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in Turkish
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Linguistics

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Language use and attitudes of Turkish immigrants in France and their subjective ethnolinguistic vitality perceptions¹

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I. Introduction

In this paper, the findings on language maintenance patterns of Turkish immigrants and their subjective ethnolinguistic perceptions in the French context are documented. The terms language maintenance and shift have been used quite extensively in the literature on language contact. The factors involved in language maintenance or shift are generally divided into two categories: those affecting a speech community and those affecting individuals within a speech community (Kipp, Clyne, & Pauwels 1995). Group factors include size and distribution of an ethnic group, the policy of the host community towards minority languages, the position of the language within the cultural value system of the group, and proximity or distance of the minority language to or from majority language while birth place, age, period of residence, gender, education/qualifications, marriage patterns, prior knowledge of majority language, reason for migration, and language variety are considered to be individual factors (Kipp et al. 1995:123). However, it is not always easy to draw the line between individual and societal factors as there is an ongoing interaction between an individual and the speech community. In most of the cases, these factors are interrelated both on the individual and on the group level. In language contact situations, one's native language is not a fixed and stable system but rather a changeable one.

Language maintenance is said to be influenced by the ethnolinguistic vitality (EV) of a minority group. According to Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor (1977), Status, Demographic, Institutional Support and Control factors combine to make up the vitality of ethnolinguistic groups. An assessment of a group's strengths and weaknesses in each of these domains provides a rough classification of ethnolinguistic groups into those having *low*, *medium*, or *high* vitality. Low vitality groups are most likely to go through linguistic assimilation and may not be considered a distinctive collective group (Bourhis et al. 1981). On the other hand, high vitality groups are likely to maintain their language and distinctive cultural traits in multilingual settings. In Giles et al.'s framework (1977), status variables involve the economic, social, sociohistorical, and language status of the group within or outside the mainstream community. Demographic variables are those

related to the number and distributional patterns of ethnolinguistic group members throughout a particular region or national territory. Demographic variables also include the birth rate, the group's rate of mixed marriages, and the rate of immigration and emigration patterns. Institutional support and control factors refer to the extent to which an ethnolinguistic group receives formal and informal support in various institutions, in particular mass-media, education, government services, industry, religion, culture and politics. The key prediction of EV theory is that mother tongues of communities with high ethnolinguistic vitality will be retained, while those with low EV will tend to be replaced by the dominant language.

In accordance with the above framework, findings on language maintenance (language use-choice), language attitudes and ethnolinguistic vitality measures of Turkish immigrants in France will be documented in the following sections.

II. Turkish immigrants in France

The immigration history of the Turkish community in France is the shortest compared to other immigrant communities. Shortly, after World War II, only 7,770 Turks lived in France. This number declined to 5,273 in 1954 and increased slightly to 7,628 in 1968. The first bilateral immigration agreement between France and Turkey was signed in 1965, but massive Turkish migration only started at the beginning of the 70s and continued in the 80s. Between 1968 and 1972, the Turkish population increased to 50,860; and between 1972 and 1982, it rose further to 123,540. The increase is not only due to labour migration but also due to family reunification for those immigrants whose families had remained in the home country. In the 1982 census, the consequences of family reunification were already obvious. It revealed a sharp rise in both the number of women and the number of young people (between 10 and 34 years). By the year 1990, there were 202,000 Turks in France. They were then the fourth largest immigrant community in the country. In 1990, for nearly half of the Turkish population the average age was below twenty. Thus, as opposed to less-educated first generation Turkish immigrants, the young generations have been through the French school system and their educational and vocational profiles are much better than the previous generations. This modifies the general profile and outlook of the Turkish population in France. The children tend to be bilingual, speaking Turkish with the parents and French among themselves (cf. Akıncı 1996, 1999). Many Turkish families have now settled in France. They maintain contacts with the homeland. They may end up staying in France indefinitely, whereas at first they thought their stay was only temporary. Today, the Turkish population in France is estimated to be 350,000. Around 15,000 Turks have taken the French nationality.

The majority of Turkish immigrants in France have blue-collar works. According to Echardour & Marin (1993), 43.7% of Turks are working in production, 28.5% in construction and 23.5% in the services. Although, following the study of Brabant (1992), there has been a slight shift in the occupational structure from blue-collar (89.9% in 1982, 80% in 1989) to white-collar jobs and self-employment (both, 6.6% in 1982, 18.5% in 1989), the majority of the working Turkish population can still be identified as blue-collar.

