

Extensive International Experience and Attitudes towards Minorities: A Case Study of Dutch Attitudes towards Syrian Migrants.

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Abstract

Diversification and diversity have become common practice in modern-day societies. Due to technological advances, new modes of global mobility and information sharing have facilitated migration. Some of the issues migrants have been, and still are, facing in new social environments have to do with discrimination and incomprehension of values and behaviours. However, previous research suggests that interaction with different cultures can be beneficial for understanding, accepting and respecting differences between cultures (Allport, 1954; Caligiuri, Jacobs & Farr, 2000; Stemler, Imada & Sorkin, 2015; Holliday, 2016). Using a contrastive approach of quantitative data, this study aims to investigate whether an *extensive international experience* (EIE) has an effect on the attitudes held towards migrants through increased intercultural competencies learned in a foreign context. The present study specifically focuses on the attitudes held by Dutch citizens towards Syrian migrants. A total of 110 participants completed a self-assessment survey that measured the attitudes by means of a 7-point Likert scale. In addition, participants were asked whether they had been on an *extensive international experience*, and, if so, information was gathered on where they had been, the duration and purpose of their stay, the number of instances they had undertaken an EIE and whether they had learned the local language during their stay. In accordance with the main hypothesis, the EIE participants group showed a more positive attitude towards Syrian migrants. Moreover, participants who had learned the local language during an EIE held an even more positive attitude towards Syrian migrants.

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1. Introduction

International migration has developed rapidly ever since the political climate became more stable after the cold war (Blommaert, 2018). Additionally, technological advances have enabled and simplified digital information sharing and global mobility connecting the global community (Messelink & Ten Thije, 2012). Due to these developments, migration streams emerged from more places to more places and, consequently, societies have been diversifying (Vertovec, 2007). These migrants move for various reasons, of which economic, political, family and, unfortunately, war and natural disasters are the most important. Immigrant groups tend to be a sensitive minority in society as they have to mediate between the old and new culture, and because they are often non-native speakers of the local language, if they speak it at all. Previous studies have already looked into outgroup matters, such as racism (Koole & Ten Thije, 1994; Amin, 2002), immigration (Hofstra, Oudenhoven & Buunk, 2005) and attitudes and behaviour towards migrants (Van Assche et al., 2014) or foreign countries (Carlson & Widaman, 1988). Outgroup discrimination is often based on prejudices, stereotypes or incomprehension of cultural factors and behaviour (Koole & Ten Thije, 1994; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009, p. 131). Other factors may include demographic features such as skin colour, language, and religion (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009; Stokoe & Edwards, 2007). Nonetheless, the *contact hypothesis* argues that interaction with different cultures can be beneficial for understanding, accepting and respecting differences between cultures (Allport, 1954; Holliday, 2016; Nyaupane, Teye & Paris, 2008; Caligiuri, Jacobs & Farr, 2000). Culture is a term with a broad spectrum of definitions, as it is discussed and interpreted differently across a variety of fields of study (Holliday, 2000; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009; Ten Thije, 2016). Generally, culture is understood as a system of shared habits, beliefs and values of a national group (Dervin, 2006), as most people are likely to share a stable and dominant culture (Nyaupane et al., 2008: p. 653). In the field of non-essentialist intercultural communication, however, it is believed that overemphasising ethnic culture may endorse racist assumptions (Andreotti, 2011). Culture is rather seen as a fluid concept encompassing various micro-, meso- and macro cultures, which shapes everybody differently and lets us interpret and describe the world accordingly (For a discussion on culture see Holliday, 2000; 2012).

Communication between individuals with culturally diverse backgrounds can be facilitated through intercultural competencies based on an individual's knowledge, skills and attitudes (Ten Thije, 2016; Stemler et al., 2015; Zhu, 2019; Deardorff, 2006). Recent literature has mainly focused on training and developing intercultural competencies in classroom settings (Najar, 2016; Deardorff, 2011; Taylor & Henao, 2006), training sessions (Finlay & Stephan, 2000), or educational exchange programmes (Stemler et al., 2015; Messelink, Van Maele & Spencer-Oatey, 2015; Nyaupane et al., 2008; Cohen et al., 2005; Carlson & Widaman, 1988). However, attitudes towards migrant groups have not yet been linked to intercultural competencies acquired through an *extensive international experience* (EIE). This term is introduced to refer to an international work, education and/or travel experience in a foreign country for a duration of at least 1 month. The term "EIE" will be further elaborated upon in

chapter 2. This paper aims to study whether an EIE has an effect on the attitudes of Dutch citizens towards Syrian migrants. Furthermore, this study will focus on the effect of *foreign language acquisition* (FLA), which in this paper refers to both natural acquisition and instructed learning, in the corresponding foreign setting on the attitudes towards Syrian migrants. Moreover, the influence of frequency of EIEs, cumulative duration of EIE in months, type of EIE (work, education, travels or a combination) and cultural distance of the target countries will be explored. Experiences of working or studying abroad have generally been linked to attitudes towards the respective visited civilisation or country, rather than an outgroup or minority unrelated to the foreign country. Therefore, a new study exploring this phenomenon is needed to provide insights on this issue. Moreover, the data could be valuable to non-governmental organisations and governmental institutions dealing with migration issues, as the data may aid them by hiring more suitable employees. Moreover, employees with intercultural competences are very valuable assets to international organisations (Miller, 2015; Stemler et al., 2015). The recent influx of immigrants from Syria has had extensive media coverage in both International and Dutch media. This exposure, as well as the recency and actuality, of the migration stream make the Syrian migrants a distinctive conceptual minority group.

In the first section of this paper the changing migration patterns and their consequences through Vertovec's concept of super-diversity (2007) in relation to Allport's (1954) *contact hypothesis* will be discussed. Next, a discussion of intercultural competencies is presented, which will be linked to contextual learning and FLA. In line with the theoretical framework, hypotheses of the research questions will be presented. A survey was conducted to gather quantitative data, which will be discussed in the methodology chapter. The analysis and results chapter will present and discuss the data in light of the research questions and hypotheses. Lastly, the study's implications will be discussed and suggestions for further research will be provided.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Super-diversity, Intergroup Interaction and the Contact Hypothesis

In his paper on super-diversity, Vertovec (2007) discusses how growing migration patterns from all over the world result in super-diverse environments. The influx and fusion of different religions, languages, Socio-Economic Statuses (SES) and other variables have created a new level of socio-cultural diversity: super-diversity. Vertovec specifically discusses the case of London, but suggests that in many other metropolises, such as New York, this phenomenon is also present. Additionally, Blommaert (2018) demonstrates that super-diversification also takes place in more rural regions and cities such as Oostende, Belgium, be it at a more moderate scale. The new immigration influxes have had an impact on several socio-cultural aspects, creating new patterns of inequality and prejudice, segregation and new experiences through intercultural contact (Vertovec 2007: 1046). Vertovec reports an increase in segregation of several immigrant groups and nascent racism directed against British ethnic minorities amongst newcomers. He therefore challenges the social psychological school of thought of the *contact hypothesis* (Allport, 1954), which suggests that “regular contact between groups may mutually reduce prejudice and increase respect” (Vertovec, 2007: 1045). Interestingly, studies on the *contact hypothesis* report varying results (Van Assche et al., 2014; Nyaupane et al., 2008). Indeed, various studies suggest that interaction with different cultures can be beneficial for mutual understanding and accepting differences between cultures, which may lead to changing attitudes and behaviours towards other cultures, but only under the right conditions: equal status of the interlocutors and their respective cultures, sharing a common goal, voluntary cooperation and institutional support (Holliday, 2016; Stemler et al., 2015; Bastian, Lusher & Ata. 2012; Lough, 2011). On the other hand, Vertovec argues that regular contact with (other) minorities may result in mutual fear, anxiety and competition due to the superficial nature of interactions in which these requirements are not met. Indeed, Amin (2002), underlines that habitual intergroup contact does not guarantee any cultural exchange or appreciation. Notwithstanding the success of multi-ethnic neighbourhoods, Amin argues that real intergroup contact occurs in society’s micropublics, such as sports, music and higher education, where favourable conditions are facilitated through passion and joint effort. Given that habitual interaction itself does not necessarily increase intergroup relations, Dixon et al. (2010) argue that quality of interaction is much more important than quantity.

