

Article

The Relationship Between Acculturation and Second Language Learning in the Context of Sustainable Multiculturalism: A Case Study of Russian Immigrants and Syrian Refugees in Türkiye

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Abstract: This study aimed to identify the acculturation strategies of Russian immigrants and Syrian refugees living in Türkiye and examine their impact on second-language learning. The idea of acculturation explains how immigrants adapt to the culture of the host country. In this research, the acculturation strategies of immigrants and refugees, their second-language learning, and other variables that could influence their integration were measured. Interviews were conducted with immigrants and refugees within the scope of the study. Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed in accordance with the mixed research method. According to the findings, immigrants and refugees generally prefer the integration strategy. Females tend to favour the integration strategy more strongly compared to males. Among those residing in Türkiye, individuals with 0–1 year of residence exhibited significantly higher motivation for second-language learning. However, no significant relationship was observed among the other groups (2–5 years, 6–10 years, and 11+ years). Refugee or immigrant status, sex, and length of residence played important roles in second-language learning. Those who preferred the integration strategy, as well as refugees and females, tended to have higher second-language learning motivation. The research indicates that refugees require more support for cultural adaptation and second-language acquisition. Effective integration policies for refugees in Türkiye and the implementation of economic and social programmes through international cooperation are essential. Otherwise, neglecting cultural and social integration may threaten sustainable multiculturalism.



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Keywords: acculturation; second language; immigrant; refugee; sustainable; multiculturalism

1. Introduction

Various individual and societal factors drive people to migrate to countries other than their own. Some of these factors can turn migration from a matter of personal choice into a necessity. The United Nations [1] reported that as of 2024, more than 120 million people worldwide are living as refugees. Additionally, individuals relocate to other countries for employment, education, or personal reasons as immigrants [1,2]. Including this group, more than 281 million people lived outside their country of birth as of 2020, representing 3.6% of the world's population [2]. When including members of heritage cultures who were born as immigrants or refugees, the scale of cultural interaction becomes more apparent. The OECD [3] reported that international migration significantly impacts labour markets,

education, and social integration. This phenomenon deeply affects not only demographics but also processes of cultural interaction [4]. Mutual interaction occurs between individuals and groups with different cultural or ethnic backgrounds, leading to cultural change [5,6].

In Türkiye, there are over 4,425,000 foreign nationals with legal residence rights, including over 3,200,000 refugees, primarily Syrians, and over 1,000,000 immigrants [7]. With the addition of an unknown number of irregular migrants [8], the figure is estimated to exceed 5 million. As of 2023, there were 1,570,543 immigrants in Türkiye [9]. In Türkiye, foreign nationals from various countries reside, with the top three in terms of numbers being Iraq (217,476), Russia (151,049), and Afghanistan (144,131) [9]. Russian immigrants stand out among immigrant groups who have settled in Türkiye over the last decade. Lifestyle migrants and retirees are prominent among Russians who have settled in Türkiye, particularly in cities like Antalya and Istanbul [10]. Furthermore, Russian families strive to integrate into Turkish society and the educational system [10,11].

1.1. Acculturation Strategies (AS)

Immigrants may adopt various strategies in their efforts to adapt to a new culture while preserving their cultural identity [12]. Research on acculturation processes incorporates various perspectives and factors. Taking a holistic view, Zane and Mak [13] examined approaches used to measure acculturation among ethnic minorities. Their research showed that acculturation could be measured using both unidimensional and bidimensional models. Bidimensional models consider immigrants' attitudes toward their own culture and the culture of the host society, as well as the host society's attitudes toward the heritage culture. Berry [4], one of the researchers who adopts a bidimensional approach to acculturation, offers a comprehensive perspective in this context. Berry's [4] theory of acculturation strategies provides a significant framework for understanding the adaptation processes of immigrants and refugees. Immigrants and refugees adopt different strategies in managing relationships with their heritage culture and the cultures of their host society. Their perspectives on their heritage culture and the new culture determine their relational and adaptive styles. Individuals may hold a positive or negative view of preserving their heritage culture and identity, as well as a positive or negative approach to engaging with the new culture. The intersection of these preferences results in four acculturation strategies (ASs) [4,14]: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalisation. Supporting this approach, Horenczyk [15] examined how immigrants' perceptions of the attitudes of the host society affect their processes of reconstructing their cultural groups. Horenczyk [15] emphasised that immigrants' decisions on whether to preserve or alter their cultural identities largely depend on their perceived attitudes of the host society. Consequently, the host society's role can be decisive in immigrant adaptation. Berry's [4] proposed ASs include four fundamental approaches used to explain the processes by which individuals adapt to another culture. These strategies vary according to the extent to which individuals maintain their cultural identities and adapt to the new culture [16,17].

The first strategy, integration, involves the individual aiming to both preserve their culture and adapt to the new one. In assimilation, the individual opts to abandon their culture and fully adapt to the new culture. Those adopting this strategy distance themselves from their cultural identity and fully integrate into the new culture. The third strategy, separation, is adopted by individuals who wish to preserve their culture while avoiding adaptation to the new culture. Marginalisation describes individuals who neither maintain their culture nor adapt to the new culture [4,16,17]. These strategies can also be examined from a social perspective (Figure 1).

Berry [17] proposes a total of eight strategies, considering both the ethnocultural group and wider society. However, as the focus of our research is on immigrants and refugees,

ASs will be addressed as four types. The acculturation status of immigrants or refugees can also influence their learning of the language of the society in which they reside [18,19].

