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TURKEY'S ENGLISH DEFICIT

In a popular television comedy, a nervous character one night barges into his coworker's apartment. "It's all over, over I tell you!" he shouts. Their company, he says, is being bought up by Americans. He drops on the sofa, hands covering his face. "No English! No Computer skills! We're done for!" His friend tries to calm him down, and they decide to try to get by with what English they speak.

The next morning they arrive at the new office the American company bought and furnished for them. Not bad, they think. It occurs to them that they'll be earning dollars from now on. One of them breaks into cheerful song, spraying imaginary money around. But the other is worried. "How do you say in English you're glad to meet someone?" he asks. His colleague thinks for a second and shouts in English "How old are you!" But he is rebuked. "No you idiot, that's how you ask someone how they're doing."

Finally the new American boss, a red haired woman, arrives. Speaking through a translator, she lays down the law. Everyone has to be in the office at 8:00am. Everyone is to meet at least four customers a day. Oh, and everyone who can't learn English within two months will be let go. "What?!" the men exclaim, their eyes open with terror. ²

¹ <http://www.tepav.org.tr/en/ekibimiz/s/1209/Selim+Koru>

² Çocuklar Duymasın.

Nothing breeds anxiety like the inability to communicate. And communication, and thereby knowledge, is becoming the currency of an increasingly global economy. The English language has become so fundamental to work environments that it can be counted up right alongside computer skills. And Turks, as the scenario portrays, are far behind.

The English Proficiency index (EPI)³ ranks Turkey 43rd among 44 countries, behind countries such as Chile, Saudi Arabia and Indonesia. 44th is Kazakhstan. The survey was conducted by Education First (EF), the world's largest privately held education company. The survey was conducted over the internet and is the most authoritative indicator of English proficiency to date⁴. While it is not a perfect indicator of proficiency, in the absence of a useful cross-country data-set, EPI scores can be used as a proxy to explore cross-country differences. As such, Turkey's lacking performance is surprising considering that it is the world's 16th largest economy and a highly important player in the region.

English is the global lingua franca of our age, and a population that does not understand it risks being left behind. The level of English in a country is amongst the most important factors for American and British companies when deciding where to outsource a business. While a few decades ago only elite bureaucrats and businessmen were expected to interact with their peers abroad, today most white collar work has some international component. English is no longer a neat addition to a resume, but a requirement in any modern economy.

Turkey however, is an economy still in the process of modernization. It wants to be part of the world's knowledge economy, but hasn't been able to make the jump. We argue in this paper that English proficiency is not the result of a knowledge economy, but a step towards it, and that conscious programs are needed in order to reach that stage. But first, it pays to take a look at why Turkey ranks poorly on the EPI.

What is good English, and where does it come from?

To connect to the global community, one needs to be able to apply English skills in different environments. This includes everyday interactions like holding a work-related conversation over the phone, the ability to write an email to a foreign business partner, or placing a bid on a company abroad. Simply put, for the purposes of our study, good English is a means of confident and effective communication across written and spoken media.

³ <http://www.ef.com.tr/>

⁴ See Annex

Table 1

English Proficiency Index	Online test score
Country and rank, 2011	
Norway (1 st)	69,09
Germany (8 th)	56,64
Poland (10 th)	54,62
S. Korea (13 th)	54,19
France (17 th)	53,16
Mexico (18 th)	51,48
China (29 th)	47,62
Brazil (31 st)	47,27
Turkey (43 rd)	37,66

Source: Education First, www.ef.com/epi

Where good English comes from is a more difficult question. One of the few decisive things that can be said about the determinants of English proficiency is that there are many. A country's level of globalization, access to the internet, economic development and trade are certainly important. In Turkey's case, one should also consider linguistic differences between English, which is indo-European and Turkish, which is part of the Altaic language family. The major factor however, is probably the length, quality and money invested in the public education.

Turkey's poor English proficiency is part of a broader education problem. Looking at economic indicators, there is no reason why Turkey should be 43rd on the EPI list. Quite a few countries of similar or lower GDP per capita and export levels rank higher than Turkey. Most spend far more on education. Countries in the top-25 of the EPI list spend at least 32,000 US dollars on educational institutions per student from 6 to 15 years of age, with the notable exception of Mexico, which benefits from its proximity to the United States. Turkey spends only \$12,708 dollars per student.⁵ That roughly means that there is less money and opportunity in teaching, that textbooks are worse (English textbooks have recently been replaced with ones written and manufactured in Turkey⁶) and extracurriculars almost non-existent.⁷

Perhaps the most notable deficiency here is the age at which language instruction begins. Top and mid-ranking countries often start English education in the first grade, in the very first year of children's educational lives. Children absorb languages better at this age, and once their fundamentals are set, advance much quicker later in life. In Turkey, instruction tentatively starts in the fourth grade, often with teachers who don't specialize in English. The high school entrance exam consequently tests students at an extremely rudimentary level on the subject.

In some instances, English programs are suffering cuts. Students usually took a year of "Hazırlık," or "preparation," between fifth and sixth grade, during which they received intensive English instruction. This class was postponed to be held between eighth and ninth grade in the late 1990s. In 2005, preparation class was cancelled entirely. Students no longer have a year in which they receive English language instruction unless they go on to University, some of which offer such a preparatory year of English. By this time however, students are already 18 years old, and it is not unheard of for even the most studious to feel the need to revisit the fundamentals.

