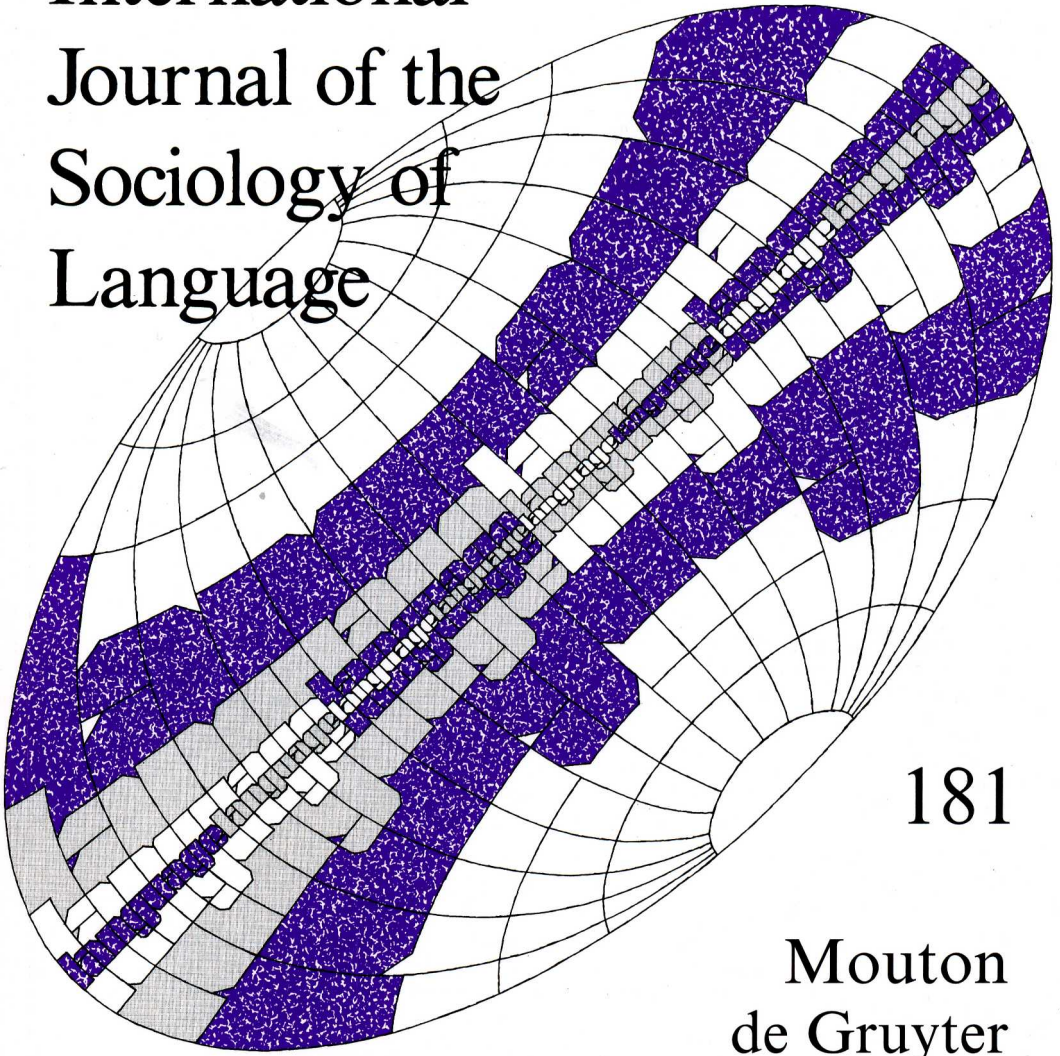


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(Studies from the Turkish Sphere)

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Dialect contact in Northern Cyprus

NURETTIN DEMIR and LARS JOHANSON

Abstract

The interest in the study of Turkic contacts with other languages is currently increasing. Recent investigations have shown that language contacts have played an important role in the development of the Turkic languages. On the other hand, developments due to encounters of different variants of Turkic have played similar roles, although they have not attracted much attention so far. The most common reasons for Turkic-Turkic contacts have been migrations, through which various varieties have come to influence each other. One of the most intensive contact regions is Anatolia.

Cypriot Turkish, generally described as an extension of Anatolian Turkish, offers a good basis for investigating inner-Turkish contact processes. The local dialect is naturally confined to the island, and its contact with external cultural centers has been rather restricted. The dialect has thus developed without a strong influence from Standard Turkish. As a result, a Cypriot Turkish dialect with specific characteristic properties has emerged.

Due to migrations from Anatolia, Cypriot Turkish has, however, also been confronted with external varieties, which has led to mutual influence. Various intensive stages of this influence have been observed since 1974. Because of immigrants and university students from Turkey, Standard Turkish, Anatolian dialects and Cyprus Turkish dialects have come into close contact with each other.