For instance, examining this from the perspective of children, Troesch et al. [19] explored the direct and indirect effects of parental attitudes towards cultural adaptation on children's second-language acquisition. Their study found that when parents adopt an integration-focused approach, children are more likely to succeed in learning a second language. Consequently, it can be anticipated that the acculturation process of migrants, whether they are immigrants or refugees, may be associated with their approach to learning the language spoken in the host society

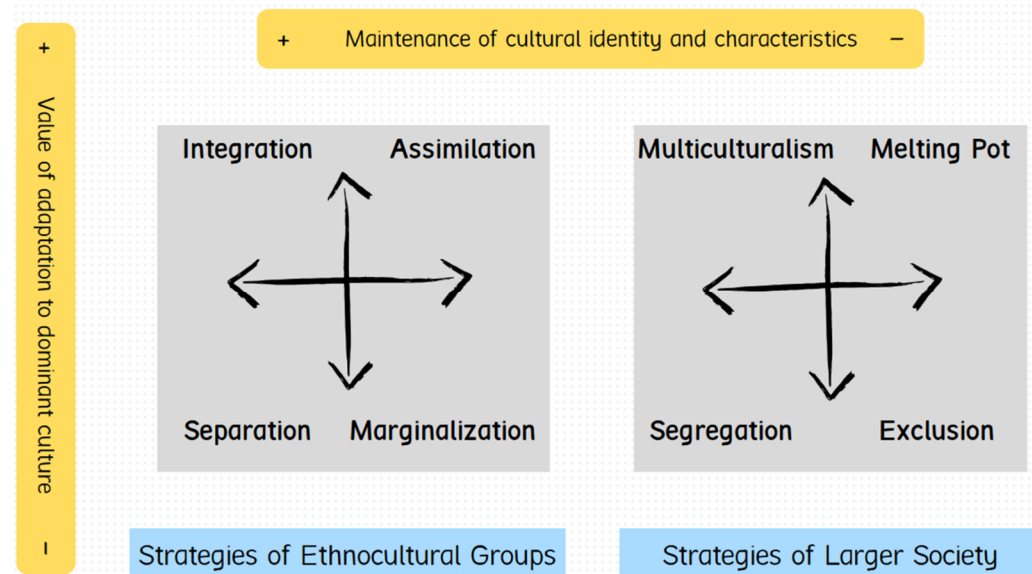


Figure 1. Berry's (2005) [17] AS based on two issues in ethnocultural groups and wider society.

Groups identified as immigrants or refugees are individuals who have moved from one country to another. However, significant distinctions exist between these two groups. Immigrants voluntarily migrate for economic opportunities, education, or family reunification, intending to settle permanently in the host country [20].

Refugees, however, are forced to flee their countries due to war, persecution, or natural disasters, seeking safety. Their movement is typically sudden and involuntary, and they seek international protection in their host country [1]. These conditions can also affect acculturation strategies. From another perspective, the acculturation strategy can influence the adaptation process. For instance, Abu-Rayya, Berry, Sam, and Grigoryev [5] proposed that the integration strategy supports immigrants' adaptation process. Additionally, immigrants' and refugees' cultural adaptation strategies can impact their language learning processes within the host society [19,21].

1.2. Second-Language Learning (SLL)

Migration to another country requires not only engagement with a different culture but also exposure to its language [22]. In such circumstances, language learning develops through ongoing use and necessity within the social environment [23,24]. This language learning is referred to as second-language acquisition [25]. Second-language learning is the process of acquiring a language different from one's native tongue, shaped by the interaction of linguistic, cognitive, social, and cultural factors [23–25]. Understanding this process requires focusing not only on theories aimed at explaining the development of language skills but also on learner-specific characteristics. For instance, in the context of this research, distinct dynamics are observed in the processes through which immigrants

and refugees develop their language skills in both their native languages and Turkish. Models such as the input hypothesis [25], the social interaction hypothesis [26], and the noticing hypothesis [23] provide varied perspectives on second-language learning.

Oxford's [27] strategy-based approach to language learning is particularly significant in this context. Oxford argues that learners' conscious use of learning strategies not only accelerates but also enhances the effectiveness of language acquisition. According to her, these strategies allow learners to personalise their language learning processes. In the context of this research, second-language learning (SLL) is explored through constructs such as attitudes towards the target language, maintaining a tolerant attitude towards learning challenges, self-assessing language use, and systematic awareness [28]. Lybeck [29], in her research on second-language learning within acculturation and social network theories, found that immigrants who established social relationships with members of the host culture were successful both in second language and cultural adaptation. Therefore, individuals' language learning methods may be termed their language learning [30].

1.3. Objective

Some studies examine the relationship between immigrants' proficiency in the host country's language and their socio-cultural adaptation [18,21,22,29,31]. In contrast, our approach to addressing second-language learning focuses on language learning strategies, attitudes, and interactions. In this regard, identifying the relationship between acculturation strategy and second-language learning among immigrants and refugees could offer both theoretical and practical benefits. However, no research has been conducted in the literature within this framework.

Based on this problem, this study aimed to determine the relationship between acculturation strategies (ASs) and second-language learning (SLL), alongside other variables. The variables included refugee or immigrant status, length of residence, and sex. To achieve more detailed findings, the following research questions were formulated.

1. Do ASs vary according to immigrant or refugee status, sex, and length of residence?
2. What is the impact of immigrant or refugee status, sex, and length of residence on SLL?
3. Do ASs influence SLL?
4. What are participants' perspectives on migration, social integration, and acculturation?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study Design

This study compared the acculturation strategy (AS) and second-language learning (SLL) of immigrants and refugees in the context of Türkiye. It also examined the effects of other variables on these factors, including immigrant or refugee status, sex, and length of residence in the new country. Additionally, participants' views on their process of preserving their cultural identities and adapting to Turkish society were assessed. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in the study. Mixed-method research is a methodology that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches [32–34], and it was applied in this study. Among the mixed-method designs, the embedded design was used, which combines the strengths of both approaches to provide a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis [35,36]. In embedded design, quantitative and qualitative data are synthesised [36]. In line with this, the research findings integrated qualitative and quantitative data, embedding the qualitative findings within the quantitative data.

