

Profiles of Learners of Turkish as a Second Language in Terms of Acculturation Orientation, Psychological Adjustment, and Perceived Cultural Distance

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Abstract

When individuals encounter a cultural circle other than the one that constructs their memory, self, and consciousness, they are likely to experience some adaptation problems. Especially for individuals living in a foreign country, such problems can be much more diverse. Therefore, it is extremely important to examine such problems by focusing on the individual's perceptions and experiences in various dimensions. The aim of this study is to determine the profiles of learners of Turkish as a second language in terms of acculturation orientation, psychological adjustment, and perceived cultural distance and the relationship between them. In line with this aim, the correlational method, one of the quantitative research methods, was preferred in the study. The sample group consisted of 300 learners at B2, C1 and C1+ language levels who were studying at Turkish language teaching centres of different universities in Türkiye in the 2022-2023 academic year. A 7-point Likert-type short scale developed by Demes and Geeraert (2014) consisting of the dimensions of acculturation orientation, psychological adjustment, and cultural distance was used as a data collection tool; the data were analyzed using the SPSS 26.0 statistical package program. As a result of the research, it was found that the participants, who exhibited different profiles in terms of scores according to gender, language level, education level, reason for coming to Türkiye, native language, and number of languages known, showed that as their orientation toward home culture increased, their orientation toward Turkish culture and perceived cultural distance scores increased correlatively; however, their psychological adjustment scores decreased. While no relationship was found between the participants' orientation toward Turkish culture and their psychological adjustment and intercultural distance perceptions, it was observed that as their psychological adjustment scores increased, their perceived cultural distance scores decreased. Finally, the results obtained from the study were interpreted and discussed in the light of the literature. Various suggestions were also presented to the researchers by mentioning the limitations of the study.

Keywords

Teaching Turkish as a second language, acculturation orientation, psychological adjustment, perceived cultural distance, international students.

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INTRODUCTION

It has a history of hundreds of years that societies interact with each other as a result of being exposed to migration movements for various reasons in a wide geographical area within historical depth. The quality and quantity of this mobility have changed throughout historical processes. Therefore, the changing dimensions of migration mobility have also determined the nature of cultural interaction. However, today, cultural interactions occur not only through mass migrations but also through accelerating communication models thanks to the wide opportunities offered by technology. This speed in cross-border information flow has brought a strong awareness of cultural interaction. However, this awareness and readiness cannot offer an absolute solution to the problems that may be encountered in interaction in socio-cultural life. For this reason, plural culture has gained importance in multilingual and multicultural areas in the 21st century. Plural culture has emerged as an important skill area for individuals exposed to cultural interaction in international educational migration movements. It is also defined as a background area that can be described as an acculturation process and directly contributes the learning-teaching processes in second/foreign language learning.

The harmony problem and implicit or explicit conflicts experienced by the individual during his interaction with others have been the focus of many scientific studies. It is clear that these problems and conflicts need to be evaluated in the context of the acculturation process (Ozer, 2015; Maddux & Galinsky, 2009; Shi et al., 2019; Swagler & Jome, 2005). International students receiving higher education in different countries are also a potential population worth examining in this context (Smith & Khawaja, 2011).

The problems that international students encounter in the process of adaptation to the target culture may arise from the target society or directly from themselves, depending on the reciprocity inherent in the acculturation process. Preferences for assuming roles within the target culture and maintaining one's own culture, psychological suitability for the target culture's characteristics/expectations, perceived similarities and differences shape harmony as well as factors such as the policies and practices of the target society, multiculturalism experiences, the value it places on internationalism, etc. This research was carried out through three concepts that center on the individual's perceptions and experiences as a "social actor" and are closely related to each other: *acculturation orientation*, *psychological adaptation*, and *cultural distance*.

Acculturation Orientation

Belonging, attitudes, values, and behaviors vary from society to society. Naturally persistent elements in one society may remain unusual in another society. Everything that an individual comes into contact with outside of his or her habits has the power to bring about emotional or behavioral changes in the individual. This process, called 'acculturation', refers to getting to know a new culture and establishing a harmonious interaction with it. Whatever the reason, it can create a feeling of being stuck between the source culture and the target culture in individuals living elsewhere within the borders of their own country. This opens up different options for determining a position in the acculturation process. In this regard, models based on the dimensions of maintaining the source culture and participating in the target culture have been proposed (Berry, 1994; Celenk & van de Vijver, 2011; Rudmin, 2009). Multi-directional models have also been developed based on the same basic dimensions. According to the model of four acculturation orientations put forward by Berry (1994), the most well-known of these is *integration*, if the orientations toward the home culture (source culture) and the host culture (target culture) are strong. If the orientation toward the home culture is weak and the orientation toward the

host culture is strong, *assimilation* occurs. If orientation toward the home culture is strong and orientation toward the host culture is weak, *separation* takes place. If orientation toward both the home culture and the host culture is weak, *marginalization* occurs. It is stated that while integration is the most ideal acculturation orientation because it facilitates adaptation by encouraging taking on roles in both cultures and maintaining a sense of identity and belonging, other trends are quite inadequate because they do not support the multiple uses of cultural resources (Berry, 1997; Ozer, 2015; Phinney et al., 2001; Schachner et al., 2016; Yoon et al., 2013).