The present contribution will focus on some linguistic changes that have occurred due to this development. In the framework of the code copying model (see, e.g., Johanson 1992, 2002b), we will deal with the question of which typical features of Cypriot Turkish are used by groups that have arrived after 1974. We will also try to answer the question whether the typical features of Cypriot Turkish (see Demir 2002) have changed under the impact of incoming varieties.

The features studied include the absence of the evidential suffix, the preference for the old present tense form over the new one in -iyor, vowel

shortening, etc. The contribution is essentially based on our own collections of materials.

1. Introduction

Language contacts have played an important role in the development of the Turkic languages. All over their huge area of distribution, they have encountered and interacted with numerous languages of different origin and structure (Johanson 1992, 2002a). The interest in the study of Turkic contacts with other languages is currently increasing. Encounters of different varieties of Turkic and their mutual influence on one another have attracted less attention so far. One of the most intensive Turkic-Turkic contact regions has been Anatolia; for Kipchak Turkic elements, see Korkmaz (1971).

Prestige varieties of culturally and economically dominant centers, older transregional written and spoken languages, as well as recently established standard languages have been exerting a homogenizing influence on dialects. For example, modern Turkish dialects have in general become more similar to the standard language.

The situation of Cypriot Turkish, which is generally described as an extension of Anatolian Turkish, is, however, different. It is naturally confined to the island of Cyprus, and its contacts with external cultural centers have been restricted. Though migrations from Anatolia have led to contacts with external varieties, Cypriot Turkish was left without strong influences from Turkey over longer periods, thus preserving old characteristics and developing innovative features. As a result of the immigration to Northern Cyprus since 1974, intensive linguistic contacts with both Standard Turkish and Anatolian dialects have been established. The present situation offers an interesting basis for investigating inner-Turkish contact processes.

2. Turkish in Cyprus

The history of Cypriot Turkish begins with the Ottoman conquest in 1571, after which Turks from Anatolia at various periods moved or were deported to the island. Before Cyprus came under British rule in 1878, Turkish was, as the official language of the Ottoman Empire, a prestige language. Turkish was represented as a minority language in all regions. In the period from 1963 to 1974, 117 of 635 villages were Turkish-speaking, and 126 had a mixed population (Peeters 1997: 1580). The

local Turkish Cypriots. On the other hand, peculiarities of the Cypriot dialect are observed in the speech of the children of the immigrants from Turkey. Both the native group speaking the Cypriot dialect and the immigrant group display internal variation. The most important reason for variation in the former group is the degree of their former contacts with Greek and English. The variation in immigrant speech depends on the regions the speakers come from. For example, in the village of Ziyamet in the Karpaz region we find immigrants from central, southern, and northern Anatolia: Maraş, Adana, Mersin, Antalya, Konya, Trabzon, Samsun, etc. Since none of their own Anatolian dialects has a higher prestige than the others, the immigrants orientate themselves towards Standard Turkish or the Cypriot dialect in their everyday speech. Those who have completed their language acquisition process in Turkey generally use a somewhat levelled form of the dialect of the region they come from. The result varies according to their degree of education and experience of other varieties of Turkish. In the speech of children who have completed their language acquisition process on the island, peculiarities of the Cypriot dialect are more dominant.

Typical copied features are local phonological traits, lack of the question particle, overgeneralized use of the copula, use of the old present tense “aorist,” preference for certain other morphological elements and differing syntactic structures. However, certain peculiarities of local Cypriot subdialects, for example, change of the position of the copula (Demir 2002b), are not observed in the speech of immigrants of the first and second generation.

3.1. *Variation in the Cypriot Turkish dialect*

In the following, we will give some examples of how standard and local varieties of Turkish have influenced each other in Northern Cyprus. What typical features of Cypriot Turkish (Demir 2002a) have changed under the impact of incoming varieties? To what extent do immigrants from Turkey use elements typical of Standard Turkish and Cypriot Turkish? Our material consists of spoken texts mirroring different phases of relations between Standard Turkish and Cypriot Turkish of three generations: one male informant, age 79, born in the region of Baf (Paphos), agriculturalist, a second male informant, age 52, formerly employed as an engine driver at British military bases, and, finally, university students of maximally 30 years of age as well as school children in the eighth grade. The first informant is a speaker of the basic Cypriot Turkish dialect who has very limited contact to Turkish of Turkey and exhibits no

