

ТУРСКИЯТ ЕЗИК В СЕВЕРОИЗТОЧНА БЪЛГАРИЯ: СРЕЩА НА КОСМОПОЛИТНОТО И ПРОВИНЦИАЛНОТО

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THE TURKISH LANGUAGE IN NORTHEASTERN BULGARIA: AN INTERSECTION OF THE COSMOPOLITAN AND THE PROVINCIAL

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Abstract *This article presents my research on language attitudes and maintenance in the Turkish minority communities in Northeastern Bulgaria. Though situated far from the Turkish border, this population has maintained its language, religion, and some aspects of its culture for generations, despite pressures towards assimilation. However, globalization presents opportunities for a different kind of assimilation – with Turkish-language populations outside of Bulgaria. I discuss the competing tensions of provincialism and cosmopolitanism on the language of this population, rooted by both its residency in villages and small- to mid-sized towns and by its very particularity in the provincial, while at the same time expressing cosmopolitanism through cross-border communication, travel, and family ties.*

Key words *Turkish, minority language, code-switching, language attitudes*

Five centuries of Ottoman rule bestowed on Bulgaria a sizeable Turkish population. Bulgaria won its independence from the Ottoman Empire more than 100 years ago, but at least 10% of the population still speaks Turkish. I am carrying out a research project¹ examining how Turkish speakers maintain their language in a society in which Bulgarian is the dominant language and what the Turkish language means to their identity. Considering this issue in terms of cosmopolitanism and provincialism offers a different perspective, and one not usually considered in linguistics. The linguistic situation is far from simple, and though there is no easy answer for where the Bulgarian Turkish-speaking community fits into a provincial/cosmopolitan dichotomy, considering the possibilities allows us to look at this bilingual community in a new way.

Provincialism, Cosmopolitanism, and Language

The terms *provincialism* and *cosmopolitanism* represent two different approaches to looking at ourselves, our society, and the world itself. Cosmopolitanism even constitutes its own academic field, cosmopolitan studies. (Provincialism as such does not have a thriving academic area of inquiry, but issues associated with

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provincialism are studied in a variety of disciplines.) Cosmopolitan studies as a field, however, is still not precisely defined. In their recent book on the subject, Zlatko Skrbiš and Ian Woodward assert that social scientists, philosophers, and political scientists understand the concept of cosmopolitanism in quite different ways, but they define the essence of cosmopolitan identity as demonstrating “a relational affiliation with difference, underpinned by an attitude of openness within spaces of cultural flow” (Skrbiš, Woodward 2013: 11). Victor Roudometof, however, displays some apprehension at what he calls “the cosmopolitan agenda,” stating that it “represents a slippery slope whereby researchers are invited to label various practices as cosmopolitan irrespective of whether social actors do so” (Roudometof 2015: 124). With this murky state of affairs in mind, I approach this idea of cosmopolitanism with both apprehension and an acknowledgement of its multifarious interpretative possibilities.

In addition to the above caveats, provincialism and cosmopolitanism are not concepts commonly applied in the field of linguistics. While it is easy enough to imagine that a “cosmopolitan” language would be a supranational world language, the term “provincial” usually implies a negative value judgment that a linguist would be loath apply to a language, especially, as the term “provincial” would suggest, a regional language. Provincialism, or rootedness in a local culture distant from the major centers, could in theory be value-neutral, but in practice it is defined as a sort of narrow-mindedness born through fear or ignorance of the – by implication – more developed, better educated, and sophisticated cities. Linguists strive to describe and analyze language usage without ascribing normative values to different language varieties. And while a world language as a *lingua franca* is irrefutably useful for communication, linguists usually advocate for the protection of languages with fewer speakers because of the vulnerability of such languages. Therefore, the common connotations of cosmopolitanism and provincialism must be questioned when applying these terms linguistically. Nevertheless, speakers routinely judge language use by their own value systems, and I believe that the ideas of provincialism and cosmopolitanism do in fact enter into perceptions about and decisions concerning Turkish language usage in Bulgaria, affecting usage and attitudes in the process.

With regard to language, cosmopolitanism can suggest more than one idea. On one hand, nationalist allegiance to a local language of limited communicative value outside of one’s own region could be seen as provincialism, while embracing a supranational language outside of one’s national and ethnic group is cosmopolitan. On the other hand, cosmopolitanism values diversity, which includes ethnic diversity and multilingualism. Selma Sonntag describes one goal of linguistic cosmopolitanism as being the reconciliation of the dichotomy of language as a medium of communication (its instrumental function) and language as a marker of identity (its affective function). She asserts that cosmopolitanism prioritizes the instrumental function, seeing its affective function as fueling “the

parochial violence of nation-state, i.e., the violence and hostility of monolingual nationalism” (Sonntag 2015: 205). This implies that cosmopolitanism means an abandonment of national and ethnic identification rather than an acceptance of multiculturalism, for with no national or ethnic cultures to contribute to a cultural plurality, there can be no multiculturalism. But in fact, another side of cosmopolitanism advocates for acceptance of cultural diversity—as Sonntag admits, advocates of local languages in India consider themselves to be champions of a cosmopolitan multilingualism (Sonntag 2015).

