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Language shift among Kurds in Turkey: A spatial and demographic analysis

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Abstract

This study explores language shift and interregional migration among Turkey's Kurdish-origin population using census data as well as TDHS data. First, the geographical retraction of the Kurdish language between 1945 and 1965 is depicted using respective censuses as data sources. Second, patterns of intergenerational language shift and the effects of migration and education on this shift are elaborated utilising 2003 TDHS data and the 2000 Census data. Interregional mobility by birth regions and language concentration across Turkey has also been mapped. The Kurdish population in Turkey appears to be on the verge of near-universal bilingualism prompting concerns about the future of the language.

Keywords: Language shift; ethnicity; internal migration; Turkey; Kurds

Guherîna zimanî di nav kurdan de li Tirkîyeyê: Nirxandineke mekanî û demografîk

Ev xebat, bi rêya tahlîlkirina daneyên serjimêriyê û herwiha daneyên TDHSyê, dikeve pey têgihîştina guherîna zimanî û koçberiya nav-herêmî di nav nufûsa kurd-regez a Tirkîyeyê de. Pêşiyê, bertengbûna coxrafî ya zimanê kurdî di navbera 1945 û 1965an de bi rêya tahlîla daneyan hatiye nîşandan. Paşê, awa û qalibên ziman-guheriya ji nîfşekî bo nîfşê din û tesîra koçberî û perwerdeyê li ser wê guherîna hatine nirxandin bi rêya bikaranîna daneyên TDHSya 2003yan û serjimêriya 2000an. Herwiha, hereketa mirovan ya ji herêmekê bo herêmeke din li gor herêma wan a jidayikbûnê, û paye û belavbûna zimanan li seranserê Tirkîyeyê hatiye bi nexşekirin. Wisa diyar e ku gelê kurd li Tirkîyeyê li ber duzimanîyeke seranserî ye, ku ev yek fikaran li dor paşeroja zimanî durist dike.

گۆرانکاری زمانی له نیو کوردەکانی تورکیا: لیکدانەوهیهکی شۆینی و دیمۆگرافیانه

ئەم لیکۆلینەوهیه به کەلکۆمەرگرتن له زانیاریی سەرژمیریانه و هەروەها زانیاریی ت دە س، له گۆرانکار زمانی و جینگۆرکینی نیوان هەرمییانهی کوردە خۆجیبهکانی تورکیا دمهۆلێنتهوه. له ههنگاوی یهکمه‌دا به کەلکۆمەرگرتن له سەرژمیرییه پێوندبەدار مکان وەک سەرچاوهی زانیاریی پاشه‌کشه‌کانی زمانی کوردی له‌نیوان سالانی ١٩٤٥ جێلێن ده‌کرێت. له ههنگاوی دووه‌مه‌دا به کەلکۆمەرگرتن له زانیاریی ت دە س له ٢٠٠٠، نموونه‌کانی گۆرانکاریی زمانی له‌نیوان جیله‌کان هه‌روەها کارتی‌که‌رییه‌کانی مهاجیرت و په‌روه‌ده له‌سه‌ر ئەم گۆرانکارییه باس ده‌کرێت. هه‌روەها جینگۆرکینی نیوان هه‌رمی له ریگای شۆینی له‌دایکبوون و قورسای زمانی له سەرئانسەری تورکیادا نه‌خشه‌کێش کر او ته‌وه. وێده‌چیت که دانیش‌توانی کوردی تورکیا وەک دیاردە‌ی دوو‌زمانی له ناستی جیبهانیی بێت که هه‌لگری نیگه‌رانییه له‌مه‌س داها‌تووی زمان. ت دە س: چاوپێدا‌خاندنی س‌لامتی و دیمۆگرافیی تورکیا

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Introduction

Analysing population patterns and behaviour of ethnic groups in Turkey is a challenge due to the persistent refusal to collect information on “ethnicity”, as such, in censuses and surveys. Many scholars have used language as an ethnic marker though the apparent language shift among Kurds and other non-Turkish ethnies has diluted the link between mother tongue and ethnic identity. O’Driscoll (2014) comparing the Irish and Kurdish cases claims that “Kurdish is facing danger of being eradicated” due to the politics of “linguicide”¹. Thus, we are set to identify this language shift with the help of large scale statistics from censuses and surveys. The diffusion of Turkish, the language of the majority, as well as the reciprocal retreat of the Kurdish language can be observed mapping at least two census data (1945 and 1965), though interestingly, to our best knowledge, this has never been done in the context of demonstrating language shift in Turkey. The retreat of the Kurdish language in the 20th century resembles that of Irish in the 19th century, even without an ethnically Turkish settler population in the predominantly Kurdish areas like the Protestants of Ulster or the “Old English” of the Pale in the Irish case (Hindley, 1990; Carnie, 1995). Interregional migration flows in Turkey have generally been from eastern to western provinces. Accordingly, population movements from the predominantly Kurdish areas head to the western parts of the country, while the spread of the Turkish language points to the opposite direction.

Apart from the geographical retreat of the Kurdish language, intergenerational language shift can also be observed within families and across generations. A portion of Kurdish parents do not transmit their mother tongue to their children or do so only as second language similar to the case of international migrants as mostly analysed for migrant groups in the United States and other receiving countries (Stevens, 1985). Alba et al. (2002) noted that languages spoken at home by third-generation immigrant children are affected by factors such as intermarriage. These arguments are not exclusive to the international migration context, and thus, may well be relevant to internal migration of ethnic groups such as Kurds moving from the east to the west of Turkey. Migration to outside the predominantly Kurdish areas and/or rise in the educational achievement of children of Kurdish families apparently dissuades retention of the Kurdish language. Interestingly though, apart from studies using language for analysis of demographic features of “ethnic/language” groups, where language is a marker rather than the main focus of analysis (e.g. Hoşgör and Smits, 2002; Koç, 2008; Mutlu, 1996;

¹ Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar (2010: 80) define linguicide in the context of cultural genocide which refers to “any deliberate act committed with the intent to destroy the language” among other cultural elements based on Article III of the draft of the Genocide Convention that was excluded from the final text mainly due to opposition from Western countries such as Canada or the United States with arguments that the inclusion of cultural genocide could inhibit the assimilation of cultural or linguistic groups as well as give way to claims by indigenous groups.

Dündar, 1998), or a few examples of small-scale qualitative fieldwork (Çağlayan, 2014; Civelek, 2015), until now no work has been exclusively dedicated to probing the language shift among Turkey's Kurds as a separate, quantitative and country-level investigation².

In awareness of background and data limitations the purposes of this paper are threefold. First, we depict the geography of the shift from Kurdish to Turkish using census data from 1945 and 1965. Second, we analyse intergenerational language shift differentiated according to educational attainment and migration status (as an indicator of context), particularly focusing on migrant (allochthon) Kurds compared to the non-migrant (autochthon) majority using the 2003 Turkish Demographic Health Survey (TDHS) data. As a prerequisite for the above stated objectives we have mapped the geographical distribution of languages other than Turkish from the latest available census of 1965, and further, analysed interregional migration currents in the second half of the 20th century using Census 2000 data. Finally, our third aim is to present a critique of studies that have, so far, resorted to the unverified assumption equating language to ethnicity in the Turkish context and to present an assessment of alternative markers, as discussed in the next chapter.

