



## An examination of psycholinguistic variables among learners of Turkish

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### Abstract

This article describes a study into the multiple interacting factors which motivate learners of Turkish, the demand for which has been steadily increasing given the geo-political realities of the region at this time. A questionnaire was used which examined motivation, investment, beliefs and autonomy on a rating scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In addition, a qualitative dimension was added by asking respondents to comment on their reasons for their ratings and to give examples where they could. The participants were 402 students of Turkish at the TÖMER center at a Turkish university. The highest ratings were for motivation and the belief that Turkish is a good language to learn (median rating=5). All of the other items of the questionnaire were given a median rating of 4 (agree). Reasons given for the ratings included personal, educational or economic advancement, conflict avoidance, and a wide range of examples was also provided. The findings are discussed and compared with existing literature, and implications are proposed. Possibilities for further research are also suggested to follow up some of the interesting questions raised by the study.

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*Keywords:* motivation; beliefs; investment; autonomy; attitude

## 1. Introduction

Although there are many thousands of languages throughout the world, by far the majority of writing and research has involved the study of English. There are signs that this may be changing however, partly perhaps in response to calls for plurilingual awareness and recognition (e.g. Cenoz & Gorter, 2013). One language which has been attracting more attention in recent years has been Turkish, possibly because of its unique strategic position as a mediator between Europe and the Middle East. Given the somewhat complicated grammatical system and the fact that there are few lexical cognates with most other language families, Turkish tends not to be an easy language for non-Turkic speakers to learn. So, what is it that motivates them, and how does their motivation inter-relate with other learner variables such as investment, autonomy and beliefs?

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### 1.1. Literature review

When it comes to teaching and learning Turkish, there is not a great deal of research, and most of what there is concerns the ‘mechanics’ of the process, such as skills (e.g. Şeref, 2013; Tiryaki, 2013) or teaching methodology (e.g. Akkaya, 2013; Kara, 2010; Tuna, 2014; Yılmaz & Taşkın, 2014; Yılmaz, 2015). Mention of the psycholinguistic dimension of language learning is virtually invisible in the literature related to the teaching/learning of Turkish (Soruç, Griffiths, & Okur, 2017). And yet, intuition would tell us that psycholinguistic variables are as important for Turkish as for any other language.

Some commonly researched variables have been found not to have a strong relationship with successful language learning. For instance, using the MBTI (The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Myers, 1962), Ehrman (2008) concluded that, although introverts were “over-represented” (p. 69), personality is not a significant factor in determining effectiveness in language learning. Similarly, with learning style, Nel (2008) concluded that any one style which is characteristic of successful language learners has not been identified, although according to Griffiths and Inceçay (2016), more successful learners are more capable of style-stretching, meaning that they are more flexible in their choice of style than less successful learners. And although affective factors, such as anxiety (e.g. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986), attitude (e.g. Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1972), attribution (e.g. Weiner, 1974, 1985), empathy (e.g. Guiora, Brannon & Dull, 1972), inhibition (e.g. Rubin, 1975), or self-concept (e.g. Mercer, 2014) have long been recognized as important (e.g. Arnold, 1999; Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Schumann, 1975), clear and consistent relationships between successful language learners and any particular affective state have not been established.

However, other factors, such as motivation, have been shown to be related to successful language learning. Indeed, Rubin (1975) includes motivation as one of the essential factors which define a good language learner. As Ushioda (2008) defines it “motivation concerns what moves a person to make certain choices, to engage in action, and to persist in action” (p. 19). Motivation has traditionally been viewed according to well-established dichotomies: integrative (the desire to fit in with others) versus instrumental (the desire to develop a tool for achieving a further purpose) (Gardner & Lambert, 1959; Gardner, & MacIntyre, 1991), and intrinsic (the desire to achieve something for its own sake) versus extrinsic (the desire to achieve because of some external influence) (Deci & Ryan, 1980; Ryan & Deci, 2000). More recently, motivation has been viewed as dynamic, that is, rather than being fixed as the traditional dichotomies might suggest, motivation is constantly changing (e.g. Dörnyei, MacIntyre & Henry, 2015). Whichever of these views is adopted, it would seem clear that motivation is important for successful language learning, since “without it, nothing much happens” (Cohen & Dörnyei, 2002, p. 174). Nevertheless, we must also remember that psycholinguistic variables do not exist in isolation: they interact with other factors in often very complex patterns.

