

“Why do you learn Turkish, Maria?”. Researching the Greek citizens’ motives and difficulties in learning Turkish as foreign language

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“Why do you learn Turkish, Maria?”. Researching the Greek citizens’ motives and difficulties in learning Turkish as foreign language

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ABSTRACT

The living and developing conditions in a globalized community among with the rapid development of technological resources and the increasingly expanding global market and economy, require advanced skills as the competence of multilevel communication and knowledge of foreign languages. The promotion of language acquisition, both at a personal and a social level, is the basic principle of the European Union’s linguistic policy, whose actions seek to support foreign language acquisition among the Adult Learning field as well. The purpose of the present study is the research of the motivations and the difficulties of Greek adult learners who decide to learn the Turkish language. After a literature review mainly focusing on the motives of learning foreign languages, the authors present the inquires and the methodology of the qualitative research they organized. The research data were collecting through semi-structured interviews from 20 learners of the Turkish language. All the participants have Greek origin. The research findings showed that mainly the difference of the Turkish language in relation to other European languages, reasons of origins as well as the acquisition of an important qualification for professional use are the most important reasons that impel Greeks to learn the Turkish language. On the other hand, the main difficulties the learners focus on are financial and family barriers as well as language difficulties.

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In the contemporary conditions of multiculturalism, of constant demographic changes and of increased needs for the acquisition and implementation of new skills, the institutions of the European Union through the strategic framework “Education and Training 2020” underline the importance of the lifelong learning

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strategies, as well as the contribution of these strategies to strengthening competitiveness, employability, social inclusion and active citizenship (Eurostat, 2018).

Under these circumstances, the knowledge of foreign languages is considered to be one of the key skills in the field of education and the European Union through various actions actively supports the foreign language learning and the dissemination of multilingualism. The ability to communicate in one or more foreign languages is now a key asset for citizens, as it promotes mobility and employment, while at the same time provides the basis for the development of many other skills. Learning a foreign language is not just a cognitive learning process, but also a linguistic, social and psychological journey influenced by both internal and external factors (Baker, 2001). Also, learning a foreign language can have a direct impact on the development of specific academic skills such as cognitive and intellectual skills which are generally associated with thinking, reading and research.

Language learning, in addition to its financial and social dimension, is directly or indirectly related to many other categories of issues, such as the development of important knowledge and social skills in fields relating to citizenship, communication, politics, employability, democracy, equal opportunities, globalization and more. These are some of the key areas related to foreign language learning in the 21st century, as arose from a research carried out by the University of Southampton among young people attending foreign language classes (Gallagher-Brett, 2004).

2. Motivation for foreign language learning

During the spring of 2012 nearly 27.000 citizens from all the Member States of the European Union, performing personal interviews, participated in the survey of the Eurobarometer entitled “Europeans and their languages” (European Commission, 2012), which established that the five most common spoken foreign languages are English (38%), French (12%), German (11%), Spanish (7%) and Russian (5%).

Based on the Eurobarometer results, the vast majority of the respondents recognizes the importance and usefulness of foreign language knowledge for themselves and regards it as positive for their children’s future. Furthermore, 72% of the respondents agree with the objective of learning at least two foreign languages in addition to the mother tongue and 77% of those citizens define this objective as a political priority for the governments of the Member States. Finally, 53% of the participants declared that they use foreign languages in their work and 45% stated that they found a better job because of knowing foreign languages (European Commission, 2012).

According to Gardner’s survey (as cited in Baker, 2001, 184), the importance of an individual’s attitude towards learning a foreign language and the strength of the motivation behind that decision are crucial to the successful completion of the foreign language learning, even more than the existence of any competence and inclination.

Baker (*ibid.*, 182-183) sets out the main reasons that actuate adults to learn foreign languages, i.e., the desire for linguistic integration into a community, for cultural, origin or other emotional reasons such as friendship or love as well as finding a job, obtaining qualifications, passing exams and more. Furthermore, ideological, international and personal reasons lead people to learn foreign languages. More specifically, by learning a language the social objective to preserve and strengthen a language, particularly by people who are a linguistic minority in a country, may be accomplished. Finally, intensified cultural sensitivity in an increasingly globalised world can lead to the learning of foreign languages with a view to gaining cultural awareness (*ibid.*, 414-417).