2.2. Participants

The study's participants were selected through purposive sampling. This sampling technique is chosen to select individuals with the most relevant knowledge for the research,

focusing on the study's target group [37]. The participants of this study consisted of 300 people residing in Antalya aged 18 to 70, comprising 150 Russian immigrants and 150 Syrian refugees. The aim was to form balanced groups of immigrants and refugees, as well as male and female participants. Among these, 10 participants reflecting the sample's age, nationality, and sex composition were selected, and interviews were conducted as part of the research (Table 1).

The second language proficiency of immigrants and refugees was measured in terms of length of residence and perceived self-efficacy (Figure 2).

The proportions of immigrants rating their Turkish proficiency were 17% very low, 29% low, 13% average, 29% good, and 12% very good. For refugees, on the other hand, these figures were 9% very low, 12% low, 29% average, 25% good, and 25% very good. Most immigrants (58%) have been residing in Türkiye for between 2 and 5 years. Most refugees have also been residing in Türkiye for 2–5 years (36%) and 6–10 years (38%). It can be inferred that this trend is associated with the Syrian Civil War of 2011 and the Russia–Ukraine War that began in 2022. Generally, refugees have lived in Türkiye longer than immigrants and consider their Turkish language proficiency to be higher.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for participants.

		Scale		Interview	
		N	%	N	%
Nationality	Russia	150	50	5	50
	Syria	150	50	5	50
Sex	Female	150	50	5	50
	Male	150	50	5	50
Length of Residence	0–1 Year	40	13	2	10
	2–5 Years	147	49	4	20
	6–10 Years	62	21	2	20
	11+ Years	51	17	2	20
Total	300	100	10	100	

Note: N = sample size; % = percentage.

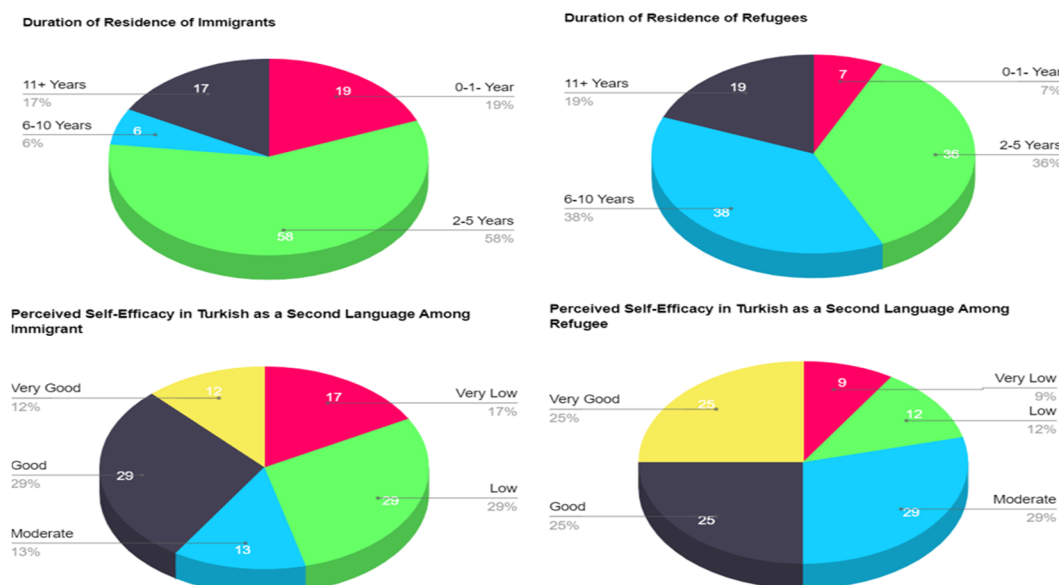


Figure 2. Immigrants and refugees in terms of length of residence and perceived self-efficacy in second language.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

2.3.1. Interview Form (IF)

To explore the perspectives of Russian immigrants and Syrian refugees residing in Türkiye regarding the preservation of their cultural identities and adaptation to Turkish society, an interview form was developed. The semi-structured interviews employed in this study strike a balance between the flexibility of unstructured interviews and the systematic nature of structured interviews [37]. This approach allows for in-depth exploration of core themes while providing participants the freedom to express their experiences and viewpoints. Such flexibility is particularly suitable for examining complex phenomena like acculturation and language learning, where participants' narratives can provide rich and nuanced insights.

The interview form used in this study consisted of open-ended questions organised into two main themes: adaptation to Turkish society and attitudes towards learning Turkish. These themes were further elaborated through subthemes such as participants' interactions with Turkish culture, efforts to maintain their own cultural identities, and challenges encountered during the adaptation process.

The questions were designed to assess participants' past experiences, current practices, and future expectations. For example, questions such as '*How do you perceive your position within Turkish society?*', '*What efforts do you make to preserve your cultural values?*', and '*What are the biggest challenges you have faced in learning Turkish?*' were posed to broaden the scope of the themes and gain a deeper understanding of participants' experiences. The development of the interview form involved several stages to ensure its reliability and appropriateness. Initially, draft questions were prepared based on a review of the literature on acculturation [4,16,17,38–40] and second-language acquisition [21,24,25]. These questions were subsequently reviewed by two field experts to ensure alignment with the study's objectives and cultural sensitivity to the participants' contexts. Following this, the finalised form was piloted with three individuals from the target population, leading to minor adjustments to improve clarity and comprehensiveness.

The interviews were conducted in a one-on-one format to encourage participants to share their personal experiences without external influence. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes, allowing sufficient time to delve into the topics while respecting participants' schedules and comfort. While the interview form provided a structured framework, participants were encouraged to elaborate on their responses, thereby introducing the flexibility typical of semi-structured interviews. For instance, follow-up questions were frequently used to explore specific points in greater depth, making the data collection process dynamic and responsive to participants' unique contributions.

2.3.2. Personal Information Form (PIF)

This form was created by the researcher and included four questions about the participants' sex, length of residence in Türkiye, and self-efficacy in second language.

