# STUDIES ON 'TURKISH IN A BILINGUAL ENVIRONMENT' PRESENTED AT *THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES ON TURKISH LINGUISTICS*: 1986 - 1994

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## 0. Introduction

There has been a growing interest in use and acquisition of Turkish in a bilingual setting, as attested through the papers that have been presented both at international conferences and in the literature on Turkish linguistics (see, the rather sketchy bibliography in the References). The topic has acclaimed such interest for a variety of reasons, all of which are of immediate concern to the linguistic circle and its related fields of the social and humanistic sciences. This brief survey will try to present the contemporary trends in these areas through an examination of the papers and abstracts that have been presented at International Conferences on Turkish Linguistics over the years 1986 and 1994 [1]. A word of caution is due here, though: I do not give due attention to all the research in the field, but present the review from the perspective of an eye that is especially interested in the sociolinguistic aspect of L1 and L2 acquisition

In the following, I first present a list, albeit not exhaustive, on what may be most relevant aspects of the research in this area in Section 1. This will be followed by a brief descriptive and evaluative section of the research in the field. Finally, in Section 3, I will focus on suggestions for emphases in research topics and approach.

## 1. The relevance of the topic

I have attempted to plot the points of intersection between the topic and its related fields of interest under three major headings: sociology and linguistics, psychology and linguistics, education and linguistics [2]. Naturally, there are many more to be added to this classification.

### 1.1. Sociology and linguistics

The acquisition and use of Turkish in a bilingual setting is providing a rich source of data on the processing of two languages in a bilingual environment, thereby enabling the examination of theories of

    a. social interaction, that is, the sociology of language.

    b. language policy-making

    c. the phenomena of code-switching and code-mixing.

## 1.2. Psychology and linguistics

The same data can provide fruitful relevant information on the theories of language learning, especially concerning the psychological aspect of

     a. interlanguage models

     b. the Universal Grammar approach

     c. socio-affective models

     d. types of bilingualism

     e. the psychological aspect of code-switching and code-mixing

## 1.3. Education and linguistics

Even though the Conferences on Turkish Linguistics do not specifically focus on educational linguistics, the contents of the papers certainly have much to offer to researchers and practitioners in the field of education; namely in areas related to

     a. educational policy making in Turkey and in Western Europe

     b. teaching approaches and curriculum design

2.0. Major topics of the papers

The topics in the research results presented to date can be grouped under three main headings. These are linguistic and cultural contact, bilingual language development, and bilingual discourse acquisition. A number of papers deal specifically with implications for education (5;17); however, since these are few, they will be considered under the second and third heading.

2.1. Linguistic and cultural contact

Although some of the studies in this group would fall into the category of stylistic variation in sociolinguistics (12; 13; 14; 17), I have chosen to put these under this heading as there seems to be a growing consensus among researchers that a "Diaspora Turkish" may be developing in Western Europe (19; 25; 26: 175; 28)

The research in this field has focused on the communicative styles of bilingual Turkish families resident in Western Europe and the Scandinavian countries, though there does seem to be a greater emphasis in this field in The Netherlands and Germany (6; 12; 13; 14; 16; 17). These studies focus on the interactional use of the language such as in uttering directives and requests and compare the data with that of the L2. The research in the field includes both single

case and multiple case studies, along with recent project-based work (10). Nearly all the studies focus on the children in the family, with the underlying statement of their relevance to the field of education in the L2 environment (12; 18).

Researchers note the difficulty of extrapolating from single case or multiple case studies (e.g., 13), yet some of the conclusions drawn may be overgeneralizations in the present state of the data collected in the field. Analyses in pragma-sociolinguistics need to be supported by extensive data collection on interactive patterns and interpretation of linguistic behaviour within its context to be able to derive conclusions related to cross-cultural issues in language and culture contact (31). Huls (17: 23) noting the relatively few linguistic strategies used in politeness phenomena in the Turkish data she studied, concludes that the families studied "are not arenas for the acquisition of strategic language use". I think the family's total paradigm of communicative styles and networking patterns would have much to say on this topic. It is undeniable that crossocultural examination of styles do bring to the surface areas of problems in crosscultural communication, yet looking into just one linguistic pattern and generalizing then on is too early an attempt in the field. Indeed, even if cultures were to resemble each other in such phenomena the degree and area of expression may be so different that a quantitative approach to communicative styles may not quite reflect the actual functioning of language. To take up just one example of the opposite situation reported for other crosscultural contact, what would one of have to say about Hindi, then, where linguistic strategic devices for politeness phenomena are so rich that the word for word translations sound like overlearning of politeness to a non-native speaker of Hindi (29)?.Furthermore, the acquisition of L1 and L2 in the environment of L2 may lead to employment of both L1 and L2 strategies in L2 communication (34). Thus, if the research emphasis is on acquisition, then we may expect future data to present different emerging patterns after entry to school, and follow-up studies on a longitudinal basis would be welcome in the area.