Linguistic provincialism, interpreted from the common implications of the term “provincialism,” suggests a form of linguistic nationalism based on closed-mindedness. On one hand, this could be the western, Herderian idea of one nation, one language, extended to the degree of advocating monolingualism; on the other hand, it could be an insistence on speaking in a local dialect viewed by outsiders as backwards or uneducated. While the former approach to language is indeed judged as undesirable by linguists, the latter approach may have the merit of preserving dialects, a feature usually considered favorable by linguists. Therefore, it is worth considering the idea of provincialism with regard to language, but keeping in mind that what is considered provincial and whether this is value-laden or value-neutral may differ between a linguist and an ordinary speaker.

In short, a neutral assessment of how language and language use is either cosmopolitan or provincial may be difficult to achieve. A non-linguist considering this problem may arrive at an interpretation that is actually a value judgment of approval or disapproval. Despite this, ideas of the cosmopolitan and the provincial give us a new and productive perspective on an issue that has vexed citizens of Bulgaria since the country’s independence from the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century and continues to be a salient issue today.

The Bulgarian Turks and Their Language

Bulgarian Turks make up around 10%, or slightly more, of the population of Bulgaria², making them the largest minority population in the country. Almost all Bulgarian Turks have maintained Turkish as their mother-tongue. While a small number of Slavic Bulgarian Moslems have begun to identify as Turks since 1990 (see Brooks 2002, for example), and these would therefore number among self-identified Turks who do not speak Turkish, there is also a significant (and difficult to count) Romani population in Bulgaria with Turkish as a mother-tongue, more than counterbalancing those who identify as Turks without

² I am basing this estimate mainly on the last official census results from 2011, at which time 8.8% of the population identified as Turkish, but I am rounding up to at least 10% for a few reasons. There have been some demographic changes in Bulgaria over the past six years, and many people I talked to in Shumen believe the number of Turkish speakers to be higher now (although this may be a matter of perception). Moreover, the Pew Research Center’s recent report “Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe” reports that 15% of the population in Bulgaria identifies as Muslim, and the majority of Bulgarian Muslims (though far from all) are Turkish speakers. Full census data is available online at censusresults.nsi.bg

speaking Turkish. Bulgarian Turks are an integrated population that can be found all over the country, but they are concentrated in the southern regions along the border with Turkey and in the northeast region around the provinces of Razgrad, Târgovishte, and Shumen. The city of Shumen, for example, is more than 12% Turkish (according to the 2011 census), while the entire province of Shumen (consisting of 10 municipalities) is more than 30% Turkish.

Turkic peoples have long been a part of Bulgaria's history, and many Proto-Bulgarian words have a Turkic origin, but Turkish immigration to Bulgaria began in earnest in the late 14th century, when Bulgaria was conquered by the Ottoman Turks. Bulgarians spent the next 500 years as a part of the Ottoman Empire in what is often referred to as Turkey in Europe. A large number of Turks moved into the region in this period, primarily farmers from Anatolia attracted by fertile land (Kappler 2002). Many Turks withdrew to Turkey proper during the years following Bulgaria's independence from the Ottoman Empire (a process which began with its liberation in 1878 and became official with the declaration of 1908), but a large Turkish population remained in Bulgaria. They regard themselves as Turks by ethnicity, but they consider Bulgaria their homeland. They have retained their religion and many of their customs, traditions, and folklore, including some traditional forms of clothing, to an extent similar to ethnic Bulgarians: that is, while traditions and beliefs are important, they are more evident in rural areas than urban areas, and while most people have a religious identity, they may not seem particularly religious. Their most obvious Turkish characteristics are their language and their names.

The attitude of Bulgarians towards the Turkish minority has generally been tolerant and neighborly, but language policies have varied greatly over the years. Turkish language education in Turkish schools was the practice after liberation and well into the first decades of the 20th century, but support for Turkish schools began to wane in the 1920s³. In 1946, the Communists nationalized the Turkish schools but continued education in Turkish, even expanding educational opportunities for Turkish speakers, while teaching them Bulgarian as well. Rudin and Eminov (Rudin, Eminov 1993: 50) characterize the language policies of this period as "encouraging bilingualism among members of the Turkish minority," and they call this a time of "substantial freedom in education and cultural matters." In the 1960s, however, assimilation policies increasingly went into effect: Turkish schools were merged with Bulgarian, education in Turkish was eliminated, and periodicals in Turkish first became bilingual in Turkish and Bulgarian and then Bulgarian only, before eventually ceasing publication altogether. In 1985 came the campaign of forced assimilation, the most tangible manifestation of which was the requirement that Bulgarian Turks change their full names to Bulgarian names. The speaking of Turkish in public was also forbidden, as was Turkish

³ For an overview of Turkish languages education in Bulgaria, see Rudin and Eminov 1993, which provides a good summary.

music and traditional Turkish clothing. In 1989, some 300,000 Bulgarian Turks left the country in period of just a few months and immigrated to Turkey.

After Živkov's regime ended in 1989, the government reversed the policy of forced assimilation, and around half of the Turks who had left eventually returned to Bulgaria. A political party was formed advocating for the rights of minorities, and Turkish speakers (as well as other linguistic minorities) were given the right to request elective classes in their mother-tongue at school. However, many Bulgarian Turks have not taken advantage of this right to study Turkish, for various reasons: some believe it unnecessary, as they already speak Turkish; some prefer to take another western language or other subject during that elective slot at school; and some schools do not actually offer the courses, so interested students must go to another school to study Turkish. Moreover, exposure to literary Turkish is greater than ever before, giving young people the opportunity to improve their Turkish in a more natural setting. Although only some people have had the opportunity to go to Turkey, everyone I have talked to has some relatives living in Turkey, and maybe more importantly, Bulgarian Turks seem to watch most of their television in Turkish.