Language as a marker of ethnicity in the Turkish context

Fishman (2010: xxviii-xxix) points out that the equality between language and ethnicity has rarely been discussed and that it is imperative to consider the context and the conditions that lead language to become a proxy for ethnicity, a process depending on circumstances and contrasts that modify, create or recreate this association over time. Moreover, he argues, that not only the connection between each other but also both “language” and “ethnicity” themselves are highly contextual as well. May (2012: 134-138) criticises the assumed association of language and ethnicity as he discusses the relations between ethnic, nation, language and culture. Yet, as Smith (1986: 27) remarked “scholars persist in regarding language as the distinguishing mark of ethnicity, a standpoint that leads to gross simplification and misunderstanding”. Such simplification has been dominant in Kurdish studies despite massive language shift and widespread bilingualism³ among Kurds in Turkey (Zeyneloğlu et al., 2014; Zeydanlioğlu, 2013). Unfortunately, many studies using historical census or contemporary TDHS data have assumed responses to the ‘mother tongue’ question as a proxy for ethnicity (e.g. Mutlu, 1996; Sirkeci, 2000; Gündüz-Hoşgör and Smits, 2002; Koç et al., 2008) though the validity of this assumption has never been probed empirically in the Turkish context.

First to mention in this regard is the ambiguity of the meaning of “mother tongue” in the Turkish language as “*anadil*” literally means “mother tongue” but

² Smits and Hoşgör's (2003) work on linguistic capital comes close but lacks a historical and geographical frame.

³ See Skutnabb-Kangas and McCarty (2008) for a comprehensive terminology on bilingualism.

is also used in the meaning of ‘main-language’. In all Turkish census forms since the first in 1927 the explanation of *anadil* following in brackets reads as “the language spoken at home and/or among family”⁴. In the 1985 census questionnaire, the question was even directly formulated as “*Ev içinde ve aile arasında konuştuğunuz dil?* (The language you speak at home and among family?)” without using the term *anadil* at all, which, for a grown up person, can certainly be different from the language learned in childhood from his/her mother, especially after experiences of migration, intermarriage and/or entrance into higher education (Zeyneloğlu et al., 2016). In other words, the census has aimed at the ‘function’ dimension of language as classified by Skutnabb-Kangas (2008: 86) as opposed to the ‘origin’ dimension.

In the TDHS, no explanation follows the corresponding question on “mother tongue” which leads to ambiguity on this matter. The perception of scholars using TDHS data concerning the responses on this question is revealed by Dündar (1998: 33-34) who gives the definition of mother tongue as “the language first learned in childhood and still understood”, which is in sharp contrast to the description used in Turkish censuses, and probably also incongruous to the subconscious perception of most members of the general population. While TDHS claims to have collected the language learned first in childhood, that is focusing on the “origin” dimension of language (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2008: 86), without a clear explanation some respondents interviewed during the successive surveys may have referred to their current language, which may be different from the one learned first in childhood due to assimilation; or, that the language learned first in childhood may not be identical with that of the parents’ first language due to language shift. We do not deny that there is a bijective link between the Kurdish language and the Kurmanji as well as the Zaza population groups both in terms of self-designation as well as outside perception (Haig and Öpengin, 2014), though not all Kurds speak a Kurdish dialect so that knowledge and/or use of the Kurdish language does not necessarily constitute an operational ethnic marker. As Fenton and May (2002: 15) remark language can certainly be “the expression and focus of” ethno-political claims, however, their discussion also reflects the complexities of using language as an ethnic marker and the temporality and relationality of both identity and its markers.

The negative correlation of educational attainment and language retention among Kurds (Smits and Gündüz Hoşgör, 2003)⁵ may be a reason why Koç et

⁴ Şeref Hoşgör, the former head of the Social Statistics Department (1996-2003) of SIS, confirms that instructions given to census interviewers were also in that direction (Personal interview on Apr.2nd, 2009 in Ankara).

⁵ An inverse relationship between language and minority language retention has been observed in many other cases such as the Nenets in Russia. Kazakevitch (2004: 10-12; cited in Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar, 2010: 63) notes that “as a rule, children of well-educated Nenets parents (even those who are concerned with protection and preservation of the ethnic language)... have poor or no command of Nenets”.

al. (2008) found strong “demographic differentials” between Turkish and Kurdish speakers. Since the odds of an individual of Kurdish origin stating Turkish as her main language increases with her educational attainment, it is highly probable that Kurds who in terms of demographic indicators are closer to the general Turkish population may have been raised in, or later on have shifted to, the Turkish language. In that case, main language, as a marker of ethnicity, will fall short of indicating a possible convergence of Kurds and Turks. Koç et al. (2008: 448) (unfortunately referring to an MA student’s work, albeit a very good one, i.e. Dündar, 1998) state that “mother tongue/spoken language is only one potential variable... as a proxy for ethnicity, but in the Turkish context it appears to be quite sufficient”. Actually Dündar (1998: 2) explicitly refrains from equating language to ethnicity, literally stating that “mother tongue and second languages of the respondents ... are not sufficient to identify an individual as belonging to a specific ethnic group”. However, Dündar (1998: 33) also discloses that for the sake of analysis of “significant differentials in reproductive patterns between ethnic groups” information on language has been collected during TDHS 1993 “as a proxy of ...ethnic background, because ethnicity is a sensitive issue”. We point to Dündar’s work since her exploratory MA thesis forms the basis to almost all subsequent studies using TDHS language data as a proxy of ethnicity. It is difficult to comprehend how a proxy becomes “quite sufficient” just because it stands for a “sensitive issue”, and it is certainly unfortunate that this proposition, which has never been empirically verified in the Turkish context, still finds its place in recent studies (for instance Eryurt and Koç, 2015) blankly rejecting the apparent language shift and disregarding the emergence of monoglot Turkish speakers among Kurds with higher levels of formal education.

Alternatives to avoid this fallacy are obvious. One method is to include parental language use to identify ethnicity of an individual as Gündüz-Hoşgör and Smits (2002) have done as well. Another option would be to employ ‘birth region’ as a proxy for ethnic origin, assuming that persons born in the predominantly Kurdish-speaking provinces are of Kurdish origin which is justified by the geographic concentration of the Kurdish population in Turkey as is shown in the relevant sections of this paper and as has been shown elsewhere (Zeyneloğlu et al., 2016). The third and ultimate option is, of course, asking explicit and direct questions about outright self-reported ethnic identity as used in censuses and surveys in many other countries. We do utilise birth region from Census 2000 and parental language from TDHS 2003 since outright self-reported ethnicity is unfortunately not available in any large-scale national survey in Turkey. Before that, however, the distribution of languages other than Turkish from Census 1965 (including references to the 1945 Census) is presented in the next section together with an assessment of data quality regarding language data from the census.

Distribution of minority languages in Turkey

Beginning with the first in 1927, Turkish censuses included questions on first and second languages until 1985 though the tabulation of language use was not published after 1965⁶. In other words, the 1965 census is the most recent one from we can obtain that information.

Map 1 shows the distribution of minority language groups (excluding non-Muslim groups which were never meant to be integrated into the Turkish core) according to the “main language spoken” variable, clustered indicating the origin of migrant populations as in the case of those originating from the Balkans and the Caucasus. Kurdish (Kürtçe), Kirmanc (Kırmanca), Kirdash (Kırdaşça) and Zaza (Zazaca), as literally stated in the 1965 census booklet, have been summed as Kurdish dialects, as had been done in the 1945 census booklet. The mentioned ethnic are not confined to the speakers of the corresponding languages, however, at least for autochthon ethnic groups the geographical distribution of the corresponding language is expected to indicate the traditional homeland of an ethnic, different from allochthon groups, who, as migrants, generally are more thinly dispersed across a wider geography.

