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Nermin Ciloglu Cakmakci  
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EXPLORING ACADEMIC STRESSORS RELATED TO SECOND LANGUAGE  
ACQUISITION AND BARRIERS OF TURKISH-INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE  
STUDENTS STUDYING EDUCATION IN THE SOUTHEAST UNITED STATES

by

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M.A. College of Community Innovation and Education, 2020

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
in the Department of Learning Sciences and Educational Research  
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at the University of Central Florida  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Many students around the world have a strong desire to study in the United States, and in recent years international students in the United States have enrolled at an all-time high. There is a significant need to learn more about these students' needs and strategies to identify the most effective practices to improve their academic life and life quality. The demand for overcoming life challenges in a new country and achieve high academic performance with their second language creates high stress for these international students. One of the groups among these international students that has been understudied is the Turkish students.

The purpose of this research is to explore the academic and second language-related stress of Turkish international students, in addition to investigating students' self-reported stress management strategies. This study uses a case study methodology to thoroughly understand the impact of the second language of participants' reported stress and how they manage their life and academic performance. The researcher collected interviews from three Turkish-International students who study in a graduate school in the US. The researcher conducted inductive coding and created themes from the qualitative data.

The results of the study indicate that students experience challenges due to their second language which creates stressful situations. One of the most critical areas that participants emphasized is the difficulties that they experience while they speak. Participants indicated that the challenges of speaking tasks affect their self-confidence and they tend to speak up less. One of the other critical findings of the study that participants highlighted is that they need to spend

more time studying just to be able to survive in a highly competitive academic life as it is challenging to comprehend content knowledge with a second language. The obligation of studying in long hours affects their social and family life. The researcher explored the coping mechanisms that participants found effective and a summary related to the COVID-19 pandemic and how it impacted these students' stress.

To my parents, daughters, and husband

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS (or) ABBREVIATIONS**

COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
IRB	Institutional Review Board
Ph.D.	Doctor of Philosophy
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UCF	University of Central Florida
U.S.	United States

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

According to the Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange (2019), “The number of international students in the United States set an all-time high in the 2018/19 academic year, the fourth consecutive year with more than one million international students” (p.1). The total number of international students, 1,095,299, is a 0.05 percent increase from the year before. According to the 2019 Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange international students make up 5.5 percent of the total U.S. higher education population.

According to data from the U.S. Department of Commerce, “International students contributed \$44.7 billion to the U.S. economy in 2018, an increase of 5.5 percent from the previous year” (p.1). Due to language barriers, students who come from non-English speaking countries may face a greater challenge than students whose first language is English (Lee, 2008).

Guttenplan (2013) reported that 12,000 students from Turkey were sent to the United States in 2012. The number of students coming from Turkey to the United States is increasing every year. Yoon and Portman (2004) reported that “Although they might experience some problems in making a cultural transition, international students have unique strengths, including bilingualism, biculturalism, and having different perspectives that are based on diverse cultural and academic backgrounds” (p. 38). Lee and Rice (2007) stated that “Those (international students) that stay add to the intellectual capital of the U.S., and those that return home most often do so with good will and affinity for their second home” (p. 381). Researchers emphasized the importance of the international students’ positive impacts in US foreign policy and leadership.

### International Students and Stress

Putwain (2007) stated that “The phenomenon of stress (and the associated topics of worry and anxiety) has been studied extensively in the field of psychology since the 1950s and there now exists an extensive literature on the antecedents, mediators and outcomes of stress” (p. 207). The education of international students at the graduate level has become a major activity of U.S. universities (Tsui, 2008). Open Doors Report, a comprehensive data source on international students, stated in 2016 that a number of international students passed 1 million for the first time. At present, international students represent over 5.2 % percent of all the total students enrolled in higher education in US. Exploring the same data from a decade ago shows that there were 85% less international students studying in US compared to international students studying in US in 2016 (Institute of International Education, 2019).

Acculturative stress impacts the cross-cultural adaption of international students (Prempeh, Thomas, & Caldwell, 2018). Some of the most common stressors in the acculturative stress are language barriers, financial issues, being away from family support and challenges to integrate into the host culture (Rogers-Sirin, Ryce, & Sirin, 2014). International students` academic experiences generally surrounded these acculturative stressors.

While stress can be an important component for personal and professional development, too much can negatively affect international students' social adaptation, personal development, and academic attainment (Tummala-Nara & Claudius, 2013). International students had greater stress from frustration due to delays, lack of resources, failure to achieve goals, and feeling like social outcasts (Misra, Crist, & Burant, 2003). The stress experienced by international students tends to center on academic situations. Indeed, research indicates that, for international students,



problems associated with academic experiences are the most stress-provoking and tend to be more persistent than social or personal problems (Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Misra, Crist, & Burant, 2003). Research suggests that the strongest stressors in international students' life is the pressure to be academically successful (Misra & Castillo, 2004).

Wan et al. (1992), believe that “the role skills (or competencies) posited to be important factors in academic stress included students' academic skills, problem-solving skills, English-language skills, and their prior knowledge of the U.S. educational environment” (p. 609). The role skills (or competencies) that were/are important factors in academic stress included students' academic skills, problem-solving skills, English-language skills, and their prior knowledge of the U.S. educational environment. Robertson et al., (2000) assumed that language difficulties are the main area of unsolved problems that international students face.

Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) defend that when international students arrive in a foreign country, a peer program helps them meet with American students. Students can easily be adapted to the community with the peer program. In a different article, Lee (2007) stated that social environment and communication are critical in the relationship between American students and International students. International students bring their financial advantages and academic viewpoints to the university. The social interaction between international and domestic students provide psychological support for the new students as well as expand domestic students' knowledge of other cultures. It is clear that social interactions are beneficial for both American and international students. The current study explores the common stressors and offers evidence of how these stressors affect students.

### Purpose of the Research

There are many international students, immigrants, and international scholars in the United States of America from all around the world. This study aims to explore Turkish international students' stressors and how they manage these stresses within their academic life. The results of the study will provide information about how these students overcome the language and stress related challenges in their academic life.

The purpose of the research included:

- 1- Identify language stressors among Turkish international graduate students' lives.
- 2- Learn about the most effective stress management strategies.
- 3- Explore their academic and language balance with stressors.

This study focused on Turkish international students' language barriers related to their academic achievement in the Southeastern USA. Turkey has always focused towards the west (Guttenplan, 2013) as Zeynep Gurhan-Canli, professor at Koc University's business faculty said. According to the Guttenplan (2013), "France and Germany were popular destinations for Turkish students, but the increasing popularity of English as a second language helps pull students to the United States". Burkholder (2010) stated that "Counselors may have skills particularly suited to finding a solution for some of the challenges that international students are facing".

### Understanding Case Studies

According to Creswell and Guetterman (2019), "A case study is an important type of ethnography, although it differs from an ethnography in several important ways" (p.477). Moreover, Stake (1995) stated that "Case study researchers may focus on a program, event, or

activity involving individuals rather than a group per se". The case studies researchers may focus on a plan, activity, or event, instead of on a group (Paramane, 2016).

In another source, there are also programs, activities and more and special areas run by the researchers of the case study (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). When analyzing a case study, a group may be more interested in describing the group's acts than with identifying shared behavior trends exhibited by a group (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). As reported by Creswell and Guetterman, "a case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection" (Greswell & Poth, 2018). According to another study "investigators, their work case studies are called many disciplines and many paradigms (qualitative and quantitative)" by researchers (Hatch, 2002, p. 30). Besides, bounded means that the case is separated in time, location, or physical boundaries for research. Another important point related to the case study is that it contains different multiple cases which are called collective case studies. Many cases are described and compared to provide insight into an issue (Stake, 1995).

As reported by Yin (2014) "Case study researchers are less likely to identify a cultural theme to examine at the beginning of a study, especially one from anthropology; instead, they focus on an in-depth exploration of the actual case". Moreover, Kher, et al., a supervised case study at one of the rural southern universities had some interesting findings about one international student's experiences with his academic journey. The case study's author believed that language barriers are one of the challenges they still feel unprepared to overcome. There can

be a direct effect on international students' adjustment process. According to Sam (2001), international student adjustment can be directly affected by language barriers.

To investigate the impact of language difficulties on Turkish students' academic life and stress, this study will use a qualitative, descriptive, multi-case study approach as a research methodology. According to the author Merriam, the concerns for a qualitative method are such as a) there are broad, flexible and open-ended research questions, b) it is felt that a detailed review of the class participation phenomena will help address the questions from the study, c) the purpose is to not to look for explanations or predictions generalizable to other populations but to gain "insight, discovery and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing" (2001, p.28).

"For the most part, however, interviewing in qualitative investigations is more open-ended and less structured. Less structured formats assume that individual respondents define the world in unique ways. Your questions thus need to be more open-ended. A less structured alternative is the semi structured interview. In this type of interview either all of the questions are more flexibly worded or the interview is a mix of more and less structured questions. Usually, specific information is desired from all the respondents, in which case there is a more structured section to the interview. But the largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic." (Merriam, p. 90).

According to the "Stress and coping experiences of international students with language barriers during the acculturation process" article shows the "Inability to speak English fluently is

a primary inhibitor to becoming socially involved in American society. Hence, separation occurs in the social milieu of international students in the U.S. When stress is severe, a complete separation occurs when students quit and go home to their home country” Lee (2008).

#### Author`s Note

To illustrate the fundamental concerns, I would like to share an experience. When I came to the United States, I joined one of my husband`s master level classes at the University of Florida. My English level was low, as I was very much a beginner and only knew several words and sentences. I knew some English idioms, but not many. I especially could not understand English jokes or word jokes in a conversation or sentence. One day, his professor made a word joke that made everyone laugh a lot, but I just stared blankly at it. My husband translated the jokes to me, and after everyone stopped, I started to laugh. When I stopped, then all the class laughed at me instead of a joke. I was so embarrassed at that time. So, language is a touchstone to a social/friend environment, education, communication, and all the daily life responsibilities in a foreign county.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### International Students` Academic Performance and Language

Students noted that when information is in English rather than in Chinese, they must triple the time spent reading. To help ease the language barriers, the students suggested that the professors give the course schedule and materials before the start of the course or lessons, so that they can better prepare for the course. If the professors or lecturers share the course notes/schedules/materials before starting to course or lessons it can help these students drastically in terms of learning despite their language barriers. In this way, an international student can better prepare for their courses or lessons. Moreover, some professors make an effort to aid in the clear understanding of course material for students by meeting with them during office hours or explaining material through video call meetings (Liu, Liu, Lee, & Magjuka, 2010). On the other hand, special support or considerations need to be provided to ensure equal participation in online courses attended by international students without a primary language in English.

