Responses to Questionnaires of Young Turkish-German Bilinguals in Berlin: Their Thoughts about Language Choice

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In this paper, I report a portion of the results obtained through surveys carried out at four different points, once every five years between 2000 and 2015. After a brief introduction to the Turkish community in Berlin, as well as linguistic studies on bilingualism between Turkish and some European languages, the outline of my questionnaire surveys is presented. Among the collected data, responses from the students of a school in Kreuzberg, a former district with a large number of residents with Turkish background, are used to examine changes between 2000 and 2015 in their patterns of language use. Based on the students' responses, I found that their patterns of language choice fluctuate to some extent but show no clear tendency of change over the period of fifteen years.

1. Introduction[*]

   In this paper, I will report a portion of the results of my surveys carried out at high schools in Berlin-Kreuzberg in the years 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2015. My questionnaire mainly contains somewhat ordinary questions, such as (i) questions about language choice (Turkish, German, or both) in different situations, with different dialogue partners, (ii) kinds of mass media that students consume regularly, as well as (iii) questions about

students' basic attributes, such as age, gender, birthplace, etc. However, it also contains a few rather unusual questions, such as questions about languages in dreams, and students' opinions about code-switching/code-mixing.

After presenting an overview of the Turkish community in Berlin and reviewing previous studies on bilingual speakers with a Turkish background in Europe, in what follows, I present a tentative analysis of the replies to the questions about language choice, including the languages in dreams.

2. Turkish community in Berlin

In Germany there are currently over two million residents with a Turkish background, i.e., those who were born in Turkey and later immigrated to Germany, as well as their children and grandchildren. This population constitutes about 30% of the total foreign resident population and is the largest such group. This is due to the policies of Germany, which accepted a large number of workers from Turkey in order to support German economic growth after the Second World War.

Berlin is one of the German cities that have received many foreigners. More than 10% of the city's residents are of foreign nationality, even after the reunification of East and West Berlin. As of the year 2000, there were 127,335 residents of Turkish nationality, comprising 3.8% of the total population of Berlin. They make up 5.8 % of the population of the former West Berlin.

In Berlin there are 12 *Bezirk*s (or districts) since the first of January 2001, though the city was divided into 23 districts up to the end of 2000. Table 1 lists five former districts with a large proportion of Turkish residents.

Table 1   Five former Berlin districts with a large proportion of Turkish residents (2000)[1]

District	Turkish residents	
	N	%
Kreuzberg	25,038	16.99%
Wedding	23,858	15.06%
Neukölln	27,403	8.95%
Tiergarten	7,805	8.82%
Schöneberg	10,029	6.77%

As is clear from Table 1, Turkish residents were concentrated in these former districts. Almost 60% of Turkish residents lived there in the year 2000, the first year of my survey.

The five former districts were close to the wall separating the former West and East Berlin, and were located on the outskirts of West Berlin, thus resulting in a living

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[1] The table shows statistical data found in Statistisches Landesamt Berlin (2001). It is actually the last publication of this annual report, containing separate statistics about Kreuzberg, Wedding, Tiergarten and Schöneberg.

environment with comparatively inexpensive rent and cost of living. Of the five districts, Kreuzberg had the largest proportion of the Turkish population in 2000.

3. Linguistic studies on Turkish immigrants

The second- and third-generation members of the Turkish community, who have fluent command of the German language, have been growing in number. It is noticeable that their Turkish language has been strongly affected by German, the language of the mainstream host society. This phenomenon is not only true in Germany but also in other countries that have accepted Turkish immigrants in large number. Such countries are primarily in northwest European regions, including the Netherlands, France, Denmark, and Sweden, as well as in central Europe, including Austria and Switzerland.

New Turkish communities born in such countries have drawn the attention of linguistic researchers as well as those of other fields. Thus a considerable number of researches on Turkish immigrants, especially their children and youth, has been conducted. The research themes vary from immediately practical issues, such as how language education should be provided for these children, to purely academic ones, aiming at contributing to building linguistic theory of variation or language contact.

For example, the research of Nehr, Birnkott-Rixius, Kubat, and Masuch (1988) concerns the methodology of bilingual education, identifying concrete problems in education and pursuing solutions for them.

