The Impressions of International Higher Education Alumni about Turkish Language and Turkey in the Context of Big and Small Cities

Dr. Sümeyye Konuk
Trakya University - Turkey
ORCID: 0000-0003-0896-0711
sumeyyekonuk@trakya.edu.tr

Abstract

In the last three years, in terms of the presence of international students in higher education, Turkey has become one of the top 10 countries in the world. This study aims at finding the reasons that make Turkey attractive for international students. With this aim, (1) reasons for country choice, (2) reasons for city choice, (3) Turkish learning experiences and (4) advantages and disadvantages of social and educational life experienced by alumni were investigated comparatively in the context of a big city and a small city. Data were obtained by conducting interviews with 42 international alumni who had completed their studies in Turkey and went back to their countries. The results indicated that scholarships supported by the Turkish state had the highest popularity in attracting international student mobility. The other reasons for selecting Turkey were educational opportunities, religious affinity, cultural affinity, and inexpensiveness. Istanbul was perceived as a crowded city that provides space for individual freedom and plenty of personal development, while Edirne was perceived as an inexpensive and calm city, and this calmness made internationals stand out. The alumni who studied in Turkish-medium departments stated negative opinions about the quality of Turkish language teaching and teachers at language preparation classes, while the alumni who studied in English-medium departments found Turkish teaching sufficient. While learning the Turkish language, the alumni had problems with Turkish suffixes, vocalizing letters like ü and ö, diffidence, inability to develop ideas because of thinking about how to say things, and limited mobile application material support. The advantages and disadvantages of social and educational life and other results of the study were discussed in the context of the international literature.

Keywords: Turkish as a foreign language, International students, Higher education, Turkey

INTRODUCTION

Student mobility in higher education around the world has increased year by year. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected student mobility as well as every other issue. In the Chinese context, due to the pandemic, students are not interested in studying abroad, health is at the forefront, and the direction of the mobility flow of international students is shifting to areas that are close, rather than remote countries (Mok, Xiong, Kea, and Cheung, 2021). Considering the global impact of the pandemic, similar results are likely to be present in other countries. According to the statistics of UNESCO (2018), the first two countries with the highest international student presence are the United States with 987,314 students and the United Kingdom with 452,079 students. These countries are followed respectively by Australia, Germany, Russia, France, Canada, Japan and China. Turkey ranks tenth with 125,138 students. Hou and Du (2020) stated that international student mobility is affected by economic progress and the progress of higher education in developing countries. Seven-year changes in the international student presence of Turkey confirm this thesis.

Table 1. *The presence of international students in Turkey*

Years	Male	Female	Total
2019-2020	119611	65436	185047
2018-2019	100178	54268	154446
2017-2018	81706	43324	125030
2016-2017	71775	36172	107947
2015-2016	60037	27680	87717
2014-2015	49533	22487	72020
2013-2014	33420	14749	48169

(Turkish Higher Education Institution, 2020)

Referring to Turkey's international student statistics, it is seen that the number of students has increased rapidly since 2013 (Table 1). According to the statistics of the Turkish Higher Education Institution (2020), the number of international students, which was 48169 in 2013, reached 185047 by 2020. In just seven years, the number of students has almost quadrupled. Riaño, Mol and Raghuram (2018) pointed out that the flow of international students may be influenced by a country's geography, migration history, political system, political power and position in the global context. The Brexit process in the United Kingdom and the election of Donald Trump as the President of the United States have been important waves that have affected international student mobility in the context of these countries (Choudaha, 2017). Moreover, a study showed that international student mobility is not consistently controlled by traditionally central countries, but China, Australia, Japan and India are rising to the center gradually (Hou, Fan, Du, Gui, and Duan, 2020).

Table 2 shows statistics of the countries sending students to Turkey in 2018-2019. Accordingly, Syria comes first. The ongoing civil war in Syria since 2011 is an important reason for this situation (Şafak-Ayvazoğlu, Kunuroğlu, and Yağmur, 2021). In addition to Iraq, Turkey is a country that is preferred by Iranian and Afghan students.

2

Table 2. *International student statistics of countries sending more than a thousand students to Turkey*

Country	Male	Female	Total
Syrian Arab Republic	17096	9938	27034
Republic of Azerbaijan	14432	4951	19383
Turkmenistan	10827	6744	17571
Iraqi Republic	5478	2130	7608
Islamic Republic of Iran	3853	3301	7154
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan	5624	1180	6804
Federal Republic of Germany	1735	2643	4378
Federal Republic of Somalia	2679	1085	3764
Republic of Yemen	2528	548	3076
Republic of Bulgaria	1440	1570	3010
Hellenic Republic	1352	1361	2713
Arab Republic of Egypt	2116	794	2910
State of Palestine	1934	549	2483
People's Republic of China	1247	1010	2257
Republic of Kazakhstan	1073	1118	2191
Islamic Republic of Pakistan	1583	532	2115
Kyrgyz Republic	1071	866	1937
Libyan State	1314	442	1756
Russian Federation	756	647	1403
Republic of Kosovo	719	603	1322
Republic of Indonesia	795	423	1218
Republic of Albania	522	626	1148
Republic of Uzbekistan	585	490	1075
Kingdom of Morocco	540	531	1071

(Turkish Higher Education Institution, 2020)

International student mobility is an important source of income for countries, and it is a massive market. However, it is necessary to look at the issue not only from a financial perspective but also from many different sides. In their study with international students in Canada, Guo and Guo (2017) found that the neoliberal approach, which treats internationalization as a marketing strategy, poses a problem. On the other hand, student circulation improves mutual understanding, cooperation between countries and cultures, and increases the quality of higher education. International students increase the graduation rate of host students and provide efficiency in education (Abegaz, Lahiri, and Morshedb, 2019). International students do not only gain knowledge from their experiences in a foreign country but also enable the spread and flow of knowledge on a global level (Hou et al., 2020). In some studies conducted outside Turkey, adjustment issues for international students have come to the fore (Quan, He, and Sloan, 2016; Xiao, Yang, and Bernardo, 2019). Factors contributing to the adjustment of international students are host language competency, knowledge about the host country, prior overseas experience, autonomy in the decision to study abroad, intercultural competence, social contact, and social support (Schartner and Young, 2016). International students in the United States mostly experience acculturative stress, as well as psychological adjustment, social belonging, depression and anxiety problems in their psychosocial adjustment process (Brunsting, Zachry, and Takeuchic, 2018). Despite all these adaptation problems, many international students see internationalization as a positive experience for academic and personal development (Guo and Guo, 2017). Moreover, for international students, higher education institutions have a lot to do. Such actions include

psychological support (Shu, Ahmed, Pickett, Ayman, and McAbee, 2020) and better information on student rights (Ramia, 2017) provided for international students.

