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Meryem Özdemir

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Book Review

Kutlay Yağmur, Intergenerational Language Use and Acculturation of Turkish Speakers in Four Immigration Contexts, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 2016, pp. 340, \$61.90 (Hardcover), ISBN 9783631663707

Meryem Özdemir 

Department of Sociology, Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands

Acculturation processes of migrants remain an interesting topic in academic studies since European nation-states have been challenged by increasing diversity due to ongoing immigration. However, integration is not a one-sided process. The host society and its institutions do have a determinant role in facilitating this process as well.

In his book “Intergenerational Language Use and Acculturation of Turkish Speakers in Four Immigration Contexts” that was published in 2016, Professor Yağmur examines the possible impact of integration policies of Australia, France, Germany and the Netherlands on the adaptation of Turkish immigrants. The relationship between language behavior and acculturation patterns has been investigated. All of the countries mentioned above, have the common feature that in the 1960s labour recruitment agreements for attracting guest workers were signed with Turkey, which have resulted today in significantly large Turkish populations in the host countries.

The book consists of 8 chapters. The first chapter is an introduction in which the conceptualization of integration in the European context and the public discourse on immigrant minority groups is outlined. In chapter 2 literature on acculturation orientations is discussed. It explores the framework of language behavior, patterns of identity formation and change, intergenerational differences in language use and studies on ethnolinguistic vitality. Chapter 3 clarifies the research design and research questions. Between chapter 4 and 7 the research outcomes in respectively the Australian, French, German and the Dutch context are presented. Chapter 8 makes comparisons between the countries and presents the discussion and conclusions.

Data is collected through large-scale surveys, in-depth interviews and document analysis. A cross-sectional design is used. Although a longitudinal design might offer a better distinction in the effects of age, generation, cohort and time, which is also discussed by Yağmur himself (p. 314). A total of 1.086 respondents were examined. The data is not collected in a random way, therefore generalization of the results need some caution. However, significant results allow us to make conclusions about the researched group.

CONTACT Meryem Özdemir  meryemozdemirr@gmail.com

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The language behavior of Turkish immigrants in Europe is presented as an interesting case in the book. Yağmur indicates that according to previous research, Turkish immigrants maintain their language better across generations in comparison to other ethnic groups than predicted by scientific models and that the Turkish language is viewed as a core marker of identity among Turkish immigrants in Western Europe, which is not the case with for example Moroccan immigrants (p.34). Yağmur also clarifies that for the Turkish group, language interacts strongly with other core values of identity like religion and historical consciousness. Professor Yağmur indicates in his book that despite this fact, the language aspect has not been sufficiently involved in many acculturation studies so far. However, language change cannot be separated from cultural change.

Furthermore, according to Yağmur; the relative weights of the mainstream language and the heritage language in expressing socio-cultural identity, in conveying communicative value in different social domains and in constituting symbolic meaning need to be understood. He gives in another study (2017) an example of the reflection of language policies in the field of education, namely that teachers who ignore the linguistic resources of children who grow up in multilingual families and who regard their competences in the dominant (legitimate) school language as flawed or even incompetent, produce power differences among students and contribute to the feeling that being monolingual means feeling superior. Or rather, appreciation of multilingualism is applied selectively. As Demirel (2019) stated, German plus English or French is highly valued, German plus Turkish is not always valued. This shows that language has an important symbolic meaning in social identity construction.

Hereby, Yağmur takes a critical look at policymakers by pointing out their shortcomings in developing an effective integration policy. According to Yağmur, the notion that heritage language in some countries is seen as a deficiency that would have a negative effect on integration, is more an ideological orientation rather than academically. Demirel (2019) confirmed this statement later too, by demonstrating that Turkish immigrant students' Turkish reading proficiency strongly predicts mainstream reading achievement. Children who use more Turkish, benefit from their Turkish vocabulary skills in the development of the mainstream language.

In the book Australia is presented as a country with a pluralistic model, France as a country that opt for integration and linguistic assimilation of immigrants because of the strong nation-state ideology, The Netherlands as a country whose approach is currently identified as assimilationist after a long period of integration and Germany as a typical ethnic nation encouraging monolingualism among the people in its territory. It is expected that in countries with the least pluralistic climate (France and Germany) immigrants would show the lowest level of sociocultural adjustment and the highest level of ethnic orientation and language use, the opposite was expected in Australia, and the Netherlands

would have an intermediate position.


The predictions were largely confirmed. The largest cross-cultural differences were found between Australia and Germany. It was intriguing that the immigrants in France combined the strongest Turkish identity of all groups with the lowest preference for using Turkish. In other words, speaking French does not necessarily mean feeling French. Speaking the mainstream language more frequently is presumed as a consequence of the French language assimilation policy, but apparently a similar assimilation effect on domains other than language could not be assumed. Another interesting finding of the French group in comparison to other immigrant groups is that more educated informants spoke the mainstream language more than immigrants with similar levels of education in other countries. Overall, education is positively related to adjustment and negatively to cultural maintenance. The negative correlations between the Turkish identity and mainstream identity were weaker in the Australian and Dutch samples than in the French and German samples.

Intergenerational comparisons are also described. According to the study, second-generation immigrants are bilingual and bicultural in many respects. Compared to other national contexts, the level of attachment to the host society is the highest among second generation Turkish-Australians and the lowest in the French context. The Turkish-French second generation is on the field of mainstream language use the most assimilated compared to other groups. Both the first and second generation informants hold onto religious values the most in the French context, which is interesting because of the strict laicism in France. Differences between generations are the lowest in the German context, which is attributed by Yağmur - referring to Alba's findings in 2005 - to bright boundaries between the Germans and Turkish immigrants that would lower the acculturation level of Turkish immigrants. In the Dutch context, the Turkish second generation has the highest attachment to Turkish identity in contrast to other national contexts. Yağmur claims that increasing restrictive policies after 9/11 and also the abolition of Turkish language teaching could be a reason. The Netherlands is the only country in this study that does not offer immigrant language education facilities at schools since 2004.

Overall, it has proven in this study that countries with pluralistic policies have better integration outcomes. Another interesting finding, in the case of France, is that linguistic assimilation does not necessarily lead to more adjustment, which means that outcomes of language policies do not always match the intended purpose of integration policies. It might also be interesting in further research to examine the role of NGO's in language behavior and their needs about mother tongue education, which was partly examined by Sözeri (2019, 2021) in her studies about Turkish mosque education. Besides, comparing Turkish immigrants with other immigrant groups in different national contexts, could offer interesting insights into more specific factors that distinguish groups from each other.

A side note is that, although it is mentioned in the book (p. 214), Germany that is a highly decentralized country with 16 different federal states with differing education and language policies, the federal states have not been examined separately. Küppers, Şimşek and Schröder (2015) notes that for example in states like Hamburg, Bremen and North Rhine-Westphalia Turkish is provided together with other heritage languages in the school program, whereas in Berlin and Schleswig-Holstein Turkish lessons are provided through extracurricular associations which are not a part of school lessons. That is why indicators of migrant policies in relation to multiculturalism and multilingualism could be set more specific in the book, with the aim to make comparisons that are more accurate between countries and between federal states in Germany. After all, this book offers meaningful insights to academicians, professionals and policymakers in the field of language and acculturation processes of Turkish immigrants in different countries.

Orcid

Meryem Özdemir  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5901-3189>