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Integrative Project

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Introduction

Within these pages is a collection of qualitative interviews and case studies portraying the real-life experiences of migrants living in Turkey. I have meticulously gleaned through research, gathered qualitative data, and collaborated with participants. A larger story emerged through those efforts, and I have been entrusted to share it with you.

In August 2022, I completed nine qualitative interviews with Syrian women (and one of their husbands) living in Ankara, Turkey. Three Syrian women who frequent the center helped me create relevant research questions for a community-based needs assessment among Syrians. I then interviewed those ladies and others in the community to complete the assessment. Each story I heard was a thread in the tapestry that depicts the Syrian experience in Ankara. There was troubling evidence of barriers and trends within Turkey that are preventing Syrian societal integration, such as:

- Violent crimes and prejudicial acts

- Widespread fear of forcible repatriation (one Turkish presidential candidate has made this a part of his platform)

- Fear of speaking Arabic in public

- Workplace exploitation (reports of Syrians being underpaid)

- Low levels of Turkish language ability (despite the availability of government subsidized language courses)

- Few relational connections between Turks and Syrian (no participants have reported having any Turkish friends)

The data demonstrated a compelling deduction: significant divides exist between Turks and Syrians. The reasons for this divide are assuredly complex; however, language and culture evidently created barriers.

With this data in mind, I designed and executed an outcomes-based program evaluation for the Fig Tree Center, a local community center whose vision is to create a welcoming space for refugees within Ankara. I evaluated a particular program, "Turkish Club," a Turkish language program for refugee women living in Ankara. Those who participated this last fall included Syrians, Iraqis, and Afghans. The purpose of Turkish Club is to help women better integrate into Turkish society through language learning. Predicted outcomes included 1) increased Turkish language ability, 2) increased basic classroom learning skills, and 3) improved, positive interethnic interaction.

Significant language and cultural gaps between Turks and refugee groups have stunted the latter's ability to healthily acclimate to their new context. However, language skills can empower diaspora peoples, like Syrians, to better socially integrate into their host countries, which is critical to migrant people thriving and rebuilding their lives. In this paper, I assert that establishing indigenous language learning settings for refugees provides a foundation of contextualization for marginalized immigrants to successfully integrate into their host communities. I illustrate this thesis through my case study of Turkish Club, which can be found following the appendix. Rationale and academic support are presented through:

1) Ascertaining the local research context

2) Outlining utilized research methodology

3) Providing rationale for refugee integration via language

4) And applying contextualization and social justice principles.

Research Context

Ankara, the capital of Turkey, a political hub, and an unlikely melting pot, is where I have gained my first foothold in international community development. This diverse city is home to approximately 5.4 million Turks, 100,000 Syrians, and populations of Iraqis, Afghans, Somalis, Russians, etc. (worldpopulationreview). When I moved to Ankara in August 2020, I became a staff member of the Fig Tree Center, a small community center with a vision to create a welcoming space for refugees within a predominately Turkish context.

The Iraqi community is one of the largest foreign communities in Turkey, with over 118,000 individuals registered as asylum seekers as of 2015, in addition to Iraqi businessmen, students, and migrant workers living in the country (UNHCR). The statistics for Afghans are more uncertain; however, the UNHCR reports 116,000 registered Afghan asylum seekers within Turkey, with some thousands of Afghan migrants who have since been deported (reliefweb).

However, the most significant population to attend the center has been Syrians. Syrians, diverse in tribal family groups, ethnicities (i.e., Kurds, Turkmen, Arabs), political affiliations, and religious denominations, share the Arabic language and Islam as the majority religion. Syrian society is highly hierarchical, collectivistic, and traditional, with passed-down norms, beliefs, and codes of behavior (Hofstede).

Today, Syrians are also survivors of one of our time's most significant humanitarian crises. Twelve years of conflict have displaced 13.4 million Syrians, over half of the total population, from their homes (UNHCR). Among those externally displaced, 3.6 million Syrians settled in Turkey, making them the largest migrant group within the country (Atasü 1). Syrians had no choice but to begin the long, intensive process of establishing themselves in a foreign

country and context. Their children attend local schools, and many men have joined the local,

albeit informal, workforce.

Unfortunately, Turkey has not always been the safe haven for which Syrians initially

hoped. Political and cultural pressures weigh heavily on this population, particularly as they find

themselves the popular scapegoat for local economic troubles. This rising negative opinion

among Turks has emboldened prejudice, harassment, and even violence against Syrians.

Deportations are also on the rise, as hundreds of Syrian men have forcibly deported from the

country (Tanis). All of my fieldwork participants echoed these concerns. One of my participants,

whom I have given the pseudonym of "Inaas," shared her perspective:

> *"Racism," Inaas said, "is our biggest problem here in Turkey. It is common for Syrians to receive verbal threats or abuse in the street. They (Turks) tell us to go back to our country. They say that we receive everything for free, but my household has no outside support." I asked if she knew any of her neighbors. "I have one Turkish neighbor, but on our last visit, she called my children dirty, so we left. I haven't been back since." Inaas proceeded to tell me more tales of prejudice and violence. Recently, a 19-year-old young Syrian man was stabbed to death in his sleep in Istanbul. A group of masked Turkish assailants stormed his flat, killing him in his bed. I was shocked and didn't know what to say.*
>
> *"When did this happen?" I asked.*
>
> *"Earlier this year." Inaas related several more stories, some of which were based in Ankara.*
>
> *"Are you afraid to speak Arabic in the streets?" Inaas nodded, her lips pressed together.*
>
> *"I don't speak Arabic publicly because I don't know who is listening or around me. Neither does my husband (speak Arabic publicly). This is why I want my girls to learn Turkish." She gestured to her children, the oldest four years old and the younger one-and-a-half years old. "Even still," Inaas smiled sadly, "Turkey is better than Syria."*

Despite the pressures of living in Turkey, post-war conditions and a hostile government are a

worse alternative. In a recent study among Syrian businessmen in Turkey, 72% of participants

reported that they hoped to stay in Turkey as opposed to returning to Syria (TEPAV 16). My

fieldwork findings correlated with these findings. In the same interview, Inaas expressed that, despite the difficulties of prejudice, she has apprehension regarding forced repatriation to Syria. If Turkey forced them to return to Syria, her husband would likely disappear into one of Damascus' infamous prisons, and perhaps she and their children would not be safe either (Inaas).

It was Inaas who, along with two other participants, helped me formulate and refine my fieldwork research questions. We discussed the core needs of a typical Syrian household in Ankara. The subsequent questions for the community-based assessment were:

1) How many members are in your households? How many adults? Children under age 18?

2) As a woman, do you feel safe in your neighborhood when by yourself? If not, what causes you to feel unsafe?

3) How many members of your household work? If no one works, how do you provide your daily needs?

4) Are your children enrolled in school? If not, what hindrances are there to your children's education?

