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Language Policy in Turkey and Its Effect on the Kurdish Language

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LANGUAGE POLICY IN TURKEY AND ITS EFFECT ON THE KURDISH
LANGUAGE

by
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For many decades the Kurdish language was ignored and banned from public use and Turkish became the lingua franca for all citizens to speak. This way, the Turkish state sought to create a nation-state based on one language and attempted to eliminate the use of other languages, particularly Kurdish, through severe regulations and prohibitions.

Firstly, this thesis traces the language planning policies in the 20th century which resulted in the invisibilization and denial of Kurdish through an attempted linguicide. Through decade long oppressions which resulted in mass killings, arrests, re-location of Kurds, monopolization of education in Turkish and eventually the legal ban on Kurdish in print and media raise questions about the survival of the language in the long run.

Secondly, this thesis discusses the revitalization processes that have occurred in educational and political life since 2003 for the use of Kurdish. To some extent, the survival of Kurdish still remains in doubt, despite the re-introduction of Kurdish in schools and universities since 2010. In order to assess these recent developments, I compare the different roles and positions not only of the ruling government, but also of other political parties in promoting the use and dissemination of Kurdish as a second native language in Turkey.

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ACRONYMS

AKP	Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi)
BDP	Peace and Democracy Party (Baris ve Demokrasi Partisi)
CHP	Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi)
DEP	Democracy Party (Demokrasi Partisi)
DP	Democratic Party (Demokrat Partisi)
DTP	Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi)
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
EU	European Union
HDP	People's Democracy Party (Halklarin Demokratik Partisi)
HEP	People's Labor Party (Halkin Emek Partisi)
MHP	National Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PKK	Kurdish Workers Party (Partiya Karkeran Kurdistan)
TIP	Turkish Workers Party (Turkiye Isci Partisi)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
YTP	New Turkey Party (Yeni Turkiye Partisi

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Has a nation anything more precious than the language of its fathers?
                                                                    -Johann Herder

Most countries comprise of citizens of various ethnic origins who speak different

languages; yet one language is usually considered the official or national one and hence

determines a significant part of the country's national identity. Even though many

languages are spoken by their inhabitants, American English is dominant in the United

States, German common to Germany, and Turkish in Turkey. In those countries that have

only one official language, what implications does this policy have for the other

languages spoken by its people?

Turkey is one example of a multi-lingual society, yet since its establishment in the

early 1920s, the Turkish language became the *lingua franca* despite Turkish not being

wide spread during the Ottoman Empire (~ 1299 - 1923). By the end of the Ottoman

Empire, among the many languages spoken, three dominant ones – Arabic, Persian, and

Turkish – were used for different purposes: Arabic was the language of religion and

religious law; Persian was the language of the educated elite and the language of art,

literature, and diplomacy; and Ottoman Turkish was primarily used by administration and

military personnel (Metz 1995). Anyone was free to communicate in any language;

however, to be able to communicate with the government it was essential to know

Ottoman Turkish or to be able to hire someone for this task.

During the early years of the 20th century when the Ottoman Empire collapsed, a

large ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity was still prevalent. Slowly this diversity

was diminished through the Greek-Turkish population exchange and the Armenian genocide (Aslan 2007, 245 and Zeydanlioglu 2012, 99). While many minorities still existed, the largest remaining minority group was the Kurds. Originally, during the 'War of Liberation' [1919-1923], Atatürk himself recognized the existence as well as the national rights of Kurds which was supplemented by his support for a detailed study of the Kurdish language in order to contest the arguments that Kurdish was a 'primitive' language (Gunes 2012, 70). However, the results of the Lausanne Treaty[1] of 1923, which documented the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, annulled all prior recognition of cultural and political rights to the Kurdish minority in Turkey.

For decades, a large number of citizens has been subjected to these restrictions in Turkey. According to a report done by the European Commission in 2004, Kurds make up about 20-25% or 15-20 million of Turkey's population of about 77 million and Kurdish is the de facto second most frequently spoken language after Turkish (Öpengin 2012, 155). However, due to numerous constricting and assimilative policies towards the Kurdish minority, its language was also affected by many bans. The promotion of the Turkish language in daily use and especially in the educational system of schools resulted in an asymmetrical development of the Kurdish and Turkish languages. As a result of these strict bans on the Kurdish language which lasted until the 21st century, scholars have referred to the practices enforced by Turkish authorities as linguicide (or linguistic genocide), as these policies prohibited the use of the language in many areas of life, most importantly in the educational and political spheres (e.g. Hassanpour 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas 2012; Fernandes 2012; O'Driscoll 2014).

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[1] Peace Treaty of Lausanne 1923.

In this thesis, the emphasis is on the policies of the Turkish state towards Kurdish as well as the state's linguistic ideologies. This means that even though scholars speak of linguicide, "attempted" linguicide would be more accurate in the case of Turkey since it was not fully realized. Thus, I distinguish between what officials hoped to achieve (linguicide) with what happened in reality. Still, it is important to note that repressive policies go beyond just restricting linguistic rights. Thus, the suppression of a language is never the whole of a state's repressive policy towards minorities; for instance through arrests and re-location, Kurds' existence was directly affected besides being denied the right to speak their language.

The asymmetrical development of Turkish and Kurdish is strongly connected to literacy. Among the Ottoman citizens, literacy is argued to have never exceeded 10% between the years of 1914 and 1918, even before the Turkish language changed its alphabet from using the Arabic script to the Latin script. Therefore, the so-called 'Turkification' policies and the spread of the Turkish language and even the change of the alphabet could be done more smoothly without any real resistance as one would expect. Given the high rates of illiteracy, it was relatively easy to enforce Turkish upon the illiterate citizens and impose the public values on how to become a good Turk in order to develop a unified Turkish national identity.

As a consequence, the widespread use of Turkish inevitably resulted in the denial of some minorities' existence, and in a decrease of the old Empire's many languages (Zeydanlioglu 2012, 99). Thus, while Turkish was promoted as a full language which was prevalent in all areas in life, the Kurdish language was not only neglected but also banned to the extent that it continued to merely exist as an oral language rather than a written

language.

By linking education and Kurdish language, one can observe that while literacy education aimed to reinforce the particular Turkish identity, it was in fact the increase of education which led to the rise of a Kurdish identity, as well. Therefore, the educated Kurds brought the Kurdish issue to the forefront and these efforts eventually led to the introduction of Kurdish to schools and universities after decade long struggles with the Turkish state. At the same time, the literacy campaigns were not fully enforced in Eastern and Southeastern Turkey, so illiteracy remained particularly high among Kurdish women. This also meant that these women preserved the Kurdish language as they were not as exposed to Turkish like their more educated counter parts.

Loosening policies towards the Kurdish language can be observed from the 1990s onwards; however, the most significant date is the year 2003 when Kurdish language courses were opened for the first time in Turkey as a requirement for Turkey to fulfill its membership candidacy status in the European Union. Since then, the spread of Kurdish in print and education is widely seen. In the last decade (~ 2003-2014), additional progress has occurred in terms of introducing Kurdish to schools and universities. In this struggle over promoting or banning the Kurdish language, primarily the Turkish state and in that respect politicians and their various political parties play a major role in introducing new regulations for the advancement or repression of the language.

This paper traces the historical status of the Kurdish language and the regulations affecting it since the beginning of the republic up to the year 2015. Specifically, this paper examines the following questions:

How did the planning and imposition of the Turkish language affect both the general literacy rate and the status of the Kurdish language?

How significant are the recent changes for the language's survival as it is promoted in the educational system and in regard to its use by political parties?

Significance of Research

This study of Kurdish language is significant due to the large number of speakers who were affected by assimilationist policies which are still endangering the survival of the Kurdish language. Since language is closely related to identity, for many Kurds the language issue is an emotional matter both inside and outside of Turkey. It is important to analyze this issue historically in order to understand the changes of the different stages of development in the 21st century. While the restrictive policies of the 20th century attempted to reduce the multi-lingual Ottoman Empire into a monolingual nation-state, it is possible that the openings towards Kurdish language in the 21st century can produce a diverse linguistic society in Turkey. In addition, due to globalization and increasing immigration, plural societies are becoming unavoidable for almost every country. Analyzing minorities and their languages is essential and a more accurate acknowledgment that multicultural societies are almost never based on one national language.

Lastly, this thesis connects two areas: Education and Kurdish language studies, which have been discussed separately by other scholars. But so far the relationship of the two has been widely neglected. This paper crystallizes that literacy and education play a

major role to the extent how a language can fully develop and gain in status if it is promoted as the national language.

Data and Methodology

For this research, I am applying a variety of primary and secondary data. My primary data consists mainly of newspaper articles, official government documents, such as the Turkish Constitution, and political parties' official websites. For the purpose of this research, especially in chapter five, I am mainly using online newspaper articles. Here, I have mostly relied on the outlets with the highest circulations. Overall, most of the newspaper sources either have an Islamist or Leftist orientation. In other words, the conservative Islamist newspapers take a pro-government stance while the others oppose the conservative leaning. The newspapers help to analyze and identify the actors and their arguments about the maintenance of the Kurdish language.

For my secondary literature, I have surveyed books and articles written on the Kurdish issue and synthesized the varying arguments to trace Turkey's policies towards the Kurdish language in the 20th century. For my research I have mostly relied on the works of social scientists and to some extent linguists. All of them, regardless of discipline, are experts in the region of Kurdistan or the Middle East, overall. While this thesis relies on contributions of linguists concerned with the maintenance of endangered languages, in this thesis the emphasis is rather on how state policies towards a language can affect the progress and survival of a language, specifically how language policies and planning in Turkey affected Kurdish. At the end, one can observe a relationship between

education and nationalism and how these two affect minority language studies, in this case the study of Kurdish language.

