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GAZIANTEP UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES TEACHING  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROGRAM

**ANALYSIS OF FACTORS AFFECTING REFUGEE  
LEARNERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEARNING  
LANGUAGES: (A CASE STUDY)**

Master of Arts Thesis

MAHMOUD DALLAL

GAZIANTEP  
December, 2021

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**Master of Arts Thesis**

MAHMOUD DALLAL

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Filiz YALÇIN TILFARLIOĞLU

GAZIANTEP  
DECEMBER, 2021

## APPROVAL OF THE JURY

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**Thesis Title** : Analysis of Factors Affecting Refugee Learners' Attitudes  
 Towards Learning Languages: (A Case Study).  
**Thesis Date** : 27.12.2021

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Prof. Dr. Filiz YALÇIN TILFARLIOĞLU  
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This is to certify that I have read this thesis and that, in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

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This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Assoc. Prof. Dr. MEHMET BARDAKÇI	.....

It is approved that this thesis has been written in compliance with the formatting rules laid down by the Graduate School Educational Sciences.

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## RESEARCH ETHICS DECLARATION

The information contained here is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, accurate. I have read the University's current research ethics guidelines, and accept responsibility for the conduct of the procedures set out in the attached application in accordance with these guidelines, the University's policy on conflict of interest and any other condition laid down by the Gaziantep University Research Ethics Committee or its Sub-Committees. I have attempted to identify all the risks related to this research that may arise in conducting this research, and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants.

I have declared any affiliation or financial interest in this research or its outcomes or any other circumstances which might present a perceived, potential or actual conflict of interest, in accordance with Gaziantep University policy on Conflicts of Interest.

Signature:

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MAHMOUD DALLAL

Date:

27.12 2021

## DEDICATION

It is with genuine gratitude and warm regard that I dedicate this work to my wonderful family. To the memory of my father, YAHIA, who never got to see this, but he is in every page. My mother, SAFAA, who taught me the purpose of life and the value of hard work. My wife, NISREEN, who never got bored of being generously supportive and caring. I am truly thankful for having you in my life. My sons, YAHIA and SHAHM, who are my everything. My brother, HUMAM and my sisters, BARA'AH and SANA, who always were by my side throughout this journey.

This thesis is also dedicated to my free country and free people.



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## ÖZET

### Öğrenici Sığınmacıların Dil Öğrenmeye Yönelik Tutumlarını Etkileyen Faktörlerin Analizi (Olgu Çalışması)

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Dünyanın yaşadığı sürekli çatışmalar ve artan yerinden edilme dalgaları ile mültecilerin istikrara olan ihtiyacı artmaktadır. Söz konusu hedefi gerçekleştirmeye yardımcı olacak önemli faktörlerden biri, yerel ve uluslararası düzeyde kapılar açabilecek olan dil öğrenmedir. Bu çalışma, Suriyeli mültecilerin Türkiye'de dil öğrenmeye yönelik tutumlarını araştırılması ve Suriyelilerin gözünden bu konuya zengin bir bakış açısı getirilmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Çalışma, 2011 yılında Suriye iç savaşının başlamasından bu yana yaklaşık 450.407 Suriyeliye ev sahipliği yapan Türkiye'nin güneyindeki Gaziantep şehrinde yürütülmüştür. Bu betimleyici çalışma, araştırma sorularını yanıtlamak için karma yöntem yaklaşımına dayanmaktadır. Nicel veriler için 18-45 yaş arası 399 katılımcıya anket uygulanmıştır. Nitel veriler için 15 katılımcı ile bir dizi açık uçlu soru içeren yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Ardından toplanan veriler IBM SPSS 23 yardımıyla analiz edilmiştir.

Nicel ve nitel olarak toplanan verilerin analiz sonuçları, Suriyelilerin İngilizce dil becerilerinin Türkiye'de kaldıkları süre boyunca Türkçe dili becerilerinin aksine bir gelişme göstermediğini, ancak genel olarak her iki dilde de yeterliliklerinin düşük olduğunu göstermiştir. Ayrıca, sonuçlar, Suriyelilerin dil öğrenmedeki en büyük engelleri olarak zaman ve uygulama fırsatlarının eksikliğini ön plana çıkarmıştır. Dahası, katılımcılar mevcut kurslarla ilgili görüşlerini ifade etmişler, ihtiyaçlarına ve seviyelerine göre özel olarak hazırlanmış eğitimlere ihtiyaç duyduklarını belirtmişlerdir. Sonuçlar, kendilerine göre iş ve eğitim fırsatlarının yanı sıra daha iyi entegrasyonu da içeren dil öğreniminin avantajlarına yönelik katılımcıların görüşleriyle sonuçlandırılmıştır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Suriyeli mülteciler, faktörler, tutumlar, dil öğrenimi, engeller, faydalar.

## ABSTRACT

### **Analysis of Factors Affecting Refugee Learners' Attitudes Towards Learning Languages: (A Case Study)**

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MA Thesis,

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Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Filiz YALÇIN TILFARLIOĞLU

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With the continuous conflicts and increasing waves of displacement the world is experiencing, refugees' necessity for stability grows. A significant factor to help fulfill this objective is learning languages, as they can open doors on the local and international levels. This study aims to investigate Syrian refugees' attitudes towards language learning in Turkey, offering a thorough description of this issue from the eyes of Syrians themselves. The study is conducted in Gaziantep city, south of Turkey, which hosts almost 450,407 Syrians since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011. This descriptive study is based on a mixed-method approach in order to answer the research questions. For quantitative data, 399 participants between 18-45 filled a questionnaire specially designed for this study. For qualitative data, semi-structured interviews with a set of open-ended questions were conducted with 15 participants. Subsequently, the collected data was analyzed with the assistance of IBM SPSS 23.

The analysis results of the quantitative and qualitative collected data demonstrated that Syrians' English language skills did not witness an improvement during their residency in Turkey, contrary to their Turkish skills; however, their overall proficiency in both languages is low. Besides, the results highlighted time and lack of practice opportunities as Syrians' most significant obstacles in learning languages. Moreover, the participants shared their opinions regarding the available courses and mentioned their need for tailored courses to meet their needs and levels. The results were concluded with the participants' views in terms of the way they see the advantages of learning languages which, according to them, included better integration as well as job and education opportunities.

**Keywords:** Syrian refugees, factors, attitudes, language learning, obstacles, benefits.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

**UNICEF:** The United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund.

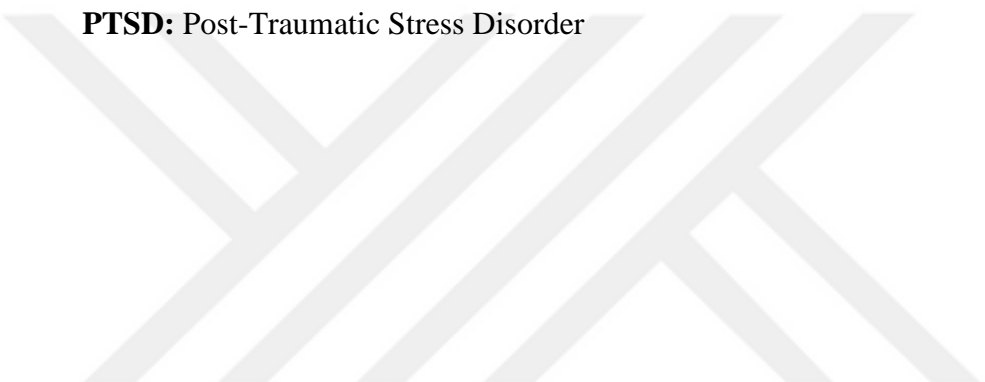
**UNHCR:** The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

**UN:** United Nations.

**NGO:** Non-Governmental Organization.

**TSL:** Turkish as a Second Language.

**PTSD:** Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder



## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Presentation**

This chapter presents an elaborated introduction of this study, which investigates the Syrian refugees' attitudes towards language learning in Gaziantep, Turkey. It introduces the statement of the problem, the significance and the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the definitions of key terms. Assumptions and study limitations are presented in this chapter as well. The main goal of this chapter is to answer all the questions related to the study itself.

#### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

In light of the interconnected and interdependent world we live in, along with the openness the world is witnessing, languages come to the surface as part of this development. Speaking many languages is always a plus on the personal and professional levels. On the one hand, the cognitive and neurological abilities are undeniably impacted by speaking more than a language; learning languages enhances the analytical and cognitive abilities. Bilinguals are better able to use self-regulatory mechanisms, such as starting a statement and then going back to correct themselves (Ekstrand, 1981). In the long term, speaking languages can maintain the strength and health of the brain into old age and supports focus and memory skills (Mårtensson, et.al. 2012).

On the other hand, speaking more than one language is a crucial skill that grants people the opportunity to engage with others in more effective and immediate

ways while making them better prepared to succeed in the global economy. Language is a communication system among individuals as well as a social phenomenon (Hickey, 2010). Economic opportunities, access to social resources, and the chance of becoming part of the power structure of a given society are all affected in case of the lack of language skills (Chiswick & Miller, 1995).

Apart from that, over 80 million people worldwide have fled war, persecution, violence, or conflict and have crossed an international border to have safety in another country in the past few years. They often have had to run away with little more than the clothes on their back, leaving behind jobs, possessions, homes, and loved ones to seek protection and a better tomorrow. After the Syrian crisis erupted in 2011, Syrian refugees have topped the list with over 6.8 million, followed by Venezuelans, Afghanistan, and South Sudanese. Most Syrian refugees (3.6 million) have chosen to move to Turkey for geographical, religious, and cultural reasons (UNHCR, 2021).

Speaking more than one language can take refugees' lives to another level as languages play an essential role in integration in the new country and reduce the likelihood of anti-refugees attitudes. In addition, languages are sometimes learned by refugees to help them move to another country. The development of second language skills improves independence and minimizes social isolation (Gordon, 2011). Communication in the language of the host country is one of the most important prerequisites for the successful economic and social integration of refugees (Ager & Strang, 2008). From the perspective of the host society, providing refugees with language skills means they are more likely to access education and employment, less likely to be dependent on welfare, and more likely to be engaged in their local community. People move from being passive recipients to active producers and take control of their own lives (Carson, 2008). In general, refugees seek to learn languages either to enhance integration into the host country or to facilitate the transition to another country (Abou-Khalil, Helou, Flanagan, Pinkwart & Ogata, 2019).

As the language situation of refugees has always been a crucial topic on the international agenda for its sensitivity and impact on the refugees' lives in addition to being a refugee, the researcher decided to do this descriptive research to see where Syrian refugees in Gaziantep, Turkey are standing regarding language learning in

light of their daily responsibilities and future plans. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the studies tackling this particular topic are rare in Turkey and usually conducted with small samples following a certain language program, which calls for the need for a more in-depth understanding of the refugees' language learning situation in Gaziantep. In this research, the researcher investigated the languages Syrian refugees have improved during their stay in Turkey, the driving influences and associated factors behind refugees' decisions, in addition to collecting the refugees' opinions about the available courses, benefits of languages, and recommendations for future consideration. It is expected that this study will be of valuable in deterring the factors that Syrian refugees living in Gaziantep encounter in terms of language learning, as well as in guiding the development of educational activities that international organizations conduct in coordination with the Ministry of Education in Turkey.

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

Refugees and asylum seekers have caught researchers' attention, and this has naturally resulted in an abounding number of studies (e.g., Elmeroth, 2003; Keyes & Kane, 2004; Kleinmann, 1984). However, as it is a unique and relatively recent case in point, the Syrian conflict has been covered with only a few studies. Once addressed, the Syrian emergency was understandably approached from a humanitarian aid perspective. As for the educational side, the literature is still very sparse, making this study one of the first in terms of the broad context and wealth of data likely to emerge. This present research attempted to provide a thorough understating of this thesis topic by investigating and emphasizing language learning as it is one of the key areas of refugees' lives. As stated in the previous part of this chapter, finding out the preference of Syrians in Gaziantep concerning language/s to learn, in addition to emphasizing the factors that impact their preferences along with spotting light on their opinions about the usefulness of languages, available courses, and recommendations for future will be the objective of this study.

First of all, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, the number of studies focusing on the refugees' experiences in learning languages is limited. In general, the precedent studies have focused on how languages contribute to the refugees' integration into the host countries after attending a specific language program (Abou-

Khalil et al., 2019), while this study laid stress on the Syrian refugees' experiences and opinions, taking into consideration that this study does not focus on a certain language program. Accordingly, it seems that this study will be among the first studies in the field of refugees' language learning, which makes it a particularly significant and distinctive contribution to the field of refugees' lives in the host countries. Language tops the list of challenges refugees encounter during their journey (Brooker, Lawrence & Dodds, 2017). Secondly, as this study was based on the participants' experiences and opinions, the results will serve the development of available courses in private and public institutions to bridge gaps that may exist in language provision. Thirdly, this study illustrates the daily responsibilities of refugees, which will be useful for the UN, international, and local organizations that work hand-in-hand with the Turkish Ministry of Education to design and implement languages programs for refugees in Turkey in general and Syrian refugees in particular. Despite the common characteristics among various refugees' experiences, the impact of leaving one's home country differs significantly (Abou-Khalil et al., 2019). Identifying the refugees' specific needs is critical to developing the tools that are used in their language learning activities. Refugee's living conditions as well as the driving reasons to learn new languages have been identified to be taken into account during language teaching for refugees (Kleinmann, 1984). Fourthly, this study will provide recommendations from the refugees' points of view which will be useful for the way forward of the responsible entities.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is not to evaluate the participants' language skills but to understand the experiences of Syrian refugees in regard to language learning in the Turkish context and the motives/obstacles they have had. Furthermore, this study examined the available language courses in Gaziantep based on the participants' experiences and present their recommendations in this regard. The study finally measured the participants' opinions on the benefit of learning language. The topic explored the experiences of 399 refugees aged between 18-45 who currently live in Gaziantep, Turkey. Besides, the researcher is very interested in tackling this significant topic from the eyes of Syrian refugees to know more about the aspects refugees find important and meaningful in their experiences. The reason the

researcher is interested in exploring this topic is that he is a Syrian refugee living in Gaziantep and has worked in private and organizational languages centers and understands the importance and role of languages in enhancing refugees' living conditions and creating education and job opportunities.

### 1.5 Research Questions

1. **Research Question 1:** What language/s have Syrians in Gaziantep improved during their stay in Turkey?
2. **Research Question 2:** What are the factors affecting learning languages for Syrians in Gaziantep?
3. **Research Question 3:** How do Syrians see the current situation of the available language learning opportunities in Gaziantep?
4. **Research Question 4:** How do Syrians in Gaziantep see the benefit of learning languages?

