

The Problems International Students in Turkey Face in Learning Environments and the Problem-Solving Skills Preferred*

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to determine the problems international students studying in Turkey face in the learning environments and the problem solving skills preferred to solve these problems. The study is a qualitative research in the case study design. 10 international preparatory year students studying at Dumlupınar University, School of Foreign Languages in 2013-2014 academic year spring term participated in the study. Data were collected through a semi-structured interview and analysed using descriptive analysis. The problems international students in Turkey face in the learning environments can be categorised into four main themes as language problems, academic adjustment problems, social and psychological problems and problems related with belongingness to the university and the students were found to have language problems most. As a result of the study, it was seen that international students use various strategies to solve the problems faced in the learning environments. The results of the study indicate that international students' awareness about the problems they experience in the host country, Turkey, is high. Furthermore, when solving the problems they use the skills of 'understanding the problem, planning for the solution and evaluating the solution' while they use the problem-solving skills in the application level poorly.

Keywords: international students, problems, learning environment, problem-solving skills

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Türkiye’de Okuyan Uluslararası Öğrencilerin Öğrenme Ortamlarında Karşılaştıkları Sorunlar ve Sorun Çözme Becerileri

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı Türkiye’de okuyan uluslararası öğrencilerin öğrenme ortamlarında karşılaştıkları sorunlar ve kullandıkları sorun çözme becerilerinin belirlenmesidir. Bu bağlamda uluslararası öğrencilerin öğrenme ortamlarında karşılaştıkları sorunlar, bu sorunlarla başa çıkabilmek için kullandıkları stratejiler, sorunları çözmeye karşılaştıkları engeller ve farklı bir ülkede öğrenim görmeyi düşünen öğrencilere, sorunlarla başa çıkma konusundaki önerileri belirlenmeye çalışılmıştır. Türkiye’de okuyan uluslararası öğrencilerin öğrenme ortamlarında karşılaştıkları sorunları ve bu sorunları çözmeye tercih ettikleri sorun çözme becerilerini belirlemeyi amaçlayan bu araştırma, nitel verilere dayalı betimsel bir çalışmadır ve durum çalışması desenindedir. Araştırmanın verileri araştırmacı tarafından hazırlanan yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşme formu ile toplanmış ve betimsel analiz yoluyla analiz edilmiştir. Çalışma 2013-2014 yılında Dumlupınar Üniversitesi İngilizce hazırlık sınıflarında öğrenim görmekte olan 10 uluslararası öğrencinin katılımıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın inandırıcılığını artırmak amacıyla veriler iki farklı araştırmacı tarafından analiz edilmiş, yapılan kodlamalar ve oluşturulan temalar karşılaştırılmış, tartışmalı kod ve temalar hakkında uzlaşmaya varılmaya çalışılmıştır. Yapılan çalışma sonucunda araştırmanın güvenilirliği 0.94 olarak hesaplanmıştır. Çalışma sonucunda, Türkiye’de öğrenim gören uluslararası öğrencilerin öğrenme ortamlarında dil konusunda sorunlar, akademik uyum sorunları, sosyal ve psikolojik sorunlar ve üniversiteye aidiyet sorunları yaşadıkları ve bu sorunlar arasında en fazla dil konusunda sorunlar yaşadıkları görülmüştür. Öğrencilerin öğrenme ortamlarında yaşadıkları sorunlara ilişkin farkındalıklarının yüksek olduğu, öğrencilerin sorun çözmeye sorunu anlama, çözüm için plan yapma ve çözümü değerlendirme becerilerine sahipken, uygulama aşamasında yetersiz oldukları görülmüştür. Çalışmanın bulguları ışığında, Türkiye’de okuyan uluslararası öğrencilerin öğrenme ortamlarında karşılaştıkları sorunların üstesinden gelebilmeleri için üniversiteler ve ev sahibi kişiler tarafından çeşitli adımlar atılması gerektiği açıktır. Bu bağlamda, öncelikle uluslararası öğrencilerin kişisel ve mesleki hedefleri ve gereksinimleri belirlenmeli ve gereksinim duydukları alanlarla ilgili yeterli destek sağlanmalıdır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: uluslararası öğrenciler, sorunlar, öğrenme ortamları, problem çözme becerileri

