

Community Archives Initiative
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Georgia Southern University
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Dr. Yasar Bodur · Oral History Transcript · Fall 2026

Dr. Yasar Bodur 00:01
Okay.

Ella Smith 00:01

Okay.

Lauren Waltz 00:01
Thanks, rolling.

Ella Smith 00:02
So, this is Ella Smith.

Lauren Waltz 00:04
This is Lauren Waltz.

Ella Smith 00:06
This is Ashley Aldridge. So, what is your full name?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 00:09
First name is Yasar.

Ella Smith 00:11
How do you spell that?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 00:12
It's Y A S A R. That's the spelling, but the phonetically it would be S H A R. And last name is Bodur. B O D U R.

Ella Smith 00:22
And then, do we have permission to record this interview and take photos, or and or scan your artifacts?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 00:29

Sure. Okay. So,

Ella Smith 00:30

what is it that you do at the University of Georgia or Georgia Southern University?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 00:36

I am one of the associate deans in the College of Education, and my official title is associate dean for academic affairs and accreditation. But I have been a professor of elementary education for a long time, and then now I'm one of the associate deans.

Ella Smith 00:54

What classes did you teach before you became an associate dean? Oh,

Dr. Yasar Bodur 00:57

I used to teach for the elementary program. I used to teach science. I would teach the cultural diversity class for the EDS programs. I used to teach the action research class, the curriculum and instruction class. I did a lot of supervising of internship one, internship two, pre-internship.

Ella Smith 01:17

Oh wow! So you were like everywhere. Oh yeah.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 01:20

And then some some other classes that I cannot even think of. There were classes that I would teach in the master's program. I've been around for a long time.

Ella Smith 01:30

So where and when were you born?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 01:33

I was born in Turkey, and I was born in 1972.

Ella Smith 01:41

And then, where did you grow up in Turkey?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 01:44

In the northern Black Sea region, and to the northwest a little bit. And then you want to know the name of the town?

Ella Smith 01:53

Sure.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 01:54

I would have to write it for you. Oh no! If you can read, it's custom or his name up to 10.

Ella Smith 02:22

That's a cool spelling. That is very cool. So

Dr. Yasar Bodur 02:26

that's where I grew up. Where I grew up, meaning you know.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 00:00

Custom, and in 1996, I came to the States.

Ella Smith 00:09

Why did you initially leave Turkey?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 00:13

Initially, to go to graduate school in the United States. So I got a pretty cool scholarship from the Minister of Education in Turkey. I mean, they don't just give it to you, right? So there was a you had to. I had to take an exam. It was a nationwide exam, and you know, like five people got the scholarship, or six, or whatever. So I was one of them. Wow. Yeah, I was I was pretty nerdy. So, so I I went to Florida State.

Ella Smith 00:48

Okay.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 00:49

You see that, right? Yeah. I wasn't even looking. So I went to Florida State. I I did my master's in elementary education, and then I did my doctoral degree, the Ph.D. in elementary education, and I finished all that in 2003. And the idea was that I would go back to Turkey and become a professor there. You know, the government is not going to give you money for nothing, right? So they they pay for you as they paid you know my tuition fees, everything, and they paid me me, you know, monthly allowance, so I could just focus on my studies. So that that was a lot of money. So that was the plan. I was going to go back to Turkey and become a professor, but I kind of broke that plan. I met my wife, you know, she's an American, so so I decided to stay, which means I had to pay all that back to the government. Well, yeah, that makes sense. So in 2006, I got my job here, and I've been here since then.

Ella Smith 01:53

Very nice.

Lauren Waltz 01:54

2006.

Speaker 4 01:57

What year did you meet your wife?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 01:59
What year did I meet? 1998.

Ella Smith 02:02
Oh, so like right, basically right when you got here. Two years.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 02:05
Two years. Two years

Ella Smith 02:06
after.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 02:06
We were in the same master's program.

Speaker 4 02:09
Oh, that's sweet.

Speaker 5 02:10
Yeah,

Speaker 4 02:11
that's cool.

Ella Smith 02:15
Oh, my place. Hold on. Who did you grow up with, like in your family?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 02:26
Oh, I mean, you know, my siblings. I'm the youngest of five.

Ella Smith 02:30
Okay.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 02:31
So, yeah, I have my sisters, my brother, you know, my parents, and the Turkish culture is very like community oriented a little bit, so of course I had my immediate family within the house. But you know, you always had visitors of you know your relatives, your neighbors, whatever. So you were always around people. So I grew up around a lot of people. Very strong connections. Yes.

Ella Smith 03:00
What was the place where you grew up like, and how do you feel that it's changed over the years?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 03:08

It was. I had a very lucky childhood, right? So I, you know, I lived in a kind of a suburban neighborhood, and that neighborhood where I grew up in you know, my late elementary school years and middle school and all of that, that neighborhood was specifically built for like teachers, educators, and all that. I know, and my father was a teacher, so we had a house there. So the people around me, the children who were my age or close to my age, they were children of teachers, were like like-minded people, and then there were a lot of them. So, like you know, I would play soccer like you know five matches a day. You know, that's that's what you did in Turkey. And what has changed? Whatever is happening to the world is happening to Turkey, to my hometown too. So you don't see, you know, children just leaving the house in the morning and going back home. You know, as the night falls, they are rather on their phones and and communicating through you know social media and other things. That's what I'm hearing from people. You know, I'm not in Turkey. I'm not seeing it in person, but I'm hearing that I'm seeing that with my nephews and all of that, so there's a whole lot less in-person, you know, gaming and playing kind of stuff. As far as relationships are concerned, like neighbor to neighbor kind of those those things are still going on. You know, I when I go back home, you know, people have changed. Like you know, let's say we used to have person A as a neighbor. Now it's person B. It's some somebody else, but the relationship is just as caring and as as strong. So those things are still happening. So a lot of like a lot of strong foundations of people and. Relationship things in the Turkish culture are still resisting this, you know, like remote relationships culture that we have right now. So those things are remaining, but I'm seeing in children, younger people. Over reliance on social media, much less actual humanly contact with their friends and such, and and a whole lot more emphasis on like buying the Nike shoes and buying the whatever brand T-shirts. There's there's a whole lot more emphasis on the the consumer culture with the younger people.

