

THE IMAGE OF KOREA IN TURKEY -A STUDY AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS WHO STUDY KOREAN-

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Abstract

Korea and Turkey are two countries geographically far away but have been friendly countries from the past to present. Despite the geographical distance of Turkey and Korea it can be found lots of similarities between two countries and people feel close to each other.

As the Turkish and Korean languages belong to same language family both countries retained similarities in their ways of thinking, acting and traditional customs also.

This study aims to overlook the relationships between Turkey and Korea and identify the Korean image in Turkey (especially among the young generation). A further conclusion of the study is analyzing the Korea image in Turkey and introducing the Korea and Korean culture to Turkish people (especially the Korean Language learners) and to improve the mutual understanding between Korea and Turkey as it helps to develop empathy to have successful communication with an understanding the Korea and Korean culture as well.

Key words: *Cultural exchange, Turkey and Korea relations, Korea image in Turkey, Korean language education.*

TÜRKİYE'DE KORE ALGISI -KORECE ÖĞRENEN ÜNİVERSİTE ÖĞRENCİLERİ ODAKLI BİR ÇALIŞMA-

Öz

Kore ve Türkiye coğrafi olarak birbirine uzak olan fakat geçmişten günümüze iyi ilişkiler kurmuş iki ülke olarak düşünülmektedir. Kültürel açıdan birçok benzerliği bulunan iki ülkenin insanları da birbirlerine karşı yakınlık duymaktadırlar. Tarihsel süreçte Kore Savaşı'nda Türkiye'nin asker göndermiş olması iki ülke arasındaki dostluğun daha da pekiştirilmesini sağlamıştır.

Türkçe ve Korece'nin dilsel akrabalıkları da her iki ülkenin insanların gelenek göreneklerinin ve düşünme yapılarındaki benzerliğe neden olduğu söylenebilir.

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye ve Kore arasındaki benzerliklerden yola çıkarak Türkiye'deki Kore imajının (özellikle üniversite öğrencileri arasındaki) tanımlamak ve bu tanımlamalardan yola çıkarak iki ülke arasındaki ilişkilerin hem akademik hem de kültürel anlamda geliştirilmesine katkı sağlayabilmektir.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Kültürel etkileşim, Türkiye ve Kore ilişkileri, Türkiye'de Kore imajı, Kore Dili öğretimi.*

Introduction

Turkey and Korea are two countries which are geographically far apart from each other but who have maintained a close relationship for decades. Following the establishment of the Republic of Korea in 1948, Turkey was the one of the first countries to recognize the Korean Government in 1949. Turkey and Korea have had a special relationship since the Korean War. Turkey dispatched soldiers to Korea in 1950. Upon arrival at Busan, the Turkish brigade started its mission at Korean front and during the Korean War, Turkish soldiers were engaged in a series of bloody and fierce battles, especially in Kunuri and Kumyangjangni. The blood-brother relationship was strengthened by the strong Turkish help in the Korean War.

The historical connections between Turks and ancient Korea go back even earlier than the Korean War. It is hypothesized that Turks and ancient Koreans share the heritage as descendants of Go-joseon. Turks and ancient Koreans used to have even diplomatic affairs in the period of three Kingdoms. “During the Yi Dynasty of Korea the Turks, who had once been once neighbours as well as blood relations, moved far away from Korea to Europe and built a great empire, so that Turks and Koreans had to become estranged from each other during the Yi Dynasty”¹.

As it is well known, Turkey and Korea have similar cultural, historical, political backgrounds. Historically, they share Altaic heritage which has many similarities in language, culture and traditional values. (Oh and Chae, 2013:84) And also both countries had the same struggle to transform themselves into a democratic societies in their region. This can explain why Turkey and Korea can understand each other in many aspects.