Bulgarian Turks could be viewed as either provincial and cosmopolitan, depending on what aspects one focuses on: rural or urban, educated or not, global or nationalist, and so on. Bulgarian Turks are more likely to be rural than urban, often living in villages⁴, but most have ties outside of Bulgaria, and some spend time in Turkey. Their native Turkish is a dialect; most people have not made a strong effort to learn the literary language, but the literary language is influencing local speech. Is the identity of Bulgarian Turks as Turks one that roots them in a minority status, thereby narrowing their horizons, or does it lie on a transnational continuum, which broadens their worldview and makes them more cosmopolitan, even when their surroundings might contradict this?

My Fieldwork in Shumen with Local Speakers of Turkish

My Fulbright project is a sociolinguistic study of language attitudes and code-switching among Turkish-Bulgarian bilinguals in northeastern Bulgaria. My research, conducted here in Shumen and the surrounding area, consists of two parts: interviews with native speakers of Turkish and recordings of conversations to analyze for code-switching and dialect features. I am still conducting interviews, but in this article I will discuss some of my preliminary findings thus far. I have interviewed around 20 people who identify as Turks, choosing questions from a list of 25; these questions range from requests for basic information (e.g., age, place of birth, occupation, level of education) to questions about what languages the respondent speaks, what language is spoken in the home, how well they believe they speak each language, and so on. We expand discussion on any of

⁴ The same census 2011 census indicates the overall number of Turks living in cities or towns as 221,522 (4.6% of the urban population), while 366,796 Turks live in villages (that is, 20.2% of Bulgaria's rural population).

these topics when the respondent is interested, and because my own Bulgarian skills far exceed my Turkish skills, after asking questions in Turkish, supplemental discussion is often in Bulgarian. Interviews are more in Bulgarian when we are in an environment that seems less conducive to speaking Turkish or when Bulgarian seems more expedient. In these cases, I rely entirely on my respondent's assessment of how comfortable he or she feels speaking Turkish.

The speakers I have worked with do not hesitate to label themselves as Turks first and foremost, although they do sometimes qualify this afterwards with the label "Bulgarian Turk" or a phrase such as, "but I live in Bulgaria" (although one respondent answered my question about his ethnicity as "Moslem"). But many people emphasize, in the course of discussing their ethnicity, how well they get along with their neighbors; several respondents described to me how they take food to their Bulgarian neighbors on Muslim holidays, and that their Bulgarian neighbors do the same for them on Christian holidays (something often mentioned to me by Bulgarians as well). It seems important to most of my respondents to convey that they are integrated in Bulgarian society – they feel that Bulgaria is their homeland and their Bulgarian citizenship is also important to their identities.

The variety of Turkish language in the northeastern region is, in the literal definition of the word, provincial. In Ottoman times, this area north of the Balkan mountain range was far removed from the capital city of Constantinople, and even today, it remains provincial, situated far from Sofia, the present-day capital, as well. Thus, the language has developed in an area considered to be the provinces, be they Ottoman or Bulgarian, for more than six centuries. Fittingly, all respondents express a strong awareness that the Turkish spoken in this region, an East Rumelian dialect of Turkish, is different from that spoken in Turkey, and they point this out without being prompted. (Bulgarians, too, are aware that the Turkish spoken here is not literary Turkish; more on that below.) Bulgarian Turks frequently say that the Turkish spoken here is not "correct" or not "real" Turkish. I had a very difficult time finding a Turkish tutor in this town where more than 12% of the population speaks Turkish as their first language, and at least one factor seemed to be the awareness, repeatedly cited, that "the Turkish here isn't correct Turkish."

Provincialism, according to Eliza Karczyńska, "is based on the notion of inferiority" (Karczyńska 2012: 178), and such a notion is a clear thread in the attitudes of almost all respondents towards their native dialect of Turkish. While everyone said that they could talk to people from Turkey with few problems, many respondents reported feeling some self-consciousness over their dialect. One respondent – a waiter – said that he only spoke to customers from Turkey in Turkish when he realized that they could not communicate otherwise. (This same respondent said he rarely spoke with Bulgarian Turkish clients in Turkish

either, so dialect insecurity is not the only factor.) Moreover, respondents who had formally studied Turkish were much harsher in their assessments of local Turkish, criticizing the ability of most locals to speak Turkish; one respondent stated that she did not know how to speak Turkish before studying it (despite admitting to having used the language in her home growing up). Complaints about the Turkish of the local speakers center primarily on three features of their language, all related to vocabulary: archaic words no longer found in modern Turkish, dialect words that have never been part of the language of the center, and the large number of Bulgarian words employed in Turkish conversations.