Ella Smith 05:44

That's very interesting. That it's very similar to what it is here.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 05:49

Yeah.

Ella Smith 05:52

So when you moved to the states, and because you were planning to go back and teach in Turkey, did you bring any like possessions of history from your family with you, or just really just clothes and suitcase.

Dr. Yasar Bodur

No.

Ella Smith

Okay, have you brought anything that since you decided to stay in the U.S.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 06:13

from home? Like not necessarily. There are cultural pieces like like you see that over there, the the blue eye thing, that's a Turkish thing. And then you are going to see in multiple places in this office. There is one there. I'm sure I have more. Like there's one over there. If you go to my house, you're going to find one in the kitchen, one in the living room. So that's you know in Turkish homes, you're going to see that. That's supposedly it keeps. It's not necessarily a good luck kind of thing, but it keeps bad luck away from there. So that's the idea. Supposedly there's a there's some kind of scientific evidence. Look, I'm in the Air Force, right? Supposedly there is scientific evidence that that tone of blue actually does something to something. I don't.

Lauren Waltz 07:03

they're traditionally like on beside every door that you have.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 07:06

Not not necessarily every door, but you have like little babies, right? So you have a little baby, so they will put a tiny little one of those on on the shoulder of the you know whatever the baby is wearing with a safety pin, just so that you know the baby is protected from bad luck or bad eyes or evil eyes or whatever. So that those types of culture items like I'll show you guys one thing. Let me see if there's an English writing on it. lemon cologne. Don't think of it like a cologne that you put on and stays with you like the whole day, right? So this is some lemon-scented thing that pretty much all Turkish households will have. It's just some kind of refreshing thing. Look, try. It's not gonna hurt you. So, like you're feeling stressed out, or you're feeling like you get up in the morning and then you just want to refresh yourself. You just put a little bit around you, whatever. It smells like lemon, right? So every Turkish household will have this. I I don't know how many bottles I have at home, but I have one in my office, as you see. Let's say on a given day, you go to neighbors for tea or coffee or whatever. You sit down and, like, within the first 1015, minutes, you know, your neighbors will come around with you know bottle of cologne, and and they will give everybody a little bit of cologne. I don't know. I don't know if people smell bad or something. I don't. I don't think that's the reason. But this this is a strong cultural part of it because you still see it, right? Yeah. And actually, you know, like say you have a headache, people will say just get some lemon cologne and like you know massage your temples, or you have high blood pressure like massage your wrist with lemon cologne. So there, I don't think there is medical truth to it, but it's part of the culture. So there is that. I'm sure I have a lot of other things at home. The the tea kettle would be. We we Turks like to drink tea, loose leaf tea. I mean, I can drink tea all day long. I cannot drink more than one cup of coffee a day. It's just I drink my one cup in the morning, and that's it. I cannot drink any more. But tea, I can drink tea all day long.

Ella Smith 09:34

What's your favorite flavor of tea?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 09:37

See, that's that's that's that's your problem. You think that tea has a lot of flavors. It doesn't.

Ella Smith 09:43
It doesn't?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 09:43

Tea, tea comes from a plant called tea, right? So you get the leaves of the tea and you make tea. But now people, you know, gather like blueberry, whatever, and they call it tea. It's not. It's a blue blueberry beverage. It's not tea. They just call.

Everything tea now. Tea is actually from a plant called tea, so that's that's that's what we drink. The only difference will be if you if you collect the leaves in the fall versus spring. I think there's a difference in the flavor you get. You know, like like English breakfast tea does not taste same as Earl Gray,

Ella Smith 10:20
right.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 10:21

So those, I think that's the collection time difference. So otherwise, it's the same plant. But all the other like lemon ginger tea, there's no tea in it. It's a lemon ginger beverage. It's not tea.

Speaker 4 10:32

Is there is there a reason why you why you why it was so like tea was a very important beverage that you guys drink?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 10:41

There's a certain region in the northeastern side of Turkey that grows a lot of tea, right? So that might be one of the. There is a lot of it in Turkey. Maybe that's why it's. I don't know. I don't know if there is some kind of British influence because, as you know, British people drink tea. Their problem is they put milk in it. We don't.

Student

I I I don't agree with that either.

Lauren Waltz 11:02

So you drink the tea just straight as it is, no sugar. Oh, I do put sugar in there. Do put, but you don't put like honey and stuff in it.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 11:09

My wife does. I don't. But you could, you could. I mean, sugar, honey, whatever, some sweetener. A lot of people drink without any sweetener. Like my sisters. I don't think any of my sisters put sugar. They just drink it like.

Ella Smith 11:25

Do you speak a different language in different settings, such as home, school, work?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 11:32

I speak English and Turkish. Those are the only languages. At home, we speak English because that's our only common language. My wife's native language is French. My native language is Turkish. Our common language is French. She also speaks Spanish, but I don't speak Spanish. English is our common language, and my son speaks English. Understands a little bit of Turkish, but he will he will not speak, and he understands maybe a little bit of French, but because because we have only one common language, that's what we use at home, and so Dylan just he grew up around hearing English from us, and of course at school and all of that. So he he did not catch on to Turkish or French at all. Okay,

Speaker 4 12:25

has he has he gone back with you to visit your family? Oh yeah, yeah.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 12:29

We we went to Turkey a good number of times.

Ella Smith 12:31

Looks good.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 12:32

Yeah.

Ella Smith 12:33

Now, when you're on the phone with your sisters or your brother, do you speak Turkish with them?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 12:37

Oh yeah. Okay. Oh yeah.

