

THE USE OF PRONOUNS OF POWER AND SOLIDARITY IN TURKISH

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Introduction

Studies in the relation between language and culture have sometimes focussed on how a way of life or thought is categorized through words. A second kind of study may focus on the connections between certain grammatical categories and people's notions. The study will fit in the latter category.

Second person pronouns used in formal and familiar settings have been analyzed from various points of view. Social psychologists have shown how the usage of the pronouns is connected with attitudes and behavior (Brown and Gilman, 1960). Philologists have produced careful accounts of historical usage in German, French, Russian (Friedrich, 1972). Linguists on the other hand have been interested in studying and analysing the pronoun systems in various languages. (Lambert 1967), (Ervin-Trip, 1972). and linking them to culturally and socially significant paradigms.

The following is a study of the use of **siz**, the formal second person pronoun and **sen**, the familiar second person pronoun in Turkish. To determine the discriminations underlying the usage, a questionnaire (Appendix one; Appendix two) has been distributed to approximately 150 Turkish native speakers of various ages, occupations and educational background. The same questionnaire has been used once in 1973 and once in 1990. To ensure a certain amount of balance between the two time periods, native speakers were matched approximately in number, age and educational background. The results discussed, questions if there has been a change in the discriminating factors of usage of **sen** and **siz** within the 17 year span.

Admittedly, this is only one of the pioneers of its kind. The evidence discussed in this research need be compared to other types of evidence, like the ones that can be observed from written or oral discourse. However, when the results of this study is compared to those in one recent study (König, 1990) the similarities in the use of **sen** and **siz** become quite apparent and leads one to think of systematic patterns of use of these pronouns in Turkish.

Discriminations in the pronominal usage

In a sociolinguistic study, there are two kinds of cultural values. Those which are explicit and understood by the native speaker and which are observed and understood by the analysing sociolinguist. Most Turkish speakers will not hesitate in their usage of the second person pronouns in most cases. True, there may be few occurrences a speaker could hesitate. On the other hand, the evaluation of the analyst depends on one's classification of the speaker's discriminations. What this means is that, the following is one analyst's point of view.

The classification of the Turkish speakers' use of second person pronouns reveals several discriminating norms: Age, sex of the speaker, sex of addressed, kinship status, group membership, relative position of authority (rank in other words), emotional solidarity - that is the feeling of sympathy or intimacy between two speakers or lack of it, and social context in which the conversation takes place.

Age is a determining factor. The relative age of the speakers within the same generation is not so important, however, in cases of different generations the speakers need to decide where the "older" starts. Sex of speakers is also a discriminating factor in that two speakers of the same sex are normally more prone to use familiar terms whereas speakers of opposite sex are more likely to restrain themselves.

The kinship status of which the Turks are quite conscious, provide a different set of rules for the pronominal usage. For example, close blood ties may easily override age or sex.

The next two categories used include social and group phenomena. The position of authority shows a distribution of responsibilities, rights and socially accepted superiority. For example, a boss or a teacher carry more responsibility than their employees or students. A father is also in the same situation; however, kinship overcomes rank in that instance. Group membership determines usage in the sense that classmates, members of a social group are more likely to be in kindred spirit and prefer the use of the familiar *sen*.

One may call emotional solidarity the psychological dimension of this classification. Emotional distance, feelings of antipathy or sympathy, anger or love determine the pronoun used. Close friends, people in love will be in familiar terms.

The relationship between pronouns and solidarity tends to be complex. At times, the use of familiar pronoun can mean dislike or a social set down. In the same manner, the use of formal pronoun can symbolize a pointed insult to a close friend.

The social context of the conversations a discourse matter. Two intimate friends may use *sen* when they are alone, but may switch to *siz* in a formal social setting.

In conclusion, the pronominal usage looks like a carpet interwoven through different threads and complicated interactive patterns.

The symmetrical usage of sen

Who mutually *sen* each other in Turkish?

First of all, the pre-school age children (ages up to 5-6) use *sen* indiscriminately to everybody, showing a healthy disregard for age, rank social status. To those they do not like, they do not talk.

Second, although not mutual, God is addressed in the informal. Both 1973 and 1990 surveys show that 95% of the respondents use *sen* when praying.

The close blood relatives, like mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters reciprocate *sen*. Male speakers, on the other hand, use *sen* more easily with even older relatives of the same gender and the female speakers vice versa. For example, the percentage of male respondents using mutual *sen* with an older sister is 66%; it is 92% for females. In the same manner, the females using mutual *sen* with their grandfathers constitute only 53% of the whole population against 93% of the male speakers.

