed in Turkish students studying in public schools that provide education in a single language, specifically Greek.

*Turkish suffixes are omitted in speech. (T6)*

*Some attachments are forgotten or dropped. In particular, the tense suffixes are dropped. An example is the expression "Kaçiyiz". (T2)*

*A child in a minority school writes faster, but a child in a Greek school takes time to think if they should add the suffix or not. Those at the Greek school may not be able to write the words because they are studying purely in Greek, they may misspell and forget their suffixes. (T19)*

### **Code 4: Weak Turkish Language Skills of Pomak Students**

Pomaks live in mountain villages in, especially in Western Thrace and have a Muslim identity. They

send their children to Turkish minority schools, especially due to the religious factor. They live more densely in the Xanthi region. Great difficulties are experienced in developing the language skills of these students who do not speak Turkish.

*They do not know the Turkish of some words; they write and speak in Greek. (T7)*

*They like Turkish, but in the way they know. They don't want to accept grammar. But they are more inclined towards Greek. While speaking, they use Greek words more often. (T22)*

*In certain villages of the Balkan region of Xanthi, the Turkish is really insufficient. The teachers of the primary schools here also do not speak Turkish for some reason. (T3)*

*We have language problems especially with students coming from the Balkan region. We can say that children have almost no foundation at the primary level. This poses a serious problem for us. (T4)*

### **Code 5: Not having a Command of Greek**

Bilingual students can often be considered bilingual by birth, especially if they are of a minority group. Turks in Greece also consider it this way and claim that they have an advantage. However, it is stated that their Greek language skills are weak, even if they are able to maintain simple daily communication. This situation shows similarity with the development of mother tongue skills.

*They know the Greek national culture and holidays, but they cannot explain it. They do not have a high level command of Greek. (T1)*

*They are interested in Turkish. As we have heard from families, there is a lot of problems regarding Greek, they cannot learn it. Their families want to send them to courses to the extent possible. (T20)*

*The main reason why they do not have a good command of Greek, and which is also the reason why they do not have high command of Turkish, is because they don't have good reading habits. In speaking and in daily life, Greek is spoken, there is no problem in terms of communication; but when a literary text is put in front of them, they do not understand it. (T2)*

**Category: Materials – Tools and Instruments for Lessons**

**Code 1: Insufficient Reading Books and Supplementary Textbooks**

As a minority, Turks living in Greece have problems with textbooks, as well as supplementary books and books of a literary nature. The provision of such books are from Turkey. It is known that books go through a variety of control stages before being presented to students. Books containing nationalistic feelings, containing the flag pertaining to Turkishness and books about Atatürk are eliminated. It is important to frequently read books with literary content in the context of students gaining reading habits, enriching their vocabulary and gaining aesthetic pleasure. Teachers state that they face problems in this regard.

*Now, we are not very enriched in terms of material. Because, I can explain by giving an example for my own classes, the subject of Miguel de Cervantes' work Don Quixote is mentioned. We have experienced this recently; where can children from villages find this book? Unfortunately, the library in our school is not adequate. (T5)*

**Code 2: Problems Related to Textbooks**

The most important material of language teaching is texts; especially literary texts have significant importance. Texts are presented to students through textbooks and language skills are developed within the framework of activities. For bilingual children, textbooks are the main factor for students to see the differences between both languages and to master the subtleties of the language. After the 1951 Turkish-Greek Treaty of Cultural was signed, Turkish textbooks started to come to Greece from Turkey. In the 1968 Protocol, this issue was arranged in detail between Turkey and Greece in the section about books, and after the signing of the protocol, books were distributed to schools. However, the renewal of the books was only possible in the beginning of the 2000s (Osman, 2016). These books are used today. As the textbooks are written in Turkey, they are considered of quality by some teachers. However, as Turkishness is removed from national identity, it is considered inadequate by some teachers. Study

centres use exam preparation books (containing subject matter content) published by private print houses in Turkey. The same books are sent to all study centres; grade levels are taken into consideration and care is taken to send separate books for different grade levels. The quality of these books is also found to be insufficient in terms of suitability for the level and exam readiness.

