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Geographical and Cultural Effects on Teaching Turkish As A Foreign Language: The Case of Asian and Pacific Countries

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Abstract

That foreign language teaching is accomplished and realized in line with determined goals is possible only if it is arranged as being responsive to the needs of the target audience and there is a good plan. Therefore, it is significant to determine interests, needs, expectations of the foreign language learners besides how and to what extent countries they live, language(s) they use and their cultures affect that they learn their target language. This study aims to detect the effects of geography and culture of the countries, and language used by the people who learn Turkish as a foreign language in Asian and Pacific countries, on that they learn Turkish. Accordingly, scientific studies conducted on teaching Turkish as a foreign language in Asian and Pacific countries were detected after scanning various databases. In this study, the qualitative method was conducted, document analysis technique was used in acquiring data, and the data acquired was subjected to content analysis. As a result of the study, 35 studies were found about the culture of the geography of Asian and Pacific countries where Turkish is learnt on positive and negative effects about teaching Turkish as a foreign language. 2 of them equaling 5.7% are doctoral theses, 10 of them equaling 28.6% are master's theses and 23 of them equaling 65.7% are articles. It is determined that students learning Turkish as a foreign language have negative transfers in vocabulary 9.6%, phonology 15.7%, punctuation and spelling 15.7%, syntax 16.9%, morphology 20.5%, and grammar 21.7% while they have positive transfers in grammar 12.5%, vocabulary 12.5%, syntax 25%, morphology 25%, and phonology 25%. It is seen that Arab and Kyrgyz students cover a large majority of the research. It is determined that studies conducted with Indian, Afghan, Persian, and Kazakh students are limited. As a result, it is stated that there are more negative transfers of Turkish language learners in Asian and Pacific countries from their

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native languages. It is emphasized that the most significant factor of these negative transfers are culture and geography.

Keywords: Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language, positive transfer, negative transfer, culture, geography.

Introduction

Turkish is one of the prominent languages of the world with more than 200 millions of speakers in a wide area. Cultural wealth and hıstorical roots of Turkish caused attention not only quantitatively but also qualitatively; Turkish has had a place among the foreign languages being learnt for different aims like Turkish education, tourismü scientific research, living in Turkey, and trade (Ercilasun, 2013). The Inclination to learn Turkish has increased in recent years in proportional to the diplomatic and economic development of Turkey especially, as a result, there is a significant increase in diversity and quantity of the studies conducted on the field of teaching Turkish (Küçük, Kaya; 2018).

Success in teaching a foreign language requires a well-prepared plan, a curriculum prepared considering the necessities of the time, and creating materials that can make the learning process qualified. Therefore, it is necessary that the target audience' interests, necessities, and expectations should be determined besides their cultures, and how the target language affects their native languages. From the fact that language cannot be considered without culture; cultural norms of the geography where the language is taught should be understood correctly, and its effects on teaching language are detected, which are crucial for teaching a foreign language effectively and correctly. Because, learning a foreign language can be defined as a kind of acculturation process that new cultural support systems being reflection of target language and a new worldview are acquired (Alptekin, 2002, p. 58) Therefore, culture's impact on teaching language is great.

Culture is a value system created by a nation or a community with a common history and awareness, it is a living concept that its all components are collected around an aim, and its transfer is performed via language; therefore, it is not possible to divide language and culture. *Language lives with culture, and culture improves and accumulates with language* (Günay, 1995). Language is the transfer tool of the culture. Culture, the essence of lifestyles coming from a nation's birth until today, has reached today with verbal and written language. Culture lives as it continues to be transferred to next generations by means of language (Göçer,

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2012). Cultures vary by nations and they can affect learning a second language positively or negatively. Learning and language is faster and easier for close cultures, and harder and time-consuming for distant cultures.

Positive transfer is a factor easing learning a new behavior while negative transfer is a factor hardening and hindering new learnings. While there is not any direct studies on the transfers in teaching Turkish as a foreign language, it is seen that they are mentioned especially in the studies conducted on language skills (Duman, 2013; Gürler, 2019; Mohammad, 2020; Özden, Boylu, Başar, 2017; Şehitoğlu, 2020). However, transfers are discussed superficially in these studies, yet transfers affect the language learning process multidimensionally, act a significant role in students' successes, and achieving specific goals in the related field. It is hard to mention about adequate and productive teaching a foreign language without knowing what kind of participation student's native language and country make in the language taught, or what kind of obstructions they create (Gürler, 2019).

