How Do Students Studying Turkish in Lithuania Describe Turkish Culture and People?

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Abstract
The aim of this paper is to describe ideas that students learning Turkish in Lithuania have about Turkish culture and Turkish people. A descriptive method was used in the research. The data for the research was collected from 15 students who learn Turkish at Vilnius University in Vilnius, Lithuania. For the participating in the research students, "An Emotional Meaning Scale about Turkish Culture and Turkish People" was used. The students were asked to identify positive and negative attributes connected with Turkish culture and Turkish people. The data was grouped according to frequency (f) values and interpreted accordingly. The research revealed that the students evaluate Turkish culture and Turkish people positively and that the positive ideas belong to a high level.
Keywords: Teaching Turkish to foreigners, Lithuania, Turkish culture, Turkish people.

1. Introduction
Rapid developments in such spheres as trade, politics, media, technology, sport, and education brought a communication between people and cultures. Due to an individual or public need for communication, foreign language learning has become compulsory. In this respect, foreign language learning is seen as a necessity to follow requirements of the age.

In our times, a realization of an effective communication between people and cultures became possible because of a change in the position of a foreign language from its position of "an aim" to the position of "a means" (Demirkan, 2008: 29). A foreign language became an important means for studying different cultures and people. In this way, a studied language did not stay apart from a culture.

The words of Wittgenstein (1961: 115) "the limits of my language mean the limits of my world" should not be taken only as an opinion connected with the philosophy of language. "The thing that Wittgenstein tried to explain in reality was how a language is realized in different forms of use and how it is used in different and connected to each other language games" (Alpyağıl, 2002). These words also reveal how difficult is to teach and to learn a foreign language. The complexity of the process is caused by the fact that a use of a foreign language is a complex process. One of the most important things, which a student who studies a foreign language must keep in mind, is culture of a target language.

A language can be evaluated as "a system than embodies a form, in which society understands and explains the world" (Börekçi, 2009: 4). A language is a system that gives individuals a fellow feeling, forms their world of ideas and meanings, shapes national memory, and reflects their culture (Akarsu 1994: 17). On the one hand, learning a foreign language is learning a new culture. Because a language is the mirror of its own culture (Kayaalp, 1998: 168). In order to learn and use a language, which is a means that reflects a culture at best, a large knowledge about a target culture is needed. A foreign language – a bridge between cultures and a means of language use – encourages students to use a studied language to discover a new cultural world. A foreign language has an important role in a process of noticing by students the similarities and differences between their own culture and a culture belonging to the studied language.

In the process of a foreign language teaching, it is needed to have a sufficient prior knowledge about a culture of a studied language and of people who make this culture real. Knowledge about a culture of a foreign language prepares a basement for a positive interpretation of a target culture that belongs to a language that foreigners approach for a first time. Moreover, it can also play an important role in speeding up a process, in which students gain a harmony with a language. At the same time, in the process of teaching, a rich, rooted, prominent and alive culture of a language can make an excitement in a person, who studies a foreign language (Aksan, 2000: 65).

In foreign language teaching, circumstances and events of a living culture and a real life as well as characteristic features of people of that culture must be brought into a learning environment. A transfer of real examples of a language use into a classroom makes the process of learning a culture and people who live in it easier. In this way, "the students will be taught how real life societal roles and relationships reflect a language and what means are needed to develop a proper linguistic behavior – both of what will strengthen an interaction between a speaker and a listener of a foreign language" (Varışoğlu, 2013: 35).

1.1. The Importance and Aim of the Research
Knowledge about perceptions and attitudes that students have towards a studied foreign language can be useful

for a teacher and students from different points of view. This knowledge can be important for a re-planning of a teaching process, for an evaluation of study materials, activities and methods, for a re-evaluation of learning and teaching strategies to be used for studying of a target language and culture.