According to the results of a survey that was conducted by the University of Southampton (Gallagher-Brett, 2004) regarding the reasons one chooses to learn foreign languages, personal satisfaction emerges as a key motivation to learn. Communication and new friendships, traveling and acquaintance with other cultures also seem to be important incentives. In addition, improving one’s position in the labor

market and the widespread opportunities that the knowledge of a foreign language gives to the personal and professional life comprise some of the dominant motivations to learn one more language.

As Gallagher-Brett (2004) points out, the knowledge of a difficult language is described as a strong asset, as a “single point of sale” and a highly regarded skill, which makes one stand out in the labor market. Finally, according to some participants of the above survey, it seems that they are motivated by the ease they have in learning new foreign languages successfully, while not few seem to be attracted to the perceived difficulty of some foreign languages, since the difficulty of a language may comprise inspiration and challenge.

It is obvious that the motivations that actuate an adult to learn a foreign language are related to the general motivations that incite adults to learn. According to Boshier (1977) an adult seeking learning, among other things, is motivated by his desire to be upskilled, to improve his communication skills, to interact with others, to have better professional opportunities, to improve his family relationships, to gain social stimulus or satisfy the interest of learning on a particular subject.

Lieb (1991) as well mentions that adult learners gravitate towards education since they are motivated by the interest in acquiring knowledge and love for learning, gaining more qualifications through personal development, the need for socialization and making new relationships, the desire for social offering in their society or community, the effort to comply with the wishes of someone else who expects more from them, the pursuit of interest through learning, avoiding at the same time the daily grind. Similarly, Burgess underlines the reasons that motivate adults to learn which among others are “the desire to learn, the achievement of a personal, social or religious goal, the participation in social activity, the leisure break, the compatibility with formal requirements” (Jarvis, 2004, 91-92).

3. Difficulties in learning foreign languages

Contrary to the learning motivations, the various difficulties encountered by adult learners, either in learning a foreign language or entering into a new learning process often act as anti-motivations.

Cross (1981) classifies the general barriers to new learning faced by adult learners into three categories: situational, institutional and dispositional. Situational barriers are factors such as lack of time, tight budget, family commitments and various barriers to situations faced by a learner at a specific time. Institutional barriers originate from the organizations and institutions which implement training programs and are related, for example, with the structure of the programs, the participation’s conditions or the timetable. Finally, the barriers arising from the learners’ attitudes to learning and their self-confidence degree when learning involved are described as dispositional.

According to a Eurostat (2018) on learning barriers encountered by adults, it is noted that the three most common barriers were: absence of need for learning (50%), lack of time due to family commitments (20.9%) and difficulty due to working hours (18%). The other limiting factors cited by participants were health/age (8.5%), inability of access due to distance (6.1%), failure to satisfy the conditions for participation (4.2%), failure to measure up to the high program cost (13.2%), failure to participate due to lack of support from employer/absence of public transport (8%), failure to find what they were asking for (8.6%), failure to pc or internet services access needed for distance learning (1.6%).

Regarding the particular difficulties encountered by a foreign language learner, Brown (1994) says that linguistic contradictions between the native language and the target language are a key source of difficulty in learning a foreign language, which can be discouraging. However, gradually, the learner in the creative process of developing the new translingual content system learns to use many sources and means that will help him to understand, while the inevitable mistakes will become the instruments for further knowledge for both learners and trainers.

According to Moyer (2004), the difficulties encountered in learning a foreign language are due to cognitive, social and psychological factors. On the other hand, Ehrman (1996) highlights that mainly the difficulties faced by a learner stem from the way of learning, from various emotional factors and from incorrect teaching strategies and less from the different grammatical system of a new foreign language. Furthermore, Ehrman believes that, as in life, it is the personality and the emotions that make a difference in learning a foreign language. She claims that any difficulties encountered are, in fact, the result of the discrepancy between the teaching methodologies on the one hand and the way the adult learns, in conjunction with his or her skills, on the other. Many adult education theorists (Race, 2015; Courau, 2015) identify with this view and point out the link between the effectiveness of learning, the learning approach and the personal way of learning.

