Perceptions of Foreigners about Process of Learning Turkish

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Abstract: Foreign students' process of learning Turkish has been a neglected research topic in studies conducted on teaching Turkish to foreigners. This study tackles the process foreign students go through while learning Turkish within the dimension of learning domains. The aim of this study is to obtain information about the Turkish learning process of foreign students who come to Turkey for higher education. This research is a qualitative study. Criterion sampling was used in determining the sample of the study. The criterion of this research was Tanzanian students who have learnt basic Turkish at Gazi TOMER during the 2013-2014 academic year. Data gathering was conducted through document analysis and focus group interviews. The data gathered through semi-structured interviews were analyzed by inductive coding and descriptive analysis method. According to the investigation of the students' perceptions within the dimension of learning domains, the study revealed that the domain the students had most difficulties was listening, while the least difficulty was observed in reading.

Key Words: Turkish education, teaching Turkish as a foreign language, language skills, perception.

Türkçe Öğrenen Yabancıların Öğrenme Süreçlerine Yönelik Algıları

Özet: Yabancılara Türkçenin öğretimi konusu üzerine yapılan çalışmalarda Türkçe öğrenen yabancı öğrencilerin geçirdikleri süreç bir inceleme alanı olarak değerlendirilmemiştir. Bu çalışmada yabancı öğrencilerin Türkçeyi öğrenirken yaşadıkları süreç, öğrenme alanları boyutunda ele alınmıştır. Bu araştırmanın amacı, üniversite eğitimi almak için Türkiye'ye gelen yabancı uyruklu öğrencilerin, Türkçeyi öğrenirken nasıl bir süreç yaşadıklarına dair bilgi sahibi olmaktır. Bu çalışma, nitel bir araştırmadır. Araştırmanın örneklemi belirlenirken ölçüt örneklemeden yararlanılmıştır. Bu araştırmanın ölçütünü, 2013–2014 eğitim öğretim yılında Gazi TÖMER'de Türkçeyi temel seviyede öğrenen Tanzanyalı öğrenciler oluşturmaktadır. Araştırma verileri, doküman incelemesi ve odak grup görüşmesi ile toplanmıştır. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme ile toplanan veriler tümevarımsal kodlama tekniği ve betimsel analiz yöntemiyle çözümlenmiştir. Katılımcıların Türkçeye yönelik algıları öğrenme alanları boyutunda ele alındığında zorlandıkları öğrenme alanın dinleme; zorlanmadıklarının ise okuma olduğu belirlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkçe eğitimi, yabancılara Türkçe öğretimi, dil becerileri, algı.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is regarded as the most powerful tool that enables people to understand each other. Reflective of emotions and thoughts, language is, first of all, the carrier of culture. The ability of individuals from different culture geographies to communicate is strictly related to speaking a common language. Dellal and Günak (2009, 66) state that the languages learned create the opportunity to communicate with different cultures and countries, and emphasize that learning a language other than the native language; above all, helps develop creativity and personality. Understanding a society is possible through leaning the language and cultural elements of that society.

In a time when technological progress is widespread and the nations have to be in close contact with each other, the need for a common language arises (Ungan, 2006: 217). Foreign languages are learned after the mother tongue, at schools, language courses, in a conscious and systematic manner guided by teachers. The reasons for learning a foreign language are quite diversified as they vary among individuals. People need to learn common international languages, in addition to their native language, at the international level to establish and develop individual and institutional relationships, and at the national level for bilateral or multilateral relationships of different characteristics in the fields of trade, economy, politics, military, science, work, culture, communication and so on (Demircan, 1990: 17). A language becomes an international language thanks to the educational, economic, military, scientific prominence of the nation using that language or a religion being widespread.

1.1. Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language

Language consists of four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Both in native and foreign languages teaching, the aim is to provide the students with the basic skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing. Due to the position of Turkey, the need to teach Turkish to foreigners gradually increases. Today, it is seen that this need is more evident for foreigners both in Turkey and abroad.

The related literature shows that teaching Turkish to foreigners has gained importance especially in recent years (Dilidüzgün, 1995; Zengin, 1995; Barın, 2003; Durak, 2006; Güven, 2007; Koşucu, 2007; Ülker, 2007; Yaylı, 2007; Kara, 2010). The studies conducted demonstrate that the research focus is on evaluating the effectiveness of a teaching strategy or method,

grammar errors, and insufficiency of language skills. It could be stated that these studies are assessments the current situation. In these studies, it is observed that there is no feedback on the experiences and the problems related to this process by people who learn Turkish as a foreign language. Moreover, the overview of the literature shoes that the topic is tackled quantitatively. It was seen that there are two researchers who shape their studies through qualitative data.

