УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ У БАЊОЈ ЛУЦИ
ФИЛОЛОШКИ ФАКУЛТЕТ

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Mahmut Uğur Arslan
Azamat Akbarov
International Burch University Sarajevo

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UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A DIGLOSSIC SITUATION AND LITERACY IN URFA (Şanlıurfa), TURKEY

Abstract: *The purpose of this article is to show whether the Urfa dialect has a diglossic feature or not and how the usage of the components of diglossia is seen in Urfa[1]. In order to determine high and low varieties of the Turkish language, the Urfa dialect shall be compared with the Istanbul dialect and old Turkish. In Urfa we can see many diglossic situations not only between two dialects of the same language but also between different languages like Arabic or Kurdish. Arab and Kurd people use their mother tongue, which is considered to be the Low variety in their daily lives, however, they are supposed to use the High variety format of Turkish when it is a necessity. They more likely experience communication problems with both the low and high variety forms of the Turkish language. Hence, their situation is more complicated than other peoples' who use the Urfa dialect only. We explain similarities and differences between the Urfa and İstanbul dialects by giving examples in tables about how people use language and also via examples from conversations between two people. Moreover comparing some words and some verbs as examples from both sides may be beneficial to understand the diglossic issues in Urfa. The qualifications of low and high varieties of language must be noted in this paper to clarify understanding of Urfa and İstanbul dialects.*

Keywords: *High Variety, Low Variety, Diglossia, Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic.*

Introduction

The disglossic situation exists in a society when it has two distinct codes which show clear functional separation; that is, one code is employed in one set of circumstances and the other in an entirely different set (Wardhaugh, 2012). The province of Urfa, in the southeast of Turkey, has been a crossing point for many nations and countries all over history, so it is not an easy task to write about just one language spoken in the city, as it has been, and still is, home to many diverse peoples. Throughout history, Assyrians, Romans, Umayyads, Abbasids, Seljukians, and Ottomans prevailed in Urfa. According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey, some 30 nations and states lived in the region. These were Eblas, Akkads, Sumerians, Babylonians, Hittites, Huri-Mittanis, Aramics and Assyrians, Kendanis, Mede-Persians, Macedonians and Seleucids, The

[1] Şanlıurfa, often simply known as Urfa in daily language, in ancient times Edessa, is a city with 482,323 inhabitants (2009 estimate) in southeastern Turkey, and the capital of Şanlıurfa Province. It is a city with a mixed Kurdish, Turkish and Arab population (Wikipedia.org).

Osrhoene Kingdom and The Romans, The Byzantine Empire, The Sassanid Kingdom, The Ommiads and Abbasids, the Great Seljuks and the Syrian-Palestinian Seljuks, Thoros and the Crusader-Counts, The Zengisof Mosul and the Eyyubids, the Mameluks, the Turcomans, The White Sheep Turks, The Dulkadirs and the Saffevid States, and finally The Ottoman Empire. (Retrieved from The Ministry of Culture and Tourism)

Some of the languages spoken in Urfa since ancient times have been Latin, Assyrian, Arabic, Aramaic, Old Turkish, Turkish, Armenian, Greek, and Kurdish. Of all these languages, in this paper we are going to discuss the resemblance between Urfa Dialect and old Turkish, and the diglossic situation in Urfa with a reference to the Urfa Dialect of Turkish, and to Arabic and Kurdish, which are also used throughout the region in many homes.

