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MOTHER TONGUE OR MOTHER'S LANGUAGE? INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF ZAZAKİ

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ABSTRACT

Language endangerment is a global concern that threatens a significant portion of the world's languages, and intergenerational transmission is critical to the survival of a language. Recent studies indicate that the use of Zazaki is declining and that the language is endangered. However, existing research focusing on the intergenerational transmission of Zazaki is both limited in number and methodologically constrained.

This study aims to analyse the intergenerational transmission of Zazaki among families living in Bingöl Province with children under the age of 10. The focus of the research is to understand how language transmission occurs, particularly during early childhood, and the role of parents in this process. Additionally, the study aims to determine the extent to which Zazaki is used in daily life within family communication, working life, and social life. A quantitative research method was adopted in the study. Data were collected from 52 participants (aged 30-50) residing in the centre, districts and villages of Bingöl, whose native language is Zazaki and who have at least one child under the age of 10 (from different socio-economic and educational backgrounds). A questionnaire containing information on language use and participants' demographic information was used as the data collection tool. Quantitative data were analysed using statistical analysis software (SPSS).


According to the findings, although Zazaki still plays an active role in daily life, it is no longer the primary language of communication and is limited to specific social contexts. If current trends continue, Zazaki faces the risk of extinction, and a multi-dimensional approach requiring urgent intervention is needed to ensure the sustainability of the language.

Keywords: Zazaki, Intergenerational Transmission, Language Preferences, Language Use

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ANADİL Mİ, ANNENİN DİLİ Mİ? ZAZACANIN KUŞAKLARARASI AKTARIMI

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ÖZ

Dillerin yok olma tehlikesi, dünya dillerinin önemli bir kısmını tehdit eden küresel bir sorundur ve bir dilin hayatta kalması için kuşaklararası aktarım kritik öneme sahiptir. Son çalışmalar, Zazaca kullanımının azaldığına ve dilin tehlike altında olduğuna işaret etmektedir. Ancak, Zazaca'nın kuşaklararası aktarımına odaklanan mevcut araştırmalar hem sayıca azdır hem de metodolojik sınırlılıklara sahiptir.

Bu çalışma, Bingöl ilinde yaşayan ve 10 yaş altı çocuğa sahip ailelerde Zazaca'nın kuşaklar arası aktarımını analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmanın odak noktası, özellikle erken çocukluk döneminde dil aktarımının nasıl gerçekleştiğini ve ebeveynlerin bu süreçteki rolünü anlamaktır. Ayrıca çalışma, Zazaca'nın aile iletişimi, çalışma hayatı ve sosyal yaşamda ne ölçüde günlük kullanım alanı bulduğunu belirlemeyi hedeflemektedir. Araştırmada nicel araştırma yöntemi benimsenmiştir. Veriler, Bingöl merkez, ilçe ve köylerinde ikamet eden, anadili Zazaca olan ve en az bir çocuğu 10 yaşın altında bulunan 30-50 yaş arası 52 katılımcıdan (farklı sosyo-ekonomik ve eğitim düzeylerinden) toplanmıştır. Veri toplama aracı olarak, dil kullanımı ve katılımcıların demografik bilgilerini içeren bir anket kullanılmıştır. Nicel veriler istatistiksel analiz programı (SPSS) ile çözümlenmiştir.

Bulgulara göre, Zazaca günlük yaşamda hala aktif bir rol oynamasına rağmen, artık ana iletişim dili değildir ve belirli sosyal ortamlarla sınırlıdır. Mevcut eğilimler devam ederse, Zazaca yok olma riskiyle karşı karşıya kalmaktadır ve dilin sürdürülebilirliğini sağlamak için acil müdahale gerektiren çok boyutlu bir yaklaşım gerekmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Zazaca, Kuşaklararası Aktarım, Dil Tercihleri, Dil Kullanımı