In this respect, it is required to use several evaluation means that can be useful to define a perception and attitudes towards target language and culture. One of the means to gain a concrete data that would reveal such abstract meanings as perception, attitude, opinion, and prospect are lists of attributes that are used more frequently in psychology (Dilmaç, 2009). Positive and negative attributes, which are based on differences in a meaning, give a concrete basis to make some conclusions about different emotional situations and students' attitudes toward a target language and culture.

Positive or negative dimension of emotions that are felt toward a culture and people who speak a target language play an important role in students' motivation to learn a foreign language. The aim of this research is to find out by which attributes Turkish language students in Lithuania define Turkish culture and Turkish people. The major research question to be answered is the following:

- What dimension of emotional values and perceptions of Turkish culture and Turkish people do students who study Turkish as a foreign language in Lithuania have?

2. The Method
2.1. The Pattern of the Research
This research was made in accordance with the patterns of a descriptive research. The research process is based both on qualitative and quantitative research methods. A descriptive research pattern–which is frequently used to deal with an analysis concerning a situation, an opinion, a perception, and an attitude–is suitable for a research, an aim of which is to define a particular situation (Karasar, 2007).

2.2. The Research Environment and Sample
The research was made among Vilnius University students who study Turkish as a foreign language; the sample is based on the data received from 15 students who were chosen by an easy-access sample technique. In the easy-access sample technique, a researcher chooses participants who can be easily accessed. The most important features in the use of this sample technique are law costs of a sample realization, ease to gain a permission, time-saving, and labor shortage (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz and Demirel, 2009: 91). In this research, the researcher used a sample technique based on information gained from the students of his own university.

2.3. The Data Collection and Analysis
Research data was collected with the "Scale of Semantic Differences" taken from the work of Sevim and Varışoğlu (2012) and re-considered accordingly to the aim of this research. The Scale of Semantic Differences was developed by Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum. The scale consists of two columns with 18 positive and 18 negative attributes, serving as synonyms; all attributes can be evaluated by points -3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3. Further, one open-end question, connected to the aim of the paper, is added into the end of the scale.

Sevim and Varışoğlu (2012) point out that the scale they have used in their research is suitable to conduct a comparative measurement between the cultures, that this scale is reliable and easy to use, and that they have calculated the Cronbach alpha coefficient as 0,73. The value of a scale of the Cronbach alpha in this work was calculated as 0,84. The fact that the value of Cronbach alpha is 0,84 show that the scale is reliable.

Quantitative and qualitative data collected in this research was analyzed with a descriptive analysis technique that is connected to the method of the research. The results of the analysis are presented with frequency values.

3. Findings
3.1. The Quantitative Research Findings
The attributes that reveal emotional values, which students who study Turkish as a foreign language in Lithuania have toward Turkish culture and Turkish people, as well as quantitative findings connected to the categories of these attributes specified by "very, quite, at some extent" are presented in the Table 1, Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, Figure 4, and Figure 5.

The Table 1 displays the attributes and frequency values that reveal students' ideas. In a row following each attribute, quantitative values "very, quite, at some extent" are given; for a neutral opinion, a quantitative values for a "hesitant" answer took place. In the lowest row of positive and negative attributes, cumulative values given to all questions are presented.

The zones under opinion columns are those that were not answered by students, they have no quantitative values are marked with the sign (-).

Table 1. Frequency values connected with the description of Turkish culture and Turkish people