In a study to determine the opinions of 12 students who learn Turkish as a foreign language abroad on Turkish and Turkey, Yaylı (2007) used the face-to-face interview technique and found out that the students have negative views on both elements, and the causes of their negative views are lack of information, the methods used in teaching Turkish and lack of instruments. It is seen that this research draws a general framework for those studying in this field and the students were not asked to present their opinions concerning the learning domains. It could be stated that this study is the first one to use qualitative methods in the examination of teaching Turkish to foreigners. Besides, Kara (2010) claims to have conducted a qualitative study by observing 1324 students. It does not seem possible to observe that many students at the same time. This study does not include any data based on observation, and instead, written and oral exams of students are used as data.

A further observation regarding studies on teaching Turkish to foreigners reveals a tendency to making generalizations. It is believed that in such research, individual differences should be taken into account, as both previous experiences of learning languages and the cultural background of students have an important role in shaping the perceptions about learning languages (Kaçar and Zengin, 2009, 55). Since these variables affect to a great extent learning a foreign language, it is necessary to know students' perceptions of the target language.

Individuals that learn a target language have observable and non-observable behavior while learning a language. Attitudes, perceptions and beliefs are in the category of non-observable behavior. It is certainly difficult to determine the effect of this sort of behavior on learners while learning a foreign language. In line with the results of the experimental study, Keiko (2008) stresses the importance of the great effect of personal attitudes on learning a target language. Lightbrown and Spada (2006) puts forward that the beliefs and the attitudes that learners hold against themselves also play a crucial role in learning the target language in

addition to the elements such as intelligence, ability, learning styles, personality and motivation that determine success or failure in learning.

It is accepted that beliefs brought along by students in a classroom contribute to the learning process and achievement level (Breen, 2001). These beliefs guide the students in the identification of strategies to be implemented in learning the target language (Abraham and Vann, 1987). According to Mori (1999), it is of crucial importance to investigate the factors that cause individual differences, observed even among students with similar language proficiency, which result in different attitudes towards the task of learning a language. It could be considered a meta-cognitive dimension students' identifying their perceptions of learning a foreign language and their priorities through these perceptions, and shaping the attitude and approach towards language learning. Students with a certain level of awareness might be expected to be more successful in the process of learning the target language. The research conducted so far has not considered the process experienced by foreign students learning Turkish as a study area. The present study discusses the process of learning Turkish experienced by students through learning domains.

Aim

The purpose of this study is to obtain information about the process experienced by foreign students who come to Turkey for higher education and whose level of Turkish is A2. The study aims to answer the following questions:

1. *Which domain is the most difficult for students who learn Turkish* (listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar)?

2. *In which domain do students think they express themselves more comfortably* (listening, speaking, reading, writing)?

3. *How does knowing a second language other than students' native languages contribute to learning Turkish?*

4. *What level of Turkish do students want to acquire?*

2. METHODOLOGY

2. 1. Research Design

Qualitative research design can be defined as a guiding strategy that determines the approach of the research and ensures that different stages are consistent within the

framework of this approach (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008, 69). The research problem of this study is "*What are the learners' perceptions of Turkish as a foreign language?*". A phenomenological method was used to answer this question. Phenomenology focuses on the phenomena that is known but about which there is no deep or detailed understanding (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008: 72). This study adopted a phenomenological approach as it evaluates through first-hand views the process experienced by people who learn Turkish as a foreign language.

2. 2. Participants

Criterion sampling was used in determining the sample of the study. Criterion sampling is the study of all situations that meet a series of predetermined criteria (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008: 112). The research criterion of this study was Tanzanian students who have learnt basic level Turkish (A2) at Gazi TÖMER during the 2013-2014 academic year.

2.3. Data Collection

The research data were collected by document analysis and focus group interviews. In order to choose the participants of the focus groups, 28 Tanzanian students were given semi-structured, open-ended questions that would help them express themselves more comfortably and were asked to give written responses. The draft questions to be used later in the interviews were prepared by taking into consideration the scales of quantitative research previously conducted on the subject. In order to make the questions easily understood, 'explorative questions' were included. Seven experts expressed their opinion on the questions to evaluate the appropriateness and usability of the questions. In accordance with these expert opinions, the final versions of the four questions to be posed to the participants were prepared. To determine the level of comprehension of the participants whose knowledge of Turkish is A2 level, interviews were conducted with 10 A2-level students from Gazi TÖMER, and it was seen that the questions were understood and answered with ease.

After examining the answers given to the semi-structured questions, it was decided that the focus group interviews would be organized with fifteen people (in groups of five). The focus group interviews sought the answers to the predetermined questions. However, the interviews were not conducted through a questionnaire; rather, new fields of inquiry determined during the interviews were sought to be examined with different questions.