5) Do you want to return to Syria? What do you believe you need in order to return to Syria safely?

6) As a refugee, have you benefitted from an NGO in any way? What type of assistance is most beneficial to your family?

7) Are you aware of any local Syrian groups that advocate for the Syrian community?

8) Do you speak Turkish? Do you have any Turkish friends?

9) Where do you want your family to live long term?

I completed nine interviews with six Syrian participants living in Ankara, five women and one

man. Any names in connection in this paper to those interviews are pseudonyms.

Resources for refugees in Ankara

In my research of locally available resources for registered refugees living in Turkey, I found that the primary sources of aid and support are derived from 1) the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and 2) the European Union. The UNHCR website provides critical information for refugees in Turkey under international protection. In addition to legal rights, they inform of free, locally available resources, such as (UNHCR Education):

1. Primary and secondary education for children

2. Financial aid for families with at least one child in school (conditional cash transfers for education [CCTE])—this program is also supported by the European Union (European Commission)

3. Vocational training (offered in Public Education Centers *(Halk Eğitim Merkezi)* and are certified by the Ministry of National Education)

4. Turkish language learning through local universities (i.e., Anadolu University and the Yunus Emre Institute)

5. Primary medical services at state health institutions, though interpretation may not be regularly available (UNHCR Health)

6. The right to work—work permits are lodged by employers (UNHCR Livelihoods)

The European Union (EU) has partnered with organizations, such as the Turkish Red Crescent Society, to launch the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN), the single largest humanitarian program in EU history. The program offers cash assistance to refugees via debit cards and currently supports 1.5 million refugees in Turkey (European Commission).

Research Methodology

The research method I employed for this thesis was *qualitative*. This method is "based on the belief that knowledge is constructed by people in an ongoing fashion as they engage in and make meaning of an activity, experience, or phenomenon" (Merriam 23). The qualitative researcher attempts to understand how people have constructed knowledge and meaning, their feelings, and perspectives, and then makes an interpretation.

The data I collected for this thesis was gathered through informal and semi-formal interviews, observations, and peer-reviewed sources (105). The research interviews were conversations with a directed "structure and…purpose," a dynamic process involving asking good questions, recording and assessing data, and the relationship between the interviewer and participant (107). The interview structure was semi-structured, which allowed me to respond to emerging data and new ideas (109). Observation opportunities were naturally interwoven with informal conversations and semi-structured interviews, and I plan to continue to utilize relevant research.

Observations and interviews were conducted from August 2022-January 2023. Interviews with Syrian and Iraqi participants were conducted entirely in Arabic, and I did not utilize a translator. In each interview, I took my time and asked questions to ensure clarity and mutual understanding.

In one of my interviews with a young Syrian woman, I asked her whether she would return to Syria. In her answer, she began making references to "Al-Assas." I understand the term to broadly mean "foundation." As an adjective, it can also mean "chiefly/primarily." Confused, I interjected and requested that she define "Al-Assas."

My participant explained that the *assas* is the head of the *misbahah*, which are Islamic prayer beads. In our conversation, she never referred to Bashar Al-Assad (the president of Syria) by name or title. Instead, Inaas called him "Al-Assas," explaining that the head or *assas* of the *misbahah* holds the beads together. Unless the president is removed from his position, Inaas said, the situation in Syria will not change.

As a non-native Arabic speaker, this interview taught me the importance of following up with informant/insider culture and language (Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater 286). I did not allow the moment to pass without a follow-up question. I have dedicated 1500+ hours of study to the Arabic language. Yet, it is still critical to continue to seek clarification, understanding, and expand my knowledge and awareness of Arabic of Arab cultures. In research, this becomes doubly important as I attempt to capture and preserve the participant's voice and perspective.

As I am not a Dari speaker, I have utilized an American translator who speaks Dari to interview the Afghan participants from Turkish Club. Native speakers translated the interview questions, both in Arabic and Dari. These questions were distributed to participants ahead of time to allow adequate opportunity for processing and consent without pressure.

Rationale for Refugee Integration via Language

Massive human trans-border movement and mobility are pressing realities of our 21st-century world. Globalization, climate change, and complex emergencies are shifting people groups to new countries, and those most affected by these crises are the most vulnerable sectors of society (Heltberg 4). There is a critical need for good integration practices for migrant peoples. Language acquisition is not only a crucial step to social integration but also an essential human right. The right to communicate and express one's ideas, values, and thoughts is fundamental to identity, freedom, and success. Language "is the very foundation upon which the concept of 'self' is based: in and through language, we present ourselves as subjects…distinct from 'the other' as object but always the other's potential subject to whom 'I' says 'you' and who says 'you' to 'I'" (Tadayon and Khodi 5). When the ability to communicate does not exist or is removed, the result is an increase in fragility, vulnerability, insecurity, and crises of identity and belonging. Language acquisition creates secure, independent, and more resilient members of society, as these members can work, build relationships, learn, contribute, and adjust to adversity (de Weijer iii).

Forced migration, as is the case for refugees and asylum seekers, is a traumatic experience as individuals leave or are expelled from their homes. Social status, economic security, and identity are often shaken or fragmented. In the pursuit of rebuilding lives, language acquisition is one of the building blocks for success and empowerment:

> Power does not operate only at the macro level of powerful institutions such as the legal system, the education system, and the social welfare system, but also at the micro level of everyday social encounters between people with differential access to symbolic (e.g., language, education, and friendship) and material (e.g., capital goods, real estate, and money) resources—encounters which are inevitably produced within language." (6)

Yet, as migration is impactful for migrants, host communities are also undoubtedly affected. In 2011, a new reality for Turks was birthed when the Syrian conflict bubbled over the border, and millions of Syrians took shelter within Turkey. Most were not happy with the situation. However, the expectation at the beginning of the conflict was that Syrians would one day return to Syria. Over time, the Turkish government began moving toward Syrian integration, signaling their opinion that Syrians were here to stay.

Despite steps toward integration, 83% of Turks reported in a 2018 poll that they view Syrian refugees negatively; a 2017 survey found terms such as lazy, rude, dowdy/filthy, and untrustworthy/dangerous were leading adjectives Turks used to describe Syrian refugees (Makovsky 14). Additionally, Syrians are a polygamist culture, the practice to which most Turks object. Objections have been raised to Syrian women's use of heavy makeup, Syrians being out late at night, and reluctance to widespread co-educational facilities for children's education (22). Common negative stereotypes abound, reflecting a deficiency of cross-cultural and interethnic understanding.

Economic and employment insecurities have greatly fanned flames of prejudice against refugees and migrants, as the Turkish economy has experienced significant upheaval in recent years. Some have blamed Syrians for rising competition among businesses and employment opportunities and increasing housing prices and rent. Regarding employment within Turkey, poor Turks have been most affected by Syrians competing for the same jobs. Syrians are willing to work for less, and migrants in the informal economy are not able to demand fair treatment.