In this way, an international student can better prepare for their courses or lessons. Professors can make an effort to aid in their clear understanding of the material and repeat topics for students before class begins, in possible office hours. This case study examines international students ' perceptions of their transnational learning experiences in an online MBA program. Researchers found that briefly, language factors might be affected to create another problem for international students described in this report (Liu, Liu, Lee, & Magjuka, 2010). Authors that explore international students ' needs, such as language, communication equipment, misuse of

pesticides, time zone variation, and lack of diversified practices are important. This is because the standard of learning for these students may be affected by such problems described in this report. For instance, according to researchers Liu, Liu, Lee, and Magjuka, (2010), the students reported the main problems for Chinese students were language barriers. Many international students spend a lot of money and serious time to learn higher-level English. When a professor or teacher gives a lesson to the international students, they might not be able to understand all subjects and English structure. They may still lack the necessary English language skills to fully participate.

Although academic success is not solely dependent on language skills of the individual, as depicted by the TOEFL as well as similar exams, they do, however, indicate the certain degree to which such skills will be sufficient in striving for a realistic expectation of academic success (Yang, 2002). Another study depicted that international students who went on to pursue advanced educational degrees happened to perceive academic situations to be much less stressful (Wan et al., 1992). In addition, graduate students who happened to be older reported that they were much more satisfied with their education endeavors while in the United States than younger, undergraduate, international students (Kozulin, 1999). It is evidently depicted, with empirical evidence, that there is a difference between certain problems that the undergraduate and graduate international student population faces related to stress.

Lin (2000) revealed that, due to limited language skills in the academic sphere, international students have trouble completing essay exams and also to taking notes lectures and adapting to the conditions of the American school. In addition to academic issues that international students face is understanding the logistics of the grading system, how to choose

course work, how to speak and write in English, and lastly how to adjust to the American classroom environment (Lin, 2000). Not being accepted in the majority culture coupled with the hardships of living in two cultures can lead international students to feel alienated. This can then lead to experience confusion of identity and also internal psychological conflict (Chittooran & Sankar-Gomes, 2007).

### International Students, Stress and Adaptation

In the life of a student, there are daily stressors that present. With international students, this risk of stress is higher due to factors ranging from not having a social life to a lack of family support. From all over the world, students come to the United States to study and also to enhance their knowledge (Li, Heath, Jackson, Allen, Fischer, & Chan, 2017; Meghani & Harvey, 2016; Tummala-Nara & Claudius, 2017). When compared to American students, international students have a higher risk of accumulating mental health issues, according to research (Mari, 2000). Historically, from the perspective of cross-cultural communication (Tummala-Narra & Claudius, 2013) social psychology; and sociolinguistics there has been much attention brought to language and communication skills and behaviors of immigrants and sojourners (Wong, Correa, Robinson, & Lu, 2016).

According to Lee (2008), college counselors who are acquainted with these languages and connectivity problems, the impact of language gaps on academic and human challenges and the manner through which problems may be mitigated can help international students from non-English speaking countries to acculturate and integrate more successfully. International students,



that presented as a sub-group of immigrants, were seen to receive less attention as compared to the overall immigrant group that is usually researched more heavily (Lee, 2008).

In a different article, Huntley (1993) explored language issues. According to Huntley, sometimes English language learning and exposure to real life could have been extensive or sorely restricted. Nevertheless, it is hard to adapt successfully to American culture and academic life for international students. Moreover, Huntley (1993) defends that “Approximately one third of international students rate their own performance upon arrival as inadequate and the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) mandated at most universities for international students may reveal an even higher number of students lacking adequate proficiency skills in English” (p. 6).” Another study by Sherry, Thomas, and Chui, (2010) defended that international students can develop new perspectives on a personal level, increase their self-esteem and self-confidence, and develop their life experiences independently of a different culture. As reported by Yeh and Inose (2003), prior research has shown that international students can face a number of challenges because of language and cultural obstacles, financial, academic, inter-personal problems, racial discrimination, loss of support, alienation and homesickness. The academic and social transition of international students is very critical for English language skills (Andrade, 2006). Another related article stated that in their new environment, international students are often very lonely and solely because of the absence of friends. Solely the absence of friends and social media but also the lack of familiar cultural or language contexts are part of such isolation (McClure, 2007; Sawir et al., 2008; Zhao et al., 2008; Ip et al., 2009).

### Turkish Students in United States Universities

Burkholder (2010) says that Turkey has become the eighth largest non-Asian country to send about 11,500 students, one of four in the top ten sending countries. Before 9/11, there had been a slow increase in Turkish students in the USA. Since then, growth rates have been fluctuating widely, with both the top ten countries sending the school year between 2004 and 2005 having the highest growth rate and four years decreasing (Institute of International Education, 2019). These have unique strengths that favor U.S. education including bilingualism, biculturalism, and diverse cultural perspectives (Yoon & Portman, 2004). One of the first research on Turkish international students was carried out by Poyrazli et al., (2001). There were 79 students surveyed with the Student Adjustment Strain Instrument (ISAS) and a demographic survey. They found that the presence of a Turkish government bursary was a further matter of adjustment. The relationship between acculturation, personality dimensions, English skills and demographic variables was discussed by Duru and Poyrazli (2007). The sample of the study included 229 international Turkish students from 17 colleges where Turkish students participated by filling out the survey. The existence of these universities was not given. Using regression analysis, they found 36 percent of the variance in a cultural stress explained by marital status, English competency, social connectivity, difficult adjustment, neuroticism and open-mindedness.

According to the annual report of the Institute of International Education (2019), Tatar (2005) indicated that Turkish students are ranked eighth of all of the international student population within the United States with (2%). However, there are currently zero studies that have looked into the specific experiences of Turkish students within US universities. According to a study of international students conducted at the University of Albany, there are significant

variables that impact academic success for international students (Light et al., 1987). White, Brown, Suddic, and Sidney (1983) used 30 variables in order to examine this correlation. Of these 30 variables, they found that lack of English proficiency was found to be the number one variable impacting academic success for international students. Two-thirds of international students reported specific difficulties with vocabulary, writing, and in-class discussions. Such students who had recently arrived in the United States reported that difficulties in listening comprehension was their specific area of highest concern.

The study from Tatar is still the only qualitative study on Turkish international students that is currently available (Burkholder, 2010). In the light of the research showing international students' concerns about the participation of oral classrooms, Tatar (2005) was interested in how Turkish graduates perceived their involvement with American classrooms. A multi-case analysis methodology was used, and 26 interviews were carried out by Tatar. Tatar emphasized that in Turkish educational culture, oral participation is not generally promoted. He studied with four graduate students (two women and two men) majoring in elementary education. In the transcribed interviews, Tatar (2005) identified and outlined themes. The teacher in classroom discussions shared a desire for more structure. Three factors were identified that influenced participation: education culture, environmental factors and dynamics of the classroom (Burkholder, 2010).

A multi-cases analysis methodology was used, and 26 interviews were carried out by Tatar (2005). Tatar emphasized that in Turkish educational culture, oral participation is not generally promoted. He studied with four graduate students (two women and two men) majoring in elementary education. In the transcribed interviews, Tatar (2005) identified and outlined

themes. The teacher in classroom discussions shared a desire for more structure. Three factors were identified that influenced participation: education culture, environmental factors and dynamics of the classroom (Burkholder, 2010).

As stated in Kilinc and Granello (2003), the first research on the help-seeking behavior of foreign Turkish students was performed. The Mental Health Information Questionnaire (MHIQ), the Towards Attitudes for Professional Psychologic Helping (ATSPPH) and the American International Relations Scale (AIRS) and the history questionnaire were given to 120 Turkish international students. The researchers concluded that if mental health professionals improve their understanding of Turkish international students, they can provide more effective services for this population. In a different study, Komiya and Eells (2001) explained that becoming young and active in campaigning for foreign students in general is a requirement to meaningful support.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### Overview

The previous chapter summarized the academic literature, which applies to international students and, in particular, Turkish students. The literature showed that international students face a lot of difficulties and how they express help-seeking behaviors. Although many findings have been obtained, all examples and the special experiences of all international students cannot be applied directly to Turkish students as the dynamic of Turkish culture differs and it is identified as a collectivist culture. The purpose of this thesis is to identify the main elements of Turkish international students' language experiences and their stress related to academic life.

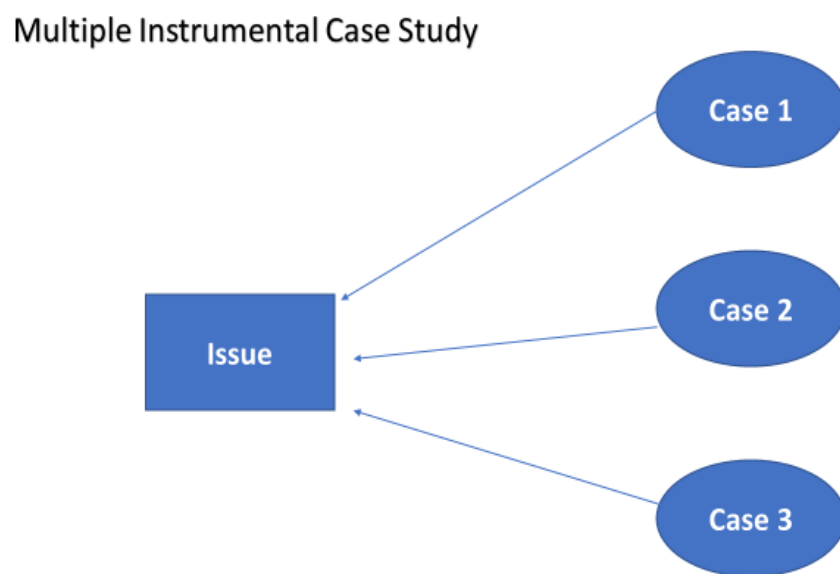
The following research questions are directing this study:

- 1- How does language acquisition and barrier affect the academic stress of Turkish-International graduate students?
- 2- What are some of the self-reported effective strategies that these students use to overcome language barriers?

### Research Design

The case study research methodology was used for the design of the study as this methodology is commonly used in social sciences and aligns to the target population and research questions. Case study methodology provides empirical structures to explore and comprehend in-depth and underlying issues related to a specific group, event or single individual. In general, main categories of case studies include illustrative, cumulative, critical and exploratory. This study followed the principles and perspectives of the exploratory type of

case studies to understand the participants' true experiences. This study focused on Turkish international graduate students who study in the US to explore their unique and common experience related to academic stress and their language acquisition and the below figure was developed to illustrate the methodology (see figure 1).