Strong motivation is likely to lead to a willingness to invest (especially time and effort) in the language learning endeavor (e.g. Norton Peirce, 1995; Darwin & Norton, 2015). Anya’s (2011) study supported the hypothesis that successful learners have “positive formative experiences of investment” (p. 441). In addition, Ghorbandordinejad & Ahmadabad (2016) found a “strong correlation” (p. 739) between learners’ autonomy (which refers to the ability to manage one’s own learning, e.g. Benson, 2013; Gao & Lamb, 2011; Holec, 1979, 1981) and their achievement in language learning. As Lamb (2011) points out, autonomous learning can help to achieve “the self-identity we wish for the future” (p. 177). Another learner characteristic which has been shown to be important is beliefs, since negative beliefs can inhibit learning (Barcelos, 2003; Horwitz, 1985). According to White (2008), especially important are learners’ beliefs in themselves as successful learners, and that the language they are studying is worth learning.

From a review of the existing literature, then, we can conclude that some psycholinguistic variables (e.g. personality, learning style or affective states) are not strongly related to effective language learning. Other psycholinguistic factors, however, do seem to be related, in particular, motivation, investment, autonomy and beliefs.

## 2. The Study

In the light of these findings from the literature, since there has been very little research exploring the psycholinguistic characteristics of learners of Turkish, this study was undertaken to investigate the following key questions:

- What motivates them?
- How much time and energy are they prepared to invest?
- How autonomous are they?
- What do they believe about themselves as language learners and about the language they are trying to learn?

### 2.1. Setting

The current study took place at the TÖMER center at a Turkish university. TÖMER is the acronym for Türkçe Öğretim Merkezi (Turkish Teaching Centre), established by Ankara University in 1984. The organization teaches numerous languages (mostly modern languages), including Turkish. There are many centers such as the one where the current study took place throughout Turkey, so that there are actually many thousands of students of Turkish around the country.

### 2.2. Participants

Over two semesters, data was gathered from a total of 402 Turkish language students. Ages ranged from 16 to 44, and 278 were male while 124 were female. The length of time in Turkey ranged from 198 months (16 years 4 months) to one month, and length of time studying Turkish ranged from 60 months (5 years) to one month. Altogether, they came from 77 different national backgrounds, including countries in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Africa and the Pacific (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Countries of origin (N = 77) of the students in the study (N = 402) with numbers of students from each in brackets

Countries			Ghana (19)	Turkmenistan (1)
India (4)	Iraq (52)	Djibouti (3)	Syria (106)	South Sudan (2)
China (1)	Nigeria (1)	Malaysia (5)	Russia (4)	Central African Republic (5)
Turkey (1)	Mali (1)	Cameroon (4)	Togo (3)	Philippines (10)
Yemen (3)	Algeria (2)	Indonesia (1)	Albania (2)	Bangladesh (1)
Kosovo (1)	Ethiopia (3)	Somalia (13)	Egypt (2)	Montenegro (1)
Morocco (1)	Ukraine (3)	Columbia (1)	Pakistan (1)	Sierra Leone (8)
Iran (2)	Jordan (3)	Thailand (2)	Haiti (1)	Ivory Coast (1)
Vietnam (1)	Benin (6)	Tajikistan (1)	Palestine (9)	Saudi Arabia (10)
Senegal (1)	Bosnia (4)	Tanzania (4)	Serbia (2)	Burkina Faso (5)
Burundi (1)	Rwanda (7)	Malagasy (1)	Kenya (4)	Sri Lanka (4)
Uganda (3)	Tunisia (1)	Myanmar (15)	Korea (4)	Zimbabwe (2)

Georgia (2)	Congo (1)	Abkhazia (2)	France (1)	Azerbaijan (5)
Gabon (2)	Lebanon (1)	Kyrgyzstan (1)	Malawi (1)	Afghanistan (1)
Chad (2)	Japan (1)	Romania (3)	Liberia (1)	Kazakhstan (6)
Nepal (2)	Fiji (1)	Germany (5)	Tonga (4)	Uzbekistan (1)

### 2.3. Data collection

Data for this study was collected using the questionnaire employed in the study of good learners of English by Griffiths (2017), with adjustments to make it suitable for a Turkish context and the psycholinguistic focus of this study (see Appendix). This was a Likert-type questionnaire, based on findings from the literature regarding motivation, investment, beliefs and autonomy. Biographical details were also asked for. After gaining permission from the Head of Department, the purpose of the study was explained to the students to ensure informed consent. Participants were asked to respond on a scale of 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree) to a series of statements on which they were also asked to comment. They were also asked to give consent for the data they provided to be used for research or publication purposes.

