



The Influence of Language Use of Turkish /English Bilingual Speakers on Their Personal and Behavioural Attitudes

Dil Kullanımının Türkçe/İngilizce Çift Anadilli Konuşanların Kişisel ve Davranışsal Tutumlarına Etkileri

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Article History: Received: 17.08.2020 / Accepted: 14.10.2020

Makale Geçmişi: Geliş: 17.08.2020 / Kabul: 14.10.2020

Doi: <https://doi.org/10.47806/ijesacademic.781559>

Abstract

This study investigated Turkish instructors of English, who have learned English as a foreign language following the acquisition of basic mother language, by utilizing a similar research procedure as in Hamers and Blanc (2004). It was aimed to reveal whether consecutive bilinguals of Turkish/English speakers feel like different people depending on their language preferences. Four female and four male Turkish instructors of English were involved as the participants of the study. The participants were selected randomly and interviewed personally. They all learned English as a foreign language at school. The data were collected through a semi-structured interview which had three parts. The first part of the interview elicited background knowledge about the participants. Secondly, an open-ended question "Do you feel like a different person when you speak English and Turkish?" was asked to get insight into their behavioural attitudes in different contexts. Thirdly, they were asked to complete the same sentence "Eğer eşimle sorun yaşarsam... / If I had an argument with my wife or husband...." both in English and Turkish, and react to a given situation "If someone passed in front of you in a queue without permission, how would you react?" in English and Turkish to investigate whether they prefer to be more polite in one of the languages. The data were analyzed qualitatively through a phenomenological research approach. The results revealed that Turkish instructors of English, who are consecutive bilinguals, feel like different people when they speak English and Turkish depending on the situation. As the sources of their perceptions, participants emphasized two main factors: (1) the context they learned English and (2) the context they use English.

Key Words: Bilingualism, consecutive bilinguals, attitude.

Özet

Bu çalışma, Hamers ve Blanc (2004) tarafından kullanılan araştırma süreçlerini kullanarak, İngilizce ikinci dil olarak sonradan öğrenen Türk İngilizce öğretmenlerini incelemiştir. Araştırma sürecinde, ardışık çift dilli yetişen ve Türkçe/İngilizce konuşan İngilizce öğretmenlerinin dil tercihlerine bağlı olarak farklı kişilik türlerinde hissedip hissetmediklerini keşfetmek amaçlanmıştır. Dört kadın ve dört erkek İngilizce öğretmeni Türk araştırmanın katılımcısı olarak belirlenmiştir. Katılımcılar rastgele seçim yöntemiyle belirlenmiş ve bireysel olarak mülakat sürecine tabii tutulmuşlardır. Katılımcıların tamamı İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak okulda öğrenmiştir. Araştırma verileri üç kısımlı yarı yapılandırılmış mülakat yöntemiyle elde edilmiştir. Mülakatın birinci kısmında katılımcıların geçmiş bilgilerinin toplanması sağlanmıştır. İkinci kısımda, "Türkçe ve İngilizce konuşurken kendinizi farklı bir insan olarak hissediyor musunuz?" açık uçlu sorusu sorulmuş ve farklı bağlamlarda davranışsal tutumlarının değişimi hakkında detaylar elde edilmiştir. Son bölümde ise "Eğer eşimle sorun yaşarsam... / If I had an argument with my wife or husband..." eş anlamlı ifadelerini hem Türkçe hem İngilizce olarak tamamlamaları sağlanmıştır. Dahası, katılımcıların "eğer kuyrukta beklerken izniniz olmadan birisi önünüze geçerse, nasıl tepki verirdiniz?" sorusunu hem Türkçe hem İngilizce cevaplamaları istenmiş ve böylelikle herhangi bir dilde kibar olma gibi farklı davranış biçimleri ve tepkileri olup olmadığı incelenmiştir. Araştırma verileri fenomenolojik araştırma yaklaşımıyla nitel olarak analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar göstermiştir ki, ardışık çift dilli İngilizce öğretmeni Türkler, dili kullandıkları bağlama göre Türkçe ve İngilizce konuşurken farklı tutum ve davranışlar sergilemişlerdir. Katılımcılar, algılarının kaynağı olarak iki temel faktörü vurgulamışlardır: (1) İngilizce öğrendikleri bağlam ve (2) İngilizce kullandıkları bağlam.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çift dillilik, ardışık çift dillilik, tutum

1. Introduction

The question of “Do bilinguals have different behavioural attitudes when they speak in different languages?” is one of the mostly asked questions about bilinguals’ attitudes. However, there is a lack of research about this issue in the literature. Pavlenko (2006) stated that according to many scholars this question is simple to answer whereas some other scholars claim that varying behavioural patterns might also be observed in monolinguals depending on registers, contexts, interlocutors, or interactional aims. Therefore, this issue has not attracted much attention in the literature. It is true that even in their mother tongue, monolinguals perform different personalities in different contexts, but the perceptions of bilinguals towards personality and bilingualism should also be explored to enrich the data about bilingual selves.

