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FOOD FOR THOUGHT ABOUT THE PROBLEMS POSED BY FRENCH TURKISH COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES

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A traditional cooperation in a world full of changes and fast openings.

The Franco-Turkish cooperation is in line with a particularly rich history which, after keeping a relatively low profile, has been taking new dimensions in the course of the last ten years. The French Istanbul Medical College which was inaugurated by Mahmut II in 1834, the Imperial French Lycée which was opened in Galatasaray in 1868, the very first Schools for Engineers set up as early as the 18th century, then the Great School for Engineers which was created in 1909 which paved the way for Istanbul Teknik Üniversitesi, all of these, stand out, among many others, as so many witnesses, showing how rich, how permanent, how fruitful Franco-Turkish exchanges have been in the cultural, scientific and technical fields.

All these projects took shape through missions, teaching staff and scientists who stayed in Turkey, being sent over to Istanbul. So it was, that, in the course of a few centuries, and thanks to the traditionally open minds towards Europe and particularly towards France of The Turkish Universities, Colleges and « Grandes Ecoles », French as a language, came to play an important role in the education and training of Turkish élites.

With the development of new technologies of information and communication not leaving out the traditional lectures which are actually given to students in Galatasaray University as well as in the French speaking department of political and managerial science in Tarabya, or again in the French speaking bilingual High Schools, it is now possible to envisage new developments for Franco-Turkish cooperation in the field of long distance media teaching. In what we would not like to call a speech, we would like to suggest a new methodology to approach long distance collaborations, that would take into account new fields that might, potentially, be involved, and new technologies that can nowadays be used.

We would like to define the context in which these cooperations might take form, and the fields, among those we are more familiar with, in which they seem more likely to be

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profitably used, before suggesting a few tracks that might be followed, pointing out some possible risks, and suggesting some useful remedies.

The present situation.

The present situation seems to be best characterized by quick changes and openings, all of which seem to promote this type of projects.

By changes, we mean changes in the professions and jobs, in the way they have to be up-dated, and, therefore, changes in the training, the training being itself strongly influenced by what has become an international market. It is clear, nowadays, that any ambitious training project should be envisaged and set up on a scale that cannot be less than European. More often than not, it is on a European scale, that any help or advice should be looked for.

So it has become a natural process to build up a training project with remote partners.

The recent past has been marked by changes, both in the use of the French language and, more progressively, in its vey image. Once spoken as a prestige language, and taught for the sake of French literature, French is more and more looked upon as the language spoken by the 180 French firms having representatives in Turkey, a language closely connected with trade, commerce and management, as it used to be taught at the beginning of this century, but closely connected too, with sciences and medicine. Second to English, French plays a fundamental role within the European Union.

Thus it has become a natural thing to learn all subjects in French.

Quick changes have been taking place too, both in the political and the economical fields, at the very moment when Turkey found its place within the Customs Union ,and while trade exchanges have been fastly growing between Turkey and Europe.

Quick changes again, have been taking place in the fields of audiovisual, dataprocessing and telecommunications. These changes have been marked by the development of new information and communication technologies, and the lowering of their costs all round. Among recent changes, one should point out the progress made by videoconferences on telephone lines and microcomputers, connections to Internet spreading out in Turkey as well as in France, and the fast development of multimedia applications and, again, the fast growing number of satellite-transmitted Hertzian channels.

In this fast moving background, the traditional Franco-Turkish cooperation is doing quite well. Important projects, among which that of Galatasaray University clearly stands out, are of course taking shape. But so far , this cooperation has not yet reached its full capacity in the field of long distance teaching.

Two series of figures might sum up the present situation and show how important the stakes are.

The first figures deal with the very fast growth rate of the Turkish University system. Two main features stand out, first the increase in the actual number of Turkish

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universities, then the very strong demand in higher education from Turkish students wishing to take a degree. So, in 1994, no less than 1,249,000 high school pupils registered for the national competitive entrance examination for university, 760,000 successfully passed the second stage. 215,362 students actually registered, among whom 165,489 for long distance teaching. As for universities, their number is growing fast. In Istanbul only, five of them are to open this very year.

The second series of figures that will allow you to be fully aware of what is really at stake in the Franco-Turkish cooperation for long distance teaching, show how the 4,226 grant holder students of Yök studying for a Master or Ph. D abroad split. Of these, 1500 are studying in the United States, 1300 in Great-Britain, 150 in Germany, and only 14 in France! As for the students who went to study in France on their own, they numbered a mere few hundreds!

So the demand for university education in Turkey is rising at a very fast rate indeed, at the very moment when present structures do not allow a new teaching staff to be trained, that might relieve the numerous French- speaking lecturers presently teaching all subjects in Turkey. And yet, it is possible, through long distance technologies, to develop, at a lower cost, good quality training methods.