Before giving the questionnaire to the whole group, it was first trialed with a sub-section of the group (N = 116). For this sample, reliability was found to be 0.778 (Chronbach's alpha) over all items, which is considered adequate (Dörnyei, 2007). No item was found to substantially alter the reliability if deleted. When a factor analysis was performed using Principal Component Analysis, all items were found to load onto a single factor, confirming the idea that all the items are related to a unified underlying concept which did not require further sub-division. Given these results, the questionnaire was considered suitable for the larger group. Since the questionnaire did not require any changes after piloting, the pilot data was included in the overall data.

Since the participants came from so many different national origins, each with its own language, and since they were still learning Turkish, the questionnaire was handed out in both Turkish and English (in which many of them were reasonably fluent, and which was, in effect, the lingua franca for most of them). In order to assist with any language problems, Author 1 (a native-speaker of Turkish, but also fluent in English) remained with the groups and assisted throughout the time they were completing the questionnaire. Those who were struggling were allowed to consult with others who shared their own language where this was possible. Just a few were unable to manage to complete the items and/or the required information, and these were discarded (N = 18).

### 2.4. Data analysis

The questionnaire data was entered into SPSS and analyzed for reliability and normality of distribution. A factor analysis was also done on the full data set to check that the results remained the same as for the pilot (that is, the items all loaded onto one factor). Since the questionnaire produced ordinal data, nonparametric tests were employed for analysis, as recommended by Dörnyei (2007) and Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007). Median levels of agreement were calculated, as well as nonparametric correlations (Spearman's rho) with age, length of study and length of stay in Turkey, and nonparametric differences according to gender (Mann-Whitney U) and nationality (Kruskal-Wallis).

The comments were analyzed qualitatively using a grounded approach. This involves examining the data for salient themes (open coding), then grouping them around central concepts (axial coding), which are then consolidated into an overall theme (selective coding). The concepts which emerged from the qualitative data were then compared with the quantitative data in the discussion.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Quantitative

Cronbach's alpha for reliability over the whole dataset was 0.806, which indicates that the instrument is reliable. As with the pilot, the items from the questionnaire all loaded onto one factor, indicating that the items all hang together in one unified construct. According to a Shapiro-Wilk test of normality of distribution, none of the items was normally distributed, indicating (in addition to the fact that the questionnaire data is ordinal) that non-parametric tests are appropriate for the purposes of analysis.

##### 3.1.1. Medians

According to the results, the two strongest levels of agreement were with Item 1 (I was motivated) and Item 6 (I believe Turkish is a good language to learn), which were both given median ratings of 5 (strongly agree – the highest possible rating). The remainder of the items were all given median ratings of 4 (agree). No items came in the neutral (3) or disagree (2-1) ranges. These results are set out in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The median (Med.) levels of agreement for all the items in the questionnaire

When learning Turkish...	Med.
1. I am motivated	5
2. I spend a lot of time working on my Turkish	4
3. I put in a lot of effort into my Turkish studies	4
4. I take charge of my own learning rather than waiting for someone else (e.g. teacher) to make all my decisions	4
5. I believe I am a good language learner	4
6. I believe Turkish is a good language to learn	5

(1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=no strong opinion; 4=agree; 5= strongly agree)

##### 3.1.2. Correlations

*Relationship of Age to Questionnaire Items.* When analyzed using Spearman's rho test of correlation, only one item (Item 3: I put a lot of effort into my Turkish studies) proved to be significantly related to age ( $r_s=0.112$ ,  $p = .025$ ), suggesting that older learners believe they put more effort into their studies than younger learners. However, this indicates an effect size of only 1.25%, in other words, age accounts for only 1.25% of the variance in just this one item. This suggests that age is not a major issue with these students.