Security issues and terrorism incidents stemming from the Syrian crisis have been a source of tension, which carries validity. In 2015 and 2016, there was a sequence of deadly attacks that took the lives of hundreds of Turks and tourists. At that time, the Turkish

government considerably tightened border control and amended its policies toward foreigners and refugees (3). The loss of life is a tragedy, and Turks have felt the pain of their neighbor's conflict.

The political sphere in Turkey has also been tense, such as the 2016 attempted insurrection of the current government. The sitting president, President Erdoğan, has been an advocate for welcoming Syrians into Turkey in the name of Muslim brotherhood. Syrians, as compared to Turks, are "overwhelmingly conservative, religious, and sympathetic to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's AKP," which puts them in direct opposition with Turkish middle-class values and lifestyle issues (Kınıklıoğlu 2).

The primary opposition to Erdoğan's Sunni-majority party is the Republican People's party, mainly composed of Alowites. The Republican People's party has objected to Erdoğan's management of the Syrian refugee crisis, especially as there has been little direct contact between the Turkish and Syrian governments, the latter of which is Alawite. Interestingly, there are currently talks of an upcoming meeting between Turkish and Syrian officials, perhaps Erdoğan and Assad, which will be hosted by Russia (Reuters).

Building Peace

So the critical question is: "how do we end something not desired and build something we do desire" (Lederach 30)? In considering this socio-cultural-political dilemma, Salter McNeil's "Contact Theory" came to mind. Contact Theory suggests "relationships between conflicting groups will improve if they have meaningful contact with one another over an extended period of time"; conditions of success include 1) a mutually beneficial context for learning and 2) multiple contact opportunities for cooperative interaction (Salter McNeil 37). Turks and Syrians live on parallel tracks—co-existing in the same neighborhoods, shopping at

the same stores, attending the same schools—but not integrating. Despite some similarities

between Syrians and Turks, 82% of Turks feel no shared culture with Syrians (Kınıklıoğlu 3).

Disgust psychology can help explain the deep-seated emotions Turks are feeling. For

example, boundary psychology is a form of disgust that "monitors the borders" of the body or

interpersonal boundaries (Beck 15). This is evidenced by one group distancing themselves from

another and thinking, "If only *they* could think or act like *us*" (Hagerman 34). This push for

homogeneity is a potent form of prejudice because it is an impossible request.

This is illustrated by the animosities between Turks and Kurdish-Turks, a relationship

with much history and baggage. The Kurds are a distinct ethnic group who live across the

Middle East—primarily in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran—and comprise one-fifth of Turkey's

population. In the 1980s, a military coup intensified Turkish nationalism, and the emerging

government failed to recognize ethnic individualism in its state. In 1983, the use of Kurdish was

outlawed and was later lifted in 1991 (Aydin-Duzgit). Kurdish-dominated regions were flooded

with government military presence, leading to human rights abuses and suppression of Kurdish

identity. The lack of democracy led to the rise of armed conflicts, and subsequently, a faction of

Turkish Kurds formed the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK). At the time, they led a series of

violent attacks that resulted in over 35,000 deaths. A significant goal of theirs is to create an

independent Kurdish state (CFR).

In response, the Turkish government has tried its best to homogenize the Kurds,

discouraging distinctive culture, language, and identity. The Kurds have resisted, and many

conflicts, and even violence, have occurred. This cannot be defined as integration but

assimilation.

Cultural integration is the process of two distinct groups influencing and accepting one another. Minority groups belong to the majority without losing their unique ethnic identity. *Assimilation*, on the other hand, is the absorption of minority groups into the majority's values, characteristics, and beliefs (Difference between). Sometimes, shedding cultural distinctiveness is a choice, and other times, the adoption of culture is forced upon minorities. For Turkey to successfully integrate an entire people group without suppressing or oppressing individuality, such as four million Syrians, critical shifts in thinking will be required.

Another example that I have noted is based on expulsive psychology. Expulsive psychology pushes away, distances, avoids, or expels the object of disgust (Beck 15). This is illustrated by sentiments such as:

- "I feel like a stranger in my own country,"

- "I never hear Turkish on the street anymore,"

- "They [the Syrians] receive more [state funding] than we do just for coming here,"

- "First we let them in, and now they wage war [that is to say, commit crimes] against us."

  (Makovsky 15)

Among the Turkish public, a majority desire to expel Syrians from Turkey and return them to a war-torn Syria. This line of reasoning is riddled with emotion. In this scenario, Syrians have been marked as "other," and Turkish society has erected a boundary between them. Misconceptions, such as how much aid Syrians receive, what they contribute to society, and their character/nature, abound.

To begin alleviating tensions, I believe the Turkish government needs to make a serious effort to communicate state policies toward refugees and build public support for integration. Misconceptions need to be more thoroughly addressed so that false negative perceptions can start

to be deconstructed. Socially, putting Turks and Syrians in the same room is not enough, as "mere diversity without real encounter and relationship will yield increasing tensions in our societies" (Friedman 316). Contact Theory requires mutually beneficial and equitable learning spaces and repeated contact. Some joint projects have lifted poor Turks and Syrians out of poverty, such as by the World Bank.

Additionally, Syrian children have the right to free primary education, which is another point of meaningful contact between the two peoples. Yet, the lack of interethnic progress leads me to believe that more significant opportunities are necessary for Turks and Syrians to break down barriers. Addressing prejudice and building peace, as opposed to simple humanitarian aid, will help Syrians living in Turkey more.

Language Acquisition

Language acquisition is a highly enculturated endeavor. When we are young, we rely on our community to impart shared meanings, or *cultural conceptualizations*, of the world around us. Culture—shared norms and values—are embedded in us "as a layered identity that has been constructed, distributed, and assimilated over time through interactions between individuals and groups" (Mohammed). Language is reflective of and constructed by culture, describing the characteristics, beliefs, and practices of that particular community. So language learning is not simply learning grammar structures or decoding words and sentences in a foreign language. It is a holistic and restorative journey that:

1. Connects learners with others

2. Helps learners participate in local community activities

3. Builds confidence with new skills in a new host context.

An ecological approach to language learning affirms that "language and context are inextricably linked and cannot be separated as without context, 'there is no language left to be studied'" (Cox 3). I define contextualization as the discovery of and entrance into a new world in which you learn to participate as a unique entity. It is an exploratory process that can be discomforting and consuming at times. These new and foreign spaces are filled with coded cultural, social, political, and historical meanings. Decoding those shared requires a comprehensive, immersive linguistic and social experience. Language acquisition cannot be separated from its environment, nor can language be separated from people.