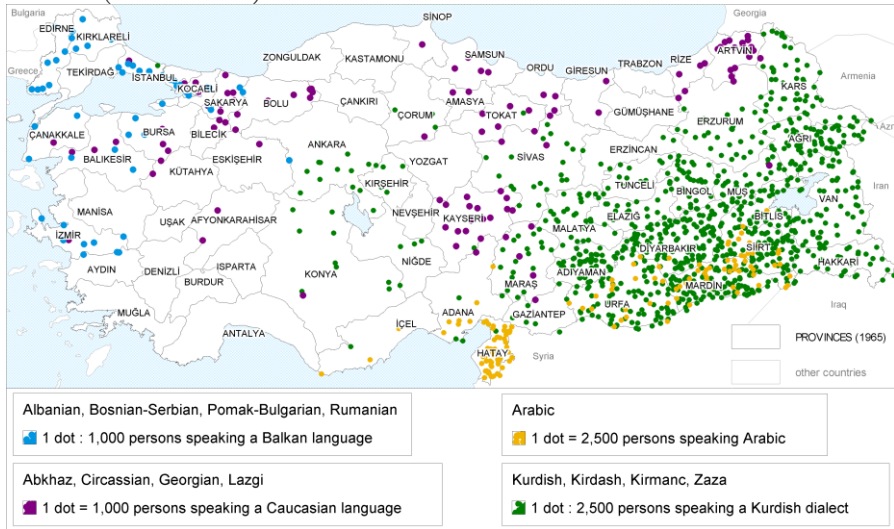
At the time of the 1965 census, Kurdish speakers were mostly concentrated in the south-eastern provinces lying south of the Erzincan-Erzurum-Kars line and east of the Elazığ-Urfa line, with the exception of the Kurds in inner central Anatolia settled in the Ottoman era in the 18th and 19th centuries. While there are Kurdish populations beyond these lines, those as such, were and are in the minority (see also Mutlu, 1996). By 1965, Kurdish speakers were not yet sizeable in large cities such as Istanbul and Izmir as well as in other western and southern provinces.⁷

As shown in Map 1, migrants from the Balkans, many of them accepted in late Ottoman as well as early Republican periods, were settled in the north-western part of the country. Migrants from the Caucasus as well as from the eastern part of the Black Sea region are found in the Western Black Sea region and the eastern parts of Marmara, the Circassians constituting an exception to a certain degree as many of them were settled in strategic zones of the Ottoman Empire as a loyal *Sünnî* ethnic group with warrior qualities (Özbek, 1989). Significant Arabic speaking populations were found only in three provinces bordering Syria, namely Hatay, Urfa and Mardin.

⁶ The practice of asking questions on language in censuses was discontinued after 1985 in a national frenzy in which prominent journalists (e.g. Güneri Cıvaoglu) and mainstream politicians (e.g. Ülkü Söylemezoğlu) accused the SIS (State Institute of Statistics) of treachery for daring to record Kurdish as a “mother tongue” (Zeyneloğlu et al., 2011). Due to similar delusions the tabulation of language had already disappeared from census publications after 1965 though the question itself remained in the census forms until 1985.

⁷ In 1965, only 0.1% of the population of both Istanbul and Izmir spoke a Kurdish dialect as a main language, of which at least some portion were soldiers fulfilling their military service who had not yet completed their three month long basic training and the education in Turkish which accompanied it. In other words, by 1965, Kurds were either not yet present in these cities or those who resided there had adopted Turkish as their main language.

Map 1. Language groups according to main language spoken other than Turkish (Census 1965)



Source: adopted from Zeyneloğlu et al., 2016, p.144.

Apart from the Kurds in Central Anatolia (re-)settled during the Ottoman period, migration of Kurds to western Turkey is relatively a recent phenomenon. This population move has been part of the general framework of post-WWII rural-to-urban migration in Turkey but also significantly affected by the ethnic conflict disadvantaging the predominantly Kurdish region from the early 1980s onwards. Resettlement as a result of village evacuations affecting over 900 villages (*köy*) and 2,000 hamlets (*mezra*) saw between 400,000 and 1.2 million people forcibly moved to western provinces⁸, mainly to the Mediterranean and Aegean regions.

In all censuses in which tabulation of language is published, there are provinces with Kurdish speakers (including all dialects) in the majority, while no other language group (even if its speakers as second language are added) forms a majority in any province. In the 1945 census 10 provinces (out of a total of 63 at the time), namely Ağrı, Tunceli, Bingöl, Muş, Bitlis, Van, Diyarbakır, Mardin, Siirt and Hakkâri had a majority of speakers of Kurdish as their main language, forming a unified space, which the current provinces of Batman and Şırnak seceded from Siirt are also part of. When speakers of

⁸ A numerical inventory of evacuated villages is given by Bekir Sıtkı Dağ from the Ministry of Interior, in “*Köye Dönüş ve Rehabilitasyon Projesi*” presented on 23 February, 2006 in Ankara at the UNDP workshop “*Yerinden Olmuş Kişiler Programının Geliştirilmesine Destek Projesi*”, stating the number of expelled persons around 380 thousand while Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies (2006:61) estimates the range of all internally displaced persons to be between .9 and 1.2 million.

Kurdish as either a main or second language are combined⁹ as comprising the minimum total population of Kurdish origin, Kurdish speakers are found to constitute more than two thirds (68%) of the population of these 10 provinces by 1945¹⁰. While provinces like Tunceli or Bingöl located closer to predominantly Turkish areas exhibit percentages as low as 56%, in Hakkâri at the south-eastern tip total Kurdish speakers amount to 92% of the population. We define these 12 provinces, out of 81 by the year 2000, as the “predominantly Kurdish speaking region” (KSR) as indicated in Map 1 and Map 5.

Within the mentioned region a striking rural-urban dichotomy can be observed in that persons who have declared a main language other than Kurdish during the 1945 Census are almost exclusively concentrated in urban areas so that all province centres in the mentioned region have a majority of speakers of Turkish (Karaköse-Ağrı, Kalan-Tunceli, Çapakçur-Bingöl, Muş, Bitlis, Van and Diyarbakır) or Arabic (Mardin and Siirt) except Çölemerik, the administrative centre of Hakkâri province. The rural areas, on the other hand, exhibit a clear Kurdish majority. That the language of the demographic, economic or political power group gets its first foothold in cities is no surprise. This urban-rural dichotomy has also been observed in the Irish case as English had become dominant in the big towns in the 18th century when large provinces still had majorities of monoglot Irish speakers (See Hyde, 1892; Filppula, 1995; Riagáin, 2015).

Some portion of Turkish speakers in cities are public service workers such as doctors, nurses, teachers and military personnel, however, a significant segment of crafts- and tradesmen also speak Turkish as a main language according to the 1945 Census in which the cross tabulation of main language and occupation is given for each province. Most government officials fulfil their ‘compulsory service’ and reside only temporarily in the region since trained personnel is otherwise hard to find. They are definitely not expected to be native inhabitants there, while persons employed in local trade and production are most likely permanent residents of each particular city, either born there or having migrated from the rural periphery. As a result, a portion of Turkish speakers residing in the KSR is not born there so that the percentage of Kurdish speakers among persons born in KSR should exceed the percentage of Kurdish speakers among those who reside there at any time. Cross tabulation of birth place and main language is not released in any census, but we are able to draw this from the TDHS. According to the 2003 TDHS, 86% of ever married

⁹ Scholars who use language tabulation from Turkish censuses should note that in Turkish census booklets the marginal total of speakers of a second language does include those who do not speak any other language than the one indicated, a figure also included in the marginal total of first language speakers of that particular language.

¹⁰ Only in the Census 1945 booklet is second language tabulated for each province separately.

women who have spent most of the period aged 0-12¹¹ in the KSR provinces speak Kurdish as either main or second language or have parents with Kurdish as their mother tongue. The remaining population, who may also be of Kurdish origin, speaks either Turkish or to a lesser extent Arabic, besides small Christian fractions speaking current dialects of ancient Aramaic¹².