Chapter Outline

After the introduction, in chapter two I briefly discuss the origin and ongoing status of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey and provide some concepts which will serve as theoretical considerations to tackle my thesis question. Here the concepts of language, nationalism, and linguicide are introduced.

In chapter three, I examine Turkey's linguistic policies throughout the twentieth century, in which through literacy campaigns and education Turkey was developed into a one nation-state based on the Turkish language and culture. This hegemonic development of Turkish is important to highlight and contrast with the suppression of the Kurdish language which is described as a process of invisibilization as argued by Haig (2004) until the 1990s. While some scholars even argue that these policies resulted in linguistic genocide of the Kurdish language, my analysis shows that the restrictive policies attempted the erasure of Kurdish, but this aim was never fully realized. The technical term "linguistic genocide/linguicide" means that a language is completely banned so that its speakers cannot learn how to read or write in their mother tongue. Some practices applied by the Turkish state, such as forced migration and re-location of Kurds, aimed to eliminate the spread and maintenance of Kurdish. The coups of the second half of the 20th century further led to the constitutional changes that suppressed and criminalized activities in the Kurdish language.

In chapter four, I discuss the introduction of raising public Kurdish awareness from the 1980s until the beginning of the 21st century. This transition period saw an increase of social and political movements that brought the Kurdish issue to the surface of Turkish politics. Particularly, the social/political movements led by the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) are worth discussing. Here one can observe that an increased level of education among the citizens in Turkey also led to more protest movements for more political inclusion; these ultimately succeeded in winning more cultural and linguistic rights for the Kurdish minority. At the end of this period, it was through conditions set by the European Union that led to the opening of Kurdish language courses in 2003.

In chapter five, I survey the developments in the 21st century for Kurdish minority rights policies by focusing on four major political parties[2] and their role in promoting or blocking the spread and development of the Kurdish language. For this chapter, I am concentrating on two areas: rules governing electoral competition between political parties and education in Kurdish language. For instance, election campaign laws have changed so that politicians can now use Kurdish when campaigning. The introduction of Kurdish language courses in schools and the growing number of programs offered by universities are also described and critically evaluated.

Lastly, in my final chapter, I draw several conclusions from my findings and state the answers to my initial research questions.

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[2] The Development and Justice party (AKP), the Republican People's Party (CHP), the National Movement Party (MHP), pro-Kurdish political parties (BDP and HDP).

CHAPTER II

Literature Review and Theoretical Considerations

In this chapter, I will trace the origin of the Kurdish issue and will also discuss some concepts that are relevant for the understanding of the language policies in Turkey. In this case it becomes evident that language is closely related to fostering nationalism and this again can have a detrimental effect on minorities and their linguistic and cultural identities. The literature discussed is important as the Kurdish issue and more recently Kurdish language studies have grown in academia and public educational settings.

This chapter also identifies how the repressive policies of Turkey led to the invisibilization of Kurdish. Some even argue that the Turkish state has committed a linguistic genocide on Kurdish by banning the language and preventing it to develop into a full language used in education. Therefore linguicide is one of the important theoretical considerations applied throughout the thesis following the invention of Turkish nationalism. As mentioned in the introduction, in the case of Turkey, it is more accurate to stress that the policies amounted to "attempted" linguicide in practice. The concept of nationalism is illustrated through the process of language planning and education in Turkey and similarly how the formation of the dominant language affected the minority language, Kurdish.

Nationalism, Language, and Minority Studies

Many scholars have extensively written on language and nationalism as complementary factors that create a common identity among citizens for state-building purposes. Even though the majority of countries still maintain a national or official language, more

recently public attention has been given to minorities and the protection of their cultural rights, especially since the introduction of Universal Human Rights after the Second World War. These cultural rights include linguistic rights. Generally speaking, many citizens are often required to learn the state's official language in order to find work or deal with governmental bureaucracy (Preece 2004). Kymlicka argues that this planning is usually justified in terms of 'efficiency' to enable more homogeneity and simplicity in communication; "it is also adopted to ensure the eventual assimilation of the national minority into the majority group" (Kymlicka 2001, 78).

Preece (2005) writes in her book *Minority Rights* that language is not only "a medium through which norms are communicated" but there also exists "an intimate connection between language and politics" (100). In the 18th century, Herder and Fichte identified language as an "expression of representative government, […] the basis of statehood" (as cited in Preece 2005, 111). Depending on the language a government chooses to adopt and promote, language can become the "motivation for consequences of linguistic policies, including those directed at linguistic minorities" (Preece 2005, 101). This means that once the government chooses a language as the official one, intentionally or not, this can indirectly affect other minority languages. Thus, Preece argues that possessing the right to speak a minority language does not necessarily mean that the state becomes obligated to use public funds for that language's survival. However, many scholars argue that the state needs to take more responsibility for funding to ensure the preservation of the language in order not to become subject to linguicide (Preece 2005, 130/1). The language regulations and decisions made by the government are crucial

factors that determine "which languages will thrive, and which will die out" (Kymlicka 2001, 78).

Overall, there seem to be opposing views as to what extent a minority language should acquire the same status as a majority language. For example, Kymlicka mentions the conflict between Article 1 of the United Nations Charter[3] and Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights[4] (Kymlicka 2001, 123). While the former is viewed by many as too strong since it says that all people have the right to self-determination, the latter is viewed as too weak, "for the right to enjoy one's culture has traditionally been understood to include only negative rights of non-interference, rather than positive rights to assistance, funding, autonomy, or public recognition" (Kymlicka 2001, 123). Whenever these positive rights are not guaranteed, the survival of a language may be endangered, resulting in the extinction of the language.

Origin of the Kurdish Conflict

Kurds, who primarily reside in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Armenia, are considered the largest stateless nation with a population of about 25 to 35 million overall (BBC 2014). The largest portion of the Kurdish population lives in Turkey, although for the majority of the 20th century, the official existence of people called Kurds and their culture and language was negated by the Turkish state until the 1980s (Yegen 1999). Yet, the Turkish state

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[3] Charter of the United Nations 1945.

[4] United Nations Human Rights 1966.
Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.

continued to "think, speak and speculate on the Kurdish question" in order to maintain the unity of the Turkish Republic as it viewed this issue and a rise of Kurdish nationalism to be a threat to the unity of the Turkish state (Yegen 1999, 555).

During the Ottoman Empire, multiple ethnic and cultural identities co-existed in which a variety of languages was spoken. Ottoman Turkish was only one of them. Under the Ottoman Empire, Ucarlar (2009) writes that communities were understood under the term *millet* which is "a product of an imperial power that had no interest in the private lives of its subjects" (Ucarlar 2009, 101). Further, this term conformed to the religious groups of the Ottoman Empire and these were the "self-ruling religious communities such as the Greek Orthodox millet, the Armenian millet, the Jewish millet and the Muslim millet" (Ucarlar 2009, 101). Since the Ottoman Empire was divided among the religious communities, this way, Turkish did not circulate among non-Muslims, but for the non-Turkish Muslim elites, it served as a secondary language (Sadoglu 2003: 61, as cited by Ucarlar 2009, 101). However, with the formation of the Republic of Turkey in the early 1920s, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk attempted to create a homogeneous nation-state emphasizing 'Turkish' citizenry and language. The exclusion and suppression of the Kurds by the Turkish State was one of the motivations for the Kurdish uprisings in the 1920s and 1930s in defense of a Kurdish ethno-national identity (Yavuz 2001).

Kurdish Studies

Kurdish Studies is a growing interdisciplinary field related to all areas concerning the Kurdish people. Since 2013, there also exists an internationally peer-reviewed journal

called *Kurdish Studies* published twice a year covering a range of issues.[5] Since Kurdish

Studies is still a fairly young and developing discipline, most scholars seem to take an

interdisciplinary approach to the overarching theme of minority rights. There are a

number of leading scholars in Kurdish Studies whose works I have relied upon

throughout this paper.

For instance, Welat Zeydanlioglu, who holds a doctorate in Cultural Studies from

Anglia Ruskin University (United Kingdom) and is the founder and coordinator of the

Kurdish Studies journal, has published extensively on Kurdish issues from a political

perspective, especially focusing on political parties. Above all, Zeydanlioglu's (2012)

article on "Turkey's Kurdish Language Policy" laid down the background and foundation

for understanding the larger picture of Kurdish language policies in Turkey.

Ucarlar, whose academic background lies in Political Science, examines the

Kurdish language through the lens of majority power versus minority resistance. Her

research has been valuable in understanding the complexity of the Ottoman Empire with

its diverse linguistic population.[6]

Due to the nature of the questions I address in this thesis, I have applied several

linguists' arguments to my analysis. For instance, Amir Hassanpour and his famous book

on *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan, 1918-1985* which was published in 1992, has

been cited by many scholars who have written on the Kurdish language. While this book

does not go into detail on Turkey *per se*, nevertheless it is important for identifying the

geographic speech areas of the Kurdish language. Other linguists such as Haig (2004),

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[5] For more information on the journal *Kurdish Studies* visit the website: http://www.kurdishstudies.net.
[6] Ucarlar's (2009) dissertation on "Between Majority Power and Minority Resistance: Kurdish Linguistic
Rights in Turkey" was especially helpful to understand the dynamic of politics and Kurdish in Turkey.

O'Driscoll (2014), Fernandes (2012), and Öpengin (2012) write extensively on the linguicide of the Kurdish language from a contemporary perspective.

Attempted Linguistic Genocide or Invisibilization?