International student research examines the age groups on primary, secondary and higher education levels in Turkey. Here, primary education in Turkey refers to the levels of primary and secondary school, whereas secondary education refers to the level of high school. Studies on the levels of primary and secondary school focus on international students who have immigrated to Turkey because of war or other conflicts. These younger children have been reported to experience problems in communicating with their teachers, friends and people around, due to their inability to understand Turkish. This situation has brought along adjustment problems, and eventually, these students have had low academic achievement (Güngör and Şenel, 2018; Levent and Çayak 2017; Sarmini, Topçu, and Scharbrodt, 2020; Şimşir and Dilmaç, 2018). International students in higher education come to Turkey with their individual preferences. Previous research has been centered on the problems of international higher education students. These problems emerge from three themes: economic problems, adjustment problems, and language and communication problems. International students have financial difficulties in making a living (Ercan, 2019; Özkan, 2019). They feel lonely in Turkey (Taylan, 2019) and tend to have higher levels of burn-out syndrome than domestic students (Adoum, 2017). They think psychological counseling and guidance services at universities are not on a sufficient level (Akıl, 2018). Since their Turkish is insufficient, these students have difficulty in understanding the classes at universities, especially in the first years of their education (Demir, 2017; Solak, 2019; Temel, 2019). Nonetheless, the topic of teaching Turkish to foreigners gets much deserved attention in Turkey. Until 2014, 147 dissertations on teaching Turkish to foreigners had been published (Büyükikiz, 2014). A previous study examining dissertations in the field of Turkish language education showed that teaching Turkish to foreigners is one of the five most preferred topics of research in the field (Özçakmak, 2017). It has the potential to be a source for research in different directions because Turkey has experienced the intensity of higher education student mobility for the last seven years.

In this study, it was aimed to shed light on the underlying reasons for international alumni' country and city preferences, views about Turkey, views about two cities: Istanbul and Edirne, views on Turkish language teaching processes, views on the amenities, and difficulties in their lives as students. Their personal and academic experiences were investigated comparatively in the context of a big city and a small city. Turkey, which has an increasing number of international students in a remarkable way year by year, was viewed in this study from the perspectives of international alumni. As pointed on in the article, Turkey has become an interesting country for international students in higher education, and this study could provide some directions for future programs to improve Turkish language learning and the quality of the education received by international students.

METHOD

This study employed the phenomenology method, which is a qualitative research method. The experiences of alumni are significant to the impressions of the country where these individuals spend their studentship. To expound the text of life, interviews based on personal experiences are suitable (Van der Mescht, 2004). The phenomenon that was focused on in this study was being an international student in Turkey. This study differs from other studies in that it included graduated international students. It examined Turkey's impression among international alumni who had returned to their country after completing their education in Turkey. Patton (2002) stated that the phenomenon under investigation must have been experienced and in the past, and as a justification for this, the author pointed out that if the phenomenon is considered while

experiencing it, the essence of the phenomenon can be missed. For this reason, the sample was determined by using the criterion sampling method (Baltacı, 2018). The basic criteria were selected as having graduated and currently residing outside Turkey. Forty-two graduated international students living in 20 different countries constituted the participants. The participants' information is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. *Information of participants*

Countries	Alumni	Department	Alumni	Other	Alumni
Afghanistan	7	Medical School	9	Male	19
Gambia	5	Nursing	5	Female	23
Greece	4	School of Education	4	25-30 years old	39
Bosnia and Herzegovina	4	Sports Sciences	3	Over the age of 30	3
Albania	3	Economics	2	Educated in Istanbul	20
Ghana	3	Theology	2	Educated in Edirne	22
Romania	3	Business	2	Graduated from Turkish-medium departments	23
Macedonia	1	Pharmaceutical Sciences	3	Graduated from English-medium departments	19
Namibia	1	German Translation and Interpretation	2		
Cameroon	1	Mechanical Engineering	2		
Mali	1	Physics	1		
Indonesia	1	Audiometry	1		
Montenegro	1	Balkan Studies	1		
Somalia	1	International Trade	1		
Congo	1	Law School	1		
Yemen	1	History	1		
Bulgaria	1	Biochemistry	1		
Ireland	1	Banking and Insurance	1		
Turkmenistan	1				
Italy	1				

One of the alumni knew 8 languages, three knew 6 languages, two knew 5 languages, thirteen knew 4 languages, thirteen others knew 3 languages, and ten knew 2 languages. There was no monolingual individual among the participants. It was determined that the graduates knew 26 different languages in total. These languages were Arabic, Albanian, Bissa, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Indonesian, Persian, French, Hausa, Croatian, Welsh, English, Spanish, Italian, Montenegrin, Macedonian, Mandinka, Uzbek, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Somali, Turkmen, Wolof, Greek, and Twi.

An interview form consisting of open-ended questions was used for data collection (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). The interview questions were created in such a way that the participants could explain their past international student experience in depth. Later, these questions were presented to the opinions of faculty members who have expertise on the topic and rearranged based on the given feedback. To test the comprehensibility of the form, a pilot implementation was conducted with four international students who had not graduated.

Arrangements were made on the form with the experiences gained from the pilot implementation. Ethical approval was obtained for the interview form from the home university of the author (Trakya University Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Committee / Date: 22.07.2020 / No: 2020-05-22). Alumni were contacted via social media. Participation was voluntary. Online interviews lasting between 20 and 30 minutes were conducted with alumni who responded and agreed to participate in the study. Audio recordings were made during the interviews, and the entire interview was transcribed verbatim. Data were collected over a six-month period between April 2020 and September 2020. The identifying information of the participants was not collected. The data collected in the main implementation were analyzed thematically. In a phenomenon where more than one participant is studied, while analyzing the data, the views of the participants are compared to each other, and the common characteristics of the effects of their experiences on them are determined (Gall, Gall, and Borg, 2005). Themes and sub-themes were reached from the analysis. Creswell (2014) defined consensus among coders as one of the factors affecting reliability. Reliability in qualitative research means stability in the responses of multiple coders in datasets (Patton, 2002). In this study, after the first themes were formed in the data analysis process, the second researcher reviewed the themes and expressed opinions on the themes. The first themes were created with the joint decision of both researchers. In the next phase of data analysis, the findings progressed by expanding the initial themes. At the end of data analysis, the second researcher reviewed the themes. The themes were finalized by reaching a consensus between the two researchers.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The responses of the participants revealed four themes: (1) reasons for country choice, (2) reasons for city choice, (3) Turkish language learning, (4) advantages and disadvantages of social and educational life.

