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STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

THESIS BY

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23.09.2016

Mehmet Şirin CENGİZ

DEDICATION



**To my beloved wife,
Sabina CENGİZ...
**and my sons,
*Yakub and Mikail...*****

ÖZET

YURTDIŐI EĐİTİM DENEYİMİ: NİTEL BİR VAKA TAKDİMİ

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Bu nitel araştırma ile Türkiye'deki bir devlet üniversitesinde çalışan bayan bir öğretim görevlisinin uzun süreli yurtdıŐı eğitimi üzerine yorumları ve bu deneyimin profesyonel gelişim ve dil yeterliliđine etkileri incelenmiştir. Birden çok veri toplama aracı ile gerçekleştirilen bir vaka takdimi olan çalışmada, araŐtırmacı yarı-yapılandırılmış mülakatlar uygulamıŐ, gözlem notları tutmuŐ ve araŐtırmanın deneđinden geçmiŐe dönük e-mailler almıŐtır. AraŐtırma, genel kanının aksine, yurtdıŐı eğitimin dil, kültürlerarası ve mesleki gelişim üzerine ilginç sonuçlar ortaya koymaktadır. Katılımcının konuşmaları incelendiđinde, bu tecrübenin, katılımcının dil yeterliliđi üzerinde negatif etki bıraktıđını ve beklenin tersi yönüne kaymasına yol açtıđını göstermektedir. Bu durum, karar verme ve hazırlık süreci, karşılaşılan zorluklar, hedef kültür, kalıŐ süresi ve adaptasyon problemleri gibi birçok faktörün bir sonucu olarak ortaya çıkmıŐtır. YurtdıŐı eğitim tecrübesi ile ilgili göze çarpan bir bulgu da, hedef kültüre adapte olmada problem yaŐayan deneđin kendini anadiline ve kültürüne adadıđını belirtmesidir. Katılımcı, yurtdıŐı tecrübesinin kazandırdıđı çok az sayıdaki katkılardan birinin yeni Őeylere karşı daha tolere ve açık olması olduđunu belirtmektedir. Çalışma, alan araŐtırmacılarının yanı sıra yabancı dil eğitmenleri ve öğrencileri için birçok öneri ortaya koyması bakımından önemli görülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: YurtdıŐı eğitim, hedef dil, hedef kültür, motivasyon, iletiŐim, adaptasyon problemleri

ABSTRACT

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This qualitative inquiry aims to investigate the interpretations of a female lecturer in a Turkish university on her long-term study abroad experience and how the experience contributed to her ongoing professional development and language proficiency. Using a case design with multiple data collection tools, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews, recorded observations through informal discussions and collected retrospective e-mails from the participant. The research reveals interesting results contrary to the general ideas about the impact of study abroad on linguistic, intercultural and professional development. By analyzing the participant's voices, it was found that the experience had negative results on her language proficiency and shifted her towards the opposite direction than expected. This was the unexpected result of many factors including factors such as decision, preparation, challenges, target culture, length of stay and adaptation problems. A salient finding of the study abroad experience was that the participant expressed a commitment to her native culture and language which was shaped as a result of experiencing adaptation problems to the target culture. She expresses being tolerant and open to new things as one of the few contributions after her study abroad experience. The study is considered significant in terms of revealing several implications for foreign language educators and students as well as the researchers in the field of study.

Keywords: Study abroad, target language, target culture, motivation, interaction, adaptation problems

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CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

All men by nature desire to know (Aristotle, 350 BC). Communication can be considered as the very first step of this reality regarding the human nature. Language is the most powerful tool used to establish the communication. Man begins to communicate with the environment by birth; babies' crying in the first weeks, then sounds like *ooo*, *aah*, *cee* indicate the initial communication efforts as the babbling stage. In fact, all the world's children use a common language in this period using the same words. Social and cultural environment in which people live determine the language group they speak by time (Ural-Altaic, Indo-European, etc.).

Piaget explores human language development in the context of cognitive development and biological-genetic-based (Ginsburg & Opper, 1988). According to Piaget (1958), language development progresses in parallel with cognitive development and genetic-biological foundations affect language development significantly. Piaget (1958) emphasizes merely the social environment and its impact on his language development theory. On the other hand, Vygotsky (1965) studied the social impact in his theory of thought and language, and presented the speech development model as "social, egocentric and inner speech", respectively. According to Vygotsky (1978), children are social from the very beginning and begin to think aloud since the external conditions begin to impose and the reflection of this idea leads to the use of an egocentric language. These finding is one of the most important criticism of Piaget's theory of language development, because Piaget (1958) theorized that the egocentric speech used would be exceeded after a certain period of time as the child matures cognitively and socially due to the genetic-biological structure of language development. Accordingly, the egocentric speech should decrease inversely proportional to the increase in the age of the children. However, children use egocentric thinking and speaking more intensively between 4-7 years of age, especially at the age of six (Vygotsky, 1978).

Language which is the first and most powerful tool used by man to communicate with the environment from the birth until the end of life is examined within the context of genetic-biological and/or social impact within the theories of development. However,

it is obvious in several studies that socio-cultural factors have a significant effect in language development (Gee, 2001; Goodman, 2001; Heath, 1982; Karacan, 2000; Mays, 2008; Meier, 2003; Nelson & Guyer, 2011). Within the scope of this effect, issues such as socio-economic status, educational status and association of parents (divorced, death, loss, etc.) are among ongoing researches (Aksan, 2003; Maviş and Toğram, 2009; Üstün, Akman and Uyanık, 2000).

Problems encountered in second language learning can be considered as phonological, semantic and syntactic problems (Castro & Peck, 2005), teaching methods, teacher behaviors and student beliefs/self-competence (Derakhshan & Shirmohammadli, 2015; Ganschow, Sparks & Javorsky, 1998; Kannan, 2009). The most remarkable of these effects is the role of the cultural factors on language learning (Olshtain, Shohamy, Kemp & Chatow, 1990).

1.1. Background to the Study

As people speaking different languages had to live together for reasons such as immigration, war, commercial activities, their languages were influenced with each other, and the need to use multiple languages emerged (Yılmaz, 2014). These sociological events and integration process into a different culture and society can be studied in terms of acculturation theory. Acculturation has become a well-recognized and important area of study (Berry, 1980, 2006; Tadmor, Tetlock, & Peng, 2009). In its broader meaning when applied to individuals, “*acculturation*” can be explained as the changes as a result of interaction with culturally dissimilar people, groups, and social influences (Gibson, 2001). These changes can take place as a result of almost any intercultural contact (Arnett, 2002), but the acculturation research most often focuses on individuals living in countries or regions other than where they were born and settled in their new homeland permanently including immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, international students, seasonal farm workers (Berry, 2006).

The acculturation concept, which has a wide application to the study of social changes and cultural interaction between different communities, started to be used by American social anthropologists towards the end of the 19th century (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). According to Redfield et al. (1936), who made one of the earliest definitions of acculturation as a process, acculturation comprises “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous

first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups”.

“*Interculturation*”, a concept developed by French scholars, is defined as “the set of processes by which individuals and groups interact when they identify themselves as culturally distinct” (Berry, 1997). Berry (1997) states that both approaches are so similar, that it is often difficult to distinguish from the two approaches. In interculturation, the interest is to form new cultures, while this interest is not observed for the acculturation.

1.1.1. Acculturation Model

The acculturation model has been developed by Schumann (1978) and is based on social and psychological factors which are believed to be important for the acquisition of the target language in natural environments. According to the assertion of the model, acculturation is the major reason of second language acquisition (Schumann, 1978, 1990). Schumann states that the degree of language acquisition is directly proportionate to the degree of the learner’s social-psychological distance to the target community and language.

Schumann (1978) states that acculturation, or in other words, the integration of the language learner into the target language community does not directly result in successful acquisition of the target language, but rather it is the one of the first factors which results in natural second language acquisition. Schumann (1986) proposes that “acculturation as a remote cause brings the learner into contact with speakers of the target language and verbal interaction with those speakers as a proximate cause brings about the negotiation of appropriate input which then operates as the immediate cause of language acquisition”.

Acculturation process of the participant of the present study has been studied under the context of the acculturation theory. Despite living and receiving education in the country of the target language, desired and expected achievement in target language skills could not be reached. On the other hand, for the processes of learning and using a new language, it has been emphasized in several studies that staying in the environment and region where the target language is used and spoken for a certain period of time will positively affect language learning process (Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Kinginger 2009; Murphy, Sahakyan, Yong Yi, Magnan, 2014). Hser (2005) mentions that the world has

become more globalized and interdependent for those studying abroad; on the other hand, becoming a global citizen can be considered as the product of this educational process. Global citizens will have interpersonal problem-solving skills (Matherly & Nolting, 2007), intercultural awareness (Rexeisen, Anderson, Lawton, & Hubbard, 2008), the ability to look at the world from a broader perspective, to protect social peace, sense of values and justice and to sustain this achievements (Woolf, 2010) and in addition to these, the ability to effectively use the language of the community they live in (Magnan & Lafford, 2012).

The participant of the present study has gained above mentioned socio-cultural achievements. Despite these achievements, she failed to gain target language skills at the desired and expected level, which can be considered as the basis for communication. In this regard, it should be questioned whether it is the prerequisite to live and receive education in the country of the target language in learning this language.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

In environments where the target language is the native language, it has been revealed by the studies conducted so far that the success in learning this target language may not be at the desired level (Allen & Dupuy, 2012; Goldoni, 2015; Guns, Richardson and Watt, 2012). The participant of the study being unable to achieve the desired level of success in basic English skills (reading, writing and speaking) and in English proficiency exams (TOEFL, ÜDS, KPDS, YDS and etc.) despite staying in England for almost six years to receive international education, and returning back after an unsuccessful education without completing the master's thesis emerge as the problem situation for the research study. In this context, in-depth and long-term investigation of the participant of the present research is expected to provide in-depth data on the language learning problems of individuals during study abroad education.

1.3. Purpose and Research Question of the Study

In this study, long-term (about 6 years) English language learning process in a study abroad context of an individual has been investigated. The participant in the study stayed in an English-speaking environment for a long time but failed to achieve success at the English placement tests and basic English skills at the desired level despite being intensively exposed to the target language in the social environment. In this context, the

purpose of this study is to investigate the underlying reasons of failure to achieve success in foreign language learning at the desired level despite a long-term stay and study abroad period in the social environment of the target language.

Therefore the research question of the study is:

- Within the scope of the research purpose, what are the factors that may lead to limited English skills of an individual despite receiving instruction in English abroad?

1.4. Significance of the Study

The participant of the present study had a long-term study abroad experience. This experience is expected to have a positive impact on foreign language learning. However, this experience had an impact in the opposite direction and foreign language learning process has not reached at the desired level. Investigating the reasons of this failure is considered as the significance of the study in terms of accessing to data that may provide a new perspective to foreign language learning problems and the efficiency of study abroad concept.

1.5. Limitations of the Study

1.5.1. Limitations related to the sample

As the research has been designed as a case study, all the process has been conducted on a single participant. The number of participants can be considered as a limitation of the study. Nevertheless, one participant for a case study is considered to be sufficient as long as the data is examined and put forward in detail.

