

Educational Exchanges and Erasmus Intensive Language Courses: A Case Study For Turkish Courses

Eđitim Amaçlı Deđişim Programları ve Erasmus Yođun Dil Kursları: Türkçe Kursları İin Bir rnek Olay

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Öz

Son zamanlarda uluslararası deđişim programları, üniversite hayatının önemli ve deđerli bir özelliđi olmuştur. Avrupa'dan çok sayıda öğrenci, hareketliliđi teşvik etmek, bireysel yeterlikleri genişletmeyi ve anlayışları geliştirmeyi amaçlayan ERASMUS gibi programlar aracılığıyla deđişim uygulamalarına katılmaktadır. Giderek artan sayıda öğrenci, Avrupa'da az kullanılan ve öğretilen dillerin konuşulduđu ülkeleri tercih etmektedir. Bu makale, deđişim programları ile dil öğrenimi ve öğrencilerin deđişim programları ile dil öğretimi arasındaki ilişkiyi ve öğrencilerin Türkiye'ye deđişim programıyla gelme ve Türkiye'de bir üniversitede 4 haftalık ERASMUS Yođun Dil Kursları'na katılma nedenlerini incelemektedir. Bu çalışma, deđişim öğrencilerinin eğitiminin amaç ve içeriđini ve katılımcıların isteklerini karşılama, öğrenme kazanımlarını görme ve uluslararası standartlara ulaştırma ihtiyacını tartışır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Dil öğretimi, Avrupa'da az öğretilen diller, uluslararası deđişim programları, ERASMUS Yođun Dil Kursları, Avrupa Ortak Çereve Programı.

Abstract

International exchanges have become an important and valued feature of university life. Large numbers of students in Europe participate in exchanges through programmes such as ERASMUS, which aims to promote mobility, enhance individual competences and develop understanding. A growing number of students exchange with countries where Europe's so-called 'least widely used and taught' languages are spoken. This paper explores the relationship between exchanges and language learning and reports on the reasons for coming on the exchange and learning Turkish of students on 4-week ERASMUS Intensive Language Courses (EILC) at a university in Turkey. The study discusses the purpose and content of training for exchange students and the need to manage participants' aspirations, recognise learning achievements and integrate with international standards.

Key words: language learning, Europe's least-taught languages, international exchanges, mobility, ERASMUS Intensive Language Courses (EILC), Common European Framework (CEF).

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Introduction

International exchanges have a long history and have developed rapidly in recent years (Byram and Feng, 2006, Teichler, 2004a, Messer and Wolter, 2006, Wierstra et al., 2003). The ERASMUS programme enables large numbers of students throughout Europe to take part in exchanges. ERASMUS participating countries consist of the 27 EU member states as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and most recently Turkey. The ERASMUS experience is seen as playing an important role both in the lives of participants and in the development of higher education in Europe. ERASMUS has been called ‘the key element’ in the internationalisation of higher education in Europe (Maiworm, 2001: 459). This internationalisation envisages the creation of a ‘European Higher Education Zone’ by 2010, promoted within the EU by the Lisbon research strategy and in the wider Europe by the Bologna Process. These measures aim to develop a ‘Europe of Knowledge’ in order to stimulate economic growth and social cohesion (Corbett 2003: 326).

The aims of ERASMUS programmes include promoting mobility, developing individual skills and competences and enhancing international understanding (Papatsiba, 2005: 174). A reading of the literature identifies exchange aims in three categories each with two sub-categories, as summarised in Table 1.

Table 1.
ERASMUS Exchange Aims

<i>Category of aim</i>	<i>Sub-category</i>
Mobility	<i>Adaptive, contrastive or integrative education</i> <i>Future Employment</i>
Competences	<i>Formal study, qualifications</i> <i>Knowledge and life skills</i>
Understanding	<i>People (self and others)</i> <i>Change of outlook</i>

ERASMUS seems to have been successful in facilitating mobility both in education and in subsequent employment. The number of ERASMUS students grew from about 10,000 in 1988-9 to 100,000 in 1999-2000 (Maiworm 2001: 464). Just over 144,000 students from 31 countries participated in 2004-5 (Commission, 2006a). Three types of student mobility in education have been identified: ‘adaptive’, where study abroad is part of a search for a better education or life through migration; ‘contrastive’, where study abroad represents a desire for different educational experiences; and ‘integrative’, where study abroad is part of a desire to join a wider international community (Teichler and Gordon, 2001: 400, Wierstra et al., 2003). Students who study on exchanges are subsequently more likely to work abroad as ‘study abroad triples the likelihood of being employed abroad’. Even though most former exchange students find work in their home country, ‘a substantial number of graduates employed at home report international job assignments for which the formerly mobile students turn out to be better prepared than those having only studied in the home country’ (Teichler and Jahr, 2001: 456-7).