1. *Reasons for Country Choice*

In this theme, three categories and ten subcategories were determined (Table 4).

The participants' reasons for choosing Turkey were predominantly under the education category. The diversity of educational opportunities and scholarship were the subcategories in which the participants were concentrated. The participants with Middle Eastern and African origins thought that the education system in Turkey was better than that in their own country. The participants with European origins thought higher education in Turkey was more inexpensive than that in their own country. Those with Balkan and Turkic origins stated that the similarity between Turkish culture and the culture in their own country guided their country choice. Those with origins in Muslim-majority countries saw Turkey as a brother country. Considering cultural and religious affinity, it seemed that Turkey's international student mobility was being fueled by the former Ottoman geography. In both Turkey and other countries, international student mobility is impacted by the historical background of the destination country. For example, regarding international student mobility, Portugal aims to maintain a leading role among Portuguese-speaking countries with a desire to maintain its influence on its former colonies (França, Alves, and Padilla, 2018). Among the countries in the former Ottoman geography, Turkey seems to stand out in attracting international student mobility, and this situation is supported politically. Historical and cultural ties provided by being in the formerly Ottoman geography guide students' preferences.

Table 4. *Reasons for choosing Turkey*

Category	Subcategory	Alumni
Education possibilities	Earning a scholarship	16
	The diversity of educational opportunities	15
	The inexpensiveness of education	8
	Learning Turkish	5
	Ease of university entrance requirements	5
	Quality of education	4
Country possibilities	Muslim country	13
	The similarity between their own culture and Turkish culture	12
	Inexpensiveness	9
Friend		3

The main reason for choosing Turkey among the participants was scholarships. Country policies have the potential to affect international student mobility (Lomer, 2018). Scholarships offered in Turkey are seen to be effective in drawing international student mobility to Turkey. Many countries around the world run various scholarship programs to stimulate student mobility. Fulbright, Chevening, Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, Erasmus are some of these programs. The reasons stated in this study as the quality of education, religious affinity and cultural affinity were in common with a study conducted in the context of the city of Sakarya in Turkey (Yardımcıoğlu, Beşel, and Savaşan, 2017). Besides, it is seen that counselors and circles of friends may direct student preferences. Similarly, stories of international students studying in North America, Europe and Australia enter the daily routines of Nepalese youth through a range of information channels such as images and social media (Kölbel, 2018). Universities do not need to spend money at fairs to introduce themselves because friends who have studied abroad offer free advertising stories to them.

2. Reasons for City Choice

In this theme, three categories and seven subcategories were determined for the participants' choice of Istanbul, whereas four categories were determined for their preference of Edirne (Table 5).

Table 5. *Reasons for choosing Istanbul and Edirne*

	Category	Subcategory	Alumni
Istanbul	Big city	Internationality	13
		Modernity	10
		Diversity of universities	9
		Sophistication	9
		Historical texture	3
	Living in freedom	Not getting attention as a foreigner	8
		Many opportunities for personal growth	6
		Consultant referral	2
	Problems	Overcrowded	7
Edirne	Safety and calmness		10
	Proximity to their home country		9
	Inexpensiveness		7
	Friend recommendation		3
	Problems	Discrimination	6

The reasons underlying the participants' preferences for Edirne and Istanbul differed. The participants perceived Istanbul as a big city that offers personal development opportunities with its modernity, provides freedom for individuals with its heterogeneous population structure and offers a diversity of universities. The city, which has a mixed population of over fifteen million people, provides a disguise for international students. According to the alumni who were included in this study, the biggest problem about Istanbul is that it is overcrowded. The participants saw Edirne as a safe and inexpensive city that is geographically close to their home. Especially for Edirne, the participants stated that foreigners attracted attention. Edirne's population is around four hundred thousand, and it is rather homogeneous. This situation may cause international students to stand out. Discrimination is a problem that international students face on an international level (Brown and Jones, 2013; Karuppan and Barari, 2011; Quinton, 2020). According to the Turkish Higher Education Institution (2020), 56102 international students study in Istanbul, while on the other hand, 3681 international students study in Edirne. International students come to Istanbul from all over the world, whereas they come to Edirne mainly from the Balkans (Turkish Higher Education Institution, 2020). Considering all this information, one would not be wrong to say that Edirne appeals to international students on the regional level.

3. Turkish Language Teaching

Turkish was the first step for social adaptation and academic success. Two categories (Turkish language teaching and difficulties in learning Turkish) emerged in the Turkish language teaching category. Three subcategories emerged in relation to Turkish language teaching, while eight subcategories emerged in relation to difficulties in learning Turkish (Table 6).

Table 6. *Views on Turkish language teaching*

Category	Subcategory	Positive Views	Negative Views
Turkish language teaching	Quality of language teaching	23	19
	Teacher competence	18	24
	Individual performance	31	11

Category	Subcategory	Alumni
Difficulties in learning Turkish	Turkish suffixes	16
	A new alphabet	13
	Diffidence	11
	Inadequate teaching of academic Turkish	11
	Vocalizing letters like ü and ö	10
	Inability to develop ideas because of thinking about how to say things	8
	Inability to express opinions in writing	7
	Scarcity of mobile applications that can be used to learn Turkish	4

The participants who studied in English-medium departments expressed positive opinions about language teaching processes. Those who studied in Turkish-medium departments emphasized that they learned Turkish well in the language preparation classes, with regard to Turkish which is used in daily life. However, that was insufficient in academic Turkish language teaching. Studies have shown that international students have a dire need to learn academic Turkish (Konyar, 2019; Özkan and Acar-Güvendir, 2015). In this study, the different result from the other studies was that only the alumni of Turkish-medium departments reported a lack of academic Turkish. This situation showed that although the participants were unable to understand the classes well, they learned Turkish on a level that could meet their social communication needs.

More than half of the participants expressed negative views about teachers. In Turkey, the gathering of international students seen in the last six years increased the demand for Turkish

8

language education. Almost every Turkish university opened its own Turkish Language Learning Research and Application Centre (TÖMER) mostly in the last decade. With these new centers, the need of universities for teachers who can teach Turkish as a second language increased rapidly. Most teachers were selected from foreign language teachers or Turkish native language teachers. Teachers have tried to become qualified through in-service training. The research by Kalfa (2015) showed that teachers of Turkish as a foreign language need training on curricular and extracurricular activities that can meet students' expectations and motivation and are suitable for students' language proficiency levels, learning styles and learning needs. There is a need to open a bachelor's degree for teaching Turkish as a second/foreign language. Some universities offer graduate programs in teaching Turkish as a second/foreign language. There are alumni of such programs, but still, they do not meet the expectations of TÖMERs. Likewise, the curricula and textbooks have continued to be updated day by day to meet the needs of the students. The result of this study also showed that internationals who learn Turkish need mobile applications to practice Turkish, and they do not find an option enough for their needs. Dumanlı-Kadızade (2015) found that "Turkish" mobile applications in teaching Turkish as a foreign language are not yet as widespread and detailed as applications in teaching other languages. The shortage of instructors and educational material resources in the face of intense demand is not an unexpected situation. The quality of language teaching is also affected by this situation because tools, materials, resources and professional instructors are important components in language teaching.