Today, the largest proportion of the Turkish population can be found in the region of Île de France (20% of all the Turks live in this region). The second region is Rhône-Alpes (17%), 38,185 individuals. Alsace comes next, with 15% (Villanova 1997). The informants in this study are all from Rhône-Alpes.

Similar to other immigration contexts (Australia, Germany, The Netherlands, etc.), in-group marriage tendency is very strong among young Turkish immigrants. According to INSEE (1997), 98% of the girls and 92% of the boys are marrying with a person from Turkey, which is why the migration process renews itself continuously. Turkey-born young immigrants arriving in France through family reunification contribute to language maintenance. According to INSEE, in Turkish families, 17% of the fathers and 3% of the mothers talk to their children in French (which are 69% and 52% for the Algerians.) The population structure of Turkish immigrants in France is very young (just like in other immigration contexts). In 1994, 50,000 Turkish children were in primary schools, 30,000 in the secondary, and 3.000 in special classes (SEGPA...).

III. Methodology

3.1. Informants

The target groups for this study were selected from the Turkish immigrant community living in Lyon and Grenoble cities (region Rhône-Alpes). In order to see intergenerational differences and the effect of education, informants from different age groups were selected. Grouping was made on the basis of age and education: group A included 28 secondary school students in the age range of 12-16; group B included 69 informants from High Schools; there were 25 university students in group C; 35 intermediate-generation adults in group D; and finally group E included 45 first-generation adults. Table (1) gives the details of the informants:

Table 1: Informants of the study

Generation	Second				First	Total
	Sec. school (12-16) Group A	High school (16-21) Group B	University Group C	Adult Group D	Adult Group E	
Female	21	46	7	18	9	101
Male	7	23	18	17	36	101
Mean age	13.28	18.97	21.28	25.54	41.46	
Born in France	93% (26)	69.5% (48)	72% (18)	23% (8)	0%	49.5% (100)
Total	28	69	25	35	45	202

3.2. Instruments

Language Use-Choice Questionnaire (LUCQ) and Subjective Ethnolinguistic Vitality Questionnaire (SEVQ) were used as data collection instruments. It includes questions on background characteristics (demographic information), language use-choice, and language attitudes. The SEVQ involves rating French and Turkish immigrants to France on 22 items, measuring group vitality along the three dimensions of status, demography, and institutional support factors respectively.

IV. Results

The data set was subjected to a number of statistical analyses. A full discussion of all the items in both questionnaires is beyond the scope of the present article. The questionnaire items relating to language use/choice and attitudes will briefly be summarized on the basis of the general descriptive analyses. Table (2) presents the results on language use-choice patterns among Turkish immigrants in France.

Table 2: Language use patterns among Turkish immigrants in France (N = 202). The scale is 1 (very little) to 5 (very much); the figures are Mean values).

Questionnaire Item	Gr. A n= 28	Gr. B n=69	Gr. C n=25	Gr. D n=35	Gr. E n=45
Amount of contact with relatives in Turkey	3.32	3.24	3.20	3.40	3.60
Difficulty in speaking Turkish during visits to Turkey	3.25	2.46	2.24	1.68	1.20
Use of Turkish in France	3.57	3.60	3.64	4.11	4.73
Difficulty in understanding Turkish in Turkey	2.53	2.01	1.72	1.68	1.08
Language mixing (L1 and L2)	3.23	2.49	2.52	2.32	2.02
Feeling of not remembering some Turkish words	2.85	2.74	2.80	2.38	1.60
Amount of reading in Turkish	2.35	2.21	2.84	2.00	1.44
Difficulty in reading Turkish	2.89	2.48	2.32	2.25	1.59
Amount of reading in French	3.92	3.52	3.48	2.85	1.41
Amount of writing in Turkish	3.10	2.49	2.64	1.91	2.28
Amount of watching French TV	3.85	3.80	3.48	3.48	2.35
Amount of Turkish TV viewing	4.42	4.26	4.28	3.85	4.31
Participation in Turkish community organizations	1.88	2.18	2.64	2.40	3.26
Participation in French clubs	1.96	1.51	1.74	1.14	1.11

When the findings on Turkish and French language use are closely examined, it is quite apparent that there are significant intergenerational differences. Younger generations report considerable difficulty in speaking Turkish in Turkey. First generation-immigrants, however, report very little difficulty in speaking Turkish. Concerning understanding (receptive skill) Turkish, the difficulty reported by groups A, B, and C are much lower compared to the difficulty reported for speaking (productive skill) by these groups. Accordingly, younger generations report more difficulty in remembering some Turkish words. From the mean scores, it is apparent that the younger the informants the more difficulty they have in Turkish. In spite of the difficulties reported, all groups of informants seem to be fond of Turkish TV channels. In general, all the informants report extensive use of Turkish language in France.

