



Attitudes of the Libyan Community in Turkiye towards Learning Turkish Language

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the attitudes of Libyan community members residing in Turkiye toward learning the Turkish language. Using close and open-ended questions, we surveyed 270 Libyan participants to investigate their attitudes toward learning Turkish, the reasons for learning the language, and the challenges they face. Our results show that most Libyan community members view learning Turkish as necessary for daily life and integration into Turkish society. However, the majority of participants face difficulties in learning the language, including differences in grammar and vocabulary from Arabic and English, and limited access to language courses. These findings highlight the importance of providing support and resources to enhance language learning among Libyan community members in Turkiye.

KEYWORDS

Language Attitude, Libyan community in Turkiye, Motivation, Turkish Language learning difficulty

Introduction

Libyan community members residing in Turkiye encounter various challenges, notably language barriers that can impede their integration into Turkish society. Proficiency in the Turkish language is vital for effective communication, education, employment, and daily life. Despite its importance, scant research exists on the attitudes of Arab/Libyan community members regarding learning Turkish. As a researcher who has undergone Turkish language courses and achieved a B1 proficiency level, I am keen on examining the attitudes of Libyan community members towards learning the Turkish language. This includes exploring their motivations for language acquisition and understanding the challenges they confront during the learning process. This study aims to address the existing gap in the literature and

contribute to a more profound comprehension of the significance of Turkish language acquisition for the Libyan community in Turkiye.

LITERATURE REVIEW

THE TARGET LANGUAGE

Before delving into the literature review, the writer thought it would be better to shed some light on the target language "Turkish", so readers will have a sound background on the language they are reading about. Turkish is considered to be a fascinating language that is spoken by over 85 million people. It is the official language of Turkiye, Cyprus, and Northern Cyprus. The Turkish language belongs to the Turkic language family, which is part of the larger Altaic language group. The origins of Turkish can be traced back to Central Asia, where the earliest known Turkic inscriptions date back to the 8th century (Minah, 2022). The Turkish language alphabet consists of 8 vowels and 21 consonants. The vowels are A, E, I, İ, O, Ö, U, and Ü, and it does not include Q, W, and X.

The Turkish language has a rich vocabulary, with over 145,000 words. This is partly due to the influence of Arabic and Persian, which were widely spoken in the Ottoman Empire and had a significant impact on the Turkish language (Almistakawy, 2019). Additionally, Turkish has borrowed words from French, Italian, and English in recent years, reflecting Turkiye's increasing globalization and Westernization, for example, there are 5,321 words of Western origin and 25,530 sample sentences in the Turkish Dictionary (TDK), *Istasyon* 'Station', *Biskilet* 'Bicycle', *Komik* 'Comical'. (TDK, 2007). In terms of grammar and syntax, Turkish is a highly agglutinative language, meaning that words are formed by adding suffixes to a root word. This feature can make Turkish seem complex and difficult to learn for Arab speakers who are used to a more analytical language; for example; in the sentence 'Can I have a cup of coffee?', the equivalent in Turkish would be 'Bir cafe alabilirmiyim?'. In this example we can see that the personal suffix "im" and the question word "mi" and the ability suffix "abilir" are all added to the root verb 'al-' 'take', 'al-abilir-mi-y-im' means 'can I have?'. However, Turkish is also known for its phonetic consistency, with each letter pronounced consistently and without exceptions. Additionally, Turkish has some special letters with specific sounds, such as; Ç = Ch, Ş = Sh, and the letter Ğ is silent. The letters 'Ö' and 'Ü' have slightly different pronunciations than an 'O' and 'U' in English. Learners should try to produce these sounds

from the front of the mouth with lips pursed tightly. Ö = as in "dirt", Ü = as in "brew" (Özkaynak,2023). Therefore, Turkish is a language that is pronounced as it is written. And learners do not need any pronunciation help next to the word because every letter is pronounced, for example; 'Günaydın', 'Pazartesi', and 'Muhacirlere' (Richard, 2023).

Turkish has some notable differences in grammar, vocabulary, and syntax. For example, Turkish uses a vowel harmony system, where suffixes are added to words based on the vowel sounds they contain, for example, Ev-de 'in the house', but otobüs-te 'on the bus'. In morphology, Turkish is marked by its tendency to expand the primary stem with different suffixes, of which many designate grammatical notions. For example the word Doctordayken 'when I was at the doctor's' is composed of doctor= doctor's, -da'y= -at, -ken= when. Compared to English, Turkish has no definite and indefinite articles (Özkaynak,2023).