One of the significant factors for the adjustment of international students is host language competency (Schartner and Young, 2016). Studies in Turkey have shown that one of the most significant problems faced by international students in the adaptation process is learning Turkish (Akgedik, 2019; Demir, 2017; Temel, 2019). Difficulties in learning Turkish consist of problems stemming from the language structure of Turkish, problems arising from the quality of teaching, and problems arising from the individual. Although these issues seem to be separate from each other, they mutually affect each other. For instance, studies showed that one of the most difficult issues for international students in learning Turkish is pronunciation (Demir, 2017; Sefer and Benzer, 2020), and students are afraid of misunderstandings and not actively participating in classes (Sadık, 2017). Difficulty with pronunciation and vocalization may lead to diffidence or vice versa. Studies show that female students from Far Eastern countries experience more speech anxiety than others (Solak, 2019), while international students from the Balkans, Turkic Republics and Asia understand the classes better than those coming from Africa and the Americas (Taylan, 2019). While incomprehension constitutes one dimension of the problem, the inability to express oneself in written and verbal form constitutes the other dimension.

4. The Advantages and Disadvantages of Social and Educational Life

Among the participants, 23 alumni stated that they would want to live in Turkey if currently possible, whereas 19 said they would not (Table 7).

Table 7. *Willingness to live - in Turkey*

Category	Subcategory	Alumni
Reason for wanting to live in Turkey	Getting used to and adapting	9
	Seeing Turkey as a homeland	7
	Feeling duty of loyalty for Turkey	5
	Inexpensiveness	4
	Wanting to live a better life	3
Reason for not wanting to live in Turkey	Commitment to one's own country	11
	Not wanting to long for family	7
	Discrimination	6
	Difficulties of living abroad	5

9

More than half of the participants obtained positive impressions of Turkey when they were a student. They wanted to live in Turkey if they could.

In the theme of advantages of social and educational life, four categories and eighteen subcategories emerged (Table 8).

Table 8. *Advantages of social and educational life*

Category	Subcategory	Alumni
Opportunities of the country	Inexpensiveness	9
	Meals	8
	Nature and climate	8
	Mosques	7
	Job opportunities	3
Opportunities of universities	Diversity of educational opportunities	13
	Facilities offered by the university to international students	12
	Easy entrance to the university	6
	World-class seminars and associations	3
Characteristics of the Turkish people	Hospitality	8
	Benevolence	7
	Patriotism	7
	Friendliness	4
	Good manners	3
New things	New experiences	11
	Getting to know a new culture	6
	Learning a new language	6
	Meeting international people and making new friends	5

According to the perceptions of the participants, studying abroad enabled them to develop personally with new experiences, a new culture, a new language, and new friends. Geographical proximity provided the advantage of adaptation in terms of climate and nature for them. Cultural proximity provided the advantage of adaptation in terms of food and worship for them.

In the theme of disadvantages of social and educational life, six categories and sixteen subcategories emerged (Table 9).

Table 9. *Disadvantages of social and educational life*

Category	Subcategory	Alumni
Private life problems	Missing family	13
	Setting up entourage late	9
	Feeling out of place	5
Problems about the country	Meals	8
	Hot air	7
Communication problems	Most of the public does not speak English	8
	Most of the employees working in corporate places such as banks and hospitals do not speak English	7
	Not being able to speak Turkish	6
Problems about the universities	Long bureaucratic procedures	9
	Lack of interest in student affairs	7
Financial problems	Staying in a dormitory due to lack of money	6
	Not having enough money to visit home country	6
	Not getting financial support from family	4

10

The participants found their own Turkish knowledge insufficient for social communication, and they thought that the public's English knowledge was insufficient. This situation arising from the language barrier negatively affected the social lives of the participants out of the school. The participants' interactions with the public outside the school created both advantages and disadvantages of social and educational life for them.

One of the contrasting findings was that while the participants European and Middle Eastern origins saw Turkish food, nature and climate as an advantage, those with Far Eastern and African origins saw these as a disadvantage. The Far Eastern and African participants stated that they had difficulties in nutrition during their years of study. International students might not be able to get used to the food culture of the host country, causing weight changes and some negative effects on physical health (Shi, Lukomskyj, and Allman-Farinelli, 2020). The problems of the international students in this study were similar to the problems of host students reported in other studies in terms of financial issues, nutrition (Kacur and Atak, 2011), housing (Gürez, 2018) and mental health (Bayatlı, 2019). Financial problems are among the top three areas where domestic university students experience problems (Erkan, Özbay, Cihangir-Çankaya, & Terzi, 2012). Instead of problematizing the adaptation of international students, researchers should try to recognize their partnerships with host students, according to Jones (2017). Entry to higher education is a turbulent period for host students in many ways.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Consequently, it is seen necessary to improve the quality of Turkish language educators and academic Turkish language teaching for internationals in Turkey who are gradually climbing up top positions in terms of the presence of international students. International students lose years in their education due to language barriers (Taylan, 2019). The level of language learning may be effective on this failure, especially in Turkish-medium departments. To find a solution for this problem, language teaching support may continue to be provided to international students throughout their studies. For international students in Turkish-medium departments, more studies are needed about academic reading, writing, listening and speaking in teaching Turkish as a foreign language (these studies should be classified based on fields such as medicine, social sciences and educational sciences).

More mobile applications are needed for Turkish language support for international students. Uçar (2019) identified 27 mobile applications for learning Turkish as a foreign language (Busuu, Rosetta Stone, Duolingo, Memrise, Babbel, Mondly, Drops, Learn Free, Fun Easy Learn, Fun EasyLearn Words, Chick – Türkçe, JW Language, Learn Turkish Free, Simply Learn, Learn Turkish, 50 Languages, Türkçe Öğrenmek, Learn Turkish, Learn Turkish Language, Türkçe Öğrenin, Mango Languages, Türkçe Kelimeleri Öğrenin, Turkish Quiz, Memory Game Turkish, Türkçe Öğren – Fabulo, Kaaed Turkish, and Merhaba Umut). Today, mobile devices are in every aspect of life. Institutions and organizations must meet this need to support international students' Turkish language learning processes. Uçar (2019) revealed that most Turkish teaching applications charge a fee, they are designed for learning not only Turkish but also other languages, users do not have the ability to use these applications offline, and due to visual design problems, these applications are far from a permanent language teaching method. Worldwide, foreign language teaching is rapidly shifting to online platforms due to the COVID-19 pandemic. From this point of view, the state of the process of teaching Turkish as a foreign language in this worldwide trend may be

examined in future research. Moreover, studies may be conducted to increase the quality of teachers who teach Turkish as a foreign language.