Introduction

Turkey, being a member of European Higher Education Area (EHEA), committed itself to reforming its higher education system through the Bologna Process as the other members. These reforms intended to achieve compatibility and comparability of degrees, encourage European higher education globally and improve European competitiveness in the knowledge-intensive world (Shields, 2016). The formation of EHEA, Bologna Process and globalisation, in general, have made the study abroad opportunities more attractive for university students. Though there are a lot of terminologies like foreign students, non-immigrant students, mobile students, transnational students, inbound/outbound students or guest students (Editorial, 2016) for the students who go to another country to pursue tertiary or higher education, the term international students (Shapiro, Farrelly and Tomas, 2014; as cited in Editorial, 2016) is preferred in the present study. In different studies it has been shown that the number of international students studying abroad and completing degrees is rising continually (McFaul, 2016; Mesidor and Sly, 2016; Özturgut and Murphy, 2009, Palmer, 2016; Shields, 2016; Taha and Cox, 2016; Urbanovič, Wilkins and Huisman, 2016). The case is similar in Turkey, too. The number of international students increased considerably from 5378 in 1983 to 7661 in 1990, to 16656 in 2000, to 43000 in 2012 and to 55000 in 2014 (Çetinsaya, 2014).

Despite the major positive outcomes of being an international student such as increased personal development, intercultural competence, employability, career skills, international networking and interest in further study (Nunan, 2006), international students face various problems in a country that is foreign to them and have to come over these problems. In this respect, it is important that international students have the problem-solving skills or competency to be able to solve the problems they face effectively (Güven and Bahar-Güner, 2014). Problem solving competency as defined by PISA 2012 (www.oecd.org) is “an individual’s capacity to engage in cognitive processing to understand and resolve problem situations where a method of solution is not immediately obvious”. Dewey explained the problem solving process as feeling and realising a difficulty, defining the problem, suggesting possible solutions, evaluating these solutions and testing the solution (Mark, 1994; as cited in Alkın-Şahin and Tunca, 2013). Similarly, Polya (1957; as cited in Senemoğlu, 2010) put forward the problem solving steps as understanding the problem, planning for the solution, applying the plan and evaluating the results.

International students face various problems in the country they go for education and these problems influence their adaptation process and academic achievements in the host country negatively (Allaberdiyev, 2007). Arkoudis (2006) draws some conclusions about the challenges that international students face different from the experiences of domestic students. These include “learning and living in a different culture, learning in a foreign university context, learning while developing English language proficiency and learning the academic disciplinary discourse”. In other words, the challenges stated by Arkoudis can be restated as cultural, social and linguistic problems. According to Gebhard (2012), international students face academic, social and emotional problems during the cultural adjustment process.

Sherry, Thomas and Chui (2010) classified these problems as language issues, adapting to new cultural norms, cultural misunderstanding, financial problems, friends and social support, inclusion in the local community, and the university community.

To ensure the continuity of the international students coming to a country and for them to lead a healthy life there, the steps that the universities take in terms of the problems that international students face and developing their problem-solving skills are essential. Determining the problems that international students face in the learning environments and the skills they use in solving these problems are important both in terms of universities' having information about the problems faced and the areas that the international students need support, and also for the students' becoming aware of their own problem-solving skills. For the international students to solve the problems encountered in the learning environment, it is crucial that they know the steps of the problem solving process and apply them. Though there are plenty of studies concerning the domestic students' problem solving skills and the international students' problems in the host countries, there is a lack of research investigating the international students' problem solving skills. The study reported in the current paper sought to fill this gap.

The aim of the present study is to determine the problems international students studying in Turkey face in the learning environments and the problem solving skills preferred to solve these problems. Answers to the following questions were sought in this respect:

- What problems do the international students studying in Turkey face in the learning environments?
- How do the international students studying in Turkey deal with the problems they face?
- Do the international students studying in Turkey face any obstacles when solving the problems in the learning environments?
- What do the international students studying in Turkey suggest the students planning to study abroad?

Method

Research Model

The present study aiming to determine the problems international students studying in Turkey face in the learning environments and the problem solving skills preferred to solve these problems is a qualitative research in the case study design. Case studies aim to understand social phenomena in a naturally occurring setting or settings and to provide an in-depth description through a detailed example (Bloor and Wood, 2006).