The term linguicide describes how a language dies out from not being promoted or being actively banned. While in Iraq, Kurdish alongside Arabic are the official languages of the country, in other countries, Kurds' linguistic rights are denied, specifically the access to education in their mother tongue. Currently, around 15 languages in Turkey are faced with danger of extinction; among them is one Kurdish dialect, Zaza[7].

The origin of the term "cultural genocide", from which "linguicide" is derived, was coined in the 1947 *Draft United Nations Genocide Convention*, where genocide is defined in Article I (3) as the following[8]:

3. [Cultural genocide] Destroying the specific characteristics of the group by:

(a) forcible transfer of children to another human group; or
(b) forced and systematic exile of individuals representing the culture of a group; or
(c) prohibition of the use of the national language even in private intercourse; or
(d) systematic destruction of books printed in the national language or of religious works or prohibition of new publications; or
(e) systematic destruction of historical or religious monuments or their diversion to alien uses, destruction or dispersion of documents and objects of historical, artistic, or religious value and of objects used in religious worship.

Even though in the final version of the convention of the Human Rights Declaration this definition of cultural genocide was not accepted, Fernandes writes that "when the

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[7] Bianet 2009.
[8] Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide 1947.

convention was finally accepted, those states then members of the UN were in [tacit] agreement that this was how the phenomenon could be defined" (Skutnabb-Kangas 2001:1, as cited in Fernandes 2012, 78). Further, it is important to pay attention to the implications of linguistic genocide because "linguistic prejudice and racial prejudice are close relatives" (Salzmann et al. 2014, 8 and Lippi-Green 2012). Ultimately, intentionally suppressing a language can be viewed as the suppression of a specific ethnicity.

Additionally, some scholars have recently written about the link between modernization, nationalism, and genocide. O'Driscoll (2014) argues that the "ideology of nationalism led to the drive to unite and nationalise the masses under a dominant linguistic identity, and the industrialisation of the printing press in the nineteenth century was an important tool in facilitating this process" (O'Driscoll 2014, 273).

Fernandes (2012) argues that the atrocities of the 20th century are responsible for mass destructions of people and cultures, as modernization is a "term for a concept known in the nineteenth century as the 'civilizing' process, and during the first half of the twentieth century as 'westernization'" (Encyclopedia of Science, Technology and Ethics (2005, cited in Book Rags [2006: 1]), as cited in Fernandes 2012, 77). Similarly, the modernity project of Turkey was inspired by U.S. and European imperialism, such that creating a modern state solely based on Turkish identity meant the colonial genocide of other groups, such as Armenians, Kurds, Assyrians, Greeks, and others (Fernandes 2012, 85).

While linguicide is a strong word which implies ethnic genocide, one can argue that the policies towards Kurdish led to the erasure of the language. Erasure is a concept introduced by Irvine and Gal (2000) which "renders some persons or activities invisible"

(p.38). In different words, Irvine and Gal point out that states create a linguistic ideology for the purpose of building one homogenous nation-state. While this erasure in ideological representation might not reflect the multi-lingual realities of the country and therefore its actual eradication might not occur, still the language's existence and its value are suppressed (ibid).

Other authors have defined the language reforms in Turkey to result in the 'invisibilization' of the Kurdish language (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000 and Haig 2004). Haig's (2004) definition of 'invisibilisation' is the following:

> Invisibilisation is the deliberate removal, or concealment, of the overt signs of the existence a particular culture, with the aim of rendering that culture invisible. It is part of the logic of invisibilisation that the policy and its implementation remain covert, because overt formulation would mean increased visibility (Haig 2004, 3).

Haig's article discusses different stages of physical and virtual assimilation in order to emphasize how 'invisibilisation' has occurred towards the Kurds in Turkey. While physical assimilation, namely relocation of Kurds and Turks throughout Turkey, primarily occurred in the 1930s in order to aim for the eradication of the Kurdish culture and language, virtual assimilation, "a policy of systematic cover-ups" lasted for a longer period of time until the 1990s (Haig 2004). As an example, Haig cites how "the Kurdish regions were under emergency rule between 1925 and 1949, and indeed for much of the 80's and 90's, and foreigners were not permitted to travel there up to 1965" (Baskaya 1997:78, 2nd fn. as cited in Haig 2004, 9). Further, Haig points out that virtual assimilation is a variation of denigration where the Kurdish language was for instance referred to as a "degenerate form of Persian" (Haig 2004, 14). Overall, through centrally strategized and implemented policies, the Turkish state could control the language use of

its citizens in promoting the Turkish language and declaring the Kurdish language as non-existent and thereby establish the 'invisibilisation' of the Kurdish language (Haig 2004, 22).

Generally speaking, 'invisibilization' of a language and linguistic genocide can result in disappearance of a language; while linguicide occurs from structural violence, invisibilisation in itself is a symbolic process. There is also the concept of erasure briefly mentioned above which overlaps with invisibilization but occurs in a less obvious manner. However, in the case of the Kurdish language, linguicide seems to best describe the policy since it was intended for the language to disappear by any means necessary. Since the policies were not awalys successful, this thesis suggests the concept of "attempted" linguicide to better capture the practical outcome of the Turkish state's policies.

Chapter Summary

In general, one can argue how erasure, invisibilization, and linguicide, all occurred in different ways and are complementary in the case of Kurdish, especially that the outcome of each negatively affects the survival of the language.

In the subsequent chapters, the invisibilization process can be observed as an attempted linguicide through the policies of the 20th century, especially through the asymmetrical development of the Turkish and Kurdish languages. This way a nationalistic Turkish identity could be developed while the Kurdish ethnicity was denied and suppressed.

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In the contemporary period of the 21st century as discussed in chapter five, the state policies show a revitalization of the Kurdish language. At the same time, the question arises to what extent the attempted linguicide of the 20th century makes the survival of Kurdish as a written language irreversible.

CHAPTER III

Turkish Language Hegemony in the 20th Century

In this chapter, I discuss the education policies in Turkey and the public use of Kurdish

language in the 20th century starting with the foundation of modern Turkey. I will

illustrate how Turkish was promoted in the new Republic through the increase in

education to drop illiteracy rates. Education and literacy courses were not only used as a

means to establish a more literate public, but also to promote and foster a national

identity for young and old alike. Similarly, this chapter examines the changes of policies

from the multi-lingual society of the Ottoman Empire to a mono-lingual nation-state with

the sole emphasis on Turkish language and culture. Specifically, the policies of the newly

established state negatively affected the use of Kurdish language with gradual restrictions

up to the ban of any publications and writings in Kurdish. Here, attention is given to

official policies and methods used to prevent the spread of Kurdish language.

Literacy Rates before 1945

During the Ottoman Empire, (Ottoman) Turkish was mentioned as the official language

in the 1876 Ottoman constitution; however, this merely meant that it was primarily

spoken by state officials and their deputies (Ucarlar 2009, 101). With the establishment

of the Turkish Republic, the Ottoman Empire came to an end and with it, the rule of the

Sultanate and Caliphate, the religious rule and powers. For the Kurdish speaking group

this change was significant as the new state also closed all religious schools, including

Kurdish-Muslim *madrasas* (schools) (Oktem 2011, 35). The Turkish Republic was built

on the concept of laicism where a division exists between state and religion in order to create patriotic citizens.

> "With the closure of religious schools, Kurdish-Muslim madrasas were outlawed and any reference to Kurdish identity and language, let alone to the bygone Ottoman province of Kurdistan, became a punishable offence" (Oktem 2011, 35)

Ucarlar concludes that other linguistic groups in the Ottoman Empire, such as the Kurds "except for their religious or tribal chiefs, […] were not largely familiar with the Turkish language during the Ottoman rule" (Ucarlar 2009, 101). This meant that the Kurdish community still needed to learn the Turkish language for official business if its members were illiterate or did not live around citizens who spoke Turkish.

Besides the language barrier for many during the Ottoman Empire, an even larger number of citizens could not read or write. Topalli (2009) discusses the concept and function of certified '*arzuhalci'* (scriveners) who were communicators between the common people and the administration for any requests and petitions. This was especially of great use since many could not read or write themselves as the report below illustrates.

A literacy report by United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) from 1945 mentions three points in time where the literacy rates in Turkey were surveyed: 1927, 1935, and 1945. In 1927, when the Arabic script was still used and Turkey was a four-year-old republic, about 12 million citizens (89.4% of the population) over the age of seven were illiterate (UNESCO 1945). The results for the time period 1935 and 1945 are especially detailed as the table below shows. The table illustrates the literacy rates among the different linguistic groups in 1945. Even though the report was conducted two decades after the establishment of the Republic, the literacy rates continued to remain low in Turkey (UNESCO 1945, 144).

TABLE 130. *Percentage of illiteracy in the population of Turkey (all ages), by principal linguistic groups and by sex: 1945*

Maternal language	Total No. of persons (all ages)	Percentage of illiteracy		
		Both sexes	Male	Female
All languages	18 790 174	75.8	65.2	86.5
Turkish	16 598 037	74.3	63.1	85.7
Arabic	247 204	89.2	81.7	96.8
Circassian	66 691	74.4	62.9	85.8
Armenian	56 179	39.8	30.2	47.7
Georgian	40 076	76.8	62.1	91.0
Laz	46 987	80.2	64.3	93.2
Greek	88 680	50.6	29.8	66.7
Yiddish	51 019	38.0	29.8	45.3
Kurdish	1 476 562	94.7	90.3	99.2
Other [1]	118 739	63.4	55.4	71.4

[1] Including 131 persons of maternal language unknown.

The UNESCO report points out that in 1945, the literacy census was more detailed in sorting people into religious and linguistic groups. In this case, they grouped the respondents by their principal language spoken in Turkey; the report does not indicate whether they were also illiterate in their mother and/or in the Turkish language alone. However, at the time of the report, Turkish was the only language that was promoted in education, so one could confidently assume that literacy was intended to refer to Turkish only.