The main goal of this study is to analyze if bilingual teachers of English perform any different behavioural attitudes resulting from their different language use. This study is important to raise language teachers’ awareness about bilingualism and its influence on their personality.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Definition of Bilingualism

It is estimated that half of the world’s population is bilingual or multilingual (Pavlenko, 2006). However, it is challenging to find a universal definition for bilingualism. Many scholars have proposed various definitions for bilingualism in the literature. For instance, according to Bloomfield (1935), “bilingualism is native-like control of two languages” (cited in Hamers & Blanc, 2004, p.6). This definition raises the question “what is native-like control?”. It might mean being able to communicate without any problems with native speakers or being able to sustain intelligibility during a conversation. It might also limit the number of bilingual people as there are many people who can communicate very well in two languages, but they do not have native-like competence. On the other hand, Braun (1937) states that “a person should be able to have a complete command over two or more languages” (cited in Forslund, 2009, p.8). Haugen (1953) also suggests that “bilingualism begins at the point where a speaker of one language can produce complete, meaningful utterances in the other language” (cited in Liddicoat, 1991, p.2). In contrast to these strict definitions, there are other definitions, too. Diebold (1961) suggests that bilingualism starts “when a person begins to understand utterances in a second language, but is unable to produce utterances” (cited in Liddicoat, 1991, p.2). Macnamara (1967) accepts anyone as a bilingual as long as minimal competence is performed “in only one of the four language skills, listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing, in a language other than his mother tongue” (cited in Hamers & Blanc, 2004, p.6).

It is clear that the definitions of bilingualism are controversial, and it is not easy to find a clear-cut definition for bilingualism in the literature. One problem related to these definitions is that they are all about the proficiency levels of bilingual speakers in each language, but they do not deal with non- linguistic features of bilingualism.

2.2. Bilingual Selves

Koven (2007) states that bilinguals mostly show different behavioural attitudes in each of their two languages. He gives bilingual people's own expressions to support this observation. For instance, a young bilingual woman grown up in France as the daughter of Portuguese migrants, reported that *"When I speak Portuguese... I have trouble recognizing myself... I have the impression of being another person."* Another said *"changing languages, even if you are in the same place, you always feel like everything changes around you"* (Koven, 2007, p.1). Moreover, according to Koven (2007),

...in order to investigate empirically bilinguals' reports of feeling like a different person in each of their two languages, one should attend to three features of the relationships among language, self, and context: (1) The semiotic theory of language adopted, (2) The actual discursive productions of bilinguals in their two languages, and (3) The local sociolinguistic contexts and language ideologies that bilinguals' speech evokes, which together help produce a sense of the type of person a bilingual is. (p. 5-6)

Pavlenko (2006) reports that when he asked the question "Do you feel like a different person when you speak a different language?", the respondents "signalled their approval and enthusiasm through lexical choices (Absolutely, definitely, all the time!), the use of capital letters (YES! ABSOLUTELY!), and punctuation (yes!). Some expressed their approval explicitly ("Ah now that's a good one", "This is a good question", "Very pertinent question for me", "Interesting thought")" (Pavlenko, 2006, p.10). As a result of the research, a thematic analysis of the investigated responses revealed four main factors of perceptions of different selves depending on language preference: "(1) linguistic and cultural differences, (2) distinct learning contexts, (3) different levels of language emotionality, and (4) different levels of language proficiency" (Pavlenko, 2006, p. 10).