Ella Smith 12:39

So you haven't lost any any part of it?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 12:42

Every once in a blue moon, maybe I will have a difficult time remembering a word because I will. I do think in English sometimes as I'm speaking Turkish, right? So every once in a blue moon, I might have a difficult time with a word, but otherwise, my fluency, my thinking, my anything in Turkish, it is the same. Actually, you know there are regional dialects in Turkey too, and it's not just the dialects. Even your vocabulary will be different from one region to another. Not to a degree that people cannot understand each other, but you know, just regional beauty of the language. So, in my region, that north northwest customer, they do have their way of talking. And when I go there, I I talk like that, right? That's how I grew up. I talk like that, and people are just amazed that I can actually, you know, just continue that. I can I

can speak the standard Turkish, which is also called Istanbul Turkish. That standard Turkish. Yeah, I can speak like when I was a teacher in Turkey. That's what I spoke. You know, the standard language. You don't want to go regional there, so I was speaking standard language. But I can speak the the Turkish of my region.

Ella Smith 14:01

What stories have come down to you about your parents and your grandparents, like history-wise?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 14:09

I don't, you know. Funny things, I don't have a lot of stories about. I actually don't have any stories about my grandparents. I don't see any of them.

Ella Smith 14:17

Really?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 14:17

Just remember, I'm the youngest of five, so that makes a difference.

Ella Smith 14:21

Yes.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 14:22

So, well, let me take that back. My father's father passed away when I was two, but I have no recollection at all. And the other, I don't know. I, you know, I people may have told me stories. I don't remember a whole lot. See, to to understand some of the things, you kind of need to understand some, you know, historical information, right, about Turkey. So, Turkey used to be Ottoman Empire. Ottoman Empire became Turkey. Put it that way. So Ottoman Empire is was this huge superpower of the world. Like whatever is the United States right now. Back then, at some point, Ottoman Empire was that. So, Ottoman Empire started in 1299, and then they were at their peak around like 1550 or so, and then they started kind of like going down around you know 1700s or so, and then 1923, Ottoman Empire officially became the Republic of Turkey, right? So around that time, you know 1923, you're right out of the World War One. World War One was in 1914, from 1914 to 1918. So Ottoman Empire was part of that, so when you're in war, a lot of people are lost. You know, you lose a lot of resources. So when Ottoman Empire became the Republic of Turkey, it was like no money, no resources, no education, and it's not like when I tell you the literacy rate around that time, probably was like 10% right? In 1923 in Turkey. Well, yes, but you look at all the other countries, like the United States, is not going to be 90% in 1923 either. So it's like a worldwide thing. So in 1923, Republic of Turkey begins as a very kind of, you know, poor country trying to pay off the debts of Ottoman Empire and trying to stay out of World War II, trying to establish itself as a democracy and this and that. So seven years after that, my father was born, 1930, and he became a teacher. And Turkey, as a young country, put a lot of importance to education, right? So when my father became a teacher, like you were a very important person if you

were a teacher because you were trying to educate people, especially in small villages and remote areas. So that's what he did. So He would be the people that he worked with in those small villages and areas. Sometimes I communicate with them through Facebook and all of that. So when they refer to me, they still kind of like use my father as a reference point. Oh yeah, son of you know my teacher kind of stuff. So there is that. I remember some stories about you know my father being a teacher in that area, in not in that area being like in in small places and how important he was to the community for you know like trying to you're trying to grow a strong educated country and those teachers were part of it, so my father was part of that. So I remember that my mother was a homemaker, so she did not, you know, she did not have an outside the home profession. But she, you know, when you have five kids, your your hands are full, and she did really do a good job, you know, raising us and all of that. So, but I don't really have a lot of stories. I wish I could tell. It's just I know that I would just hear this constant, like respect kind of statements about my father and and his impact on people and places kind of stuff.

Ella Smith 18:15

That's amazing that they put so much importance on education.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 18:18

You had to. You had to when you had when you end up with a country with very little resources and and very few people with educate not just education just like basic literacy I think that was about 10% at the time. So from 1923, 10% literacy rate to about let's say 1990 or so. That literacy rate was about 90 percent by then.

Ella Smith 18:49

Wow!

Dr. Yasar Bodur 18:50

Oh yeah, yeah.

Ella Smith 18:52

That's amazing. Yeah.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 18:54

So one of the things, like as part of your research, I'm not going to tell you much about it, but okay, I'm going to give you the exact outstanding Atatürk. Atatürk is the person who was the founder of Republic of Turkey, right? Actually, there there should be a picture of him somewhere. So that was Atatürk, right? He he's the one who you know started the Republic of Turkey, and he's the one who said you know education is the you know he put the country in its path to a good democracy and this and that. So, kind of for you to understand all that history, you kind of need to maybe do a lot of Google search about him.

Ella Smith 19:54

Okay, definitely. Yeah. Yeah. How are holidays traditionally celebrated in your family, especially since it's two cultures that came together?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 20:08

So you're asking about how our holidays celebrated here.