1.5.2. Limitations related to time and practice

The research has been limited to the dates between September 2015 and May 2016. Data collection tools of the research have been limited to interview forms/interviews, unstructured open-ended questions, and reading-writing-listening texts.

CHAPTER 2

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

English is one of the preferred languages as a second language in the world. This is due to the adoption of English as a common language worldwide. Career, education, communication, travelling, entertainment and internet are concepts that have the greatest impact on the life. Those who want to take advantage of these concepts worldwide are required to know English. Especially those who want to communicate with the world over the internet are obliged to know or learn English, even if it is only for this reason.

Since English has become a common language (*lingua franca*) of 21st century, it took the most important place among foreign languages being taught in schools around the world. In the Netherlands, English is in the curriculum from the first stages of primary education since 1985. English education as a compulsory foreign language starts at the first stages of primary education in the Nordic countries such as Sweden and Norway where English is widely taught, yet 12-year-old students also learn either French, German or Spanish (Trim, 1998).

Teaching English in Turkey has made progress in the period when the French began to lose its influence. French, which was once the language of nobles, lost its importance after World War II and with the increasing influence of the United States of America, English has gained importance in Turkey and in the world. During the republican period in Turkey, in order to “save the Turkish children from going to foreign school to learn a foreign language” (Demircan, 1988), the Turkish Education Association was established on January 31, 1928, and today’s TED College has emerged between the years 1928-1934 and this school has started to provide education entirely in English after the education year of 1951-1952. Then, new types of schools were opened slowly with the name of college (in the name of Anatolian High School in later years) and for evaluation since 1956 (Demircan, 1988).

After the 8-year primary (elementary) education law, English has begun to be taught from the 4th grade. With the 4-year education at general high schools, preparatory classes were repealed and weekly hours of English classes increased. In terms of foreign language education in Turkey, the Law No. 4306 has led to starting the foreign language education at the 4th grade in the primary education level, previously starting

from the secondary education level, and the addition of the option of elective second foreign language in the curriculum from the 6th grade of the primary education (Haznedar, 2010).

2.1. Foreign Language Learning Problems

Different nations can face specific problems in learning English and to discover and avoid these problems has become a matter for number of studies and researches. Also in Turkey some researches have been carried out on this topic.

The findings of the study conducted by Solak and Bayar (2015), who aim to determine problems in English language learning in Turkey from the perspective of students, reveal that according to the students' ideas, the aspects causing unsatisfactory level of the students' knowledge of English language are include focusing on teaching grammar rather than other language skills, less positive approach towards learning English caused by insufficient importance given to English language learning by student's environment, lack of practice, structure of language especially difference between writing and reading, difference between English and Turkish grammar, motivation and differences between individuals. Solak and Bayar (2015) suggest changes in the system of English language education in Turkey such as continuity of English language education through all levels of education, changes in designing English courses, point out the importance of competency of teacher and relevance of materials in terms to avoid the problems of students in process of learning English. Işık (2008) also provides the foreign language teaching system in Turkey as the main source of problems in reaching success in learning English language.

On the other hand, İter and Güzeller (2005) mention cultural aspect as an important factor involving the success of the process of learning English. As state by İter and Güzeller (2005), "Culture is one of the best ways of motivation and it also provides students with useful models of authentic use of the language in the classroom. On the other hand, cultural differences may bring some problems into the classrooms while learning a foreign language." According to this research carried out among Turkish students, cultural aspects in learning a foreign language can significantly influence students' motivation towards learning English such as the results of the learning process.

Karahan (2007) considers students' attitudes as the key point of problems in learning process of English in Turkey. The findings concern the relation between students' language attitude and language learning. Despite the recognition of the importance of English as a foreign language in Turkey, it may not lead students to have active steps towards learning English. Karahan (2007) provides reasons of not fully positive attitude towards English language, which are related to the education system in Turkey and the lack of feeling the need for English language in daily life.

Although there are English lessons at all levels of education starting from the primary education up to secondary education, even at the university level, and many research studies have been carried on to increase the success of English language education, the desired success has not still been attained in English education in Turkey. Under the light of the studies conducted on the issue (Demircan, 1988; Işık, 2008; İltir and Güzeller, 2005; Karahan, 2007; Solak and Bayar, 2015), the main reasons for the failure of public schools in the teaching of foreign languages in Turkey are as follows:

- The lack of adequate number of teachers,
- Crowded classrooms,
- Insufficiency of curriculum,
- Not using the instructional technologies and methods sufficiently,
- Problems resulting from the regulations for passing a grade level of the Ministry of National Education,
- Students' concentrating their attention to passing the exams.

According to Cook (2013), some of the general problems of English learners are hardly avoidable and they are caused by the fact that teachers usually have to deal with students in groups rather than as individuals. The ability of individual students to learn second language differs. "Whatever the teaching method used, some students will prosper, some will not, often despite their best intentions." Cook (2013) also mentions reasons causing better or worse performance of students in their learning process, such as motivation, attitude, aptitude, age and personal characteristics of learners and their impact on the learning process.

Although countries such as Turkey know better their environment, the requirements and needs of their students and teachers, the policies and objectives of their own country compared to the researchers or book authors and are obliged to

develop their unique methods, techniques and materials, they could not have found the necessary strength in themselves in developing foreign language teaching methods, techniques and materials (Rogers, 1990; Pennycook, 1996).

As a result, from a methodological point of view, the traditional method, which is a foreign language system considering to know the rules of the language the same with teaching language, to have information about the language the same with knowing the language, has continued its existence along with the mistakes and shortcomings in foreign language teacher training and recruiting system (Işık, 2008).

2.2. The Effect of Socio-Cultural Factors on Foreign Language Learning

Especially in the last quarter of the twentieth century, as a result of very fast and comprehensive changes and transformations in the field of economy, science and technology in the world, a huge boom of information has been experienced all over the world. The information generated in the last thirty or forty years is the same as the total information generated in the previous period in the history of mankind. With these mentioned developments and changes in information and technology, our age began to be called “information and communication age”. As a result, many countries aimed at economic, social, political and technological cooperation and solidarity and the phenomenon so-called “globalization” towards the end of this process has been lived (Gedikoğlu, 2005). No doubt the extent of this rapprochement and sharing of the values obtained is mutual agreement of individuals and the instrument of this case is the language (Engin, 2006). Although there are so many languages on the world, increasing international relations makes it inadequate for the nations to communicate using only their native language, and thus, the need arises to learn the languages of other countries to be able to express themselves at the universal level (Er, 2006).

According to Zhang (2006), there is the influence of many internal and external factors in the process of foreign language learning and teaching. Internal factors include students’ individual differences; and external factors include the social and cultural conditions in the learning environment. In addition to the internal factors, external factors can be said to lead to serious differences in the success of language learners.

According to Gardner and Lambert with similar views on this matter, foreign language courses, different from the other course, has a structure affected by many socio-cultural factors such as attitudes developed towards foreign language and cultural

patterns (cited in Dörnyei, 2005). These socio-cultural factors are of great importance in explaining the discrepancy between the student's school performance and mental capacity (Yavuzer, 1998). However, Ling (2006) also stressed the importance of social factors in language learning, and stated that language is learned in a social structure shaped by the effect of culture, the family structure and the characteristics of the students. In this respect, instead of linking the success in foreign language education to only the effect of cognitive factors, it is important to consider the social and cultural factors influencing language learning process, and to present the suggestions related to success with these factors.

Some researchers have studied the factors affecting foreign language success, and have divided these factors as internal and external factors (Ellis, 1997; Gonzales, 2001; Zhang, 2006; Öner and Gedikoğlu, 2007; Aküzel, 2006). According to Gonzales (2001), internal factors are students' biological, physical, psychological, cognitive and social features while the external factors are socio-economic and socio-cultural features such as school and family, parents' level of education, their occupation, family structure and the language used at home. According to Arend, linguistic and non-linguistic experiences of the individual arising directly from the individual and being spiritually ready and willing to learn a foreign language and not to have a physical disability to learn a language are included in internal factors, while all kinds of external influences affecting, directing and evaluating the behaviors of individuals are included in external factors (cited in Şahin, 2006). It can be stated that the impact of internal and external factors in the success of foreign language learning and teaching cannot be ignored.

According to Collier (1995), there are four basic elements in language learning process including socio-cultural, linguistic, academic and cognitive elements. Language learning is based on socio-cultural formations that take place in the student's life, home, school and the society. When the student is in a socio-culturally supportive environment, factors such as student's individual differences, classroom practices at school, the school environment, and program structure positively affect the attitude and academic achievement of the student developed against the target language. However, socio-cultural, linguistic, academic and cognitive elements are interconnected and the omission of one greatly affects the student's achievement. In particular, socio-cultural formation strongly effects cognitive, linguistic and academic achievement of the student

in both positive and negative directions. Thus, creation of rich socio-cultural environment in language learning process is considered to be an important factor.

Academic, cognitive and language development and socio-cultural processes are in constant interaction in language learning process. In this respect, it can be argued that socio-cultural processes including students' individual characteristics and home and school life affect language learning. Tucker and Lambert have put forward similar views with Collier, and stated that besides student's personal and emotional characteristics, socio-cultural factors influence the attitudes of the student towards the target language and shapes the language learning process (cited in Bang, 1999).

Some researchers have examined factors influencing the student's academic success more comprehensively. Yapıcı ve Keskin (2008) grouped factors affecting success under three headings including socio-cultural, developmental and psychological factors; and stated that friends, family and school are among specified socio-cultural factors. The group of friends, family's social class and culture, attitudes towards school depending on the family's social status, and physical structure of the school have a great impact on the student's success.

According to another opinion, social factors affecting the student success at school are (Cortes, 1986):

- Family's culture and use of language
- Society
- Non-school institutions
- Mass media
- Culture and ethnicity
- Attitudes
- Perception
- Socio-economic status of the society and family
- Education level of the individual, family and the environment.

Success depends on factors such as family, student, school and society. All these factors are interdependent; lack or an error in one of them leads the individual to failure (Saiduddin, 2003). Güney (2009) has specified the factors influencing success as the individual's existing potential and skills, self-concept or expectations developed as a result of experiences within the family and school environment, the life with the family,

the nature and quality of the education at school. Şerefli (2003) has divided the factors affecting the success as the mental and non-mental factors. According to Şerefli, although failure is associated with cognitive reasons at the beginning, there are non-cognitive factors with observed impact on success, and these factors are grouped under the main headings of school, family, individual and environment. Gordon has similar views with Şerefli. Gordon (1996) analyzed the reasons of academic failure in three groups:

- Home and family environment,
- Individual properties
- The school and teachers.