Historical Perspective

Coming from the Ural-Altaic language group, Turkish is a member of the Oghuz languages, which is a category within the Turkic languages. Main Turkic languages include Turkish, Azerbaijani, Kazak, Kyrgiz, Uzbek, Turkmen, and Gagauz. There is a mutual intelligibility between Turkish and the other Oghuz languages. Vowel harmony, agglutination, and lack of grammatical gender are characteristic features of the Turkish language and these are only some of the features that make Turkish brother with other Turkic languages. Linguist Wilhelm Thomsen found the very first Turkic written records, Orkhon inscriptions, in modern Mongolia in 1889. These inscriptions trace back to the 8th century A.D. With this information given, we should also point out that long before this discovery; some acquaintance about these inscriptions was given by historian Cuveyni in the 12th and 18th centuries by Johan Von Strahlenberg, a Swedish prisoner of war to Russia. (Taneri, 2006, p.18). After the migration of Turkic tribes to the West, Oghuz Turks brought their language to modern day Iran and Azerbaijan. With the battle of Manzikert in 1071, the Oghuz tribes started to invade eastern parts of Anatolia and settle in those new lands. The Kayi tribe, from which the Ottomans descended from, settled in Ahlat, an eastern town in the modern day province of Bitlis and then in Siverek, which is in the modern day province of Urfa. Today, one of the tribes living in the region is Karakecili, many of whom claim they are Kurdish but for Gökalp they are Kurdified Turks who came to Anatolia within the Turkification period of Anatolia after the Manzikert War. (Cited in Uluc, 2010, p.43)

Urfa Dialect – A Low Variety?

The reason as to why we have summarised the Turkish language history from its basics until the Turkification of Asia Minor is to show that the Urfa Dialect (in this context a regional dialect) is not a low variety of Turkish spoken by uneducated people only in the streets, but actually a remnant of Turkish spoken by the Kayi tribe who first settled in Ahlat and then in the town of Siverek in Urfa. Here, at this point in fact, we come to the issue of High Variety and Low Variety, which are components of Diglossia. This is a relatively stable language situation (Ferguson, 1959). Each variety has its own specialised functions, and each is viewed differently by those who are aware of both. Diglossia is the sociolinguistic situation in which people use a vernacular at home and another language at school. A key defining characteristic of diglossia is that the two varieties are kept quite apart in their functions (Wardhaugh, 2012). However, in some cases they use a regional dialect of the same code that they use at school. According to Random House Dictionary of the English Language, its primary meaning is described as "the widespread existence within a society of sharply divergent formal and informal varieties of

a language, each used in different social contexts or for performing different functions, as the existence of Katharevusa and Demotic in modern Greece." (Cited in Hudson, 1992, p.613) Today, since the Istanbul Dialect has become the standard variety due to socio-economic and political reasons, all other regional dialects including the Urfa dialect are seen as low variety, forgetting the fact that it was once the language spoken by the Oghuz Turks. At this point, I think it will be beneficial to show resemblances between today's Urfa Dialect and some examples from the Ottoman Period. The examples from the Ottoman period have been taken from Ottoman Emperors' poetry.

Bozulubdur bu cihan sanmaki bizde düzele
Devlet-I çerh dönüverdi kamûmübtezele
(http://osmanlihanedanligi.tr.gg/Karisik.htm)

By Sultan III. Mustafa

Bizimle saltanat lafın edermiş ol Karamânî
Hüdâ fırsat veririse kara yere koramânı. (Baykal, 1956, p.77)

By Fatih Sultan Mehmed

From the first extract, we would like to analyse the first word 'bozulubdur'. The word for word translation into English has two versions. The first one is 'it must have been corrupted' and the second version is 'it may have been corrupted'. In today's standard Turkish, the Istanbul Dialect, the translations are 'bozulmuş olmalı' and 'bozulmuş olabilir', respectively. However, when we take a look at the Urfa dialect, we see that the word, which was used by Sultan Mustafa III is still being used by people who live in Urfa with the exact meaning. The meaning, whether it is a strong positive deduction like in 'bozulmuş olmalı' or a weak positive deduction 'bozulmuş olabilir' is dependent on the context of the usage.

The second extract is by Mehmed II and it reads as: 'Hüdâ fırsat veririse kara yere koramânı.' If we translate it word for word, it means 'If God gives the chance (if God allows me), I shall bury him in the black soil. The line has a rather threatening tone. Now let's have a look at the High Variety translation.