ERASMUS exchange programmes also seem to have successfully developed students’ competences both in terms of formal study and wider knowledge and life skills. As such, ‘ERASMUS students believed that study abroad was most valuable in contributing to cultural enhancement, personality development and foreign language proficiency’ (Teichler and Jahr, 2001: 447). Exchanges were found to be beneficial, providing gains in professional knowledge, experience of life and a new perspective on studies at their own institution (Stastna, 2001: 480). Exchanges improved language and communication skills for ‘new individual stances and competences’ and ‘greater adaptability that was useful for professional purposes’ (Papatsiba, 2005: 180).

An important issue in the enhancement of competences for exchange participants is the recognition of qualifications and study achievements. Teichler (2004b: 402-3) says recognition is seen as 'the most important criterion for the success of student mobility' by the European Commission, and considers recognition for about 80% of study to be a 'high degree of recognition', but even so 19% of students 'state serious problems in obtaining recognition'. Stastna (2001: 481) notes that in spite of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), 'recognition faces many prejudices'. Concern for standards may lead to reluctance to accept the equivalence of a course followed in another country. One possible cause of reluctance could be the language through which the course is studied. The assumption is that university degrees from different countries are of similar value, and on this basis equivalence may not be an issue for a student from Turkey following a course at an Austrian university in English literature through the medium of English, or for a student from Holland following an economics course taught through English at a Turkish university. However, recognition problems may arise when the medium of instruction is the host language and a student's competence not enough to benefit from the course as a home student would. The extent to which a student can be said to have completed an equivalent course may be debatable. Recognition of study, then, is an area of potential risk for exchanges.

Exchanges can also develop understanding through increasing mutual knowledge and supporting personal growth. After ERASMUS exchanges students reported that they felt more versatile, and many had changed their opinions about the host country, but opinions 'neither became more positive nor more negative' suggesting that 'experience of the host country also means to get to know problems in more depth, and close encounters could reinforce both sympathy and antipathy' (Teichler 2004: 405). Nevertheless, having chosen the host country in the first place exchange students are likely to have a positive view of the host country, and it may be unreasonable to expect more positive rather than more knowledgeable views to emerge in many cases. There are, however, indications that some students encountered 'problems of integration abroad' with serious problems in contact with host country students. Only half the students reported satisfaction regarding contacts with host country nationals. Furthermore 18% felt that too much contact with students from their own country was a serious problem (Teichler 2004: 404). Language skills may well be a factor that influences integration in the host country.

Language learning for exchanges

Language skills can be an enhanced competence resulting from an exchange, and are also an important means of achieving gains in understanding. A number of studies refer to language competences in exchanges (Teichler, 2004b, Teichler and Gordon, 2001, Teichler and Jahr, 2001, Hermans, 1997, Maiworm, 2001, Stastna, 2001, Corbett, 2003, Fernandez, 2005, Papatsiba, 2005), but fewer studies have looked in detail at the role of language in facilitating the outcomes of exchanges. Dłaska (1999) claims that studying a foreign language does not necessarily lead to academic success, suggesting that language preparation focusing on language for specific purposes is preferable to raising general language competence. Taillefer (2005: 520), however, in a study of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic issues, points out that the successful application of language skills on courses of study required 'a much wider social transformation' and not a simple transfer of linguistic knowledge. Furthermore Brumfit *et al* (Brumfit *et al.*, 2005: 165-6) found language played an important and extremely positive role in the development of criticality amongst exchange students, and provided a 'unique experience' where overcoming the frustrations of language learning can lead to engagement 'with other insider cultures across the greatest barrier offered between cultures'. They concluded that:

'experience of language learning thus becomes not just a means of encountering the other cultures but a process of redefinition of self, a means of refining criticality by destabilising and restabilising the mechanisms through which we understand and communicate'.

International understanding achieved through an exchange, under certain conditions, may be part of participants' profound experience involving change and personal growth. Some students are successful 'in negotiating an identity defined by multiple senses of belonging' but success is not guaranteed (Papatsiba, 2006). The experience requires effort and commitment on the part of participants and involves a wide variety of positive and negative experiences (Ayano, 2006).

