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How Do Turkish University Students Perceive Globalization? A Phenomenographic Analysis

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Abstract

This article aimed to reveal the Turkish university students' perceptions and perspectives around globalization. For this purpose, a research was carried out among university students and a total of 11,650 students who are studying in 78 different departments of 127 universities participated in the survey. The phenomenographic analysis was used in order to determine the description categories and mental maps. The participants were given 19 statements and asked their level of agreement using a 5 point Likert-type evaluation scale. It was revealed that the university students in Turkey generally understand globalization as the integration, unification progress and development of countries and societies in many areas. They believe in the various benefits of globalization for Turkey especially economically and culturally and do not see it as a threat to the unity of state structure. However, the majority of students still think of globalization as a factor that eliminates local and national culture.

Keywords: *Undergraduate students, globalization, phenomenographic analysis, mental map, nationwide survey, Turkey.*

1. Introduction

In 1990, Giddens described globalization as "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa". This definition has not changed in a quarter of a century but has evolved over time and included many new aspects. Today, the term globalization also represents an accelerating set of flows and connectivities that encompass an ever greater number of the world's spaces. As it expands and deepens, the worldwide diffusion of ideas and practices increasingly parallels the huge flows and mobility of people and goods across countries and continents (Tsai, 2013). It is also observed as the compression of the world and the intensification of the consciousness of the world as one unity (Wang and Yunxiang, 2014). In short, globalization can be defined as "the increased flow of goods, services, capital, people and information across borders".

Although globalization has been widely discussed, there is an ongoing debate over its effects especially on politics, cultures, economies, environments and education (Choi and Park, 2014; Bottery, 2006). Globalization has its passionate supporters and its ardent critics worldwide (Hytten and Bettez, 2008). Different societies have very different perceptions of globalization and these perceptions are classified into three categories as "radicals" (hyper globalist), 'sceptics' (sceptical) and 'recyclers' (transformationalists). Radicals are also referred to as over-globalists. Skeptics, who are located directly opposite to radicals, are known as the opponents of globalization and recyclers see globalization as the main political power behind rapid social, political and economic change that reshapes modern societies and the world (Çelik, 2012).

It is important to find out the perceptions and perspectives of the community around globalization in order to give wise decisions especially in political, cultural and economic areas. Therefore, a few studies were conducted in different countries and years. In a study conducted by Sasaki (2004), the Japanese people's perceptions about globalization and national identity were investigated and 2164 people were included in this study. In 2011, Kayani, Ahmad and Saeed (2013), conducted a study in Pakistan. They explored knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of both genders towards cultural globalization and its influence on the values and culture of Pakistani society. Also, in a research conducted in Alabama A&M University in the USA, students' perceptions of globalization and the study abroad programmes were explored. The analysis was based on survey questionnaires administered to 263 undergraduate minority students (Walker, Bukenya and Thomas, 2011). In addition, in a study which was conducted in UK, USA, Australia and New Zealand, 302 respondents were asked to note the first five things they associate with the word 'globalization' (Garrett, Evans and Williams, 2006). Furthermore, Aydın (2014) has explored how the public evaluates the integration of the Turkish economy into the global economy, in particular, increasing trade ties, globalization, greater availability of foreign products and travel opportunities and the impact of multinational companies and international financial institutions in Turkey. However, in Turkey, there is an urgent need for research that reveals how university students evaluate globalization.

Turkey is a bridge country situated between not only Asia and Europe but also the different religions, languages and cultures of the Middle East and Europe. It is a Muslim country with a population approaching 75 million by 2016, has membership negotiations with the European Union and wanted to be among today's developed countries. It is also a near neighbor of the Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Therefore, society's perceptions of and approaches towards globalization in Turkey are important for a wide variety of sociological analysis and forecasting. For this purpose, this study was conducted on university students – because they form the basis of society – and important results were revealed.