However, part of the difference between the university administered TDHS and the state run censuses in terms of the share of Kurdish speakers may be due to the former practice of recording many Kurds as speaking Turkish as a main language in the census if they had at least some knowledge of Turkish as mentioned by Mutlu (1996). Furthermore, minority languages are generally stigmatised and can be regarded as a handicap (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000: x-xi) by both the majority as well as members of the minority. Thus, it is possible that many Kurds might not have disclosed any knowledge of Kurdish in the census if they also speak Turkish. It was not uncommon that Kurds refrained from disclosing their mother tongue or ethnic identity in surveys due to the fear of negative consequences such as being blacklisted by security forces (Civelek, 2015: 359). Moreover, language can become an issue if ethnic relations are strained. Because of the symbolic place of language within ethnicity, answers to questions on mother tongue might reflect a political attitude (Ozolins, 1996).

Nevertheless, we believe that whatever bias there is regarding the absolute number of Kurdish speakers in each census, the tabulation of language can safely be utilised for the assessment of any change in these figures. A series of Kurdish uprisings beginning in the early 1920s had been suppressed by the late 1930s. Thus, the intercensal period covered in this paper, between the 1940s until the 1970s, was relatively quiet compared to the earlier period and the decades from the 1970s and the 1980s, when the PKK movement had gained momentum. Fahrettin Kırzioğlu, the creator of the *kart-kurt* 'theory', then a history teacher and amateur scholar, had propagated 'the Turkishness of Kurds' as early as 1946¹³, but he had to wait until the mid-1960s to be taken seriously and then publish his junk thesis *Tarih Bakımından Kürtlerin Türklüğü* [The Historical Turkishness of Kurds] in 1964 (Beşikçi, 1969: 259). Kırzioğlu's views did not become state policy until the 1980 military coup after which he was 'awarded' with a professorship in 1982. Contrary to popular belief, in the early decades of the Republic the existence of the Kurdish language was never seriously denied, though assimilation of Kurds was heavily propagated and the language was severely restricted to the private sphere, with the only exception

¹¹ The individual questionnaire of the TDHS does not include questions on place of birth, however, the longest place of residence before the age of 12 is recorded as such, which we take as more or less equal to birth place.

¹² According to TDHS data less than 2% of ever married women nationwide speak Arabic as a main language, furthermore, more than two thirds of Arabic speakers live outside the region defined as KSR, particularly in the provinces of Hatay and Şanlıurfa. In the KSR, only Mardin province accommodates an important Arabic speaking population.

¹³ Kurmanç Kürtlerinin Aslı. *Tasvir*, 1 and 22 May, 14 June, 1946 in Andrews, 1989: 643.

that Kurdish translators officially served at courts in the Kurdish populated regions. Despite perhaps a will to suppress and assimilate, the Turkish state continued collecting mother language data including Kurdish and systematically published the census results with detailed language breakdown until the results of the 1965 Census published. These census reports were available in public libraries and even after the ban on Kurdish in the 1980s, there was no official attempt to withdraw these reports.

The legal ban on the Kurdish language came in 1983 with a cunning wordplay not even mentioning the name of the language to be banned. Article 2 of the “Law on Broadcasting with Languages Other Than Turkish”¹⁴ (which consisted of only two articles the first of which was an introduction) stated that “thoughts cannot be expressed, disseminated and published in any language other than those which are the first official languages of all states that Turkey has recognized”. Kurdish was Iraq’s second official language and a formal regional language in Iran at the time, however, it didn’t enjoy first-language status in any country. It was obvious to everyone that this clause was to ban the public use of Kurdish. This law was abolished in 1991 when the “Kurdish reality” was acknowledged by Süleyman Demirel, then Turkish Prime Minister.

Thus, we are confident that a comparison of the 1945 and 1965 censuses will reliably reveal the extent and the pattern of the language shift we are investigating in this paper. We assume that a vast majority of KSR-born persons are probably of Kurdish origin, though not all Kurds are KSR-born or Kurdish-speaking¹⁵. Nevertheless, we argue that demographics of the KSR-born population might be indicative of overall patterns of the Kurdish population without the need to recourse to language variables which are unreliable and missing in censuses after 1965. According to the 2003 TDHS, less than 3% of ever-married women living in West and South regions combined who had not spent their childhood in the East region did have a connection with the Kurdish language while more than 97% neither spoke Kurdish as a main or second language nor had parents speaking Kurdish as a main language. While a large Kurdish population does exist in the western regions it appears that even at the beginning of the 21st century most of them still had the East as their birth and/or childhood region. Hence, we are confident that in the 2000 Census data, the vast majority of KSR-born persons will be of Kurdish origin though in later censuses¹⁶ the distinction based on birth region will probably be blurred due to

¹⁴ https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc066/kanundmc066/kanundmc06602932.pdf. (Retrieved: 10/01/2016)

¹⁵ According to the 1945 Census 53% of Kurdish speakers (as either a main or second language) were living in KSR, 36% in the rest of the East region, while 9% resided in Central Anatolia and the remaining 2% were scattered over the rest of the country.

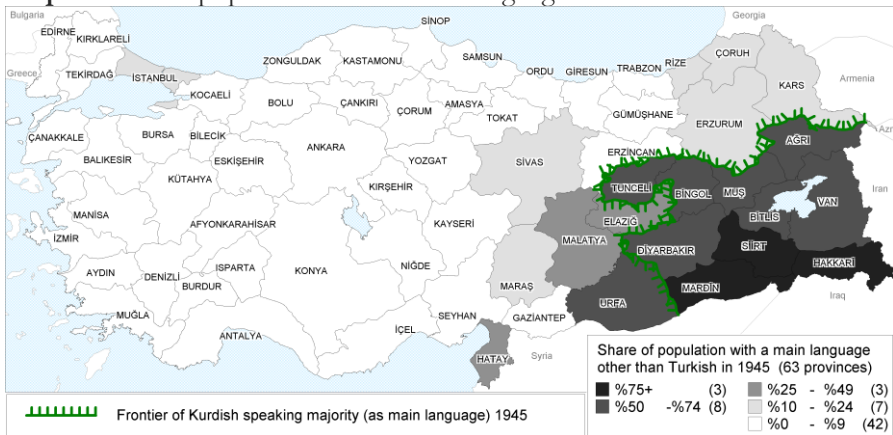
¹⁶ Until the year 2000, Turkey conducted de facto censuses, however, this practice has been discontinued since the establishment of the address based population record system in 2007, whose yearly outputs are merely a tabulation of population according to domicile. The recent “2011 Housing and Population Census”, on the other hand, is in fact an 11% sample survey of

second generation Kurdish migrants outside KSR reaching adulthood. In the next section, using the language data released until the 1965 census, we outline the language shift.

Geographical diffusion of Turkish and retreat of the Kurdish language

The share of the population with a main language other than Turkish in 1945 and 1965 is shown in Map 1 and Map 2, respectively, while Map 3 indicates the advance of Turkish in the given timeframe. The frontier of the provinces where Kurdish was spoken by the majority is highlighted with a symbolised green line. All provinces where Turkish had a share of less than half did have a majority of Kurdish speakers with the exception of Urfa where, both in 1945 and 1965, Turkish speakers amounted to less than half of the population, though Kurdish speakers, the largest group, did not constitute the absolute majority due to the presence of a large Arabic speaking population as well.