*Figure 1: Multiple Instrumental Case Study*

*The figure was adopted from Creswell and Guetterman (2019, p. 478)*

### Participants

The snowballing technique was used to recruit participants. The researcher contacted 15 potential and eligible participants after receiving the IRB approval and requested that the information about this research be spread to identify strong and potential subjects. Purposeful

sampling strategy was used to identify the target sample. International graduate students from Turkey studying in a graduate school in the southeastern part of the USA were the target group for the study.

Study participants were chosen for their ability to explain and convey their involvement in stressful situations because of language barriers. The requirements for eligibility for this purposeful sampling methodology included:

- 1) being from a Turkey,
- 2) have lived in the Southeast United States for more than one year,
- 3) study in a US graduate school.

The participants of this study included three Turkish international graduate students, two women (pseudonyms Defne and Sara), and one man (pseudonyms Mert), ages ranging from the mid-20s and the mid-30s. The participants were selected on a purposeful sampling base from Turkish international graduate students who had lived in the Southeast United States for more than one year at the time of the data collection. Two of the interviewers were Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) students, while the other one was a master's student. The participants offered and experienced similar language learning paths and practices, educational backgrounds, and living experiences in the United States.

#### Data Collection

Data collection was based on individual interviews. A phone call was used to conduct the interview with headphones to secure the privacy. A semi-structured interview process was followed for the study. The researcher identified 11 open-ended questions for the interview.

Interview questions were related to the language difficulties, stress, and bilingualism that they had previously experienced or currently ongoing and their effects on language lessons. Each interview was recorded with an electronic voice recorder with the permission of the interviewee. Each interview took approximately 45 – 60 minutes. Then, the researcher kept the recording in an encrypted device to prevent any potential breach of data. All participants identifiers were removed from the analysis and pseudonyms were generated.

The interview was conducted in Turkish language to gather a genuine response from the participants. Then the recordings were transcribed to be prepared for the analysis. Last, the full Turkish interview was translated to English. The English data was analyzed to identify themes and received conclusions. The purpose of this process was to gain rich responses from participants.

### Instruments

The interviews were semi-structured. The conversations were not limited to these questions, however. The participants answered semi -structured and open-ended questions. The semi-structured interview questions were developed as a result of the comprehensive literature review and exploring how the stress and academic performance being studied. The following factors were discussed in the interview questions about general English experiences, difficulties, advantages, and suggestions of their research in the Southeast United States. Moreover, the reactions, thoughts, and feelings towards the adversities that international students must overcome, as well as their respective coping mechanisms and problem-solving strategies were elicited. Additionally, the participant's perception and views of language barriers were collected.



The following were semi-structured interview questions:

1. Can you talk about your English language background?
2. What problems do you have with your second language? How does this affect your stress?
3. What factors does your second language play in your academic performance? What contribution did your second language provide to your academic performance?
4. How do you feel about being bilingual?
5. When you have any language problems, how does this affect your life? e.g. lack of social life, being angry, reflecting your stress to people around you, addiction or bad habits.
6. Can you talk about the stress in your academic life?
7. Can you talk about how to deal with stress?
8. What is your stress level in the COVID-19 pandemic? How does stress affect you and your life in general?
9. What concerns do you have about language or stress?
10. What are your thoughts about the impacts of the second language's acquisition with academic stressors?
11. What are your experiences with language barriers and academic stress to address the second language?

### Data Collection Credibility

The research proposal was submitted to the University of Central Florida (UCF) Institutional Review Board (IRB) to receive approval for the human subject research (Appendix A). Before conducting the interviews, all participants have received a notice of confidentiality, an explanation of the research, and an informed consent form (Appendix B). Every audio interview was linked before the data analysis, to maintain consistency, in the transcribed interview. The researcher offered a member check by emailing participants their transcripts (Appendix F) to ensure that the transcripts captured their intentions. This process allowed interviewees to have a chance to review, clarify, and correct any information if needed (Ary et al., 2019).

### Data Analysis

As reported by Creswell and Guetterman (2019) there are six steps in analyzing and interpreting qualitative data. The six steps are:

1. “Preparing and organizing the data for analysis,
2. Engaging in an initial exploration of the data through the process of coding it,
3. Using the coding to develop a more general picture of the data,
4. Representing the findings through narratives and visuals,
5. Interpreting the meaning of the results by reflecting personally on the impact of the findings and on the literature that might inform the findings, and, finally,

6. Conducting strategies to validate the accuracy of the find proceed back and forth through the steps of qualitative analysis” (p. 237).

The researcher followed these steps for the analysis of the study. The researcher read through data to develop an overall understanding of it. The collected cases were described in detailed to establish powerful context for it. The common and profound themes related to the cases were identified. When the data was collected, thematic analysis and coding were used for this study. The reporting and explaining the findings were include exploratory perspective to comprehend the participants full and genuine experience. By looking at the characteristics of the data the researcher categorized the profound meaning and assigned codes to the participants responses. By engaging all the codes and studying the participants` responses, the researcher then created the themes.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS**

### Introduction – Overview

The researcher collected interview data from Turkish international students for this study using a case study methodology. The purpose of this thesis is to identify the main elements of Turkish international students' language experiences and their stress related to academic life. The extensive literature review showed that there is a limited research article on Turkish international students and their academic experience with the second language. The researcher interviewed three Turkish international students one master and two doctoral students in the Southeastern United States to gain a deeper understanding of the academic stressors due to language barriers. This chapter explains the procedures and analysis of the qualitative data in response to find insight into the following research questions:

Research Question 1: How does language acquisition and language acquisition affect the academic stress of Turkish-International graduate students?

Research Question 2: What are some of the self-reported effective strategies that these students use to overcome language barriers?

### Qualitative Data Analysis Procedures

The interviews were conducted through a phone call with participants. The researcher recorded the interviews with a voice recording device and saved all of the recordings to an encrypted hard drive. The researcher transcribed all of the recordings from voice to words and email each participant for a member check (Appendix F). After each member of the participants

approved their interviews the researcher started preparing the data for the analysis and removed all of the personal identifiers

The researcher followed the six steps which commonly used and identified by the Creswell and Gutterman (2019). The six common steps are:

- 1- “Preparing and organizing data for analysis,
- 2- Engaging in an initial exploration of the data through the process of coding it
- 3- Using the codes to develop a more general picture of the data (description and themes)
- 4- Representing the findings through narratives and visuals
- 5- Interpreting the meaning of the results by reflecting personally on the impact of the findings and on the literature that might inform the findings, and finally,
- 6- Conduct strategies to validate the accuracy of the findings” (Creswell & Gutterman, 2019 p. 237).

The researcher did not follow these steps in a sequence but rather went back and forth to improve the quality of the analysis. To comprehend the participant’s genuine experiences related to their stress and academic life, the interviews were conducted in their native language. Then the interviews and recordings, which were in Turkish, were fully transcribed to prepare the data for the analysis. While organizing the data and removing the identifiable information, the researcher read each interview to familiarize herself with the data. In the process of the second reading, the data were initially coded and labeled. The researcher used hard copies of the interviews and highlighted the codes. During the following step, the researcher transformed all

the information into an electronic format. Then, the codes were reviewed again to recode and identify the critical categories. The categories of codes helped to find the evolving themes and finally analysis of the data.

### Participations Profiles

#### Participant 1

Mert is a 33-year-old male from Turkey. He said that he started learning English when he was in middle school. He took different English classes at various places. He expressed that his grammar much better than speaking. He completed his undergraduate degree at a University in Turkey where the education language is English. He studied the Department of Economics for his master's degree in Italy. He visited some different countries to improve his English before starting his doctoral program. He has also had the opportunity to learn English and practice directly with English speakers in different countries. However, he indicated that he experienced some second language challenges in his academic life. Mert is a hardworking student who enjoys coding and loves listening and reading English. He came to the United States and started his Ph.D. degree where he recently started his last year in his doctoral program and plans to complete his education next year at the end of summer. The interview with Mert took 45 minutes and 37 seconds.

#### Participant 2

Sara is a 24-year-old female from Turkey. She started to learn English when she was in elementary school. She is a master's level student in an education department. She loves to read

English books. Also, she prefers to write rather than speak English. She published some English articles in academia. She argues that she expresses herself better in her writings. Since her father is a Turkish teacher, she only wanted to speak Turkish at home so as not to forget the mother tongue. The only opportunity she had to improve her English was at school. A different language was learned only because it was imperative. Her friends learned Portuguese, Korean, or Spanish, but she did not try to learn it as she felt a strong pressure to learn English. She lost her interest in learning another language, unlike her friends as a result of her experience with learning English. She states that her biggest challenge in the process of language is speaking rather than listening, writing, or reading. Moreover, Sara enjoys listening to TedTalk videos. She wants to continue her doctorate education in the US. The interview that was conducted with Sara over the phone took 45 minutes and 40 seconds.

### Participant 3

Defne is a 34-year-old Turkish female. She stated that she started to learn English, specifically grammar, instead of speaking at elementary school. Also, she studied English for one year during high school. She diligently studied English because she wanted to study in a master's program in the United States. She passed different English exams and receive several acceptances from different master's programs in the United States. After completing the first master's program in Turkey, she came to her second master's program in the United States. She completed the second master's here. She reported that, whenever someone speaks English with her on the phone, she always stresses out. The reason for this is that she does not fully understand what is being said or cannot convey what she means to the other person. Since she

cannot see another person and their reaction, it becomes more challenging. Defne recently started her third year in her Ph.D. program, where she currently focused on writing her dissertation. The interview with Defne took 35 minutes and 33 seconds.

### Analysis of the Results

The researcher analyzed the data by coding the interviews and exploring the critical themes. In addition to coding and reporting the themes, the researcher created a frequency table where the table included the total word counts that participants expressed. The most common theme that participants indicated was stress, which was mentioned 70 times. Participants stated the most challenging experience for them related to their language skills was their concern about speaking. The concern while speaking was mentioned 37 times where the challenges of the second language were explained 33 times. Please see below table 1 for the remaining themes and the frequency of their word counts.

*Table 1: Frequency of Theme*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency of theme</b>
1. Language related induced stress	
Sub-theme 1. Challenges of the second language	11
- Concern about speaking	10
2. Non-Language related induced stress	7
3. Self-Confidence	9
4. Academic Life	
Sub-theme 1. Spending extra time for studying	8



<b>Theme</b>	<b>Frequency of theme</b>
5. Coping mechanisms for stress	9
6. COVID-19	4
Total Themes: 6	Total: 58

Research Question One

The first research question asked, “how do language acquisition and barrier affect the academic stress of Turkish-International graduate students?” After thoroughly analyzing the qualitative data, the researcher revealed four themes including (1) Language related induced stress, (2) Non-Language related induced stress, (3) Self-Confidence, and (4) Academic Life to answer the first question in a comprehensive way. The following themes provide detailed information about how language acquisition and barriers affect the academic stress of Turkish-international graduate students.