Two countries are not only sharing a historical and cultural background but also their languages have some common properties. Both Korean and Turkish languages belong to same Ural-Altaic language family. “Because Koreans and Turkic people originated from the Central Asia, there are many morphological similarities between Korean and Turkish languages.” (Lee, 2012:228)

Besides, Turkish and Korean even have some similar words, which shows the deep relationship between ancient Turk and ancient Koreans.

“With the Turkish and Korean belonging to similar groups, nationals of both countries retained similarities in their ways of thinking, traditional customs, and practices.” (Lee, 2012:228)

¹ Brother Nations, Korean and Turkey; A History of Turkish Soldiers' Participation in the Korean War. Ministry of Patriots & Veterans Affairs, Republic of Korea, 2007:34.

1. Diplomatic and Cultural Relationships Between Turkey And Korea

As mentioned above, diplomatic relationships between Turkey and Korea started in 1949. Political relationships between Turkey and South Korea were established on 11 August 1949 with Turkey's recognition of the Republic of Korea as an independent country. Our participation to the Korean War with a brigade had a positive impact on our mutual relations and thus diplomatic relations were established in March 1957. After the Cultural Agreement in 1972 cultural exchanges started. Even though there weren't any political problems between the two countries, cultural exchange and high level visits did not start until the 80s.

According to Lee (2012:229), "Korea and Turkey relations can be divided into three stages at twenty-year intervals. The first stage (1950-1970) deals with military-based relations. Two major aspects in this section are discussed: the participation of Turkish troops in the Korean War and the presence of Turkish troops in the Korean peninsula after the Korean War. The second stage (1970-1990) sets out to outline the process of founding cooperation. This part briefly examines the two countries' endeavours to establish an institutional arrangement for bilateral cooperation, particularly in trade and investment. The last stage (1990-2010) covers their deepening and diversifying relations".

Even though there weren't any problems between Turkey and Korea, there was a lack of exchange and high level visits until 2000s. After 2002, diplomatic visits between the two countries developed rapidly. And also year 2007 was the 50th anniversary of Turkey-Korea diplomatic relations. To sum up, high-level official visits were continued due to the political, economic and cultural exchanges between the two countries.

Not only diplomatic visits but also personal (touristic) visits are increasing rapidly. The number of Korean visitors are increasing continuously. Air route is contributing to the increasing trend. The number of flights between Korea and Turkey has increased, and this increasing rate plays a important role in the economic and cultural exchanges between two countries.

2. The current situation of Korean Language Education in Turkey

Korean Language education began with the founding of the department of Korean Language and Literature department at Ankara University in 1989. Department has admitted 10 students every year until 2005. However, due to the increasing interest in Korea, the department increased this number 20, and after 2013 to 30.

A total of 240 credits are required, in four years, to graduate, and the students are offered various courses related to Korean Language, literature, history, culture and research techniques. Following this department, Erciyes University launched a new department of Korean Language and Literature in 1998 and admitted its first students in 2003². Both Ankara University and Erciyes University have graduate programs and have students registered for these programs. This year, 31 students entered Ankara University, Korean Language and Literature Department and 35 students entered Erciyes University. Erciyes University also started offering evening classes in 2012, and every year 35 students start this program.

Ankara University and Erciyes University have mutual agreements³ with universities and research institutes in Korea. Over 20 students have opportunities to go to Korea and study as exchange students up to four semester in Ankara University.

Recently, Medeniyet University launched the Korean Language and Literature Department in 2010. However, this department is not admitting students yet. There are some other universities in Turkey which are planning to open Korean Language and Literature Department also.

Except for the Korean Language and Literature department, there are also elective courses related to Korea studies in different universities and institutes. Number of students who wants to learn Korean Language have been increasing rapidly.

Due to the increasing interest to Korea and Korean Language, Korean cultural center was opened in Turkey in Ankara and after that, The Sejong Institute opened in Ankara with the support of Ankara University TÖMER (Turkish and Foreign Languages Research and Application Center). The Sejong Institute has been opening new branches in other cities, İstanbul, İzmir, Bursa, Trabzon...etc in Turkey recently. People who wants to learn Korean Language and culture has opportunities to study at Sejong Institute also.