In her master's thesis, Açıkgöz (1995) asked the same question to five simultaneous bilinguals who have developed two mother tongues from the beginning of language acquisition: German and Turkish. They all claimed that they feel different as a person when they speak different languages. In this study, one of the participants, Hakan, stated that he feels totally different, he is not a particular person, he is someone else, he is not Hakan. He does not know which personality he belongs to, which is still a problem for him. Another participant of this study, Atilla stated that he feels more knowledgeable about everything when he speaks German. However, when he speaks Turkish, he feels like a *'fool'*, as if he does not know anything. One of the female participants, Fatma said that she feels different as a person when she speaks Turkish, German or any other language, and adds that one should feel different.

In a relatively recent research, Bakic and Skific (2017) aimed to investigate the multifaceted relationship between bilingualism and the route of expressing emotions and thoughts by utilizing a qualitative methodology. In this study, varying factors which might influence the language preference in different types of activities related to expressing emotions and thoughts were tested. Though the results were found to be individual due to the different bilingual experiences, it was suggested that the L1 of the participants be more

emotional and used more commonly for activities such as counting and converting currencies, whereas a combination of L1 and L2 was preferred for activities such as preparing a shopping list. This research also concluded that language preference is influenced by different factors which contribute to the identity formation process.

Review of the previous studies revealed that bilinguals are different people in each of their languages, and the common sources of their perceptions are context, culture, and language proficiency.

3. Methodology

This current research investigated the influence of language preference of language teachers on their identity features. Due to the abstract nature of identity, the research was conducted through phenomenological approach which provides an opportunity to the researcher to gather profound understanding of the abstract terms of identity and bilingualism. Therefore, qualitative research approach best suits with the aims of the current research. The goal of the present study is to investigate the following research question:

Do Turkish instructors of English, who are consecutive bilinguals, feel like different people when they speak Turkish and English?

3.1. Participants

Participants of this study are four female and four male Turkish instructors of English of different ages and experiences. They have been teaching English at different universities in Turkey. Three of them have master's degree and five of them are pursuing their doctoral studies in ELT. While choosing participants for this study, simple random sampling method was used. It means that each member of the population has an equal and independent possibility of being involved in the study as a participant (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). According to age of acquisition, participants of this study are assumed to be consecutive and adult bilinguals as defined by Hamers and Blanc (2004).

3.2. Research Design and Procedure

The data were collected through a semi-structured interview. Participants were interviewed personally, and each interview consisted of three parts. Firstly, socio-biographical information (gender, age, education level, languages known and dominant language or languages) was elicited. Secondly, through the open-ended question (Do you feel like a different person when you speak Turkish and English?) participants' responses about bilingualism and personality were analysed through content analysis. Finally, participants were asked to complete the same sentence in Turkish and English, and they were asked to react to a given situation in Turkish and English to see if they are more polite in one of the languages. A qualitative research method was chosen to gain detailed information about the phenomena of effects of bilingualism on personality. Findings were evaluated according to a phenomenological approach which enables the researcher to get a better understanding of participants' perceptions towards the effects of bilingualism on personality (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006).

4. Findings

4.1. Attitudes in different languages

When teachers were asked whether they feel like different people when they speak Turkish and English, they all approved that they are different people. Similar to the Pavlenko's research participants (2006), the participants of this study showed their approval by some lexical choices, too. After the question was directed, they all said "Definitely! Certainly! Absolutely! Yes! or Completely Different!". Some of them also stated that they had not thought about it before, but they all expressed that they are completely different people in two languages.

The notable personality adjectives that participants used to talk about differences in two languages are listed as: polite, rude, shy, comfortable, bossy (more teacher like), reserved, warm, serious, funny, peaceful, angry, introvert, and extrovert. The common sources for their perceptions were found to be the context they learned English and the context they use English. Teachers' perceptions about feeling like a different person when they speak Turkish and English are as follows:

- (1) Yes! Of course! I am much more comfortable in English. For instance, when students ask me if I am married, I answer it in English to be distant. If I answer this question in Turkish, I feel that I am going to be very close to my students. In English, when I experience something bad, I can easily say "Oh s**t!", but I never use its Turkish translation even in my daily life. On the other hand, I have just realized that, although I am more comfortable in English, I am much more polite in English. If I speak Turkish in class, I may say "Kapıyı açsana!" (Open the door!), but in English, I generally say "Would you mind opening the door?" or "Open the door, please!"
- (2) Certainly! I am a different person when I speak English. When I ask a question or when I say something in English, I am completely different! When I speak Turkish, I can make jokes easily. However, in English I avoid making jokes. I believe that I am politer in English because I learned English from books. Therefore, I use basic formal structures to make a sentence.
- (3) I am not the same person when I speak English. I speak English with my colleagues and with my students. Therefore, whenever I speak English, I feel like a teacher, I just do not feel like myself. When I speak English, I want to be direct to be intelligible. In Turkish, I am 100% real, but while speaking English, I try to be more sympathetic and friendly. In English, I feel more simple and plain. While speaking English, I am politer, but it is related to the context. I speak English at school with my students, so I have to be politer!
- (4) I have never thought about it, but I have just realized that I am a different person. I speak English in my professional life not in my private life. Therefore, when I speak English, I am much more like a teacher. I feel bossy when I speak English. While speaking English, I try to manipulate the conversation. I feel that I have to