2.3.3. Acculturation Strategy (AS) Scale

This study utilised the Acculturation Strategies Scale developed by Berry et al. [41] to assess the acculturation strategies of Russian immigrants and Syrian refugees in Türkiye. The scale focuses on two key dimensions: the willingness to maintain one's cultural identity and values, and the desire to engage with the host society. These dimensions determine individuals' acculturation strategies, categorised as assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalisation. Based on the model proposed by Berry et al. [41], the scale was adapted into Turkish and tailored to the cultural context of the target population, namely, Russian immigrants and Syrian refugees. The scale comprises 20 items, each evaluating

one of the four acculturation strategies. Participants respond using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'never' (1) to 'always' (5). Examples of items include: 'I tell my jokes both in Turkish and in Russian/Arabic' (integration), 'I find it easier to express my emotions to Turks rather than to Russians/Syrians' (assimilation), 'I do not prefer attending social gatherings where the majority are Turkish' (separation), and 'Sometimes, I find it difficult to trust both Turks and Russians/Syrians' (marginalisation). The reliability and validity of the scale were thoroughly examined in the original study by Berry et al. [41]. The Cronbach alpha coefficients for the subscales were as follows: assimilation, 0.74; integration, 0.70; separation, 0.75; and marginalisation, 0.68. For this study, the scale was adapted to the local context through a forward- and back-translation process, with input from experts to ensure cultural and linguistic appropriateness. A pilot study was conducted to confirm the scale's clarity and suitability for the target population.

Data were collected online using Microsoft Forms, providing participants with an accessible and efficient means to complete the survey. Participants were informed about the study's objectives, and survey links were shared with them. Participation was voluntary, and responses were collected anonymously to ensure confidentiality. This online method was chosen to enhance accessibility and minimise data entry errors. Participants were given sufficient time to complete the survey without any time constraints. The Acculturation Strategies Scale has been demonstrated to be a scientifically valid and reliable tool, as highlighted in the original work of Berry et al. [41], for understanding individuals' attitudes toward acculturation.

2.3.4. Second Language Learning (SLL) Scale

To assess participants' profiles in second-language learning, the Second Language Learning (SLL) scale was used in this study. The scale, adapted for this research, was developed by Özçelik [28] to measure the learning profiles of individuals learning Turkish as a second language. The scale includes 18 items that evaluate participants' language learning strategies, attitudes, and interactions.

The scale, based on the characteristics of effective language learners identified by Naiman, Fröhlich, Stern, and Todesco [42], was adapted into Turkish and tailored to the cultural context of the target population. It consists of 18 items distributed across five sub-dimensions:

1. Active approach (e.g., participating in learning activities).
2. Systematic awareness (e.g., drawing connections between known and new languages).
3. Communication tools (e.g., using the target language in natural settings).
4. Emotional dimension (e.g., maintaining a tolerant attitude toward learning challenges).
5. Performance evaluation (e.g., self-assessing language use).

Participants responded to items using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 'always' (5) to 'never' (1).

The reliability and validity of the scale were rigorously tested. A factor analysis revealed five distinct sub-dimensions, explaining 62% of the total variance. The internal consistency of the overall scale based on Cronbach's alpha was 0.87, while the sub-dimensions ranged between 0.86 and 0.87. To ensure clarity and cultural appropriateness, the scale was applied to a group of 78 students, followed by a test-retest procedure three weeks later. The test-retest correlation coefficient was calculated as $r = 0.77$.

The data were collected using Microsoft Forms, allowing participants to complete the survey online at their convenience. This method was chosen for its efficiency and ability to reach a dispersed sample. Participants were informed about the study's purpose and assured of their anonymity.

2.4. Data Analysis

IF, AS, and SLL provided quantitative data on participants' acculturation strategies, sex, years of residence in Türkiye, Turkish proficiency level, and second-language learning. The distribution of AS and SLL data was examined. For this purpose, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test was applied, and the data were found to be normally distributed. Therefore, parametric tests were used for data analysis (Table 2).

Table 2. Kolmogorov–Smirnov test for AS and SLL.

	N	<i>p</i>	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
AS	300	0.00	0.44	−0.54	1.13
SLL	300	0.00	0.83	−1.09	1.28

Note: N = sample size; SD = standard deviation; *p* = significance level.

To meet the criteria for normal distribution, skewness and kurtosis values should fall within the range of ± 2 [43]. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test results and skewness (−0.54, −1.09) and kurtosis (1.13, 1.28) indicated that the data were normally distributed. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test the differences among the means of three or more groups [44]. In this study, ANOVA was employed to determine whether participants' SLL differed in terms of AS. When differences between groups were observed, Tukey's post hoc test was used for further examination [45]. The chi-squared test was applied to ascertain whether participants' ASs resulted in significant differences depending on their migration status [45]. The dataset of perspectives from Russian immigrants and Syrian refugees within the study's context was analysed using content analysis. For the content analysis, the qualitative data analysis recommendations by Huberman and Miles [46], Creswell [37], Creswell and Poth [33], and Merriam [47] were reviewed, and the content analysis stages were defined based on a synthesis of these suggestions. These stages included three main steps: data reduction, data organisation, and data description.

In the first stage, elements in the qualitative dataset that were deemed irrelevant to the research objectives and context were removed. In the second stage, the data were coded. During the coding process, a deductive approach was employed to establish connections between participants' views and acculturation strategies [4,16,17,38–40]. Simultaneously, an inductive approach was used to group related codes under specific categories, which were further organised into new subthemes based on their relationships. Participants' views were coded 'R' for Russian immigrants and 'S' for Syrian refugees. In the final stage, various categories, subthemes, and themes were identified. The resulting network of relationships was explained and interpreted.

3. Results

The perspectives of Russian immigrants and Syrian refugees on acculturation, their acculturation strategies (ASs), second-language learning (SLL), and other variables tested for their potential relevance were assessed together.

3.1. The Relationship of AS with Migration Status, Sex, and Length of Residence

In Figure 3, participants' acculturation strategies and their views on Turkish society and learning Turkish as a second language can be seen.