The enriching experiences reported in Brumfit et al (2005) were gained by students who already had a relatively high level of competence in the language of the host country. However, the most successful and satisfied exchange students are not necessarily those with the highest level of host language proficiency. Students with less proficiency who try harder to communicate in the host language have been found to be more successful than those with better language who resist contact with the host culture (Jackson, 2006). This suggests that the desire to learn the host language can contribute to the success of the exchange for individual students, even when low levels of language competence are involved.

Language skills may influence all the aims and outcomes in Table 1, namely mobility (travel, new places, survival), competences (study, knowledge, life skills) and understanding (personal growth and change). The ability to use a language supports mobility and is often a prerequisite for both education and employment abroad. Language skills are competences that may form part of certificated formal study, and may also be a life skill that contributes to knowledge and the quality of every day life. Language skills can also support international understanding by facilitating deeper knowledge and understanding of different cultures and by facilitating change or personal growth in individuals. The extent to which language skills can support exchange aims are likely to vary between contexts and individuals. One such context is in countries where Europe's least-frequently learned languages are spoken.

Europe's least-widely used and taught languages

Some languages in Europe are used and learned more widely than others internationally. The growth in exchanges between EU countries has involved more exchanges involving countries where the 'least-widely used and taught' languages are spoken, presenting a considerable challenge to exchange participants and organisers alike. One response has been the provision of special language courses, known as ERASMUS Intensive Language Courses (EILCs), to support the learning of languages defined within the EU as least-widely used or taught.

EILC languages include most languages of ERASMUS participating countries apart from English, French, German and Spanish. The 24 EILC countries have a population of 306 million people, 55% of the 561 million people who live in all the ERASMUS participating countries (Eurostat 2004). In 2004-5 48% of ERASMUS students came from the EILC countries. The EILC countries hosted 40% of all ERASMUS students, however (European Commission 2006). Participants from the EILC countries were thus underrepresented in ERASMUS. Students from countries where French, German, Spanish or English are spoken were more likely to participate in exchanges, with 52% of all ERASMUS student participants but 45% of the total population. English, French, German and Spanish are often studied longer and to a higher level of proficiency all over Europe. A higher level of proficiency facilitates study in those languages, which is one explanation of why those countries are more likely to be involved in exchanges.

EILCs last three to eight weeks and take place in the host country before the participants start their period of study at a host institution. The EILC institution is not necessarily the ERASMUS host institution. In 2006-07 EILCs were advertised in Belgium (Flemish Community), Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden and Turkey, 23 countries in all (Commission, 2006b: 165-6). There were over 10,000 participants in the first six years the courses were available (1999-2005), with 3,864 participants in 2005, less than 10% of the total number of students who went to EILC countries for their exchange. Encouraging the learning of EILC languages is seen as preferable to favouring the most-widely learned languages through the provision of more English-medium courses across Europe (Hermans 1997: 48).

Method

ERASMUS exchanges with EILC countries are evolving rapidly. Their success can be enhanced by a better understanding of the various aims and intentions of the participants. Exchange participants have many different aims and outcomes for the exchange (Tarp, 2006), and the reasons participants choose a particular host country and want to learn the host language affect exchange outcomes.

This paper reports on a case study that used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate participants' reasons for coming on the exchange and their reasons for learning the host language. The study aimed to answer three main research questions:

1. Why did these EILC participants choose the host country for their ERASMUS exchange?
2. Why did they want to learn the host language?
3. Do participants' reasons for learning the host language support their reasons for coming on the exchange?

Data for the study are from the 157 students who participated in a series of EILCs at a university in Turkey between 2005 and 2008. These participants represent a diverse group of students from 19 home countries, 95 female and 61 male. Most were visiting Turkey for the first time. They studied a wide range of subjects at their home university and were bound for different host universities, including the EILC host itself. 67% of the students came from other EILC countries, a higher proportion than the 48% of all ERASMUS participants from those countries in 2004/5.

The main data for the study come from responses to a questionnaire delivered to 84 students in 2007 and 2008. The main data were supported by interviews conducted with 26 of the participants in 2005 and written responses collected from all 157 students who participated in the courses between 2005 and 2008. In the first stage of the study students gave their reasons for choosing to come to Turkey in open written and oral responses elicited by questionnaire and group interviews. These responses were then used to develop a questionnaire about the exchange delivered in 2007 and 2008. The study compares responses to 14 questions that started 'I chose Turkey for my ERASMUS exchange because I want to ...' with 13 questions that started 'I am learning Turkish ...' Response options were 'yes', 'no' and 'don't know/ not sure'.