Researcher's Purpose

This study was conducted to detect positive and negative transfers of the individuals learning Turkish as a foreign language in Asian and Pacific countries. Accordingly, the questions below are aimed to be answered:

1. How many detected studies are there in positive and negative transfers of the individuals learning Turkish as a foreign language in Asian and Pacific countries?
2. What are the distributions of the transfers in the studies on positive and negative impacts of geography and culture in teaching Turkish as a foreign language in Asian and Pacific countries?
3. What are the distributions of the individuals learning Turkish as a foreign language by Asian and Pacific countries?

METHOD

Research Model

Qualitative research method was used in this study where positive and negative impacts of geography and culture in teaching Turkish as a foreign language in Asian countries are examined. Qualitative research model is a research model where qualitative data acquiring tools like observation, interview, and document analysis are used, a procedure to present the events in the natural environment realistically and holistically (Aydın, 2018). This study was

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conducted with the qualitative method just because it requires to be classified as documents are examined in accordance with specified aims.

Acquisition and Analysis of Data

Document analysis method was used during process data acquisition. Document analysis is one the qualitative methods to analyze the content of pressed and electronic documents carefully and systematically (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010). The studies and articles conducted in the related field were examined, and positive and negative transfers were detected and they are ordered under two headings from these articles. The data were acquired by scanning from the studies published related to impacts of geography and culture in terms of positive and negative transfers in teaching Turkish as a foreign language in Asian and Pacific countries on the databases of National Thesis Center of Council of Higher Education of Turkey (CoHE) (URL 1), Google Scholar (URL 2), and Dergipark (URL 3).

The scans were made with "teaching Turkish as a foreign language, Turkish education as a foreign language in Asian countries, positive transfers, negative transfers" keywords. The studies related to the subject area were compiled, and collected under three subheadings of doctoral theses, master's theses, and articles. Afterwards, the studies collected in the research were examined, and the studies being in the research area were classified by their areas. Content analysis technique in analyzing the data. The studies discussed in accordance with the purpose of the research were expressed in numeric data by positive and negative transfers, type of the study conducted, numbers of positive and negative transfers, and these transfers' distribution for Asian and Pacific countries, and commented under the results.

These points are especially paid attention when articles and theses forming the basis of the research:

1. Positive and negative transfers are dwelled on.
2. It is stated that How the transfers in the works are discussed.
3. The data acquired after the research were examined in terms of positive and negative transfers.

Validity and Reliability

Two experts studying on teaching Turkish as a foreign language to provide validity and reliability of the research conducted. The formula of Huberman (1994) on agreement+disagreement was used. Consistency percentage among the coders was regarded.

The researcher negotiated the codes related to two field experts and got a conclusion when coding where consistency is not achieved.

RESULTS

The results acquired from the research are presented in the tables below.

The results on the question of "How many detected studies are there in positive and negative transfers of the individuals learning Turkish as a foreign language in Asian and Pacific countries?" which is found in the research's subproblems

Table 1. The studies conducted on the positive and negative transfers in teaching Turkish as a foreign language in Asian and Pacific countries

Study type	F	%
Doctoral theses	2	5.7
Master's theses	10	28.6
Articles	23	65.7
Total	35	100

When Table 1 is examined, it is found that there are 35 studies on examining positive and negative transfers of geography and culture in teaching Turkish as a foreign language in Asian and Pacific countries. 5.7% of them are 2 doctoral theses, 28.6% are 10 master's theses, and 65.7% are 23 articles.

The results on the question of "What are the distributions of the transfers in the studies on positive and negative impacts of geography and culture in teaching Turkish as a foreign language in Asian and Pacific countries?" which is found in the research's subproblems

Table 2. Distribution of positive and negative transfers detected based on the research

Transfers	Positive Transfers	Negative Transfers
Morphological	2	17
Phonological	2	13
Misspelling and	0	13
Grammar	1	18
Syntax	2	14
Vocabulary	1	8
Total	8	83

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When Table 1 is examined, it is found that there are 2 morphological, 2 phonological, 0 misspelling and punctuation, 1 grammatical, 2 syntactic, and 1 vocabulary positive transfers while there are 17 morphological, 13 phonological, 13 misspelling and punctuation, 18 grammatical, 14 syntactic, and 8 vocabulary negative transfers.

