TURKISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN TERMS OF LANGUAGE TOURISM AND LANGUAGE TOURIST

AYŞE DAĞ PESTIL,
PHD

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes students' language learning motivations using a mixed-method approach by addressing the concepts of "language tourism" and "language tourist" for the first time in Turkish tourism history. With globalization, communication, and educational processes, language tourism has become a significant form of tourism. It refers to individuals traveling to a country where the target language is spoken in order to learn or improve that language. Beyond the classroom setting, this method is supported by cultural interaction and real-life experiences. Türkiye, with its historical richness and unique cultural heritage, is a strong destination for language tourism. The process, which began during the Ottoman period with the practice of sending "Dil Oğlanları- Language Boys," became institutionalized with the establishment of Ankara University TÖMER in 1984. As of 2018, Turkish language teaching centers exist in 166 universities. Between 2013 and 2023, 1,621,974 international students came to Türkiye, significantly increasing the country's economic gain from language tourism. Long-term stays and cultural engagement position *language tourism* as an important pillar of sustainable tourism.

Key words: Teaching Turkish to Foreigners, Language Tourism, Language

INTRODUCTION

The tourism movement has given rise to various branches of tourism, such as health tourism, cultural tourism, nature tourism, and gastronomic tourism, from its inception to the present day. Along with cultural interaction, communication, education, and the process of internationalization, the concept of language tourism is also considered a very important type of tourism. Language tourism refers to individuals traveling to a country where a foreign language is spoken in order to learn that language or improve their existing language skills. This approach takes language learning beyond the classroom environment, enriching it with real-life experiences and cultural interactions. Language tourism is an effective method that allows individuals to learn the target language and culture by experiencing it firsthand. Türkiye, with its rich history, cultural heritage, and strategic location, is an important region for language tourism and offers unique opportunities for teaching Turkish to foreigners. Teaching Turkish to foreigners in Türkiye contributes to both the development of language skills and cultural interaction through language tourism. During the Ottoman period, learning Turkish was an important competitive factor among translators, and Dil Oğlanları (language boys) were sent to Istanbul. This field became institutionalized with the establishment of the first TOMER at Ankara University in 1984, and as of 2018, Turkish language teaching centers have been opened at 166 universities. Between 2013 and 2023, 1,621,974 international students came to Türkiye to learn Turkish, increasing the economic contribution of language tourism. The long- term stays and cultural interactions of language tourists have made language tourism an important sustainable tourism resource. In this study, the concepts of "Language Tourism" and "Language Tourist" were addressed in Turkish for the first time in Turkish tourism history. A mixed research method using both qualitative and quantitative data was adopted to examine the concept of language tourism in greater depth and to understand students' motivations for learning languages.

THEORY

Tourism, Definition and Types

Tourism can be defined as temporary trips made by individuals outside their place of residence for the purpose of recreation, relaxation, exploration, or cultural experiences, and the activities carried out during this process. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines tourism as "travel and tourism activities undertaken by individuals to destinations outside their usual place of residence and work, for leisure, business, or other purposes, for a period of up to 12 months in a year."

Tourism is generally divided into two main categories: domestic tourism and international tourism. Domestic tourism covers trips made by individuals within their own countries, while international tourism involves

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people traveling outside their own countries. Tourism is also divided into different types according to its purpose, duration, and participant profile.

According to information obtained from the website of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Türkiye, the types of tourism are listed as follows: Health and Thermal Tourism, Winter Tourism, Mountain Pasture Tourism, Cave Tourism, Hunting Tourism, Congress Tourism, Golf Tourism, Yacht Tourism, Silk Road Tourism, Religious Tourism, Air Sports Tourism, Mountaineering Tourism, River Rafting Tourism, Scuba Diving Tourism, Bird Watching (https: , accessed March 2025).

The information on tourism types published by TURSAB on its website *akademi.tursab.org.tr in the Unite-8 document* is as follows:

Table I . Tourism Types -TURSAB

Type of Tourism	Description
Mass Tourism	This type of tourism involves large groups traveling to popular tourist destinations for vacation purposes. It is generally focused on beach, sand, and sun destinations and is planned through hotels, resorts, and tour packages.
Alternative Tourism	Unlike mass tourism, this type of tourism encompasses tourism based on different themes such as nature, culture, health, and adventure. It offers more unique and personalized experiences.
Cultural Tourism	Aims to help tourists discover the cultural heritage of a country or region by visiting historical structures, museums, and art galleries. Festivals, artistic events, and local traditions are important elements.
Type of Tourism	Description
Ecotourism	It is an environmentally friendly approach to tourism that does not harm nature. It is usually carried out in national parks, nature reserves, and areas that protect biological diversity.
Health Tourism	This is tourism undertaken to receive health services such as medical treatment, cosmetic surgery, and rehabilitation. Türkiye is particularly popular for health tourism in areas such as dentistry, eye care, hair transplants, and cosmetic surgery.
Thermal Tourism	This is a type of tourism conducted for health purposes in regions famous for their mineral-rich hot springs and thermal facilities. It is preferred for conditions such as rheumatism, skin diseases, and musculoskeletal disorders.
Sports Tourism	This is tourism undertaken for the purpose of participating in or watching sports events. It includes various disciplines such as football, golf, skiing, water sports, and mountaineering.
Adventure Tourism	This type of tourism encompasses adrenaline-filled activities such as nature sports, trekking, rafting, paragliding, and mountaineering. It is generally preferred by young tourists.
Gastronomic Tourism	This type of tourism involves traveling to experience the culinary cultures of different countries and regions. It includes activities such as tasting local delicacies and organizing wine and coffee tours.
Conference and Exhibition Tourism	It covers business travel for international conferences, seminars, trade fairs, and meetings organized for the business world. It contributes significantly to the city's economy.
Education and Language Tourism	This type of tourism involves traveling to pursue academic education or learn a new language. It is supported by universities, language courses, and cultural exchange programs. It is an important area of tourism for international students coming to Türkiye.

Religious Tourism	These are trips made for religious and faith-based reasons. Pilgrimages such as Hafi and Umrah, or visits to sacred sites, fall into this category.
Agro/Agricultural Tourism	This type of tourism involves observing agricultural activities and experiencing farm life in rural areas. It offers the opportunity to experience a sustainable lifestyle in close contact with nature.

The information obtained from the document provided by TIJRSAB on the subject has been presented in tabular form. The table comprehensively classifies the types of tourism. (*https://akademi.tursab. org.tr/WS/assets/pdf/konu-ozetleri/unite-08.pdf* accessed March 2025).