2.3. Study Abroad

The need to know begins from the very first moment a human opens his eyes to the life. Aristotle (BC 350), by saying “*All men by nature desire to know*”, means that knowledge is an inevitable desire for mankind. Since the first ages of the history, people pursued knowledge in terms of “reaching the truth”. With the recognition that to reach the truth is only possible through science, the glory of science and knowledge is standing in front of us as an indisputable fact. With this reality that people always searched for knowledge in different geographies and destinations, people pursued knowledge all over the world and tried to learn science from the beginning of history. The words of Ali (r.a.) who said “*I’ll be forty years a slave to those who teach me a letter.*” are still in our ears (Yılmaz, 1992). “*Seek knowledge, even as far as China.*” The famous statement of Prophet Muhammad goes to the men and women of the Islamic community. Actually, very few people would really think to travel to the ends of the world for knowledge, but “journey in search of knowledge” has shown its presence as the lifestyle of many people such as merchants, princes, travelers as well as religious scholars (Berkey, 2014). This journey in search of knowledge showed its presence throughout the history; in the life of Evliya Çelebi who travelled from city to city; Ahmedi Xani, Feqiye Teyran, Şems-i Tebrizi, or Ibn Battuta who travelled 29 years of his life with the hunger of knowledge. Erasmus, Marco Polo, Pierre Lotti in Europe or William W. Hoffa as the modern example who travelled from Holland to Oxford just to study in the university (Hoffa, 2007, 2010) were filled with the hunger for knowledge. All these examples are the result of the people’s need to know without

considering the time, religion or ethnicity. Religiously, the students in the Islamic geography were travelling to madrasahs miles away with the desire to acquire the “real truth”, while similarly at the same ages or even before; people were taking long trips to learn all around Europe.

In our age, this “desire to know” is reflected on people to travel abroad with the effort to learn a foreign language or receive a good education. The term “study abroad” is defined as an academic experience where students physically leave their home countries to involve in an academic study, cultural interaction, or to live in the host country. It may include foreign language study, residing with a foreign host family, academic development as well as cultural awareness (McKeown, 2009; Freed, 1995). The length of the stay may range from one week to a years-long stay.

There exist numerous statistical studies which report the value of study abroad in terms of its benefits related to proficiency in the target language (Carroll, 1967; Freed, 1995; Stansfield, 1975). These studies consider study abroad as the prerequisite for successful language acquisition.

On the other hand, the majority of second language acquisition research studies on study abroad have been focusing on the measurable developments of students in language proficiency and linguistic knowledge during study abroad experience. Relatively little research considers the real experiences and perspectives of learners living in the country of the target language and removed from their home culture.

Studies on the beliefs of the learners about language learning have focused primarily on learner beliefs and the influence of learners’ backgrounds (national and cultural backgrounds and previous language learning experiences) on their beliefs. While some researchers have studied on the changes of the learner beliefs as a result of learning experience after a period of time in the target destination (Amuzie, & Winke, 2009; Gao, 2003), some others have studied the relationship between beliefs and language proficiency (Tanaka & Ellis, 2003; Peacock, 1999).

On the contrary, there are very few studies conducted to document pre and post impacts and results of study abroad experiences with an attempt to measure changes in terms of the impact of study abroad programs and experiences. Medina-López-Portillo (2004), Engle and Engle (2004), and Paige, Cohen, and Shively (2004) have examined intercultural sensitivity in study abroad programs designed to improve language skills. Similar to Engle and Engle’s (2004) findings, Paige, Cohen, and Shively (2004) found

that the students studying language in the target destination improved overall intercultural sensitivity. Engle and Engle also observed that students who stayed abroad longer showed the greatest improvement in intercultural sensitivity. In contrast, Medina-Lopéz-Portillo (2004) found little evidence for improvement as the result of a seven-week or semester-long program of study in Mexico.

Short-term study abroad programs have been shown to have an impact on intercultural development as reported by Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen and Hubbard (2006) researching the impact of a short-term (four-week) non-language-based study abroad program on intercultural sensitivity. Patterson (2006) compared the effects of a short-term study abroad experience with that of traditional intercultural study.

According to the results of the study by Patterson (2006), while the students who studied abroad showed a small improvement in intercultural sensitivity, those who studied in the traditional classrooms showed no improvement at all. While additional studies are needed to evaluate the effect of study abroad programs, there is little research to show the lasting impact of study abroad students after returning back home.

A significant exception is the survey study carried out by The Institute for the International Education of Students (IES, 2002), which is one of the largest surveys including study abroad alumni. The survey resulted in more than 3,400 returned questionnaires yielding an overall response rate of 23%. According to the data obtained from the study, self-confidence and world-view of the participants continued to be developed after returning back as a result of their study abroad experience.

In terms of the relation of gender and study abroad success, Rexeisen and Roffler (2005)'s study is notable. They reported that gender is related to changes in environmental attitudes as a result of a study abroad. They found that the ecological worldview of women tended to improve whereas men's attitudes tended to decline as a result of their study abroad experience.

2.4. Acculturation

As people speaking different languages had to live together for reasons such as immigration, war, commercial activities, their languages were influenced with each other, and the need to use multiple languages emerged (Yılmaz, 2014). These sociological events and integration process into a different culture and society can be studied in terms of acculturation theory. Acculturation has become a well-recognized

and important area of study (Berry, 1980, 2006; Tadmor, Tetlock, & Peng, 2009). In its broader meaning when applied to individuals, “*acculturation*” can be explained as the changes as a result of interaction with culturally dissimilar people, groups, and social influences (Gibson, 2001). Any intercultural contact can lead to these changes (Arnett, 2002), but the acculturation research most often focuses on individuals living in countries or regions other than where they were born and settled in their new homeland permanently including immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, international students, seasonal farm workers (Berry, 2006). As a result, the terms “*migrants*” or “*international migrants*” are used collectively to refer to these social groups, but the usage may change depending on the hypotheses or propositions about the type of migrant.

The acculturation concept, which has a wide application to the study of social changes and cultural interaction between different communities, started to be used by American social anthropologists towards the end of the 19th century (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). According to Redfield et al. (1936), who made one of the earliest definitions of acculturation as a process, acculturation comprises “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups”.

Acculturation is a dual process as the members of each group affect each other culturally to the presence of the other (Berry, 1997). According to Castro (2003), acculturation is different from *enculturation*, learning a specific culture’s values, beliefs and norms, and also from *cultural change*, which are changes in a culture resulting from innovation, invention and discovery.

“*Interculturation*”, a parallel concept developed mainly among French-language scholars, is defined as “the set of processes by which individuals and groups interact when they identify themselves as culturally distinct” (Berry, 1997). Berry (1997) states that both approaches are so similar, that it is often difficult to distinguish from the two approaches. In interculturation, the interest is to form new cultures, while this interest is not observed for the acculturation.

2.4.1. Acculturation Model

The acculturation model has been developed by Schumann (1978) and is based on social and psychological factors which are believed to be important for the acquisition of the target language in natural environments. According to the assertion of the model, acculturation is the major reason of second language acquisition (Schumann, 1978, 1990). Schumann states that the degree of language acquisition is directly proportionate to the degree of the learner's social-psychological distance to the target community and language.

Schumann (1986) claims that acculturation, or in other words, the integration of the target language learner into the target language community does not directly result in successful acquisition of the target language, but rather it is the one of the first factors which results in natural second language acquisition. Schumann (1986) proposes that "acculturation as a remote cause brings the learner into contact with speakers of the target language and verbal interaction with those speakers as a proximate cause brings about the negotiation of appropriate input which then operates as the immediate cause of language acquisition".

Schumann (1978) enlists various factors to describe the concept of social distance between members of social groups speaking different languages:

- *Social dominance*: Dominance of the learner's social group to the target language group will decrease the acquisition of the target language as the social contact between the two groups will not be sufficient for optimal target language acquisition. Equal status will increase the amount of contact between the two groups and thus, acquisition of the target language will be enhanced.
- *Assimilation, preservation, and adaptation*: The desire to be assimilated in the target language society and culture is the best condition for acquisition of the target language. In case of not being assimilated in the target society, adapting to the target language society is the second best condition for the interaction between both groups. The acquisition of the target language is minimal when the learner wishes to remain separated linguistically and culturally from the target language community.
- *Enclosure*: Increased number of social institutions such as schools, religious institutions and such places with the target language group increases the conditions for the acquisition of the target language.

- *Cohesiveness and size*: The smaller and less cohesive society of the learner increases the contact with the target language group and conditions for the acquisition of the target language.
- *Congruence*: Higher degree of similarity between the cultures of the two groups will increase the social contact and the acquisition of the target language.
- *Attitude*: If the learner of the target language has positive attitude towards the target language and the community, the conditions for learning the target language will be more favorable.
- *Intended length of residence*: As the time of the residence in the target community gets longer, the learner of the target language will feel the necessity of learning and using the target language.

According to Schumann (1978), the following factors which have secondary importance affect the psychological distance:

- *Language shock* refers to target language learners' confusion in using the target language.
- *Culture shock* refers to the target language learners' disorientation as a result of the distance to the target culture.

2.5. Study Abroad and Second Language Learning

Arslan (2009: 310) states that communicating with native speakers of the target language and speaking a few words with them motivate the students in a positive way. It is also an important aspect in terms of language acquisition for students to make short terms trips to the country of the target language. One of the most common foreign language acquisition methods today is through living or staying in the territory of the acquired language, either for a short or long term depending on the purpose of the learner.

With the growing number of the students recruited in study abroad programs (OECD, 2011), several studies have examined the impact of the study abroad experience on foreign language learning. Carroll's (1967) and a number of researchers have examined the effect of the study-abroad experience on language learning and the relationship between the language proficiency and the study-abroad experience. According to these researchers' assumption, informal learning in natural environment

with the interaction with the target language leads to higher levels of progress than traditional classroom teaching. Thus, providing opportunities for informal learning, study-abroad is considered to be more valuable.

However, Ellis (1994) reports some studies against this assumption in two ways. According to the findings of these studies, natural settings did not necessarily result in higher proficiency; instead, traditional classroom teaching often resulted in higher proficiency, especially higher grammatical competence. Second, compared to the type of interaction, the amount of interaction with the target language had less influence on language learning in natural environment. Language learning/acquisition in natural environment differed depending on learners' initial levels of proficiency. For example, a study by Freed (1990) on the effects of interaction, which was conducted on 40 undergraduate American students revealed that the lower-level students showed higher and more clear progress and gained higher scores in grammar and reading tests through speaking more with the native speakers of the target language, while it did not have the same effect for advanced-level students. In contrast, no interaction activities such as reading newspapers and watching television had more benefits on the advanced-level learners while it was opposite for the lower-level students.

Freed (1993, 1995, 1998) and Coleman (1997) listed the main findings related to the effects of study-abroad programs on foreign language learning through examining previous studies:

- Accuracy and complexity, measured in terms of frequency of mistakes, sentence length or syntactic complexity in oral production, did not change in any noticeable way.
- Gains in fluency, in terms of the speaking rate (syllables per minute) or phonation/time ratio (percentage of total time spent speaking), were strong.
- Overall oral proficiency scores were higher in learners in study-abroad programs than in learners who did not participate.
- Gains in overall oral proficiency scores were stronger than gains in test scores on grammar, listening, and reading.
- Vocabulary gains, measured by vocabulary tests, were stronger than those of comparable students who did not participate in a study-abroad program.
- The higher the students' initial level of proficiency, the lower the gains in proficiency as a result of studying abroad.

Thus, considering the impact of study abroad experience on the acquisition of the target language as a whole, increased amount of exposure to the target language in natural environment through a study-abroad experience seems to have higher contribution to fluency and naturalness of speech than to accuracy and complexity of speech. Compared with gains in fluency and naturalness of speech, the improvement in grammar, listening, and reading is relatively low. However, Freed (1993, 1995, 1998) and Coleman (1997) noted that the gains change from the learner to learner in the same study-abroad program.