Participants were free not to participate in the process during data collection. The participants were informed that their names would be confidential. The participants were

asked whether they gave their consent to the use of audio recording and an audio recording device used after obtaining the necessary permission from the participants. In addition, it was emphasized that the interview could be terminated at any time upon the participants' request. In total, 15 students were interviewed which lasted for approximately 185 minutes (3 hours 5 minutes). Later, the transcription of the interviews was done, which resulted in a 25-page document.

2.4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected through semi-structured interviews were analyzed by inductive coding technique and descriptive analysis method. The analysis process can be summarized as follows: each student was given a number starting from 1, their answers to the four questions of this study were grouped, and then the information gathered from this grouping was categorized under two main headings, 'demographics' and 'perception of Turkish'.

The data categorized under the dimension 'perception of Turkish' were systematically gathered under sub-headings, and inductive method was used to obtain results. In order to ensure the internal reliability and the validity of the research findings, direct quotations from the participants' responses were included in the results. To ensure the reliability of the data, first, an independent expert (observer) transcribed the interviews selected in a random manner and its consistency with the written text was checked. It was seen that the transcribed texts were identical with the written text. Then, the consistency between the results of the descriptive analysis conducted by the researcher and the expert was examined on a sentence basis. To do this, the formula *Reliability = Consensus/* (Consensus + Dissent) by Miles and Huberman (1994) was used. The coding of the two observers for the dimension 'perception of Turkish' was found to be .88 for reliability analysis, also called interobserver agreement. This result was considered an evidence for the reliability of the data obtained by the researcher through the analysis.

Excerpts from the transcribed texts were presented to the participants for confirmation of the interview, and after the research was complete, the findings were presented to the participants for a second confirmation about the reality and validity of the data

3. RESULTS and INTERPRETATION

3.1. Demographic Information

Among 15 participants, twelve were male and three were female. All the participants are Tanzanian who came to Turkey for their undergraduate studies, three in medicine and twelve in engineering. The age range of the participants was 17-21, with the mean age being 19. Although the native language of the participants is Swahili, the language of instruction is English. Thus, the participants had to learn a foreign language at a young age.

3.2. Perceptions of Turkish

The participants' perceptions of Turkish were investigated through four open-ended questions on the difficulties and conveniences experienced in learning Turkish in the learning domains, the effect of knowing a foreign language on learning Turkish and the level of Turkish the participants wish to achieve.

With regards to the question "*Which domain is the most difficult for you in learning Turkish*? *Why*", most of the participants stated that they have difficulties in more than one domain. Table 1 presents the domains in which the participants have difficulties in learning Turkish.

Table 1: Domains in Which Participants Have Difficulties While Learning Turkish

Learning domains	Number of students
Listening	7
Speaking	6
Writing	6
Grammar	3

Table 1 demonstrates that the most difficult domain for the students is listening. According to Özbay (2010, 191), listening is one of the main ways of gathering knowledge, learning and understanding and is as well the key to success. This statement is remarkable in that it highlights the role of listening in language skills. 7 students stated that they face problems in listening activities while learning Turkish. They listed the reasons for this difficulty as the fast-speaking people, and the consequent swallowing of some words during conversations, difficulties in setting the tone, and the use of street language:

Listening is difficult. Because they speak Turkish so fast and I don't understand some words. Some speak Turkish very quietly that I don't understand **(P4)**.

The most difficult domain of learning Turkish is listening. Because many people speak fast and some people use street language. For this reason, I don't hear some words and understanding is difficult **(P8)**.

The most difficult domain of learning Turkish is listening. Because Turkish people speak very fast and some people swallow the words **(P11)**.

"Listening" is the most problematic course because in Turkey people speak Turkish very fast and I don't understand different, difficult words **(P13)**.

One participant explained the listening problem by giving an example from his/her own experience:

The most difficult domain of learning Turkish for me is listening. Last month, I went to the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations. There, the tourist guide introduced the historic sites and beauties. But I was just looking because of my difficulty in listening **(P1)**.

Six students stated that they have difficulties in speaking. The participants told that they have difficulties in pronunciation while speaking Turkish, their vocabulary is not enough to express themselves, and thus, they have difficulties in speaking:

Turkish pronunciation is difficult for me **(P6)**.

The most difficult domain of learning Turkish for me is speaking. I only know English and Swahili. My housemates know only Turkish. So they always speak in Turkish, I cannot speak as I don't understand. When I speak, they don't understand. People on the street tell things to me, I don't understand and don't know how to answer **(P10)**.

I had the biggest difficulty in speaking. Because I know very few Turkish words. So I don't speak much. In addition, some Turkish words are very difficult to say. For example, ı, ö, and ü. So, to me, the most difficult domain is speaking **(P13)**.

Speaking is the most difficult domain for me. Because I know very few Turkish words. It is so difficult to speak Turkish for me **(P15)**.