### 1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Providing explanation of the key terms mentioned in the study will assist readers to become familiar with the research topic. The following is a brief definition of the key terms mentioned in the study;

1. **Refugee:** is a person who has been forced to flee his/her country due to violence, persecution, or war. They have a well-founded fear of persecution on the grounds of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return to their home country or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are the main causes of flight from their countries.
2. **Internally displaced person (IDP):** is a person who has been forced to flee his/her homeland, but never crosses an international border. These people seek shelter wherever they can find it - in nearby towns, schools, settlements, internal camps, even in forests and fields.
3. **Asylum Seeker:** is a person who flees his/her own country and seeks refuge in another country. They apply for asylum, which is the right to be recognized as a refugee and receive material support as well as legal protection.

## 1.7 Assumptions

The below assumptions were considered for the purpose of this study to reach its main objectives:

**Assumption #1:** It is assumed that the sample participating in the current study reflects the entire population of the Syrian community in Gaziantep, Turkey, as the selection of participants is done through Simple Random Sampling to ensure that the selected sample represents the entire population.

**Assumption #2:** The participants were informed about the nature of the study. They were not asked to provide private details such as names. The participants were assured that the information collected would be kept confidential and used only for this study.

## 1.8 Limitations

**Limitation# 1:** All participants are from the same city, which is Gaziantep. Thus, the conclusions of this study may not be applicable to different contexts.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Presentation**

This chapter aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the history related to the topic of this study. In this chapter, the information is clustered into three parts: A. Information about refugees worldwide in general and Syrian refugees in Turkey in particular who will be the target of this study, B. Bilingualism and C. Language learning for refugees.

This chapter will help readers understand the background of the topic and notice the gap that will be bridged by this study.

#### **2.2 Refugees**

Over the past decade, nearly 82 million people have had to leave their homeland and seek refuge or safety within or outside their country's borders. Forced displacement has been high on the international agenda recently, making dramatic headlines worldwide. Millions have been lucky to return home or find other solutions, like voluntary resettlement in third countries or repatriation. But many more have not been able to return, joining the displaced people of previous decades. The total of displaced people due to persecution, human rights violations, war, conflict, and events alarming public order increased to 82.4 million by December 2020, which is the highest number on record. The number of displaced people increased compared to 2019 (79.5 million) and almost doubled the number in 2010 (41 million) (UNHCR, 2021).

Currently, one in 95 people worldwide, is forcibly displaced, which is considered an increase compared with one in 159 in 2010. Nearly 11.2 million people were newly displaced, almost nine million were newly displaced within their countries' borders, while almost one million sought shelter outside their country's borders during 2020. Many displaced populations did not succeed in finding long-lasting solutions for rebuilding their lives. Only 251,000 refugees could go back to their homeland, and just 34,400 have been resettled to third countries; 69% compared to 107,800 in 2019. About three million internally displaced people have been able to return home during the year, including almost one and a half million Congolese. Nevertheless, in many cases, IDPs and refugees returned under unfavorable circumstances in which the sustainability of returns could not be guaranteed (UNHCR, 2021).

Syria, Congo, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Somalia are considered only a few of the several hotspots in 2020 driving people to search for safety and refuge within or outside their country's borders. By far, Syrians remained the largest forcibly displaced population worldwide (13.5 million, including almost 6.7 million IDPs) at the end of 2020. Moreover, Syrians are at the top of the list with 6.8 million people, followed by Venezuelans with 4.9 million, Afghans with 2.8 million, and South Sudan with 2.2 million, when considering only international displacement situations. Behind the figures are people filled with distinctive life experiences and ambitions for the future. They are fathers yearning to work again, mothers longing to return home, and children searching for a childhood. Turkey remains the country with the highest number of hosted refugees worldwide since the number of people forcibly displaced worldwide as a reason of persecution, violence, and conflict hit record levels. The top host countries are Turkey (3.7 million), followed by Colombia, Pakistan, Uganda, and Germany with (1.7 million), (1.4 million), (1.4 million), (1.2 million), respectively (UNHCR, 2021).

Several official institutions studied the situation of these people, and the most comprehensive and internationally conclusive document on the refugee question, entitled "Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees", was published by the UN in 1951. The Convention provides an international recognition of the refugees and asylum seekers' situation and discussed their legal status. The Convention describes refugees as people who have fled their homeland and cannot go back because they

have a well-founded fear of being oppressed on account of their nationality, membership in a particular social group, religion, race, or political opinion (UNHCR, 2021). Throughout history, there have been undesirable situations that have forced people to leave their places of residence; however, this problem is not getting any better.

### **2.2.1 Syrian Refugees in Turkey**

Before the conflict in Syria, Syrians complained about corruption, lack of political freedom and high unemployment. Inspired by the "Arab Spring", pro-democracy demonstrations erupted in the southern city of Deraa in March 2011. As the government used deadly force to quell the protests, protests erupted across the country demanding the resignation of the president. The unrest spread and the crackdown intensified. Protesters took up arms to defend themselves and liberate their areas from the regime's troops. The regime decided to fight what it called "foreign-backed terrorism." The violence quickly escalated, and the country descended into a bitter war (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/search?q=syria>).

After the Syrian conflict in 2011, vast influxes of Syrians moved to the neighboring countries seeking safety and protection. Since then, Turkey has welcomed around 3.650.496 Syrian refugees, of whom 450.407 are located in Gaziantep, according to statistics published by General Migration Directorate in Turkey in February 2021. 41.1 percent of Syrians in Turkey are between 19-45 years old (<https://en.goc.gov.tr/>).

Several UN agencies like UNHCR and UNICEF, in coordination with the Ministry of National Education in Turkey, established temporary education centers to ensure that Syrian refugee students are enrolled in schools and receiving a relevant, quality education and to contribute to restoring educational service provision to strengthen the resilience of conflict-affected students. Thus, on 26 September 2013, the Turkish Ministry of Education (MoNE) issued a public mandate entitled "Educational and Instructional Services for Syrian Citizens under Temporary Protection in our Country", which emphasises that education services will be provided according to certain standards, that education services will be provided jointly inside and outside the camp, and that, in addition, special importance will be

given to university education (MEB, 2013). A total of 215 temporary education centers had been set up across 19 governorates in Turkey by December 2018, offering courses in different subjects to 676,560 students (<http://hbogm.meb.gov.tr/meb>). Furthermore, several organizations like the Turkish Red Crescent funded community centers in different Turkish governorates offering free-of-charge courses to kids and adult Syrians in the fields of music, social integration, languages, etc. Those centers have become a resort for Syrian refugees to learn languages (<https://turkey.servicesadvisor.org/en/service/46943>).

Despite the traumatic events Syrians went through and the effects that some may still have, the number of participants in such courses show that Syrian refugees tend to learn languages since languages are always a plus regardless of what they seek, be it integration, education, job, transition to another country, etc. Adequate language skills enable refugees to move up the career ladder, increase their likelihood of employment, and facilitate their access to well-paid jobs. Poor adaptation to the host society can have an impact on the refugees' mental health which can, in turn, affect the integration process (Virta, Sam & Westin, 2004).

### **2.3 Bilingualism**

People are surrounded by languages at almost every moment of their lives. They use language to connect with others, share their thoughts and feelings, understand the world around them, and identify with their culture. Moreover, for many people, this plentiful linguistic environment includes not just a language but two or more (Marian & Shook, 2012). The original language an individual grows up speaking is thought of as their mother tongue or first language. A person who is raised speaking two mother tongues or first languages is termed a 'simultaneous bilingual.' If they learn a second language later, they are called a 'sequential bilingual' (Bloch, et.al. 2009).

In reality, most of the population worldwide is bilingual or multilingual. In 2006, a study was conducted by the European Commission showed that 56% of respondents can speak a language different from their mother tongue. The survey also showed that in several other countries, the ratio is even higher; 99% of Luxembourgers and 95% of Latvians can speak a language other than their mother

tongue. Unexpectedly, in the United States of America, which is generally considered monolingual, 1/5 of the population reported speaking a language besides English at home in 2007, a 140% increase since 1980. Millions of Americans use a language other than English in their daily lives outside the home when they are in the classroom or at work. The United States of America and Europe are not alone either. According to a report by the Associated Press, up to 66% of children worldwide are being raised bilingual. (Marian & Shook, 2012).

As a matter of fact, the number of job postings specifically geared towards bilingual applicants multi-doubled in the U.S. during the period 2010-2015. Companies are looking for professionals who can serve and sell to a large foreign-born population at home and communicate seamlessly with customers in new and expanding overseas markets. With over 60 million residents in the U.S. who speak a language other than English at home, people do not have to get on a plane to practice their language skills. As an added incentive, language skills can also lead to higher salaries and hiring bonuses in many examples (New American Economy, 2017).

Inevitably, language contact leads to bilingualism. Generally, bilingualism has two kinds: societal and individual. On the one hand, roughly speaking, societal bilingualism occurs when two or more languages are spoken in a given society. Based on that, almost all societies are bilingual, but they can differ concerning the form or degree of bilingualism. On the other hand, it is quite straightforward what individual bilingualism is, yet determining whether a given individual is bilingual or not is not simple. Many people in Britain learned some French at school and practice it on their annual vacation, but are they as bilingual as a young Mexican in Los Angeles who speaks English and Spanish with equal ease? To what extent should a speaker be proficient in the two languages to be called bilingual? Should they be able to write and speak fluently in both languages? Should a true bilingual master in receptive tasks (listening, reading) and productive (speaking, writing)? Which components or language are the criteria: pronunciation, vocabulary, pragmatics, syntax? (Cook & Bassetti, 2011).

In the history of bilingualism study, different definitions have been proposed. Two extremes yet well-known variants will be given. According to Bloomfield (1933), who went to the extreme describing bilinguals as those who should have

“native-like control of two or more languages” (p. 56). Hall (1952) went to the other extreme, when he believed that a person who had “at least some knowledge and control of the grammatical structure of the second language” is considered bilingual (p. 14). Macnamara (1967) referred to bilinguals as individuals who are proficient in one of the four language skills (speaking, writing, listening, or reading) in a language other than their native language.

In recent decades, researchers have benefited from the technological advances to look deeper into the brain to examine the way bilingualism alters and interacts with neurological and cognitive systems (Marian & Shook, 2012). Researchers have also shown that the level of creativity is higher for bilingual speakers compared to monolingual speakers. Developing the skills of a foreign language enhances the problem-solving ability and increases logical thinking; it also makes people experiment with new words and expressions. Learning a second language forces speakers to search for equivalent words if they cannot remember the original word they wanted to use (Diaz & Klingler, 1991). It enhances the skills in ‘divergent thinking,’ which is the capability to come up with several solutions to one problem. Divergent thinking (DT) tests are very often used in creativity studies (Runco & Acar, 2012).

Moreover, decisions taken in the second language are more reason-driven compared with the decisions taken in the mother language. Contrary to assumptions, when people depend on a second or third language, they distance themselves from the biases and emotional responses deeply linked with their mother tongue, which results in clear-headed and systematic decisions based on only facts. Bialystok and her colleagues, in a series of studies, have found that bilingualism is linked with more effective cognitive control, particularly executive control and those executive skills (EF) associated with the frontal lobe and related to decision making, monitoring, planning, attention, and switching (Bialystok, 2001; Bialystok, Craik, Klein & Viswanathan, 2004; Bialystok, Craik & Luk, 2008).

Speaking two languages can have tangible practical benefits. Improving sensory and cognitive processing through bilingualism can help bilinguals better process information from the environment, paving the way for a clearer learning indicator. This type of increased attention to detail may contribute to clarify the

reason behind bilinguals learning a third language better than monolinguals learning a second language (Kaushanskaya & Marian, 2009). The benefit of language learning for bilinguals could be the capability to concentrate on information about the new language while decreasing interference with the languages they previously knew. This capability would allow bilinguals to approach newly learned words more efficiently, resulting in better vocabulary growth than monolinguals who are not as gifted at suppressing competing information (Bartolotti & Marian, 2012). Cenoz (2003) has shown that learners who have gone through the process of learning a second language are more experienced language learners and are likely to have developed certain strategies and skills to accomplish the task of language learning. These strategies and skills may be reactivated and adapted to the new challenges when they are faced with learning a third language task.

Moreover, the benefits associated with bilingual experience appear to begin quite early. Researchers have shown that bilingualism has a practical influence on conflict management and attention in infants as young as seven months. In Kovács and Mehler's (2009) study, researchers taught infants who grew up in bilingual or monolingual environments that when they heard a ringtone, a puppet appeared on one side of the screen. During the trial, the puppet started to appear on the other side of the screen. To receive an award, the children had to modify the rule they had learned; only the bilinguals were able to successfully learn the new rule. This shows that navigating a multilingual environment has benefits beyond language, even for very young children.

The bilingualism's neurological and cognitive benefits also expand into older adulthood. Bilingualism comes across to introduce a means to fend off a natural decrease of cognitive function and maintain what is called "cognitive reserve" (Bialystok, Craik, & Luk, 2012). Cognitive reserve points to the effective use of brain networks to improve brain function during aging. The contribution of bilingualism to this reserve may be that it maintains sharp cognitive mechanisms and helps recruit additional brain networks to make up for the ones that become damaged during aging. Old bilinguals enjoy executive control and enhanced memory compared to older monolinguals, leading to real-world health advantages (Bialystok et al., 2012; Schroeder & Marian, 2012).

Bilingualism may not only halt the decline that comes with aging, but also provides protection against diseases that accelerate that decline, like Alzheimer's disease. Craik, Bialystok and Freedman (2010) studied over 200 monolingual and bilingual patients with Alzheimer's and found out that monolingual patients showed the first symptoms of the disease at the age of 72.6, 5.1 years earlier than the average bilingual (77.7). Similarly, monolingual patients were diagnosed 4.3 years earlier than bilingual patients (76.5 years and 80.8 years, respectively). Thinking of the brain as an engine, bilingualism may help it perform better with the same amount of fuel (Marian & Shook, 2012).

Research has shown that when bilinguals use one language, the other language is activated at the same time. When people hear a word, they do not hear the entire word at once because the sounds come in a certain order. Long before the word is complete, the brain's language system begins to guess what the word might be by activating many words that match the signal. When someone hears the word "can," it is likely that words like "candy" and "candle" will also be activated, at least in the earlier stages of word recognition. For bilinguals, this activation is not tied to one language. The auditory inputs activate the corresponding words independently of their language (Marian & Spivey, 2003).

## **2.4 Language Learning for Refugees**

### **2.4.1 Challenges**

The conflict in Syria has created a long list of dilemmas, including mental, physical, as well as social health disorders (Schilling, Rauscher, Menzel, Reichenauer, Müller-Schilling, Schmid & Selgrad, 2017). Among the important dilemmas that refugees face are the hardships in learning a second language. This can be seen whether during the process of learning a second language, such as English, in Arab-speaking countries like Jordan and Egypt (Alefsha & Al-Jamal, 2019) or non-Arab speaking contexts like Turkey and Germany (Şeker & Sirkeci 2015).