In her series of studies, Carol W. Pfaff has been conducting quite extensive research on Turkish children in Berlin who are exposed to two languages, Turkish and German (Pfaff 1988, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1999, 2000; Kardam and Pfaff 1993). She has been especially focused on what kinds of linguistic varieties they use, and the process of language acquisition that they experience. Her research is based on two important research projects that she conducted in the 1980s and 1990s, the EKMAUS[2] project and the KITA[3] project, which have helped to paint an accurate picture of bilingual children's language use. Her projects have also served as the prototype for later Turkish/German bilingualism studies. In this sense, Pfaff definitely stands out as a trailblazer in the field. The empirical research based on tape-recorded natural discourse material that she pioneered in the field of Turkish/German bilingualism has also been applied in the field of socio-pragmatics by younger scholars.

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[2] EKMAUS is an acronym that stands for *Entwicklung von Konzepten und Materialien für die Förderung ausländischer Kinder und Jugendlichen im schulischen und außerschulischen Bereich*, the name of a group of projects funded at the Freie Universität Berlin between 1983 and 1986.
[3] KITA is an acronym of *Kidertagesstätte*, or daycare centers for children, where linguistic data were collected for the project.

As Turkish immigrant families' stays in Germany were gradually prolonged, bilingualism among adolescents also attracted the attention of scholars. For example, Volker Hinnenkamp collected natural conversations among young bilinguals and tried to show how code-switching fulfilled dramaturgical functions by focusing on heterogeneity within discourse (Hinnenkamp 2003). Inken Keim, on the other hand, focused on heterogeneity among speakers (Keim 2002). On the accumulation of research findings, including those of his own research, Christoph Schroeder took a step toward their application to language education (Schroeder 2003, 2006).

In the Netherlands, the study of Turkish-Dutch bilingualism was already well underway in the 1980s. Hendrik Boeschoten, Guus Extra, Ludo Verhoeven, Ad Backus, and Kutlay Yağmur were taking the lead. For example, Boeschoten (1990) analyzed the language acquisition of bilinguals, comparing children ages four, five, and six, based on experimental data as well as natural discourse. Verhoeven (1987) focused on bilingual literacy; his concern was scientific as well as educational. Unlike the research of Boeschoten and Verhoeven, the target speakers of Backus (1992, 1996) were bilingual adolescents, who enabled him to analyze more complex constructions. It was a natural consequence that he focused on language choice rather than acquisition. Sociological studies based on large-scale statistical data have also been conducted in the Netherlands. One example is Extra and Yağmur (2004), which was based on the data collected in an international research collaboration, the Multilingual Cities Project, headquartered at the Centre for Studies of the Multicultural Society at Tilburg University.

In France, Mehmet-Ali Akıncı was the pioneer of the Turkish/French bilingualism study. He conducted a large-scale survey targeted at children between the ages of five and ten, and identified patterns exhibited by bilinguals using both quantitative and qualitative data. He found differences in language choice between the first and the second generations among Turkish residents in Lyon (Akıncı 1999, 2002, Akınci and Yağmur 2003).

In Denmark, Jens Normann Jørgensen re-examined whether the factor of young bilinguals' immigrant descent has a greater effect on their linguistic performance than other factors such as gender and age. This re-examination was conducted using a large volume of discourse data taken from children's natural classroom conversations (Jørgensen 2003).

In other parts of the world, where Turkish immigrants have been increasing in recent years, studies such as Kurtböke (2000) and Türker (2000) are worth noting. The former deals with Turkish-English contact in Australia, and the latter, Turkish-Norwegian contact.

Some studies have dealt with not only Turkish immigrants in Europe but also immigrants who have returned to Turkey. Research by Treffers-Daller and Daller (1995)

pursues the change of linguistic proficiency and performance in the children of immigrant families who have returned to Turkey from their former homes in Europe.

4. Outline of my surveys in Kreuzberg

Just a small fraction of the previous research concerning the language use of Turkish immigrants has been briefly introduced above. It should be noted that this introduction specifically covers the works published in a relatively early stage of the research field, i.e., mainly in the last century. It is, therefore, far from fair to generalize the research trends on the basis of such a limited introduction, although the studies introduced above can be roughly classified into two groups: those analyzing natural or non-controlled discourse, and those based on data obtained from experiments or questionnaire surveys. These two types clearly reflects the validity of both research methods.

Natural or non-controlled discourse data is, of course, a good replica of real linguistic performance. It is the best source for understanding exactly what bilingual speakers are doing in real life. A substantial amount of such data has been accumulated and the majority of the studies introduced above are based on such data.

However, if we want to understand bilingual speakers' awareness of their language choice or their attitudes toward specific phenomena, it might be too indirect to collect only relevant naturally spoken data. Questionnaires may offer a good and practical solution to such challenges. In particular, young bilingual speakers' linguistic awareness is worthy of attention when considering the future of Turkish in Berlin.