4. Teaching and learning the Turkish language in Greece

In recent years, one of the foreign languages that has been particularly in demand in Greece is the Turkish language. It is worth noting that Turkish, according to data taken from Ethnologue (2017), is at the 24th position on the list of the most widely spoken languages in the world and is the official language of Turkey of about 80 million inhabitants. Based on estimates, the Turkish language is spoken by minorities in another 35 countries, including Greece, Bulgaria, North Macedonia and other countries such as Romania, Serbia, Syria, Israel, as well as in several European Union countries, such as Germany, France, Belgium, Britain, Scandinavian countries and elsewhere, where several million Turkish immigrants live.

Until a few decades ago it was mainly military and some ministry officials who used to learn the Turkish language, a choice that was based on the primary purpose to meet the country's security needs. Given the long-standing non harmonious relations between the governments of the two countries, the Turkish language was regarded as a hostile language (Argyrou, 2006; Magos, 2019). Gradually, however, the twinning of some universities and cities, the entry of Greek entrepreneurs into the Turkish market, the tourist activity in the neighbor country, the Turkish literature translations, the film co-productions and the constant screening of Turkish series on the Greek television, contributed to the increased interest in the Turkish language whereas its knowledge has become useful for purposes other than national security (Toptsoglou, 2005).

It is worth mentioning that in northern Greece, in the Thrace region, there is a remarkable number of Greek citizens whose native language is the Turkish language. These are people of Turkish descent and Muslim religion who were excluded from the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey, according to the Lausanne Treaty signed between the two countries in 1922. A special category of schools, known as minority schools, operates in the same area, where pupils of Turkish origin are taught in both Turkish and Greek language. Moreover, in this area, various public and private organizations provide both Turkish language courses for residents of Greek origin and Greek language courses for residents of Turkish origin.

Similarly, members of the Greek minority living in Istanbul who were also excluded from the abovementioned exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey have also an excellent knowledge of the Turkish language. Many of the members of Istanbul's Greek minority, as well as the respective smaller groups of Greek citizens living in the Turkish islands of Imbros and Tenedos, have moved to Greece. Even though those who were born and raised in Istanbul continue to use Turkish as a second knowledge, in most cases their children completely ignore it or slightly speak it.

Apart from the Greek region of Thrace, where a Turkish minority lives and which has been mentioned above, in many other parts of Greece the Turkish language is taught in private and public institutions such as lifelong learning centers, foreign language schools, municipal educational institutions and elsewhere. Turkish language courses are highly common not only in Athens and Thessaloniki, the two

biggest cities in Greece, but also in the islands of the Eastern Aegean, which are visited by a large number of Turks every year. Also, among the Greek universities a total number of six undergraduate or postgraduate courses attended by a remarkable percentage of Greek students pertain to the tuition of the Turkish language. Finally, via their websites various foreign institutions and organizations offer distance learning of the Turkish language to anyone interested.

To obtain Turkish language degrees and certification, exams are being conducted in Greece by “The Turkish and Foreign Languages Teaching and Research Centre” of Tömer University of Ankara, by the University of Istanbul and the Dilmer Institute. In addition, the Greek Ministry of Education provides in regard to the Turkish language a state certificate of linguistic competence known as “KPG”, based on the 6-level scale set by the Council of Europe to describe the levels of language proficiency.

5. Research methodology

5.1. Aim and Participants

The aim of this research was to explore the motivations and difficulties of Greek citizens who chose to learn Turkish as a foreign language. The research included twenty participants (P1 to P20) of Greek origin as a whole, fifteen women and five men. The age range of participants was wide from 25 up to 73 years old. Similarly, their professional scope was also wide, since among the participants there were civil servants and private employees, freelancers, commissioned officers, unemployed and pensioners. The common feature of all participants was that all of them chose to learn Turkish as adults. Their language proficiency level was diverse from moderate to excellent. Among the participants, 95% were higher education graduates -some of them also held a master's/doctoral degree- and on average they spoke one or two foreign languages other than Turkish. Eight of them (40%) said they spoke one more foreign language, seven (35%) spoke two more foreign languages, four (20%) spoke three foreign languages, whereas one said that spoke four foreign languages other than Turkish.