Dixon et al. (2010) studied the perceived discrimination in South Africa from “Blacks” by “Whites” and found that quantity of contact does not determine perceived personal or group discrimination very strongly. Instead, the quality of contact between “Blacks” and “Whites” did strongly correlate with these discrimination categories. Profound intergroup interactions have been found to lower perceived discrimination and therefore implies that positive intergroup interactions strongly determine the way they think about discrimination situations. The relationship between

intergroup interaction, appreciation and respect is thus not as clear cut as the *contact hypothesis* may suggest. According to Dixon et al. (2010), personal experience and racial attitudes are important factors mediating intergroup interactions. To no surprise, having cross-group friendships reduces avoidance of the specific outgroup the friend belongs to (Bastian et al., 2012; Pettigrew, 1997). Other studies suggest that social distance (Bastian et al., 2012; Vescio, Sechrist & Paolucci, 2003), authoritarianism (Van Assche et al., 2014) cross-group commonalities (Saguy & Chernyak-Hai, 2012; Holliday, 2016) and societal segregation (Vertovec, 2007; Amin, 2002) are other factors which affect intergroup relations and communications positively or negatively.

2.2 Intercultural Competencies

Through the new super-diverse social environment, intergroup contact has become daily practice and, according to the *contact hypothesis*, it should facilitate respect, acceptance and abolish prejudices if the required conditions are met. However, these conditions are seldom met in superficial interaction and mere intergroup contact does therefore not necessarily bear this result. In order to achieve successful everyday communication between culturally diverse people, Vertovec (2007) calls on the need for the development of theories on intercultural competencies. According to Trede, Bowles & Bridges (2013), the term intercultural competencies denotes “dispositions and capabilities rather than measurable skills” (p. 443). In an attempt to define the constitutes of the concept of intercultural competence, Deardorff (2006) conducted a Delphi study among top intercultural scholars and academic administrators. Deardorff found that, within Anglophone western academics, a wide variety of opinions and definitions exists for the specific components of intercultural competence. However, the top three common elements found in all definitions were valuing and understanding cultural differences, experiencing other cultures, and awareness of one’s own culture (p. 247). However, according to Stemler et al. (2015), there is an academic consensus on the broader elements that characterise an intercultural competent individual, namely: “knowledge (e.g., cultural knowledge, self-awareness), attitudes (e.g., openness, respect, valuing others), and skills (e.g., listening, analysing, language)” (p. 26). Indeed, Deardorff (2004) and Ten Thije (2016) also argue that knowledge, skills and attitudes are the three core components of intercultural competencies. According to the Process Model of Intercultural Competence (Deardorff, 2006), intercultural competencies grow over time through new knowledge of the self and the other, as well as reflection of the values and behaviours of the self and other to achieve effective communication. Therefore, learning intercultural competencies, in the form of knowledge, attitudes and skills, can be seen as an iterative process through reflection and evaluation (Trede et al., 2013; Deardorff, 2011): the more effective intercultural interaction takes place, the more interculturally competent an individual will become.

Attitudes towards outgroups are the foundation of intergroup behaviour and intercultural competencies (Deardorff, 2011). Several studies have focused on specific aspects of attitudes, such as

respect and curiosity, that facilitate intercultural or intergroup communication. For example, Caligiuri et al. (2000) and Deardorff (2006; 2011) argue that the character trait openness facilitates acceptance of cultural diversity, as individuals who have this trait are more open to other ideas, norms and values (Caligiuri et al., 2000, p. 28). According to Tomasello, Kruger & Ratner (1993) as well as Stemler et al. (2015), the ability to recognise the perspective of another is “a key characteristic of intercultural competence” (Stemler et al., 2015: p. 40). Moreover, as synthesised by Finlay & Stephan (2000), empathy seems to be a key factor to the success of improving intergroup relations. Specifically, in intergroup relation training programmes, perspective taking is actively engaged through role-playing activities, and relates to empathy as follows:

The process of actively playing the role of out-group members involves efforts to take the perspective of others, and it can elicit affective reactions that cause people to experience [cognitive] dissonance (McGregor, 1993; Smith, 1990). This dissonance then motivates people to modify their attitudes in order to reduce the inconsistency between their current behaviors and their previous attitudes (Festinger, 1957, as cited in Finlay & Stephan, 2000, p. 1721).

This friction between the affective and cognitive aspect of empathy, is an important component of perspective taking. Through the mediation of a cognitive dissonance and the affective reactions elicited by empathy, behaviours and traits are reflected upon, resulting in adjusted behaviour. Because minority positions and perspectives are often overlooked, experiencing such a societal status and reflecting upon it can be of great value in adjusting attitudes towards minorities.

Vescio, Sechrist & Paolucci (2003) argue that empathy and perspective taking are mechanisms that facilitate improved intergroup relations and attitudes. Perspective taking encourages the perceiver to explain behaviours and attitudes from an outgroup as if it were encompassing the self. The process of perspective taking leads to increased identification of the self with the outgroup through the arousal of empathy (Vescio et al., 2003; Pettigrew, 1997). Interestingly, it is argued that empathy arousal transcends the “cognitive barriers operating against improved intergroup attitudes” (Vescio et al., 2003, p. 456). Consistent with this notion, Vescio et al. (2003) provided evidence that the type of outgroup is irrelevant if the participant was empathetic towards the study-object. Despite the internal consistency of the empathy constructs in their study, Vescio et al. do not consider the discrepancy of participants who demonstrate high levels of empathy and those showing low empathy. A difference in empathy levels between participants may be explained due to differences in natural traits as well as trained intercultural competency skills that affect outgroup attitudes. Moreover, the study has a skewed participant pool with 78% being female. Other studies have suggested that women have a greater disposition towards empathy and attitudes (Stemler et al., 2015; Carlson & Widaman, 1988), which may have influenced the outcomes of the study. Nonetheless, Vescio et al. (2003) argue that perspective taking has been shown to promote cognition on intergroup commonalities, postponement and decrease

of stereotyping and improved intergroup attitudes. Peoples' attitudes towards another social group are therefore strongly determined by intercultural competencies such as the ability to empathise with and take on the perspective of an outgroup.

2.3 Contextual Learning

To help students become competent global citizens, intercultural learning pedagogy aims to teach and develop students' attitudes, skills and behaviour. Awareness and sensitivity to differences and diversity of the self and the other "enable[s] them to understand international experiences from new perspectives and to transform their perceptions and identity in this process" (Trede et al., 2013, p. 452). Intercultural competencies have gained considerable importance in education programmes, as more programmes implement intercultural learning aspects in their curricula (Najar, 2016; Stemler et al., 2015). Not only is the concept of global citizenship gaining importance for international industries (Miller, 2015), but universities are also educating more international students every year (Gürüz, 2011 in Stemler et al., 2015). As Trede et al. (2013) point out, most students and curricula lack the urgency and capacity of critical self-awareness, reflection and socio-political cultural preparation. Even though studying in a culturally or ethnically diverse environment stimulates complex thinking and global citizenship and has positive effects beyond "simply studying about diversity" (Stemler et al., 2015, p. 27), intercultural competencies are only developed marginally in the context of formal instruction (p. 28). Various studies suggest intercultural competencies are best developed in the context of a foreign experience (Najar, 2016; Stemler et al., 2015; Bhabha, 1990). From an interactionist point of view, new knowledge, behaviours and attitudes can only be fully acquired, learned and formed in context through natural reflection of cultures and interactions as well as adjusting to the socio-cultural settings.