'(Tanrı izinverirse) –or- Tanrının izniyle onu yerin dibine göndereceğim (koyarım).'

However, in the Urfa Dialect which is a so-called low variety, the line does not change except for the last word: ânı, in English: him. In the Urfa Dialect, the sentence goes as follows: 'Hüdâ izin verirse kara yere koramonu.' When we dissect the sentence, we see that the word Huda for Tanrı or Allah is still used in Urfa although we should not neglect that it is a Persian borrowed word. At the time, the language spoken by Kayi Turks was not affected by Arabic or Persian, protecting its pure Turkic vocabulary. Later, as the Ottomans, who were the descendants of the Kayi tribe, expanded all through Anatolia, the language came into contact with Persian and Arabic and as a result, it borrowed a lot of words and phrases from both languages. The phrase 'Kara yere' is still a phrase used in Urfa which has the meaning of execrating and cursing. The verb 'Koram' is inflected in first person singular present simple tense. In High variety it is 'Koyarım' but in Low Variety it is exactly as Mehmed II said it: 'Koram'.

Another example we would like to give is the word 'devşirmek', which in English means 'to collect, to gather' (http://tureng.com/search/devsirmek). The Ottoman Empire had the system of 'devşirme', which meant the selection and education of talented and gifted children and employing them in state institutions. Those children were 'gathered' from their families. A good example for devşirme was Sokollu Mehmed Pasha. (Nagy, 1969, p.53) The word 'devşirmek' was used to give the meaning of 'cleaning the dining table'. They said 'Sofrayı devşir', which meant 'clean the dining table' or word for word 'collect, gather the plates, forks, spoons

(dining tools) on the dining table'. In today's Istanbul Variety it is difficult to understand the sentence 'Sofrayı devşir'. They say 'Sofrayı topla', but when, for example, a grandmother living in Urfa says 'Sofrayı devşir' to a youngster in the family, he or she will start cleaning the dining table right away. These examples show that there is a strong connection with the Urfa Dialect, which is today's Low Variety with the Ottoman Turkish. Still, this does not change the fact that in today's Turkey, the Urfa Dialect is the Low Variety and the Istanbul Dialect the High Variety. So in these terms we can say that a once high variety of any given language may turn into a low variety with the flow of time.

Some Diglossic Cases

Then what exactly is a low variety of a language? A low variety is not the written version of a language. It is not codified. Its rules are not set clearly. It may be different from the high variety in terms of inflection, pronunciation, and syntax. Low variety is generally the dialect, which is learned at home, it is the mother tongue of a child. It does not hold any prestige. It is only used for communication inside family, with friends and relatives, namely it is the code used for communication in informal situations. On the other hand, a high variety of a language is strictly codified and has gone through a process of elaboration, which means that its rules are determined clearly by an institution and it is always used in formal settings, such as schools, universities, courts, parliament. It is the indicator of prestige. These two make up the definition of diglossia. According to Ferguson, the definition of diglossia is as follows:

> Diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superdosed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation. (Cited in Hudson, 2001, p.49-50)

A difference between the Low and High varieties is that they have separate functions. One should not use Low Variety in an inappropriate context and vice versa. Ferguson says that "One of the most important features of diglossia is the specialisation of function for H and L. In one set of situations only H is appropriate and in another only L". (Cited in Sneddon, 2003, p.4)

It will be more explanatory to illustrate differences between the two varieties with some examples. In our case, the low variety is the Urfa dialect and the high variety the Istanbul dialect. The main differences between those two varieties are in terms of inflections of verbs, pronunciation and sometimes vocabulary. There is no change in terms of syntax. Let's have a look at the inflection of the verb 'to come' with all subject pronouns in both varieties.