It is stated that acculturation is not specific to the new participant(s) but also brings about some changes in society (Flaskerud, 2007; Schwartz et al., 2010). On the other hand, it is emphasized that acculturation orientation is a complex and dynamic process affected by factors such as individual preferences, social expectations, and contact level (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2012; Schachner et al., 2016). In the process of adaptation to new sociocultural contexts, acculturation orientation is extremely decisive due to its guiding effect on the individual's attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, acculturation is a common psychological phenomenon that can affect outcomes on a wide range of issues, from mental health to interpersonal relationships (Berry, 2006).

Psychological Adjustment

One of the main indicators of human behavior and development is contact between different populations. The contact between two different cultures causes cultural and psychological changes (Balidemaj & Small, 2019, p. 649). The effects of staying in a new or different place, whether temporarily or permanently, can have a significant impact on an individual's psychology and are among the determinants of acculturation. Those coming from culturally more different/distant regions have more acculturation concerns and exhibit more reserved behavior and accordingly, social isolation appears to occur. Studies mention two basic aspects of adaptation that are socioculturally and psychologically interrelated (Demes & Geeraert, 2014; Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Sociocultural adjustment involves daily behaviors, while psychological adjustment involves emotional factors that influence these behaviors.

Psychological adjustment is a concept that deals with how well and comfortable a person feels in a new culture. Life satisfaction includes positive affect and self-esteem, as well as it may also include negative affect, such as coping with low levels of alienation, anxiety, depression, loneliness, etc. (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2012; Ozer, 2015). In other words, psychological adjustment is a process in which individuals strive to meet their needs, follow their goals, and manage expectations in a new society, and it requires a flexible balance between the past, present and future (Marczak et al., 2020). Time spent in the culture, commonality or similarity of cultural representations, language level, etc. determines the degree of psychological adjustment.

In an environment where psychological adjustment is not possible, cultural adaptation problems are likely to occur. As a matter of fact, it has been stated that a low acculturation level is associated with high depression levels (Jang et al. 2005). Additionally, interaction with the host culture has been found to be associated with measured psychological characteristics (Nguyen et al., 1999; Ozer, 2015; Schwartz et al. 2013).

Cultural Distance

Cultural distance refers to the level of meaningfulness of representations of a culture for individuals from other cultures. Overlaps and divergences in the perceptual world determine the distance

between two cultures (Aydın, 2020). Therefore, it helps to analyze differences in values, norms, behaviors, and practices between different cultures. Demes and Geeraert (2014) explain that sociocultural adaptation and perceived cultural distance are interrelated, and the greater the difference between two cultures, the more difficult adaptation will be. It is stated that as cultural distance increases, individuals will learn new culture-specific skills more difficultly, and as it decreases, it will be easier for individuals to learn new culture-specific skills (Masgoret & Ward, 2006; Geeraert & Demoulin, 2013).

Hofstede et al. (2010) evaluate cultural differences in six dimensions (power distance, individualism-socialism, masculinity-femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-short termism, enthusiasm-constraint) and they argue that these dimensions can be used to determine the distance between different cultures and make comparisons. These identified differences are highly likely to affect acculturation strategies and direct communication, cooperation, trust and participation processes. Because it determines the attitude toward people from other cultures, beliefs, behaviors, in short, identities.

Although the three concepts mentioned above are related to each other, measuring them separately may be valuable to produce more effective results. Although there are separate studies on these concepts in the literature (for example; Boynueğri, 2018; Gökyer, 2017; Güler, 2019; Güngör, 2014; Karluk, 2022; Şeker & Akman, 2016), no study addressing all three together has been found. International students' perceptions and experiences with these concepts may affect their adaptation. The purpose of this research is to examine the profiles of international students learning Turkish as a second language in terms of acculturation orientation, psychological adjustment, and perceived cultural distance, which are extremely important for adaptation. In this context, answers were sought to the following research questions:

1. Is there a statistically significant relationship between acculturation orientation, psychological adjustment, and perceived cultural distance scores of international students learning Turkish as a second language?
2. Do the acculturation orientation, psychological adjustment, and perceived cultural distance scores of international students learning Turkish as a second language differ according to gender, nationality, education level, Turkish language level, reason for coming to Türkiye, language family in which their native language belongs, and the number of languages they know?

METHOD

Research Model/Design

This is correlational research in which a quantitative research approach is preferred by its purpose and nature. Correlational research is carried out to determine whether there is a relationship between two or more variables, and if so, at what level (Büyüköztürk et al., 2012; Karasar, 2006). In correlational research, the researcher does not make any interventions to affect the variables before or during the data collection process. Instead, the researcher tries to reveal the relationships between the numerical data obtained through correlation or regression analysis (Creswell, 2017).