When two different cultures interact, a third space of unified cultures is created. Bhabha (1990) suggests with his *Third Space Theory* that cultural assimilation, the process of two cultural aspects assimilating into one, takes place when someone is exposed to a new or another culture than his/her own. According to Bhabha's theory, (un)conscious reflection takes place as a result of this interaction. Due to the hybridity of the cultural interaction, a process of identity reflection and construction is put in motion and, according to the Process Model of Intercultural Competence (Deardorff, 2006), this results in attuning pre-existing knowledge, behaviours and attitudes to the new-found insights. Bhabha's *Location of Culture* (1994) precluded this model, as he argued that migration strongly influences the self-perception of migrants on vast categories. These include gender, religion and nationality, as they need to be revisited and reflected upon on account of the aforementioned collision with the new cultural environment (Bignotti, 2019). Through the cultural assimilation, a hybrid identity and culture come into existence. That being said, Holliday (2016) challenges Bhabha's notion of cultural assimilation in a Third Space and suggests an additive outcome of intercultural communication in the form of adaptation or integration of cultural aspects. According to Holliday, a cultural encounter does not result in cultural

assimilation, because it, as described by Bhabha (1990), purports the assimilation of parts of the other culture in interaction; thus “resulting in some loss of this identity” (Holliday, 2016, p. 319). Instead, Holliday argues that intercultural contact goes beyond the *Third Space*, by seeking commonalities (threads) in intergroup contact rather than essentialist traits (blocks). In line with Allport (1954), equality and mutual interest facilitate cultural threads. Through the focus on commonalities, mutual understanding and acceptance is created (p. 321). In this sense, crossing boundaries, literally and figuratively, enables cultural threads to be woven between interlocutors and their respective cultural identities. Therefore, participating in an intercultural situation contributes to improving intercultural competences.

The importance of context and interaction is also stipulated by Najar (2016). Through her criticism on the neglect of contextual factors of the physical world in intercultural learning – the ability to gain, adjust and apply cultural and linguistic knowledge in real-time communication (Messelink & Ten Thije, 2012, p. 81) –, an appeal is made to consider the practices of intercultural learners. Using the spatial theory - “a field of study in which the role of context and location is [...] discussed” (Najar, 2016, p. 150) -, Najar argues that physical space is a key factor in (intercultural) learning as it brings back the essence of intercultural learning through human practice, whereas, so far, studies mainly focused on language classroom settings or training sessions. The sociopolitical and geopolitical aspects of learning are often taken out of the equation in classroom settings, while collaboration and contextual learning facilitate more effective learning because this is where intercultural learning happens (Tomasello et al., 1993; Najar, 2016). By following and interviewing 26 international students in three countries, Najar aims to show the importance of context in intercultural and language teaching and learning, as they are subject to their environment due to their interactive and dynamic nature. Because the data of only one participant is presented, the paper fails to constructively link the interview to the proposed theory. However, the data presented does illustrate the importance of context and it is therefore argued that language and intercultural learning are best performed in their respective contexts (e.g. in a foreign context), as intercultural (language) learners have to “read” intercultural situations and “decipher the practices, sensory information and semiotic resources” (Najar, 2016, p. 157).

With the importance of contextual learning in mind, individuals who have spent time abroad and have engaged in intergroup interaction are expected to have increased intercultural competencies. This paper introduces the term *extensive international experience* (EIE), referring to a long-term independent going abroad experience. Lough (2011) emphasises that cultural learning is a continuous process resulting in a mild increase of intercultural competencies in short-term experiences, whereas longer experiences have a greater effect (p. 459). A foreign experience, according to the theory Lough provides, starts to produce significant differences at a one-month benchmark, where longer experiences should yield increased intercultural competencies. Besides the one-month benchmark, the purpose of an EIE is an important factor to consider. Whereas working and studying abroad nurture mutual

understanding and acceptance due to favourable conditions of the *contact hypothesis*, tourism does not necessarily bear this result. Nyaupane et al. (2008) report that earlier studies have seldomly shown an attitude change towards host or foreign countries due to tourism. Nonetheless, they argue that tourism provides millions of interactions between tourists and hosts, facilitating social and cultural awareness, understanding and acceptance. Nyaupane et al. acknowledge the importance of overcoming unequal economic factors, as well as “the typical superficial interactions between hosts and visitors” (p. 652) but overlook the imbalance of the power dynamics at play. Therefore, equal status of interlocutors, a prerequisite for Allport’s *contact hypothesis* (1954), cannot be achieved and profound positive intercultural experiences are unlikely to occur.

O’Reilly (2006) discusses the form of backpacker tourism as a mode of travelling beyond regular tourism. The independent and adventurous mode of travelling provides many intercultural interactions inside and outside the backpacking community. Moreover, O’Reilly carefully suggests that backpackers may have a shared worldview, as many have “the sense of having more in common with fellow travellers of different nationalities than with many fellow nationals” (p. 999). Due to the intercultural interactions backpackers have with fellow travellers and the local population, intercultural learning occurs. Accordingly, De Boer (2018) showed that individuals who had backpacked scored higher on intercultural competencies than those who had not done so. These self-initiated going abroad experiences are essential due to their unique qualities, including personal development, open predisposition towards other cultures and confronting real-life situations, inducing contextual learning. According to Messelink, Van Maele & Spencer-Oatey (2015), an international work or study experience provides more opportunities to confront, reflect and learn from intercultural encounters. Especially individuals who have spent numerous and longer periods abroad will benefit from an international experience, as “the first time can be a stressful experience” and intercultural learning opportunities “may be overshadowed by first-time anxiety” (p. 63). However, Lough (2011), argues that individuals who experienced severe stress due to the cultural differences were shown to be the most competent learners of intercultural competencies. In the process of learning intercultural competencies, greater exposure to a culturally different outgroup, i.e. western vs. non-western (cf. Huntington’s *Clash of Civilisations*, 1996), increases the amount of learning opportunities, which may lead to “greater understanding of an out-group culture” (p. 453). In contrast to tourism, working, studying and travelling abroad are situational factors aiding intercultural learning due to favourable conditions. Thus, learning in context allows people to bring their own cultural identity from one place to another, where cultural identity will be mediated, through language and interaction, with the cultural environment (Bhabha, 1990; Holliday, 2016).

2.4 Foreign Language Acquisition and the Conceptual Mind

Tong & Cheung (2011) argue that especially by learning the respective foreign mother tongue, institutional systems, spiritual values and cultural lifestyles are made accessible, as language is an important carrier of culture (p. 58-9). Language is not simply a practical tool that people use to communicate; it also facilitates the participation in a (foreign) society. To do so successfully, language needs to be attuned to the social and (inter)cultural environment (Stephan, 2015, p. 773), which evokes a great deal of knowledge of the (inter)cultural situation (Blacquièrè, 2019; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). The importance of language is also stipulated by Kramsch (1998) and Tong & Cheung (2011), who argue that it is through language we can express, embody and symbolise cultural identity and reality. Additionally, Martinovic & Altarriba (2012) argue that our knowledge of language(s) enables us to express ourselves through certain emotional labels and concepts, which are used to “identify, understand and label what we feel and how we can experience events” (p. 294). The acquisition of a new language in the corresponding social setting can therefore be challenging, as the language learner is placed in the position of a minority, having not fully mastered the foreign, majority language. Therefore, expressing ideas and emotions can be difficult and eventually lead to feelings of misunderstanding or even discriminated against due to the linguistic capacities or outsider status (Peirce, 1995). Indeed, it is through language that new speakers gain access to the target language’s society, providing them with speaking opportunities that facilitate growth of both linguistic and cultural skills.

