

□ **NURDAN KAVAKLI**



Daha ileriye... En iyisine...

LANGUAGE CHOICE, USE AND TRANSMISSION

LAZ AT THE CROSSROADS¹

Abstract

Given its focus on a definitely endangered language as noted by the UNESCO Atlas of the World Languages in Danger, and also marked as being threatened by the Ethnologue, this study aims to scrutinize whether Laz people do, or do not use their ancestral tongue, to identify factors involved in their language choice, and ultimately, to comment on its vitality going forward. Concerns addressed in the study include self-reported proficiency in Laz, ethnic self-identification of Laz speakers in Turkey, the effect of external factors (e.g., place of birth and residence, spouse's ethnicity) on Laz language use, the perception of Laz in Turkey, and the Laz community's preferred revitalization efforts. Correlatively, the data were collected using an online questionnaire, and related statistical analyses were performed. As a result, it is reported that Laz speakers define themselves as the good speakers of the language. Ethnic self-identification of Laz speakers are marked as Laz more than Turkish, Turkish more than Laz, and both respectively. However, Laz language is not a preferred choice of new generation. Even more, Laz language use amidst elders is getting lowered since Laz customs are applied in their daily routines to a lesser extent. Besides, it is noted by the perceptions of Laz residing in Turkey that Laz language is perceived either as a Black Sea dialect, or a variation of Turkish language within the community. The Laz community's preferred revitalization efforts are also drawn to provide insights from a survey-based exploration of the factors associated with Laz language endangerment and maintenance in Turkey.

Keywords

Laz, endangered languages, language maintenance, language endangerment, language revitalization.

¹ This paper was partly presented at Soillse Conference on Small Language Planning: Communities in Crisis, held between 6th-8th June 2016 in Glasgow, Scotland.

Introduction

The languages are the reciprocal public tools for communication, and the sources of information, if the last speakers are reached before they die (Hoffman 2009). However, today, most of the minority languages in the world are in the teeth of endangerment. Language endangerment is defined by the shrinking number of its speakers, and the failure of the speakers' transmission onto the next generation (Annamalai 2014). Therefore, language loss is conceptualized as a societal or individual loss of a language by replacing it with another language (Huss 2017).

At that point, Grimes (2000) asserts that 330 out of 6.000 languages in the world have the speakers up to one million and above, which is the indicator of a strict number of speakers for the rest, meaning that 450 languages are expected to die (Ibrahim 2011). Similarly, Harrison (2007) puts forward that half of the nearly 6.900 languages spoken in the world are in danger of extinction. The UNESCO (2003) confirms the language deaths, reporting every 10 of them to die out each year. A recent prediction by Thomason (2015: 2) asserts that "at least half the world's seven thousand languages will cease to exist by the end of 21st century". Generally speaking, military, cultural, religious, cultural and economic factors are reported as external, and the attitudes of the community are marked as internal barriers against the transmission of both language and culture according to the UNESCO's Report in 2003.

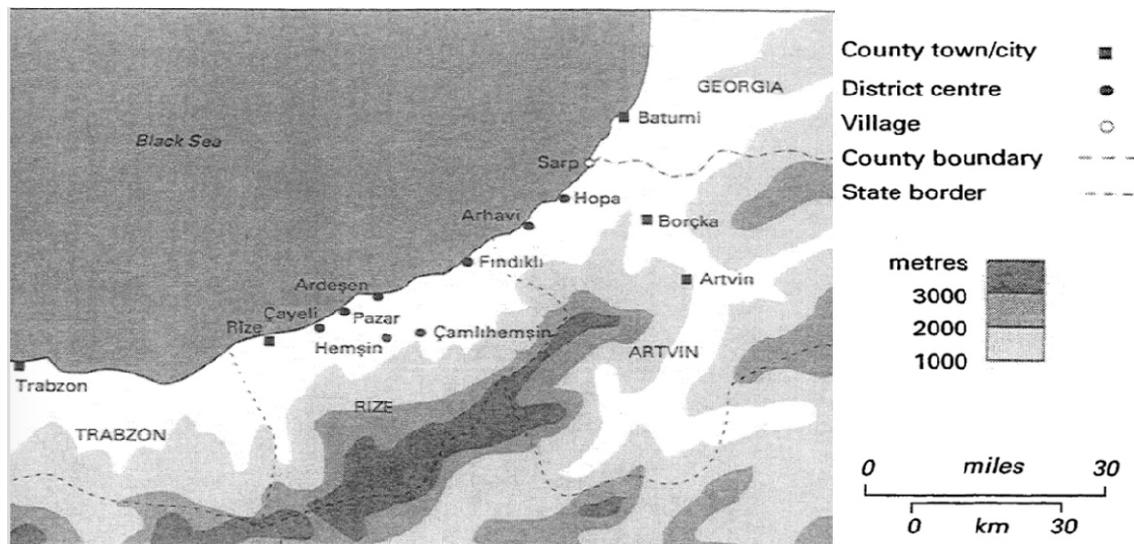
Taking language endangerment as the starting point, in the great scheme of this article, reported as a definitely endangered language, Laz as a Kartvelian language spoken on the north-eastern coast of Turkey, is described. Besides, the perceptions of people speaking Laz are probed in terms of Laz language use and choice as a path towards the transmission of a definitely endangered language. Accordingly, the background information on Laz language is given to enlighten its boundaries and features. Besides, the factors behind Laz language loss are elaborated in terms of economic, educational, social and political veins. Henceforth, answers to the research questions on the self-reported proficiency levels in the language, self-perceived ethnicity of the Laz people, and the factors beneath the Laz language use are sought to uncover the perceptions of Laz residing in Turkey towards Laz language use and choice. Besides, language revitalization acts favored by the Laz community are also scrutinized. Primarily, it is to be noted that the data gathered for this study are composed of Laz people living in the different parts of Turkey, rather than the countries in which people of Laz origin mostly reside in. The results and conclusions drawn in this paper are, therefore, restricted to the aforementioned area.