Participants of the Study

In this study, criterion sampling, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was utilized. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2013) explain criterion sampling as utilizing individuals who fulfill predetermined criteria and

are related to the subject. The participants of the study consisted of international students learning Turkish at TÖMER or DİLMER centers of various universities in Türkiye. The main criterion for determining the participants was to have B2, C, and C1+ level Turkish proficiency in terms of the comprehensibility of the items in the scales to be used. Detailed information about the participants in the study is given in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Information on Participants

| Variables | Group | N | % |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----|------|
| Gender | Female | 161 | 53,7 |
| | Male | 139 | 46,3 |
| Nationality | Asia | 213 | 71 |
| | Africa | 76 | 25,3 |
| | Other | 11 | 3,7 |
| Level of Education | Undergraduate | 210 | 70 |
| | Graduate | 90 | 30 |
| Turkish Language Level | B2 | 149 | 49,7 |
| | C1 and C1+ | 151 | 50,3 |
| Reason for Coming to Türkiye | Education | 266 | 88,7 |
| | Other (war, economy, etc.) | 34 | 11,3 |
| Native Language Family | Indo-European | 79 | 26,3 |
| | Afro-Asiatic (Hamito-Semitic) | 97 | 32,3 |
| | Ural-Altaiic | 76 | 25,3 |
| | Other | 48 | 16 |
| Number of Known Languages | Unspecified | 50 | 16,7 |
| | 1 language | 133 | 44,3 |
| | 2 languages | 84 | 28 |
| | 3 languages | 33 | 11 |
| Total | | 300 | 100 |

Of the 300 participants in the study, 53.7% were female and 46.3% were male. 71% were of Asian nationality, 25.3% were of African nationality, and 3.7% were of other nationalities. 70% were undergraduates, and 30% were graduate students. 50.3% of the participants have C1 and C1+, and 49.7% have a B2 Turkish language level. On the other hand, 88.7% of the participants stated that they came to Türkiye for educational reasons and 11.3% for other reasons (war and security problems, economic, sociocultural, etc.). When the distribution of the participants according to the native language family is examined, it is observed that 32.3% of the participants belong to the Hamito-Semitic language family, 26.3% to the Indo-European language family, 25.3% to the Ural-Altaiic language family, and 16% to other language families. Finally, when the distribution of the participants according to the number of languages they know other than their native language is examined, it is found that 44.3% know 1 language, 28% know 2 languages, 11% know 3 languages, and 16.7% do not specify the number of languages.

Data Collection

This study utilized three brief scales developed by Demes and Geeraert (2014): the Acculturation Orientation Scale, the Psychological Adjustment Scale, and the Perceived Cultural Distance Scale. The scales were developed in nine different languages, including Turkish. In this direction, the authors were contacted via e-mail, and the Turkish version of the scales was requested and approval for use was obtained. Detailed information about the scales is as follows:

Acculturation Orientation Scale (AOS)

This scale was created in two dimensions. Demes and Geeraert (2014) state that orientation toward home culture (source culture) and host culture (target culture) are independent of each other and therefore should be measured separately. In the scale consisting of 8 items related to friendship, traditions, values, and behaviors/actions, the first four items are related to home culture orientation, while the second four items are related to host culture orientation. For this reason, in this study, a distinction was made between orientation toward home culture (AOS-H) and orientation toward Turkish culture (AOS-T). The participant is asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with the statements in the items. The scale was developed as a 7-point Likert-type scale and is graded from strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 7. There are no reverse-scored items on the scale. A sample item from each dimension of the scale is given below.

Home Culture;

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4. In Türkiye, it is important for me to perform behaviors and actions that belong to my own culture. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Host Culture (Turkish Culture);

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8. When I live in Türkiye, it is important for me to do things like Turks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Demes and Geeraert (2014) calculated the reliability of the scales separately with data collected from both international students studying at the University of Essex and international staff of the same university. Since the participants of this study were international students, only the reliability results based on the data obtained from the students were included. Accordingly, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the AOS-H (orientation toward home culture scale) was calculated as 0.79, and the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the AOS-T (orientation toward host culture scale) was calculated as 0.80. Additionally, the total reliability coefficient for the CTS was calculated and found to be 0.712.

Psychological Adjustment Scale (PAS)

There are 8 items in this scale that focus on the feelings in the host country, such as tension caused by the effort to adapt, missing relatives back home, and anxiety when meeting people from the target culture. The participant is asked to indicate how often he/she has felt the psychological states described in these items in the last two weeks in the host country. The scale is developed as a 7-point

Likert-type scale with a rating from never = 1 to always = 7. In addition, items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 are reverse scored. A sample item from the scale is given below.