Positive attributes	Very (3)	Quite (2)	At some extent (1)	Hesitant (0)	At some extent (-1)	Quite (-2)	Very (-3)	Negative attributes
	f	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	*f*	
1. Good	8	6	-	1	-	-	-	1. Bad
2. Beautiful	8	5	-	1	1	-	-	2. Ugly
3. Clean	5	2	2	2	2	2	-	3. Dirty
4. Consistent	1	6	-	-	3	3	2	4. Inconsistent
5. Powerful	5	4	4	2	-	-	-	5. Powerless
6. Tasteful	2	3	6	2	2	-	-	6. Tasteless
7. Important	8	3	1	3	-	-	-	7. Unimportant
8. Meaningful	2	7	2	-	2	1	1	8. Meaningless
9. Honorable	6	7	1	-	1	-	-	9. Dishonorable
10. Peaceful	1	1	3	1	2	6	1	10.Peaceless
11. Useful	7	3	2	1	1	1	-	11. Useless
12. Pleasant	10	2	1	1	1	-	-	12. Unpleasant
13. Warm-hearted	14	-	-	1	-	-	-	13. Unloving
14. Sufficient	1	8	2	3	1	-	-	14. Insufficient
15. Emotional	8	5	1	-	1	-	-	15. Unemotional
16. Easy	4	1	4	1	3	-	2	16. Difficult
17. Effective	7	4	4	-	-	-	-	17. Ineffective
18. Productive	3	9	-	3	-	-	-	18. Unproductive
Total	**100**	**82**	**33**	**22**	**20**	**13**	**6**	**Total**

When the data from the Table 1 are analyzed from the point of *positive* and *negative* attributes, it becomes clear that the level of *positive* attributes is higher that the level of *negative* attributes. Therefore, it can be concluded that the majority of the students learning Turkish in Lithuania evaluate Turkish culture and Turkish people with *positive* attributes.

When the quantitative values of negative attributes are analyzed, it is seen that even in case of the most negative attitude the highest mark given by students to a *negative* attribute is equal to a mark "at some extent".

When the Table 1 is analyzed according to cumulative values, it is revealed that according to cumulative frequency values the level of *hesitant* finds itself in the middle (f=22). The attributes that express positive ideas are arranged as *very* (f=100), *quite* (f=82), *at some extent* (f=33); the attributes that attributes that express negative ideas are arranged as *at some extent* (f=20), *quite* (f=13), *very* (f=6) – what also reveals positive ideas. In other words, it was revealed that the tendency of ideas that Lithuanian students have toward Turkish culture and Turkish people is that of a positive inclination.

The attributes, which reveal positive ideas that Lithuanian students have toward Turkish culture and Turkish people, were also analyzed; the gained quantitative values are displayed in the Figure 1 and Figure 2.
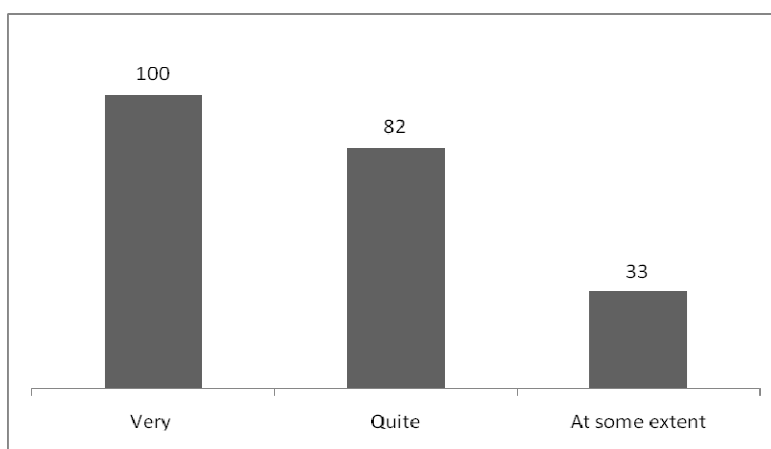

