# An Investigation of the Difficulties Faced by Syrian Asylum Seekers and Syrian Refugees in Acquiring a Second Language and the Possible Solutions from Refugees' Perspective

دراسة حول الصعوبات التي يواجهها طالبو اللجوء السوريون في اكتساب لغة دولة اللجوء

والحلول الممكنة لهذه الصعوبات من وجهة نظر اللاجئي

**by**

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**An Investigation of the Difficulties Faced by Syrian Asylum Seekers and Syrian Refugees in Acquiring a Second Language and the Possible Solutions from Refugees' Perspective**

## Abstract

The current dissertation sheds light on the difficulties that Syrian refugees and asylum seekers face in acquiring the languages of the countries they had to flee to. To do so, this qualitative research investigated the experience of 45 Syrian refugees and asylum seekers who were hosted by 9 different countries around the world (Germany, Turkey, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, France, Malay, Austria, Romania); it concentrated on the difficulties that these refugees encountered in acquiring the languages of the hosting countries. It also sought to know the possible remedies and solutions for these difficulties from the participants' point of view. Moreover, this research was executed on the Facebook messenger application through interviews and a survey with open-ended questions. The uniqueness of this research lies in the fact that it is studying the experience of refugees of one nationality, that are trying to acquire different languages not only one as it is the norm in the research. Finally, regarding the difficulties faced by asylum seekers and refugees in acquiring a second language, this research found that the main difficulty is caused by the language itself, along with the social, financial, temporal and psychological difficulties faced by the participants. As for the proposed solutions for these difficulties, the participants classified them into two categories: some of them were recommended to be made by the refugees themselves like practicing the acquired language and interacting with the native speakers in all the possible means;

while the other solutions were recommended to be done by the governments of the hosting countries to encourage their nations to integrate more with the refugees to help them acquire the target languages.

نبذة مختصرة:

تلقي الدراسة الحالية الضوء على جانب من الأزمة السورية و خصوصاً الصعوبات التي يواجهها اللاجئون وطالبو اللجوء السوريون في اكتساب لغات الدول المضيفة التي فروا إليها. إضافة إلى ذلك فإن هذا البحث النوعي يسعى لدراسة تجربة 45 لاجئ وطالب لجوء سوري ممن استضيفوا من قبل 9 دول مختلفة حول العالم ألا وهي ألمانيا وتركيا والسويد و الدنمارك والنرويج وفرنسا و النمسا وماليزيا و أخيرا رومانيا.كما و يركز هذا البحث على دراسة الصعوبات التي واجهها هؤلاء اللاجئون في اكتساب لغات الدول المضيفة بالإضافة إلى الحلول الممكنة و المقترحة من وجهة نظر هؤلاء اللاجئين. وقد أجري هذا البحث باستخدام أحد وسائل التواصل الإجتماعي ألا وهو تطبيق الـ فيس بوك ماسنجر, حيث تم ذلك من خلال إجراء مقابلات فردية واستبيان ذو أسئلة مفتوحة لجمع البيانات. و إن ما يميز هذا البحث عن غيره هو دراسته لتجربة لاجئين من نفس الجنسية في محاولة اكتسابهم عدة لغات على عكس ما هو شائع في الأبحاث المماثلة في هذا المجال حيث تدرس تجربة عدة جنسيات في إكتساب نفس اللغة. ونهايةً فقد وجد هذا البحث أن العقبة الأساسية في اكتساب لغة الدولة المضيفة تتمثل باللغة نفسها بالإضافة إلى مجموعة من الصعوبات الاجتماعية والمادية والنفسية. أما بالنسبة للحلول المقترحة من قبل اللاجئين المشاركين في هذا البحث, فقد تم تصنيفها من قبلهم أولاً : إلى حلول فردية تتعلق باللاجئين أنفسهم كممارسة اللغة بكافة الوسائل المتاحة والتواصل المستمر مع الناطقين الأصليين لهذه اللغات. و ثانياً إلى حلول تتعلق بالحكومات التي يجب عليها إيجاد طريقة لدمج مواطنيها مع مجتمعات اللاجئين على أراضيها لكي يسهل عليهم اكتساب اللغات الرسمية في هذه الدول.

## Acknowledgments

**Table of contents**

**Chapter One: Introduction**

**1.1 Overview**

Wars have always resulted in disasters on education, economy, infrastructures, and most importantly on human beings. In addition, they devastate everything and have deleterious consequences on health, public and social order that lead to displacement. During wars, people try to save their lives and the lives of their beloved ones by escaping internally inside their countries or externally to neighboring countries or even by seeking asylum all around the world. According to Ferris and Kirisci (2018, 23),

> [a]t the present time, humanitarian actors are struggling to respond to multiple mega-crises. The number of displaced persons has reached levels not seen since the end of World War II. Worldwide, almost 60 million people have been forced from their homes by conflict, violence, and persecution.

Nowadays, the worst and the most lamentable humanitarian crisis has arisen from the civil war in Syria, which has forced around half of the Syrian population to unwillingly migrate or to be displaced into different regions and countries all over the world. Moreover, this crisis has created the biggest number of refugees and migrants, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Data2.unhcr.org 2018). On the authority of UNHCR, the number of Syrian refugees who have fled their homes since the eruption of the civil war in March 2011 has reached 5,627,781 in March 2018. About 13.5 million of them are in need of humanitarian support within the country. Most of Syrian refugees have sought refuge in neighboring countries or within the country itself. About 4.8 million have escaped to Turkey, Lebanon, Egept, Jordan and

Iraq, and 6.6 million are internally displaced within their country Syria. In the meantime, about one million have requested asylum in Europe. Germany, with more than 300,000 cumulated applications, and Sweden with 100,000, are EU's top receiving countries (Data2.unhcr.org 2018).

Baber Baloch, the spokesman of the UNHCR (2017), said "It's not about the number, it's about the people,". He also noted that the humanitarian situation is getting worse since this crisis has already lasted for longer time than World War II, Baloch added that the main concern of UNHCR is to find ways of considerateness and unity among all countries to help the sorrowful humanitarian situation of the Syrian refugees; "We're trying to look for understanding, solidarity and humanity." and that "Our hope is the focus will come back on the suffering of these desperate people and refugees and there will be solidarity and responsibility sharing by all countries." Although the consequences of this humanitarian crisis have spread on all life aspects of Syrians inside and outside their country, the case study of this research focuses mainly on the educational side of this crisis and on the difficulties that are encountered by Syrian asylum seekers in their way of looking for stability and safety in the countries of asylum.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

As a result of this nonstop surge of the Syrian refugees and asylum seekers around the world, acquiring the hosting countries' languages has become an urgent need for these refugees in order to integrate and merge into the new communities receiving them. The aforementioned statistics showed that a huge number of the Syrian refugees sought

asylum in countries of different languages like Turkey, Germany, and Sweden and other non-Arabic speaking countries.

Consequently, the phenomenon of acquiring a second language has turned to be a serious hardship that faces the Syrian refugees in their way of coping with the totally new societies in Europe and in the other countries accepting them, which is added to the pre migratory hardships they have faced before arriving there. So, the readiness of the refugees and their well-being are the most important factors that help them to accept the new culture and learn the new languages of these countries. According to Little (2003, p.11), acquiring a new language by refugees should not be provided for them until they "are emotionally and psychologically ready to do so". Similarly, Goodkind (2006) suggested that the previous harsh experiences of the refugee should be taken into consideration along with the sudden challenges he encounters daily in the new environment of refuge.

Due to the importance of acquiring the language of the host country, Dohrenwend (1961) proposed a useful theoretical work on social-psychological stress of refugees that gave a full understanding of the implications of refugees' experience in acquiring a second language. In this work, Dohrenwend presented a model of stress based on a forced relation that is affected by internal and external factors. The internal ones encompass the internalized subjective aspirations that impact refugees' life goals, while the external factors are made up of the objective conditions of refugees' life situation by comparing their new and old life conditions.

Therefore, the complexity of the various factors that form the trauma of acquiring a second language in the Syrian case of refuge, in addition to the increasing number of the affected audience of this crisis, and more importantly the necessity of studying this dilemma closely are all factors that have encouraged me as a Syrian refugee to do this research study.

## 1.3 Background of the Research

This paper aims to study the difficulties and obstacles that are encountered, particularly by the Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in acquiring the languages of the countries they managed to seek asylum in. Explicitly, this research focuses on the cases of those refugees who have experienced acquiring another language rather than the English language or the languages they used to know before the civil war in order to investigate the problems and difficulties they went through in their way of resettlement in such new environments.

Since acquiring a second language is very essential for refugees and asylum seekers to acculturating to their countries of asylum (Delgado-Gai; Elmeroth 2011; Keyes & Kane 2004), and as a result of the ascending number of Syrian refugees and their need to improve their situation in the countries of asylum taking them, I myself, as a Syrian refugee, conducted this research by interviewing 30 Syrian refugees and asylum seekers of my relatives, friends and previous colleagues in different countries around the world. All the participants are Syrian refugees who sought asylum in countries with languages they did not know about before refuge as Turkish, German, Norwegian,

Malay and Swedish. Moreover, due to the far distance existing between the interviewer and the interviewees, the interviews were done through social media applications like Facebook and Facebook Messenger. Some of the interviews were live, others were carried out by implementing a survey link while the rest was held through the messenger application.

## 1.4 The Research Questions

This research was conducted in order to investigate the difficulties that face Syrian asylum seekers in their rough way of harmonizing themselves within the new societies they were displaced into, especially those societies that have other official languages rather than Arabic and English. The case study of this research tries to answer the following questions:

**1- What are the main difficulties that face asylum seekers in acquiring a second language in the countries that they sought asylum to?**

**2- What are the possible remedies for these difficulties from the asylum seekers' perspective?**

## 1.5 Significance of the Research

Refugees and asylum seekers have always been under the scope by researchers. A corpus of literature aimed to investigate this phenomenon and its implications like Kleinmann (1984), Delgado-Gai; Elmeroth (2011), Keyes and Kane (2004) and so many

others. But very few researches and studies have been conducted regarding the Syrian crisis since it is a unique and a very recent case as Ferris and Kirisci (2018). In addition, there are plenty of reports about the Syrian crisis by UNHCR, UNICEF and most of the Humanitarian organizations around the world in which the Syrian crisis was tackled only by focusing on the humanitarian side of this dilemma to find statics about the death and displacement toll and about the violations of human rights. While none of them studied the educational side of the Syrian crisis in depth.

Moreover, most of the researches in the literature that were conducted apropos of acquiring a second language and seeking asylum were about acquiring a specific language by specific nationalities or population and vice versa like Popescu (2008) which examined the case of multi-nationalities refugees in acquiring the Norwegian language. Similarly, Van Tubergen (2010) studied the experience of refugees of different nationalities in Netherland while acquiring the Dutch language. Furthermore, the relation of English language and seeking asylum by different nationalities of refugees was also the main interest of copious researches as Tully (2008), Borrell (2010), Gordon (2011) and Rose (2014). Yet, none of the studies done in this field encountered a problematic case like the Syrian one, where one population has to be displaced all around the world without exaggeration. Syrians were obliged to seek asylum in any possible country by any possible mean, regardless the considerations of language or closeness to their country that has created a huge gap in their trial to cope with the totally new societies mainly in acquiring a new language.

Finally, in Syria, before the current civil war, Syrian people, primarily used to study English as a second language, but unfortunately most of them were obliged to seek asylum in non-English speaking countries like Turkey, Germany, Sweden, Norway and Malaysia. So this research is significant, firstly, because it is different from the other studies conducted in this field, as most of them examined the case of one population or more whilst acquiring one new language, whereas the study of this research has shed light on the experience of one population in acquiring different languages. Secondly, the significance of this research emerges from the fact that it is the first research to examine the difficulties faced by Syrian asylum seekers in acquiring the language of the hosting countries they were welcomed in, and to investigate the possible remedies and solutions that can reduce the suffering of refugees in this regard from their point of view. So, the increasing number of Syrian refugees, who form the non-stop audience of this research, and the lack of researches investigating this new and current phenomenon and its educational side in particular, all these factors have generated this research to be done.