This table also shows that by the mid-20th century over half of the population in Turkey could not read or write; the greatest illiterate group was in fact the Kurds. While women show a higher illiteracy rate in all linguistic groups, nearly all Kurdish women practically seem to have been illiterate in 1945, as the percentage (99.2%) shows. From this study one can conclude that by 1945, the Kurds made up about 12% of the entire Turkish population. In forthcoming literacy rate surveys, there is no distinction made

between the different linguistic groups. Instead there is only a differentiation by gender. Geographically, the illiteracy rate was the highest (about 81%) in rural areas because the literacy campaigns and literacy schools (discussed more in detail on pp. 28f in this chapter) which were established in the cities had little effect in the rural areas (Sayilan and Yildiz 2009, 738). This also explains the higher illiteracy rates among the Kurdish speakers until the mid-20th century as they mainly inhabitted rural areas of Eastern Turkey.

Kurdish Speaking Areas

The Kurdish language in Turkey has two different dialects: the dominant dialect is Kurmanji while Zazaki (Dimili) is not as widespread. Both belong into the category of Indo-European languages, specifically to the Iranian languages. The map below shows the regions where Kurdish was spoken in Turkey in the 1960s.

Map 2: Kurdish and Other Native Languages Spoken in Turkey (1966).
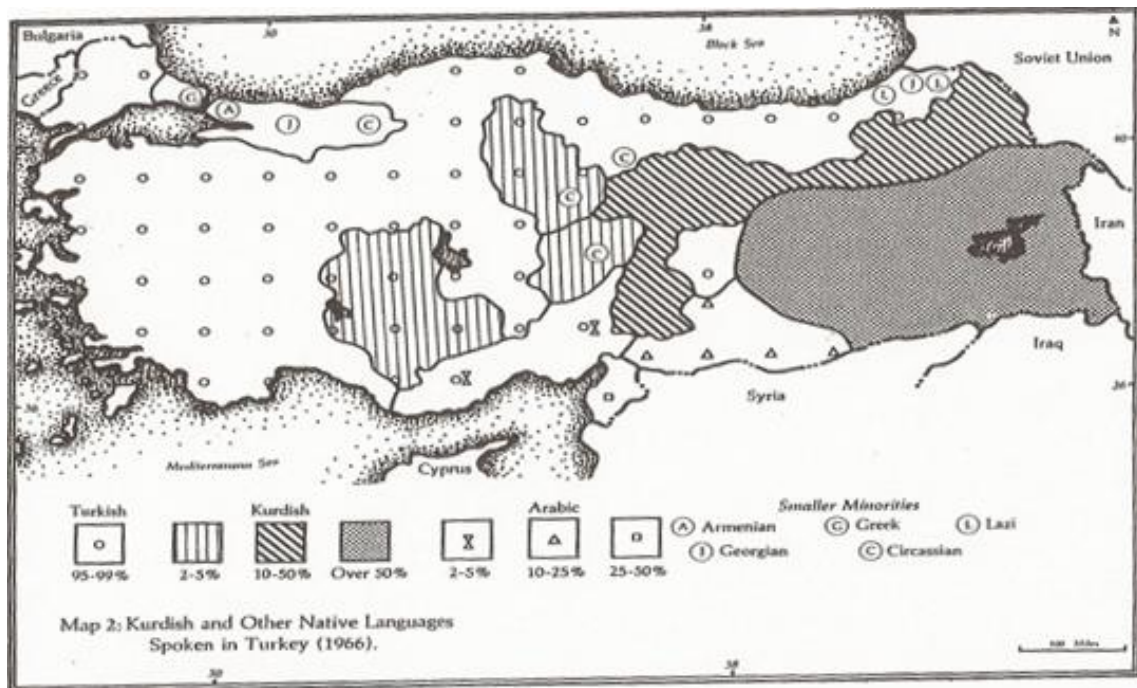
Source: Hassanpour 1992, 4

While the greatest density is mainly expressed in the Southeast region, which holds true up to today, central Turkey also had increasing numbers of Kurdish speakers. Nowadays, the Kurdish speakers are more scattered all over Turkey. In Istanbul alone there is an estimated two to four million Kurds in the year 2012 out of the 12 million inhabitants (Zalewski 2012). Either way, it is difficult to determine the exact number of Kurdish speakers in Turkey, as there are no linguistic and ethnic data available on Turkish citizens. It actually becomes even more problematic to arrive at an exact number of the Kurdish language *speakers* since due to intermarriages some might identify as Kurds without necessarily speaking the language. Of course, others might identify as Turks and still have the ability to speak Kurdish (at home).

While the map does not distinguish between the Kurdish languages, Zazaki and Kurmanji, in some studies, it is contested whether Zazaki is part of the Kurdish language group or rather should be viewed as its own language as the differences between these two languages are comparable to differences between German and English. However, other scholars argue that belonging to an ethnic group goes beyond the mutual intelligibility of a language, namely whether a group shares the same socio-political background.

O'Driscoll (2014) refers to a famous phrase for the distinction between a dialect and a language namely that 'a language is a dialect with an army and a navy[9]' to underline that language boundaries are more based on political grounds than on clear linguistic criteria. As far as Kurdish is concerned, she supports the view that "'language' and 'dialect' need to go beyond linguistic evidence, and when social, political, and

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[9] The Sociolinguist Max Weinreich (1894-1969) is usually associated with this phrase.

cultural factors are taken into consideration, it becomes evident that groups like Kurmanji, Zazaki, Sorani [spoken in Iraq], etc., are all Kurdish and thus speak the Kurdish language" (O'Driscoll 2014, 273). In this thesis, Zazaki is treated as the second most frequently spoken Kurdish dialect in Turkey and there is no distinguish between these two languages whenever the term "Kurdish language" is used.

In this section, the UNESCO report and the linguistic map show that a large proportion of the population of Turkey speaks only Kurdish or also Turkish besides Kurdish. The report also shows that since illiteracy rates are high among most Kurds in the first half of the century, the following restrictive policies towards Kurdish were detrimental only if Kurdish was compared to the development of the Turkish language. In other words, while during the Ottoman Empire as Ucarlar points out nobody was required to learn Turkish in order to be considered a citizen, at the same time one can argue that the Kurdish community had little incentive to promote literacy among themselves as the low literacy rates suggest. The fact that by the end of the Ottoman Empire most Kurds were illiterate, along with the restrictive policies of the emerging Turkish state, the development of Kurdish literacy could not be manifested or widely spread throughout the 20th century.

Socio-Economic Background of Kurds

Lower rates of literacy and education are correlated with lower socio-economic status. As the linguistic map illustrated, most Kurds reside in the Southeast region of Turkey. Since the Kurdish minority is rarely explicitly discussed by the Turkish state, most studies discuss the socio-economic situation of citizens in Turkey through the

geographic/regional areas of the country. For instance, studies address socio-economic differences as regional disparities (but not ethnic ones), or sometimes called Eastern and South Eastern Anatolia, to reflect the economic and social polarization of Turkey in the West and East.

White (1998) points out that in the beginning of the Turkish Republic, in the "Kurdish east and south-east, agriculture remained at subsistence level" (141). While in the 1930s about 414 manufacturing industries were opened in West Turkey, only seven existed in the Kurdish region; occupation in agriculture and farming continued for many decades and even today for some it is their only source of income and occupation (ibid).

The inequality is also reflected in education, especially the low literacy rates among Kurdish women. Illiteracy rates in the East and Southeast of Turkey remain as high as up to 30% for women, even in the beginning of the 21st century (Sayilan 2008, 261). The reason why literacy is higher among the male population is due to gender discrimination and also relates to mandatory military service for men where the young men are educated in literacy besides civic education in how to become a patriotic Turkish citizen (Caymaz 2008).

Lower literacy rates and low economic development in the Kurdish regions in Turkey are linked with continual high poverty rates among citizens living in the rural areas; precisely 73.5% of the inhabitants working in the agricultural and forest sectors were poor (Saatci and Akpinar 2007, 631). Even in urban areas about 52% of the population occupied in manufacturing, construction, and trade are poor, while the percentage of economically disadvantaged citizens occupied as administrative personnel is only 0.2% and from these only about 6% live in poverty (ibid).

One can observe that throughout many decades, there are not only disparities in literacy, but also in income between the Turkish and Kurdish population of Turkey. To this day, these inequalities remain and diminish the political power of the Kurdish regions and continue to divide East and West Turkey.

Turkish Language Promotion

Nationalism and nation-building were on the rise in the early 20th century, the idea of one unified nation needed to be invented and promoted as the past Ottoman Empire was not built on one specific nation. In such processes, language can play a crucial role in fostering these ideas of a nationhood and nationalism. Not only as the medium of communication to unite its subjects but more generally in education, the introduction of one common language is often seen as essential to raise citizens based on one common ideology. Due to the low literacy rates (merely 10% country wide) a new state identity could be formed without competition and taught to children in schools. The small educated minority were able to impose an education system in Turkey that was based on their ideas, the "civil and military bureaucratic elite" who formed the 'Modern Turkey' (Sayilan and Yilidz 2009, 35).

In 1928, efforts to spread literacy among citizens were put on the agenda through *millet mekteps* (nation's schools) which made it mandatory for everyone between the ages of 16-45 to attend literacy education (Sayilan and Yilidz 2009, 737). This approach raised the literacy from 8% in 1928 to roughly 20% in 1935 suggesting that not all adults participated in the literacy schools (ibid). This number suggests that the state was not always effective in enforcing its policies in practice. These literacy schools also taught

people to blame the Ottoman legacy for the low literacy rates in order for people to think more favorably of the new republic (Gunlu 2005, 80; as cited in Sayilan and Yilidz 2009, 737).