Thus, I developed questionnaires to learn about the language use and awareness of young Turkish-German bilingual speakers. My hope was to also identify changes in their language use and awareness and to become informed about the diversity among Turkish/German bilingual speakers, if any.

Fortunately, the teachers of two high schools in Kreuzberg kindly accepted my request to give the questionnaires to young Turkish/German bilingual speakers. Students enrolled in elective Turkish language classes were chosen as respondents.

The surveys were carried out four times between the years of 2000 and 2015. In this paper, I will report a portion of the results obtained through these surveys at one of the two high schools that I visited, School A.

5. School A

School A is located in the western part of Kreuzberg. The majority of the students are of Turkish background. The school is now categorized into *Integrierte Sekundarschule*, which corresponds to *Gesamtschule* according to the former classification. Students study there for four years, between 7th and 10th grade. Unlike at *Gymnasium*, graduates opt for

an occupation. Few students go to university. As of 2000, there were about 480 students.[4] English is taught as the first foreign language, while French and Turkish are taught as a second foreign language in elective classes. In fact, almost all the students enrolled in Turkish language classes are from families with a Turkish background. Turkish language classes thus provide a kind of mother tongue education at School A.

6. Survey questions

The questionnaire consists of various questions, which can be roughly classified into the following seven categories:

(1) respondent's basic attributes,
(2) respondent's life and experiences (media frequently watched or read, favorite writers/singers, frequency of seeing specific people, connection with Turkey, experience learning the Turkish language, etc.),
(3) language choice by situation (in writing, counting/calculating, speaking, and dreaming),
(4) language choice by dialogue partners,
(5) spoken vocabulary of Turkish and German languages,
(6) value placed on each language, and
(7) opinions about code-switching.

In what follows, I will focus on the responses to the third types of questions, i.e., language choice by situation. The results are discussed in section 8; but first, the following section presents the distribution of respondents by age and gender.

7. Respondents

There were 116 respondents in 2000, 69 in 2005, 80 in 2010, and only 29 in 2015.[5] The percentage of female students remained between 52.5% and 66.5%. Female students were more numerous than male students among the respondents for all four surveys. As shown in Table 2, students' ages ranged between 12 and 18 in 2000 and 2010, while the surveys of 2005 and 2015 lack any age-12 respondents, and the 2015 survey also lacks any age-18 respondents. The majority of the students were ages 13, 14, 15, and 16. It is

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[4] Unfortunately, the number of students at School A has been gradually decreasing. The enrollment was just over 300 students in 2015.
[5] Students were completely free to refuse to answer the questionnaire. It is thus a natural consequence that the number of respondents fluctuates. The reason why I could find much fewer respondents in 2015 than in the other years is unknown.

true that the age and gender distributions of the respondents of the four surveys differ from each other to some extent, yet not enough to prevent comparison.

Table 2   Respondents at School A

		2000		2005		2010		2015	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Age	12	6	5.2%	0	0.0%	3	3.8%	0	0.0%
	13	27	23.3%	6	8.7%	21	26.3%	2	6.9%
	14	30	25.9%	18	26.1%	16	20.0%	7	24.1%
	15	24	20.7%	28	40.6%	22	27.5%	12	41.4%
	16	20	17.2%	12	17.4%	11	13.8%	6	20.7%
	17	7	6.0%	3	4.3%	5	6.3%	2	6.9%
	18	1	0.9%	2	2.9%	1	1.3%	0	0.0%
	NR	1	0.9%	0	0.0%	1	1.3%	0	0.0%
Total		116	100.0%	69	100.0%	80	100%	29	100%

8. Language choice by situation

In the surveys, students were asked to answer the following four questions:[6]

(1)   Which language do you feel more comfortable with in writing?
(2)   Which language do you feel more comfortable with in counting?
(3)   Which language do you feel more comfortable with in speaking?
(4)   Which language do you think you speak in dreams?