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4. In Türkiye, I feel nervous because I don't know how to behave in certain situations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Demes and Geeraert (2014) calculated the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the PAS as 0.79. For this study, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was found to be 0.69.

Perceived Cultural Distance Scale (PCDS)

It consists of 12 items on climate, natural environment, social environment, daily life, activities, eating and drinking behaviors, family life, social rules, values and beliefs, character traits of people, friendship, social communication, and interaction. In these items, the participant is asked to make comparisons by considering the similarities and differences between the home culture and the host culture. The scale was developed on a 7-point Likert scale and is rated from very similar = 1 to completely different = 7. There are no reverse-scored items on the scale. A sample item from the scale is given below.

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. My country and Türkiye in terms of climate (temperature, rainfall, humidity) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Demes and Geeraert (2014) calculated the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the PCDS as 0.79. For this study, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was found to be 0.854.

Data Analysis

In this study, the SPSS 26 statistical package program was used for data analysis. Participants who gave the same answer to all items separately for all three scales were checked, and 28 participants were excluded from the analysis. Outliers for the scale scores were examined according to the z standard values being outside the ± 3.30 range, and no outlier was found. In assessing the normality of the scale scores, skewness and kurtosis coefficients were examined, and if these values were between ± 1 , the score distribution was considered normal (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Accordingly, descriptive statistics for the three scale scores are given below.

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics Related to Scale Scores*

| Scale Scores | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | SD | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|--------------|---------|---------|------|------|----------|----------|
| AOS | 1,5 | 6,8 | 4,85 | 0,99 | -0,589 | 0,202 |
| AOS-H | 1 | 7 | 4,56 | 1,37 | -0,459 | -0,307 |
| AOS-T | 1 | 7 | 5,14 | 1,22 | -0,518 | -0,069 |
| PAS | 2,3 | 6,8 | 4,36 | 0,97 | 0,146 | -0,502 |
| PCDS | 1,1 | 6,8 | 4,25 | 1,13 | -0,122 | -0,201 |

H: Orientation toward home (source) culture score; T: Orientation toward Turkish culture score

All scale scores were obtained by averaging the items. Acculturation orientation scale scores ranged between 1.5-6.8 with a mean of 4.85; the mean score for orientation toward home culture was 4.56, and the mean score for orientation toward Turkish culture was 5.14. Psychological adjustment scale scores ranged between 2.3-6.8 with a mean of 4.36; perceived cultural distance scale scores ranged between 1.1-6.8 with a mean of 4.25. Since all skewness and kurtosis values are between ± 1 , the score distribution is normal.

Skewness and kurtosis values for all scale scores were obtained within the range of ± 1 for all categories of independent variables (see Appendix). It was determined that the scale scores were normally distributed both for the whole group and in each category of independent variables, and parametric comparison methods were used.

The Pearson correlation method was used for the relationship between the sub-dimensions of the acculturation orientation scale, psychological adjustment, and perceived cultural distance. In the interpretation of the correlation coefficient, Baykul (2010) stated that there is a high correlation if the coefficient is greater than 0.70, a moderate correlation if the coefficient is between 0.40-0.70, and a weak correlation if the coefficient is less than 0.40. Since all of the scale scores were normally distributed and the number of data was sufficient in each group ($N > 30$), independent groups t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), which are parametric methods, were used. The independent samples t-test method is used in comparisons between continuous and normally distributed measurements of two groups, while ANOVA is used in comparisons of more than two groups (Pallant, 2007). LSD multiple comparison method was used for significant differences as a result of ANOVA. Comparisons were made at $p < .05$ significance level for statistical analysis.

Ethical Principles

Ethics committee permission for this study was obtained from Gazi University Ethics Committee with the decision dated 18.04.2023 and numbered 08.

FINDINGS

The study analyzed the correlations between acculturation trend, psychological adaptation, and perceived cultural distance scores using the Pearson correlation method. The findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3*Pearson Correlations Between the Scale Scores*

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|-----------|---------|-------|---------|---|
| 1. AOS -H | 1 | | | |
| 2. AOS -T | ,162** | 1 | | |
| 3. PAS | -,323** | 0,038 | 1 | |
| 4. PCDS | ,221** | 0,002 | -,346** | 1 |

H: Orientation toward home (source) culture score; T: Orientation toward Turkish culture score

There were positive, low, and significant correlations between legacy acculturation scores, Turkish acculturation scores ($r=0.162$, $p<.01$), and perceived cultural distance scores ($r=0.221$, $p<.01$) of the participants. There was a negative, low, and significant correlation between legacy acculturation scores and psychological adaptation scores ($r=-0.323$, $p<.01$). In other words, participants' orientation toward home culture increased with their orientation toward Turkish culture and perceived cultural distance scores; however, their psychological adaptation scores decreased. There was no significant correlation between the participants' orientation toward Turkish culture and their psychological adaptation and perceived cultural distance scores ($p>.05$). Finally, a negative, low, and significant correlation was determined between psychological adaptation and perceived cultural distance ($r=-0.346$, $p<.01$) scores. In other words, as psychological adaptation scores increased, perceived cultural distance scores decreased. The increase in the psychological adaptation of the participants demonstrated that the differences between the legacy culture and Turkish culture decreased or the similarities between them increased.