## 1.6 Structure of the Dissertation

This paper is divided into five chapters. The first one includes the introduction which is a review of the research topic about the Syrian civil war and some of its ramifications. It also sheds light on the significance of this research, its background and organization, and its questions. The second chapter provides an adequate amount of the literature that tackled the issue of asylum seeking and acquiring a second language and to put it in its theoretical framework. The third chapter explains the methodology followed by the researcher to have this study done, in addition to details about the samples, the

instruments, data collection and the research design. The fourth chapter elucidates the findings and of this study followed by a discussion to analyze them. The fifth draws conclusions from this study and presents recommendations and limitations for it.

**Chapter two: Literature Review**

**2.1 Introduction**

This chapter will provide an overview of the three threads of this research which are: refugees and asylum seekers, the Syrian crisis and finally, acquiring a second language. It helps us form a comprehensive idea about the emergence of the phenomenon of refuge and asylum seeking, and it tries to put in its historical and chronological frame. It also manifests the Syrian crisis and its consequences as being the worst humanitarian crisis of our time. Then, it sheds light on second language acquisition in general and the case of acquiring a second language by asylum seekers in particular.

**2.2 The History of Asylum-Seeking and Refugees**

To have a comprehensive idea about refuge and asylum seeking, which form the main topic of this study, a historical review of the emergence of refugees will be provided through this section.

Feller (2001) gave a general review about the history of refugees, in which he stated that "Refugees have existed as long as history." According to him the feeling of responsibility toward refugees and their protection came later "but an awareness of the responsibility of the international community to provide protection and find solutions for refugees dates only from the time of the League of Nations and the election of Dr. Fridtjof Nansen as the first High Commissioner for Russian refugees in 1921."

On the other hand, a more detailed review about refugees is given by Jaeger (2001) "the history of protection of refugees dates back at least a few centuries, not to mention refugee situations in Antiquity." He added that "the history of international protection starts with the League of Nations." In addition, he provided new information about the founder of refugee protection system saying "No one would be surprised to learn that the International Committee of the Red Cross was the initiator of the international protection system set up by the League of Nations."

Jager (2001) added that this phenomenon was caused by the sorrowful number of wars in humanity marked by the Ottoman Empire (1299-1923) and its aftermath, World War I (1914-1918), its preliminaries (the Balkan Wars, 1912-1913) and its consequences in the Near East (the wars in the Caucasus, 1918-1921, and the Greco-Turkish War, 1919-1922). Jager, G ended his review on the history of refugees saying, "Thus, since 1 January 1951, the international protection of refugees has been in the hands of the High Commissioner of the United Nations on the basis of its Statute." Thereby, the emergence of the High Commissioner of the United Nations 14 December 1950 and its statue of convention 1951 brought the conception of refugees into the light and made it officially accepted worldwide.

Furthermore, UNHCR interpreted the concepts of refugees and asylum seekers through the definitions provided in its 1951 convention as "a person is a refugee as soon as he or she fulfills the criteria contained in the definition of the 1951 Convention. A person may also deserve international protection if he or she qualifies for "subsidiary

protection." (UNHCR 2009). Another and a wider definition of a refugee was provided by the UNHCR (2007, p.16), in which a refugee is considered as someone who:

"(has) a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his(her) nationality" he is also defined as not being able or "not , owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him(her)self of the protection of that country; or, who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his (her) former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it".

On the other hand, UNHCR (1951) defined an asylum-seeker as someone who claims to be a refugee, yet his/her claim has not been proved to be true by the country he/she flees to. Eventually not every asylum seeker is recognized as a refugee, while most refugees are considered initially as asylum-seekers.

According to the UNHCR, a refugee initially should seek asylum in the nearest neighboring countries that take refuge in. If not, an immigration official could return him/her to any country that the claimant passes while fleeing from his country of origin. This happens if the government of this country of asylum has signed the convention of refugees (Harrell-Bond 1995).

## 2.3 The Syrian Crisis

"Syria is the biggest humanitarian and refugee crisis of our time" Filippo Grandi (Unhcr.org, Refugees 2018). Half the country's population, around 13 million Syrians has been displaced to form the most unsettling crisis of our time, according to Ferris and Kirisci (2018). The Syrian crisis started in March 2011 in the southern city of Daraa when civilian protesters went to the street to protest over the incident of the children who wrote

some anti-government graffiti on walls in public places inspired by the "Arab Spring", and then were caught by the Syrian security forces. Although, those protesters did not call for the overthrown or dethrone of Al Assad, the president of the country, they were dealt with brutally by the security forces, as some were killed and others were arrested.

This impelled the other cities to protest peacefully asking for democracy and fairness to end with 500 killed persons and thousands of residents who fled to Turkey by June 2011. Consequently, protests and oppositions spread all over Syria to be suppressed by the deadly forces of the government that spared no mean of killing and quelling the rebellions as shooting, shelling, barrel bombs, and air strikes according to (BBC News 2018) and (Ferris and Kirisci 2018). Dramatically, violence increased; the whole country fell into a grievous civil war and the calls for the overthrown of the regime erupted countrywide.

Afterwards, the conflict in Syria converted from a revolution against an autocratic regime into sectarian civil war, in which the opposition took up arms and was fragmented into Islamic and radical groups who are fighting the regime as well as fighting each other, as documented by BBC News (2018) and Ferris and Kirisci (2018). Subsequently, Syrians had to flee from the regime brutality, cruelty and ruthlessness either internally by moving to the safe cities and areas in the country, or by seeking asylum externally. "At least 6.1 million Syrians are internally displaced, while another 5.6 million have fled abroad."(BBC News, 2018), that is clearly displayed in Figure 1.

**More than half of Syrians have been displaced since 2011**

**53%** of Syrians have been uprooted from their homes

**5.6m**
refugees

**6.1m**
internally displaced

**22m**
pre-war population
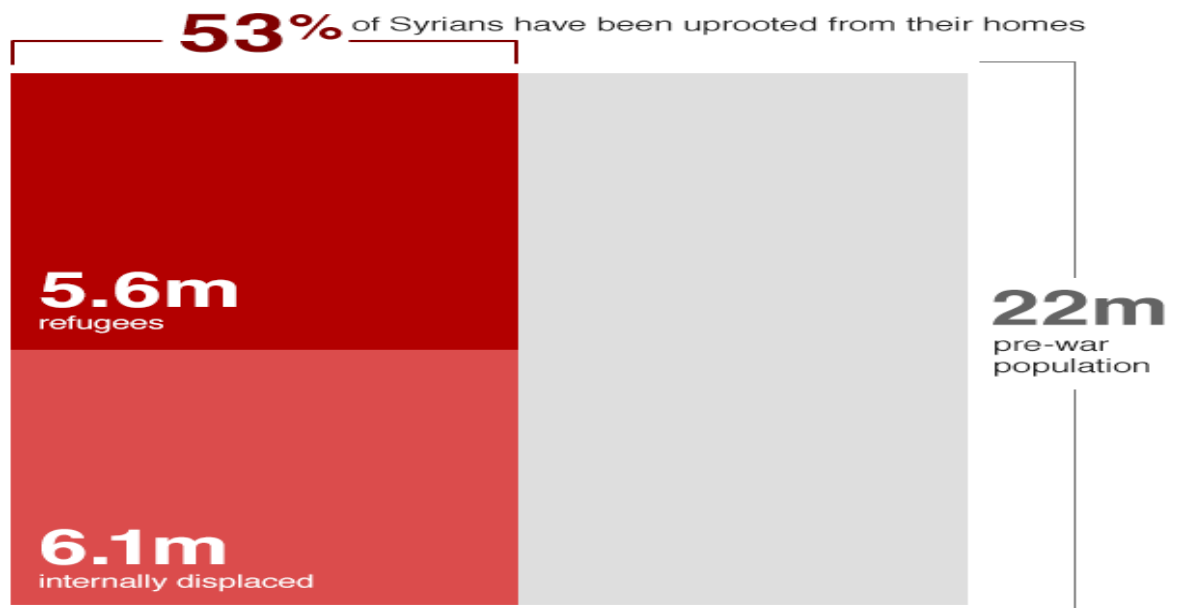
Source: UNHCR

BBC

**Figure 1: The Number of Syrian Refugees and The Internally Displaced ones in 2018**

First of all, they sought asylum in the neighboring countries, mostly in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan. Thereafter, and due to the rapid increase of both violence and refugees, neighboring countries were overloaded and could not afford receiving more refugees in their countries, as they claimed, so Syrians Looked forward to having safety in other countries of asylum around the world like Germany, which has received the biggest number of refugees until now, Sweden, Hungary and others as it is shown in Figure 2 (BBC News 2018).

**Where are Syrians going?**

Sweden 115,125
Netherlands 35,247
Denmark 20,898
Belgium 21,285
Germany 525,262
France 20,348
Austria 51,231
Hungary 77,256
Bulgaria 20,593
Greece 26,048
Turkey 3,540,648
SYRIA
Iraq 247,379
Lebanon 995,512
North Africa 30,104
Egypt 127,414
Jordan 657,628

Top 10 European countries for asylum applications
Syrian refugees registered in neighbouring countries*

*Latest figures up to February 2018
Source: UNHCR
BBC

**Figure 2: The Countries that Hosted the Syrian Refugees**

Finally, the Syrian crisis with all its savage implications on human, culture and infrastructure has formed the most humanitarian and miserable crisis ever, with more than 400, 000 savagely killed or missed persons (The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights 2018), half of the population , who have been displaced internally and externally, in addition to all kinds of human rights violations as torturing, raping, killing, unconditioned arresting, sieging and starvation (BBC News 2018) and (Ferris & Kirisci, 2018).

## 2.4 Second Language Acquisition

### 2.4.1 Theoretical Framework

According to the high importance of second language acquisition in the field of education, a great deal of the literature has investigated this issue, since it is described by many researchers as being multifaceted and manifold (Ellis 2005). Moreover, second language acquisition has first been studied in the early seventies; loads of researches and studies were done in this regard, but none of theories, or the approaches nor the psychologies resulted from those studies could find out the nature of input that can help or at least leads to L2 mastery, White (1989).

Krashen is an educational researcher whose theories are considered to be the backbone of the field of second language acquisition "Language acquisition does not require extensive use of conscious grammatical rules, and does not require tedious drill." (Krashen 1987). Krashen, in his book Principles and Practice in Second language Acquisition- which was initially published in 1982 and then had some minor changes to it in 1983 and 1987, supposed that second language acquisition is "first or second, occurs when comprehension of real messages occurs, and when the acquirer is not 'on the defensive'". That is, second language acquisition is based on comprehension and the state of mind of the acquirer in which he/she does not feel anxious about the challenge of acquiring a language and starts to produce language when he/she feels ready to.

Moreover, Krashen's theory (1982) about second language acquisition is made up of five hypotheses; of which the most indispensable and most well-known one is the

Acquisition and Learning hypothesis. In this hypothesis, he suggested that two systems are required for the process of second language acquisition: the acquired and the learned systems. The acquired one is unconscious that is exactly similar to what children experience while acquiring the first language. It mainly depends on approaching a comprehensible input that helps the acquired system to be constructed. In this system, the acquirer needs subconscious meaningful interaction and natural communication. On the other hand, the learning system presents the conscious process of second language acquisition, in which the acquirer should be aware of the rules and grammar of the language he/she is trying to acquire "conscious knowledge of a second language, knowing the rules, being aware of them, and being able to talk about them."

The Input Hypothesis of Krashen (1982) supposes that "We acquire, in other words, only when we understand language that contains structure that is 'a little beyond' where we are now." That is, an acquirer should focus on effective and understandable communication rather than seeking teacher's help to teach us grammar and structure because the ability of producing a second language emerges by itself and is never taught. "Production ability emerges. It is not taught directly." According to this hypothesis, a language acquirer should be given a "silent period" in which he/she builds up acquired competence before they start producing it.