The refugees' phenomenon's emergence, its quick escalate, and its authentic link to language learning have been the main concentration of several studies that endeavored to tackle the refugees' experience from different angles. For instance,

Kleinmann (1984) examined the experience of the Indo-Chinese refugee in terms of learning English as a second language, Goodkind (2006) studied the refugees' humanitarian and psychological side by concentrating on their well-being, Hou and Beiser (2006) looked into the experience of English language acquisition by Southeast Asian refugees living in Canada. In addition, refugees' trauma and their experience in second language learning were studied by (Block, 2003; Gordon, 2011; Horsman 2013).

The factors that may impact the refugees' learning languages process are interrelated and might be connected to a battery of causes that are inseparable. Dominant among these are psychological disturbances, social factors, and language-related difficulties (Al Masri & Abu-Ayyash, 2020). According to Elmeroth (2003), the factors relevant to the process of language acquisition include changes in family and culture roles, social isolation, the refugees' ethnic view of the new society, and barriers to refugees' psychological and mental health.

Steele (2017) demonstrated the institutional, educational, social, and economic aspects as key challenges to Syrian refugees learning English. Evans and Fitzgerald (2017) examined the challenges Syrian refugees living in the United States faced in learning English and found that most Syrian refugees lacked basic needs such as shelter, food, medicine, clothing, and education. This made language learning difficult. In addition, the majority of Syrian refugees had problems finding jobs, which led to a severe financial crisis. The majority of Syrian refugees could not complete their education due to economic, financial, educational and social problems.

Other studies investigating the challenges encountered by the refugees' women, adults, and children while attending language classes revealed that the challenges include language problems (Bond, Giddens, Cosentino, Cook, Hoban, Haynes, .. & Glover, 2007), cultural and religious obstacles (Riggs, Block, Gibbs, Davis, Szwarc, Casey, ... & Waters, 2012), gender problems (Popov & Erik, 2015), age-related problems (Casimiro, Hancock & Northcote, 2007), institutional challenge (Riggs et al., 2012), economic challenge (Perry, 2013), difficulty in adjusting to new faces in the class (Watkins, Razee, & Richters, 2012), social problems (Lee, 2016) and so on. Researchers argued that refugees do not fulfill real learning from the language classes until these problems are resolved. The following is a summary of the main challenges types discussed in previous studies throughout history.

### 2.4.1.1 Psychological Challenges

In psychology, the trauma concept refers to responses to shocking and dangerous events which crack the person's sense of security and affect normal resilience to adversity. Traumatic events "generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death. They confront human beings with the extremities of helplessness and terror and evoke the responses of catastrophe" (Herman, 1997, p. 33). PTSD has been linked with extensive traumatic events: heart attack (Edmondson, Richardson, Falzon, Davidson, Mills & Neria, 2012), parental break-up (Mahon, Bradley, Harvey, Winston & Palmer, 2001), sexual abuse (Kessler, Aguilar-Gaxiola, Alonso, Benjet, Bromet, Cardoso, ... & Koenen, 2017), natural disasters (Carmassi, Bertelloni, Massimetti, Miniati, Stratta, Rossi & Dell, 2015) domestic violence (Rothschild, 2000), kidnapping (Liu, Petukhova, Sampson, Aguilar-Gaxiola, Alonso, Andrade,... & World Health Organization World Mental Health Survey Collaborators, 2017), military services (Shalev, Liberzon & Marmar, 2017), emotional or physical abuse (Kessler, Sonnega, Bromet, Hughes & Nelson, 1995), war trauma (Hollifield, Warner, Lian, Krakow, Jenkins, Kesler, ... & Westermeyer, 2002), and medical conditions including cancer (Cordova, Riba & Spiegel, 2017), stroke (Edmondson, Richardson, Fausett, Falzon, Howard & Kronish, 2013), death of a loved one (Atwoli, Stein, King, Petukhova, Aguilar-Gaxiola, Alonso ,... & WHO World Mental Health Survey Collaborators, 2017), intensive-care unit hospitalization (Davydow, Gifford, Desai, Needham & Bienvenu, 2008), and miscarriage (Christiansen, 2017).

When psychologists studied refugees' populations, they discovered high rates of substance abuse, anxiety, depression, and PTSD (Jaranson, Butcher, Halcon, Johnson, Robertson, Savik, ... & Westermeyer, 2004; Mollica, Wyshak, & Lavelle, 1987; Westermeyer & Her, 2007). According to Nicholl and Thompson (2004), the ratio of refugees having trauma-related symptoms is between 30% and 86%. Steel, Zachary, Silove, Phan and Bauman (2002) studied the case of adult Vietnamese refugees in Australia and found out that the daily function and integration were noticeably affected by the amount of trauma refugees had before refuge. Trauma's symptoms varied greatly from refugee to refugee, and PTSD was more severe. Therefore, Goodkind (2006) emphasised the value of refugee's well-being, pointing out that it should be understood holistically and that all the negative experiences

refugees encountered should be considered along with the hardships they faced in their daily lives. Having traumatic experiences may lead learners to symptoms that are directly related to learning difficulties like poor concentration, anxiety and memory problems (Isserlis, 2000; Kerka, 2002; McDonald, 2000). McDonald (2000) indicated that symptoms of trauma among refugees in Canada include dissociation, poor concentration, and memory problems that impair cognitive functioning and interfere with learning.

As a consequence of the fierce conflict in Syria, Syrian refugees have suffered from PTSD (Al Masri & Abu-Ayyash, 2020). Mahmood, Ibrahim, Goessmann, Ismail and Neuner (2019) examined the PTSD level among Syrian refugees in Iraq, 98.5% of the participants had experienced at least one traumatic event, and 86.3% experienced three or more. The prevalence of probable PTSD was about 60%. In a study of the PTSD level among Syrian refugees in Lebanon, the results showed that the prevalence of positive PTSD screen of Syrian refugees was 47.3% (Aoun, Joundi & El Gerges, 2018). Similarly, in the study of Alpak, Unal, Bulbul, Sagaltici, Bez, Altindag, ... and Savas (2015), the PTSD rate was measured among Syrian refugees in Turkey, and the results showed that the frequency rate was 33.5%. Moreover, the results showed that 71% of Syrian refugees in Turkey have the probability of having PTSD based on the binary logistic regression analysis.

Research in the field of cognitive psychology has found that the brain's neural pathways are affected by traumatic experiences, which impair learning throughout the lifespan (Perry, 1999). Söndergaard and Theorell (2004) found that the trauma's impact on language acquisition may have been significantly underestimated. Learners who have experienced trauma may exhibit symptoms such as poor concentration, memory problems, and anxiety that are directly related to learning difficulties (Isserlis, 2000; Kerka, 2002; McDonald, 2000). According to Gordon (2011), traumatic experiences affect memory, attention, and cognitive processing, which are essential factors to second language acquisition.

Stevens (2001) studied the case of Cambodians who lived in Australia and got to the result that 91% of the participants had depression and PTSD symptoms. Several participants had symptoms that directly affected learning and cognitive function, loss of memory (57%), poor concentration (58%), and including headaches (69%). The study by Bremner, Scott, Delaney, Southwick, Mason, Johnson, ... and

Charney (1993) on Vietnam veterans with combat-related PTSD found that they performed significantly worse on tests of short-term and long-term memory storage than people without PTSD.

Several studies have particularly investigated trauma's influence on adult learners (Isserlis, 2000; Kerka, 2002; Stone, 1995). Ying (2001) studied a case of a Vietnamese person who suffered from anxiety, frequent nightmares, and severe headaches. He was referred for treatment based on his complaint of poor concentration, which made it hard to attend language classes. During the treatment, the refugee revealed that he had been imprisoned and tortured for thirteen years in a "reeducation camp". Santoro (1997) mentioned problems of high rates of anxiety, low motivation, and unwillingness to participate verbally among a group of adult refugee learners who are trauma survivors.

#### **2.4.1.2 Social Challenges**

Bruner (1985) and Farrar (1990) reached the result that social interaction plays a vitally important role in acquiring a second language. Al Masri and Abu-Ayyash (2020) stressed the significance of the social factor in learning languages when they studied the social challenges faced by Syrian refugees in various countries. The participants had various experiences based on the country they reside in. The participants mentioned that people in Germany and France are conservative and monolingual and they are generally cautious about dealing with strangers and usually do not attempt to learn other languages. In comparison, Malaysian people are timid to communicate with strangers. Some refugees in Germany demonstrated the lack of necessity to learn the host language since the presence of Arabs in asylum countries hindered acquiring the languages of these countries.

In a study conducted by Dilek, Boyaci and Yasar (2018) about teaching Turkish to Syrian refugees in a camp, the participants mentioned lack of communication opportunities between the learners and the native speakers as a central challenge during the learning process. Syrian refugees in Jordan, in a study by Alefsha and Al-Jamal (2019), stated that social challenges affected their motivation as well as concentration on learning languages. The social challenges included their need to find jobs in addition to the lack of fulfilling their basic needs. Lee (2016) showed that the reason for social problems refugees face is that they have

various backgrounds that limit their association with people from other backgrounds. Thus, they cannot confidently and openly interact with their classmates.

#### **2.4.1.3 Linguistic Challenges**

The language barrier was found by Karipek (2017) as the prime challenge in learning the Turkish language by refugees. According to Al Masri and Abu-Ayyash (2020), the linguistic factor was among the language-related challenges Syrian refugees experienced in different refuge countries. The main linguistic-connected factors reported by refugees were mainly related to grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, length, and the difference between the standard language, the dialect and word formation. On the one hand, Syrian refugees in Germany faced several linguistic challenges and highlighted that the German language is very hard to acquire, the syntax of the language is complicated, having very long expressions and words as well as pronunciation-tied difficulties. Syrians learning Danish reported challenges in terms of pronunciation, while Malay was found to be hard in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. In addition, Syrians in Sweden mentioned the difference between the colloquial language and the one they studied in courses, along with the multi-meaning vocabulary as their major linguistic challenges. As of Turkish, the language nature; having a different word formation and different semantics were the major linguistic challenge for the participants, which matched the findings of Dilek et al. (2018), who found that Syrian refugees in their study faced problems as Turkish is being structurally different from Arabic.

On the experience of learning Turkish, Demirci (2015) studied the case of a Syrian refugees group doing B1 level courses in Turkish and reached the conclusion that they made mistakes in "reading aloud" because of the alphabet and phonemic differences between Arabic and Turkish. Mavaşoğlu and Tüm (2010) highlighted the difficulty learners face in terms of hearing and voicing the *c* and *ğ* sounds. The authors added that learners could not adapt to the order of "subject-object-predicate" (SOV) if they are used to the order of "subject-predicate-object" (SVO) in their first language and the problems in syntax that they had faced led to phonetic problems, concurrent morphological, and semantic problems.

Açık (2008) mentioned that those who learn Turkish as a second language mainly encounter difficulties with writing, speaking, reading, and listening. A

number of studies revealed that learners generally face difficulties in vocalizing the main letters/sounds, whether in speaking, reading, or writing (Açık, 2008; Onur, Biçer, & Bozkırlı, 2012; Adalar, 2010; Mavaşoğlu & Tüm, 2010; Demirci, 2015). Due to the structural and phonetic differences between the native language and the target language, challenges arise in terms of syntax and pronunciation (Demirci, 2015; Mavaşoğlu & Tüm, 2010; Açık, 2008; Büyükikiz & Çangal, 2016). Onur et al. (2012) reported that learners encountered challenges pronouncing and processing the sounds ğ, ş, ç, ı and ü, while according to Açık (2008), learners generally struggled most with the writing of vowels. Furthermore, Adalar (2010) demonstrated that since the sounds ü, o, and ö do not exist in most Arabic dialects' phonology, Arabic-speaking learners made many mistakes in terms of voicing and writing them. Semantics and use of affixes are other problems caused by structural differences between languages (Mavaşoğlu & Tüm, 2010; Adalar, 2010; Candaş, 2009).

#### **2.4.1.4 Institutional Challenges**

In the study of Dilek et al. (2018), Syrian refugees expressed encountering challenges to learn basics while learning Turkish in a camp course. These challenges can be problems in term of teaching material and technology, textbooks and methods and techniques. According to the participants, the activities were insufficient. In addition, there were inadequate physical conditions in the classroom and camp, insufficient communication opportunities, complex listening texts and the presence of students of different educational levels in the same class. The participants added other reasons for encountering challenges which were the lack of a standard curriculum, as well as the fact that the courses were not tailored towards students' needs, desires, and levels.

Studies dealing with the same topic have shown that the methods and techniques used in the language courses were tedious and not diversified according to the contemporary demands and goals of language teaching (Ünlü, 2011; Göçer & Moğul, 2011; Onur et al., 2012; Açık, 2008). Another problem is the materials used. Problems arising in this context can be set down as culturally inappropriate, as well as unqualified and inadequate materials (Ünlü, 2011; Durmuş, 2013; Emin, 2016; Güngör, 2015; Göçer, 2013; Dağdelen, 2015; Büyükikiz & Çangal, 2016; Mavaşoğlu & Tüm, 2010; Ciğerci & Güngör, 2016; Onur et al., 2012).

According to Karam, Kibler and Yoder (2017), teachers' skill gap often creates difficulties in teaching languages to the Syrian refugees. Several studies have discussed the language instructors' competencies, and the results showed instructors' lack of proper training, and their dealing with their job of being temporary (Özyürek, 2009; Yıldız & Tepeli, 2014; Ünlü, 201), their incapability to communicate in their students' native language(s) (Mavaşoğlu & Tüm, 2010; Güler, 2012), their incapability of using information technology during classes (Büyükaslan, 2007), and their lack of knowledge of their students' cultures (Güler, 2012). The same idea was discussed in Lee's (2016) study, where the author mentioned that despite the experience of some teachers, the majority of the remaining teachers and volunteers lack qualification certificates. In the study of Riggs et al. (2012), it is mentioned that courses usually include participants from different age groups, which creates an obstacle for refugees to freely interact with each other when they hold different age profiles. The refugees participating in Dilek et al.'s (2018) study also expressed that having learners from various age groups has made learning Turkish more difficult.

#### **2.4.1.5 Financial Challenges**

Refugee students, according to Baynham (2006), cannot be full-time students. They can attend classes only at night since they need to work to earn money during the day. Perry (2013); Alefsha and Al-Jamal (2019) argued that refugees do not attend language courses as they encounter serious difficulties in terms of economic support. Refugees believe that spending time in languages courses is less important than the time invested in making money, as fulfilling their family needs is a priority for them.