The alumni who were included in this study were found to have experienced problems such as longing for their family, setting up entourage late, feeling out of place. While longing for one's homeland reduces socio-cultural harmony, the use of Facebook reduces homesickness in the short term (Billedo, Kerkhof, and Finkenauer, 2020). The more international students use social media, the better they can adapt to a new socio-cultural environment, as social media allows international students to interact with host citizens. In this context, the use of social media may be recommended to international students who have longing- and adaptation-related problems (Pang and Wang, 2020). Being depressed by longing for their family and home, some international students were able to recover by sharing their problems with others, keeping themselves busy, exercising physically, facing the situation, thinking positively and reading religious texts as their own strategies (Saravanan, Mohamad, and Alias, 2019). The current state of students who have recovered from these problems may be shared with international students as a motivating factor.

International student adaptation has two dimensions. These are the school environment and the non-school environment. The participants tended to communicate in English inside and outside the school, although there were no English natives among them. In the Korean context, non-native English-speaking international students' academic socializing processes in a non-English higher education context takes place through English-mediated interaction (Kim, 2020). In the context of Turkey, the situation is similar. However, language is also an important factor in communication outside the school, as in daily life. For Turkish language support and cultural adaptation, Turkish Language Learning Research and Application Centers could engage in matching international students with Turkish university students and planning social activities with mixed groups. Outside the school, international students who have social contact with host nationals have better psychological well-being than isolated ones (Szabó, Zsuzsanna, and Luu, 2020). In this study, the insufficient knowledge of English among the public and the students' insufficient Turkish knowledge seemed to have restricted the students' social contact. Adjustment is an everyday challenge for an international student, and higher education institutions have a responsibility to provide direct social support to international students (Shu et al., 2020). International students should be provided with psychological counselling and guidance services that they can easily benefit from within the university. It could be helpful to follow a two-stage strategy to minimize the adaptation problems of international students. These stages are pre-training guidance and in-training guidance. The study conducted by Southgate (2020) showed that it is necessary to support students in their adaptation to the culture of the destination country before going to a different country so that the learning skills of these students are not affected negatively due to cultural differences.

International students should act more responsibly regarding their preferences of big and small cities in Turkey and for higher education. They should be aware of their expectations and make choices that can meet their expectations. As it may be seen in the results of this study, a disadvantage for some students might be an advantage for others. For example, Istanbul is seen as overcrowded for some students, while for others, this crowd means freedom. Furthermore, small cities in Turkey, especially those located in the border regions of the country, are preferred by their neighboring countries in terms of the presence of international students. Universities in Turkey also need to introduce themselves effectively and show their facilities to international students on social platforms or their official websites. Keeping the web pages of universities up-to-date and including the stories of international students on these web pages may motivate prospective students, because it is possible for a country and universities in the country to reach

students through many channels. Chinese universities with a high international student presence already feature English, which is the standard for international communication, on their web pages (Zhang, Tan, Wignell, and O'Halloran, 2020). If universities want to attract international students with their web pages, they should use English. From this point of view, the presence of international students in Turkish universities and the strategies used by universities for student mobility may be examined comparatively.

KAYNAKÇA

Abegaz, M., Lahiri, S., & Morshedb, A.K.M.M. (2020). Does the presence of international students improve domestic graduations in the US? *The Quarterly Review of Economics and Finance, 75*, 95-108. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.qref.2019.05.008

Adoum, S. Y. (2017). *Determining of burn-out level for local and foreigner students in Süleyman Demirel University* (Unpublished master's thesis]. Süleyman Demirel University, Isparta, Turkey.

Akgedik, M. (2019). *Experiences, problems, and solution offers of international students upon their adaptation year* (Unpublished master's thesis). Yıldırım Beyazıt University, Ankara, Turkey.

Akıl, Ö. (2018). *A sociological study on foreign students studying at the Cumhuriyet University* (Unpublished master's thesis). Cumhuriyet University, Sivas, Turkey.

Baltacı, A. (2018). A Conceptual review of sampling methods and sample size problems in qualitative research. *BEÜ SBE Dergisi, 7*(1), 231-274. https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/bitlissos/issue/38061/399955

Bayatlı, E. (2019). *Relationship between physical activity level and depression and anxiety in pre-undergraduate students in Edirne* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Trakya University, Edirne, Turkey.

Billedo, C. J., Kerkhof, P., & Finkenauer, C. (2020). More Facebook, less homesick? Investigating the short-term and long-term reciprocal relations of interactions, homesickness, and adjustment among international students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 75,* 118-131. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2020.01.004

Brown, L. & Jones, I. (2013). Encounters with racism and the international student experience. *Studies in Higher Education, 38*(7), 1004-1019. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2011.614940

Brunsting, N. C., Zachry, C., & Takeuchic, R. (2018). Predictors of undergraduate international student psychosocial adjustment to US universities: A systematic review from 2009-2018. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 66*, 22-33. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2018.06.002

Büyükikiz, K. (2014). An investigation on graduate dissertations written on Turkish teaching as a foreign language. *Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi, 11*(25), 203-213. https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/183334

Choudaha R. (2017). Three waves of international student mobility (1999–2020). *Studies in Higher Education, 42*(5), 825-832. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1293872

Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Demir, D. (2017). *Academic Turkish needs of international students* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey.

Dumanlı-Kadızade, E. (2015). Teaching Turkish as a foreign language by mobile phone application, *The Journal of Academic Social Science, 3*(10), 742-752. http://dx.doi.org/10.16992/ASOS.574

Ercan, A. (2019). *Adaptation of international students in higher education in Turkey: The sample of Muğla* (Unpublished master's thesis). Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, Muğla, Turkey.