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1. INTRODUCTION

The transmission of a language from one generation to another is the crucial factor in protecting that language against the danger of extinction. A language is in danger when its speakers are no longer transmitting their language to the next generations. Some scholars estimate that by the end of the twenty-first century, 90 per cent of the world's languages could be replaced by dominant languages, reducing the number of existing languages from about 7000 to about 700 (Brenzinger & de Graaf, 2009; Brenzinger, 2007; Lewis & Simons, 2017; Sallabank & Austin, 2011). Globalization, industrialization, and the influence of dominant languages or cultures are placing many languages in danger of extinction. The loss of these languages means not only the loss of oral forms of expression, but also the loss of the knowledge, experience, and perspectives they contain (Crystal, 2002). Thomason (2015) addresses the lack of precise information on the exact number of endangered languages in the world, however, he mentions that there are endangered languages on almost every continent except Antarctica. Ethnologue, a comprehensive reference source providing information and statistics for all known living languages of the world, reports that at least 40% of the estimated 7,139 languages spoken in the world are endangered. It is challenging to determine the exact number of languages because there is no universally accepted definition of what constitutes a language. Languages can frequently be separated into smaller linguistic units such as dialects or accents, and perspectives on which linguistic units are distinct from one another differ. According to Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig (2021) as the definition of languages and data on languages are constantly changing, statistics vary and therefore the total number of living languages in the world cannot be calculated with certainty. In this context, Brenzinger & de Graaf (2006) refer to the lack of any kind of overview of the extent of endangered languages and argue that one reason for this is that there are regions where no language research has been conducted.

It is commonly accepted that the causes of language endangerment and loss are often a combination of multiple factors. Brenzinger & de Graaf (2006) divide the factors that lead to language endangerment into two groups: internal forces and external forces. They refer to military, economic, religious, cultural or educational subjugation as external forces, while internal forces include negative attitudes towards their own language and a general decline in group identity. The reasons for the language endangerment are based on a complex set of interactions. External and internal factors, as well as economic, political, demographic and sociocultural factors, lack of institutional support, language use and preference, subjective attitudes, natural disasters, war, oppression and cultural pressure, as well as the cultural, political and economic superiority of the language, can lead to language endangerment (see e.g. Campbell & Rehg, 2018; Crystal, 2002; Romaine, 2007; Austin & Sallabank; 2011). It is worth noting here that a language does not necessarily have to have few speakers to be endangered. Despite the fact that small communities are more vulnerable to external threats, group size is not always significant. A language's survival is primarily based on how its speakers generally view their ancestral culture, which is arguably one of the most significant aspect of their language. The most significant aspect of linguistic vitality in this context is the intergenerational transmission of the language, or teaching children the heritage language (Brenzinger & de Graaf, 2006).

The early 1990s saw the emergence of the first serious debates and studies regarding the possibility of language extinction. It was then becoming evident that language endangerment needed immediate intervention on an international basis (Namrova, 2021). According to Namrova (2021), attempts to classify or scale which languages are endangered and the degree of endangerment are highly challenging. There are several scales that categorize the degree of endangerment of languages (Fishman, 1991; Lewis & Simons, 2010; Moseley, 2012; Lee & Van Way, 2018). Detailed information about these scales can be found in Namrova's (2021) thesis. In this study, we only refer to UNESCO's scale, which proposes an alternative framework for assessing the status and vitality of endangered languages. Since our study is about the intergenerational transmission of Zazaki, we refer to the framework in which UNESCO categorizes endangered languages by focusing on intergenerational transmission. The UNESCO framework identifies six degrees of language vitality in relation to intergenerational language transmission, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1.
UNESCO's endangerment scale (Moseley, 2012)

Degree of endangerment	Intergenerational transmission
Safe	Language is spoken by all generations; intergenerational transmission is uninterrupted
Vulnerable	Most children speak the language, but it may be restricted to certain domains (e.g., home)
Definitely endangered	Children no longer learn the language as mother tongue in the home
Severely endangered	The language is spoken by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to children or among themselves
Critically endangered	The youngest speakers are grandparents and older, and they speak the language partially and infrequently
Extinct	There are no speakers left

If the transmission of a language between generations is interrupted, that language is in danger of extinction. Zazaki is also included in the group of “vulnerable” in the report published by UNESCO in 2010, in other words, although Zazaki can be partially learned by children, it is only spoken in particular domains. In this respect, the intergenerational transmission of the Zazaki language is of great importance for the preservation and revitalisation of languages that are in danger of being lost.