*Relationships of Length of Time in Turkey (LOTT) and Length of Study (LOS) to Each Other and to Questionnaire Items.* Understandably, length of time in Turkey and length of study were significantly correlated with each other ( $r_s = 0.389$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), since we might expect that many students would begin to study on arrival. However, none of the correlations between length of study and any of the items of the questionnaire was significant. Interestingly, although there were three questionnaire items which were significantly negatively correlated with length of stay, as we can see from Table 3:

**Table 3.** Items negatively related to length of stay in Turkey with spearman's correlation (S), probability (P) and effect size (percentage of variance=E)

ITEM	S	P	E
Item 1: I was motivated	-0.139*	$p = 0.019$	1.93%
Item 2: I spend a lot of time	- 0.179**	$p = 0.002$	3.20%
Item 3: I put a lot of effort into my studies	-0.186**	$p = 0.002$	3.46%

In other words, these results would seem to suggest that the longer they had been in Turkey, the less motivated to learn the language they were, and the less time and effort they were prepared to invest. The effect sizes, however, are all small, with even the largest (investment of effort) accounting for only about 3.5% of the variance.

### 3.1.3. Differences

*Differences according to Gender.* According to a Mann-Whitney U test of difference for two independent samples, there were no significant differences in the questionnaire responses according to gender for any of the questionnaire items. In other words, both males and females were equally motivated and autonomous, they both invested time and effort equally, and they both had equally positive beliefs about themselves as language learners and about the language they were trying to learn (Turkish)

*Differences according to Nationality.* According to a Kruskal-Wallis H test of difference for several independent samples, there were no differences in motivation, investment of effort or beliefs according to nationality, although there were some differences apparent for investment of time and autonomy. Some of the national groups displaying most difference, however, were very low numerically (sometimes just one individual). No differences were in evidence for countries with 10 or more representatives (Syria=106; Iraq=52; Ghana=19; Myanmar=15; Somalia=13; Philippines=10; Saudi Arabia=10), suggesting that, where there are differences, it is more a matter of individual variation than characteristic of the group.

## 3.2. Results: Qualitative

### 3.2.1. Comments

Altogether, the participants made 1197 comments. Most of the participants wrote in English (their lingua franca), and these are included here verbatim (including any ‘infelicities’). A few chose to write in Turkish, and these have been translated by Author 1 for the purpose of this article.

By the nature of the instrument, the comments are already grouped according to the items of the questionnaire, so the axial coding stage involved identifying salient themes for each item. Author 1 identified 22 categories in total, to which Author 2 added a further two categories (total = 24), making an inter-rater level of agreement of 92%. Since there are obviously far too many comments for them all to be included here, the authors have selected those which seemed most representative, while trying to avoid repetition. The countries from which those quoted originated will be included. Where possible, comments have been reproduced verbatim, in an attempt to preserve something of the original “voice”.

### 3.2.2. Motivation

Responses to the item on motivation (Item 1), which attracted strong median agreement (median rating=5) seemed to fall into six fairly distinct thematic groups. Many gave as their major reason for wanting to learn Turkish that they wanted to further their education, from college to PhD level, in order to “follow my dreams” (Vietnamese student). Given the major conflicts occurring right on Turkey’s borders at the moment, it is perhaps no surprise that conflict avoidance was mentioned as a motivation by a number of respondents: “It is safer in Turkey for now” (Syrian student); and “Turkey is a better choice for us because of the wars” (Iraqi student). Others quote economic motivations, such as the need to get jobs and engage in business in order to earn money and provide for families. For some, the motivation relates to lifestyle, since “my family roots are Turkish [from] the time of the Ottoman Empire” (Bulgarian student), and “I found that Turkish is close to our culture and....Turkish community are similar to mine in many ways (Iraqi student). Others are intrinsically motivated to learn for their own satisfaction: “Turkish is the 6th language I am learning. My goal for learning 7 languages always

motivated me” (Algerian student). In addition, a variety of extrinsic motivators is mentioned here, including teacher, friends, relatives, and parents.