*The current book is loaded with information, it's a toilsome, boring book. The vocabulary in the book are words that are not even used in Turkey. Instead of bringing books from Turkey, books specific for here should be prepared. (T1)*

*It seems that the nationalistic aspects in the books are removed. By doing so, the book loses its speciality. Even city names are changed in the texts. (T7)*

*I think it should moreso appeal to the population here. The books we receive are above the level of our students. (T22)*

*They are high quality books. But there are some aspects that the students do not understand. Now, the child here does not know about Turkish history. Consider interpretation of a text; even if he can fully interpret the poem, it does not hold any meaning for the student. In the first place, there should be a historical background in the books. (T2)*

*Grammar is never mentioned. The questions are very simple and the children can find the answers easily in the text and write them down. They do not force them to think. (T19)*

*The books sent to our courses this year are mostly grammar-based, and I think that grammar-based books were requested and sent, as not enough emphasis was given grammar lessons in minority primary schools, or because it was not delivered at all. But books are too high level for our students. (T18)*

*The books we use to teach at the moment have universal themes, not national ones. (T4)*

**Code 3: Lack of Materials**

It is stated that Western Thrace Turkish minority educational institutions lack the sufficient educational tools and instruments and school libraries (BAKEŞ, 2012). Especially with development of technology,

digital tools have gained importance and Turkish teaching should also integrate to the situation.

*The materials are limited, we cannot use the activities we want, the books we want. (T19)*

*Our biggest shortcoming here is the lack of material. We have a lot of difficulty while teaching lessons to our students here in terms of researching the lessons or being able to have access to book by any means. (T5)*

*From time to time, we have a difficulties with material. We don't have a projector. (T23)*

### **Category: Classroom Activities which Students Enjoy**

#### **Code 1: Debate Topics/Popular Topics**

Teachers who teach Turkish in Greece stated that students generally like to discuss current topics.

*They like comparative topics more. (T1)*

*They enjoy discussion topics, especially topics like sports. (T7)*

*They are very enthusiastic to participate in discussions, especially about this region or on social issues. (T2)*

*In general, they like examples from daily life, popular stories, stories related to our region. (T3)*

#### **Code 2: Vocabulary Activities**

Teaching words are important in terms of vocabulary teaching and vocabulary. Teachers teaching Turkish in Greece stated that students enjoyed vocabulary exercises. This is positive in terms of language development.

*Sometimes drama activities and sometimes vocabulary exercises attract their attention. (T6)*

*Studies related to text, vocabulary exercises.*

*When we do these, they become more interactive.*

*Word search in the dictionary was very enjoyable for them. (T5)*

#### **Code 3: Drama**

The knowledge and experiences learned by doing provide learning permanency. In language teaching, theatre, drama and enactment activities play an important role in the construction of knowledge. Such activities should be applied frequently for bilingual children.

*They enjoy activities such as plays, quizzes, essay competitions in lessons. (S11)*

*We have many students who want to voluntarily participate in theatre studies. Because they are also socialising. (T4)*

### **Category: Problems Related to the Education System**

#### **Code 1: Lessons Containing National Culture/Aspects are in Greek**

With the Lausanne Peace Treaty signed in 1923, Turks gained minority status in Greece and various rights were given to Turks in this context. Turkish children can receive education in their mother tongue. However, not every Turkish student can go to minority schools that that provide instruction in Turkish. A bilingual education model is implemented in minority schools. The language of instruction in Turkish primary schools has been determined as Turkish and Greek. Turkish is accepted as mother tongue and Greek as the official language (Paraskevopoulou, 2002, p. 182).

Subjects supporting the attainment of national identity, such as history and geography, are taught in Greek. Over time, subjects such as Life Sciences and Physical Education which were given in Turkish, began to be provided in Greek. This situation especially worries teachers who teach Turkish.