3. Korea Image Among University Students

As mentioned above, even though Korea and Turkey are geographically far away to each other, they have been emotionally close. Due to the shared historical relations,

2 http://edebiyat.erciyes.edu.tr/eng/Departments/Eastern_Languages_and_Literatures/Korean_Language_and_Literature.html Ankara University has an agreement with 20 Korea universities and research institutes.

3 Ankara University students and academic researchers have opportunities to go to Korea universities and do researches related to Korea studies. You can see the list of universities at the official web site of Ankara University. http://foreignrelations.ankara.edu.tr/?page_id=1169

Erciyes University has an agreement with 16 Korea universities. Each semester Erciyes University send 15 students to Korea universities as exchange students.

the blood-brother relationship established by Korean War and continued by the İzmit earthquake in 1999. And also during the 2002 World Cup Turkey and Korea showed their brotherhood to the world especially in the semi-final match between Turkey and Korea.

Close cultural and economic ties played an important role in cultural exchange by shortening geographical distance. Also, cultural phenomenon Hallyu⁴ (Korean Wave) made a significant impact on Turkish youngsters. According to Gökmen (2011), not only the common cultural features but also the historical background of the two nations has laid the groundwork for the Hallyu in Turkey. “Hallyu in Turkey is playing an important role in transforming static cultural relationship between Turkey and Korea and is opening a new window in cultural exchange program. The Hallyu boom is inspiring mutual interest which geographical distance has hindered until today.” (Oh and Chae, 2011:152)

In order to identify the Korean image in Turkey (especially among the young generation) a simple survey have been conducted on 70 students studying at Ankara University. The survey has been limited to students who are studying Korean studies department of Ankara University. The survey questions are as follows:

1. Why did you choose to learn Korean?
2. Did you have any information about Korea before you started studying Korean Language?
3. When do you think the first relationship started between Turkey and Korea?
4. Which country do you think is the brother country of Turkey?
5. What comes into your mind when your hear the word Korea?
6. Do you think there are any similarities between Turkish and Korean culture?
7. Did you have any prejudice before your started learning about Korea?
8. Did you change your mind about Korea and Koreans after you found out about Korea?

⁴ The term of Hallyu refers to popularity of Korean entertainment and culture across Asia and Europe. “The literal translation of Hallyu is Korean (Han) Wave (Lyu) as it signifies the sudden increase of importation, circulation and consumption of Korean cultural products.” (Oh and Chae,2011:139) Hallyu is first introduced by Chinese press since the mid 90s as it gained great popularity in China. While Hallyu initially gained its popularity across Asia regions, now it is expanded to the European countries. The unexpected rise of popular culture has expended to Korean traditional culture, food, language and literature as well. After the first Korean drama have aired in Turkey in 2005, Hallyu phenomenon started to spread im Turkey rapidly.

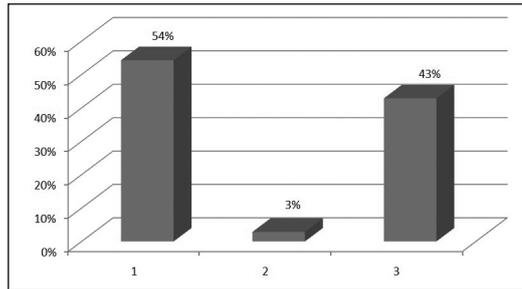
3.1. Analysis of Questions

It will be helpful to identify the image of Korea by analysing student's answers to questions.

Firstly, the question 'Why did you choose to learn Korean?' and the analyses of answers for this question.