The deficiencies of Turkey's education system are well known, but it is important to note that English instruction perhaps takes the most significant blow. The result is that it is almost impossible to attain good English skills through Turkey's education system. This leaves the task to private schools and tutors, which are difficult to afford for a large segment of the population.

The role of English in Turkey's economic growth

The question of causation vs. correlation comes up frequently in this discussion: does a country need to be rich in order to learn English, or does it need to learn English in order to become prosperous? Do people need to be educated to be curious about the world and thereby learn English, or do they need to access English sources to be well

⁵ Education at a Glance – OECD indicators

http://www.oecd.org/document/0,3746,en_2649_201185_46462759_1_1_1_1,00.html

⁶ <http://www.eab.org.tr/eab/oc/eatconf/pdfkitap/pdf/271.pdf>

⁷ See annex for a more detailed look at the determinants of English proficiency

educated? It might seem that people in Turkey will learn English once they reach a level of development similar to that of Europe. This assumes that English proficiency is irrelevant to its economic growth. After all, poor English doesn't seem to hinder it from being the second fastest growing economy of 2011. But this line of reasoning overlooks the trajectory of Turkish economic development. For a real answer to the dilemma of causation vs. correlation, we need to look not only at where Turkey has been, but where it is headed.

What sets Turkey apart in this regard is its stage of economic development. Throughout the 1980s and 2000s, the country has gone through rapid financial reforms which turned it into an exporting powerhouse. Economists now argue that Turkey needs to shift into what is called "second generation reforms," which include a long list of challenging overhauls, from education system to tax, judiciary and urban planning. The reasoning behind this is that in order to grow, Turkey needs to jump from mid-technology activities such as machine assembly and textile production, to high-tech production such as Pharmaceuticals, Robotics and other R&D and knowledge-intensive work. A high level of English proficiency is vital for this second stage of economic growth.

Better English skills would make the Turkey's workforce more adaptable to economic reform as well as their immediate neighborhood. Innovation and the production of high technology, by their nature, require interaction with the world. Currently foreign professionals, especially from neighboring countries often have to learn Turkish in order to contribute to the economy. A more effective brain-drain from neighboring countries such as Iran, Syria and Bosnia could start if Turks could communicate with these neighbors in English. A leap in English proficiency would also make second generation reforms more effective. No matter how sound the patent structure, an entrepreneur pursuing an international internet business for example, can hardly expect to function without the ability to communicate effectively in English. Proficiency in English is therefore not the prize of economic development; it is one of its steps.

The most successful developing economies know the importance of English. Looking at the EPI ranking, we see that the four BRIC countries are ranked consecutively, occupying spots 29 to 32. Despite their immense size and demographic problems, these countries score significantly higher than Turkey because they have worked English education into their national programs for economic growth. China especially, has a growing hunger for English teachers as part of its long-term economic plan. Deng Xiaoping, when enacting the reforms that led to China's economic success today, especially emphasized English education as the key to accessing international know-how and thus catching up with the West⁸. Today, China is the world's fastest growing economy and sports a better EPI score than its rival India, which was colonized by the British. Both BRIC countries however, rank high on the production and development sides of international chains.

Recommendations

The root of Turkey's English proficiency deficit, no doubt lies in education. A country's public education system is responsible for ingraining fundamental knowledge, such as mathematics, reading, history and the sciences into the minds of its young citizens. What Turkey is missing, and what countries like China and Poland have caught up on, is

⁸ Guangwei Hu, English Language Education in China: Policies, Progress and Problems, 2004, <http://www.springerlink.com/content/r6hj7x514v865094/fulltext.pdf>

that English now counts as fundamental knowledge. It is no longer a luxury but a necessity.

It is no secret today that Turkey's education system is ineffective. In the long run, it is imperative for Turkey's economic growth to reform its education system, including English education. Turkey's poor English proficiency however, is too acute a problem to be left for the long term. The country is growing quickly and needs to transform into a knowledge-driven economy in the near future. We will therefore explore some ways in which Turkey could record progress in this regard within the next decade.

Our plan has two approaches. First, we focus on improving English education in primary schools. English education should be of high quality and start from an early age. Strong fundamentals are especially important in language education and could significantly improve proficiency across the board. Second, we recommend instituting English courses for professionals subsidized by the state. These vocational English classes would enable lawyers, nurses, bureaucrats and others to communicate more effectively with their colleagues abroad, connecting them to the global knowledge network.

Measures for primary school education

- **Importing teachers from English-speaking countries** would be one of most effective ways of boosting education quality. Turkey's government could create an umbrella organization to partner American and British universities with Turkish public schools. This organization would then recruit promising English-speaking students seeking international experience and assign them to Turkish schools. Special visa arrangements and work contracts would facilitate the process.

South Korea has pursued a similar system for some time, recruiting native English speakers from American Universities⁹. The University of Wisconsin for example, is connected to the Gyeonggi Provincial Education Office, the educational authority in the Republic of Korea's most populous province. Highly qualified students from Wisconsin can apply to a program between the two institutions and teach English at public schools in Korea. ¹⁰Considering Korea's recent rise from gnarling poverty and cultural and linguistic distance from the Anglophone World, its level of English proficiency is considerable, certainly higher than that of Turkey. A similar system could work for Turkey's education system. As its hinterlands develop, Turkey is becoming an attractive destination for young university graduates in English speaking countries. This would be a way of capitalizing on the region's political and social dynamics.