Figure 1 shows students' responses in the year 2000 survey, which have already been reported in Ogoshi and Hayasi (2004).[7]

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[6] It should be noted that responses to these questions may not necessarily reflect reality. What is significant for my discussion is not the face values of responses but patterns found among students' different responses to the questions.
[7] In the following discussion bar graphs do not show any diachronic change but just difference in patterns of students' responses.
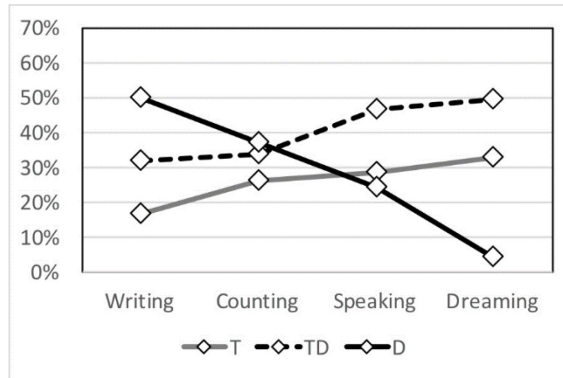
Fig. 1   Language choice at School A in 2000

The faded gray line represents the percentages of students who chose Turkish as the more comfortable language in writing, counting, speaking, and dreaming, respectively. It rises slowly from 16.4% to 32.8%. The dotted black line represents the percentages of students who choose both Turkish and German as equally comfortable languages in the same four situations. It also rises from 31.9% to 49.1%. The solid black line represents the percentages of students who choose German as the more comfortable language in the respective situations. It decreases sharply from 50% to 4.3%.

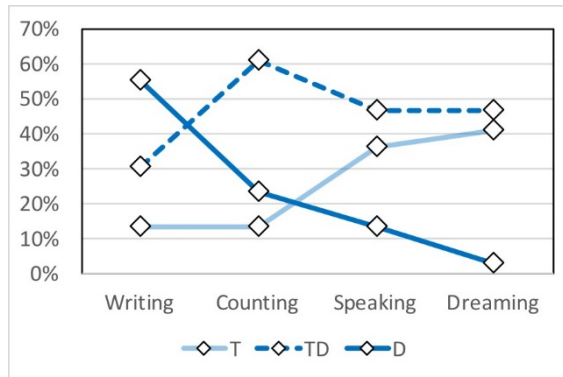Figure 2 shows students' responses in the 2005 survey.

Fig. 2   Language choice at School A in 2005

Although a different color, the faded, dotted, and solid lines represent the same respective percentages. Figure 2 shows a different pattern in terms of the most comfortable language used in counting: the percentage of students who chose both Turkish and German was much higher than that of students who chose only German, while in Figure 1, from the year 2000, these were very close.

Figure 3 shows the responses to the same questions in 2010. It displays basically the same patterns as in Figure 1.
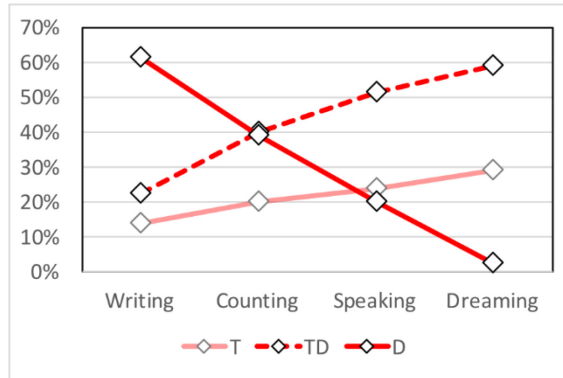

Fig. 3   Language choice at School A in 2010

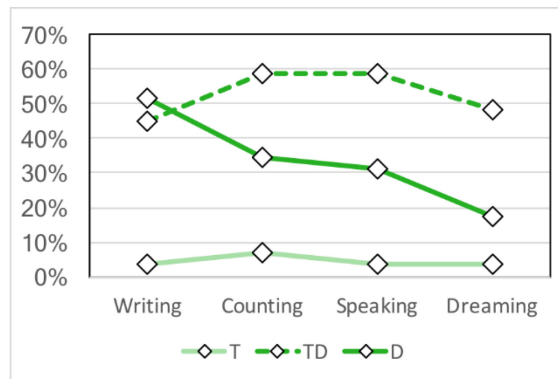Figure 4 shows students' responses in 2015.

Fig. 4   Language choice at School A in 2015

Compared to the other three graphs, in Figure 4, there were consistently far fewer students choosing only Turkish, and consistently far more students choosing both Turkish and German. The percentages of those choosing only German show the same decreasing pattern as in the figures above.