Figure 1. The extent of positive ideas

The data which is presented in the Figure 1 reveals that foreign students have positive ideas about Turkish culture and Turkish people on a high level. In the level of answers given by the students in the connection with Turkish culture and Turkish people, *very positive* (f=100) and *quite positive* (f=82) show a
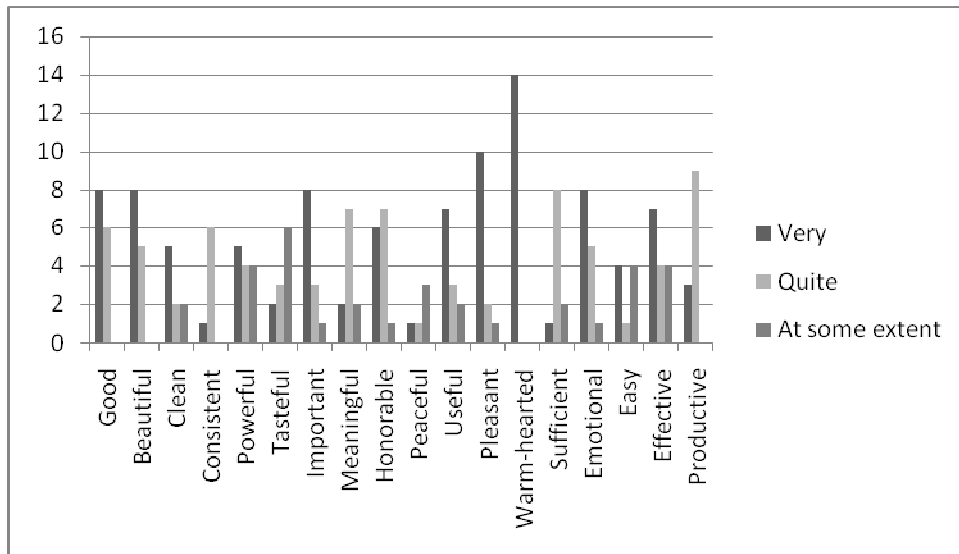
higher level than *positive at some extent* (f=33).

Figure 2. The extent of positive attributes

The Figure 2 displays that Lithuanian students who study Turkish describe Turkish culture and Turkish people mostly with such positive attributes as *warm-hearted* (f=14), *pleasant* (f=10), *productive* (f=9), *good* (f=8), *beautiful* (f=8), *important* (f=8), *emotional* (f=8) and *sufficient* (f=8). When the attributes were analyzed, it was revealed that very positive and quite positive ideas prevail.

The attributes that reveal negative ideas of Lithuanian students towards Turkish culture and Turkish people were similarly analyzed; the quantitative values are displayed in the Figure 3 and Figure 4.
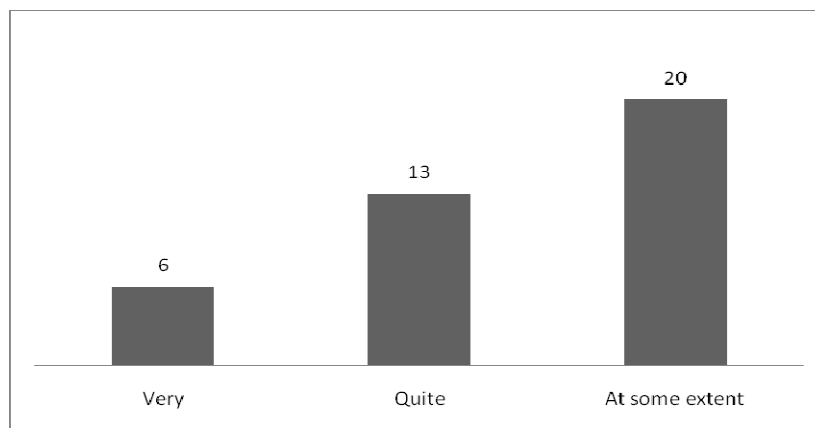

