Original Research

LANGUAGE USE OF BILINGUAL YOUNG PEOPLE: CASE OF GERMANY AND FRANCE[1]

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ABSTRACT

Starting from the second half of the 20th century, Turkish people who had to migrate to European countries due to the need for labor force in Europe, gradually settled in these countries through family reunification. Today, fourth-generation Turkish people are born and raised, educated, and integrated into the working life in these lands. The generations that grow up in a bilingual and double culture environment are exposed to both languages and cultures in their daily lives. In this study, the language use and native language skills of 9 university students from the third and fourth generations who were born and raised in France and Germany are examined in their family and social lives. In this context, the research questions of the study are: "What are the factors that determine the language use of third and fourth-generation Turkish people living in Germany and France?" and "How do competences in language skills affect the language use of bilingual young people?". In this qualitative study, the phenomenological pattern has been used. Interview technique was used as a data collection tool and semi-structured interview questions were asked to participants, including language use and native language skills. As a result of the study, it was found that young people of the third generation living in France and the fourth generation living in Germany use the dominant language, French and German, mostly, in their social environment and education life. In the family, both languages are used effectively, however, the preferred language with parents is mostly Turkish or a mixture of both languages. Young people tend to speak the target language or code-switch with their siblings and Turkish friends. Regarding native language skills, they are more effective in oral communication and comprehension.

Keywords: Bilingualism, France, Germany, language use, native language skills.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Immigration and integration process of Turks in Europe

To migrate means "to leave one's own country and go to a place where another language is spoken, both finding oneself within a different language system and finding a new way of communication to express oneself to others and the world" (Lüdi & Py, 2003, p. 63). According to the definition provided by the Turkish Language Association (TDK) for migration, it means "the act of individuals or communities moving from one country to another, or from one settlement to another, for economic, social, or political reasons. Emigration, migration, or displacement."

Due to the need for workers in Europe after World War II, Turkey signed bilateral labor agreements with Germany in 1961 and with France in 1965 (T.C. Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Bakanlığı Dış İlişkiler ve Yurtdışı İşçi Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 2014). The first generation who went abroad consisted of male workers, thus language and integration became their biggest challenge. The men who went to these lands for a short time to earn money later brought their wives and children and started to live in these European countries through family reunification. The second generation, who continued their education and work life in these countries, married individuals from the same generation who grew up in these lands or merged their lives with imported brides/grooms from Turkey. In this regard, the third generation of Turkish young people born and raised in France and Germany, and who continue their education and work life in these countries, still exists today. Along with migration, one of the most important issues is the integration process. Integration means adaptation without losing one's own culture, values, and mother tongue. The aim of integration is for individuals to be able to adapt to the target society without losing their own culture, values, and mother tongue. For Turkish immigrants who migrated to Europe, the first generation had a difficult time with integration. Nevertheless, economic, cultural, and linguistic integration towards the later generations can be discussed. Identity, integration, culture and language concepts stand out with migration. Because a person can have multiple identities, he/she can be bi/multicultural, bilingual/multilingual. And they can be integrated or assimilated.

According to Demirbaş (2014), the intergenerational integration process can be summarized as follows:

> The first generation struggled with language and cultural differences in their new countries. They typically had limited opportunities to integrate due to their work and language barriers. The second generation had more opportunities to integrate as they were born and raised in their new countries. They typically had a better command of the language and were more familiar with the culture. The third generation, born and raised in their new countries, has a more hybrid identity. They are often bilingual and bicultural, and they may have a greater sense of belonging to their host country while still maintaining connections to their heritage culture (p. 10-11).

1.2. Bilingualism and language use of Turks

According to linguistic dictionaries, bilingualism is defined as a situation where an individual knows two languages or where two languages are used within a society (Vardar, Güz, Huber, Senemoğlu & Öztokat, 2007, p. 118; İmer, Kocaman & Özsoy, 2013, p. 155). Although there is no common definition of bilingualism in sociolinguistics, some linguists describe bilingualism as having a minimum proficiency in both languages (Macnamara, 1967; Haugen, 1953); while others refer to maximum language competence in both languages (Bloomfield, 1935). Linguist Myers-Scotton (2006) defines bilingualism as having the ability to use two languages to carry out a limited conversation (p.