Respondents who criticize the local Turkish dialect focus much more on vocabulary issues – the features that most stand out to people to the untrained speaker – and less on other dialect features, but sometimes these characteristics garner mention as well. More work has been done on the differences between West Rumelian and standard Turkish, but features described as occurring in East Rumelian dialects include the mixing of the accusative and dative cases, changes in the typical SOV word order, and use of a productive diminutive suffix (-*čo* or -*ka*) from Balkan Slavic. The only grammatical feature mentioned by respondents, however, is the shortening of the present continuous verbal suffix -*iyor*. For example, the widely used greeting *ne yapıyorsun* ‘what are you doing’ (more on this below) uses the 2nd person singular of the present continuous form of the verb *do*, but is pronounced as *n’ýábiyısın*. In addition to the voicing of the intervocalic *p*, we see a stress shift from the tense marker to the root, and -*iyor*-shortening to -*iyı-* (which sometimes occurs as -*iy-* as well). This is a routine feature of northeastern Turkish dialects.

In my interviews, respondents have used, by and large, standard Turkish, or have at least eschewed major dialect markers. Not only have verbal endings been standard, but respondents have had few problems with finding the Turkish words they needed and have only occasionally had to substitute a Bulgarian word or hesitate to think of a Turkish word. This indicates two things: the ability by many speakers to speak standard Turkish when necessary, or at least something close to standard Turkish; and an awareness of when it might be more appropriate to use standard Turkish rather than dialect. I cannot draw strong conclusions from this yet, both because I have interviewed mainly educated people, and because I have not yet had a native speaker listen to my recordings to see what I might have missed. However, this does suggest a preliminary hypothesis that the Turkish language skills may not be as low as people generally think—rather, the “notion of inferiority” characteristic of provincialism may render people more sensitive to mistakes and perceived markers of provincialism—a kind of preemptive provincialism.

Although in my interviews I did not hear many Bulgarian words used when my respondents were speaking Turkish, in listening to Turkish speakers in

other circumstances, it is clear that Bulgarian Turks do use a great many Bulgarian words in their conversations. There are three explanations for this, all of which play a role. The first is that, indeed, there are some Bulgarian words that are a part of the local dialects. These words are often relatively modern words, such as the Bulgarian word хладилник 'refrigerator' used in place of modern Turkish *buzdolabı*. The second is that sometimes a speaker simply does not know a particular word in Turkish just because of a deficiency in his or her particular knowledge bank; another speaker might have no problem producing the same word. The third, and perhaps most frequently at play, is that Bulgarian Turks who live in towns are bilingual, and most of them speak Bulgarian more often than Turkish; therefore, code-switching is a natural part of their speech routine.

Code-switching is the use of more than one language in one and the same speech act by speakers who are functionally bilingual, and it occurs when the person is speaking to another bilingual. (It is telling to note that Bulgarian Turks do not seem to insert Turkish words or phrases, other than Turkisms present in Bulgarian, into their conversations with Bulgarians. I even had a respondent hyper-correct and reject the use of *heyce* 'never mind; anyway' in Bulgarian because she insisted it was only a Turkish word, rather than a Turkism in Bulgarian.) Code-switching may consist of inserting single words or entire phrases and sentences from another language into the predominant language of the speech act. However, code-switching does not occur only, or predominantly, because the speaker does not know the appropriate word in the language being spoken. Although the prompts for code-switching are often opaque, it may take place either because of a conversational cue or a psychological prompt, such as a stronger association with a particular concept in the other language. For example, in one overheard conversation, a man was discussing a doctor's appointment on the phone in Turkish, and he used the Bulgarian words for "Monday" and "Tuesday" (*понеделник* and *вторник*). It is completely possible, but highly unlikely, that this speaker knows enough Turkish to discuss his doctor's appointment in Turkish, but not enough to know the days of the week. What is more likely is that he is more used to talking about days of the week in a Bulgarian context, or that he remembered discussing the appointment days with someone at the doctor's office in Bulgarian and was thereby prompted to switch into Bulgarian at that moment. We cannot know his reasons, but the important fact is that he probably would have been able to conduct that entire conversation without code-switching had he been speaking to a monolingual Turk.

Ironically, this reading of the use of Bulgarian words in Turkish as a provincialism, cited by so many respondents as evidence of poor knowledge of Turkish, can actually be a mark of cosmopolitanism. Code-switching occurs in situations of multilingualism or linguistic diversity, a hallmark of linguistic cosmopolitanism. Sonntag finds linguistic cosmopolitanism's celebration of

linguistic diversity facile because, in her assessment, multilingualism among immigrants in America leads to monolingual assimilation by the third generation (Sonntag 2015: 204), but in Bulgaria, Turks have managed bilingualism for at least three generations now with no sign of linguistic assimilation. Sonntag's critique is based on the way the national project in western countries maps a single language onto a single state, but Bulgaria has successfully maintained a cosmopolitan position so far (despite its attempts to join the one nation-one language program in the 1980s).

The language of the Bulgarian Turks is also an expression of cosmopolitanism in its function of connecting Bulgarian Turks with the world outside the Bulgarian borders. Now that a couple of a million Bulgarians are living outside the borders of Bulgaria, everyone has some kind of connection beyond the border, but for Bulgarian Turks, these connections do not rely on familial relations. The idea that Bulgarian Turks could feel connected to something outside of the Bulgarian state does not fit in well with the nationalist project, but it does move a step closer to cosmopolitanism. The cosmopolitan ideal is to be a citizen of the world and not simply of a second country, but not one of the Turks I spoke with expressed any kind of political allegiance to Turkey itself. When national belonging comes up, respondents have all emphasized that Bulgaria is their home. However, they all know people in Turkey, and they get a large portion of their entertainment media from Turkey, thus making a supranational perspective part of their quotidian lives. This influence from beyond the Bulgarian borders has an impact on the language as well.