*History lessons must be taught in Turkish by Turkish teachers. Children are raised not knowing history. (T3)*

*The biggest problem in our schools is the scarcity of Turkish lessons and too many Greek lessons.*

*Inevitably, students become more inclined towards Greek or needs to improve their Greek more. (T19)*

#### **Code 2: Compulsory Pre-school in Greek**

Pre-school was not compulsory for minorities in Greece until 2006. With a law enacted in 2006, pre-school became compulsory for minorities. However, minorities began to practice this only in 2011. "The Greek State is responsible for the establishment and operation of all pre-school education institutions, including children belonging to the Turkish minority. The language of instruction in pre-school institutions in Western Thrace is Greek." (Bahçekapılı, 2016).

It is clear that this situation is not in accordance with the educational status determined by the Lausanne Peace Treaty. The State claims that there is no provision regarding pre-school education in the Lausanne Peace Treaty and taking a step towards the establishment of pre-schools within the structure of minority primary schools places minorities in a difficult situation (Chairoula, 2018).

*They have made pre-school for children compulsory. If you take a 4-year-old child from his mother's arms and remove him from his mother tongue, that's when the problems will begin. (T2)*

### **Code 3: Too few Turkish Lesson Hours**

It is stated that Turkish mother tongue lesson hours are less than Greek lesson hours and this negatively affects Turkish language development. An individual who has not developed their mother tongue cannot have a full command of the other language.

*Turkish lesson hours are insufficient. (T6)*

*It is thought-provoking that Turkish lesson hours are gradually decreasing. (T11)*

*In minority schools, lesson hours for literature and Turkish should not be less than 8 hours. Greek mother tongue lessons in Greek minority schools in Istanbul are not less than 8 hours. (T3)*

### **Code 4: Inadequacy of the Pedagogical Academy of Thessaloniki graduates**

In 1968, a school was opened in Thessaloniki by the Greek authorities to provide education in Greek for three years, of which one year is the preparatory year. Its official name is "Thessaloniki Private Pedagogical Academy". The aim of its establishment is to train more qualified teachers for the State, to ensure that teachers to be employed in minority schools have a command of the Greek language, and to abolish the old assignment system (Hurşit, 2006, p.244). Apart from Turkish lessons, the language of instruction of this institution is Greek. Teachers graduating from this institution have difficulties in delivering lessons in Turkish because they take all courses in Greek. An additional aim of this institution is to reduce the number of contingent teachers from Turkey. The teachers trained in this

institution do not have sufficient qualifications and formation training to educate bilingual students. Minority students' educational progress is strongly influenced by the extent to which educators advocate for the development of students' language skills, actively promote students' social participation in the development of their academic and cultural skills, and apply successful pedagogical approaches (Cummins, 1986). It is understood that the graduates of the Thessaloniki Private Pedagogical Academy are far from being equipped with these qualifications.

*While some children learn Greek well in some villages, in other villages children graduate from primary school without having learned Greek. Here, the case now is with the education provided by Greek teachers. (T23)*

*Primary school teachers do not show enough interest and engagement. The teachers continue to teach with the knowledge they received from the Thessaloniki Pedagogical Academy 30-35 years ago, and do not have self-development. (T6)*

*The Turkish language level of our teachers who are assigned to this region is insufficient. Teachers who graduated from Thessaloniki Private Pedagogical Academy teach the Turkish curriculum, but they do not teach Turkish lessons. We found this out from the students later on. (T3)*  
*The basic education at primary level should be very good. I think the problem starts here. In other words, teachers graduated from Thessaloniki Pedagogy are insufficient in this regard. I'm not saying this for all of them, but the problem starts here. (T4)*

*The inadequacy of most of the teachers graduated from Thessaloniki Private Pedagogical Academy in primary schools leads to not gaining the desired efficiency from the books. (T21)*

### **Code 5: Existence of Combined Classes in Primary Education**

In Greece, combined classes are the case in minority primary schools depending on the number of classrooms and the number of students. Classes are combined in schools with two classrooms, and it is also the case in schools with four classrooms. In schools with two classrooms, Turkish curriculum

lessons are given in one classroom, while Greek curriculum lessons are given in the other classroom. This is especially the case for village schools. Legally, a minority primary school must have 41 students to have four classrooms. It can be said that the effect of the teacher on the academic success of the students in terms of time and interest is weaker in combined classes.