The financial difficulties were mentioned as an obstacle in learning languages for Syrian refugees in Turkey. A number of participants reported that they were unable to attend language courses as they were expensive (Al Masri & Abu-Ayyash, 2020). The research conducted by Popov and Erik (2015) found that most refugees participate in EFL programs and other foreign language courses to obtain financial assistance that is not provided by governments. For this reason, they do not fully focus on learning. Al-Hariri (2018) stated that the financial challenges that Syrian refugees suffer in the US are a barrier to learning English.

#### **2.4.1.6 General Challenges**

Baynham (2006) discussed the religious and cultural heterogeneity as the main reason why female refugees do not attend classes with male participants. Popov and Erik (2015) reported that the majority of female refugees shy away from attending mixed-gender language classes, which is a major barrier to learning the host country language. For Riggs et al. (2012), religious and cultural barriers prevent refugees, particularly women, from attending language classes.

According to Al Hariri (2018); Popov and Erik (2015), the unavailability of childcare spaces in languages centers affects the women's refugees attending classes. Casimiro et al. (2007) shed light on other challenges that it took refugees with no formal education longer time to capture or cope with the new people, environment, society and language. In their studies, Frimberger (2016); Olliff and Couch (2005) clarified that the refugees' level of education has a vital role in learning the target language. The refugees residing in Turkey in Al Masri and Abu-Ayyash's (2020) study stressed the time factor as a challenge due to the long working hours.

#### **2.4.2 Benefits**

The first and most significant step in the integration process is acquiring the host country's language. It can be considered a prerequisite for full social integration. Limited knowledge of the host country's language will most likely have a negative impact on the four dimensions of integration: understanding of the culture, ability to interact with locals, sense of belonging in the host society, and access to position and status in key institutions (Xhelili, 2014). Riggs et al. (2012) depict that learning refugees foreign languages comes in multiple benefits. Firstly, they learn a foreign language to help them survive in the host country. Secondly, they simply want to have a job. The Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma (n.d.) states that learning a second language enhances independence and minimizes social isolation while acquiring citizenship enhances the "survivor's sense of security and well-being" (p. 1).

Syrian refugees in Turkey consider learning the host language essential to integrate into Turkish society, to start a business as well as to complete their unfinished education (Açık, 2008; Güler, 2012). Most of the participants were learning Turkish as they liked Turkish and believed learning it could create a chance for them to attend university, find a job in Turkey or in the neighboring countries,

with having an option at hand to work as translators/interpreters for tourists (Dilek et al., 2018). In Hou and Beiser's (2006), refugees reported that language is a key factor for integration in a new country, and if they have the language skills, it would be simpler to overcome the other challenges. Abou-Khalil et al. (2019) studied the case of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Germany and revealed that in Lebanon, Syrians were studying English to help them in transition to another country, while in Germany, the participants were learning German for better integration with the host society.

### **2.4.3 Suggested Solutions**

Horsman (2013) discussed the need for providing refugees with psychological support to be able to overcome stressors allied with the PTSD they may have during language classes. Teachers and instructors need to be supportive and understanding of such cases to handle them properly. Van Rensburg and Son (2010); Werge-Olsen and Vik (2012) stated that more time and effort should be invested by teachers to identify the right materials and methods that make it an easy process for those interested in learning the target language. Werge-Olsen and Vik (2012) added that courses must ensure high flexibility to avoid boredom. Bond et al. (2007) called for building the capacity of teachers and other academic staff in programs targeting refugees to learn and improve the knowledge and skills of their foreign language. Riggs et al. (2012) backed this argument and clarified that teachers should pay more attention to students from different educational, religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The Syrian refugees stated that the host government and the resettlement agency should pay more attention to the challenges encountered by refugees. They asked the concerned entities to be more cooperative in making life easier. The participants mentioned that receiving support in terms of accommodation, financial, and medical would help them resolve their ongoing social challenges and better engage in the language courses (Alefesha & Al-Jamal, 2019).

The participants in Alefesha and Al-Jamal (2019) mentioned that the Jordanian government should better support the language institutions to help refugees overcome the educational challenges. The participants proposed hiring

qualified teaching staff to be able to provide quality language classes. Also, the participants suggested having a more flexible and learner-friendly curriculum of teaching to enhance the learning process. In addition, the use of technology in classes will enhance the participants' interest to learn easily and quickly. In Al Masri and Abu-Ayyash's 2020, the same recommendations were shared by the Syrian refugees living in Sweden.

The participants residing in Germany recommended the government take action to increase the integration in the society by mediating between the refugees and the Germans. In Turkey, the participants called the Turkish government to provide free courses and make them mandatory. Besides, the financial support should increase to help Syrian refugees focus more on learning the host language (Al Masri & Abu-Ayyash, 2020).

Moreover, participants from different refuge countries stated that to overcome the language barrier, they should be practicing the language on a daily basis by interacting/working with native speakers as well as attending courses. Some participants suggested watching series and movies in addition to listening to songs and radio to improve their language skills. Also, they suggested taking any chance they may have to use the language, for example, attending social activities (Al Masri & Abu-Ayyash, 2020).

Some studies depicted the need for improvement on the levels of classroom environments as well as communication opportunities in Turkish. The studies suggested focusing more on the speaking activities. According to those studies, technological and audiovisual tools and materials should be available and/or enhanced. Furthermore, the studies called for using Turkish textbooks that emphasize the relationship and similarities between the two cultures, teachers to be oriented about the psycho-social conditions of the refugees, teachers be trained and experienced in basic language skills and are able to speak at least two languages. Finally, the duration of the courses should be lengthened to ensure proper teaching provision (Polat, 2012; Dilek et al., 2018; Ciğerci & Güngör, 2016; Mete & Gürsoy, 2013; Büyükkiz & Çangal, 2016; Güngör, 2015; Özer Yurrer, Komsuoglu & Ateşok, 2016).

Overall, the studies conducted so far on refugees and the dilemmas they face in host countries are valuable in understanding certain refugee-related issues. This study can be seen as another piece of the puzzle that is being put together to gain a deeper understanding of the overall picture of the difficulties refugees face in their language acquisition journey.



## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Presentation**

This chapter documents the methods, instruments, and procedures used in conducting the study and explains the rationale for using the preferred design to evaluate the study's research questions.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

This study used a descriptive research design based on a mixed-methods approach. Descriptive studies define the given conditions and cases as thoroughly as possible and present explanations of the main findings (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). The general attitude of producing descriptive statistics and figures involves compiling, systematizing, and summarizing numerical data (Gall, Borg, & Joyce, 2003). The commonly used descriptive methodology is the survey (Borg & Gall, 1989). In this regard, conducting a descriptive study and using questionnaires and interview techniques is the most appropriate method for conducting this research.

According to Sandelowski (2003), the main purpose of using various methods is to gain a more comprehensive understanding of a target phenomenon and to verify a set of findings with the others. The purpose of the first case is to gain a comprehensive understanding of a complex issue by looking at it from different angles. The second purpose is the traditional goal of triangulation, namely to validate one's conclusion by presenting converging results obtained by different methods.

The present study propped up the mixed-method approach where a four-dimension questionnaire was conducted to execute the quantitative approach. The four dimensions are A. Reality of Language/s of Syrians in Gaziantep, B. Factors

Affecting Language Learning for Syrians in Gaziantep, C. Evaluation of Language Learning in Gaziantep, and D. Benefits of Language Learning for Syrians in Gaziantep. On the other hand, qualitative approach was executed through semi-structured interviews.

### 3.3 Participants

399 Syrians in Gaziantep participated in the study based on the Simple Random Sampling method. “A simple random sample is one in which each and every member of the population has an equal and independent chance of being selected. If the sample is large, this method is the best way. The larger a random sample is in size, the more likely it is to represent the population” (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012, p.94).

The sample size was determined based on Yamane’s formula (Sarmah & Hazarika, 2012).

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n represents the sample size

N represents the population size (in the present study, it is all Syrians aged between 18-45 in Gaziantep)

e represents the level of precision or sampling of error which is  $\pm 5\%$

Substitute numbers in formula:

$$n = \frac{185,117}{1 + 185,117(.05)^2}$$

$$n = 399 \approx$$

In the current study, seven variables related to the demographic information of the participants were taken into account, and these were; Gender, Age, Mother Tongue, Legal Status, Duration of Stay in Turkey, Status of Work, and Type of Work.

Table 1. *Demographic Information of the Participants.*

Variable		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	322	80.70%
	Female	77	19.30%
Age	from 18 to 24 years	90	22.60%
	from 25 to 31 years	159	39.80%
	from 32 to 38 years	121	30.30%
	from 39 to 45 years	29	7.30%
Legal Status	Turkish nationality	74	18.50%
	Residency	56	14.10%
	Temporary protection	265	66.40%
	None	4	1.00%
Duration of Stay in Turkey	less than 1 year	0	0.00%
	1 - 3 years	54	13.50%
	4- 6 years	185	46.40%
	more than 7 years	160	40.10%
Status of Work	Student	38	9.50%
	Working	273	68.40%
	Student and working	80	20.10%
	None	8	2.00%
Type of Work	Organization/company	153	38.40%
	Factory/shop	128	32.10%
	Freelance	72	18.00%
	Not working	46	11.50%
	Total	399	100.00%

The first variable was the ‘Gender’ of the participants, and the data related to showed that 77 (19.3 %) of the participants were females, while 322 (80.7 %) were males. The second variable was the ‘Age’ of the participants, and the collected data showed that the participants were between 18 and 45 years old. 90 participants (22.6%) were between 18 and 24 years old, 159 Students (39.8%) were between 25 and 31 years old, 121 participants (30.3%) were between 32 and 38 years old, and 29 participants (7.3%) were between 39 and 45 years old.

The third variable was the ‘Legal Status’ of the participants, and the related data showed that the majority were with Temporary Protection IDs ( $f=265$ ; 66.4 %), participants with Turkish nationality came second ( $f=74$ ; 18.5 %), then participants with Residency ( $f=56$ ; 14.1%) and finally were participants with no available legal

documents ( $f=4$ ; 1%). The fourth variable was the 'Duration of Stay in Turkey', and the related data showed that 185 participants (46.4%) have been living in Turkey for 4-6 years, 160 participants (40.1%) have been living in Turkey for over 7 years, and 54 participants (13.5%) have been living in Turkey for 1-3 years.

The fifth variable was the 'Status of Work' of the participants, and the related data showed that the work status of the participants included 'Student', 'Working', 'Student and Working' and 'None'. 273 participants (68.4%) were working, 80 participants (20.1%) were student and working, 38 participants (9.5%) were students, and 8 participants (2%) were not working or students. The sixth variable was the 'Type of Work' of the participants, and the related data showed that the majority of the participants were either working in Organization/company ( $f=153$ ; 38.4%) or factory/shop ( $f=128$ ; 32.1%). The remaining participants were either Freelancers ( $f=72$ ; 18 %) or not working ( $f=46$ ; 11.5 %).

For the mother tongue variable, the results showed that Arabic was the mother tongue of 99.25% of the participants.

### **3.4 Data Collection Tools**

A questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were employed in the city of Gaziantep to address the research questions. According to Mertens (2014), mixed methods are of particular value when studying topics that are embedded in a complex pedagogical or social context. She argues that "many researchers have used mixed methods because it seemed intuitively obvious to them that combining and increasing the number of research strategies used in a given project would broaden the scope of the inquiry and enrich the researcher's ability to draw conclusions about the problem under study" (p.28). The mixed methods approach grants the researcher using various approaches in answering the research questions rather than limiting their alternatives (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In addition, the study can be better explained as the risk of weaknesses arising from the use of mono-methods is minimized and the reliability and validity of the results increases (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

### **3.4.1 Questionnaire**

The first phase was the development of the questionnaire as a data collection tool for this study. The questionnaire was designed by the researcher under the supervision of the supervising professor. A draft was prepared by the researcher and discussed with the supervisor, then irrelevant items were eliminated. The questions were clustered into four dimensions to address the four research questions. When the final version was prepared, a pilot study was launched to ensure all items were statistically correlated with the sub-scale they belong to. The questionnaire starts with an introduction clarifying the questionnaire objective and clearly states that participating in the questionnaire is totally voluntary in addition to the fact that the information collected would remain confidential and would not cause any harm to the participants. The introduction also explained the scale that the answers in the questionnaire follow. The questionnaire is divided into two sections; A. Participants' demographic questions and B. Topic questions. Section A includes seven questions and aims to provide basic information about the participants in this research. Section B includes 40 questions and aims to collect the participants' opinions regarding the research topic. The questions in section B follow the Likert scale, which includes 5 options: "1. 0-20%, 2. 20-40%, 3. 40-60%, 4. 60-80%, 5. 80-100%." 0-20% means "Completely Disagree", 20-40% means "Disagree", 40-60% means "Neutral", 60-80% means "Agree", 80-100% means "Completely Agree". Due to COVID-19 restrictions in Gaziantep during the study time, the researcher designed the questionnaire online and contacted all participants to clarify the study objective as well as provide support in terms of explaining questions. It was observed that participants managed to answer the questions in almost fifteen to twenty minutes with no encountered difficulties (Appendix A).

### **3.4.2 Semi-Structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews grant researchers the opportunity to compare various cases and opinions. In semi-structured interviews, researchers prepare a set of guiding questions; they are also free to ask follow-up questions to elicit further information (Mackey & Gass, 2005). In this kind of interview, the researcher as interviewer guides and directs the student who is the interviewee, but allows the interviewee to elaborate on the topic. Also, by using semi-structured interviews, the

results become more practical and one gets a deeper insight into the thoughts of the individual (Dörnyei, 2007). In this study, the interviews occurred online with a group of fifteen volunteer participants; of whom were twelve males and three females, six were staff in companies and organizations, three were workers in factories, three freelancers, and three students. The interviews were recorded based on approval from the interviewees, then transcribed, translated, and subjected to deductive content analysis. A group of questions were set and discussed between the researcher and the supervisor and finally six questions were determined to be the base of the interviews, however the participants were free to add more ideas (Appendix B):

1. How was your experience in learning languages in Turkey?
2. What do you think are the biggest challenges to learning languages?
3. What is the best way to learn languages?
4. What do you think of the available language courses?
5. What do you recommend to make learning languages easier for Syrian refugees in Turkey?
6. What do you think is the outcome of learning languages?

### **3.5 Data Collection Procedure**

This section provides information on the pilot process, data collection, and data analysis.

#### **3.5.1 Piloting Procedure**

It is with no doubt that conducting a pilot study is crucial and its significance lies in the fact that it helps the researcher gather feedback on the instrument and see if it is working as expected and accomplishing the task for which it was designed (Dörnyei, 2003). The pilot study was conducted primarily to see if the questionnaire was well applied and to consider any adjustments to the questionnaire before actual data collection began. In total, the questionnaire was administered to 40 participants, who were not considered later in the actual data collection. The participants were assured that the collected information would be confidential and would not affect them in any way. Once all the questionnaires were filled, the data was entered into the SPSS. After analyzing the data, the results showed the Cronbach's Alpha as .718, which was a green light to start the actual practice. Among the most essential

measures of internal consistency is Alpha, which was developed by Lee Alpha in 1951 to provide a measure of the internal consistency of a test or scale (Mohsen & Reg, 2011).

