

Aspects of Turkish Bilingualism

Editorial Note

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Çiğdem Sağın Şimşek

Middle East Technical University, Turkey

Elena Antonova Ünlü

Hacettepe University, Turkey

Bilingualism leads to the emergence of language contact phenomenon, which can manifest in various domains, such as language acquisition, language perception and production, as well as in the social relationships of speakers in contact. In this special issue, a series of articles and research notes are presented investigating a number of aspects of Turkish bilingualism in which the language occurs in contact with another language or dialect.

Due to the geographical location of Turkey and the history of migration, the Turkish language has become a contact language with a variety of languages and/or dialects inside and outside the country. Turkish is spoken predominantly in the Republic of Turkey, of which it is the official language spoken as a first language (L1) by the population of around 80 million. As Turkey is a multilingual and multi-ethnic country, within its borders Turkish coexists with a number of ethnic minority languages spoken by about 16% of the population. These minority languages include Kurdish (12%), Circassian (2.14%), Arabic (1.38%), Laz (0.12%), Armenian (0.07%), Greek (0.06%) and other minorities (less than 1%) (Andrews, 2002; KONDA, 2006). In addition, foreign languages, particularly English, German, Russian, French and Italian, are taught and/or used as the medium of instruction in various educational and professional institutions. Outside the country, Turkish also shares bilingual contexts with many other languages for several reasons. Firstly, Turkish is used in various lands that were formerly parts of the Ottoman Empire, such as Bulgaria, Romania, Macedonia, Greece and Cyprus. Secondly, Turkish is the language of immigrants who reside in various Western European countries, such as Germany, France, the Netherlands and England, as well as the USA and Australia. Thirdly, due to the typological proximity, common cultural and religious backgrounds, as well as social and economic interactions between Turkey and the Turkic Republics, Turkish also appears as a contact language in countries such as Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, among others. Last but not least, inter-marriages and business contacts can also account for the contact of Turkish with a variety of other languages. The present volume comprises articles and research notes that examine the Turkish bilingualism in

Corresponding author:

Çiğdem Sağın Şimşek, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey.

Email: sagin@metu.edu.tr

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different contexts and from divergent perspectives, and as a whole they illustrate how multifaceted the phenomenon of bilingualism is.

The volume opens with two contributions that examine Turkish bilingualism from a psycholinguistic perspective. In the first article, Belma Haznedar investigates morpho-syntactic properties of English-Turkish bilingualism in a case of simultaneous acquisition. In her longitudinal case study, she focuses on the relationship between subject realization and verbal morphology in an English-Turkish bilingual child (2;4–3;9) acquiring both languages simultaneously. The author reports that the child uses overt subjects in his English consistently and productively, but that uninflected verb forms also appear along with overt subjects in his English, which, according to the author, challenges previous research postulating an association between overt subjects and finite forms versus null subjects and non-finite root forms. Based on these results, Haznedar suggests that language-particular devices are involved for the realization of person deixis.

Gülay Cedden and Özgür Aydın explore whether the knowledge of additional languages in the linguistic repertoire has an effect on sentence processing in L1 Turkish. For this purpose, the researchers compare reading times of their monolingual, bilingual, trilingual and plurilingual L1-Turkish participants when they process canonical subject-object-verb (SOV) sentences, subject-verb-object (SVO) sentences where constituents move to post-verbal positions and SVO-*ki* sentences where post-verbal constituents are base-generated. A non-cumulative self-paced reading task is used in the study. Their findings reveal that all three sentence types are processed significantly slower by the Turkish monolingual group than by the bi- and multilingual groups, which allows the researchers to infer that non-native languages have a positive effect on sentence processing in their L1 Turkish.

The subsequent three papers of the volume look into Turkish bilingualism from a sociolinguistic perspective in which the contact of Turkish with another language from abroad is investigated. In the first of them, Ad Backus and Kutlay Yağmur compare the socio-pragmatic skills of Turkish-Dutch bilinguals living in the Netherlands in the L1 Turkish with those of Turkish monolingual children. The researchers, assuming lexical skills as good indicators of overall language proficiency, also examine the correlation between lexical skills and socio-pragmatic skills of the Turkish immigrant children. The study reveals that the socio-pragmatic skills of the Turkish immigrant children are different from their monolingual counterparts, displaying a much lower level of knowledge. The findings of the study are discussed from contact and applied linguistics perspectives and indicate that the differences between mono- and bilinguals might be attributed to group-internal changes in conventional culture, direct Dutch influence, and reduced proficiency in Turkish.

