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Learning Turkish is/was a very special experience for me because it was the first foreign language I learned in the country where the language was spoken. I took Latin in high school and Italian at Duke to fulfill the language requirement. Then, I participated in the Duke in Istanbul program, during which I had the chance to practice everyday - in taxis, in restaurants, in markets.This was my first experience connecting with people from another country/culture in a foreign language so I think that is what inspired me to continue learning Turkish upon returning to Duke.

After graduation, I returned to Turkey as a private English teacher/au pair for a family. I was really hoping to learn more Turkish during that experience, but my job was to speak English, not Turkish. Unfortunately, I didn't learn as much as I hoped, but it was a good way to at least stay connected to the language and retain what I had learned at Duke. A few months later I got an internship in Istanbul. Living on my own in Istanbul, I learned more. My office building had a cafe in the lobby, and one of the best ways to practice my Turkish was talking to the barista. It was really great because I got the practice my Turkish and I got free coffee!

Now, I have a full-time job in Istanbul as an editor at a publication about emerging markets. While the publication is in English, almost all my co-workers speak fluent Turkish. I've already learned some Turkish from them. Also, now I have the income to take language lessons. With regards to learning a language, you get out of it what you put in, and I am recommitted now to practicing as much as I can. I practice flashcards on the metro and while I'm walking to work. I try to speak even when I know I'm not 100% right. I made a mistake with some friends from Boğaziçi university, and they were very encouraging about it. One guy said, "the thing about language is the other person just has to understand what you mean. Even if you make mistakes speaking a language, don't stop trying." So that's where I'm at right now!