Zazaki is among the Northwestern Iranian languages of the Indo-Iranian group, a subdivision of the Indo-European language family. It is spoken more intensively in the Eastern and Southeastern regions of Turkey, and also spoken in various parts of Turkey and Europe due to migration. This language is considered to be the mother tongue of 4-6 million people, although there is no exact number (Varol, 2015). Among the languages spoken in Turkey, it can be noted that Zazaki is the only indigenous language that is not spoken outside Turkey (except for immigration) as a mother tongue (Keskin, 2011). Many studies published in recent years have emphasized that Zazaki is becoming less widely used and is in danger of extinction (Aldatmaz, 2020; Bulukgiray & Kimsün, 2023; Eppler & Benedikt, 2017).

1.1. Literature review

There are very few studies on the intergenerational transmission of Zazaki. The most comprehensive of these rare studies is the Migration and Humanitarian Relief Foundation's (GİYAV) “Analysis Report on the Use of the Language in the Regions where Zazaki is Spoken in Turkey and Predictions for the Future” which was published in 2021. Assuming that native speakers of Zazaki use the language in certain areas and that there are significant problems in transmitting the language to new generations, the research was conducted by interviewing both children and their parents in the six provinces along with their districts and villages where Zazaki is most commonly spoken. According to the results of the research, Zazaki is used at home, on the street and in social relations, but its use has decreased in the new generations. This reveals that intergenerational transmission has been interrupted. For example, the rate of children who answered, “I speak, understand and can write” to the question “To what extent do you know your mother tongue” was 7.9, while the rate of parents who answered, “I speak, understand and can write” was 8.7. Although the study presents data on the percentages of children and adults under many topics, this study is deficient in that it fails to clearly indicate the regions where it was conducted and lacks any clear data on the number of participants.

In her doctoral dissertation, Aldatmaz (2020) focused on the level of disappearance of Zazaki in the center of Tunceli -one of the cities where Zazaki is spoken most widely- and tried to reach a conclusion by comparing different generations in terms of language use. Using a language use questionnaire in the form of face-to-face interviews with participants from different age groups, socio-economic backgrounds, and educational levels, the study found that Zazaki is rapidly disappearing to the extent that linguistic interactions between the first and third generations are disappearing. The research would have been more convincing if a wider range of regions where Zazaki is spoken (e.g. Bingöl, Elazığ or Diyarbakır) had been included.

Although not focusing directly on the use of Zazaki, Rawest Research (2019) surveyed 1537 parents who have children between the ages of 3 and 13 in 25 provinces and districts (including the central districts of Diyarbakır,

Mardin, Urfa, Van, Ağrı, Bingöl, Şırnak and Tunceli) about the use of Kurdish. Researchers have used Kurdish as an umbrella term that includes Zazaki and Kirmanji. According to the report, the use of Kurdish among children has decreased, while the use of Turkish has increased. The same survey results show that the rate of parents speaking Kurdish with their mother and father is 48%, while this rate decreases to 13% in children. The main weakness with this study is that it does not focus specifically on Zazaki and therefore does not provide a clear outline of language transmission among Zazaki speakers.

1.2. Aims and Research Questions

This study aims to analyse the intergenerational transmission of Zazaki in families residing in Bingöl province and having children under the age of 10. The focus of the study is to understand how language transmission takes place, especially in early childhood, and the role of parents in this process. Since all the studies mentioned earlier have some shortcomings, in this study we aim to examine the intergenerational transmission of Zazaki by including participants from different regions where Zazaki is widely spoken as a mother tongue. It is generally assumed that for various reasons, speakers of Zazaki have stopped using their mother tongue and started to use only the dominant Turkish language in the society with their children, gradually reducing the intergenerational transmission of their mother tongue (Arslan; 2019; Şanlı, 2022; Werner, 2021). This paper aims to find out to what extent this assumption is true by conducting fieldwork and to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the extent of intergenerational transmission of Zazaki?
2. To what extent is Zazaki used in daily life, particularly in family communication, at work, and in social life?