In conclusion, the Turkish language has a rich history and complex yet fascinating grammar and syntax. With its large vocabulary and unique features, Turkish is a unique language that is distinct from English and Arabic languages.

IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING TURKISH LANGUAGE

Learning languages is often looked at as a transformative experience that may expand one's view of the world. It helps individuals to value cultural differences and be more accepting of differences among people "Language will have words to express most concepts relevant to the culture, and most words in each language will express cultural concepts, definable only in terms of the culture concerned" (Hudson,1996,p. 9). Turkish is spoken by more than 80 million people as a first language, not to mention the other millions who speak it as a second language in other countries like Uzbekistan, Northern Cyprus and Bulgaria. This makes the Turkish language one of the top 15 most widely spoken languages as a first language. Geographically speaking, Turkiye is located at a strategic location connecting three areas from three different continents, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Therefore, speaking its language can be a very valuable skill that helps its speakers in career opportunities in the whole region. Recently, Turkiye has become a major player in the world of international business (Jafari,2002), therefore, learning its language can be a very good benefit for those who speak it and plan on doing business globally. Moreover, learning Turkish makes its learners able to understand other Turkic languages spoken in other countries

like; Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (Koyfman, 2021). To sum up, the Turkish language can be very beneficial for its speakers in terms of personal growth, career opportunities, and education. Learning this Language can serve as a foundation for acquiring proficiency in other languages (e.g., Turkman and Ozbek) and gaining insights into diverse cultures.

MOTIVATION AND ATTITUDE TOWARD LANGUAGE LEARNING

Motivation and attitudes toward language learning are important factors that can influence the efficiency and success of learning a new language. For example, in a study of undergraduate ELT students in Libya, the researchers found that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were key factors that influenced students' attitudes and behaviors toward learning English as a foreign language (Alkorbow et al., 2022).

Motivation plays a very important role in both initiating and maintaining the process of language learning. Research indicates that learners who possess high motivation and enthusiasm toward acquiring a new language, and hold a belief in its practicality, tend to make faster progress compared to those who lack such motivation (Pham et al., 2021). Attitudes toward a language can be either positive or negative, and a negative attitude toward learning a second language may lead to learning solely for the sake of prevailing over others (Yousef, 2012). Thus, it is important to establish a positive learning environment that can support a positive attitude toward language learning. Pham et. al, (2021) suggest that learners, who are motivated and have a favorable attitude toward the language being learned, tend to make better progress in learning the language than those who lack motivation. In other words, motivation matters for language learners not because it changes how they acquire language but because it keeps them oriented to long-term goals and influences whether they choose to seek out opportunities to learn and use the language beyond the classroom (VanPatten et al., 2020).

In conclusion, motivation and attitudes toward language learning play crucial roles in the success of language learning, and it is important to create a positive learning environment and foster a positive attitude toward the target language to help learners stay motivated and engaged throughout the learning process.

RESOURCES FOR LEARNING TURKISH LANGUAGE

Various language institutions in Turkiye offer Turkish language courses. The main universities in Istanbul, for example, Istanbul University, Sabah Edin Zeem University, and others provide Turkish language courses. Those university language centres' courses are conducted by well-trained teachers who are native Turkish speakers and hold university degrees. These courses follow a three-semester plan each year, which may not be flexible enough for employees or self-employed learners. However, language centres are available that offer more flexible course schedules, making them more suitable for those learners. In 2011, because of the large number of Arab refugees, specialised Turkish language and literature teachers, classroom teachers, and foreign language teachers were increasingly being assigned to teach Turkish to refugees by the Turkish government. However, some of these teachers tend to distance themselves from teaching Turkish to refugees and in language centres due to their limited knowledge of the Arabic language and their lack of expertise in teaching Turkish to foreigners (Ulukutuk et al., 2017). However, the shortage of necessary educational tools and the limited number of teachers capable of teaching Turkish negatively impact the quality and accessibility of educational services. This delay may hinder the expected integration of foreigners within Turkish society (Ulukutuk et al., 2017).