The communicative patterns studied by van de Mond and Huls (17; 12) are directives and the development of conversations in the family setting. The research findings in this area appear to parallel those on communicative styles in Turkey (3). It is noteworthy that styles which appear to foster school achievement in Turkey are not necessarily functional in Western Europe. Thus, the research findings on the significance of sociocultural variables summarized in Verhoeven (32: 145-148) and presented in a new study by Aarts (5) are especially significant. As to be expected, attitudinal factors such as perceptions of L1 language and culture contribute more to L1 acquisition, just as attitudes attaching high value to status and education along with better educational opportunities would foster school achievement in L2 environment (12; 17).

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Besides the above-mentioned studies, those that look into L1 and L2 contact on a macro-linguistic scale, suggest the development of new varieties of Turkish in the countries where immigrant families live (7; 16; 25; 28). Questions that may be posed at present related to the possibility of these becoming permanent varieties of Turkish, trends toward paradialects, creolization, or attrition are largely issues related to diachronic developments and long-term changes in socio-economic patterns (cf., 26) and political policies both in Turkey and in Europe.

## 2.2. Bilingual language development

I will mainly look into research reports on bilingual language development concerning their implications for code-switching and code-mixing, on the one hand, and their findings on language development in L1.

### 2.2.1. Code-switching and code-mixing

The studies report a qualitative change in L1 and L2 use of the second-generation children, especially in the language of those who received pre-school education in the L1 environment (10; 20). The most recent studies on young adult speech note frequent inter-clausal shifts between languages, a sign of growing proficiency in L2. While the theoretical implications of these studies concerning definitions of code-switching and code-mixing are significant (cf. 30), an examination of the sociolinguistic parameters that trigger, so to speak, the switches observed in the speakers' discourse is needed. Such an approach could clarify the pragma-sociolinguistic functions of L1 and L2, especially in cases of linguistic and cultural contact. The findings could then probably clarify the problems stated in the previous Section regarding communicative patterns and educational issues. For example, the samples of code-copying onto L1 or inter-clausal switches between L1 and L2 could be investigated for the social values assigned to the lexemes inserted from one language or the other. Below, I quote two samples from van der Heijden and Backus and Türker (10; 20), respectively:

(1)    Dan is het niet meer erg, çok yapıncı, dan is het niet meer erg. Ama birincisini yapan die is gewoon de kötüsü.
       Then it's not bad anymore, when people do it, it's OK. But the one who does it first, she's just bad.
(2)    X'la bozulduk, uvenner olduk. (my underlining)

In (1) it is interesting to note that the part of the utterance rendered in L1 are the interpersonal components of the total sentence (i.e., the use of the conjunctive

*ama*, and the evaluative remark *kötüsü*). In (2) it is unlikely that the speaker is uttering 'uvenner' because of a missing lexical item in his/her L1. What is probably at issue here is the special meaning that the Norwegian word has for the speaker.

The literature in code-switching for Turkish and several other languages is abundant in examples of such switches occurring through contact with the physical and cultural environment of L2 (cf., 10; 19; 25; 28, to cite but a few for Turkish). But when these appear and how they function in the speech event could be researched in future, that is, a more "Hymesian" perspective on code-switching is needed in the field. Thus, for example, the kind of research emphases as observed in Berber (in 32:147-148) in the use of L1 and L2 concerning social networking and solidarity relationships seem to be a promising line of development. Also, an ongoing master's theses on attitudes to Turkish and foreign languages in the L1 environment is likely to provide rich comparative data in this field [4].

### 2.2.2. L1 Development

The data and research results presented so far cover the syntactic and semantic developmental aspects of L1 acquisition in an L2 environment. Case and number marking and modifications are studied in Pfaff and Savaş (16); relative clause comprehension in L2 environment is compared with L1 environment in Aarssen (3). In semantics, Schaufeli (18) compares the vocabulary of L1 speakers in the L1 and L2 environment; Boeschoten (8) compares the developmental trends in acquisition of modality in the same environments; and Verhoeven's (21) study on temporality, though related to discourse organization, provides comparative data on the acquisition and use of markers of tense and aspect in L1.

All the studies have noted differences between the L1 and L2 environment. These are explained through limited exposure to L1 in the L2 environment (e.g., 19; also implied in 16) and through L2 influences on L1 structure. Also, significant universal trends in acquisition are noted especially concerning the acquisition of modality such that the weaker forms of modality expressed through **-EcEk** and the **aorist, -Ar**, in Turkish emerge earlier than forms such as **-Ebil-**.