Theme 1. Language related induced stress

The participants mentioned that it was not easy to live in a foreign country and to receive academic education in English, that is, in a language different from their native language. The stress that arose as a result of these difficulties affected them both psychologically, physiologically, and emotionally. "I didn't have much English background and knowledge of English. This, in turn, caused me stress. I got nervous and didn't want to talk. I was worried about it" (Participant 1).

Another participant stated that he was also greatly affected physically due to stress. He indicated that he had difficulties to have positive and certain feelings about the content of his knowledge. The language barrier makes him questions the content of his knowledge. Although the students make thorough reviews, they still have anxiety about both making mistakes and what others think about them. "I mean, even though I know that subject very well, or I research it very well, I still have a concern about the language and often think too much, how are people going to welcome, how will they react to me? How will they think of him? I am much affected by this" (Participant 2).

From another point of view, if we consider the consequences of stress, a participant who stated that he was successful in his academic life in his own country, it seems that he could not be as social as before because of his foreign language after coming to a new country. Because the language factor is dominant, it affects the social circle of the participant for a while. "My friends call me over, but I am a little bit afraid to meet with my friends because I cannot feel very comfortable, thinking about what I will talk about when I go there, and I mean, I think it also affects my social environment. This causes me stress" (Participant 2).

On the other hand, one of the participants, who is a Ph.D. student, is worried about her dissertation. She needs to interview in English, but he is not sure if this will be fully productive. In this case, it increases her anxiety level and reflects on her academic life. "I will be interviewing for my dissertation and now, I am under stress for holding interviews with principals and teachers in English. This creates a lot of stress on me. First, you need to understand what the other person is talking about and then you need to give them proper

feedback; also, there are questions you have to ask them in between. I have to understand him completely so that I can ask him to follow up questions" (Participant 3).

### Sub-theme 1. Challenges of the Second Language

As a result of the analysis made in this study, it was concluded that the participant students came to the US to get a better education. Although they envisioned that this process would not be easy, they stated that they had taken the chance for their future careers. According to the information obtained through follow-up questions, we can classify the challenges faced by the participating students in terms of language into three groups. These are Life Challenges, Social Life Challenges, and Emotional Challenges. It is not easy for a student, especially for one who has not fully acquired the language of the country he/she travels to, to go abroad leaving his entire family, his environment, and his school/profession behind. Still, although the students who came here experienced serious problems with English at first, they managed to overcome these problems in time.

Participant 1 stated that he realized having some characteristics that he had not had before he came to the US, but those that emerged only after coming to the US. This participant said that while he spoke confidently as he wanted beforehand, he became a quiet person in this country. He reinforced his thoughts with the following sentence. "When you don't talk to people in a group, you don't look so good, you don't make a good impression. You have to express yourself. When I went abroad, I was afraid to talk to people. I mean to make a mistake. I thought I would not be able to express myself fully" (Participant 1).

According to the statements of a participant, the difficulty he experienced in academic English also negatively affects his social life. "You know, when I try to speak to someone, I remember the English word. Yet, I remember the Turkish word when I speak English, too. It feels like I can't speak any language very well. I may be limiting myself while in the circle of friends because I think whether I will make myself look wrong in the social environment. I frequently wonder if I use a word correctly. Since my mind is constantly concentrated on such thoughts, I forget to socialize or have fun" (Participant 2).

In addition to this participant, another participant explained the difficulties he encountered related to language through a good example of the social environment. Based on this evidence, the researcher concludes that the students experience stress in their social lives as a result of not being able to speak English well. "I have to learn this language. I think if I want to be successful, I have to learn. I challenge myself. In social life, for instance, language affects my social life very much. Maybe it is because of cultural differences; I don't know exactly. I cannot have long conversations with a foreign friend" (Participant 3).

When asked about the stress caused by language and emotions it brings about, it is concluded that they are also negatively affected the emotions. One participant had to step back for fear of making mistakes although he was willing to learn the language, speak, and establish a social environment. "Emotionally I can give such an example. My feelings are blocking me. In other words, I feel regret, I feel a loss of self-confidence, I cannot express myself, I feel failure, they are emotions, but I am here only to learn the language-independent from these emotions" (Participant 1).

### Concern about Speaking

It was concluded that all Turkish International Graduate students interviewed had anxiety while speaking English. Extensive information and different examples were obtained through the follow-up questions asked. It is possible to classify these concerns as those felt when talking with professors, felt in the classroom or when talking with friends, and those felt when talking on the phone. As a result of the interview, we understand how much a participant wants to talk about the subject in the classroom. However, it was observed that the participant did not ask for the floor by raising his hand since his stress and anxiety suppresses his urge to speak. "Indeed, I want to talk to my classmates or friends. I think that what if I sort of stutter and I can't speak or can't remember the words" (Participant 2). These thoughts prevent students from speaking. Another student expresses this eloquently. "You can't talk to a teacher as you talk to your classmate or you can't email them in the same way. Everything has certain rules" (Participant 3).

Sometimes, we find that speaking English as a second language also negatively affects daily life skills. For example, one participant reported that he was afraid to go even to the supermarket even though when he needed to. This helps us to better understand the stress it creates on that person. "I was even afraid to go to the supermarket. For example, I was hesitant to talk to someone on the phone. Whenever I had to talk on the phone, I started to talk saying that I was a foreigner and asking the other person to speak slower because of that. Still, I have difficulties" (Participant 3). The same student stated that he got prepared for the presentations two months earlier looking at the syllabus and rehearsed many times at home and he even sometimes recorded his voice. "I would speak and sometimes audio record myself so that the speech text remains in my mind" (Participant 3). Another student said that he would feel relaxed

if he wrote the words he would say during the presentation onto a card and studied using the flashcards. "For example, I always write what I will say on note cards before the presentation. Even though I never look at those cards, I still write exactly what I will say. Even if I never look at them, it makes me comfortable to know they are there" (Participant 2). According to the conclusion reached here, the students have serious problems/obstacles related to language when they first come to the US. These problems could be experienced either in meeting their daily life, during phone calls, or most importantly, in their academic life.

#### Theme 2. Non-Language related induced stress

One of the participants indicated that living away from family has many aspects that increase stress. The participant indicated that it is challenging to live without family support and difficult to be not able to offer help when a family is in need. The follow-up questions helped to clarify what these aspects were. "The first one is about the well-being of our parents. As you know, everyone's parents are old. My father stays at home; he cannot go out due to the lockdown (it applies to the people aged 65 and above). In other words, you are at home and as long as you stay at home, i.e., in a confined space, your stress increases" (Participant 1).

The students living in the US are not only unable to see their parents, but also concerned about their well-being. This stresses them out. One of the participants stated that: "The second one is the economic aspect; economic activities have stopped everywhere. That's, what concerns me is about its repercussions for the next year. What if I will not be able to find a job? What if universities do not accept students? It was already a big challenge to find a job as an international student. Now we have to find a job post-pandemic!" (Participant 1). This student

noted that he focused on studying more as a distraction from the epidemic. "I try not to think about more. Instead, I allocate more of my time to coding" (Participant 1). He believes that the work on vaccines is a positive development of the Covid-19 process. "Currently, certain vaccines are being developed; and you have to trust in the scientists. This gives you hope" (Participant 1).

### Theme 3. Self-confidence

Self-confidence means feeling good about oneself as a result of developing positive emotions (Bénabou & Tirole, 2002). In other words, self-confidence is being satisfied with being who we are and, as a result, being at peace with ourselves and our social environment (Bénabou & Tirole, 2002). Self-confidence has three components: (a) communication, (b) self-expression, and (c) self-management.

Self-confidence has three steps. The first and most important of them is communication. A person can have a conversation with others comfortably only after he or she has already acquired communication skills. A person with communication skills listens to discussions or dialogues calmly and deeply, welcomes them with understanding and cares about what they say. That's why communication is important. In this context, there is a link between communication and self-confidence. The first participant stated: "I am afraid to communicate. This, in turn, causes a general loss of self-confidence and makes it a little harder to express what you want to express in the way you want to express them. Therefore, this inability naturally causes me stress. I asked myself a lot of questions such as 'Now you are here; where would you go to improve your language skills if you are not going to be able to make it better it here?'" (Participant 1). As it has also been stated by the participant, his concerns about language skills caused him to

question his self-confidence. This constant high pressure to be better resulted in some negative outcomes and make him question all of his actions.

In addition, the feature of self-expression, which is the second aspect of self-confidence, emerges as a concept which is paid more attention to by the students living abroad. Some of the concepts that seem to hinder the ability to express themselves are the concepts of self-confidence, self-management, and not listening. An individual who can express himself can defend both his rights and the rights of others when necessary. One participant stated his own experience as follows: "When I first started my language education, I thought I was far behind my classmates in terms of speaking and writing because I thought my English was insufficient. I was trying to think of something first in Turkish and then translate it into English in my mind; however, I could not find the exact word I wanted. I could not express myself clearly. I was feeling inadequate and experiencing self-confidence problems"(Participant 3). Language anxiety causes students to have language problems.

It is observed that being in the same environment with those who have similar characteristics with themselves makes the students, who share this and similar thoughts, feel better. Thus, their self-confidence is less shaken. The researcher shares the example of one of the participants in reaching this conclusion: "Abroad, there were quite a lot of foreigners such as the Pakistani, Indian, and Chinese people around. When I heard them speak English, I felt kind of confident because I thought if these guys speak English like this and can communicate, I can speak in any way" (Participant 1). Hence, when the students start observing others and detect behaviors similar to theirs, they start to regain their self-confidence.



Being able to control emotions, which is the last aspect of self-confidence, is also an important point in terms of human psychology. The reason for this is that individuals who can control their emotions are those who can succeed. Emotional regulation is a critical skill and an important concept in wellbeing. When their unhappiness continually interferes with their thoughts, it starts to make them feel diffident. Participant 2 believes that being a perfectionist, as well, negatively affects his feelings from time to time. "I used to believe that perfectionism was a very nice thing. Because perfectionism means you do not do anything for yourself. You do it for someone else to like it. You think about whether the other person will like it; or, what the teacher will think about it. Concerned about whether my English will be good. When I make mistakes due to stress, this in turn, affects my self-confidence "(Participant 2). Also, the same participant says that he wants to get rid of those stressful situations as soon as possible. "I negatively feel considerable stress. For example, if I was to make a presentation and if I was stressed out about it, I wanted to talk very quickly and just sit in the classroom. Sort of, as we call it as if it was battered" (Participant 2).

The feeling that such a situation causes another participant is the feeling of inadequacy. Some of the students, on the other hand, find themselves inadequate in a foreign language. "Early on, I was feeling inadequate, really inadequate. I could not express myself clearly and this inability made me suffer feelings of inadequacy and problems of self-confidence" (Participant 3).