2. METHODOLOGY

In this study, a quantitative research method was adopted to determine the intergenerational transmission and daily usage of Zazaki. A structured questionnaire was used as the data collection tool, and the research questions included questions related to the participants' demographic information, language proficiency, language use practices within the family, language communication with children, language preferences in social and professional environments. The survey was administered to participants selected from the Zazaki-speaking community, and the data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. This approach aims to objectively reveal the intergenerational transmission of Zazaki and its frequency of use in various areas of daily life.

2.1. Setting and participants

The participant group of the study consists of 52 individuals residing in Bingöl city centre, districts and villages, with at least one child under the age of 10. This age group was specifically selected as it represents the critical period of language acquisition and reflects the current attitudes and practices of families regarding language transmission. The sample of the study consists of middle-aged participants (aged between 20 and 50) whose mother tongue is Zazaki. In this context, the inclusion of participants from different socio-economic and educational levels may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the current state of Zazaki language transmission. Demographic information of participants is presented in the table below.

Table 2.

Demographic information of participants

Demographic Characteristics	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	33	63.5
	Female	19	36.5
Age	20-29	2	3.8
	30-39	29	55.8
	40-50	21	40.4
Education	Primary School	6	11.5
	Secondary School	12	23.1
	High School	12	23.1
	University	13	25.0
Number of Children	Postgraduate	9	17.3
	1	9	17.3
	2	19	36.5
	3	17	32.7
	4+	7	13.5
Residence	Center	36	69.2

District	9	17.3
Village	7	13.5

The demographic data obtained from 52 participants were analyzed within the scope of the research, and the male participants (63.5%) had a significant majority compared to female participants (36.5%) in gender distribution. When the age distribution was analyzed, participants between the ages of 30-39 (55.8%) constituted a significant portion of the sample, followed by participants between the ages of 40-50 (40.4%). This shows that the sample is concentrated in the middle age group. According to the educational level parameters, 34.6% of the participants had basic education (primary and secondary school), 23.1% had secondary education (high school) and 42.3% had higher education (university and graduate school). When the number of children of the participants was analyzed, it was found that the majority of the participants (36.5%) had 2 children. This is followed by participants with 3 children (32.7%). Regarding the place of residence, more than half of the participants (69.2%) resided in the central region, while the rest lived in the district (17.3%) and village (13.5%) settlements.

2.2. Instruments

To answer the research questions, a questionnaire was preferred as a data collection instrument. The use of questionnaires is one of the data collection method frequently used in the literature to define the thoughts, tendencies, expectations, preferences and perceptions of the participants in the sample about the subject or phenomenon being researched. According to Yazicioğlu and Erdoğan (2004), the reason for the use of questionnaire data collection tool in social sciences is that questionnaires have important advantages due to their features such as being economical, being able to obtain a large amount of data, allowing the data to be reliable and valid by reaching participants on a large scale, and receiving feedback in a short time.

The first part of our questionnaire included questions about the background of the participants (gender, mother tongue, age, educational background, and number of children, etc.) In the second part of the questionnaire, there are questions about the extent to which the participants use Zazaki in communication with their children. The last part of the questionnaire includes questions about with whom, where and to what extent the participants use their mother tongue Zazaki. This section also presents questions to determine their language preferences when engaging in certain activities.

2.3. Data Analysis

The data obtained in the study were analyzed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Descriptive statistical methods (frequency, percentage) were used to determine the demographic characteristics of the participants. Frequency and percentage distributions were calculated and descriptive statistics were presented to reveal the intergenerational transmission of Zazaki and its daily usage. Comparative analyses were conducted to examine the effects of demographic variables such as gender, age, education level, and place of residence on language use practices. The findings were visualized and presented using tables and graphs. A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was applied in the analyses.

3. RESULTS

This section presents the results obtained from research questions related to the intergenerational transmission and daily use of Zazaki. The results are organized under three main headings in line with the research questions: the intergenerational transmission of Zazaki, the use of the language in different areas of daily life, and the effect of demographic variables on language use practices. The results are explained in detail and visualized using tables.