*In primary school, students study with the same students in a combined classroom. When the student reaches secondary school, they encounter higher number of and unfamiliar students, and the students falters and is affected psychologically. (T7)*

*In schools with two classrooms and four classrooms, there is the practice of combined classes; in other schools, each grade level has their own classroom lessons. (T8)*

#### **Code 6: Teachers do not Receive In-Service Training**

The infrastructure of education is based on teacher competence. In-service training plays an important role in helping teachers adapt to revised curriculum programs and adapt to strategies. In particular, bilingual teachers should be supported in this regard, but in-service seminars are not held for teachers working in Western Thrace Turkish minority schools, and requests are not accounted for (BAKEŞ, 2012).

*In-service training should be given, but it is not. We took an initiative, but it did not happen, the Greek government did not allow it. (T6)*

#### **Code 7: Families Preferring Education in Greek**

Turkish families in Greece send their children to Greek public schools with the concerns that minority schools do not provide quality education and finding opportunities for employment in various institutions in the future. The language of instruction in Greek public schools is Greek. The child learns the Greek language, but the aspects specific to their mother tongue and culture become lost. "It is argued that minority parents see it in their children's interest to fore go their own language and learn the dominant language at the expense of their language for a better education, better careers and better life opportunities.

Parents have to make a choice, as achieving a high level of bilingualism is next to impossible or impractical." (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009). In this context, while some of the families prefer minority schools, some opt for Greek public schools.

It is understood that the Turks of Western Thrace lead a life dominated by Turkish in their daily lives, but they do not exclude Greek, which is the second language, and they consciously determine the place of Greek in their children's education life. (Yalınkılıç and Yağmur, 2014).

*Parents think: We speak Turkish at home. The Turkish we have already learned is sufficient. (T15)*

*If the family wants their child to learn Greek very well, if the child is constantly guided in that direction, his Turkish side becomes weak. (T15)*

*As our generation or the previous generation did not have a good command of Greek or because they studied in Turkey and then returned to Greece, they are experiencing the impact of a lack of Greek. They do not want children to also experience this, so they want them to learn Greek well. They are trying to do this by putting Turkish in the background and placing Greek in the foreground. In doing so, the child learns the second language, Greek, very well, and cannot develop their first language, Turkish, which is also their mother tongue. (T15)*

*Students often exhibit behaviour which is in parallel with their parents' preferences. Some students think that Greek is more important, while others think that Turkish is more important because of their families' preferences and motivating their children in this matter. (T21)*

#### **Code 8: Lack of a Turkish Curriculum**

There is no specific curriculum in the Turkish teaching of the Turkish minority in Western Thrace. Teachers create their own lesson plan in line with the textbook. In the Greek lessons, the curriculum delivered is the one determined by the Ministry. Curriculum is important to deliver the lessons in a systematic way. The lack of a Turkish curriculum can be considered as one of the biggest shortcomings for the education of Turks in Greece.

*However, many of us there are now, we all gather together. We make an annual plan. Everyone comes up with their own plan. According to these annual plans, we teach in that way within the framework of a program. (T23)*

*I am having a lot of trouble because there is no curriculum. I'm trying to stick to the book, but I still have trouble. It would be better if it was planned. (T1)*

*There is no curriculum for Turkish lessons, the teachers prepare the lesson themselves. It depends on the teacher. There is a specific curriculum for other lessons, but not for religion and Turkish. (T7)*

*In Greece, you do not need to follow a compulsory curriculum. The teacher is free within the lesson. They are able to deliver the subjects they want and do not deliver that they don't want to. (T2)*