Similarly, *Halkevis* (people's houses) existed from 1932 until 1951, which combined a program of literacy education with other activities such as arts, culture, and sports which served "to teach the people the ideas and decisions of the political power" (ibid). From these efforts one can infer that literacy education's aim was two-fold: first, to teach the citizens to read and write; and second, to make them into citizens who love their nation and country.

Other ways to increase the literacy rate among the citizens were through campaigns which also included alphabet booklets. Besides teachings in the new Latin script, these alphabet booklets contained further information on civic education. These booklets included sentences to establish a national unity for the new republic, e.g.:

> The Turkish blood in our veins should only be shed for the sake of the nation; One should die for the homeland … a lion is courageous, like Turkish soldiers. Turkish soldiers are more courageous than lions; It is the duty of every Turk to defend the homeland against the enemies. Without soldiers, there would not be any law and order in the villages, counties and provinces. Without them, the enemy nations would attack, take away the beautiful parts of our country and slaughter us (as cited in Gunlu, 2008, p. 180).

These instructional materials used in the literacy schools indicate that the education system was going above and beyond general instruction on how to write and read. To manifest this unity in promoting one national language can lead to further unification. A quote by Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) emphasizes the importance of language and its connection to nationalism in one of his speeches:

One of the most obvious characteristics of a nation is language. A person who says that he belongs to the Turkish nation, should, primarily and absolutely, speak Turkish. If a man who does not speak Turkish claims his loyalty to the Turkish culture and community, it will not be correct to believe him" (Aydingun 2004, 423/4).

This quote by Kemal infers that personal identification with the language and nation go together and language can be used to unify and at the same time separate people, namely that one cannot belong to a nation without speaking its language. However, this quote does not explicitly say that anyone who speaks Turkish is automatically part of the Turkish nation. But rather it lays down the significance of the Turkish language *per se*, especially if one wants to be regarded as Turkish.

In another speech Kemal repeats the significance of the Turkish language:

The Turkish language is a sacred treasure for the Turkish nation because the Turkish nation knows that its moral values, customs and memories, interests, in short in everything that makes it a nation was preserved through its language despite the endless catastrophes it has experienced. (Virtanem 2003, 13)

Kemal's followers, such as İsmet İnönü, who became the second President of Turkey after the death of Kemal in 1938 and additionally served as the Prime Minister for many years, similarly argued for the establishment of one monolithic nation (Üngör 2012, 130). Another politician, a veteran interior Minister, Şükrü Kaya, argued for the emergence of one nation state in 1934 to replace the existing ethnic differences (Üngör 2012, 131):

No matter what happens, it is our obligation to immerse those living in our society in the civilization of Turkish society and to have them benefit from the prosperity of civilization. Why should we still speak of the Kurd Mehmet, the Circassian Hasan or the Laz Ali. This would demonstrate the weakness of the dominant element. . . . If anybody has any difference inside him, we need to erase that in the schools and in the body politic, so that man will be as Turkish as me and serve the homeland. (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi zabıt ceridesi 1934: Volume 2, 71, 249)".

This quote shows that prominent Kemalist politicians believed that education is an essential factor in evoking a certain way of thought in a population. This phenomenon took place in Europe as well. At the end of 19th century, France – to give an example from another country – "intended to replace the regional dialects with standardized French" and establish a sense of French culture and patriotism in the population by introducing mandatory education (Weber as cited in Aslan, 2007, 248). Next to state policies, which are captured in constitutions or certain regulations, the public can also have an effect in manifesting a national identity (ibid).

For instance, a campaign called "Citizen, Speak Turkish!" which took place in the first two decades of the republic's foundation underlines this argument, namely in terms of how citizens were influenced by state policies and saw themselves as the "state's missionaries" by reflecting these views in newspapers (249). This campaign which was mainly supported by university students took place in Istanbul in the 1930s where about 28% of the inhabitants did not speak Turkish as their first language (ibid). The author argues how these campaigns led by students were primarily addressed to non-Muslims such as to Greeks, Jews, and Armenians by threatening them to be "thrown out of the country if they did not speak Turkish" (262). Since the author points out the importance of the non-Muslim community for economic reasons, this infers that socio-economic factors play a major role whether people during the Ottoman Empire were literate or not (from the literacy table it is apparent that most literate group was the non-Muslim community). Subsequently, the state condemned these actions,[10] while at the same time it

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[10]The author briefly states that these particular groups, namely the non-Muslim communities were essential for the economic development of Turkey, such as the trade which took place with Europe.

banned the use of Kurdish in the 1930s in state institutions and public spaces in the eastern provinces of Turkey (266).

Even though overt discrimination was exerted against non-Turkish speakers, at the same time the increase of literacy rate was viewed as essential, which was especially low among the Muslim population. Since the non-Muslim communities were important for economic reasons such as for trade with Europe, the state condemned the student movement led by the campaign and requested the removal of the discriminatory banners on non-Muslims houses and stores (Aslan 2007). However, it is questionable how meaningful the state's condemnation of this student movement was, as other sources point out that the campaign itself was originally funded by the state (Akdoğan 2012). Since linguistic restrictions were imposed on Kurdish as well, it becomes more realistic to assume that the state was rather in favor of imposing these campaigns to further establish a unified nation-state.

Language Planning

Language is an essential factor in all spheres of life, not just for communication among one's social networks such as family and friends, but especially to form a nationalistic identity. Geoffrey Haig points out that Turkey had undergone an extensive language planning process in order to "influence the behaviour of others with respect to the acquisition, structure or functional allocation of their language codes" (Cooper 1989:45, as cited in Geoffrey Haig 2004, 1).

Besides the change in script of Turkish in 1928, further linguistic alterations took the form of language 'purification'. Using a top-down approach, the state aimed to create

a westernized nation-state with the change of the script and similarly 'purifying' the Turkish language by removing its Ottoman (e.g. the Arabic and Persian influenced) vocabulary and introducing new European words (Yilmaz 2013). The Turkish used throughout the Ottoman Empire "was a version of Turkish with extensive borrowings from Arabic and Persian as well as other languages" (Zeydanlioglu 2012, 100). With the new Turkish Republic aiming to be a secular and modern western state headed in a direction similar to that of European states, anything related to the Ottoman period was viewed as out-of-date and archaic. Some literacy campaigns promoted the idea that the new republic was better in many ways compared to the past Ottoman Empire, which had allowed communities to remain ignorant and undeveloped. In contrast, the new republic changed people for the better through the introduction of education and knowledge (Gunlu 2008).

In 1928, the most important reform known as Language Reform (*Dil Devrimi*) was introduced when the Latin alphabet replaced Arabic letters (Zeydanlioglu 2012, 102). This reform is viewed as the beginning of Turkey's transition towards Europe and away from the Middle East. With this reform and other policies that followed, such as giving people surnames starting in 1934, the dominance of the Turkish language became apparent as only Turkish surnames or surnames derived from Turkish were accepted and no Kurdish first or last names could be chosen (ibid, p.103).

James Scott (1998) writes in his book *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to improve the human condition have failed* that the "invention of permanent, inherited patronyms was [...] the last step in establishing the necessary preconditions of modern statecraft"; in most cases this was a "state project" (Scott 1998, 65). Scott provides the

example of the Philippines under Spanish rule where the inhabitants of the Philippines had received *Spanish* surnames (Scott 1998, 69), similar to the Kurds receiving Turkish surnames. In some cases, the surnames declared their belonging to the Turkish ethnicity, being given the names 'Türk', Özturk', or 'Üzbek'. A good example is the contemporary Kurdish politician who is called 'Ahmed *Türk*'. The argument put forward by Scott and other scholars shows that the forms of discrimination occurred in modern practices to erase a diversified population and establish a more homogeneous citizenry. Similarly, imposing legible surnames on people makes is simpler for the government to locate all the citizens and therefore easier to implement taxation, conscription, and punishment (Scott 1998).

Further, in 1935, Turkish scholars had developed a theory called the "Sun-Language Theory" (*Gunes-Dil Teorisi*) that Central Asia, the geographic origin of the Turks, "was the cradle of human civilization and Turkish was the mother of all languages" (Hassanpour 1992, 133). Through this theory, *Kurds* were made a tribe of Turanian (Turkish) Turkish which had forgotten its native language due to being isolated via the mountains and through the influence of the Persian neighbors (Besikci 1977 and Hassanpour 1992). This language theory explained the origin and vocabulary of the Kurdish language. One of the claims for the non-existence of a Kurdish language was, as the "Iraqi ambassador to Turkey (1958-64), Talib Mushtaq (Mushtaq 1969:374) recalled in his memoirs, the Turkish claim that Kurdish was a language with no grammatical rules and with a mixed vocabulary of only 8428 words" (Hassanpour 1992, 133).

These were the components of the Kurdish language according to the Iraqi ambassador:

Old Turkmen	3,080
Arabic words used in Turkish	2,000
Zand language	1,240
Modern Persian	1,030
Old Pahlavi	370
Original Kurdish	300
Armenian	200
Chaldean	108
Circassian	60
Georgian	20
Total number of words used in Kurdish:	8,428

Source: Hassanpour 1992, 133

The 'sun language' theory was widely accepted in Turkey and also influenced Turkish dictionaries. The definition for the word Kurd/Kurdish (*Kürt* in Turkish) until 1979 was the following: "The name of a group/society who are ethnically Turkish but, having changed their language, (now) speak a degenerate form of Persian and inhabit Turkey, Iraq and Iran; the name of anyone belonging to this group" (as cited in Haig 2004, 13).