The EILC context

Course objectives are officially described as; ability to communicate in everyday life, ability to comprehend written and oral information/messages and ability to perform academic activities in the language. Further objectives are an introduction to the local culture and way of life, integration into an international group of students and contacts with local students'.

Within these broad terms of reference design for this specific course was based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, or CEFR (Council of Europe 2001). The CEFR informed course objectives, content, teaching procedures, assessment practices and materials: objectives targeted A1 level in the framework (Council of Europe 2001: 26-29); content was based on domains of language use (Council of Europe 2001: 48-49); teaching procedures aimed to be interactive and communicative (Council of Europe 2001: 167); assessment was based on the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing (Council of Europe 2001: 177-197); a special package of materials was produced to cater for the specific needs of university students ((Mirici et al., 2007). As complete beginners could not be expected to function exclusively in the host language, English was the medium of communication. The overall aim of the course was to provide a stimulating and motivating introduction to Turkish language and culture and participants' feedback showed these aims were achieved.

Searching for additional guidelines for course design, a review was conducted of 14 EILCs offered by other institutions in Sweden, Portugal, Hungary and Turkey. The review identified common course elements in grammar and vocabulary, but texts, skills, materials and testing varied greatly between courses. Six different ways of defining skills for the courses were used, ranging from 'oral skills' through 'pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary' and 'speaking and writing skills' to 'speaking, listening reading and writing'. Texts were not mentioned in five courses, and where they were mentioned they were either defined as teaching materials, 'from textbooks and other materials' or used vague terms such as 'simple', 'diversified' or even 'complex', although two courses mentioned 'carefully graded' and 'specially developed'. Course materials were not mentioned by 5 courses. Most courses appeared to use a combination of materials from different sources put together for the course. Only one mentioned a specific course book. Testing was only mentioned by two courses: 'oral and written, and translation into English' and 'Understanding of new language information, memorization and usage are tested'.

In a situation where international recognition of standards by home universities is potentially problematic, the variety in course design and the lack of clarity in assessment procedures is a cause for concern, particularly when ECTS credits are awarded. EILC courses have common aims and objectives and are intended for groups of students with similar needs, so the variety is surprising given the existence of the CEFR. Only one of the 14 courses reviewed mentioned the CEFR. Recognition is one factor that may influence the motivation of students and perceptions concerning the success of the exchange.

Results

The reasons the students gave for choosing the host country were matched with the categories in the literature review; mobility, competences and understanding (see Table 1). Reasons for choosing to come to Turkey are shown in Table 2, grouped according to whether they relate to mobility, competences or understanding.

Table 2
Students' Reasons for Choosing Turkey for the ERASMUS Exchange (n= 84)

<i>I chose Turkey for my ERASMUS exchange because I want to ...</i>	Yes	No	<i>Unsure/ no response</i>
<i>Mobility responses</i>			
experience a different educational context.	72 (86%)	4	8
visit Turkey more in the future	63 (75%)	1	20
improve my future employment prospects in my home country.	57 (68%)	3	24
improve my future employment prospects outside my home country.	56 (67%)	4	24
get better quality education than in my home university.	20 (24%)	26	38
work in Turkey in the future.	13 (15%)	12	59
<i>Competence responses</i>			
experience a different culture.	84 (100%)	0	0
learn a new language.	84 (100%)	0	0
know more about Turkey.	83 (99%)	0	1
learn new life skills.	81 (96%)	1	2
learn new academic skills.	71 (85%)	4	9
<i>Understanding responses</i>			
improve international understanding.	81 (96%)	1	2
know myself better.	71 (85%)	8	5
change my opinions and outlook.	50 (60%)	6	28

The most popular reasons for participating in the exchange relate to competence enhancement. All or nearly all the students expressed a desire to experience different cultures in general, or to experience Turkey as a different or unusual culture, or to know more about Turkey. Verbal responses mentioned; 'living with a completely unfamiliar culture and environment', 'Turkey is a rapidly developing country with interesting culture different from most of Europe' and 'because I have never been to Turkey'. All the students said they wanted to learn a new language, and verbal reasons given included: 'Learn a non-Indo-European language', 'Just because I love learning new foreign languages' and 'To study the relations between culture and language and common characteristics of a language'. Eighty-six percent also wanted to learn new academic skills.