Participants

The participants of the study are 10 international preparatory year students studying at Dumlupınar University, School of Foreign Languages in 2013-2014 academic year spring term. As the students undergo an adjustment process to the new culture and new environment, using the problem solving skills in case of the problems is essential. For this reason, the study was conducted only with the preparatory year international students. The ones who enrolled the university, but did not attend at all were not included in the study. International students may have a lot of problems in the host country; however, the problems outside the learning environment were not dealt with in this study.

Data Collection Process

Firstly, class lists and the names of the international students in the preparatory classes were taken with a permission from the administration. Interview questions were prepared using the related literature and the experiences of the researchers and two curriculum and instruction experts were consulted about the questions. Data were collected through a semi-structured interview and each interview lasted about 15 minutes.

Data Analysis Process

Interview voice records were transcribed by the researchers and interview transcription form was prepared. Voice records and transcriptions were checked for accuracy by an expert from the field of study. Both researchers reviewed the data to get a sense of the information and descriptive analysis was used for data analysis. In descriptive analysis, data can be organized into themes derived from the research questions or the questions and dimensions of the interview (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011). In the present study, codes were determined based on the interview questions and used to identify the themes. To find out the different aspects of the reality, the researcher should find out different viewpoints, meanings, indicators and resources related with the case or phenomenon researched (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011). One of the ways to do this and increase reliability is the researcher triangulation. In this study, answers to the interview questions were coded by both researchers independently. Each code and related quotations were examined by the other researcher. Later on, both researchers came together to discuss the controversial codes and themes to reach a consensus on them and do the necessary changes. For the reliability calculation, the formula $[\text{Reliability} = \text{Agreement} / (\text{Agreement} + \text{Disagreement})]$ proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) was used and the reliability of the analyses was found to be 0.94.

Findings

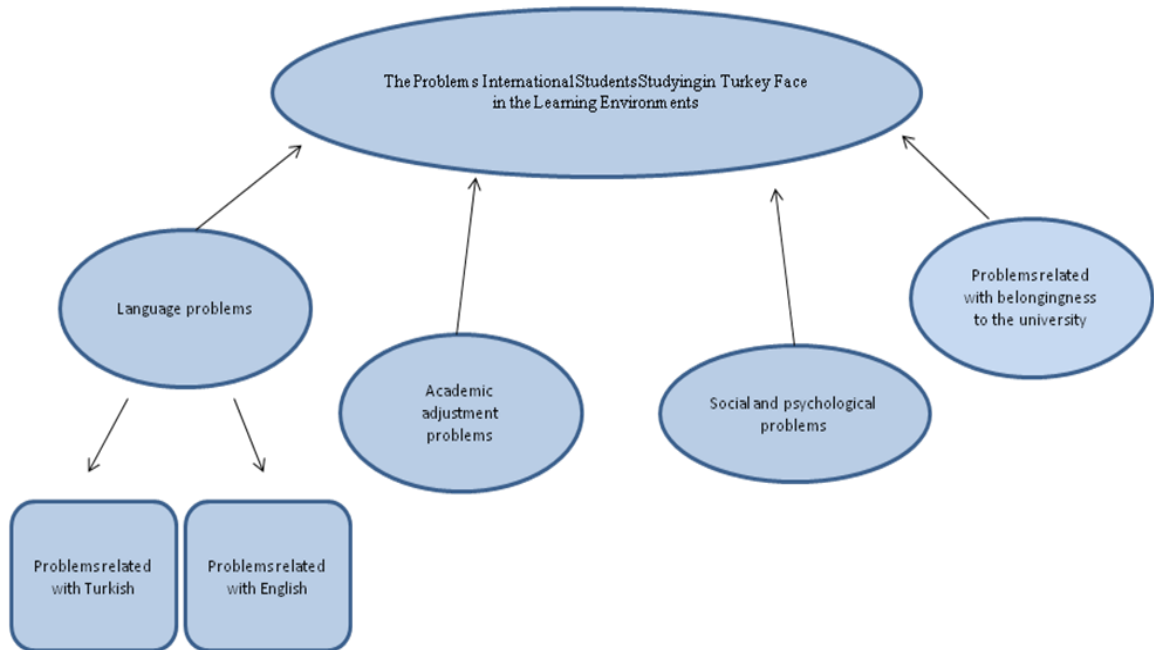
In this part, findings of the study on the problems international students studying in Turkey face in the learning environments and the problem solving skills preferred are presented.