Some decades after Ataturk's death, the sun theory was abandoned in Turkey (Shaw 2004). Similarly, when looking up the word "Kurd", a contemporary dictionary provides a new definition: 'a group of people who lives in Front Asia and anyone belonging to this community' (Great Turkish Dictionary 2015). While this definition has drastically changed to reflect a more neutral view over the years, still it remains incorrect to state that this group lives in Front Asia since they inhabit all cities of Turkey, including the western cities that belong geographically to the European continent.

Forced Migration and Re-Location

The centralization and Turkification process "led to many Kurdish revolts (in 1925, 1927-31, 1930-32, and 1937-38) which were severely repressed" through mass killings of Kurds (Hassanpour 1992, 132). In order to stop the revolts and control the Kurdish masses, Kurds were forced into mass migrations to primarily Turkish inhabited cities. Furthermore, the Turkish state "conducted mass executions after each revolt, and resettled Turkish immigrants from Europe in the Kurdish areas in the 1920s-1940s" (Rambout 1947; Kendal 1980a: 58-68; Bedr Khan 1928; as cited in Hassanpour 1992, 132). Already by the late 1930s, all Kurdish provinces were under the control of the Turkish military to manage the Kurdish dominated areas and prevent any uprisings from happening (van Bruinessen 1984:8 as cited by Hassanpour 1992, 132).

In addition, in a 1935 report, the Prime Minister İsmet İnönü advocated for assimilative policies based on re-location of Kurds and Turks in order to decrease the density of the Kurdish population in the Southeast regions. This re-arrangement of Kurds and Turks was supplemented with more investments as these areas are still less developed and it was hoped that through educational facilities one could help "Kurds to become familiar with Turkish identity and become loyal to the state" (Efegil 2011, 29).

Accordingly, the 1934 Settlement Act's Law No.2510 regulated the relocation of Kurds and settlement of the Muslim populations from the past Ottoman Empire into Central and Southeast Turkey, or so called Anatolia (Kılıçaslan, 2015, 160). While thousands of Kurds were displaced throughout the country, no explicit number is available. However, this was not the only time where forced migration happened repeatedly. For instance, another wave of displacement occurred in the 1980s and 1990s

where the "state forcibly evacuated almost 3,500 villages and hamlets, displacing about 3,500,000 Kurdish and other people from their homelands" (ibid).

Through forced migration and relocation, the Kurdish population was exposed to Turkish culture and its language and at the same time had fewer opportunities to speak the Kurdish language exclusively. This active engagement of the government in Kurdish population distribution in the Southeast regions can be viewed as an attempt for Kurdish linguicide, since any development and expansion of the Kurdish language was intentionally blocked.

Multi-Party System

After the initial Kurdish revolts up until the late 1930s, the change of the government allowed different parties to rule. In the first half of the 20th century, from 1923-1946, only a single-party system, represented by the founding party, Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP)[11], existed in Turkey. After World War II, the leader of the CHP introduced a multi-party system where elections were held in Turkey for the first time in 1946 in which more than one party was represented. In the second election in 1950, the CHP no longer had the majority. The Democratic Party (*Demokrat Parti*, DP) won the elections which led to the first change of government since the formation of the Republic. This change resulted in granting communities more political freedom (Goktepe 2005 and Howard 2001). For example, for the first time after 27 years, the Democrats (members of the Democratic Party) ended the ban on religious broadcasting and the call to prayer was changed again from Turkish to Arabic, on the grounds that Muslim prayer

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[11] The CHP party is discussed more in detail in chapter five.

is supposed to be in original Arabic (Howard 2001, 123). Compared to the previous Republican Party, the DP was welcomed by many Kurds; many voted for the Democratic Party as opposed to the Kemalist CHP (McDowall 1992, 39). Gunes (2012) argues that numerous Kurdish politicians were members of the Democratic Party who later joined the New Turkey Party (*Yeni Türkiye Partisi*, YTP) and aimed to "protect the individual's freedoms and the democratic norms to institute a stable democracy in Turkey" (Gunes 2012, 52). In the 1960s, Kurdish politicians of the YTP voiced concerns about the Kurdish issue implicitly (as it was not allowed to mention that a Kurdish minority existed) by talking about the socio-economic disparities and the uneven development of East Turkey compared to West Turkey (Gunes 2012, 53). Thus, the introduction of multi-party system provided some leverage for the Kurdish issue to indirectly reach the political arena.

It was also in this period, specifically in 1952, that Turkey joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and thus enhanced its relationship with the West. Joining NATO meant that Turkey was now provided with technical military training in "engineering and the sciences critical to the operation of a modern, mechanized military force" (Howard 2001, 124). Since Turkey was based on strong military foundations from the beginning, the electoral losses of the Kemalist party (CHP) and their enhanced military training from the NATO soon led to three coups occurring in 1960, 1971, and 1980.

The Coups of 1960, 1971, and 1980

In May 1960, the military eventually took over the government as they believed the new government was not capable of leading the country and restoring order, since many movements and protests were taking place due to the new democratic freedoms. Within two months, the military drafted a new constitution which went into effect from July 1961 onwards and was approved by a referendum. This first coup also affected literacy campaigns as by the 1960s the literacy rate still remained low at about 40% for the general population, only a 7% points increase from 1950 (Ogretmenler Sitesi 2009). Since the literacy schools closed in 1952, literacy rates remained low and did not increase as much as in the previous decades (Sayilan and Yildiz 2009, 740).

In 1960 a second literacy campaign for private citizens (the first one being in 1928) was established by the military government to further foster values such as "homeland, heroism, courage, honor and martyrdom" besides acquiring literacy skills (Gunlu 2008, 181). Furthermore, this new constitution also included articles in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights by incorporating a new bill of rights in the constitution and having proportional representation in the parliament.

Some of the articles of the 1924 constitution, however, had not changed in the 1961 constitution. For instance, Article 54 states that "every individual who is bound to the Turkish State by ties of citizenship is a Turk" which for some may mean that citizenship equals ethnic identity (Turkish Constitution of 1961). While in the contemporary era citizenship does not necessarily have to be tied with an ethnic identity, as it is the case with "U.S. American" citizenship for instance, but considering that in 1924 different ethnicities existed the origin of this definition remains incorrect.

For election purposes, linguistic regulations laid down the form in which election campaigns could be held. Article 58 of the Law on Basic Provisions on Elections and Voter Registers reads that "it is strictly forbidden to use any language other than Turkish in electioneering broadcasts on radio and television, and in other electioneering" (Basic Provisions on Elections and Voters Registers 1999). While linguistic policies such as these could have led to greater Turkish unity and increase the national pride, these restrictions not only discriminated against minority languages, more importantly they also justified imprisonment and deportation. For some, their lives were even endangered (Zeydanlioglu 2012, 107). Nezan (1993) reports that after the 1961 coup about 485 Kurdish intellectuals who questioned the new state policies were captured and "sent to a concentration camp in central Turkey without trial, while others were sent to exile in western parts of the country" (Nezan 1993:65; as cited in Zeydanlioglu 2012, 107).

Additionally, in 1961 the Turkish Worker's Party (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi*, TIP) similarly to the YTP expressed concerns for disparities between the Kurds and Turks. However, the TIP was the first party to explicitly discuss the Kurdish question which led to its ban from the parliament for "encouraging separatist activities" (Gunter 1990: 17; Nezan 1993: 68–70; as cited in Zeydanlioglu 2012, 107). Eventually, in 1961, the CHP won the elections, benefitting from the military coups.

Further turkification attempts include the change of the names of many Kurdish villages and settlements into Turkish. By introducing Turkish radio stations in these areas to oppose neighboring Kurdish stations, public media aided the ideological domination and spread of Turkishness (Nezan 1993: 68-70; as cited in Zeydanlioglu 2012, 107). This phenomenon of changing names has been seen in many other cases all over the world.

For instance, James Scott (1998) provides several examples from around the world where state authorities have changed the names of villages and people for the state's convenience, as these amendments would constitute "simple, repetitive logic [that] will be easiest to administer and to police" (Scott 1998, 55). Adding to the simplicity factor would be that a change of names into a certain language can help to promote a certain language and ethnicity, while rendering another invisible. For instance, one city in Northeast Turkey, originally called "Dersim" in Kurdish was changed to "Tunceli" in 1935 after large Kurdish protests occurred in the 1930s following mass killings ordered by the state. Recently, the Turkish government has proclaimed to re-name the province to Dersim and the Prime Minister Erdogan apologized for the bombings and killings of thousands of Kurds (Today's Zaman 2013a).

Nevertheless, due to the relative increase in freedom of expression with the new constitution, supplemented with the rising literacy rates, the educated public became more active in voicing their concerns. As Kurdish remained outlawed, one of the clandestine parties established in 1965 was the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDPT) which had a nationalist agenda and resembled and echoed the movement happening in Iraqi Kurdistan at the same time (McDowall 1992, 40). Compared to the many leftist parties which emerged in the 1960s, KDPT was a separatist party and less concerned with the "equal rights within the state" such as equal economic opportunities, but rather demanded political autonomy (McDowall 1992, 40). In the late 1960s, youth organizations were formed in the eastern regions and also in Ankara and Istanbul such as the "Organization of Revolutionary Kurdish Youth"; eventually, this organization was banned by the government due to its separatist nature (McDowall 1992, 41).

Therefore, it is noteworthy to mention that it was the spread of education and an increase in literacy along with the limited freedoms of the 1961 constitution that "resulted in the emergence of a new group of activist intellectuals, who took a leading role in Kurdish cultural and political activism in Turkey" (Gunes 2012, 49). The Kurdish Workers Party (*Partiya Karkeran Kurdistan* PKK) emerged out of these student organizations about a decade later which led to an armed struggle with the Turkish government.