Map 1. Share of population with a main language other than Turkish in 1945

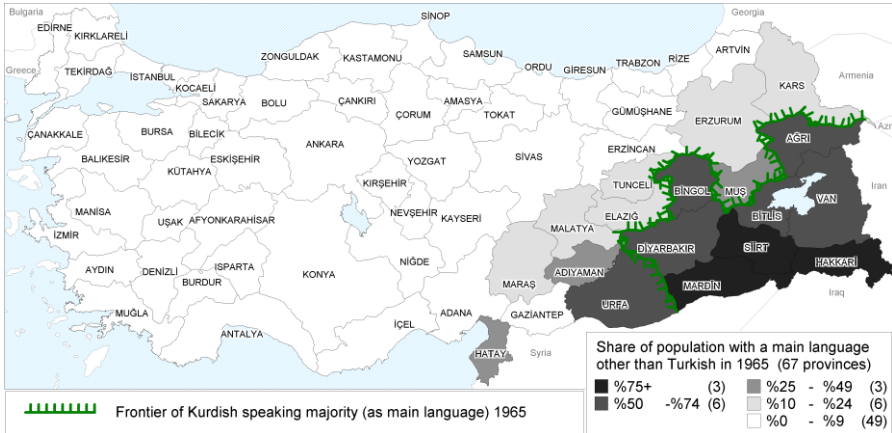


Comparable to the Irish case between 1851 and 1891 (Hindley, 1990; Riagáin, 2015) the retreat of the Kurdish language can be observed in the direction from the centre to the periphery. Map 3 shows that the strongest advance of Turkish between 1945 and 1965 did happen in provinces close to the Turkish-Kurdish language frontier (such as Tunceli, Elazığ and Muş, and to a lesser extent also Diyarbakır, Malatya and Urfa on both sides of the line) suggesting a diffusion in the form of waves. If census figures after 1965 had not been censored, most likely the Diyarbakır-Van line would have appeared as the next wave of provinces with the swiftest retreat of Kurdish until the 1980s. Together with the fact that almost all province centres with the exception of tiny Çölemerik were already Turkish (or Arabic) speaking by 1945, the

the population whose data set was not yet available as of May 2015. Similar to all other censuses after 1985, the 2011 Survey does not include questions on language.

geographical retreat of Kurdish insinuates dynamics of trade and commerce in addition to schooling and assimilationist policies. This is not to deny the obvious policies of assimilation and linguicide¹⁷ towards Kurds pursued by the Turkish republic; however, the signs for a language shift are also evident

Map 2. Share of population with a main language other than Turkish in 1965



If forced assimilation was the only reason, we would expect a decreasing share of Kurdish speakers in all provinces. Within in each province, diffusion of the Turkish language would be observed from the centre to the rural periphery in accordance with the expected strength and influence of the state. Due to relatively large Turkish military, administrative and cultural presence in province centres, Turkish should be dominant in all of them. However, this is not the case as we identify geographic patterns in the region.

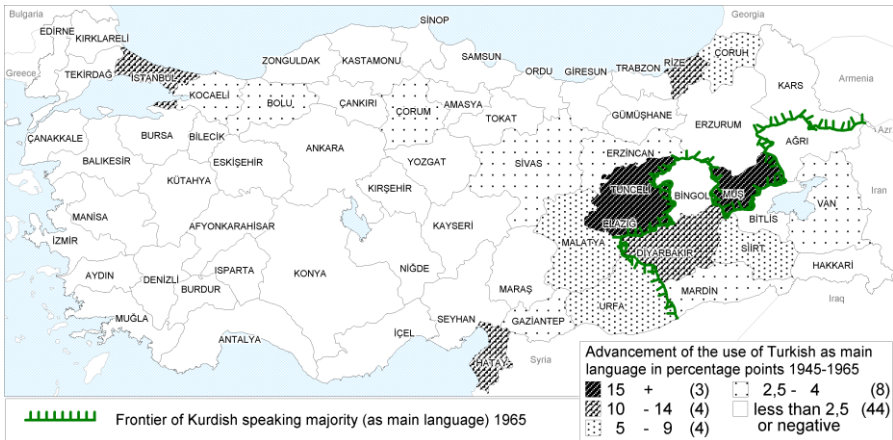
In the Irish case, Odlin (1994) showed that in Galway in the west of Ireland in 1851, there was a massive language shift towards English despite unschooled bilinguals clearly outnumbering schooled bilinguals. In other words, Odlin argues that the acquisition of English took place with little or no help from schools. Trade and commerce seem to play a role in spreading the English language in Ireland rather than caused by schooling alone (Carnie, 1995). This was also the case in Cornwall where the retreat of the Cornish language spans over five centuries (Spriggs, 2003).

A similar situation can be said for the predominantly Kurdish provinces in Turkey in the 20th century. For instance, according to the 1945 Census, in Muş province, where the vast majority of the population is of Kurdish origin, 34%

¹⁷ Zeydanlioglu (2012) offers an account of the politics of linguicide in Turkey while Bayir (2013:19) underlines the indirect methods of repression of the Kurdish language. See also Taylor and Skutnabb-Kangas (2009), Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar (2010), Çağlayan (2014), Coşkun et al. (2014), and Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1995). For a comparison of the Kurdish and Irish cases see O’Driscoll (2014).

of males indicated Turkish as their main language while only 27% of these “Turkish-speaking-Kurds” were literate. Among females, of which 33% were reported as Turkish speaking, the figures are even more striking in that only 5% of Turkish speaking females were literate. As another example, in Diyarbakır province 29% of males had been reported as speaking Turkish as a main language though only 40% of them were literate. For females, the literates among Turkish speakers (25%) were only 8%. Thus, one can imagine that some Kurds must have learned Turkish from non-native Turkish speakers outside of schools as it was the case in Ireland (Filppula, 1995). On the other hand, literacy does not guarantee that Turkish is adopted and expressed as main language, though that is mostly the case. Still, 5% of males in Muş province who had reported their main language as Kurdish were literate in 1945 while the corresponding figure for Diyarbakır was above 8%.

Map 3. Advance of Turkish as main language between 1945 and 1965



We elaborate, in the next section, whether migration might have facilitated the contact-induced changes as well as language shift in general.

Inter-regional migration of Kurds in Turkey

The second part of the 20th century is a period of massive uprooting characterised by internal as well as international mobility and urbanisation in Turkey, though there are striking differences between different regions in terms of in- and out-migration. Boundaries of the eight regions indicated in Table 1, Table 2 and Map 5 differ from the conventional seven geographical regions commonly used in describing Turkey’s geography. Our spatial zoning of provinces is to reflect cultural and ethnic similarities and is not intended to represent an ideal or alternative regional classification. Marmara (Mar) is the most industrialised region of Turkey including Istanbul, the largest city and the economic capital of the country, while the Aegean (Aeg) region is the second

most developed both in terms of economy as well as human development. The Mediterranean (Med) is economically better off than the remaining regions with a strong tourism sector concentrated in Antalya and agricultural and industrial centres in the eastern section of the region. Ankara, the capital city, is the centre of the Central Anatolian (Cen) region. The Black Sea region, and eastern and south-eastern regions are relatively deprived and accommodate many provinces ranked towards the bottom of the socio-economic development level rankings (Dinçer et al., 2003) and therefore out-migration propensity is higher (Sirkeci et al., 2012). The Black Sea region is considered in two parts: the Western Black Sea (WBS) and Eastern Black Sea (EBS). We divide the eastern and south-eastern provinces into two regions: the predominantly Kurdish speaking region (KSR) and the rest of Eastern and South Eastern Anatolia (ESA).