- **English language instruction should start in the first grade and should be taught by English teachers only.** Studies show that children are most receptive to language instruction between the ages of 8-12. Earlier language acquisition can help in familiarizing with the concept of foreign languages and developing the child's ear.¹¹ This is why many private pre-schools institute language programs. Turkey can target these kinds of programs in the long run, but in the short run, the system could focus on starting English classes earlier, and assigning them to qualified English teachers.

⁹ <http://immigration.go.kr/>

¹⁰ [Teachers to Gyeonggi-do](#) program

¹¹ [EF EPI report](#)

- **English teachers in Turkey should be sent abroad for training.** Turkey already sponsors higher education abroad, including that of teachers. It should however, institute specific programs for the education of English teachers. Government sponsored programs could send newly graduated English teachers on internships with experienced colleagues abroad. In addition to its technical benefits, international experience would put them in touch with the global discussion of pedagogy. This program should have an ambitious scope and send as many of Turkey's newly graduated English teachers abroad as possible.

English Education for Professionals

- **English education geared towards mid-career professionals** could alleviate some of Turkey's immediate deficiencies. Bureaucrats, doctors and other public servants could benefit from vocation-specific English education. These would be geared to help them participate in international conferences, read academic papers and follow international news reports of their fields.

This project could be framed within, and funded by, the EU accession process. Poland is also pursuing foreign language education for mid-career adults under the European Funds Human Capital Program¹². The state, on its own or through EU programs, could subsidize full-time English teachers to train their workforce during allocated office hours. A whole sector of corporate English instruction has sprung up and their classes are subsidized at rates up to a hundred percent. Following this trend, Turkey could accredit competent instructors and companies, and compensate for 50 percent of their cost to private companies. This could make its white collar workforce more competitive and strengthen its global integration.

¹² [Poland's Human Capital Operation Programme](#)

Annex

Measuring English Proficiency: The EF EPI

English proficiency is truly difficult to measure. In the past, The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)¹³ examination was the most common measurement, despite the test makers' explicit statement that it should not be used for this purpose. Last year, Education First, (EF) the world's largest privately held education company, published the first study aiming to compare countries' levels of English proficiency. The English proficiency index (EPI) spans a wide range of countries from Europe to Asia to Latin America.

The most notable difference between the EPI and previous indices of English proficiency is that the EPI uses a 'modern' interpretation of what good English is, with a focus on English as an international tool of communication.

The EF English proficiency index was compiled by letting over two million adults from 44 countries take a free test that measured their grasp of the different aspects of the English language.

The EPI however, has its limitations. The Economist points out that subjects took a free test online, which implies that they were connected to the internet and that they must have been engaged in learning and assessing their English levels. The magazine also notes that test takers are also most likely young and urban.¹⁴ The study is therefore vulnerable to, among other factors, differing degrees of internet access, urbanization and age. It is less representative for example, of the entire population in Turkey's case than that of Sweden. Internet connectivity in Turkey is 36.8 percent, while it is 90.3 percent in Sweden.¹⁵ These limitations are significant, but the EPI remains the largest and by far the most accurate measure of English proficiency to date, and was used as the primary measurement in this analysis.

The determinants of English proficiency

The reasons why one country speaks English better than another are innumerable. For the purposes of this analysis, we have identified some salient factors, such as education, linguistic makeup, economic indicators and the degree of globalization in societies.

In looking at these variables, it is important to keep in mind the evasive nature of language proficiency. Factors are difficult to quantify, and the lack of a consistent tool of measurement through time means that policies in countries cannot be evaluated based on merit. As a result, it becomes hard to differentiate causation from correlation. A country which is rich and learned English relatively recently might have acquired

¹³ <http://www.ets.org/toefl>

¹⁴ <http://www.economist.com/blogs/johnson/2011/04/english%20>

¹⁵ http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.P2?order=wbapi_data_value_2009+wbapi_data_value+wbapi_data_value-last&sort=desc

proficiency as a result of becoming wealthy. On the other hand, rising English proficiency could have been a factor in its economic development.

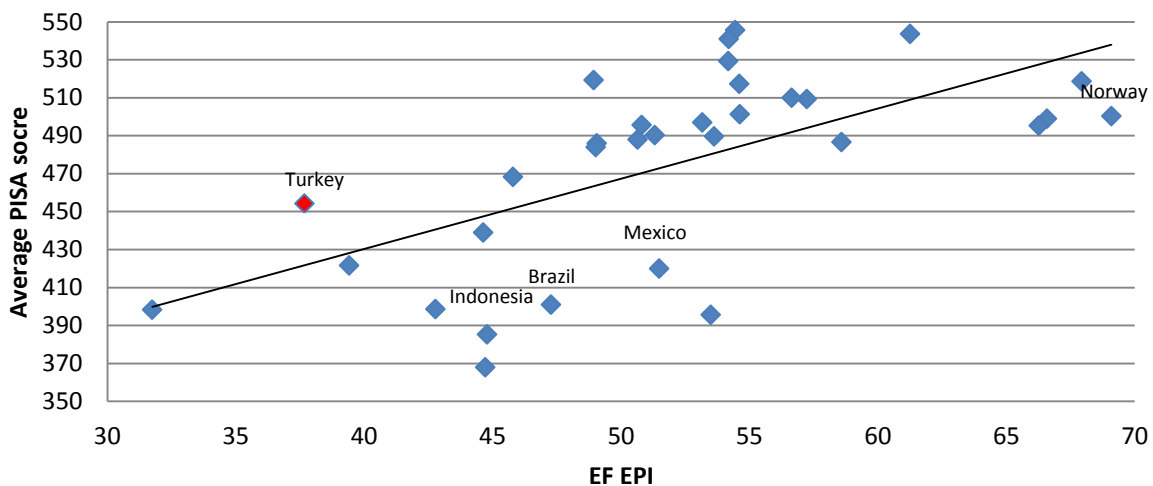
Overall school performance

The classroom is where most children first start learning English. The general quality of environment is therefore of great importance, and likely to effect the quality of English education. The leading indicator for the overall performance of schools is the OECD Program for International Student Assessment, (PISA)¹⁶ which ranks students in mathematics, reading and science. PISA's assessment of the efficacy of education systems is therefore an indicator of the overall quality of teaching, which makes it an important factor to keep in mind when looking at English language education as well.