Laz Language

Laz language is a member of the South Caucasian language family together with its congeners Mingrelian, Georgian and Svan, and has speakers both in Turkey and Georgia according to the 17th edition of Ethnologue (Kavaklı 2015). Although it is of Kartvelian origin, Laz language is primarily spoken in Turkey with the exception of some people residing in Georgia. It is reported that there are merely two villages in Georgia where Laz language is spoken (Beridze, Nadaraia & Bakuradze 2017). There are five major dialects of Laz, namely Xopuri, VitzurArk'abuli, Çxaluri, Atinuri and Art'aşenuri spoken in Turkey. However, as the younger generations show tendency towards using Turkish more than Laz, Turkish is the 'young people's language' (Schmidt 1985) in Turkey. In this context, it is stipulated that adolescent speakers of Laz compose the 5-10% of

fully proficient ones, whereas 50-70% of them are passive users (see Tsunoda 2006), which means that they can understand but cannot speak the language (Kutscher 2008). There are also semi-speakers who can understand and speak the language to some extent, but generally show tendency to apply Turkish instead of Laz.

The traditional Laz residential area extends primarily across the north-eastern coast of the Turkey (see Map 1). As the autochthons of this area, Laz people dominantly reside in the provinces named Pazar, Ardesen, Camlihemsin, Findikli, Arhavi, Hopa, Borcka and Murgul. Beside these settlements, there are some other cities where Laz people are randomly scattered after immigration following the 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War such as Bolu, Bursa, Düzce, Karabük, Kocaeli, Trabzon, Samsun, Sakarya, Yalova, Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara. To add more, there are the ones who live in abroad –though in small amount- such as Germany and France, as well.



Map 1. Laz region in the north-eastern coast of Turkey²

Due to the fact that there is a lack of information on the census of the minorities with some exceptions of Greek and Armenian (Kutcher 2008), the exact number of Laz cannot be calculated thoroughly, albeit estimated roughly. Herein, the very latest Turkish census which was officially launched in 1965 gave the number of Laz for Turkey as 81.165 (Dündar 1999). According to the data gathered by Ethnologue, Laz language is reported to have 20.000 users in Turkey with its total users in all countries amount to 22.000 (Salminen 2007). Though indicated as possibly inflated, this number has also been estimated as somewhere between 130.000-150.000 (Климов 2001). According to Öztürk-Başaran & Pöchtrager (2011), the estimated number of Laz speakers is assumed to range between 50.000 and 500.000.

Laz Language Endangerment

Like many other ethnic minority languages, Laz language has also undergone a language loss with the arrival of each new generation. However, there are some other factors beneath Laz

² Reproduced from C. Hann. Ethnicity, Language and Politics in North-east Turkey. In: C. Govers, & H. Vermeulen (Eds.). *The Politics of Ethnic Consciousness*. (p. 121-156). Copyright 1997 by UK: Palgrave Macmillan. Reproduced with permission.

language endangerment in Turkey. Amongst them, economic factors/education, pro-Turkish quasi-scientific propaganda and political factors (e.g. the linguistic legislation in Turkey) with respect to the current situation of Laz in Turkey can be listed as the most apparent external factors (Kutscher 2008).

Talking about the economic factors, Laz parents' desire to see their children on a road towards good career ending has long prevented their children to learn and speak Laz language efficiently. Since education mushrooms as a necessity to exploit good career prospects, proficiency in Turkish mushrooms as the first step for good education as the universities in Turkey holds Turkish as the medium with the exception of some that adopt English as the medium of instruction. Correlatively, local teachers have also restricted the use of Laz language on the grounds that any being raised in a bilingual environment where both Laz and Turkish are provided might prevent them from being fully proficient in Turkish. In this context, Hann (1997: 141) states that "many Laz parents still believe this to be the case, so that those who encourage their children to sit the examinations for entering higher education are likely to discourage the native tongue most strongly".

Moreover, the perception towards the existence of Laz as a distinct ethnic identity is not only denied by some of the Turkish academic elites (see Beller-Hann & Hann 2000) but also by Laz people, though. This might be due to the fact that even Laz speakers do not have a clear conception of Laz as a distinct language. They are -in fact- cognizant of the fact that Laz is different from Turkish; however, even those who do not associate Laz language with Turkish do not necessarily accept this as a feature of a distinct identity from Turkish. Herein, the presence of pro-Turkish propaganda dating back to the nineties is to be enlightened as Laz language was seen as a dialect of Turkish; henceforth, Laz people were introduced to the public with Turkish origin (see Benninghaus 2007). Moreover, by the legislation enacted in 1934 in Turkey, naming children and any place in Laz was strictly banished together with the use of any other ethnic minority language within the country (see Haig 2003). There were some legal practices of the 1950s to rename the towns and villages with their Turkish equivalents that went into effect, though. What is more to the point is that, following the 1980 *coup d'état*, speaking Laz as any other ethnic minority language was proscribed in Turkey until 1991. In the light of these, it can be stipulated that the distribution of the Laz language on social domains is somehow restricted by law.