### 3.5.2 Data Collection

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions imposed in Gaziantep, including remote learning, curfew at some times, etc., the researcher designed the questionnaire online and contacted all participants to collect the data. At the beginning of each conversation, the researcher gave an introduction in regard to the purpose of applying the study in addition to the voluntarism and information confidentiality points. A month later, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 participants. Again, the interviews were conducted online and recorded after obtaining approval from the participants. The researcher prepared six questions for these interviews for the sake of qualitative data collection.

### 3.5.3 Data Analysis

The present study adopted the mixed-method approach, where qualitative and quantitative data was collected through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The collected responses were analyzed using SPSS. The analysis included calculating frequencies and percentage, which meant to count the number of answers to the same question and calculate their percentage against the total answers. Also, the analysis included calculating the weighted average which was measured by the following equation:  $((\text{Sum of "0-20\%"} \times 1) + (\text{Sum of "20-40\%"} \times 2) + (\text{Sum of "40-60\%"} \times 3) + (\text{Sum of "60-80\%"} \times 4) + (\text{Sum of "80-100\%"} \times 5) / N$ . and that one response per phrase. The rationale for measuring level by using the average: Formation beginning and end of the gradient trio of categories: the coding and data entry into the computer, and to determine the length of scale cells (lower and upper) border, was calculated term  $(5-1 = 4)$ , then it was divided by the number of scale cells to obtain the correct cell length  $(4/5 = 0.80)$ , and was then added this value to a lower value on the scale (or the beginning of the scale, a right one) in order to determine the upper limit of the cell, and thus became the length of the cells as follows: 'Very Low': if the average value of the range or distance is between 1 and 1.80, 'Low': if the average value of the range or distance is between 1.81 and 2.60, 'Average': if the average value of the range or distance is between is between 2.61

and 3.40, 'High': if the average value of the range or distance is between 3.40 and 4.20 and 'Very High': if the average value of the range or distance is between 4.20 and 5. The third transaction was the Standard Deviation, which was based on the extent of dispersion or non-dispersion of the respondents' answers and helped in arranging phrases or variables with center-weighted, so that if the phrases were equal in the total weights and thus the center-weighted, the variable with the lower standard deviation takes the arrangement.

The fourth transaction was the Normality Test, which aimed at knowing the underlying distribution of the data to apply the most appropriate statistical tools for the analysis.

Table 2. *The Results of Normality Test.*

		Gender	Age	Duration of stay in Turkey ?	Legal Status	Status of Work	Type of Work	Dimension 1	Dimension 2	Dimension 3	Dimension 4
	N	399	399	399	399	399	399	399	399	399	399
Normal Parameters	Mean	1.19	2.22	3.26	2.49	2.14	2.03	3.42	3.18	3.87	3.56
	S.D	.39	.87	.69	.80	0.59	1.01	.61	.53	.34	.39
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.49	.22	.25	.40	0.37	0.22	.062	.093	.068	.095
	Positive	.49	.22	.24	.25	0.37	0.22	.038	.079	.051	.049
	Negative	-.31	-.18	-.25	-.40	-0.30	-0.15	-.062	-.093	-.068	-.095
	Test Statistic	.49	.22	.25	.40	0.37	0.22	.062	.093	.068	.095
	P-value	.00 <sup>c</sup>	.00 <sup>c</sup>	.00 <sup>c</sup>	.00 <sup>c</sup>	.00 <sup>c</sup>	.00 <sup>c</sup>	.001 <sup>c</sup>	.00 <sup>c</sup>	.00 <sup>c</sup>	.00 <sup>c</sup>

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

The above Table of One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of normality shows that all the variables do not follow the normal distribution as the P-value of each of the variable is  $> 0.05$ . Accordingly, the Kruskal-Wallis test (one-way analysis of variance) was used, which is a non-parametric test to test if two or more groups differ from each other significantly in one or more demographic information. Finally, the Validity Test was used to measure survey instrument validity in the current research, Person's Correlation Coefficient was used to measure the degree of association between the scores of each item with the total scores of the subscale to

which it belongs. “Validity is a very critical criterion that indicates the degree to which an instrument measures and what it is supposed to measure” (Kothari, 2004, p.49).

Table 3. *The Validity of Subscale Items for Each Scale in The Instrument.*

Item no.	Correlation	Item no.	Correlation	Item no.	Correlation	Item no.	Correlation
1.1	.58**	2.1	.40**	3.1	.33**	4.1	.28**
1.2	.37**	2.2	.36**	3.2	.39**	4.2	.32**
1.3	.52**	2.3	.57**	3.3	.44**	4.3	.52**
1.4	.52**	2.4	.58**	3.4	.55**	4.4	.31**
1.5	.62**	2.5	.57**	3.5	.48**	4.5	.31**
1.6	.56**	2.6	0.08	3.6	.39**	4.6	.29**
1.7	.62**	2.7	-0.05	3.7	.34**	4.7	0.06
1.8	.56**			3.8	.36**	4.8	.59**
1.9	.31**			3.9	.45**	4.9	.67**
				3.10	.25**	4.10	.32**
				3.11	.31**	4.11	.17**
				3.12	.35**	4.12	.24**

\*\* indicates that the correlation coefficient is significant at the (0.01) significance level

The results in above Table show that all subscale items statistically correlated with the scale to which they belong, as the values extended from 0.590 to 0.931 and all the values were statistically significant at the (0.01) level. Therefore, the researcher concludes that all survey instruments items satisfied the measurement criteria.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Presentation**

This chapter presents the results and findings of the data obtained through the questionnaire that was carried out with 399 participants and the semi-structured interviews that were carried out with 15 participants. The findings of the two data sets (questionnaire and semi-structured interviews) are briefly described in guidance of the research questions of the study. Accordingly, this chapter covers four dimensions to clarify each of the research questions in turn. The chapter ends with showing the findings of the variance test between each demographic variable and research dimension.

#### **4.2 Results for Research Question #1: What language/s have Syrians in Gaziantep improved during their stay in Turkey?**

Table 4. *Dimension 1: Reality of Language/s of Syrians in Gaziantep.*

Item	0- 20%	20- 40%	40- 60%	60- 80%	80- 100 %	WA	SD	Chi- Square	P- value
1.1 In general, I find it easy to learn languages	11	116	68	174	30	3.24	1.04	219.75	0.00
1.2 For me, it is crucial to speak a language other than my mother tongue	0	6	6	83	304	4.72	0.56	597.26	0.00
1.3 Turkish is an easy language to learn	19	71	72	181	56	3.46	1.08	183.49	0.00
1.4 English is an easy language to learn	20	50	76	193	60	3.56	1.04	221.61	0.00
1.5 I can speak Turkish well	57	142	27	106	67	2.96	1.36	100.58	0.00
1.6 I have improved my Turkish in Turkey	51	10	8	178	152	3.93	1.28	322.21	0.00
1.7 I can speak English well	92	102	30	110	65	2.88	1.44	53.29	0.00
1.8 I have improved my English in Turkey	177	71	24	96	31	2.33	1.43	191.51	0.00
1.9 I have a plan to learn languages	28	36	27	231	77	3.73	1.08	379.18	0.00
Total						3.42	0.61	295.93	0.00

The first dimension of the questionnaire is ‘Reality of Language/s of Syrians in Gaziantep’. As shown in the Table above, the total dimension evaluation is High with a weighted average (3.42) and a standard deviation of (0.61). In the 1<sup>st</sup> rank comes “For me, it is crucial to speak a language other than my mother tongue” with a very high evaluation (4.72) weighted average and (0.56) standard deviation, the 2<sup>nd</sup> rank “I have improved my Turkish in Turkey” comes with a high evaluation (3.93) weighted average and (1.28) standard deviation, the 3<sup>rd</sup> rank is for “I have a plan to learn languages” with a high evaluation (3.73) weighted average and (1.08) standard deviation. On the other side of the ranking scale, “I have improved my English in Turkey” comes as the 9<sup>th</sup> rank with a very low evaluation (2.33) weighted average and (1.43) standard deviation, the 8<sup>th</sup> rank is “I can speak English well” with an average evaluation (2.88) weighted average and (1.44) standard deviation, the 7<sup>th</sup>

rank is for “I can speak Turkish well” with an average evaluation (2.96) weighted average and (1.36) standard deviation.

For the first dimension of the questionnaire, the results showed that the majority of the participants were eager to speak a language besides their mother tongue, and they had a plan to learn languages in the future. Moreover, the participants believed that English and Turkish are easy languages to learn. Apart from that, the majority improved their Turkish level during their stay in Turkey, yet they still cannot speak well. Meanwhile, the majority of the participants demonstrated that they have not improved their English in Turkey; thus, they cannot speak it well.

The results were confirmed in the one-to-one interviews when the participants were asked ‘How was your experience in learning languages in Turkey’. Most of the interviewees endorsed that they could speak some English before coming to Turkey, yet most of them could not improve their English language in Turkey, which affected their overall proficiency. On the other hand, most of them could improve their Turkish during their stay in Turkey despite having no background of Turkish back in Syria; however, their overall proficiency is still low due to the limited use.

Extract 1. (Interviewee A)

“In Syria, I only knew English. When I came to Turkey, my Turkish was 0%, and I have improved it to 65%, but English witnessed only 20% improvement. I still have a problem with the two languages in general as I do not use them regularly.”

In this extract, interviewee A, who is a student, clearly described how her Turkish language remarkably developed during her stay in Turkey, while English did not have the same level of development. The interviewee added that using Turkish and English is limited to a few sentences in her daily life, which is restricting her overall level.

Extract 2. (Interviewee B)

“My English was good when I was in Syria with general information about Turkish. When I moved to Turkey, I did not have the chance to improve my English, while my Turkish became fairly good.”

In this extract, interviewee B, who works in an organization, stated that he could enhance only his Turkish skills during his stay in Turkey.

Extract 3. (Interviewee C)

“My mother language is Arabic. Before I came to Turkey, my English was excellent, and I didn’t know any Turkish; now, my Turkish is almost at the same level as my mother tongue. For English, I have done my best to seize every opportunity to use it in order not to lose it, so I believe I am still very good at it.”

Interviewee C, who is a freelancer, mentioned that he could learn Turkish during his stay in Turkey, and he has become native-like. Furthermore, he has created chances to use English to ensure he does not lose it.

Extract 4. (Interviewee D)

“I could speak English in Syria. In Turkey, my job requires good English, so I have improved my English language to almost 85%, but I am still beginner in Turkish because I do not use it.”

Interviewees D, who works in an organization, illustrated that English is needed in his job, so he has focused on improving it, and since he does not use Turkish a lot, his level is still low.

Extract 5. (Interviewee E)

“The only language I could speak back in Syria was Arabic. During my stay in Turkey, I have improved Turkish to a good extent during work.”

Interviewee E, who is a factory worker, clarified that he did not know any language but Arabic when he was in Syria, and his Turkish has become very good after moving to Turkey.

### **4.3 Results for Research Question #2: What are the factors affecting learning languages for Syrians in Gaziantep?**

Table 5. *Dimension 2: Factors Affecting Language Learning for Syrians in Gaziantep.*

Item	0-20%	20-40%	40-60%	60-80%	80-100%	WA	SD	Chi-Square	P-value
2.1 Time is not a big challenge for learning languages	203	91	14	29	62	3.86	1.49	154.21	0.00
2.2 Cost is not a big challenge for learning languages	95	83	37	76	108	2.95	1.56	5.48	0.14
2.3 Desire is not a big challenge for learning languages	46	53	29	129	142	2.33	1.37	102.78	0.00
2.4 Motivation is not a big challenge for learning languages	70	51	27	112	139	2.50	1.50	63.58	0.00
2.5 Lack of practice opportunities is not a big challenge in learning languages	186	104	15	41	53	3.82	1.44	115.85	0.00
2.6 I have a very good income	32	82	88	161	36	3.22	1.11	313.23	0.00
2.7 I do not learn only what is necessary. I always learn something extra.	7	80	36	181	95	3.69	1.09	221.68	0.00
Total						3.20	0.70	315.64	0.00

The second dimension of the questionnaire is ‘Factors Affecting Language Learning for Syrians in Gaziantep’. As shown in the Table above, the total dimension evaluation is average with a weighted average (3.20) and a standard deviation of (0.70). In the 1<sup>st</sup> rank comes “Time is not a big challenge for learning languages” with a high evaluation (3.86) weighted average and (1.49) standard deviation, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> rank “Lack of practice opportunities is not a big challenge in learning languages” comes with a high evaluation (3.82) weighted average and (1.44) standard deviation, the 3<sup>rd</sup> rank is for “I do not learn only what is necessary. I always learn something extra.” with a high evaluation (3.69) weighted average and (1.09) standard deviation.

On the other side of the ranking scale comes “Desire is not a big challenge for learning languages” as the 7<sup>th</sup> rank with a very low evaluation (2.33) weighted average and (1.37) standard deviation, the 6<sup>th</sup> rank comes for “Motivation is not a big challenge for learning languages” with an average evaluation (2.52) weighted average and (1.50) standard deviation, the 5<sup>th</sup> rank is for “The financial factor is not a big challenge for learning languages” with an average evaluation (2.95) weighted average and (1.56) standard deviation, and 4<sup>th</sup> rank is for “I have a good income” with an average evaluation (3.22) weighted average and (1.11) standard deviation.

The above Table and results show that Syrians in Gaziantep were enthusiastic about learning in general. The participants highlighted some obstacles affecting improving their languages skills; time and the unavailability of practice opportunities were the obstacles with the highest impact on languages development, unlike the factors of desire and motivation that had the most negligible influence. The majority reported having a good income, yet their opinions regarding the impact of the financial factor on learning languages were almost equal as results showed 44% considering it a challenge while 46% had the opposite opinion.

This claim is supported in the one-to-one interviews, when the participants were asked ‘What do you think are the biggest challenges to learning languages’, as most of the interviewees confirmed that in light of the long working hours, available free time as well the practice windows are not sufficient to improve their language skills, thereby they are the biggest barriers. The majority of the participants reported a good level of motivation and desire to learn languages. Furthermore, the interviews were helpful to learn more about the financial factor. The interviews revealed that the financial factor is a challenge for Syrians in Gaziantep as the majority confirmed that language courses are expensive and they can afford them only as long as they work. Besides, the interviewees highlighted the low quality and inefficient courses in the city.

Extract 6. (Interviewee A)

“I have only one barrier, which is conversation, I have tried and attended courses, but they didn’t help a lot. Courses have helped me develop only grammar and vocabulary.”

Interviewee A, who is a student, clearly stated that she considers the lack of practice as the major challenge for improving languages. She mentioned that courses are useful, but when it comes to speaking, they are not sufficient.