By reviewing the five hypotheses of Krashen (1982), we find that acquisition is more important and fundamental in the process of second language acquisition. In addition, the more comprehensible input an acquirer receives in low-stress conditions, the more of language competence he/she has. This comprehensible input should be slowly and

carefully articulated, and language acquirers should not be corrected at this stage to avoid stressing them and putting them 'on the defensive', and this kind of input is called the optimal input. Finally, a good review of Krashen's book Principles and Practice in Second language Acquisition is found in Reid (2000).

Similarly, the Interaction Hypothesis of Long (1996) stated that the comprehensible input is of a great significance for language acquisition. According to this hypothesis, language proficiency is only developed by face to face interaction and productive communication. The productive communication here means that an acquirer learns from the misunderstanding occurring during conversations and gets a good feedback through this comprehensible input about the grammar of the target language and eventually improves this language structure.

On the other hand, Ellis (2006) supposed that teaching grammar instructions is somehow important in the process of acquiring a second language. He added that teaching some rules of the targeted language is beneficial in order to gain language competence, especially in the case of adult acquirers who, as he assumed, have a better memory capacity than children and can easily concentrate on the application of grammar rules and instructions (Ellis 1985). Likewise, White (1989) assumed that incomprehensible input can also lead to language acquisition, as he suggested that the teaching order is not necessarily based on the natural order of acquiring a language.

Finally, one of the most recent books about second language learning is the one written by Cook (2016). Cook started this book saying that "Language is at the centre of human

life. We use it to express our love or our hates, to achieve our goals and further our careers". As for him, "Knowing a second language is a normal part of human existence; it may be unusual to know only one." (Cook 2016, p.209). Cook (2016) supposed that knowing a second language is crucial for human existence since it plays a great role in all life aspects, it affects people's careers, future and the very identity of each one of us.

Cook also added that people have been interested in investigating second language acquisition since at least the Ancient Greeks, but the application of this knowledge came to light around 1970. According to Cook (2016) second language learning is the acquisition of conscious knowledge, while L1 learning is the acquisition of unconscious knowledge. Additionally, cook supposed that acquiring a second language is a tough feat for some people, but for others is normal and unexceptional.

He also assumed that people who speak more than one language are more flexible and creative at problem solving than monolinguals, and that according to research "L2 users have advantages over monolinguals in several cognitive areas; they think differently and perceive the world differently." (Cook 216, p.8). As for him, L1 and L2 should be separated in the learners' minds due to the fact that when children acquire their first language the second language does not exist. Additionally, Cook supposed that grammar can be practiced and incorporated through communicative exercises, but it should not be explained explicitly for students.

In his book Second Language Learning and Language Teaching (2016), Cook supposed that even if a country has several official languages, this does not mean that all individuals speak more than one language; and that they may live in totally different communities. He also added that "Regardless of whether they have more than one official language, most countries contain large numbers of people who use other languages." On the report of the Eurydice network (2012) " in Europe, '8% of pupils aged 15 say that at home they speak a language other than the language of instruction." This was proved to be true by the participants of this research as we will see in Chapter 4. These participants said that most of the citizens in the countries hosting them, speak a different language from the taught one in classes.

## 2.4.2 Second Language Acquisition and Refugees

As mentioned before, a massive corpus of literature over the last century until our present time has investigated the field of second language acquisition, and so many researches, studies, theories and hypotheses were generated in order to reveal the ambiguity of second language acquisition like Krashen (1992), Chomsky (1965), Vygotsky (1987), Ellis (1985), White (1989), Block (2003), Ellis (2006), and so many others. These studies and others tried to discover the factors that affect second language acquisition or play a role in its process as age, gender, teaching grammar explicitly or implicitly, the teacher's role, motivation, classroom environment, student learnability, and society.

Furthermore, after the emergence of the refugees' phenomenon, its rapid increase, and its authentic relation to second language acquisition, a good deal of studies attempted to examine it and to shed light on refugees' experience in this regard. Some of these studies are: Hou and Beiser (2006) whose study about English language acquisition by Southeast Asian refugees in Canada took ten years, Allen, Vaage and Hauff (2006), who tried to find out the relation between acculturation and second language acquisition, Goodkind (2006) who investigated the psychological and humanitarian side of refugees by focusing on their well-being, and finally those who concentrated on the trauma of refugee as Block (2003) and Horsman (2000).

As for Hou and Beiser (2006), the most important step in language acquisition is to understand the factors that lead to second language acquisition and end with a successful integration within the new society. In this regard, refugees are considered to be social beings, while the researchers are the ones who are concerned with the refugees' relationships to the social background in which language acquisition takes place (Block 2003, Mitchell & Myles 2004). And the factors are the ones related to social isolation, changing in culture and family roles, barriers to refugee's mental and psychological health and the ethnic view of the refugee to the new society, as all of this interact with language acquisition process (Elmeroth 2011).

According to a study conducted by Steel et al. (2006) on adult Vietnamese refugees who live in Australia, it was found that the amount of trauma refugees experienced before refuge has a considerable connection to their integration and daily function. In addition, the symptoms of trauma differ widely from refugee to another and the posttraumatic

stress disorders (PTSD) are much more severe. That is why Goodkind (2006) asserted the importance of refugees' well-being and he suggested that it should be comprehended holistically and that all the bad experiences and hardships faced by refugees should be taken into consideration along with the challenges they encounter in their daily life.

Moreover, most of the studies done about the relation between refugees and second language acquisition have mainly investigated the factors that affect this relation, but not much of these studies has considered the ways of mastering second languages or even the correlation between second language proficiency and the well-being of refugees (Hou & Beiser 2006). Likewise, Fennelly and Palasz (2003) noticed that the main concentration of most studies that investigated the determinants of refugees' language acquisition was about their social integration, work and well-being, while little was investigated about their language skills and proficiency. Although the experience of acquiring a second language is considered to be a hardship and an obstacle in the attempt of refugees to integrate in the new societies, refugees' language proficiency is not needed since most of second language learners do not master it as native speakers do, "the majority of naturalistic second language acquirers never attain native speaker proficiency" Little (2003).

Consequently, Stewart (2011) supposed that it would be impracticable for refugees to overcome all these challenges unless they get the appropriate and opportune support needed. That is, whenever refugees attend SL classrooms, they are exposed to many stressors added to their posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) of which they may be at

different stages of recovery, and that language instructors should take this into consideration and should not expect from refugees to be completely healed of their trauma and its harsh memories. Therefore, the timely assistance is required from the whole surrounding and effective players in this regard (Horsman, 2000).

Additionally, a study done by Rose (2014) is somehow similar to the study of this research in the way it examined second language acquisition among a group of refugees of the same nationality, but who are studying the same language. In this study, the researcher investigated the acquisition of the English language by Program Chechen refugees who had come to Ireland ten years before the piloting of this study in 2014. The researcher looked at the way these refugees have acquired English from the beginning of their English course outside the classroom and inside their social surroundings. This research was done in Roscommon town, and it found that Chechen refugees did not benefit from the English course and that they were not able to participate in it. As for them, acquiring English took place mostly outside the classroom where they could integrate more within the new society. Consequently, and as a result of the benefit they got from the outside interaction, they became independent, they spoke English fluently and they were improving their language by communicating with the local society. Most importantly, they planned to stay in this new society. Finally, the findings of this research led the researcher to recommend that the initial language course for refugees should be started or provided at a convenient time for them after they settle down and are completely ready for that.

A very recent study of Karipek (2017) about Syrian refugees' experience in acquiring the Turkish language examined particular factors that affect Syrian refugees' acculturation process at a Turkish university. This study is an attempt to analyze Berry (1997)'s acculturation theory by examining the effect of cultural, ethnic, and linguistic differences and similarities on  integration among Syrian refugee students at a university level by interviewing fifteen refugees individually. Besides, this study aimed to investigate how Syrian refugee students cope and integrate at university, how they improve and acquire linguistic skills, how they managed to employ their educational objectives in correlation to their future goals, and how they got adapted with the ethnic and cultural differences in the Turkish society.  The findings of this study found that, the main obstacle that Syrian refugees faced on their way toward acculturation was the language barrier, yet the short cultural distance between Syria and Turkey contributed highly in acculturation and Turkish language acquisition. Eventually, Syrian refugee students described their refuge experience in Turkey as being temporary, and they have intended to go back to their home country as soon as they can.

**Chapter Three: Methodology**

**3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter the main focus will be on the case study of this research, the methodology used to have this research done, the samples, data collection and the ethical issues related to this research.

**3.2 The Present Study**

The case study of this research investigates a very recent and current issue of our present time. It is a tiny attempt of the researcher as a Syrian refugee in an Arab country, to shed light on the lamentable crisis of the Syrian refugees around the world. It aims to examine the difficulties that Syrian refugees and Syrian asylum seekers encountered in acquiring the languages of the countries they were welcomed in. In addition, the participants in this case study were asked to suggest some possible remedies and solutions for these difficulties out of their experience in acquiring a second language. Moreover, 45 participants were interviewed by the use of social media, mainly Facebook, since it is one of the most popular social networking sites, and one of the most visited ones on the web as Alexa (2015) suggested.

The research was piloted on Facebook as a post asking the participants to take part in a survey with open-ended questions prepared by the researcher and then the next step was to interview each one of them individually on Facebook messenger in order to explain the aim of the research clearly and to avoid any ambiguity that may occur by answering the open ended questions of the survey. Additionally, the interaction between

the research techniques and the variety of them is a merit of qualitative research and is called triangulation, as Cohen and Manion (2002) suggested that it enhances the research and enriches it as it is an "attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behavior by studying it from more than one standpoint."

Moreover, the 45 participants are displaced in Turkey, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Austria, France, Malaysia and Romania. Table 1 demonstrates the exact number of the participants in each of these countries. When the researcher first conducted this study, the number of the supposed participants was bigger than the current one, because some of the participants appeared to be refugees in countries that are Arabic or English speaking countries like America, Egypt and Sudan. Another reason why some of the participants were excluded is due to not being refugees, but they were either immigrants or on business visas.

**Table 1: The number of the Syrian participants in this research in each Asylum country**

| Country | Germany | Turkey | Sweden | Norway | Denmark | Austria | France | Malaysia | Romania |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of Refugees | 17 | 10 | 7 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

Finally, regarding the personal information of each of the current participants, Table 2 gives details about age, gender and marital status as participants were asked about in one of the survey questions. These details were questioned due to the norm of asking such questions in surveys, although the findings of this research were not linked to any of this information like studying refugees' experience in acquiring a second language according to their age or gender. It should be mentioned that the numbers provided in Table 2 do not reflect the exact state of participants, as some of them skipped this question and did not answer it. According to Table 2, we found out that the average age of the participants is between 23 to 43, the male participants were quite more than the female ones as a result of the obligatory military service they fled from, and the last thing to be mentioned is that single participants were more than the married ones. See Table 2:

**Table 2: Participants' Personal Information**

| Category | Age | Gender | Marital status |
|---|---|---|---|
| number of participants | 23-43 | Female: 8<br><br>Male: 31 | Married: 13<br><br>Single: 21 |

## 3.3 Approach

This research is a qualitative one and is a case study, since it seeks to investigate the phenomenon of Syrian refugees and Syrian asylum seekers. It specifically aims to examine the issue of acquiring a second language by Syrian refugees and to explore the difficulties they face in this regard. According to Creswell (2002), case studies aim to obtain an in-depth understanding of a specific case or a phenomenon from which the researcher tries to collect all the possible data that helps to establish this understanding.

Moreover, since the purpose of this research study is to find out individuals' perspective about a particular issue, which is in this case the perspective of Syrian refugees and asylum seekers about their experience in acquiring the languages of the countries they were displaced in, the most convenient tool to be used for collecting such data is by conducting interviews. Blumberg *et al.* (2008, p.378) stated that "Interviews are the most widely used resource for collecting information for evidence". Eventually, interviews lead to obtain useful information, when direct observations of the studied case are difficult to happen, and they allow the participants to share detailed personal information (Creswell 2012).