Regarding the speaking skills, one participant told that s/he first translates the questions posed to him into a language s/he knows better and then into Turkish:

I find speaking the most difficult. In the classroom, I understand most of the time what the teacher says but I have a little bit difficulty in speaking. Because I first translate from Turkish to English, and then, I reply in Turkish, so I talk too slowly **(P14)**

Considered the last stage of teaching language skills, writing is also referred as the most difficult language skill for students (Byrne, 1993; Demirel, 2007). Connor and Mbaye (2002)

view the elements such as grammar, lexical knowledge, spelling and punctuations as the indicator of grammatical competency. There were six students who stated that they have difficulties in writing. Too many rules in writing, some letters in the Turkish alphabet with which they are not familiar, their vocabulary being too limited to be able to write and rules about spelling and punctuation were the reasons expressed by the participants for the difficulties they face with in writing:

For me, writing is more difficult than the others, because I need to follow so many rules like sentence structure and punctuation while writing. Also the letters ğ, ü, ö, ı that don't exist in other languages give me a hard time **(P2)**.

The most difficult domain in learning Turkish for me is writing. Because writing is a complete course package. To write, you need to know to words and grammar. We learn words during the speaking, listening and reading courses. When you gather these words in a sentence, you need to use grammar. Writing is composed of reading, speaking and grammar. For this, it is difficult for me to write **(P9)**.

There are many rules in Turkish. It is therefore very difficult to write for me. There are many suffixes and pronouns in Turkish, it is hard for me to remember them **(P11)**.

The most difficult domain for me is writing. Because sometimes I forget punctuation while writing. This is not a problem in my two languages but if I forget to put a dot on the front vowels in Turkish, the meaning changes. In Swahili and English, two languages I know, a missing dot does not change the meaning, the reader understands. But this is not the case in Turkish. Therefore, writing is the most difficult subject for me. Moreover, many Turkish words are similar **(P12)**.

Three students stated that they have difficulties in grammar. According to the student, the reasons for this difficulty are the number of suffixes in Turkish, the difficulty of grammar, the lack of a dictionary containing the suffixes and the difficulty of remembering the grammar rules they learn:

To me, the most difficult part of the Turkish language is grammar. There are too many rules. Turkish has too many suffixes and they are very complicated. These suffixes are not in the dictionary and are hard to learn **(P5)**.

I find the grammar classes difficult, as the grammar rules are very different and hard. I find t very hard to understand some rules. For example, case suffixes. This subject is very difficult because the dative, the ablative, noun cases, etc. are very complex **(P13)**.

2. With respect to the question "*Which domain is the easiest for you? Why?*" the majority of the students in this study stated that they do not have difficulties in reading. Some of the participants explained that they comfortably express themselves in more than one learning domain. The learning domains that the participants do not face any difficulty are listed below. It is seen that the listening domain is not in this list.

Table 2: Domains in Which Participants Do Not Have Difficulties While Learning Turkish

Learning domains	Number of students
Reading	12
Speech	3
Writing	4

To me, reading is very easy. Because Turkish is read as it is written **(P5)**.

Reading is the easiest. Because both Turkish and Swahili are read in the same way. Some words exist in Swahili. For example, pen (kalem), engineer (mühendis), prayer room (mescit), book (kitap), watch (saat). But some words have different meanings. For example, mühendis means accountant in Swahili **(P7)**.

The easiest subject in learning Turkish is reading. Because in my country, Tanzania, everything is pronounced as written. It is this way in Turkish, too. Another reason is that the letters are similar to our letters such as a, b, c, I can learn Turkish comfortably by using them **(P12)**.

It is easier to read because you can read whatever you write. You read Turkish more easily than you read English. For example, you write 'special' and you have to read 'spesho', so it is very easy to read words and sentences in Turkish **(P14)**.

The participants' responses show that the reasons for reading domain to be easy for them are the similarity between Turkish and their native language, Turkish being read as it is written and some common loan words from Arabic both in Turkish and in their native languages. In addition, some participants underlined that reading offers the individual the opportunity to act alone, there is no time limitation and the possibility of checking the words in the dictionary while reading:

Reading is easy for me while learning Turkish. Reading very interesting and very useful. For example, while reading a book I learn many new words. Also, I learn Turkish more easily while reading. Because if I don't understand a word I check it in the dictionary, but if I don't understand a word while talking or listening, I cannot check it **(P8)**.

To me, reading is easy because I can read. Swahili and Turkish are similar but not identical. In addition, if there is a word I don't know while reading a book, I can look it up in to the dictionary, but I cannot do so while speaking as people talk very fast **(P13)**.