#### Theme 4. Academic Life

Academic life is a precious setting for students. It is a golden opportunity particularly for the students who study a foreign language abroad. How you can take advantage of this

environment is up to you. Some students spend their time mainly at the beaches, cafes, or game tracks, whereas other students try to have access to more information or become acquainted with more people or improve their English skills. The important characteristics common to all the students interviewed was that all of them had previous academic success.

Difficulties in speaking turned out to be a major problem for these students. In this context, one of the participants said: "Academic presentations, for one thing. I refrain from making too many applications. I can make presentations at conferences, though. I have to apply for them, but I restrict myself, considering my language skills" (Participant 2).

This student feels insufficient and unsuccessful. "My English is, for me, an area I am not good at. Take the homework for example. I look at the papers I wrote when I first started with my master's study or language training. 'How could I give this paper to the teacher?' I ask myself. At that time, I was stressed from an academic point of view. I would start to make preparations for a presentation two months before it" (Participant 3). He had to exert greater efforts than other students to prepare for the homework.

The last participants talked about the importance of pronunciation in the academic field. He noted that he felt very ashamed when he realized that he mispronounced a word, particularly if the other person was his teacher. We conclude that another source of stress for the students is their failure to pronounce the words correctly while speaking. This makes them feel ashamed. "In academic terms, pronunciation is an important indicator of language skills. When you make a mistake, not many people laugh at it, but you may find yourself in a funny situation. For example, I had a friend named Dirk. His name was spelled as D-i-r-k. I would always refer to

him as 'Dirk'. I thought it would be pronounced in that way. But the guy finally said, 'My name is pronounced as Durk', and I felt embarrassed. It was not something I did deliberately" (Participant 1).

Another source of stress for the students in their academic lives is their conversation or correspondence with their teachers. There is formal and informal language. You cannot use informal language when you talk to a professor or send an ordinary e-mail to him. It seems that this was a problem in the life of one of the participants: "You can't talk to a teacher as you talk to your classmate or you can't email them in the same way. Everything has certain rules. I would get prepared for the presentations two months earlier looking at the syllabus and rehearse them many times at home sometimes recording my voice. I would speak and sometimes audio record myself so that the speech text remains in my mind" (Participant 2). These students have to rehearse every homework, speech, e-mail, or presentation for many times. This means that they have to study harder compared to other students, sacrificing their private time. They do this to get better language training and have a better career in the future. Their goal is to train the next generations of children so that they can be more knowledgeable and have a high level of character.

The opinions of the other students on academic life have similarities with those of other participants. "I can speak my mind, but I feel that my thinking speed declines when I talk about an academic or intellectual matter. When we build a language, we do a format based on it and follow it. You have to be more careful and attentive while speaking to teachers in particular. You have to be careful about the selection of words. Some professors even gave feedback on the

language, your English is a bit like this, but you can also do that, and it would be better"

(Participant 1).

It was concluded that one of the participants attached greater importance to his writing just because he was afraid of speaking and making errors. "I think I am more careful about my writing because I limit myself regarding speaking" (Participant 2). Another student notes that he has received assistance from the Writing Center regarding writing. "I was trying to think of something first in Turkish and then translate it into English in my mind; however, I could not find the exact word I wanted. I could not express myself clearly. My writing was not satisfactory, either. I have used the Writing Center with advice from my teacher. At first, you lose your self-confidence, and you don't want to speak. Rather, you want to communicate by writing, because you can make use of translation services" (Participant 3).

Another common characteristic of the students was their position regarding grammar. All students noted that although they had received good grammar training in Turkey, they were not good speakers of the English language. The most common problem with English was speaking, or as the students put it, "not being able to speak." A student explained this with a good example. "The main problem is generally about the differences in grammar. Turkish is an agglutinating language with many suffixes. In our Turkish language, we do not use 'a' or 'the'. Also, the suffixes '-lar' and '-ler' are easy to distinguish. Of course, this is because Turkish is my mother tongue. I make occasional errors in grammar while speaking; for instance, I forget to add 's' to the plural words or I use plural words with 'there is' or singular ones with 'there are', etc." (Participant 1). The participant touched on the clearest and common errors in both languages.

An example is given by other participants regarding grammar further clarified the matter. "The training we got in Turkey was completely based on grammar. We never focus on speaking at schools. There is only grammar. I always lack for it. You have to manage/improve your speaking on your own. The more contact or dialogue you have with foreign people; the greater progress you make. That is how I made progress. For instance, when I first started with my master's study, I remember that I could understand none of the things my teacher said. I could understand only 40% of the course. When everyone laughed at something, I would laugh at it as well supposing it was a funny thing" (Participant 3).

The participant also talked about thinking the words or sentences in Turkish first and trying to translate it into English then. "I still cannot speak English like the way I speak my mother tongue. There is a translation mechanism going on at the back and you try to speak based on that mechanism. You know which words you will use, but there is a problem with it" (Participant 1). One of the common mistakes for students is that they exchange nouns with verbs. The sentence structures in Turkish and English are completely different. A student clarified the matter with a good example from his life. "Sometimes, I exchange nouns with verbs. For example, instead of asking, 'Did you put the bread in the fridge?' I may ask, 'Did you put the fridge in the bread?' I can make such stupid mistakes while speaking" (Participant 1).

Another student gave the following example from his academic life: "My English is, for me, an area I am not good at. Take the homework for example. I look at the papers I wrote when I first started with my master's study or language training. 'How could I give this paper to the teacher?' I ask myself. At that time, I was stressed from an academic point of view. I would start to make preparations for a presentation two months before it" (Participant 3).

Even if they engage in extensive reading, listening, writing, or watching, the students still see themselves insufficient regarding their English skills. This naturally creates a source of stress for them. Nevertheless, they have found certain methods that make them feel good and help them ease out their stress. They confirmed that these methods were useful in decreasing their stress. Thanks to their decreased stress levels, they were able to study harder and have more academic achievements.

There are many advantages to being bilingual. Some of these advantages are a great way to keep your brain healthy. For example, multitasking skills, have a more controlled attention span, problem-solving, open-mindedness, awareness of other cultures, make travel easier and enjoyable, try to learn a third language, and improve social life. Regarding this question, one of the participants responded as follows "I'm a little proud of myself. Because speaking a second language is harder than you would think. My vocabulary is expanding. However, the challenge to speak a second language continues" (Participant 2). Besides, the same student stated that she had more chances to socialize with a second language, and it was a great feeling to read the novels in the original language. One of the other students indicated that "It is a great feeling to be able to help when someone in a Turkish speaking group comes and asks an English question. I feel accomplished and valuable when I can provide my support and help related to second language" (Participant 1). Speaking English is so important today. The last participant mentioned the importance of knowing English. "I have already learned English as I had obligated to learn. I say, for example, I speak English because it is a global language, I can survive wherever I go in the world" (Participant 3).

## Research Question Two

The second research question aimed to explore the Turkish-International graduate students' coping mechanism when they are dealing with stress. The second question asked, "What are some of the self-reported effective strategies that these students use to overcome language barriers?". The following theme which is theme 5 was created to organize participant responses to their coping strategies. Examples and direct quotations to fully comprehend their effective strategies are provided below.

### Theme 5. Coping mechanisms for stress

Examining the methods of participants to cope with stress, we witness striking examples. One of the methods commonly used by the students is sharing the problems they encounter with another Turkish friend. When we go into more detail, it is possible to say that each participant has different methods of coping with stress. One method reported by one of the students is as follows: "I feel very relaxed when I call my parents/family and talk to my family for example. It is a great self-protection technique" (Participant 2). Talking to the mother or a family member reduces stress. Another method mentioned by the same participant is about videos. "You know there are TED Talks; I watched a lot about like how they prepared for those talks or what kind of exercises they practice getting better. I even watched them before some of my exams and sometimes it helped" (Participant 2).

Another participant found the solution in starting to learn a language other than English to reduce his stress. "Since my wife is foreign, I try to learn a bit of language. I don't know, I try to teach her a programming language so that I think less when dealing with such things. I spend

more time studying lessons to get rid of stress" (Participant 1). Another method used by the same student is thinking about the fact that his professors are very understanding. The fact that his professors are tolerant of his mistakes considerably reduces the stress of the student. The participant expresses this situation clearly. "Look, this is very important. Professors generally speak English; I mean most of them are native English speakers. They are from the United States. They express incredible understanding because they know that we are international students. They show a little more understanding of language issues. Some professors even gave feedback or suggestions on the language. They would say your English is a bit like this, but you can also do that or use these resources to improve" (Participant 1). The student expressed that he enjoyed communicating with people who have similar language experiences. The main reason for this was to feel better and reduce stress. "I was relaxed to see people like myself. I met people all around the world including Pakistani, Indian, Chinese as our school has many international students. These guys, too, spoke broken English like me. Observing and experiencing this encouraged me to be more outspoken" (Participant 1).

On the other hand, the third participant preferred to spend time with her pet as a method of reducing stress. Whenever the participant was stressed, she spent time with her dog (such as walking, playing, or going shopping with him) and relaxed. While talking about the moments she spent with her dog, one could tell from her tone of voice how happy and peaceful the participant was. So, it is very nice that animals can also help to reduce stress. Of course, the techniques to reduce stress used by the student included others such as meeting friends, participating in sports, and watching movies. "I meet with my close friend once in a while and it makes me feel good. I go on a walk with my dog. Nowadays, I am obsessed with losing weight; I do sport by myself



because I always eat something at home. I started watching too many soaps. These distract me" (Participant 3). There are soaps that the participant follows regularly. She stated that her stress decreased by watching more episodes especially when she was stressed. The soaps are in English voice-over; moreover, they have English subtitles. This means that while this is a kind of relief for her, it is a kind of study as she improves her listening skills.

#### Time-sensitive Question

During the phase of the proposal and IRB process of the current research, the COVID-19 cases and the effects of this national pandemic started impacting all parts of life. The researcher and the committee members decided to receive the participant's perspectives about COVID-19 as it has been an incredible indicator of stress. Participant's responses and how the pandemic affected their life and their stress related to their academic life are reported below. The researcher also acknowledges that the pandemic is unprecedented, and the design of the research was conducted without the presence or the prediction of the pandemic.

#### Theme 6. COVID-19

The current quarantine process is something that we normally would not encounter. Still, we are faced with this pandemic. This unexpected new development affecting many people including international students or students who are living abroad. This, in turn, leads to stress, which may have consequences different from those of academic stress. Its results will naturally manifest differently in each student. According to the data collected from the participants, this epidemic has affected them considerably.