The influence of television and media on the Turkish population should not be underestimated. My evidence so far is more anecdotal than scientific, but every interview I have carried out suggests that Turkish television has helped to maintain the Turkish language. Respondents commonly say that most of their television viewing is in Turkish, and several older respondents say that their children or grandchildren now speak better Turkish than they do as a result. Two respondents even described instances of their grandchildren correcting their language based on what they had learned from television. While the Turkish of earlier generations was maintained primarily through hearing Turkish from other dialect speakers, with inconsistent reinforcement in school for a few years, now almost all Turks, despite living 300 kilometers or more from the Turkish border, regularly hear the standard language, and most people mention ways in which this exposure has changed the way they speak.

The main influence of television on the Turkish spoken here is with vocabulary. One example cited above, of хладилник 'refrigerator' being used in place of modern Turkish *buzdolabı*, comes from an article I read years ago on Turkish in Bulgaria, which provided some examples of vocabulary for modern, post-Ottoman inventions that had not entered Bulgarian Turkish. However,

buzdolabı is now a familiar word, largely because of television. (I am now looking into this question more systematically to find words that might eventually be displaced by Turkish words from Turkey.) Other examples include the word *anne* 'mother' being used in place of the dialectal *nine* (perhaps to disambiguate it from its meaning of 'grandmother' in Turkey), and *evet* 'yes' increasingly replacing the local words for "yes," which include *yea* and *ti*. These words are reportedly still used in villages, but some, like dialect words for "yes," are no longer common in towns, and studying these changes provides a window into how language changes in the modern world. Some terms that have entered the language without replacing dialect terms include *afiyet olsun* 'bon appetit' and *eline sağlık* 'health to your hand' (said to the cook when presented with food).

The changes taking place are not perfect standardizations of dialectal Turkish, and this is an interesting part of the process as well. The above-mentioned greeting *n'ýabiyısın* 'what are you doing' is a good example. The literal meaning is 'what are you doing', but the communicative meaning is 'how are you', to which the standard answer is *iyi* 'good'. This is still the common greeting in villages and does still occur in towns, but it is frequently replaced with either the standard pronunciation *ne yapıyorsun* or with the standard way of asking 'how are you': *nasılsın* 'how are you'. Both of these represent efforts to shift to the standard language, but the former is an imperfect attempt – the pronunciation has been changed, but the actual vocabulary of the phrase retains its typical Bulgarian Turkish construction. Change effected through the influence of television requires two things: a desire to change and an awareness of linguistic differences. Television may change language all over the world, but even with generations raised on television, regional and dialect differences still exist. The fact that Bulgarian Turkish is changing under the influence of television suggests that speakers have a desire to change their language, which would not be surprising given the negative assessment of the local speech patterns expressed by so many of my respondents. The awareness of what the differences between the two forms of the language are beyond vocabulary, however, is more difficult to attain without some formal language education.

The question of Turkish language education is another important part of the equation. While most respondents report having taken some Turkish in school, it is usually inconsistent and limited to a few (typically three to six) years. A systematic study of how many hours a week and for how many years people have studied Turkish, as well as what these lessons have consisted of, is a logical component of a study on language attitudes and maintenance, but this is beyond the scope of my present project. What I have surmised so far is that most respondents do not feel that they learned enough Turkish in school to be competent with the language (again, in spite of speaking it fluently by most other measures). Reasons for not studying Turkish include not only lack of availability of

lessons or time for supplemental lessons cited earlier, but also the perception that studying Turkish is not really necessary. As one respondent who “does not want to burden” her daughter with Turkish lessons told me, “It’s her mother language. There’s no way for her to not know it or to forget it. It’s in her blood.” This is a more extreme statement than I heard from most people (although I heard something similar from Roma respondents with regard to Romani language), but it is emblematic of a provincial kind of essentializing around language and ethnicity: a language is inextricably connected with a people and cannot simply be shed. In reality, we know that languages can be lost with disturbing ease, but the evidence from Bulgarian Turkish thus far has not given speakers grounds for worry.

Despite near universal agreement among respondents that most people do not speak Turkish well here, I did encounter from several respondents the idea that their language is a more authentic than that spoken in Turkey today. Bulgarian Turkish did not undergo Atatürk’s language reforms that began in the 1920s, and in this way, it has preserved some of the Ottoman-period vocabulary expunged in the effort to “purify” (Turkify) the language. This assertion may seem paradoxical, given the attitudes displayed by most speakers towards the local dialect, but I believe it shows an ambiguity among Turkish speakers that is understandable given the circumstances. Pride in dialect features, if encouraged, could be a useful step towards developing an appreciation of the unique regional culture found here. Joseph Baker, writing about American provincialism at the dawn of the Second World War, stated that “The cure for provinciality is a genuine regional culture” (Baker 1940: 490), and I believe this holds true here. There is beyond doubt already a genuine regional culture among the Turks of northeastern Bulgaria, but feelings of provincialism result in a greater valuation of the culture of the center, whether that center be Sofia or Istanbul.