The question arises whether *foreign language acquisition* (FLA) can be done without contextual learning, as language learning inherently entails a cognitive - such as vocabulary and grammar - and a social aspect - such as communication modes and cultural conventions (Tong & Cheung, 2011). Yet, most FLA is practiced by means of classroom instruction, often without any direct access to the target language culture nor with adequate language practice (Najar, 2016). Based on prior studies, second (or third) language acquisition (LX, where $X > 1$) has a bidirectional relation with the native language (L1) (Cook, 2003; Pavlenko & Jarvis, 2002). Interestingly, the influence of the bidirectional relation between languages appears to go beyond linguistic knowledge; it enriches the conceptual mind, thus enlarging an individual’s understanding of reality (Kesckes & Papp, 2003). This notion is well-known as the *principle of linguistic relativity*, or *Whorfian hypothesis* (Whorf, 1956), and suggests that the language(s) people speak influence(s) the way we understand and think about reality (Oostendorp, 2012). More specifically, it argues that some of the concepts embedded in languages are not universal (Oostendorp, 2012: p. 392). Although this view has been rejected by some (socio)linguistic studies, Jarvis & Pavlenko (2008), among others (Oostendorp, 2012; Kesckes & Papp, 2003; Bassetti & Cook, 2011), argue that language does play a crucial role in the understanding of certain worldly concepts, such as the conceptualisation of colours (Athanasopoulos, 2009), motion (Bylund & Athanasopoulos,

2013; 2015), space (Haun et al., 2011; Choi et al., 1999) time (Boroditsky, Fuhrman & McCormick, 2011), emotions (Martinovic & Altarriba, 2012), and objects (Lucy, 1992; Athanasopoulos, 2007).

Kesckes & Papp (2003) have introduced the existence of a *common underlying conceptual base* (CUCB), which is argued to be responsible for the conceptual operation of the two (or more) language channels (248). The influence and measurement of the CUCB is an issue, as it is difficult to demonstrate the effects of FLA on the conceptual mind, due to the fact that it is expressed linguistically. Nonetheless, Kesckes & Papp argue that the cognitive functioning acquired through one language system becomes readily accessible to other language channels. Similarly, the *conceptual transfer hypothesis* (CTH) (Byland & Jarvis, 2011) assumes that speakers of different languages have somewhat different patterns of conceptual categorisation and that these can be transferred and adopted from one language to another. Some studies have shown the effects of an additive conceptual mind through transfer, arguing that multilinguals who have learned a language in context show higher emotional sensitivity (Martinovic & Altarriba, 2012) and higher cognitive performance (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008).

Byland & Jarvis (2011) note that migrating from an L1 environment that distinguishes a certain contrast to an L2 environment where such contrasts are not regularly made, will result in reduced use of this type of distinction in the L1 (p. 50). Kesckes & Papp (2003) also argue that exposure to, and improving the proficiency of, (a) foreign language(s) can result in accommodating the conceptual system of the native language to the foreign language(s), expanding its comprehensibility. Athanasopoulos (2009) provides evidence for this notion in an inversed example: in his study on the perception of the colours *ble/ghalazio* (blue/light blue), two groups of Greeks were juxtaposed; those who had spent time in England, where this distinction is non-existent, and those who had not. Results showed the Greeks who had lived or worked in England had adjusted the perception of the Greek *ble/ghalazio* towards the English use of blue, having been influenced by the English conceptualisation of colours. An individual's understanding of reality can thus be enriched through FLA and its effect on the conceptual mind. The cognitive and emotional advantages of the enlarged conceptual mind may therefore affect an attitude, as they greatly influence the three dimensions: affective, cognitive and conative.

2.5 *The Present Study*

Unlike the *contact hypothesis* suggests, positive attitudes, behaviours and cognitions are not necessarily constructed through intergroup contact. Instead, intercultural competencies such as empathy and perspective taking, specifically the competencies acquired through contextual learning and language acquisition are factors that can influence attitudes, behaviours and cognitions. As argued in the theoretical framework, intergroup contact in a foreign country combines these factors and is

therefore likely to facilitate a more positive attitude towards other cultural groups, in this case Syrian migrants specifically.

Various researchers have already studied the effects of studying and working abroad with respect to attitudes towards other cultures or intercultural competency development (Stemler et al., 2015; Lough, 2011; Nyaupane et al., 2008; O'Reilly, 2006; Carlson & Widaman, 1988). Hence, Messelink et al. (2015) concisely propose that through experiences of studying and working abroad, an ample amount of intercultural learning opportunities will be encountered through real-life intercultural contact. The present study aims to discover whether there is an attitudinal difference towards Syrian immigrants between Dutch individuals who have spent more than one month abroad, and those who have not (Lough, 2011). The literature has yielded evidence that based on an EIE, through contextual learning and possibly language acquisition, an individual is more likely to have a positive attitude towards different cultures due to increased intercultural competencies.

2.6 Research Questions & Hypotheses

Based on the literature, the following research question has been designed:

RQ: To what extent is there an effect of an *extensive international experience* on the attitudes of Dutch individuals towards Syrian migrants?

Moreover, in order to better understand how an EIE affects the attitudes held, the following sub-questions take on different aspects that, according to the literature, may play a role in attitude shaping.

SQ 1: Does the acquisition of the local language during an EIE have an effect on the attitude held towards Syrian migrants?

SQ 2: Does the acquisition of the local language of an EIE have an effect on the attitude towards Syrian migrants within the subcategory of EIE participants?

SQ 3: Is there a correlation between the number of EIEs and attitudes held towards Syrian migrants?

SQ 4: Is there a correlation between the cumulative duration of EIEs (measured in weeks) and an attitude towards Syrian migrants?

SQ 5: Does the type of EIE (work, education, travel or a combination of these three) have an effect on the attitude towards Syrian migrants?

SQ 6: Does the cultural distance of target countries have an effect on the attitude towards Syrian migrants?

It is expected that EIE does have a positive effect on the attitudes of Dutch individuals towards Syrian migrants due to the real-life interactions with different cultural and social identities. Based on the literature, individuals who have an EIE are likely to have developed more intercultural competencies (Fantini, 2000; O'Reilly, 2006; Najar, 2011; Stemler et al., 2015). It is therefore expected that participants with an EIE will show more positive attitudes towards outgroups. Moreover, it is expected that language acquisition of the local language also affects the attitudes toward outgroups positively

(Tong & Cheung, 2011; Stemler et al., 2015; Athanosopoulos, 2009). Furthermore, frequency and cumulative duration of EIEs are expected to correlate positively with the attitude towards Syrian migrants (Lough, 2011; Stemler et al., 2015). Also, an exploratory ANOVA analysis should reveal whether any type of EIE (work, study or travels) has a stronger effect on the shaping of attitudes towards Syrian migrants. Finally, the cultural distance of an EIE destination visited, western vs. non-western cf. Huntington's *Clash of Civilisations* (1996), will be analysed to see whether an EIE in a non-western country entails greater learning opportunities, which should be palpable in a more positive attitude.