Most of the students answered as "I am curious about Korean language and Korea related areas." with the percentage of %54 and also another notable answer was as "I believe that relations with Korea will be develop quickly, so I want to specialize in Korea and Korean studies" with the percentage of %43. Only %3 of students answered as "Hallyu". It can be clearly understood that the students have clear and well defined motivations for studying Korean and Korea related areas. It can be assumed that Hallyu phenomenon also, has an effect on students motivations before they choose Korea studies. Table of this question as follows:

Table 1



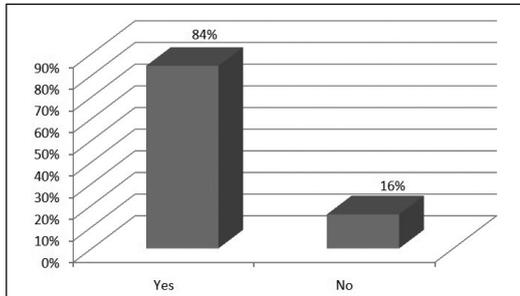
I am curious about Korean language and Korea related areas.

Hallyu

I believe that relations with Korea will be develop quickly, so I want to specialize in Korea and Korean studies

Another question which aims to find out student's knowledge of Korea is "Did you have any information about Korea before entering the Korean Language and Literature Department?. %84 of students answered as yes. It can be clearly understood that students have information about Korea before entering the university. It should be noted that some of the students are even proficient in Korean language also. Table of this question as follows:

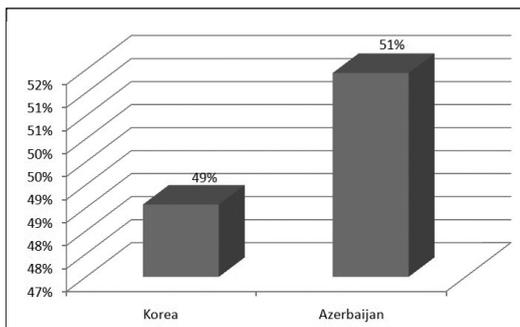
Table 2



As students have clear and well defined targets and motivations, most of their answers are more sensible than expected. Another question was “When do you think the first relationship started between Turkey and Korea? and all the students answered as “the Korean War”. Most of the student added a note that they think real relations started long time ago between ancient Turks and ancient Koreans and added that two nations have a deep relation.

As mentioned, Turkish people feel comfortable with Asian people especially to Koreans and the Japanese. Also many Turks have relatives who fought in the Korean War, which proves the historical ties to Korea. The fourth question was “Do you think which country is the brother country of Turkey? and the answers are as follows: %51 percent of student answered as “Azerbaijan” and %49 Percent of students answered as “Korea”. Table of this question as follows:

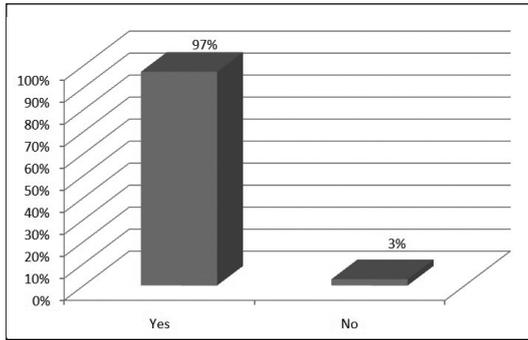
Table 3



As to the question “What comes to your mind when your hear Korea?”, there are various kinds of answers for this question, but this question can draw a big picture of image of Korea among students. Most of students answered as, “Korean War”, “Blood-brother country”, “Technology”, “Samsung”. There are many interesting answers like “Busy”, “Kimchi”, “Bibimbab”, “Online Games” etc...