Ella Smith 20:12

Yes, but then also like back home in Turkey when you come in

Dr. Yasar Bodur 20:16

Turkey, that community orientation just shows itself again, right? So Turkey is a country with about 90 to 95% of the populations Muslims, right? And then the remaining populations are, I think, mostly Christians and everything else. So the Muslim religious holidays are the big holidays, and what is significant about that is that People visit each other. This is kind of weird, but it's it's it's wonderful at the same time. Just think of again a neighborhood kind of place. Think of a neighborhood, let's say with 50 houses, right? So as part of those religious holidays, there is the Ramadan holiday, and then there's the next one? I don't know how it's called in English. So you go and visit like I'm not going to say every single neighbor. You're not going to visit every single house, but probably you're going to end up visiting like 20 people, 20 houses, on a given day. So you go and then spend 510, minutes. You drink some tea, eat some baklava, whatever. So move on to the next house, and then all those people will come and visit you also. Like everybody tours each other, so you you end up seeing everybody. Everybody you end up hosting everybody in your house for a short time. So that that happens in religious holidays, and that's kind of part of that you know strong cultural Collective culture, like people, people emphasis kind of stuff, and another aspect of those religious holidays is to like helping the poor kind of stuff. So that still happens. National holidays, I don't, you know, I haven't been to Turkey in national holidays in a long time, so I actually don't know. But there's there's a very strong sense of patriotism in people, so you want to see a lot of flags everywhere, you know, that kind of stuff. Now, how we celebrate holidays in the United States, we definitely celebrate Christmas. Although I'm not a Christian, I do participate. You know, if they we're you know having the Christmas tree in the house, probably I'm you know most likely I'm the one who puts it up and you know decorating it, and then you know Thanksgiving. You know we will have a big turkey and then have you know the green bean casserole, whatever comes with it. So we we do follow the American traditions. My wife is French, but her mother is American. We are pretty complicated. So my wife's father is French, her mother is American, and and her mother actually lives in the same neighborhood as I do now. Like she's our neighbor. She's right across from us. So we do the American things the way Americans do in my house. The Turkish holidays, I I kind of just do it my own way. You know, my wife is not the same religion as me and my son. I don't think he even has chosen. We kind of we we kind of let him be, right? So my celebration of my own holidays is usually, you know, communicating with my family and friends who who celebrate the same holidays, and American holidays and

Christian holidays here, I will part. I mean, they don't mean a whole lot to me, but I will still participate.

Ella Smith 23:47

That's nice that you still participate, so everybody's together. Yeah.

Lauren Waltz 23:52

So you are Muslim.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 23:54

Yeah.

Lauren Waltz 23:54

Okay.

Ella Smith 23:58

And then, what special type of like food traditions does your family have, like especially growing up? Did you do big dinners or have any specific foods that you would eat for specific holidays?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 24:15

Absolutely, food is definitely a very big part of Turkish culture. One thing is, you know, I talked about tea, right?

Ella Smith 24:27

Right.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 24:27

So you drink tea for breakfast in Turkey. That's like non-negotiable, almost. Well, the new generation is a little different. You know, the new generation drinks coffee or whatever. My generation and people close to my age, we drink tea, and funny thing is, say you're at home, your mother is calling and saying, "Yeah, come to the table, breakfast is ready. That's not how you say it in Turkish. Come to the table, tea is ready, which means breakfast is ready.

Speaker 4 25:00

Because they go together.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 25:01

Yes, exactly. So when somebody says tea is ready, your understanding is that breakfast is ready. Let's go and eat.

Ella Smith 25:06

Interesting. Yeah. That the that tea comes first.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 25:10

Well, tea goes with breakfast. So when you know tea is ready, breakfast is ready. So there's that around religious holidays. There's the tradition of making sure that you make baklava, and then you share that with people around you. And it's it's back in the day it was homemade baklava. People would actually make take time to make the baklava, and then you know everything would be homemade. I think these days people just go to I don't know some bakery shops and buy them. There's that, and then have you ever had? Have you guys had stuffed grape leaves? Do you know what they are?

Ella Smith 25:48

Yes, I have. Yeah,

Dr. Yasar Bodur 25:51

you have. I have. Okay, so we make and eat stuffed grape leaves also quite a bit in in those holiday times. I mean, you can eat them other times too, but so food. I mean, I I don't know that there's a specific food that goes with a specific time, but we we do you know like there's a very rich Turkish cuisine and Turkish food culture. So people, a lot of you know family gatherings or or like people gathering together. There's always food involved in it.

Ella Smith 26:23

What was your favorite food growing up?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 26:25

Oh, there's not. I mean,

Ella Smith 26:27

All of them?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 26:28

I, I, you know, like stuffed grape leaves. I actually, I actually try to make stuffed grape leaves myself here, and it's not easy. But I, you know.

Speaker 4 26:36

Yeah.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 26:37

I called my sisters and I, I got the instructions, and I tried. They turned out okay. You spent you spent like a couple hours. You don't know what I'm talking about.

Student

I personally don't.

Speaker 4 26:49

Is it like? Does it look like what it sounds like?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 26:52

Yeah, grape leaves and you stuff them with. And then you roll them. You roll them with stuff. I might

Lauren Waltz 26:57

have seen. I would have to see it. Maybe I've seen them, but I've definitely never tried them.

Speaker 4 27:02

Yeah, I've never heard of that before. I mean,

Lauren Waltz 27:07

it sounds really cool.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 27:08

That's what it looks like.

Speaker 4 27:10

Oh, okay. I have seen that before.

Lauren Waltz 27:12

Yes, I've seen them, but I've never tried them.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 27:14

So, you know, things that I liked when I was growing up in Turkey, I'm actually able to make pretty much everything, almost everything here. But I mean,

Ella Smith 27:27

yeah,

Dr. Yasar Bodur 27:28

I wouldn't try to make baklava. That's too complicated.

Lauren Waltz 27:32

What is like? What's the like main ingredient of that?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 27:34

Baklava? You never had baklava?

Lauren Waltz 27:37

I have not.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 27:38

Oh dear God, you got some have some growing up to do. It's a sweet thing. It's a dessert. Yeah.

Speaker 4 27:46
Okay.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 27:49
It's it's made from like phyllo dough, like very thin layers of dough, and then you you fill them up with either walnuts or or pistachio or something, and then you you have some hot syrup. Hold on, I'll show you.

Speaker 4 28:10
Yeah, I've heard of baklava, but I've never.

Lauren Waltz 28:12
I've heard it, but I've never seen it or tried it.

Speaker 4 28:16
To try some new things. Yes.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 28:20
It's something like that. It's very flaky and kind of nutty too, because you either have walnuts or pistachios or something. But it's very sweet too. I'm actually not. I'm not crazy about baklava. I'll eat it, but you know, if I don't have baklava, I'm not going to crave it. Yeah. Anyways.