The foreigner, or explorer, requires guidance from the locals. In fact, both the learner and the local share responsibility in creating opportunities for learning and sharing space (Cox 3). If we could create mutually beneficial spaces for Turks and Syrians, great learning and sharing could occur. Applying that principle could be recreational outings to shared spaces structured with language learning opportunities in both languages. Such moments could help shift power relations, spark catalytic experiences, and socially empower refugees to participate in this society (Tadayon and Khodi 4).

Contextualization and Social Justice

Contextualization

Cultural contextualization is meaningful engagement within the framework of a particular culture—i.e., characteristics, values, and beliefs— at a specific place in time. Contextualization does not imply that people groups are alone or totally independent; our world is interdependent on many levels (Hesselgrave 32). Yet special consideration is due to understanding and relating to each people—worldview, ideology, theology, etc.–and the many layers of their world and culture. Contextualization involves uncovering these various layers to learn, understand, and make meaningful applications. The multiple paradigms that express culture, a shared, perceived reality by a group of people, include:

1. "Worldviews—ways of viewing the world

2. Cognitive processes—ways of thinking

3. Linguistic forms—ways of expressing ideas

4. Behavioral patterns—ways of acting"

5. Communication media—ways of channeling the message

6. Social structures—ways of interacting

7. Motivational sources—ways of deciding." (203)

Learning language is the first step to entering these realities, as communication is a crucial aspect of context and contextualization. Communication theory states that meaning comes not from words but from the hearts and minds of people who can express meaning in code form (60). Context, language, and community cannot be separated. Language acquisition is as much a relational and social effort as it is academic.

In that vein, it is true that listening and copowerment, our core ICD values, are necessary and practical steps to meaningful contextualization. The contextualizer/practitioner exists within a unique reality that is likely shared by the community that raised her. In confronting a different kind of worldview, it would be easy to dismiss specific values, practices, or characteristics as "bad" instead of "different." Listening helps the contextualizer slow down and take note of her environment rather than react emotionally or dismissively.

The value of copowerment also insists that we limit our power. It is said that "if you want to fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." In limiting ourselves, we acknowledge our actual capacity and seek the value and strength of others. Language acquisition is such a journey. When we learn a new language, we become like an infant in that world, unknowing, unseeing, and uncommunicative. We need the hand of a guide to hold, nurture, and teach us until we are ready to walk. Yet, even then, we are still foreigners, always learning, participating, and growing (Growing Participation).

Case Study

"'I look and I see white everywhere: white walls, white floors, and a lot of white people. The teachers do not know I have no idea of anything they are talking about. I do not want to listen to anyone, especially the teachers. They are giving homework and expecting me to do problems on my own. I have never done homework in my life. I go to the bathroom, look in the mirror and say, 'This is not Michael Oher'." (Oher)

What Oher is describing here is a wall of noise surrounding him. When you enter another world, a wall of noise surrounds you (Growing Participation). You hear but cannot understand and see without being able to ascribe meaning. There is a disconnect that can only be overcome by constructing a bridge of understanding.

My fieldwork and research have revealed that most Syrian adults have minimal Turkish language ability. Their children are learning Turkish in school, but adults remain behind a wall

of noise, cut off from the sociocultural world around them. The case study for this paper is an evaluation of Turkish Club, a Turkish language course for refugee women living in Ankara. Turkish Club aims to help migrant women move from living behind a wall of noise and participating in Turkish society through language learning. Predicted outcomes included 1) *increased Turkish language ability*, 2) *increased basic classroom learning skills*, and 3*) increased positive interethnic interaction*. Last semester, ten Afghan, Syrian, and Iraqi participants graduated from the course. In the New Year, I was able to interview 8/10 women and three other women attending Turkish Club this semester for a total of 11 interviews. In the course of each interview, the participants answered the following:

1. Why did you attend Turkish Club?

2. When was the last time you were in a classroom setting?

3. Has the classroom experience helped you learn? Why or why not?

4. Since attending Turkish Club:

   a. Has your understanding of Turkish increased?

   b. What class content have you used outside of class?

   c. In what contexts do you usually speak Turkish? Is there a context of life in which you wish you had more Turkish?

   d. Are you interested in participating in Turkish society, i.e., work, friendship, etc.?

5. What did you enjoy the most about Turkish Club? What was hardest?

6. What would have made attending this course easier for you?

7. What was your experience of being in class with multiple nationalities?

8. Would you like to learn more Turkish? After completing Turkish Club, do you feel that you could attend a local Turkish course?

9. Would you recommend this course to a friend? Why or why not?

10. How would you describe this course to a friend?

For this paper, I illustrate how establishing indigenous language learning settings for refugees provides a linguistic foundation of contextualization for marginalized immigrants. Contextualization answers the question, "How am I changed?"

Applications for Contextualization

In evaluating Turkish Club, I listened to our participants, asked questions, and endeavored to understand their stories. I found that most are eager to share their perspective. It is validating and empowering for them to be an "expert" source of information, as their stories and perspectives are uniquely their own.

First, I needed to ascertain whether Turkish Club is increasing participants' Turkish language ability. After the course, participants took a final test to gauge reading comprehension, writing skills, numbers, and vocabulary. The average test score of the class was 85.8%, the highest score was 100%, and the lowest was 70%. Of the 11 participants I interviewed, all reported increased understanding and verbal fluency. One woman said that before attending TC, she always brought a family member with her when going out to translate (Ar). Now, she no longer feels that she needs to. Another participant shared that, before the course, she could not communicate with her Turkish neighbors (though she wished she could). Since completing the course, she has, for the first time, visited her neighbors in their homes and used her newfound linguistic skills (S).

Second, I attempted to ascertain whether or not there was an increase in basic classroom skills. I asked participants when they were last in a classroom, and the average answer was 15 years ago. Two of the 11 participants had completed their Master's degree, while the rest of the

women, on average, completed the 11th grade. One participant stopped school at ten and is functionally illiterate in her heart language (Im).

Fifty-five percent of participants shared that learning in a classroom setting increased their ability to focus. Participants did not report a change in being able to follow instructions, complete their homework, or sit without getting up and moving. The staff member teaching the class, Katherine, reported that everyone in class faithfully finished and submitted their assignments (which she rewarded with stickers and positive affirmations). For more challenging exercises, Katherine allowed the ladies to work in pairs, which increased confidence when reporting back to the larger group. She reflected that, in teaching this group, she learned to simplify instructions, as their only common in-class language was Turkish. Katherine noted that no one gave up or got up during a lesson, as she frequently changed activities and kept them engaged.

Concerning being in class with people of different ethnicities, the women reported mainly positive experiences. One Arab woman shared that an Afghan woman, who knew some Turkish, helped her and others in the class (Ay). The Afghan ladies thought their perceived value of Turkish increased because they could communicate with both Turks and other nationalities. One Arab woman remarked that it seemed the Afghan ladies did not study much at home, and they interrupted the class with chatter and questions.