traces of influence from Standard Turkish. The second informant is basically a speaker of Cypriot Turkish who, however, also uses Standard Turkish elements. The people in the third group exhibit considerably more variation in their speech. Our material relating to this group also includes compositions and tests written by secondary-school children and university students. In our on-going project on variational features in Cypriot Turkish, various cases of interdialectal influence are analyzed within the framework of the code copying model (Johanson 1992, 2002a, 2002b). Interdialectal contacts have given rise to variants that are not observed in the more general forms of Cypriot Turkish. The language of the speaker representing the oldest generation displays a certain typically Cypriot variation, but it is more homogeneous with respect to morphological criteria than that of the other informants. The language of the speaker who represents the intermediary age group and who has been confronted with other varieties of Turkish is rather homogeneous, though it shows traces of contacts with other varieties of Turkish. One feature typical of Cypriot Turkish is, as stated above, the preference for the old present tense form in *-(Ir/Ar)* over the new, more focal present tense in *-(I)yor*. Our materials also contain variants that are obviously copies of *-(I)yor*. The speaker representing the intermediary age group uses forms such as *alırık* 'we take', *giderik* 'we go', *gelirik* 'we come', *beklerik* 'we wait', but also copied forms such as *gonuşuruz* 'we speak' and even forms copied from Standard Turkish, for example, *kaçıyorum* 'I escape'. The following examples from the speech of this informant show how far the variation may go:

- (1) Usda dedi baa nere gidiyoñ dedi baa. Dedim gene asger gelir ar-kadan usda dedim gene. Rum asgeri gelir dedim. Bak gene dedim, ilgilen dedim gene. Sokuldum içeri ben. Torbaynan beraber gördüm urubaları çıkdım. Deyiyor asger usdaya düdük çalarık diyor. Ne durmadı arabañız diyor. Usda bir gızdı genne. Dedi sen kör musuñ? Buraşda bu araba günde on defa yirmi defa girer çıkar bu garacın içine. Utanmañ deyyor da bu arabayı yoklaycañ falan deyyor gene usda. Başladı usdadan özür dilesin.

'The master said to me, "Where are you going?" I said, "A soldier is coming, master." "A Greek soldier is coming," I said. "Look," I said, "keep him busy." I went inside, put the clothes into the sack, and went out. The soldier says to the master, "We blow the whistle." "Why didn't your car stop?" he says. The master got angry. He said, "Are you blind? The car enters and leaves the garage fifteen or twenty times a day. Don't you feel ashamed to inspect the car." He then began to ask the master to excuse him.'

This passage contains twelve present tense forms: *gidiyoŋ*, *gelir*, *gelir*, *deyiyor*, *çalarık*, *diyor*, *diyor*, *girer*, *çıkır*, *utanmaŋ*, *deyyor*, *deyyor*. All of them except *girer*, *çıkır*, and *utanmaŋ* carry focal present tense suffixes. The forms *gidiyo*, *diyor*, *deyiyor*, and *deyyor* 'says' are copies of Standard Turkish *-(I)yor*. The distribution of the forms in the complete text is interesting: *diyor*, *deyiyor*, *deyyor* are used four times each, whereas *der* is used 26 times. The first three forms are used in sentences that are close to each other in the text, whereas the form *der* has a more even distribution. This difference indicates that the copied forms are new and subject to considerable variation. The form *diyor* agrees with the standard, whereas *deyyor* and *deyiyor* are forms found in subdialects. It is difficult to decide whether forms such as *deyyor* are actually copied from Standard Turkish or result from an independent dialectal development.

Another interesting case concerns the absence of *-mIy* as an evidential (indirective) suffix in Cypriot Turkish. In some local varieties, this suffix is used as a perfect marker (as in some Anatolian dialects), for example, *Şimdi gelmişem* 'I have now arrived'. Our materials contain the following example from the speaker representing the intermediate age group:

- (2) Bülbülü altın kafese gomuşlar, 'Ah vatanım' demiş.
 '[It is said that] they put the nightingale into a golden cage, and it said, "Oh, my motherland!"'

This is, however, the stereotypical form of a proverb that is well known in the whole area of Turkish distribution.

Interference of Cypriot Turkish elements creates problems in the standard language instruction. A report on the language acquisition of primary school children shows that their phonological deviations from the standard are mostly caused by the influence of dialect features (Pehlivan 2000: 11). The written texts of high school and university students used for the present contribution also document morphological influences, for example, *sevmen* 'you don't love' (cf. Standard Turkish *sevmezsin*), *gelmeyik* 'we don't come' (cf. *gelmeyiz*), *çalışacayık* 'we will work' (cf. *çalışacağız*), *görmeyeceğim* 'I will not see' (cf. *görmeyeceğim*). Since the subdialects receive no institutional support in the educational system, features like these are not likely to remain in the language. One typical feature of Cypriot Turkish subdialects is the absence of a morphological question marker *-mI* to form yes-no questions. We have, however, observed that this marker is now being introduced in subdialects. Both the informant who represents the intermediate group and the university students exhibit an interesting variation. They all use the "aorist" present tense typical of Cypriot Turkish. In seven cases, they express yes-no questions without the question marker (and only by means of question intonation), as in the