Ella Smith 28:43
So you said that you make a lot of the foods from home.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 28:47
Yeah.

Ella Smith 28:47
So were those recipes passed down to you, like from your siblings,

Dr. Yasar Bodur 28:52
Not officially, but you know, like I feel like eating something. I'll call my sisters and say, so how do I make this?

Ella Smith 28:58
Okay.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 28:58
And then they'll tell me how to make it. Yeah. So I usually do that. A lot of times, you can actually find recipes. You know, there are YouTube channels of people, right? Yes. Telling you recipes and how to cook this and that. I find, you know, such information. But I, I usually go to my sisters and get the information from them. Okay. Okay.

Ella Smith 29:23

And then, what was the most difficult part about leaving Turkey?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 29:37

Oh, it's the people. You know, you you leave people behind. Probably that's the most difficult thing, as far as adapting to a new culture. I mean, you know, if you're educated, if you're you know reasonably smart, and if you if you can speak the new language a little bit, you can adapt to any place. It's not you know. It's it's people always. People you leave behind-that's the most difficult part. It's still difficult. I've been in the states since so 30 years, and can you be homesick for 30 years? You can. Yeah.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 30:11

So that doesn't go away.

Speaker 2 30:14

I assume it was a very difficult like decision to choose between going back to Turkey to teach there and staying here.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 30:20

Yeah. See, the thing is, as I was coming to the United States, my thinking was like, the day I finish my PhD will be the day I go back to Turkey, and and you know I had all these plans, right?

Speaker 2 30:34

Yeah.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 30:35

But then you know, life makes plans for you, so.

Speaker 2 30:38

Yeah. When you first arrived, what was

Dr. Yasar Bodur 30:45

it like? I, I arrived. You know, I went to Florida State, like I said, Tallahassee. And before starting graduate school, before starting my master's program, Florida State had an English school, let's say, like people who were trying to learn, they had a place called Center for Intensive English Studies. So that was a place for people who were trying to improve their English. So I was there for three months, I think, at at the Center for Intensive English Studies. You know, studying English to be ready for graduate school, and the very first day I arrived, may 7 or may 6, 1996, I think it was may 6. I remember getting out of the airport, and Tallahassee is a hot place. You know, it's Florida, right? And it was you know May, but it's almost summertime, and I remember smelling this heavy, humid air, and that smell bothered me so much. And I remember, like, probably my first words in the United States after smelling that air was like, "I cannot live here."

Speaker 2 31:57

Oh no! And

Dr. Yasar Bodur 31:58

I lived in Tallahassee for 10 years. You know, after graduate school, I actually worked at Florida State for a few years. Okay. So, what was difficult? Language is always a difficult thing, right? So when you're trying to learn a new language, it's again, you're an educated person. You know how to read. You know how to write. You know how to comprehend what you're reading, so reading and understanding was not a problem most of time. Expressing yourself in writing, yeah, that could be a problem because there are quite some differences between English and Turkish. Like like the most basic thing is the syntax, right? How you you know order things in a sentence. In in the English language, you have you have the subject you have the verb and you have everything else right in Turkish you have the subject you have everything else and you have the verb

Speaker 2 32:50

oh wow so the verb that

Dr. Yasar Bodur 32:52

that's yeah

Speaker 2 32:55

that's a very

Dr. Yasar Bodur 32:56

like I will I will I will give you a very simple example. You say, you know, I went home, and the Turkish version of it would be. So, eve means to home. Gitim means Went, and this M makes it I. I went home, so you don't even have to say I in the sentence because from the way I say, you know, because there's an M at the end of the sentence, the person understands it's me. If I were saying you went home, this would have been eve kitten instead of an m it would be an n gitin which means u. So that's the the syntax difference, right? So that syntax difference, it you know, it took some time to adapt. Most importantly, two things. Most importantly, not just one. One is the th sound is the most disgusting sound in the world. If you're not, if you're not, you know, if you did not grow up using that, so I probably still have a difficulty with the th sound. That's the first thing, and the second thing is, you know how you have in English she, he, it, him, her. Everything is it in Turkish.

Speaker 2 34:34

Really?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 34:34

Yeah. Everything is it, and the word for it is oh. Oh. That's simple. The word for it is oh. Yeah. Oh. Oh.

Speaker 2 34:46

That's so interesting. So I will. I will. I

Dr. Yasar Bodur 34:48

will. Yeah. I will still. You know. I will still. Sometimes I'll talk to my son about my wife, and I will call her a he. She. You know. Him.

Speaker 2 34:58

Right.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 34:59

Talk about you know, females as him or males as her. I still confuse those after 30 years.

Speaker 4 35:06

Yeah.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 35:08

No, probably I always will. I made my I made my peace with it. So that's that the language part. So those grammatical structural differences between two languages that was a big challenge. The second challenge was understanding when people spoke to you because when you read, you know, you read, you have a hard time with a sentence. You read again, you read again, whatever. You know, you can read slowly, quickly. It's up to you. When you're talking to people, you kind of have to adapt to their pace, and then try to understand what they are saying. And a lot of times, if you're talking to you know reasonable, smart, educated people who speak clearly with proper English or whatever, you you are okay most of the time. Then there are times you you end up talking to people who are not like that, right? So, I I look. I remember in my earlier years. One time, I think I was ordering pizza. And or if you're an international and if you're new to your country, trying to learn the language, ordering pizza is a horrifying experience. It really is. You don't think about that. And back then, you know, cell phones were not very common yet. So, home phone, I I don't know whatever pizza place I called. So the person on the other side said something, but I don't know what they said. So I started ordering. You know, I want this and this and this and that, and then I'm not hearing anything. Later, I figured they said like, "Can you hold on for a second? or something like that. And

Speaker 3 36:51

I don't understand what they were saying. I'm

Dr. Yasar Bodur 36:54

like, "Yeah, I would like you know pizza with mushrooms and olives, whatever. So I was ordering, but you know, there was nobody on the other side, and another kind of a funny story, I guess. When I was in that English school, a group of us from the English school went to have dinner or lunch or something at Applebee's, and the waitress came as we were ordering, and there was this guy from Saudi Arabia sitting

right next to me. The waitress said, "Whatever he ordered came with either soup or salad. And the waitress, "Super salad. And then the guy's like, "What you know? What is super salad?