Mobility is given as a reason for joining the exchange by between 67% and 86% of the students. The most popular type of educational mobility chosen is in the contrastive category of experiencing a different educational context. Only a quarter of the students chose the 'adaptive' or better learning option, and they were from the fields of tourism, cross-cultural studies or sport, indicated by comments such as 'I'm interested in Turkey because I'm studying tourism management', 'I want to write my thesis about Turkish politics' and even 'I am going to an excellent university in my subject... a great place to study'. Responses also mentioned integrative mobility, where participants join an international community, noting the value of meeting peers from many different European countries 'to experience different cultures through other participants', 'Meeting new people from different countries' and 'Interacting with people of my age coming from all over the world'. As for employment mobility, two thirds of respondents said future employment prospects in the home country or abroad were a reason for

coming on the exchange, adding comments such as 'To search employment opportunities outside home country' or 'I want to work in Embassies', but only 15% considered the possibility of future employment in Turkey.

In the understanding category, whilst nearly all participants gave improving international understanding as a reason, and 85% said they wanted to know themselves better, fewer, at 60%, gave changing their outlooks and opinions as a reason. Those who talked about knowing more or understanding better gave comments such as 'It is really important to get to know other countries' culture, climate, language, habits.', 'understand something of the Turkish point of view' and 'I can get to know the Islamic religion from inside, it could help to understand other cases, for example conflict in Arab countries'. Comments relating to change or personal growth mentioned 'try something new and challenge myself', 'when you are abroad for several months you look different at things back home, you have a point of comparison', 'to fight against growing Islamophobia in Europe' and 'to understand a greater diversity of cultures from the ones that are shown as the old Europe (French, British) therefore being able to respect the still unknown ways of life and thinking from some countries in the East'.

The largest number of students, then, saw the exchange as a means of enhancing their personal competences. Mobility was the second most popular, with somewhat fewer choosing understanding as a reason for coming on the exchange.

Reasons for learning Turkish fall into similar categories, and are shown in Table 3. The most popular reasons for learning Turkish relate to competences and mobility, and fewer participants gave reasons for language learning that went beyond supporting basic needs.

Table 3.
Reasons for Learning Turkish (n=84)

<i>I am learning Turkish ...</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Unsure/ no response</i>
Mobility			
to help me travel in Turkey.	82 (98%)	0	2
for basic survival in Turkey.	80 (95%)	4	0
to help my studies in Turkey .	64 (76%)	12	8
to help my future employment prospects.	38 (45%)	17	29
Competences			
to help me gain experience of Turkish culture.	82 (98%)	0	2
to help me make contact with Turkish people outside the university.	78 (93%)	1	5
to help me make contact with Turkish students at my host university.	75 (89%)	1	8
because it is good to know more languages.	72 (86%)	6	6
so that I can know more ... about Turkey.	65 (77%)	13	6
to help me read newspapers and magazines.	51 (61%)	14	19
Understanding			
to help me show that I have a positive attitude to Turkey.	66 (79%)	5	13
to help me change my opinions and outlook.	54 (64%)	8	22
so that I can know more about myself.	49 (58%)	20	15

The reasons for learning Turkish chosen by the largest number of students are in the competences category. Turkish is learned as it enables students to learn from contact with Turkish culture and Turkish people and to know more about Turkey. Fewer said they were learning Turkish to read newspapers and magazines. Mobility is also given as a reason for learning Turkish by nearly all the students insofar as it supports travel and survival. Three quarters hope Turkish will help their studies, but less than half see Turkish as helpful for future employment. As for understanding, whilst 79% say that they are learning Turkish to show a positive attitude towards the host country, fewer see the language as making a contribution to changing opinions (64%) and knowing more about themselves (58%). The students gave far fewer verbal responses about their reasons for learning Turkish.

Discussion

Three points emerge from looking at the students' reasons for coming on the exchange alongside their reasons for language learning. The first point concerns the contribution that the Turkish language can make to the wider aims of the exchange. The second point concerns the contribution that language learning can make to learning during the exchange. The third point concerns how some students see the contribution that language learning can make to their other exchange aims.

The Turkish language contributes to overall exchange aims in a number of ways. Language learning supports mobility by facilitating survival and travel. Language learning supports competence development by assisting studies and enabling students to make contact with Turkish people. Language learning is seen as supporting better understanding by contributing to self-awareness, assisting change and helping the students show a positive attitude. These exchange aims are shared by individual participants, home and host universities alike, and the contribution that language learning can make is recognised by the great majority of the EILC participants.