Some notable unanticipated outcomes from the course included mental health benefits, such as increased motivation and confidence. For example, a participant reported much improvement in fluency and that her confidence also has risen considerably (Ay). She feels encouraged to express herself and is no longer discouraged when she makes mistakes. The language teacher, Katherine, modeled this confidence to her.

One of the participants, an older woman, expressed that attending Turkish Club is "good for the heart, mind, and body" (K). "K" shared that she lives alone and has no family. She cooks, cleans, and lives quietly. Each week, Katherine made a baked good for the class. In our interview, "K" remarked that eating "from Katherine's hand" touched her heart and made her feel cared for. She expressed familial and relational comfort in the simplicity of kindness and hospitality.

These stories remind us that academic progress alone does not accurately measure a student's progress in migration or integration (Tweedie 135). For those who have experienced the trauma of displacement, separation from loved ones, or social isolation, indigenous language learning settings can help participants by 1) building strong teacher-student relationships, 2) affirming participants' efforts and strengths, and 3) helping participants to increase mental health through focused learning (125). Learning language is not limited to memorizing grammar structures or decoding vocabulary. Language acquisition is a social experience that moves individuals from isolation to connection. The Turkish Club participants expressed and demonstrated that learning Turkish builds confidence and opens doors for more significant participation in the community.

Theoretical Applications for Social Justice

Social justice "is dedicated to the reordering of society, to the changing of institutions, systems, and patterns of behavior which deny people their basic human rights and which thereby destabilize society. Social justice . . . aims at correcting any oppressive and alienating trends within the community" (Moe-Lobeda 180). Within indigenous language learning settings lie exciting opportunities for social justice. When teachers and educators are attuned to social justice, three fundamental principles emerge: 1) equity of learning opportunity, 2) respect for

social groups, and 3) acknowledging and dealing with tensions (Akin-Sabuncu 817). The first

principle of equitable learning opportunities speaks to the human right to learn, which lays the

foundation for societal success. Defining human rights is a multifaceted moral and legal effort;

however, morality, the bedrock of humanitarianism, provides us the starting point (Darcy 5).

The Sphere Handbook summarizes fundamental human rights for those affected by

disaster or conflict as 1) the right to life with dignity, 2) the right to receive humanitarian

assistance, and 3) and the right to protection and security (Sphere 29). Within the right to

protection and security is *non-refoulement*, the principle that displaced peoples shall not be

returned to contexts where their life, freedom, or security is in danger or where they may face

inhumane treatment or abuses (31). Inaas, one of my Syrian participants, shared this fear, as her

husband would likely face imprisonment and worse. Turkish presidential candidates have made

Syrian repatriation a part of their platforms.

While the protracted nature of the Syrian war has catalyzed change within Turkish

refugee policy, repatriation is not an entirely empty political threat. Less than a year ago, the

Turkish government arbitrarily arrested hundreds of Syrian boys and men, many from their

workplaces or homes, and forced to sign paperwork indicating that they were voluntarily

repatriating to Syria. They were then transported to the Turkish-Syrian border and made to cross

at gunpoint (Majumdar).

There remains much work to be done concerning Turkish-Syrian relations. Perhaps the

most significant barrier is the socio-cultural tension between the two peoples. Moe-Lobedo

writes, "neither state nor military domination is required to elicit the general population's

consent to the overall direction imposed on life by dominant sectors or culture. Rather, consent is

garnered through worldview, values, and ideas, even where that societal direction is exploitative

or oppressive to the very people who consent to it" (Moe-Lobedo 89). If consent is garnered

through the "soft" skills or values of culture, worldview, etc., then there remains hope for the

successful integration of Syrians into Turkish society.

At this early stage of Turkish Club, we cannot measure its social justice impact in helping

Syrians integrate into the greater society. However, there are academic rationale and case studies

that support social justice through linguistic acquisition and contextualization. Encouraging

themes in one review across US, Turkish, and Hong Kong literature for ESL teachers include:

1. Language as a key bridge (Lee et al. 77)

2. Immigrant experiences as valuable knowledge (80)

3. And educators shifting and developing thinking within the classroom toward social

   justice to counteract racist and prejudiced ideologies. (83)

One Turkish report related that when teacher candidates were exposed to topics that deepened

their understanding of their students' experiences and struggles, their personal viewpoints and

biases changed (83). If given the opportunity, the Turkish public may change their perspective to

empathize with Syrians and value their culture. Language acquisition and the unique relationship

between teacher and student is one context where social justice can be championed.

Another study reported how Turkish classroom teachers recognized curriculum deficits

concerning their refugee/immigrant students. To meet their students' needs, they incorporated

subjects such as refugee asylum, refugee rights and freedoms, and valuable knowledge that

refugees bring into society (84). This illustrates 1) the value of interethnic contact, 2)

corresponding empathy and transformation through contact, and 3) how educators can welcome,

value, and empower their students. This case study illustrates how indigenous language learning

settings help migrant populations socially connect with locals, contextualize, and integrate into society as valued members.

Success in language acquisition is essential to successful integration into society. For indigenous language learning settings in Turkey to be most effective, educators must be attuned, either through contact or training, to their students' holistic needs. Teachers who invest in understanding their students' assets, values, and vulnerabilities are likelier to instill a sense of belonging and connection, which is critical for the language learner's development in their host-context (87).

Consent of societal direction, as Moe-Lobeda stated, is determined by worldview, values, and ideas. When humble and equitable contact occurs, we can see through others' eyes, and empathy, understanding, and transformation are grown (Rocke and Van Dyke 50). Language acquisition is more than decoding meaning in a foreign language. It is the key to breaking down the "wall of noise" and constructing a bridge of understanding with the worldviews, values, and ideas that direct the greater society. Understanding the "other" and making meaningful contact lays the foundation for necessary conditions of social justice and integration.

Personal Perspective

Personal Transformation

When I first entered the program, I was uneasy with myself. For much of my life, my identity and relationships with others were tainted by a lingering sense of inferiority to one degree or another. Shame creates an unspoken fear of being "found out" that if someone sees me for who I am, they will inevitably reject me. With equal measures of desire and trepidation, my inner man longed to hear these words, "You are lovable and worthy as you are."

In retrospection, I realize I was caught in a mindset of what I "should" or "should not" be. This example of black-and-white thinking presents the illusion of simplifying our value system or worldview with explicit or implicit rules and expectations. Light and shadow are defined and separate. It is tempting to eliminate the chaos of the grey to extinguish uncertainty and insecurity. Yet, this mindset imprisons rather than empowers (Palmer Ch. 5). It kept me from confronting my inner reality and growing.