Besides, Sarigil (2012) states that foundation of the Turkish Republic in the early 1920s could not completely vanish the remnants of multi-ethnic, -religious and -lingual Ottoman Empire from the stage of history. In such a multi-cultural environment, the newly created nation state was composed of myriad of ethnic groups (Andrews & Benninghaus 1989) even though all these groups were bounded together under the tenet of Turkish nationalism. Amongst them, Laz could be counted which became subjected to the Ottoman State by the late 15th century (Cagaptay 2006). The fraternization under the Turkish ethnicity after the 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War led Laz people to be socially stated and stately protected community (Serdar 2013). Therefore, it was seen as a debt for them even though the entire communication was in Turkish alongside the public domain. It was the situation until the amendments made by the language law enacted in 2002 purporting that minority languages could be used in the media; ethnic names could be given to the children; and language courses in any ethnic minority language could be possibly

given in Turkey.

In the light of these, this study is aimed to uncover the perceptions of Laz speakers residing in Turkey towards Laz language use and choice. Accordingly, answers to the following research questions were sought:

1. What are the participants' self-reported proficiency levels in Laz language?
2. Considering the self-perceived ethnicity, how do Laz people define themselves in Turkey?
3. What is the general outline of the multiculturalism index of Turkey?
4. What are the participants' general tendencies regarding Laz culture in Turkey?
5. What are the participants' perceptions towards Laz language use and choice?
6. How is the Laz language perceived in the context of Turkey: as a distinct language, as a Black sea dialect or as a variation of Turkish?
7. What kind of Laz language revitalization acts are favored more by Laz community in Turkey?

Accordingly, participants and setting, instruments used to collect data, procedures for data collection and analysis, which are further molded into the findings, discussion and conclusion parts are elaborated in detail below.

Methodology

With the expectation of contribution to both theoretical and practical benefits, this study is conducted to scrutinize whether Laz people do, or do not use their ancestral tongue, to identify factors involved in their language choice, and ultimately, to comment on its vitality going forward. Taking these as the enlightening parameters, this study aims to uncover Laz language use and choice of Laz people residing in Turkey through a non-experimental research utilizing quantitative survey design. The data were gathered through snowball random sampling by using an online questionnaire composed of Likert-type response items. The data were analyzed by Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23.0. The findings were given numerically, which were followed by the results discussed in tow.

Participants and Setting

The quantitative data were collected through snowball random sampling by means of an online questionnaire in June, 2016. Of 144 participants in total, 41% were female (N=59), and 59% were male (N=85). In terms of education level, it was concluded that the lowest group was composed of primary school graduates with the percentage of 2% (N=3); however, the highest ratio was constituted by the graduates of university (either bachelor or associate degree) with the percentage of 70.8% (N=102). To add more, the participants were graduates of high school at the ratio of 9.8% (N=14), and graduates of secondary school at the ratio of 1.4% (N=2). There were those with either Master or PhD degree at the ratio of 16% (N=23), as well. The male participants had higher level of education than female participants. Herein, it could be stipulated that the schooling rate of men was higher than that of women. It could also be speculated that the woman's marriage age was lower than that of man, which might cause a decrease in the schooling rate.

Regarding the age groups, it was stipulated that participants' age range was among 16 (N=15) and 79 (N=1). The date of births yielded groups of five: the ones born between the years of 1939-1950 (N=3), between the years of 1951-1969 (N=30), between the years of 1970-1983 (N=31), between the years of 1984-1992 (N=47) and those born in 1993 and above (N=33), as yielded by the K-Means Cluster Analysis.

Besides, concerning the places of birth, the seven main geographical regions of Turkey were taken into consideration as a means of classification. Therefore, it was observed that the participants' birth places were various; however, the expected area was the Black Sea Region as all of the participants were of Laz origin. In this sense, as expected, most of them were born in the Black Sea Region (N=92; P=63.9%). It was followed by the Marmara Region (N=21; P=14.6%). The ones born in the Central Anatolia Region (N=13; P=9%) and those of the Aegean Region (N=12; P=8.3%) were close to each other. The lowest number of participants were composed of the ones who were born in Mediterranean (N=4; P=2.8%) and Southeastern Anatolia (N=2; P=1.4%) regions respectively. However, when the place of residence was concerned, it was observed that the Marmara Region was at top with the ratio of 40% (N=58). It was followed by the Black Sea Region with the percentage of 18.7 (N=27). The Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia Regions were both at the bottom with the ratio of 1.4% (N=2).

It is to be noted that the main cities which hosts Laz people in Turkey are Artvin and Rize, although now Laz speakers are scattered around the country for many reasons. These are the places where Laz is spoken as a distinct language. Considering the country of origin, taking where fathers were from as a sign of ancestral chain was the ongoing common practice. However, in this study, it was indicated by the hypothesis that solely the participants' mothers were of Laz origin in some cases, albeit not their fathers. Accordingly, the countries of origin for the participants themselves were observed as Artvin (N=69; P=47.9%), Rize (N=52; P=36.1%), Trabzon (N=17; P=11.8%), Ordu (N=3; P=2.1%), Giresun (N=1; P=0.7%), Sinop (N=1; P= 0.7%) and Samsun (N=1; P= 0.7%) respectively. With regard to the parents' countries of origin, the Black Sea region took the first line for both mothers' place of birth (N=132; P=91.7%) and those of fathers (N=126; P=87.5%). The spouse selection was also concerned, indicating that the participants' spouses (if they were married) were mostly born in the Black Sea Region with the ratio of 62.5% (N=90), eliminating the ones (N=55) labelled as 'not available'.