Despite numerous studies conducted abroad on the impact of study abroad, very low number of studies has been conducted in Turkey on the issue. These studies conducted related to foreign language learning in Turkey are limited either to the researches on the teaching of Turkish as a foreign language (Büyükaslan, 2007; Filiz, 2012) or adaptations of the studies conducted by the foreign researchers (Güler, 2005; Tomakin and Yeşilyurt, 2013; Tezcan, 1998).

CHAPTER 3

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study has been conducted with narrative case study design, one of the types of case studies. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007: 253) define case studies as unique examples of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principles. Case study is defined by Yin (2013) as an empirical research method which allows to study on a current case within the real-life frame (content), where the boundaries between the case and the content are not marked explicitly with exact lines, and used in cases where more than one evidence or data sources are available. On the other hand, Merriam (1998) indicates this process between systematic design methods including steps such gathering information, organizing and interpreting the information collected, reaching the research findings. In addition, case studies is a method arising from "how" and "why" questions providing information to researchers by retaining holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 2013). Manion (1994: 123) lists the reasons for the choice of case studies in educational researches as follows:

- The data obtained by the case studies are “very strong in the context of reality” but is difficult to organize.
- Case studies allow generalization of an event or from an event to a category.
- Case studies allow to study an event to the smallest detail and to fully absorb it. It can also reveal careful examination of the social situations, and incoherence and contradictions between viewpoints of the participants. The best case studies can be performed also by the introduction of alternative interpretations.
- Case studies can also be considered as products. Archive documents or descriptive materials, allows users to perform subsequent reinterpretation. These materials may reveal new objectives and new research topics, especially for educational researches beyond the main purpose of the researcher.

- The findings obtained by the case studies are directly ready to be used and interpreted. The studies conducted for an individual, an academic staff or an organization may lead to development of an “educational environment”.
- Case studies have the qualification of “being open to the public” compared to the other research reports in terms of understanding and interpretation. Survey forms and language of the survey forms carry less the feature of “appealing to a particular population (being esoteric)” than other research reports and this quality improves intelligibility by the public. Case studies are based on serving a large number of readers from different socio-economic levels. Therefore, it can be stated that case studies contribute to the “democratization” process.

Yin (1993) refers that case studies can be investigated under 3 basic features including *exploratory case studies* in which hypothesis and questions are aimed to be defined, *descriptive case studies* in which events with their context are aimed to be described, and *explanatory case studies* in which cause-effect relationship is aimed to be explained.

In this context, as it is aimed with this present study to investigate the reasons of the inadequate level of success of an individual with a long period of study abroad experience who have tried to learn English through foreign education (study abroad) but could not achieve proficient level in English, narrative case study design is considered to be more suitable for the design of this research.

3.2. Setting

The applications have been carried out in places with only the participant and the researcher, free from the distractions and with the environmental regulations where the participant could feel comfortable. No video recordings of the participant have been taken and audio recordings have been used within the extent of the participant’s permission. The application process has been carried out in sessions pre-scheduled by the participant and researcher. The applications have not been conducted in the classroom environment; instead, the sessions have been scheduled in environments where the participant and the researcher could establish eye contact, the physical environment (light, temperature, noise) has been kept at optimal level and seating

arrangement free from the authority and hierarchy between the participant and researcher.

3.3. Participants of the Study

The participant of the study is a thirty-four years old female. She works as an instructor of law in a state university for 7 years and doing PhD studies on the same field of study. Before the academic career, she used to work as a lawyer for almost two years. She has very strong communication and interaction skills but this is limited to a small number of people she already knows.

She comes from an upper-middle level family who migrated from a city in the east of Turkey to İstanbul. The social environment of the parents is also limited to a narrow environment. The communication is mostly with the relatives and neighbors. The education level of the parents is low: father is high-school graduate and mother is literate with no regular school education. On the other hand, the rest of the family (brothers and sisters) have occupations with good income and are socially very active people both personally and professionally.

3.4. Data Collection Tools

Information on the data collection tools and features used in the study is presented below.

3.4.1. Informal Discussions

As it is aimed to investigate in-depth the participant of the research and events, and the human behaviors and attitudes in qualitative research studies, using tools that allow natural data collected in natural environment rather than considering standard tools providing numerical data as the strongest data collection tools is thought to provide more effective results (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994). Of these tools, informal discussion is used to determine the characteristics of the participant as well as in selecting the participant for this research and personal characteristics of the participant. Cohen & Crabtree (2006) define informal discussion as interview talks with people in the field informally, without use of a structured interview guide of any kind. Randomly obtained data from these naturally-developed informal discussions has been the starting point of this study and the research has been based on this data. Moreover, striking

situations and discourses in these informal discussions have formed the structure and content of the data collection tools.

After identifying the research subject and the participant with informal discussion, the participant of the research was interviewed, informed about the content of the research and asked to participate in research. After the participant's positive response, she was requested to fill in the voluntary consent form in terms of ethical issues. After these procedures, the research was started.

3.4.2. Retrospective E-mails

Retrospective e-mails as a data collection tool used in the research constitute the basis for the retrospective data. Retrospective data is used to obtain personal experiences of the participant, ideas and opinions about a specific slice of the participant's past including general and specific details on the topics to be explored. Before the retrospective e-mails about the past experiences, the participant was requested to send her autobiography in order to learn about her and her English history before the study abroad experience. Retrospective e-mails were requested under three headings including pre-study abroad period, during study abroad period and finally post-study abroad period. She had difficulties to reflect her experiences and ideas in English language, thus all the e-mails were written in Turkish.

3.4.3. Properties of the Checklist

After the examination of the retrospective e-mails, the data from these retrospective e-mails were categorized under headings as a result of the relevant literature review, and a checklist was created under the titles of "motivation to study abroad, challenges during study abroad, outcomes of the study abroad and reasons for failure" for the detailed analysis of the data obtained from the participant. This checklist constituted the basis for the structure and content of the other data collection tools to be used in research. There are two main reasons for creating the checklist: to enable the selection and analysis of the questions to be asked in in-depth interviews to avoid waste of time, and to check if there are recall errors between the retrospective e-mails and the responses to the interview questions.

The titles and sub-titles included in the checklist under these basic objectives are:

- 1- Pre-Study Abroad
 - a- Reasons, Motives and Expectations
 - b- Decision and Choosing the Location
 - c- Preparations
- 2- During Study Abroad
 - a- Traveling Abroad
 - b- Adaptation and Adjusting to the New Life
 - c- International Culture
 - d- Challenges (Homesickness, new culture, safety, etc.)
- 3- Post Study Abroad
 - a- Adjusting to Life Back Home
 - b- Now What?
 - c- Career Plans
- 4- Gained Skills
 - a- Personal
 - b- Professional
 - c- Language Skills
- 5- Reasons for Success/Failure
 - a- Individual (Personal) Reasons
 - b- External Reasons (Related to the new culture, country and language)

The main objectives to create this checklist are:

- to eliminate the information that will not be used within the context of this study,
- to compare the data obtained from the participant about the study abroad concept with the relevant literature and to determine significant key points encountered in the participant which have not been reported in the literature,
- to provide a basis for the semi-structured interviews for in-depth analysis and to enable the determination of the questions to be asked and the points to be investigated,
- to enable the comparison of the data from the subsequent interviews with the data from the retrospective e-mails, and to detect recall errors.

3.4.4. Semi-Structured Interviews

Interview as a research technique that will provide data at different nature and depth is the controlled and intentional verbal form of communication between the researcher and the participant of the interview (Cohen and Manion, 1994). In this context, after the examination of the retrospective e-mails with the checklist prepared, the issues that are related to the participant identified in the checklist but not included in the e-mails were determined, semi-structured interviews were conducted to receive detailed information on these issues. The questions posed to the participant were in Turkish language for her to feel comfortable to reflect her experiences and ideas and also she expressed that she felt more comfortable to respond in Turkish language. Questions posed in the interviews were prepared in accordance with the main headings and sub-headings identified in the checklist. The following points were considered and paid attention during the interviews:

- After giving the necessary information and obtaining the consent form, the interview was initiated.
- Any information that may define the identity of the participant was not given.
- She was given the maximum opportunity to talk about her experiences, opinions, attitudes in her responses to the questions in the interview, and the interviews were not limited to any time period.
- Interviews were audio-recorded, and important points were recorded with note-taking technique.

After each interview, the audio-recordings were decoded and combined with the notes taken during the interviews, categorized in accordance with the checklist created in the previous phase of the study, and were analyzed by comparing with the data obtained from the retrospective e-mails.

3.4.5. Observation

Observation is a method used to identify in detail a behavior that occurs in any institution or environment. But the observations are not simply used to reveal only uncommon behaviors in normal situations. If a researcher wants to obtain a detailed, comprehensive and extended picture related to a behavior that occurs in any

environment, observation method can be used (Bailey, 1982). To benefit from these features of observations, observation notes by the researcher during the interviews with the participant were also benefited and used benefited. In our case, the participant has been observed during the informal discussions, paying attention to what she mentions about her study abroad experience; during the interviews, paying more attention to what she mentions and her behaviors, her mimics and gestures; and during the teaching hours carried out between the researcher and the participant, paying attention to her language skills. All these observations were evaluated to analyze her attitude towards the target culture and skills in the target language.

3.5. Procedures

There are some basic steps in qualitative methods including defining the problem, designing the research, determining research questions and the participants of the study, data collection tools, determine how to analyze the data obtained, interpret the data and limit in accordance with the scope of the study and finally make inferences and recommendations.

Although the process has not been in the same order, all the key factors were applied in this present research. The study has been initiated by the selection of the study participant through an informal discussion in September, 2015. This enabled the researcher to determine the research problem and research questions at the same time. After the selection, oral and written consent form for the research was obtained from the participant after the necessary meetings with the participant.

It is expected in qualitative research studies to use multiple data collection instruments to be able to, clearly and in details, investigate, describe and explain the facts or events, and to compare the data obtained with these instruments together. These instruments are usually observations, interviews and document analysis. The use of multiple data collection instruments in qualitative studies is important in terms of increasing the reliability and validity of the study. Similarly, interviews, retrospective e-mails, and observation through informal discussions have been used in this study.

With reference to the research problem and questions, in October and November, the participant of the study was asked to provide data on her study abroad through retrospective e-mails. This information was sent to the researcher periodically in a two months' time. These e-mails were analyzed by the researcher and some key

points were noted down to shed a light for the other phases of the study. After comparing this data with the relevant literature, in December, a checklist was prepared including the information in the literature and information, concepts and facts about the participant.

For an in-depth analysis, a set of questions in line with the checklist was prepared for two interviews with the participant. The interviews were semi-structured for the purpose of not losing the control the flow of the interview and also enabling the participant speak as much as possible to obtain in-depth information related to the research problem. The first interview was conducted in January, 2016 and the second interview was conducted in February.

The final step was to compare the data from all the instruments. The data was interpreted, recall problems were determined; the results were defined and limited to the scope of the study, and final results and interpretations from the analysis were made within the scope of the study. Data analysis was completed in In March and April, 2016; and preparation for publication processes was carried out in May, 2016.

