

# English with a Non-Native Accent as a Basis for Stigma and Discrimination in the US

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<https://www.e-ir.info/2021/06/23/english-with-a-non-native-accent-as-a-basis-for-stigma-and-discrimination-in-the-us/>

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Although it is hard to argue that there is now awareness about, and protection against all kinds of discriminatory practices, some forms of discrimination have become more easily identified, and there are currently more widespread institutional protections against them. In many different country contexts, there are increasingly more recognized definitions of discrimination based on, for instance, class, gender or race. However, discrimination based on non-native accent is not one of those widely accepted categories of discrimination. In fact, accent is considered something that a person can change almost effortlessly if s/he has the will to do so, and thus, it is seen as different from other characteristics, such as race or gender, which admittedly cannot be changed. According to this rationale, the fact that you speak another language with an accent signals incompetence and lack of effort. If you are not changing, an aspect about you (accented speech) that you are capable of changing, differential treatment against you cannot be discrimination, the logic goes. Therefore, it gives employers, public officials, teachers and native speakers reason to treat you differently from those who speak 'without an accent'.

Accent refers to the phonological characteristics of speech. In that sense, everyone has an accent (Matsuda 1991). There are accents that are geographically or class-determined, and other accents are caused by the transfer of the phonological features of the native language to a second language. This second one is called an L2 accent (Derwing et al. 2014, 65), while L1 accent refers to the native variety of a language. This paper is about the non-native accent or L2 accent, which is an issue that has so far been especially discussed by linguists and researchers of education. While this chapter benefits from the contributions of these two groups of researchers on the subject, it mainly aims to make a sociological contribution to debates on accent by focusing on discrimination based on non-native accent. Although discrimination has been a well-researched sociological subject in general, it has especially been studied with reference to such categories as class, race and gender. Discrimination based on non-native accent remains a largely under-researched area for sociologists.

This chapter will start with a linguistic discussion on accent and non-native/L2 accent, and will then tie these discussions to a more sociological debate on how non-native accent can be a basis for stigma, how people make judgements about others based on non-native accent and what non-native accent discrimination implies especially in the context of the United States. The following section will first give information about the empirical research, where we conducted semi-structured interviews with 40 highly skilled Turkish migrants who left Turkey as adults with at least undergraduate degrees to have further degrees or professional careers in the US and returned back to Turkey after living in the US for at least five years. In this section, there will also be a discussion of the experiences of our respondents as non-native speakers of English during their stay in the US. This section will emphasize that, although they had left Turkey with certified proficiency in English, their everyday life in the US was largely shaped by the fact that they had non-native accents. Although the respondents did not name their difficulties related to accent as discrimination, depending on their accounts, I argue that their non-native accent functioned as a marker of their foreignness and became a basis for negative differential treatment in different spheres of life in the US. In the conclusion, I discuss the ways non-native accent can become a basis for discrimination in the context of the US and

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why migrants who experience discriminatory treatment do not call it discrimination.

## Stigma and Discrimination Based on Non-Native/ L2 Accent

Lipi-Green (2011) argues that, like any other group of scholars, linguists do not form a homogeneous club; there are several differences of opinion among them. However, there are also certain points about which all linguists agree. She identifies five *linguistic facts of life*, where, she argues, most linguists would come together (Lipi-Green 2011 6–7).

- All spoken language changes over time.
- All spoken languages are equal in terms of linguistic potential.
- Grammaticality and communicative effectiveness are distinct and independent issues.
- Written language and spoken language are historically, structurally and functionally fundamentally different creatures.
- Variation is intrinsic to all spoken language at every level, and much of that variation serves an emblematic purpose.

By stating the last point, Lipi-Green (2011, 20) points out the fact that spoken language varies for every speaker. If the language in question is English, this is 'true even for those who believe themselves to speak an educated, elevated, supra-regional English' (Lipi-Green 2011, 20–21). There are three major sources of variation in spoken language: language internal pressures, external influences on language and variation arising from language as a creative vehicle on free expression (Lipi-Green 2011, 21). Considering the variation in spoken language, she talks about *standard language* and *non-accent* as myths, reminding readers that 'myths are used to justify social order, and to encourage or coerce consensual participation in that order' (Lipi-Green 2011, 44). Following this line of argument, it will be appropriate to approach the notion of non-accent as a myth that justifies existing hierarchies between the individuals who have the 'right' accent and those who do not.