3.1. Results Regarding Intergenerational Transmission of Zazaki

At first, the results related to the extent of intergenerational transmission of Zazaki will be presented. The introductory table contains the results of the question aimed at determining the language used by participants' parents to communicate with them in their childhood.

Table 3.

Language spoken with parents during childhood

	N	%
Only Zazaki	32	61.5
Mostly Zazaki	9	17.3
Zazaki and Turkish equally	5	9.6
Only Turkish	3	5.8
Mostly Turkish	3	5.7
Total	52	100.0

As shown in the table, 61.5% of participants spoke only Zazaki with their parents when they were children. 17.3% spoke mostly Zazaki. As a result, 78.8% of communication was predominantly in Zazaki. The language experiences of participants during their childhood indicate that Zazaki was dominant at that time. The following table contains responses regarding the use of Zazaki in communication with children.

Table 4.*Language spoken with children*

	N	%
Both Zazaki and Turkish	20	38.5
Mostly Turkish	13	25.0
Only Turkish	10	19.2
Mostly Zazaki	6	11.5
Only Zazaki	3	5.8
Total	52	100.0

Data regarding language preferences when communicating with children reveal a significant decline in the intergenerational transmission of Zazaki. Only 5.8% of participants speak exclusively Zazaki with their children, while 11.5% speak mostly Zazaki. Such a rate is equivalent to a total of 17.3% of communication being Zazaki-dominant. In contrast, 44.2% of participants speak predominantly Turkish (mostly or exclusively Turkish) with their children, while 38.5% use both languages equally. These data show that, despite the fact that 78.8% of parents grew up in a Zazaki-dominant language environment during their childhood, as seen in the previous table, they have not been able to pass on their mother tongue to their children. Notably, the decline in the percentage of those who speak only Zazaki from 61.5% to 5.8% points to a critical situation for the survival of the language. Table 5 presents statistical data on the participants' children's ability to speak Zazaki.

Table 5.*Children's ability to speak Zazaki*

	N	%
Can speak some words and simple sentences.	22	42.3
Cannot speak at all.	15	28.8
Can talk about things in limited situations and on limited topics.	8	15.4
Can talk about anything in any situation. Can express almost anything in Zazaki.	7	13.5
Total	52	100.0

According to Table 5, 42.3% of the participants' children can say some words and simple sentences, while 28.8% cannot speak at all. The percentage of those who can speak in limited situations is 15.4%, while the percentage of those who can speak fluently in all situations is only 13.5%. Considering the data, it is evident that the vast majority of the participants' children remain at a basic level of Zazaki proficiency (42.3%) and can only form simple words and sentences. Another notable point is that 28.8% of the children cannot speak Zazaki at all, and only 13.5% can speak it fluently. This situation indicates that the intergenerational transmission of the language has been disrupted. The next table shows children's level of understanding of Zazaki.

Table 6.*Children's ability to understand Zazaki*

	N	%
Can understand some words.	20	38.5
Can understand very well.	15	28.8
Can understand most of words and sentences.	9	17.3
Can not understand anything.	8	15.4
Total	52	100.0

In line with data on children's ability to understand Zazaki, 38.5% of children can only understand some words, while 28.8% can understand very well. The percentage of those who can understand most words and sentences is 17.3%, while the percentage of those who cannot understand at all is 15.4%. It can be said that children are better at understanding Zazaki than they are at speaking it, as 46.1% can understand it well or very well. However, 38.5% can only understand it at a basic level and 15.4% cannot understand it at all. This situation indicates that the receptive skill of the language is also declining during intergenerational transmission.

The participants' children's level of speaking and understanding Zazaki is directly related to communication within the family. Therefore, it is important to determine how often the participants speak Zazaki with their children. Table 7 shows data on how often participants use Zazaki when communicating with their children.