13

Erkan, S., Özbay, Y., Cihangir-Çankaya, Z. & Terzi, Ş. (2012). University students' problem areas and psychological help-seeking willingness. *Education and Science, 37*(164), 94-107. http://egitimvebilim.ted.org.tr/index.php/EB/article/view/402

França, T., Alves, E., & Padilla, B. (2018). Portuguese policies fostering international student mobility: A colonial legacy or a new strategy? *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 16*(3), 325-338. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2018.1457431

Gall, M. D., Gall, J. P., & Borg, W. R. (2005). *Educational research: An introduction* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Güngör, F. & Şenel, E. A. (2018). Teachers and students view in problems of the foreign primary school students in education process encountered, *Anadolu Journal of Educational Sciences International, 8*(2), 124-173. doı: 10.18039/ajesi.454575

Guo, Y. & Guo, S. (2017). Focus understanding the international student experience internationalization of Canadian higher education: Discrepancies between policies and international student experiences. *Studies in Higher Education, 42*(5), 851-868. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1293874

Gürez, M. F. (2018). *Üniversite öğrenci harcamalarının analizi ve karşılaştıkları sorunlar hakkında bir araştırma: Şanlıurfa örneği* (Unpublished master's thesis). Hasan Kalyoncu University, Gaziantep, Turkey.

Hou, C. & Du, D. (2020). The changing patterns of international student mobility: A network perspective. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies,* 1-25. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2020.1797476.

Hou, C., Fan, P., Du, D., Gui, Q., & Duan, D. (2020). Does international student mobility foster scientific collaboration? Evidence from a network analysis. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2020.1765316

Jones, E. (2017). Problematising and reimagining the notion of 'international student experience'. *Studies in Higher Education, 42*(5), 933-943. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1293880

Kacur, M. & Atak, M. (2011). Problems fields of university students and cope with the problems: Erciyes University sample. *Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi, 31*(2), 273-297. https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/erusosbilder/issue/23765/253325

Kalfa, M. (2015). Subject field competency analysis of teachers of Turkish as a foreign language. *Education and Science, 40*(181), 241-253. http://dx.doi.org/10.15390/EB.2015.3064

Karuppan, C. M. & Barari, M. (2010). Perceived discrimination and international students' learning: an empirical investigation. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 33*(1) 67-83. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2011.537013

Kim, J. (2020). International students' intercultural sensitivity in their academic socialisation to a non-English-speaking higher education: A Korean case study. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 44*(7), 939-955. https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2019.1627298

Kölbel, A. (2018). Imaginative geographies of international student mobility. *Social & Cultural Geography, 21*(1), 86-104. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2018.1460861

Konyar, M. (2019). *Academic Turkish needs analysis of the international students: Sample course content* (Unpublished master's thesis). Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University, Tokat, Turkey.

Levent, F. & Çayak, S. (2017). School administrators' views on Syrian students' education in Turkey. *HAYEF Journal of Education, 14*(1), 21-46. https://www.hayefjournal.org/Content/files/sayilar/64/21.pdf

Lomer, S. (2018). UK policy discourses and international student mobility: the deterrence and subjectification of international students. *Globalisation, Societies and Education Volume 16*(3), 308-324. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2017.1414584

Merriam, S. B. & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). Qualitative research: a guide to design and implementation (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

14

Mok, H., Xiong, W., Kea, G., & Cheung, J. O. W. (2021). COVID-19 pandemic on international higher education and student mobility: Student perspectives from mainland China and Hong Kong. *International Journal of Educational Research, 105*, 101718. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2020.101718

Özçakmak, H. (2017). New trends of the postgraduate research on Turkish language education (2011-2015). *Uluslararası Türkçe Edebiyat Kültür Eğitim Dergisi, 6*(3), 1607-1618. https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/351121

Özkan, F. (2019). *Satisfaction levels of international students studying in the faculties of theology in Turkey* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Bursa Uludağ University, Bursa, Turkey.

Özkan, G. & Acar Güvendir, M. (2015). Living conditions of international students: a sample of Kırklareli and Trakya universities, *Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, 15*(1), 174- 190. https://doi.org/10.17240/aibuefd.2015.15.1-5000128601

Pang, H. & Wang, J. (2020). Promoting or prohibiting: Understanding the influence of social media on international students' acculturation process, coping strategies, and psychological consequences. *Telematics and Informatics, 54*, 101454. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2020.101454

Patton, M. Q. (2002). Qualiative evaluation and research methots (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Quan, R., He, X. & Sloan, D. (2016). Examining Chinese postgraduate students' academic adjustment in the UK higher education sector: a process-based stage model. *Teaching in Higher Education Critical Perspectives, 21* (3): 326-343. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2016.1144585

Quinton, W. J. (2020). So close and yet so far? Predictors of international students' socialization with host nationals. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 74*, 7-16. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2019.10.003

Ramia, G. (2017). Higher education institutions and the administration of international student rights: a law and policy analysis. *Studies in Higher Education, 42*(5) 911-924. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1293878

Riaño, Y., Mol, C. V., & Raghuram, P. (2018). New directions in studying policies of international student mobility and migration. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 16*(3), 283-294. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2018.1478721

Sadık, E. (2017). *Problems of international student mobility in the globalization process: Example of the Kosovar students in Turkey* (Unpublished master's thesis). Marmara University, İstanbul, Turkey.

Şafak-Ayvazoğlu, A., Kunuroglu, F., & Yağmur, K. (2021). Psychological and socio-cultural adaptation of Syrian refugees in Turkey. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 80*, 99-111. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2020.11.003

Saravanan, C., Mohamad, M., & Alias, A. (2019). Coping strategies used by international students who recovered from homesickness and depression in Malaysia. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 68*, 77-87. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2018.11.003

Sarmini, I., Topçu, E., & Scharbrodt, O. (2020). Open Integrating Syrian refugee children in Turkey: The role of Turkish language skills (A case study in Gaziantep). *International Journal of Educational Research, 1*, 100007. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2020.100007

Schartner, A. & Young, T. J. (2016). Towards an integrated conceptual model of international student adjustment and adaptation. *European Journal of Higher Education 6(*4), 372-38. https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2016.1201775

Sefer, A. & Benzer, A. (2020). Listening skill with a holistic approach in teaching Turkish as a foreign language. *International Journal of Language Academy, 8*(3), 123-142. http://dx.doi.org/10.29228/ijla.42254

Shi, Y., Lukomskyj, N., & Allman-Farinelli, M. (2020). Food access, dietary acculturation, and food insecurity among international tertiary education students: A scoping review. *Nutrition*, 111100. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nut.2020.111100

15

Shu, F., Ahmed, S. F., Pickett, M. L., Ayman, R., & McAbee, S. T. (2020). Social support perceptions, network characteristics, and international student adjustment. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 74*, 136-148. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2019.11.002

Şimşir, Z. & Dilmaç. B. (2018). Problems teachers' face and solution proposals in the schools where the foreign students are educated. *Elementary Education Online, 17*(3), 1719-1737. doi 10.17051/ilkonline.2018.419647

Solak, E. M. (2019). *Speaking anxiety of international students learning Turkish as a second language* (Unpublished master's thesis). Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University, Tokat, Turkey.