local subdialects, for example, *Aşa:da galır?* 'Does it stay downstairs?', *Hatırlağ, anne?* 'Do you remember, mother?', *Siz Rumca konuşurduñ onnara?* 'Did you speak Greek to them?'. On the other hand, in eight sentences, which are in other respects typical of the Cypriot Turkish dialect, the informants form interrogative sentences of the Standard Turkish type, for example, *O hala sürer, değil mi?* 'It still continues, doesn't it?', *Sebebi var mı?* 'Is there a reason for it?'. In one sentence, both methods are used: *Peki sizin esgi köyünüzdekilerin hepsi şimdi Akova'dadır yoksa başka yerlerde de var mı?* 'Are the people from your old village all in Akova now, or are they also in other places?'. In Standard Turkish, *-mI* must be placed after Akova as well.

4. Influence of Cypriot Turkish subdialects on immigrant speech

When dialect speakers in Turkey visit other regions, they generally do not use their own dialect, but rather prefer varieties that are closer to the standard language and thus have a broader transregional validity (Demir 1995: 113, 1998: 60). In Northern Cyprus, we observe another kind of differentiation according to the communication partner. Adult immigrants try to use Cypriot Turkish subdialects in their contacts with Cypriots, while they use their own native dialect when speaking to people from Turkey.

The speech of the children of immigrants varies according to the intensity of their contacts with Cypriot subdialects. Those who arrived as small children display phonological, morphological, and syntactic features copied from the Cypriot dialect, for example, the typical accent, the loss of the question particle, frequent use of the copula, and word order features. On the other hand, they generally do not use the simple past tense in *-DI* instead of the evidential marker *-mIş* or exhibit violations of the vowel harmony such as *ben da* 'me too' (cf. Standard Turkish *ben de*) and *gelsa* 'if it comes' (cf. *gelse*).

Immigrant children who were born in Cyprus and completed their language acquisition process there — in our material, children aged 13–14 in schools in Akdoğan and Erenköy — do not differ from other Cypriot Turkish children in their linguistic behavior. For example, children in the eighth grade of the Polatpaşa secondary school have completely acquired the Cypriot Turkish variety. Their speech reflects all the phonological and morphological peculiarities of the Cypriot Turkish dialect. In no case is the question particle used, for example, *Sınav yapacayık?* 'Shall we do the exam?' (cf. Standard Turkish *yapacak mıyız?*), *Sizin kızınız ilko-kula gider?* 'Does your daughter go to primary school?' (cf. *gidiyor mu?*).

Schooling plays an important role in the socialization process of the children of the immigrant families. Here they are confronted with the Cypriot dialect in an intensive way and copy so many various elements from it that their speech cannot be distinguished from that of their native Cypriot peers. For males, military service is a second important stage in their acquisition of the Cypriot Turkish dialect. This is generally the longest period in which they stay away from their families. Young men from immigrant families who have not acquired the Cypriot dialect prior to this period now finally adapt their linguistic behavior to it.

5. Conclusions

Interdialectal contacts have led to variation in the Cypriot Turkish dialect and in the varieties of the immigrants from Turkey. Local subdialects show influence from Standard Turkish in the intermediate generation and, still more, in the younger generation, especially among people with a university education. Those who go to secondary school have a good knowledge of Standard Turkish, but their spontaneous speech is dominated by local dialectal elements. People who immigrated after 1974 display various stages of variation. Those who arrived as adults try to use the Cypriot dialect when speaking to locals. In the speech of those who arrived as children, the typical Cypriot features are more dominant: frequent use of the copula, omission of the question particle, use of the “aorist” as present tense, etc. This generation does not, however, use dialectal elements that are judged as vulgar (Johanson 1989), for example, violation of the vowel harmony or certain morphological items such as *-nAn* ‘with’ instead of *-(y)lA*, for example, *arabaynan* ‘by car’ (cf. Standard Turkish *arabayla*). The speech of secondary school children born in immigrant families is Cypriot throughout and does not differ from that of their peers. The decisive influence exerted by Standard Turkish through various channels is obvious. Educated persons can use standard forms if necessary. The immigrants also acquire the local dialect, which fulfills all functions of a spoken standard and may be used in all official and semi-official contexts. Thus a clear distinction between written and spoken registers is maintained. It seems important to consider this situation when trying to understand other processes in the history of Turkic languages and dialects.

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