Table 7.
Frequency of speaking Zazaki with children

	N	%
I talk a little every day.	24	46.2
I talk very rarely.	11	21.2
I talk every few days.	9	17.3
I never talk.	8	15.4
Total	52	100.0

When examining how often participants spoke Zazaki with their children, it is understood that 46.2% spoke a little every day, while 21.2% spoke very rarely. The percentage of those who spoke every few days was 17.3%, while the percentage of those who never spoke was 15.4%. Although it is positive that nearly half of the participants (46.2%) speak Zazaki with their children on a daily basis, it appears that this regular use is not sufficiently reflected in the children's language skills. Furthermore, as can be seen from previous data, despite the high rate of daily conversation, only 13.5% of children are able to speak fluently, suggesting that the quality and duration of conversation may be insufficient. This situation reveals that not only frequency but also the diversity of conversation may play a critical role in language transmission.

3.2. Results Regarding Language Use Areas and Frequency

The results of the second research question regarding the frequency of Zazaki usage in daily life will be presented in this section. Table 8 presents the results regarding the frequency of Zazaki usage by participants.

Table 8.
The frequency of Zazaki usage

	N	%
Frequently	26	50.0
Occasionally	13	25.0
Always	9	17.3
Rarely	4	7.7
Total	52	100.0

When the obtained data are examined, 50% of participants use Zazaki frequently, while 25% use it occasionally. The percentage of those who use it always is 17.3%, while the percentage of those who use it rarely is 7.7%. It is observed that the vast majority of participants (67.3%) speak Zazaki regularly (always or frequently), which indicates that the language is still actively used. However, only 17.3% speak it "always" and 25% speak it "occasionally" which shows that the use of Zazaki is inconsistent and varies depending on the situation.

Table 9.
Language preferences in reading and social media use

	N	%
Turkish only	40	76.9
Both Zazaki and Turkish	11	21.2
Zazaki only	1	1.9
Total	52	100.0

According to data on language preferences in reading books and using social media, 76.9% of participants prefer to use only Turkish, while 21.2% use both Zazaki and Turkish. Only 1.9% prefer to use Zazaki exclusively. Turkish has an overwhelming dominance (76.9%) in reading books and social media usage, clearly highlighting the weakness of Zazaki on digital platforms. Only 1 person prefers Zazaki which shows that the language is almost never preferred over Turkish in modern communication tools.

Table 10.
Language preference for watching television/videos

	N	%
Turkish only	35	67.3
Both Zazaki and Turkish	16	30.8
Zazaki only	1	1.9
Total	52	100.0

As shown in Table 10, 67.3% of participants prefer to use only Turkish, while 30.8% use both Zazaki and Turkish. Only 1.9% prefer to use only Zazaki. While Turkish continues to dominate television and video watching habits (67.3%), the higher rate of mixed use compared to social media (30.8%) is noteworthy. This situation indicates

that there is a greater interest in Zazaki content in audiovisual media than in written content, yet Zazaki remains in a minor position in media usage.

Table 11.

Language use in communication with close family members

	N	%
Always Zazaki	21	40.4
Mostly Zazaki	18	34.6
Both Zazaki and Turkish	10	19.2
Mostly Turkish	2	3.8
Always Turkish	1	1.9
Total	52	100.0

The results related to language of communication in the close family circle show that 40.4% of participants always use Zazaki, while 34.6% usually use Zazaki. The percentage of those who use both Zazaki and Turkish is 19.2%, while those who usually use Turkish is 3.8% and those who always use Turkish is 1.9%. Zazaki appears to hold a strong position in communication within the close family circle, as 75% of participants communicate predominantly in Zazaki (always or usually). These findings indicate that Zazaki still functions as the primary language of communication within the family and among close relatives.

Table 12.

Language use in communication with distant social circles

	N	%
Both Zazaki and Turkish	23	44.2
Always Turkish	10	19.2
Mostly Zazaki	9	17.3
Mostly Turkish	6	11.5
Always Zazaki	4	7.7
Total	52	100.0

It can be seen from the data in Table 12 that 44.2% of participants use both Zazaki and Turkish, while 19.2% always use Turkish. The percentage of those who generally use Zazaki is 17.3%, those who generally use Turkish is 11.5%, and those who always use Zazaki is 7.7%. The dominance of mixed language use (44.2%) in communication with the distant environment indicates that language choice in social settings varies depending on the situation. Compared to the close environment, the decrease in Zazaki-dominated communication from 75% to 25% and the increase in Turkish-dominated communication from 5.7% to 30.7% reveal that Zazaki usage decreases as social distance increases and Turkish is preferred as a means of communication.