The Problems International Students Studying in Turkey Face in The Learning Environments

Figure 1 presents the problems international students studying in Turkey face in the learning environments.

Figure 1

The Problems International Students Studying in Turkey Face in the Learning Environments



As seen in Figure 1, the problems international students in Turkey face in the learning environments can be categorised into four main themes as language problems, academic adjustment problems, social and psychological problems and problems related with belongingness to the university. The theme language problems has two sub-themes as problems related with Turkish and problems related with English.

language problems.

International students interviewed in the study have problems communicating in Turkish and/or English language.

problems related with Turkish.

The problems that international students experience related with Turkish language are:

- lack of vocabulary,
- difficulty in understanding the figures of speech,
- difficulty in understanding what is listened to,
 - difficulty in understanding the classmates
 - difficulty in understanding Turkish explanations of the instructors
- difficulty in understanding the reading materials,
- difficulty in explaining oneself orally,
- syntactic differences between the mother tongue and Turkish,
- phonological differences between the mother tongue and Turkish.

Some related quotations are as follows:

“I have difficulty in explaining what I want to say when don’t know some words.” (IS 2)

“I don’t know the literary words much and when the friends use them, I don’t understand.” (IS 9)

“For example, there is no “q” in Turkish alphabeth, but there are two “i”s: i and ı. I pronounce both as “i” because I don’t know.” (IS 8)

“It’s a problem for me when the instructors sometimes lecture in Turkish because my Turkish isn’t good that much. I can understand but speaking is a bit difficult.” (IS 8)

problems related with English.

The problems that international students experience related with English language are “the instructors’ carrying out the courses in English all the time”, “the instructors’ speaking fast”, “difficulty in translating from English into Turkish”, “difficulty in keeping Turkish meaning of the words in mind”, “loaded content-having a lot to study”, and “having difficulty in the exams”. Some quotations from what the students said are given below:

“At first, it was difficult for me to understand the instructors speaking English all the time.” (IS 5)

“I memorize what is covered in class, but the exams are more difficult.” (IS 7)

“We don’t understand the instructors when they speak fast.” (IS 4)

academic adjustment problems.

Academic adjustment problems stated by the international students are “difficulty in learning three languages at the same time (English, Turkish and other)”, “differences in the education systems between the homeland and Turkey”, and “being regarded as Turkish students”.

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“Sometimes the instructors don’t realize that we are foreigners. We want them to pay special attention to us and to make things easier for us. It is because whatever language they use in class, Turkish or English, both are foreign languages for us... They regard us the same as Turkish students. We’re different from them. In our country, we were trained in different systems.” (IS 3)

“It’s difficult for me to learn three languages at the same time. Turkish, English and French.” (IS 4)

“For example, when I study, it’s like studying in three languages because I form the sentences in Kirghiz. Then I translate them into Turkish and write the English version later.” (IS 3)

social and psychological problems.

The social and psychological problems stated by the international students are “difficulty in adjusting to the friends”, “being a ‘foreigner’ ” and “being away from the family and friends”. Examples related to the international students’ statements are presented below:

“I have never got a high grade from the speaking exams as I can’t get on well with Turkish students. Girls don’t want to practise with me. They don’t realize that they can’t do the task and blame me immediately as I am a foreigner. ‘She’s a foreigner. So we couldn’t communicate. That’s why the speaking exam went bad.’ If their partner were a Turkish girl, they wouldn’t blame her.” (IS 3)

“I miss my family... You want to spend time on the internet to talk to your family instead of going to school.” (IS 10)

problems related with belongingness to the university.