The next study dimension was the effect of demographic variables on acculturation trends, psychological adaptation, and perceived cultural distance scores. The t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4*Comparison of Scale Scores Based on Demographic Variables*

| Variables | Group | N | AOS -H X \pm ss | AOS -T X \pm ss | PAS X \pm ss | PCDS X \pm ss |
|--------------------|--------------------|-----|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Gender | Female | 161 | 4,6 \pm 1,3 | 5,2 \pm 1,3 | 4,4 \pm 0,9 | 4,2 \pm 1 |
| | Male | 139 | 4,5 \pm 1,4 | 5,1 \pm 1,2 | 4,4 \pm 1 | 4,3 \pm 1,2 |
| | t ₍₂₉₈₎ | | 0,935 | 0,45 | 0,011 | -1,13 |
| | p | | 0,351 | 0,653 | 0,991 | 0,259 |
| Nationality | Asia | 213 | 4,5 \pm 1,4 | 5,2 \pm 1,2 | 4,5 \pm 0,9 | 4,1 \pm 1,1 |
| | Africa | 76 | 4,7 \pm 1,3 | 4,9 \pm 1,3 | 4,1 \pm 1 | 4,5 \pm 1,2 |
| | t ₍₂₈₇₎ | | -0,857 | 2,334 | 3,207 | -2,807 |
| | p | | 0,392 | 0,02* | 0,001* | 0,005* |
| Level of Education | Undergraduate | 210 | 4,6 \pm 1,3 | 5,1 \pm 1,2 | 4,4 \pm 0,9 | 4,3 \pm 1,1 |
| | Graduate | 90 | 4,4 \pm 1,4 | 5,3 \pm 1,3 | 4,3 \pm 1,1 | 4,2 \pm 1,2 |
| | t ₍₂₉₈₎ | | 1,17 | -1,695 | 0,124 | 1,024 |
| | p | | 0,243 | 0,091 | 0,902 | 0,307 |

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Turkish Language Level | B2 | 149 | 4,4±1,5 | 5±1,2 | 4,4±0,9 | 4,2±1 |
| | C1 and C1+ | 151 | 4,7±1,3 | 5,2±1,2 | 4,3±1 | 4,3±1,2 |
| | $t_{(298)}$ | | -2,245 | -1,438 | 1,644 | -0,481 |
| | p | | 0,025* | 0,151 | 0,101 | 0,631 |
| Reason for Coming to Türkiye | Education | 266 | 4,6±1,4 | 5,1±1,2 | 4,3±0,9 | 4,3±1,1 |
| | Others (war, economy, etc.) | 34 | 4,2±1,2 | 5,6±1,4 | 4,4±1,2 | 3,9±1 |
| | $t_{(298)}$ | | 1,622 | -2,193 | -0,41 | 1,982 |
| | p | | 0,106 | 0,029* | 0,682 | 0,048 |
| Native Language Family | Indo-European (a) | 79 | 4,6±1,5 | 5,2±1,1 | 4,2±1 | 4,3±1,3 |
| | Hamito-Semitic (b) | 97 | 4,5±1,3 | 5,2±1,4 | 4,4±1 | 4,1±1,1 |
| | Ural-Altaic (c) | 76 | 4,5±1,5 | 4,8±1,3 | 4,4±0,9 | 4,1±1 |
| | Others (d) | 48 | 4,9±1 | 5,5±0,8 | 4,4±0,8 | 4,7±1 |
| | $F_{(3,296)}$ | | 1,369 | 3,418 | 0,863 | 4,226 |
| | p | | 0,252 | 0,018* | 0,461 | 0,006* |
| | Difference** | | | c<a,b,d | | d>a,b,c |
| Number of Known Languages | Unidentified (a) | 50 | 4,5±1,4 | 5,1±1,4 | 4,4±1,1 | 4,1±1,1 |
| | 1 language (b) | 133 | 4,3±1,4 | 5,2±1,2 | 4,5±1 | 4,2±1,1 |
| | 2 languages (c) | 84 | 4,9±1,2 | 5±1 | 4,3±0,8 | 4,2±1,2 |
| | 3 languages (d) | 33 | 4,7±1,4 | 5,2±1,4 | 4,2±1 | 4,8±1,1 |
| | $F_{(3,296)}$ | | 3,227 | 0,631 | 1,117 | 3,375 |
| | p | | 0,023* | 0,596 | 0,343 | 0,019* |
| | Difference** | | c>b | | | d<a,b,c |

* $p<.05$; **LSD post hoc comparison; **H**: Orientation toward home (source) culture score; **T**: Orientation toward Turkish culture score

As seen in Table 4, there were no significant differences between orientation toward home culture ($t_{(298)}=0.935$, $p>.05$), orientation toward Turkish culture ($t_{(298)}=0.45$, $p>.05$), psychological adjustment ($t_{(298)}=0.011$, $p>.05$), and perceived cultural distance ($t_{(298)}=-1.13$, $p>.05$) scores. In other words, the orientation toward home culture, orientation toward Turkish culture, psychological adjustment, and perceived cultural distance mean scores of the male and female participants were similar.