One participant compared her/his native language, the foreign language s/he knows, and stated that writing is a rather easy process for her/him for the same reasons:

Reading and writing are easy for me in learning Turkish. Because Turkish letters are like Swahili and English letters. So it was easy for me to learn Turkish. Because I know most of the letters. But I learned here some Turkish letters like ı, ö, ü and ğ. Writing and reading Turkish words are very similar. In other words, writing and reading in Turkish and Swahili are in the same way. But this way is different than English. Some Turkish words are written and read like in Swahili, and the meaning is similar. For instance, that is (yani), weak (zayıf), poor (fakir), religion (din), imam, worship (ibadet) and so on. These are Turkish words, but they exist in Swahili **(P1)**.

Ehrman and Oxford (1995) found out that the perceptions of individuals about their ability to learn a language well are strictly related to both speaking and reading proficiency levels. Three students in this study stated that the speaking domain is easy for them:

I have Turkish people at home, so we always speak in Turkish. Because my teacher teaches well **(P4)**.

Speaking is easy for me while learning Turkish. Because we are free in this class. We talk about our days with our teacher. We learn new words from the speaking class. We both learn during this class and have fun. In addition, this class helps us relieve our stress, because we have a very good teacher who loves us **(P9)**.

Speaking is easy for me while learning Turkish. Because my teacher teaches slowly. So I understand very well **(P11)**.

The explanations of the students who stated that they do not have difficulties in the speaking domain show that the reason for them to find speaking easy could be related to the

factor of 'teacher'. The participants' emphasis on the 'teacher' is regarded as an important data revealing the role of the teacher in teaching Turkish to foreigners. Researchers state that the positive beliefs about learning a foreign language when combined with a learning environment based on trust between the teacher and the student accelerate the process of learning a foreign language (Mantle Bromley, 1995, Victori et. all, 1995).

The responses of the four students who told that the writing domain is 'easy' demonstrate that the expressions used for the reading domain are relevant for the writing domain. The reason they find writing easy was explained as the use of the Latin alphabet:

Writing is easy for me in learning Turkish. Because Turkish letters are in Latin alphabet like my mother tongue, Swahili. Thus, writing Turkish is easy for me. Turkish letters and Swahili letters are the same, but ı, ö, ü and ğ are only in Turkish and not in Swahili **(P10)**.

3. With respect to the question "*Does knowing English make learning Turkish easier?*", only one student out of 15 told that knowing English makes it difficult to learn Turkish:

To me, using English is not good for learning Turkish. Because students rely on English and don't learn Turkish. For this, they don't learn Turkish **(P7)**.

Other participants reported that knowing English facilitates learning Turkish. The opinions expressed show that the participants use English in order to communicate with their environment.

Knowing English made it easier for me to learn Turkish. Most people in Turkey do not know Swahili. But some of them speak English, so I use English to develop my Turkish. In some places, such as banks, subway, airport and other places, they write important announcements in Turkish and English. Thus, by reading announcements I improve my Turkish **(P1)**.

Knowing English made it easier to learn Turkish. My Turkish friends speak English. So they explain Turkish words to me in English and English words in Turkish. That's why it is very easy to learn Turkish **(P8)**.

Knowing English made it easier to learn Turkish. English helps me to translate some words in Turkish. Thus I can easily understand some sentences and words. Some Turkish people speak English. I understand the meaning of English-Turkish sentences with them. Some important announcements in Turkey in hotels, subways, restaurants, buses are written in English and Turkish **(P10)**.

As seen from the above excerpts, the participants use English in order to communicate with Turkish people.

The participants expressed that knowing English contributes to learning Turkish, as they use Turkish-English dictionaries to check the new words due to the lack of a Turkish-Swahili dictionary:

English helps me when I use the English-Turkish and Turkish-English dictionary to check the words that I don't know **(P2)**.

There are Turkish-English dictionaries in Turkey, but there is no Swahili-Turkish dictionary. For this reason, I use to the English dictionary to translate **(P4)**.

Two participants stated that there are common words in Turkish and English:

I think knowing English made it easier for me to learn Turkish because there are many words in Turkish similar to words in English **(P3)**.

It is easy. Turkish words derive from English. E.g. system, internet, t-shirt **(P6)**.

4. Regarding the question "*What level of Turkish do you want to acquire?*", the participants stated that they want to acquire a level of Turkish sufficient to understand the courses at the university, as they will attend universities in Turkey for their undergraduate studies:

I want to receive a Turkish diploma. Because I am going to study at the university in Turkey. There we will speak only in Turkish, because most students and teachers know Turkish. I'll have so many opportunities with Turkish and several important things. It must study Turkish **(P1)**.

I want to learn at an advanced level. Because I'll study in Turkey and I like Turkish. Turkish is a very beautiful language. I want to speak Turkish like Turkish people. I want to learn Turkish to the finest detail **(P5)**.

Turkish is very important because it's used at the university **(P7)**.