Speaker 4 37:39
Right.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 37:40

Like he thought there there was like salad there's super salad mega salad whatever different degrees of salad right super salad yeah so you have that that difficulty like communication part of it and automatically you are kind of shy about talking to people as you're learning this and and probably you're going to learn about something called silent period in Dr. Reyes's class. Probably she'll talk about that. Silent period is the the time period when English language learners or this would be applicable to any language actually second language learners. There's a time that you you are more receptive than expressive because you know you're self-conscious, you're anxious, you're shy, or you you just need more time to build that you know base that you need to communicate properly with people. So you you do go through a silent period because you're afraid that you're going to speak with improper grammar, which happens a lot, right? More importantly, if you're coming from a language where the sounds are very different, like the th sound, like I said, you know, I still hate this sound. You say something, and the person on the other side doesn't understand, and you have to repeat yourself. Those are really like very annoying experiences. So you try to avoid them. So that that you know the language part of the experience is definitely a big challenge. Was that the question? I don't know. No, that's

Speaker 2 39:15
totally fine. That I may

Dr. Yasar Bodur 39:16
have deviated from. You are all good. You

Speaker 2 39:18
actually are covering a lot of the stuff we wanted to talk to you about.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 39:21
I used to teach that class. Just keep so you

Speaker 2 39:24
know it. I don't know. That's

Dr. Yasar Bodur 39:26
not an assignment that I did with my students. Well, no. Let me take that back. My students had to do an immigrant interview, so maybe there's a new name for the same assignment. Okay, go on. You're

Speaker 2 39:39

fine. So speaking of language, you moved to the South, and the South has a very different way of speaking than other places. And

Dr. Yasar Bodur 39:47

like Chris,

Speaker 6 39:48

Danny's back in the conference room. He's gonna leave about 6o'clock.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 39:51

That's fine. Okay. All right. Have a good one. And we say words like y'all and all of that. Was that also hard to? It didn't matter to me because I I got exposed to English in in the like live format in the south. I never lived in the north, so whatever I I you know know is whatever I know. So I try to speak like southerners. I I do say y'all, but you know people don't get like people will ask me where you're from, and I tell them I'm from Statesboro. Nobody believes me, but no, it did not bother me. You all and all that. But there were some things, you know. Before I came to the States, I studied English formally, like as as preparation for graduate school in Turkey too. So, like you know, I'm not talking about my English classes in middle school and high school. Like we had to take a foreign language class, which I did, which was English. But you don't learn much other than you know, mr. and mrs. Brown went to picnic, like you know that kind of stuff. But I started studying English seriously when I started graduate school. Into I started graduate school in Turkey at some point, and then after that I'm like okay I want to become a professor and as a professor I have to be able to follow you know the professional academic literature scientific literature in education in you know English written journals too so I started going to a private English school on my own to learn English, and you know, after that, you know, all that scholarship thing and and all of that happened. So, part of the program that the minister of education had was to send us to a a an English school in Turkey for six months for like intensive studying like every day of the week for like six to eight maybe eight hours I don't know six to eight hours studying English so I came to the states with that six hours six months of English training in Turkey and then three more three more months at Florida State, so after that I started graduate school. Remind me your question again. I lost my train. No, you're fine. Don't say you're fine. I'm trying. No, I promise. I actually

Speaker 2 42:12

have a follow-up question to what you just said. Hold on. Yeah, you

Dr. Yasar Bodur 42:14

you were asking me about people saying y'all and all that. Hold on. So the the problem I had, I learned English in a grammar-based manner, right? So it's like you know how people make jokes. I still laugh at like grammar mistakes types of jokes. They just sound so funny to me because I learned English in a in a grammar page.

Have you ever guys seen like LG show? Don't watch it. Don't it's it's horrible, right? But the the funny thing about the LG show, which was an HBO show, but there are a lot of inappropriate things in it, so don't go and watch it. What else? He just spoke broken English all the time. Like in one episode, like what you should do and what you should don't. You know who says that. So that was just so funny to me because he was playing with English. So that was like one of the things when you learn the language in a rule-based manner. So whenever whenever somebody breaks the rule, it's funny to you, but it's also challenging. So in my earlier months in the United States, I stayed in a like a private dorm very close to the Florida State campus, and like I had never heard the word "ain't, right? I'm like, what the hell is this "ain't" business? You know, I couldn't figure it out, and then, you know, like Greens, like, "What's up? What do you mean? What's up? Like you know, it didn't make sense to me at first. But those things, you know, you get you get used to easily. But if if people do not speak proper language with proper pronunciation, I still have trouble after 30 years. Probably like you know, you guys are probably like 20. So it's like I've been speaking language 10 years at least, 10 years more than you've been alive. So every once in a while, you know, I will see someone at a grocery store, or I will need some services in my house. Somebody will come to I don't know, fix my garage or whatever. If they speak with a lot of southern accent, right, and very fast. Now I I will understand about like 30 to 50% of what they are saying, and just take that 30 to 50% and try to make sense of rest of what they are saying, and then communicate with them in that manner. And I and I still have that problem. Yeah. If people speak very fast and improperly, it's a challenge because I did not. It's I did not acquire the language as my native language. I learned it, so I'm you know I'm a learning. It's not acquisition; it's learning. So, anyways, carry on.

Speaker 2 44:56

So the English school that you attended when you were in. Turkey were those like the professors and teachers were they Turkish or were they British? Those

Dr. Yasar Bodur 45:06

those ones were Turkish.

