



New Trends and Issues Proceedings on Humanities and Social Sciences



Issue 3 (2017) 155-163

ISSN 2421-8030

www.prosoc.eu

Selected paper of 5th Cyprus International Conference On Educational Research (Cyicer-2016) 31 March-02 April 2016,
University Of Kyrenia, Kyrenia North Cyprus

Opinions of Afghans Learning Turkish as a Foreign Language Towards Turkish

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Suggested Citation:

Sengul, K. & Sunbul, A. M. (2017). Opinions of Afghans learning Turkish as a foreign language towards Turkish.
New Trends and Issues Proceedings on Humanities and Social Sciences. [Online]. 03, pp 155-163.
Available from: www.prosoc.eu

Selection and peer review under responsibility of Assist. Prof. Dr. Cigdem Hursen, Near East University
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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to develop new hybrid admission decision prediction models by using Support Vector Machines (SVM) combined with a feature selection algorithm to investigate the effect of the predictor variables on the admission decision of a candidate to the School of Physical Education and Sports at Cukurova University. Experiments have been conducted on the dataset, which contains data of participants who applied to the School in 2006. The dataset has been randomly split into training and test sets using 10-fold cross validation as well as different percentage ratios. The performance of the prediction models for the datasets has been assessed using classification accuracy, specificity, sensitivity, positive predictive value (PPV) and negative predictive value (NPV). The results show that a decrease in the number of predictor variables in the prediction models usually leads to a parallel decrease in classification accuracy.

Keywords: Teaching Turkish as a foreign language, Afghan students, opinion towards Turkey and Turkish.

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1. Introduction

Tendencies and needs to learn a foreign language as well as variation among individuals; it is known that certain nations have more tendency and need to learn a specific language. Central Asian Turkic Republics' learning Russian because of political reasons; most of those living in Afghanistan, although they are not Pashtun, their learning Pashto have evidential value for this thesis. Foreign language teaching is formed in some places with the policy of the imperialist states to assimilate or is widely preferred according to people's specific interests and needs. In the 11th century, the tendency to Arabic in the Karakhanid period which made its presence felt which was beginning to show its weight in all areas before long exemplifies the second case. This interest of Turks without exposure to any political pressure of course was resulted from the religious factors. There is no doubt that there are many cases similar to this in the world.

Also Turkish has been learned by Chinese especially active in diplomatic relations as a result of political and military relations in Gokturk Empire period. In addition to this, also Turks felt the need to learn Chinese. Again in the same period, it is known that Sogdians* who are especially dealing with commerce learned Turkish to be able to get along with the Turks holding trade routes.

'Also Afghanistan has been the point of contact throughout the history of civilization; meeting, propagation and battle area of various religions and ideologies as a result of its geographical position.' (Siddiqi, 2007). It is known that the ancient Iranians, Empire of Alexander the Great, Bactria Empire, Sakas and later Kushans† established dominance in the region; earlier in the 5th century, White Huns by eliminating Kushans became dominant in Afghanistan and North India. 'In 557, with the Gokturk Khan's claim, Sassanian ruler Nusirevan alliance put an end to White Huns presence in Afghanistan. Both Kushans and White Huns prevented spreading of Iranian states to Afghanistan and India and set the stage for Turkish formations (Gokturks, Ghaznavids, Ghurid dynasty, Mughals) that would come after them in this region' (Ercilasun, 2012).

In 18th century, desire of Pashtuns especially around Kandahar and Herat to establish their own state became apparent and as a result of that Pashtuns' Durani tribe established the Durani Empire. This state is a form of today's Afghanistan's first appearance (Omrani, 2009). It is known that many ethnic groups are living in Afghanistan. Pashtuns form the largest ethnic population; Tajiks form the second largest ethnic population and then Uzbeks and Turkmens form the ethnic population of Afghanistan. This ethnic diversity in Afghanistan prevented the settling of 'Afghan national consciousness'. Individuals in Afghanistan express themselves according to mostly the origin they belong and religious laws. Hence, students coming from Afghanistan to Turkey introduce themselves not as 'Afghan' but as 'Uzbek' Tajik 'Pashtun' or 'Turkmen'.