Tourism is an important sector that contributes significantly to economic development and builds bridges between societies by increasing cultural interaction. Çam states that language and culture are very important in creating a tourist communication bridge (Çam 2023, p.93). In the classification of tourism types, it is stated that language tourism, which is mentioned as a concept within educational tourism, is supported by universities, language courses, and exchange programs. It is an important tourism area for international students coming to Türkiye (*https://akademi.tursab. org.tr/WS/assets/pdf/konu-ozetleri/unite-08.pdf* accessed March 2025).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept and Importance of Language Tourism
Language tourism, a growing sector of educational travel and cultural tourism, involves students traveling abroad to learn a foreign language while engaging in tourist activities (Iglesias 2016). This specialized tourism market encompasses various components such as language learning, accommodation, and cultural experiences (Iglesias 2017). Research examining the motivations and behaviors of language tourists has revealed that cultural immersion and personal development are key driving forces (Drozdzewski 2011). For university students, language tourism can enhance employability and global citizenship (Iglesias 2020). The language tourism product has evolved to include a range of travel-related services, and customers now seek comprehensive educational experiences abroad (Iglesias 2016). Studies have examined travel components of language tourism experiences, such as interaction with locals, accommodation, and leisure activities (Iglesias 2017). The impact of language tourism extends beyond education, affecting the tourism industry and local communities (Iglesias 2020). More research is needed to fully understand this emerging form of specialized tourism.
Language tourism, a growing sector within the global tourism industry, combines travel experiences with language learning opportunities (Salazzaro 2017, Barra-Hernandez, 2021). This niche market attracts a diverse audience, including those seeking personal development through linguistic immersion, those wishing to reconnect with their ancestral cultures, and those seeking cultural heritage, according to Drozdzewski and Carvalho (Drozdzewski 2011, Carvalho 2021). Carvalho also states that the pursuit oflanguage skills significantly influences travelers' experiences, often leading to deeper intercultural understanding and increased interaction (Carvalho 2021). In her study, Barra-Hernandez argues that language tourism offers a strategic opportunity for diversity and economic growth for well-known destinations. However, despite its potential, she notes that research on the economic and social impacts of language tourism on destinations is limited (Barra-Hernandez 2021).

Language Tourism and Foreign Language Learning
The phenomenon of language tourism is driven by a desire to learn a foreign language, experience the culture, and develop language skills by practicing them in the country where the language is spoken. Salazzaro and Drozdzewski point out that globalization continues to increase the demand for foreign language skills and that the language tourism sector is poised for further growth by offering unique products that combine entertainment and education (Salazzaro 2017, Drozdzewski 2011). Language tourism is the common ground between language learning, travel, cultural interaction, etc., where individuals engage in language acquisition while discovering new cultures. This sector is attracting increasing attention due to its potential to contribute to sustainable tourism and enhance travelers' experiences.

The Economic Impact and Sustainability of Language Tourism
Hernandez and Alfalla-Luque state that language tourism can significantly boost local economies by attracting international students and travelers seeking language courses, and that it can support economic

growth in host countries by promoting employment in language schools, accommodation, and related services (Hernandez and Alfalla-Luque 2025).

In economic benefit analysis, some studies, including Barra-Hernandez et al. (2019), analyze the economic benefit derived from tourism activities for both the region and the individuals involved. Correia (2011) concluded that language travelers' total expenditure per trip is higher than that of long-distance international tourists and therefore generates more revenue for the local economy. Garcia-Henche and Yang (2022) examine the Spanish market as a high-value resource in the Chinese market and analyze the three main dimensions of sustainable development: economy, environment, and society. The results show that language tourism has a relatively greater economic impact than traditional tourism, has negligible negative effects on the environment, and contributes to increasing knowledge and mutual relations among students from different countries and cultures, thereby strengthening intercultural interaction and communication (Hernandez and Alfalla-Luque, 2025, p.139).Effective communication in sustainable development can increase tourists' safety and comfort, thereby improving their overall experience and increasing the likelihood of repeat visits (Fathayadirnyati et al. 2025). The Role of Cultural Interaction and Tourism in Foreign Language Learning

Language Tourism and Global Mobility

Globalization has increased economic, cultural, and social interactions between countries, making language learning an international necessity. As the need to learn a second language, primarily English, has grown, this has also encouraged language tourism.

With Globalization: Language Education Has Become Commercialized: Universities and private language schools have developed programs for international students.

Multiingualism and Cultural Exchange Have Gained Importance: Individuals have turned to language learning to gain a competitive advantage in both academic and professional life.

The Education and Tourism Sectors Have Become Integrated: Language tourism has become part of countries' education and tourism policies. The increased mobility of students and professionals due to globalization has heightened the importance of language tourism. For example:

In Europe, Erasmus and exchange programs encourage language tourism.

In Asia, learning Chinese and Korean has become popular, and China and South Korea have become language tourism centers.

In Türkiye, language centers such as TOMER and other special language courses offer programs that combine language learning with cultural experiences for foreign students.

Language tourism contributes significantly to the UK economy. It is a leader in the global language tourism market According to British Council data, it provides English language education to approximately 550,000 international students annually, contributing £3.2 billion to the economy.

METHOD

Scope and Universe of the Study
This section is based on a mixed research methodology that includes both a literature review and survey data.

Research Methods and Methodology
In this study, a mixed research method using both qualitative and quantitative data was adopted to examine the concept of language tourism in greater depth and to understand students' motivations for learning languages. The research process consists of two main stages: Literature Review: Analysis of existing academic sources in Turkish and other languages related to the subject to establish a theoretical framework.

Survey Application: Collecting data from students learning Turkish at the A1-B2 level at a TOMER of a university located in the west of Türkiye in order to understand their motivations for learning the language.

In the first phase of the study, the concept of language tourism, language learning motivations, and academic studies on this topic were examined using the secondary data analysis method.

Source Selection and Scope: The literature review was conducted using academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and YÖK Thesis Center in both Turkish and English, Spanish, and other languages in which the subject had been previously studied and data presented. No studies or data on this subject were found in Turkish. Data and information were compiled from studies conducted in other languages, sources that could support the subject in Turkish were searched, and the necessary data were collected. Important journals and academic publications in the field were examined, and theoretical approaches that reveal the conceptual framework of language tourism were analyzed. Topics examined: The definition, importance, history, economic effects, relationship with language learning processes, motivation theories (e.g., Gardner and Lambert's Integrative and Instrumental Motivation Theory), and language tourism practices in different countries were addressed.

Analysis Method: The studies in the literature were evaluated using descriptive analysis, common themes were identified, and the theoretical framework of the study was established.

Survey Application

In the second phase of the research, a survey was conducted using quantitative methods to understand language learning motivations.

Participant Profile: Sample Selection: The sample of the study consisted of 36 students at the A1-B2 level studying at the TOMER unit of a university in northwestern Türkiye. Purposeful sampling was used for the sampling method. Participants were students who had at least one foreign language learning experience and had a certain motivation in this regard.

Data Collection Tool

Survey Structure: The survey has a mixed structure, containing closed-ended (Likert scale) and open-ended questions. Scale Usage: Questions based on Gardner's Integrative and Instrumental Motivation Model were also asked to understand the participants' reasons for learning a language in more detail. Survey Content: Demographic Questions (age, gender, previous language learning experience), Language Learning Motivations, open-ended questions (students explain their reasons for learning the language (Turkish) in their own words).