Accordingly, it is possible to say negative transfers are more numerous while negative transfers in the resources examined in teaching Turkish as a foreign language are so limited. Negative transfers are made in grammar and suffixes most. These kinds of transfers are the frequently encountered negative transfer forms because students' native languages have different structures from Turkish. Positive transfer examples detected in the study are given under "morphology, phonology, syntax, vocabulary" headings.

Morphological Transfers

The Turkish suffix "-çi" forming profession noun is used in Hindi-Urdu language. As examples of positive transfers that the students made concerning noun suffixes, *taklitçi* for imitator in Turkish, and *nakalçi* used in Hindi-Urdu can be exemplified. Also, there are some similar usages like aşçı-bawarçi (باورچی) "cook", and davulçu-tabalçi (طبلچي) "drummer" (Mohammad, 2020).

Phonological Transfers

The students state that they hear many words they use in daily life like "dünya" and "muhabbet" in series, easily understand "a" and "e" vowels in words, and do not suffer from problems in pronunciation (Mohammad, 2020).

Syntactic Transfers

It is found that both Turkish and Hindi-Urdu languages have a sentence order of subject, object, and predicate/verb at the end when evaluating them. Turkish "Ben okula gidiyorum." and Hindi-Urdu "Main skūl cā rahā hūn" meaning "I go to the school" have a similar feature (Mohammad, 2020).

Vocabulary Transfers

There are similarities between formation of Turkish and Hindi-Urdu idioms: It is found that like the examples of Turkish dayak yemek "to eat beating [to get a beating]", sopa yemek "to eat stick [to get a beating]", gam yemek "to eat grief [to grieve]"; *to eat* is also used in Hindi-

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Urdu similarly. For instance, Hindi-Urdu mar "stick", khana "to eat", and gham khana "to eat grief [to grieve]" (Mohammad, 2020).

The negative transfer examples detected in the study are given under "morphology, phonology, misspelling and punctuation, grammar, syntax, vocabulary" headings.

Morphological Transfers

Some gerund suffixes like "-ıp, ip" in Turkish make no sense at all for Iranian students, which makes them inadequate to form a sentence (Özden, Boylu Başar, 2017).

It is found that students do not use case suffixes while writing and speaking because there are not any prescriptive rules in daily Persian language. For instance, "Saat 09.00 ev gittim." (It should be "Saat 09.00'da eve gittim.") (Özden, Boylu Başar, 2017).

As the example of the Indian students' mistakes on possessive suffixes, the sentences " O evi çok iyi. (Onun evi) Çanağı yere düşürdü ve çanak kırdı. (Çanağı) Ali'nin anne vardı (annesi)" are found (Şehitoğlu, 2020).

Phonological Transfers

It is found that Persian audience learn vowels hard, and confuse font and back vowels with each other after learning them in the phonological aspect (Özden, Boylu Başar, 2017).

It is found that the vowels "ü, ö, ı" existing not in Persian are the subject that Persian individuals learning as a foreign language have difficulty to understand most (Özden, Boylu Başar, 2017).

It is found that students suffer from pronouncing "ö, ü, ı" vowels existing not in Persian for Turkish words, and they pronounce these vowels as "o, u, i" (Özden, Boylu Başar, 2017).

It is found that the vowels "a, ı, i, o, ö, u, ü" are represented with *alef*, *waw*, and *ya* letters in Arabic while they are presented directly as separate letters in the Turkish alphabet. It is found that Arab and Persian students have difficulties pronouncing and writing these sounds (Şengül, 2014).

It is found that Arab students have difficulties differentiating "a" and "e" vowels. For instance, they wrote "Maydena, itiberen, başlngcınden, yaşanteleri, gitiran, bylaşmaleri, sonocende, yeryüzena" which is incorrectly written just because they could not differentiate "a" and "e" vowels.