3. Methodology

The present study will make use of a survey (appendix A) in the form of a questionnaire in order to gather demographic and quantitative data. A contrastive approach and quantitative analysis were used in order to see whether an *extensive international experience* (EIE) affected the attitude towards immigrants. This methodological approach allows for statistical analyses of the data obtained in the form of independent T-tests, bivariate correlation analyses and an ANOVA test. Furthermore, future studies should include qualitative research methods in order to see if the EIEs in the perception of the participants have changed them and their attitudes. A mixed-methods approach would have been favourable for a more complete analysis of data (Dörnyei, 2007), however, the length of this study did not allow for both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis.

3.1. Participants

As the main research question of this study is whether EIE affects the attitudes of Dutch individuals, this study focused on individuals who are likely to have an informed opinion on Syrian migrants, by being part of the social, political and economic community. Because “older people” have “fewer experiences that induce attitude change” (Tyler & Schuller, 1991, p. 691), one of the parameters this study will limit itself to is the age group of participants, which is the age span of 18 – 67: the working population. Moreover, the participants had to have a Dutch passport, in order to guarantee the homogeneity of the participant group and prevent bias towards migration due to an individual’s own international status. Because this study has a comparative experimental nature, this study aimed to have at least 20 participants in both categories (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 99): those who met the criteria of an EIE and those who did not meet these criteria. After conducting a pilot study, the survey was spread using snowball and convenience sampling. This method was chosen in order to exploit the social circle of individuals with EIE, which is likely to contain individuals with similar experiences. Therefore, it must be kept in mind that this study might not be an accurate representation of the Dutch population. Also, several companies that are in contact with expats and students exchange programmes have been contacted and asked to share the survey with their network. A total of 147 participants replied to the survey, of which 32 participants were not eligible for the study due to incomplete surveys or ambiguous responses (31), age restrictions (5) or nationality (1).

3.2. Materials & Topic

The survey questions were constructed according to the three dimensions that shape an attitude: affective, cognitive and conative according to Hovland's *Learning Theory Model* (Hovland, Irving & Kelly, 1963) More recently, Reid (2007) also argued that there is a general consensus of these three constructs, commonly known as the ABC components (affective, behavioural, cognitive, Breckler, 1984; Stemler et al., 2015) that shape an attitude. For each construct, multiple statements were

formulated that aimed to measure the essence of the coherent attitude dimension. A number of seven affective, eight cognitive and six conative questions were designed to measure the attitude of Dutch individuals towards Syrian migrants. Participants had to respond to these statements by means of a 7-point Likert scale. The order of questions was generated randomly and the values of the Likert scale were clearly pre-determined to prevent misinterpretation. Furthermore, the survey inventories demographic data of the participants on age category, sex, which languages the participants spoke on a B1+ level (provided with a CEFR model as a guide), time spent abroad, in which country/countries this had been spent and for which goal (work/travels/study/immigration), and, lastly, whether they learned the locally spoken language.

The topic of Syrian migrants was chosen due to its frequent and relatively recent mediatisation. As a result of the extremist movement IS, a large-scale migration of Syrians moving towards the European Union and neighbouring countries started. The migration crisis had, and still has, great exposure in the international media. Therefore, the topic of Syrian migrants has been heavily discussed and clearly outlined and would not mix conceptually with other migration groups present in The Netherlands. Moreover, the migration stream tends to be homogeneous in the purpose of migrating.

3.3. Procedure

A questionnaire was designed using the Qualtrics survey tool. A pilot study was conducted to control for the internal coherence of the questions. In order to test the validity of the three attitude constructs, Cronbach's Reliability tests were performed. In both the cognitive and conative dimension one item had to be deleted due to a negative inter-item correlation. Upon consideration, the deleted conative question drew a response based on passive behaviour rather than active behaviour. Furthermore, the deleted cognitive question did not elicit a response based on Syrian migrants but based on The Netherlands, and thus drew a different response. The pilot study's Cronbach's alpha score sufficed for all three dimensions ($\alpha > 0.7$), namely: affective dimension ($\alpha = 0.868$; $n = 7$); cognitive dimension ($\alpha = 0.802$; $n = 7$), and the conative dimension ($\alpha = 0.828$, $n = 6$).

The final survey (appendix A) was divided into two main parts: the first part consisted of 6 demographic questions and the second part consisted of 20 7-point Likert scale-based questions. Before starting the study, a short introduction to the questionnaire, including a brief description of the topic, and a consent form were presented. Furthermore, after completing the main parts of the survey, the participants had the opportunity to leave comments concerning the study and received the researcher's gratitude.

The eligible 110 participants (73 female, 37 male; mean age = 32,1) were split into two groups based on the EIE condition: 51 were classified as not EIE and 59 were classified as EIE (table 1). Another reliability analysis was conducted to ensure the validity of the three dimensions, a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.82 was found for the affective dimension; 0.8 for the cognitive dimension and 0.77 for

the conative dimension (table 2). All dimensions met the 0.7 norm and were computed into a single variable of the means.

Table 1: Participants Frequencies

	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	Total
Female / male	73	37	110
Non-EIE / EIE	51	59	110

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Attitude Dimensions

	Cronbach's α	M	SD
Affective	.82	5.46	.86
Cognitive	.80	5.08	.82
Conative	.77	4.36	.96

4. Results & Analysis

This section will present the results of statistical tests performed on the selected data. First, an independent T-test was performed to test the main research question: is there an effect of EIE on the attitudes held by Dutch individuals towards Syrian migrants (table 3).

Table 3. Independent T-test of Extensive International Experience and Attitude Dimensions

	EIE	<i>n</i>	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Conditions	Significance (2-tailed)
Affective	Yes	59	5.64	.82	$t(108) = 2.4$	$p = .017^*$
	No	51	5.25	.86		
Cognitive	Yes	59	5.20	.82	$t(108) = 1.8$	$p = .077$
	No	51	4.93	.80		
Conative	Yes	59	4.58	.98	$t(108) = 2.6$	$p = .011^*$
	No	51	4.11	.89		

*, Effect is significant at the 0.05 level

A significant difference in the scores of participants with an EIE ($n=59$, $M=5.64$, $SD=.82$) and participants without EIE ($n=51$, $M=5.25$, $SD=.86$) was found for the affective dimension ($t(108)=2.4$, $p=.017$) as well as the conative dimension ($M=4.58$, $SD=.98$; $M=4.11$, $SD=.89$; $t(108)=2.6$, $p=.011$). No significant difference was found between EIE ($M=5.20$, $SD=.82$) and without EIE ($M=4.93$, $SD=.80$) for the cognitive dimension ($t(108)=1.8$, $p=.077$). Therefore, it can be concluded that the attitudes of Dutch individuals towards Syrian migrants are positively affected by an EIE, as two out of the three attitude dimensions differ significantly between the participants with, and the participants without an EIE.

Furthermore, an independent T-test was performed to test the first sub-question: does the acquisition of the local language during an EIE have an effect on the attitude held towards Syrian migrants (table 4)?

Table 4. Independent T-test of Foreign Language Acquisition in Context and Attitude Dimensions

	FLA	<i>n</i>	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Conditions	Significance (2-tailed)
Affective	Yes	22	5.95	.78	$t(108) = 3.14$	$p = .002^{**}$
	No	88	5.34	.83		
Cognitive	Yes	22	5.49	.77	$t(108) = 2.76$	$p = .007^{**}$
	No	88	4.97	.80		
Conative	Yes	22	5.01	.95	$t(108) = 3.73$	$p < .001^{***}$

No 88 4.20 .89

*, Effect is significant at the 0.05 level

**, Effect is significant at the 0.01 level

***, Effect is significant at the 0.001 level

The results of the T-test show a significant difference between FLA participants ($n=22$) and non-FLA participants ($n=88$) on all three dimensions, respectively: affective ($M=5.95$, $SD=.78$; $M=5.34$, $SD=.83$: $t(108)=3.14$, $p=.002$), cognitive ($M=5.49$, $SD=.77$; $M=4.97$, $SD=.8$: $t(108)=2.76$, $p=.007$) and conative ($M=5.01$, $SD=.95$; $M=4.2$, $SD=.9$: $t(108)=3.73$, $p<.001$). Therefore, the acquisition of a new foreign language in context, i.e. during an EIE, also has a positive effect on the shaping of attitudes held towards Syrian migrants compared to all other participants who had not acquired a new foreign language in context.