Turkish language teaching to foreigners is an issue that gains importance day by day. Turkey's being a country that connects Asia and Europe, being east-west synthesized, providing democratic and modern living space attracts foreigners and ensures to be preferred by especially younger generation for university education. Iraq war, the civil war in Syria, the Arab Spring and the Taliban events in Muslim countries occurred in the recent history has stimulated the desire of especially the people of these countries and the younger generation to get university education in Turkey and to immigrate to Turkey. Because of the fact that Turkey's being more peaceful and democratic environment, compared to surroundings, people's preference of Turkey in neighboring countries shows up as an expected result.

There are 35 Afghan students studying in B2 level, in TOMER, in Nevsehir Haci Bektas Veli University. 25 of these students are Uzbeks. As well as Turkish's being learned by foreign nations, being learned by relative communities is also a striking and studied issue in the field of "Teaching

* Sogdians: Given as an example for the nations which have two languages and mixed with city folk in the Turkish language dictionary (Divân-i Lugati't-Turk). Also, it is mentioned as a Turkified nation between Balasagun, Bukhara and Samarkand.

† Kushans: Referred as Turkish nation in most sources (Esin, 1978; Togan, 1981).

Turkish to Foreigners". Turkey's strategic position and prestige in world politics increases the desire of relative communities to learn Turkey Turkish. Uzbek Turks living in Afghanistan are also among relative communities that show interest to Turkey and Turkey Turkish.

Opinion that 'Uzbek' name sprang from Uzbek Khan, Golden Horde Empire, who ruled between the years 1313-1340 has the most supporters. According to H. Vambery, precise meaning of the Uzbek word is 'detached, independent, private' and in the form of Oz(self)+bek(independence). However, Hasan Eren says that this word is comes from 'Ozu(self)+berk(solid)'. According to the explanation, the word means 'strong person'. Uzbek Turks are formed by the combination of Karluk, Kipchak and Oghuz Turks (Buran & Alkaya, 2010).

'Uzbek Turkish is assessed within the scope of East Turkish (Karluk) which is one of the three major groups of the Turkish language and is considered a continuation of the Chagatai Turkish. Uzbek Turkish is the most widely spoken dialect after Turkey Turkish between Chagatai Turkish Dialects. Uzbek Turkish apart from Uzbekistan is spoken densely in the southern part of Kazakhstan, in the northern part of Turkestan, border areas of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan (Buran & Alkaya, 2010). Afghanistan's surface area where 30 million people lives today is 657.500 km². Afghanistan is neighbor with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the north; East Turkestan, Kashmir and Pakistan in the east; Pakistan in the south and Iran in the west.

1.1. Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to determine the views of Afghan students studying in Turkey towards Turkish and Turkey. While determining these views, answers to the following questions will be sought.

1. What are the views of Afghan students studying Turkish in TOMER, in Nevsehir Haci Bektas Veli University towards Turkey?
2. What are the views of Afghan students studying Turkish in TOMER, in Nevsehir Haci Bektas Veli University towards Turkish?

2. Method

In this section, information is given about study's research model, working group, collection of data and analysis of data.

2.1. Research Model

Qualitative research method was used in this research which aims determining the views of Afghan students studying in Nevsehir Haci Bektas Veli University towards Turkish. "Qualitative research can be defined as a research in which qualitative data collection method used such as observation, interviews and document analysis, and qualitative process is followed to determine facts and events in the natural environment in a realistic and holistic way' (Yildirim & Simsek, 2008). 'In this study, case study design was used as a design. The main feature of the qualitative case study is investigating one or more status thoroughly. So factors related to a condition (environment, individuals, events, processes, etc.) are investigated with a holistic approach and sight is set on how they affect the related case and how they are affected by the related case.' (Yildirim & Simsek, 2008). As 'why' and 'how' of the views of students coming from Afghanistan towards Turkey and Turkish are intended to be learned in-depth, case study design is considered as the most appropriate study design.