2. Method

The data underlying this study was based on a research carried out among university students in Turkey in 2015. As of January 2016, there exist in Turkey a total of 193 universities of which 109 are public and 76 are private and the total number of undergraduate students is 3,628,800

(YOK, 2016). A total of 12,780 students who are studying in 78 different departments of 127 universities participated in the survey which was conducted based on the random sampling method. However, a total of 11,650 students were included in the study after evaluating students' answers in terms of the consistency of the answers as evaluated by the researcher. Accordingly, the number of students who participated in the research was 11,650 of which 4,980 were male (42.75%) and 6,670 female (57.25%).

The first five universities, which have the highest amount of participation in the research, were Istanbul, Marmara, Sakarya, Uludag and Gazi University. The students of these five universities made up 37.67% of the total participants. Although, there was not a large difference in the distribution of the students among the departments, most of the participants were from the departments of geography, business, history, law and Turkish language and literature. In addition, about one third of the students (33.82%) who participated in the survey were second grade students and about 60% were first, third and fourth grade students. Details regarding participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Students by Gender, University, Department and Grade

Variable	N	%	Variable	N	%
Gender			*Department*		
Male	4,980	42.75	Geography	375	3.22
Female	6,670	57.25	Business	303	2.60
University			History	258	2.21
Istanbul	1,527	13.11	Law	239	2.05
Marmara	1,051	9.02	Turkish Lang.	211	1.81
Sakarya	1,023	8.78	Others	10,264	88.10
Uludağ	528	4.53	*Grade*		
Gazi	259	2.22	Prep.	351	3.01
Others	7,262	62.33	1st grade	2,079	17.85
			2nd grade	3,940	33.82
			3rd grade	3,142	26.97
			4th grade	1,887	16.20
			5th grade	251	2.15
			Total	**11,650**	**100.00**

In the study, an internet-based survey was used as a data collection tool. In the first part of the survey, which consists of three sections, personal questions about participants' university, department, grade and gender were asked. In the second part, the participants were asked to describe the term globalization along with reasons for this description. In this aspect, this part was prepared according to the method of phenomenographic analysis. In the third part, the participants were given 19 statements and asked their level of agreement using a 5 point Likert-type evaluation scale (1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neutral, 4-agree, 5-strongly agree).

In the analysis of the data collected from the survey, descriptive, inferential and phenomenographic analysis methods were used. Phenomenography is an experimental and qualitative research approach, which investigates how people perceive, understand and

conceptualize a variety of events or issues in different ways. This method is especially designed to answer questions about the thinking and learning processes in the context of educational research (Tuna, 2013). The phenomenographic analysis, which tried to determine the description categories, was carried out in four stages. These stages were, (1) coding and classification, (2) the creation of pioneer categories, (3) the creation of the category descriptions and (4) the creation of a description map. In addition, in order to increase the validity of the research, the responses to the second part that had a discrepancy between a description and its reason were not taken into consideration in the evaluation. Furthermore, the responses of the students who described globalization irrelevantly in the second part were not taken into consideration in the third part.

3. Findings

As a result of the analysis of data obtained, some important results were found about students' definitions and perceptions of globalization. Initially, it was observed that the participants (11,650 students) identified the concept of globalization with six different description categories. These categories were: Globalization is (1) an integration or unification, (2) a progress or development, (3) an exploitation, (4) a solidarity, (5) a harmful phenomenon and (6) a change, respectively. The description categories and the number of metaphors they contain are given in detail in Table 2.

Table 2. Description Categories and the Metaphors

Description Category	f	%	Metaphors	f
An integration or unification	5,460	46.86	in a myriad of areas	1,650
			in all areas	1,022
			the shrinking of the world	883
			administrative or political unification	835
			cultural integration	687
			economic integration	383
A progress or development	2,440	20.94	In communication and transportation	1,051
			in a myriad of areas	702
			in economy	525
			in culture	125
			in technology	37
Exploitation	1,373	11.79	for riches	722
			for political aims	423
			for economic aims	228
Solidarity	1,082	9.29	in a myriad of areas	987
			in social life	95
A harmful phenomenon	1,019	8.75	extinction of natural resources	560
			disruption of the ecological balance	290
			loss of local cultures	169
A change	276	2.37	in almost every area	86
			completely	73
			in social life	74
			in economy	22
			politically	21
			Total	**11,650**