Moreover, in order to understand the importance of FLA in context, an independent T-test was performed to see whether a difference exists in the attitude dimensions within the EIE subgroup, distinguishing EIE with FLA participants with EIE without FLA participants (table 5).

Table 5. Independent T-test of Foreign Language Acquisition in Context and Attitude Dimensions within EIE Subgroup

	FLA	<i>n</i>	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Conditions	Significance (2-tailed)
Affective	Yes	22	5.95	.78	$t(57) = 2.36$	$p=.022^*$
	No	37	5.46	.79		
Cognitive	Yes	22	5.49	.77	$t(57) = 2.16$	$p=.035^*$
	No	37	5.03	.81		
Conative	Yes	22	5.01	.95	$t(57) = 2.76$	$p=.008^{**}$
	No	37	4.32	.91		

*, Effect is significant at the 0.05 level

**, Effect is significant at the 0.01 level

Participants in the EIE subgroup who had learned the local language ($n=22$) differed in attitude scores on the affective ($M=5.95$, $SD=.78$), cognitive ($M=5.49$, $SD=.77$) and conative ($M=5.01$, $SD=.95$) dimension compared to those in the EIE subgroup ($n=37$, $M=5.46$, $SD=.79$; $M=5.03$, $SD=.81$; $M=4.32$, $SD=.91$ respectively) who had not learned the local language: $t(57)=2.4$, $p=.022$; $t(57)=2.2$, $p=.035$; $t(57)=2.8$, $p=.008$. These results provide evidence for the strong effect that learning the local language during an EIE has on the shaping of attitudes. Not only do the FLA participants hold a significantly better attitude towards Syrian migrants overall, within the already significantly differing (in two out of three dimensions) EIE subgroup the FLA participants also scored significantly higher.

Next, 2-tailed bivariate correlation analyses were performed within the EIE subgroup ($n=59$) to answer sub-questions three, is there a correlation between the number (frequency) of EIE and attitudes

held towards Syrian migrants? (table 6), and four: is there a correlation between the cumulative duration of EIEs and attitudes held towards Syrian migrants? (table 7).

Table 6. Bivariate Correlation Analysis on Frequency of Extensive International Experience and Attitude Dimensions

		Affective	Cognitive	Conative
EIE Frequency	Pearson Correlation	.177	.191	.238
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.179	.148	.069
	<i>n</i>	59	59	59

Table 7. Bivariate Correlation Analysis of Duration of Extensive International Experience and Attitude Dimensions

		Affective	Cognitive	Conative
EIE Duration	Pearson Correlation	-.017	.019	.239
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.898	.886	.068
	<i>n</i>	59	59	59

The correlation analysis of EIE frequency and the attitude dimensions shows no correlation for any of the attitude dimensions: *affective* ($r=.177$, $p=.179$); *cognitive* ($r=.191$, $p=.148$); *conative* ($r=.238$, $p=.069$). Neither did the analysis of EIE duration show a correlation with the affective ($r=-.017$, $p=.898$), cognitive ($r=.019$, $p=.886$) nor conative dimension ($r=.239$, $p=.068$). The presented correlations suggest there is no interaction of number of EIEs or cumulative duration of EIEs with the attitudes held by Dutch individuals towards Syrian migrants.

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to answer sub-question five: does the type of EIE (work, education, travel or a combination of these three) have an effect on the attitude towards Syrian migrants? The ANOVA compared the effect of type of EIE on the attitude dimensions in the conditions of work, education, travel and a combination of these (table 8).

Table 8. ANOVA of Type of EIE and Attitude Dimensions

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
Affective	Between groups	.551	3	.184	.265	$p=.851$
	Within groups	38.159	55	.694		
Cognitive	Between groups	.946	5	.315	.456	$p=.714$
	Within groups	38.042	55	.692		
Conative	Between groups	1.785	3	.595	.613	$p=.610$
	Within groups	53.4	55	.971		

There was no significant effect of type of EIE on the attitude dimensions, with conditions for affective ($F(3, 55) = .265$, $p=.851$) cognitive ($F(3, 55) = .456$, $p=.714$) conative ($F(3, 55) = .613$,

$p=.610$). The presented results suggest that it makes no difference whether an individual has a work-related, study-related or travel-related EIE, or a combination of the three types, when it comes to the attitudes held towards Syrian migrants.

Furthermore, a T-test was performed in order to answer sub-question six: does the cultural distance of target countries have an effect on the attitude held towards Syrian migrants (table 9)? The T-test provided no evidence that a non-western EIE (cf. Huntington, 1996; $n=20$) leads to a more positive attitude towards Syrian migrants compared to western EIEs ($n=39$). Non-western EIEs showed no difference in the affective ($M=5.75$, $SD=.74$), cognitive ($M=5.29$, $SD=.98$) and conative ($M=4.70$, $SD=.97$) dimension compared to the western EIEs ($M=5.59$, $SD=.86$; $M=5.16$, $SD=.73$; $M=4.50$, $SD=.98$), conditions: $t(57)=-.73$, $p=.470$; $t(57)=-.6$, $p=.553$; $t(57)=-.79$, $p=.433$.

Table 9. Independent T-test of Cultural Distance and Attitude Dimensions

	Cultural Distance	<i>n</i>	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Conditions	Significance (2-tailed)
Affective	Western	39	5.59	.86	$t(57) = -.73$	$p=.470$
	Non-western	20	5.75	.74		
Cognitive	Western	39	5.16	.73	$t(57) = -.6$	$p=.553$
	Non-western	20	5.29	.98		
Conative	Western	39	4.50	.98	$t(57) = -.79$	$p=.433$
	Non-western	20	4.70	.97		

During the analysis of data a T-test performed on sex and attitude dimensions (table 10) provided results showing that women ($n=73$) held a more positive attitude towards Syrian migrants as both the affective ($M=5.59$, $SD=.85$) and the conative ($M=4.53$, $SD=.97$) dimension differed significantly with the men's ($n=37$) score on the affective ($M=5.19$, $SD=.81$) and conative ($M=4.03$, $SD=.84$) dimension: $t(108)=-2.35$, $p=.021^*$; $t(108)=-2.68$, $p=.008^{**}$. The cognitive dimension showed no significant difference between women ($M=5.12$, $SD=.79$) and men ($M=4.98$; $SD=.87$): $t(108)=-.83$, $p=.410$. These results will be further elaborated upon in the discussion.

Table 10. Independent T-test of Sex and Attitude Dimensions

	Sex	<i>n</i>	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Conditions	Significance (2-tailed)
Affective	Male	37	5.19	.81	$t(108) = -2.35$	$p=.021^*$
	Female	73	5.59	.85		

Cognitive	Male	37	4.98	.87	$t(108) = -.83$ $p = .410$
	Female	73	5.12	.79	
Conative	Male	37	4.03	.84	$t(108) = -2.68$ $p = .008^{**}$
	Female	73	4.53	.97	

*, Effect is significant at the 0.05 level

** , Effect is significant at the 0.01 level

5. Discussion & Conclusion

The forthcoming chapter will aim to connect the literature discussed in the theoretical framework with the results and analyses section. It will be indicated whether the results are in line with previous research and, if not, try to explain the differences. Because no previous research has connected an EIE with attitudes towards a minority group unrelated to the country visited, comparisons with, and affirmations of previous research should be considered carefully.