2.2. Working Group

15 Afghan students learning Turkish in TOMER in Nevsehir Haci Bektas Veli University form the working group of the study. Students who came to Turkey for university education has been living in

Turkey since October, 2014. Easily accessible case sampling method was used in the selection of sample. In easily accessible case sampling, researcher selects a case that close to him and easy to be accessed. This method saves time and increases practicality of the research. Also cost of this method is less than other methods (Yildirim & Simsek, 2008). Information related to working group is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Data Regarding Nationality of Afghan Students Learning Turkish in TOMER in Nevsehir Haci Bektas Veli University

Nationality	f	%
Uzbek	25	%71,4
Tajik	5	%14,3
Hazerah	2	%5,7
Qizilbash	1	2,9
Farce	1	2,9
Pashtun	1	2,9
Total	35	%100

When the table 1 is examined, it is seen that there are 35 Afghan students in B2 level in TOMER, in Nevsehir Haci Bektas Veli University. 15 students were interviewed voluntarily within the student group. It was identified that students who are interviewed are all Uzbek and they came to Turkey for undergraduate study.

2.3. Collection of Data

Interview form developed by the researcher to determine the views of the students was used as a data collection tool. Two Turkish language education experts' opinions were taken to ensure the content validity of the interview forms. The two separate raters were used on the data to ensure the reliability of the study. Data which is finalized after getting experts' opinion and pre-application were collected with interview form consisting of eight questions.

2.4. Data Analysis

In this study, content analysis method was used in the analysis of data which is one of the qualitative analysis methods. Content analysis is a kind of analysis method that is used for substantive examination any text or document and presenting it numerically or statistically. Scalar presentations are performed by creating categories while the document is being examined (Ekiz, 2013). In this context, content analysis was conducted by sorting out student views according to codes, categories and themes. The description of the findings is provided by presenting the findings in the form of tables. Also, study is detailed with students' views presented as examples.

3. Findings

3.1. Findings Related to Views of Afghan Students towards Turkey

Categories; reasons to study in Turkey, characteristics of Turkey, Characteristics of Turkish people and codes forming them which take part in the approaches of Afghan students towards Turkey are presented in Table 2:

Table 2 indicates the views of Afghan students studying in Turkey and shows that 15 students expressed their opinions in the category of reasons to study in Turkey. According to this, all of the students interviewed state that they are studying in Turkey because they receive support from their families. 4 people for each because of quality of education in Turkey and cultural similarities between Afghanistan and Turkey; 3 people because Turkey is a developed and powerful country; 2 people for each because of Islam and war in their country; 2 people because of linguistic affinity stated that they chose Turkey. Students’ being supported by their families is the primary reason to study in Turkey. In the category of reasons to study in Turkey, all of the 15 students stated that they receive family support. From these statements of students, it is seen that Afghan families count on Turkey and have positive opinions about Turkey. Expressions of some of the students about family support are as follows:

Table 2: Afghan Students’ Views towards Turkey

Views towards Turkey		
Category	Reasons to study in Turkey	f
	Quality of education in Turkey	4
	Family support	15
	Islam	3
	Turkey’s being a developed and powerful country	3
	Cultural similarity	4
	Linguistic affinity	2
	War environment in their countries	2
Category	Characteristics of Turkey	
	Friend	5
	Safe	1
	Climatic conditions	2
	Islamic	3
Category	Characteristics of Turkish people	
	Brother	9
	Muslim	5
	Helpful and welcoming	11
	Honest and hardworking	3
	Gives importance to Education	1

K4: I applied to Indian schools and I was accepted. My parents didn't want me to go there but they wanted Turkey.

K5: When I was a kid, my father always said; 'son, if god lets you will study in Turkey because the closest and the most helpful country is Turkey for us.'

K10: My family sent me Turkey because Turkish people acts like us and our cultures and lifestyles are similar.

4 students stated that they chose to study in Turkey because of the good quality of education in Turkey. According to the students, quality of education in Turkey is better than in Afghanistan. Expressions of the students about Turkey's education quality are as follows:

K12: First of all, studying in Turkey was my dream, because Turkish education system is very good. So, I chose Turkey for education.

K15: Turkey is one of the developed countries. I thought that if I study here, I will be successful and I came to Turkey for that reason.