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Within the description categories, the category of "globalization is an integration or unification" included the highest number of metaphors with a total of 5,460 (46.86%). In this category, 1,650 of the students described globalization as integration or unification "in a myriad of areas" and 1,022 of them described it as occurring "in all areas". 883 students defined the globalization as "the shrinking of the world" and 835 students defined it as "administrative or political unification and integration". In addition, 687 students described it as "cultural integration" and 383 students described it as "economic integration". Here are some of the answers in this category:

- *Globalization is the non-importance of geographical boundaries. It is the quick and easy interaction of people with each other regardless of geographical boundaries. In particular, with the development of transportation facilities in the world and with internet, access to everything became easier and distances became closer. Therefore, it is the integration of societies worldwide.*
- *Two most important reasons of cross-cultural sociological integration among communities are transportation and communication. Therefore, today the exchanges among cultures are so fast and easy. Therefore, nowadays the integration of the communities in different parts of the worlds is very fast.*
- *Globalization is unification. The sale of a tie in Paris, which was manufactured in India and the formation of long queues for American Apple products in China are best indicatives of this unification.*
- *Globalization is the simplification of achieving a whole world of information, technology and people in a small and far place. It is also the integration and unification of the world into a single state. It is the integration of all nations with each other, culturally, politically, commercially without considering the geographical boundaries. For example, globalization is a world citizen instead of being Turkish citizen.*

The second category which has the most number of metaphors (n=2440, 20.94%) after "integration and unification" was "a progress and development". Here are some of the answers in this category:

- *Globalization is the world's economic growth and development. Therefore, it is keeping pace with developing countries and having a power worldwide.*
- *Globalization is the spread of all the innovation and development around the world quickly and the co-development of the whole world together.*
- *Globalization is the development of all countries by influencing each other to the same extent. It is also an opening to the world in terms of social, economic, political and cultural senses for a country.*
- *Globalization is a development phase, which provides ease to the problems of societies. It is also an opening to the world both in social and economic aspects and a country's being aware of the developed world.*

Of the students, 11.79% (n=1,373) defined globalization as "exploitation". Here are some of the answers in this category:

- *Developed countries, are in a constant quest to establish an effect on undeveloped countries. They try to place their own culture in undeveloped countries besides grabbing underground and surface riches of these countries.*
- *Globalization is the practice of colonial thinking by developed countries without aggression on less developed countries. Developed countries use the resources of the less developed countries for their own benefits.*
- *Globalization is the efforts of the developed countries for dominating around the world. It is also developed countries' swallowing up of the weak states and firms. In short, it is exploitation by the big powers of less developed countries.*
- *Globalization is a concept that was put forward in order to implement the imperialist aims of the capitalist states. It is the understanding that big fish eat little fish.*

A total of 9.29% (n=1,082) of the students who participated in the research described globalization as "solidarity" in many areas or in social life. Here are some of the answers in this category:

- Globalization is the increase of global solidarity in social, economic and technological aspects among countries.
- *Globalization is the world's solidarity in terms of social, economic, technological, political and ecological balances. It is the search for finding common solutions to the problems together.*
- *Globalization is an increase of integration and solidarity in every area. It is also a country's socialization together with other countries.*
- *Globalization is the sharing of data through communication, increasing solidarity and solving poverty and environmental problems together.*

In addition, 8.75% (n=1,019) of the students defined globalization as a "harmful phenomenon". Here are some of the answers in this category:

- *Globalization is a harmful event that has consequences such as disruption of the ecological balance, global warming, drought, depletion of the ozone layer, extinction of life resources on the Earth, the melting of glaciers and emerging of abnormal seasons.*
- *Globalization is the loss of the naturalness of our environment and even our foods. It is the deterioration of the balance of nature by humankind. Moreover, humankind is preparing its end. Therefore, it is a harmful process for the world.*
- *Globalization is the loss of local values and it is a nations' breaking from its past. It is the destruction of the existence of national states.*
- *Globalization is the degeneration of cultures. It is a diktat or a phenomenon that breaks a human being from itself.*