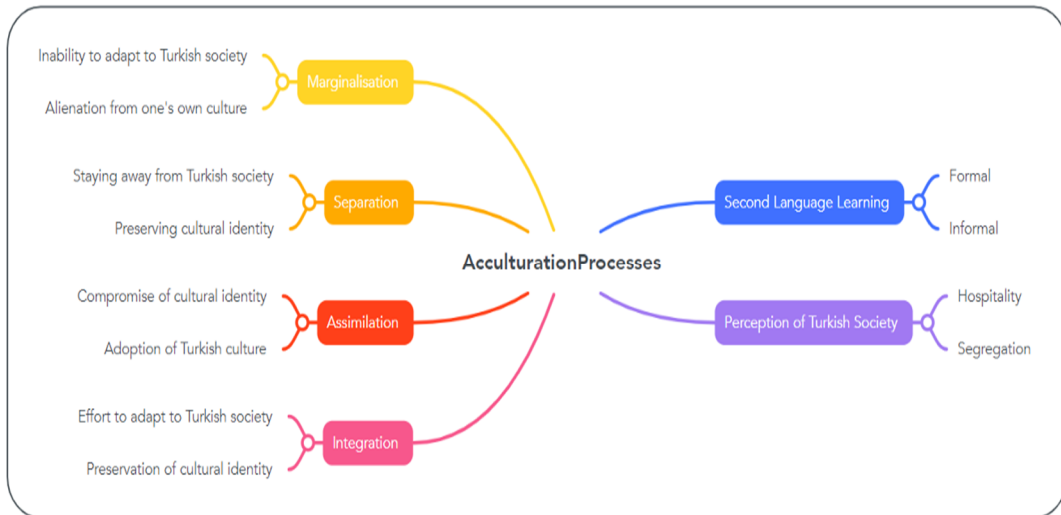


Figure 3. Perspectives of Immigrants and Refugees on the acculturation process.

The proportion of participants preferred AS is shown in Figure 4.

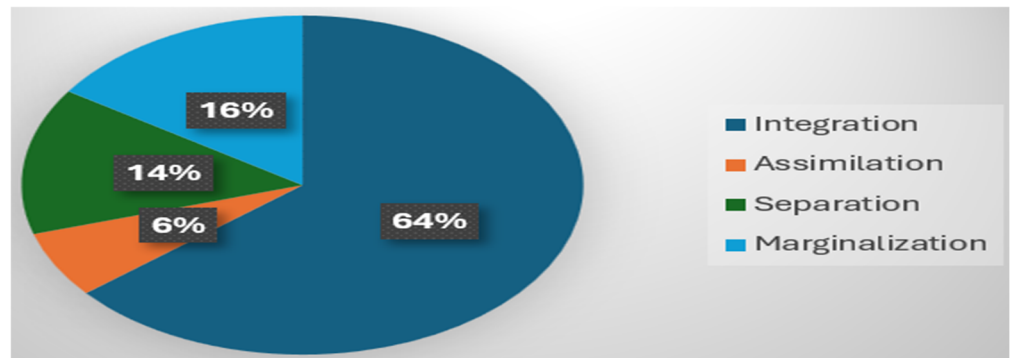


Figure 4. Acculturation strategy.

Most participants (64%) favoured integration, followed by marginalisation at 16% and separation at 14%. Assimilation was the least preferred strategy. The distribution of acculturation strategies among refugees, immigrants, females, and males is illustrated in Figure 5.

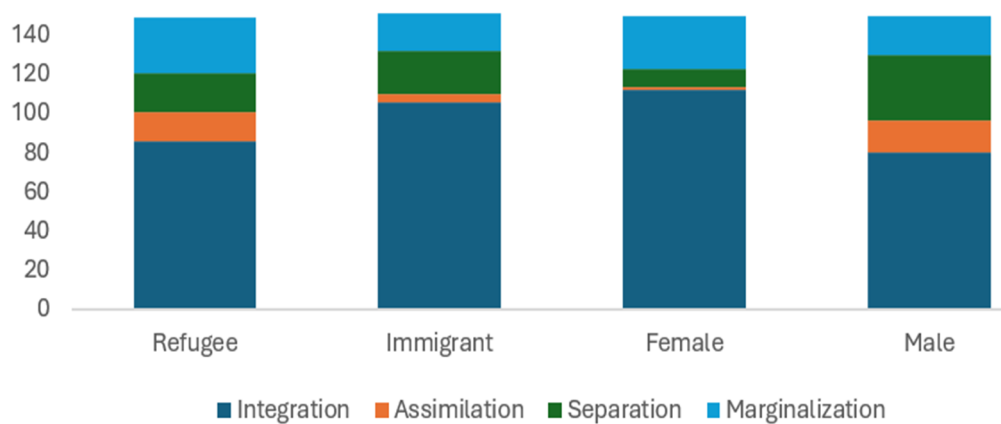


Figure 5. ASs among refugees, immigrants, females, and males.

Integration: Efforts to adapt to Turkish society while maintaining one’s cultural identity. Russian immigrants generally consider themselves to be making adequate efforts to

adapt to Turkish cultural norms while continuing their cultural practices and enjoying positive interactions with Turkish friends. Conversely, integration is somewhat less prevalent among Syrian refugees: “I try to make Turkish friends and learn their culture, but I also continue our own traditions” (R1). “We try to adapt here, but I think the solidarity among Syrians is also important” (S3).

Assimilation: Adaptation by relegating one’s cultural identity to the background. Refugees are more likely than immigrants to compromise their cultural identity, aiming to speak Turkish fluently and be more accepted within Turkish society. Some refugees express a cultural identity linked to religion, whereas immigrants tend to preserve their own national identities: “I really want to learn Turkish well, so that I can feel like a part of Türkiye” (R3).