In other words, supply and demand for training might meet. Let us try to see, how they might do so, however small the scale might be to start with.

In which fields should top priority projects be launched?

Any long distance teaching or training project implies some risks. Financial risks first, linked to investments, then human risks, linked to the students or the teaching staff feeling demoralized or to growing scepticism, should the project happen to fail. Now, it so happens that any failure in the field of long distance teaching is a direct hit to the morale, and a direct threat for any further project. The image of long distance teaching might thus easily be damaged, and be that of a cheap teaching, meant at a lower level, for students doomed to failure.

We now propose to examine what the prospects might be for cooperation in long distance teaching viewed as supplementing already existing projects. So for us, long distance teaching, should not be considered as an end in itself, but as one of the tracks that might be followed on the way to cooperation, particularly in such cases where it is more likely to meet clearly identified needs. Other cooperations to be carried out on a much larger scale, e.g. those involving production centres like French CNEDⁱ and Eskisehir, or TV channels like French Channel 5ⁱⁱ or Turkish channels, such other cooperations will have to be dealt with some other time.

Once a particular need in teaching or training has been clearly identified, it seems to us that a long distance training cooperation might be envisaged if :

- a. no direct traditional teaching can answer this particular need.
- b. the French side can clearly meet this particular need.
- c. permanent reception facilities are available, on the spot, as far as material and human resources are concerned.

In the particular case of the Franco-Turkish cooperation, we shall take for granted that long distance teaching projects can best be set up under two indispensable conditions.

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First, a pre-existing French-speaking/bilingual background. The question of the language to be used is obviously fundamental. French will have to be mainly used for any project involving a Turkish audience in Turkey, and no long distance teaching project can be set up, unless French « hazirlik » classes have been created, or unless these graduates have previously been following a bilingual curriculum, or, again, unless some associations already exist, that can play the role of « hazirlik » classes, such as the Association France-Turquie in Adana.

Second, developing such projects in Higher education or vocational training fields. As French is no longer taught in secondary high schools such projects could only be set up either in the vocational training sector or in the universities having a French department available.

It seems reasonable to envisage the development of long distance teaching only in those sectors where French has been traditionally taught for a long time, and where France and Turkey have been having long -standing relations, and where, again, structures *do* exist that might vouch for permanent cooperation.

The Turkish background being what it is at present, it seems that long distance training cooperation projects might be set up in the following sectors .

a) Training engineers, whether as university education or further education.

Cooperation in this sector should be easily developed due to two positive factors. First, a great number of French-speaking engineers are already practising in this sector. Second, Franco-Turkish structures have already been set up and in existence for some time. Among other favourable factors, one should point out that a *Franco-Turkish Association of engineers* already exists, that two new paths have been opened to engineering students at Galatasaray University, one in computer engineering, the other in industrial engineering, not to forget, of course the 180 French firms which secure for France a position second to none as a foreign investor in Turkey. The Franco-Turkish cooperation in this field is in line with a tradition that goes back to many centuries ago, ever since Comte de Bonneval set up his school for surveyors back in 1734 or since the Chabaud mission (1783) or the Laffite Clavé mission (1784) were sent over to Turkey, paving the way for the first schools for engineers.

Training is already supplied in this field. The CNAMⁱⁱⁱ, which in France, issues diplomas for engineers are considering setting up long distance training units through interactive video conferences on Internet, while the Ecole Normale Supérieure at Cachan, which trains top level engineers is developing interactive video conferences systems in electric engineering, mechanic engineering and applied arts. As a first step, lectures might be introduced from France into Turkey through Internet and high output lines.

b) Trainings in applied foreign languages, whether already in existence (such as translating, French for business or French for tourism), or likely to be set up (agronomy)

Converting literature, philology or French teaching departments into vocational applied foreign languages departments has been going on for some time already in Turkey, as it has in France^{iv}. The students make no mistake about it, and the results of the national entrance competitive examination for universities show that a higher number

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of marks is required for entering such departments, whether at Hacettepe, Bilkent Dokuz Eylül in Izmir or Yıldız in Istanbul than for entering a traditional French teaching, French literature or philology department with no foreseeable professional prospect.

In this particular field French universities are many years ahead, and enjoy an experience that should be shared, whether it be for conceiving or setting up projects, or curriculums, or teaching methods. Conceiving projects, exchanging data between universities or teaching staffs could be achieved at a lower cost and with more assured continuity with the help of electronic mailing.

As a second step, teaching modules might be exchanged, common projects might be set up between teaching staffs or students using the same channels.

The cooperation between the Tourism Department of Chambéry University and the Tourism section of the management department of Dolkuz Eylül stands out as a perfect example of cooperation very much in line with this new continuity concept, thanks to long distance technologies, allowing the two parties to exchange documentations, lecture frameworks, and duplicated lecture notes through electronic mailing.

c) A few top level trainings in human sciences and medicine.