I want to get a Turkish diploma. With a Turkish diploma, I will be speaking Turkish in the classroom, at home, on the street, at office and hospital. With a Turkish diploma, I'll overcome my difficulties in writing, speaking, reading, listening and grammar. The university

courses are all taught in Turkish, thus the courses will be easier with the diploma. The Turkish diploma will help me to learn the tradition and culture in Turkey **(P10)**.

Some of the participants stated that they want to be proficient in "general Turkish". These participants want to achieve a level of learn Turkish that will enable them to comprehend Turkish fully while reading books, listening to music, watching films and television series:

Sufficient to read a novel in Turkish. To understand films in Turkish. To speak fast **(P4)**.

I want to learn Turkish well and I'll do so. First, I want to read Turkish articles. I like a lot novels, stories, tales, legends. Second, I want to watch Turkish films. I watch some Turkish TV series but I don't understand some words. But I want to understand all the words **(P9)**.

I want to listen to music. Music is fun, but hard to understand because I know very few Turkish words. I'll be very happy when I understand the music. I really enjoy watching TV; there are many different worlds there. I watch Turkish films because I want to develop my Turkish. Also, my dream is to become a teacher at a school in Turkey. Thus, knowledge of Turkish is very important. That is, I want a good level of knowledge of Turkish **(P13)**.

Two participants want to learn Turkish at an "academic" level:

I want to be an expert of Turkish. I really want to learn Turkish at the highest level possible with all its details **(P2)**.

I want to learn Turkish in the best way. In the future I want to write some story books. I want to read Turkish books. In addition, I want to hold major conferences in Turkish around the world. I want to participate in Turkish television shows. Then later, I want to be a professor of Turkish **(P3)**.

The explanation of a participant who wants to achieve a level of Turkish necessary for being translator is as follows:

I want to learn at a professional level because when I go back to Tanzania I'm thinking of becoming a translator, there are many Turkish companies in Tanzania, and tourists come from Turkey every summer. In addition, as I know that Turkish people are very good at trade, I think everyone will try to learn Turkish. My third reason is that I want to attend a university in Turkey. I need to be at a professional level in order to study **(P12)**.

4. CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the perceptions of the participants about Turkish in terms of the learning domains and found out that the most difficult learning domain is *listening* while most of the participants do not have difficulties in the *reading* domain. All participants except for one stated that knowing English makes it easier to learn Turkish with regards to the question 'Does knowing English make it easier to learn Turkish?'. Most of the participants expressed that they want to acquire a level of Turkish that would enable them to follow the courses at the university and a general level that would provide them with communication skills, and some of them told that they would like to use Turkish at an academic level.

Little is known about how a target language is learned in the context it is spoken or in other words, little is known about the target language learners' beliefs of language learning and self-confidence as a language learner (Dörnyei, 2005). Brown (2009-a:407) proposes that learning a target language in the country where it is spoken is of great importance as it motivates learners of this target language.

There are many experimental studies that investigate how learners experience the process in which they learn the target language in the country where it is spoken. It is seen that these studies for the most part focus on research areas such as fluent speaking (Segalowitz & Freed, 2004), grammatical development (Regan, 1995; Isabelli, 2004), acquisition of phonology (Diaz-Campos, 2004), reading comprehension (Brecht et al., 1995), strategy use (Hassall, 2006), students' attitudes towards language learning (Brown, 2009-b; Tarp, 2006; Pellegrino, 1998; Wilkinson, 1998). The quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that individuals who learn a foreign language aboard change their beliefs in areas such as learning time, learner autonomy and learning, and teacher role compared to those who learn in their own country. Moreover, the results of these studies reveal how this situation is reflected in the experiences and their future life of the individuals that have learned a foreign language abroad.

Aiming to determine foreign language learners' attitudes, perceptions and beliefs towards the target language, Wesely (2012: 111) states that learners' attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs are effective in their success in learning a target language; however, adds that it is not possible to determine definitively how these affect the success. There are quite a few studies that are in alignment with this view (Yoshida, 2008; MacIntyre, 2007, Barcelos, 2003).

Previous academic achievement has an effect on learning a new language (Stenson, 1998). Therefore, learners' academic achievements should be also considered in the studies. In this way, their motivation might be increased, and learners' attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs towards a target language can be directed positively.

Language education cannot be irrespective of students' conditions and expectations. This study is believed to be significant as the success level of language learning will increase if foreign students' perceptions of Turkish are understood. The students' adoption of control over their own processes of learning Turkish would result in an increased self-esteem, in addition to an acceleration of the process of learning Turkish. Students' realizing their perceptions of Turkish while learning the language is considered a positive step towards comprehending their awareness. At the same time, determining students' perceptions is believed to be useful in clarifying the way to be followed in teaching Turkish.

Recommendations

1. An analysis of the needs that takes into account individual differences in teaching Turkish to foreigners should be made.