There were significant differences between the orientation toward Turkish culture ($t_{(287)}=2.334$, $p<.05$), psychological adjustment ($t_{(287)}=3.207$, $p<.05$) and perceived cultural distance ($t_{(287)}=-2.807$, $p<.05$) scores of the participants based on nationality. The mean orientation toward Turkish culture and psychological adjustment scores of the Asian participants were higher when compared to the African participants, while their mean perceived cultural distance score was lower. However, there was no significant difference between the mean orientation toward home culture score of the participants based on nationality ($t_{(287)}=-0.857$, $p>.05$).

There were no significant differences between the orientation toward home culture ($t_{(298)}=1.17$, $p>.05$), orientation toward Turkish culture ($t_{(298)}=-1.695$, $p>.05$), psychological adjustment ($t_{(298)}=0.124$, $p>.05$) and perceived cultural distance ($t_{(298)}=1.024$, $p>.05$) scores of the participants based on education level. The mean orientation toward home culture, orientation toward Turkish culture, psychological adjustment, and perceived cultural distance scores of the participants with undergraduate and graduate degrees were similar.

A significant difference was determined between the orientation toward home culture scores of the participants based on their Turkish language level ($t_{(298)}=-2.245$, $p<.05$). The average score of participants with C1 and C1+ Turkish language levels for orientation toward home culture was higher than that of B2 levels. However, there were no significant differences between orientation toward Turkish culture ($t_{(298)}=-1.438$, $p>.05$), psychological adjustment ($t_{(298)}=1.644$, $p>.05$), and perceived cultural distance ($t_{(298)}=-0.481$, $p>.05$) scores based on the Turkish language level.

A significant difference was determined between the orientation toward Turkish culture scores of the participants based on their reason for came to Türkiye ($t_{(298)}=-2.193$, $p<.05$). The mean orientation toward Turkish culture scores of the participants who came to Türkiye for other reasons (war and safety, economic, sociocultural, etc.) were higher when compared to the participants who coming for educational reasons. However, there were no significant differences between orientation toward home culture ($t_{(298)}=1.622$, $p>.05$), psychological adjustment ($t_{(298)}=-0.41$, $p>.05$), and perceived cultural distance ($t_{(298)}=1.982$, $p>.05$) scores based on their reason for coming to Türkiye.

A significant difference was determined between the mean orientation toward Turkish culture ($F_{(3,296)}=3.418$, $p<.05$) and perceived cultural distance ($F_{(3,296)}=4.226$, $p<.05$) scores based on the native language family of their native language. However, there was no significant difference between the orientation toward home culture ($F_{(3,296)}=1.369$, $p>.05$) and psychological adjustment ($F_{(3,296)}=0.863$, $p>.05$) scores based on the language family of their native language. The LSD post hoc test, a multi-comparison method, was employed to determine the significant differences based on the language family of the native language. Thus, a difference was determined between the orientation toward Turkish culture scores of the participants whose native language was a Ural-Altaic language and whose native language was Indo-European, Hamito-Semitic, and others ($p <.05$). Participants whose native language was Ural-Altaic had the lowest mean orientation toward Turkish culture score. There was a difference between the mean perceived cultural distance scores of the participants whose native language was Indo-European, Hamito-Semitic, or Ural-Altaic and the participants whose native language was other ($p <.05$). Participants whose native language was in the other group scored a higher mean perceived cultural distance score.

Finally, the study found a significant difference in mean orientation toward home culture ($F_{(3,296)}=3.227$, $p<.05$) and perceived cultural distance ($F_{(3,296)}=3.375$, $p<.05$) scores based on the number of languages known by the participants, except for their native language. However, there was no significant difference between the orientation toward Turkish culture ($F_{(3,296)}=0.631$, $p>.05$) and psychological adjustment ($F_{(3,296)}=1.117$, $p>.05$) scores based on the number of languages they knew. The LSD post hoc test was employed to determine the significant differences based on the number of known languages. There were differences between the orientation toward home culture scores of bilingual and trilingual participants ($p<.05$), and the mean orientation toward home culture score of trilingual participants was higher. There was a difference between the perceived cultural distance scores of the participants who knew three languages and all others ($p<.05$), and the mean perceived cultural distance score of the participants who spoke three languages was the highest.