Looking at the scatter plot below, we see that there is some positive correlation between average school performance and English proficiency. Out of the countries included in the EPI, some countries stand out for having performed better in reading, mathematics and science than they did in English. These are most notably Switzerland, Germany and Hungary. Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Austria are among the countries that perform better in English than reading, mathematics and science.

Turkey's English language results rank worse than its overall education. That means that Turkey's education system is more effective at teaching the fundamentals than it is at teaching English. Turkey has an average PISA score of 454. Many countries with ranking below that score, such as Indonesia, 385, Mexico, 420 and Brazil, 401 have far higher English scores. Here, one of two scenarios could be the case. Turkey could not be valuing English education as much as other countries or it could be spending its time and energy inefficiently.

Figure 1: EF EPI, 2011, and average PISA score: 2009



Source: EF, OECD

¹⁶ <http://www.pisa.oecd.org/>

Spending on education

The amount of money a country spends on education seems to influence its level of English proficiency. This spending includes expenditure on educational institutions, including teacher salaries, school supplies, transportation and other expenditures.

It seems that high spending is a prerequisite for advanced levels of English proficiency. The top 4 countries (Norway, Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden) all spend 80,000 USD per student from the age of 6 to 15. On the other hand, high spending does not guarantee a high English proficiency. Switzerland, the highest spender with 104,352 USD per student of the same age group only ranks 11th while Poland, with a spending of 39,964 USD ranks 10th. Some countries seem to require more spending than other to reach the same level of English proficiency, but none seems to be able to attain high EPI levels without considerable spending.

Education expenditure seems to be a limiting factor for Turkey's English proficiency. Turkey spends 12,708 USD per student from 6 to 15, lower than Thailand's 46,331 USD, Mexico's 21,175 USD or Poland's, which has a similar GDP to Turkey but spends 39,964 USD on education¹⁷. The exact data on this count is hard to come by, but low expenditure in Turkey roughly means that teachers are paid less and schools badly supplied. Less capital in the education sector could mean that there is less competition and therefore less incentive for improvement. Being a teacher in Finland for example, is seen as a well respected and challenging career path and teachers are paid accordingly. In Turkey, teachers' pay is insufficient to lure top graduates and barely increases over time. Especially English and Math teachers have to offer their services as private tutors to make a decent living.

The limits of spending for education, should however, be kept in mind. It is difficult to determine if spending on education is a major cause of English proficiency, or if higher spending on education works as a proxy of higher GDP per capita, as the countries that spend the most money on education are also the wealthiest. A country could also be spending money inefficiently, further skewing the numbers.

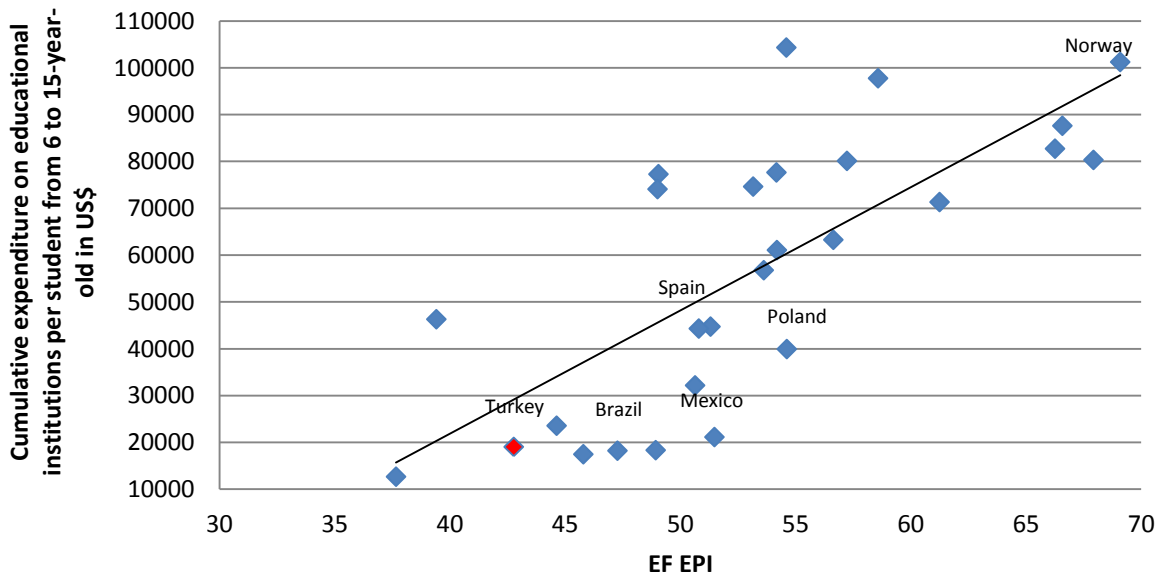
Timing is also a factor. Countries with high spending on education might simply not have had enough time for their spending to have effected their population's English proficiency. It can take decades for a country's investment in English education to show results.¹⁸ This may explain why a country like Spain, which has recently enacted major school reform, has low English proficiency in comparison to the amount it spends per pupil. Poland however, enacted school reform in the late 1990s and recently saw significant increases in PISA scores¹⁹. Though our study lacks English proficiency scores to compare older Polish scores with new ones, it is reasonable to assume that English proficiency has also increased.