Thus, Bulgarian Turks straddle both provincialism and cosmopolitanism. Their worldview is increasingly set beyond their local region, and indeed, beyond national borders, but they still define themselves in relation to a distant center perceived to hold greater cultural authority. For those who are aware of it, this situation may be uncomfortable—they can take a cosmopolitan approach and throw off their regional language in favor of the standard, but as one respondent discussed with me at length, it can be alienating if she uses her educated register of Turkish with people who speak the local dialect, and finds herself code-switching between different dialects and registers of Turkish. Considering the issue as a question of provincialism or cosmopolitanism does not provide any solution, but it does lend interpretive insight to the social and emotional factors that affect language attitudes and maintenance among this group of Bulgarian Turks.

Provincialism and Cosmopolitanism, Beyond the Turks

The factors affecting language attitudes and maintenance among Bulgarian Turks cannot be studied in isolation within the Bulgarian Turkish community. The

Bulgarian Turks are part of a larger community of Bulgarian citizens as a whole, and they are strongly influenced by the policies of the Bulgarian government and sociocultural factors present in their environment. Because of this, the identity of the Turkish speakers is partially constructed and reinforced by attitudes of the local Bulgarians; these attitudes can also productively be discussed in terms of provincialism and cosmopolitanism.

The relationship between Bulgarians and Turks in regions such as Shumen, with unusually high concentrations of ethnic Turks, is sometimes complicated. On one hand, people get along well; there is no instability and little ethnic tension. Bulgarians and Turks in urban areas rarely stand out visually from other Bulgarians (except for the occasional female in a headscarf, but even here I see fewer women in hijab than I did in California). Turks and Bulgarians are friends and neighbors, and almost everyone I talked to emphasized how well they get along (including the aforementioned example of how they exchange holiday foods on both Muslim and Christian holidays). Bulgarians are rightly proud of their history of tolerance and ethnic diversity. Despite good relations and general social integration among Bulgarians and Turks, however, Turkish language usage meets with attitudes ranging from ambiguity to hostility. Some of my Turkish respondents believe that the situation was much better before the assimilation policies of the 1980s and that relations have never fully recovered to what they used to be. From what I have encountered in studying language attitudes among the Turkish population, I believe that a separate study in the future focusing on attitudes of ethnic Bulgarians would yield interesting results. In discussing Turkish and Turkish speakers with Bulgarians in this area, several themes come up frequently; these can be divided into attitudes toward people speaking Turkish and attitudes about the Turkish language itself.

A large number of Bulgarians do not like hearing Turkish in public, and they are not shy in our discussions about expressing their disapproval. Discomfort with hearing people speak a language one does not comprehend is natural, but the emotions Bulgarians still experience over their centuries of Ottoman occupation (routinely referred to in Bulgarian as *робство* 'slavery') seems to heighten antipathy toward Turkish itself. The presence of a highly visible (and audible) Turkish population (all the more noticeable because of its high concentration predominantly in two regions of the country) rests uneasily on many Bulgarians. Exacerbating the situation is the political power of the party widely known as the Turkish party⁵, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms. To explain Bulgarian

⁵ The Bulgarian constitution bans parties formed on ethnic grounds, and the MRF (Движение за права и свободи) does not call itself a Turkish party; rather, they state their commitment to defend the rights of all minorities. They are, however, perceived as a *de facto* Turkish party, and most, but not all, of their representatives are Bulgarian Turks. Although the MRF never gets anything close to a majority of parliamentary votes, the situation in Bulgarian elections since the institution of democratic elections in 1990, in which the two largest winners adhere to ideologies on opposing ends of the political spectrum, ensures that the support of MRF is usually necessary to form a government.

opposition to public use of the Turkish language with these few factors, however, is reductionist – suffice it to say that the situation is nuanced and complex, but the effect is that most Bulgarians do not enjoy hearing Turkish, and all Turks are keenly aware of that.

Turks themselves react to Bulgarian discomfort with Turkish in a variety of ways. It is the perception of some of the Bulgarians with whom I have spoken that Turks do not care about the feelings of ethnic Bulgarians in this matter, and that they freely “parade their language,” as one person phrased it. It is true that many people feel no compunction about speaking Turkish in public, and they do so whenever it suits them. It is also true, however, that many Turks try to avoid speaking Turkish around non-Turkish speakers, and this is something I have observed with many of my respondents. One woman described how, as she was growing up in the 1980s, her mother would squeeze her hand in public if she started to speak Turkish because of the law forbidding its public use; this same woman now speaks with her daughter only in Bulgarian outside of the house (something I can confirm through observation of mother and daughter together), and she complained to me about parents who come to their children’s classrooms to bring them something and speak to them in Turkish in front of their classmates. I have in fact observed a wide range of attitudes among Turkish speakers regarding both their right to speak Turkish and the etiquette of speaking Turkish in front of Bulgarians. For some, it is indeed a political issue of asserting a right they feel they have been denied.

In our discussions, most respondents emphasized to me their good relationships with their fellow Bulgarian citizens and friends and the extent to which they feel that Bulgaria is their home. However, they voice confusion over and frustration with the negative reactions they meet to the Turkish language. While Bulgarians often wonder aloud why Turks would choose to stay here but at the same time retain their non-Bulgarian language (and names), Turks emphasize that this is their home, and Turkey is not: why would they leave their home? Numerous respondents mentioned that Bulgarians are proud that Bulgarian emigrants abroad make an effort to teach their children Bulgarian, even sending them to special weekend Bulgarian schools, and so they do not understand why Bulgarians should object to their using their mother-tongue and passing it on to their children. The leader of one Turkish community cultural center (*читалище*) I visited outside of Shumen even told me that the children are told not to sing any songs in Turkish at festivals; she does not understand this, as one goal of the system of cultural centers here in Bulgaria is to preserve and pass on cultural traditions. Although only one of my respondents was not at all hesitant to immediately label Bulgarian attitudes discriminatory, as we talked further, many of the people I talked to eventually shared, if sometimes reluctantly, some feelings of being discriminated against.