5.2. Data Collection Procedure and Tools

The qualitative research approach and the semi-structured interview was adopted as the most appropriate approach and tool for the collection of research data, as they provide more flexibility for both the researcher and the respondent. Also, they are most appropriate for those issues where apart from cognitive, emotional and psychological dimensions of the person interviewed are involved (Seidman, 2019). Considering that exploring the motivations and difficulties in learning Turkish by Greek learners is linked to or stimulates emotions and psychological reactions, this tool was considered the most effective for this research.

Concerning the research procedure, the researchers followed the typical steps: First, through language centers, other organizations and people of their social environment, they came in contact with Greek citizens who learn or have learned Turkish and would like to participate in the research. After having interviewed the participants, they analyzed the content of the interviews using the thematic content analysis approach, according to which both the motivations to learn the Turkish language and the various difficulties reported by the participants, were classified into relevant categories. The main categories that appeared from the content analysis concerning the motives of learning Turkish were the willingness to learn a different language, professional reasons, reasons of origin, familiarity to the Turkish language and culture, tourism and other reasons. Concerning the barriers to learning Turkish the researchers used the three categories of Cross's barriers typology (1981), namely the situational, the institutional and the dispositional barriers.

6. Research findings

6.1. Motivations for Learning Turkish

A remarkable number of the participants, nine out of twenty (45%), said they chose the Turkish language impelled from their desire to learn a non-typical foreign language, a distinct, a “different” language from the usual ones, and from their love for foreign languages. The following interview extracts represent the participants’ notable views:

“I saw it as a great challenge, as a difficult language, which is good to know, because not too many people know it. So, most people who decide to learn foreign languages, they learn what the majority learns ... Turkish is in the same category as Chinese ... this language can also offer you an advantage in your life, in a way it may “refund” all the effort you made to learn it”. (P9)

“I wanted to look a little bit towards Asia, so I wanted my third foreign language to come from the Asian Continent”. (P17)

Seven participants (35%) pointed out that they chose the Turkish language to use it at work and as an asset for finding a job.

“Professional [reasons], because the school I was working was a minority school and I thought that knowing the mother language of the children could help me to understand them better or help them more with something”. (P2)

“As a journalist I think I have to “keep my eyes open” –let’s put it this way - and speaking such a language is an incentive for me”. (P9)

“The nature of my work requires the knowledge of foreign languages; tourism is an integral part of my daily life since I work on a cruise boat... there is an increase of the Turkish element in the touristic sector and this could help me to confabulate with them and attend on them better”. (P19)

“...Speaking the language of the tourist makes him feel so much better... And since the neighbor is about to start bringing in people, I'm going to rent [my rooms] to these people”. (P20)

Seven out of twenty participants (35%) said that the familiarity and the interest they felt for the Turkish language, the common words between the two languages and even the proximity to Turkey were the reasons they decided to learn Turkish. Specifically, they declared:

“Because I was familiar with it. As I said, I was born in a village in the Rodopi Prefecture, raised with Muslims, hearing their language, living with them, seeing them everywhere... I was very familiar with their language”. (P7)

“It happens to be a country that is very close to us, a country in which Greeks live as well and whom we meet from time to time. I don't know, I felt very familiar learning Turkish”. (P9)

“The first time I went to Istanbul was in 2000 and the sound of the language had an effect on me. It seemed very familiar to me, as it was inside me. Since then, every time that I visited Turkey and Istanbul, I always had that feeling”. (P13)

“I have decided to learn Turkish because the Greek language has too many Turkish words”. (P14)

Furthermore, emotional or reasons of origin motivated six of the participants (30%) to learn the language their ancestors spoke.

“Actually, Turkey and its language were attractive to me because my grandparents lived there and then after the population exchange, they came to Greece”. (P8)

“Both my parents are from Istanbul. They were born there. We used to speak the [Turkish] language at home. I wasn’t a fluent speaker, that’s why I was very interested in learning more”. (P11)

The luck factor in particular or even in combination with the free language courses was the reason that impelled five participants (25%) to learn Turkish. However, during the learning process and after having the experience of the language contact, all of them said that eventually they would have chosen the Turkish language consciously and consequently they either fulfilled their language courses or expressed the desire to overcome any barriers and continue learning it.