The participants were also asked about the frequency of visiting their hometowns if they happened to live far away. Accordingly, it was reported that most of the participants (P=35.3%) visited their hometowns every year. It was followed by the participants stating that they were visiting their hometowns more than once a year (P=23.7%). There were also participants who visited their hometowns every other year (P=10.1%) and once every three years (P=7.2%). What was more interesting was that nearly one-fourth (P=23.7%) of the participants did not visit their hometowns on such a frequency. Herein, it could be indicated that the elders of the family might no longer live in their hometowns as most of the family members settled down in much bigger cities for either economic or educational purposes.

Instruments

With a view to the recent sociolinguistic studies conducted within the field of language attrition, shift and/or endangerment, it has been observed that the questionnaires whose validity and reliability values are highly accepted and therefore used, are constituted primarily by the

components of language use/choice, language preference/dominance, parental background, personal background concerning the proficiency level in the first language, length of residence and attitudes toward first language maintenance (Cherciov 2010; Coughlin & Tremblay 2014; Gharibi 2013; Keijzer 2007; Schmid & Dusseldorp 2010). Taking these into account, an online questionnaire, controlled and validated as appropriate by the experts in the field of both language revitalization and statistics, was administered. It was constituted by the sections of demographic information, multiculturalism index, Laz culture and Turkey, social affairs, Laz language use and choice, and acts towards Laz language revitalization labelled after the factor loadings of the principal component analysis. The participants' proficiency levels in Laz language were, however, taken as the self-reported proficiency of Laz as the participants were recruited online, which was also noted as a limitation for this study. Additionally, assuming that the participants could figure out better, the Turkish version of the questionnaire was used. Before release, the Turkish version was delivered to the experts in the field of language studies for a final check of back translation. The scale yielded internal consistency at the alpha level of .86, which could be regarded as a high level of reliability.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection procedure was conducted via an online questionnaire through snowball random sampling. The data were analyzed through SPSS (Version 23.0). Detecting items throughout data entry, frequency analysis yielded no abnormality as there were no items to be reversed in coding. Besides, for the demographic information concerning the participants' year of birth and length of residence, the K-Means Cluster Analysis was conducted in order to syllogize each component, which then yielded the groups of five for each. The descriptive statistics and frequency analysis were applied to present the results of the data analysis.

Findings and Results

RQ-1. What are the participants' self-reported proficiency levels in Laz language?

In order to define the participants' self-reported proficiency levels in Laz language, the descriptive statistics were used. Accordingly, for each basic skill, namely reading, listening, speaking and writing, mean scores were calculated. Accordingly, the sample group's score for listening was estimated as the highest with the mean score of 3.27/5. It was followed by speaking, and reading whose means scores were 2.81/5 and 2.51/5 respectively. The lowest mean score was calculated with that of writing as 2.20/5. It was most probably the fact that the participants perceived themselves as the understanders of the language, but neither speakers nor writers, due to the fact that the sources in Laz were restricted and the official language in the country was Turkish.

RQ-2. Considering the self-perceived ethnicity, how do Laz people define themselves in Turkey?

In order to find out how Laz people did define themselves in the country, the frequency analysis was conducted. Accordingly, out of 144 participants, the 32.6% (N=47) confirmed that they felt Laz more than Turkish. They were the ones (N=18), with the ratio of 12.5% who felt Turkish more than Laz. No one coded himself as completely Laz nor completely Turkish. On the other hand, there were the ones (N=79), who defined themselves as both Laz and Turkish, at the ratio of 54.9%. In the light of these, it could be stipulated that Laz people residing in Turkey were

aware of the fact that they were from different ethnical background; however, they were somehow bounded to the ethnicity of Turkish, as no one isolated himself/herself solely belonging to one group. Not surprisingly for such contexts, most of the participants defined themselves as having a hybrid identity.

What was more to the point was that the participants were also asked when they felt more Laz or Turkish. Herein, it was reported by the most of participants that they felt Laz when they happened to meet someone from their own hometowns, speaking Laz. They also added that they felt Laz when they were with their relatives and/or friends with the same cultural background, playing *horon* (a folk dance of the eastern Black Sea region), eating Laz food, and listening to and/or singing music in Laz language. On the contrary, they felt Turkish while watching national football matches, going through passport check, living abroad, talking to a foreigner, chatting with office mates, and most frequently if something of national interest did mushroom.

RQ-3. What is the general outline of the multiculturalism index of Turkey?

In order to draw a general outline of the multiculturalism index of Turkey, the participants were asked five questions on a 5-point Likert-type basis with 1 as the possible lowest rating (strongly disagree) and 5 as the possible highest rating (strongly agree). Accordingly, most of the participants (P=91.7%) confirmed that Turkish society was to accept the presence of different cultures nestled within the country. In the same vein, most of the participants (P=87.5%) asserted that Turkey was to help other ethnic minority groups to keep their own cultures. Therefore, it was stipulated by the most of the participants (P=89.6%) that it was not favorable for Turkey when ethnic minority groups in the country were alienated from their own sub-cultures. Correlatively, it was affirmed by the most of the participants (P=62.5%) that Turkish people were expected to show more endeavor to learn about other ethnic minority cultures in the country. One more to note, it was also confirmed by the most of the participants (P=84.7%) that families with different cultural background and from ethnic minority groups were expected to support their children to preserve their own cultures as a distinct feature.