Furthermore, as Creswell (2002) stated, qualitative interviews provide accurate, effective data and an understandable context especially the semi-structured ones. According to Gill et al. (2008), there are three types of interviews that are conducted in a qualitative approach: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Unlike structured and unstructured interviews, during which the interviewer plays a neutral role and do not try

to derive or ask for any extended questions; in semi-structured ones "the interviewer follows the guide, but is able to stray from the guide when he or she feels this is appropriate" (Creswell 2002). Therefore, semi-structured interviews were used to conduct this research study as they are more precise and efficacious than the other two types.

Additionally, Creswell (2002) supposed that semi-structured interviews are flexible in the way they allow both the interviewer and the interviewee to make some amendments on the questions like deleting, editing or even rewarding them whenever they find out that they are inappropriate or unsuitable. All these amendments occur during the interview, as none of them impact the aim of the questions and the conducted interview. This helped the participants in this research study to express their opinion freely and to skip the political questions that they felt may cause a future threat for them. Although the interviewee has the ability to change and edit some questions, all the interviewees are initially asked the same basic questions, as Shank (2006, p.50) suggested "some latitude in how questions are asked, and in what order, but it is still the case that all interviewees are asked the same basic questions".

In qualitative research, open-ended questions are asked, so that the participants have the freedom to talk about their experiences freely with no constraints or limitations. Open-ended questions give the participants more time to think of answers and more options for responding. As for the interviewer, open-ended questions enable him/her to collect more data by asking more extended questions, commenting on some points, asking for clarification and to ascertain understanding, dissimilar to close-ended

questions which are full of restrictions that lead to less data collection with old findings (Creswell 2002). On the other hand, McMurry and Pace (2004, p. 101) described open-questions saying that they "have no prior expectations in terms of what the answer should be and allow you to fully explore the field". That is, open-ended questions allow the researcher to discover and see the studied case from different angles and different aspects of which more extended questions can be raised and discussed.

## 3.4 Social Media Research

Since the participants of this study are geographically disseminated, this research study was conducted via Facebook which is one of the most popular sites on the web (Alexa 2015). According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) social media is '' ... a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0' they also added that social media application "allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content'' (p. 61).

According to Duggan et al. (2013, 2015), the emergence of social media technologies has been compromised by the growing number of users who post text messages, photos, and videos online. In addition, Snelson (2016) in her review about qualitative and mixed methods researches which use social media indicated that, the reports about social media users and worldwide social networking activity showed a number of 1.96 billion users in 2015 and predicted an increase in this number by 2018 to reach 2.44 billion users.

Consequently, the emergence of social media research, which is comparatively new to the field of research, came as a result of the development of social media technologies and the rapid increase of their use (Duggan et al. 2015). Additionally, a great deal of studies were generated and piloted via the use of social media sites and applications; the review of Snelson (2016) proved that through the 229 qualitative studies chosen by the research to be examined and analyzed. One of these studies, Vyas et al. (2012), is similar to the study of this research in a way that it gathered between a survey and a follow-up interview, as both of them were generated on Facebook. This study aimed to investigate the potential role of using short message services and social media application among Latino youth in the field of public health programs. Likewise, the study of Morgan, Snelson, and Elison-Bowers (2010) followed the same methodology in collecting data.

In conclusion, after reviewing a collection of 229 qualitative studies, Snelson (2016) concluded her review saying that social media research appears to be as an independent field of study "in its own right". She also added that "social media research is becoming increasingly commonplace", and the studies conducted based on social media research emphasize that "Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, social media, and social networking have entered the mainstream of academic literature."

## 3.5 Research Procedure

To have this research done, the researcher used an electronic survey generator called SurveyMonkey to facilitate the process of creating professional surveys, sending them to

a big number of participants and getting reliable answers in a rapid and free-cost way (SurveyMonkey 2018). This survey-online engine was used only to collect the data and not to analyze it. After designing the survey with open-ended questions needed, the researcher sent it as a post on Facebook to a specific sample of her Facebook friends who meet the requirements of this research. Most of the targeted participants responded to the researcher's appeal in answering her survey. Initially, the targeted participants were 40 who were all thought to be asylum seekers, later the researcher found that 5 of them were immigrants and did not seek asylum.

Afterwards, the researcher redirected the survey link to each of the participants individually in order to make sure they will take a part in it and to have the chance to raise some extended questions and clarifications. Then, the interviews took place at this stage with the researcher asking each participant some general questions about their family study or work to break the ice and invigorate them to do the survey. Creswell (2012) suggested that a researcher should "ask the participants about themselves as your opening question. In this way you break the ice and encourage them to answer your questions." The researcher explained the aim of this survey from the very beginning, and ascertained it again during the interviews since it has a political side that people feel afraid to voice it.

After gaining the permission and acceptance from the participants' side to do the survey, the researcher raised more extended questions about the main topic of this research which is the difficulties in acquiring a second language during asylum seeking. Most of the interviews were in a form of voice recordings not only written chats. Finally, the

researcher asked the participants to forward the link of the survey to any person of those who meet the research needs, but unfortunately they did not and no snowball sampling was used. This was also suggested by Creswell (2012) saying "when you conclude the interview, you might ask them to suggest individuals that you might visit with to gather additional data."

## 3.6 Sampling

The participants of this research are 45 Syrian asylum seekers, who eventually managed to seek asylum in different countries as shown in Table 1. These asylum seekers are mostly relatives, friends and ex-students of the researcher and not virtual ones; this grants the research more credibility since many individuals have several accounts on social media applications and sites with fake names and information.

Moreover, since this research is a qualitative research, purposeful sampling is the kind used here (Creswell 2012). In purposeful qualitative sampling, we have to "select people or sites who can best help us understand our phenomenon to develop a detailed understanding about it" (Creswell 2012); the standard of choosing individuals and sites in this type of sampling, is whether they provide rich information or not. Furthermore, purposeful sampling equips the research with useful information, helps learning more about the phenomenon, and may give voice to silenced people. In this regard, the sampling used in this research is a purposeful one called homogeneous sampling. As for Creswell (2012) "In homogeneous sampling the researcher purposefully samples individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup that has defining

characteristics." Accordingly, the researcher chose the sample of her research on the base of having the same characteristic of being Syrian refugees and asylum seekers who will share their experience in acquiring the languages of the countries they were displaced into. Another common trait among these participants is that all of them sought asylum in countries with different official languages that Arabic and English languages are not among them.

## 3.7 Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2012), analyzing data derived from qualitative research "requires understanding how to make sense of text and images so that you can form answers to your research questions" (p.236). As for him, "Coding is the process of segmenting and labeling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data". Thus, the collected data in this qualitative research went through two phases, data coding and thematic data analysis.

As for data coding applied in  this case study research, the researcher started with analyzing the collected data in order to link the ideas resulted from the conducted interviews and the survey with open-ended questions. The researcher managed to do this through data reduction and through data categorization into patterns. This process of data coding is considered to be the initial step of data analysis by which the researcher attempted to relate the theory to the empirical data. According to Miles and Huberman (1994a; p. 11), coding data is suggested to be the process by which "data

chunks to code and which to pull out, which patterns best summarize a number of chunks, which evolving story to tell."

Furthermore, the second phase used for collecting data in this research is the thematic data analysis. This type of analysis is mainly used in qualitative research studies because as Creswell (2012) stated "themes are similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the database, they form a core element in qualitative data analysis." Besides, this kind of methods used in data analysis concentrates on organizing the data set and describing it, as it is not about counting phrases and words in a given text. Thematic analysis goes beyond this in order to identify implicit and explicit ideas within the collected data. After the process of encoding data into specific codes, decoding process of interpreting these codes comes to compare themes frequencies, to display relations between different themes graphically and to identify themes co-occurrences; as it is thought that thematic analysis is a very beneficial method for capturing detailed ideas of meaning within a data set (Guest et al. 2012).

Finally, the data analysis process of this research study was done manually. That is, the researcher first read the collected data and then marked it by hand and finally divided it into parts and categories. According to Creswell (2012), this kind of analysis is preferred when the researcher "is analyzing a small database (e.g., fewer than 500 pages of transcripts or field notes)", when the researcher "can easily keep track of files and locate text passages" and when he/she "wants to be close to the data and have a hands-on feel for it without the intrusion of a machine… and has time to commit to a hand analysis".

## 3.8 Ethical Issues

Creswell (2012) provided us with the ethical issues that should be followed in any research saying any "Research needs to be honestly reported, shared with participants, not previously published"; he added that a research should not be "plagiarized, not influenced by personal interest, and duly credited to authors that make a contribution". In this research study, all of the aforementioned ethical issues were maintained and followed carefully by the researcher.

Additionally, the researcher started each individual interview by stating the purpose of this research clearly and by assuring the understanding of this purpose for each participant. According to Creswell (2012), this happens through "Using ethical practices by debriefing the participants by informing them of the purpose and reasons for the experiment". Since this research tackled a case study of which a great deal is correlated to political issues, some of the participants showed a sense of fear to participate in it, but as a result of their previous and strong relationship with the researcher, this feeling vanished instantly after clarifying the aim of the study and asserting the confidentiality of this research from the side of the researcher.

The political side of this research is sensitive, as most of the Syrian refugees and asylum seekers sought asylum after experiencing horrifying incidents in Syria that obliged them to find a way out of the increasing violence practiced against them by the regime and its forces. Declaring the reason behind seeking asylum as one of the interview questions required was the most difficult part of the interviews.

As for gaining access for the research to be done, it was easily and confidently accessible by employing Facebook which is the most popular website. Validity, on the other hand, is highly maintained in this case study due to the fact that the Syrian crisis and the phenomenon of Syrian refugees who form the main players in this research are current issues known all over the Globe. According to Mills (2003), the validity of a research is measured by being recent and has "the quality of data that it is set to present." (Mills, 2003:87)

**Chapter Four: Findings and Discussions**

This research study aims to investigate the difficulties that face Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in acquiring the languages of the countries that hosted them. Additionally, it seeks to find out if there are any possible solutions and remedies for these difficulties from the perspective of these refugees. The data collected through the survey with the open-ended questions and the interviews on the Facebook messenger application will be analyzed in the light of the literature review provided in this paper and the research questions which are:

**1- What are the main difficulties that face asylum seekers in acquiring a second language in the country they sought asylum to?**

**2- What are the possible remedies for these difficulties from the asylum seekers' perspective?**

The process in which this research study was conducted went through two phases which are the aforementioned survey and interviews. Although, the survey questions were written in English, the researcher asked the participants to answer them using the Arabic language upon some of the participants' request, in addition to getting the very point of view of the participants who mostly have weak English language skills. On the other hand, the language of the interviews was only Arabic due to its fact being a mutual and strong language among the researcher and the participants.

The survey consists of 10 open-ended questions (see Appendix 1), these questions are designed logically as the last question of this survey is a customary one asking about

age, gender and marital status. The rest of the questions will be discussed one by one thoroughly.

Q 1- **Where/Why did you seek asylum?**

The first part of this question was answered by all the participants, while the second one was not because Syrian refugees are still afraid to discuss such political issues even if they trust the other partner in the conversation. The following chart (Chart 1) gives a clearer idea about the percentage of the countries hosting the participants of this research, where Germany comes first among the hosted countries to prove the validity of both UNHCR (2018) and BBC News (2018) reports about the statistics related to this issue. These reports are mentioned in the literature review of this paper.  On the other hand, Turkey comes in the second place, Sweden comes third, Denmark and Austria host less number, while Malaysia, Romania and France come last with the least number of refugees hosted on their lands.