Other qualitative data presented in the study were compiled and presented as a result of reviews conducted in the field literature.

Data Collection Process

Survey Implementation: The survey was administered online via Google Forms. The questions were prepared in a clear and understandable manner to allow participants to respond comfortably. In accordance with ethical principles, consent was obtained from participants in line with the principles of confidentiality and anonymity, and the data was used solely for scientific research purposes.

Data Analysis: Quantitative data and data collected using the Likert scale were analyzed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, and mean values were calculated.

Qualitative Data Analysis: Responses to open-ended questions were examined using content analysis methods. Findings obtained within this methodology aim to evaluate students' language learning motivations both theoretically and empirically. The literature review provides a framework linked to existing academic studies, while the survey results provide up- to-date findings based on actual student data. In this way, a comprehensive analysis has been made of the reasons for language learning among students in the context of language tourism and why they chose Türkiye.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

Turkish Tourism History and Language Tourism in Türkiye

Increased international student mobility with the spread of global mobility has led to students coming to Türkiye to learn Turkish and has made Turkish gain importance as an international language. International students studying in Türkiye adapt more easily to both academic and social life while interacting with different cultures through Turkish. As Turkish becomes a common language for international students, students who complete their education and return to their countries contribute to the development of economic, commercial, and cultural relations between the two countries by spreading Turkish. This process supports the internationalization of Turkish, while the education, accommodation, and living expenses of students coming to Türkiye also make a significant contribution to the country's economy. Thus, international students strengthen Türkiye's global position both culturally and economically. Turkish tourists, who are participating in Turkish language learning as a foreign language in increasing number every day, enable Türkiye to achieve significant gains in language tourism, economy, trade, international relations, intercultural communication, and diplomacy.
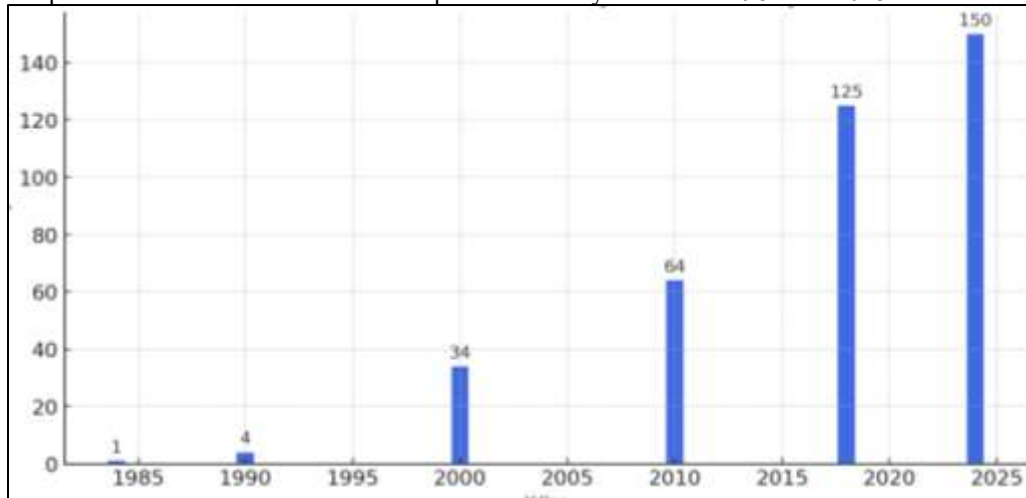
Language Tourism and Teaching Turkish to Foreigners

When examining Turkish tourism history in terms of language tourism and Turkish, the opening of Institutions of Oriental Languages and Language Boys in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries, the growing popularity of learning Turkish among translators, and the sending of Language Boys to Istanbul to learn Turkish are among the notable developments in this movement. The opening of the Turkish Language Teaching Center (TOMER) at Ankara University in 1984, followed a few years later by centers at Gazi University and Ege University, was a precursor to the growing potential for language tourism in Türkiye. In the subsequent period, the opening of multiple Turkish language teaching centers for foreigners at different

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universities almost every year demonstrates how much the demand for learning Turkish as a foreign language has increased. It is thought that Türkiye's cultural geography, diplomacy, and successes in various fields such as the Turkish cinema sector and technology have had a direct impact on the intensification of demand. According to the latest 2018 data (Erdil, 2018, p. 94), it is noteworthy that Turkish is taught to foreigners in 166 centers within state and foundation universities in Türkiye. This number indicates that over the 40-year period from 1984 to 2025, since the opening of the first center at Ankara University TOMER, more than 30 Turkish language teaching centers have been opened every 10 years. This reveals that at least 3 new TOMER-Turkish Language Teaching Centers for Foreigners have been opened every year in Türkiye. These figures reveal that the language tourism sector in Türkiye, within the scope of teaching Turkish to foreigners, is developing at an excitingly rapid pace.

Using the available data, a bar chart showing the number of Turkish language teaching centers -TOMER, opened in Türkiye between 1984 and 2025 has been created for visual perception.

Graph I. Number of TOMER Centers Opened in Türkiye Between 1984 and 2025

Graph-1: Number of TOMER centers opened in Türkiye between 1984 and 2025 A bar graph containing statistical information based on the number of Turkish language teaching centers -TOMER opened in Türkiye between 1984 and 2025 is provided. The graph clearly shows the rapid increase in the number of TOMER centers every 10 years. 1984: l center (Ankara University). 1990:-4 centers (Gazi University, Ege University, and several other universities). 2000: -34 centers, 2010: -64 centers, 2018: 125 centers. According to 2025 data, there are 166 centers within universities across Türkiye (http://www.dilbilimi.net/tomer_ve_dil_merkezleri.html accessed October 2025).

The rapid increase in the number of centers, along with the rapidly growing number of foreign students coming to Türkiye to learn Turkish, demonstrates that language tourism is a rapidly growing and powerful type of tourism with great potential for Türkiye. The number of foreign students, which was 48,161 in the 2013-2014 academic year, has increased noticeably each year, reaching 301,549 in the 2022-2023 academic year (Dag Pestil 2023, p.66). According to this information, obtained from data filtered from the Higher Education Information Management System, a total of 1,621,974 international students came to Türkiye to learn Turkish between 2013 and 2023 (Dag Pestil 2023, p.67). This increasing demand for learning Turkish in Türkiye is also increasing language tourism mobility, economic contribution, and impact at the same rate. Moreover, the length of stay of international students participating in language learning mobility-as language tourists-in the country their visit is much longer than other types of tourism. Therefore, it is estimated that the economic value and other benefits provided by Language Tourism in this context are also correspondingly high. Moreover, these language tourists act as cultural ambassadors, each playing an active role in promoting the country from the outset of their language learning process.