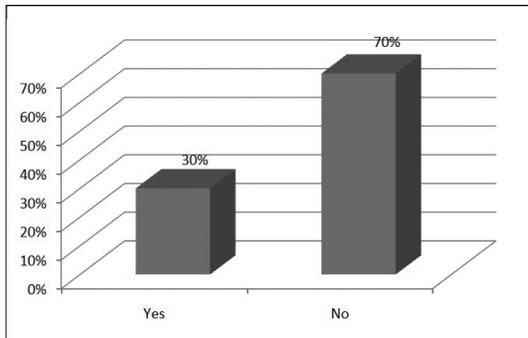
One of the questions was about similarities in cultural components to the students: “Do you think there are any similarities between Turkish and Korean culture?” %97 of students answered “yes”. Only %3 of students answered as “no”. During Korean culture courses at Ankara University students find out that there are lots of similarities between two cultures regarding traditions, some of customs and family structure. Table of this question as follows:

Table 4



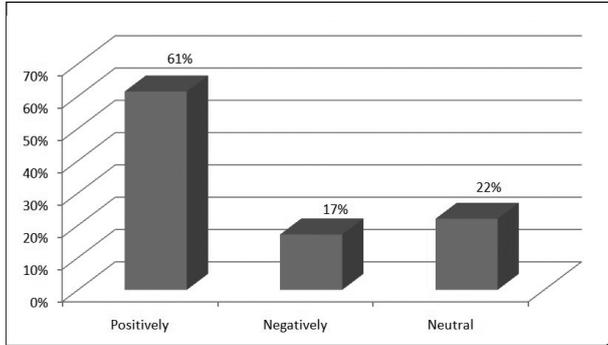
Although there are similarities in Turkish and Korean culture, there is some prejudice about far east. To the question “Did you have any prejudice before learning about Korea?”, %70 of students answered “no” but also a small group answered “yes” with the percentage of %30 for this question. A certain amount of prejudice is assumed in language teaching. Students’ attitude to Korea and Korean culture shows the same results during learning about Korea. Of course personal differences play a big role but prejudice can be altered with appropriate teaching methods. Table of this question as follows:

Table 5



Related to the question above, last question aimed to evaluate the personal opinions about prejudice as “Did you change your mind about Korea and Koreans after you found out about Korea?” % 61 of the students answered “yes my opinion changed positively after learning about Korea” on the other hand, %17 percent of students answered as “yes my opinion changed negatively after learning about Korea”. Also %22 of the students answered “I did not change my mind”. As it is shown in the answers, teaching and introducing culture plays an important role, especially in language teaching. Through the implementation of this survey, most of students (Ankara University, Korean Language and Literature Department) are familiar with Korea and Korean culture. Table of this question as follows:

Table 6



This small survey results can help us identify the image of Korea on a small scale. There is an another study for Korean image in Turkey which is done by Cho and Banbal (2016), including the subjects such as previous experience of Korean culture, basic knowledge of Korea, aspects of Korean and information source that Turkish people are in touch with. The findings of this study reveal quite high awareness among Turkish people and Hallyu has had a huge impact on Korean image in Turkey.

Large scale surveys should be conducted on Turkish people to have more accurate results, but this survey makes it evident that “Korea” always has a good impression on Turkish students studying Korea related studies.

Conclusion

Turks and Koreans have a deep ancient relationship lasting for a long time. After a long break two nations came together in the Korean War again and continued their

brotherhood with political, economic, social and cultural relations. Despite Korea's positive impression in general, there is much work to do to enhance the relations of two countries.

Firstly, Korea and Korean culture should be taught to Turkish people. This can only be done with education. To this end, Korea related studies should be encouraged. Curriculum and education depends on social needs and demands and must be fixed accordingly with the unique context of each society. Taking these factors into consideration, Korea related studies should be revised and enlarged.

The number of projects should be increased so that Korean studies can be developed in Turkey.

Awareness should be raised by supporting cultural, social and academic activities to strengthen the friendly ties between two countries.

Mutual understanding and efforts needed for the future relations of Turkey and Korea. Especially governments should devote efforts to improve partnership and continue the blood-brotherhood which originated in the ancient times.

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