METHODOLOGY

The researcher used a questionnaire to collect data for this study (See Appendix One). The researcher surveyed 270 Libyan community members residing in Turkiye using an online questionnaire that included closed and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was distributed through social media platforms, and participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their rights as participants. The closed-ended questions included demographic information and attitudes toward learning Turkish, while the open-ended questions asked participants to provide their reasons for learning the language and the challenges they face in the learning process. The questionnaire was written in Arabic as all respondents were Arabic speakers and their English level was unknown. The questionnaire consists of 15 questions. The questionnaire was designed using Google Forms and was distributed to the Libyan community residing in Turkiye through two WhatsApp groups. These two groups are already established and widely used by the community as a means of social connection and are mainly used for support and inquiries.

This distribution method allowed for easy and convenient access to the participants, and ensured a large and diverse sample for analysis. The total number of these two groups' members was 270. A message in Arabic was sent to explain the purpose of the research and ensure the confidentiality of the participant's details attached to the questionnaire. After one week of the first distribution, a reminder message (Appendix two) was sent to encourage the members to participate and to highlight the importance of their contributions. In two weeks after the first call, the total responses were 63.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

QUANTITATIVE DATA

THEME ONE: DEMOGRAPHICS

The data was collected from a sample of individuals regarding their age, gender, and length of stay in Turkiye. The results showed that the majority of respondents were between the ages of 30-39, with the highest proportion of (38.1%) followed by ages 40-49 with a proportion of (25.4%). The data also shows that the proportion of respondents decreases significantly for those aged 50-69, with only 17.5%. Additionally, a greater percentage of males (82.5%) participated in the survey than females (17.5%). In terms of length of stay in Turkiye, the largest proportion of respondents had been living in the country for 4-6 years (25%), followed by 1-3 years (19%) and 7-9 years (9%).

THEME TWO: LANGUAGE LEARNING MOTIVATION AND IMPORTANCE

For the prior knowledge of the language, the data shows that 90.5% of the sample had no prior knowledge of the Turkish language before coming to Turkiye, with only 0.5% of the sample reported having learned Turkish before coming to Turkiye. In terms of current language levels, the statistics show that 33.3% reported having A1, 12.7% B1, and the same percentage of 12.7% B2. Only a small percentage of respondents reported an advanced level C1-C2 (3.2%) and (6.3%) respectively. Also, it is worth mentioning that 28.6% of respondents reported not having studied Turkish before.

These findings may point out the general level of the Libyan community in terms of language proficiency (A1 to C2). Also, these findings

may suggest the importance of raising awareness within the community of the language in general and providing support language programs within the community, particularly, for those who have no prior knowledge of the language and have limited exposure to the language. Therefore, to improve the social and economic integration of the members of the Libyan community, it is important to address such barriers. And to look at the responses to the next question "How important do you think it is to learn the Turkish language for daily life?". The responses reveal that the majority (47.6% and 41.3%) consider the language to be very important and important respectively. Only a small percentage looked at the importance of learning the language as "slightly important" (6.3%) and "fairly important" (4.8%).

These findings suggest that Libyans living in Turkiye value the acquisition of Turkish language skills, as the data (see section 4.1) show that 90% of respondents had no prior knowledge of Turkish language but most of them reported having known Turkish language with A1 level at least. This may reflect an awareness of language acquisition and its implications for social integration, employment opportunities, and overall quality of life in the host country.

The responses to the question "What are your reasons for learning the Turkish language?" suggest that the majority of the sample has practical reasons for language learning, with 38.2% indicating that it is related to work or business, and 23.8% indicating education as their reason. A smaller proportion of respondents indicated personal interest (22.2%), family or social connections (11.1%), or travel (4.8%) as their motivation for learning Turkish.

These results suggest that language learning is often driven by pragmatic considerations, such as improving employment prospects or pursuing academic goals. However, it is worth noting that a significant proportion of respondents indicated personal interest as their reason for language learning, suggesting a potential interest in Turkish culture and society. This leads us to their motivation and the challenges they may face in learning Turkish which will be discussed in the next section.

THEME THREE: LANGUAGE LEARNING CHALLENGES AND RESOURCES

Learning the Turkish language can be a demanding task, but with the right strategies and support, the learning journey can be a rewarding experience. Our results show that the majority (66.7%) of respondents feel motivated and 23.8% indicate a very high level of motivation in learning the language. On the other hand, a high percentage, 42.9%, of respondents

reported that they are somewhat motivated to learn the language. However, a non-negligible proportion of respondents (17.5%) did not feel motivated to learn Turkish, and 15.9% expressed a neutral stance. These findings may suggest that motivation plays an important role in language learning and therefore, learners may benefit from strategies to enhance motivation and engagement with language learning.