¹⁷ http://www.oecd.org/document/0,3746,en_2649_201185_46462759_1_1_1_1,00.html

¹⁸ http://www.ef.com.tr/sitecore/_/_/~/media/efcom/epi/pdf/EF-EPI-2011.pdf

¹⁹ http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTECALEA/Resources/ECA_KB34_Education_Reform_in_Poland.pdf

Figure 2: EF EPI, 2011, and cumulative expenditure on educational institutions per student from 6 to 15-year-old in US\$: 2009



Source: EF, OECD

Years of schooling

The correlation between the amount of years spent in school and English proficiency is another point of consideration in our study, as the amount of time a student spends learning English likely effects his level of proficiency. The average amount of time spent in school varies from around 12 to 7 years, with the average being around 7 years in Turkey and 12 years in Norway²⁰.

While it would have been ideal to use statistics on the amount of years spent learning English, no such reliable data exists across the countries covered by the EPI.

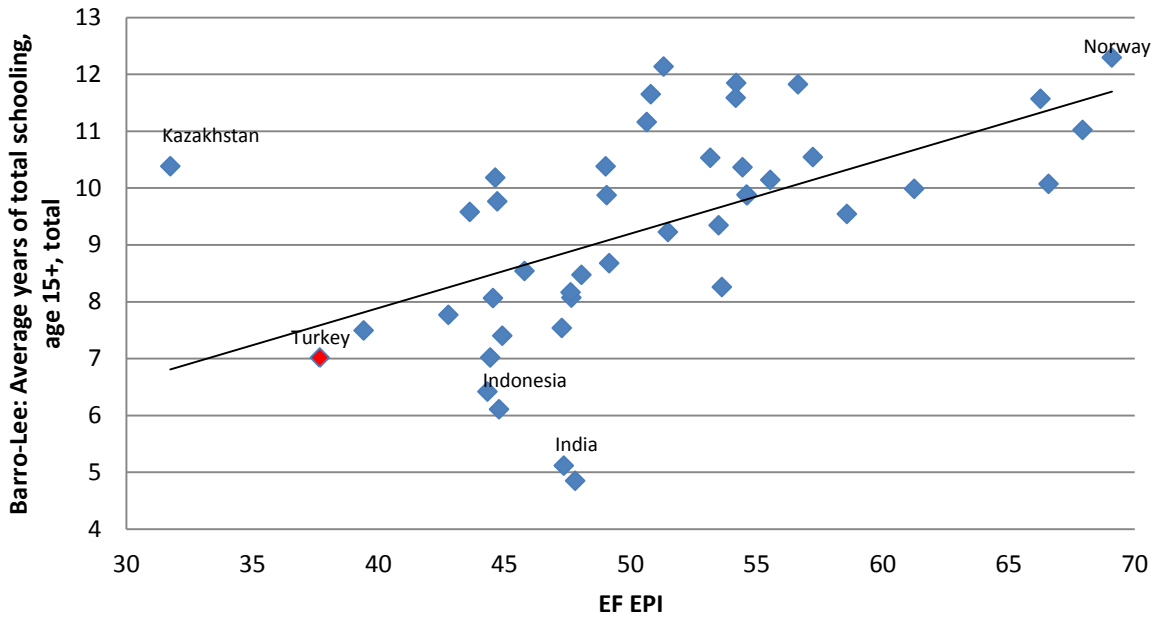
The amount of years spent in school and English proficiency do correlate. While this does not necessarily mean that it is a determinant factor, it does suggest that increasing the amount of years spent learning English may be worth looking into.

The data indicates that the amount of years spent in school may be a limiting factor for Turkey, as Turkey's English proficiency is high in relation to the average amount of years students spend in school.

Therefore, efforts aimed at increasing the amount of years students spend in school may yield positive effects upon the country's English proficiency. However, increasing the number of years students spend studying English is only really worth it if it is combined with an increase in the quality of education.

²⁰ <http://databank.worldbank.org/ddp/home.do>

Figure 3: EF EPI, 2011, and Barro-Lee: Average years of total schooling, age 15+, total: 2010