Another participant notes that he was distressed during the Covid-19 process. He indicated that the initial impact was not very adverse for him since he did not take courses after finishing the course process earlier. The restrictions on social life started to stress him out. "I was able to go shopping whenever I want, or I could have fun with my hammock at will. I could visit a couple of shops. Now, I have to do shopping once in three weeks and the shopping process now includes wearing your mask and washing everything after returning home, and it is a very tiring activity and you can get no fun from it" (Participant 3). A student stated that although he was working from home, he missed meeting with friends and social life, and this increasingly stressed him out. It follows that staying at home for longer periods paves the way for stress disorders. In addition, some people comply with lockdown rules, but others do not follow them. The same student is sensitive to these rules. We understand it from the following remarks: "Here, the lockdown has been recently lifted. I see people in the park; the cafes are very crowded. How can I go to those crowded places? I want to go, but I don't know how they can go. No one wears any mask. What if I contract the disease and am hospitalized? This stresses me out" (Participant 3).

One of the participants stated that he was not expecting the pandemic in the least and he didn't know what to do. He noted that the courses were canceled first, and online courses were introduced then and the schools were shut down. This uncertainty was a source of concern for him. "When the Covid-19 outbreak started, I had three courses. I returned home, and my motivation to study and complete these classes were enormously decreased. I had a cousin who was two and a half years old. He was making too much noise, and this not only impacted my presentations but also my will to study in that setting. As I was affected too much

psychologically, my motivation declined considerably. For instance, I was not able to do my reading homework" (Participant 2). This interview reveals that a small kid around adversely affects his studying, creating stress for the student.

The methods the students developed to overcome stress related to the Covid-19 outbreak were similar to the methods they employed in combating academic stress. As noted above, some students opted for spending more time watching soaps or taking their dogs for a walk while others chose to talk to their mothers or learn another language. Other students indicated that they might study outdoors when it got warmer. "I will go to the balcony and close the door, and do my reading work outside, feeling nature. You cannot be productive when you are stuck in your room for weeks" (Participant 2).

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

### Introduction

The final chapter of this research explains the discussion. The following section includes a review of the study, discussion of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and conclusions.

### Review of the Study

In this section, the researcher described the findings of this qualitative study. Using a case study design, in-depth information was given on the connection between graduate students' academic stressors and their second language acquisition and barriers. The research questions provided the foundation for the collection of data and the design of the study. The two research questions that the study aimed to find answers are:

- 1- How do language acquisition and barriers affect the academic stress of Turkish international graduate students?
- 2- What are some of the self-reported effective strategies that these students use to overcome language barriers?

The topic and this population have not been studied often, revealing the need to conduct such a study. This study was prepared to compensate for the shortcomings in this area. The researcher reached the students with the snowball technique and chose the first three eligible participants. Three interviews conducted with the participants to explore their experiences as they related to the language barrier with academic stress. The results from the qualitative data allowed for a meaningful understanding of academic stress with language difficulties. The

researcher collected data by interviewing three Turkish international graduate students in total. Then, detailed inductive coding was conducted. Themes were created with the specified codes. According to the participants' interview results, themes were created, and the data was presented.

### Discussion of the Findings

The results of the qualitative data provided a meaningful understanding of the academic stressors of Turkish international graduate students. Six themes were revealed to organize the result of the study through the coding of the interview data. (1) Language related induced stress, (2) Non-Language related induced stress, (3) Self-Confidence, (4) Academic life, (5) Coping mechanism for stress, and (6) COVID-19. These themes were created as a result of the combination of codes (Appendix E).

Especially when speaking English, stress was the most overarching theme throughout all three interviews. Every participant indicated that speaking was the most stressful and challenging process of the language. These stressors affect their academic life. Tummala-Nara and Claudius (2013) explained that too much stress can negatively affect international students' academic life. Language barriers and living away from home with a lack of family support makes life even more difficult for international students (Rogers-Sirin, Ryce, & Sirin, 2014). In addition to all these factors, the participants indicated that they need to perform with the best of the ability in a challenging academic environment.

All the participants stated that to survive in the most competitive academic life, they need work so much harder compared to their native peers. To accomplish this task, most of the time they need to limit their social life if they have any. Participants shared that academic life created

great stress and burden in their life especially when they came to the US for the first time. Prempeh, Thomas, and Caldwell (2018) found that stress impacts the cultural adaptation of international students. Participants of the study stated that they have a very limited time of anything other than the schoolwork. The combination of schoolwork and stress with very limited social life increases the negative impact.

Participants very clearly shared that their lack of knowledge of the English language is most evident in speaking. Language is the basic unit of communication. Speaking out makes communication easy and makes it meaningful. The participants stated that the difficulties they experienced while studying English as a second language were more internal rather than their skills. They often question themselves. Even though international students seem to have a higher risk to develop psychological issues, Lee (2008) stated that international students received less attention compared to the overall immigrant group. The participants of this study stated that talking in class, talking with a professor, and talking on the phone are the most difficult challenges.

International students have to study more to be successful in the academic field and overcome their language barrier. Liu, Liu, Lee, and Magjuka, (2010) found that language barriers are the most prominent problems of international students. One of the main reasons for this is that the content knowledge that they need to comprehend is not in the native language. Missing or incorrect understandings emerge when they read the subject only once. Students do it over and over again to get fully comprehend the contexts. While doing these repetitions, they compromise their sleep, fun, TV time, and social life.

Based on data from the interviews, participants shared that their insufficient language skills affect their social lives. It is not easy for them to be in a group of friends or to create a new group so that they can express themselves fully. For this reason, they have stated that they always have difficulties in their social life, as they avoid trying.

The researcher concludes that one of the methods of reducing the stress of the students is sharing the difficulties they experience with a friend who speaks the same language. Also, some of the students' methods of coping with stress include talking with their mother, listening to TedTalks, walking with their dog, watching movies, doing exercises, and learning a different language. The researcher created the figure below to better represent the findings. Turkish international students experience stress related to their language barriers which affect their self-confidence and the pressure of their academic life.

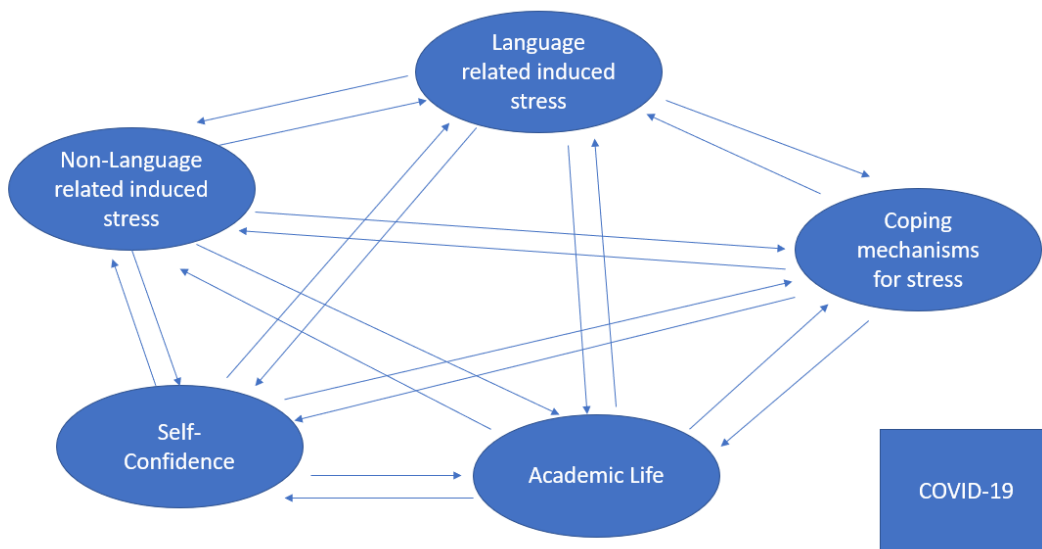


Figure 2: Result of the analysis

The figure 2 was developed as a result of the analysis and provide a better representation of the results. All interview participants expressed a love of learning the English language. This quality is indicative of academic life and improves their academic life and language success. After developing their language, they stated that they took part in many projects, worked in different workshops with their professors, and were writing various articles.

All participants also shared that they lack self-confidence due to the difficulties that they face with their language acquisition. Before they came to the US, each student stated that they were incredibly successful students with great self-confidence. After coming to the US and having these experiences, a serious self-confidence problem occurred due to language issues. Participants indicated that they were feeling inadequate and felt as if they had never received language training before. Stress caused a lack of self-confidence. Although this stress affects both their social environment and self-confidence, it has a greater impact on their academic life.

Being healthy is one of the basic requirements for working regularly and being a successful student. It was observed that the stress levels of the students increased during the quarantine period in response to COVID-19. Participants shared that many factors impacted them during COVID-19: such as the fact that they stayed at home for a long time, thought about their old parents who are miles away, live alone in a foreign country, worried if they can stay healthy, continued their education in an online format, and worried about the future and employment. When evaluating the interviews, it was concluded that the motivations of the students were dramatically reduced due to COVID-19. Moreover, participants stated that they were doing at least three weeks of grocery shopping. They shared that on the way to shopping, they had to wear gloves and masks each time, that they had to wash their hands many times after



coming from the shop, and that they had to wipe all the items one by one. From now on, the market has now turned into a tormenting obligation rather than an action taken with pleasure. Besides, they can't meet their friends and talk the life challenges.

One of the participants stated that he was stuck at home due to quarantine orders, but it was very difficult to study in the same house with his two-and-a-half-year-old little nephew. From here, we understand that small children or children in the home negatively affect studying. This participant expressed a lack of motivation and attention towards his studies. However, he stated that they found some temporary solutions to overcome these challenges including studying on the balcony, learning a different language, watching movies, or meeting online with their families.

#### Limitations of the Study

This study had four limitations. One of the limitations is that this study was completed in the form of an interview. The explanations shared by the participants completely cover their personal experiences. It was made by trusting their opinions of the students and a conclusion was made within the framework of their past and present experiences. The answers to the study questions took place in the direction of their beliefs and perspectives. In some cases, the participants may have described the subject more quietly and exaggerated, to answer more appealingly. However, as Ely (1991) states that “observation can never be objective... [nor can it be] judgment-free.

Another limitation was the sample size of this study. The research included only three International Turkish Graduate Student, despite using a snowballing sampling technique. All work and deductions have been obtained with the information shared by only three students.

An additional limitation was that the participants only joined from the southeast of the United States. This study has been concluded based on only that area. That`s why this point made it one of the limiting factors of this study. The impact of the location has not been measured. Various subcultures may have an impact on Turkish international students` experiences. The current study does not provide any information related to the subcultures or location.