Extract 7. (Interviewee F)

“The biggest challenge for me is the differences in dialects among Turkish cities as I have moved between cities a lot. Besides, speed talking and lack of time to learn are also challenges for me.”

Interviewee F, who works in a company, listed the challenges he has encountered in learning languages as 1- variances between cities dialects, 2- speed talking, and 3- the unavailability of time.

Extract 8. (Interviewee G)

“Time is the biggest challenge, working hours are long, so I don’t have time. Also, the financial side is an important factor, as to study in a language center, you have to pay almost 350 Euro which is a considerable amount for a refugee.”

For interviewee G, who is a freelancer, time and cost are the biggest challenges to learning languages.

Extract 9. (Interviewee H)

“The financial factor is the most important for me, as to improve myself I have to dedicate myself to learn, then if I do, I will not have enough money.”

Interviewee H, who is a factory worker, believed that the expensive fees of courses are what prevent him from learning languages.

Extract 10. (Interviewee I)

“Generally, courses are not good. There should be linguistic experts to supervise the content and quality to ensure useful courses.”

Interviewee I, who is an NGO staff, believed that specialists should be responsible for overseeing courses to ensure effective courses.

#### **4.4 Results for Research Question #3: How do Syrians see the current situation of the available language learning opportunities in Gaziantep?**

Table 6. *Dimension 3: Evaluation of Language Learning in Gaziantep.*

Item	0-20%	20-40%	40-60%	60-80%	80-100%	WA	SD	Chi-Square	P-value
3.1 Social contact is the best way to learn languages	0	10	6	45	338	4.78	0.59	767.96	0.00
3.2 Watching movies is the best way to learn languages	4	32	47	161	155	4.08	0.95	267.60	0.00
3.3 Attending courses is the best way to learn languages	7	24	53	176	139	4.04	0.93	274.32	0.00
3.4 Paid courses are efficient	5	34	161	140	59	3.54	0.89	229.86	0.00
3.5 Free courses are efficient	16	43	197	111	32	3.25	0.89	280.93	0.00
3.6 Good incentives in free courses can be motivating to learn	18	68	60	127	126	3.69	1.20	109.18	0.00
3.7 Available language courses should be more practical	0	8	110	94	187	4.15	0.89	457.67	0.00
3.8 Governmental centers are the best place to learn languages	8	35	241	92	23	3.22	0.76	589.08	0.00
3.9 Organizational centers are the best place to learn languages	12	34	268	75	10	3.09	0.69	256.47	0.00
3.10 Private centers are the best place to learn languages	3	30	158	153	55	3.57	0.84	728.00	0.00
3.11 The host government should make learning the host country's language compulsory	4	25	23	54	293	4.52	0.92	468.11	0.00
3.12 The UN and international organizations should put more efforts and focus on teaching refugees the host country's language	0	9	31	77	282	4.58	0.73	162.09	0.00
Total						3.88	0.34	288.82	0.00

The third dimension of the questionnaire is Evaluation of Language Learning in Gaziantep. As shown in the Table above, the total dimension evaluation is high with a weighted average (3.88) and a standard deviation of (0.34). In the 1<sup>st</sup> rank comes “Social contact is the best way to learn languages” with a high evaluation (4.78) weighted average and (0.59) standard deviation, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> rank comes for “The UN and international organizations should put more efforts and focus on teaching languages to refugees” with a high evaluation (4.58) weighted average and (0.73) standard deviation, the 3<sup>rd</sup> rank is for “The host government should make learning the host country's language compulsory.” with a high evaluation (4.52) weighted average and (0.92) standard deviation. On the other side of the ranking scale, “Organizational centers are the best place to learn languages” comes in the 12<sup>th</sup> with an average evaluation (3.09) weighted average and (0.69) standard deviation, the 11<sup>th</sup> rank comes for “Governmental centers are the best place to learn languages” with an average evaluation (3.22) weighted average and (0.76) standard deviation, the 10<sup>th</sup> rank is for “Free courses are efficient” with an average evaluation (3.25) weighted average and (0.89) standard deviation, and 9<sup>th</sup> rank is for “Paid courses are efficient” with an average evaluation (3.54) weighted average and (0.89) standard deviation.

The above Table and results and indicate that Syrians in Gaziantep believed that social interaction, watching movies and series, and courses are effective ways to learn languages. However, they highlight the importance of having more practical courses to meet their needs in terms of speaking. The participants expressed their increased motivation when a good incentive is provided in free courses. When answering the questions about available language courses, the majority of respondents selected ‘neutral,’ which does not provide a clear picture about the situation regarding the courses. Aside from that, the participants agreed that learning the host country’s language should be imposed by the host government in addition to the need for more efforts from the UN and responsible entities in helping Syrians learn languages.

This claim is supported in the one-to-one interviews when the participants were asked ‘What is the best way to learn languages,’ as most of the interviewees confirmed that interaction with people, watching TV, and attending courses are ideal ways to learn languages. When asked ‘what do you think of the available language courses,’ the interviewees demonstrated that courses are good, but they need full reform on the level of staff, materials and design to meet refugees’ needs. Finally, the

participants responded to the question ‘What do you recommend to make learning languages easier for Syrian refugees in Turkey’ and stressed the absolute need for more efforts from the responsible parties to help Syrians learn languages and shared several recommendations in this regard.

Extract 11. (Interviewee J)

“I advise Syrians who want to enhance their language to start seriously reading books, articles, and websites in the desired language, or to join online courses, along with interacting with native speakers.”

Interviewee J, who is a student, stated that the best methods to learn languages are reading in the target language, attending courses, as well as communicating with native speakers.

Extract 12. (Interviewee A)

“The best way to learn a language is to contact with people and watch movies.”

Interviewee A, who is a student, believed that interacting with people and watching movies are the best ways to learn languages.

Extract 13. (Interviewee B)

“I have attended free and paid courses in various institutions. They all need to enhance the level of teaching available in terms of materials and teachers’ qualifications.”

Based on interviewee B’s experience, who is an NGO staff, available courses need to reform the materials used in the teaching process as well as select teachers with better qualifications.

Extract 14. (Interviewee K)

“Interacting with the language native speakers, watching movies and talk shows programs are the best ways to enhance languages.”

Interviewee K, who is an NGO staff, stated that to learn languages, you need to communicate with natives and watch movies and programs in the target language.

Extract 15. (Interviewee G)

“A lot of money is spent on free courses, and only a few people are benefiting because, in general, teachers, supervisors, and participants are not taking the courses seriously. Contrarily, paid courses make participants feel responsible, and that is what would make those courses effective.”

For interviewee G, who is a freelancer, paid courses are more valuable than free ones as all involved persons, including teachers, supervisors, and students value these courses.

Extract 16. (Interviewee I)

“To have a real positive impact on Syrians’ level of language, there should be a certain program for each group of Syrians; students, factory workers, etc., as groups vary in respect of capabilities, time flexibility, and goals of learning. For instance, instead of inviting workers to attend a course for 15 or 20 Turkish Lira a lesson with the possibility of losing a job for repeated leaves, coordination can be done with factories’ owners to conduct sessions in factories during working hours or courses can be provided in evenings or at weekends.”

According to interviewee I, who is an NGO staff, the provided courses should be better designed to meet Syrians’ needs and abilities. Coordination is to be done with concerned people to provide courses at convenient times for various groups of Syrians.

Extract 17. (Interviewee D)

“Supporting Syrian refugees with recorded online courses can help them learn as they will have more control over their schedule. Concerning the content, courses should focus on everyday language that helps refugees use the language. Academic content should be provided only to students and those who seek it.”

Interviewee D, who is an NGO staff, illustrated that providing online courses can be helpful for Syrian refugees. Also, courses should be more practical and concentrate on what is really needed in Syrians’ everyday life. Academic content should be available for those who need it.

#### **4.5 Results for Research Question #4: How do Syrians in Gaziantep see the benefit of learning languages?**

Table 7. *Dimension 4: Benefits of Language Learning for Syrians in Gaziantep.*

Item	0-20%	20-40%	40-60%	60-80%	80-100%	WA	SD	Chi-Square	P-value
4.1 My mother tongue is not enough for my life in Turkey	5	29	6	155	204	4.31	0.91	434.87	0.00
4.2 Turkish is part of my job	139	76	53	71	60	2.59	1.48	58.98	0.00
4.3 English is part of my job	161	39	48	88	63	2.63	1.56	120.53	0.00
4.4 Learning languages can create job opportunities	0	4	6	40	349	4.84	0.47	838.62	0.00
4.5 Having a job opportunity can be motivating to learn	4	17	20	93	265	4.50	0.85	598.23	0.00
4.6 Turkish is essential in my study	36	11	278	27	47	3.10	0.95	624.04	0.00
4.7 English is essential in my study	55	18	280	23	23	2.85	0.93	638.68	0.00
4.8 Learning languages can create education opportunities	27	26	52	92	202	4.04	1.22	269.88	0.00
4.9 Having an education opportunity can be motivating to learn	31	25	54	113	176	3.95	1.23	205.59	0.00
4.10 I have encountered several challenges in Turkey because I do not speak Turkish	13	37	17	130	202	4.18	1.08	347.00	0.00
4.11 I feel stable in Turkey	50	101	59	143	46	3.09	1.25	86.55	0.00
4.12 I have plans to leave Turkey	89	99	67	115	29	2.74	1.28	55.59	0.00
Total						3.57	0.39	302.12	0.00

The fourth dimension of the questionnaire is to collect the opinion of Syrians about “Benefits of Language Learning for Syrians in Gaziantep.” As shown in the

Table above, the total dimension evaluation is high with a weighted average (3.57) and a standard deviation of (0.39). In the 1<sup>st</sup> rank comes “Learning languages can create job opportunities” with a very high evaluation (4.84) weighted average and (0.47) standard deviation, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> rank comes “Having a job opportunity can be motivating to learn” with a very high evaluation (4.50) weighted average and (0.85) standard deviation, the 3<sup>rd</sup> rank is for “My mother tongue is not enough for my life in Turkey.” with a high evaluation (4.31) weighted average and (0.91) standard deviation. On the other side of the ranking scale, “Turkish is part of my job” is ranked 12<sup>th</sup>, with an average evaluation (2.59) weighted average and (1.48) standard deviation, in the 11<sup>th</sup> rank comes “English is part of my job” with an average evaluation (2.63) weighted average and (1.56) standard deviation, in 10<sup>th</sup> rank is “I have plans to leave Turkey” with an average evaluation (2.74) weighted average and (1.28) standard deviation, and the 9<sup>th</sup> rank is for “English is essential in my study” with an average evaluation (2.85) weighted average and (0.93) standard deviation.

The majority demonstrated that their mother tongue is not enough to live in Turkey, taking into consideration the encountered challenges for their lack of Turkish skills. Furthermore, the participants also mentioned that learning languages could open doors for job and education opportunities. Meanwhile, their motivation to learn languages can be enhanced in case of the availability of job or education opportunities. This claim is supported in the one-to-one interviews when the participants were asked ‘what do you think is the outcome of learning languages,’ as the interviewees confirmed that learning languages could contribute to better interaction and integration with the host country as well as greasing the wheels to find job and education opportunities on the local and international levels.

Extract 18. (Interviewee J)

“I have learned Turkish for academic study purposes, and then I learned English for one year to complete my master’s degree.”

Interviewee J, who is a student, talked about his experience in learning languages in Turkey and mentioned that learning Turkish and English was helpful for facilitating his academic pursuit.

Extract 19. (Interviewee H)

“When I came to Turkey as a refugee, I learned a few sentences and phrases in street language to communicate with others and buy my needs.”

Interviewee H, who is a factory worker, said that the reason behind some sentences and phrases was to be able to buy his needs.

Extract 20. (Interviewee I)

“When I first came to Turkey, I started working with Syrians and foreigners, so I have focused on improving my English language rather than Turkish. If my work needed Turkish, I would definitely learn it.”

For interviewee I, who is an NGO staff, work was the reason that made him choose English over Turkish to learn.

Extract 21. (Interviewee L)

“When I first came to Turkey, I had to learn Turkish to be able to communicate with people, especially in university as the study was in Turkish. I noticed later that being a speaker of Turkish made me more acceptable by the citizens, which encouraged me to learn more.”

For interviewee L, who is a student, she learned Turkish for academic purposes as well as for promoting integration with the host community.

Extract 22. (Interviewee E)

“Although I did not go to college and did not know anything in Turkish when I moved to Turkey, I have worked with Turks, and now my Turkish is very good. Hence, I believe I have great chances to find a new job if I want to.”

According to interviewee E’s experience, who is a factory worker, learning languages can create job opportunities.

#### **4.6 Tests of Variance Between Study Dimensions and Participants’ Demographic Data**

In order to study the variance between study dimensions and demographic variables, the following tests were conducted.

##### **4.6.1 Tests of Variance Between Study Dimensions Due to Gender**

To validate this test, we used the (independent sample non-parametric Mann-Whitney -test), and the results are shown as follows:

Table 8. *Tests of Variance Between Study Dimensions Due to Gender.*

	<b>Dimension 1</b>	<b>Dimension 2</b>	<b>Dimension 3</b>	<b>Dimension 4</b>
Mann-Whitney U	10006	10579	11563	8191
P-value	0.00	0.04	0.35	0.00

The Table above shows that there is a significant difference in sample responses due to 'Gender' in each of the 1st dimension 'Reality of Language/s of Syrians in Gaziantep' towards females as the mean rank was 231 verses 192 to males, 2nd dimension 'Factors Affecting Language Learning for Syrians in Gaziantep' towards males as the mean rank was 205 verses 176 to females, and 4th dimension 'Benefits of Language Learning for Syrians in Gaziantep' towards females as the mean rank was 254 verses 186 to males. However, the 3rd dimension, 'Evaluation of Language Learning in Gaziantep' responses has no significant differences in sample responses due to gender.

#### 4.6.2 Tests of Variance Between Study Dimensions Due to Age

To validate this test, we used the (independent sample non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test), and the results are shown as follows:

Table 9. *Tests of Variance Between Study Dimensions Due to Age.*

	<b>Dimension 1</b>	<b>Dimension 2</b>	<b>Dimension 3</b>	<b>Dimension 4</b>
Kruskal-Wallis H	12.653	9.923	3.599	2.463
P-value	0.00	0.01	0.30	0.48

The Table above shows that there is a significant difference in sample responses due to 'Age' in each of 1st dimension 'Reality of Language/s of Syrians in Gaziantep' towards 25- 31 years' group, and 2nd dimension 'Factors Affecting Language Learning for Syrians in Gaziantep' towards 32-38 years' group. Though the 3rd dimension, 'Evaluation of Language Learning in Gaziantep' and 4th dimension 'Benefits of Language Learning for Syrians in Gaziantep' responses have no significant differences in sample responses due to Age.