Graph 2. Number and Percentage of International TOMER Students Coming to Türkiye by Year
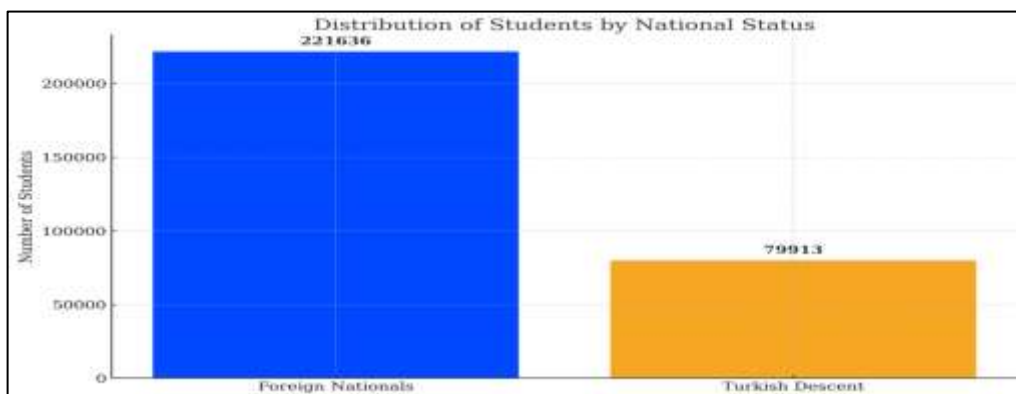
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Graph 2, which shows the number of international students coming to Türkiye to learn Turkish by year, focuses on data from the last l0 years. The graph clearly shows the increase in the total number of students from the 2013-2014 academic year to the 2022-2023 academic year. This number of students, which has shown a steady increase each year, has exceeded 300,000 in the 2022-2023 period. The data was converted into a graph from the table of International and Turkish-Origin Students Learning Turkish in Türkiye, prepared according to the Higher Education Information Management System data (Dag Pestil 2023, pp. 65,66).

Globalization and the Place of Turkish in Language Tourism
Turkish is gaining importance across a wide geography, including Central Asia, the Balkans, and the Middle East, amid increasing global mobility and the accompanying process of cultures around the world getting to know each other and increasing communication. Türkiye is strengthening its cultural and communication ties and diplomacy by encouraging the teaching of Turkish to foreign students through language tourism. Programs such as the Yunus Emre Institute and Türkiye Scholarships aim to make Turkish a global language of education. The number of international students who want to learn Turkish by enrolling in Turkish language teaching centers affiliated with foundations and state universities in Türkiye is rapidly increasing every year .According to data from the Higher Education Information Management System for 2022-2023, the number of international students who came to Türkiye solely to learn Turkish during this period reached 301,549. Of these students, 221,636 were foreign nationals and 79,913 were of Turkish descent (Dag Pestil 2023, p. 60).Data from the last ten years, between 2013 and 2023, showing the rate of increase in the number of foreign and Turkish-origin students coming to Türkiye to learn Turkish is shown in the graph below;

Graph 3. Number and Percentage of TOMER Students Coming to Türkiye by Year

The Graph 3 presents data from the last ten years. The data was converted into a graph based on the table of International and Turkic students learning Turkish in Türkiye, which was prepared according to the Higher Education Information Management System data (Dag Pestil, 2023, pp. 65, 66). The graph showing the number of international and Turkic students coming to Türkiye to learn Turkish represents foreign students in blue and Turkic students in orange. It is clear that the number of students has steadily increased over the years. Students from the Turkic Republics who come to Türkiye to learn Turkish strengthen the cultural and communication ties between Türkiye and these Republics, shaping the future world by strongly supporting the Turkish society and values, shared culture and cultural heritage, as well as diplomacy in terms of sustainability.

Türkiye's Language Tourism Potential

Language tourism refers to individuals traveling to a country where a foreign language is spoken in order to learn that language or improve their existing language skills. This approach takes language learning beyond the classroom environment, enriching it with real-life experiences and cultural interactions. Türkiye, with its rich history, cultural heritage, and strategic location, is an important destination for language tourism and offers unique opportunities for teaching Turkish to foreigners.

Turkish studies, Turkish translation, and Turkish as a compulsory or elective foreign language are taught in departments and units such as Oriental and Eastern Languages Institutes, Linguistics universities, Tourism faculties, Education faculties, and Economics faculties in different countries around the world. Students studying in these departments come to institutions in Türkiye to reinforce the language and cultural knowledge they have acquired through experience. In fact, in the book Turkish Studies in Europe, published in 2020, more than twenty academics and Turkologists shared detailed information and data on the history, development, and current status of Turkish language education in European countries, encouraging students studying Turkish in foreign countries to receive education at TOMER centers at universities in Türkiye through Turkish Scholarships. Turkology is described in detail in countries such as Germany, Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, France, Finland, Croatia, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Italy, Kosovo, Lithuania, Hungary, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, and Greece. However, northern Europe and the Eastern Bloc countries, which are not on the list, are not included in this work, and data on countries such as Asian countries, America, and Latin America have not yet been compiled. When assessing the status of Turkish in the world, the place and importance of Turkish language teaching in language tourism will become clearer.

The Importance of Language Tourism in Turkish Language Education Cultural Integration and Social Connections: Language tourism enables language learners to become closely acquainted with Turkish culture. Immersing themselves in traditions, customs, and daily life practices helps language learners better understand the context of the language. This type of interaction makes language learning more meaningful and lasting. Alipbayeva and Arslan (2023) state that cultural elements play an important role in the language learning process and contribute to the development of students' language skills. Learning language and culture together is a unique method for full comprehension and learning. Language learning requires understanding the culture to which the language belongs, beyond grammar and vocabulary. In Türkiye, during Turkish language instruction for foreigners, the inclusion of cultural elements such as traditional handicrafts in teaching materials helps students gain a deeper understanding of the language. A study by Nurşen Çağlak (2023) indicates that the Yedi iklim Turkish Teaching Set includes elements related to traditional handicrafts, thereby supporting cultural transmission. Üçler (2018), on the other hand, noted that training of a language cannot be separated from the cultural elements. Turkish reflects its cultural heritage through its vocabulary, idioms, and proverbs, making cultural integration essential in language teaching. The analysis of the Istanbul and Yedi İklim Türkçe coursebooks (A1–C2) Üçler, indicates that cultural elements are progressively incorporated across levels, which is particularly significant for language tourism and the cultural transmission embedded in learning Turkish (Üçler 2018).

Motivation and Willingness to Learn: Language tourism increases learners' motivation. Being in Türkiye offers students the opportunity to use the language they are learning in daily life, which reinforces their willingness to learn. In his study examining the language learning profiles of those learning Turkish as a foreign language, Demir (2022) emphasizes that students' motivation increases through cultural interactions. Development of Language Skills: Being in Türkiye offers students the opportunity to use and practice Turkish in a natural context. Daily interactions, informal conversations, and various social activities contribute to the rapid development of language skills. Such experiences support real-life language use beyond classroom learning.