Source: EF, The World Bank

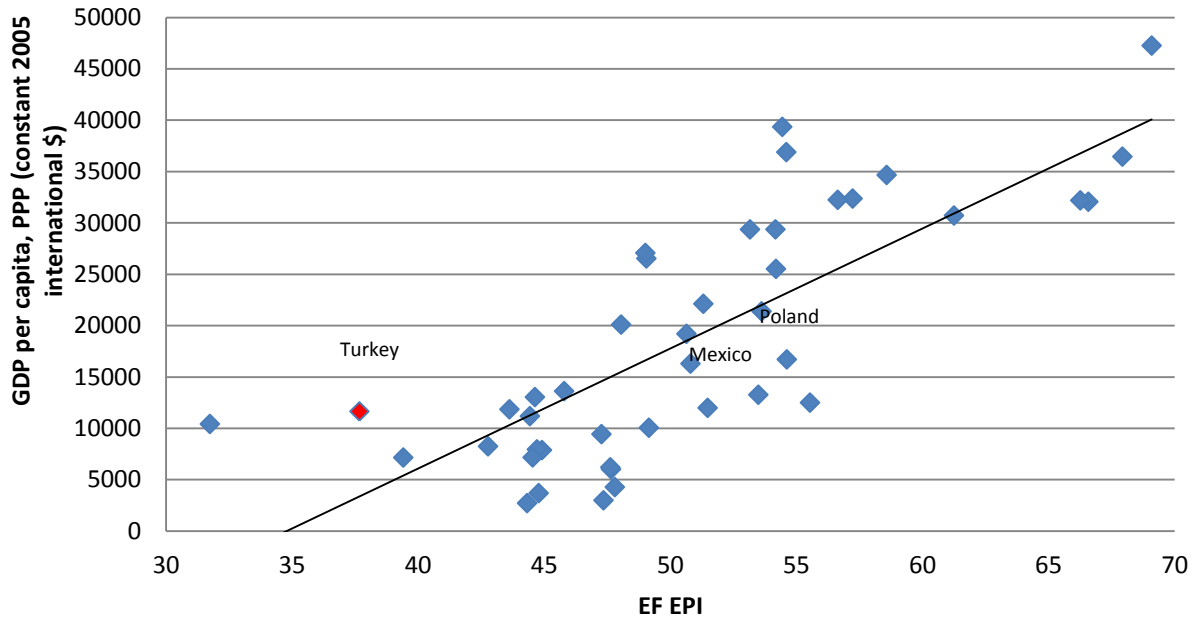
GDP per capita

GDP per capita to some extent correlates with English proficiency. As it should be expected, wealthy countries do well, and small and wealthy countries, such as Sweden and Norway, do better. Going down the EPI list to poorer countries, we can see that GDP quickly becomes less determinant. Panama for example, has roughly three times more GDP per capita than Vietnam but the two countries rank right next to each other as 39th and 40st.²¹

Turkey too, ranks far lower in the EPI than a slew of countries with lower GDPs, such as Malaysia and Argentina. Countries like Mexico and Poland, which have similar GDP per capita to Turkey, are in fact ranked high (11 and 18th) GDP can therefore be safely excluded as a limiting factor to Turkey's English proficiency.

²¹ <http://databank.worldbank.org/ddp/home.do>

Figure 4: EF EPI, 2011, and GDP per capita, PPP (constant 2005 international \$): 2009



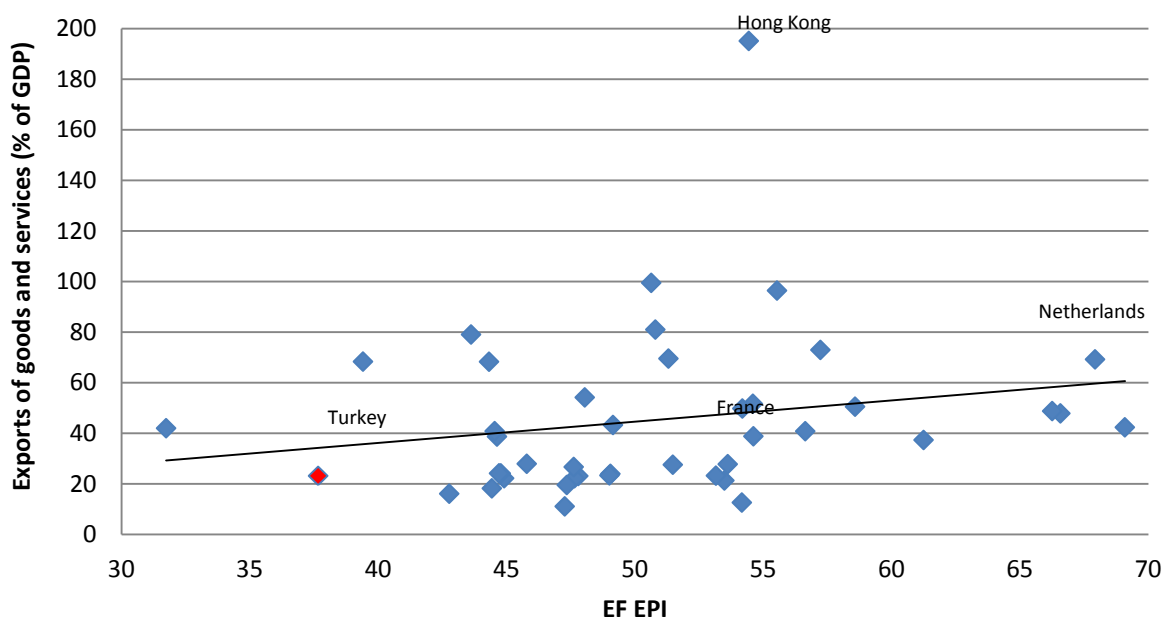
Source: EF, The World Bank

Exports

Reliance upon exports may effect English proficiency in a positive manner. This is because reliance upon exports creates incentives for a country's population to learn English, as those proficient in English in an export based economy may gain big advantages when looking for jobs. Also, trade with foreign countries exposes a country to English, as it is the go-to language of international trade.

The scatter plot below shows that the correlation between English proficiency and exports as a percentage of GDP is not strong. This may be because reliance upon exports is irrelevant if those exports don't go to countries where English is a necessary means of communication.