3.6. Data Analysis

Data analysis for the present study was carried out assuming that data collection tools used in the study would produce valid data. The data obtained from the informal discussions, retrospective e-mails, semi-structured interviews and observations were assessed in order to determine the factors that led to the limited skills of the participant despite receiving instruction in English abroad. Detailed information about the individual and language background of the participant was obtained in order to learn whether there were any other factors and experiences before study abroad that may lead to the failure during instruction abroad.

Qualitative methods were used for the analysis and interpretation of the data in order to provide interpretive results at the end of the study. Semi-structured interviews were decoded by the researcher and important key elements and interpretations were highlighted. The same procedure was applied for the retrospective e-mails, background information and observation notes by the researcher. Finally, the highlighted interpretations and key points were added to the checklist for the comparison. All the data on the checklist was analyzed together under the titles of “pre-study abroad, during study abroad, post-study abroad, gained skills and reasons for failure/success” and other

relevant sub-titles. The researcher compared and contrasted the data from all the data collection tools, checked for the consistency of the information in case of recall errors, deleted the points with recall errors, determined the key factors with reference to the relevant literature and made comments on the results and discussed the findings and results with the experts in the field.

3.7. Validity and Reliability of the Research

A single method can never be enough to describe and analyze a phenomenon. For a deeper understanding of a phenomenon, multiple methods are used. Data from multiple sources is included in triangulation method for a better understanding (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Denzin (1978) and Patton (1999) notes down four types of triangulation:

- Methods Triangulation
- Triangulation of Sources
- Analyst Triangulation
- Theory/Perspective Triangulation

There are other types of triangulation used in the social sciences, for example, data triangulation (i.e. the combination of two or more methods of analyzing data). One of the main reasons to use data triangulation in this study is to benefit from a variety of data collection tools, and as well as the effective use of data triangulation in maintaining the reliability in qualitative studies as stated by some researchers (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011) that qualitative researchers use triangulation method to check and establish validity in these studies.

To overcome the validity problem of the research, the strategies developed by Moshkovich & Brenner (2000) on the basis of the previous studies (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993; Firestone, 1993; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) have been used. Validity strategies brought together by Moschkovich & Brenner (2000) are presented in Figure 1 and have been used for the validity studies of this research.

Table 1. *Validity strategies developed by Moschkovich & Brenner*

| Dimensions of Quality | Traditional Term | Naturalistic Term | Sample Strategies | Strategies in Current Study |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Truth value | Internal validity | Credibility | Prolonged engagement Persistent observations Triangulation Member checking | Prolonged engagement Persistent observations Triangulation |
| Applicability | External validity Generalizability | Transferability Analytical generalizability | Thick descriptions Purposeful sampling Multisite designs | Thick descriptions Purposeful sampling |
| Consistency | Reliability | Dependability | Critical case selection Audit trail Multiple researchers Participant research assistants Recording Devices | Audit trail Recording Devices |
| Neutrality | Objectivity | Conformability | Audit trail Researcher's role defined | Audit trail Researcher's role defined |

Moshkovich & Brenner (2000) point out that data collection tools and techniques should also be reliable for the reliability of the qualitative researches, and Merriam (1998) points out the importance of being able to replicate the findings. In this context, to improve the reliability of the study, the participant has been observed, observation notes have been taken, various interviews have been recorded and audio recordings have been supported with note-taking. Within this context, the findings obtained have been replicated by a variety of techniques, notes have been taken and note-taking have been supported by audio recordings (techniques used in this present study are shown in blue circles).

CHAPTER 4

4. FINDINGS

The results obtained in this study will be presented by discussing the findings from the retrospective e-mails and semi-structured interviews with the relevant literature. As the data obtained from the retrospective e-mails and interviews are parallel, the discussions on these two sections are made under the same heading. Interviews were conducted in Turkish language for the participant to feel more comfortable during the interview sessions and later before the analysis, inscriptions were translated into English language.

4.1. Retrospective E-mails and Interviews

4.1.1. Pre-Study Abroad

4.1.1.1. Decision, Goals, Motives and Expectations

There are several motivations for students to study abroad. According to studies, students have several reasons from professional reasons to cultural and to personal reasons including a job or career abroad (Emanoil, 1999), work experience in an international university that will lead to an international career (Malliah, 2001), to learn a foreign language, to experience living in a foreign country, to study at another university, to make international friends, to find excitement and enjoyment (Schroth & McCormack, 2000), and to experience at least one semester before a full-time job in the home country. In line with the above literature, following excerpts from the participant illustrate this issue:

- *After graduating from the faculty, I as a student with no interest in school and education decided to travel abroad to study master's degree. It was actually not my decision but my parents' decision to study abroad so they supported this decision and I went to England in September 2003. (retrospective e-mails)*

As can be understood from the quotes above, the participant of the study decides to study master's degree and plans to travel abroad for this purpose. Despite this, the participant's considering herself as an unsuccessful student builds negative self-esteem. As she states in her quotes, the reasons why she considers herself unsuccessful is due to her failure in placement exams in English and her difficulty in basic skills especially

speaking, listening and writing. Motivation and setting objectives seem to be quiet decisive factors for study abroad in previous relevant studies on the issue (Wiers-Jenssen, 2003; Kitsantas, 2004; Iso-Ahola, 1980; Snepenger, King, Marshal & Uysal, 2006; Uysal & Yoon, 2005). One concern sometimes raised is that a focus on these goals can result in high levels of pressure and stress (Bankston & Zhou, 2002). They can also result in shame and depression when desired success is not achieved. Such extrinsic motivation is not always sufficient to sustain students' engagement with the academic content of the subjects they are studying (Windle, 2008). Our subject faces similar experiences as she repeatedly mentions in that her parents covered all the expenses and she would manage this by being successful in her studies. Also, she mentions how they decided for the destination country:

- *After deciding to study master's degree abroad, I applied to a consulting agency. The advices of the official in the agency made us decide for England. So, there is no special reason for studying abroad in England. (interviews)*

In this regard, setting proper and achievable goals has largely been underestimated in research on international students; however studies conducted on the school children suggest that it is critical to develop an understanding of these elements. Previous research (Bankston & Zhou, 2002; Portes & MacLeod, 1996; Windle, 2008) has shown, as in our case, that for some groups of students, making their parents happy and bringing pride to the family within their community are important motivators. In light of the data obtained and the related literature, expectations regarding the pre-study abroad period can be listed as linguistic development, cultural development and career and personal development (Teichler & Steube, 1991; Nash, 1976).

4.1.1.2. Preparations

Following information has been obtained regarding the preparations (researching for the destination country and city, financial preparations, documents, etc.) carried out by the participant of the present study:

- *Before leaving, I did not do any preparations. I only informed the agency about my demand related to the host family and that I did not wish to study in London. Because I was thinking that I could be more successful if I stayed in a smaller place. I did not do any preparations or research about the city, its climate as*

well as the people, their lifestyles or culture. (interviews)

- *I do not know but the only thing I learnt was the currency and that was the night before the departure. (informal discussions)*

Based on this information, it appears that she did not have an effective and active preparation period. The preparations being organized by an agency but not the participant herself shows that she was far from an intrinsic motivation in this process. Preparation of students going abroad affects factors such as success, adaptability and socializing of the students. Regarding this matter, the principles adapt well to the specific goal of getting study abroad students involved in, and learning about their city surroundings. Following are some of the quotations by the participant of the present study that were stated on this issue:

- *When I went to the agency organizing my trip to England, they informed me that I was going to stay with a host family and wanted to know if I had any requests. I did not have any because I did not know what to request. What could I request about a culture and language I did not know? The lady in the agency informed me about the city of Eastbourne where I was going to live. (interviews)*

Both common-sensible and theoretically well-grounded, National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE) principles ask instructors, before taking their students out of their classrooms into the on-site instruction, to consider the following: *Intention; preparedness and planning; authenticity; reflection; orientation and training; monitoring and continuous improvement; assessment and evaluation; and acknowledgment* (NSEE, 2010).

The findings reveal the necessity of doing the preparations related to the language and knowing the destination country and its culture in the preparation stage. The participant's considering study abroad as an obligation lead to improper and unhealthy operation of the preparations which led to difficulties in adaptation period and integrating to the target environment.

4.1.2. During Study Abroad

4.1.2.1. Adaptation and Adjusting to the New Life

- *When I got to Eastbourne, it took me hours to find the address of the host family. When I arrived home, Marry, the landlady, tried to talk to me but I was only looking at her face with a silly smile on my face and fear in my eyes. Marry showed me my room. The next day, I woke up at school time, got ready and went to school with the host family. It drew my attention not to see many people on the streets. The first day was a placement test at school. A few hours later, I was sent to my level class. I stayed one semester in Eastbourne. I had very good relations with Marry and her daughter. I was spending almost all my time in the library. I guess it was one month after I arrived there when Marry offered me something thin and green like a paper she was eating while watching television. As usual, I did not understand what she was talking, got what she offered and started to eat. The taste was very bad. Later, I learned that it was dried seaweed. (interviews and retrospective emails)*

Analyzing the participant's quotes above, finding the host family's home and the first contact and adapting later were not so easy. She also states that she had a bad shopping experience because of language problems and adaptation process to her new life was a problematic state. Thus, she wanted to get away from the city he lived in.

- *One day, I was shopping in a grocery. After shopping, I approached to the cashier and handed my credit card for payment but the cashier lady told something looking weird at me. I did not understand any single word again. The cashier lady got annoyed and called the security. I was so scared that I could not understand what was going on. Security and cashier were asking something nonstop but I could not understand any single word. I called Marry and handed the phone to the cashier lady. Marry came and told me I had to have my signature at the backside of the credit card, so that I had to go home to pick up my passport. Of course, this took me almost about 20 minutes to understand it. When I brought my passport, they sent me away without even apologizing. After six months in Eastbourne, I decided to move to London. I guess I was bored of living in a small place. (interviews)*

In another quote, she mentions:

- *There were many people from different cultures in elementary class but I did not get in touch with anyone the first two months. I was spending most of my time in the library reading “level” books. After a while, I started to enjoy reading English books a lot. I was trying my best not to get in touch with the host family, and I was not talking anything except “good morning, good day”. I wanted to speak English too much but somehow I could not dare. (interviews)*

Highlighting communication problems experienced in the classroom, she indicated that she broke all the contact with the host family as a reflection of these negative experiences.

- *No, I went there without searching and wondering for anything. I was a bit like headlong. I went to a small town there. The average age was 60 and over. I was staying with a host family so I clung so tightly to English. (interviews)*
- *Let me explain: There was only one Turkish-speaking student at school and I did not have too much contact with her. I was completely on my own. I did not have too many peers and friends. (interviews)*
- *I was staying at school from the morning to the afternoon. I think I had 3-4 hours at school. The school I was going afterwards had a very nice library. I was spending most of my time in the library because I did not have too much contact with the host family. I was not so much involved in their things so they liked me. (interviews)*

Adaptation and failure in the development of the language skills can be considered as the underlying factors under the adversities of the participant. Another quote is related to the culturally handicapped eating habits, and eating pork which is religiously forbidden was related to this issue. Her anger on this is still very hot.