Figure 3. The extent of negative ideas

The data that is presented in the Figure 3 reveals the negative ideas that foreign students have about Turkish culture and Turkish people belong to a lower level. The percentage of students who describe their ideas about Turkish culture and Turkish people as *very negative* (f=6) is lower that the percentage of students who define their ideas as *negative at some extent* (f=20) and *quite negative* (f=13). This also reveals that students describe Turkish culture and Turkish people in a positive way.
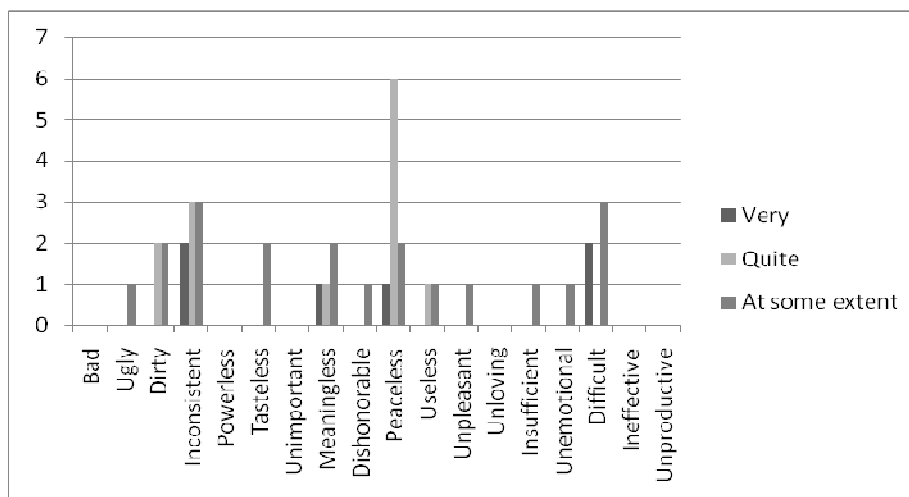
Figure 4. The extent of negative attributes

The Figure 4 reveals that the negative ideas that students have about Turkish culture and Turkish people are collected in the entries with attributes *peaceless* (f=6), *inconsistent* (f=3), and *difficult* (f=3), followed by *dirty* (f=2), *tasteless* (f=2), and *meaningless* (f=2). Such attributes as *bad*, *powerless*, *unimportant*, *unloving*, *ineffective*, and *unproductive* were not marked ; in other words, it clear that the students did not find them suitable to depict Turkish culture and Turkish people. It was revealed that the quantitative values of negative attributes from Figure 4 are of a much lower level than positive attributes.

When the data given in the Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, and Figure 4 is analyzed cumulatively, it is revealed that: positive and negative attributes complement each other; when in one gains a high score, another has a low score; when values connected to attributed are analyzed cumulatively, it is seen that positive attributes have a tendency of a higher use.

Attributes that reflect ideas in which Lithuanian students stayed hesitant while thinking about Turkish culture and Turkish people were analyzed; the qualitative values are displayed in the Figure 5.
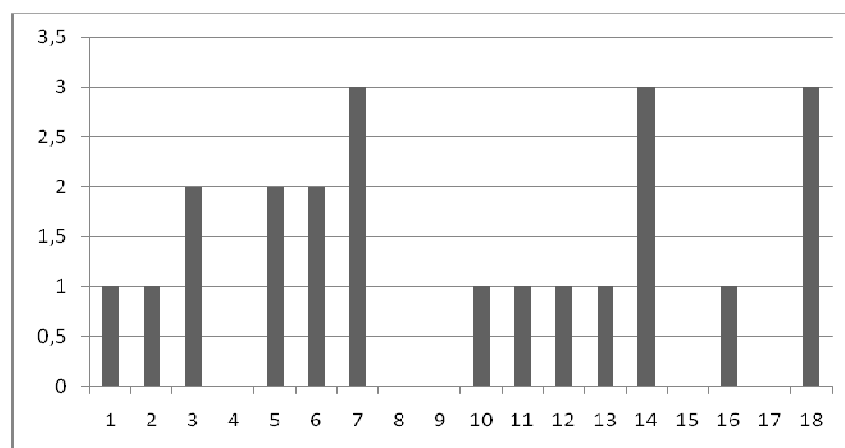

Figure 5. The extent of the hesitant idea

When the Figure 5 is analyzed, it is seen that among the attributes which raise most hesitancy in students are: *important – unimportant* (f=3)*, sufficient – insufficient* (f=3) and *productive – unproductive* (f=3). These attributes are followed by the following attributes: *clean – dirty* (f=2), *powerful – powerless* (f=2) and *tasteful – tasteless* (f=2). The following attributes received no marks: *consistent – inconsistent, meaningful – meaningless*, *honorable – dishonorable*, *emotional – unemotional*, and *effective – ineffective*.