For the difficulty of learning the language, 36.5% consider the Turkish language to be difficult and not easy to learn compared to English. At the same time, 49.2% found it to be slightly easy to learn and 6.2% rated learning Turkish as fairly easy. Only 1.6% of the participants found Turkish very easy to learn. These findings indicate that the Turkish language is generally perceived as somewhat challenging to learn. Also, it is important to note that nearly half of respondents found it slightly easy to learn.

To look at what resources Libyans used to learn Turkish, 44.4% of respondents reported language courses as their main resource and 25.4% of respondents indicated that they have learned the language through social life interaction. Online and private courses were the least used resources within the community with only 15.9% and 3.2% respectively. This shows that language courses, social interaction, and online courses are the most commonly used resources used by Libyans to learn the Turkish language. For accessibility and affordability of language courses, 38.1% of respondents indicate that it is somewhat accessible, in terms of location, and affordable. And 15.9% indicate them to be very accessible and affordable. However, 27% consider language courses to be somewhat accessible but not affordable. Only a smaller percentage (3.2%) found them to be very accessible but not affordable. Also, it is worth mentioning that 15.9% of respondents have not looked into language courses. These results suggest the importance of accessibility and affordability of language courses for Libyans and this suggests room for improvement to be highlighted to the Libyan community to make language courses more accessible and affordable for Libyan learners.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Based on the responses provided by the participants to the open-ended question "What difficulties have you faced in learning the Turkish language?", it appears that the most commonly cited challenges are related to grammar, writing, pronunciation, sentence structure, and social contact. Specifically, many respondents reported struggling with the complex grammar and sentence structure of the Turkish language, including the placement of verbs and

suffixes at the end of sentences. Pronunciation and writing were also frequently mentioned as areas of difficulty (see section 2.1). Additionally, some participants noted that they lacked social contact with native Turkish speakers, which hindered their ability to practice and improve their language skills. Other challenges mentioned include interference from other languages, lack of time or access to courses, and cultural barriers. These findings suggest that learners of Turkish may benefit from targeted instruction and support in these areas to improve their language proficiency and overcome these obstacles.

According to the responses, participants see that social interaction and courses are the most commonly cited ways to learn the language effectively. Specifically, many participants emphasized the importance of social interaction and practising speaking with native Turkish speakers. Others mentioned that taking language courses or enrolling in university programs could be helpful, especially when combined with social interaction. A few participants suggested that getting married to a Turkish speaker or working with Turks could also be effective ways to learn the language. Additionally, some respondents noted that online courses or studying with well-known centres could be beneficial. Overall, these findings suggest that a combination of language instruction and social interaction may be the most effective way to learn Turkish.

The qualitative data gathered from the responses of Libyan community members in Turkiye suggests that there are several suggestions to improve language learning opportunities. Participants indicated that language courses should be provided at a nominal price in places where the Libyan community gathers and should include both intensive and elementary courses. Social interaction with the Turkish community is also important, and courses and activities that provide opportunities for interaction were recommended. The data also suggests that the practical application of the language in daily life is important, and online training courses were suggested as a way to make language learning more accessible. Additionally, careful planning of language courses and high-efficiency courses supervised by the community committee was mentioned as effective strategies. Overall, the data suggest that a combination of formal language courses, social interaction, and practical application of the language is necessary to improve language learning opportunities for Libyan community members in Turkiye.

CONCLUSION

The study aimed to investigate the attitudes of Libyan nationals living in Turkiye towards learning the Turkish language. The questionnaire was designed using Google Forms and distributed through WhatsApp groups used by the Libyan community in Turkiye. 63 respondents completed the survey, and the data were collected on participants' age, gender, length of stay in Turkiye, prior experience of learning Turkish, current language levels, the importance of learning Turkish for daily life and integration, reasons for learning Turkish, perceived difficulty in learning Turkish, resources used for learning Turkish, accessibility, and affordability of language courses, and motivation to learn Turkish.