Problems related with belongingness to the university mentioned by the international students are “getting the student identity cards late” and “not being able to stay in the state dormitories”. Some examples for the students’ statements are as follows:

“Especially at the beginning we had a card problem. Student identity card. We waited for it for almost 1.5 month. We needed to do explanations that we’re students there to the security by the entrance of the campus and to be able to make use of the facilities in the library.” (IS 7)

“They assign us a temporary identity number, but the system doesn’t recognize you when you enter your ID number. So we can’t apply for the state dorms.... As I have economic problems, I want to stay in the dorm.” (IS 7)

The Strategies International Students Use to Solve the Problems They Face

In this section of the study, the strategies international students use to solve the problems they face are presented.

the strategies used to solve the problems related with Turkish.

To solve the problems related with Turkish language, international students use the following strategies: getting help from Turkish and foreign friends (doing speaking practice with friends, asking the unknown words to friends), checking the accuracy of the information got from the friends, using a dictionary, reading books, underlining the sections not understood, watching films, trying to speak only Turkish, doing exercises, and trying to figure out the meaning of the unknown words from the context. Some examples for the strategies used are given below:

“Sometimes I don’t understand some words, but when I read the words I try to figure out the meaning from the sentence.” (IS 9)

“If you ask something to Turkish friends, most of them don’t explain the things clearly. They make fun. They deceive you. So I ask it to friends first, then I ask it to the others three or four times... Then I can understand whether they are telling the truth or making fun.” (IS 10)

“To solve these problems, I ask for help from the friends. For example “What does it mean?” I watch films and read books, Turkish books, in my free time and I look up the dictionary. I read literary books. That is I read novels. I like literary books a lot. I read Turkish novels. I improve my literature through Turkish.” (IS 9)

“I read books. Turkish novels. There are such books as ‘Çalığışu’, ‘Adam Zar’. .. ‘Zar Adam’, pardon me. ... I underline the parts that I don’t understand and ask them to my friends. ‘I’d be very happy if you could explain me detailly’ and they explain it right away.” (IS 5)

the strategies used to solve the problems related with English.

To come over the problems related with English language, international students use the following strategies: doing English speaking practice, getting support from the instructors, asking for help from the classmates, and taking the classmates as a model.

“There are some foreign friends in the dorm. We try to speak English with them. I have some friends in the prep class like me. We try to speak English in Facebook.” (IS 3)

“At the beginning of the year instructors said that they would speak English all the time. I thought how I would understand them. ... Later on, they helped me when I was speaking asking ‘Do you mean this?’ With the help of the instructors and paying attention to how my classmates speak, I started to answer the questions.” (IS 5)

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the strategies used to solve the academic adjustment problems.

The strategies that the international students use to solve the academic adjustment problems are “using bilingual dictionaries” and “asking for help from the instructors or classmates”. An example statement is presented below:

“I look up the words in two dictionaries. I use Kirghiz to Turkish dictionary. If I don’t understand a word in English though I look it up in an English to Turkish dictionary, I use a Kirghiz dictionary.” (IS 3)

“If you study hard, things will be easier. I study myself, but if my homemates help me, I can understand the topics that I haven’t understood better.” (IS 4)

the strategies used to solve social and psychological problems.

The international students interviewed for the study stated the following strategies to solve their social and psychological problems: forming close relations with friends, sharing the problems with friends, being good-humored, being positive, being honest and trying to come over shyness. Some related excerpts are presented below:

“I tried to be close to my friends... If they want to speak, see an instructor, go somewhere or see the sights, I started to do the same with them. I started to say ‘goodmorning’ with a smiling face when I came to class... If you be honest, they will behave you well. It’s up to you.” IS 5.

the strategies used to solve the problems related with belongingness to the university.

The strategies international students use to solve the problems related with belongingness to the university are “seeing the concerned authority” and “writing a petition about the problem”. Some example quotations for these strategies are given below:

“We would always go to the place where student ID cards are pressed and ask for it... I wrote a petition to be able to stay in the dorm when there is a free place.” (IS 7)

The Obstacles International Students Meet When Solving the Problems

It was found out that the obstacles international students meet can be collected under two themes as “social-psychological obstacles” and “obstacles related with belongingness to the university”.

social-psychological obstacles.

The findings obtained about the social-psychological obstacles that international students meet can be collected under five themes as “worrying about making

mistakes”, “feeling shy to ask the friends”, “holding back not to be misunderstood”, “repressing the problems” and “missing the homeland”. Some related quotations from what the students said are as follows:

“I don’t speak much fearing that my friends will misunderstand me if I say something wrong.” (IS 2)

“I am kind of humm...hesitant fearing that my answer is wrong.” (IS 1)

obstacles related with belongingness to the university.