Table 1

Low Variety	High Variety	English Translation
Gelyem	Geliyorum	I am coming
Gelisen	Geliyorsun	You are coming
Geli	Geliyor	He/She/It is coming
Gelyikh	Geliyoruz	We are coming
Gelisiz	Geliyorsunuz	You are coming
Geliler	Geliyorlar	They are coming

As we can see in the above table, there is a completely different inflection of the verb 'to come' with all subject pronouns and even with the first person plural verb there is a different sound which does not

exist in the standard Istanbul variety. When we say the word 'gelyikh', we do not actually pronounce the k and h letters separately, instead, we utter the guttural k, a sound that exists in Arabic but does not exist in High Variety Turkish. We have a similar situation with the word 'fıstık', pistachio in English. We pronounce it as 'fıstıkh'. Below are some more examples of change in pronunciation.

Table 2

Low Variety	High Variety	English Translation
Yengi	Yeni	New
Demirchi	Demirci	Blacksmith
Ilan	Yılan	Snake
Kuyimchi	Kuyumcu	Jeweler
Tüken	Dükkan	Shop
Ürek	Yürek	Heart
Kölge	Gölge	Shade
Köynek	Gömlek	Shirt

We can observe changes in vocabulary as well. Though, we should not think that vocabulary of the High Variety is not used in daily speech. Words from both varieties can be and are used interchangeably in the region. Some examples of difference in vocabulary level are listed below.

Table 3

Low Variety	High Variety	English Translation
Bekhteniz	Maydanoz	Parsley
Bibi	Hala	Aunt (Father's sister)
Taka	Pencere	Window
Zahar	Galiba	Probably
Irakh	Uzak	Far

Since the low variety is learnt and used at home and in informal situations, children who are raised in Urfa in families using the Low Variety Turkish have difficulty in learning the High Variety. They almost always learn it at school. During the first years of learning the High Variety, problems arise, especially with their self-esteem because they cannot speak the High Variety. Furthermore, they are afraid of asking their teachers questions, which also hampers the teaching – learning process. Below is an example from a state primary school classroom setting. The student avoids communication with his teacher because of his knowledge and usage of the Urfa Dialect and when he has to speak, he has no other choice but to speak in the Low Variety Dialect. Sentences uttered by Ali, the student, are in the Low Variety, whereas all others are in the High Variety and English Translations.

Teacher: Bu alıştırmayı kimyapmakister? (Who wants to do this exercise?)

The teacher wants Ali to do it.

Teacher (Pointing at Ali): Ali, senyapmakistermisin? (Ali, do you want to do it?)

Ali (hesitant to speak): İstemyem. (İstemiyorum. – I don't want to.)

Teacher: Nedenyapmakistemiyorsun? (Why don't you want to do it?)

Ali: Bilmiyem. Yapamya. (Bilmiyorum. Yapamıyorum. I don't know. I can't do it.)

As we can see, the student shows a minimum level of response, with one-word sentences to the teacher's questions because his own language embarrasses him. There are even more confusing situations where the diglossic situation does not happen between the two dialects of the same language but between completely different languages. Urfa is not a homogenous city. It mainly consists of three peoples, Turks, Kurds, and Arabs. So far we have talked about people who are Turkish in origin, however, the case with Kurd and Arab speakers is more complicated. They speak their own language, which we call vernacular. Children acquire their mother tongues, Kurdish or Arabic at home. They use it at home and while they communicate with their relatives, but when they go out and mix with their Turkish friends, they need

to use the Urfa dialect, the Low Variety. When they start school it gets even more difficult because they have to learn the standard variety of the Turkish language. So basically they speak Kurdish or Arabic at home, the Low Variety with their Turkish neighbours and friends and the High Variety at school. Below we give another semantic misunderstanding, which stems from the linguistic gap between the Low and High Variety between two speakers of the same language. In this case the Low Variety speaker's mother tongue is Kurdish. He has not received any formal education in Turkish though he can speak the Low Variety Turkish. And this is one of his first days at school. The conversation takes place between the student and his teacher who stems from a western city and just started working in the region.