Professional and Academic Opportunities: Learning Turkish provides significant advantages for those who want to study or work in Türkiye. With its growing economy and international relations, Türkiye offers attractive opportunities for foreign professionals and students. Knowing Turkish is a critical skill for taking advantage of these opportunities. The Turkish Council (2023) highlights the advantages of learning Turkish in academic and professional fields.

Tourism and Cultural Experiences: Türkiye offers unique experiences to language learners with its rich history and cultural heritage. Those who visit Türkiye as part of language tourism can improve their language skills and increase their cultural knowledge by exploring different regions of the country. These experiences make language learning more enjoyable and memorable.

Language Teaching According to Target Audience Characteristics

When teachng Turkish to foreigners, factors such as the target audience's native language, culture, and learning objectives should be taken into account. A study conducted by Semra Alyılrnaz (2017) emphasizes that the characteristics of the target audience must be taken into account when teaching Turkish as a foreign language. This approach also plays an important role in the design of language tourism programs, as determining content and methods suitable for the needs of students from different cultural backgrounds increases the effectiveness of the learning process.
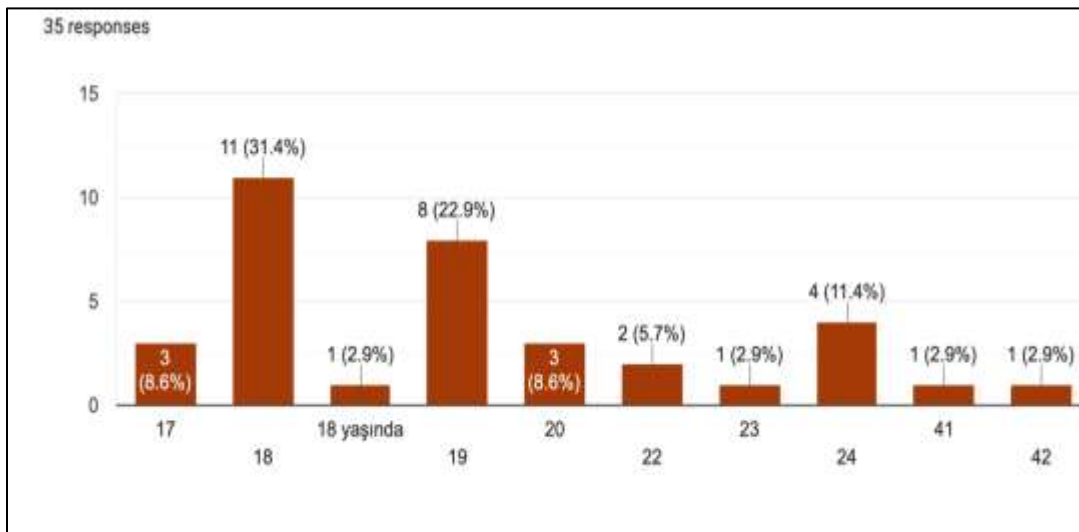
Survey Application
In the second phase of the research, a survey was conducted using quantitative methods to understand language learning motivations.
Participant Profile: Sample Selection: The sample of the research consists of 35 A1-Bl level students studying at the TOMER unit of a university located in western Türkiye. Participants are students who have at least one foreign language learning experience and have a certain motivation in this regard. Survey Content: Demographic Questions (age, gender, previous language learning experience), Language Learning Motivations, Open-Ended Questions (students explaining their reasons for learning a language in their own words)
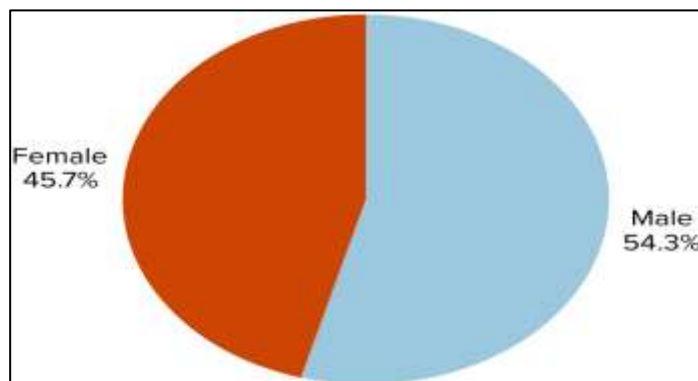The survey was administered online via Google Forms. To ensure participants could respond comfortably, the questions were prepared in a clear and understandable manner, and only age and gender were asked as personal data.
In accordance with ethical principles, the Ethics Committee's approval was obtained from the participants in line with the principles of confidentiality and anonymity, and the data was used solely for scientific research purposes.

Graph 4.Age Graph of Students Learning Turkish and Participating in the Research
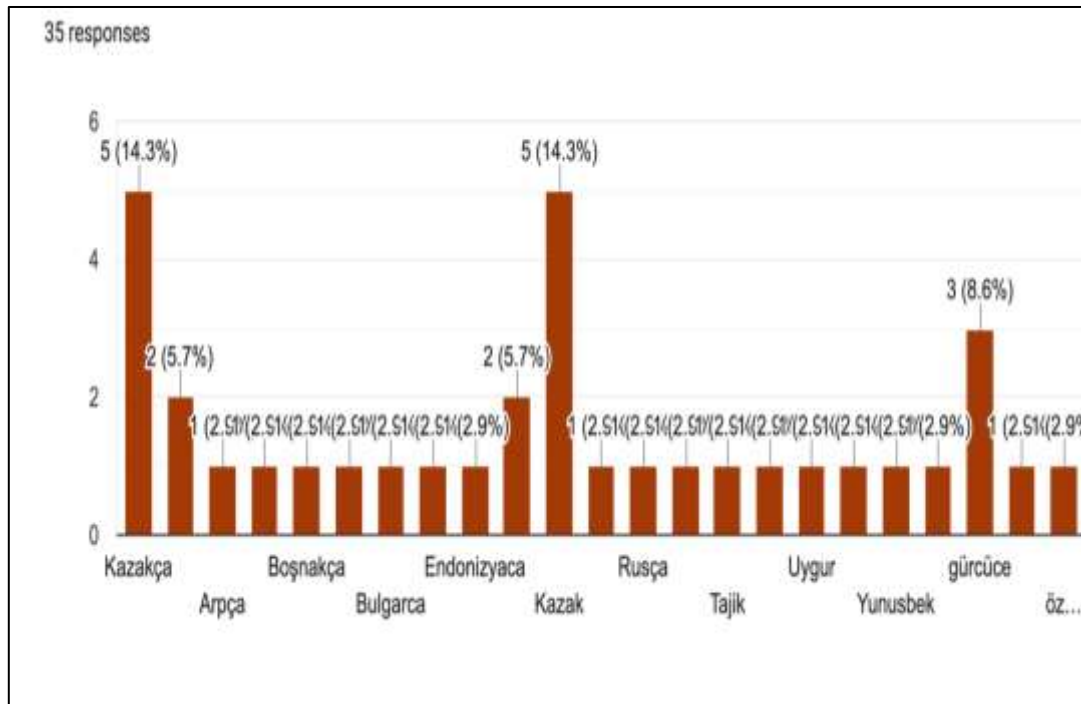