Chart 1 The Countries Hosting the Participants of This Research
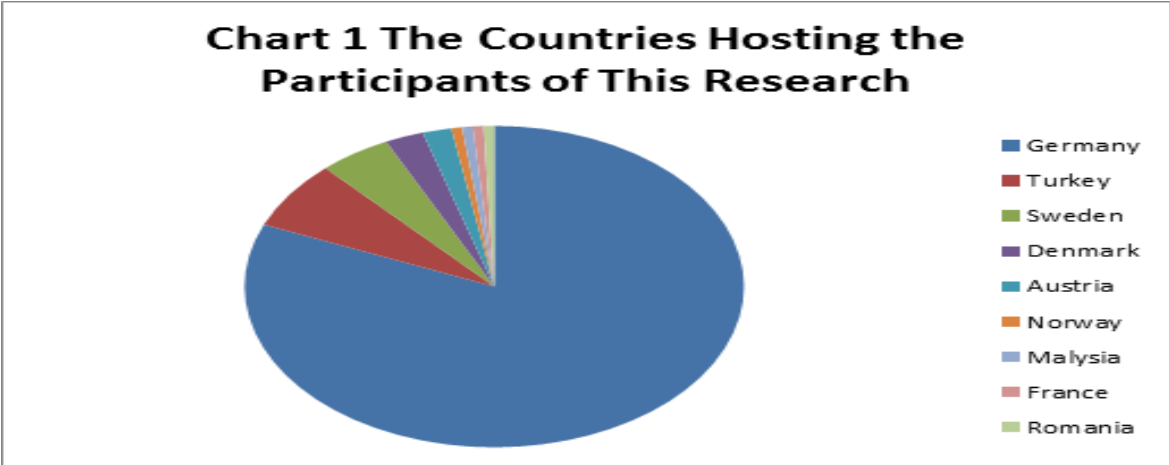
The second part of the first question, about the reason behind refuge, is demonstrated in Table 3. As stated before, not all the participants answered this question, and according to the similarities of the participants' answers, less number of results is shown in this table. Some of the participants answered using the Arabic language, so the researcher translated them and kept the ones in English as they are. The answers that were initially written in English are shown in Table 3 as quotes, and this will be applied to the rest of the questions.

**Table 3: The Participants' Answers on the Second Part of Question 1**

| Number of Participants who Gave the Same Answer | Reason Behind Seeking Asylum/Refuge |
|---|---|
| 11 participants | War |
| 1 participant | "In Germany, to get the opportunity to study in its univerities." |
| 1 participant | "The president who did injustice and sorrow in our hearts forever without forgetting" |
| 2 participants | "I don't want to fight" |
| 1 participant | "To study" |
| 1 Participant | Upon my father's wish because of his fear of the war ramifications. |

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 participant | "I wanted to avoid the compulsory military service" |
| 1 participant | "Due the war, and the savagery from the Assad Regime" |
| 1 participant | "I sought asylum here due to the hardships during the war back there. In addition, to pursue my higher studies." |
| 1 participant | War and what it may draw on me as joining the Assad's combatants. |
| 1 participant | "I came to Turkey to seek safety from persecution and death due to the devastating bombardment and shelling of Assad regime." |
| 1 participant | "To avoid serving in the army (getting my hands blooded)" |
| 1 participant | Turkey, because it is close to Syria and due to my work in Istanbul, and the possibility of travelling to Syria is more here than in other countries. |
| 1 participant | " I moved to Malaysia because the war in Syria shows no signs of ending." |
| 3 participants | "Because of the war in my country." |
| 1 participant | " Because the war in my country and I did not have another chance in another country." |

| 1 participant | "I was seeking asylum cause the war in my country syria." |
|---|---|
| 1 participant | I sought asylum with my husband due to the war circumstances in Syria. |
| 1 participant | "Because of the war in my country (Syria)." |
| 1 participant | I applied for asylum due to the instability in all fields mainly the security level and to continue my study. |

Table 3 showed that most of the participants fled from their country as a result of the current savage war in Syria and its ratifications. In order to get the most out of the participants' answers, the researcher coded them to be classified into categories to decide on the main reason that obliged these Syrian refugees to escape from their country. This will be clearly demonstrated in Chart 2, as it provides the percentage of each main reason (see Chart 2).

Chart 2: The Main Reasons Behind the Participants' Refuge
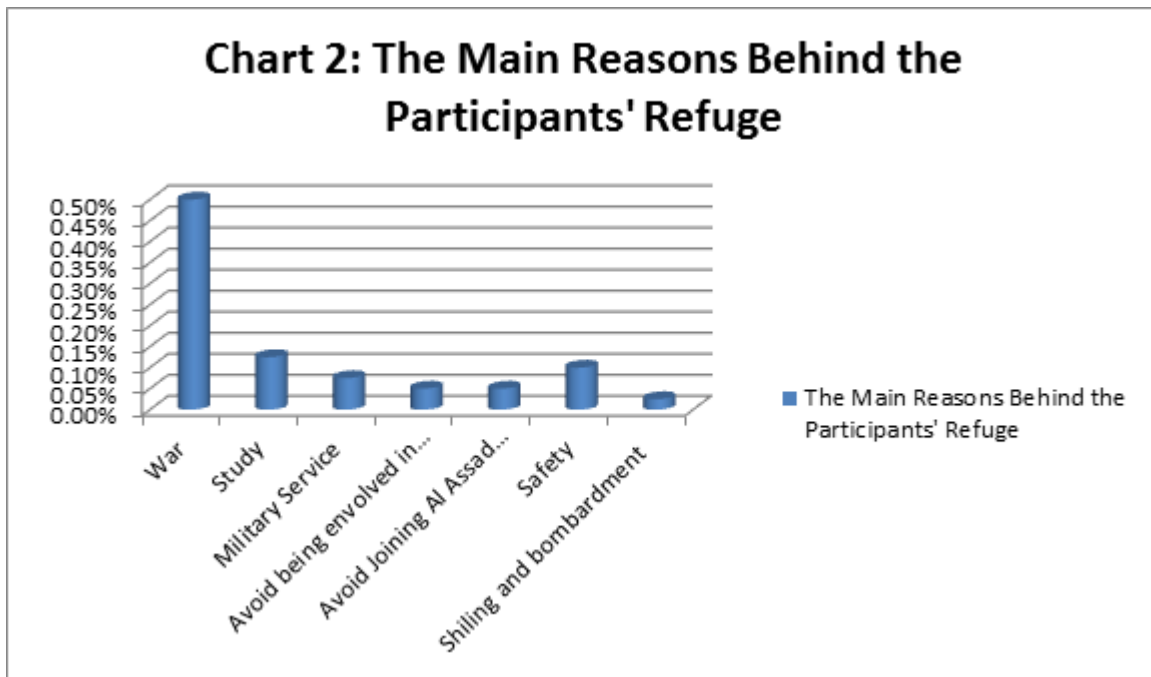
Consequently, Chart 2 shows that almost half of the participants ascribed their refuge to war, while about quarter of them ascribed it to pursuing their study. Another reason was the compulsory military service that leads eventually to joining al Assad forces and to be involved in killing, finally the lack of safety due to the continuous shelling, bombardment by the regime in addition to its savagery in dealing with the population. The results of this question are compatible with the fact that refugees are people who faced a well-founded fear of being persecuted, killed, tortured or even who can not avail safety and security in their country (UNHCR 2007).The answers of question one assure that the sample of the chosen participants is a convenience one that forms a solid foundation for this research since all the participants are truly refugees or asylum seekers and that their answers will support the credibility of this research.

Q2 **Why did you choose this country in particular?**

Similarly, the answers of this question varied owing to the fact that this research study targeted a sample of refugees who were hosted by different countries not only one, which adds to its uniqueness of not being conducted before in a similar way. Additionally, not all participants answered all the questions, as it usually happens while answering surveys. Finally, the answers of this question will be demonstrated and classified in Table 4.

**Table 4: The Reasons Behind Choosing these Countries**

| The Country of Asylum | Reasons on Choosing these Countries for Asylum in Particular |
|---|---|
| **Germany** | - It is the only country that provided lots of help for Syrian refugees, and it has more job opportunities related to my job. <br><br> -"Because German government support refugee." <br><br> -"Because employment opportunities." <br><br> -"Because they respect people wherever they come from." <br><br> -"It can make me save and I can complete my studying." <br><br> -"Because I can build my future here with different chances." <br><br> -"Because of its good quality in the high education. And it was a dream for me to be in |

| | |
|---|---|
| | its universities.”<br><br>-”I didn't choose. Germany respects human rights.”<br><br>-”I had no choice, I was forced to go to Germany and if I could I would choose another country.”<br><br>- I chose Germany for what distinguishes it from the other countries in the field of work and study.<br><br>-”Because I can build my future here with different chances.” |
| **Turkey** | -Initially, I didn't think why, it was the only available choice, but later over time,and after living in it and knowing its culture and people, the reasons behind staying increased a lot.<br><br>-”Syrian refugees faced many political and bureaucratic obstacles from the Arab countries, especially Palestinians of Syria, and borders were closed in their faces therefore, Turkey was the only solution.”<br><br>-”Because it is not far from Syria.”<br><br>-”People are kind and their traditions are close to ours. Syrians are well treated by the government and protected by law.”<br><br>-In fact, it was not my choice initially, I thought it was temporary and soon I will go back to Syria, and I did not want to go to Europe.<br><br>-Due to the easiness of procedures and the low cost in Turkey, and the easy access to and from it to my homeland Syria. It is a civilized Islamic country; we share traditions and values with it, even in language there are more than mutual words with the Arabic |

| | language, due to the accelerated economic growth that creates job opportunities. |
|---|---|
| **Sweden** | -"Has a justice ruler and a law that respects all citizens"<br><br>- "I got a scholarship from Sweden to finish a higher education degree at one of the universities"<br><br>-"Peaceful and grant permanent residence and can have citizenship in  short time"<br><br>-"Because English is widely spread here; it is the second language."<br><br>- "Because it had better conditions than other countries for me as a Syrian"<br><br>- Because Sweden grants citizenship, and by having this nothing will stop me from entering any country and enjoying freedom, in contrast to what we feel now only because we hold the Syrian nationality. |
| **Denmark** | -"Family reunion procedure is easier here<br><br>-"The happiest for the children." |
| **Austria** | -"Safe and future"<br><br>-"Due to the language."<br><br>-"It wasn't my choice, it was forced." |
| **Norway** | -"Freedom country" |
| **Malaysia** | -"I moved to Malaysia to complete my studies." |

| France | - |
|---|---|
| Romania | - |

The second question is one of the general questions that help in preparing the participants for the important and specific questions coming later. The responses on this question showed that Germany was mostly desired by the Syrian refugees for its freedom and its great reputation in the field of study and work. As for the participants, Germany respects human rights, it provides safety and it keeps supporting refugees who dream to have a bright future on its lands. Turkey, on the other hand, is distinguished by its close geographical location from Syria that made it the first destination of asylum for Syrians. Karipek (2017) stated that "Syria and Turkey are geographically and culturally close countries." He also added that "Turkey and Syria are neighbor countries and families, especially in border cities such as Sanliurfa, Hatay and Gaziantep have or had families across the border." Moreover, Turkey welcomed the Syrian refugees and treated them well, while other neighboring countries did not. The participants mentioned traditions, culture, religion and the common words between the two languages, Arabic and Turkish, as being important reasons for choosing Turkey in particular.

Sweden also was among the countries that hosted a good number of Syrian refugees because, according to them, it grants citizenship in shorter time than the other countries and it is a safe country that respects all citizens. The reason of language was mentioned

in the cases of Sweden, Turkey and Austria. Finally, four of the participants said that it was not their choice to seek asylum in the country they are in now.

As for questions 3, 4 and 5 (see Appendix 1), the participants' answers to them will be gathered all in one table, since they are correlated with each other.

Q3 **Was the official language of this country the reason why you chose this country to seek asylum in?**

Q4 **What is the official language of this country?**

Q5 **Did you have any prior knowledge of this language?**

The aim of these questions was to assure and prove the validity of the first question of this research, that is to say, refugees would not have faced difficulties in acquiring the language of the hosted country, unless they had not had a prior knowledge of it. The assumption of this case study about the difficulties faced by Syrian refugees in acquiring a second language is highly proved by the results shown in Table 5. Finally, these results show that 39 participants out of 45 did not have any prior knowledge of the languages they are learning now in the countries of refuge. Only 4 participants said that language was the reason behind seeking asylum in these countries. Consequently, according to the responses to questions 3,4 and 5 of the survey, it was found that Syrian refugees and asylum seekers do face difficulties in acquiring the languages of the hosting countries since most of them do not have a prior knowledge about these languages.