“Not getting an answer to the applications” is an obstacle that prevents the international students from the feeling of ‘belongingness to the university’.

“They said they’d call me, but nobody called.” (IS 7)

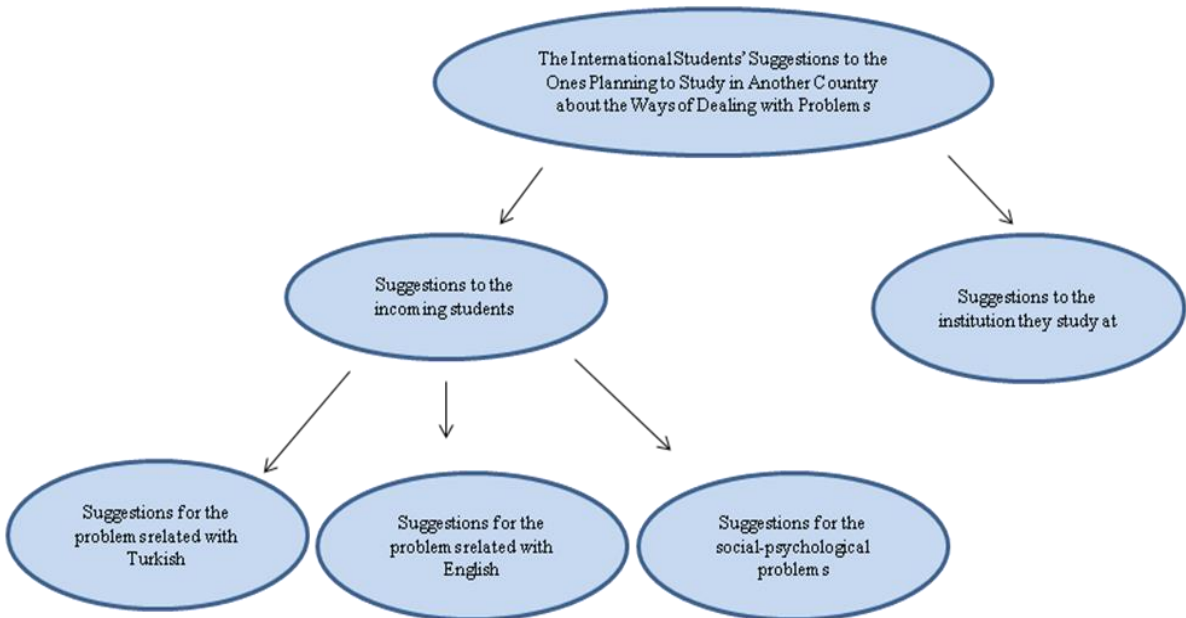
“We had to wait for the student ID cards more than Turkish students. We asked it to the concerned people several times, but nothing changed.” (IS 1)

The International Students’ Suggestions to the Ones Planning to Study in Another Country about the Ways of Dealing with Problems

Figure 2 presents the suggestions made by the international students to the ones planning to study in another country about the ways of dealing with problems.

Figure 2

The international students’ suggestions to the ones planning to study in another country about the ways of dealing with problems



As seen in the figure, the suggestions made by the students can be collected under two themes as “suggestions to the incoming students” and “suggestions to the institution they study at”. The first theme, suggestions to the incoming students, has three sub-themes as “suggestions for the problems related with Turkish”, “suggestions for the problems related with English” and “suggestions for the social-psychological problems”.

suggestions to the incoming students.

suggestions for the problems related with Turkish.

The suggestions made by the international students for the problems related with Turkish are “reading books/reading literary works”, “making Turkish friends (doing speaking practice with the Turks)”, “studying Turkish”, “learning Turkish before coming to Turkey”, “learning Turkish in Turkey”, “using a dictionary (monolingual or bilingual)”, “watching Turkish films” and “listening to Turkish music”. Some related quotations are presented below:

“I’d suggest them to attend TÖMER after they come here. It’s more logical to learn the language of a country there.” (IS 10)

“I’d suggest them to make a lot of friends.” (IS 2)

“I’d suggest the ones who will come to Turkey not to study only Turkish books, but to practise it speaking with the Turks.” (IS 3)

suggestions for the problems related with English.