RQ-4. What is the participants' general tendencies regarding Laz culture in Turkey?

In response to this research question, it was reported by the most of the participants (P=69.4%) that they knew Laz culture very well. Besides, slightly higher than the half of the participants (P=56.2%) affirmed that they knew lots of Laz customs and applied them in their daily routines. Additionally, most of the participants (P=86.1%) confirmed that it meant a lot for them when Laz value judgments such as history, language and like were concerned. Therefore, it was stipulated by the most of the participants (P=89.6%) that Laz culture was an important part of their lives. Herein, it was asserted by the most of the participants (P=89.6%) that they listened to music in Laz language. They also confirmed to prefer Laz food (P=81.2%). In their spare times, most of the participants (P=60.4%) affirmed attending cultural events relevant to Laz language, culture and people.

RQ-5. What are the participants' perceptions towards Laz language use and choice?

In terms of Laz language use and choice, most of the participants (P=45%) confirmed that either only Turkish or mostly Turkish was applied as a medium of communication in intra-familial conversations. It might be due to the fact that the family members mostly applied Turkish in conversations held amidst them (P=57%). It was also reported that the participants applied

Turkish more than Laz even conversations with friends held in their hometowns (P=55.6%). Interestingly, most of the participants (P=45.2%) confirmed that even the conversations with Laz friends and neighbors were held mostly in Turkish. In the light of these, it could be stipulated that the effect of Turkish as the official language within the country has surpassed the use of Laz language even in intra-familial contexts.

RQ-6. How is the Laz language perceived in the context of Turkey: as a distinct language, as a Black sea dialect or as a variation of Turkish?

Upon the participants' perceptions, Laz language was perceived either as a Black Sea dialect, or as a variation of Turkish language. However, there were some assuming that the Laz language was perceived as a distinct language in Turkey, even if just a smidgen. Accordingly, the 84% of the participants reported that Laz language was perceived as a Black Sea dialect (N=121). On the other hand, the 13.9% of the participants reported that the Laz language was perceived as a variation of Turkish language (N=20). The participants also reported that there were some people who knew that Laz was a distinct language at the ratio of 2.1% (N=3). In the light of these, it could be stipulated that Laz language was mostly regarded as a Black Sea dialect in Turkey.

RQ-7. What kind of Laz language revitalization acts are favored more by Laz community in Turkey?

The participants' opinions on the governmental acts dealing with Laz language revitalization were probed by means of amendments in education, literary works and social life as the public use of Laz was limited. Accordingly, it was concluded that according to the participants' perceptions, educational amendments took the first place with the highest mean score of 4.57/5, which was amount to 91.4%. Following this, literary works (M= 4.48/5) came as the second. Accordingly, the translation of classics and famous novels into Laz was desired with the ratio of 89.6%. As the third place, naming children in Laz (M= 4.41/5) was seen as a positive change in social life with the ratio of 88.2%.

Discussion and Conclusion

In the great scheme of this article, it was aimed to uncover the perceptions of Laz people toward above-stated components. Accordingly, self-reported proficiency levels in Laz, Laz language use, self-perceived ethnicity of Laz people, desire of Laz cultural transmission and language preservation, and reactions towards Laz language revitalization acts and amendments were taken into the scope. The data gathered answered the questions blossomed, though limited number of participants and duration.

In this context, the study limits survey on Laz people who live in other cities rather than the ones where people of Laz origin predominantly live such as Rize and Artvin. One more to add, solely Laz people with internet connection are able to participate in the study. In this sense, members of the older generations, as expected not to enroll for this study with their inability to use technology effectively, which is also noted as a limitation for this study. However, it is realized during the data analysis procedure that probably other family members do make them participate in the study by reading the questions for them, as the range for age includes elders, albeit small in number. In this sense, it can be purported that this study is seen as a value added task providing them the opportunity to have a voice in public; therefore, they somehow include

other family members into the study, as well.

According to the results, it is reported that the participants of this study mostly define themselves as good speakers, albeit not good writers. Not interestingly, this is the case of languages which are jeopardized with endangerment. Herein, it could be attributed that until certain period of time, Laz language has not been written, but used mostly in intra-familial contexts. Additionally, seeing language as a problem (Ruiz 1984; Sallabank 2011; Wright 2004), and assuming that multilingualism might lead to a lack of social cohesion, or a racial conflict (Marzoug 2017), the Turkish government have banished the use of any ethnic minority languages until 2002.

In a similar vein, when asked about self-perceived ethnicity, the participants have defined themselves to hold hybrid identity, which is also not surprising as they are of two minds between two cultures: Laz and Turkish. Hybrid identity is explained as a “twofold process involving the interpretation of the universalization of particularism and the particularization of the universalism” (Robertson 1992: 100). Therefore, participants feel more Turkish while issues of national values are concerned whereas they feel more Laz when issues of concern are changed according to their local interests. It seems to be a tendency towards the loss of in-group cultural components in daily routines; however, the efforts for the occurrence of cultural and language revitalization within the community lead them to keep their ethnic maintenance. Such kind of a co-occurrence might be explained by the successive processes of ethnic identity and adjustment (Gaudet & Clément 2005).