- *The bizarre point was that I was tolerating even the things I did not like as they were foreigners. There was a strange anxiety in me. For example, they offered me pork without even asking and I tasted it as I did not know what it was. As they say “Forty people said at once”, I recognized it was pork that way and tried to explain why I could not eat that. I could show enormous reaction if it was now, but those times I was anxious. As I said, all my time was between*

school, library and home. I can never get familiar with foreign names.
(interviews)

In respect with this subject, study abroad contains two items directly related to intercultural awareness; the first item is if the students are able to understand and adapt to the target cultures, and the second item is comparing the home culture with the target culture increases the understanding of the home culture.

4.1.2.2. International Culture

Analyzing her experiences, it can be seen that the problems arising from cultural differences cannot be overcome even over a certain period of time. Not being able to adapt to the new lifestyle away from her native culture, inconsistency between the target culture and the elements of her native culture such as giving presents and guesting or not having these elements in the target culture detracted her from the target culture. Regarding this matter, researchers including Guns, Richardson and Watt (2012) have increasingly been investigating how these international students fare once they are in foreign country as the pressures of tertiary study are compounded by the need to adjust to a foreign culture. On this issue, she informs about her negative experiences with the following quotes:

- *One day, the phone in the law office rang and unfortunately I was the one closest to the phone. The one on the other side of the phone was talking in English and I replied “What” because I could not understand what he was telling. The lawyer, then, explained me it was so rough to speak this way and I was supposed to reply “Excuse me”. I was so embarrassed.* (informal discussion)
- *In the language course, I proceeded up to the “Advanced” level but I still could not express myself because the most difficult aspect of the language for me was phrases: If someone used phrases to describe an event, I could not understand what s/he meant to say. One day, one of my British friends asked me why I was using the word “like” that much.* (retrospective e-mails)
- *Aside from all these, I could never get along with the British culture. I could not feel upset for what they were upset for, and could not laugh at what they laughed at. In other words, I somehow could not adapt to the social life. One*

day, I bought a birthday gift for a friend from office. She thanked me for the gift but did not open the package. I was surprised if she ever did not want to know what was inside. She could at least open and tell her idea as a matter of courtesy. The next day, she told me how much she liked the gift. I was confused because she could open the package and tell her idea when I gave her. (interviews)

- *Another day, someone approached me and asked for a cigarette when I was sitting in the park. I gave him a cigarette. He tried to hand me some money. I asked him wondering why he was trying to do: “What is this for?” “For the cigarette” he replied. I replied that it was not necessary, but he was surprised upon my behavior. (interviews)*
- *In Eastbourne, one of my classmates invited us for dinner and we accepted. She told us that we had to go to the grocery before going home. She bought three types of cheese and something to drink. I thought she was probably doing shopping for breakfast. When we got home, she served us those cheese and drinks. Of course, I was very surprised. I thought they were snacks. But nothing was served later. When you are foreign to the culture and cannot adapt to it, you do not have the enthusiasm to learn the language. No matter how many years you stay there, you still feel foreign and I think this leads to one tying to his/her native culture. At least it was so with me. (interviews)*

4.1.2.3. Challenges (Homesickness, New Culture, Safety, etc.)

She mentions the type and amount of clothes she got with here and how inappropriate for the current conditions of the destination country they were:

- *Well, there is a phrase saying about the language “I know how to tell my problems”, I could not even explain my problems in English and this was like a dark cloud on my excitement. This uncertainty was going to discourage me from my intention but I could not tell my parents who were more excited than me. Few weeks before departure, the preparations increased. The country I was planning to go seemed like not to be the country where the sun does not set but like a country where there was no clothes. I took even my summer clothes although I was going in autumn. (interviews)*

In one of her experiences, she got thirsty in the aircraft but she was served and had to drink mineral water because she did not know the meaning of “still” which is another usage for “water” in the target language. In another quote, she complains how much she suffered from not being able to get into a conversation with the people she went out together for dinner.

As can be understood from her quotes, she experienced difficulties in many cases abroad. Above stated experiences related to the challenges during study abroad indicate negative impact of the challenges on the adaptation, motivation and language development skills (Ylönen, 1994; Chalmers and Volet, 1997; Ramburuth and Mason, 2000; Schumann, 1978)

It can be understood from her quotes that effective factors in her failure in foreign language learning are culture shock, language difficulty, loss of motivation, being reminded of her ethnicity and cultural barriers. As expressed in the quotes, the participant of the study was affected negatively by above-mentioned factors. About the demotivation and shift to her native language, she stated:

- *Meanwhile, I began to go to Kurdish language courses, and work as a consultant on refugee law in a human rights foundation. Every week, I was going to the courses and my enthusiasm for learning English was converting to enthusiasm for learning my mother tongue. Contrary to my shyness in English courses, I was trying to speak Kurdish tactlessly in Kurdish language courses. I did not have any contact with the Americans, Irish and British at the foundation. Although we were having lunch together, their conversations except for the work sounded strange to me. (retrospective e-mails)*

4.1.3. Post Study Abroad

4.1.3.1. Adjusting to Life Back Home

- *After returning back from England, approximately for two years, I read the books I had brought from England and bought from the bookshops. As much as I could, I continued to watch East Enders, a daytime series I was watching when I was in England. After a while, I stopped reading books, and did not watch the series again. The interesting point is that I never spoke English. I was refraining from speaking and replying in Turkish the questions in English. The reason of this, as I recognized later, was people’s high expectations on speaking fluently*

but I did not believe I could speak fluent English; I even could not speak any. To hide this, I preferred to speak in Turkish. Any time I had an English book, I was leaving it aside five minutes later. This was annoying and disappointing me. But with every passing time, I was detaching from the language. I was not taking any foreign language proficiency tests because I was afraid of having low grades. I knew that I would have to break down this chain one day but I was not able to tidy myself up. (interviews)

Her quotes suggest that everyone around her had high expectations on speaking fluent English and she was experiencing her inability under such high expectations. She stopped reading English books and watching English series as well on her return from England, and after a while, she completely broke from the English language (Kim, 1997; Schumann, 1978; Smalley, 1963).

4.1.3.2. Now What?

- *After return, I started to think of a job. I did not continue to study English but only kept reading books in English. I did not read any Turkish books for about two years. I always give the same example; I have never read Pamuk, I rejected reading in Turkish, because my only link with the foreign language was through reading. There was no place and occasion to speak English and no way to continue practicing in English. Two years later, I stopped reading as well. (retrospective e-mails)*

After returning back from England, she left the habit of reading, a way of practicing the foreign language. As there was no environment to practice the language, she could not speak and closed all the channels related to the language. Although it was not a natural environment with the elements of the target language, she moved off the visual elements and written texts which allows to practice the language.

4.1.3.3. Career Plans

- *To achieve these goals and to take steps on this path was very enjoyable at the beginning. I believe I achieved my goals to some extent and later I broke loose of my goals. The first question in my mind when I get back was “what will*

happen now?” Everybody around were asking the same question. This was a big stress and challenge for me. When I look back now, I believe I made the right decision about the job I have now. Of course, dissatisfaction is still a question for some people around. (interviews)

Despite the contradiction between the career plans and the current situation, the participant of the study can be considered to be satisfied in terms of her current professional position. Despite this, dissatisfaction of her family is still a question.

4.1.4. Gained Skills

The literature that evaluates the impact of study abroad on students reveals that participants with a study abroad experience acquire global-mindedness, grow intellectually, and develop personally (Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Carlson et al., 1991; Thomlison, 1991; Cash, 1993; King & Young, 1994; McCabe, 1994; Drews & Meyer, 1996; Hutchins, 1996; Waldbaum, 1996; Bates, 1997; Ybarra, 1997; Zhai, 2000).

There is also evidence related to gains and improvements in the second language acquisition - especially in listening and comprehension skills - for students who study abroad (Parr, 1988; Austin, 1989; Ginsberg, 1992; Ginsberg et al., 1992; Brecht et al., 1993; Brecht & Robinson, 1993; Kline, 1993, 1998; Iino, 1996; Rivers, 1998, Jones & Bond, 2000). With reference to the literature, the changes and gains in the participant are categorized under three headings including the changes in personal, professional and language skills.

4.1.4.1. Personal Skills

The participant of the study states that study abroad experience changed and contributed her a lot in terms of acquiring global-mindedness, growing intellectually, and developing personally. She mentioned contributions of study abroad experience on her personal skills in the following quotes:

- *Of the positive contributions of study abroad experience on my personal growing and development, to be disciplined comes first. Before study abroad, similar to almost all people in my country, I was leading a very tolerant life but living in a country where everything is in an order, I became intolerant to the irregularities not only in my personal life but also to those in social life. Second,*

study abroad experience made me believe that I can now live anywhere and I learned to stand on my own feet. When I first went there, I was not at all open to new things, new people and especially to new food. After returning back, I can frankly say that living abroad taught me to be more open, receptive and respectful to new thing, cultures and people. (interviews)

4.1.4.2. Professional Skills

She links language acquisition with her career development. For the participant of the present study, improvement in the target language made her gain her position in the university.

- *In professional sense, I have learned a foreign language. This is considered as the most important factor in professional terms. Moreover, I believe living and studying abroad contributed a lot in terms of working and living with people of all nationalities. (interviews)*

4.1.4.3. Language Skills

Although she is not completely satisfied with the level of English she acquired after a long-term stay and study abroad experience, in parallel to the literature, she mentions the development on her language skills.

- *To assess living abroad in terms of language development, I can primarily say that I am able to speak in a foreign language and can read and write much more comfortable than before. I was never very good with grammar, but my reading skills were always better than the other language skills. (interviews)*

4.1.5. Reasons for Success/Failure

To understand success and failure, internal and external factors have been studied in the interviews with the participant. Findings in this chapter will be presented in two headings: Individual factors under the first heading and external factors under the next heading.

4.1.5.1. Internal (Personal) Reasons

- *Yes, I think going unprepared had a great influence in my failure. (interviews)*

- *To achieve the goals and to take step on this path was very enjoyable at the beginning. I believe I achieved my goals to some extent and later I broke loose of my goals. (interviews)*

The participant of the present study considers herself unsuccessful in general terms and collects this failure under two headings. The first one is the preparation period and the second is the sense of failure generated from not being able to reach her goals. She was unable to achieve her goals at the beginning and later she broke up of her goals even after she started to achieve her goals. In this context, it can be stated that factors such as preparation, self-efficacy and motivation affect success in international educational activities. In this respect, according to Goldoni (2015), the students studying abroad may not always be ready and find opportunities to increase their learning opportunities at the target environment, to effectively interact with locals, to develop cultural awareness, and to respond to challenging situations occurring abroad. He recommends that students should be exposed to such activities to prepare them for the study abroad experience which will increase students' awareness and exercises on their own identity. In addition, Allen & Dupuy (2012) states that educators and students have to be trained on how to prepare and maximize learners' study abroad outcomes and to engage into the target language community. In this context, in line with the findings and related literature, the reasons for her failure can be listed as:

- to consider English and study abroad as a necessity,
- to travel without any background in English,
- not to know enough about the destination country and its culture,
- failure to achieve the goals at the desired level and time, thus to wander from the goals.

4.1.5.2. External Reasons (Related to the New Culture, Country and Language)

In this section, the participant quotes the following information about the environmental factors affecting her failure.