“It was a matter of luck. I have applied for the foreign language lifelong learning program held in the Municipality of Kozani. The program included three languages, Turkish, Russian and Spanish but eventually it was only the Turkish language program that was carried out”. (P4)

“...that is where the luck factor played a part. It was one of the potential languages I had chosen to attend in the foreign language courses carried out by the Greek Parliament. Eventually the Russian language course never started so I entered the Turkish language course”. (P10)

Furthermore, four participants (20%) said that the reason for starting the Turkish classes was a series they watched on television and their general interest in the Turkish series as they are presented not only on television but also in the various groups on social media.

“I actually started learning Turkish motivated by the series I was watching on TV, and I wanted to learn the language in order to understand better the dialogs I was listening to and the series storyline”. (P1)

The seamless and comfortable communication and understanding when travelling in Turkey or when associating with Turks friends, as well as their great love for Istanbul, were the main reasons for three of the participants (15%) for starting the Turkish language courses.

“I wanted to go to Turkey, make some trips there and be able to understand and communicate”. (P7)

“When I visited Istanbul, I adored it! I was amazed by Istanbul and I believe that excitement was an incentive for me to learn Turkish”. (P14)

Two participants (10%) claimed that they learned Turkish due to the results of the Greek admission tests. After started studying Turkish literature they also attended Turkish language courses in order to perform better at the university.

“It was a completely random selection. After the entrance examinations I could choose between two schools and I chose the Turkish Studies School since I thought that it would be a good opportunity to learn a new language and see in the future where my choice could lead me”. (P15)

“When I chose this School, I knew that at the end of my studies I would have a certificate of proficiency in Turkish. From the four linguistic fields that my School had I preferred to choose the Turkish language” (P16)

Two more participants (10%) said that they started the Turkish language courses due to the prospect of living in Turkey for a while.

“Before I was told that I would be posted to Ankara, I hadn't thought about starting a third language. That was the reason... I decided to learn Turkish to make my life a little better in a foreign country by speaking the language and being able to integrate a little better into a "foreign" environment”. (P6)

“I decided to choose the Turkish language because I was thinking about staying in Istanbul and maybe the knowledge of this language would be necessary, since it would be easier for me to be professionally absorbed out somewhere”. (P16)

Finally, one participant (5%) said that he learned Turkish for ideological reasons, believing that in this way he could help to dismantle the negative stereotypes that still some Greeks have against the Turkish people.

“I learned it for purely ideological reasons, a language which is supposed to be the enemy's language. Therefore, learning the Turkish language was one way to foster better communication with the people of that country, in order to create new peace and communication conditions”. (P18)

6.1. Barriers to Learning Turkish

The situational barriers, referred by the participants, were identified as: (i) financial distress (28%), (ii) various family commitments (24%), (iii) lack of time (20%), (iv) professional commitments/irregular work shift (20%), (v) various health problems (12%), (vi) the absence of teaching structures/inability to find a language teacher (12%), (vii) inaccessibility due to distance (4%); (viii) other academic commitments (4%). The following excerpts from the participants' interviews are indicative of the above findings:

“Mainly family and financial barriers that I had not predicted have arisen along the way”. (P3)

“Time and family were the main obstacles; I couldn't be totally devoted to the classes”. (P19)

“The only barrier to learning was that I didn't have an easy access to it. In what sense? I didn't have any teacher, I didn't have any foreign language school nearby, I didn't have any possibility... For the people living in the shires, it's a little bit difficult to learn a distinct language”. (P1)

“Due to my irregular work shift, having no specified timetables, I couldn't find a foreign language school with a regular teaching timetable to attend” (P10)

“Then there was a number of personal and health reasons that made me leave the course. But as I said I didn't leave it forever. I may have stopped taking classes, but I didn't give it up”. (P8)

“It was the combination of these two reasons, an accident I had and the completion of my PhD, that made me stop”. (P13)

In the category of institutional barriers which result from the ways the training activities are offered by the institutions; two barriers were mentioned: (i) the termination of the offered courses (16%) and (ii) the incompatible course time (4%).