Palmer wrote, "*Go far enough on the inner journey, they all tell us-go past ego toward true self-and you end up not lost in narcissism but returning to the world, bearing more gracefully the responsibilities that come with being human*" (Ch. 5). The inner journey of transformation has returned me more whole…and more me. As I have laid down "should" and "should not" for "what is" and "what could be," I began to take greater ownership of my life and became more hopeful for the future. My curiosity and love for learning grew exponentially, and I immersed myself in more intensive personal and professional development. I never thought I would love research, but now I deeply enjoy the journey of exploring content on a variety of subjects. My personal discipline and habit of reading have grown beyond the program's

workload, and though I am finishing this program, I do not want to stop learning. Lifelong

learning is now an engrained value in my life!

Additionally, the program has significantly shaped me as a leader. In August 2021, our

cohort gathered in Washington State to meet one another and our professors. I still remember

Professor Brian Humphreys' words at that time. He said we are leaders, and one of his main

objectives is convincing us that we are.

In April 2022, I accepted a leadership position on a team that happened to be in deep

conflict. As I have had the opportunity to lead and implement course materials into my

leadership and work, I have flourished, and I believe my team has also benefited. Through fiery

trials and challenging conflicts, I have embraced the principle that "easy learning doesn't build

strong skills" (Brown 170). In my short time as a leader, I have grown in:

- Listening

- Leading collaboratively

- Peacebuilding/mediation

- Team development

- Delegation

- Compassion

- Failure-tolerance

- And taking personal ownership of my growth.

I am learning to distinguish between sensitivity and stubbornness, accountability and

compassion, justice and transformation, and creative destruction and resilience through chaos

(Bornstein 23). This leads me to believe that if I am living in tension, I am where I need to be.

Copowerment

Imagining ourselves as heroes or saviors is tempting in pursuing goodwill and change-making. Yet, according to Easterly, this would make us a Planner. The Planner imagines that he knows the answer, can engineer a solution, and impose that solution from the outside; whereas the Searcher believes that answers are not known in advance, developed by trial and experimentation, and that "only insiders have enough knowledge to find solutions, and that most solutions must be homegrown" (Easterly 6).

My fieldwork and interview opportunities were, perhaps, the most impactful experience that cemented the value of copowerment in my mind. I began my fieldwork with a thesis and project designed entirely by myself. Perhaps unsurprisingly, that initial project failed. I received a new direction for my project when I went to my target community, asked questions, and gained their input. They edited my research questions, cutting and adding until each question accurately reflected their present realities and concerns. It takes courage to work with others, accept criticism, and make revisions (Janus 16, 19). However, the end result was increased failure tolerance and a fieldwork project that was meaningful and relevant to my participants. I learned through this experience that participants are not only receivers but also givers with skills, talents, capacities, connections, and resources (Wilke 5).

For future work and efforts, I would like to partner more fully with locals in the development, execution, and evaluation phases of a given program. Participants are not only sources of expertise but also empowered individuals who can and should lead change within their communities (Bryant 20). This means releasing control and allowing development in creative and contextualized ways.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have explored how establishing indigenous language learning settings for refugees provides a linguistic foundation of contextualization for marginalized immigrants. Rationale and academic support were presented by 1) ascertaining the local research context, 2) outlining the utilized qualitative research methodology, 3) providing a rationale for refugee integration via language, and 4) applying contextualization and social justice principles. The Syrian, Iraqi, and Afghan residents of Ankara inspired this study. Through their stories, I learned to see the migrant and refugee experience through new eyes.

In my program evaluation of Turkish Club, I also learned how language acquisition and classroom experience have the potential to powerfully impact participants in their new host culture. As the case study of Turkish Club demonstrated, learning the local language can catalyze increased contextualization and opportunities for meaningful contact with the larger society. Contextualization through language acquisition and cultural immersion is critical to social integration and educational and professional success.

As participants learn in the classroom and engage society, there is also increased potential for social justice. This is particularly true as teachers and instructors are either 1) mobilized to understand their students' perspectives or 2) recognize and respond to the unique needs of their students. With the teacher as their guide, the classroom is the participants' first step beyond the "wall of noise."

For future work, this thesis project and paper have equipped me in two primary ways. First, I have gained skills in program evaluation, which is a crucial need in any community development project or NGO. Second, the research process for this academic process has demonstrated the role of language acquisition in contextualization and social justice for refugees

and migrants. This knowledge is valuable and applicable in any context where those populations are present and working to integrate and succeed in their host cultures.

We are living in migratory age. Within the last decade, the effects of conflicts, climate change, and economic instabilities have exponentially increased global economic migration, irregular border crossings, and asylum applications (ICMPD). Integrating migrants en masse into host countries and cultures is a pressing need for today and beyond. This thesis has demonstrated that establishing indigenous language learning settings for refugees provides a solid linguistic foundation that is essential for contextualization, which is illustrated through my case study of Turkish Club. Contextualization is a critical tool for migrants to integrate and rebuild their lives and become more resilient, secure, and healthy members of their community. This is the kind of society for which I am working, a society where vulnerabilities and insecurities diminish and identity, belonging, and resiliency create stability and peace. Investing in marginalized migrants through language learning is an impactful, worthy investment in the individual and in local and global communities.

Appendix

Project Proposal

Introduction

The Fig Tree Center is a community center located in Ankara, Turkey. Opened in 2019, the Fig Tree Center (FTC) stands as a hospitable and welcoming intersectional point for the diaspora peoples of Ankara. Iraqis, Syrians, Afghans, and Somalis frequent the center's programs. To best serve these people, I will work with FTC to design an evaluation for one of its major programs, the women's Turkish Club.

Turkish Club is a program for diaspora women living in Ankara, Turkey. The current participants of this club are Syrian, Iraqi, and Afghan women. During my program evaluation design, I will develop 1) a logic model and evaluation plan for Turkish Club, 2) receive program feedback from participants and staff, and 3) analyze and present the evaluation's findings.

The purpose of Turkish Club is to aid refugee women in socially integrating into the Turkish community through language learning. Turkey is rife with interethnic conflict, creating social isolation and otherness. Those who can learn Turkish are better equipped to become a part of Turkey's social fabric. This semester, I volunteered with Turkish Club, particularly with Kids' Club, whose purpose is to better facilitate their mother's participation. My evaluation design will not evaluate Kids' Club, though their activities and outputs are included. The program spanned 12 weeks with two hours of weekly class time.

The Significance of Evaluation

Evaluation is a term that inspires a range of feelings. Sometimes evaluation invokes fear. There may be fears of how the information will impact funders, interference of services to participants, or the dedicated resources required to implement evaluation (Reisman and Clegg 10). There is also the natural, personal fear of receiving critical feedback.

However, within a culture of learning, evaluation is a positive term. A learning culture instills curiosity, nurtures creative thinking, and helps people "expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire" (Tiess). Within a culture of learning, fear is not at the helm, and failure is not final. Analytical and focused evaluation helps create the conditions for increasing growth, effectiveness, and understanding. Evaluation, implemented in the spirit of learning and discovery, builds more vital organizations, leaders, teams, and programs.