Goffman (1963, 12), in his classic work, defines stigma as 'an attribute that is deeply discrediting'. However, after giving this definition, he also emphasizes that we need a language of relationships, not a language of attributes while we are talking about stigma. It means that there may be certain attributes that will be discrediting in one context, while confirming the usualness in another context. In that sense, it may be more appropriate to think of stigma as 'a special kind of relationship between attribute and stereotype' (Goffman 1963,13). He discusses three different types of stigma based on various physical deformities, character traits and race, nation and religion, commonly interpreted as group identity (Goffman 1963, 13). The person who has a stigma possesses an undesired differentness from what others expect, and those others who conform to expectations are 'normals', as Goffman (1963, 14) identifies them. These 'normals' then exercise various types of discrimination against those with stigma and reduce their life chances (Goffman 1963, 15).

According to this framework, can non-native accent function as a basis for stigma? Being an indicator that one was born and raised in another country, non-native accent can be a basis for the third type of stigma that Goffman discusses. 'Normals' are the ones who speak the language with native accents, while those who have non-native accents are stigmatized. Although everybody has an accent and not having an accent is a myth, people use accent to make judgements about others, both in their official capacities and in everyday life encounters. In everyday usage, people say 'a person has an accent' to point out the difference from an assumed norm of non-accent, as if only foreigners have accent (Matsuda 1991). A non-native accent is one of the most noticeable characteristics of those individuals who are originally from other countries, and marks and potentially stigmatizes them as not being native born (Gluszek and Dovidio 2010).

Research shows that native speakers/listeners are highly sensitive to the presence of foreign accents (Atagi and Bent 2017; Derwing and Munro 2009). Accent is certainly not the only factor that people use to evaluate others. There are many other categories, such as gender, skin color, other physical features, etc. However, as Derwing et al. (2014, 66) emphasize, society has become more aware of prejudices based on these categories and is more prepared to guard vulnerable groups against them compared to accent prejudices. Especially regarding the US

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context, researchers argue that following increasingly tighter anti-discrimination laws in the US, more subtle ways for exclusion have been created, and language and accent have become an acceptable excuse to discriminate (Gluszek and Dovidio 2010). As Zuidema (2005, 666) argues, linguistic prejudice is an 'acceptable' American prejudice; assumptions are made about the others' intelligence, competence, morality, etc. based on how they speak. Teachers, employers and landlords assume that a person whose first language is English might be a better student, employee or tenant than another person who speaks English with a non-native accent. Accordingly, these assumptions do not remain inconsequential thoughts, but turn into active discrimination.

As Lipi-Green (2011, 67) states,

When an individual is asked to reject their own language, we are asking them to drop allegiances to the people and places that define them. We do not, cannot under our laws, ask a person to change the color of her skin, her religion, her gender, her sexual identity, but we regularly demand of people that they suppress or deny the most effective way they have of situating themselves socially in the world.

In other words, native speakers very often demand too easily that foreigners shift from their own language to another one, ignoring the complex and deeply rooted meanings of native language for individuals. In addition to discussing the desirability of an immediate language and accent shift, we can also question how doable it is. Researchers often refer to a *critical period* for second language acquisition (Vanhove, 2013). According to the critical period hypothesis, there is a critical period for attainment of second language and, beyond the critical period, people cannot achieve native-like competence in their second language.[1] Researchers argue that there is enough evidence to support the argument that there is an age-based limitation on the attainment of proficiency in a second language (Patkowski 1990). Therefore, if we consider the widely accepted notion that learning a second language after early childhood almost inevitably leads to non-native accent and speech that is different from the speech of native speakers (Tahta et al. 1981; Scovel 1988; Flege et al. 1995; Munro et al. 2006), expecting people to drop their L2 accent is almost like expecting them to change the color of their skin. It is unrealistic to expect a person who learned English as an adult to speak like a native speaker of English (Ingram 2009). However, it is rarely recognized as such, and differential treatment based on L2 accent is not considered as discrimination by many. As Akomolafe (2013) argues, of the major types of discrimination, accent discrimination is the one that gets the least attention.