- *I went to a small town there. The average age was 60 and over. I was staying with a host family so I clung so tightly to developing my English skills. They asked me to describe a picture and write a short essay in the placement test. I was unable to write anything. I started to lose my interest to English, which I had been tightly clung to. (retrospective e-mails)*

She also quotes that:

- *I was using the word “like” very often and people were continuously correcting this mistake. I think I was talking like a teenager. The frequency of corrections was demotivating me.” (interviews)*
- *One day, before the master’s study, the teacher in the language school took us to the park. He asked us what we were planning to do after the language course. I told him I wanted to study master’s career. He looked at me with meaningless eyes and told me I was mispronouncing the word “master” and showed me how to pronounce the word. For me who had serious problems with pronunciation, it caused to turn in on myself and even decide to stop the course. (retrospective e-mails)*

As can be seen in the quotes above, one of the biggest problems she faced was continuous feedback received after the incorrect use of the words or the wrong sentences. This had a negative impact on her in terms of motivation and self-confidence. Regarding this issue, Goldoni (2015) explains with such an example the negative effects on the international students as a result of receiving critics and corrections:

- *Her Spanish instructor’s comments and approach were hurtful, a style she was unused to in the US where professors tend to be more nurturing and avoid overt criticism. This situation made Theresa feel uncomfortable and aggravated on her already serious disengagement from academic learning.*

In addition to this, as a result of another research study, Coleman (1998) states that positive attitudes to speaking, and actual use of the target language statistical improved speaking skills in the target language. The researchers compared enhanced skills with personality factors, and found introverts made greater progress in listening skills, extroverts in sociocultural knowledge, and the open-minded, less anxious and person-oriented in productive skills. In line with the findings obtained, it can be stated that such external factors mentioned below generally had a negative impact on her failure:

- receiving too many feedback and corrections,
- the length of stay,
- interest to the mother tongue,
- pressure from the family,

- demographic structure and size of the destination city.

The following quotes support the impact of these external factors on the efficiency of study abroad. The participant of the study links her failure especially with the length of stay, interest to the mother tongue and pressure from the family which made her consider studying an obligation.

- *Yes, I am very clear on this issue; if I stayed shorter, I believe I would be more successful.* (interviews)
- *In fact, my interaction with the Kurdish language started after breaking from English. I do not know but I was always closer to my native language.* (interviews)
- *To travel to a foreign country and to set a new life there is extremely tempting for someone who just graduated from the university but actually to study master's degree abroad was not my idea. I could study master's degree in any university in Turkey but because the financial situation of my parents was very good and my father dedicated himself to education, my parents suggested to study abroad. I was undecided. On one hand, I wanted to go but on the other hand, I did not want to go because I was just graduated from the faculty and because of the fear of failure I had experienced in the preparatory class of the university education. Of course, my confusion such as whether I would succeed or fail and to integrate or not to the culture of the destination country was causing to lose my desire to go.* (interviews)
- *Before going abroad, English was a necessity for me to pass the classes in secondary and high school and also to be able to start faculty education at the university. As I said at the beginning, I have never been a successful language student. The first months of the study abroad, I started to learn English with joy but then I started to lose my interest and by time I completely broke of the language. In fact, that was also a necessity for me. My aim to travel abroad was to study master's degree and my parents were financing my expenses there. I did not receive any scholarship from any organization. I had to pass an exam to receive education in the destination country but with this exam, learning English became a necessity for me again.* (retrospective e-mails)

As can be understood from the findings of the study, the participant of the study feels unsuccessful in terms of English language development in spite of her educational activities abroad and the researcher has identified this case stated in the interviews. Although in many of the studies on study abroad (Pellegrino, 1996; Lennon, 1989; Meara, 1994; Bicknese, 1974; Laubscher, 1994; Sutton and Rubin, 2004; Lewis and Niesenaum, 2005; Ingraham and Peterson, 2004), positive contribution of the target culture and location on learning the target language have been emphasized, this positive contribution have not been observed in the participant of the present study, even as a result of the negative role of the cultural differences causing failure, factors such as motivation and self-efficacy have observed to have decreased. As a result of common effect of these variables, in spite of a staying abroad for longer years, she had experienced an unsuccessful language learning process. On the other hand, she ironically learned the Kurdish language in a Kurdish language course in England with the materials including the motifs and elements representing her cultural identity and values. The participant whose English was slightly better than her Kurdish before study abroad experience failed to learn English fluently even she was in England, but managed to learn Kurdish fluently in an environment where Kurdish was not spoken. In this context, it can be argued that in language teaching, the materials including motifs of the target culture but not the native culture and the environment of the target culture do not have a very “strong” impact factor in learning the target language. As can be seen in the following quotes, the participant of the study thinks that she could show greater improvement and get more effective results in English and had higher level of motivation and learning potential through classes, books and materials including elements of her local culture.

- *I can never get familiar with the foreign names. When I read a book, a few pages later I forget who is who. The names in the course materials, cities or the events were so far from me that I got lost sometimes in the materials including too many names or I could not picture the cities when they were describing a place. When they were describing the places I am familiar with, I could picture something in front of my eyes, I do not think I will like someone to describe me somewhere like Tokyo in English as I will not be able to picture anything about there. I even could not smile at the funny things. (interviews)*

- *It makes me very happy to talk in my native language, and to express myself with the words of that language. The more I lost my interest for English, the more I had stronger interest for Kurdish. I think Kurdish is like a safe haven for me. (interviews)*
- *I could never learn idioms. I was supposed to learn some of the idioms and phrases after staying there for quite a long time. On the contrary, I believe I would be more successful without idioms and phrases but would do much better and read more the materials describing something from “me”. (interviews)*
- *It would be much easier to learn a foreign language with something I already know and dream of. You cannot dream of Tokyo if you have not been there before. You will not have the full picture of Tokyo when you read something about there in English. If I read something about my city, I will be able to dream of it; moreover it will be more entertaining for me. I believe I will learn the vocabulary easier. (interviews)*

In this context, as claimed and implemented in the language learning process, involving the cultural aspects of the target language, geographical elements (mountains, rivers, etc.) or the structures in the cities (buildings, bridges, etc.) or the names used in the target destination may not always provide positive impact on the expected learning outcomes. On the other hand, including above-mentioned local elements into the materials used in language learning process is believed to increase the power and impact of learning. Therefore, integration of the motifs and elements from the students' local culture instead of cultural or geographical elements of the target language may lead to higher achievement in foreign language learning. Moreover, language-learning environment, which also contributes positively in language learning process (location, country of the target language), may be concluded not to be a necessary or the most influential element for this process.

CHAPTER 5

5. DISCUSSION

Besides only grammar structure, vocabulary or theoretical understanding, social interaction and cultural factors are known to be effective in language learning process. It would not be a proper finding to assess the participant's failure to reach the desired level in the target language skills within only the theoretical structure or the learning process of the target language. At this point, culture and language have an inseparable complex relationship. Mondy (2007) states that an individual in his/her attempt to learn the target language is expected to not only deal with the grammatical structure of the language, but also with the social and psychological elements.

This state has been conceptualized by Schumann's "Theory of Acculturation" (1986). According to Schumann (1986), there are two kinds of acculturation. One type causes integration to the target society, and the learner is psychologically open to accept the values of the target culture more readily, and in the other type, the learner considers the target language community as the desired way of lifestyle and values. Schumann (1986), in his acculturation hypothesis, stresses on two main factors to describe the differences language learners approach and acquire language. The first is *social factors*, and the second is *psychological factors*. Social variables attempt to explain the degree of social distance to the target language, while the psychological variables are related to how the learner responses to the different situations in language learning.

According to Schumann and other theorists, *social distance* is how much a learner is in relation to the target language group, and the distance to that target language community (Schumann, 1986; Damen, 1987; Ushioda, 1993; Ellis, 1994; Brown, 2007).

Considering the data obtained from the participant of the study as a whole, the distance between the target culture and the Turkish culture led to the development of a negative attitude towards the target language. In this context, language learning process of the participant of the present study contradicts with Schumann's (1976) idea that the "social" is the differences between the community of the learner and the target language. In this view, the "acculturation" of the second language group is facilitated depending on the "social distance" between the two social groups, which initiates language learning.

Major differences between Turkish and English cultures and lifestyles, and these differences having a negative impact on the acculturation process of the participant of the study as defined in Schumann's theory (1978) lead to "separation" process from the target culture and failure in foreign language development. In this regard, as stated in studies supporting this state (Berry, 1997; Mondy, 2007; Sam and Berry, 2010; Schwarts et al., 2010; Barjesteh and Vaseghi, 2012), members of a social group tend to have value systems and cultural heritage that are closely defined by their particular group. When they leave their own community and enter a new community with a new set of values, they face a situation known as culture shock. This is when two communities do not have similar sets of values. This determines an individual's attempt to try to assimilate or accommodate into the target language group. If an individual doesn't question the values of his/her own culture, and does not leave some of these cultural values, they will resist against the cultural values of the target community, and return to their own culture (Damen, 1987). They may feel that some of the value systems in the target culture are completely opposite to their own. The total effect of these several and numerous differences may discourage them from adopting a way of thinking that will direct their language acquisition.

The participant of our study states that she does not have intrinsic motivation and she considers her achievement in English only as the success in English proficiency tests. Moreover, she considers English as a necessity rather than a means of communication, and her external motivation for learning English is originated from the pressure from her family. These main factors hinder her from the target language and its community.

Besides these, staying and living with an elderly family has restricted her communication skills due to the generation difference. In the transition process to a different culture from her own culture, with the effect of culture shock, she isolated herself from the target community and culture and began to live an isolated life. These negative experiences are directly proportionate to the findings of Gardner (1985) arguing that self-confidence is a result of positive experiences with the target language, and Gardner and Lambert's (1972) assuming that the learner's motivation is determined by the attitudes towards the target language community.

Related to this process experienced by the participant at the beginning of studying abroad, Schumann (1976) argues that the learner level of motivation is

determined by the attitudes towards the target language community, and that levels of anxiety determine how much comprehensible input becomes cognitive intake. On the other hand, the social generally refers to the differences between the learner's and target groups. Harmony and closeness between both groups decreases the social distance between these group, which facilitates the acculturation into the target language group and enhances language learning. Little or no acculturation takes place in case of great social distance between the groups, and as a result, the second language learners become less proficient in speaking the target language, as is in our case.

Negative attitude and perspective against the target language before arriving England, negative feedback and corrections from the native speakers and the problems and negative experiences in the daily life created a bias against the target language and thus led to a weakening of the sense of confidence. Related to this case, Krashen considers self-confidence as an intrinsic characteristic of the language learner while Gardner argues that self-confidence is a result of positive experiences with the target language: "self-confidence develops as a result of positive experiences in the context of the second language and serves to motivate individuals to learn the second language" (Gardner, 1985).

This cultural isolation experienced by the participant has caused a loss in the perception of status, role and identity. These negative experiences have led her to contact with the community from the culture she felt closer. In this context, the participant of the present study stated that she has gained her professional identity with the contact with the group she felt close. She began to live her identity as a lawyer with this culturally close community and started to use knowledge and skills as a lawyer to help these immigrants. With this new situation, she also made progress in the target language skills to meet the needs of this immigrant community. Interestingly, despite never speaking previously, her native language Kurdish has developed after the interaction with this group in England, and she started to use it more effectively. Simultaneously, her English skills have made progress within this community with her efforts to help them.