Table 13.

Places where Zazaki is most commonly spoken

	N	%
Private Places (Home environments)	134	77.0
Social Places (Friends' households)	17	9.8
Religious Places (Places of worship)	12	6.9
Public Places (Workplaces, stores)	11	6.3

Table 13 shows the places where participants use Zazaki most frequently. When we asked participants where they usually speak Zazaki, 77.0% of the total 174 responses indicated private settings, 9.8% indicated social settings, 6.9% indicated religious settings, and 6.3% indicated public settings. It is observed that the use of Zazaki is largely limited to private spaces (home environments). The low rate of use in public spaces (workplaces, stores) indicates that the social visibility of the language has decreased. The majority of participants chose more than one location, which shows that Zazaki is used in different social contexts but remains limited to certain areas, which shows that Zazaki functions as a family-centred language and that family ties are critical in intergenerational transmission.

3.3. The Impact of Demographic Variables on Language Use Practices

The socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, such as gender, age, education level and place of residence, were examined comparatively in terms of their effect on the frequency of speaking Zazaki with children and the frequency of Zazaki use. Statistical analyses are presented below.

A Chi-square independence test was applied to examine the relationship between gender and the frequency of speaking Zazaki with children. The analysis results show that there is no statistically significant difference in language use frequency between male and female participants ($\chi^2 = 1.177$, $p = 0.758$).

In order to examine the relationship between age groups and the frequency of speaking Zazaki with children, a Chi-square independence test was again applied. Although parents in the 40-49 age group were observed to be more active in language transmission, the difference between the groups was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 3.341$, $p = 0.765$).

There is an inverse correlation between educational background and frequency of speaking Zazaki with children. Parents with secondary degree are the most active (1.73), while university graduates are the least active (2.38). However, this difference is not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 10.763$, $p = 0.549$).

The Mann-Whitney U test was applied to examine the relationship between the place of residence and the frequency of speaking Zazaki with children. It was found that the frequency of speaking Zazaki with children was significantly higher among parents living in villages than among those living in central settlements. While 68.4% of those living in villages speak Zazaki with their children every day, this rate is 33.3% in central settlements. The results of the Mann-Whitney U test indicate that this difference is statistically significant ($U = 196,000$, $p = 0.018$).

A Chi-square independence test was applied to examine the relationship between the place of residence and the level of proficiency in Zazaki among children. The analysis results show that there is a statistically significant difference in the level of proficiency in Zazaki between children living in villages and those living in urban areas ($\chi^2 = 12.307$, $p = 0.006$).

Furthermore, it is worth examining the relationship between participants' demographic characteristics and the frequency of speaking Zazaki. There was a statistically significant difference in language use frequency between age groups ($\chi^2 = 15.926$, $p = 0.043$). The 30-39 age group had the highest frequency of language use (Mean = 3.87), while the 20-29 age group had the lowest frequency (Mean = 2.50). This finding indicates that language use is decreasing among the younger generation. On the other hand, no significant relationship was found between demographic characteristics such as gender ($p = 0.216$), educational level ($p = 0.298$), and place of residence ($p = 0.088$) and the frequency of speaking Zazaki.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this section, the findings are interpreted and presented within the scope of the research questions. Conclusion and recommendations regarding the results are also presented.

4.1. What is the Extent of Intergenerational Transmission of Zazaki?

Our first research question concerned the extent to which Zazaki is transmitted between generations. In line with this purpose, we sought to determine how often parents speak Zazaki with their children and their children's level of proficiency in speaking and understanding Zazaki.