Munro (2003) discusses the probable reasons behind negative reactions to foreign accents. The first possibility he discusses is *accent stereotyping*, where one's prejudice against a certain group is triggered when that person hears speech patterns associated with that group. The second possibility is that some people find accented speech unintelligible or difficult to comprehend. While he evaluates this second argument, he stresses that there is, in fact, no reason to think that accented language is typically difficult to understand, since 'an objection to accents on the grounds that they are unintelligible may sometimes have more to do with an unwillingness to accommodate differences in one's interlocutors than with a genuine concern about comprehension' (Munro 2003, 40). Munro (2003) looks at human rights cases that involve language-related issues in Canada and argues that, in most of those cases, the notion of accent was crucial. In his study, he identifies three types of accent discrimination: discrimination in hiring decisions, discrimination in employment and tenancy and harassment based on accented speech (Munro 2003).

What forms can non-native accent discrimination take in the context of the US? In the US, a person's intellectual ability is often evaluated based on his/her ability to speak 'standard English', and people who speak with foreign accents can be subject to negative evaluation and discrimination (Ingram 2009). Nguyen (1993), with reference to the US context, also argues that employers use claims of 'unintelligible English' to not hire accented but qualified applicants. She also reminds the fact that courts have recognized how discrimination against accent may function as the equivalent of discrimination against national origin, a violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Nguyen 1993, 1327). Some studies focus on the effects of non-native accents on employment-related decisions in the US (Hosoda and Romero 2010; Deprez-Sims and Morris 2010), which demonstrate that accent can have an impact on evaluations of an applicant's suitability for a job. What do we know about the extent of accent-focused discrimination in the US? Lippi-Green (1997, 153) mentions a statistical study of a stratified random sample of employers nationwide where 10 percent of the sample, or 461,000 companies, that employ millions of people openly disclosed

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that they 'discriminated on the basis of a person's foreign appearance or accent'. Although there is a need for further large-scale studies on the subject, this gives an idea about the extent of accent discrimination in the US.

Some researchers also argue that there is *differential accent discrimination* in the US (Holmes 1992; Quinn and Petrick 1993). This means that, in the evaluation of the accent, speaker's non-native status is not the only applicable issue; perceptions about the speaker's particular group or nationality can also be pertinent (Lindemann 2003). While the stigmatized identifier of using 'broken' English is used for non-native accents, this category may not necessarily apply to Western European accents (Lindemann 2005). Some non-native accents are considered high-status, whereas others are regarded as low-status. Low-status accents are usually thought of as difficult to comprehend and signaling incompetence, while high-status accents are evaluated as easy to understand and indicative of competence (Quinn and Petrick 1993; Matsuda 1991; Goto 2008). In the context of the US, a person with a high-status British accent will be regarded as well educated and upper class (Quinn and Petrick 1993) while French accents will be considered 'cute' (Lippi-Green 1997). In contrast, Hispanic, African and Eastern European accents will be considered negatively (Valles 2015). Individuals who speak English with a low-status foreign accent are more prone to accent discrimination (Akomolafe 2013; Valles 2015).

## Turkish Highly-Skilled Migrants in the US

This chapter highlights some findings of a broader research project about return migration of highly skilled Turkish migrants who lived in either the US or Germany, and then returned back to Turkey. In a previous paper (Yilmaz 2019), I discussed the findings of this research project with respect to discrimination perceptions of these two groups of returnees. According to these findings, returnees from Germany thought they experienced ethnic discrimination, and discrimination was a major reason behind their return, while returnees from the US did not mention discrimination, and discrimination was not a reason for return for them. To explain the difference between these two contexts, I used Alba's (2005) distinction between bright and blurry boundaries. I described Germany as a context that has bright ethnic boundaries for Turkish migrants even when we focus on a highly skilled group, whereas the US had blurry ethnic boundaries for this group. Many of the highly skilled Turkish migrants who lived in the US argued that they faced difficulties because of the fact that they speak English with a foreign accent. However, they did not consider those difficulties as discrimination.

In this chapter, I focus on interviews with the respondents who lived in the US and, contrary to what they claimed, I argue that what they experienced can in fact be considered accent discrimination. By analyzing their responses to questions not only about language and accent, but also about their experiences in the US, I aim to demonstrate how and why the instances that they described as the challenges of being a foreigner can be thought of as examples of accent discrimination. In parallel with the previous discussion of the literature on accent discrimination, I argue that the reason they do not think of these negative experiences as discrimination has to do with the fact that negative differential treatment based on foreign accent is rarely recognized as discrimination. Although they shared their negative experiences related to foreign accent as events that made their life more difficult and made them unhappy, they either blamed themselves individually for those experiences, as they were 'unsuccessful' in dropping their accent, or they thought of it as a part of the 'inevitable burden' attached to being a foreigner.