The results show that the majority of respondents were males aged between 30-39 and had been living in Turkiye for 4-6 years. A vast majority of respondents had no prior experience in learning the Turkish language, with beginner and intermediate levels being the most common. Respondents also considered learning the Turkish language for daily life and integration into Turkish society as important. Practical reasons, such as work or education, were the primary motivations for learning Turkish. The most commonly used resources for learning Turkish were language courses, followed by social life and online courses. Language courses were perceived as somewhat accessible and affordable, but a significant proportion of respondents felt that they were not affordable. Most participants were motivated to learn Turkish, but a non-negligible proportion of respondents did not feel motivated. The main difficulties reported in learning Turkish were grammar, writing, pronunciation, sentence structure, and social contact.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on our findings and to improve the social and economic integration of the Libyan community in Turkiye, it is important to demonstrate the practical application of this research. Some suggestions can be highlighted here to improve the general level of language proficiency and the social integration of the community. These suggestions can be given to the Libyan community heads of the Libyan council in Istanbul. The suggestions can be listed in the following points:

1. The data suggested that the majority of Libyans had no prior knowledge of the Turkish language and consider it to be important

- for daily life, therefore, it is important to support and develop language support programs for integration purposes.
2. Language courses were reported to be the main resource for learning, but accessibility and affordability were mentioned as a hindrance to this resource. Therefore there is a need to provide language courses with reasonable prices to help Libyans learn the language effectively.
 3. Social interactions were reported to be the second most common resource for learning Turkish among the Libyan community. Therefore, the community needs to take the responsibility to organize events to facilitate and encourage social interactions with native speakers.
 4. The reason for learning Turkish must vary from work to education. Therefore, tailored language programs are needed to meet the specific needs of learners, taking into account their motivations, learning styles, and contexts. This can improve the effectiveness of language programs and enhance the learners' language acquisition.

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APPENDIX ONE

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Libyans living in Turkiye,

I kindly invite you to participate in this survey exploring the attitudes of Libyans living in Turkiye toward the Turkish Language. Your contribution is greatly appreciated and will help us gain valuable insights into Libyans' perceptions regarding the importance of learning the Turkish language. The questionnaire will take no longer than 10 minutes to complete. I assure you that all information provided will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only. Thank you for your time and valuable input.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jalal Ali

Q1- What is your age?

Q2- What is your gender?

Q3- How long have you been living in Turkiye?

Q4- Have you had any prior experience learning the Turkish language?

Q5- How would you rate your current level of proficiency in Turkish?

Q6- How important do you think it is to learn the Turkish language for daily life?

Q7- How important do you think it is to learn the language for integration into Turkish society?

Q8- What are your reasons for learning the Turkish language?

Q9- What difficulties have you faced in learning the Turkish language?

Q10- How easy or difficult do you find the Turkish language compared to Arabic or English? Q11- What resources have you used to learn Turkish (e.g., language courses, online resources, language exchange programs)?

Q12- How accessible and affordable do you find language courses in Turkiye?

Q13- Do you feel motivated to learn Turkish?

Q14- What suggestions do you have to improve language learning opportunities for Libyan community members in Turkiye?

APPENDIX TWO

Reminder Message

Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who participated in the survey. I greatly appreciate your efforts and contributions which will undoubtedly help in identifying and shaping the results derived from this research. As for those who did not participate, I encourage you to do so. Your opinions and experiences are very important and will help ensure that the views and attitudes of the community toward learning the Turkish language are reflected. Thank you once again to all of you and I hope to receive more participation.

تحليل اتجاهات الجالية الليبية في تركيا نحو تعلم اللغة التركية

جلال علي بالشيخ

قسم اللغة الإنجليزية - كلية التربية - جامعة طرابلس - ليبيا

الخلاصة

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى فهم اتجاهات أفراد الجالية الليبية المقيمة في تركيا تجاه تعلم اللغة التركية. وباستخدام الاستبانة والتي تحتوي على أسئلة مفتوحة ومغلقة، قمنا بمسح 270 مشاركاً ليبيا للتحقيق في آرائهم تجاه تعلم اللغة التركية، وأسباب تعلم اللغة، والتحديات التي يواجهونها. تظهر نتائجنا أن معظم أعضاء الجالية يرون تعلم اللغة التركية ضرورياً للحياة اليومية والاندماج في المجتمع التركي. ومع ذلك، يواجه معظم المشاركين صعوبات في تعلم اللغة، بما في ذلك الفروق في القواعد النحوية والمفردات بالمقارنة مع اللغتين العربية والإنجليزية، وقلة الوصول إلى دورات اللغة. تسلط هذه النتائج الضوء على أهمية توفير الدعم والموارد لتعزيز تعلم اللغة بين أعضاء الجالية الليبية في تركيا.

الكلمات الرئيسية

اتجاهات تعلم اللغة، الجالية الليبية في تركيا، الدافع في تعلم اللغة، صعوبات تعلم اللغة التركية