Southgate, A. N. J. (2020). Preparation of undergraduate health and care students from the United Kingdom for an international learning experience in Japan: A phenomenological study. *Nurse Education Today*, 104649. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2020.104649

Szabó, A., Zsuszanna, Z. P., & Luu, L. A. N. (2020). Social contact configurations of international students at school and outside of school: Implications for acculturation orientations and psychological adjustment. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 77*, 69-82. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2020.05.001

Taylan, Ş. (2019). *Problems of international students in Sakarya University* (Unpublished master's thesis). Sakarya University, Sakarya, Turkey.

Temel, B. (2019). *Non-Turkish speaking students' opinions about learning Turkish* (Unpublished master's thesis). Yeditepe University, İstanbul, Turkey.

Turkish Higher Education Institution (2020). International student statistics. Ankara. Retrieved from https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/ Accessed January 4, 2021.

Uçar, T. (2019). Classification and evaluation of mobile applications for learning Turkish as a foreign language and students' opinions regarding their benefits (Unpublished master's thesis). Bursa Uludağ University, Bursa, Turkey.

UNESCO (2018). Global flow of tertiary-level students. Paris. Retrieved from http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow Accessed January 4, 2021.

Van der Mescht, H. (2004). Phenomenology in education: A case study in educational leadership. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology, 4*(1), 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1080/20797222.2004.11433887

Yardımcıoğlu, F, Beşel, F, Savaşan, F. (2017). Socio-economic problems of international students and some remedies (Sakarya university case). Journal of Academic Inquiries (AID), 12 (1), 203-254. DOI: 10.17550/akademikincelemeler.308940

Xiao, S. L., Yang, Z. X., & Bernardo, A. B. I. (2019). Polyculturalism and cultural adjustment of international students: exploring the moderating role of cultural distance in a quantitative cross-sectional survey study. *Cogent Psychology 6* (1). 1682767. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2019.1682767

Zhang, Z., Tan, S., Wignell, P., & O'Halloran, K. (2020). Addressing international students on Australian and Chinese university webpages: A comparative study. *Discourse, Context & Media, 36*, 100403. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2020.100403

16

Büyük ve Küçük Şehir Bağlamında Uluslararası Yükseköğretim Mezunlarının Türkiye ve Türkçe İzlenimleri

Dr. Sümeyye Konuk

Trakya University - Turkey
ORCID: 0000-0003-0896-0711
sumeyyekonuk@trakya.edu.tr

Özet

Son üç yıldır Türkiye, yükseköğretimde uluslararası öğrencilerin varlığı açısından dünyanın ilk 10 ülkesinden biri hâline gelmiştir. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'yi uluslararası öğrenciler için cazip kılan olası nedenleri bulmak için uluslararası mezunların (1) ülke seçimi nedenleri (2) şehir seçimi nedenleri (3) Türkçe öğrenme deneyimleri, (4) mezunların sosyal ve eğitim hayatlarında yaşadığı avantaj ve dezavantajları büyük ve küçük bir şehir bağlamında karşılaştırmalı olarak ele almıştır. Veriler Türkiye'de eğitimini tamamlayıp ülkelerine dönen 42 uluslararası mezun ile görüşmeler yapılarak elde edilmiştir. Sonuçlar, Türkiye tarafından desteklenen bursların uluslararası öğrenci hareketliliğini çekmede en büyük paya sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Mezunların Türkiye seçiminin diğer nedenleri ise eğitim olanakları, dini yakınlık, kültürel yakınlık ve ucuzluktur. Mezunlar tarafından İstanbul bireysel özgürlüğe, kişisel gelişime alan açan kalabalık bir şehir olarak algılanırken, Edirne ucuz ve sakin bir şehir olarak algılanmakta ve bu sakinlik uluslararası bireyleri ön plana çıkarabilmektedir. Eğitim dili Türkçe olan bölümlerde öğrenim gömüş mezunlar hazırlık sınıflarındaki Türkçe öğretimi ve öğretmenlerin niteliği hakkında olumsuz görüşler belirtirken, eğitim dili İngilizce olan bölümlerden mezun olanlar olumlu görüş bildirerek Türkçe öğretimini yeterli bulmuşlardır. Dil öğrenirken, mezunlar Türkçe ekler, ü ve ö gibi harfleri seslendirme, çekingenlik, nasıl söyleneceğini düşünmekten dolayı fikir geliştirememe ve sınırlı mobil uygulamadan kaynaklı materyal eksikliği sorunları yaşamışlardır. Uluslararası mezunların sosyal ve eğitim hayatlarında yaşadığı avantaj ve dezavantajlar ile çalışmanın diğer sonuçları uluslararası literatür bağlamında tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Yabancı dil olarak Türkçe öğretimi, Uluslararası öğrenciler, Yükseköğretim, Türkiye*

Genişletilmiş Özet

Amaç: *Türkiye, UNESCO (2018) istatistiklerine göre yükseköğretimde uluslararası öğrenci varlığının en yüksek olduğu onuncu ülkedir. Hou ve Du (2020), uluslararası öğrenci hareketliliğinin gelişmekte olan ülkelerdeki yükseköğretimin ilerlemesinden etkilendiğini belirtmektedir. Türkiye'nin uluslararası öğrenci mevcudiyetinde yedi yıllık değişiklikler bu tezi doğrulamaktadır. Türkiye Yükseköğretim Kurumu istatistiklerine (2020) göre sadece yedi yıl içinde, uluslararası öğrenci sayısı neredeyse dört katına çıkmıştır (2013'te 48106 iken 2020'de 185047'dir.). Bu araştırmada, uluslararası mezunların ülke ve şehir tercihlerinin altında yatan nedenler, Türkiye, İstanbul ve Edirne'ye yönelik izlenimler, Türkçe öğretimine ilişkin görüşler, Türkiye'de yaşamanın ve okumanın avantajları ve dezavantajları incelenmiştir. Uluslararası mezunların kişisel ve akademik deneyimleri, büyük ve küçük şehir bağlamında karşılaştırmalı olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Özetle Türkiye'ye ve Türkçeye, uluslararası mezunların gözünden bakılmıştır. Bu araştırma, Türkçe öğretimi ve uluslararası öğrencilerin eğitim kalitesini artırmak için gelecekteki araştırmalar ve planlamalar için bazı öneriler verebilir, dünya çapındaki uluslararası öğrenci hareketliliğiyle ilgili alanyazının genişletilmesine katkıda bulunabilir.*