Speaker 7 45:08

Okay,

Dr. Yasar Bodur 45:09

but they they were people who studied English as their you know university majors and all of that. So they had the proper credentials and probably they knew better grammar than you know most people here. Yeah,

Speaker 2 45:22

no, I was just curious because you wouldn't necessarily like think like, oh, there's a whole institution to learn English. What is the thing you are proudest of so far, and why? I

Dr. Yasar Bodur 45:43

don't know. Probably my son. He's 21. He's a senior in college. He's in Athens. He's not becoming a teacher. He's he's studying business. But you know, he, I I know we did not do a good job with the language part of raising him, but you know he he he does understand his you know Turkish culture, Turkish family. You know he has a lot of respect and you know love for the family, and then you know he he turned out good and you know good student doing a good job at school. Probably that's that's a very standard answer. So probably that's not what you're looking for. What's the proudest moment? It's okay if you want to say your sign. It's not. I you know, I've been talking about challenges you may have in a new place when you're trying to learn the new language and all of that, you can adapt to any place. Like I said, if if you're reasonably smart, if you have reasonable education, you can adapt to any culture, right? So we have tools in our brains that we can use. Language could be the main challenge. So the fact that you know, I was able to actually get a doctoral degree. I think that's that's something to be proud of.

Speaker 4 47:08

Absolutely.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 47:10

And later on, okay, you know, I've been here for 20 years. Worked as a professor. I think I had a pretty decent job as a professor. And later on, you know, I was program director. Then I became a department chair. Then I'm an associate dean. So there's a gradual increase in the responsibilities I have taken in my job and the positions I've had. So those are, you know, those types of things.

Speaker 2 47:38

What did you get your doctoral degree in?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 47:40

Elementary education. Oh, okay. Yeah. Maybe you can take a picture of my sofa. I'm joking. You don't have. I mean, if you have to, you can, but you don't have to.

Speaker 2 47:52

How often do you go visit your family in Turkey?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 47:56

Back in the day, I was able to go every summer. These days, you know, maybe every other year, there's not a set plan. It's like whatever life calls for. So, I was not able to go this summer, and the time before that was, I went pretty much exactly a year ago, like my niece was getting married. Yeah, september 9 or something like that. Her her wedding was yeah, like last year around this time I was in Turkey.

Speaker 2 48:36

Do all of your siblings still live in the same town, or have they moved?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 48:39

No, three of them live in the same town, and one of them lives in in a different town. Okay.

Speaker 4 48:47

I have a question. So, is there any like specific like wedding culture traditions in Turkey?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 48:57

I'm sure there are, right?

Speaker 4 49:00

Or any of these? I I I

Dr. Yasar Bodur 49:01

don't know. Well, where's my phone? I'm here. I'll show you some things. Some of the traditions, as you know, traditions change. So I'll I'll give you my answer with a video. I'll I'll try to find your video from my niece's wedding,

Speaker 3 49:34

which I know we'll see it in the video. But do they like wear traditional white dresses there, or do they have like certain dresses that they wear.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 49:41

Yeah, it's just like the rest of the. It's white, you know, wedding gown. And actually, this this specific wedding, like just to show you a picture. That's there's my niece with me on the day of her wedding.

Speaker 2 49:57

Oh wow.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 50:00

So that's September 13, 2025. So it's almost a year ago. So I will give you a sense of what's happening. Hold on. I'll sit next to you so I can hold the video and everybody can see it. Where did this go? It went. So we're talking about September 25, right? Hold

Speaker 4 50:30

on. Because I know, like for us, or at least I know for some people, they have the it's like the tradition where you don't see the bride before the wedding day, and so I wonder how. I

Dr. Yasar Bodur 50:41

don't know if that's the case. Look, so what's happening is that the day of the wedding, the bride, you know, the girl is at home with her family, and the groom comes with his family to take the girl, right? And they make noise, meaning they

they they want to make sure that everybody. When I say they make no, they come with music and like they're not just yelling. So I'm trying to find those videos.

Speaker 2 51:09

They're not just hooting and hollering down the street. Exactly.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 51:11

So. Oh

Speaker 8 51:15

wow.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 51:16

So this is like you know you rent some musicians and all of that, so they are making all that noise just so that people know that there is something special happening. So there's all that musician dancing in front of the house or the apartment where the bride lives, right? And then the woman and his family is a happy event, so there will be some dancing going on there with the music, and I'm sure you're seeing some of them.

Speaker 2 51:42

Yeah.

Speaker 4 51:51

That's cool that they make it a point that is special. I love that, everybody. That's really cool.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 52:11

So what happens is that after this, after they make some noise, the groom comes to the door of the bride's house to take the bride, and here's the groom at the door with his family, mom and whatever brother and all of that. I should have a video of that too. And then he takes the bride, and then they leave the house. Like this is formally when the groom takes the bride out of the house, like you know, she's my man, right? So from here they go to the actual wedding reception location. So there's actual reception after this. So this is formally groom taking the bride out of the house. Now the thing is, after that, all the dancing you saw on the street, the groom and the family. Now the groom and bride and both families will start dancing. Okay.

Speaker 4 53:09

Okay.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 53:10

So there's kind of like integration there, right? So they're coming down to the street. Now they will start dancing.

Speaker 2 53:33

they go.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 53:43

So all that happens, other people join the dances, and then you go to the wedding reception, and you know the wedding receptions. I actually don't know how the wedding receptions are in the United. I haven't been to a lot of weddings in the United States. I had my wedding, you know, that was a long time ago.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 54:01

I don't remember all the details, but one tradition, probably this is a tradition in the United States, to like you know throwing the the bouquets. Yes, yes, the bouquet

Speaker 3 54:12

toss. Oh. There goes.

Speaker 2 54:35

Aww.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 54:37

Let me do that. Yeah. The the actual reception part is really it's it's just music and people dancing, yeah, drinking and dancing. I guess that's that's one. Sounds like

Speaker 2 54:51

most weddings here. Yeah, I don't

Dr. Yasar Bodur 54:54

know. There are a lot of videos of that too, but Helen, if I can.