Graph 5. Gender Distribution of Students Learning Turkish and Participating in the Study

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Looking at the data obtained from the gender table, the gender distribution of the participants is fairly homogeneous, with 54% female and 46% male. This is a positive situation in terms of obtaining homogeneous data on the gender-related preferences of foreign students who come to Türkiye to learn the language.
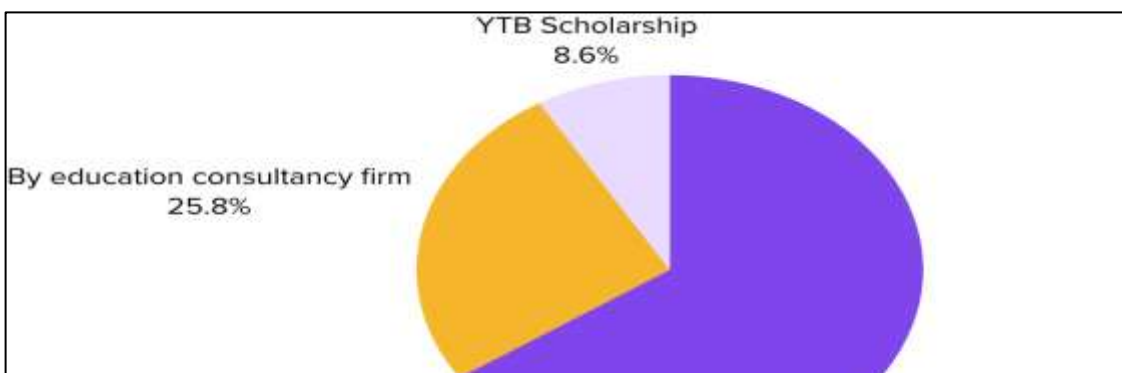
Graph 6. Native Language Statistics of Students Learning Turkish in Türkiye

As seen in the graph above, the range of native languages spoken by foreign students is quite broad.
Students speak languages belonging to different language families, such as Arabic, Bulgarian, Tajik, Indonesian, Russian, Georgian, Bosnian, Ukrainian, and Albanian. In addition to these students, there are also students who speak Kazakh. Some of the languages spoken by the students are second languages or foreign languages, but this distinction has not been taken into account in this study. The "language tourist" students who choose to come to Türkiye to learn Turkish come from very different geographical areas and can speak at least 2-3 different languages.
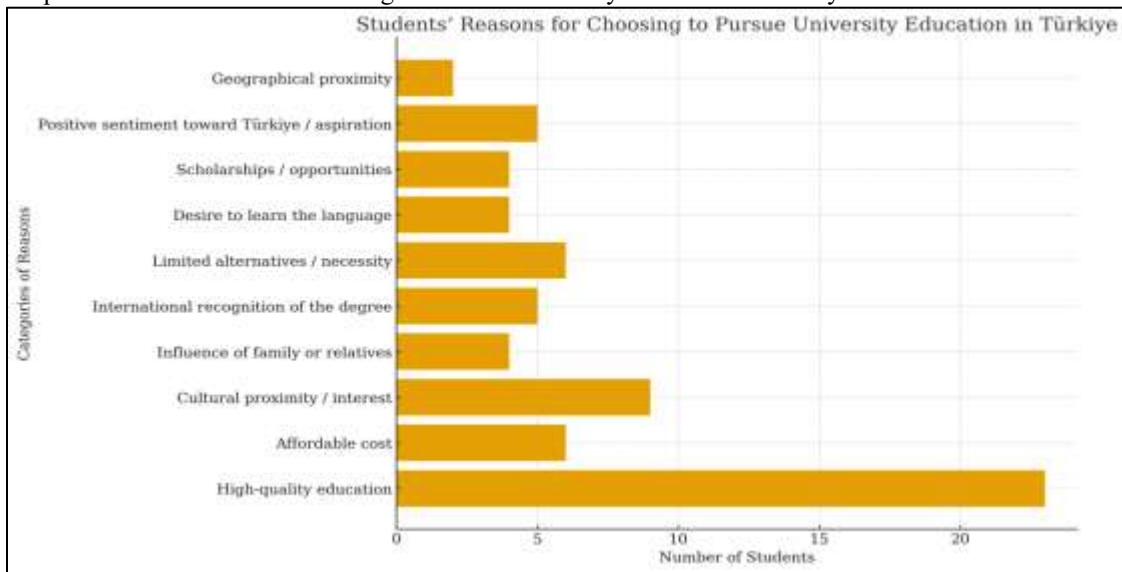The data from the investigation into how these students in the Language Tourist category came to Türkiye to learn Turkish is presented visually in Graph 7.

Graph 7. In Which Way The Students Came to Türkiye For Learning Turkish and Getting Education in Türkiye, 36 responses

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Based on the data in Graph 7, it is understood that 65.6 % of language tourist students came on their own. It is seen that 25.8% came through an education consultancy company, while a smaller portion came to Türkiye to learn Turkish through YTB Scholarship. On the other hand, in an analysis of the open-ended responses provided by thirty-five students regarding the reasons for international students, also known as Turkish language tourists, coming to Türkiye, the data related to the main themes were converted into a graph, and the data that stood out clearly are presented in Graph 7.

Graph 8. The Reasons for Choosing to Pursue University Education in Türkiye
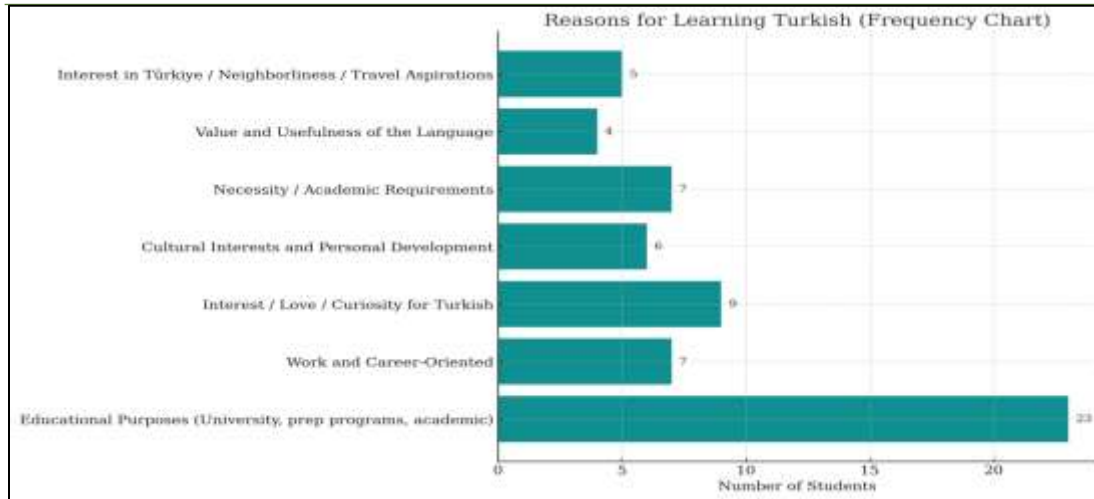

The graph visualizes the main themes of why foreign students want to study at a university in Türkiye. The most common reasons are "quality education," "affordability," and "cultural affinity," while other important factors such as "necessity," "scholarships," "desire to learn the language," and "family influence" also stand out.