Yöntem: *Patton (2002) fenomenoloji araştırmalarında, araştırılan fenomenin geçmişte yaşanmış ve bitmiş olması gerektiğini belirtir. Bu nedenle bu çalışmada, uluslararası öğrencilerle değil uluslararası mezunlarla çalışılmıştır. Ölçüt örnekleme yöntemiyle belirlenen çalışma grubunu 20 farklı ülkede yaşayan 42 uluslararası yükseköğretim mezunu oluşturmuştur. Katılımcıların 20'si İstanbul'da, 22'si Edirne'de eğitimini tamamlamıştır. Veri toplamada, açık uçlu sorulardan oluşan bir mülakat formu kullanılmıştır. Veriler içerik analiziyle tematik olarak çözümlenmiştir. Veri analizi sürecinde güvenilirliği sağlamak için eş kodlayıcıdan yardım alınmış ve kodlayıcılar arasında fikir birliğiyle temalar, kategoriler ve alt kategoriler belirlenmiştir.*

Bulgular ve Tartışma: *Türkiye'nin uluslararası mezunlar tarafından tercih edilmesinin başlıca nedenleri burslar, eğitim olanakları, eğitimin ucuzluğu, üniversiteye giriş şartlarının kolaylığı, Müslüman bir ülke olması, kültürel yakınlık ve ucuzluk olmuştur. Osmanlı coğrafyasındaki ülkeler arasında Türkiye, uluslararası öğrenci hareketliliğini çekmede öne çıkmaktadır. Sadece Türkiye'de değil, diğer ülkelerde de uluslararası öğrenci hareketliliği ülkelerin tarihsel geçmişinden etkilenmektedir. Örneğin, uluslararası öğrenci hareketliliği konusunda Portekiz, eski sömürgeleri üzerindeki etkisini koruma arzusuyla Portekizce konuşan ülkeler arasında öncü bir rol sürdürmeyi amaçlamaktadır (França, Alves ve Padilla, 2018). Mezunların Edirne ve İstanbul tercihlerinin altında yatan nedenler farklılık göstermektedir. Mezunlar İstanbul'u kişisel gelişim olanağı sunan, uluslararası bireylere özgürlük sunan, üniversite çeşitliliği sunan bir şehir olarak algılamaktadır. Edirne tercihinde mezunlar güvenlik, coğrafi yakınlık, ucuzluk, arkadaş tavsiyesi gibi konuları ön plana koymaktadır. Özellikle Balkan kökenli mezunların Edirne tercihlerinin temel nedeni coğrafi yakınlıktır. Mezunlara göre İstanbul'un olumsuz yanı kalabalık olmasıyken Edirne'ninki yabancıların dikkat çekmesidir. Mezunların yarısından fazlası Türkçe öğreten öğretmenlerin yeterliliğiyle ilgili olumsuz görüş bildirirken çoğu Türkçe öğrenme konusunda kendi bireysel çabalarını yeterli bulmaktadır. Mezunların yarısına yakını Türkçe dil öğretiminin niteliğine yönelik olumsuz görüş bildirmiştir. Bu çalışmada da olduğu gibi pek çok araştırma uluslararası öğrencilerin akademik Türkçe öğrenime ciddi anlamda ihtiyaç duyduğunu göstermektedir (Konyar, 2019; Özkan ve Acar-Güvendir, 2015). Ancak mevcut çalışmada, diğer çalışmalardan farklı olan sonuç sadece eğitim dili Türkçe olan bölümlerin mezunlarının akademik Türkçe eksikliği bildirmiş olmasıdır. Eğitim dili İngilizce olan bölümlerin mezunları Türkçe dil öğretimini yeterli bulmuştur. Mezunların, Türkçe öğrenirken karşılaştıkları zorluklar: Türkçe ekler, yeni bir alfabe, çekingenlik, akademik Türkçe öğretiminin yetersizliği, ü ve ö gibi harfleri seslendirme güçlüğü, nasıl söyleneceğini düşünmekten*

18

fikir üretememe, görüşlerini yazılı olarak ifade edememe, Türkçe öğrenmek için kullanılabilecek mobil uygulamaların azlığı şeklinde sekiz kategori oluşturmuştur. Mezunlara göre, coğrafi yakınlık iklim ve doğa açısından; kültürel ve dini yakınlık, yemek ve ibadet açısından uluslararası bireylere avantaj sağlamıştır. Uluslararası öğrencilerin bu çalışmadaki sorunları ekonomi, beslenme (Kacur ve Atak, 2011), barınma (Gürez, 2018) ve psikoloji (Bayatlı, 2019) gibi konularda yerel öğrencilerle benzerlikler göstermiştir. Jones'a (2017) göre, araştırmacılar uluslararası öğrencilerin adaptasyonunu sorun haline getirmek yerine yerli öğrencilerle ortaklıklarını tanımaya çalışmalıdır. Yükseköğretime giriş birçok yönden yerli öğrenciler için çalkantılı bir dönemdir.

__Öneriler:__ Sonuç olarak, her geçen gün uluslararası öğrenci sayısı artan Türkiye'de Türkçe öğretimi, akademik Türkçe öğretimi ve Türkçe öğretenlerin niteliklerinin iyileştirilmesi gerekmektedir. Uluslararası öğrenciler için Türkçe dil desteği veren daha fazla mobil uygulama ve online platform üretilmelidir. Uluslararası öğrenciler, Türkiye'de büyük ve küçük şehirleri tercih ederken daha bilinçli hareket etmeli, beklentilerinin farkında olmalı ve beklentilerini karşılayabilecek tercihler yapmalılardır. Bu araştırmanın sonuçlarında da görülebileceği gibi, aynı durum bazı öğrenciler tarafından avantaj olarak algılanırken bazı öğrenciler tarafından dezavantaj olarak algılanabilmektedir. Örneğin, İstanbul bazı öğrenciler için aşırı kalabalık olarak görülürken, bazıları için bu kalabalık özgürlük anlamına gelebilmektedir. Bu araştırmanın sonuçlarından hareketle gelecek dönemlerde COVİD-19 salgınında online platformlara kayan yabancı dil öğretiminde Türkçe'nin durumuna yönelik, Türkçenin yabancı dil olarak öğretiminde alan bazlı sınıflandırılmış akademik okuma, yazma, dinleme ve konuşma becerilerine yönelik, Türkçeyi yabancı dil olarak öğreten öğretmenlerin niteliğinin artırılmasına yönelik araştırmalara ihtiyaç olduğu görülmektedir.

19