As mentioned previously, this research concerns highly skilled migrants. We interviewed people who emigrated from Turkey with at least an undergraduate degree (in three cases as university exchange students), had further degrees and/or professional experience in the host country and stayed there for at least five years and then returned back to Turkey. We conducted the interviews in Turkey after their return. Most of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, although in a few cases, they were conducted on Skype. They were semi-structured, in-depth interviews in Turkish, which lasted 1.5 hours on average. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and translated into English by the author. We interviewed 40 returnees from the US. (We also interviewed 40 returnees from Germany. However, this chapter only focuses on the returnees from the US.) Our respondents were all over 20 years old at the time of their migration. The majority completed their secondary and high school education at institutions where the language of instruction was English, including private schools or competitive public schools, which accept students based on central, countrywide examinations. They also completed their university education at prestigious public or private universities, which instruct in English.

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Although, in many cases, interviewees demonstrated their proficiency in written English, through their Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) or Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) scores, they had all learned English after early childhood or after the *critical period*, and most had few experiences speaking English in daily life before migrating. In general, they had few international experiences before migrating. Consequently, most interviewees expressed difficulties speaking English, especially during their first years in the US. Rather than the academic language with which they were familiar thanks to their education in Turkey, they found the language of everyday life more challenging during this initial period. Below are three responses about the challenge of using English in everyday life during the initial stage.

My English was good. I received my education at *Kadikoy Anadolu Lisesi*[2] and *Bogazici University*[3] afterwards... I was pretty good at writing and reading, but I was not that good at speaking. During the first two years, I can say, I had some problems related to speaking. In terms of both expressing myself and also making myself understood by others... It was challenging for me because we were not practicing English in Turkey. Especially after the first three years, I started feeling more confident... I had never gone abroad before this experience.

My business English was good. But to be more fluent in the language of everyday life, you need to know those simple words... Like tweezers... It was a word that I had never used in English previously. After living there, you learn the name for it when you need to buy tweezers. Do you know when I realized that I became fluent in English? The TV was on in the living room and I was cooking in the kitchen. But I could follow the conversations on TV easily, as if they were in Turkish.

Before going to the US, the level of my English was in fact advanced. I had an internet-based TOEFL score of 113 out of 120. But, you know, as is common for many Turks, I did not find myself so good when it came to speaking. There were times when I had issues in everyday conversations, especially during the first years. Sometimes because of the idioms that they use, other times because of the accent... But except that, for instance in writing, I did not have problems.

According to the accounts of our interviewees, although it created problems during the first period of their stay, the challenge of becoming familiar with everyday language and becoming fluent in using it was something that they could overcome. It was a problem that they could work on and solve. There was a need to gain more information about the cultural context, but for a person who was open to learning, it was possible to eventually get familiar with new ways of doing things. However, as some of them discussed during the interviews, 'the problem of accent' was not something that they could solve. After a while, they realized that how they were perceived when they spoke with a non-native accent was important in terms of positioning them, but they had little control over their accent even if they wanted to change it.

When I first went to the US, there were some very simple idioms or sayings that I did not know. However, I think that was a problem only at the very beginning. In a pretty short period, it is possible to overcome the challenges related to understanding what others are saying. Another dimension is about the pace of your speech. That can also be solved relatively fast. If you have a tendency to speak a lot, or if you are brave enough, you can also solve that quickly. But you cannot solve the problem of accent. You cannot change it. That is, in fact, what it means to be American or to speak like an American... If you speak with the same accent, with the same pace as an American, then you can be accepted... The critical distinction was not about being Turkish or being something else, but it was mostly about whether or not you can have those conversations with the same accent, with the same pace. That is what we cannot do.

This person feels that as a foreigner, he can only feel accepted in the US if he can speak English without a foreign accent. However, he also came to the realization that one cannot change his/her accent easily. In this context, while changing one's accent or solving the 'problem of accent' becomes the condition of being accepted, it is also unachievable. Defined as such, it is easy to see how it can be the source of a lot of frustration. In another example, many years after her return, one interviewee still blamed herself for not having been able to drop her accent. She was still reflecting on what she could have done to 'solve that problem'.

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I had many problems related to my accent, yes... As I had an accent, there was the problem of incomprehensibility. I wish I could have taken some courses... Courses on accent reduction for instance... Maybe it would have been useful for being understood.