3.2. The Qualitative Findings
The qualitative findings connected with the question how do students who study Turkish as a foreign language in Lithuania evaluate Turkish culture and Turkish people are revealed from the answers to the sentence "Write anything you would like to add in connection with Turkish culture and Turkish people", which was added into a final line of the Scale of Semantic Differences. The findings are given in the Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2. Students' descriptions concerning Turkish people

Content category	f	Sentence
Jealous	3	"Turkish men are very shy and *jealous*" S1* "Turkish people are *jealous* and loyal, they are very good friends" S10 "A Turkish person is very shy, *jealous*, energetic" S12
Hospitable	3	"[They are] very friendly and good people, *hospitable* [people]"S8 "People very hospitable" S11 "Turks are very *hospitable*" S13
Good (A good friend)	2	"[They are] very friendly and good people, *hospitable* [people]"S8 "Turkish people are jealous and loyal, they are *very good friends*" S10
Warm (friendly)	2	"[They are] very friendly and *good people*, hospitable [people]"S8 "The most important in Turkish culture is a *warm* behavior of Turkish people. In our culture it is very difficult to find this kind of *warmth*" S6
Shy	2	"Turkish men are very *shy* and jealous" S1 "A Turkish person is very *shy*, jealous, energetic" S12
Annoying	1	"As for my opinion, Turkish people are very friendly and sometimes can be very *annoying*" S7
Friendly	1	"As for my opinion, Turkish people are very *friendly* and sometimes can be very annoying" S7
Energetic	1	"A Turkish person is very *shy*, jealous, *energetic*" S12
Smiling	1	"Turkish girls are very lovely, always cheerful and they *smile*" S3
Hesitant	1	"But Turks are very *hesitant* and inconsistent people. This feature bothers me a lot" S6
Cheerful	1	"Turkish girls are very lovely, always *cheerful* and they smile" S3
Loyal	1	"Turkish people are jealous and *loyal*, they are *very good* friends" S10
Lovely	1	"Turkish girls are very *lovely,* always cheerful and they smile" S3
Inconsistent	1	"But Turks are very hesitant and *inconsistent* people. This feature bothers me a lot" S6

* S: Student

From the analysis of the content categories–as it is shown in the Table 2–it is revealed that –similarly with the data in the scale–the adjectives *good* and *lovely* were used in connection with Turkish people most frequently. Among the negative attributes, the adjective inconsistent was repeated most often.

Differently from the attributes in the scale, the adjectives *hospitable*, *warm*, *friendly*, *energetic, smiling, cheerful, loyal* are used to express a positive description and the adjectives *jealous*, *shy*, annoying, hesitant – to express a negative impression about Turkish people.

Table 3. The students' descriptions of Turkish culture

Content Category	f	Sentence
Interesting	2	"Turkish culture is very *interesting*" S3 "Turkish culture is very *interesting* and different" S10
With many historical places	2	"Turkish culture is full of historical places".") S6 "There are a lot of historical places" S13
Different	1	"Turkish culture is very interesting and *different*" S10
Warm behavior	1	"The most important [thing] about Turkish culture is *warm behavior* of Turkish people. In our culture it is very difficult to find this warmth" S6
Mature and rich	1	"My opinion is that Turkish culture is *very mature and rich* culture" S7
Dirty streets	1	"Problems with cleaning occur. *Sometimes streets are dirty*" S8
Cuisine culture is rich	1	"At the same time, it has rich, tasty and nice food" S6

According to the data shown in the Table 3, the opinion of Lithuanian students on Turkish culture has a tendency to be positive. Except for one attribute – *dirty streets*, the Turkish culture is depicted with positive attributes: *interesting*, *with many historical places*, *different*, *warm behavior*, *mature and rich*, *with rich cuisine culture*.