Talking about the multiculturalism index of Turkey, it is marked by the participants of this study that Turkey is expected to take steps to revitalize minority languages and provide support for them to keep their own cultures alive. Besides, families with different cultural background and from ethnic minority groups are expected to support their children to preserve their own cultures as a distinct feature. Additionally, the participants of this study also state that Laz language should be regarded more than a Black Sea dialect, or a variation of Turkish language, albeit as a distinct language in Turkey. In essence, such kind of activities are favored by the community members in order to increase the shrinking number of speakers of a language in question (Jones 2015).

Regarding the general tendencies of the participants in terms of Laz culture in Turkey, it is concluded that they are well-aware of Laz culture, and to some extent apply them in their daily routines. It is also reported by the participants of this study that cultural elements such as Laz history, language, songs, food, folk dances and customs are quite important for them; henceforth, they attend cultural events relevant to Laz language, culture and people if they happen to have any spare time. From that point of view, it could be stipulated that Laz people are striving for the protection of their cultural identity as a Laz. However, it is also reported by the participants of this study that Laz language is losing new speakers and users. It is also confirmed by the language cloud of the Ethnologue that Laz language is a ‘threatened’ language with the label of 6b, meaning that it is used for face-to-face communication within all generations, albeit losing users (Simons & Fennig 2017). Similarly, an endangered language is defined as a language that is no longer being used by children (Krauss 2007). As there is an intense contact between Laz and Turkish, communication in Laz is solely restricted to be used within family members in small speech communities (Akkuş 2017). It is also confirmed by the findings of this study that even

conversations with Laz friends and neighbors are now held mostly in Turkish.

As “language endangerment is a matter of degree” (Tsunoda 2006: 9), revitalization blossoms as a need for the aftermath of any threatened language. Herein, cooperation between community members and the state is suggested in order to pursue language planning and policy actions at both micro- and macro-levels (Hatoss 2006; Kaplan & Baldauf 1997; Spolsky 2004). The micro-level actions are derived from grass-roots, and organized by non-governmental organizations, or other initiatives on a community-basis (Baldauf 1994; Hornberger 1996; Kaplan & Baldauf 1997). On the other hand, macro-level actions are directly taken by the government itself to provide the ethnolinguistic community with some potential benefits. Therefore, the government decides on the language(s) “that people will know in a given nation” (Shohamy 2006: 49). In both ways, the ultimate purpose is to utilize the use or preservation of the minority languages by increasing their vitalities within the community. Accordingly, as a macro-level policy, the governmentally induced Laz language loss is loosened with the amendment made in 2002. Therefore, families have begun to opt for Laz names for their new-born children. Additionally, Laz has been taken to rank as a language with its distinct feature in the media and at schools as an elective course under the name of ‘Living Languages and Dialects’. As a course at primary schools, a textbook composed of 11 units and 213 pages for A1 proficiency level is prepared by the experts and linguists in the field, and is published online by the Turkish Ministry of National Education in 2015. With its publication by the Ministry, it has reached a governmental significance through an official channel. Besides, on a micro-level basis, the endeavors of some non-governmental organizations, namely Laz Institute that was founded in 2013, and Laz Cultural Association, have raised awareness for Laz cultural transmission and language revitalization. Amidst them, free-of-charge Laz language courses and workshops organized by the linguists can be counted as the examples.

To note more, the findings of this study have shown that governmental amendments in education take the leading role. As above mentioned, the most significant educational amendment made by the government is to put Laz language as an elective course in primary schools within the scope of ‘Living Languages and Dialects’. It is followed by the amendments made in literature, such as translating classics and/or famous novels into Laz so that they become more cognizant of the written form of the language. Henceforth, through documentation, it is believed “to reduce the risk that it is sterile, opaque and untestable (as well as making it perceivable for future generations and valuable for language support activities including revitalization)” (Austin 2010: 23). However, documentation is not purely helpful if descriptive linguistics is not molded into the process (Austin 2010; Austin 2016; Austin & Lenore 2007; Haugen 1966; Woodbury 2011; Wright 2004). Thus, documentation generated through a textual corpora, in which morphological, phonological and syntactic features of a language in question are described, is expected to be filed in order to get long-lasting outcomes of language revitalization. Such kind of a corpus planning mainly derives from the structural adequacy of the language together with the possible emerging functional domain(s) (Ferguson 2006; Hornberger 2006). Therefore, a ‘status planning’ (Jones & Singh 2005) is recommended to come up with strategies for the promotion of any language in question, through which processes of first-hand relevance to the language in danger, such as graphitization, modernization, standardization and production of dictionaries and other relevant language learning materials (Sallabank 2011) are brought up to the agenda. Yet, another major challenge that is to be considered here is to draw

the attention of academicians and linguists in the country.

Moreover, for the standardization process, five major dialects of Laz, namely Xopuri, VitzurArk'abuli, Çxaluri, Atinuri and Art'aşenuri which are all spoken in Turkey, should be considered before choosing the most favorable and intelligible one that represents all the others. For the development of a standard form, graphitization can be applied together with the process of modernization, through which the language in danger is impelled to confront with 'elaboration' (Newmeyer 1989) and expand up-to-date resources. Correlatively, there are some current examples as the materials published in Laz language, such as Laz-Turkish & Turkish-Laz Dictionary by Erten (2000), Lazuri Grameri (Laz Grammar) by Kojima and Bucaklışı (2003), Lazuri Paramitepe (Laz Folk Tales) by Abaşışi (2005), Svacoxo (Dictionary for Place Names in Laz) Bucaklışı and Aleksiva (2009), Language Cards in Laz by Bucaklışı (2010). In that, through this way, Laz can be transmitted to younger generations, and known with its distinct features through written documents, as well.