Strategic and timely evaluation provides a logical framework to generate helpful information for guiding programs, directing long-term vision, and securing the program's survival (10). As community development practitioners, we are accountable to our participants, funders, and team. Evaluation ensures that we are doing as we say and that we are doing it with excellence. High-quality and effective programs will better impact their target community and win like-minded funders' support.

Another significant truth is that good evaluation embodies the value of *listening*, which lays the foundation for life-honoring *copowerment*. Evaluation creates opportunity to listen to our stakeholders, to understand, clarify, and hear the stories that are important to them. As we partner with our participants, staff members, and other stakeholders, we can reorient our perspectives to implement more effective programs.

Cultural Competency in Evaluation

Fundamentally, evaluation is "a procedure for determining values, which are emergent and transformed through deliberative processes into evaluation findings" (SenGupta 10). Every person operates from a cultural framework—worldview, beliefs, and values—that informs how we understand the world and our place within it. So values, in all their shapes and forms, are a fundamental element of culture.

Evaluation is distinct from social science research in that social science research does not attempt to designate "standards or values" in culture (10). The implication is that *social studies research* studies and reports; *evaluation* establishes value, which assumes some understanding of truth, i.e., what has and does not have merit or worth. In cross-cultural evaluation, what becomes dangerous is the transference of value from one culture to another, such as the evaluator's values to their participants' cultural context.

There are many contrasting areas of values within culture, which I will not explore in this paper. However, the key is understanding and establishing 1) differing cultural value systems and 2) methods for implementing cross-cultural evaluation. One important expression of values is how social problems are conceptualized and how these social programs may be addressed (8).

Using Turkish Club as an example, a problem has been identified: social segregation between Turks and foreign refugees. An existing assumption is that this lessens refugees' quality of life and increases ethnic tensions. The following assumption is that social integration would benefit the refugee community.

The question is: do these peoples want to integrate into Turkish society? Do they view separation as a problem? If not, why? If so, what viable solutions could they envision? To clarify assumptions and values, cross-cultural managers/evaluators can invite program participants to help 1) define the problem and 2) design and plan the program.

This approach to evaluation is also consistent with the biblical framework. Biblically, humanity is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-30). God, who is both Creator and King, created life that is *tov*, meaning *good* or *life-furthering*; as his image bearers, we are also called to life-furthering, creative work (Moe-Lobeda 55). The implication is that it is biblically ethical to include participants in defining problems and planning programs that impact their lives and

communities. Our participants are actors with an inborn right to 1) life-furthering, creative work and 2) morally and ethically exercise power in their environments (Myers Ch. 3).

Evaluation Parameters

In developing this evaluation's parameters, I interviewed the director of the Fig Tree Center, Ben, and the program manager for Turkish Club, Katherine. Some questions I asked included (McNamara 5):

1. What do you hope to receive from this evaluation?

2. What is the purpose of this evaluation?

We identified the stakeholders, clarified information sources, means of information collection, and how I will implement the evaluation. I interviewed staff this semester and completed the evaluation design, logic model, and plan. In the New Year, I plan to conduct semi-formal interviews with program participants to understand the program's actual outcomes and results.

Through an interview, Ben shared that he has been developing a theory of change for the center and creating unifying indicators of success and goals to align their programs with the FTC's mission. Additionally, Ben expressed optimism that this evaluation process can be a model for the center to replicate in the future. His desire is to foster a culture of learning and evaluation at FTC and increase strategic thinking concerning program management. So implementing the Fig Tree Center's first program evaluation is an excellent first step (Ben).
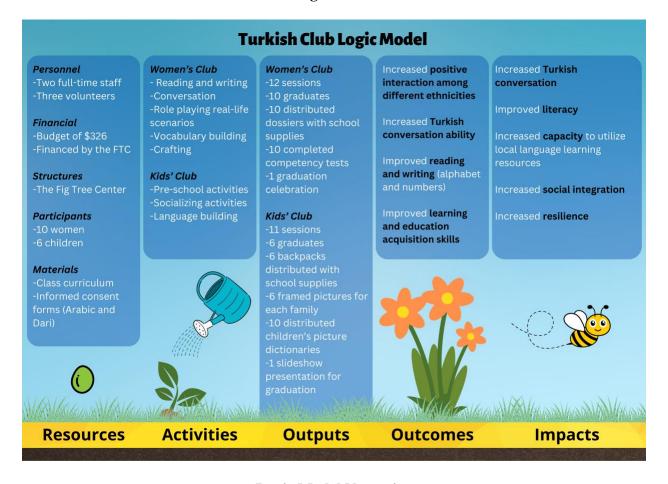
As program manager, Katherine identified that she would like to know if participants are more confident and equipped to utilize local language learning resources (i.e., Turkish courses). Upon finishing Turkish Club, are they using Turkish in new arenas of life? Do they feel encouraged to learn more? Has this club met a social need (Katherine)?

In meeting with Ben and Katherine, we also discussed the goal of Turkish Club's evaluation. Three common evaluation types are outcome-based, goal-based, and process-based evaluation (McNamara 6):

1. Outcome-based evaluation identifies benefits to program participants, i.e., how is this program affecting our community (7)

2. Goal-based evaluation answers if a program is fulfilling its predetermined objectives (6)

3. Process-based evaluation helps evaluators understand how the program works, i.e., how it produces its results.

We identified that an outcomes-based evaluation for Turkish Club is most strategic and needed. We want to understand Turkish Club's impact on our community, what is working, and what we can adjust to increase the FTC's effectiveness.

Logic Model

Turkish Club Logic Model

Resources	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
Personnel -Two full-time staff -Three volunteers **Financial** -Budget of $326 -Financed by the FTC **Structures** -The Fig Tree Center **Participants** -10 women -6 children **Materials** -Class curriculum -Informed consent forms (Arabic and Dari)	**Women's Club** - Reading and writing -Conversation -Role playing real-life scenarios -Vocabulary building -Crafting **Kids' Club** -Pre-school activities -Socializing activities -Language building	**Women's Club** -12 sessions -10 graduates -10 distributed dossiers with school supplies -10 completed competency tests -1 graduation celebration **Kids' Club** -11 sessions -6 graduates -6 backpacks distributed with school supplies -6 framed pictures for each family -10 distributed children's picture dictionaries -1 slideshow presentation for graduation	Increased **positive interaction among different ethnicities** Increased **Turkish conversation ability** Improved **reading and writing** (alphabet and numbers) Improved **learning and education acquisition skills**	Increased **Turkish conversation** Improved **literacy** Increased **capacity** to utilize local language learning resources Increased **social integration** Increased **resilience**

Logic Model Narrative

A logic model is a planning tool that provides a systematic and visual map of how a particular program works and to what end; represented within the logic model is the planned work—resources and activities—and the intended results of the program—outputs, outcomes, and impacts (Kellogg 1). Fundamentally, a logic model paints a picture of 1) what you expect to achieve and 2) how you intend to do that.