The results presented above provide evidence that an EIE positively affects the attitude of Dutch citizens towards Syrian migrants. Two out of the three attitude dimensions, namely the affective and conative dimension, (cf. Hovland et al., 1963; Reid, 2007; Stemler et al., 2015) differ significantly between the two participant groups. Therefore, it can be said that an EIE affects the affective and conative dimension, and thus the general attitude towards Syrian migrants by Dutch citizens as a whole, confirming the hypothesis of the main research question. In light of the *contact hypothesis* (Allport, 1954), it appears that the prerequisites for successful intercultural contact, which are equal status, sharing a common goal, voluntary cooperation and institutional support, are more readily available in a foreign context than it is in the native country. In a society where the average Dutch citizen is part of the societal majority, voluntary contact and equal status may not be self-evident in intergroup contact. Therefore, Vertovec (2007) and Amin (2002) have underlined the dangers of superficial intergroup contact, which may lead to mutual fear and anxiety. The significant differences in attitudes towards Syrian migrants between the EIE and non-EIE groups suggest that an EIE facilitates mutual understanding and acceptance of cultural differences (Holliday, 2016; Stemler et al., 2015). As Lough (2011) pointed out, the greater exposure to and increased opportunity of intergroup contact ultimately leads to acceptance and convergence of cultures. Also, the data provide support for Najar's (2016) appeal for contextual learning. Najar claimed that intercultural learning and language learning is without its essence if not put into practice. Even though studying and reading about global citizenship and socio-political cultural awareness is valuable for mutual understanding, Najar (2016) and Stemler et al. (2015) argued that intercultural competencies can only be marginally developed in a classroom or formal setting. The interactionist point of view held by Najar (2016) and Stemler et al. (2015) is therefore enforced by the results presented. The difference between EIE participants and non-EIE participants suggests that interaction with different cultures is important for improving intercultural (communication) competencies due to their interactive and dynamic nature. Moreover, a higher degree of openness, respect and appreciation towards the Syrian migrant minority in The Netherlands is more likely to be achieved through the quality of intergroup interactions during an EIE (Dixon et al., 2015; Cagliuri et al., 2000). Therefore, it can be said that the *contact hypothesis* works well in a foreign context as people will mediate, adapt and accommodate specific aspects of other cultural identities by experiencing real-life intercultural interactions (Najar, 2016; Stemler et al., 2015; Tong & Cheung, 2011; Holliday, 2016; Bhabha, 1990).

Considering the first and second sub-question, FLA of the local language seems to be a key factor in the shaping of the attitudes towards Syrian migrants by the Dutch. The 22 participants who had acquired the local language in context had a significantly more positive attitude towards Syrian migrants compared to all other participants, including the participants who also had had an EIE and thus already held a relatively positive attitude towards Syrian migrants. Additionally, within the already significantly differing subgroup of EIE participants, those who acquired a foreign language in context also differed significantly on all attitude dimensions compared with the EIE participants who had not learned a foreign language in context. It can therefore be claimed that FLA in context strongly affects attitude shaping towards outgroups, in this specific case the Syrian migrants. This is in line with Tong & Cheung (2011), who argue that language is an important carrier of culture and thus cultural identity. Therefore, learning a foreign language grants easier access to cultural lifestyles of an outgroup. Familiarisation with the respective institutional systems, spiritual values, and social norms and behaviours of an outgroup allows a foreign language speaker to successfully attune (linguistic) behaviour to the intercultural situation (Stephen, 2015; Blacquière, 2019; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009; Tong & Cheung, 2011).

The link between FLA and outgroup attitudes is a complex one and needs more research to expose the exact relation. However, because language is used to identify with, embody and express what we feel and experience (Tong & Cheung, 2011; Martinovic & Altarriba, 2012), internal mediation between the interacting languages and cultures is inevitable, resulting in mutual understanding and respect (Allport, 1954; Lough, 2011; Finlay & Stephan, 2000; Bhabha, 1990). Moreover, the additive cognitive perks that the CUCB and CTH entail, are likely to have manifested in the EIE with FLA group. By having spent time in an L2 environment, the conceptual brain will have accommodated to the L2 environment, expanding its cognitive functioning (Kesckes & Papp, 2003; Byland & Jarvis, 2011). Therefore, it is likely that this participant group was affected by higher emotional sensitivity and cognitive performance.

Regarding sub-questions three and four, no correlation was found between the number of EIE instances and the affective, cognitive and conative dimension, nor did the length of EIE instances show any correlation with the attitude dimensions. The literature suggested individuals who have had multiple EIEs would benefit more from intercultural learning opportunities and have increased intercultural competencies, as the first time can be stressful or overshadowed by first-time anxiety (Messelink et al., 2015; Lough, 2011). Moreover, greater exposure to outgroups, relating to both number as well as duration of EIEs, would lead to a greater mutual understanding and acceptance of culturally different outgroups. However, none of these predicted correlations were found in the present study, possibly due to differences of measurement. Conducting an Intercultural Competencies Test could reveal a correlation between intercultural competencies test results and EIE frequency and/or duration, as reported by Lough (2011). However, the absence of these correlations may also suggest a hierarchy of quality of contact over quantity of contact (cf. Dixon et al., 2010).

Neither did this study find support for the existing literature on increased intercultural competencies, measured by means of the attitude dimensions, attained through the cultural shock and stress that is experienced as a result of the Cultural Distance of a foreign destination compared to the native country (Lough, 2011; Messelink et al., 2015). Due to the hypothetical extra growth of intercultural competencies, a more positive attitude towards Syrian migrants was to be expected, however, no such an effect was found. Also, the results did not show any effect of type of EIE, namely: work, education, travels or a combination of these, implying that the type of EIE does not affect the extent to which the attitude towards Syrian migrants is shaped. These results would imply that it does not make a difference where an EIE is experienced, nor does it matter for which reason (work, education or backpacking) one would go there.

Interestingly, the findings showed an interaction of gender, as female participants held a more positive attitude towards Syrian migrants. Similar to the analysis of the main research question of this paper, both the affective and conative dimension differed significantly, whereas the cognitive dimension did not. The reason for these differences in attitudes held, which is in line with Stemler et al. 2015, could be attributed to the slightly skewed distribution of women in the survey (66%). However, as Stemler et al. (2015) point out, gender differences could also play a role. They propose that women might be more interested in and willing to expose themselves to intercultural experiences, however, they do not provide any substantial evidence for this phenomenon. Similarly, Lough (2011) reports a higher rating of intercultural competencies in women and provides theories of gender attributed differences in communication styles as well as traits such as “empathy, emotional and verbal expression, and greater sensitivity to the needs of others” (p. 460). Carlson and Widaman (1988) also found that female students as well as students of the humanities department had higher cross-cultural interest prior to an exchange, suggesting a more positive attitude towards ‘other’ from onset. Considering such results, future studies should aim to see whether factors such as gender, level and department of education, and occupation may affect attitudes towards Syrian migrants or other minority groups.