To conclude, the participants do see themselves neither as a threat, nor as a member of an ethnic particularity; henceforth, they do not feel alienated in the country. This might be attributed to the Laz people's embracement to Turkish nationalism rather than showing ethno-nationalism (Connor 1994) by raising hostility and resentment against Turkish government because of banishment. However, it is a crystal-clear fact that speakers of ethnic languages may experience the loss of their language as a loss of their original ethnic and cultural identity (Bernard 1992; Hale 1998). It seems to be a Herculean task, albeit still promising to revitalize Laz language as the governmental bodies are more attentive than before. Besides, a number of bold reforms has been launched as above mentioned. Yet, Wright (2004: 230) states that "speakers themselves are the ultimate arbiters of language revitalization, and other players need to be sensitive if they aspire to play a role". Therefore, if the others pave the way towards language loss, there mushrooms a slight chance to succeed in the long run for the revitalization of Laz language in Turkey.

References

- Abaşışi, N. (2005). *Lazuri Paramitepe* (Laz Folk Tales). Istanbul: Akyüz Yayıncılık.
- Akkuş, M. (2017). A note on language contact: Laz language in Turkey. *International Journal of Bilingualism*. (doi. 10.1177/1367006917703458).
- Andrews, P. A., & Benninghaus, R. (1989). *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey*. Wiesbaden: Reichert.
- Annamalai, E. (2014). Death by other means: Neo-vernacularization of South Asian languages. In: H. C. Cardoso (ed.). *Language endangerment and preservation in South Asia*. (p. 3-18). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Austin, P. K. (2010). Current issues in language documentation. *Language Documentation and Description*, 7/1, p. 12-33.
- Austin, P. (2016). *Language Documentation*. Available at: <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199772810/obo-9780199772810-0075.xml#firstMatch> (Date of retrieval: 6 February 2017).
- Austin, P., & Lenore, G. (2007). Current trends in language documentation. In: Austin, K. (ed.).

Language documentation and description. (p. 12-25). London: SOAS.

Baldauf, R. B. (1994). [Unplanned] Language policy and planning, *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 14, p. 82-89.

Bellér-Hann, I., & Hann, C. (2000). *Turkish region: State, market and social identities on the East Black Sea coast*. Oxford: Currey.

Benninghaus, R. (2007). Turks and Hemshinli: Manipulating ethnic origins and identity. In: Simonian, H. H. (ed.). *History, society and identity in the highlands of northeast Turkey*. (p. 353-370). Abingdon: Routledge.

Beridze, M., Nadaraia, D., & Bakuradze, L. (2017). Georgian dialect corpus: Linguistic and encyclopedic information in online dictionaries. *Jazykovedný Časopi*, 68/2, p. 109-121.

Bernard, H. R. (1992). Preserving language diversity: computers can be a tool for making the survival of languages possible. *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, p. 15-18.

Bucaklışı, I. A. & Aleksiva, I. (2009). *Svacoxo*. (Dictionary for Place Names in Laz). Istanbul: Kolkhis Yayinlari.

Bucaklışı, I. A. (2010). *Lazca Dil Kartlari*. (Language cards in Laz). Ankara: Delta Kitap.

Cagaptay, S. (2006). *Islam, secularism and nationalism in modern Turkey: Who is a Turk?* London: Routledge.

Cherciov, M. (2010). *Between acquisition and attrition: The dynamics between two languages in adult migrants*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Toronto, Canada.

Connor, W. (1994). *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Coughlin, C., & Tremblay, A. (2014). Morphological decomposition in native and non-native French speakers. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 18/3, p. 524-542.

Dündar, F. (1999). *Türkiye nüfus sayımlarında azınlıklar*. (Minorities in Turkish Censuses). Istanbul: Doz Yayıncılık.

Erten, M. (2000). *Lazca-Türkçe, Türkçe-Lazca Sözlük*. (Laz-Turkish, Turkish-Laz Dictionary). Istanbul: Anahtar Kitap Yayinlari.

Ferguson, G. (2006). *Language planning and education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gaudet, S., & Clément, R. (2005). Identity maintenance and loss: Concurrent processes among the Fransaskois. *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 37/2, p. 110-122.

Gharibi, K. (2013). *L1 vocabulary knowledge: The case of Iranian bilinguals in New Zealand*. VocabaVic: Current Trends in Vocabulary Studies, Conference Handbook of Abstracts. <http://www.lexicalresearchfoundation.org/wpcontent/uploads/2016/02/Vocab@Vic-Handbook.pdf> (Date of retrieval: 17 February 2016).

Grimes, B. F. (ed.) (1996). *Ethnologue: Languages of the world*. <http://www.sil.org/ethnologue/> (Date of retrieval: 15 April 2016).

Haig, G. (2003). Sprachenvielfalt und Sprachenpolitik am Rande Europas: die

Minderheitensprachen der Türkei. In: Metzling, Dieter (ed.). *Sprachen in Europa: Sprachpolitik, Sprachkontakt, Sprachkultur, Sprachentwicklung, Sprachtypologie*. (p. 165-188). Bielefeld: Aisthesis.