Figure 5: EF EPI, 2011, and exports of goods and services (% of GDP): 2009



Source: EF, The World Bank

Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic are countries that have a low English proficiency and a high reliance upon exports. None of these countries top export destinations are countries where English is a prerequisite for trade²².

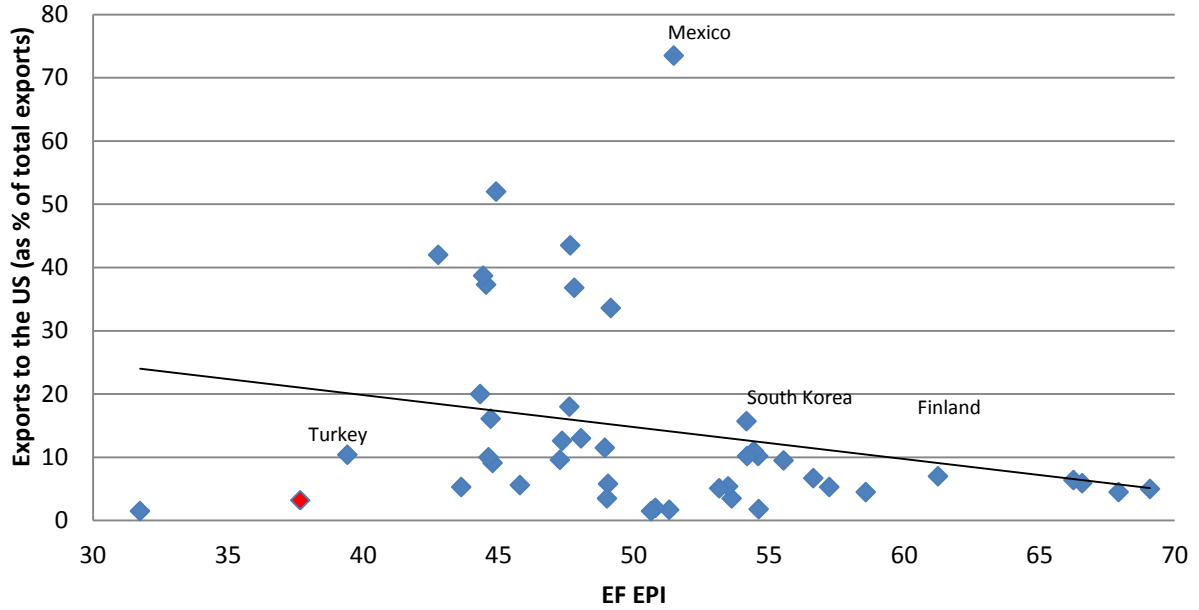
In this context, it is interesting to look at what percentages of a country's exports go to the US. Trade with an English-speaking country such as the US would in most likelihood contribute to proficiency in English, whilst a high English proficiency may in turn lead to an increase of exports to the US.

The scatter plot below shows that there is no positive correlation between the percentage of total exports to the US and English proficiency. The trend line is in fact negative. This goes to show that exports to the US probably have more to do with which products a country exports in combination with factors such as geography (73.5% of Mexico's exports are to the US) than with English proficiency.

English proficiency should, however, not be discounted in the context of exports to the US. If Turkey were to increase production of products in demand in the US market, a high English proficiency would surely amplify the success of such endeavors.

²² <http://comtrade.un.org/db/>

Figure 6: EF EPI, 2011, and exports to the US (as % of total exports): 2009



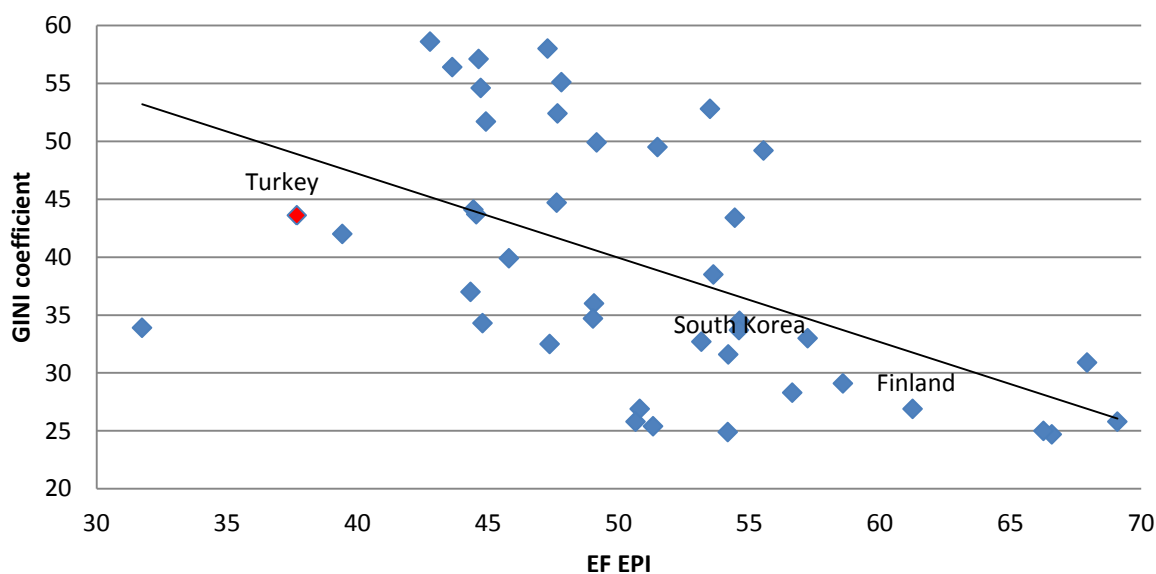
Source: EF, UN comtrade

Distribution of income

An unequal distribution of income has a negative effect on English proficiency. One reason for this is that unequal countries provide unequal opportunities in areas like education. Private schools in these countries take over the job of teaching English, while public schools barely scrape by.