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Misspelling and Punctuation Transfers

It is found that Arab students made misspelling mistakes because they could not differentiate sounds in some words. For instance, "Başlangecenden, başlıngıcından, başlngcınden, itiberen, , ehtiyacı, ihteyaci" (Şengül, 2014).

Indian students' misspelling mistakes can be exemplified with the sentences "Ondan *reca* ettim (rica). Dün *akaşam* biz çok eğlendik (akşam). *Süleman* dede yemek yiyemiyordu. (Süleyman)" (Şehitoğlu, 2020).

Arab students' mistakes can be exemplified with the sentence "Bu yüzden hayatımdaki en önemli broblem savaşı ve yapanci ülkede yapanci hayatımdır. Bu yüzden hayatımdaki en önemli problem savaş ve yabancı bir ülkedeki yabancı hayatımdır" (Gürler, 2019).

Grammatical Transfers

It is found that Persian students frequently make mistakes in some grammar subjects like aorist tense verbs, noun phrases, indefinite past tense (Özden, Boylu Başar, 2017).

It is found in another study that noun phrases are one of the subjects that students have difficulties with. It is found Iranians, non-Turkic students, could not differentiate definite and indefinite noun phrases (Özden, Boylu Başar, 2017).

It is found that Iranian students confuse places of use of "–mAk" and "–mA" suffixes in the subject of noun phrases (Özden, Boylu Başar, 2017).

Syntactic Transfers

The mistakes that Indian students made on misusing noun phrases are found. The sentence "Bebeğin cinsiyeti öğrenmek istiyor (bebeğinin cinsiyetini)" can be exemplified for this kind of mistake (Şehitoğlu, 2020).

As an example of students' mistakes on misordering elements of the sentence, "Ali dedi kaşık yapıyorum (Ali "kaşık yapıyorum" dedi)" is found (Şehitoğlu, 2020).

As an example of Arab students' syntactic mistakes, "Bazı şeyler olumlu yaptı bazı şeylerde olumsuz. Bazı şeyleri olumlu bazı şeyleri de olumsuz yaptı" is found (Gürler, 2019).

Vocabulary Transfers

It is found that the fundamental reason for negative transfers arising from using common words in Turkish and Arabic is that they want to write in colloquial language in vocabulary.

The sentences like "O ama zaraları da var. Ama zararları da var. İnternetin başka zaralı da var çok kişi interneten saysinde piş işirler karışıyor, internet insanın zaral da var faydası da var" can be regarded as examples (Gürler, 2019).

Additionally, the sentence "Siyahet gitmeden önc eşyalar getirmek lazımdır. Seyahate çıkmadan önce yanınıza eşyalarınızı almanız gerekmektedir" can be seen as the example of negative transfers that Arab students made in the vocabulary (Gürler, 2019).

The results on the question of "What are the distributions of the individuals learning Turkish as a foreign language by Asian and Pacific countries?" which is found in the research's subproblems
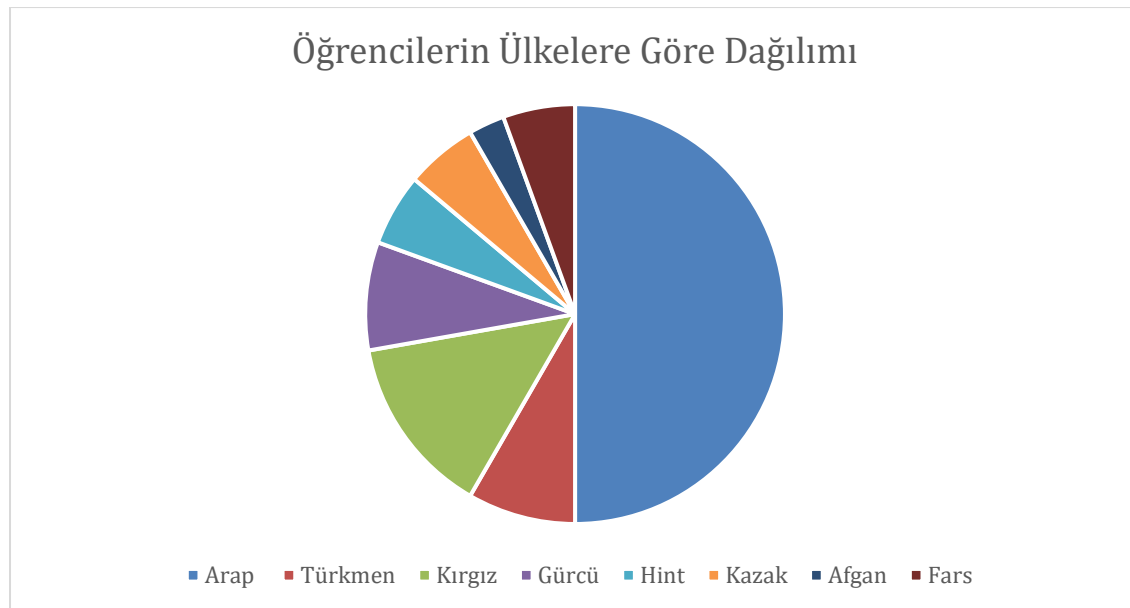
Graphic 1. The distribution of the students by countries in the studies examined in the research