Table 1 shows the distribution of population born in each region according to region of current residence indicating the destinations of out-migration from each region based on the 2000 Census data, differentiated into age groups and gender. Some regions have retained the native born to a large extent. For example, 90% of the population in all analysed cohorts and each gender born in the Marmara region continued to live there at the turn of the century. Similarly, around 90% of population born in the Aegean region remained in that region with a small decline among younger age groups. However, in Central Anatolia while 80% of the 55-64 age group have remained in their region of birth, more than a quarter of both men and women aged 25-34 have out-migrated. Northern regions, WBS and EBS, also have relatively high out-migration levels. In Eastern and South Eastern Anatolian regions, the percentage of those remaining in their birth region was below two thirds for all age groups and both sexes. The percentage of KSR-born population living in their birth region ranged from 57% to 68% differing by age group and gender.

The out-migrating population from Eastern and South Eastern Anatolia was destined to several regions. While 18% of men and 15% of women at ages 25-34 born in KSR lived in the Marmara region, 9% of males and 8% of females resided in the Aegean, and a further 8% of males and 7% of females in that age group lived in the Mediterranean.

Table 2 demonstrates the distribution of population living in regions according to birth region indicating the origins of the population of each region. The Marmara region, as the nodal and economic centre of the country had the most diversified population with 8% of males and 6% of females aged 25-34 born in KSR. In the Aegean, 7% of males and 6% of females among the 25-34 age group were born in KSR while in the Mediterranean the share of KSR-born persons in the 25-34 population was 7% for both males and females. Central Anatolia and the Black Sea regions lacked the presence of any significant KSR-born population. It appears that KSR and ESA, along with EBS have not been preferable destinations for internal movers over time. In other words, there is no population movement from the predominantly Turkish regions into the predominantly Kurdish ones.

Table 1. Distribution of population born in regions according to region of residence and age groups (column % within each region of birth)

Region of birth	Region of residence in 2000 ^a	Age group							
		55-64		45-54		35-44		25-34	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Mar	Mar	90.3	89.9	91.4	90.1	91.8	90.7	90.7	90.1
Aeg	Mar	4.7	4.9	5.5	5.9	5.3	5.7	5.7	5.8
	Aeg	92.6	92.3	91.1	90.4	90.5	90.0	87.2	87.8
Med	Mar	3.8	3.4	4.6	4.0	4.7	4.1	5.6	4.5
	Med	89.6	90.4	87.9	88.9	87.1	88.7	82.6	86.2
Cen	Mar	10.5	9.7	13.4	12.4	14.6	13.7	15.8	14.7
	<i>Aeg</i>	5.3	4.4	6.0	5.2	5.9	5.4	5.4	5.2
	Cen	80.2	82.6	75.8	78.0	74.1	76.0	71.4	74.1
WBS	Mar	20.0	19.9	26.6	26.2	30.6	29.9	33.4	32.1
	Cen	4.4	4.7	5.1	5.3	5.5	5.3	5.8	5.4
	WBS	72.6	72.6	64.6	64.9	59.7	60.8	55.0	57.7
EBS	Mar	24.0	22.5	31.3	29.7	34.9	34.7	36.0	35.5
	WBS	7.1	7.3	6.7	6.9	5.7	6.6	4.3	5.2
	EBS	61.6	63.9	53.3	55.8	50.3	50.4	49.7	50.8
ESA	Mar	18.9	18.3	21.7	20.2	23.3	21.9	23.1	21.2
	<i>Aeg</i>	5.6	4.9	6.1	5.5	5.8	5.7	5.3	5.1
	Med	5.8	5.2	6.8	6.2	6.5	6.4	5.8	5.9
	Cen	5.6	5.6	6.0	5.9	5.9	5.7	5.3	5.0
	ESA	62.4	64.3	57.3	60.3	56.3	58.3	57.6	60.7
KSR	Mar	12.3	11.9	15.0	13.6	16.4	14.4	18.1	14.6
	<i>Aeg</i>	7.6	7.0	8.8	7.9	9.1	8.3	8.7	8.0
	Med	7.3	6.8	8.1	7.5	8.0	7.8	7.5	7.3
	KSR	66.1	67.9	60.1	64.1	58.3	62.3	57.4	63.6

^a Only those regions of residence with a share of over 5% in any age or gender group are indicated.

Source: Census 2000 data (adopted from Zeyneloğlu et al., 2016, p.150).

An interesting difference between age groups has to be noted for the KSR. While in the groups above age 35, regardless of gender, more than 95% of the population has been born in that region. Among males aged 25-34 this percentage drops to 87% whilst measured as 92% among females in the same age group. This could be due to the fact that most government officials (civilian as well as military) in the KSR are made up of non-locals fulfilling their compulsory service at relatively younger ages who often leave the region upon completion of their term.

In summary, interregional population movements of Kurds originate from ESA and KSR and are directed towards the Mediterranean, Aegean and Marmara regions. Another strong population movement from EBS to Marmara is evident as illustrated in Map 5. The Western and Southern regions require further analysis as these are the regions where local Turkish and allochthon Kurdish populations co-exist. We expect that in these regions, stronger language shift trends exist among allochthon Kurds compared to their autochthon ethnic fellows in the East region. However, before probing the effects of migration, we will first analyse the language shift in the next section.

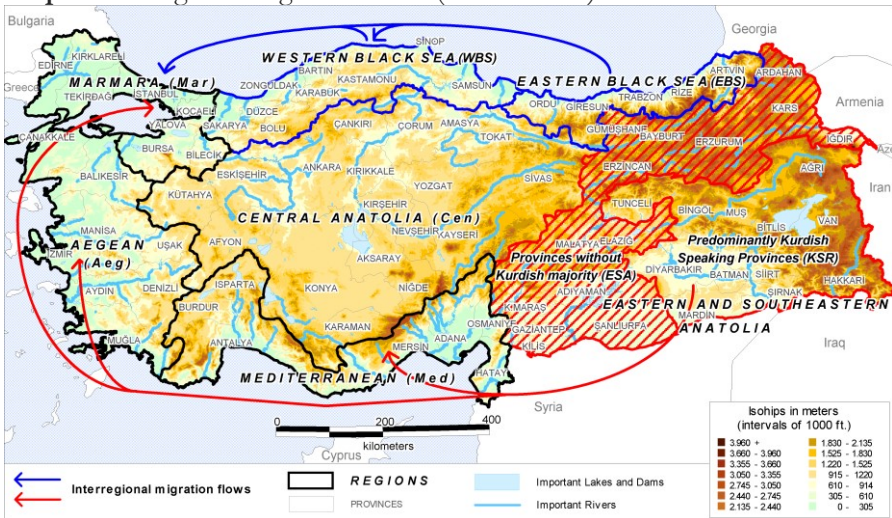
Table 2. Distribution of population living in regions according to region of birth and age groups (column % within each region of residence)

Region of de facto residence in 2000	Region of birth ^a	Age group							
		55-64		45-54		35-44		25-34	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Mar	Mar	42.6	44.8	37.9	39.8	34.6	37.0	35.2	37.6
	Cen	13.7	12.7	15.5	14.8	15.9	15.2	15.9	15.5
	WBS	9.2	9.5	10.8	11.0	11.1	11.5	10.7	11.1
	EBS	10.1	9.6	10.8	10.3	12.0	12.0	10.6	10.9
	ESA	14.7	13.9	14.8	13.8	15.6	14.4	15.4	14.4
Aeg	KSR	4.8	4.5	5.2	5.0	6.2	5.3	7.9	6.3
	Aeg	76.9	79.8	73.7	75.9	71.3	73.3	68.3	70.3
	Cen	8.3	6.9	9.8	8.6	10.3	9.6	10.5	10.2
	ESA	5.2	4.5	5.8	5.2	6.3	5.9	6.8	6.3
Med	KSR	3.5	3.2	4.3	4.1	5.6	4.8	7.3	6.4
	Med	76.2	78.6	74.0	75.6	73.2	74.8	71.6	74.0
	Cen	6.9	5.8	7.8	7.1	7.7	7.3	7.9	7.2
	ESA	8.3	7.6	9.2	8.3	8.9	8.4	8.8	8.3
Cen	KSR	5.3	4.8	5.5	5.4	6.3	5.8	7.3	6.6
	Cen	89.1	89.2	87.6	87.9	86.8	87.4	85.6	87.0
WBS	Cen	2.6	2.2	3.6	3.1	4.2	3.6	5.1	4.2
	WBS	85.7	86.2	83.6	84.8	82.2	83.0	80.4	82.4
EBS	EBS	7.6	7.8	7.4	7.4	7.4	8.1	5.8	6.7
	EBS	97.6	97.4	95.7	95.8	94.1	94.4	91.1	92.1
ESA	ESA	96.0	95.9	94.9	94.8	93.2	93.7	89.2	91.5
KSR	KSR	97.6	97.2	96.6	96.9	95.0	96.3	87.0	92.2

^a Only those regions of birth with a share of over 5% in any age or gender group are indicated.