Student: Örtmenim, tuvaletegidim. (This would be 'Öretmenim, tuvaletegidebilirmiyem?' in Urfa Dialect, 'Öğretmenim, tuvaletegidebilirmiyim?' in Standard Dialect, and 'May I go to the toilet?' in English.)

Teacher: (No response.)

Student: Örtmenim, tuvaletegidim.

Teacher: Evladım, izin istemen gerekmez mi? (Son, shouldn't you ask for permission?)

Other students all-together: Öğretmenim, zaten izin istiyor! (He is already asking for permission!)

The teacher does not understand what the student wants to say because the student does not use 'ebilir' the suffix for permission and the interrogative suffix 'miyim'. He asks the question or asks for permission only with a question intonation. Other students understand what he wants to say as they share the same neighbourhood and are familiar with that student's variety of Turkish but the teacher does not.

Concluding Remarks

Neither the Low Variety Urfa Dialect, nor the vernaculars like Kurdish or Arabic, which are spoken in Turkey, has gone through any codification or elaboration. The High Variety Istanbul Dialect on the other hand, has gone through the codification and elaboration processes. Especially with the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, reform in the language was realised. First of all Arabic script was given up and the Latin alphabet was adopted by the new state. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk founded the Turkish Language Association, the institution whose duty was and is to set the rules for Turkish. Through the works of this institution, words that had been borrowed from Arabic and Persian were removed from the language because, according to Heyd, the language of that time was " as unintelligible to the Turkish peasant and illiterate townsman as mediaeval Latin was to the layman in Europe." (Cited in Tachau, 1964, p, 193) and this was called 'purification'. According to Perry (1985, p.295) this purification process in fact worked for rather political reasons than linguistic reasons, like westernising and modernising the country and it is obligatory to use no other language but Turkish in all state institutions. Having said so, we should not make the mistake of thinking that the Istanbul Variety was made the High Variety with the foundation of the Republic. It was already the High Variety before 1923. (Goksel and Kerslake, 2005, p.xii)

In a nutshell, what we can infer from what we have mentioned is that there is no escaping from learning the Low Variety or the High Variety. Their existence does not possess any threat to one other. A Low Variety of a language possesses in fact the richness of that language and thus, should not be discouraged to learn; instead, studies must be carried out to help low varieties continue to live. Evidently, surviving speakers of the low variety, in our case the Urfa dialect, are mainly the elderly people

in families. We should not permit the Urfa Dialect to become extinct and to consequently join the family of dead languages.

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РАЗУМИЈЕВАЊЕ ОДНОСА ДИГЛОСИЈЕ И ПИСМЕНОСТИ У УРФИ (ШАНХУРФИ) У ТУРСКОЈ

Резиме

Циљ овог рада јесте показати да ли дијалекат Урфе посједује елементе диглосије и на који се начин диглосичне јединице исказују на подручју Урфе. Дијалекат Урфе поређен је са истанбулским и старотурским дијалектима како би се одредио виши и нижи варијетет турског језика. На језику којим се говори у Урфи могу да се примијете многа диглосична својства која су уочљива не само када се пореде два дијалекта

истог језика него и два различита језика, попут арапског и курдског. Арапи и Курди у свакодневном животу користе матерњи језик, који представља нижи варијетет, али се од њих очекује да, када је то потребно, говоре обликом који представља виши варијетет турског језика. Због тога је ситуација у којој се они налазе сложенија од оне у којој се налазе људи који користе искључиво дијалекат Урфе. Ове сличности и разлике између дијалеката Урфе и Истанбула објашњавамо табеларним приказом језичке праксе говорника, као и илустрацијама разговора. Штавише, поређење лексике и појединих глагола из оба језика може помоћи разумијевању диглосичних проблема у Урфи. Означавање варијетета као вишег или нижег у овом раду урађено је и зато да би се појаснила разлика између дијалеката Урфе и Истанбула.

azamatakbar@yahoo.com
marslan@ius.edu.ba