Hale, K. (1998). On endangered languages and the importance of linguistic diversity. In: Grenoble, L. A., & Whaley, L. J. (eds.). *Endangered languages, language loss and community response* (p. 192-216). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hann, C. (1997). Ethnicity, language and politics in north-east Turkey. In: C. Govers, & H. Vermeulen (eds.). *The politics of ethnic consciousness*. (p. 121- 156). UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Harrison, K. D. (2007). *When languages die: The extinction of the world's languages and the erosion of human knowledge*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hatoss, A. (2006). Community-level approaches in language planning: The case of Hungarian in Australia. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 7/2-3, p. 287-306.

Haugen, E. (1966). Linguistics and language planning. In: Bright, W. (ed.). *Sociolinguistics*. (p. 50-71). The Hague: Mouton.

Hoffman, M. (2009). *Endangered languages, linguistics, and culture: Researching and reviving the Unami language of the Lenape*. BA Thesis. Bryn Mawr College, USA.

Hornberger, N.H. (ed.) (1996). *Indigenous literacies in the Americas: Language planning from the bottom up*. Berlin: Mouton.

Hornberger, N. H. (2006). Frameworks and models in language policy and planning. An introduction to language policy: *Theory and Method*, p. 24-41.

Huss L. (2017) Researching language loss and revitalization. In: King, K., Lai, YJ., May, S. (Eds.) *Research methods in language and education*. Encyclopedia of Language and Education (3rd ed.). (p. 99-111). Springer: Cham.

Ibrahim, G. A. (2011). Bahasa terancam punah: Fakta, sebab-musabab, gejala, dan strategi perawatannya. *Linguistik Indonesia*, 29/1, p. 35-52.

Jones, M. C. (2015). *Policy and planning for endangered languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jones, M. C., & Singh, I. (2005). *Exploring language change*. London: Routledge.

Kaplan, R. B., & Baldauf, R. B. (1997). *Language planning from practice to theory*. Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Kavaklı, N. (2015). Novus ortus: The awakening of Laz language in Turkey. *Idil Journal of Art and Language*, 4/16, p. 133-146.

Keijzer, M. (2007). *Last in first out? An investigation of the regression hypothesis in Dutch emigrants in anglophone Canada*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam.

Kojima, G., & Bucaklışı I. A. (2003). *Lazuri grameri* (Laz grammar). Istanbul: Chiviyazilari Yayinevi.

Krauss, M. E. (2007). *Keynote-mass language extinction and documentation: The race over Time*.

The vanishing languages of the Pacific Rim. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kutscher, S. (2008). The language of the Laz in Turkey: Contact-induced change or gradual language loss? *Turkic Languages*, 12, p. 82-102.

Климов, Г. А. (2001). *Linguistica Uralica*. Teaduste Akadeemia Kirjastus: Estonia.

Marzouq, T. A. M. (2017). Blowing off the dust: Towards salvaging the forgotten Mehri tongue in Saudi Arabia. *ARECLS*, 14, p. 98-141.

Newmeyer, F. (ed.). (1989). *Linguistics: The Cambridge Survey: Volume 4, Language: The Socio-Cultural Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Öztürk-Başaran, B., & M. A. Pöchtrager (eds.) (2011). *Pazar Laz*. (Languages of the world materials, 484). Munich: LINCOM EUROPA.

Robertson, R. (1992). *Globalization: Social theory and global culture*. London: Sage Publications Inc.

Ruiz, R. (1984). Orientations in language planning. *NABE Journal*, 8/2, p. 15-34.

Sallabank, J. (2011). Language policy for endangered languages. In Austin, P.K., & Sallabank, J. (eds.) *The Cambridge handbook of endangered languages*. (p. 277-290). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Salminen, T. (ed.) (2007). *Ethnologue: Languages of the world*. <http://www.sil.org/ethnologue/> (Date of retrieval: 1 May 2016).

Sarigil, Z. (2012). Ethnic groups at critical junctures: The Laz vs. Kurds. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 48/2, p. 269- 286.

Schmid, M., & Dusseldorp, E. (2010). Quantitative analyses in a multivariate study of language attrition: The impact of extralinguistic factors. *Second Language Research*, 26/1, p. 125-160.

Schmidt, A. (1985). *Young people's Dyirbal: An example of language death from Australia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Serdar, A. (2013). *Ethnic languages, multiculturalism and assimilation*. Conference presentation on 7th Global Conference: Multiculturalism, conflict and belonging. 1-3 September, Mansfield College, Oxford, United Kingdom.

Shohamy, E.G. (2006). *Language policy: Hidden agendas and new approaches*. London: Routledge.

Simons, G. F., & Fennig, C. D. (eds.) (2017). *Ethnologue: Languages of the world* (20th edition). Dallas, Texas: SIL International. <https://www.ethnologue.com/cloud/lzz> (Date of retrieval: 20 January 2017).

Spolsky, B. (2004). *Language policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2003). *Language vitality and endangerment. Methodological guideline: Review of application and feedback since 2003*. Document by UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages. Paris.

http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/unesco_language_vitaly_and_endangerment_methodological_guideline.pdf (Date of retrieval: 5 May 2016).

Thomason, S. G. (2015). *Endangered Languages: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tsunoda, T. (2006). *Language endangerment and language revitalization. An introduction*. (Trends in Linguistics. Studies and Monographs: 148). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Woodbury, T. (2011). Language documentation. In: Austin, P. K., & Sallabank, J. (eds.). *The Cambridge handbook of endangered languages*. (p. 159-186). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wright, S. (2004). *Language policy and language planning: From nationalism to globalisation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.