#### 4.6.3 Tests of Variance Between Study Dimensions Due to Legal Status in Turkey

To validate this test, we used the (independent sample non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test), and the results are shown as follows:

Table 10. *Tests of Variance Between Study Dimensions Due to Legal Status in Turkey.*

	Dimension 1	Dimension 2	Dimension 3	Dimension 4
Kruskal-Wallis H	38.81	1.60	14.93	28.34
P-value	0.00	0.66	0.00	0.00

The Table above shows that there is a significant difference in sample responses due to 'Legal Status' in each of the 1st dimension 'Reality of Language/s of Syrians in Gaziantep,' 3rd dimension 'Evaluation of Language Learning in Gaziantep' and 4th dimension 'Benefits of Language Learning for Syrians in Gaziantep' responses towards Turkish nationality group for all 3 dimensions. Though the 2nd dimension, 'Factors Affecting Language Learning for Syrians in Gaziantep' has no significant differences in sample responses due to legal status in Turkey.

#### 4.6.4 Tests of Variance Between Study Dimensions Due to Duration of Stay in Turkey

To validate this test, we used the (independent sample non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test), and the results are shown as follows:

Table 11. *Tests of Variance Between Study Dimensions Due to Duration of Stay in Turkey.*

	Dimension 1	Dimension 2	Dimension 3	Dimension 4
Kruskal-Wallis H	4.059	1.381	2.859	1.417
P-value	0.25	0.71	0.41	0.70

The Table above shows that there is no significant difference in sample responses due to 'Duration of Stay in Turkey' for all dimensions.

#### 4.6.5 Tests of Variance Between Study Dimensions Due to Status of Work

To validate this test, we used the (independent sample non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test), and the results are shown as follows:

Table 12. *Tests of Variance Between Study Dimensions Due to Status of Work.*

	<b>Dimension 1</b>	<b>Dimension 2</b>	<b>Dimension 3</b>	<b>Dimension 4</b>
Kruskal-Wallis H	24.41	19.04	1.67	40.28
P-value	0.00	0.00	0.64	0.00

The Table above shows that there is a significant difference in sample responses due to ‘Status of Work’ in each of 1st dimension ‘Reality of Language/s of Syrians in Gaziantep’ towards Student and working, 2nd dimension ‘Factors Affecting Language Learning for Syrians in Gaziantep’ towards working, and 4th dimension ‘Benefits of Language Learning for Syrians in Gaziantep’ towards Student and working. However, the 3rd dimension, ‘Evaluation of Language Learning in Gaziantep’ responses have no significant differences in sample responses due to the status of work.

#### 4.6.6 Tests of Variance Between Study Dimensions Due to Type of Work

To validate this test, we used the (independent sample non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test), and the results are shown as follows:

Table 13. *Tests of Variance Between Study Dimensions Due to Type of Work*

	<b>Dimension 1</b>	<b>Dimension 2</b>	<b>Dimension 3</b>	<b>Dimension 4</b>
Kruskal-Wallis H	56.23	27.57	17.56	76.96
P-value	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

The Table above shows that there is a significant difference in sample responses due to ‘Type of Work’ for all 1st dimension ‘Reality of Language/s of Syrians in Gaziantep’ towards working in Organization/company, 2nd dimension ‘Factors Affecting Language Learning for Syrians in Gaziantep’ towards working in Factory/shop, 3rd dimension ‘Evaluation of Language Learning in Gaziantep’ towards working in Organization/company, and 4th dimension ‘Benefits of Language Learning for Syrians in Gaziantep’ towards not working.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSIONS**

#### **5.1 Presentation**

This chapter presents discussions on the findings of this thesis research. Both qualitative and quantitative findings were discussed by providing data from the other relevant studies.

#### **5.2 Discussion of the Results**

This descriptive study aimed at finding out the situation of language learning for Syrian refugees in Gaziantep through examining a number of angles, emphasizing the languages Syrians have enhanced in Turkey, highlighting challenges, and collecting their opinions about available courses and usefulness of languages in Gaziantep. The results of the present study will be compared with other studies' results.

##### **5.2.1 What language/s have Syrians in Gaziantep improved during their stay in Turkey?**

The results of the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews stressed that the majority of Syrians in Gaziantep have enhanced their Turkish level during their stay in Turkey, unlike English that did not witness the same level of improvement. The participants reported that their overall level of proficiency in the two languages is low due to the limited use. These findings were parallel to the findings of the study conducted by Isphording (2015), which showed that despite the significance of language learning for refugees, large segments remain with a low level of proficiency. The study of Chauhdry (2016) revealed that despite improving their

level in the host country's language, the participants' overall level was still low, which deprived them of having job opportunities. The results of Popov and Erik (2015) are consistent with the present study as well. The findings of their studies show that due to the financial challenges of refugees, they join language courses to benefit from the financial support they receive without taking the learning chance seriously, which implies having a low proficiency level in the target languages. Tshabangu-Soko and Caron (2011) studied the case of African refugees attending an English program and elaborated that many of the interviewed refugees did not have a good command of English despite attending the program twice.

### **5.2.2 What are the factors affecting learning languages for Syrians in**

#### **Gaziantep?**

Based on the analysis of the collected data, Syrians in Gaziantep consider time and the unavailability of practice opportunities the most significant obstacles they encounter on the level of language learning. Contrarily, desire and motivation factors were not obstacles, according to the participants. The results of the present study are compatible with the results of Dilek et al. (2018); Büyükkiz and Çangal (2016), which clearly clarified that lack of communication with native speakers is considered a challenge that hinders Syrian refugees' ability to learn Turkish. Al Masri and Abu-Ayyash (2020); Al-Hariri (2018) demonstrated that time is an obstacle for Syrians in Turkey and USA, taking into account the long working hours as well as the family needs. On the same topic, Al Masri and Abu-Ayyash (2020) discussed the importance of language practice as the introversion as well as the conservatism of host people affect the refugees' interaction and learning the host country's language. Motivation's role in the present study differs from its role in Alefsha and Al-Jamal (2019), which considers motivation to be an obstacle as the participants in their study claimed that they do not know the benefit of learning languages.

The results of the present study showed that available language courses were expensive, which makes the financial factor a challenge towards learning languages. This matches the results of Perry (2013); Al Masri and Abu-Ayyash (2020); Alefsha and Al-Jamal (2019); Al-Hariri (2018) who showed this factor as a major obstacle towards learning languages for the majority of the participants in their studies. The participants in these studies added that they prefer spending time making money and

fulfilling their families' needs over attending courses and learning languages. The participants in the present study referred to challenges encountered due to inconveniences of available courses on the level of design, content as well as teachers' qualifications. These findings are compatible with a number of studies that tackle the gap in language courses for refugees and discuss the lack of experience of the teaching staff, inadequacy instructional materials, and inappropriate design of courses (Mavaşođlu & Tüm, 2010; Güler, 2012; Büyükaslan, 2007; Özyürek, 2009; Ünlü, 2011; Yıldız & Tepeli, 2014; Dilek et al., 2018; Lee, 2016).

A number of studies have discussed several factors that can have an impact on refugees' learning of languages. These factors were not mentioned by the participants in the present study. Below is a summary of the factors discussed in those studies:

Lee (2016) illustrated the social problems affecting learning languages as refugees come from various backgrounds, which make association with people from other backgrounds limited. Herby, they cannot confidently and openly interact with their classmates. Another social challenge was mentioned by the refugees in Germany in Al Masri and Abu-Ayyash's (2020), who stated the unnecessary of learning German in light of the distribution of Arabic speakers in many areas.

The psychological factor has been discussed in a number of studies and has been referred to as an obstacle in learning languages. Learners who have had traumatic experiences may exhibit symptoms such as memory impairment, difficulty concentrating, and anxiety that are directly related to learning difficulties (Isserlis, 2000; Kerka, 2002; McDonald, 2000). Research in the field of cognitive psychology has found that traumatic experiences can affect neural pathways in the brain and impair learning throughout the lifespan (Perry, 1999). According to a study conducted by Steel et al. (2002) on adult Vietnamese refugees living in Australia, the level of trauma experienced by the refugees prior to their flight had a significant impact on their integration and daily functioning.

The study of Stevens (2001) on Cambodian refugees' case in Australia found that 91% of participants had symptoms related to PTSD and depression. In addition, many suffered from symptoms that had a direct impact on learning and cognitive functioning, including poor concentration (58%), headaches (69%) and memory loss (57%). Likewise, Syrian refugees were studied in Turkey, Lebanon, and Iraq by three

separate studies, and the results revealed 98.5% of the participants in Iraq had experienced at least one traumatic event, and 86.3% of them underwent three or more. The prevalence of probable PTSD was about 60% (Mahmood et al., 2019). In Lebanon, the prevalence of positive PTSD among Syrian refugees is 47.3% (Aoun et al., 2018). In Turkey, 71% of Syrian refugees have the probability of having PTSD based on the binary logistic regression analysis.

The linguistic factor was also studied in a number of researches. For Karipek (2017), the language obstacle was a major difficulty for Syrian refugees to acquire the Turkish language. Dilek et al. (2018) studied the Syrian example in Turkey and found out that the participants faced problems as Turkish is being structurally different from Arabic. The same results were revealed by Aık (2008); Adalar (2010); Onur et al. (2012); Demirci (2015); Mavařođlu and Tm (2010) which found out that Syrian refugees faced morphological, semantic, phonetic and structural problems due to the alphabet and phonemic variations between Turkish and their mother tongue.

Al Masri and Abu-Ayyash (2020) mentioned that the participants found the German language a difficult language to learn. The Syrian refugees in Germany described the German language's syntax as complicated and with long words and expressions. In Turkey, the participants found that the language nature was a challenge as it has different semantics and different word-formation. Malay was described as a difficult language in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

General challenges encountered by refugees were discussed in several studies. The refugees in Dilek et al.'s (2018) study expressed that having learners from all age groups has made learning Turkish more difficult Baynham (2006) found that religious and cultural heterogeneity is the main reason why female refugees do not participate in classes in the presence of men. Popov and Erik (2015) also found that the majority of female refugees shied away from attending mixed-gender language classes. In support of this claim, Riggs et al. (2012) illustrated that refugees, particularly women, do not attend language classes for reasons related to their religious and cultural barriers. Apart from this, Casimiro et al. (2007) argued that refugees without formal education need longer time and hours to grasp and cope with the new environment, people, society and language. Frimberger (2016) clarified in his study that the level of education refugees have acquired in their own language

or in their home country plays a crucial role in language learning. Similarly, Olliff and Couch (2005) found that refugees, who had no formal education in their own language or home country, encounter more challenges compared with those who did in regard to learning languages.

### **5.2.3 How do Syrians see the current situation of the available language learning opportunities in Gaziantep?**

This findings of the present study indicated that Syrians in Gaziantep believe that social interaction, watching movies and series, and attending courses are effective ways to learn languages. These results are compatible with a series of studies. Bruner (1985) and Farrar (1990) revealed the significance of social interaction to improve language learning. To use the language, it is vital to practice it so that one can improve one's communication skills as well. Norwegian language courses alone are not sufficient, but the combination of both language courses and language practice is an ideal combination (Chauhdry, 2016). The participants indicated that intensive courses and interacting/working with the host community, watching TV and listening songs in the target language, would be very helpful in acquiring the language of the host country (Al Masri, & Abu-Ayyash, 2020).

The participants in the present study highlighted the fact of the inappropriateness of the available courses in terms of content and design and the need for a complete reform, including having qualified teaching staff as well as tailored courses to meet their linguistic needs, expectations, and levels. These findings agree with Alefsha and Al-Jamal (2019) that learners consider the materials and books, as well as the environment of the available courses inconvenient, and they suggest hiring qualified teachers, using a learner-friendly and flexible curriculum, and using technology in the classrooms to enhance engaging the participants in the learning process. In Dilek et al.'s (2018) study, the participants stressed the need for better design of courses as the number of hours as well as learning materials are not supporting the learning process. Göçer and Moğul (2011); Açık (2008); Onur et al. (2012); Ünlü (2011); and Demirci (2015), emphasized that language instruction methods and techniques utilized in TSL courses were monotonous, and not diversified based on the language instruction goals and the current requirements. Problems experienced in this context can be listed as being material that is inadequate, unqualified, and culturally inappropriate (Göçer, 2013; Onur et al., 2012;

Durmuş, 2013; Ünlü, 2011; Güngör, 2015; Ciğerci & Güngör, 2016; Büyükkiz & Çangal, 2016; Dağdelen, 2015; Emin, 2016; Mavaşoğlu & Tüm, 2010). Teachers are unable to use information technology in the classroom (Büyükaslan, 2007), they lack proper field training, and considering their job of being temporary (Özyürek, 2009; Ünlü, 2011; Yıldız & Tepeli, 2014). In the study of Dilek et al. (2018), it is demonstrated that teachers should be experienced and knowledgeable. Carson (2008) called for designing courses in a way that fits participants' cultures, educational experiences, and ages.

The results of this study showed that the host government should make learning the host language compulsory, which matches the results reached by Al Masri and Abu-Ayyash (2020) that called the host government in Turkey to provide free language courses and make them obligatory. The participants in the present study recommended putting efforts and focus from the responsible parties including the UN and international organizations to help Syrian refugees reach a better linguistic level. The recommendations included better design of language courses in terms of content and schedule, taking into consideration the working hours, appointing qualified and trained teachers, and using valuable materials to meet refugees' different groups' needs. The same idea was discussed by the participants in Alefsha and Al-Jamal (2019), who called for more support and cooperation from the host government and resettlement agency in terms of social and economic challenges, which will contribute to better learning languages.

Apart from that, the participants in Sweden advised the Swedish government to equip the language institutions with qualified teachers who can facilitate the acquiring the Swedish language process. Moreover, refugees in Turkey mentioned that receiving financial support would help them have free time to develop their language skills. In Germany, the participants suggested that the government take action to mediate between the refugees and the Germans in order to increase integration among them (Al Masri & Abu-Ayyash, 2020). In this context, Dilek et al. (2018) mentioned that creating communication between refugees and Turks would enable reflective learning, developing Turkish textbooks that emphasize the similarities and relationship between the two cultures, and hiring qualified teachers would improve the learning process. Horsman (2013) suggested providing refugees with timely assistance to support the host language process.

Van Rensburg and Son (2010) depicted that there should be more investment from teachers in terms of effort and time to identify the suitable materials and methods that make the learning process easy. Werge-Olsen and Vik (2012) discussed that classes need to be highly flexible to prevent boredom, and the teachers should ensure easy learning. In Al-Hariri's (2018) study, the participants proposed hiring bilingual teachers who can speak both Arabic and English to help refugees learn the target language.