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, the relationship between acculturation orientation, psychological adjustment, and perceived cultural distance scores of international students was examined. Accordingly, as the participants' orientation toward home culture scores increases, orientation toward Turkish culture and

perceived cultural distance scores also increase relationally; however, psychological adjustment scores decrease. Here, the fact that orientation toward home culture linearly affects orientation toward Turkish culture can be associated with developing competencies as a result of contact and thus gaining social and cognitive flexibility. On the other hand, increasing perceived cultural distance and decreasing psychological adjustment are not expected results for individuals whose orientation toward both cultures increases relationally. The source of this result can be explained by the fact that the research participants come from different cultures, and the unifying culture for them is Turkish culture. Given that the items on the AOS-H and AOS-T scales primarily relate to observable behaviors, it can be inferred that participants behaved appropriately in both cultures. However, the items on the PAS and PCDS scales mostly relate to affective behaviors and the psychological factors associated with them, indicating a discrepancy between the participants' feelings and behaviors. Similar studies have shown that cultural orientation is a predictor of psychological adjustment (Ozer, 2015; Zhang et al., 2010); in particular, integration, which affects orientation to both cultures, has been found to significantly support sociocultural adaptation (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2012; Ozer, 2015; Schachner et al., 2016; Yoon et al., 2013). However, it should be taken into consideration that the level of relationality in this study was low. On the other hand, the negative and low-level relationship between psychological adjustment and perceived cultural distance in the study shows that as the participants' psychological adjustment scores increase, their perceived cultural distance scores decrease. This result indicates that the participants feel psychologically good and comfortable because they have more commonalities between the representations of Turkish culture and their own culture. This negative relationship overlaps with the result obtained in Demes and Geeraert's (2014) study. Mumford and Babiker (1998) found a positive correlation between cultural distance and psychological problems, indicating that as perceived cultural distance increases, anxiety and stress replace well-being to the same degree.

In the second stage of the study, it was analyzed whether demographic variables have an effect on acculturation orientation, psychological adjustment, and perceived cultural distance scores. Accordingly, it was found that *gender* and *level of education* variables did not have a significant effect on any scale. According to the *nationality* variable, participants from the Asian continent have a significant score difference in terms of orientation toward Turkish culture and psychological adjustment. In addition, perceived cultural distance scores were also low, as expected. Nationality is a predictive variable about the situations that may be encountered in the host society (Meloni, 1986). Low cultural distance scores mean that there are more similarities. The relationship between similarities and feeling secure in one's identity, reducing the feeling of alienation, and increasing social connectedness has been expressed in studies (Sever, 2020; Traş & Güngör, 2011).

According to the *Turkish language level* variable, a significant difference was detected in favor of C1 and C1+ only in terms of orientation toward home culture. It is expected that as we begin to recognize and understand a culture, our orientation towards it and even our familiarization with it will increase. While it is expected that students who have reached C1 and C1+ levels will be more oriented toward Turkish culture based on the assumption that they will know and understand it more, it is noteworthy that the opposite result emerged here. As a matter of fact, while low language levels can be associated with adaptation problems and trigger the individual to escape to the comfort of his/her own culture, this is less common at high language levels (Zhang & Goodson, 2011). Despite the language level, situations encountered in social contexts may have influenced the orientation here. For example, it is natural for excluded and discriminated groups to have a high level of commitment to their home culture (Phinney et al., 2001; Schwartz et al., 2010).

It was determined that the *reason for coming to Türkiye* variable only significantly affected the orientation toward Turkish culture in favor of the participants who came to Türkiye for other reasons (such as war and security problems, economic, sociocultural, etc.). As in other studies (Er, Saat, & Üstten, 2018), most of the participants stated that they came to Türkiye for educational reasons. This may be associated with personal preferences and may reinforce the perception of transience. However, most of those who came for other reasons expressed forced migration based on war and security problems. Studies indicate that voluntary migration and involuntary migration make a difference in terms of adaptation (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2012; Sodowsky et al., 1991). This result can be explained by the fact that those who cite war and security problems as reasons are more inclined toward Turkish culture and try to adapt to Turkish culture because they have no hope of returning. Aydın and Avaroğlu (2023) also found that the same reason created a significant difference in attitudes toward Turkish culture. When the perception of permanence is reinforced, it is possible to see adaptation as the only option.

A significant difference was found in the mean scores of orientation toward Turkish culture and perceived cultural distance according to the *language family of the native language*. It is noteworthy that the participants from the Ural-Altai language family had the lowest orientation toward Turkish culture, considering that Turkish is also from the same language family. This result differs from the results of Aydın and Avaroğlu (2023) in favor of those from the Ural-Altai language family in terms of both attitudes toward Turkish culture and social adjustment. On the other hand, the expectedly higher perceived cultural distance average score of the participants from other language families indicates that there are many cultural differences among the participants from other language families.