Akdeniz University in Antalya, Galatasaray University in Istanbul and some French departments are already enjoying a French-speaking staff and have already started a few cooperation projects with French universities. Besides, quite a few projects have been set up in the medicine field and demand for specializations in French has been constant. In the same way, the Faculties of Medicine of Istanbul and Adana have engaged in various projects with French universities (Paris, Amiens ...). The "Conférence des Doyens des Facultés de Médecine francophones" (the Conference of French-speaking Deans of Faculties of Medicine^v) own a mediathèque and are already having long distance training sessions in medicine.

But it is a well-known fact that the vocational teaching of French often stands in the way of a project. Thus Adana University is often brought to turn down the invitations sent by French hospitals and universities due to the lack of doctors having a good command of the French language.

d) Training modules in French.

This general inadequacy of the teaching of French brings us to move on to another field that of French taught as a foreign language, particularly in vocational training. If CD Roms are already available for learning French, if French teaching programs are already being broadcast through satellites and can thus be recorded and relayed, such tools ought to be looked upon as complementing the work Eskisehir has been doing on TRT4. Connecting the French teaching centres with the departments of French as a foreign language of French universities should prove most useful. We think we shall be in a position to make proposals on this particular point sometime in 1997.

How to approach long distance cooperation.

Audiovisual technologies bursting into the teaching systems, telematic channels arriving in France and being used in colleges and universities, micro computers and,

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more recently, video-conferences and Internet coming now in current use, all these factors have been, and still are, giving rise to similar phenomena.

Generally speaking, the arrival of a new technology in the teaching system causes two opposite reactions, both of them quite harmful. On the one hand, the changes that are brought into the teaching profession by new technologies cause a reaction of fear, of repulsion, a reaction which tends to minimise or even neutralise any possible consequence. On the other hand, allowing yourself to be bewitched by a new object tends to make you believe that this object, in itself, will solve all the problems you meet in the teaching system.

Now a new media cropping up, the available data being multiplied, new communication systems being developed, none of these can in itself solve any problem. But all of these imply new approaches and new professional practices. So in no way should the technological tool be uppermost in our minds, in no way should we try to solve every day problems with it. On the contrary, and only after carefully analyzing the need, should we choose the appropriate technology, examine under what conditions it might be used, and what needs, whether in training, in staff and/or financing should be met.

Once the appropriate training has been clearly defined, we might then try to look successively into the problems posed by the teaching staff, the institutional framework of this cooperation, the foreign partners, the means of assessment, and last but not least, the right media to be chosen according to the solutions it will bring about, not forgetting to look into the conditions under which it might be set up (staff training, cost etc.).

a) A staff volunteering for teaching with new technologies

Setting up a long distance training, just as working on a network, or using other new technologies, all these bring about serious changes in the use of teaching aids as well as in the role played by the teaching profession, or in their relations with their students, or again in the way they view their profession, or the way knowledge should be passed on. To cut a long story short, we might say that :

- 1./ teaching no longer means passing on knowledge through lectures *in praesentia* but new self teaching or mutual teaching processes are coming into light ;
- 2./ written work is no longer the unique guarantee or support of knowledge. Both image and sound come in as a complement or even a substitute ;
- 3./ the teaching staff are no longer in control of knowledge transmission but help the students acquire new knowledge at their own pace along channels of their own choosing ;
- 4./ in no way can any knowledge newly acquired in a different way be assessed on the same criteria.

It follows that only a fully motivated teaching staff can enter a process that utterly changes their working conditions to such a degree that the very image of their profession is affected.

b) A basis both material and institutional.

Let alone a particular lecturer, it should be no less than a whole department or a whole college that should get involved in such project. The history of cooperation is full of conventions, projects and twinning agreements which vanished as soon as the individuals who had initiated them had withdrawn. Only if a whole institution as such,

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gets involved at the highest possible level, can we feel assured that a project will stand as long-lasting and efficient.

c) Looking for and choosing partners

This should only take place after the need in training has been clearly identified and the previous points clearly settled.

d) Choosing the right technologies to be used

The media to be used should be agreed upon and chosen once a few parameters have been taken into account. The first of these is assessing the available materials (telephone lines, computers, softwares, possible access to Internet, correct dish antennas for satellite reception) as well as the staff available on either site. This staff should be able both to use the hardware and teach others how to use it.

From this view point the situation should of course be quite different in Eskisehir from those on other sites. So, for each of these projects, one should first ask what the cost will be (meaning the initial cost in investment as well as the long run operating cost), and which staff should be used for using the hardware or teaching others how to use it.

At this point it should be decided whether a data transmission technology might prove more useful or if a long distance communication facility should be considered.