The suggestions made by the international students for the problems related with English are “studying hard”, “listening to the lectures carefully”, “asking for help from the instructors”, “asking for help from the friends”, “participating in the lessons” and “learning other foreign languages”. Below are some quotations presenting the international students’ suggestions about the issue:

“I’d suggest them to participate in the lessons.” (IS 1)

“I’d suggest them to study a lot. I’d suggest them to listen to the lectures carefully and ask the unknown words to the instructors or the friends.” (IS 2)

“I’d suggest them to learn two or three foreign languages if possible.” (IS 4)

suggestions for the social-psychological Problems.

The international students suggest the incoming students “to try to get used to the new environment”, “not to be shy”, “to accept Turkey as their homeland”, “to form close relations with both Turkish friends and the friends from their homeland”, and “to keep in touch with the foreign student representative”. Some quotations explaining the suggestions made are presented below:

“You’re in Turkey now. You’d try to like Turkey. You study here, you have to live there several years. So, you’d accept it as it is your own country.” (IS 5)

“I’d suggest them to make Turkish and foreign friends and not to be shy with friends.” (IS 1)

suggestions to the institution they study.

The suggestions made by the international students to the institution they study at are “opening a Turkish course at university for the foreign students”, “instructors’ using a simpler language when talking to the foreign students both in Turkish and English”, “instructors’ giving the students study CDs, suggesting books”, and “instructors’ allocating extra time to the foreign students”. Below are some related quotations:

“For example, a student comes here from Turkmenistan. S/he studied Turkish there. Maybe you can do something for her/him to take Turkish course again here. You can talk to Turkish teachers at university to do extra courses with these students, propose books to them or spend extra time with them so that they can pass the class. Not only Turkish, but also English courses. Instructors can give CDs, or use simple English when talking to them. Then they can come over these problems.” (IS 5)

Results And Suggestions

Globalisation yields almost infinite occasions for students to travel overseas, get internationally accepted degrees and look for jobs abroad (Vasilopoulos, 2016). As the present era necessitates the students to study abroad, that is to become international students, the number of students who prefer to study in another country in some part of their lives is increasing each day. Being an international student has some benefits like broadening the perspectives, creating mutually beneficial economic, diplomatic and cultural bonds. It also contributes to the host country and its citizens as enriching the environment with their presence and ideas (Palmer, 2016). Furthermore, though higher education institutions benefit from the international students both culturally and financially, the support provided to them is not always adequate or appropriate (Breuning, 2007; as cited in Urban and Palmer, 2016).

Besides the positive experiences and contributions, international students face some problems in the host country and have to deal with them. The present study investigated the problems international students studying in Turkey face in the learning environments and the problem solving skills preferred to solve these problems. The following results were obtained as a result of the analyses of the interviews conducted.

The international students studying in Turkey face language problems, academic adjustment problems, social and psychological problems and problems related with belongingness to the university. Similarly, Arkoudis (2006) brings up cultural, social

and linguistic problems that are different from the problems of domestic students. Gebhard (2012) puts forward three overlapping problems that the international students face as difficulties with academics, social interaction and handling emotions. Alavi and Mansor (2011), on the other hand, divide the problems of international students into 11 categories as health problems, financial and lifestyle problems, social and recreational problems, psychological social relations problems, personal relationships and emotional problems, marriage and sexual problems, family problems, morals and religious problems, academic work problems, future career problems, and curriculum and teaching methods problems. Of the 11 categories of problems, social and recreational problems, and curriculum and teaching methods problems seem to be the most disturbing ones for the international students studied. Though there are different categorisations of the problems that international students undergo on and off campus, the present study deals only with the problems faced in the learning environments.