A significant limitation was the Covid-19 pandemic which took place during the data collection for this study. Covid-19 restricted us because we were unable to meet face to face with the participants. Conducting the interviews over the phone may have an impact on participants` experience. Additionally, most Turkish international graduate students were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic within many layers including stress, health issues, and academic anxieties. The investigator planned to study with more Turkish students however it did not happen as two potential participants withdrew from the study due to problems related to COVID-19 and they returned to their country. The impact of the COVID-19 may have critical importance as Turkish international students stayed at home for several months where they were thinking about their old relatives including parents and grandparents. The participants shared that they were even thinking about where they would be buried, if they were deceased, due to the pandemic. This unprecedented situation has an incredible impact on their mental health and stress.

### Recommendations for Future Research

The role of the second language is immense in students' academic life. However, it is noted that very little research has been conducted focusing on Turkish international graduate students and their second language experience in academic life. There is also a need for studies for populations who are from different cultures or different nations to comprehend the cultural impact. Richer studies where researchers collect different and strong data to explore the impact of stress can provide useful information. The result of this study calls for an extensive cross-cultural investigation to identify powerful strategies to help international students and the quality of education.

This study provides empirical perspectives to understand the complexity of international students' experience in academic life. Many aspects of life that have a potentially strong impact on international student life including political issues, economic difficulties, crises, or unexpected events such as a pandemic. Future studies can focus to identify these aspects, what impact do they have on international students' life, and how international students can prepare to overcome these challenges.

This study only focused on Turkish international students and their experiences. Future studies can also explore U.S. students' experience with the meaning to have international students in their classrooms or the challenges. The faculty members who advise or teach international students can also be a good population to explore or receive perspective. The faculty members can offer their experience and strategies on how to improve the teaching and learning experience for these students that would potentially improve the quality of the pedagogy.

## Conclusion

This study provides perspectives of Turkish international graduate students and their language experience in academic life while exploring the impact of stress. Turkish international graduate students have a complex life and difficult life challenges to overcome while performing in a highly competitive school. Language is only one aspect of their life that creates stress. Managing life demands, trying to live in a place far from family or social support, growing a family, and responding to a pandemic just a few topics that often shared by the participants for the study. Turkish international graduate students who participated in the study experienced challenges of the second language and their strongest difficulty was their concerns and thought process for the speaking aspect of the language. Students indicated that speaking English as a second language has a powerful impact on their self-confidence and they spend more hours studying so that they can keep up with the demand for academic life. Coping mechanisms and the discussion related to pandemic were explored in previous chapters.

**APPENDIX A**  
**IRB APPROVAL**



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Institutional Review Board  
FWA00000351  
IRB00001138, IRB00012110  
Office of Research  
12201 Research Parkway  
Orlando, FL 32826-3246

EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

May 7, 2020

Dear Nermin Ciloglu Cakmakci:

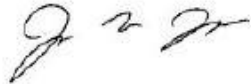
On 5/7/2020, the IRB determined the following submission to be human subjects research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Initial Study, Category 2
Title:	Exploring Academic Stressors Related to Second Language Acquisition of Turkish-International Graduate Students Studying Education in the Southeast United States
Investigator:	Nermin Ciloglu Cakmakci
IRB ID:	STUDY00001717
Funding:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doc Apr 19, 2020, 2048.pdf, Category: Faculty Research Approval;</li> <li>• Cakmakci HRP-254 Form_IRB clean final.pdf, Category: Consent Form;</li> <li>• Interview Questions.docx, Category: Interview / Focus Questions;</li> <li>• Recruitment material.docx, Category: Recruitment Materials;</li> <li>• Updated HRP-255 - Form.docx, Category: IRB Protocol;</li> </ul>

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made, and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please submit a modification request to the IRB. Guidance on submitting Modifications and Administrative Check-in are detailed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the IRB Library within the IRB system. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request so that IRB records will be accurate.

If you have any questions, please contact the UCF IRB at 407-823-2901 or [irb@ucf.edu](mailto:irb@ucf.edu). Please include your project title and IRB number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Jacques', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Racine Jacques, Ph.D.  
Designated Reviewer

**APPENDIX B**  
**THE CONSENT FORM**



***Title of research study:*** Exploring Academic Stressors Related to Second Language Acquisition of Turkish-International Graduate Students Studying Education in the Southeast United States



UNIVERSITY OF  
CENTRAL FLORIDA

Investigator: *Nermin Ciloglu Cakmakci*

Key Information: The following is a short summary of this study to help you decide whether or not to be a part of this study. More detailed information is listed later on in this form.

Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?

We invite you to take part in a research study because your contributions are critical for the scientific understanding. In order to participate to the study, you must be 18 years of age or older, study in a US graduate school, being from Turkey, and have lived in the Southeast United States for more than one year.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of the research includes;(1) Identify language stressors among Turkish international graduate student`s life, (2) Learn about the most effective stress management strategies, (3) Explore their academic and language balance with stressors.

How long will the research last and what will I need to do?

We expect that you will be in this research study for 45-60 minutes.

***You will be asked around 11 research questions related to second language acquisition, academic life and stress.*** More detailed information about the study procedures can be found under ***“What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?”***

An interview to explore your experience will be conducted if you participate to the study.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?

***There are no known risks identified to the participants.***

Will being in this study help me anyway?

***This study can help you to think your experience related to stress extensively and make meaningful understanding.***

What happens if I do not want to be in this research?

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time without any outcome. Whether or not you take part is up to you.

Who can I talk to?

***PI contact info: [nermin@Knights.ucf.edu](mailto:nermin@Knights.ucf.edu) Phone: 352-888-1630***

***Faculty Advisor contact info: [Taylor.Wenzel@ucf.edu](mailto:Taylor.Wenzel@ucf.edu) Phone: 407-435-7157***

This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (“IRB”). You may talk to them at 407-823-2901 or [irb@ucf.edu](mailto:irb@ucf.edu) if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

How many people will be studied?

We plan to have 3 participants in this research study.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?

You can leave the research at any time and it will not be held against you.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study and to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other representatives of this organization.

If identifiers are removed from your identifiable private information that are collected during this research, that information could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without your additional informed consent.



**APPENDIX C**  
**RECRUITMENT SCRIPTS**

Only the following recruitment text used to recruit participants.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Whether you take part is up to you.

The purpose of this research is to describe the academic stressors related to second language barriers of Turkish-International graduate students and share their experiences. You will be asked to participate in an interview to explore your experience related to stress and academic achievement.

In order to participate in the study, you must be 18 years of age or older, currently study in a US graduate school, be from Turkey, and have lived in the Southeast United States for more than one year.

We expect that you will be in this research study for 45-60 minutes.

You will be asked around 11 research questions related to second language acquisition, academic life, and stress. We will conduct the interview over a phone call, and you will be audio-recorded during this study. If you do not want to be recorded, you will not be able to be in the study. Discuss this with the researcher or a research team member. If you are recorded, the recording will be kept in a locked, safe place. All data will be stored for 5 years, at which time the recording will be erased or destroyed. The researcher will not collect any identifiable data.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

**Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem:** If you have questions, concerns, or complaints: Nermin, Ciloglu Cakmakci, Graduate Student, [nermin@knights.ucf.edu](mailto:nermin@knights.ucf.edu), Applied Learning and Instruction Program, College of Education, 407-823-2766 or Dr. Taylar Wenzel, Faculty Supervisor, Department of School of Teacher Education at 407-435-7157 or by email at [Taylar.Wenzel@ucf.edu](mailto:Taylar.Wenzel@ucf.edu).

**IRB contact about your rights in this study or to report a complaint:** If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or have concerns about the conduct of this study, please contact Institutional Review Board (IRB), University of Central Florida, Office of Research, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901, or email [irb@ucf.edu](mailto:irb@ucf.edu).

**APPENDIX D**  
**SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

The following questions are semi-structured interview questions:

1. Can you talk about your English language background?
2. What problems do you have with your second language? How does this affect your stress?
3. What factors does your second language play in your academic performance? What contribution did your second language provide to your academic performance?
4. How do you feel about being bilingual?
5. When you have any language problems, how does this affect your life? e.g. lack of social life, being angry, reflecting your stress to people around you, addiction, or bad habits.
6. Can you talk about the stress in your academic life?
7. Can you talk about how to deal with stress?
8. What is your stress situation in the COVID-19 process? How stress affects you and your life in general?
9. What concerns do you have about language or stress?
10. What are your thoughts about the impacts of the second language's acquisition with academic stressors?
11. What are your experiences language barriers with academic stress to address the second language?

**APPENDIX E**  
**CODING TABLE**



**Coding Table**

<b>Open Code</b>	<b>Subtitle</b>	<b>Examples of participants words</b>
1- Stress	<p>Causes of stress</p> <p>-Physical Stress</p> <p>-Psychological Stress (What others think about you)</p> <p>-Social Stress</p>	<p>"I didn't have much English background and knowledge of English. This, in turn, caused me stress. I got nervous and didn't want to talk. I was worried about it" (Participant 1).</p> <p>"I mean, even though I know that subject very well, or I research it very well, I still have concern about the language and often think too much, how are people going to welcome, how will they react to me? How will they think of him? I am much affected by this" (Participant 2).</p> <p>"My friends call me over, but I am a little bit afraid to meet with my friends because I cannot feel very comfortable, thinking about what I will talk about when I go there, and I mean, I think it also affects my social environment. This causes me stress" (Participant 2).</p> <p>"I will be interviewing for my dissertation and now, I am under stress for holding interviews with principals and teachers in English. This creates a lot of stress on me. First, you need to understand what the other person is talking about and then you need to give them proper feedback; also, there are questions you have to ask them in between. I have to understand him completely so that I can ask him follow up questions" (Participant 3).</p>
Methods of coping with stress	Feedback/support of professors	<p>"Look, this is very important. Professors generally speak English; I mean most of them are native English speakers. They are from United States. They express incredible understanding because they know that we are international students. They show a little more understanding about language issues. Some professors even gave feedback or suggestions on the language. They would say your English</p>