Using data banks, transmitting or receiving television programmes, or again using video cassettes are matters for passing on *information*. Any Turkish university department can enter RENATER, the French-speaking university network, and be connected with resource centres, with numerous libraries or university French speaking departments. This increasing number of available resources may require some training, at an evident cost, whether it be for acquiring the facilities or making use of them. What needs to be done on the actual site, is teaching people both how to gain access to all these data banks, and how to use them.

On the other hand, as soon as the use of interactive facilities is envisaged, one should think in terms of *communication* technologies. Long distance cooperation should then be considered in terms of *real* projects. Using a mere electronic mail may give a new turn to various Franco-Turkish cooperation projects. Within this frame, setting up cooperation projects, holding interactive video conferences, and long distance common research work are only a few of the tracks to be followed.

Both the Internet network and the videoconference facilities are likely to open quite promising tracks, if used in cooperation, on condition, let us point it out again, that technology does **not** prove to be a mere lure.

Both of these tools do allow the distance between two speakers to be abolished as long as the communication lasts. But on the other hand, they give food for thought on how time should be spent on the work to be carried out, and how long distance work and actual contact work should alternate. Indeed any training work, any research, requires some length of time to mature at its own pace. In particular the time needed by a student to learn a particular item, should not be defined by the long distance technologies being used. If any long distance teaching structure is to be set up, a tutorial should immediately follow, while long distance and *in praesentia* lectures should alternate, along with independent and supervised work, as well as self-teaching periods and actual *in praesentia* lectures.

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e) Choosing the right method for assessment

It might be the right time now, to be more specific about assessment : how should it be carried out, and who should be in charge of it? It stands out clearly, now we have witnessed Ph.D and M.A. theses being supervised by two chairmen, that the teaching staff from two universities or more, or from two countries should take part in the assessment, but this raises serious institutional problems. How could this assessment be both carried out and accepted by both parties, possibly by the YÖK authorities for universities examinations, remains to be seen.

The foreseeable problems and possible answers.

The first of these is the drop out rate among students. In Turkey, as well as in France, the drop out rate for pupils and students in long distance teaching is quite high. It might even reach 80 to 85%.

The second problem is due to the cooperation structure proving too fragile, which may result in people feeling discouraged and soon losing touch with each other.

The third problem is that the teaching staff may simply refuse to get involved in such projects.

Last but not least, raising the necessary funds both for setting up and using the hardware and training the staff, may simply prove impossible!

Finding the answers to such problems is easy, but implementing them is not always that easy. Setting up a tutor-based teaching system implies that bilingual tutors accept to get involved in the training project. Bilingual Turkish assistant lecturers may perfectly play this role. But then if they cannot be found on the spot, they should be first recruited then given the appropriate linguistic training. If long distance teaching is to be a long-lasting reality, it should be implemented through agreements that go far beyond mere individuals and bind the institutions at the highest possible level. If the teaching staff are really to feel involved in such projects they should

a) be properly trained ;

b) brought to ponder on this updating process of their teaching methods.

Any updating process is to be clearly defined against a classical pattern which is clearly challenged. We are here in a situation where the pattern of the *in praesentia* lecture, given at a particular time in a particular room, (what the Americans call the "contact hour") , where the only references are the lecturer's speech and the paper support of it (whether a book or duplicated notes), we are in a situation where all this is clearly abolished.

The *in praesentia* lecture being thus challenged may bring the lecturer to feel shattered as a teacher, and look upon his own knowledge of his subject as devastated. Such was the case when new LEA departments (Applied Foreign Languages Departments) were set up in French universities. Such changes should then be carried out in close connection with those departments which have already been proceeding along this new track.

Last but not least, funds must be found to finance such projects which, in the long run are bound to prove cost effective. They may be found on a national, bi-lateral or multilateral basis. Of course, the latest rulings made by the European Parliament in Strasbourg will in no way make cooperation between Turkey and Europe any easier for

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European or Mediterranean projects to be financed by Brussels. No doubt the hardware to be used locally will have to be financed locally, while staff training and starting small scale projects that might help volunteering departments get familiar with the new facilities might be financed on a bi-lateral basis. Conventions signed by universities on both sides should then play a fundamental role.

What is at stake here, whether in term of production or knowledge circulation is enormous. The tools of communication already exist. That such projects will prove most useful makes no doubt. What remains to be done, is connecting the volunteering Turkish departments or training centers with French partners who have already started working along this track. The French services in Turkey and the French and French-speaking university networks can help them along the way. If they start with small-scale projects, and have them based on firm principles, the partners no doubt stand a very good chance to make quick progress. I, for my part, and in my own place, am quite ready to do my best to help.

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ⁱ Centre national d'enseignement à distance, Futuroscope.

ⁱⁱ La 5, chaîne éducative.

ⁱⁱⁱ Centre National des Arts et Métiers, (centre de Versailles).

^{iv} see Symposium of Çukurova University, Adana, dec. 1995.

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