An interesting parallel to L1 acquisition in L1 environment is observable in the lexical data in Schaufeli (19). Tendencies to substitute specific items for another specific term (e.g., *çivi* to replace *vida*) are also observed in acquisition in the L1 environment. Thus, children are frequently observed using *kum* instead of *toprak*; and *karpuz* instead of *kavun* . This would suggest that similar data in (19) could be taken as examples of L1 strategy use, which would probably require a re-examination of the strategies proposed by Faerch and Kasper (quoted in 19:326).

A point on which these studies converge is the comparatively slow acquisition of complex syntactic structures (e.g., embedded modifying structures and

subordination) in the L2 environment that hinders the use of the more 'advanced' forms of expression in the language. Considering the age groups studied, this is natural as exposure to L1 in most cases would be limited to the family environment, and even more so if the learner is not exposed to L1 in the school environment. Hence, future research results of the project of bilingual education in the pre-school period (e.g., The KITA Project described in 16) are likely to provide important insights into the possible developments of more proficient bilingual development in an L2 environment.

## 2.3. Discourse acquisition

The reason I have separated the discussion of the research on discourse acquisition from previous sub-heading is that discourse organization is an area that is influenced not only by the interaction of the two linguistic systems on a syntactic and semantic level but also by the conventions of language for communicative purposes. The discourse sensitive phenomena that have been investigated so far have mostly to do with the development of anaphoric processes: deictic terms such as use of pronouns, pro-drop phenomena, free and bound time markers, and use of participial forms (3; 20; 23 and 24).

The findings in this area parallel those summarized in Section 2.2.2. in that where syntactic complexity is concerned, young L1 learners are slower in acquisition. Verhoeven (22; 23: 445) records a less differentiated system of tense and aspect markers and a lower use of participles and gerunds in narrative organization for the L1 group in the L2 environment. Aarssen (3) finds a higher use of nominal forms in introducing characters and in maintaining reference due to L2 interference.

Against this data, the report by Aarts (5) on the "high proficiency level ... for school language tasks ...and for functional literacy tasks" is surprising. Yet this may be accountable based on the significant correlation between sociocultural variables and L1 proficiency (25), which Aarts too considers for L1 instruction in the L2 environment and self-esteem.

Given the difficulty of developing replicable experimental settings in discourse analysis, especially when working with children, one is tempted to consider data collection methods that would engender naturally occurring yet still controllable data in this field. The Labov design of "narrating experiences that have impact on the individual" or the "participant-observer" formats that van de Mond (17) has used could provide data that may explain the results that Aarts mentions concerning functional literacy.

3.0 Future research

An examination of the works cited in the papers presented at the Conferences and the bibliography included in *Turkish Linguistics Today* clearly point out that the topics discussed at the Conferences are but just a small collection of the research being carried out in the field of Turkish acquisition in an second language environment. We hope that the findings of ongoing research will continue to be presented in future conferences.

Summing up the major contributions of this field, we may first refer to the findings obtained in issues related to the universal aspects of language acquisition such as the developmental patterns in modality and the acquisition of the lexicon. The findings on slower syntactic development are crucial too for language specialists in the field of education. Data on a non-Indo-European language in contact with Western European languages will certainly provide insights in the modeling of not only language acquisition but also diachronic variation. What may be desirable in this field is more research focusing on the adolescent's and young adult's language development within the context of the sociocultural environment. Second, studies on the code-switching, if considered and analysed as speech events rather than individual cases of language use, may produce valuable implications for educational policies in language planning both in Turkey and in the L2 environments. Indeed, it is regrettable that the Conferences have so far not embodied a more interdisciplinary audience of researchers in this respect on Turkish linguistics.

## List of abbreviations

L1:   Turkish as the first language of the parents in the family
L2:   The language in the country of residence

## Notes

(1) The fact that two of the proceedings of the Conferences are yet to appear may be mentioned as one technical gap, though I am aware of that a small number of these have appeared in journals. For proceedings of conferences that have not been published to date, I rely on the book of abstracts for the Vth and VIth Conferences and my understanding of the presentation of the papers I listened to at the latter.
(2) The numerals for the section headings do not intend to imply any sense of priority.
(3) The studies on communicative styles that are being conducted are both in the field of linguistics and in the Project being extended by Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı on

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communicative training for mother-child discourse in pre-school education (cf., Nermin Selen, Ailenin dil gelişimine etkileri, Ferhan Oğuzkan, ed., *İlköğretim Okullarında Türkçe Öğretimi ve Sorunları*. T.E.D. Yayınları, 77-92.)

(4) The study is being conducted under the supervision of Güray Çağlar König by İnci Somuncu at Hacettepe University.

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