“The program was cut off, so I couldn't continue”. (P9)

“Moreover, the course timetable that my class had wasn't convenient anymore”. (P3)

The dispositional barriers, which relate to the learning attitudes of the participants and their degree of self-confidence, as resulted from our interviews are classified into following: (i) difficulty/diversity of the language (48%), (ii) age/worries/difficulty to concentrate (16%), (iii) feeling of loneliness/no support/mockings from the family or the social circle (4%), (iv) teacher's inadequacy (4%); (v) misunderstood perception regarding the language's ease of language due to common words (4%), (vi) confusion caused by the knowledge of Romance languages (4%), (vii) low educational level (4%), (viii) low self-confidence/lack of confidence (4%). Excerpts of the participants' answers interviews are quoted below:

“The barrier for me was in terms of pronunciation and mainly in terms of syntax, because everything is totally hypothetical. You have to make a double process in order to understand and start speaking Turkish. It's completely upside down from what I have used to”. (P15)

“OK it's true I was a little bit old and perhaps that made it more difficult, in this age you have more worries and I think I couldn't concentrate in order to learn the language”. (P2)

“After the first level [it was mainly] the difficulty of the language. At first it seems easy but as you move on, whereas it looks simple, it turns out complex and you start wondering: How is possible? I learned German and other languages so easily! Why can't I learn this language?” I have mentioned already that Turkish is a language difficult to be internalized, haven't I? Eventually, it's a very tough language. What defines it tough? You must always insist. It's a language where no infidelity is accepted. You can't abandon it. If you abandon it, it leaves you”. (P8)

“It was difficult; I don't know why it seemed that difficult to me. These negative “prefixes” that they put in the middle of the word, i.e., the verb “istiyorum” (meaning “I want”) in the negative form is turned into “istemiyorum”. Things like that seemed very strange to me. Additionally, the pronunciation was such a difficult part! I couldn't by any means learn it! So, I stopped, I didn't continue”. (P5)

“Since there are many common words between the two languages, in the beginning Greeks think they will know many words and it will be easy for them, but then they find it somewhat difficult”. (P20)

According to nine participants (45%) among the major learning barriers they faced was the dissuasion by their family or social circle against learning the Turkish language. The following aspects are indicative of the above finding:

“Everyone who heard I was learning Turkish asked me why. They couldn't find any reason for it. They considered it as a useless knowledge. Thus, there was a kind of hostility; I was accused of learning the enemy's language”. (P9)

“I was told “what’s the matter with you and you are all turning to the Turkish language?” In other words, they believed that the Turkish TV serials had an influence over us and they regarded it as an ugly language. They used to say “How do you learn it? It’s not a nice language” In general, most of them were negative”. (P12)

“I had no support. In fact, there were people laughing at me hearing that I was learning Turkish; even my intimates were making fun of me”. (P7)

On the other hand, five out of the twenty participants (25%) did not meet with any barriers during learning Turkish.

Finally, the oldest of the research participants had the following remarkable position:

“It’s quite different language. Its structure and vocabulary are different... However, I liked that difficulty. I wanted to test my mental strength, how much of these I could remember, what I could do with my mind at the age of 73”. (P19)

Despite the fact that the majority of the learners identified Turkish as a “difficult” or of “moderate difficulty” language, three of them were differentiated themselves from the others claiming the following:

“No, I don’t think it’s difficult. But I think you need to learn the language’s “mentality” first, to understand its philosophy and structure, that’s all. But in other respects, no, it’s not difficult since there are so many common words; for Greeks it’s not so hard to learn Turkish, they just have to get used to putting the verb at the end of the sentence. That’s the basic point”. (P17)

“Generally, yes, [it’s easy], but maybe because I have familiar sounds from this language...” (P11)

Overall, it’s worth mentioning that five of the participants (25%) who referred to specific barriers to learning Turkish, failed to overcome them and therefore were compelled to stop the courses. All the other participants either completed their studies in Turkish or kept on learning it in a foreign language school, through private courses or self-instruction.

7. Discussion

Regarding the incentives to learning Turkish, this research has pointed out that a significant percentage of the participants (40%) chose to learn Turkish motivated mainly by their desire to acquire a different language against the classical foreign languages they already knew. According to Polio (2016), the concept of the term “difference” in a language usually focuses on the strange and unfamiliar sounds, the different writing system and grammar as learning challenges that make the new language unique and special.