**Table 5: The Official Languages of the Hosting Countries and Participants prior Knowledge of it**

| Official language | Was it the reason behind asylum seeking or not? | Does the participant have a prior knowledge of it or not? |
|---|---|---|
| German | Yes: 2<br><br>No: 15 | Yes: 4<br><br>No: 13 |
| Turkish | No: 10 | No: 10 |
| Swedish/Svenska | No: 6 | No: 6 |
| Norwegian | Yes: 1 | Yes: 1 |
| Danish | No: 5 | No: 5 |
| Austrian German/German | No: 2<br><br>Yes: 1 | No: 3 |
| French | No: 1 | Yes: 1 |
| Malay | No: 1 | No: 1 |
| Romanian | No: 1 | No: 1 |

| Total | Yes: 4 | Yes: 6 |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | No: 41 | No: 39 |

Q6 **What difficulties did you face in acquiring this language?**

Q7 **What are, in your opinion, the possible remedies or solutions to these difficulties?**

The following two questions to be discussed are questions 6 and 7. These two questions are the essence of this case study as they form the main topic of this research. Therefore, the researcher tended to interview the participants to make sure that they will give adequate answers to these two questions and will not skip them as some of them did with most of the survey questions. After having a good background about the participants through their responses to the previous questions of the survey, their experience of acquiring a second language will be examined to find out what difficulties they really face in learning the language of the hosted country and what solutions they think will help to overcome these difficulties.

Q6 **What difficulties did you face in acquiring this language?**

To answer this question, each participant was interviewed individually and a range of extended questions was asked during these interviews. In order to get the most out of the participants' responses, the researcher classified them into categories as economic, personal, social, linguistic, temporal and psychological. Additionally, this research deals

with refugees from different countries, that is why all the responses should be linked to the countries hosting these participants. This will be demonstrated in Table 7 and Chart 4.

**Table 7: The Difficulties Syrian Refugees and Asylum Seekers Face in Acquiring the Language of the Hosting Country**

| Hosting Countries | Linguistic | Social | Temporal | Personal | Economic | Psychological |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Germany** | -Difficult in **pronunciation** and **-Forming sentences.**<br><br>-"**Pronunciation**."<br><br>-"The sretile system of tuition."<br><br>-"**Grammars.**"<br><br>-"**The** | -"People **mock** you when you speak **wrongly**"<br><br>-"**No contact** with people"<br><br>-"Not **enough communication** with native speakers"<br><br>-"It is **not easy** to be integrated in | | -"Speaking is my problem, I am **shy to speak** and commit mistakes." | -The **government doesn't pay for courses for old people**. | -"Refugees experienced **fear before and still because people look at them as terrorists.**<br><br>-**Stress** in all fields because of the Germans and the other nationalities. |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **grammar.”**<br><br>**-”The grammar** of this language is difficult.”<br><br>-”**Pronunciation**.”<br><br>-”**The Grammar**.”<br><br>-”Grammar and the **long, complex words**.”<br><br>-German is a **complicated** language in **forming sentences**.”<br><br>-**Long words** with 20 letters sometimes. | the German community.”<br><br>-German people are **closed**, and like to hear their language not others, which is a big **incentive** to learn quickly..”<br><br>-”**Lack of contact** with the society.”<br><br>-”Germans speak a d**ifferent language from the taught one.**”<br><br>-”I **live with Arabs**, so I | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | don't use German a lot." <br><br> -"Communication with native speakers." | | | | |
| **Turkey** | -Turkish language is a **mixture of many languages.** Rules differ from word to word. **Pronunciation** is difficult. <br><br> -"**difficult pronunciation**. Mix of different languages." | -The **Turkish people don't understand the concept of refuge**. <br><br> - The Turkish **government doesn't provide language courses**. | -"The **lack of time**. <br><br> -We don't have time since we **work 10 hours** a day. <br><br> -We have start work since day one, so we **don't have time to study.** <br><br> -There are | -**Shyness ,embarrassment and hesitation.** <br><br> -"I learned only what **allows me to communicate** with people to meet my **daily needs**." <br><br> -"**No time to learn**, and work is long." | -"**Life expenses are too high,** earning a **living is prioritized** over anything else." <br><br> -"**No free courses** from the government." <br><br> -Learning languages | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | language **courses, but only students get use of** them, or people who don't work. | | is **costly.** - **Government doesn't provide free language courses**. | |
| **Sweden** | -**The difference between the taught language and the language of citizens.** -"The **vocabularies."** -A word has many meanings. -"**It has a lot of new** | -The **frustrating people who don't love learning.** -"**Swedes are shy** somehow and don't help in integration." -"No qualified Swedish language teachers" | -"**Long waiting queues to register in a language course."** | -"**Nothing is difficult** when you want to **achieve a goal.**" | | -I have **depression** because of **stress.** |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **vowels."** | | | | |
| **Denmark** | -"The **pronunciatio n is difficult"** "Pronunciation ." | | | | |
| **Norwegi an** | -"**It is easy**" | | | | |
| **Austria** | | -"**Contact to Austrians.**" | | | |
| **France** | | -"**French people are monolingual** and don't make any effort to learn other languages" | | | |
| **Malay** | -"**Accent** and **vocabulary**." | -"Malaysian speak **only Malay"** | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | -"**Grammar.**" | | | | |
| **Romania** | -"**Unfamiliar vowel sound. Tricky verb conjugation.**" | | | | |

According to Table 7, the main and most noticeable difficulty that almost most of the participants faced in acquiring the language of the hosting countries lies in the languages themselves (see Chart 4.)

**Chart 4: The Difficulties that Asylum Seekers Face in Acquiring a Second Language and Their Percentages**
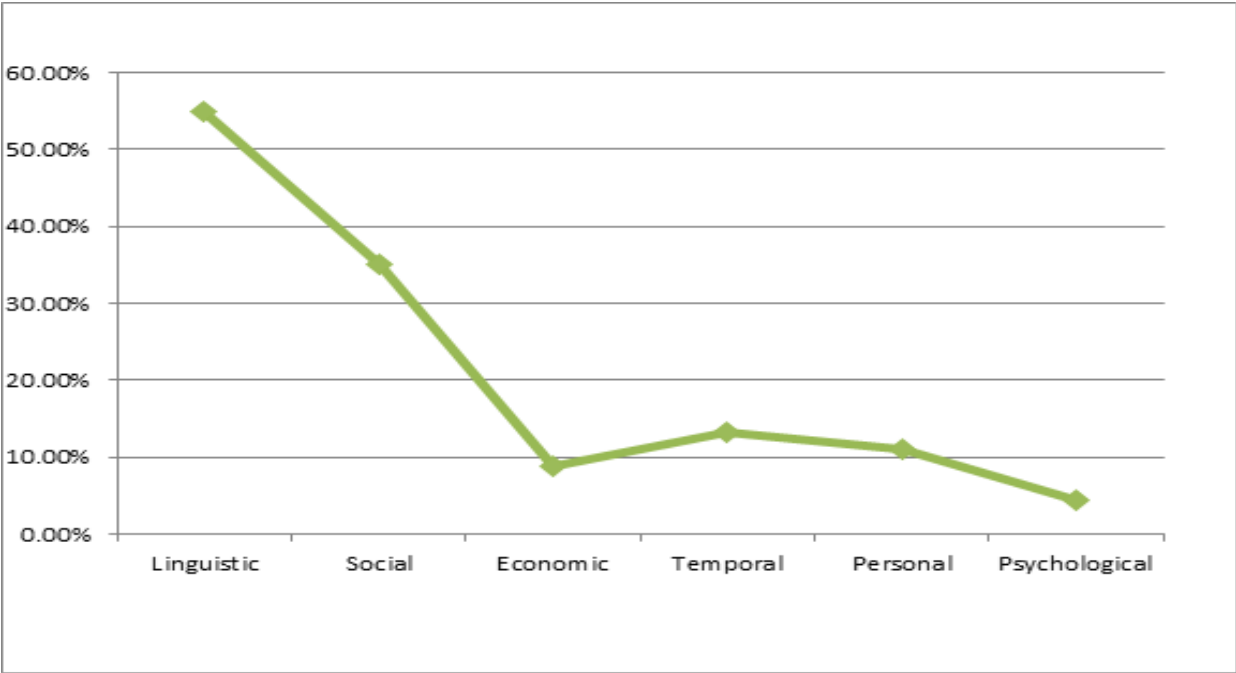


After interviewing the participants and analyzing their responses, the German language was found to be the most troublesome language among the other tested languages in this research. The syntax of the German language was described by the refugees in Germany as being complicated and having very long words and expressions contrary to the languages they learnt previously, (see Chart 3). All participants faced a hitch in pronouncing most of the languages of the countries that are hosting them. The problem with the Turkish language was its nature of being a mixture of languages as been described by the participants; it has a different word formation and different semantics. Danish on the other hand, caused problems in pronunciation, while Malay is found to be difficult in grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. Moreover, participants who were

trying to acquire Swedish encountered difficulties between the language they study in classes and the colloquial one used by Swedish people along with the multi-meaning vocabulary that form the Swedish language. Finally, only Norwegian was found to be easy by the sole participant in Norway.

According to Cook (2016), "The differences between individuals do not disappear when they come in the classroom door….they do not start from scratch without any background or predisposition to learn language in one way or another." This was clearly proved in the case of the participants of this research, as they could not detach their previous experience in acquiring languages from the current one; they kept comparing the similarities and differences between the languages they learnt before and the ones they are obliged to learn now. Moreover, this way of comparison between languages is called Contrastive Analysis according to Cook (2016); as for him "this research method compared the descriptions of two languages in grammar or pronunciation to discover the differences between them; these were then seen as difficulties for the students to overcome."(Cook 2016, p.6).

As for the social difficulties in acquiring these languages, German and French people, according to the participants, appeared to be very conservative and monolingual. They are afraid of communicating with strangers and do not make any effort to learn the languages of the other nationalities in their countries. Diversely, Malaysian people were shy to communicate with others, and the Turkish ones did not even bother themselves to have a full understanding of the conception of refugees to know how to deal with them.

This may be a result of the languages that these nations speak as Cook (2016) supposed saying "Different cultures think in different ways. Our cultural attitudes may be changed by the language we are acquiring." A good example of this is the German language that is distinguished for being complicated and cold, and for its obvious reflection on Germans who have the same characteristics as the participants supposed. Besides, another important and very serious difficulty to be discussed is the huge presence of Arabs in the mentioned countries that hampered acquiring the official languages of these countries. It was not only the Arabic language, people in countries like Sweden and Denmark speak English too as a second language. Thus, In the case of refugees being surrounded with people who speak their first language or any other languages they are familiar with, they will not be motivated to learn the hosting country's language and their desire of acquiring the official language of the hosting country will fade away.

According to some of the participants who live in Germany and Turkey, the demographic distribution of refugees either in camps or compounds made it difficult for them to be in contact with the citizens and to acquire their languages. In Turkey, one of the participants said that "We have to start working from day one, and the government does not provide any language courses for refugees who cannot pay for them, so we go to work for Syrians who have their own businesses there. We avoid working with the Turkish people and they in return refuse to hire us since they do not know any other way of communication, but the Turkish language which we do not know or did not have the chance to learn."

Additionally, lack of time was one of the difficulties that hindered the process of acquiring a second language in the case of this research participants mainly in Turkey. As claimed by these participants, Turkish government opened its doors to Syrian refugees, but did not provide any facilities, especially for those who did not stay in the camps. Syrian refugees in Turkey have to depend on themselves from day one; they have to work as soon as they arrive to cover their daily life needs. They work for long hours, some of them work for ten hours a day, which leaves no time for them to learn the Turkish language. On the other hand, Syrian refugees in Sweden complained about queuing for a long time in order to be registered in the language courses provided by the government.

The financial difficulties as well, were experienced by Syrian refugees in Turkey and Germany. One of the participants in Turkey said that "life expenses are too high, earning a living is prioritized over anything else." Other participants could not attend any language courses because they are expensive and the government does not offer them for free. While in Germany and the other countries in the European Union, participants said that theses countries provide free language courses for refugees and support them to cope with the new societies by all means, but the only problem in Germany is that the government does not pay much attention to elderly people to help them acquire the German language.