The accent came to be understood as the main sign of foreignness. According to these respondents, their foreignness was not necessarily something that others could immediately recognize based on their physical appearance. It became identifiable when they started speaking:

The level of my English was advanced when I went to the US. I knew the language pretty well, I think... In Turkey, I'd had all my classes in English up to the completion of my Master's degree. [In the US,] I did not find the academic life challenging. However, when it came to the language of everyday life... Even to have a conversation at a restaurant... You need to get used to it. And the biggest challenge about speaking was the accent. When they look at you from the outside, they don't necessarily understand that you are a foreigner. However, at the moment you open your mouth and say something... You are a foreigner; you have an accent. I didn't like the fact that I could never be ordinary. It is not like racism or hostility to foreigners but... They lump you in another category. In that sense, after that point, you can never be ordinary. It's like, in terms of appearance, you are one of them. But when you start speaking, it becomes obvious that you are not one of them.

This quotation is important in many ways. First, it tells us how this respondent perceives the distinctions between 'us' and 'them' in the context of the US. He thinks that his physical appearance does not necessarily mark him as different from the members of mainstream society. According to his understanding, for American people, the distinction is especially based on whether or not one speaks English with a foreign accent. If we rephrase this using Goffman's (1963) vocabulary, non-native accent was the aspect that stigmatized them. Accent was what made it impossible for them to be 'normal'. Once native speakers hear the accent, the person was identified as the Other, which from then on made it impossible to be an 'ordinary person'; one is put into that other category of 'the foreigner'.

Respondents who lived in smaller towns or cities, which were less cosmopolitan, talked about having experienced even bigger problems in social life because of speaking English with a foreign accent. As the locals had limited experience interacting with people from other countries, their foreign accent became a significant barrier in everyday communication. However, according to the perception of our respondents, this barrier was not necessarily related to comprehension. Many of them talked about how they could successfully communicate with other international people in English during their stay in the US. They all spoke English as a second (or third or fourth) language, and they all had their different, peculiar accents. However, using English as a medium, they were able to communicate with each other effectively. According to some of our respondents, the problem about communicating with Americans in English was related to the fact that Americans 'did not want to understand' people who spoke English with non-native accents. This is in parallel with Munro's (2003) argument about the intelligibility and comprehensibility of accented speech, which I discussed in the previous sections: The objection to accented speech on the grounds that 'it is unintelligible seems to have more to do with an unwillingness to accommodate differences'. It seems to have less to do with a genuine concern about comprehension.

Accent was a problem. With international friends, it was not an issue. But with Americans, it was a totally different story... This is the thing about Americans: they see it as their right not to understand you if you are speaking with an accent. They claim that they don't understand you. This really annoyed me both at the university and also outside. At the university, we were teaching, we were interacting with students. At the end of each semester, I got the same comment on evaluations: 'He has a very strong accent. We don't understand people who have accents, why do we have them as instructors' and such... Always the same kinds of comments... Economics is not like, for instance, philosophy. I don't need to lecture for hours. I solve problems, and then I explain the solutions with simple terminology. If you catch the terms, you will easily understand. But still, we always used to get the same types of comments.

He believes that in the case of the students who complained about his accent, there was not a sincere interest in communicating or a sincere effort to understand what he was explaining. How the students phrased their comments on the evaluation forms, putting it as 'he has a strong accent' also provides a hint that the students saw it as their

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right to criticize accented English. They mentioned a fact almost as a defect. This respondent was not the only one who got the comment that 'he has an accent' on student evaluation forms. As mentioned earlier, many of our respondents went to the US for graduate degrees and worked as teaching assistants, instructors or professors during their studies and afterwards. Depending on their accounts, getting the comment that one has an accent as a criticism from students seems to be a common experience.

## Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper, I focused on non-native accent discrimination in the US, a type of discrimination that is not usually considered discrimination by the public and that has been a rather neglected subject in the sociological literature. Benefiting from the works of especially linguists, I argued that the notion of not having an accent is a myth, and for those people who learn a second language after the critical period, it is almost impossible not to have an L2 accent and to speak that language in the same way as a native speaker. Next, depending on Goffman's (1963) arguments on stigma, I discussed how non-native accent can function as a basis for stigma. Moreover, depending on the literature, I also discussed how non-native accent can be a basis for discrimination, especially in the context of the US. Next, depending on our empirical research with highly skilled Turkish return migrants from the US, I tried to demonstrate what kind of difficulties or problems they had in the US related to speaking English as a second language and speaking it with an L2-accent. Our respondents had certified proficiency in English before their migration. However, having learned English during later years, not when they were kids, and not having spoken it in everyday life before their migration to the US as adults, they did not have native-level fluency and had a non-native accent. Referring to their narratives, I discussed the ways their non-native accent functioned as a marker of their difference, and what kind of problems it created for them.