44). Süverdem & Ertek (2020) state that the first definitions of bilingualism emphasized perfectionism, while current definitions focus more on functionality (p. 185).

There are lots of studies conducted on the language usage of bilingual individuals. In France and in Germany, children acquire Turkish language in family, for this reason both languages are spoken in families but with peers or siblings, young people prefer generally French or German language. Children in families where both parents were born and raised in France and two languages are spoken at home, start learning and actively using French at home before starting school (Hamurcu Süverdem & Akıncı, 2017, p. 162). Second and third generation Turks living in France mainly communicate with their families in Turkish or both Turkish and home country's language; while with their siblings and peers, they usually speak in home country's language or both languages (Yağmur & Akıncı, 2003; Krüger Serour, 2009). The same situation also applies to the language use of bilinguals living in Germany. Turkish language is not losing its importance in Turkish–German families, even though most of them are now in their third or fourth generation (Ertanir, Kratzmann, Frank, Jahreiss & Sachse, 2018, p. 2). During the natural process of language acquisition, children first learn Turkish within the family via speaking and listening randomly and having intense experiences when compared to German but they learn German through reading and writing at school as it is planned (Aktürkoğlu & Özaydınlık, 2017, p. 2350).

Although Turkish is one of the first acquired languages among bilingual Turks in France and in Germany, it can be observed that the third generation experiences difficulties with Turkish language skills. For example, Pilancı (2009) states that during her research on young Turkish people living in Europe, the third generation Turkish youth and children were unable to start and finish a sentence in Turkish. She also notes that the third generation has important problems such as communication difficulties within the family due to their lack of proficiency in Turkish (p. 151).

Growing up bilingual and being exposed to two languages from birth results in the advantage of being able to use both languages. In these situations, a phenomenon called code-switching can be observed in bilingual individuals. Code-switching is the alternating use of two languages within a single discourse or sentence (Poplack, 1980, p. 583). According to Poplack (1980), code-switching can occur in the morphological, phonological, and syntactic dimensions. She states that code-switching can be done in three different ways: intrasentential code-switching, intersentential code-switching and extrasentential or tag code-switching.

1.3. Aim and research questions of the study

This study aims to examine the language use of third-generation bilingual young people living in Germany and France. In this regard, the grandchildren of the workers who migrated to Europe for work in the 1960s are being studied in this research.

In accordance with this aim, research questions of this study are as follows:

- What are the factors that influence the language use of bilingual young people?

- How do competences in language skills affect the language use of bilingual young people?

2. METHOD

This section contains information about the method, research model, the universe and sampling, data collection tool, validity and data analysis method of the study. This study is a qualitative study and phenomenological design is used in this research.

2.1 Sample

The universe of the study consists of third-generation young people of Turkish origin living in France and Germany. The sample of the study consists of 5 students who came to Galatasaray University in Turkey with Erasmus from various cities in France and 4 students who live in various cities in Germany and came to Marmara and Yeditepe Universities in Turkey with the Erasmus exchange program.

2.2 Data Collection Tools and the Validity

In this research, a semi-structured interview form in French and Turkish languages was used as the data collection tool. The form consisted of interview questions. Semi-structured interviews combine both fixed-option answering and the ability to go in-depth in the relevant field (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz & Demirel, 2010, p. 163). If more than half of the experts mark an item as "appropriate", the item has a certain degree of content validity (Karaman, 2018, p. 651). Expert opinions were obtained from 4 field experts (3 professors and 1 assistant professor) and 1 measurement and evaluation expert (research assistant doctor) for the content validity and reliability of the interview form. As a result of the expert opinions, the interview form has taken its final form.