### 3.2.3. *Investment*

Items 2 and 3 refer to what Darvin and Norton (2015) refer to as “investment”, in other words, how much time and effort learners are prepared to ‘invest’ in the learning endeavor. Generally, students report spending a lot of time on their study, such as the student from Zimbabwe who reports “I will be working on my Turkish when I am not eating or sleeping”, although not everyone is so committed, for instance the Mongolian student who declares “only in TÖMER (13:30-17:30)”. Investment of effort seemed to be manifest in two fairly distinct categories: hard work (“I am working hardly to learn Turkish as good as possible” – Albanian student) and using resources. Resources were, in turn, sub-divided into six types: visual (movies, TV, etc.), graphic (novels, brochures, etc.), media (news, social media, etc.), electronic (websites, apps, etc.), audio (Turkish songs) and human (Turkish people/friends, teachers, etc.)

### 3.2.4. *Autonomy*

The item on autonomy (Item 4) was another which divided itself into two fairly distinct categories. There seem to be two main ways students exercise autonomy: by means of material resources, and by means of human resources. Examples of material resources included “I usually use google, YouTube” (Somali student), and “via internet and TV series” (Tunisian student). Human resources (which included self-reliance) included “Sometimes teacher is important to teach correct knowledge. But sometimes I need my time to learn by myself” (Malaysian student); “I will study the material beforehand, so I will not coming to class with empty head” (Indonesian student); and “I follow the teacher but I prepared myself a day before by reading the next page and translate it to make myself more understand” (Indonesian student)

### 3.2.5. *Beliefs*

The last two items (5 and 6) in the questionnaire aimed to explore students’ beliefs. Almost all of the responses to the item regarding beliefs in self as a good language learner quoted previous experience, of which many had a great deal: “I speak 5 languages and in Turkish language there is a lot words Arabic and French and I’m speaking French, Arabic and English” (Nigerian student); “I think I have the ability to learn a language quickly. I grew up speaking 2 mother tongues, later I learnt English and Turkish” (Russian student); “I am very good at 3 other languages which are French, Arabic and English. I will be good at Turkish too” (Moroccan student). Like Item 1 (about motivation), Item 6 about believing that Turkish is a good language to learn also attracted strong agreement (median=5). The reasons given seemed to fall into two main groups. Firstly, many of the students seemed to feel that Turkish is an easy language to learn: “It is a little same with my mother tongue” (Albanian student); “because Turkish and Arabic close to each other” (Syrian student); “Some of Turkish words is similar with Indonesian and the pronunciation too” (Indonesian student); “There is no feminine or masculine easy to do the plural and grammar easy” (Moroccan student); “Turkish is all written in Roman letters” (Afghanistani student). But not everyone agrees here, for instance: “It is very hard for me, I hope I will love it soon” (Yemeni student). Others believe that Turkish is an important language internationally: “I think it is becoming a global language” (Palestinian student); “Turkey is one of the powerful countries of the world, the Turkish language is now very important” (student from Burundi); “It introduces you to a rich culture and civilization” (Palestinian student); “Turkey is a cross point of the world history” (student from Burundi); “because of Muslim cultures” (Egyptian student); “Turkey is a very important country in the Middle East and Islamic world” (Algerian student). Again, however, agreement with such statements is not total: “It is a good language, but it is not international” (Sudanese student)

#### 4. Discussion

When Griffiths (2017) used the questionnaire employed in the current study with a group of teachers who were non-native speakers of English, she found that, like the current group, they also gave a median rating of 5 (strongly agree) to the item concerning motivation. This concurs with the importance given to motivation by others, such as Rubin (1975) and Ushioda (2008). According to the qualitative data provided by the comments made by the participants, motivation derived from several different directions. The desire to learn the language as a tool to obtain other goals was evident in those who wanted to learn in order to pursue an education, to gain economic advantage, or to escape the conflict raging in their homelands. Some wanted to integrate into Turkish life, others were intrinsically motivated by the love of learning languages, while yet others were extrinsically motivated by teachers, friends or relatives.

The participants in this study also agreed that they invested time and effort (median rating=4 for both). These responses are also in close accord with those from Griffiths's (2017) study (median rating=4.5 for both). The concept of investment was first introduced to the language learning field by Norton Peirce (1995), and it remains an important theoretical construct which may help to explain why some learners are more successful than others (e.g. Darvin & Norton, 2015). According to the qualitative data, investment of time varied from 'all my time' to 'only in TÖMER', although most responses suggested that the time spent was substantial, as indicated by the rating. Numerous examples (such as 'studied all day long', 'revise my lessons every day', 'watching movies with Turkish subtitles' and 'I check out Turkish news') were provided as evidence of investment of effort.