Source: Census 2000 data (Source: adopted from Zeyneloğlu et al., 2016, p.151.)

Map 5. Interregional migration flows (Census 2000)



Source: adopted from Zeyneloğlu et al., 2016, p.145.

Generational language retention vs. intergenerational language shift

In Table 3 and Table 4, we present an overall picture of language retention versus language shift in Turkey using TDHS 2003 data. In Table 3 the respondent's own language use is tabulated according to parents' language use. More than 3% of children with both parents speaking Kurdish as a main language expressed themselves as not speaking Kurdish. At the same time, Kurdish speakers are almost non-existent among the children with neither parent having Kurdish as mother tongue. Furthermore, Kurdish is only the second language among 5% of children whose both parents speak Kurdish as main language. This figure declines below 2% among the children of persons whose main language, as reported by their children, is not Kurdish. It appears that some of the children of Kurdish parents have been raised primarily in Turkish speaking environments or have adopted Turkish as their main medium of expression at a later time.

Education seemingly plays a role in language shift (Hinton, 2014: 414) which is also the case in Turkey as summarised in Table 4, in which the cross-tabulation of language and level of education is given only for those respondents whose both parents speak Kurdish as their main language. Thus, all persons indicated in Table 4 are expected to be of Kurdish origin. The four categories of Table 3 have been regrouped into three in Table 4 to concentrate on the divide between bilingual and monolingual Kurds. The higher the educational attainment the lower the use of Kurdish language as it declines from over 99% among the unschooled to 87% among secondary school (including middle school [*ortaokul*]) or above graduates. Kurdish is not even a second language for 13% of secondary school graduates. As Smits and Gündüz-Hoşgör (2003) have noted, there appears to be a “strong relationship between going to school and speaking Turkish” among the Kurds. In the reverse analogy, it is also possible and actually more probable that children who have been raised in the Turkish language by their Kurdish parents are more successful in the educational system so that Turkish speaking Kurds can be found disproportionately more at the upper steps of the education ladder. It was not possible to tabulate language use for graduates of higher education in Table 4 as there are only 9 persons in the whole sample of the TDHS in this category, making up less than 1% of all persons with Kurdish-speaking parents.

Smits and Gündüz-Hoşgör (2003) argue that there are ethnically non-Turkish parents “prefer to speak Turkish at home to teach their children the country's official language, because they believe that this may increase their children's upward social mobility chances”, while one can also link it to the dominant ethnicity's language being the medium of instruction in formal compulsory education. Since most Kurds in Turkey are bilingual (Zeyneloğlu et al., 2014), a Kurdish individual may also easily opt for Turkish as her main medium of expression during early adulthood and Kurdish drops to second position even if that was the language she first learned from her parents. Upward social mobility and economic opportunities are also known major

drivers of language shift (Anthonissen, 2013; Hinton, 2014; Kandler et al., 2010) which is usually preceded by bilingualism (see Field, 1980; Backus, 2004).

Table 3. Cross-tabulation of parents' language versus respondent's language^a

Respondent's own languages	Parents' language		
	Both parents speak Kurdish as main language	Only one parent speaks Kurdish as main language	Neither parent speaks Kurdish as main language
	Column %	Column %	Column %
Main language Kurdish, does not speak Turkish as second language	21.3	3.8	0.0
Main language Kurdish, does speak Turkish as second language	70.0	25.7	0.1
Main language not Kurdish, but does speak Kurdish as second language	5.4	26.3	1.5
Does not speak Kurdish at all	3.3	44.1	98.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	1,203	62	6,805

^a Ever married women aged 15-49

Source: TDHS 2003 data (Source: adopted from Zeyneloğlu et al., 2016, p.142.)

Table 4. Cross-tabulation of educational attainment versus respondent's own language among the Kurdish origin population^a

Monolingualism vs. bilingualism among Kurds	Highest graduation level of respondents		
	No graduation	Primary	Secondary or above
	Column %	Column %	Column %
Monoglot Kurdish speaker	32.1	0.9	1.6
Bilingual	66.8	92.8	85.9
Monoglot Turkish speaker	1.1	6.3	12.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	786	348	64

^a Ever married women aged 15-49 whose parents both speak Kurdish as their main language

Source: TDHS 2003 data

On the other hand, language retention is not a prerequisite for retention of a minority ethnic identity. A prominent example, for instance, is Selahattin Demirtaş, the current co-chair of HDP, the pro-Kurdish party in Turkey. Demirtaş was raised solely in Turkish by both of his Zaza parents in urban Diyarbakır¹⁸, but this did not deter him from developing a strong Kurdish

¹⁸ Selahattin Demirtaş interviewed by Fatih Polat, *Evrensel*, 1 August 2014: “*Annemiz babamız Kürtlüğün o ağır yükünü de yaşatmamak adına kendi bakış açılarıyla bize iyilik yapma adına bize Türkçe öğretmişler. Bu devlet içerisinde başarılı olalım, iyi yerlere gelebilelim, eğitimde başarılı olalım, diye.* (Our parents taught us Turkish from their own perspectives as a favour to us not to let us bear the heavy burden of Kurdishness. So that we succeed in this state, so that we can achieve a good position, succeed in education.)” <http://www.evrensel.net/haber/89193/demirtas-secilirsem-mgkyicalistirmam>

ethnic identity and learning Kurdish at a later age despite being raised as a monoglot Turkish speaker¹⁹. Of course this is also likely to be linked to the Kurdish ethno-political revival since the 1970s gradually encouraging many Kurds to reconnect with Kurdish language. To complicate things further, his strong affiliation with the Kurdish ethnic identity does not restrain Demirtaş from continuing to speak Turkish at home to his also Turkish speaking Kurdish wife as well as to their two daughters with Kurdish given names. We have to emphasise that with criteria used in most previous work, utilising TDHS or census data, even a well-known Kurdish leader would be classified as Turkish.

Çağlayan's qualitative study (2014) has captured similar parent-child experiences in which concerns regarding education where environmental effects reshaped daily routines and language use. Narratives of the second generation include anecdotes about how Turkish frequently interrupted their after-school stories at home, while talking to grownups during their childhood. Coşkun et al. (2010) even found parents who had limited or no proficiency in Turkish registering for Turkish language courses to be able to help their children at homework and other school problems. Civelek's (2015) study reveals conflicting motives as well: One Kurdish parent, for instance, referring to her daughter states that "*Türkish let her to be successful at school and to be loved by other children and her teachers*", but at the same time hopes that "*She will understand what Kurds have gone through for years, sooner or later*". Both context (i.e. migration to a different linguistic environment) and motives regarding education and social mobility affect language shift.