teach something when I speak English, so I try to be dominant. I am more direct in English, but in Turkish, I try to be politer not to offend people.

- (5) Wow! That is a cool question! I am completely a stranger when I speak English. I am more comfortable. I can easily say the things that I cannot say in Turkish. For example, once I was short of money and I could not ask my boyfriend to send me money in Turkish, so I texted in English and asked for money. I think my boyfriend is more comfortable in English, too. He was shy to declare his love in Turkish, so he declared it in English. Even six or seven months later, he still says “I love you” instead of “Seni seviyorum!” I think I am very polite in English. When I was in the USA, I never asked like “Where is ...?” I always asked “Could you please tell me where ...?” It may be the effect of school English. I learned English at school, and we were supposed to learn some basic structures to request something.
- (6) Exactly! I normally like making jokes, but when it comes to speaking English, I am a serious guy. I believe that I can speak English only with my students, so I need to be serious. It may be related to language proficiency as well. We use English in a very limited context with very limited vocabulary. Hence, I try to keep my sentences very simple in English because I am scared of making a mistake.
- (7) I feel like a different person when I speak English. I am from Kayseri, and you know, people in Kayseri speak a bit rudely. However, when I speak English, I feel like a polite man. I never use my Kayseri accent in English. In Turkish, I hardly ever use “please” in class, but in English, I very often add “please” to my sentences. Do you think that teachers say “go to page ... PLEASE” in Turkish? They never say like that but in English, we say “go to page ... PLEASE”. It is the way we learned English, so we use it in that way.
- (8) Yes, I am a different person when I speak English. I think that it is because of my job. Normally, I am an introvert person, but while speaking English, I feel that I am an extrovert person. I can easily ask the questions in English which I cannot ask in Turkish. For example, in Turkish I cannot ask a student “Do you have a girl friend?” but in English, I can ask it easily, because it is my job. I think I am politer in English. The first thing we teach students in English is some very basic but very polite phrases like “No, thank you! Yes, please!”

In the third part of the interview, participants were asked to complete the same sentence in Turkish and English, and to react to a given situation in Turkish and English to reveal if they are more polite in Turkish or in English. The sentence to be completed is given below:

**If I had an argument with my wife/husband...*

**Eğer eşimle sorun yaşarsam...*

They were also asked to react to a given situation both in English and Turkish. The situation is like that:

**If someone passed in front of you in a queue without permission, how would you react in Turkish and in English?*

The results showed that participants were politer in English than Turkish. While completing the sentence in Turkish, they preferred words which reflected their anger, but in English, they completed the sentence positively. As the sources of this difference, they showed the learning context and the power of mother tongue. As they learned English as a foreign language at school, they claimed that they learned it in a polite way. They also mentioned that it is much easier to express their feelings in their mother tongue. Therefore, they were more sincere in Turkish sentence completion to show their anger towards their husband/wife. Some of the participants' sentences are below:

(1) Eğer eşimle sorun yaşarsam *bağırabilirim*. (If I had an argument with my wife, I would shout at her) (Turkish)

If I had an argument with my wife, *I would try to solve it*. (English)

(2) Eğer eşimle sorun yaşarsam *ona kızardım*. (If I had an argument with my husband, I would be angry with him) (Turkish)

If I had an argument with my husband, *I would feel terrible*. (English)

(3) Eğer eşimle sorun yaşarsam *sinirlenirdim*. (If I had an argument with my wife, I would be angry) (Turkish)

If I had an argument with my husband, *I would expect him to say sorry*. (English)

4.2. Reactions to the Given Situation

If someone passed in front of you in a queue without permission, how would you react in Turkish and in English? This question was answered by the participants both in Turkish and English and their reactions were indicated in Table 1. below.