Separation: Retention of cultural identity while distancing from Turkish society. Refugees, compared to immigrants, feel greater social pressure to primarily socialise within their own communities. They attribute this situation partly to socio-economic factors: “I spend more time with Syrians because I can’t really connect with Turkish people” (S1). “We work in jobs that others often avoid. There are always Syrians like me there, and usually, there are no Turks” (S5).

Marginalisation: Lack of strong connection to either Turkish society or one’s own culture. Both refugees and immigrants’ express feelings of detachment from both their cultural heritage and Turkish society, although this is more common among refugees. Some refugees report difficulty integrating into Türkiye and feel uncertain about acceptance in their home country: “I am not fully accepted here, nor would I be in my own country” (S5).

The relationships between migration status (MS), sex, length of residence (LR), and acculturation strategy (AS) are outlined in Table 3.

The data revealed a statistically significant difference in AS preferences between immigrants and refugees ($\chi^2 = 11.12, p = 0.03, V = 0.33$). The higher rates of assimilation and marginalisation among refugees may indicate potential challenges faced by this group in their adaptation process. Sex and AS: A strong statistical association was found between sex and AS ($\chi^2 = 31.93, p = 0.00$). While 74% of females preferred integration, this rate was 53% among males. Males were more likely to choose separation (22%) compared to females (6%). Assimilation and marginalisation rates for males were 11% and 13%, respectively. Among females, the marginalisation rate was 18%. The greater preference for integration among females suggests that women have a stronger tendency towards societal adaptation than men.

Table 3. Relationship between MS, sex, LR, and AS.

		Integration	Assimilation	Separation	Marginalisation	χ^2	p	df	V
MS	Immigrant	106	4	22	19	11.12	0.03	1	0.33, Medium
	Refugee	86	15	20	28				
Sex	Female	112	2	9	27	31.93	0.00	1	0.19, Medium
	Male	80	17	33	20				
LR	0–1 Year	22	6	9	3	13.99	0.12	3	0.12, Small
	2–5 Years	93	8	19	27				
	6–10 Years	46	3	6	7				
	11+ Years	31	2	8	10				

Note: χ^2 = chi squared; p = significance level; df = degrees of freedom; V = Cramér’s V.

LR and AS: AS preferences were also examined across four residence duration categories, showing an increasing tendency for integration with longer residence durations. For

participants residing in Türkiye for 6–10 years and over 10 years, integration rates were 74% and 60%, respectively. Marginalisation showed a slight increase with longer residence, yet the analysis did not reveal a statistically significant difference between residence duration and AS ($\chi^2 = 13.99, p = 0.12$). Nevertheless, the rise in integration with extended residence might suggest a greater sense of integration among those who have resided longer.

3.2. SLL and the Relationships with MS, Sex, LR, and AS

SLL scores were calculated based on participants' responses regarding their Turkish language learning preferences. It was examined whether SLL differed according to MS, sex, LR, and AS (Table 4).

Table 4. Relationships between SLL, MS, sex, LR, and AS.

Variable	N	M	SD	t/F	p	d/ η^2	Comparisons	
MS	Immigrant	150	3.61	1.41	−2.76	0.00	0.21	
	Refugee	150	3.88	1.13				Refugee > Immigrant
Sex	Female	150	4.10	1.2	−5.72	0.00	0.52	
	Male	150	3.55	0.71				Female > Male
LR	0–1 Year	40	4.19	0.59	13.86	0.00	0.16	
	2–5 Years	147	3.48	0.86				1 > 2
	6–10 Years	62	3.71	0.90				4 > 2
	11+ Years	51	4.11	0.58				
AS	Integration	192	4.27	0.86	1.78	0.14	0.03	
	Assimilation	19	3.82	0.39				Integration > Assimilation
	Separation	42	3.73	0.93				
	Marginalisation	47	3.62	0.70				

Note: N = sample size; M = mean; SD = standard deviation; t = t statistic; F = f statistic; p = significance level; d = Cohen's d; η^2 = eta squared.

The results of the t-test regarding SLL and MS indicated a significant difference in SLL scores between immigrant and refugee groups ($t = -2.76, p = 0.00, d = 0.21$). The average score for the refugee group (3.88) was higher compared to the immigrant group (3.61). This may suggest that refugees are in a more favourable position compared to immigrants when it comes to learning Turkish. However, the effect size was small ($d = 0.21$), and although there was a significant difference, it appears that this difference does not have a strong impact.

All immigrants reported attending courses or obtaining resources to learn Turkish, whereas refugees mainly depended on informal methods, possibly due to socio-economic reasons.

"I went to TÖMER (Turkish course). Speaking well is important for job" (R5).

"I want to learn Turkish better, but there is no time, and the courses are expensive" (S3).

Both groups generally had a positive perception of Turkish hospitality and warmth. Nonetheless, some individuals expressed discomfort with occasionally being regarded as foreigners, and refugees occasionally reported experiences of discrimination.

"Turkish people are generally hospitable, but sometimes they treat me differently because I'm a foreigner" (R4).

"People are usually helpful, but I don't always get a good vibe from some Turks" (S4).

These findings suggest that refugees are more willing than immigrants in the process of learning a second language. The results indicate that refugees have a more pronounced motivation for language learning during their adaptation process to the new culture, which may enhance their language learning success.

Comparisons between the sexes revealed that females perform significantly better than males in terms of SLL ($t = -5.72, p = 0.00, d = 0.52$). The average score for females was 4.10, while for males, this value was 3.55. This difference showed a medium effect size ($d = 0.52$). This situation suggests that females are more willing in the process of learning a second language.