Speaker 9 55:00

Well, it

Dr. Yasar Bodur 55:02

starts with the romantic dance, right? So it's bride and groom. They start the romantic dance. After that, you start singing other, you know, actual dancing, not romantic. So,

Speaker 3 55:27

is there like a traditional bride and like father daughter dance in that culture?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 55:34

It starts with bride and groom, right, and then after they dance for a couple of minutes, other family members start joining in life. There's a brother with his wife. They will, you know. If there's a sister with her husband, mom and dad, whatever. As the dance dance goes on, you start switching partners. So the dad goes to the daughter, and the mom dances with the you know son-in-law kind of stuff.

Speaker 7 55:58
Okay.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 55:58

That there's that. Then this happens, you know, after the romantic dance, this kind of dancing all night long. Now, as far as the tradition is concerned, you know how you in the United States you register for gifts, like you register at a store or Amazon or whatever. I think people do that in Turkey too. But there's this. I'll find pictures and show you. Hold on. There's this tradition of like giving people money, but you don't just give money. You actually like with a safety pin. You just attach money to. I'll I'll find I'll find some pictures. It will make sense to you. Just give me a second.

Speaker 2 56:50
No, you're fine.

Speaker 3 57:02

Same line. they have a lot of fun over there. Yes, absolutely. It looks really fun. I was getting like I was like, dang, I wish I could experience one of those in my off.

Speaker 4 57:11

That sounds cool. I think I like the part where they play the music in front of their house to let everyone know. Oh yeah, yeah. It's very romantic.

Speaker 3 57:20
Yeah, it's like she's

Dr. Yasar Bodur 57:29

mine. I'm not. There are pictures. Well, you know what? Can can you just grab that picture with the white frame over there? That's my nephew. This is my see all the money and gold just hanging. Oh yes, that wow. So people, if they are registered, you know, you can buy them whatever. But people will either bring and give you some gold or money, and then you can just take that, do whatever you want, you know, which I think is better, right?

Speaker 4 58:00
Yeah.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 58:00

So you can see, it's not that you you clip those things onto their clothes. They had this, you know, like ribbon thing, kind of white ribbon thing. So people have space to put their money. They look at it closely. Yeah.

Speaker 4 58:15

Do you want to take a picture of this? Do you mind if I take a picture?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 58:17

Go ahead. Go ahead. Okay.

Speaker 2 58:20

Um. That we really covered all of the the questions that I think we wanted to, unless you guys have any more questions. No, you're

Dr. Yasar Bodur 58:30

all good.

Speaker 3 58:33

And if there's anything else you wanted to add that we didn't cover, you're more than welcome. If you want to talk about, I'm sure

Dr. Yasar Bodur 58:38

you're covered more.

Speaker 4 58:40

Did you do any of these traditions at your wedding? Anything like that?

Dr. Yasar Bodur 58:44

Oh yeah, yeah. I mean, all those dances we had in in our wedding. The only difference was we we did not actually have musicians. You know, where am I going to find Turkish musicians in Tallahassee? So we had a like player, some kind of you know stereo kind of thing.

Speaker 4 58:59

Okay.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 59:00

We played all kinds of Turkish music and danced, and I remember we had our wedding at the the DoubleTree Hotel or something. And people who were hearing the music, I remember somebody asked me because I stepped outside of the wedding hall at some. Somebody, is this a Greek wedding or a Jewish wedding? I'm like, it's a Turkish wedding. It's neither. Yeah, it's a Turkish wedding. There was there was a video of the whole thing, not I don't mean the whole wedding. The the professionals, you know, who were there taking the like taking the pictures and all of that, they created a like professional like wedding summary type of video, and I'm trying to find that. And there was some interesting music. Jesus, see, I'm Muslim, but you will hear me say Jesus, right? So this is just. You know, grabbing the culture where you live. Is this it? It's not. It's not. Hold on. Okay, the music that good with this is kind of weird, but I don't know if you know this song. Yeah. The bottom of the river. I don't know why anybody would put that in the thing in a video like this. So this is like a summary of the events of the wedding, so that's the street dancing. Next, I think they're gonna go to a place to get their pictures taken. Oh, by the way, see how you see you saw like a little convoy of cars. That's that's another thing. Like you know

how I said you they like to make noise. It's kind of like making a statement. So, in a wedding like this, you will have a convoy of I don't know 20, 3050, cars.

Speaker 4 1:01:29

Wow!

Dr. Yasar Bodur 1:01:30

And as those cars going from you know point A from the house to the wedding location, they will be just you know honking the whole time just to let people know. And and and the very first car in the convoy will be the we call it the bride's car. It's all decorated with flowers and ribbons and this and that. So the the whole place knows that oh there's a wedding going on. So this is when they get to the actual oh where's the play button? Where's the play button? Did I do something?

Speaker 4 1:02:11

Oh, I see it right in the corner over there.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 1:02:13

Okay, now they are coming down to the reception. Like the reception started, so the witness, yes, just like do you take this money? The music is going to change. This is this is a horrible song for you.

Speaker 2 1:02:57

Oh wow! So

Dr. Yasar Bodur 1:03:06

that's what happens. That's Italian, by the way. That's not Turkish.

Speaker 2 1:03:12

I

Dr. Yasar Bodur 1:03:13

was gonna say I don't think that's not Turkish. So that's from almost precisely a year ago. Wow,

Speaker 3 1:03:25

that looks like so much fun. It

Dr. Yasar Bodur 1:03:28

was it was a lot of fun.

Speaker 3 1:03:30

Yeah. Well, we appreciate you sitting down and talking to us and giving us all this information. It was very interesting to learn about your culture, and we appreciate you giving up this time.

Dr. Yasar Bodur 1:03:40

Okay, if you have to take pictures or whatever, you're more than welcome.