One example of what is perceived as discrimination is the differing attitudes towards English and Turkish. Most people who speak some English are eager to use it, and I have found people almost too willing to speak English with me. While I address everyone here in Bulgarian, upon hearing my foreign accent in Bulgarian, people often try to switch to English, and I have to request that we continue to speak Bulgarian. One particularly telling incident stands out, though. I was talking to the director of a school in the Shumen region (outside of the city itself), hoping to speak to a few teachers and students about their experience with language in the school. The director asked if I would be interviewing students in English, and whether they would need to find only students who spoke English well. When I told her that I actually planned to interview them in a combination of Bulgarian and Turkish, she told me firmly that this was not allowed under Bulgarian law – the official language is Bulgarian, and therefore we could not use Turkish in the school. Furthermore, she hoped that the example I, an American, would provide by speaking to them in Bulgarian would show them the importance of learning foreign languages and of the of Bulgarian language itself. While I see the logic of this second assertion, I was curious why it would be acceptable to speak in English at the school but not in Turkish.

I recounted this incident to a number of Turkish speakers in Shumen, and many saw this as an example of a double-standard regarding Turkish in Bulgaria. English is valued as a western language and people who are able to speak it are appreciated. (Indeed, at a pre-election event for one of the political parties here in Shumen, I noticed that all parliamentary candidates mentioned which foreign languages they spoke, be it English, German, or Russian, but not one mentioned Turkish, including the two candidates with Turkish names.) Turkish is not seen as important, despite Bulgaria's Turkish population of over half a million, its shared 260-kilometer border with Turkey, and Turkey's status as one of Bulgaria's major trading partners. In the larger Shumen region, 17 schools offer students the opportunity to study Turkish as an additional subject if that is their mother-tongue, but there are no opportunities for Bulgarian students to take Turkish as a foreign language. There are logical arguments for Turkish being considered less important as a learning goal: it is not a language of the European Union, of which Bulgaria is a member; it is definitely more difficult for Bulgarian speakers to learn than English, German, French, or Russian; and many Bulgarians study English or German in particular with the goal of studying or working in English- or German-speaking countries. However, because Turkish is so widely spoken in this region, one can also imagine a situation in which the ability to speak Turkish could be considered a valuable asset among ethnic Bulgarians as well. A large number of Turkish firms operate in Shumen and the surrounding area, with more scheduled to open in 2017, and some people believe, correctly or not, that the ability to speak Turkish is an advantage in getting hired by these businesses. Economically, there is no downside to having greater Turkish language support in Bulgaria.

This reluctance to hear Turkish sometimes seems to extend to a general lack of appreciation of the Turkish language itself. Most Bulgarians in this region know a few words of Turkish (beyond the Turkisms present in the Bulgarian language), and they sometimes apply them to ironic effect. Nevertheless, they often mention that Turkish words in Bulgarian may actually be of Persian or Arabic origin, although the words have indeed entered the Bulgarian language through Turkish as Turkish words. Depending on one's point of view, this could be rooted either in an interest in historical etymology or in a desire to downplay the Turkish presence in the Bulgarian language.

The most frequently cited fact about Turkish by Bulgarians is its lack of gender. I would wager that all adults in northeastern Bulgaria know that Turkish has no gender, in part because this accounts for errors in Bulgarian often committed by Turks, and in this sense, it is good that there is a ready linguistic explanation for these mistakes. However, this fact is often presented as a way in which the Turkish language is "simple"; when I mention the six grammatical cases in Turkish, Bulgarians are often surprised to learn that Turkish has cases. Interestingly, I have never heard the same sense of wonder that English has no gender⁶. I believe that this dismissive attitude fostered toward the Turkish language may contribute both to the antipathy among Bulgarians towards hearing (or learning) Turkish as well as to ambivalent feelings some Turks have towards their mother-tongue as being worth the time it would take to study it in school.

The apparent lack of appreciation for Turkish grammar is a small thing, but it is an example of the sort of provincialism associated with dismissing something because of a lack of knowledge. A larger issue is the much-repeated criticism of the level of Turkish among Bulgarian Turks, often by the same people who would prefer that they not speak Turkish in the first place. I have been told countless times, by Bulgarians, that Bulgarian Turks speak a dialect of Turkish that is very different from standard Turkish and that is marked as provincial. Bulgarians also cite the frequency of code-switching or the large number of Bulgarian words in the speech of local Turks. These things are true on the face of it – as described above, the Turkish spoken here is indeed the East Rumelian dialect, many Bulgarian words have entered this dialect, and code-switching is common. However, these are all normal characteristics of a multilingual situation, and the danger of having the situation described as one of deficiency is that it may justify for some people their opposition to the language. After all, if the local Turks are not even speaking real Turkish, and they're speaking it poorly at that, how can they justify not simply switching to Bulgarian?