2.3. Data Analysis Method

Thematic analysis was used for data analysis in the study. In addition, the names of the participants were coded using a coding technique. As the participants were students, they were coded with the letter "S" and numbered from 1 to 9 as S1, S2, and so on.

3. FINDINGS

The participants' countries, fields of study, and identity authentications are presented in the table 1.1. below. While single citizenship is observed among those living in Germany, dual citizenship is observed among those living in France. One noteworthy participant is S1, who only has German citizenship but identifies herself as 100% Turkish when asked about her identity. Additionally, participant S8 identifies as "Turco-French" and prioritizes her ethnic identity when describing herself.

Table 1

Informations about the participants

Participant	Country	Department	IdentityAuthentication
S1	Germany	English-Turkish Teaching	German but feels 100% Turkish
S2	Germany	German-Turkish Teaching	Turkish
S3	Germany	German-Turkish Teaching	Turkish

S4	Germany	German-Turkish Teaching	Turkish
S5	France	Management	Dual citizen-French of Turkish origin
S6	France	Management	Dual citizen-French of Turkish origin
S7	France	Management	Dual citizen-French of Turkish origin
S8	France	Law	Dual citizen-Turco-French
S9	France	Law	Dual citizen-Franco-Turkish

3.1. Factors Influencing the Language Use

Concerning the first research question of the study, it is observed that third-generation young individuals communicate in the host society's language in places such as schools, workplaces, official institutions and social areas. However, they communicate in Turkish or both languages in places such as family, Turkish associations, Turkish friend groups, Turkish language and culture classes, Turkish businesses, mosques, etc. It is worth noting that communication is primarily carried out in the language of the host society with siblings or peers. As also indicated by Akıncı (2009), Turkish children prefer to speak Turkish within the family, while, in contrast, they mostly choose to speak French among their siblings and peers (p. 206). Thus, the choice of language spoken by bilingual individuals is often influenced by various contextual factors, such as the interlocutor, environment, and situation. Akdoğan Öztürk (2018) also notes that in the third generation of Turks living in France, the usage of Turkish and French varies depending on the situation and the interlocutor (p. V). In this way, bilingual and bicultural environments and interlocutors play an important role in determining language choice and language use patterns.

As the interviews have been done in French and in Turkish, they have been translated into English by the researcher in this study. Here, there are statements from participants indicating that language use changes depending on the subject and interlocutors:

S9: *"It depends on the topic. For example, I think I have difficulty in political issues. I understand them, but I struggle to express myself. (...) Since our lessons are in French, we speak more in French. We speak more in Turkish with the family. If we meet a Turk on the street, we still speak Turkish. C'est un réflexe quoi."*

S8: *"At home, I speak both French and Turkish with my mom. I speak Turkish with my grandmother. With my Franco-Turkish friends, it's half Turkish and half French. (...) It actually depends on the person. If someone is proficient in Turkish, I adjust accordingly to them."*

S1: *"In a friend's environment, at home, with my family, I speak Turkish; in situations where there are Germans, I switch to German, but generally, it's Turkish."*

S2: *"Within the family, it's always Turkish, but with friends, there is a lot of code-switching between both Turkish and German."*

S4: *"I always speak Turkish with my family. Outside or when it's related to school matters, I tend to speak more in German. When discussing things with friends, for example, about school, I speak in German. We use both languages."*

S7: *"We speak French with our siblings, but we speak Turkish with our family. We adapt ourselves according to the environment."*

Young bilingual individuals who report feeling integrated into their host society tend to view their bilingualism as an asset or resource. In this sense, being bilingual is seen as a source of cultural richness and linguistic versatility that enables them to navigate diverse social and cultural contexts.

S7: "We are people who are born and raised between two cultures and have to adapt to both of them. We are dependent on and attached to both cultures."

S3 "I grew up in two cultures. Turkish at home, German culture at school. I didn't struggle much. Germans see Turks as a part of themselves."

S5: "Being bicultural is a great richness."