Dynamics of intergenerational language shift: Education and migration

In the previous section (Table 4) we had presented the language use of persons whose parents both have Kurdish as mother tongue so that persons in this category could safely be assumed of Kurdish origin. Here, we continue with this filter and differentiate individuals with Kurdish-speaking parents into autochthon and allochthon groups to demonstrate the effect of both education and migration on language shift using TDHS 2003 data. Autochthon Kurdish speakers who live in their traditional homeland in the East region (roughly equal to our ESA and KSR regions combined) are shown in Table 5²⁰ while in Table

¹⁹ Interviewed by Kübra Par, *Habertürk*, 19 July 2014: "*Türkiye'de kendi kendini asimile etme çok yaygın. Kürtler Kürt olduğunu sakladı, çocukları öğrenmesin diye ellerinden geleni yaptı... Etnik olarak Kürt olduğumun farkındaydım ama siyasal ve sosyolojik olarak bunun ne anlama geldiğini lise yıllarında anladım. [Self-assimilation is very prevalent in Turkey. Kurds withheld their Kurdishness, tried hard to prevent their children from figuring out... While I was aware that I am an ethnic Kurd it was in my high school years that I apprehended what this means in political and sociological terms.]*" <http://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/971550-iyi-utu-yaparim-guvecte-iddialiyim-album-cikarabilirim->

²⁰ In both tables 5 and 6, figures in the secondary or above category are to be interpreted cautiously due to the low number of observations, the reasons of which elaborated in the preceding chapters.

6, we summarise allochthon Kurds living in the West and South regions (roughly equal to Marmara, Aegean and Mediterranean regions combined). Some of these persons might well be “locals” that have never migrated outside their birthplace. On the other hand, many Kurds living in the East may well be internal migrants who have moved within the region. Our autochthon-allochthon differentiation is based on context (that is, whether a Kurd lives in the East region comprising the traditional homeland of the Kurdish ethnic where they constitute the majority, or whether they live in regions with a Turkish majority) rather than any individual experience of migration.

A very clear difference between Kurds in these two contexts is evident in terms of bilingualism. While in the East only persons with at least primary school graduation have near universal knowledge of the Turkish language (either in form of bilingualism or monoglot Turkish use), among migrant Kurds in the western regions even those with no formal education are universally bilingual. In the East 43% of Kurds without any graduation are monoglot Kurdish speakers, while this proportion is only 9% among allochthon Kurds. In both settings, the East and the analysed western regions alike, most Kurds with some education do speak Turkish as a first or second language. The percentage of monoglot Turkish speakers of Kurdish origin, on the other hand, differs not only across graduation categories but also according to context. While 11% of secondary school graduates of Kurdish origin in the East do not speak Kurdish at all, among those living in the western regions more than 17% are monoglot Turkish speakers.

Apparently, both education and migration lead to an increase in the share of monoglot Turkish speakers among Kurds. Also bilingualism is considerably higher among Kurds in the West (where Kurds are a minority) compared to the East (where Kurds are majority). While the context effect can be explained by linguistic theories of minority versus majority, the education effect is largely linked to the assimilationist policies and practices (see Zeydanlioglu, 2013), including self-assimilation.

These results are no surprise. Similar effects of internal migration are observed in multilingual societies such as India where many are obliged to learn two or more languages including English, although minority languages are protected by the constitution (Sridhar, 1996; Mahapatra, 1990; Laitin, 1993). Thus, movers migrate and carry their languages with them while switching to other languages by necessity. In some countries, such as the US, language shift was experienced with relatively less conflict between English speakers and others including indigenous peoples while in Canada language shift became an issue between the English- and the French-speaking communities (Lieberson and Curry, 1971; see also Fishman, 1966; 2001 for the US). Veltman (1983; 1988) showed for Hispanic immigrants in the US that language shift of adults is related to the duration of stay while for children the age of arrival is the main determinant. Similar to our findings, Veltman (1988) demonstrated that approximately 10% of the children of immigrant Hispanic families became

English-only speakers while almost none of them remained monoglot users of Spanish.

Table 5. Cross-tabulation of educational attainment versus respondent's own language^a among the autochthon Kurdish origin population in the East region

Monolingualism vs. bilingualism among autochthon Kurds living in the East region	Highest graduation level of respondents		
	No graduation	Primary	Secondary or above
	Column %	Column %	Column %
Monoglot Kurdish speaker	43.2	1.1	2.6
Bilingual	56.7	96.0	86.8
Monoglot Turkish speaker	0.2	2.8	10.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>N</i>	533	177	38

^a Ever married women aged 15-49 whose parents both speak Kurdish as their main language
Source: TDHS 2003 data

Table 6. Cross-tabulation of educational attainment versus respondent's own language^a among the allochthon Kurdish origin population in Western and Southern regions combined

Monolingualism vs. bilingualism among allochthon Kurds living in West and South	Highest graduation level of respondents		
	No graduation	Primary	Secondary or above
	Column %	Column %	Column %
Monoglot Kurdish speaker	9.0	0.8	0.0
Bilingual	89.1	87.7	82.6
Monoglot Turkish speaker	1.9	11.5	17.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>N</i>	211	122	23

^a Ever married women aged 15-49 whose parents both speak Kurdish as their main language
Source: TDHS 2003 data

Conclusion and suggestions for further analysis

In this study, we laid bare the rapid language shift among Kurds across Turkey, a process correlated with the level of education (assimilation) and experience of internal migration (context) at the individual level, while at the territorial level it appears to be related to economic geography. Our study utilises available data in detail and maps the shift experienced by Kurds in comparison to other minorities, migrant and indigenous groups in the US, several European countries and elsewhere.

After three decades of armed conflict and an era where education and broadcasting in Kurdish was severely prohibited both legally and in practice (Taylor and Skutnabb-Kangas, 2009: 172-173), a short but relatively peaceful

period, up to the recent rise in violence in the summer of 2015, together with cultural steps such as the initiation of Kurdish broadcasting by the state run network in 2009 and the recent introduction of Kurdish elective courses in secondary public schools, has shown that there is a possibility of preserving the language. Nevertheless, the simple mathematics of demography, the dictates of the market and the influence of socio-cultural life favouring the language of majorities remain the main driver of language shift among groups who are in the minority. For the Kurdish population in Turkey, the shift towards the Turkish language increases with formal schooling. Furthermore, migration from the predominantly Kurdish provinces to the western regions of the country increases the odds of language shift, while the diffusion of the language of the majority into the periphery does not necessarily require human movement.

Considering language shift as well as widespread bilingualism among Kurds we reject the approach equating mother tongue to ethnicity in censuses and surveys in Turkey. Birth region together with second language as well as parental language use can be employed as complementary ethnic markers, though this method will probably be inappropriate with more recent data considering children of Kurdish migrants born in the western regions in the last few decades. Some of these offspring will adhere to the Turkish identity but some might retain their Kurdishness even with good educational achievement. Some might retain their mother tongue; others may shift during their lifetime or ensure their children do. The time has come for ethnicity, as such, to be openly asked and recorded in Turkish surveys and censuses. Until then, most researchers including the authors of this article, will have to utilise proxies as a substitute.

Decades of mass schooling since the 1960s, diffusion of the coverage area of the national as well as global economy penetrating even to the most peripheral areas since the 1980s, and rapid mass internal migration throughout the second half of the last century ought to have eroded the bijective link between mother tongue/main language and ethnicity in the contemporary Turkish context. There is clearly need for further investigation of the process of language shift and its individual and group dynamics among Kurds in Turkey. The advantages and disadvantages of such a shift for the groups themselves and for the universal cultural heritage are of concern too. Assessment of risks and benefits associated with this process require better quality information on ethnicity which goes beyond weak proxies commonly resorted to in the literature on the Kurdish population in Turkey.

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