There was a statistically significant difference between participants' LR in Türkiye and SLL ($F = 13.86, p = 0.00, \eta^2 = 0.16$). Among those residing for 0–1 year, the average score was the highest (4.19), while the average for those residing for 2–5 years was lower (3.48). However, for those residing for 11 years or longer, the average increased again (4.11). According to the difference analysis, a significant difference and a large effect ($\eta^2 = 0.16$) were found, particularly between those residing for 0–1 year and those residing for 2–5 years. Participants residing for 0–1 year had significantly higher SLL scores than those residing for 2–5 years. This result indicates that individuals with a shorter LR start their Turkish learning processes with higher motivation, but this motivation seems to decline after a certain period. On the other hand, it appears that those who have resided for a longer time may have an increasing motivation for language learning again. According to the ANOVA showing the relationship between AS and SLL, the average score of participants adopting integration was 3.73, those adopting assimilation 4.27, those adopting separation 3.82, and those adopting marginalisation 3.62. There was a significant difference between those adopting integration and assimilation; however, there was no significant difference overall between AS and SLL ($F = 1.78, p = 0.14$). AS showed a small effect on SLL ($\eta^2 = 0.03$).

The findings suggest that individuals with an integration strategy tend to adapt to Turkish society more strongly, and this tendency could positively contribute to their language learning processes. However, no strong relationship was found overall between AS and SLL.

4. Discussion

This study examined the second-language learning (SLL) profiles of immigrants and refugees and their relationship with acculturation strategies (ASs). The research explored how acculturation strategies—integration, separation, marginalisation, and assimilation—affect individuals' language learning processes and how these processes are influenced by factors such as gender, length of residence (LR) in the host country, and financial support (FS). The key concepts of this study included acculturation strategies (ASs), second-language learning (SLL), sustainable multiculturalism, motivation, and individual differences. Through these concepts, we sought to understand the dynamics of individuals' adaptation processes with the host society at both personal and societal levels. Within this conceptual framework, the research highlights that language learning is not merely a means of communication but also a crucial factor in fostering individuals' cultural adaptation and social acceptance.

The context of the study is based on a sample comprising individuals from diverse sociocultural backgrounds, specifically Russian immigrants and Syrian refugees residing in Turkey. Discussing second-language learning within the migration and acculturation literature, particularly by addressing it across various sociocultural contexts, offers valuable insights into the dynamics of language acquisition and integration. For instance, Grigoryev and Vijver's [48] research on acculturation strategies of Russian-speaking immigrants in Belgium focuses on the relationship between residence duration and integration. Their findings reveal that integration levels are significantly higher among immigrants who

have lived in the host country for more than five years. While Grigoryev and Vijver's [48] findings partly support our study, we argue that immigrants and refugees display a strong eagerness for cultural integration, especially within the first few years of migration. Based on this, it is recommended that orientation and adaptation programs targeting immigrants and refugees should not be delayed, as early support can be crucial for successful integration. Marginalisation and separation tend to emerge when immigrants feel excluded from society [49]. Just as the initial years of migration are critical for the integration of immigrants, younger people also demonstrate higher adaptability than older individuals. Berry and Sabatier's [16] research with second-generation immigrant youth in Montreal and Paris explored cultural integration, experiences of separation, and adaptation processes. The results showed that integration was associated with more favourable integration outcomes among youth, whereas separation negatively impacted psychological adaptation. Similarly, Berry, Lepshokova, Mirips and Grigoryev [40] examined this issue within the context of multicultural societies, demonstrating that integration yields the most positive outcomes in pluralistic societies, while separation has adverse effects on integration processes. Kämmer and Albert [50] investigated the acculturation processes of former and new refugees migrating to Germany. Their findings indicated both empathy and solidarity as well as concerns and demands in relation to integration policies. While the welcoming attitude was appreciated, there was also a call for clear regulations. In our study, the opinions of immigrants and refugees largely align with those in Kämmer and Albert's [50] findings, though refugees place greater emphasis on the need for social and economic support for cultural and social integration. One of our study's findings highlights that females are more successful in integration. Based on this, it is recommended that policymakers consider the specific needs of males in supporting immigrant and refugee integration.

Antonova-Ünlü, et al. [31] found that Russian immigrants in Türkiye predominantly adopt integration and are generally proficient in both Russian and Turkish. Additionally, their research concluded that cultural integration positively affects second-language proficiency. While our study found that those adopting integration possess the highest SLL, no significant relationship was found between AS and SLL. Although there is no direct research in the literature comparing AS with SLL, other variables related to SLL have been explored. For instance, Jasemi and Gottardo [21] examined the relationship between migration status and certain sub-dimensions of second-language proficiency, such as reading comprehension and vocabulary. Their findings suggest that immigrants are more successful than refugees in second-language skills. Their study sample consisted of Iranian immigrants and refugees living in Canada. However, Jasemi and Gottardo's [21] differentiation between immigrants and refugees is more a distinction based on cultural capital, as it considers their means of arrival in Canada and their income. Our study's comparison between Russian lifestyle immigrants and Syrian refugees fleeing civil war may provide more accurate results in this context. According to our findings, refugees exhibit a higher motivation for SLL. Similarly, refugees display a clear eagerness to adapt to the host culture. Refugees interviewed for this study expressed a strong desire to learn Turkish as a second language but reported socio-economic barriers preventing them from accessing education.

Bozdağ's [18] research compared the ASs of Syrian secondary and high school students in Türkiye, exploring psychological variables. Syrian students used ASs in relatively close proportions, with integration being the most frequently preferred strategy. One of Bozdağ's [18] variables was the perception of Turkish language proficiency. The findings indicate that individuals with very low proficiency levels tend to use marginalisation, those with low proficiency favour separation, and those with good and very good proficiency levels more frequently employ integration and assimilation strategies. Bozdağ's [18]

findings suggest a positive correlation between perceived Turkish proficiency and cultural integration. Our study included adult Syrian refugees, while Bozdağ's [18] participants were Syrian high school students. Marcu [51], examining the integration processes of refugees in the context of Spain, presents findings that highlight the critical importance of overcoming language barriers for the social integration of refugees. One of our findings indicates that higher SLL contributes to integration. Taken together, these results suggest that proficiency in a second language is closely related to cultural integration.