S8: "I have nationalist feelings but I grew up with French laws and education system."

When communicating with other bilingual speakers, code-switching tends to be the predominant mode of communication employed by such individuals.

S4: "I do code-switching unconsciously."

S5: "I often start speaking in French and continue in Turkish, or vice versa, without any particular rule. It just depends on whichever comes to mind at the moment."

S7: "A sentence becomes half Turkish and half French. (...) Some expressions don't exist in French. For instance, we cannot say 'Allah razı olsun', 'maşallah', 'geçmiş olsun' in French."

In situations where a word is forgotten or not found, code-switching is often preferred by bilingual speakers. The language that is most readily accessible or familiar to the speaker is typically chosen in such instances.

3.2. Effects of Competences in Language Skills on Language Use

With respect to the second research question, the findings indicate that the primary source of challenges across the four fundamental language skills is the limited lexical knowledge and difficulty with unfamiliar terms or word meanings. Here, there are statements from participants regarding the difficulties experienced in language use:

S2: "I often miss words. When I talk with a Turk, I think first and then speak. I speak by thinking. But I speak German without thinking."

S3: "I have difficulty with certain areas. I don't understand old Turkish words, but I have no difficulty in communication in terms of speaking."

S5: "I have difficulty understanding and expressing technical issues in Turkish.

S7: "We express ourselves better in French when it comes to deep subjects in conversations."

S9: "I have difficulty when speaking. (...) I think I struggle with political topics. (...) I struggle to express myself."

S8: "In serious discussions, when talking about current events or politics, I sometimes stumble on technical terms but I correct myself."

S6: "I may face difficulties in reading due to my lack of knowledge about the terms."

Moreover, the language of choice for self-expression among bilingual individuals is largely contingent upon the interlocutor, situational context, and environmental factors.

S3: "It depends on the field and the environment we are in. We use the language that comes more easily to us at the moment. For example, since I studied mathematics in German, I can't recall the Turkish term for the concept."

S8: "I find it easier to express myself in Turkish. (...) I keep a journal as much as I can. Turkish feels more intimate to me. I prefer my boyfriend to say 'seni seviyorum' rather than 'je t'aime.' (...) When speaking Turkish, it feels like I am more myself. I feel more comfortable speaking Turkish and become a happier, more joyful person."

Young bilingual individuals engage in reading and writing activities in both languages, as determined by situational demands and personal preferences. They also consume media in both Turkish and the host language, such as Turkish TV series and news, and German or French films and news. Their smartphone language is typically set to the host language, while social media pages and posts are predominantly in Turkish. Despite exhibiting a high level of language proficiency, many of them experience feelings of inadequacy due to a limited vocabulary. In their study about the Turkish language proficiency of bilingual children, Sönmez & Akıncı have observed that bilingual Turkish children exhibit higher levels of proficiency in speaking Turkish compared to other language skills. It can be said that television and the internet influence children's listening and particularly speaking and writing skills in a more standard Turkish (2022, p. 729-731). Accordingly, Pilancı (2009) also states that Turkish youth maintain their connection to their native language through Turkish television (p. 152). It is noteworthy that, based on the Turkish language, the participants tend to view themselves as having two native languages. In addition to these, Turkish is often used as the primary language within the family and is seen as a vital aspect of their identity and cultural heritage. As Akıncı (2014) and Hamurcu Süverdem & Akıncı (2017) indicate, "compared to other immigrant communities in France, Turkish-origin people increasingly use French with their siblings and peers, but the use of their mother tongue and therefore the preservation rate with their parents is still high."

The future of the Turkish language is a subject of concern, as some individuals express apprehension and unease over the potential loss of their linguistic and cultural identity. However, there is also a sense of resolve and aspiration among these bilingual individuals to preserve and uphold their heritage language and culture despite the challenges they face.

S1: "The main issue is that neither Turkish nor German is fully understood. They don't fully know either of them. (...) There is a generation in front of us where the third generation of Turks has started getting married, but their Turkish language skills are weak. I don't know how their children will speak Turkish."