Table 3: Language use and choice patterns among Turkish immigrants in France (N = 202). The scale is 1 (only Turkish) to 5 (only French); the figures are Mean values).

Questionnaire Item	Gr. A n= 28	Gr. B n=69	Gr. C n=25	Gr. D n=35	Gr. E n=45
Language used					
- with mother and father	1.53	1.23	1.28	1.17	1.06
- with brothers and sisters	4.25	3.95	3.24	3.02	1.13
- by you to your friends	3.60	3.23	3.36	2.97	1.17
- by you to your neighbours	1.82	1.55	1.68	1.42	1.17
- by your parents to you	1.53	1.10	1.20	1.14	1.22
- by your siblings to you	4.14	3.98	3.24	3.28	1.15
- by friends to you	3.60	3.11	3.72	3.45	1.24
- by your neighbours to you	1.64	1.47	1.72	1.60	1.20

A close examination of the mean values in Table (3) shows that there are clear differences between informants' language use and choice patterns. Young informants speak mostly in Turkish to their parents but in speaking to their brothers/sisters and friends, they use French more. First-generation immigrants consistently speak in Turkish in various domains. Other than context of interaction with parents, French seems to be the dominant language for young informants.

4.1. Language attitudes

Table 4: Language attitudes towards Turkish among Turkish immigrants in France (N = 202). The scale is 1 (not important) to 5 (very important); the figures are Mean values).

Questionnaire Item	Gr. A n= 28	Gr. B n=69	Gr. C n=25	Gr. D n=35	Gr. E n=45
Importance of Turkish					
- to make friends	3.17	2.55	2.60	3.08	4.08
- to earn money	3.21	2.01	2.48	2.11	2.08
- to study	2.88	2.34	3.04	2.32	2.20
- to find a job	3.29	2.30	2.88	1.94	1.68
- for better education	3.40	2.75	3.16	2.28	1.84
- to live in France	3.21	2.20	2.64	2.17	1.97
- to be valued in the society	2.92	3.41	3.60	3.20	2.40
- to raise children	4.00	4.50	3.92	4.25	3.53
- to be accepted in Turkish community	3.62	4.61	4.32	4.91	4.52
- to speak to Turkish friends	3.29	3.18	3.24	3.25	4.02
- to be accepted by French people	3.11	1.80	2.04	1.57	1.86
- to speak to colleagues at work	2.81	2.13	2.20	1.77	2.27
- Turkish to travel	3.14	3.11	3.16	2.40	1.95
- for trade	3.11	3.30	3.60	2.14	1.88
- in the family	4.03	4.62	4.20	4.57	4.45
- for cultural survival	4.10	4.67	4.68	4.94	4.50
- for identity	3.44	4.42	4.24	4.64	4.52
Average Mean	3.38	3.30	3.29	3.03	2.92

When the mean values in Table (4) are examined, it is apparent that the first-generation's attitudes towards Turkish is significantly different than younger generations. Younger informants' ratings concerning the 'value of Turkish' in the immigration context is much higher than the first generation. Instrumental value of Turkish for finding jobs, studying, etc. is higher for younger generations. However, value of Turkish language in child rearing, communication with family, friends, and for communication in the community turns out to be rather high for all groups.

4.2. Ethnolinguistic vitality perceptions

Table (5) presents the findings of the subjective ethnolinguistic vitality questionnaire with means.

Table 5: Turkish immigrants' ethnolinguistic vitality ratings of their own group and of the French (N = 202). The scale is a 7-point scale, 1 indicates minimum vitality, while 7 indicates maximum vitality. The figures are Mean values.