The consistent absence of a significant effect on the cognitive dimension implies that there may be a gap between having knowledge of a topic and forming beliefs based on this knowledge. The data presented in this study show no effect of EIE on cognition, however, the gap between ratio and emotions (cognitive vs. affective) could indicate a difference of processing information: either treating it as a simple fact or processing it to beliefs and thoughts on the subject matter. The difference of processing this information, then, would entail no difference in cognition but rather in its assertion through the affective and conative dimension. Whereas this study has argued and provided evidence in favour of increased intercultural competencies due to (an) EIE(s), it has not been studied which competencies in particular differed from those who had not had an EIE. Similar to De Boer (2018) and Stemler et al. (2015), a more complete analysis of intercultural competencies should be done by incorporating an Intercultural Competencies Test such as the *Global People Competency Framework* (Spencer-Oatey & Stadler, 2009) or the Wesleyan Intercultural Competence Scale (Stemler et al., 2015).

Furthermore, support has been found that FLA in foreign context positively affects the attitude shaping towards Syrian migrants. More research should be done on similar subjects to see whether this effect can also be found on the attitude towards other minority groups. The relatively positively valued attitude is most likely to be attributed to the development of intercultural competencies due to the requisite of having to attune your language and intercultural communication skills to the social and intercultural environment. Future research should study whether an EIE leads to a more positive attitude towards other minority or migrant groups in order to determine whether an EIE results in a more positive attitude overall.

6. References

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7. Appendix

Appendix A: Survey

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Hartelijk welkom bij dit onderzoek naar immigranten uit Syrië. Velen zijn door de oorlogsomstandigheden gevlucht van huis op zoek naar een veiligere leefomgeving, zo ook naar Nederland. Deze studie betreft specifiek deze immigratiestroom en gedurende deze vragenlijst zal er steeds gerefereerd worden aan migranten, waarmee dan specifiek de **Syrische migranten** worden bedoeld.

Deze studie bestaat uit twee delen: eerst wordt er een aantal demografische gegevens van u gevraagd die nodig zijn voor het onderzoek. Daarna volgt een aantal stellingen die u dient te waarderen aan de hand van een Likertschaal (helemaal mee oneens - helemaal mee eens).

Beantwoord de stellingen naar uw eigen inzicht, er zijn geen goede of foute antwoorden! We verzoeken u de vragenlijst naar waarheid in te vullen, het invullen van de vragenlijst zal ongeveer 10-15 minuten duren. Voor uw privacy wordt het onderzoek volledig geanonimiseerd.

Hartelijk bedankt voor uw deelname.

End of Block: Default Question Block

Start of Block: Block 4

Ik bevestig: dat ik uit vrije wil deelneem.
Ik stem er mee in dat: de verzamelde gegevens voor wetenschappelijke doelen worden verkregen en bewaard zoals in de informatiebrief vermeld staat;
de verzamelde, geheel anonieme, onderzoeksgegevens door wetenschappers kunnen worden gedeeld en/of worden hergebruikt om eventueel andere onderzoeksvragen mee te beantwoorden;
Ik begrijp dat: ik het recht heb om mijn toestemming voor het gebruik van data in te trekken.

Ja, hier stem ik mee in. (1)

End of Block: Block 4

Start of Block: Block 1

Hoe oud bent u?

M/V/O

- Man (1)
- Vrouw (2)
- Overig (3) _____
-

Heeft u een Nederlands paspoort?

- Ja (1)
- Ja, maar ook een ... paspoort (2) _____
- Nee (3)
-

Spreekt u naast het Nederlands nog andere talen? Schrijft u alstublieft alle talen waarin u het niveau B1 (of hoger) behaalt.

Dit wil zeggen: u begrijpt waar de meeste gesprekken over gaan en u kan het over normale situaties op het werk en/of school hebben.

Op vakantie in een land waar deze taal wordt gesproken heeft u dus weinig problemen met de taal en kunt u zich zelfstandig redden. Als u twijfelt vindt u hier een handvat:

<https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/nl/resources/european-language-levels-cefr>

- Engels (1)
- Duits (2)
- Frans (3)
- Arabisch (dialect) (4)
- Spaans (5)
- Anders, namelijk: (6) _____
- Nee (7)
-

Heeft u voor langere tijd in het buitenland (langer dan 1 maand) gewerkt, gewoond of gereisd?

- Ja (1)
- Nee (2)

Display This Question:

If Heeft u voor langere tijd in het buitenland (langer dan 1 maand) gewerkt, gewoond of gereisd? = Ja

Zo ja, waar, en hoe lang heeft u gewerkt, gewoond of gereisd?

Vermeld u alstublieft alle keren dat u zoiets heeft ondernomen als volgt: Werk, 8 maanden, Engeland

N.B. Vakanties worden hier niet tot gerekend, zelfstandig reizen wel.

Display This Question:

If Heeft u voor langere tijd in het buitenland (langer dan 1 maand) gewerkt, gewoond of gereisd? = Ja

Heeft u in de desbetreffende periode(s) ook de lokale taal geleerd?

- Ja, ik heb een nieuwe taal / nieuwe talen geleerd, namelijk: (1)
-
- Nee, ik heb geen nieuwe taal geleerd, maar een taal die ik al kende verbeterd. (3)
-
- Nee, ik heb geen nieuwe taal geleerd. (4)

End of Block: Block 1

Start of Block: Block 5

Hier volgt een aantal stellingen m.b.t. **Syrische immigranten**, u kunt op een 7-punts Likertschaal uw positionering aangeven ten opzichte van de stelling binnen het spectrum van *Sterk mee oneens* tot en met *Sterk mee eens*.

End of Block: Block 5

Start of Block: Block 2

Page Break

Als ik migranten op straat zie, voel ik me niet op mijn gemak.

- Sterk mee oneens (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- Neutraal (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)
- Sterk mee eens (7)
-

Ik zou me nog steeds op mijn gemak voelen als mijn burens migranten zouden zijn.

Ik voel me minder comfortabel als ik weet dat iemand een migrant is.

Ik vind het oneerlijk als migranten op dwingende wijze terug naar hun thuisland worden gestuurd.

Ik vind het fijn om te zien dat Nederland migranten verwelkomt.

Het frustreert mij als er protesten tegen immigranten plaatsvinden bij, bijvoorbeeld, opvangcentra.

Ik vind het mooi om te zien als een Nederlandse burger een migrant op straat een handje helpt.

Migranten hebben hun thuisland niet zomaar verlaten, dit doen ze omdat ze te kampen hebben met problemen aldaar.

De meeste migranten doen hun best om te integreren in de Nederlandse samenleving.

Ik heb niets gemeen met migranten.

Ik vind dat hier in Nederland migranten welkom zijn.

Migranten zijn een toevoeging (kennis, economie, sociaal) voor de Nederlandse samenleving.

De meeste migranten doen hun best om de taal te leren.

Migranten hebben dezelfde rechten en verplichtingen als niet-migrant.

Ik doe actief mijn best om immigranten zich thuis te laten voelen in Nederland.

Een collega met een migratie-achtergrond behandel ik hetzelfde als mijn andere collega's.

Ik interesseer me in de herkomst van migranten.

Ik stimuleer vrienden en familie om zich positief in te zetten voor de komst van migranten.

Als ik moest kiezen tussen het tijdelijk opnemen van een migrant bij mij thuis of hem/haar naar huis te laten sturen, zou ik het overwegen om de migrant bij mij thuis te verwelkomen.

Ik zou (meer) Syrische migranten willen leren kennen.

End of Block: Block 2

Start of Block: Block 3

Hartelijk dank voor uw deelname. Mocht u geïnteresseerd zijn naar het eindresultaat, laat u dan uw e-mail achter.

Mocht u vragen hebben of contact op willen nemen, stuurt u dan een e-mail naar w.blacquièrè@students.uu.nl

E-mail

Wilt u nog iets kwijt betreffende het onderzoek?

End of Block: Block 3