As seen in the Graphic 1, it is found that the distributions of the students by country are 50% Arab students, 13.9% Kyrgyzs, 8.3% Turkmens, 8.3% Georgians, 5.6% Indians, 5.6% Kazakhs, 5.6% Persians, and 2.8% Afghans. It is seen that Arab and Kyrgyz students cover the majority, and it is found also that the studies conducted on Indian, Afghan, Persian, and Kazakh students are limited.

Conclusion

In this study where positive and negative impacts of geography and culture on learning Turkish as a foreign language in Asian and Pacific countries are examined, the conclusions are presented below.

There are 35 studies where positive and negative transfers of geography and culture in teaching Turkish as a foreign language in Asian and Pacific countries are examined. 5.7% of these studies are 2 doctoral theses, 28.6% are 10 master's theses, and 65.7% are 23 articles. Accordingly, it is found that there is a huge gap between them when comparing numbers of articles and other studies. When taking scope and significance of the subject into consideration, it is possible to say more postgraduate studies should be conducted.

It is found that there are 2 morphological, 2 phonological, 0 misspelling and punctuation, 1 grammatical, 2 syntactic, and 1 vocabulary positive transfers.It is found that there are 17 morphological, 13 phonological, 13 misspelling and punctuation, 18 grammatical, 14 syntactic, and 8 vocabulary negative transfers. It is seen that positive transfers are very few while negative transfers number in when examining the resources in teaching Turkish as a foreign language. It is found that the largest number of negative transfers is related to the use of suffixes and grammar. While that they are caused from learning incorrectly is considered, it is thought that Turkish learner individuals' negative transfers from their native languages are significant factors in these transfers because many students repeat these mistakes frequently.

When considering the distributions of the students by country, It is seen that the places are given to Arab students 50%, 13.9% Kyrgyzs, 8.3% Turkmens, 8.3% Georgians, 5.6% Indians, 5.6% Kazakhs, 5.6% Persians, and 2.8% Afghans in the studies. It is seen that the great majority of the studies are conducted on Arab students. It is found that the studies on Kyrgyz students follow, and the studies on Indians, Afghans, Persians, and Kazakhs are limited. Also, any studies were not found in the countries where Turkish draws attention such as Malaysia, and Indonesia.

Teaching foreign language covers a multidimensional and multifaceted process that should be arranged regularly for the students' characteristics like different motivation, reason, aim, and expectations. The individuals who were raised in a different language, culture, perspective, and the system of education may suffer from different difficulties or learning disabilities as learning a language. It is crucial in teaching a foreign language that the differences and similarities between the target language and its culture, and language and culture of the individuals who learn it as a foreign language should be determined. These determinations would make the teaching process productive for both students and language teachers.

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When considering the currentness of positive and negative transfers in teaching a foreign language, it is seen that the studies on teaching Turkish as a foreign language are very limited. The transfers were not discussed in data sources of this study directly but mentioned indirectly. It is found that transfers were discussed indirectly in the limited number of numerous studies related to teaching Turkish as a foreign language in Asian and Pacific countries. These conclusions show that the studies related to impacts of culture and geography in the teaching a foreign language for Turkish are very few and inadequate.

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