Questionnaire Item	Gr. A n= 28	Gr. B n=69	Gr. C n=25	Gr. D n=35	Gr. E n=45
1. Proportion of Turkish population	4.57	2.98	2.72	2.50	2.15
Proportion of French population	5.11	5.00	5.04	4.76	4.84
2. Language status locally, Turkish	4.51	3.47	3.12	3.20	2.57
Perceived language status locally, French	6.33	6.53	6.56	6.57	6.27
3. Language status internationally, Turkish	3.92	2.96	2.44	2.28	1.77
Language status internationally, French	5.85	5.30	5.48	5.42	5.42
4. Amount of Turkish in local services	3.44	1.92	1.32	1.51	1.17
Amount of French in local services	6.25	6.65	6.72	6.91	6.91
5. Turkish birth rate	4.29	3.89	4.04	3.65	3.95
French birth rate	5.51	4.85	4.04	3.68	2.95
6. Turkish control over business	4.57	2.79	2.16	2.48	1.64
French control over business	6.17	6.00	6.12	6.25	6.57
7. Turkish language in mass media	4.03	2.45	2.20	1.80	1.24
French language in mass media	6.35	6.42	6.41	6.68	6.93
Perceived group status, Turks	4.14	3.68	3.69	3.45	2.22
Perceived group status, French	5.78	4.84	5.69	5.71	6.33
9. Proportion of Turks locally	4.37	4.04	3.84	3.26	2.77
Proportion of French locally	4.85	4.95	5.12	4.58	5.36
10. Amount of Turkish in schools	3.82	2.76	2.44	2.54	1.77
Amount of French in schools	6.35	6.56	6.72	6.80	6.95
11. Turkish immigration patterns	4.23	3.23	2.90	2.68	1.88
French immigration patterns	4.84	6.63	3.27	3.55	3.50
12. Amount of exogamy, Turks	4.64	5.92	6.00	6.11	6.11
Amount of exogamy, French	5.04	4.11	3.72	3.51	4.90
13. Amount Turkish political power	4.44	2.97	2.04	1.74	1.20
Amount French political power	5.88	5.44	5.76	6.25	6.68
14. Amount Turkish language in business	4.64	2.72	2.16	1.97	1.42
Amount French language in business	6.03	6.60	6.48	6.82	6.88
15. Turkish emigration patterns	4.22	2.60	2.62	2.35	1.58
French emigration patterns	5.18	3.72	3.75	3.52	2.85
16. Pride of cultural history, Turks	4.50	5.15	6.04	5.42	5.53
Pride of cultural history, French	5.75	4.62	4.79	5.20	5.00
17. Turkish in religious worship	4.85	5.69	5.79	5.91	5.97
French in religious worship	5.96	5.05	4.04	5.51	4.73
18. Group's cultural representation, Turks	3.71	2.71	2.88	2.25	2.02
Group's cultural representation, French	5.89	5.82	5.32	6.51	6.33
19. Perceived group strength, Turks	3.92	3.73	3.73	3.41	2.64
Perceived group strength, French	5.64	5.43	5.30	5.82	6.06
20. Perceived group richness, Turks	4.07	3.92	3.86	3.65	2.51
Perceived group richness, French	5.89	5.33	5.30	5.77	5.57
21. Perceived future strength, Turks	4.35	4.44	4.37	4.37	3.80
Perceived future strength, French	6.10	5.50	4.91	5.80	6.20
22. Perceived Turkish/French contact	4.53	4.54	4.36	4.37	3.35
23. Solidarity Turks	4.64	4.72	4.83	5.02	4.77
Solidarity French	5.25	4.45	4.04	4.00	4.67
24. Importance of the traditions, Turks	4.37	5.74	5.78	5.88	5.75
Importance of the traditions, French	5.77	4.46	4.21	4.29	4.54
Average Mean TURKISH	4,28	3,67	3,50	3,36	2,88
Average Mean FRENCH	5,97	5,40	5,18	5,43	5,48

As seen from the average mean values for Turkish and French per group, the vitality of the Turkish language is low compared to the French language in the eyes of the informants (the average means vary between 2,88 for gr. E to 4,28 for gr. A), while French vitality is perceived to be higher (5,97 for gr. A and 5,18 for gr. C).

Among the 23 variables in the questionnaire, for Group A, French vitality is higher than Turkish on most of the variables. Groups B, C and D, rated Turkish vitality higher on five variables: amount of exogamy, pride of cultural history, Turkish in religious worship, solidarity between the Turks, and importance of the traditions. For the first generation adults in France, Turkish vitality is higher than the vitality of French on birth rate as well. For secondary school students, French has been rated higher compared to Turkish vitality. However, with age the subjective perceptions have changed for some variables only. Yağmur (1997) observed similar findings in his data of the Australian context. Concerning the variable 22 "perceived Turkish French contact" for the first 4 groups, the mean is 4,36 or more and for the last group it is 3,35. We can conclude that the second generation immigrants indicate a high vitality for the contacts between the two communities, while for the first generation adults there is minimal contact.