Within a logic model are five fundamental categories: resources, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts. *Resources* are any human, financial, or material inputs that make the program possible. *Activities* are what we do with our resources, i.e., applications. *Outputs* are quantifiable products of any program activity. *Outcomes* are qualitative products of activities,

such as changes in program participants, i.e., behaviors, knowledge, and skills (2). *Impacts* are

the changes that occur in communities, systems, or organizations due to the program.

For my logic model, I gathered information through semi-formal interviews with FTC

staff, observation, and informal conversations with program participants. I have gained a strong

understanding of the "how" and "why" of the program's activities from FTC staff. For example,

one compelling reason for program activities was that refugee women attending the center

reported difficulty learning in free, locally available Turkish classes provided by the government.

The gap between their language/education skills and the classes' requirements was too

significant.

Some instances where participants reported needing Turkish skills include: 1) filling out

official forms, 2) interacting with Turkish neighbors, 3) seeking medical services, etc. Turkish

Club intends to help bridge this educational gap, equipping participants to better interact in

various contexts. The underlying assumption is that increased Turkish ability will also aid their

integration into Turkish society, which is one of the program's desired impacts.

Evaluation Plan for Turkish Club

Outcome	Indicators	Data Collection Method & Tools	Frequency and Schedule of Data Collection	Sampling Strategy and Size
1. Increased	2.1 Conversational ability (greetings, vocabulary, question and answer)	1. Semi-formal interview 2. Observation	Short-term monitoring	Program participants

	Turkish language ability	2.2 Increased literacy (reading and writing, filling out official forms, writing their name, etc.) 2.3 Increase of conversations in Turkish	3. Post-program competency test	(Sep-Dec 2022) Long-term monitoring (Jan 2023)	Program staff
2.	Equipping with basic classroom learning skills	2.1 Focusing on lesson content for a period of time 2.2 Sitting without getting up or moving 2.3 Following instructions 2.4 Completing homework	1. Semi-formal interview 2. Observation	Short-term monitoring (Sep-Dec 2022) Long-term monitoring (Jan 2023)	Program participants Program staff
3.	Positive interethnic interaction	1.1 Increased social cohesion within the group (conversation, trust, sharing resources) 1.2 Decreased prejudice and distrust 1.3 Increased positive attitudes toward each other	1. Semi-formal interview 2. Observation	Short-term monitoring (Sep-Dec 2022) Long-term monitoring (Jan 2023)	Program participants Program staff

Evaluation Plan Narrative

The central question of outcome-based evaluation is, "What has changed as a result of this program?" (Reisman and Clegg 9). My qualitative interviews will aim to discover how our participants have changed due to the program. The three outcomes that I have identified as most fundamental to Turkish Club are:

1. Increased Turkish language ability

2. Increased classroom learning skills

3. Positive interethnic interaction.

In outcomes-based evaluation language, evaluators must ask, "So what?" (9). So what if these outcomes are achieved? The creation of Turkish Club was a response to two problems reported by center participants:

1. Locally available Turkish classes were too advanced. For example, some of our participants do not know the Latin alphabet, which is required for beginners.

2. Reported alienation and separation from Turks.

During my summer fieldwork, no respondents reported having conversational Turkish language abilities or Turkish friends/allies. Participants reported:

- No meaningful engagements with Turks (Hafsa)

- Fear and stress living in Turkey (Inaas)

- Workplace exploitation from Turks (Mustafa).

Many said they refrained from speaking Arabic in the streets for fear of who may be around them (Inaas). I believe that increased Turkish language skills would greatly help these community members *so that* they can thrive in Turkey, such as through increased employment, income, formal education, etc. (Arend 37). Additionally, among the women who attended

Turkish Club this semester, many had not been to school in years, and one woman had never attended school. There was a need to equip this group of women with basic classroom skills *so that* they can succeed in other Turkish programs.

These outcomes work toward the most significant desired impact: social integration and interethnic peace. Within Turkish Club, three nationalities were represented (four, including the teacher). This classroom setting presents an ideal opportunity to grow mutual understanding, trust, and positivity cross-culturally. We cannot control politics or popular sentiment. Realistically, the only factors we can influence are our programs and the in-center environment (9). If we can create a positive and empowering environment within the FTC, we may spark change in our participants' lives through 1) increased Turkish, 2) increased classroom skills, and 3) and positive interethnic interaction.

Participant Interviews Design

I will conduct semi-formal interviews in the New Year to gain a qualitative understanding of program outcomes. Drawing from the program's outcomes and their indicators, the questions are:

1. Why did you attend Turkish Club?

2. When was the last time you were in a classroom setting?

3. Has the classroom experience helped you learn? Why or why not?

4. Since attending Turkish Club:

   1. Has your understanding of Turkish increased?

   2. What class content have you used outside of class?

   3. In what contexts do you usually speak Turkish? Is there a context of life in which you wish you had more Turkish?

4. Are you interested in participating in Turkish society, i.e., work, friendship, etc.?

5. What did you enjoy the most about Turkish Club? What was hardest?

6. What would have made attending this course easier for you?

7. What was your experience of being in class with multiple nationalities?

8. Would you like to learn more Turkish? After completing Turkish Club, do you feel that you could attend a local Turkish course?

9. Would you recommend this course to a friend? Why or why not?

10. How would you describe this course to a friend?

I expect 95% of our 10 participants to reflect growth in all three outcomes, which are 1) increased Turkish language ability, 2) increased classroom learning skills, and 3) increased positive interethnic interaction. In anticipation of these interviews, I have:

- Translated, through native speakers, informed consent forms into Arabic and Dari

- Recruited assistants for interview translation for Afghan participants

The following steps are 1) translating the interview questions into Arabic and Dari, 2) completing participant interviews, and 3) analyzing and reporting findings to the FTC according to the identified outcomes.

Conclusion

As a community development practitioner, I believe that evaluation is essential to successful program planning, design, and implementation. Sometimes, fear can hold us back from constructive criticism. However, good evaluation is not destructive. The intent of evaluation is to carefully prune our activities and programs so that they can become more fruitful.

Sometimes, in the rush of our programs, activities, and deadlines, we cannot see the forest for the trees, and pruning can feel scary or daunting. While it may be momentarily painful, pruning ultimately serves to preserve and increase the long-term health of the entity. For the sake of our programs, organizations, and communities, is it not better to take a step back for a better view of the forest? When we see the bigger picture, we can work and lead with precision and vision, understanding who we are and how we connect with our larger community.

Good evaluation embodies the values of learning, discovery, and growth. When wielded with care and consideration, good evaluation and wise evaluators impart value, yielding healthier programs and stronger communities. Stronger communities make a better world, a future worthy of our utmost effort. So let us evaluate well, wholeheartedly advocating for our treasured programs and precious global community!

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