S3: "Turkish culture never disappears. The culture lives on as long as even one person in each family values it."

S4: "I have fear for the next generation. They even speak German with their parents. This bothers me. They do not pay attention to the Turkish language."

Some participants express the view that the Turkish language lacks practical utility in the host country, and as such, there are limited opportunities to use it in everyday life.

S6: "We know Turkish, but I don't know in which field it will be helpful for us."

The transmission and continuity of the mother language are seen to be contingent upon the continuity of cultural practices, customs, and traditions, as well as the promotion of endogamous marriage and family-based education. In addition, the existence of a Turkish community, travel to Turkey, and

participation in events organized by Turkish associations are also regarded as influential factors in fostering the transmission of the Turkish language to future generations. In respect to this, Akıncı (2003) associates the use of their native language by Turkish immigrants with criteria such as the presence of cultural places and associations, bringing "fresh blood" to the migration process with brides and grooms from Turkey, accessing Turkish mass media, and frequent visits to Turkey (p. 141).

4. RESULTS, DISCUSSIONS, SUGGESTIONS

4.1 Suggestions based on study results

Regarding the findings and suggestions, it can be concluded that the third generation Turkish youth residing in Europe are integrating into their host society while simultaneously embracing and adopting a bicultural way of life. These findings are similar to the results of the studies by Akdoğan Öztürk and Yağmur. Akdoğan Öztürk (2018) states that the third generation Turks do not assimilate as they do not want to give up their roots and do not dissolve in society, but rather integrate and adapt well into French society (p. 26; p. 154). Similarly, Yağmur expresses that Turkish groups living in different countries in Western Europe will successfully integrate with the society they live in and continue to be a strong group in their respective societies (2006, p. 40). However, according to Demirbaş (2014), unlike the second generation who cannot identify with a culture, the third and fourth generations of Turkish immigrants experience a struggle between the culture they inherited from their families and the culture they live in. This generation, which lacks sufficient Turkish language skills, is more educated and makes more effort to integrate into society (p. 11-12). On the other hand, Bayraktarlı argues that a significant portion of Turks have assimilated into the society they live in (2018, p. 276).

The bilingualism of these young individuals is facilitated by their family and social lives. Additionally, their linguistic abilities and usage are shaped by their social environment and educational experiences, thus code-switching can be mentionned as an example. Akdoğan Öztürk (2018) notes that the use of Turkish and French among third-generation Turks living in France varies depending on the situation and the interlocutor (p. V).

It is evident that as generations progress, the use of Turkish among Turkish citizens also decreases (Kayır, 2018, p. 25). Akdoğan Öztürk also mentions the difficulty in predicting the continued use of Turkish for future generations due to language attrition, as Turkish usage in France is increasingly weakening. She notes that the use of Turkish solely in family relationships is not sufficient for its continuation (2018, p.88; p.157). Despite potential concerns regarding the longevity of the Turkish language, it is probable that the language will endure in European countries as long as it continues to be spoken and taught within families and the Turkish community. Akıncı (2009) states in his study that, contrary to the erosion or extinction of Turkish language within families in France, Turkish language has maintained its current strength. Similarly, Yağmur (2006) expresses that future generations of Turks living in Western Europe will continue to learn and preserve their mother tongue.

4.2 Suggestions for future studies

Firstly, it is essential to raise the awareness of families regarding the importance of their children's acquisition of Turkish language skills, and subsequently, provide formal education to enable them to learn Turkish as their mother tongue along with Turkish culture. Thus, it is crucial to promote conferences and other relevant events to the Turkish community in Europe, allowing them to participate as listeners to facilitate direct discussions on issues and proposed solutions. In this context,

experts, official institutions, and organizations involved in Turkish language education and teaching, as well as Turkish associations, should increase their visibility among the Turkish community in Europe by organizing various linguistic and cultural activities.

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