2. The activities aiming at the learning domains should be organized in a way that ensures the equal development of each domain and it should be ensured that the activities support each other.

3. Teachers who teach Turkish to foreigners should consider the interests and needs of the students and consider them in classroom activities.

4. Researchers studying the subject should focus on the characteristics of a particular group, rather than generalizations because teaching Turkish to foreigners is a significant subject. As the characteristics of the target group are quite diverse and variable, generalizations should be avoided.

5. Researchers should embark upon studies that evaluate the practices in the field of teaching Turkish to foreigners.

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GENİŞ ÖZET

Dil öğretiminde dinleme, okuma, konuşma ve yazma temel becerilerinin kazandırılması hedeflenmektedir. Türkiye'nin içinde bulunduğu konum itibariyle Türkçenin yabancılara öğretilmesi ihtiyacı her geçen gün biraz daha artmaktadır. Bugün bu ihtiyacın gerek Türkiye'de bulunan gerekse Türkiye dışında Türkçe öğrenmek isteyen yabancılar için daha da belirginleştiği görülmektedir.

Yabancılara Türkçenin öğretimi konusunun özellikle son yıllarda oldukça önem kazandığı ilgili literatürden anlaşılmaktadır Yabancılara Türkçe öğretimi üzerine yapılan çalışmalarda bir genellemede bulunma eğilimi olduğu gözlenmektedir. Ancak bu alanda yapılan araştırmalarda bireysel farklılıkların göz önüne alınması gerektiği düşünülmektedir. Çünkü yabancı dil öğretimi üzerine yürütülen çalışmalarda hem önceki dil öğrenme deneyimleri hem de sahip olunan kültürel geçmişin yabancı dil öğrencilerinin dil öğrenmeyle ilgili algılarını şekillendirmede önemli bir yeri olduğu belirtilmektedir Bu değişkenlerin yabancı dil öğrenmeyi önemli oranda etkilediği dikkate alınırsa öğrencilerin hedef dile yönelik algılarının bilinmesi gerekliliği anlaşılmaktadır. Öğrencilerin yabancı dil öğrenme ile ilgili algıları ile bu algılar doğrultusunda önceliklerini belirlemeleri ve dil öğrenmeye yönelik aldıkları tavrı ve yaklaşımı şekillendirmesi üstbilişsel bir boyut olarak değerlendirilebilir. Kendi farkındalıklarını bilen öğrencilerin, hedef dili öğrenme sürecinde daha başarılı olacağı yorumu yapılabilir. Bu zamana kadar yapılan çalışmalarda Türkçe öğrenen yabancı öğrencilerin geçirdikleri süreç bir inceleme alanı olarak değerlendirilmemiştir. Bu çalışmada ise öğrencilerin Türkçeyi öğrenirken yaşadıkları süreç, öğrenme alanları boyutunda ele alınmıştır.

Amaç

Bu araştırmanın amacı, üniversite eğitimi almak için Türkiye'ye gelen ve Türkçesi A2 seviyesinde olan yabancı uyruklu öğrencilerin, Türkçeyi öğrenirken nasıl bir süreç yaşadıklarına dair bilgi sahibi olmaktır. Çalışma, aşağıdaki sorulara cevap aramayı amaçlamaktadır:

1. *Öğrencilerin Türkçeyi öğrenirken en çok zorlandıkları alan hangisidir* (Dinleme, konuşma, okuma, yazma, dil bilgisi)?

2. *Öğrenciler, hangi beceri alanında kendilerini rahat olarak ifade edebildiklerini düşünmektedir* (Dinleme, konuşma, okuma, yazma)?

3. *Öğrencilerin ana dillerinden başka bir dil daha bilmeleri, Türkçeyi öğrenmeleri sırasında ne tür katkılar sağlamıştır?*

4. *Öğrenciler, Türkçeyi hangi seviyede öğrenmek istemektedir?*

Araştırmanın Deseni

"Yabancı dil olarak Türkçeyi öğrenenlerin Türkçeye yönelik algıları nedir?" sorusu, araştırmanın problem durumunu oluşturmaktadır. Bu durumu ortaya koymak için araştırma, olgu bilim bakış açısıyla

değerlendirilmiştir. Olgu bilim (fenomenoloji), farkında olunan ancak derinlemesine ve ayrıntılı bir anlayışa sahip olunmayan olgulara odaklanmaktadır. Bu çalışmada da yabancı dil olarak Türkçeyi öğrenen kişilerin yaşadıkları sürecin birinci elden görüşler alınarak değerlendirilmesi yapıldığı için olgu bilim bakış açısı benimsenmiştir.