While income inequality is high in Turkey, a comparison to the GINI index shows that this may not be its limiting factor, as there are more unequal countries which have far better EPI scores.

Figure 7: EF EPI, 2011, and GINI coefficient (1=perfect inequality): latest available data



Source: EF, The World Bank

Linguistic factors

Similarities a country's main languages may have to English could impact proficiency levels. The top 4 countries of the EPI all speak Germanic languages.

Aside from noting this correlation however, linguistic factors are difficult to quantify accurately. Linguistic affinity and word order are the more reliable of these methods²³.

The index of linguistic affinity has been put together by assigning different values to certain languages, depending on what language family they belong to. As English is a West Germanic language, languages from the same family are given the highest values in the linguistic index (e.g. German), while languages which aren't of the Indo-European language tree (e.g. Turkish) get the lowest numbers.

West Germanic	9
North Germanic	8
Italic	7
Hellenic	6
Slavic, Indo-Iranian, Baltic	5
Non Indo-European	0

²³ The linguistic indices were taken from a study by Myung-Hee Kim & Hyun-Hoon Lee, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00036840701857960>

Comparing the index of linguistic affinity to the EPI, seems to indicate that linguistic affinity may not play a determinant role when it comes to English proficiency across the world. The Finns are a good example of a people who speak a language distant to English, while performing exceptionally well. Also, many Spanish-speaking countries (relatively close to English), perform poorly. However, we should not completely discount the effect of language affinity upon English proficiency.²⁴

A second linguistic factor that may affect English proficiency is the order words are placed in. The index of word order assigns a one or a zero, depending on if said language shares the same word order as English or not.

Examining the index shows that the two worst performing countries in the EPI (Turkey and Kazakhstan) do not share the same word order as English. On the other hand, there are languages with a different word order that perform relatively well (South Korea, Japan.) Thus, word order may be important to note, but its importance should not be overestimated, or worse, seen as an insurmountable hurdle.²⁵

A third linguistic factor that could be taken into account is language fractionalization. The index of language fractionalization²⁶ reflects the probability that two randomly selected individuals from a population belong to different language groups.

Language fractionalization may affect English in different ways in different countries. This is because ethnic differences may lead to political instability in some countries, which in turn creates a less favorable environment for English learning. Language fractionalization could also have a positive effect on English proficiency, as in some countries where many different languages are spoken English acts as the common language (as is the case in India).

The correlation between language fractionalization and English proficiency seems to be insignificant, as with the prior two linguistic factors. Many countries with a high language fractionalization perform poorly in the EPI, but there are also many countries with a high language fractionalization that perform well (e.g. the Netherlands, Belgium and Malaysia). It can thus be discounted as a major global determinant of English proficiency.

Other determinants of English proficiency

As mentioned before, not all determinants of high English proficiency are easily quantifiable.

Factors such as culture and history, which are difficult to quantify, play an important part. Malaysia may be an example of this. It is a country which has a relatively high English proficiency, which could be explained by its history as a British colony.

²⁴ See table 5

²⁵ See table 5

²⁶ <http://www.springerlink.com/content/n705384x46004871/fulltext.pdf>

Countries within the influence of regional languages could also be less reliant on, and therefore less proficient in English. This may explain the poor performance of Latin American countries, which, with the notable exception of Brazil, communicate with each other in Spanish. Former Soviet bloc countries such as Kazakhstan might similarly have been reliant on Russian, which would explain their performance.

Also, the EF report states that "There is ... a strong correlation between the requirement of English for all students as the first foreign language and high English proficiency. Only Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, and Germany required English as the first foreign language for 100% of students between 1982 and 2000."

There are other cultural factors to consider. Nordic countries refrain from dubbing American TV-shows which increases their people's exposure to English. This is the case in the English-proficient Nordic countries, in contrast to countries such as France or Turkey where the dubbing of TV-programs is rampant.

English Proficiency Index, Country Rankings

Table 2

Country	EF EPI: 2011
1. Norway	69,09
2. Netherlands	67,93
3. Denmark	66,58
4. Sweden	66,26
5. Finland	61,25
6. Austria	58,58
7. Belgium	57,23
8. Germany	56,64
9. Malaysia	55,54
10. Poland	54,62
11. Switzerland	54,6
12. Hong Kong	54,44
13. South Korea	54,19
14. Japan	54,17
15. Portugal	53,62
16. Argentina	53,49
17. France	53,16
18. Mexico	51,48
19. Czech Republic	51,31
20. Hungary	50,8
21. Slovakia	50,64
22. Costa Rica	49,15

23. Italy	49,05
24. Spain	49,01
25. Taiwan	48,93
26. Saudi Arabia	48,05
27. Guatemala	47,8
28. El Salvador	47,65
29. China	47,62
30. India	47,35
31. Brazil	47,27
32. Russia	45,79
33. Dominican Rep.	44,91
34. Indonesia	44,78
35. Peru	44,71
36. Chile	44,63
37. Ecuador	44,54
38. Venezuela	44,43
39. Vietnam	44,32
40. Panama	43,62
41. Colombia	42,77
42. Thailand	39,41
43. Turkey	37,66
44. Kazakhstan	31,74

Source: Education First, www.ef.com/epi