Finally, due to the harsh civil war back in their country, Syrian refugees suffered from the posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that was mentioned earlier in the literature review of this paper. Continuously, some of them resumed to experience fear from the new

societies that hosted them and at the same time look at them as being terrorists and avoid contacting with them, especially in the German society as for one of the participants. Undoubtedly, being obliged to live in a totally new society causes stress of all kinds; one of the refugees in Sweden suffers from depression caused by the stressful kind of life he lives there. Such circumstances, weakened the participants' self confidence and made them feel shy to speak up the new language in order not to make mistakes that the society may mock them for. All in all, one of the participants said that nothing is difficult when we have the will to do it.

To sum up, the responses to this question (question 8) answer the first question of this research about the difficulties that asylum seekers faced in acquiring the languages of the hosting countries. Furthermore, it was found that these difficulties varied and differed from one country to another, but the main difficulty that almost all the participants shared was in the language itself. Acquiring new languages appeared to be a difficult mission no matter if the learner had experienced this before or not. Likewise, in the case of this research, all the participants had experienced acquiring new languages, yet they "will find that their memory works less well in the new language." Cook (2016, p.11) This was experienced by almost all the participants, since they are as "students have much in common by virtue of possessing the same human minds."

So the main difficulty lay in the grammar, structure and pronunciation of the new languages, in addition to the society which hindered the process of acquiring a language by isolating itself away from the refugees' community, giving them very few chances to acquire the language from the native speakers. Lack of time and life expenses along

with the psychological problems have also played recognizable role in obstructing acquiring the languages of the hosting countries.

Q7 **What are, in your opinion, the possible remedies or solutions to these difficulties?**

Only those who have lived an experience and went through its hardships can give practical solutions for it. The participants of this research are all Syrian refugees who had to acquire the languages of the hosting countries and who have recognized the exact difficulties of such experience, thus their opinion about the possible solutions to these difficulties should be taken into consideration.

Moreover, the participants suggested two types of solutions, one is related to the refugees as individuals, and the other one should be done by the governments of the hosting countries. Table 8 demonstrates the possible solutions suggested by the participants for the difficulties they faced in acquiring the hosting countries languages. Finally, these solutions will be feasible remedies for the difficulties caused by the linguistic, social, temporal, financial and psychological problems that the participants of this case study have encountered.

**Table 8: Possible Solutions Proposed by Syrian Refugees for the Dilemma of Acquiring the Languages of the Hosting Countries**

| Individual Solutions | Governmental Solutions |
|---|---|
| -Practice (almost all participants)<br><br>-Interacting with native speakers (almost all participants)<br><br>-Reading, writing in the SL<br><br>-Watching TV and listening to the local radio stations<br><br>-Attending intensive language courses<br><br>-Attending social activities<br><br>-Making friends<br><br>-Organizing more speaking events in cafes | -Providing qualified teachers (Sweden)<br><br>-Providing free language courses and make them obligatory (Turkey)<br><br>-German society should accept the other and integrate with refugees to help them speak the German language (Germany)<br><br>-Governments should provide psychotherapy sessions to help refugees cure from what they suffer from |

| | |
|---|---|
| -Working with natives<br><br>-Not to be shy of communicating with native speakers<br><br>-Being ambitious and persistent | |

The responses to this question will answer the second question of this research which is: **What are the possible remedies for these difficulties from the asylum seekers' perspective?** As for one of the participants, he suggested the following solutions for refugees in Germany:

"To learn any new language, you have to take time to learn it, especially when you do not know anything about it. I'd say, that the Germans should be more patient, to help the refugees to be able to speak their language fluently. In addition the refugees should be more active to learn it because the German government offers free German courses for them."

Furthermore, these responses were similar regarding the linguistic barriers that almost all the participants have encountered. The suggested solutions for this barrier were the need to practice the language and all its skills on a daily basis by attending intensive courses and interacting with native speakers. Working with the native speakers was also recommended by one of the participants in order to be in a continuous contact with the acquired language. For some other participants, the individual solutions include

watching series and movies of the target language in addition to listening to songs and to the national radio stations of the hosting countries. According to some participants, refugees should attend any social activities that enable them from contacting to native speakers. Finally, refugees should not be shy of committing mistakes while speaking in the acquired language, they should also have ambition and persistence and never give up.

Regarding the solutions related to the governments of the hosting countries which are applicable to some of them, the participants recommended that the Turkish government should provide free language courses and they should make them obligatory. Besides, the Turkish government should bestow the participants a monthly amount of money that help them to fulfill their daily needs for at least six months in order to let them have free time to attend language courses before starting work.

On the other hand, the German government was advised to take an action to mediate between the refugees and the Germans in order to increase integration among them. Additionally, the Swedish government should equip the language institutes with qualified teachers who can facilitate the process of acquiring the Swedish language. Finally, a general point of view from one of the participants emphasized on the urgent need of providing psychotherapy sessions for all refugees and asylum seekers to attend, as soon as they arrive the hosting countries in order to help them heal and forget about the hardships they went through.

Q8 **Have you experienced acquiring a second language before seeking asylum?**

All the participants have experienced acquiring a second language before seeking asylum, but with different levels as the responses to this question showed. Except one of the participants who said that he acquired a little French at school. As usual, some participants skipped this question, but since the researcher was either a teacher or a colleague of most of them in the field of teaching and learning English, she guarantees that almost 99% of the participants have good knowledge of the English language.

Moreover, some of the participants who were answering in English said that they only had an experience in acquiring French as a second language. Anyway, the results of these responses will be shown in Chart 3, that shows the languages acquired by the respondents before seeking asylum. Thus, Chart 3 shows that the English language was the most acquired language before seeking asylum among the participants, while French comes in the second place, due to the fact that both English and French were taught in schools in Syria as a second language, but English was more desirable by students. It is worth saying that all the participants in this research are either Graduate or postgraduate, so all of them are educated and have a good knowledge about the meaning of acquiring a second language.
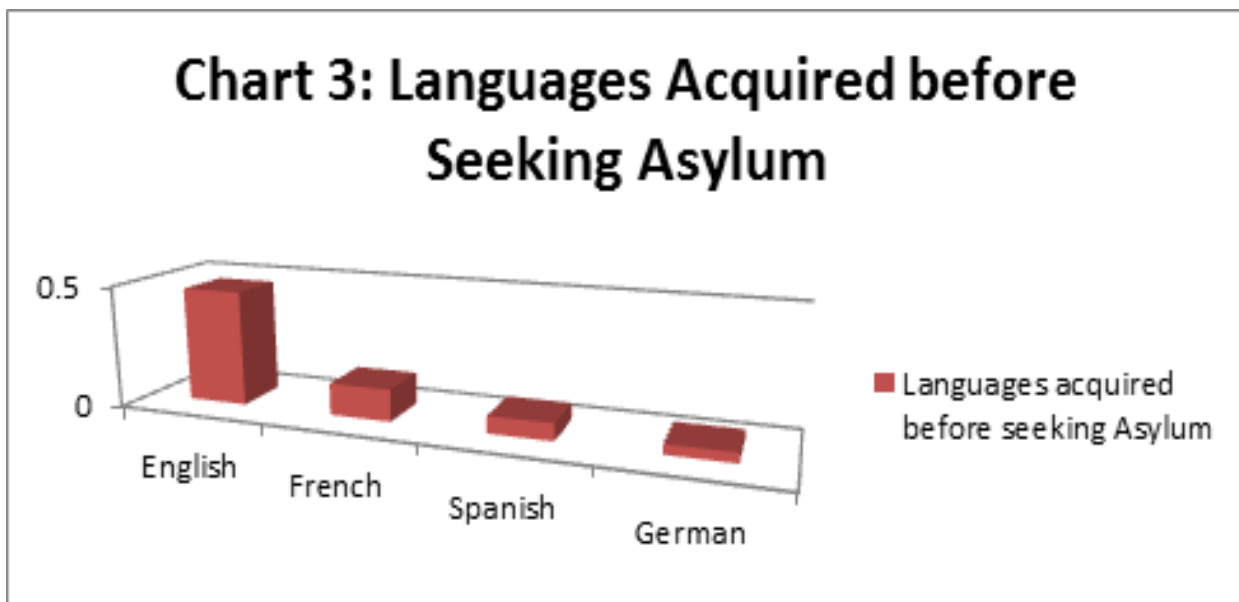
**Chart 3: Languages Acquired before Seeking Asylum**

**Q9 What are the differences between acquiring a second language in normal conditions and under the necessity of seeking asylum?**

According to most of the participants, a huge difference does exist between acquiring a language in normal conditions and under the necessity of asylum seeking. On the other hand, only few of them found no differences between the two cases. The responses to this question are classified into categories in Table 6. To have a more understandable and clearer view, the researcher classified the differences between acquiring a second language in normal condition and the condition of seeking asylum according to the language that each participant is trying to acquire now (see Table 6). The researcher chose this kind of classification based on the current acquired language in order to have a more obvious idea about the difficulties encountered while acquiring this language in particular.

**Table 6: The Differences between Acquiring a Second Language in Normal Conditions and under the Necessity of Asylum Seeking**

| The current acquired language | Normal condition | Asylum condition |
|---|---|---|
| German | - The aim here is to pass exams and get good grades.<br><br>-"People **choose** the language that **motivate** them."<br><br>-"I **want to** learn."<br><br>-"People have **passion** and find it **interesting**."<br><br>-"You learn the language with more **comfortable**, and you **have the time**." | -"we **don't have the choice**, we **have to** learn it, especially it is the key for everything."<br><br>-"I **must** use it with a teacher from the same language"<br><br>-"It is **easier** to speak a language in a country that speaks it."<br><br>-"Absolutely **more difficult**."<br><br>-"You **have to** speak the language because all people around you speak it, and you get many chances **to get work and study."**<br><br>- The refugee is **obliged to** continue his life and to get a better job opportunities. And it is **easier and more exciting** since we hear the language everywhere.<br><br>-"I **have to**."<br><br>-"People have **problems** when they *have to* |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | *learn*." <br><br> - Learning a language **should be faster** to have more chances in work and study. <br><br> -"You will be under **time pressure**, so you will learn quickly and you could practice it with the native speakers." |
| Turkey | -"People learn a language because they **like or want to** learn it." <br><br> -"**Peace of mind** and the **lack of obligation** help acquire a second and a third language." <br><br> - It is a **desire and personal motivation**." <br><br> -You **have the choice** with more excitement and enthusiasm and less persistent. <br><br> -"It is **easy** and not under stressful conditions" | -"Asylum seekers **have to**." <br><br> - **Obligatory**. <br><br> - You are **obliged** with more persistent and less excitement and enthusiasm. <br><br> - It is **easier and faster** since you are motivated by the urge to live and continue to cope with society. <br><br> -"You **should learn** the language **to get a job** otherwise life becomes difficult and you face misunderstanding." |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Swedish | -"May give room for more **flexibility**." <br><br> -"You **choose** the language that you **want to** learn." <br><br> - You **have the choice** to learn hard or not. <br><br> -"I will be **less serious** in studying it." | -"L**imited period of time** during which a refugee has to prove linguistic and communicative capabilities." <br><br> -"You are **forced to** learn it." <br><br> - A person is **obliged to**, which helps in acculturation. <br><br> -"You **don't have the choice**." |
| Danish | | -"**Pressure of time**, it is a **challenge** for refugees because they have to use it every day." |
| Malay | | -"You will **love to learn the language if you love the country** and felt welcomed from the citizens." |

The researcher underlined the keywords in these answers in order to make it easier for the reader of this paper to have a clearer and a faster idea about the answers. It is the norm among participants to skip some questions and that is what happened with this question as some of the participants skipped it.

Moreover, the responses to this question showed that the majority of the participants think that learning a language in normal conditions is totally different since there is no obligation, and a person learns the language that he wants to or likes to learn. According

to the participants, acquiring a second language in normal conditions is not restricted by time limits which gives the learner peace of mind to study in a comfortable and a flexible way. It is also distinguished by being a desire and passion of which the learner feels motivated, enthusiastic and interested to acquire a language.