Finally, it was found that the *number of known languages* significantly affected the orientation toward home culture and perceived cultural distance scores. The participants with the highest scores of orientation toward home culture were those who knew two languages, while the participants with the highest perceived cultural distance scores were those who knew three languages. It is thought that the number of known languages will make a significant contribution to adaptation, as it provides the opportunity to benefit from several language resources at the same time. Research has also shown that multilingualism is associated with stronger socialization, higher proficiency, lower anxiety, and greater cultural empathy and tolerance (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele et al., 2008; Dewaele & Van Oudenhoven, 2009; Wei & Hu, 2014). Therefore, it can be expected that the perceived cultural distance score of the participants who speak three languages will be lower.

This research is a small-scale, quantitative study that reveals the relationship between *acculturation orientation, psychological adjustment, and perceived cultural distance* and the effect of some variables on them. Research results can increase awareness about supporting sociocultural and psychological adjustment in the processes of teaching Turkish as a second/foreign language and can direct activities and practices. The limited sample and participants from limited regions (especially from Asia) in the study reveal the need for further research to make generalizations. In this framework, studies with more comprehensive samples and more different variables can be conducted at the national level. Nevertheless, it is not possible to generalize the results related to the measurement of adaptation processes from different perspectives. Due to the uniqueness of each individual's perceptual and behavioral processes, subjective evaluations have been excluded from this study. The small number of items in the scales used in the study can be considered a limitation in terms of providing more superficial/general results. For detailed measurements, longer scales can be used or new scales can be developed. With globalization, intercultural contact is experienced in many countries around the

world. Similar studies can be conducted on individuals from different cultures living in these countries, facilitating cross-country comparative research. In addition, longitudinal/qualitative studies based on long-term observations and interviews may also be effective in revealing the causality between the concepts investigated.

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Appendix

Normality Distribution Table for Demographic Variable Categories

| Variables | Group | AOS-H | | AOS-T | | PAS | | PCDS | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | | Skewness | Kurtosis | Skewness | Kurtosis | Skewness | Kurtosis | Skewness | Kurtosis |
| Gender | Female | -0,406 | -0,642 | -0,659 | 0,233 | 0,299 | -0,436 | -0,169 | 0,006 |
| | Male | -0,489 | -0,066 | -0,327 | -0,506 | 0,023 | -0,595 | -0,153 | -0,435 |
| Nationality | Asia | 0,122 | 0,374 | -0,656 | -0,194 | -0,216 | 0,051 | -0,2 | -0,327 |
| | Africa | -0,45 | -0,624 | -0,059 | -0,18 | -0,201 | -0,17 | -0,17 | -0,172 |
| Level of Education | Undergraduate | 0,205 | -0,369 | 0,149 | -0,205 | 0,002 | -0,726 | -0,213 | -0,676 |
| | Graduate | -0,325 | -0,345 | -0,657 | 0,047 | -0,049 | 0,548 | -0,376 | -0,194 |
| Turkish Language Level | B2 | -0,374 | -0,425 | -0,472 | -0,037 | -0,224 | -0,284 | -0,83 | -0,407 |
| | C1 and C1+ | -0,441 | -0,046 | -0,275 | -0,337 | -0,839 | -0,796 | 0,982 | -0,557 |
| Reason for Coming to Türkiye | Education | -0,611 | 0,141 | -0,134 | -0,187 | -0,443 | 0,204 | -0,745 | 0,117 |
| | Other (war, economy, etc.) | 0,005 | -0,069 | -0,744 | -0,329 | 0,105 | -0,619 | -0,157 | -0,526 |
| Native Language Family | Indo-European | -0,4 | -0,624 | 0,132 | -0,541 | -0,179 | -0,439 | -0,461 | -0,238 |
| | Hamito-Semitic | -0,237 | -0,614 | -0,44 | 0,489 | -0,147 | -0,317 | -0,347 | -0,196 |
| | Ural- Altaic | -0,477 | -0,387 | 0,15 | -0,098 | 0,24 | -0,771 | -0,365 | -0,369 |
| | Other | 0,079 | -0,418 | -0,94 | -0,18 | -0,155 | 0,463 | -0,083 | -0,008 |
| Number of Known Language | Unspecified | -0,538 | 0,35 | -0,522 | 0,187 | 0,171 | -0,052 | 0,628 | -0,258 |
| | 1 language | 0,026 | -0,58 | -0,106 | -0,317 | -0,408 | -0,276 | 0,289 | -0,283 |
| | 2 languages | -0,47 | 0,001 | -0,205 | 0,158 | 0,241 | -0,03 | -0,119 | -0,345 |
| | 3 languages | -0,214 | -0,597 | -0,742 | -0,303 | -0,728 | -0,072 | -0,11 | 0,444 |

Author Contributions

All authors contributed equally to the article.

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest was declared by the author.

Supporting Individuals or Organizations

No support received.

Ethical Approval and Participant Consent

Ethics committee permission for this study was obtained from Gazi University Ethics Committee with the decision dated 18.04.2023 and numbered 08.

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Availability of Data and Materials

Not applicable.

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