Table.1. Participants reactions to given situations

<i>Reactions in Turkish</i>	<i>Reactions in English</i>
- Hey Ne oluyor? (<i>Hey what's happening?</i>)	- Excuse me! There is a line here!
- Biz de sıradayız görmüyor musun? (<i>I am waiting in the line; don't you see?</i>)	- Could you please follow the line?
- Sırayı takip edelim? (<i>Follow the line!</i>)	- Can you please follow the line?
- Pardon ama sıra bende! (<i>Sorry but it is my turn!</i>)	- Excuse me! It is my turn!
- Kör müsün biz de sıradayız? (<i>Are you blind? We are in the line, too!</i>)	- Please, don't jump the queue!

As shown in Table 1, the participants were much politer in English while warning people in the queue. They all claimed that they are more polite in English because they

learned it in that way, and they added that they might express themselves better in their mother tongue to show their happiness or anger.

The results did not reveal any differences in terms of background factors. All the participants with MA degree or Ph.D. candidates, males or females, experienced or less experienced ones stated that they are different people in English and Turkish in similar contexts.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings showed that bilinguals feel like different people when they speak English and Turkish. As the sources of their perceptions, they suggested: (1) the context they learned English and (2) the context they use English. All the participants learned English at school, so they learned English from books which abide by formal language. Moreover, English is the language that participants use for their profession, so they think that they have to be politer and formal while speaking in English. Participants claimed that they feel more polite, extrovert, relaxed, serious, peaceful and reserved when they speak English.

The results of this study are consistent with the results of Açıkgöz (1995), Esparza, Goslin, Benet-Martinez, Potter, & Pennebaker (2004), Pavlenko (2006), and Koven (2007). They found that simultaneous bilinguals feel different when they speak different languages, and the results of this study showed that consecutive bilinguals also feel different when they speak different languages. The findings of the current research also comply with the results of the study conducted by Bakic and Skific (2017) since it is suggested that language preference is influenced by different factors for bilinguals and these factors might influence the process of bilingual identity development.

Pavlenko (2006) stated that “Reflections of bilingual writers and explorations by linguists and psychoanalyst show that languages may create different, and sometimes incommensurable, worlds for their speakers who feel that their selves change with the shift in language” (p. 27). Furthermore, Pavlenko (2006) claims that “psychoanalysis, psychology, and linguistic anthropology demonstrate that bicultural bilinguals may exhibit different verbal behaviours in their two languages, and may be perceived differently by their interlocutors depending on the language they use in a particular context” (p.27).

The results of this study indicated that monocultural bilinguals also exhibit some differences in terms of personality in their two languages. There may be a few reasons for this fact. Firstly, emotional attachment may have a big role for personality differences. It is inevitable for consecutive bilinguals that they are more dominant in their mother tongue and they may play with the language to express themselves. Therefore, as the study revealed, they may feel more direct in their second language while implying indirectness in their mother tongue. In English, they might not get engaged in the conversation emotionally. They may just exchange ideas or tell their problems, but in their mother tongue, they try to show feelings and emotions, as well. Therefore, they may naturally feel like different people regarding the languages they speak. Secondly, context is one of the crucial factors on personality. The teachers in this study speak English and Turkish in completely different contexts. They speak Turkish with their family members and friends, so they do not force themselves to choose

polite words. However, they speak English with their colleagues and students, so they may feel the pressure to be polite. Finally, culture is a salient factor which affects personality. Turkish people may tend to be more sincere during daily speech, so they may avoid using some words not to be perceived as distant and unfriendly. Therefore, it may be perceived as being rude, and it might not be related to language itself. For instance, Turkish equivalent of “please” is “lütfen, rica ederim or rica etsem” and it might signal to be distant in daily conversation. Turkish people generally say “rica etsem” (please) when they need to be very polite or when they talk to someone who they do not know very well while requesting something.

All in all, the results of the current study might provide support for the phenomenon that bilinguals might have two personalities. This phenomenon reflects that bilinguals feel like different people when they speak Turkish and English languages depending on the contexts that they learned the language and they use the language. The results from the similar studies showed that the language does not only affect bilinguals’ attribution or values, but also their personality (Esparza et al.,2004).

5.1.Limitations of the Study

The results of this study are true for consecutive bilingual instructors of English who live in a mono-cultural environment. The results may not be the same for simultaneous bilingual instructors or for consecutive bilingual instructors who live in a bicultural environment.

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