Furthermore, the category which included the lowest number of answers (2.37%; n=276) was found to be "globalization is a change". Some of the answers in this category are:

- *Globalization is the change that restructures the world whole. These are political, economic, sociological, cultural and psychological changes.*
- *Globalization is a change in almost every area from economics to politics, from culture to social policy.*
- *Globalization is an inevitable change. It is a change in every area of our lives up to the politics of the countries.*
- *Globalization, in one word, means changes.*

After finding out the students' perceptions of globalization, a students' description map was prepared based on their answers. Accordingly, six different description paths and related answers were mapped. These paths and answers are given in Figure 1.
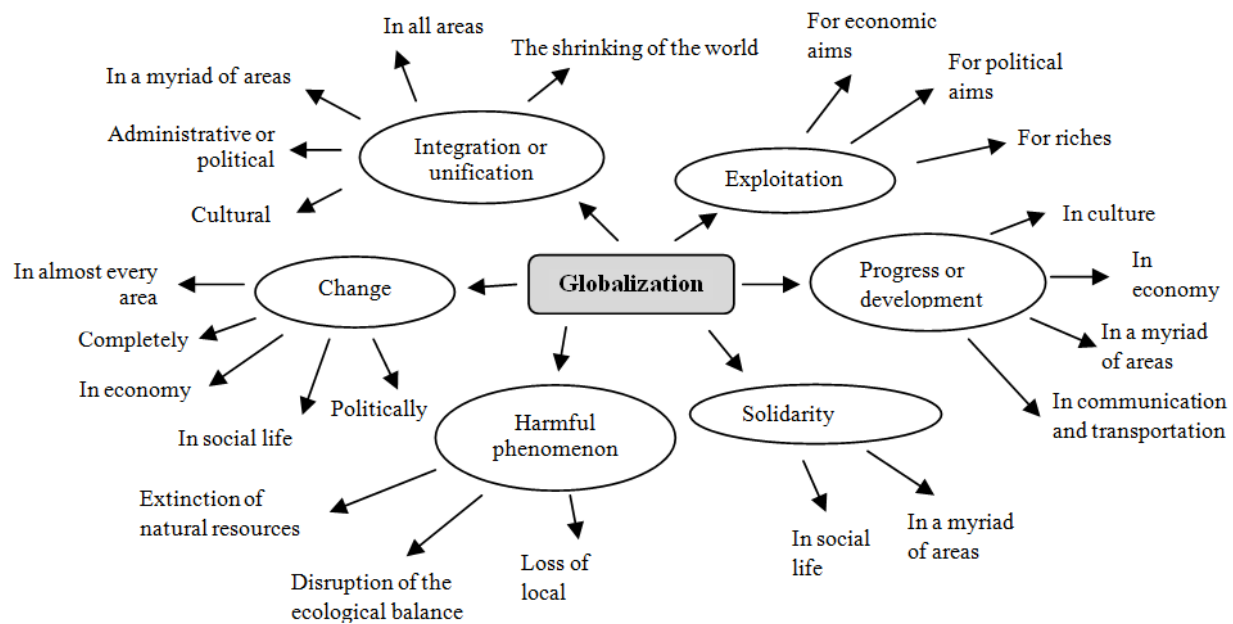

Figure 1. Students' Description Map of Globalization

Furthermore, the results obtained by analyzing the answers of 19 statements directed to the students in part 3 of the survey were presented in detail in Table 3.