4. Results and Discussion

The research revealed that ideas which Lithuanian students who study Turkish as a foreign language in Vilnius University have about Turkish culture and Turkish people have positive tendencies; the positive opinion has a rather high level. In majority, these students define Turkish culture in Turkish people as *warm-hearted*, *pleasant*, *productive*, *good*, *beautiful/nice*, *important*, *emotional*, and *sufficient*.

The students expressed a negative attitude about Turkish culture and Turkish people with the attributes

peaceless, *inconsistent*, *difficult*, *dirty*, *tasteless*, and *meaningless*. However, the negative attributes are less in comparison with positive attributes. At the same times, the students decided that such attributes as *bad*, *powerless*, *unimportant*, *unloving*, *ineffective*, and *unproductive* do not suit to be used to describe Turkish culture and Turkish people.

While the moments when the students stayed hesitant about expressing their opinions belong to a very limited number of instances, the attributes that received more "I cannot decide" answers were *important – unimportant*, *sufficient – insufficient*, *productive – unproductive*, clean – dirty, powerful – powerless, and *tasteful – tasteless*.

According to the analysis of the sentences added by the students upon the request *"Write anything you would like to add about Turkish culture and Turkish people"*, the positive adjectives attributed to Turkish people were *hospitable*, *warm*, *friendly*, *energetic*, *smiling*, cheerful, and *loyal*. Among the negative attributes were such adjectives as *jealous*, *shy*, *annoying*, and *hesitant*.

According to the findings that came from the analysis of sentences written by the Lithuanian students, they made a negative comment on *dirty streets* but otherwise expressed positive comments on Turkish culture, naming it *interesting*, *with many historical places*, *different*, *warm behavior*, *mature and rich*, and *with a rich cuisine culture*.

All the findings of the research reveal that the model, transmitted in Lithuania about Turkish culture and Turkish people, is understood in a positive way by the students who learn Turkish as a foreign language. It is possible to think that among the reasons of this positive opinion are students' trips into Turkey, the interest they feel toward Turkey and the Turkish language, a positive opinion of foreign lecturers–who teach Turkish–on Turkey and Turkish culture, the success of lectures sent from Turkey in transmitting Turkish culture and ideas about Turkish people, a warm attitude towards the students, displayed by Turkish statesmen, politicians, and scientists who come to Lithuania, an attention the students and local teachers receive from the Turkish Embassy in Vilnius, and a communication between the students participating in Erasmus programs.

The author of the present paper had not found an academic work, dealing with a foreign students' perception on Turkish culture and Turkish people, with which the results of this paper could be compared. The literature on the subject is formed by works that deal with culture transmission, intercultural communication, the place of cultural elements in study books, and the relation between language and culture ((Doğru, 1996; Işık, 1996; Asutay, 2003; Gökmen, 2005; Er, 2006; Pehlivan, 2007; Uyar, 2007; Ülker, 2007; Bölükbaş and Keskin, 2010; Demir and Açık, 2011; Saraç, 2012; Alpar, 2013; Okur, 2013; Okur and Keskin, 2013; Özdemir, 2013). A common finding of the mentioned works is that culture has a very important place in a foreign language teaching. This is indirectly connected with the finding of the present paper.

The findings of the paper can offer following recommendations:

- It is possible to conduct more research to make a more comprehensive overview on the opinion the students have on Turkish culture and Turkish people,
- It is possible to make a research with more participants to give more examples on how Turkish culture and Turkish people are described in Turkey and abroad,
- It is possible to make a research on the reasons of a negative evaluation and to give some recommendations on how this opinion can be changed,
- It is possible to make a comprehensive project that would include such activities as writing of textbooks, educating teachers, and preparing and use of teaching programs – all of what with a particular attention to the subject of establishing of positive perception of Turkish culture and Turkish people within the process of teaching Turkish to foreigners.

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