⁵ Here I want to note that while English does have separate words for *he* and *she*, which Turkish does not, a large number of people use *they* as a default singular non-gendered pronoun, a development which apparently has been in process for some centuries, and one which I myself am trying to accept, though not without difficulty, as an example of natural language change.

One solution to some of the above issues might be better Turkish language education, and not just for Turks, but for interested Bulgarians as well. The benefits for Turks would be not only an increased competency in standard Turkish, useful for business as well as for potential literary production that could elevate the status of the region beyond the borders of Bulgaria, but many pedagogues consider mother-tongue education to be beneficial for later education in the target majority language as well. Although Bulgarians worry that Turks fail to learn Bulgarian properly, more formal education in the Turkish language should only make a student more aware of and competent with grammar. And the reluctance of Bulgarians to learn Turkish even in an area in which Turkish is widely spoken might be viewed as a manifestation of provincialism, in opposition to the cosmopolitan idea of a culturally diverse, multilingual society.

The language attitudes of Bulgarian Turks cannot be separated from the attitudes of the larger society they inhabit. It is true that the situation is complex for both Bulgarians and Turks. In the current political environment (not just in Bulgaria, but in Europe as a whole and the United States of America), cosmopolitanism and provincialism have taken on different values in recent times, with provincialism more frequently embraced and cosmopolitanism viewed with some suspicion. With this in mind, it is worthwhile to interrogate both cosmopolitan ideals and provincial biases and to consider how they relate to the fabric of our daily lives in an arena such as language, which is so intimately and inextricably connected with personal, group, and national identity.

In Conclusion and Moving Beyond

The multiethnic and multilingual region of Bulgaria's Northeast is a rich area for research into language acquisition, language change, and code-switching, but it is also a fascinating area in which to study language attitudes formed over the course of centuries of social and political change. The competing tensions of provincialism and cosmopolitanism continue to influence how people feel about the minority language that has thrived here for more than six centuries and how that language continues to develop. The pull of cosmopolitanism exerts a leveling influence on the dialects of the Turks in this region, and it could also eventually help the non-Turkish speakers to value the diversity imparted by a linguistic minority. Provincialism may heighten negative attitudes towards the local language on the part of Bulgarian and Turks alike, but it is the region's very provincial location that has allowed the interesting and too little studied local dialects to develop and flourish in the first place.

Fluency in Bulgarian is undeniably an important issue, and competence in Bulgarian is necessary for all citizens in order to be productive members of a cohesive society. In my research so far, however, the only people I have found who truly lack fluency in Bulgarian are people who are already retired and are living in villages, villages that have become increasingly isolated as residents

move away and buses stop servicing them. All of the respondents in my research have asserted the importance of the Bulgarian language, and their loyalty to their mother-tongue does not diminish their respect for the official language of Bulgaria. Questions of the place of the Turkish language in Bulgaria may be more closely related to issues of provincialism and the affective function of language than to effective communication and the instrumental function of language valued by cosmopolitanism.

There is indeed a practical issue for communication, education, and economic development in managing linguistic diversity. For northeastern Bulgaria, though, the issue is complicated by historical attitudes developed over centuries. The Turkish language is a reminder for many ethnic Bulgarians that Bulgaria spent centuries under Ottoman rule, and the country is still negotiating its cultural position between Europe and Asia. Provincialism and cosmopolitanism in this highly Turkish region of Bulgaria are intertwined with issues of Orientalism, an intellectual phenomenon characterized by Karczyńska (2012) as provincialism, and Maria Todorova's concept of Balkanism.

There is an Orientalist approach to the Turks of the region, who with their Muslim religion and scattered manifestations of Turkish culture are still perceived as the Other. Many problems with Bulgarian society, especially the more traditional, patriarchal attitudes of this region, are quickly attributed to the Ottoman past (without regard to the prevalence of similar patriarchal attitudes in provincial areas all over Europe and America). However, the concept of Balkanism comes closer to describing the situation, because the "Other" in this case is part of the self as well; the categories of East and West are blurred in this part of the world, an approach is called for that addresses the specific issues stemming from a liminal position (Todorova 1997). As Aleko Konstantinov suggests in *Bai Ganyo*, removing a Turkish cloak and donning a Belgian overcoat will not actually make one a European; the Orient is still within, and daily encounters with the Turkish language can be a trigger.

For people around Shumen, the Turkish language may be a reminder of provincialism as well. Milica Bakić-Hayden introduced the idea of "nesting Orientalisms": Asia is more "East" or "other" than eastern Europe; within eastern Europe, the Balkans are seen as most "eastern"; but even within the Balkans, some places are more "eastern" than others (Bakić-Hayden 1995). The Turks of Shumen are similarly situated in the center of a set of nesting provincialisms: The Balkans are doubly provincial: first situated as the Ottoman hinterlands, only to be perceived as the hinterlands of Europe (if even part of Europe) after liberation from the Ottoman Empire. If this renders even Sofia provincial, Shumen is even more so in relation to Sofia, where everything was centered under a centralized government and continues to be today. Finally, the disproportionately rural (and viewed as "Oriental") Turks are at the very center, chatting away in Turkish. But

just as Bakić-Hayden believes that the “terms of definition of such a dichotomous model eventually establish conditions for its own contradiction” (Bakić-Hayden 1995: 918), the situation of the Bulgarian Turks could as easily be inverted and embraced as cosmopolitanism.

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