Motivations for Learning Turkish
The reasons for learning Turkish among thirty-five students were grouped thematically according to their content, and the types of reasons identified based on these students' reasons for learning Turkish are summarized below according to their frequency. Each type of reason was grouped according to the students' answers, and the number of people who mentioned it was determined.

The Garph 9 is visualized in the bar chart presented below.

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The Graph 9, above shows the students' reasons for learning Turkish according to themes and their frequencies. The most common reason is "For Educational Purposes" (65.7%), followed by "Interest/Love/Curiosity for Turkish" and "Work and Career-Oriented" rmotivations. The findings obtained within the scope of this methodology aim to evaluate students' language learning motivations both theoretically and empirically. The literature review provides a framework linked to existing academic studies, while the survey results provide up-to-date findings based on actual student data. In this way, a comprehensive analysis of students' reasons for learning languages within the scope of language tourism has been conducted.

THE FUTURE OF LANGUAGE TOURISM IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Foreign language learning stands between the concepts of globalization and language tourism as one being the cause and the other being the result. Globalization leads to an increase in foreign language learning, and foreign language learning leads to language tourism.

The Impact of Globalization on Language Tourism

Globalization has increased economic, cultural, and social interactions between countries, making language learning an international necessity. The need to learn a second language, especially English, has increased, which also encourages language tourism With globalization:

Language Education Has Become Commercialized: Universities and private language schools have developed programs for international students. Multilingualism and Cultural Exchange Have Gained Importance: People have turned to language learning to gain a competitive advantage in both academic and professional life. Education and Tourism Sectors Have Become Integrated: Language tourism has become part of countries' education and tourism policies. Increasing student and professional mobility due to globalization has heightened the importance of language tourism. For example:

In Europe, Erasmus and exchange programs encourage language tourism

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English: Due to its widespread use around the world, English is one of the languages that provides the greatest economic returns for countries. English language schools, language courses, integrated "work and travel" programs for language learning, partial student language learning scholarships, etc. are quite common around the world.

In Asia, learning Chinese and Korean has become popular, and China and South Korea have become centers for language tourism.

In Türkiye, language centers such as TÖMER offer programs that combine language learning with cultural experiences for foreign students.

Benefits of Language Tourism: In addition to its positive aspects in terms of culture, society, world heritage, and intercultural communication, it ensures the continuity of cultural heritage and prevents it from disappearing and being forgotten, as the number of speakers has decreased significantly and those interested in local languages are preserving them

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Language tourism refers to trips made by individuals to learn a foreign language and its culture in situ. However, existing sources contain no data on the number of academic studies conducted in the field of language tourism in Türkiye. To obtain more detailed information on this subject, a comprehensive literature search was conducted in relevant academic databases such as Google Scholar, Dergipark, and Sobiad. As a result of the research, no academic studies examining this field under the term "language tourism" in Turkish were found within the conceptual framework. This research is of great importance as it is the first study on language tourism in Türkiye.

Therefore, in order to access specific data on language tourism for both comparison and scientific research purposes, a search was conducted in foreign language sources.

Language tourism in Türkiye stands out as an effective method for teaching Turkish to foreigners. Language tourism offers many advantages, such as learning a language while staying in Türkiye, cultural integration, increased motivation, and the development of language skills. In this context, evaluating and supporting Türkiye's language tourism potential will contribute to both the promotion of the country and the spread of Turkish internationally and globally.

Globalization is one of the fundamental dynamics supporting language tourism. Global mobility transforms language learning from merely an academic process into a cultural and social experience . Türkiye should further develop its language tourism policies to position Turkish as an international language in this process. Language tourism enables the integrated transfer of language and culture in teaching Turkish to foreigners, improving students' language skills and increasing their cultural awareness. Furthermore, among the main reasons for teaching Turkish to foreigners are enabling them to communicate with foreign tourists visiting Türkiye and establish ties with Turkish society, as well as generating foreign exchange income (Tekeli and Ternizyürek, 2024). Therefore, supporting and expanding language tourism activities in Türkiye will contribute to Turkish being learned and recognized more internationally, and this cycle will lead to an increase in language tourists visiting the country, thus creating a sustainable source of tourism and income. With the spread of this situation, it is thought that Turkish will become the lingua franca-the common language of the world-in the near future, replacing English and French.

In Türkiye, greater care should be taken to utilize the country's cultural and tourist attractions to make learning Turkish more appealing, and cooperation between the education and tourism sectors should be increased. Policies and practices should be reviewed to increase language tourism and language tourist mobility, leading to benefits as a sustainable tourism resource. For example, state-supported scholarship programs, cultural events, and summer and winter language scholarships should be implemented systematically.

Here, based on the data we obtained from students coming to Türkiye, the reasons for these students learning Turkish were analyzed in terms of language tourism in general and Türkiye's language tourism potential in particular. Accordingly, it has been interpreted as follows in the context of language tourism. Language tourism is a specific type of tourism that involves individuals going to another country to learn a language there. This type of tourism also has high potential in terms of education, cultural interaction, and economic contribution.

The data obtained reveals some of the fundamental advantages Türkiye possesses in terms of language tourism:

l. High Demand for Education: 23 out of 35 students are learning Turkish for university education. Türkiye is becoming an attractive education destination for international students. This increases the strategic value of language centers such as TOMER.

Soft Power and Cultural Influence: Some students are learning the language because of their interest in Turkish TV series, music, and culture. This shows that Türkiye's soft power has become an effective foreign policy tool through language.

Geographical and Economic Suitability: When interpreting the results from this perspective, Türkiye's position as a country connecting Europe and Asia, its ease of transportation, and relatively low cost of living make it an ideal destination for language learning. When evaluating Turkish and foreign language learning, Turkish is now becoming a language learned not only regionally but also internationally. While global

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language tourism generally focuses on languages such as English, French, and German, this graph shows that Turkish is also beginning to emerge as an alternative "language destination language." Interest in Turkish is transforming into a strategic advantage in terms of cultural exchange and diplomatic relations.

Recommendations, Goals, and Policy Development
1. TOMER Centers Should Be Expanded: It is considered necessary to increase activities, especially in the Balkans, Central Asia, and Africa.
2. Scholarships and Short-Term Language Camps: Itis considered important to increase incentive programs for foreigners who want to learn Turkish.
3. Digital Content Should Be Supported: Turkish TV series, music, and digital content are considered to have great potential in terms of globalizing Turkish.
4. Adaptatin Programs for Foreign Students: Cultural integration is considered to make language learning more effective.