4 Students pointed cultural similarities between Afghanistan and Turkey as reason to study in Turkey. Students' opinions are as follows:

K1: Our cultures and languages are almost same but just a few differences.

K10: ... I preferred Turkey because Turkish Republic and Turkish culture is almost same as ours.

K14: ... I preferred Turkey because we are blood brothers, our blood is one, religion is one, and culture is one.

According to the interviews, students think that Turkey is a strong and developed country and stated that it was effective in coming to Turkey for education. Students' opinions are as follows:

K5: I chose Turkey because it is developed and cultural.

K15: Turkey is one the most developed countries.

Two of the students pointed the Turkish's relationship as a reason to study in Turkey. Students' opinions are as follows:

K13: I preferred Turkey because the words in Uzbek language are also in Turkish language.

In the interviews, two of the students stated that there is a war in their country and for that reason they want to have education in Turkey. Students' opinions are as follows:

K8: There was a war in my country, that's why I chose Turkey.

K9: ...There is a war in my country. They are all jackals. We came here. we will get rid of those jackals and make our country peaceful.

Two of the students see Turkey as an Islamic country and they stated that this affects the preference of Turkey. One of the students' opinion is as follows:

K7: Turkey is an Islamic country and people are hospitable. That's why I preferred Turkey.

According to Table 2, in the category of Turkey's characteristics, 3 of the students see Turkey as Islamic, 2 of them see as it has a good climate, one of them sees as safe. Also 5 students stated that there is a historic friendship between Turkey and Afghanistan. It is proven that the historic friendship between Turkey and Afghanistan affects the students' views towards Turkey and give a positive opinion. Some of the student's views are as follows:

K3: ... In old times, Turkey and Afghanistan helped each other a lot.

K8: Turkey and Afghanistan have been friends for a long time and Turkey helps my country. 6 years ago when I was in seventh grade, I wanted to come here and get my education.

According to the interviews, students see Turkey as an Islamic country and this provides that they have positive opinions towards Turkey. Some of students' opinions who see Turkey as an Islamic country are as follows:

K9: I love Turkey very much because it is a powerful country among Islamic countries.

In the interviews, it was revealed that two students like climatic conditions of Turkey. Students' opinions are as follows:

K11: Turkey is one of best places. Nature and climate are pretty good here.

In the interviews, it was determined that one of the students considers Turkey as safe. Student's opinion is as follows:

K7: Turkey is a very safe place.

In the category of Characteristics of Turkey, it was revealed that Afghan students see Turks as brother, Muslim, helpful, hospitable, ones giving importance to education, honest, hardworking. As a result of the interviews, 8 of the students see Turks as brothers, 5 of them see as Muslim, 11 of them see as helpful and welcoming, 3 of them see as honest and hardworking, 1 of them sees as ones giving importance to education. The views of some students who see Turks as brother or sister are as follows:

K2: Turks are our brothers.

K10: ... I presume that Turks are our brothers.

K14: Turkish people are my blood brothers.

According to the interview, it was concluded that seeing Turks as Muslims is an important factor to build positive opinions for them. Opinions of some students in this regard are as follows:

K6: Turkish people,Muslim,..... and one of the best nation.

K10: Turkey had lots of martyrs while defending Islam.

11 of Afghan students see Turkey as helpful and welcoming. Opinions of some students in this regard are as follows:

K1: I think that the Turkish people are hospitable and very compassionate.

K8: Turkish people are good because they help others a lot.

K5: Turkey was helping our country and still it is helping.

As a result of interview it was identified that 3 of students see Turks as honest and hardworking. Opinions of students in this regard are as follows:

K2: They are always studying and I liked it.

K12: I think Turkish people are the best and most hard working people. Everybody works and earns money. This is really nice.

Interview result shows that one student thinks Turks give importance to education. Opinion of the student is as follows:

K12: Turkish people give importance to education.