Çalışma Grubu

Araştırmanın örneklemi belirlenirken ölçüt örneklemeden yararlanılmıştır. Bu araştırmanın ölçütünü, 2013–2014 eğitim öğretim yılında Gazi TÖMER'de Türkçeyi temel seviyede (A2) öğrenen Tanzanyalı öğrenciler oluşturmaktadır.

Verilerin Toplanması ve Analizi

Araştırma verileri, doküman incelemesi ve odak grup görüşmesi ile toplanmıştır. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme ile toplanan veriler, tümevarımsal kodlama tekniği ve betimsel analiz yöntemiyle çözümlenmiştir.

Bulgular ve Yorum

Demografik Bilgiler

15 katılımcının 3'ü kadın, 12'si erkektir. Katılımcıların hepsi Tanzanyalı olup üçü tıp, on ikisi mühendislik alanında lisans eğitimi almak üzere Türkiye'ye gelmişlerdir. Katılımcıların yaş aralığı 17-21 arasında değişmektedir. Katılımcıların ana dili Swahilice olmakla beraber ülkelerindeki eğitim dili İngilizcedir.

Türkçeye Yönelik Algılar

1. "Türkçeyi öğrenirken en çok zorlandığınız alan hangisidir? Niçin?" sorusunda katılımcıların büyük bir çoğunluğu birden fazla öğrenme alanında zorlandıklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Öğrenciler en çok dinleme becerisinde zorlandıklarını ifade etmişlerdir: *Dinleme zor. Çünkü Türkçeyi hızlı konuşuyorlar bu yüzden bazı kelimeleri anlamıyorum. Bazı Türkçeyi sessiz konuşuyor anlamıyorum* (**K4**).

2. "Türkçe öğrenirken size kolay gelen alan hangisidir? Niçin?" sorusuna araştırma kapsamında görüşleri alınan öğrencilerin büyük çoğunluğu okuma becerisinde zorlanmadıkları yönünde dönüt vermişlerdir.

3. **"***İngilizce bilmeniz Türkçe öğrenmenizi kolaylaştırdı mı?*" sorusunda 15 katılımcıdan biri, İngilizce bilmenin Türkçe öğrenmeyi zorlaştırdığını düşünmektedir: *Bence İngilizce kullanmak Türkçe öğreniyor güzel değil. Çünkü öğrenciler, İngilizce güvenmek Türkçe öğrenmiyorlar. Bunun için onlar Türkçe öğreniyor değil* (**K7**).

4. "Türkçeyi hangi seviyede öğrenmek istiyorsunuz?" sorusuna katılımcılar Türkiye'de üniversite eğitimi alacakları için üniversitede alacakları dersleri anlayacak düzeyde Türkçe öğrenmek istediklerini ifade etmişlerdir.

Sonuç ve Öneriler

Katılımcıların Türkçeye yönelik algıları öğrenme alanları boyutunda ele alındığında zorlandıkları öğrenme alanın *"dinleme"* olduğu; büyük bir çoğunluğunun *"okuma"* becerisinde zorlanmadıkları belirlenmiştir. **"***İngilizce bilmeniz Türkçe öğrenmenizi kolaylaştırdı mı?*" sorusunda 15 katılımcıdan biri hariç İngilizce bilmenin Türkçe öğrenmelerini kolaylaştırdığı yönünde görüş bildirmiştir. Katılımcıların pek çoğu Türkçeyi üniversite öğrenimlerini sürdürmeye yetecek, Türkçe iletişim becerilerinde zorlanmayacak yani genel seviyede öğrenmek istediğini; bir kısmı ise akademik düzeyde Türkçeyi kullanmak istediğini ifade etmiştir. Ulaşılan sonuç doğrultusunda şu önerilerde bulunulmuştur:

1. Yabancılara Türkçe öğretiminde bireysel farklılıkların göz önüne alındığı bir ihtiyaç analizi yapılmalıdır.

2. Öğrenme alanlarına yönelik düzenlenen etkinlikler, her birinin eşit düzeyde gelişmesini sağlayacak şekilde düzenlenmeli ve etkinliklerin birbirini destekler nitelikte olmasına dikkat edilmelidir.

3. Yabancılara Türkçe öğretenler, öğrencilerin ilgi ve ihtiyaçlarını göz önünde bulundurmalı; sınıf uygulamalarında bu noktadan hareket etmelidir.

4. Bu alanda çalışan araştırmacılar, çalışmalarında genellemelere ulaşmadan ziyade belli bir grubun özelliklerini gözler önüne sermeyi amaçlamalıdır. Çünkü yabancılara Türkçe öğretimi özel ve önemli bir alandır. Hedef kitlenin özellikleri oldukça çeşitli ve değişken olduğu için genellemelerden kaçınılmalıdır.

5. Araştırmacılar tarafından yabancılara Türkçe öğretimi alanındaki uygulamaların değerlendirildiği çalışmalar yapılmalıdır.