On the other hand, acquiring a language under the necessity of asylum seeking is found to be obligatory and an urgent need by most of the participants. As for them, acquiring a language in such conditions is stressful and should be done faster so learners can cope with the new society they live in and can get good job opportunities and more chances to complete their studies. For some of the participants, being surrounded by native speakers facilitates acquiring a language and accelerates it, especially if the refugee feels welcomed by the citizens of the asylum country. Finally, acquiring a second language under the condition of refuge needs more persistence than acquiring it in normal conditions. Refugees are obliged to learn it even if it is difficult or not interesting, otherwise they will not be able to continue living in the countries of refuge that hosted them.

Furthermore, the participants' responses to this question showed that they are fully aware of the factors that lead to second language acquisition; and have a comprehensible view about the importance of acquiring the language of the hosting country toward achieving a successful integration within the new society and having good ways of life (Hou and Beiser 2006).

**Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations**

**5.1 Conclusion**

To conclude, this paper presented an investigation about the difficulties that Syrian refugees face in acquiring the language of the hosting countries. The participants of this research are all Syrian refugees or asylum seekers who were hosted by 9 different countries. Moreover, The importance of this research came from the 9 languages that each participant has experienced acquiring according to where he/she lives. This research also sought to know the possible solutions for these difficulties from the participants' perspective. The literature review of this research sheds light on the Syrian crisis and some of the hardships the refugees encountered before seeking asylum; besides, it studied some of the research conducted in the field of second language acquisition. Since this research was done using the Facebook messenger application, a part of the literature review was assigned to the social research and the new trend of using social media applications in research. Finally, the questions of this research were answered through the following findings.

The research found out that the difficulties in acquiring a second language varied according to the language and the country. But the main difficulty that almost all the participants faced, is the language and its structure, grammar and pronunciation. Although all the participants have experienced acquiring a second language before seeking asylum, the majority of them complained about the differences occur between the languages they already knew and the new ones they are trying to acquire in terms of

structure, syntax and pronunciation. Likewise, the language barrier was found to be the major difficulty in acquiring the Turkish language in the recent study done by Karipek (2017). Another serious difficulty was the societies that refused to be in contact with the refugees' communities like the German, French and Turkish societies. Some other difficulties were caused by the lack of time to attend language courses and the lack of the financial support from the Turkish government. Finally, another difficulty was caused by the psychological condition of the participants due to what they experienced during the war in Syria and after seeking asylum because of the society who looked at them as terrorists.

Regarding the solutions that the participants recommended out of their experience in acquiring the languages of the hosting countries, it was found that both the individuals, who are the refugees in this case, and the governments of the hosting countries are the doers of applying these solutions. As for the individuals, they should practice the acquired language in all the available means like attending courses and integrating with the native speakers whenever they  have a chance to. They were also recommended to practice the skills of the new language like reading, listening and speaking on a daily basis.  On the other hand, governments were found to be responsible for encouraging their population to help the refugees in integration by communicating with them and not to keep themselves away in their own world, since the colloquial language they speak is different from what is taught in the classes. The Turkish government was advised to provide free-cost language courses for the Syrian refugees on its land; in addition to the need of a financial support that enables the refugees from fulfilling their daily needs

which they work for long hours to fulfill, that leave them with no free time to attend language courses. Finally, the participants suggested psychotherapy sessions as a solution done by the governments in order to help the refugees get cured of the PTSD they had during the war.

## 5.2 Limitations

Respecting the limitations of this research, the first one was the impossibility of having face to face interviews due to the distinct locations of the researcher and the participants as they do not only live in different countries but also in different continents. For that reason, the interviews were done on Facebook messenger, and it is known that so many interruptions may occur during having such kind of interviews as the incoming phone calls or the interviewer being busy or even the time difference between the countries. The second limitation was the many languages that are examined at the same time in this research along with the little number of participants who are studying them as in the case of the one participant who is acquiring the Malain language and the other ones learning the French, Norwegian and the Romanian language. That is to say, not all languages are similar in nature and more concentration should be paid to each one of them aside.

## 5.3 Recommendations

Accordingly, depending on the findings of this research, the researcher recommends more research to be done in Turkey about the Turkish language acquisition and how is it possible to be more accesiable for refugees, since the government does not take any

action towards that. Another recommendation by the researcher is the necissety of investigating the reasons behind the refusal of the German community to help the refugees integrate within their society in order to acquire the German language although they hosted the refugees first and gave them their rights.

As being a very recent phenomenon, the Syrian crisis is a very rich subject for research in all fields. Regarding second language acquisition, more research can be done by investigating the factors of age and gender. The researcher also recommended studying the case of the illiterate refugees who have not experienced acquiring a second language before seeking asylum as there are plenty of them among the Syrian refugees. Finally, a very beneficial research could be conducted in classrooms to investigate the role of the teacher in facilitating acquiring the language of the hosting country through teacher student interaction.

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**Appendix 1**

**The Survey Questions:**

1- Where/Why did you seek asylum?

2- Why did you choose this country in particular?

3- Was the official language of this country the reason why you chose this country to seek asylum in?

4- What is the official language of this country?

5- Did you have any prior knowledge of this language?

6- What difficulties did you face in acquiring this language?

7- What are, in your opinion, the possible remedies or solutions for these difficulties?

8- Have you experienced acquiring a second language before seeking asylum?

9- What are the differences between acquiring a second language in normal conditions and under the necessity of seeking asylum?

10- Would you please complete the following personal information about you?

Age:

Gender:

Marital Status:

## Appendix 2:

## Samples of the Participants' Responses

## -Sample 1

**Q1 Where/Why did you seek asylum?**

In Germany, because of the war in my country

**Q2 Why did you choose this country in particular?**

Because German government support refugees

**Q3 Was the official language of this country the reason why you chose this country to seek asylum in?**

No.

**Q4 What is the official language of this country?**

German

**Q5 Did you have any prior knowledge of this language?**

Not at all

**Q6 What difficulties did you face in acquiring this language?**

Grammars

**Q7 What are, in your opinion, the possible remedies or solutions for these difficulties?**

Practice with talking and writing

**Q8 Have you experienced acquiring a second language before seeking asylum?**

Yes

**Q9 What are the differences between acquiring a second language in normal conditions and under the necessity of seeking asylum?**

It's always good to learn new language but in asylum situation, you feel you have to learn the language because all the people around you speaking it and you can get many chances to start working or studying in the country where you live.

**Q10 Would you please complete the following personal information about you?-Age-Gender-Marital status**

26

Male

Single

**-Sample 2**

**Q1 Where/Why did you seek asylum?**

Sweden

**Q2 Why did you choose this country in particular?**

Because it had better conditions than the other countries for me as a syrian

**Q3 Was the official language of this country the reason why you chose this country to seek asylum in?**

No, it was not

**Q4 What is the official language of this country?**

Swedish

**Q5 Did you have any prior knowledge of this language?**

No at all

**Q6 What difficulties did you face in acquiring this language?**

The vocabularies

**Q7 What are, in your opinion, the possible remedies or solutions for these difficulties?**

Train to get the right pronunciation, try to talk to swedish people more , listen to radio and watch tv , especially the cartoons

**Q8 Have you experienced acquiring a second language before seeking asylum?**

Yes

**Q9 What are the differences between acquiring a second language in normal conditions and under the necessity of seeking asylum?**

In normal conditions you can choose the language that you want to learn, like i chose to learn English and Spanish, but did not imagine that i would learn Swedish as example, and when you are seeking asylum you are forced to learn the langauge of this or that country, even if it is not so common langauge and have not that much speakers.

**Q10 Would you please complete the following personal information about you?-Age-Gender-Marital status**

32
Male
Single

**-Sample 3**

**Q1 Where/Why did you seek asylum?**

I came to Turkey to seek safety from persecution and death due to the devastating bombardment and shelling of Assad regime

**Q2 Why did you choose this country in particular?**

Syrian refugees faced many political and bureaucratic obstacles from the Arab countries especially Palestinians of Syria , and borders were closed in their faces therefore, Turkey was the only solution .

**Q3 Was the official language of this country the reason why you chose this country to seek asylum in?**

No , I would prefer to seek asylum in an Arab country or a country that speaks English because it's my second language .

**Q4 What is the official language of this country?**

Turkish

**Q5 Did you have any prior knowledge of this language?**

No

**Q6 What difficulties did you face in acquiring this language?**

A lot of difficulties because it's a new language that has difficult pronunciation and is a mix of different languages.

**Q7 What are, in your opinion, the possible remedies or solutions for these difficulties?**

In addition to Turkish courses interaction with native speakers is essential in learning the language .

**Q8 Have you experienced acquiring a second language before seeking asylum?**

yes , French

**Q9 What are the differences between acquiring a second language in normal conditions and under the necessity of seeking asylum?**

There is a big difference , when you are seeking asylum in a foreign country that you have no idea about its language, you should learn the language very fast to be able to work, buy interact with people and that

should be done in a short period of time otherwise life becomes very difficult and you face many problems and misunderstandings . While in normal conditions this is done easily and not under such stressful conditions.

**Q10 Would you please complete the following personal information about you?-Age-Gender-Marital status**

35

Female

Married

**-Sample 4**

**Q1 Where/Why did you seek asylum?**

Turkey

**Q2 Why did you choose this country in particular?**

Because it is not far from Syria

**Q3 Was the official language of this country the reason why you chose this country to seek asylum in?**

no

**Q4 What is the official language of this country?**

Turkish

**Q5 Did you have any prior knowledge of this language?**

No

**Q6 What difficulties did you face in acquiring this language?**

One difficulty is I have to work and at the same time to learn the new language. No free course from the government to learn. work is long here and it is difficult to concentrate and have enough time to learn a new language

**Q7 What are, in your opinion, the possible remedies or solutions for these difficulties?**

The government should provide free courses and even make it obligatory to attend them and give the asylum seeker some money to live and he/she has to attend and learn the language

**Q8 Have you experienced acquiring a second language before seeking asylum?**

yes

**Q9 What are the differences between acquiring a second language in normal conditions and under the necessity of seeking asylum?**

the difference is in normal condition people learn a language because the like the language or want to learn about the culture of a country while asylum seekers have to learn it

**Q10 Would you please complete the following personal information about you?-Age-Gender-Marital status**

32
male

**-Sample 5**

**Q1 Where/Why did you seek asylum?**

I, ve had asylum in 2015 in Germany.
I was seeking for asylum cause the war in my country Syria

**Q2 Why did you choose this country in particular?**

I had no choice, i was forced to go Germany and if i could i would choose another country.

**Q3 Was the official language of this country the reason why you chose this country to seek asylum in?**

On the contrary, the language was the reason why i didn't want choose this country Germany is a rich and strong country with a good job opportunity, University study is for free, but i was seeking asylum in country such as Netherlands or Sweden where they speak English

**Q4 What is the official language of this country?**

German

**Q5 Did you have any prior knowledge of this language?**

No, i did not

**Q6 What difficulties did you face in acquiring this language?**

1. The grammar of this language is difficult

2. They teach us in Germany the classical language and the German people speak slang language.

3. Where i live in Germany there are a lot of arabs, so i speak Arabic all the time.

**Q7 What are, in your opinion, the possible remedies or solutions for these difficulties?**

1. Living in the villages where there are a lot of German then we can speak German all the time

2. There should be psychological courses in addition to the language courses because the syrians here are not in normal conditions, they come from a country of all tragedies and wars.

**Q8 Have you experienced acquiring a second language before seeking asylum?**

Yes, i have.

**Q9 What are the differences between acquiring a second language in normal conditions and under the necessity of seeking asylum?**

Acquiring a second language under the necessity of seeking asylum is absolutely more difficult, but sometimes the bad conditions make us more stronger.

In my opinion there are no differences, when we have goodwill we can do what we want under any conditions and there are many syrians here who have confirmed this statement.

**Q10 Would you please complete the following personal information about you?-Age-Gender-Marital status**

I am 33 years old.

Male.

Married.