In the mid-1960s, Zeydanlioglu points out that Turkification of Kurds continued through the establishment of boarding schools in the Kurdish provinces to separate children from their families and communities and these children were "often forced to forget their mother tongue and exposed to propaganda" (Zeydanlioglu 2012, 107). In terms of literacy education, by 1970 a little over half of the population (53%) was literate and the gap between men and women was enormous, 70% of men could read while the literacy rate for women remained low at 36%.[12] This indicates that despite the coups and the various literacy schools and campaigns, the state officials were not very successful in educating all the masses. Especially women were deprived of education, meaning that Kurdish women most likely did not to go to school, learn any Turkish and therefore continued to communicate with their children in Kurdish.

In 1971, another coup was carried out by army generals. While with the first coup in 1960 the military only took over for one month, still they closely influenced the government until 1965. In the second coup of 1971, the military took control over 67 provinces (out of 81) and restrictive orders remained in place for about two and a half

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[12] For an overview of the literacy rate in Turkey from 1923 – 2011, see appendix 1.

years (Ulus 2010, 18). Due to martial law, the implementation of laws towards using Kurdish language was enforced more strictly overall and the activist movements were kept under control through arrests (McDowall 1992, 44).

Interestingly, in the 1970s with continuous low literacy rates, especially among women, a wider rhetoric towards education and literacy was developed by the Turkish state. While earlier pamphlets and literacy campaigns contained a nationalistic voice, there was a change seen in the campaigns of the 1970s with additional emphasis on agricultural work techniques, civic participation, and gender equality, and unification besides ongoing nationalistic ideals (Gunlu 2008, 183):

> "Demir [male name] planted cotton seeds. He took good care of the cotton. He gave it water. He hoed the field several times … Laws bring order to people. Laws teach citizens their rights and duties … Girls should also go to school just like boys. Discrimination between girls and boys is a sin … The Turkish nation lives in unity and brotherhood. Happy is the one who calls himself a Turk. Long live the great Turkish nation. The Turkish state is a great state. Our state protects us. …" (Gunlu 2008, 183/4).

In September 1980, a third coup occurred and the military took over the government again. From 1971 until the coup, there were ten different governments in Turkey which signified political deadlock (Gunter 1990, 24). This coup led to another updated constitution in 1982 which is still in place up to this date. The coups remain important to look at since they heavily influenced the education system. For instance, there was an increase in literacy to 65% in the 1980s. Overall, the time period from 1960-1980 encompassing the coup years is viewed as the decades of planned development, meaning that the literacy challenge was viewed as part of development problems especially with each coup more regulations towards education was established (Sayilan and Yildiz 2009,

740/1). Since the role of the military has been strong in Turkey from the beginning along with creating a modern and secular state, an increase in education goes along with the ideals of Mustafa Kemal.

Therefore, in 1983, the literacy courses did not only remain compulsory as they were in the past, now there was a penalty introduced if one did not attend them (ibid, p. 742). Thus, there was a huge drop in illiteracy rates between the years 1960 and 1980. As mentioned earlier, the UNESCO report of 1945 is the only one which details literacy based on the different linguistic groups in Turkey; all the following literacy reports do not distinguish the literacy rates between Turks and Kurds.

One way to re-inforce the hegemony of Turkish language was to constitutionally ban the Kurdish language. However, the official bans on the Kurdish language in the 1982 Turkish Constitution did not directly ban the Kurdish language *per se*. State officials circumvented using the word "Kurdish" by banning "any language that is not the first official language of a state that is recognized by Turkey" (Haig 2004, 15). This wording in the constitutions achieves two goals. First, since Kurdish *per se* is not mentioned, the state could continue denying the existing of Kurdish. Second, as there is no Kurdistan as a country and no other country recognizes Kurdish as its official language, this ban could seem legitimate from a political stand point; all with the ultimate aim to invisibilize and similarly aim towards extinction or linguicide of Kurdish.

To illustrate that despite the unclear wording in the constitution, the ban of Kurdish was still explicit is the fact that Turkish officials' attempt in eliminating the Kurdish language did not only occur in Turkey, but went beyond Turkish territories, as well. Just before the third coup of 1980, a Kurdish course was organized in Denmark to

train Kurdish teachers among the immigrants in the Scandinavian countries so that they could teach immigrant Kurdish children the writing, vocabulary, and grammar of the Kurdish language. However, the Turkish Embassy in Copenhagen "tried [unsuccessfully] to stop the course by pointing out that participants were still Turkish citizens and were thus not entitled to break Turkish law, whatever country they were in, and in Turkish law Kurdish [wa]s a forbidden language' (Skutnabb-Kangas 1981:279-80; cf., also, Bozarslan 1981, for clippings from Danish press accompanied by English translations; as cited in Hassanpour 1992, 132).

Another important change in this time period was the introduction of a party threshold. In 1983 after the coup of 1982, a 10% threshold replacing the 3% was introduced; this too has remained unchanged (Özkan 2007). One of the main reasons to introduce this high threshold was to prevent the pro-Kurdish political parties gaining entrance into the parliament (Schönbohm and Tröndle 2002). As this is a very high threshold and especially hinders smaller parties from entering the Parliament, in all cases until June 2015 when the HDP surpassed the threshold, pro-Kurdish political parties were not able to gain seats in Parliament. For instance, in the year 2002, due to this high threshold only two parties from among the 18 participating entered the parliament.

Overall, one can observe that throughout the 20 year period from the 1960s until the early 1980s even though the military did not always control the country, it played a significant role in 'restoring order' by arresting, torturing, and imprisoning citizens for any activities that were not aligned with maintaining Turkish unity and could have been interpreted as separatist movements such as the leftist and Kurdish activities (Ulus 2010).

Further, the military imposed a new constitution, increased literacy and ensured that the

Kemalist values, with emphasize on Turkish nationalism, were maintained.

Chapter Summary

Events and policies that affected the use of Kurdish language

Year	Restrictions	Loosening
1920s – 1930s Kurdish ethno-national uprisings	Through mass executions or imprisonment by the state, the uprisings were shut down	
1934 Resettlement Act	This act led to forced migration and re-location of Kurds	
Surname Law of 1934	All citizens were required to adopt a Turkish family name	
Starting in 1930s	Town and city names changed from Kurdish into Turkish	
Multi-party system		Freedom of expression, emergence and representation of more political parties/ideologies
1965	Establishment of boarding schools for Kurdish children	
Late 1960s onwards		Growing Kurdish student organizations raising awareness on the Kurdish issue
Literacy campaigns lasting until 1980s	Only teaching literacy in Turkish	More educated Kurds led to more awareness of their Kurdish identity
1982 constitution	Ban of Kurdish language in print and media and introduction of 10% threshold for polit. parties	

In this chapter one can recognize that literacy education and education in general served

to teach people about the new Turkish state and about Turkishness. Since education was

only provided in the Turkish language, this linguistic hegemony suppressed the

development of the Kurdish language. Similarly, the policies towards the public use of

Kurdish language were unjust, either banning Kurdish altogether or through other means

such as relocation or forced immigration to halt the spread of Kurdish language and

culture. For many decades these repressive policies allowed the state to capture, torture and murder anyone who did not play by the rules to serve as a good Turkish citizen. The policies towards the use of Kurdish became even more severe and restrictive with the three coups of the second half of the 20th century by introducing boarding schools to Kurdish children and eventually constitutionally banning the public use of Kurdish all together. On a positive note, the developments and efforts put forward in regard to literacy education are remarkable and ultimately had positive consequences for the Kurdish cause as now a more educated population was becoming aware of inequalities and started demanding more rights for Kurds.

CHAPTER IV

Transition Period: Resistance and Recognition

This chapter describes which events led to the lifting of bans on the Kurdish language

between the years from the 1980s until 2003. This time period can be seen as a transition

period; it is important to understand what actors and factors led to the liberalization of the

language policies. There are internal and external factors that led to the increase in

tolerance towards Kurdish. Internal or domestic factors are primarily based on political

parties and politicians who brought the Kurdish issue on the government agenda. As an

external factor, the European Union played a major role. The most significant step was

the introduction of Kurdish courses opened in Turkey as part of Turkey's negotiation

process into joining the European Union.

PKK Movements: Raising Consciousness of a Kurdish Identity

Throughout the 20th century, many Kurdish movements brought awareness to the

differences of the Kurdish peoples' identity and justified their right for an autonomous

state. The 1982 coup was among other factors a response to the growing mobilization of

student movements which led to the formation of the Kurdish Workers Party (*Partiya*

Karkeran Kurdistan PKK). The PKK movement with Abdullah Öcalan as the main

leader. Öcalan became an activist during his university years, especially after his

imprisonment in 1971 for seven months for participating in illegal student

demonstrations. From there on, he became a "leftist; scientific socialism and dialectic

materialism replaced religion" (Gunter 1997, 29). Here, as with any other movement, one can observe that literacy and education in general have a big impact on people's consciousness about certain values such as different treatments of ethnicities in one country and especially in raising consciousness of their own identity. Again, the formation of the PKK was another attempt/example to achieve some kind of independence and a national Kurdish identity. Since there was little unity among the Kurds, Öcalan needed to strengthen this unity by appealing to people's feelings of injustice done towards the Kurds, especially being deprived of their rights of self-governance and maintenance of cultural and linguistic rights. One way of establishing this unity was placing emphasis on a distinct Kurdish culture and language different from Turkish.