In parallel with this data, Bourdieu (1977) notes that there is a strong relationship between the value given to the speech, the speaker and the social relationships. Every time we speak, we are negotiating and renegotiating our sense of self in relation to the larger social world, and reorganizing that relationship across time

and space. Our gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientations, among other characteristics, are all implicated in this negotiation of identity.

The participant of our study established a strong bond and relation with the group close to her culture. The aim to help this group increased her level of motivation for learning the target language and integrating into the target community; and with this increased level of motivation, a more positive progress has been observed in her English skills. This case and change in the participant of the present study has been discussed in a similar study by Bonny Norton (2013). Norton (2013) discusses this similar situation through Saliha, one of the participants in her study. She states that there is no consensus between the theorists in the field of second language acquisition on why learners like Saliha have changing attitudes; why sometimes there may be social distance between learners and the target language community, but sometimes minimal or no social distance; why learners can sometimes speak and at other times remain silent. She also puts forward the idea that current theory studying the relationship between the language learner and the social world is questionable. Scovel (1978) has found that research on foreign language anxiety has several uncertainties, and the research conducted so far is far from convincing Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) on the relationship between “personality variables” and language achievement.

Moreover, the findings in another study by Norton (1995) explain the progress in target language skills of our participant. In this study, Norton (1995) discusses this similar situation through Eva, another participant in her study. She states that she has drawn on Eva’s data to argue that language learning is a complex social practice that must be understood in relation to inequitable structures of power in the social world. According to her, it should not be taken for granted that those who speak regard those who listen as worthy to listen, and that those who listen regard those who speak as worthy to speak. These findings also explain the progress in target language skills of the participant in our study.

In addition to these, the relationship between the language learner and the social environment has been argued in the other studies. Norton (1994) states that second language acquisition theorists have lacked creating a concept related to the relationship between the learner and the social environment which is due to the lack of a comprehensive theory of identity that integrates the language learner with the language learning context. Furthermore, they have not questioned how relations of power in the

social world impact on social interaction between second language learners and target language speakers. Many theorists such as Ellis (1985), Krashen (1981), Schumann (1978) and Stern (1983) recognized that language learners do not live in idealized, homogeneous communities but in complex, heterogeneous ones, such heterogeneity has generally been framed uncritically. According to the premises of the theories of the good language learner that language learners can choose under what conditions they will interact with members of the target language community and that the language learner's motivation determines the access to the target language community. Thus Gardner and MacIntyre (1992), for example, argue that "the major characteristic of the informal context is that it is voluntary. Individuals can either participate or not in informal acquisition contexts". Second language theorists have not adequately explored how inequitable relations of power limit the language learners in terms of practicing the target language outside the classroom. In addition, many theorists have classified the learners under some attitudes such as being motivated or unmotivated, introverted or extroverted, inhibited or uninhibited, without considering that such factors may change frequently in a single individual over time and space according to the relations of power in society.

As the participant of our study interacted with individuals close to her culture, the idea to be able to help them led to the desire to improve her target language skills. Progress in skills of both languages accelerated integration process to both societies and led to the development of a sense of role in both societies.

Norton (1995) describes the role of language as "constitutive of and constituted by a language learner's social identity". An individual's sense of self under different circumstances in time, and the skills in language create opportunities for the learner to gain access to or be denied access to powerful social networks where the learner will gain the opportunity to speak (Heller, 1987). Thus, language is not alone the neutral medium of communication, but is understood with reference to its social meaning.

The distance to the target culture and language had a negative impact on the participant's learning process. Being demotivated and inflexible which contrasts with Bonny Norton's (1995) "good language learner" concept began to be observed in our participant. The distance to the target culture and language changed after being integrated into the society she felt close, and with the role she provided for herself in this community, she started to use the target language more often to be able to meet the

needs of this new community, thus she made progress in a positive direction in terms of using the target language skills. This development process has been explained by Norton (1994) that language learning is a social practice that is intimately connected to social relations of power between speakers. The data in the same study suggests that a language learner's motivation to speak is mediated by investments that may conflict with the desire to speak - investments that are intimately connected to the ongoing production of the learner's social identity.

In this context, with the concept of "social investment" by Bonny Norton (1995) in the participant of the present study, sense of responsibility increased her flexibility and motivation and she started to be in a process appropriate to the definition of "a good language learner". The example of Saliha in Bonny Norton's study (2013) is similar to the case of our participant.

In theories of second language acquisition focusing on individual differences, learners like Saliha in Norton's study (2013) and the participant in our study are primarily responsible for their development in target language. The "good language learner" is one who tries to find out opportunities to speak and learn the target language, is highly motivated, pays attention to details, and has low levels of anxiety. If Saliha made little progress in learning the second language, she might be considered unmotivated and inflexible (Norton, 2013)

However, starting master's degree education led to lower amount of time spent with the community she felt close and thus, decreased the level of communication and interaction. This situation led to a new period of isolation. With this isolated life, she fell apart from communication which is one of the key points of the concept of acculturation and isolation led to the loss of identity. As a natural consequence of all this negative process, the participant of the present study got back to where she started again and became demotivated and inflexible against the target language and community.

This finding is in line with Norton's findings (1994) that motivation, extroversion, and self-confidence are not unchanging characteristic properties, but must be linked with social relations of power that create the possibilities for language learners to speak. In this context, the data obtained from Norton's study (1994) supports the results from this present study.

All these processes discussed above have negatively affected the language learning process of the participant of the present study; thus, she failed to perform at the desired level of success both during the long years of staying abroad in the country of the target language and after returning back to Turkey. In the light of the results obtained from the research, it can be suggested that the effort to be integrated into the target culture for language learning may lead to experience negative situations such as assimilation, culture shock and isolation, whereas the experiences and environment related to the learner's own cultural elements play an important role in language learning. To sum up, rather than experiences and culture/materials of the target language, local and familiar culture/materials and experiences are thought to be more effective in learning a foreign language. Instead of isolation, loss of identity, lack of foreknowledge and/or learning experiences without pragmatic values in the target culture, to have learning experiences with elements of the own local culture is thought to affect the success and learning process of the target language more positively.

CHAPTER 6

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Results of the Research

In this chapter the results of the research are presented under the titles “language learning and teaching, teaching materials, the effect of culture, and study abroad”. According to the data obtained from the study and the relevant literature, it was concluded that factors such as motivation, readiness and self-efficacy are important factors in language learning process. On the other hand, language learning and development processes, continuous and negative feedback, corrections and critics make a negative impact on the self-confidence of the students which causes the failure to interact in the target language.

Besides internal key factors, one of the most significant characteristics of a language is to be able to be used as a tool for interaction. The use of a language for exposure only will not lead to the desired success. Thus, language learning and teaching should be based on the phenomenon of mutual interaction.

Culture is a significant factor and the process of learning any languages must include cultural motifs and elements of the learner’s culture for the aim of self-expression and interaction. Either explicit or implicit, intercultural dialogue is an essential component of intercultural activities. Intercultural studies enhance a better understanding of one’s own culture and its several patterns. Thus, authenticity of the materials and including cultural values and elements of the learners rather than the target culture will have a positive impact in terms of language development.

When learning about the culture of the other, the learner is constantly encouraged to look at his own culture. Mostly the focus is on the components of the target language culture or, as may be the case in the teaching of English, on the idea of the other and a different culture, in the process of preparing the learner for the use of English as primarily the lingua franca of the modern world. The intracultural dialogue approach is the essence of personal sociocultural development which includes attention to daily living, social practices, socially accepted behavior, non-verbal communication as well as the value system and national stereotyping.

One of the main problems of the participant of the present study is the lack of the ability to use intracultural knowledge which led her to get away from interaction

with the local people during study abroad. This is due to the fact that insufficient knowledge about the target culture may cause the development of prejudice against the target language.

To be in the country of the target language may not provide expected contribution to the learning of the target language. Thus, setting true and achievable goals and a good preparation may have a positive impact on the expected success. On the other hand, the length of stay is an important factor affecting the success. As long-term study abroad experiences may cause disadvantages in terms of language acquisition and development, the length of the stay should be planned and scheduled according to the expectation and type of study.

6.2. Suggestions

6.2.1. Suggestions for Researchers

The present study provides valuable insights, contributions and findings, which should be built upon by future research. Future research should consider expanding this present study to include larger number of students from different source countries, programs carried out in different regions, and programs of different time lengths so that the results can be compared and generalized. The success of the education program with reference to the results of the present study can be investigated.

The location of the study abroad experience may have impact on the learners differently and studying this is another issue which needs further research. The results of this study support this idea that the location has a strong impact on the learners of the target language; yet, further research is still necessary to understand these differences. In addition, potential students are required to be directed to make personal decisions to recognize these differences that have impact on their progress in target language.

6.2.2. Suggestions for Practitioners

It should be important for teachers to understand the backgrounds, attitudes, levels of motivation and rationale for studying the target language of all the students they teach. Researchers suggest that there is a strong relationship between these social variables and the successful acquisition of the target language. Teachers are expected to understand some of the factors that affect the progress of their students.

Social environment is one of the key elements in English language acquisition. The students feel limited and restricted in an environment that does not motivate them enough to speak the target language. Findings of the present study indicate that teachers are supposed to consider and evaluate the social conditions in the classroom, at school and outside the school, and adjust the curriculum accordingly. The changes in the curriculum may include various activities outside school that will provide students with information on opportunities how to involve in different groups. Such opportunities may lead students become more open and motivated to learn.

Most of the problems in language classrooms are commonly related to the culture. These problems include constant use of first language by the students, over dependence, understanding what to do, boredom, inattentiveness, and being unmotivated to some extent due to the type of materials. Overcoming this can be achieved by teaching lessons involving authentic materials including the local cultural motifs and elements such as local newspapers, cartoons, advertisements, and classifieds in the target language which provide rich cultural topics and informally lead to language acquisition at the same time. This supports Schumann's theory (1978) that language is only one aspect of an ethnic group's culture and the relationship between the target language and the learners' language community is very important. While there are ongoing research aiming at studying the relationship between socio-psychological distance factors and second language learning, it is important for educators to consider the issues that may affect their students in different social environments.

6.2.3. Suggestions for Learners

The results of this present study argue a number of recommendations for the students in the process of foreign language learning. As the study is concerned with the link between foreign language learning and study abroad concept, it is not always easy or even meaningful to distinguish between motivations related to personal development, education and career plans. Learning about other cultures or cultural differences may have an impact on educational dimension and career perspective. Thus, the students may be open to learning new cultures and people from these new cultures. Yet, language learning is a process of interaction, thus the students are expected to not only consider language learning as the process of exposure but also a process of influencing and self-expression.

The other results of the study may be informative and useful for the students in terms of revealing that using the existing background information in language learning process more actively which will motivate the students to be more active in their efforts for communication in the target language. Thus, the students are expected to keep in mind that language learning process is a communication process consisting of four basic skills but not based on grades and exam success. Exams may only be the fruit of the efforts and success of a long but entertaining process of learning the target language.

In an effort to communicate both in speaking and writing, it is always possible to receive negative feedbacks, critics and corrections. As language learning is a long adventure, the students are expected to be affected as less as possible from these corrections, rather these corrections can be considered to better highlight the interaction dimension of the language.

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