These results show that within the immediate family circle,, age is overridden by the intimacy created by kinship. An interesting comparison between two surveys shows that there is a marked increase in the use of mutual *sen*. To give an example, in 1973 only 69% of the male population and 12% of the female population used reciprocal *sen* with their fathers; in 1990 these percentages are 85% for male and 79% female speakers.

Membership within the community often triggers a mutual *sen*; for example, classmates or army mates use mutual *sen*. An increase in number is also observed for this category when 1973 and 1990 surveys are compared. Among female friends the use of reciprocal *sen* was 53% in 1973, this number has reached 89% in 1990. Showing a distinct increase in the use of mutual *sen* among the female population.

The comparative figures for the female population using reciprocal *sen* is 69% in 1973 and 93% in 1990, again showing a similar trend to that of the female population.

The symmetrical usage of *siz*

All formal social occasions override age, sex and solidarity between speakers. At a formal gathering even intimate friends tend to reciprocate *siz*. A very formal setting such as the army, also calls for mutual *siz*. The restrictions, put upon the individual by the society motivates the individual to use the socially determined and accepted pronoun. Apparently, *siz* is the preferred pronoun in restricted social settings. The higher an individual is in the social system, the more he/she tends to use and receive *siz*. No matter how much this type of individual tries to break the norms, the result is not successful (see question 43).

A friendly high ranking individual still receives formal *siz* 91% of the time.

Lack of solidarity is another source of reciprocal *siz*. First encounters or relative status of the speakers symbolize an automatic formal pronoun. Age, sex, educational status of the speakers do not matter when they are addressing or being addressed by a doctor, waiter or janitor.

In this category, there are no marked differences between the 1973 and 1990 figures. As a matter of fact, there is marked similarity between the two surveys. For example, in 1990, the total population still use 100% mutual *siz* with their doctors, janitors or policeman as they did in 1973.

These surveys suggest that when and if one is indecisive as to which pronoun to use in a socially correct and acceptable manner, the formal pronoun *siz* seems to be the safe one to use. Therefore, pointing a neutral usage for this particular pronoun.

Asymmetrical relationship

In Turkey, obedience and submission are usually associated with age. Younger generations use the formal pronoun with the older to receive the informal. However, as mentioned earlier, such a distinction does not exist within the immediate family circle, uncles, aunts, in-laws also do fall into this category.

Teacher versus student, employer versus employee, higher ranking officers versus lower ranking ones can be given as examples of superior versus inferior authority relation within marked social and/or institutional settings.

Given these factors, it is natural to expect a more frequent use of *sen* to an individual in a lower social status. Contrary to this expectations, the two surveys in discussion do not show that the lower social status of such occupational groups as janitors, taxi drivers trigger the use of the informal pronoun.

The switching

The categorization of the formal and informal usage of the second person pronouns sometimes are not as straight forward as one might expect. These distinctions that exist in the minds of the speakers can easily change and sometimes even cost us our understanding of the system. The alternations, variations done can be on voluntary basis. Let us discuss two cases of switching.

In the questionnaire, husbands and wives were asked to respond to which pronoun they usually used; what they used at an official meeting and what happened if one of them was of a higher rank.

The responses were quite revealing. Under normal circumstances, 94% of the population uses the informal pronoun mutually. This figure drops to 53% in 1973 and 70% in 1990 at a social gathering and all the way down to 18% in 1973 and 30% in 1990 at an official meeting. The higher rank of one of the spouses again causes a switching in the usage of pronouns in an official setting.

These results point out the severity of the socially demanded pronouns. Individuals even as close as husbands and wives, give in to the social norms at the expense of solidarity.

The second case of switching to be discussed is different in a sense than the former one. The switching of the pronoun does not always signify a social demand. Sometimes such a demand comes within the individual. In such cases, it points to rather an attitude change. When friends were asked (Question 46) how they would reach to an intimate friend the following day after a serious fight, 58% of the population in 1973 and 27% in 1990 indicated a tendency to use the formal pronoun. However, symbolization of attitudes by the use of the formal pronoun seems to be more prominent in 1973 than in 1990. Yet again showing a marked indifference towards the discriminations indicated by the pronouns.

Conclusion

Pronouns display social attitudes, emotional expressiveness and highly marked social preferences in Turkish. The two survey discussed here reveal that in turkey of the 90's there is a tendency towards a more informal social setting. The changes in the results of the kinship discriminations must be supported by various other observations from literature.

The reasons for these changes? Your guess is as good as anybody's at this moment. Will Turkish come to a point in future history where there will be single second person pronoun? That is even a harder question to answer. Only time will tell - in a couple of hundred years perhaps?

Bibliography

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