*No particular curriculum is followed. It depends entirely on literature teacher. For this reason, the lessons related to the Turkish curriculum have already been restricted and everything has been removed. Turkish has the status of being taught as a foreign language. (T3)*

## Conclusion

This study, which aims to ascertain the opinions of teachers concerning Turkish teaching in Greece, selected "Turkish Teaching in Greece" as a theme and categories were identified as "Language Skills", "Reflections of Bilingualism", "Materials – Tools and Instruments for Lessons", "Classroom Activities which Students Enjoy" and "Problems Related to the Education System". The following conclusions are drawn from the scope of this study:

Language development in bilingual individuals is very important in regard to both of the languages. Language skills develop or weaken in parallel. When the language development of Turkish children in Greece was examined, it was stated that they have reading comprehension problems. In general, a problem regarding comprehension was mentioned. The participants made mention of reading comprehension skills but did not comment on listening skills. It is thought that listening comprehension skills are also weak. Since listening is a neglected skill area, the teachers did not

mention it in the interviews. Weakness in one of the language skills affects the other. Considering the dialect characteristics of the Western Thrace Turks, the differences in articulation comes to attention. However, the reason for the weak articulation here is not only a dialect characteristic, but also a problem arising from bilingualism. It was stated that the students were also reluctant in writing, made too many spelling and punctuation mistakes, and mixed the two languages. As a result of the problems experienced in reading and listening comprehension, their vocabulary is also weak. It was stated that they used a limited number of words while expressing themselves and even misused many words.

As a natural consequence of bilingualism, the use of suffixes, words and grammar from both languages was often mentioned. It has been determined that they have problems in changing the code and they confuse the languages. Not using Turkish suffixes, poor Greek language skills, Pomak students not knowing Turkish are among the prominent problems. These problems can only be overcome by implementing a systematic bilingual education program.

One of the factors that negatively affect Turkish education in Greece is the inadequacy of course materials, tools and instruments. While the Greek public schools are fully equipped, there are many shortcomings in minority schools, from textbooks to reading books, from supplementary books to technological tools. Textbooks are sent from Turkey, but the removal of images to evoke national identity reduces the quality of the book. It was also stated by participants that the suitability of the books for the students' level could be a point of discussion.

Turkish students in Western Thrace mostly enjoy discussing current issues, doing dictionary research, and drama activities. Considering that these activities help students develop their mother tongue skills, the importance of applying them frequently in and out of the classroom can be recommended.

Turkish education in Greece takes place within the framework of minority rights and challenges which originate from the Greek education system are encountered. The lack of a curriculum for Turkish lessons, lessons which support the development of national identity such as history and geography being delivered in Greek, pre-school being

compulsory (in Greek), few hours for Turkish lessons, combined classes due to small classroom populations, and the lack of in-service training for teachers are among the factors that have a negative impact on bilingual education. In terms of teacher training and employment, both the language skills and pedagogical inadequacy of the Thessaloniki Private Pedagogical Academy graduates come to the fore. Teacher candidates who shall deliver bilingual education should be trained with the appropriate means which meet the conditions of the era. Reducing the number of contingent teachers from Turkey is another problem. Participants expressed the importance of emphasising this situation, which ignores bilateral agreements. In terms of the future of the Turkish minority in Greece, families' preference for Greek public schools poses an important challenge. Families have a tendency towards Greek education because they want their children to continue their lives in prosperity and without problems in the country in which they live. This situation created the concern that it could result in generations that cannot access their self-identity in the future, deprived of national feelings and foreign to their culture. Balanced or enriched bilingual education programmes which do not pursue an assimilation policy should be implemented within the framework of agreements between the two countries in order to raise individuals who are loyal to their roots and can use both the official language of the country they live in and their mother tongue competently.