One important question to ask at this point is whether the problems related to non-native accent narrated by our respondents can be considered examples of discrimination. As Altman (2011) discusses, although there are some disagreements about the definition of discrimination, it is possible to say that 'discrimination consists of acts, practices or policies that impose a relative disadvantage on persons based on their membership in a salient social group.' With its emphasis on *salience*, this definition suggests that groups based on, for instance, race, gender and religion can be potential grounds of discrimination, while groups based on, for instance, 'length of toe nails' would not count. Additionally, the definition of discriminatory conduct also indicates that it creates some kind of disadvantage or harm for those at whom it is directed. This disadvantage or harm is determined relative to a comparison group.

According to this definition, I argue that the accent-related problems that our respondents mentioned during the interviews can be considered examples of discrimination, although most respondents did not think of them as discriminatory conduct. Their non-native accent positioned them in this salient social category of the *foreigner* (or maybe a foreigner with a low-status foreign accent) which put them in a disadvantaged position relative to those who speak with native accents or high-status foreign accents. As highly skilled migrants who left Turkey with at least undergraduate degrees, they were accepted to graduate programs or professional jobs based on both their subject-area competence and certified proficiency in English. However, even after getting used to speaking English in everyday life, they were treated differently relative to the comparison group of native speakers because of an aspect that they cannot in fact change, as the critical period argument suggests. This differential treatment led to disadvantages in their lives. Consequently, the experiences they mentioned count as discrimination based on non-native accent.

How can we explain the fact that our respondents did not name these negative experiences as discrimination? First, like many other people, our respondents did not think that negative differential treatment based on accent would count as discrimination. They were thinking of discrimination as related to more well-known categories, such as race or gender. Additionally, when they noticed that they were assessed or treated negatively because of the kind of accent they had, they blamed themselves for 'not having been able to' drop their accent and speak 'without accent'. Some of them eventually came to the realization that it is not achievable to speak in the same way as a native speaker if one migrates after a certain age. However, they had mixed feelings, and this realization seemed to exist together with self-blame. Furthermore, in general, it is very hard to be sure about or prove discrimination if it does not take the form of direct confrontation, and in many instances, it does not take that form. Therefore, in most other

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cases, people just 'have a feeling' that they are treated negatively. Based on such vague feelings, people hesitate to call those experiences discrimination.

The fact that one is being discriminated against can position that person as a victim, and many people do not prefer to be seen as victims. Consequently, while responding to the questions of a researcher about whether they were discriminated against during their time in the US, they may not necessarily want to reconstruct their past as a painful one and name their experiences as discrimination. I also argue that being highly educated people who are used to perceiving themselves as having a high status, they do not want to situate themselves as having been in a disadvantaged position as migrants in the US, based on their own perception of situations.[4] While considering their negative experiences as 'problems' that happened once in a while is easier, naming them as 'discrimination' means attributing to them a more structural, permanent nature. Many of our respondents seemed to be unwilling to position themselves as having been exposed to such continuous negative treatment. Further studies that reflect on why migrants (as well as other groups of people) avoid naming differential treatment directed at them as discrimination can help us better understand the dynamics of this phenomenon.

## Notes

[1] For debates on the critical period hypothesis, see Penfield and Roberts (1959), Lenneberg (1967), Singleton and Lengyel (1995), Birdsong (1999), Scovel (2000), Bailey et al. (2001), Hakuta et al. (2003) and Singleton (2005).

[2] A prestigious public high school in Istanbul that gives education in English. Students are placed at the school according to their scores from a central nationwide exam.

[3] A major research university in Istanbul. It was founded in 1863 as Robert College and was the first American higher education institution founded outside the US.

[4] Although the findings of interviews with the highly skilled returnees from Germany are not discussed in this paper, it is important to stress that the responses of those respondents were strikingly different. Most of them stated that they were discriminated against in several different spheres. When the negative encounters take the form of direct confrontation and one has a large number of such experiences repeatedly, which seems to be the case for Turkish migrants in Germany, the person more readily accepts them as discrimination.

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