Firstly, the fact that the vast majority of participants grew up speaking mainly Zazaki during their childhood shows that Zazaki has a strong mother tongue status for this generation and that the language acquisition process took place mainly in Zazaki. On the other hand, when examining language preferences used in communicating with children, a dramatic gap in the intergenerational transmission of Zazaki is evident. Despite the fact that parents grew up in a predominantly Zazaki environment during their childhood, very few of them are able to pass this language on to their children, which reveals a sharp decline in language transmission within a single generation. This situation meets the criterion of "a serious break in intergenerational transmission" in UNESCO's classification of endangered languages. Findings regarding children's ability to speak and understand Zazaki confirm that receptive skills are at a higher level than productive skills in language transmission. However, the fact that levels are very low in both skills coincides with the reality that Zazaki is a language in danger of extinction. The main reason for children's limited Zazaki skills lies in their daily interaction with their parents. Although almost half of the participants speak Zazaki with their children on a daily basis, very few children are able to speak Zazaki fluently. This is probably because parents' daily conversations are short and limited to specific topics, preventing children from receiving extensive language input. Furthermore, one third of participants rarely or never speak Zazaki with their children, which means that the conditions of "intensive and continuous exposure" necessary for language acquisition during the critical period are not being fulfilled. This situation directly explains why children's language skills remain at a basic level.

4.2. To What Extent is the Daily Use of Zazaki Especially in Family Communication, Working Life and Social Life?

Our second research question was about the frequency of Zazaki usage in daily life. Thus, an attempt was made to reach the results regarding how often, where, and with whom Zazaki is preferred.

The regular use of Zazaki by the vast majority of participants shows that the language still plays an active role in everyday life. However, the variability in frequency of use depending on the situation reveals that Zazaki is no longer the primary language of communication and is now limited to specific social contexts. Furthermore, the almost complete lack of preference for reading books and using Zazaki on social media reveals that the language is in a relatively minor position. The more widespread use of mixed languages in television watching suggests that visual media offers a more suitable environment for Zazaki. However, the dominant position of Turkish in all media genres clearly shows that Zazaki remains in the background in today's communication tools.

Language preferences in communication with the immediate and distant social circles indicate that the use of Zazaki has declined in line with social distance. The more frequent use of Zazaki within the immediate family circle highlights the importance of the language in terms of emotional bonds and identity expression. However, the sharp decline in the use of Zazaki in communication with the distant social circle points to a loss of prestige for the Zazaki language in public domains. This prestige loss is also confirmed by data on the places where Zazaki is most commonly preferred. Findings reveal that the language is largely restricted to private domains. Three-quarters of its use takes place at home, which indicates that Zazaki has lost its public presence. The low rate of use in public spaces suggests that the language has lost its social prestige and is not preferred in social interactions. This situation clearly shows that Zazaki is limited to being a language of communication within the family and has withdrawn from the social usage areas necessary for the vitality of the language.

Additionally, findings regarding the impact of demographic variables on language use practices reveal the critical importance of geographical and generational factors in the preservation of Zazaki. Place of residence creates a significant difference in both parent-child communication and children's language proficiency, indicating that rural areas play a protective role for Zazaki. Parents living in villages speak Zazaki with their children two times more often than those in urban areas, which suggests that traditional lifestyles support language transmission. The significant difference between age groups, particularly the decline in language use among the younger generation, is a matter of concern for the future preservation of Zazaki. Gender and education level have no significant effect; therefore, language decline seems to affect all demographic groups regardless of gender and education level, but geographical and generational factors appear to be more decisive.

In conclusion, this research reveals that Zazaki is at a critical threshold. The dramatic loss of transmission experienced within a generation indicates that the language is seriously endangered according to UNESCO criteria. While Zazaki is being preserved in specific areas, its withdrawal from public spaces makes it difficult to ensure a complete transmission to future generations. The protective role of rural areas and the decline in usage among the younger generation indicate the need for urgent intervention to ensure the sustainability of the language. If current trends continue, Zazaki faces a high risk of extinction.

A multi-dimensional approach should be adopted to preserve Zazaki. First, there should be initiatives to support language transmission within families. Second, the production of Zazaki content on digital platforms should be encouraged. Third, the protective role of rural areas should be supported, and social events that increase language use in urban areas should be organized. Fourth, the selection of Zazaki as an elective course in schools should be promoted, thus providing children with the opportunity to develop their language skills through formal education. Finally, modern educational tools and technology-supported language learning applications should be developed to increase the younger generations' interest in the language.

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