

Identity vs Integration

Dutch-Turkish Contact in the Netherlands

Jia Ruan

Linguistics 115

University of Michigan

December 14, 2019

Introduction

Turkish immigration to the Netherlands began in the 1960s and has resulted in Turkish immigrants becoming a large immigrant group in the Netherlands. While the Netherlands is known for its liberal policies and lack of discriminatory policies against immigrants; nevertheless, 1st and 2nd generation Turkish immigrants faced integration issues in the Netherlands. 1st generation Turkish immigrants spoke very little Dutch and tend to form tight-knit Turkish communities and uphold Turkish culture. Consequently, Turkish immigrant families tend to have a Turkish language policy in order to preserve the Turkish language and a sense of Turkish identity within their children. In contrast, the main motivation for a Dutch family language policy is to ensure that the children will become more successful in school and have better career prospects by increasing their proficiency in Dutch.

Dutch language policy has also adapted to the issue of integration of Turkish immigrants. Initially, immigrant children were taught their home language and culture. The idea behind the language policy is to encourage cultural diversity within Dutch society. This policy was quickly abolished and an assimilationist approach is taken, intending to assimilate immigrant children into Dutch society. Moreover, in order to naturalize as a Dutch citizen, which will permit a non-citizen to stay in the Netherlands permanently, a civic integration diploma is required in order to demonstrate that the immigrant can read, write, speak, and understand sufficient Dutch. This is in stark contrast to the language policy enacted by the US government, where the US government enacted English-only education for Native American students and only recently did they allow for Native American language and Native American bilingual programs.

Family Language Policy

Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands faced challenges integrating with society after immigration to the Netherlands. 1st generation Turkish immigrants typically cannot speak Dutch and thus are only offered low skilled jobs (Euwals 2007). As a result, they cannot identify with Dutch cultures and “tend to maintain tight-knit community within [Turkish] community” (TPQ). Consequently, 1st generation Turkish immigrants tend to hold on to their Turkish heritage, socializing with other Turkish immigrants and upholding Turkish culture. Turkish children born in the Netherlands are typically taught Turkish until they attend school, after which Dutch and Turkish practices are equally involved in the family. Bezcioglu-Goktolga (2018) notes that almost half the parent in the study, apart from everyday use, expressed their efforts to speak only Turkish until school age; others try to correct their children when they try to mix Dutch and Turkish or speak in a regional accent. From Bezcioglu-Goktolga (2018)’s study, a mother from the study explained “We are Turkish. What does it

mean to be Turkish if the child does not speak a word of Turkish?” Among other reasons cited in Bezcioglu-Goktolga (2018)’s study are to contact with mainland Turkish, allow back-migration opportunities, preservation of the Turkish language, and religion. In all of these reasons, the common motivation is to impart a Turkish identity to Dutch Turkish born in the Netherlands and to preserve Turkish culture within the community.

In contrast, the primary reason that Turkish immigrant families establish a primarily Dutch language policy within their family is to ensure that their children will become more proficient in Dutch and integrate with Dutch society. Their intended goals are to provide their children with a higher employment prospect to allow their children to enjoy a better future. From Euwal (2007)’s study, as shown in Figure 1, Dutch language proficiency and education levels have respectively moderate and somewhat strong correlation with employment rates.

Table 5.2 Marginal effects of employment probability, 2002 *

	Men		Women	
	Germany	Netherlands	Germany	Netherlands
Age				
25-34	**0.33	**0.25	**0.18	0.03
35-49	**0.32	**0.23	**0.39	0.02
50-64	0.07	-0.09	0.11	** -0.15
Children				
Dummy (age 0-16)	**0.15	**0.10	** -0.27	-0.03
Education				
Lower secondary	**0.24	**0.16	-0.01	**0.12
Upper secondary	**0.15	**0.18	0.04	**0.19
Tertiary	0.11	**0.19	0.12	**0.35
Type				
Late migrants	-0.04	**0.12	0.07	-0.02
In between generation	0.14	0.03	0.13	0.08
Second generation	0.13	0.01	*0.28	-0.03
Immigration				
Nationality of host country	-0.12	*0.06	0.03	**0.09
Language proficiency 'good'	0.02	*0.09	0.05	*0.08

Figure 1: The Correlation of Factors on Employment Rates

**Positive numbers means said factor increases employment rates, while negative numbers means it lowers employment rate; a higher number equates to a stronger correlation*

More important from Euwal (2007)’s study however, is that “in [the Netherlands], second generation immigrants, immigrants with a good language proficiency, and immigrants who are naturalized have a [measurably higher prestige jobs]”. Given that Dutch is now required for naturalization and permanent residence, it can be argued that proficiency in Dutch is almost required in order to succeed in the Netherlands, which prompts some Turkish immigrants families to adopt a Dutch language policy.

Institutional Language Policy

The language policy of the Dutch government with regard to immigrants has undergone a major shift since the 1960s. Initially, the Dutch government encouraged immigrants to receive education in the language and culture of their homeland. The goal of the policy is to promote self-organization and education in minorities' own languages [to strength Dutch society via cultural diversity]" (TPQ). This policy is no longer followed in recent years; instead, immigrants are expected to integrate into Dutch society. One of the requirement to naturalize as a Dutch citizen is to obtain a Civic Integration Diploma, which shows that the applicant "can read, write, speak and understand Dutch" (IND). The Civic Integration exam tests knowledge of Dutch society, proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening Dutch, and integration into the Dutch labor market (DUO). An illustration detailing the examinations are given in Figure 2.



Figure 2: the various examinations required to obtain a Civic Integration Diploma

This shift in language policy occurred as the perceived role of Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands changed. Initially, Turkish immigrants are expected to follow a seasonal nature of work. As the motivation for immigration shifted from work opportunities to family formation and reunification, Turkish immigration took on a more permanent nature, and thus are required to integrate with Dutch society and with the labor market in a more long-term manner.

Analogy to another contact variety

The Netherlands is unusual in its liberal language policy for immigrants. In particular, it's a total opposite from the language policy enacted by the US government for Native Americans. In

particular, the US government enacted English language policy in an attempt to displace Native American language and culture. In an attempt to forcefully assimilate Native Americans, English only schooling was mandatory for Native American children (McCarty 2008). McCarty (2008) further elaborates that this policy only changed after the 1960s with Native American controlled schools, native language programs, and frameworks for Native American bilingual programs. This is in stark contrast to the language policy initially undertaken by the Netherlands, where immigrant children are taught their home language in order to promote cultural diversity. Moreover, the change to a Dutch language policy is not a move that is intended to exact greater governmental control over a population.

Conclusion

Turkish immigrants are initially encourage to receive education in their home language. The motivation is to promote cultural diversity and self-organization. As the nature of Turkish immigration began to take on a more permanent nature, the Dutch government changed to a Dutch language policy in order to integrate Turkish immigrants into Dutch society. Within Turkish families, some enacted a Turkish language policy while others enacted a Dutch language policy. Turkish language policies are enacted in order to preserve Turkish culture and language within subsequent generations of Turkish immigrants, while Dutch language policies are enacted in order to ensure that Turkish children can succeed in Dutch society.

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