		<p>is a bit like this, but you can also do that or use these resources to improve" (Participant 1).</p> <p>"I feel very relaxed when I call my parents/family and talk to my family for example. It is a great self-protection technique" (Participant 2).</p> <p>"You know there are TED Talks; I watched a lot about like how they prepared for those talks or what kind of exercises they practice getting better. I even watched them before some of my exams and sometimes it helped" (Participant 2).</p> <p>"Since my wife is foreign, I try to learn a bit of language. I don't know, I try to teach her a programming language so that I think less when dealing with such things. I spend more time studying lessons to get rid of stress" (Participant 1).</p> <p>"I was relaxed to see people like myself. I met people all around the world including Pakistani, Indian, Chinese as our school has many international students. These guys, too, spoke broken English like me. Observing and experiencing this encouraged me to be more outspoken" (Participant 1).</p> <p>"I meet with my close friend once in a while and it makes me feel good. I go on a walk with my dog. Nowadays, I am obsessed with losing weight; I do sport by myself because I always eat something at home. I started watching too many soaps. These distract me" (Participant 3).</p> <p>"For example, I always write what I will say on note cards before the presentation. Even though I never look at those cards, I still write exactly what I will say. Even if I never look at them, it makes me comfortable to know they are there" (Participant 2).</p>
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<p>2- Self-confidence</p>		<p>"I am afraid to communicate. This, in turn, causes a general loss of self-confidence and makes it a little harder to express what you want to express in the way you want to express them. Therefore, this inability naturally causes me stress. I asked myself a lot of questions such as 'Now you are here; where would you go to improve your language skills if you are not going to be able to make it better it here?'" (Participant 1).</p> <p>"When I first started my language education, I thought I was far behind my classmates in terms of speaking and writing because I thought my English was insufficient. I was trying to think of something first in Turkish and then translate it into English in my mind; however, I could not find the exact word I wanted. I could not express myself clearly. I was feeling inadequate and experiencing self-confidence problems"(Participant 3).</p> <p>"Abroad, there were quite a lot of foreigners such as the Pakistani, Indian, and Chinese people around. When I heard them speak English, I felt kind of confident because I thought if these guys speak English like this and be able to communicate, I can speak it any way" (Participant 1).</p> <p>"I used to believe that perfectionism was actually a very nice thing. Because perfectionism means actually you do not do anything for yourself. You do it for someone else to like it. You think about whether the other person will like it; or, what the teacher will think about it. Concerned about whether my English will be good. When I make mistakes due to stress, this in turn affects my self-confidence "(Participant 2).</p> <p>"Early on, I was feeling inadequate, really inadequate. I could not express myself clearly and this inability made me suffer feelings of inadequacy and problems of self-confidence" (Participant 3).</p>
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<p>3- Challenges of the Second Language</p>		<p>"When you don't talk to people in a group, you don't look so good, you don't make a good impression. You have to express yourself. When I went abroad, I was afraid to talk to people. I mean to make a mistake. I thought I would not be able to express myself fully" (Participant 1).</p> <p>"You know, when I try to speak to someone, I remember the English word. Yet, I remember the Turkish word when I speak English, too. It feels like I can't speak any language very well. I may be limiting myself while in the circle of friends because I think whether I will make myself look wrong in the social environment. I constantly wonder if I use a word correctly. Since my mind is constantly concentrated on such thoughts, I forget to socialize or have fun" (Participant 2).</p> <p>"I have to learn this language. I think if I want to be successful, I have to learn. I challenge myself. In social life, for instance, language affects my social life very much. Maybe it is because of cultural differences; I don't know exactly. I cannot have long conversations with a foreign friend" (Participant 3).</p> <p>"Emotionally I can give such an example. My feelings are blocking me. In other words, I feel regret, I feel a loss of self-confidence, I cannot express myself, I feel failure, they are emotions, but I am here only to learn the language independent from these emotions" (Participant 1).</p>
<p>4- Academic Life</p>	<p>Advantages of the second language</p>	<p>"Academic presentations, for one thing. I refrain from making too many applications. I can make presentations at conferences, though. I have to apply for them, but I restrict myself, considering my language skills" (Participant 2).</p> <p>"My English is, for me, an area I am not good at. Take the homework for example. I look at the papers I wrote when I first started with my master's study or language training. 'How could I give this paper to the teacher?' I ask myself. At that time, I was stressful from an academic point of</p>

		<p>view. I would start to make preparations for a presentation two months before it" (Participant 3).</p> <p>"In academic terms, pronunciation is an important indicator of language skills. When you make a mistake, not many people laugh at it, but you may find yourself in a funny situation. For example, I had a friend named Dirk. His name was spelled as D-i-r-k. I would always refer him as 'Dirk'. I thought it would be pronounced in that way. But the guy finally said, 'My name is pronounced as Durk', and I felt embarrassed. It was not something I did deliberately" (Participant 1).</p> <p>"You can't talk to a teacher as you talk to your classmate or you can't email them in the same way. Everything has certain rules. I would get prepared for the presentations two months earlier looking at the syllabus and rehearse them many times at home sometimes recording my own voice. I would speak and sometimes audio record myself so that the speech text remains in my mind" (Participant 2).</p> <p>"Actually, I can speak my mind, but I feel that my thinking speed declines when I talk about an academic or intellectual matter. When we build a language, we do a format based on it and follow it. You have to be more careful and attentive while speaking to teachers in particular. You have to be careful about the selection of words. Some professors even gave feedback on the language, your English is a bit like this, but you can also do that, and it would be better" (Participant 1).</p> <p>"I still cannot speak English like the way I speak my mother tongue. There is a translation mechanism going on at the back and you try to speak based on that mechanism. You know which words you will use, but there is a problem with it" (Participant 1).</p>
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		<p>“Sometimes, I exchange nouns with verbs. For example, instead of asking, 'Did you put the bread in the fridge?' I may ask, 'Did you put the fridge in the bread? I can make such stupid mistakes while speaking" (Participant 1).</p> <p>"My English is, for me, an area I am not good at. Take the homework for example. I look at the papers I wrote when I first started with my master's study or language training. 'How could I give this paper to the teacher?' I ask myself. At that time, I was stressful from an academic point of view. I would start to make preparations for a presentation two months before it" (Participant 3).</p> <p>"I'm a little proud of myself. Because speaking a second language is harder than you would think. My vocabulary is clearly expanding. However, the challenge to speak a second language still continues” (Participant 2).</p> <p>"It is a great feeling to be able to help when someone in a Turkish speaking group comes and asks an English question. I feel accomplished and valuable when I am able to provide my support and help related to second language"(Participant 1).</p> <p>"I have already learned English as I had obligated to learn. I say, for example I speak English, because it is a global language, I can survive wherever I go in the world" (Participant 3).</p>
5-Extra Studying	<p>More speaking</p> <p>More listening</p> <p>More reading</p>	<p>"The main problem is generally about the differences in the grammar. Turkish is an agglutinating language with many suffixes. In our Turkish language, we do not use 'a' or 'the'. In addition, the suffixes '-lar' and '-ler' are easy to distinguish. Of course, this is because Turkish is my mother tongue. I make occasional errors in grammar while speaking; for instance, I forget to add 's' to the plural words</p>

	<p>More writing</p>	<p>or I use plural words with 'there is' or singular ones with 'there are', etc." (Participant 1).</p> <p>"I was trying to think of something first in Turkish and then translate it into English in my mind; however, I could not find the exact word I wanted. I could not express myself clearly. My writing was not satisfactory, either. I have used the Writing Center with advice from my teacher. At first, you lose your self-confidence, and you don't want to speak. Rather, you want to communicate by writing, because you can make use of translation services" (Participant 3).</p> <p>"I think I am more careful about my writing because I limit myself regarding speaking" (Participant 2).</p> <p>"The training we got in Turkey was completely based on grammar. We never focus on speaking at schools. There is only grammar. I always lack for it. You have to manage/improve your speaking on your own. The more contact or dialogue you have with foreign people, the greater progress you make. That is how I made progress. For instance, when I first started with my master's study, I remember that I could understand none of the things my teacher said. I could understand only 40% of the course. When everyone laughed at something, I would laugh at it as well supposing it was a funny thing" (Participant 3).</p>
<p>6- Anxiety while speaking</p>	<p>-With professors</p> <p>-With friend/classroom</p> <p>-With phone</p>	<p>"You can't talk to a teacher as you talk to your classmate or you can't email them in the same way. Everything has certain rules. I would get prepared for the presentations two months earlier looking at the syllabus and rehearse them many times at home sometimes recording my own voice. I would speak and sometimes audio record myself so that the speech text remains in my mind" (Participant 2).</p> <p>"I was even afraid to go to the supermarket. For example, I was hesitant talking to someone on the phone. Whenever I had to talk on the phone, I started to talk saying that I was a</p>

		<p>foreigner and asking the other person to speak slower because of that. Still, I have difficulties" (Participant 3).</p> <p>"Indeed, I really want to talk to my classmates or friends. I think that what if I sort of stutter and I can't speak or can't remember the words" (Participant 2).</p> <p>"I would speak and sometimes audio record myself so that the speech text remains in my mind" (Participant 3).</p> <p>"For example, I always write what I will say on note cards before the presentation. Even though I never look at those cards, I still write exactly what I will say. Even if I never look at them, it makes me comfortable to know they are there" (Participant 2).</p>
<p>7- COVID-19</p>		<p>"The first one is about the well-being of our parents. As you know, everyone's parents are old. My father stays at home; he cannot go out due to the lockdown (it applies to the people aged 65 and above). In other words, you are at home and as long as you stay at home, i.e., in a confined space, your stress increases" (Participant 1).</p> <p>"The second one is the economic aspect; economic activities have stopped everywhere. That's, what concerns me is about its repercussions for the next year. What if I will not be able to find a job? What if universities do not accept students? It was already a big challenge to find a job as an international student. Now we have to find a job post pandemic!" (Participant 1).</p> <p>"I try not to think about more. Instead, I allocate more of my time to coding" (Participant 1).</p> <p>"Currently, certain vaccines are being developed; and you have to trust in the scientists. This gives you hope" (Participant 1).</p> <p>"I was able to go shopping whenever I want, or I could have fun with my hammock at will. I could visit a couple of</p>



		<p>shops. Now, I have to do shopping once in three weeks and the shopping process now include wearing your mask, and washing everything after returning home, and it is a very tiring activity and you can get no fun from it" (Participant 3).</p> <p>"Here, the lockdown has been recently lifted. I see people in the park; cafes are very crowded. How can I go to those crowded places? I want to go, but I don't know how they can go. No one wears any mask. What if I contract the disease and am hospitalized? This stresses me out" (Participant 3).</p> <p>"When the Covid-19 outbreak started, I had three courses. I returned home, and my motivation to study and complete these classes were enormously decreased. I had a cousin who was two and half years old. He was making too much noise, and this not only impacted my presentations, but also my will to study in that setting. As I was affected too much psychologically, my motivation declined considerably. For instance, I was not able to do my reading homework" (Participant 2).</p> <p>"I will go to the balcony and close the door, and do my reading work outside, feeling the nature. You cannot be productive when you are stuck in your room for weeks" (Participant 2).</p>
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**APPENDIX F**  
**MEMBER CHECK EMAIL**

Hello ...(Participant)

Thank you so much for your help with my research project. I appreciate your time and offering your insight to the interview questions.

The attached is a copy of our interview transcript. You will need a password to open the transcript so that we can protect the confidentiality of the document. I will text you the password for the file.

Could you please carefully read the transcript and confirm if this is a good representation of your intention? I look forward to hearing your feedback.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about this important step.

Thank you for your time again,

Sincerely,

Nermin Ciloglu Cakmakci

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