In answer to the question about autonomy, a concept introduced to the field of language learning by Holec (1979), which has long been associated with strategy use (e.g. Wenden, 1991), students mentioned the material resources they used (internet, TV, books, etc.). They also note the human resources used, especially 'other persons' and the teacher. Others emphasize the need to depend on themselves: 'I need my time to learn by myself', 'I have to be on my own choices and make my decisions', and 'I always learn in my own special way'. The ongoing level of importance ascribed to autonomy is reinforced by recent publications on the concept (Little, Dam & Legenhausen, 2017; Pawlak, Mystkowska-Wiertelak, & Bielak, 2017).

The importance of beliefs was first introduced to the field of language learning by Horwitz (1987), and the relationship with successful language learning has received much research interest in the years since (e.g. Barcelos, 2008; White, 2008). In the case of the current study, most of the participants seemed to confidently believe (rating=4) that they were capable of learning Turkish; in many cases this belief was based on previous successful learning endeavors with other languages. Even stronger agreement (rating=5) was accorded to the item concerning positive beliefs about the language they were learning. In order to explain, many expressed the belief that Turkish is 'an easy language', and for many of them, similar to their L1; in addition, many of them believe that Turkish is 'becoming a global language', and that it is important internationally, and especially in the 'Islamic world'.

In terms of correlations, older learners seemed to believe they put more effort into their studies than younger learners, and length of stay in Turkey showed significant correlations with three of the questionnaire items (for motivation, investment of time and investment of effort). Interestingly, the last three of these relationships were negative, suggesting that the longer the time in Turkey, the lower the motivation and investment of time and effort. This is actually an intriguing finding, the reasons for which the current study was unable to follow up, but which could be an interesting direction for future research. As for differences, there were no differences according to gender for any of the questionnaire items, and although there were some differences according to nationality, these were not pursued because of the low numbers from many of the national groups, and because there were no differences for groups of 10

or more, suggesting that any apparent differences might be ascribed to individual rather than group variation.

Overall, the results of this study would seem to suggest that, in spite of some minor differences according to age and length of time in Turkey, this is, in general, a remarkably homogenous group, where by far the majority is highly motivated, autonomous, and positive in their beliefs, and willing to invest time and effort in achieving their goal. Furthermore, although the participants in Griffiths's (2017) study (using the same questionnaire) were learners of English, the responses from the learners of Turkish in this questionnaire were remarkably similar, suggesting, perhaps, that the process of learning a language may not be too different, irrespective of the actual language.

#### *4.1. Implications*

It is interesting to find such strongly positive attitudes towards Turkish being expressed. It is also interesting to find that so many of the students are already very experienced language learners. Some of them mention knowing up to seven other languages. From a psycholinguistic point of view, it is important that this experience is valued, and that learners are given recognition for the resource that they possess. This may be especially important since many of these students are from major conflict areas, and they may already have experienced very traumatic events. Recognizing the substantial skill that they already have may help to provide reassurance and confidence as they embark on a new and hopefully safer phase of their lives, although the inevitable uncertainty which comes from being in an unfamiliar place may take some time to overcome.

#### *4.2. Suggestions for Ongoing Research*

This study has produced some interesting insights, but some questions could benefit from more exploration.

Since the questionnaire used in this study was given to students whose main concern is with the language they are trying to learn, and who are, therefore, willing to divert their attention to other matters (such as filling out research questionnaires) for a short time as long as it does not distract too much from their main goal, it was kept short in order to minimize the possibility of participant resistance. As a result, therefore, none of the items deals with any of the issues in any depth, which leaves much space for further exploration. The items which received the highest median ratings (motivation and belief that Turkish is a good language to learn), for instance, could well be worth further investigation. Further details about exactly what they do to achieve autonomy, etc., could also produce useful extra information.

The questionnaire could also be used in other situations in order to investigate any differences which might exist according to context. This might apply to other nationalities, or even to other institutional environments or geographical locations within the same country.

Some of the nationalities have very low numbers, making it impossible to make reliable generalizations about them. It would be interesting to gather larger numbers of some of these nationalities in order to investigate whether any effect relates just to individuals or whether it is more widely applicable.