#### **5.2.4 How do Syrians in Gaziantep see the benefit of learning languages?**

The results of the present study revealed that the participants believed that learning languages can open doors for job and education opportunities; meanwhile, their motivation to learn languages can be enhanced in case of the availability of job or education opportunities. The participants also highlighted the role of learning languages in integrating with the receiving country. The results of this question were consistent with the results of Dilek et al. (2018) when the majority of their study participants stated that the reasons for learning Turkish are to attend university, find jobs in Turkey or the neighboring countries.

Açık (2008); Güler (2012) also mentioned that Syrians in Turkey consider learning Turkish essential in order to be able to integrate into Turkish culture, to start a business as well as complete their unfinished education. The impact of language skills extends beyond the immigrants' economic success to helping immigrants integrate into the labor market, as well as in education, health, marriage, social integration, and political participation (Isphording, 2015). Riggs et al. (2012) depicted that refugees take two advantages from learning languages. Firstly, learning languages help them survive in the host country. Secondly, they simply want to have a job. It is crucial for foreigners to learn the host society's language as it is a significant factor for establishment and integration.

Being proficient in the host society's language helps in having access to jobs, social acceptance from the society, and educational opportunities (Chauhdry, 2016). Learning the language of the host country is the first step and a crucial component in the integration process. It can be seen as a prerequisite for full social integration. Limited language proficiency will most likely have an overall negative impact on the four dimensions of integration, i.e. their ability to interact with locals, understand the

culture, gain access to position in key institutions, and find a sense of belonging in the host society (Xhelili, 2014).

In the study of Hou and Beiser (2006), refugees stated that language is a key for integration in a new society, and if they know the language, it would be easier to overcome the other challenges. According to the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma (n.d.), developing second language skills enhances independence and minimizes social isolation, while acquiring citizenship expands the “survivor’s sense of security and well-being” (p. 1).



## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 Presentation

This chapter provides a summary of this research study. This chapter discusses the quantitative and qualitative results in detail. It also reviews the results of the analyses conducted as part of the study. In addition, some potential recommendations for further studies are also provided.

#### 6.2 Summary of the Study

The purpose of the present master's thesis was to capture the insights of Syrian refugees in Turkey regarding the factors that affect learning languages. The study also aimed to find out the situation of the currently available courses in the city and the what advantages Syrians see in language learning, and what recommendations they have for the future. Based on the research framework and problem statement, four research questions were determined to investigate in this study.

The study took place in the city of Gaziantep, Turkey. Gaziantep is located in southern Turkey and hosts almost 450.407 Syrian refugees since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011. The necessary permissions and approvals were obtained in each setting. A questionnaire was prepared for this study, and the researcher contacted each and every participant to collect data. All participants were Syrians between 18-45 living in Gaziantep and have been in Turkey for at least one year. The participants were from diverse backgrounds, mainly university students, factory workers, company and organization employees, which contributed to the representation of the entire population of Syrians in the city. This study included a total of 399 respondents, 322 males (80.7%) and 77 females (19.3%) in the questionnaire process.

After collecting the data in the questionnaire process, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 participants. Three participants were three

freelancers, six employees in companies and organizations, three factory workers, and three students. Later, SPSS software was used to analyze the collected data and address the research questions. The analyzed quantitative and qualitative data revealed that the majority of the sample participants developed their Turkish language, while their English did not witness the same improvement. The participants' English and Turkish levels remain low based on their opinions. The participants mentioned lack of time, cost, and unavailability of practice opportunities as the major obstacles towards developing languages. In terms of the learning situation in Gaziantep, the participants' main concern was the suitability of the available courses in regard to the refugees' needs, levels, and expectations. They made several recommendations to the responsible entities for this purpose. Finally, when asked about the advantages of learning languages, the participants' opinions agree that languages can create job and education opportunities and contribute to better integration with the host communities.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

After ten years of conflict, displacement, and refuge, Syrians have witnessed various types of challenges; security, economic, social, etc. The conflict has torn apart Syrians' lives who are currently taking shelter in neighboring countries, including Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, as well as in Europe. The first Syrian refugees fleeing conflict and violence in their homeland arrived in Turkey ten years ago. What began as a trickle soon became an influx. Today, Turkey hosts more than 3.6 million Syrian refugees, who make up the vast majority of the more than 3.7 million refugees currently living in the country (UNHCR, 2021). With the absence of a political solution in sight as well as seeking more stability, Syrians are struggling to create a balance between their daily responsibilities and their educational and skills improvement. Learning languages comes to the surface as a cornerstone to create educational and job opportunities on one side and enhance the integration level and/or open the doors for moving to another country on the other.

This study was done to elucidate the current situation of language learning of Syrians in Gaziantep, Turkey, from the eyes of Syrians themselves. The researcher used a mixed-method approach to collect data and administrated a questionnaire specifically designed for this study by contacting 399 participants. The researcher

also interviewed 15 participants with diverse educational and experience backgrounds to ensure the best representation of the target population.

In this study, the vast majority of the participants agreed that learning a second language is essential. On top of that, the participants considered English and Turkish easy languages to learn, and they have a plan for learning languages in the future. During their stay in Turkey, the majority have improved their Turkish, unlike English that was not the participants' core interest. According to the participants, their level in Turkish and English remain low due to the limited.

When investigating the factors affecting language learning for Syrians in Gaziantep, the results revealed that the majority have the desire and motivation to learn in general and languages in particular, yet time, cost, and lack of practice are factors negatively affecting their goal. The participants added that working hours are long, which leaves them with a short time for other activities. Moreover, the participants highlighted problems on the institutional level as available courses need total reform. In terms of the effective ways to learn languages, the participants agreed that social integration, courses and watching movies and series are useful ways. For the participants, good incentives can motivate them to learn; nevertheless, various types of courses, including paid and free provided in governmental, organizational, or private institutions, need to be better designed to have real influence. The majority expressed their need for practical courses where available ones generally offer grammar, non-practical, and non-daily life related information. The participants recommended the need for more serious actions from the UN, concerned organizations and host government to provide efficient courses that meet refugees' needs.

Finally, the majority demonstrated that their mother tongue is not enough to live in Turkey and they have experienced several challenges for not speaking Turkish. The majority are feeling stable and have no plans to move to another country. They demonstrated that languages could open doors for better integration as well as jobs and education opportunities. Furthermore, for them, the availability of job and education opportunities is the ultimate reason to learn languages.

#### **6.4 Implications and Suggestions for Further Studies**

This study offers answers to many questions that will surely benefit entities funding, organizing, or providing languages courses to Syrian refugees in Turkey. The entities can be A. UN agencies, B. Local organizations, C. International organizations, D. Turkish Ministry of Education, E. Private languages centers, and F. Tutors. This study puts forward a full picture of the various challenges Syrians are going through. In addition, this study provides insights into the gaps Syrians see in the currently existing programs and courses, as well as the way they believe reform should be. Based on the provided information, the responsible entities can design and provide languages courses in a better way to meet Syrians' needs and levels and have a tangible outcome on their life.

Because of the limitations the current study possesses, some recommendations are presented for future research. First of all, this study was carried out in Gaziantep city. Thus, the results may not be generalized. Further studies can be conducted in other cities to find out the factors that affect the learning process. Another suggestion would be about the enrichment of the qualitative data through the usage of diverse instruments. With the application of more qualitative data collection tools such as focus group discussion, much extensive information can be attained in further studies. Finally, the data collected showed a significant difference between some study dimensions and demographic variables; further studies can dig deeper to find out more in this regard.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Questionnaire

Dear participants,

I hope my message finds you and your families well and healthy. My name is Mahmoud Dallal. I am a master's degree student at English Language Teaching Department, Gaziantep University.

1. The below questionnaire is part of my research that investigates the factors affecting Syrian refugees' attitudes towards learning languages in Turkey.
2. This questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes.
3. Participation in the questionnaire is voluntary, and the results of this research will be used only for academic purposes.
4. The questionnaire is intended and should be filled in only by Syrian refugees in Gaziantep, who are between 18-45 and have been living in Turkey for over a year.
5. The questionnaire consists of 2 sections: A – Participants' demographic questions; B – Topic questions,
6. Section A includes seven questions and aims to provide basic information about the participants in this research.
7. Section B includes 40 questions and aims to collect the participants' opinions regarding the research topic. The questions in section B follow the Likert scale, which includes 5 options: "1. 0-20%, 2. 20-40%, 3. 40-60%, 4. 60-80%, 5. 80-100%."
8. 0-20% means Completely Disagree, 20-40% means Disagree, 40-60% means Neutral, 60-80% means Agree, 80-100% means Completely Agree.
9. All questions have no right or wrong answers.

**Section A****1. Gender:**

- ❖ Male
- ❖ Female

**2. Age: .....****3. What is your mother tongue?**

- ❖ Arabic
- ❖ Turkish
- ❖ Kurdish

**4. what is your legal status in Turkey?**

- ❖ Temporary protection
- ❖ Residency
- ❖ Turkish nationality
- ❖ None

**5. How long have you been in Turkey?**

- ❖ Less than a year
- ❖ 1-3 years
- ❖ 4-6 years
- ❖ Over 7 years

**6. what do you do?**

- ❖ Student
- ❖ Working
- ❖ Student and working
- ❖ None

**7. What type of work do you have?**

- ❖ Organization/company
- ❖ Factory/shops
- ❖ Freelance
- ❖ None

### Section B

**Please rate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements:**

N	Question	0-20%	20-40%	40-60%	60-80%	80-100%
<b>Dimension 1: Reality of Language/s of Syrians in Gaziantep.</b>						
1.1	In general, I find it easy to learn languages.					
1.2	For me, it is crucial to speak a language other than my mother tongue.					
1.3	Turkish is an easy language to learn.					
1.4	English is an easy language to learn.					
1.5	I can speak Turkish very well.					
1.6	I have improved my Turkish in Turkey.					
1.7	I can speak English very well.					
1.8	I have improved my English in Turkey.					
1.9	I have a plan to learn new languages.					
<b>Dimension 2: Factors Affecting Language Learning for Syrians in Gaziantep.</b>						
2.1	Time is not the biggest challenge for learning languages.					
2.2	The financial factor is not the biggest challenge for learning languages.					
2.3	Desire is not the biggest challenge for learning languages.					

2.4	Motivation is not the biggest challenge for learning languages.					
2.5	Lack of practice opportunities is not a big challenge in learning languages.					
2.6	I do not learn only what is necessary. I always learn something extra.					
2.7	I have a good income.					
Dimension 3: Evaluation of Language Learning in Gaziantep.						
3.1	Social contact is the best way to learn languages.					
3.2	Watching movies is the best way to learn languages.					
3.3	Attending courses is the best way to learn languages.					
3.4	Paid courses are efficient since they make learners feel responsible.					
3.5	Free courses are efficient.					
3.6	Good incentives in free courses can be motivating to learn.					
3.7	Language courses should be more practical.					
3.8	Governmental centers are the best place to learn languages.					
3.9	Organizational centers are the best place to learn languages.					
3.10	Private centers are the best place to learn languages.					
3.11	The host government should make learning the host country's language compulsory.					

3.12	The UN and international organizations should put more efforts and focus on teaching languages to refugees.					
Dimension 4: Benefits of Language Learning for Syrians in Gaziantep.						
4.1	My mother tongue is not enough for my life in Turkey.					
4.2	Turkish is essential at work and I use it a lot.					
4.3	English is essential at work and I use it a lot.					
4.4	Learning languages can create job opportunities.					
4.5	Having a job opportunity can be motivating to learn.					
4.6	Turkish is essential in my study.					
4.7	English is essential in my study.					
4.8	Learning languages can create education opportunities.					
4.9	Having an education opportunity can be motivating to learn.					
4.10	I have encountered several challenges in Turkey because I do not speak Turkish.					
4.11	I feel stable in Turkey.					
4.12	I have plans to leave Turkey.					

## **Appendix B: Semi-structured Interview**

1. How was your experience in learning languages in Turkey?
2. What do you think are the biggest challenges to learning languages?
3. What is the best way to learn languages?
4. What do you think of the available language courses?
5. What do you recommend to make learning languages easier for Syrian refugees in Turkey?
6. What do you think is the outcome of learning languages?



## Appendix C: Sample of Semi-structured Interviews Transcription

1. How was your experience in learning languages in Turkey?

*Answer: At first I learned Turkish, then I focused on English. I tried to learn it but I think I am still not good at it. As for Turkish, I think I am native-like.*

2. What do you think are the biggest challenges to learning languages?

*Answer: The biggest challenge I faced was the financial factor that impacted my progress as courses are expensive. Also, time was another factor as working hours are long.*

3. What is the best way to learn languages?

*Answer: Watching movies and contacting with native speakers are the best ways to learn.*

4. What do you think of the available language courses?

*Answer: In general, courses are using curricula that do not match what we need. On the other hand, teachers lack creativity and can only provide routine courses. Paid courses are expensive and free courses make participants feel that courses are not serious.*

5. What do you recommend to make learning languages easier for Syrian refugees in Turkey?

*Answer: 1) Re-preparing the existing programs and aligning them with the participants' needs.*

*2) Evaluating teachers to find the diversity of language delivery.*

*3) Increasing flexibility to help all refugees have a chance to learn taken into consideration working hours, educational level, etc.*

6. What do you think is the outcome of learning languages?

*Answer: of course, languages are always important and the more languages people know, the more chances they receive in different fields; education, business, etc.*

## Appendix D: Permission Letter to Conduct Questionnaire

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 30.06.2021-58388



T.C.  
GAZİANTEP ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ  
Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü

Sayı :E-62927161-302.08.01-58388  
Konu :Bilimsel ve Eğitim Amaçlı (Mahmoud  
DALLAL)

30.06.2021

### YABANCI DİLLER EĞİTİMİ ANABİLİM DALINA

Anabilim Dahmız, İngiliz Dili ve Eğitimi tezli yüksek lisans programı öğrencilerinden **Mahmoud DALLAL**'ın Araştırma Uygulama İzni ile ilgili olarak Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Etik Kurulu'nun 27/04/2021 tarih ve 07 (44) sayılı toplantı tutanağı ekte gönderilmekte olup, bilgilerinizi ve gereğini rica ederim.

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Doç.Dr. Ahmet İhsan KAYA  
Enstitü Müdürü

Ek:Etik Kurul Kararı

## VITAE

Mahmoud Dallal studied English Language and Literature at Aleppo university. He has been working as an English teacher for over six years, along with being a humanitarian worker in the education sector. He can speak Arabic and English, with survival skills in Turkish.

## ÖZGEÇMİŞ

Mahmoud Dallal, Halep Üniversitesi'nde İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı okudu. Eğitim sektöründe insani yardım çalışanı olmanın yanı sıra 6 yıldan uzun süredir İngilizce öğretmeni olarak çalışmaktadır. Arapça ve İngilizce bilmektedir, Türkçe dilini temel seviyede konuşmaktadır.