9. Longitudinal change in language choice

To facilitate comparisons of the results from different years, i.e., Figures 1–4, the percentages of students who indicated the same language choice in 2000, 2005, 2010, and

2015 are displayed together in the following figures. First, Figure 5 shows the percentages of students who chose only Turkish.
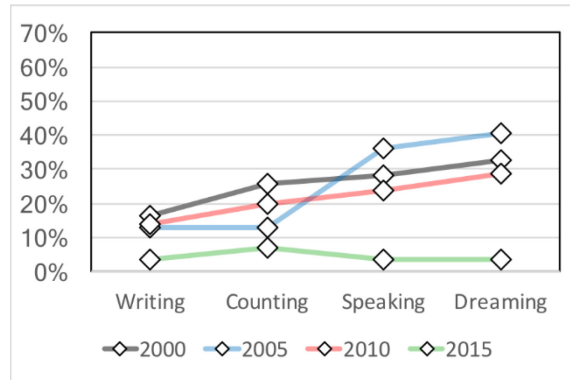

Fig. 5   Difference in the percentages of students choosing only Turkish

The results from 2015 clearly deviate from those of 2000, 2005 and 2010, which all show almost the same tendency, especially those of 2000 and 2010: those two lines are quite close to each other and look parallel. However, far fewer respondents chose only Turkish, especially for speaking and dreaming, in 2015. Unfortunately, I cannot decide whether such discrepancy between the results from 2015 and those from the other three years reflects the reality or the coincidence caused by a far smaller number of respondents in 2015.

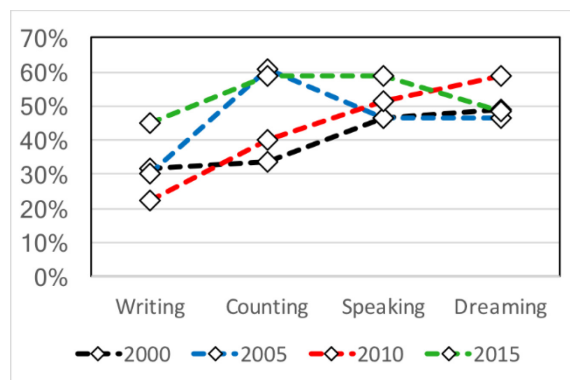Figure 6 shows the percentages of students who choose both Turkish and German.

Fig. 6   Difference in the percentages of students choosing both Turkish and German

Here, like in Figure 5, the results of 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015 are displayed together. Similarly to the pattern in Figure 5, the lines of 2000 and 2010 are close to each other, yet in this case the lines of both 2005 and 2015 deviate from them. In particular, more

students chose both Turkish and German for counting in 2005 and 2015 than in the other two years.

An apparent contrast between Figures 5 and 6 is also noticeable: the percentages of students choosing "only Turkish" (Fig. 5) consistently remain below 40%, with a slight increasing tendency from "writing" to "dreaming". In contrast, the percentages of students choosing "both Turkish and German" (Fig. 6) range between 20% and 60%, i.e., they are consistently higher than those of students choosing "only Turkish".

Last, Figure 7 shows the percentages of students who chose "only German" over the four years. Although the lines representing the results of 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2015 do not overlap completely, they show quite similar tendencies: the percentage consistently decreases in the order of writing, counting, speaking, and dreaming.
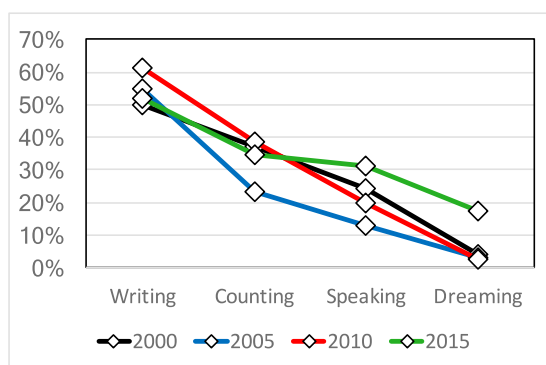

Fig. 7   Difference in the percentages of students choosing only German

Unfortunately, the number of students who participated in the four surveys between 2000 and 2015 was not consistent. The 2000 survey had 116 respondents, while the 2015 survey had just 29. We should be thus very cautious about making generalizations. Nevertheless, the results tempt me to suppose that these bilingual students' patterns of language choice did not notably change over the period of fifteen years. It has fluctuated to some extent, though without showing any clear tendency of change across the fifteen years with the exception of the choice of "only Turkish" in 2015, which the fewest respondents chose for all four language situations.

10. Conclusion

In this paper, I have reported several aspects of the results obtained through surveys carried out at four different moments, one every five years between 2000 and 2015. The responses from the students of a school in Kreuzberg concerning their language choice in four different situations—specifically, writing, counting, speaking, and dreaming—show

no clear tendency of change across the period of 2000–2015 in their patterns of language choice. The distribution of the percentages of students choosing Turkish, German, or both languages exhibits a certain pattern across the four different language situations, yet does not show any unidirectional shift over the fifteen years.

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