## References

- Bahçekapılı, Mehmet. "Religion and Education in Greece and Western Thrace." *Journal of Aegean and Balkan Studies*, vol. II, no. 3 2016, pp. 1-58.
- BAKEŞ. *Bilingual Education and Its Application in Minority Schools*. Western Thrace Minority Culture and Education Company, 2012.
- Büyüköztürk, Şener, et al. *Scientific Research Methods*. Pegem Publishers, 2009.
- Chairoula, Pervin. *The Socio-Cultural Life and History of Education of the Western Thrace Turks after the Balkan Wars*. University of Trakya, 2018.
- Creswell, John W. *Qualitative Research Methods*, translated by Bütün, M., and S.B. Demir, Siyasal Press, 2013.
- Cummins, Jim. "Empowering Minority Students: A Framework for Intervention." *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 56, no. 1, 1986, pp. 18-37.
- Derntiman, Mehmet. *The Differences in Bilingual Education in Western Thrace*. University of Trakya, 2017.
- Glesne, Corrine. *Introduction to Qualitative Research*, translated by Ersoy, Ali, and P. Yalçinoğlu, Anı Publishers, 2013.
- Grand National Assembly of Turkey. *Laws on the adoption of the Lausanne Peace Treaty*, 1923, [https://www5.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR\\_KARARLAR/kanunbtmmc002/kanunbtmmc002/kanunbtmmc00200343.pdf](https://www5.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanunbtmmc002/kanunbtmmc002/kanunbtmmc00200343.pdf)
- Grosjean, François. *Bilingual: Life and Reality*. Harvard University Press, 2010.
- Hatipoğlu, M. Murat. *Western Thrace Turks in the Ethnic Fabric of EU Member Greece - Historical and Current Approaches to the Problems of the Minority*. Turkish Hearths, 2005.
- Hurşit, Şerafettin. *Education History of Western Thrace Turks from the Treaty of Lausanne to the Present*. Gumulcine, 2006.
- Karasar, Niyazi. *Scientific Research Method*. Sanem Press, 1991.
- Kelağa Ahmet, İbrahim. *Evaluation of the Reading Understanding and Written Expression Skills of Students Reading in Turkish and Greek at Minority Schools of Bilingual Education in Greece (West Thrace)*. Ankara University, 2005.
- Kelağa Ahmet, İbrahim. "Turkish as a Mother Tongue and One of the Education Languages of the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace in Greece." *International Congress on Asian and North African Studies*, 2007, pp. 977-91.
- Nureddin, Abdülmecit. "Statute of Teaching of Turkish Language in Greece in the Context of International Law and National Legislation." *Hikmet International Peer-Reviewed Journal of Scientific Research*, no. 25, 2015, pp. 42-59.

- Osman, Ntilek. *The Western Thrace Turks: Native Language Conservation, Use of Language and Identity Perceptions*. University of Trakya, 2016.
- Ozkan, Nevzat. *Dormitories of Turkish Language*. Akçağ Publications, 2002.
- Paraskevopoulou, Anna. *Regional Policy and Minorities in the EU: The Case of Western Thrace, Greece*. University of London, 2002.
- Patton, Michael Quinn. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, translated by Bütün, M., and S.B. Demir, Pegem Publishers, 2014.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove. "Multilingual Education for Global Justice: Issues, Approaches, Opportunities." *Social Justice through Multilingual Education*, edited by Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove, et al., Multilingual Matters, 2009, pp. 36-62.
- Yalınkılıç, Kadir, and Kutlay Yağmur. "The Attitudes of Turks in Western Thrace toward their Mother Tongue and Culture." *Bilig*, no. 70, 2014, pp. 283-308.
- Yıldırım, Ali, and Hasan Şimşek. *Qualitative Research Methods in the Social Sciences*. Seçkin Publications, 2008.

### Author Details

**Nuray Kayadibi**, *Kırıkkale University, Turkey*, **Email ID:** [nuraykayadibi@hotmail.com](mailto:nuraykayadibi@hotmail.com), [nuraykayadibi@kku.edu.tr](mailto:nuraykayadibi@kku.edu.tr)