Most of the students can identify a number of reasons for participating in the exchange and for learning Turkish. It seems, then, that most students think that language learning makes an important contribution to their overall exchange aims. Most students say that learning Turkish assists mobility by making it easier to move around the host country and satisfy basic survival needs. They see learning Turkish as a valued competence in itself, although not for future employment for many, and learning Turkish helps the students learn about Turkey by facilitating social contact. They think learning Turkish can help understanding by enabling most students to show a positive attitude to Turkey, change their own opinions and outlook and know more about themselves.

Furthermore, language learning can contribute to the academic success of the exchange in a number of ways. Language continues to play an important role during the exchange period, and after the exchange period too, if longer-term links are to be developed by the individual. The four-week course itself makes important contributions, but language learning needs to continue for students to be able to support their studies and make good contacts with Turkish people.

Finally, however, it should be noted that although most students see the contribution of language to many aspects of the exchange, between one third and a half of the participants do not see language learning as supporting the development of understanding through self-knowledge and a change of outlook. Whilst all or nearly all of the students saw language learning as a new competence and supported mobility for immediate survival and travel needs, a number of students did not see learning the host language as a way of supporting some

educational or cultural objectives, which are arguably the greatest benefits that an exchange can bring. In particular, one third did not see language as contributing to a change in opinions and outlook, and 42% did not see learning Turkish as making a contribution to self-knowledge. The fact that the questionnaire was administered on the first day of the course, when exchange enthusiasm and ambitions are likely to be high (Pearson-Evans, 2006), suggests that student's desire to learn Turkish may diminish during the exchange. Some students do not seem to see learning the host language as an integral part of the exchange experience. Even so, at the start of the exchange, at least, it does not seem to be the intention of many participants to establish long-term study or work relations with the host language or culture by learning Turkish to a high level. This may be a cause for some concern as consideration for people from the host country is an important element in exchange success (Jackson 2006: 145).

Conclusions

There has been much debate over the value of international exchanges, with arguments over the extent to which benefits merit the resources expended, and whether gains are personal or beneficial to the wider community (Messer and Wolter, 2006: 15). Findings in this study suggest that there are many gains that are both personal and of great benefit to society as a whole, offering an opportunity to work against 'the clash of civilisations' as one participant put it. If exchanges with EILC countries are worth pursuing, then, they deserve to receive attention for their further development. The EILC course is one opportunity to promote the value and importance of language learning for the exchange, but a number of other complementary steps would also be beneficial. The role of language and intercultural learning on international exchanges could be enhanced in three areas: training, recognition, and integration.

More training for language learning could take place before and during the exchange period. Home and host universities could encourage language learning and emphasise the value of language for achieving positive exchange outcomes. Language still seems to be regarded as an optional extra on exchanges, as shown by the low level of participation in EILCs (less than 10 per cent), and by the reluctance of home universities to value language learning by recognizing additional language learning as part of the study agreement.

More recognition for language learning would represent a major encouragement and incentive for language learning. Language learning could become a more important part of study plans during the exchange. Universities could provide greater recognition for language learning achievements in EILC contexts by accepting that low levels of proficiency achieved in the few months of the exchange were a valid and valuable gain. Recognition of learning achievements at A1 or A2 level would also fit with moves in Europe's towards valuing the learning of additional languages in a lifelong learning context, and towards establishing plurilingualism as a principle.

An additional factor arising from the medium of instruction concerns recognition. The validity of courses that are delivered in Turkish, but mediated through the support of an English-speaking staff member need to be researched and best practices established and shared. Reluctance by some universities to recognise English-mediated courses of study represents a threat to the success of these international exchanges and will reinforce the dominance of Europe's most-taught languages. This in turn will undermine efforts to promote a diversity of language learning in Europe.

Recognition in turn would be encouraged by the wider use of common standards through the Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning. A common framework

need not be imposed, but could be encouraged by the Commission by including references to the CEFR in course requirements. References to the CEFR would contribute to the development of standards across the EU, particularly when they are accompanied by detailed and validated measures relating examinations to the CEFR (Europe, 2003). Integration and standard setting would respond to the 'growing need for establishing mechanisms suitable to make appropriate decisions on the equivalence of competences acquired by mobile students' (Teichler, 2004a: 15).

Language learning supports and can enhance the achievement of exchange aims, but success is not guaranteed. Positive steps need to be taken to increase the likelihood of success and encourage the learning of Europe's so-called 'least-used and taught' languages. Such steps are in the interests of Turkey, the individual students, their institutions and the wider European community.

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