Cormoş [52] provides significant insights into the role of acculturation strategies in shaping individuals' interactions with host societies and their identity transformations. Drawing on Berry's acculturation strategies model, Cormoş [52] demonstrates that strategies such as integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalisation have distinct impacts on various dimensions of identity. The study reveals that immigrants' acculturation strategies influence multiple identity dimensions, including personal identity (mindset, self-esteem, life principles), social identity (group belonging, societal behaviours), national identity (patriotism, national values), and spatial identity (sense of belonging). For immigrants adopting integration and assimilation strategies, changes in mindset and lifestyle are more pronounced, whereas such changes are more limited for those following a separation strategy. From the perspective presented by Cormoş [52], sustainable multiculturalism can be understood through the lens of individuals' acculturation strategies and identity transformations.

Immigrants who adopt integration strategies tend to develop a more resilient identity by engaging in deeper and more meaningful cultural interactions with the host society, allowing them to preserve their own identities while integrating into the new culture. Although assimilation entails notable identity changes, it may threaten cultural diversity, as it requires immigrants to fully adapt to the host culture, often at the expense of their cultural heritage. Separation, while preserving cultural diversity, limits cultural interaction and poses challenges to the sustainability of multiculturalism, potentially leading to isolation and social divisions. Host societies that reinforce cultural and social boundaries rather than promoting coexistence hinder sustainable multiculturalism. Marginalisation strategies, on the other hand, may result in individuals becoming alienated from both their own culture and that of the host society, leading to a loss of identity. The qualitative dimension of our research aligns with these perspectives.

Our findings indicate that refugees have greater needs for cultural integration than immigrants. Given the ongoing conflicts and wars in the Middle East—the primary region from which migration flows into Europe—the geopolitical context behind Türkiye's large refugee population becomes clearer. Türkiye hosts a significant number of immigrants and refugees. According to our results, refugees are found to be lacking in the desired levels of support for second-language learning and socio-economic conditions that could positively impact their integration. Effective policies to support refugee adaptation are required in Türkiye, and international cooperation is essential for the implementation and funding of necessary economic and social programmes. Motivation for both second-language learning and cultural integration is significantly higher among those who have resided in Türkiye for 0–1 year. However, it is apparent that the necessary steps have not been taken for the cultural and social adaptation and orientation of new immigrants and refugees. In Türkiye, economic aid programmes are primarily provided to Syrian refugees yet overlooking cultural and social integration may ultimately render sustainable multiculturalism impossible.

5. Conclusions

According to the research results, immigrants and refugees predominantly choose integration, followed by marginalisation and separation, with assimilation being the least preferred. Integration is notably more dominant among immigrants, whereas refugees tend toward assimilation and marginalisation. Sex also significantly influences AS, with females showing a stronger inclination towards integration. LR does not create a significant difference in AS, yet the rate of integration noticeably increases LR. Most immigrants (70%) adopt the integration strategy, while this rate is lower among refugees, at 57%. Assimilation is more commonly observed among refugees (10%) compared to immigrants (3%). For refugees, the rates of separation and marginalisation are 13% and 16%, respectively, whereas immigrants show lower rates of separation (15%) and marginalisation (12%). Adopting the integration strategy is critical for both immigrants and refugees in achieving sustainable multiculturalism. Therefore, within the limited scope of this study, positive interpretations can be made regarding sustainable multiculturalism. On the other hand, 36% of the sample did not adopt the integration strategy.

Factors such as MS, sex, and LR play a substantial role in shaping SLL. Refugees and females exhibit higher SLL, although the impact of AS on SLL remains limited. Refugees demonstrate an increased motivation to learn the language of their host country, whereas sex differences indicate a higher inclination towards second-language learning among females. A notable finding is that those who have lived in the host country for a shorter period show higher SLL, suggesting that newcomers are more motivated to learn the language of the new culture during their initial encounters.

This study explored the perspectives and approaches of immigrants and refugees regarding their acculturation strategies and social integration processes. Integration emerged as the most common approach across the sample and both groups, though Russian immigrants emphasised integration efforts more strongly than Syrian refugees. Assimilation appears more prevalent among Syrian refugees, who tend to downplay their cultural identity to a greater extent than Russian immigrants to gain acceptance within Turkish society. Separation was similarly emphasised among both groups, with some individuals in each group limiting their social ties with Turkish society and preferring to spend time within their own communities. Marginalisation was more pronounced among refugees, with many Syrian refugees expressing feelings of disconnection both from their cultural heritage and the Turkish community. They reported experiencing rejection in Turkey and uncertainty about acceptance in their home country.

The findings indicate that the acculturation processes and social integration of immigrants and refugees are shaped by similar strategies but differ significantly in their contextual dynamics.

6. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The limited sample size used in this study may restrict the generalisability of the findings. The migrant sample was represented by Russian nationals, while the refugee sample consisted of Syrian nationals. A larger and more diverse sample encompassing individuals from various nationalities could contribute to more reliable and valid results. Future research could include participants from different ethnic backgrounds, age groups, and educational profiles to provide a broader perspective.

The study sample was exclusively drawn from individuals residing in Antalya, Türkiye, which may reflect the unique characteristics of this region. Language learning experiences of migrant and refugee groups in Türkiye may differ from those in other countries. Comparative studies conducted in different geographical regions could offer valuable insights into the regional differences that influence migrants' language learning processes.

The cross-sectional nature of this research limits its ability to capture the dynamic and evolving nature of language learning processes among migrant and refugee groups. Longitudinal studies could enrich these findings by tracking language acquisition over time.

Migrants and refugees face not only linguistic challenges during language acquisition but also psychological factors such as trauma, anxiety, socio-economic hardships, and cultural identity crises. Although some qualitative findings in this study support this argument, they remain limited and superficial. Future research should delve deeper into the psychological and sociological factors affecting language learning among migrants and refugees.

Lastly, the study's exploration of participants' learning styles and strategies and their impact on second-language acquisition was relatively cursory compared to the focus on acculturation strategies. Future studies should aim to examine these factors in greater depth to better understand their role in the language learning process.

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