International Accreditation Should Be Obtained: Turkish courses should be made compatible with Common European Framework of Reference for Languages levels, as this is believed to professionalize Turkish teaching and encourage students to take Turkish more seriously. A multidimensional and sustainable strategy can be envisioned and designed to increase language tourism potential of Türkiye. Türkiye has the potential to make Turkish a strategic language. Türkiye. can derive significant economic benefits from language tourism, make Turkish an attractive language on a global scale, and significantly increase its appeal to international students. A Corporate Cooperation Table proposal and recommendation to increase Türkiye's language tourism potential is presented here. This table indicates the areas of responsibility of the relevant institutions and provides recommendations on how they can contribute to the objectives Language Tourism Market, Current Global Assessment United Kingdom and France. The UK is a leader in the global language tourism market thanks to its strong educational infrastructure, globally recognized language schools, and cultural prestige. According to British Council data, it provides English language education to approximately 550,000 international students annually, contributing £3.2 billion to the economy. Prestigious schools in cities such as London, Oxford, and Cambridge offer cultural experiences alongside language education, creating a high value-added language tourism model. The UK has transformed language learning into an attractive service export through visa facilitation, accreditation systems, and digital marketing. This success isbased on English being the global lingua franca-the common language of the world-and the UK's strategic corporate management. The economic impact oflanguage tourism provides a multidimensional contribution that affects many sectors through direct and indirect revenues.

Direct Economic Contributions
Education Revenues: Language course fees, exam fees, and material sales are direct sources of income.
Accommodation: Students stay in dormitories, homestays, hotels, or rented apartments, generating significant revenue for the accommodation sector.
Food and Transportation: Students' daily living expenses (restaurants, transportation cards, grocery shopping) support the local economy.

Indirect Economic Contributions
Employment: Language schools, guides, accommodation businesses, and local businesses create employment opportunities.
Tourism Expenditures: Students contribute totourism by participating in cultural activities such as tours, museums, and events during their free time.
Family Visits: Students' family members also visit the country from time to time, which increases tourism revenues.
Long-Term Gains Country Image and Brand Value: Countries promote their cultures through language tourism, creating "soft power." Within the framework of academic and commercial connections, some students return to the country to pursue higher education or start a business. As part of service exports, education is not only a learning process but also a service sector that generates foreign exchange.

France
France holds a significant position in the global language tourism market after the United Kingdom. The global recognition of French, the richness of its cultural heritage, and state- supported strategies are increasing its influence in this field. Current data and strategies related to language tourism and its components in France are as follows:
Economic Contribution of Language and Education Tourism in France

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Education Tourism Market Size: France's education tourism market is expected to be worth approximately $35.6 billion in 2025. This figure is projected to reach $114 billion by 2035, growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 12.3%.

Total Tourism Revenue: In 2023, France's travel and tourism sector contributed approximately 246 billion euros to GDP. This figure is expected to reach 254.7 billion euros in 2024.

International Visitor Spending: In 2023, international visitors contributed approximately €66.7 billion to the French economy. Strategies and Initiatives Destination France Plan: France has implemented the €1.9 billion "Destination France" plan to revitalize the tourism sector and promote sustainability. This plan aims to develop tourism services focused on digitalization, sustainability, and quality.

About France: About France, France's official tourism development agency, promotes the country as a tourist destination. This institution supports the tourism sector through public- private partnerships. Language and Cultural Policies: France ensures the preservation of the French language through regulations such as the Toubon Law, which aims to promote the use of French. This law mandates the use of French in official documents, advertisements, and public spaces.

Marketing and Promotion Tactics

Highlighting Cultural Heritage: France promotes language tourism by showcasing its historical and cultural riches. For example, initiatives such as Les Plus Beaux Villages de France (France's Most Beautiful Villages) support tourism in rural areas.

Use of Major Events: Major events such as the 2024 Paris Olympic Games increase the country's international promotion and contribute to language tourism. During such events, businesses are encouraged to offer multilingual services.

Digital Marketing and Sustainability: France aims to attract environmentally conscious and sustainable tourists by promoting itself through digital platforms and adopting sustainable tourism practices.

As a result, France has a strong position in language tourism and is increasing its influence in this field through its cultural heritage, state-supported strategies, and sustainable tourism practices. The size of the educational tourism market and overall tourism revenues demonstrate the country's success in this sector. France's strategies in this area can serve as an example for other countries.

France has adopted an approach that integrates language tourism with sustainability principles, prioritizing environmental, cultural, and economic responsibilities. This strategy aims to provide long-term benefits for both international students wishing to learn French and the local population.

By integrating language tourism with sustainability principles, France has developed a model that minimizes environmental impacts, supports local economies, and preserves cultural heritage. This approach provides long-term benefits for both students and host communities. In conclusion, language tourism is not just an educational activity; it is a comprehensive economic activity that directly affects many sectors such as education, tourism, culture, accommodation, and retail. For this reason, countries position language tourism as a service export strategy.

The following strategies are presented below under key headings:

To make language tourism a strategic export area, multidimensional steps such as quality education, easy access, presentation of cultural values, and effective promotion must be carried out together. These strategies not only contribute economically but also increase the country's global brand value.

The most effective marketing tactics for attracting international students in the field of language tourism are shaped by strategies that are tailored to the target audience, digitally focused, and confidence-building. The most effective marketing tactics are those that win the trust of the target audience, are active in the digital spaces where they are located, convey the right messages, and succeed in offering "language education plus   life   experience". Language tourism is not just the sale of an education; it is the marketing of a life experience. For this reason, campaigns that establish an emotional connection, are based on real experiences, and incorporate cultural values are considered to be the most effective strategies. The global dissemination of Turkish is not only an impact in terms of language but also a strategic tool that increases Türkiye's soft power capacity. Turkish language education has become a multidimensional field that contributes to sustainable development goals in terms of Türkiye's cultural diplomacy, education exports, and tourism revenues. Reports published by provide long-term benefits for both international students wishing to learn French and the local population.

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Although Türkiye has taken important steps through collaborations with the Yunus Ernre Institute, YTB, TIKA, and YOK. it needs to increase its digital infrastructure investments, scholarship diversity, regional culture-based marl<eting strategies, and strengthen its integration with the private sector to increase its language tourism potential. The most strategic step that could be effective in the short term is the establishment of target country-focused digital

promotion campaigns between the Yunus Emre Institute and TGA (fwkey Tourism Promotion and Development Agency). This would increase interest in the Turkish language and further strengthen Turkey's image as a safe, culturally rich, and education-friendly country.

Inconclusion, teaching Turkish as a foreign language opens doors not only for individual but also for national-scale economic, cultural, and diplomatic gains. Supporting this potential with effective and comprehensive policies can transform Turkey into a competitive player in the global language tourism sector.

This study is the first in Turkish literature to express and examine the concepts and terms of language tourism and language tourist It is considered important that it will form a basis for future studies within the framework of teaching Turkish to foreigners and in Türkiye, and that the subject will be examined in greater detail in the future.

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