Ayşegül Şallı investigates the contact of the Turkish and Greek communities, which became possible after the partial opening of the Green Line in Cyprus. This newly formed context gave an opportunity to both communities to contact each other for the first time after years of separation. Considering the historical background, the paper explores the motivational factors that led Turkish and Greek Cypriots to learn each other's languages, as well as their attitudes towards each other and the target language they learn. The study provides evidence that despite having a cautious stance towards the other community, both Turkish and Greek Cypriots seem to exhibit willingness to learn each other's language, for which both intrinsic and integrative motivation constructs seem to be strong sources.

The next contribution, by Çiğdem Sağın Şimşek and Elena Antonova Ünlü, is devoted to Turkish-Azerbaijani Receptive Multilingualism, a mode of multilingual communication in which speakers of different languages use their own native language to communicate and still understand each other (Rehbein, ten Thije, & Verschik, 2012). The article aims to examine the features of Turkish-Azerbaijani receptive multilingual communication and the strategies applied for achieving

understanding. Based on the analysis of the authentic data obtained from an oral communication between an Azerbaijani and a Turkish native speaker and a post-interview conducted with these participants, the authors demonstrate that receptive multilingual communication between Turkish and Azerbaijani can be utilized as an alternative to lingua franca communication thanks to the typological proximity of these languages. Furthermore, the authors describe strategies, such as counter-questions for clarification, confirmation, repetition, rephrasing and resorting to their lexical and world knowledge, used by their participants to enhance mutual understanding in receptive multilingual communication.

Turkish has often been focused on in its contacts with other languages outside the borders of Turkey. Although Turkish is in contact with a number of ethnic minority languages within Turkey, relatively little is known about these settings. Currently, there are several projects being carried out that shed light on the contact of Turkish with minority languages spoken in Turkey. This special issue presents preliminary findings of these studies in the form of research notes.

Some of these languages are endangered and that is why the studies present unique data of languages that may be considered “unsafe” (Crystal, 2005) and potentially under the danger of extinction. The first contribution in this line is a research note on an endangered language spoken in Turkey, the Laz language, investigated by Mehmet Akkuş. Within the framework of contact-induced language change, the study investigates an inevitable outcome of Turkish-Laz contact at the lexical level, placing special emphasis on loanwords. The data have been obtained from various written authentic Laz text samples and analysed by following Thomason and Kaufman’s (1991) borrowing scale. Akkuş demonstrates that nouns transmitted from Turkish into the Laz language have undergone some phonological alterations, such as vowel addition and alteration, consonant alteration and direct insertion. The contact-induced change in the Laz language has been interpreted as a possible result of historical and social contact processes.

In the next research note, Sakine Çabuk looks into Turkish-Kurmânjî Kurdish contact. The study is based on the analysis of the interaction among Turkish-Kurdish speakers and contact-induced language change in the Kurdish language at lexical and morphological levels. The study demonstrates that when verbs are borrowed from the Turkish language into Kurdish, they appear to undergo a process of “Kurdification”. The author concludes that the contact between Turkish and Kurdish leads to a diffusion of linguistic elements reinforcing interference, borrowing and eventually change on the part of Kurdish.

Finally, Hatice Sofu and Hatice Çubukçu examine Arabic-Turkish bilinguals’ basic vocabulary for words borrowed from Turkish and the phonological changes they have undergone. The data have been obtained from 40 bilingual speakers, with an age range of 50 years and above, who were asked to carry out a picture naming task including items from various semantic fields used in everyday life. The study reveals that nouns borrowed from the Turkish language into Arabic belong to various semantic fields and shows that phonological changes into the borrowing process follow mostly the phonological rules of Arabic. However, with the influence of Turkish, some Arabic sounds may also seem to be replaced by Turkish sounds.

We believe that this current issue will provide researchers interested in language contact and specifically in Turkish bilingualism with new insights into this issue. We hope that this volume of work will inspire researchers to conduct further research, particularly on endangered and ethnic-minority languages in bilingual contexts.

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