It would also be interesting to explore the question of why it should be that the longer people are in Turkey, the less motivated they seem to be to learn the language, and the less time and effort they are prepared to invest in the endeavor. Is it because they have jobs, or families, or other demands on their time and energy, or what, precisely is the reason for this phenomenon? Is it because they feel safe in Turkey, and so the initial sense of urgency has subsided? Is it something which applies only to Turkey, or is it a phenomenon which is more widely applicable? There are many questions here worth investigating further.

Differences according to language might also be interesting to investigate; it is commonly recognized that those who already speak a Turkic language (e.g. Kyrgyz, Kazak, Albanian, etc.) find it easier to learn Turkish, whereas those who speak another European language find it easier to learn English. Does the same apply, one wonders, to languages such as Chinese: in other words, is Chinese easier to learn for those who already speak a tonal language? Other similar questions might be considered in relation to other language families.

The effect of culture might also reward further exploration. It would be reasonable to expect that a common culture (including religious beliefs, which were mentioned by several of the participants) creates common understandings and empathy. What effect does this have on the willingness to acculturate and to absorb the language?

The study reported in this article employed a questionnaire design with qualitative triangulation by means of the students' comments. It could also be interesting to follow up some of the cases with interviews or narratives in order to find more detailed information about them.

## 5. Conclusion

The selective coding stage involves identifying an overall theme for the study. In light of the data so far presented, we might suggest that the overall theme is: psycholinguistic factors which relate to the learning of Turkish. The picture which emerges from the quantitative and the qualitative data from this study is of a group of students with multiple motivations, most of whom (though not all) believe that they work hard, using many resources, and spend a lot of time working on their Turkish. Most of them are able to take charge of their own learning and learn autonomously. By these means, most of them, based on successful previous language learning experience, seem to be confident that they can also successfully learn Turkish, which they believe to be a worthwhile objective in terms of their own goals and also in terms of its international standing.

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## Appendix

Dear Language Learner. Would you mind reading the statements below and indicating whether you personally agree or disagree with them on a scale of 5 to 1.

Gender: M F Age:

Nationality:

Length of time in Turkey:

Length of time studying Turkish:

**5=strongly agree 4=agree 3=neutral 2=disagree 1=strongly disagree**

Could you also please add any other ideas you have in the comments box.

When learning Turkish	5	4	3	2	1	Comment
1. I was motivated						
2. I spent a lot of time working on my Turkish						
3. I put a lot of effort into my Turkish studies						
4. I took charge of my own learning rather than waiting for someone else (e.g. teacher) to make all my decisions						
5. I believe I am a good language learner						
6. I believe Turkish is a good language to learn						
Any other comments:						
Many thanks for your time						

I agree to the use of these data for research or publication purposes. Yes No

## Yabancı dil olarak Türkçe öğrenen öğrencilerin psikodilbilimsel değişkenler bakımından incelenmesi

### Öz

Bu çalışma yabancı dil olarak Türkçe öğrenen öğrencileri Türkçe öğrenmeye güdüleyen psiko-dilbilimsel çoklu değişkenleri incelemektedir. Özellikle son yıllarda jeopolitik konumundan dolayı Türkiye'nin her yıl artan bir şekilde yabancı öğrenci çekmesi Türkçe üzerine yapılan bu tür çalışmalara ihtiyacı ve talebi arttırmaktadır. Öğrencilerin güdülenme, yatırım, inanç ve özerklik seviyeleri beşli Likert ölçeği kullanılarak incelenmiş olup nicel verinin yanı sıra katılımcıların cevaplandığı yapılandırılmış açık uçlu sorularla nitel veri de toplanmıştır. Sonuçlar göstermiştir ki öğrencilerin güdülenme ve Türkçenin öğrenilmeye değer bir dil olduğu inancı seviyesi nicel olarak en yüksek bulunurken, nitel sonuçlar da öğrencilerin Türkçe öğrenmeyi tercih etmelerinin sebeplerini kişisel, eğitimsel, ekonomik refah ve savaştan vs. kaçınma gibi faktörler olarak ortaya koymuştur. Makalenin sonunda, çalışmadan elde edilen sonuçlar ışığında bulgular tartışılmış, gelecekte yapılması ihtiyaç duyulan çalışmaların yanı sıra bir dizi önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

*Anahtar sözcükler:* güdülenme; inanç; yatırım; özerklik; tutum

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