In addition to the original questions in the questionnaire administered by Bourhis et al. (1981), three more questions were asked on (i) about the in-group solidarity among the majority and minority groups (variable 23), (ii) how closely the majority and minority group members maintain and value their customs and traditions (variable 24), and (iii) the future of Turkish in France (see Table 6). The results suggest that according to the informants of all groups except the youngest group (Gr. A), there is more solidarity among Turkish immigrants than among French people. The same group thinks also that traditions are more important for French than Turks (5.77 for French against 4,37 for Turks).

Table (6) represents the beliefs concerning the future of Turkish in France. We asked the informants this question with choice between 5 possible answers. They were allowed to choose more than one belief.

Table 6: Beliefs concerning the future of Turkish

Questionnaire Item	Gr. A n= 28	Gr. B n=69	Gr. C n=25	Gr. D n=35	Gr. E n=45	Total
1. Different Turkish will appear	35.5% (10)	42.5% (29)	44% (11)	43% (15)	46.5% (21)	42.5% (86)
2. Turkish will be lost	21.5% (6)	17.5% (12)	24% (6)	25.5% (9)	60% (27)	29.5% (60)
3. Turkish will be very strong	35.5% (10)	25% (17)	28% (7)	14.5% (5)	20% (9)	23.5% (48)
4. In 2 nd and 3 rd generation Turkish will be lost	18% (5)	10% (7)	20% (5)	8.5% (3)	46.5% (21)	20.5% (41)
5. Turkish will be used in certain domains	35.5% (10)	61.5% (42)	56% (14)	60% (21)	82.5% (37)	61.5% (124)

This table shows that the majority of the informants believe that Turkish will be limited to certain domains, like home, cafes and mosques. 82,5% of the first generation informants chose this possibility, but only 35,5% of Group A shared this opinion. The second highly shared idea is that a new variety of Turkish will appear in France. The percentages are quite identical varying between 35,5% and 46,5%. It is interesting to observe that even the group A informants think that Turkish will be very strong in the future. Apparently, the idea that the position of Turkish language would be stronger is not shared by all the informants. The older the age of the informants, the lower the ratings concerning the future vitality of Turkish in France. Accordingly, the first generation immigrants believe that Turkish will be lost among second and third generations. Because of these opposite views between the generations, the results are intriguing. Higher ratings of the secondary school informants are perhaps due to the fact that all of them were following Turkish lessons at the time of data collection.

V. Concluding remarks

In line with the assumptions inherent in EV theory that mother tongues of communities with high ethnolinguistic vitality will be retained while those with low EV will tend to be replaced by the dominant language, one would normally expect a higher shift to the dominant language and even more so in the following generation among Turkish immigrants; however, our findings do not support this tendency. The young informants report difficulty in speaking Turkish but they have rather positive attitudes towards Turkish. They report Turkish to be a fundamental aspect of cultural maintenance in the French context. The reasons for this may lie in the linguistic, cultural, and religious distance between the majority and the Turkish group. As indicated in the literature (Kipp, Clyne, & Pauwels 1995), the more the typological difference between the languages in contact, the more likely it is that the minority language will be maintained. Thus, the fact that Turkish is an agglutinative language might have an effect on strong maintenance figures of the group. Nevertheless, the most important factor behind high maintenance figures might be attributable to the high rate of in-group marriages. As indicated earlier, in most cases Turks born in France and Western Europe marry persons born in Turkey, thus providing a constant inflow of first-generation immigrants. In this way, Turkish does not lose its dominant role in the domestic domain, and children who are born into those families acquire Turkish as their first language till they begin the nursery schools at the age of 2 (Akıncı 1999). Furthermore, the concentration patterns of Turkish migrants (Tribalat 1995) provide them with a strong community network where Turkish can be used for day-to-day communication without having contact with French. However, the results can be

different in other migration contexts (Yağmur (1993, 1997), Yağmur et al. 1999). Even though Australian policies favour language maintenance and multiculturalism, ethnolinguistic vitality of Turks in Australia turns out to be lower than that of Turks in France. This situation highlights the complicated nature of language contact settings. The attitudes and policies of the dominant group towards the minority group might have a role in this variation. If an ethnic group is received more warmly by the dominant group, minority group members' attitudes and orientation may change accordingly. However, the interaction is not always in the same direction, multicultural policies sometimes might promote language shift instead of maintenance, or just the other way around. When findings of this study are compared with other Turkish immigrants groups' ethnolinguistic vitality perceptions, a more representative sociolinguistic picture will emerge.

Notes

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