Table 3. Students' statements about globalizations and agreement rates

	Statements	Ave.	Result*
1	Turkey is affected by globalization.	4.58	strongly
2	Turkey's national and local cultures and values should be preserved.	4.52	agree
3	Today, globalization is managed by the developed countries.	4.34	
4	Globalization is a factor that eliminates national and local cultures.	4.32	
5	Globalization is an inevitable process for all countries and societies.	4.28	
6	Globalization will contribute to the economic development of Turkey.	4.23	agree
7	Turkey should be involved in the process of globalization economically.	4.18	
8	Globalization will contribute to the protection of natural and environmental	4.04	

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	resources in Turkey.		
9	Globalization is a process that will contribute to the multiculturalism in Turkey.	3.97	
10	I'd like to know the cultures of Europe and other developed countries.	3.95	
11	Along with globalization Turkey's national and local cultures will disappear.	3.40	
12	Globalization is an opportunity for the Turkish people to gain universal values.	3.26	
13	Turkish culture will have the opportunity to spread to the different parts of the world along with globalization.	3.03	neutral
14	Globalization means wealth, prosperity and ease of life.	2.95	
15	Globalization is developed countries' seizure of the wealth resources of less developed countries.	2.25	
16	Globalization will damage Turkey's economic development.	2.20	disagree
17	Turkey's national state unity will be damaged by globalization.	2.12	
18	Turkey should close its doors to globalization.	2.08	
19	The destruction of natural resources in Turkey will be accelerated along with globalization.	1.32	strongly disagree

*** 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neutral, 4-agree, 5-strongly agree.*

4. Discussion and Results

As a result of this study which aimed to reveal the Turkish university students' perceptions and perspectives around globalization, it was revealed that they defined the concept of globalization in six different description categories. These categories – from most to least responses respectively were: integration and unification, progress or development, exploitation, solidarity, harmful phenomenon and change.

When analyzed by category, it was seen that about half of the students who participated in the survey defined globalization as "integration and unification" in political, administrative, cultural, economic or different areas. About half of the students in this category identified globalization as integration or unification "in many or all areas". In addition, about one-fifth of the students who participated in the study described globalization as "development of communication, transportation, economy, culture or technology". Among these, the highest number of responses was in "communication and transportation". Moreover, about 12% of the students who participated in the survey, defined globalization as "exploitation" and half of them related their answers to the reason of grabbing the wealth of undeveloped countries. However, approximately 10% of the students – at a rate close to the rate of those who define globalization as exploitation – defined globalization as "solidarity" in many areas. In addition, close to 10% of the participants defined globalization as a harmful phenomenon. Most of these students saw globalization as "the cause of environmental damage and extinction of natural resources" while a portion of them stated that globalization would lead to the extinction of the local cultures. In addition, a very small portion (about 3%) of the students who participated in the research defined globalization as "a change" only.

In the next section in which the students were asked the level of agreement about the globalization statements, the following thoughts emerged in general:

1. Globalization is an inevitable process for countries and communities and this process affects Turkey.
2. Globalization, which is managed by developed countries today, will contribute to multiculturalism in Turkey. However, it is a phenomenon that eliminates national and local cultures. Therefore, Turkey's national and local cultures and values should be preserved.
3. Globalization is not developed countries' seizing the wealth resources of less developed countries. On the contrary, it will contribute to economic development in Turkey. Therefore, Turkey should be involved in the process of economic globalization.
4. Globalization is not a threat to Turkey's national state unity.
5. Globalization is not a harmful factor in the extinction of natural resources in Turkey. On the contrary, globalization will contribute to the protection of natural and environmental resources.
6. Turkey, in general, should not shut its doors to globalization.

As a result, in this study, we tried to define and map the perceptions and perspectives around globalization of university students in Turkey, which is a country bridging the continents of Asia and Europe and located in a cosmopolitan geographical area, trying to join the European Union and the developed world. In short, it was revealed that the university students in Turkey generally understand globalization as the integration, unification, progress and development of countries and societies in many areas. They believe in the various benefits of globalization for Turkey especially economically and culturally and do not see it as a threat to the unity of state structure.

However, the majority of students still think of globalization as a factor that eliminates local and national culture. So, some precautionary measures should be applied. In addition to these general opinions, there is also a variety of negative judgments about globalization. At least some of the students think of globalization specifically as exploitative and ecologically damaging. For this reason, the results of the study should be taken into account carefully by decision-makers and experts working in related fields and the necessary works should be carried out. Educators, especially, should revise the education programs of related disciplines by integrating needed standards into them.

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