The research participants underlined that the different elements of the Turkish language, such as the pronunciation, the grammar, the syntax constituted an educational challenge to be delivered. Also, they believed that travelling to neighboring Turkey and watching Turkish series on Greek television would provide them many opportunities to make good use of the Turkish language in many ways. This position shows that the participants are in fond of the Turkish people and culture, since they wish to travel to Turkey and watch Turkish series on the Greek television.

Also, according to the research findings, reasons of origin arouse Greeks’ interest for the Turkish language as well. Especially for those with origins from the Greek population living in various parts of

Turkey, as Marantzides (2001) points out, the Turkish language is an element of their connection to the past “contributing to the enhancement of nostalgia as a collective memory”, a nostalgia that passes from generation to generation up to the present, as occurred from the research participants’ narratives. As Gravani, Soureti and Stathi (2018) point out, nostalgia is a dominant emotion among people, such as immigrants, refugees and other population groups, who were obliged to leave their homeland for various reasons.

In addition, according to our results, the knowledge of the Turkish language is considered to be an additional qualification in the labor market, since it does not belong to the list of the most common foreign languages, and therefore its speakers will have an additional professional qualification compared to their potential job competitors.

Furthermore, the knowledge of the Turkish language, as stated by our participants, can contribute to acquiring new friends, acquainting with the elements and the characteristics of another culture, and improving the communication skills.

In comparison with Boshier’s (1977) motivation scale, in general terms there is identification among the categories of motivation that emerged from our research and those of Boshier. The motivation “to improve family relations” on Boshier’s scale does not correspond to any of the findings of our survey, since none of our participants was a member of a mixed family of both Greek and Turkish origin. On the contrary, our research revealed that reasons of origins as well as emotional reasons, related to the Greek residents of Turkey, constituted a learning motivation, an element that finds no correlation in Boshier’s ranking.

Regarding to the main barriers that our research participants were confronted by the difference of this language in relation to the usual learnt foreign languages seems to be one of the most important obstacles, since it was mentioned by eighteen (72%) out of twenty learners. They focused this difference on writing, on morphology -with remarkable reference to the “adhesive” form of the words- on structure, alphabet and pronunciation.

According to Rico (2014), those who start learning a new language go through a translingual process and inevitably they compare the language they learn with their own or others who already know, locating though different degrees of difficulty. The fact that the Turkish language is different from the others seems to be an incentive and disincentive at the same time. The difference of Turkish as compared to the most spoken foreign languages makes it attractive and actuates a particular interest in learning it, but it also constitutes a difficult barrier for the learners to accomplish a more advanced language level. This barrier is in line with what Brown (1994) points out about the main sources of barriers to learning a new foreign language. The rest of the barriers mentioned by the participants are common in most cases where adult learners are involved in new learning and are related to financial and family barriers, time constriction, increased professional obligations and other practical problems in particular.

The fact that almost all research participants (95%) were graduates of higher or tertiary education suggests that the choice of Turkish as a foreign language is linked, at least in the case of Greek citizens who decided to learn Turkish, with a high level of education, a defeat of any nationalistic thinking as well as a high intercultural competence. It could also be linked to what Cross calls “addictive learning”, a situation in which people of higher education are constantly seeking new knowledge, making lifelong learning a way of life.

8. Conclusion

Learning Turkish from Greek citizens is an important choice, as learning the ‘neighbor’s language’ (Magos, 2018) can effectively contribute to a deeper acquaintance and development of relations between the two peoples. At the same time, it can play an important role in the development of cultural exchanges, tourism,

trade and many other cultural, social and economic sectors. Although to date the number of Greek citizens learning Turkish is not large, in the future it is expected to increase.

As the present research showed, there is a variety of motivations that push Greek citizens to learn Turkish. Among them, the willingness to learn a different language, the professional development, the familiarity with the Turkish language and culture, the tourism as well as reasons of origin have an important role. On the other hand, the difficulties encountered by the participants in the study of learning the Turkish language are related to situational, institutional and dispositional barriers, which were presented in detail above. Increasing motivation and reducing learning difficulties are decisive factors for the choice of learning Turkish as a foreign language by a growing number of Greek citizens.

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