As a result of the study, it was found out that students have language problems most and the language problems are categorized under two sub-themes as problems related with Turkish and problems related with English. As Sherry, Thomas and Chui (2010) say, international students have to adjust to a foreign language. In the case of Turkey, students need to adjust both to Turkish and English, both of which are foreign languages for the students. As “English has become the new lingua franca in international higher education” (Luijten-Lub, van der Vende and Huisman, 2005; as cited in Urbanovič, Wilkins and Huisman, 2016), more and more higher education programs are delivered in English in Turkey. For this reason, to become proficient users of English, international students just like the domestic students have to attend English preparatory class for one year if they cannot pass the proficiency exam. Since the international students interviewed for the present study are the preparatory year students and the medium of instruction is English that year, students have some difficulties dealing with English. Besides having to learn English as a foreign language, international students need to develop their Turkish language skills to sustain their life in Turkey. That is, as Kuo (2011; as cited in Mesidor and Sly, 2016) states, the international students interviewed for the study have some language problems especially in listening comprehension and oral communication. They experience difficulties understanding the lectures in English even if the instructor makes further explanations in Turkish as Turkish is also a foreign language for them. Therefore, universities should provide a more engaging learning environment for the international students (Sakurai, Parpala, Pyhältö and Lindblom-Ylänne, 2016).

Another problem that international students studying in Turkey face is academic adjustment problems. The problems mentioned by the international students are “difficulty in learning three languages at the same time (English, Turkish and other)”, “differences in the education systems between the homeland and Turkey”, and “being regarded as Turkish students”. As Malaklolu and Selan (2011) say, students have difficulty in getting used to the new education system, acquiring new learning strategies and they lack language proficiency. Dumlupınar University School of Foreign Languages offers second foreign language courses to its students.

So, the international students, who were trained in different education systems in their homeland, find it difficult to learn three foreign languages (English, Turkish and other) at the same time and want the instructors not to regard them the same as the domestic students as they have to deal with more problems.

Besides the language and academic adjustment problems, international students face social and psychological problems. The problems stated by the international students are “difficulty in adjusting to the friends”, “being a ‘foreigner’ ” and “being away from the family and friends”. Similarly, Le, LaCost and Wismer (2016) state that international students experience loneliness, lack of support, few meaningful relations with the domestic people, isolation and alienation. In Brown and Holloway’s (2008) study it was also found that international students experience feeling nervous, feeling adrift, feeling excited, dissatisfaction with the aspects of life in the new country, feeling depressed, longing for home, feeling lonely and stress and sleeplessness in the initial stage of their international sojourn.

It was also found out that students experience problems related with belongingness to the university. The problems mentioned are “getting the student identity cards late” and “not being able to stay in the state dormitories”. Though they may seem smaller problems than the previous ones, as they were mentioned by just a few students, it is important for the institution to solve these problems immediately for the students to be able to develop the sense of belongingness to the university that they are a part of.

As a result of the study, it was seen that international students use various strategies to solve the problems faced in the learning environments. Sharing the problem with friends and instructors and asking for help from them was found to be the mostly used strategy. It may be due to the fact that they can get immediate help from these people and find an immediate solution to their problems. It was also found out that when solving the problems, students face some social and psychological obstacles not depending on the problem. So, to be able to solve the problems faced in the learning environments effectively, international students have to come over these obstacles. When the students’ suggestions for the solution of the problems were examined, it was seen that students come up with suggestions the same as the strategies they use to solve the problems. Only the ones who experience some psychological problems like being shy make opposite suggestions like not being shy to the future international students.

The results of the study indicate that international students’ awareness about the problems they experience in the host country, Turkey, is high. Furthermore, when solving the problems they use the skills of ‘understanding the problem, planning for the solution and evaluating the solution’ while they use the problem-solving skills in the application level poorly.

In the light of the present study, it is evident that for the international students to come over the problems they face in Turkey, some steps should be taken by the

institution and the host nationals. To illustrate, Turkish courses can be opened by the instructors who are experts in teaching Turkish to foreigners to help the students improve their Turkish language skills. Moreover, the hours of English speaking classes can be increased. That way, students' language proficiency both in English and Turkish can be improved. For better and quicker academic adjustment, orientation programs can be organised. Or a course can be offered on academic issues such as courses, measurement and evaluation, academic units, administrative units, writing a petition on a problem, and so on. Collaborations can be done with the guidance and psychological counselling units for better social and psychological adjustment. In conclusion, universities as the welcoming institutions for the international students should identify their personal and professional goals and take necessary steps to solve the problems they face in the learning environments.

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