3.3. Findings Related to the Views of the Afghan Students towards Turkish

Categories; reasons to learn Turkish and codes forming them which take part in the approaches of Afghan students towards Turkish are presented in Table 3:

Table 3: Views of the Afghan Students towards Turkish

Views towards Turkish		
Category	Reasons to learn Turkish	F
	Linguistic affinity between Uzbek and Turkish	3
	Being considered more valuable compared to its dialects	1
	Belief in finding better jobs with Turkish	3
	Living in Turkey	3

In the category of reasons to learn Turkish, 3 of the students stated that there is a linguistic affinity between Uzbek and Turkish; 3 of them believe that they can find better jobs with Turkish; 3 of them stated that they want to live in Turkey; and 1 of them stated that he considers Turkish more valuable compared to its dialects. In the interviews, it was confirmed that 3 students want to learn Turkish because of linguistic affinity between Uzbek and Turkish. Some of these students' views are as follows:

K4: I am Uzbek and my language is pretty similar to Turkish except a couple of differences.

K1: Because our cultures and languages are almost same but just a few differences.

One student thinks that Turkish is more valuable than its other dialects and states that this case is the reason he learns Turkish. Students' opinion is as follows:

K6: I am also Turk so I need to learn Turkish. Uzbeks Turks, Kyrgyz, Turkmens are all Turks and we all need to learn Turkish.

3 of Afghan students think that they will find better job opportunities if they learn Turkish. Because of this, they stated that they want to learn Turkish. One student's opinion is as follows:

K15: After finishing Turkish, I will start my department. Then, to be specific; after I finish my department, I think I will find a good job.

Interview result shows that 3 students learn Turkish because they want to live in Turkey. One student's opinion is as follows:

K6: I am living in Turkey and learning Turkish now, because I want to live here.

4. Results And Discussion

In this research, opinions of students towards Turkish and Turkey were studied under two themes. In the Approaches towards Turkey theme, reasons to study in Turkey, characteristics of Turkey, characteristics of Turkish people are discussed. In the Approaches towards Turkish theme, reasons to learn Turkish are discussed. When the mentioned factors are analyzed between the reasons to learn Turkish and characteristics of Turkey and Turkish people, it was concluded that Opportunities offered by Turkey and characteristics of Turkish people are important for Afghan students. Turks being Muslim and their families' love of Turkish people and Turkey are important factors that increase the desire of Afghan students to study in Turkey. Afghans see Turkey as a friendly country and presume Turks as brothers. Historic friendship between Turks and Afghans and the aids for the Afghan people today make students feel at home and see Turks as their brothers. Afghan students stated that existing historic friendship between their countries and Turkey and cultural partnership are important for

them. They stated that there are similarities in the way they observe religious holidays, respect for elderly, domestic behaviors between their country and Turkey and they also claimed that those factors increase the desire to come to Turkey and study. As a result of the interviews, most of the students have had the desire to come to Turkey and study to have a good future. Students are affected by their family and acquaintances and also by both Turkey's being almost all Muslim and more democratic and modern than most of other countries. For Afghans, Turkey is the brother of all Turkish community. Therefore, they stated that they would rather study in Turkey than Iran or India. Also, students claimed that Islam's being widespread in Turkey and Turkey's being a peaceful and comfortable environment increase the desire to study in Turkey. Taliban which is a major problem in Afghanistan can be considered as the most important reason for young people to leave their country. Afghans who want to study abroad prefer Turkey first. As a result of the interviews, quality of education, Islam, support of the families of the children studying in Turkey, Turkey's being a developed country, cultural similarities between Turkey and Afghanistan, peaceful and safe environment Turkey has, Turkey's physical and climatic conditions, historical friendship between Afghanistan and Turkey are the primary reason to study in Turkey. Students want to learn Turkish because they think Turkey has a respected position in world politics and Turkish is more valuable than other Turk dialects. Also, the process while learning Turkish is enjoyable and easy for them. The reason is that Afghans interviewed use Uzbek Turkish which is one of Turkish dialects in terms of mother tongue. They think their language and Turkish are similar and state that Turkish can be learned easily. They stated that knowing Turkish will contribute their employment and prepare the way for pursue better conditions of life. Difficulty of public life, especially due to the Taliban, restriction to get education for girls has led to the fear of living under constant threat for Afghans. Therefore, Turkey is regarded as a country where there is religious freedom and they can exercise their rights in free and democratic environment. Therefore, Afghan students' desire to live in Turkey after university education increases the desire to learn Turkish.

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