Through the PKK movement, the Kurdish ethnic issue turned into a supranational struggle, undermining the societal and geographic margins of previous tribal constructions (Özcan 2006). As for any movement to gain wide support it is essential to appeal to people by creating emotions which would turn into shared understandings and identities that "justify, dignify, and animate collective action" (Tarrow 1998, 21). Therefore, the PKK advocated for a national Kurdish identity through "shared myths of common ancestry, territory, language, history, and past nationalist accomplishments" (Romano 2006, 131).

The Introduction of Newroz

One of the festivals introduced by the PKK is the tradition of *Newroz* which is an Iranian word meaning "New day". This festival is celebrated at the beginning of spring in many Persian speaking countries. During the Ottoman Empire, Newroz was celebrated by

Persians. Bruinessen argues that during his field work in 1971, the Kurdish villagers were not familiar with Newroz, only nationalist Kurdish elite celebrated Newroz (Bruinessen 1998, 11). In Turkey it has been popularized since the 1980s and celebrated by Kurds to bring awareness to the suppression of Kurdish people and celebrate the PKK's resistance (Gunes 2013, 259). However, Newroz is only freely celebrated in Turkey since 1993 when the ban on publishing in Kurdish also ended (Bruinessen 1998, 11). More interestingly, in the early 1990s the Turkish State adopted this festival as one of Turkey's national holidays and called it 'Nevruz' since the letters q, x, and w do not exist in the Turkish alphabet and were banned until 2013 (Yanik 2006, 285). Irvine and Gal argue for the concept of iconization where letters are associated with a language and a social group; whenever the language, in this case even certain letters are banned, this leads to the erasure and invisibilization of a language (Irvine and Gal 2000).

The adaptation of 'The Invention of Tradition'[13] is a result of the "rise of Kurdish nationalism and the terror [through the PKK] that came with it, both which challenged the authority of the state" (Yanik 2006, 285). The Turkish state introduced this holiday as an ancient *Turkic* festival; as Hobsbawm clarifies, states invent traditions in difficult times to bring closer the ties humans have with the past (Yanik 2006, 285). This move by the Turkish State was also an opportunity to establish close ties with the post-Soviet Turkic states that celebrate Newroz (ibid). This specific holiday and the state officials calling this holiday a 'Turkish' tradition was aimed to distance the association of Newroz with Kurds. This disassociation was attempted to undermine the rise of Kurdish nationalism since

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[13] These terms are used by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger in their book *The Invention of Tradition* (1993).

Kurds saw this festival as their distinction from Turks and the Turkish traditions and ethnicity (Yanik 2006).

For instance, the Turkish President, Demirel, in 1996 explained Newroz as the following (as cited in Yanik 2006, 288/9):

> Most of the communities that celebrate Nevruz in fact have Turkish [sic] origins. What makes a nation a nation and a person a person is culture …. If cultures of various peoples stem from the same root and share the same history this means brotherhood and unity. Even if these people were separated in the past, this means little, because for these people what matters the most is the future.

Here one can observe that the tradition of Newroz commonly known as a Persian holiday is constructed in different ways in Turkey. Accepting this holiday as a Turkish tradition aligns with the state's rhetoric that Kurds did not exist in Turkey or if they did then they were actually of Turkish origin sharing the same traditions. Kurds, on the other hand, even though they speak an Iranian language celebrated Newroz differently from Persians, mainly turning Newroz into a political liberation movement day for Kurds and Öcalan in Turkey. This case is interesting to point out as it illustrates how identities are invented and built on myths just to create a common identity and solidarity among citizens.

Also, a growing number of scholars inside Turkey challenged the dominant notion from the 1970s that there was no such phenomenon as a Kurdish conflict as it was claimed by the state. Between 1920 and 1990, the state did not allow any research related to Kurdish studies so that no one could "side with the Kurds' struggle for their rights" (Malmisanij 2011, pp.65-76; as cited in Unlu 2012, 5).

There are three forms of research related to Kurdish studies that some in academia more generally refer to as Kurdology: In Turkey two types of studies existed, 'anti-

Kurdology', and a general 'Kurdology' while sometimes the Turkish state conducted 'secret' Kurdology (Unlu 2012). While research on anti-Kurdology was openly published, secret Kurdology was used internally only by the state (ibid). Secret studies would include gathering facts about Kurds which were not distributed to the public, but helped the state to learn more about them. In other cases the Kurdish issue was framed in other terms such as calling it the 'Eastern Question" or the "Easterners," seeing it in geographical terms instead of ethnic ones (e.g. McDowall 1992; Ozcan 2006; Ucarlar 2009; Unlu 2012). This shows that for the longest time the state did not want to accept that there existed a minority group. Consequently their languages had even lesser chance of being accepted into the dominant Turkish culture.

The Özal Period

In the early 1990s, Turkish politicians finally initiated an open dialog on the Kurdish issue. Turgut Özal who was the President of Turkey from 1989 to 1993 succeeded in lifting the ban of the Kurdish language in Turkey in 1991. In 1989, Özal was elected President by the parliament at a time when much tumult was going on as the Soviet Union was breaking apart. Yet, Özal had remarked early on in his appointment that he was partly Kurdish and sought to resolve the Kurdish conflict by promoting more cultural rights for Kurds (Howard 2001, 172). In this time period, the United States had started a war with Iraq and had "created a de facto Kurdish autonomous zone under the protection of the 'no fly zone' in northern Iraq (Howard 2001, 172). The Turkish government feared a similar autonomous Kurdish region could occur since the armed struggle with the PKK for a separate Kurdish nation-state was still going on (ibid).

In 1992, Özal even advocated for radio and television broadcasting to be streamed in Kurdish and that Kurdish should have some presence in schools (Haig 2004, 15). Still, it needs to be noted that all of this did not occur until 2009, with the first Kurdish TV channels and Kurdish courses only being introduced in 2012 to schools due to the fears of the Turkish state if more rights were granted to the Kurds. After Özal's sudden and suspicious death in 1993[14], no further improvements were made towards enhancing Kurdish linguistic and cultural rights for a decade until the beginning of the 21st century.

Even though Özal had a vision to grant Kurdish linguistic and cultural rights, many other politicians did not share his views. His successor, Demirel, who was quoted above on the Newroz issue declared in 1993 (following Özal's death) that granting more Kurdish rights would result in "an attempt at dividing the country […] This is the greatest harm you can inflict on Turkey".[15] Another politician, a member of the parliament, commented on the Kurdish language with "What language is that? I do not know of such language" (ibid). Gunter cites other politicians who voiced this fear of separatism resulting from the Kurdish culture: "there will be cafes where Kurdish old songs are sung, theaters where Kurdish films are shown, and coffee houses where Kurdish is spoken. If this is not separatism, what is?" (Sagirsoy 1991: 41-42 as cited in Gunter 2011, 92). This quote suggests that for some Turkish politicians different linguistic and cultural practices are politically dangerous and therefore should not be promoted for.

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[14] Recently news articles have pointed out that he might have been poisoned (e.g. Today's Zaman 2010).
[15] Cumhuriyet 1991h: 36-7, as cited by Gunter 2011, 92.

Legal Pro-Kurdish Political Party Candidates

Since the establishment of Turkey, several politicians with Kurdish backgrounds made their way into the Turkish parliament by supporting Turkish political parties such as President Turgut Özal. However, the first explicitly pro-Kurdish political party was established in 1990 and called People's Labor Party (*Halkin Emek Partisi*, HEP). It is important to mention that though in the past some Kurds entered the parliament, they did not belong to a particular party which mainly focused on the Kurdish issue.

Soon after the HEP party was dissolved for promoting separatist ideologies, another pro-Kurdish party emerged in 1993, called the Democracy Party (*Demokrasi Partisi*, DEP) which consisted of some politicians who had previously belonged to the HEP. Many members of this party were tried under Article 125 of the Turkish Penal Code which meant that "these people hold opinions which violate the indivisibility of the state and nation" (Gunter 1997, 14). Some of the party members were imprisoned for several years when in 1994, the DEP was constitutionally banned from the government. One of those imprisoned politicians was Leyla Zana, the first known Kurdish female politician to be elected into the parliament[16].

Even though the Kurdish language was officially no longer banned in 1991, Zana irritated the Kemalist establishment when she spoke Kurdish when taking the oath at her swearing-in ceremony, adding the words "I have sworn this oath for the sake of brotherhood between the Turkish and the Kurdish people" in Kurdish (van Bruinessen

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[16] Similar with male politicians not everyone in Turkey could easily be identified as a Kurd if they choose not to reveal their identity in order to avoid discrimination or just because they view themselves as Turkish. As the famous Turkish saying goes "Happy is who calls himself a Turk" is not about being Turkish as such more about becoming/identifying as one.

2001: 107, as cited by Zeydanlioglu 2012, 116). When she had joined the DEP party which was banned in 1994, this took her immunity away and she was thus put on trial. Zana became the first politician to speak Kurdish in the Turkish parliament and was eventually convicted in 1994 for alleged membership in the illegal terrorist organization PKK (Kurdish Worker's Party) to 15 years imprisonment. In 2004 she was released but sentenced again to 10 years imprisonment since 2008 for various political speeches (Mustafah 2012). While in prison, she received the Sakharov Award from the EU in 1995 for advocating for freedom of thought and expression.

Over the last two and a half decades several pro-Kurdish political parties (and also others) have been dissolved by the Turkish Constitutional Court for conflicting with "Atatürkist nationalism", the emphasis on "Turkishness", and especially if the "indivisible integrity of the state and nation" was challenged (Ünaldı 2014). The ban of the political parties is referred to in articles 68/9 of the constitution which deal with the regulation of political parties. If any political party seems to endanger the unity of the nation, the courts can close them down for violating this law mentioned above[17]. Not only pro-Kurdish parties, but also many others have been closed down for different kinds of reasons, including some parties with Islamist roots. In the case of the pro-Kurdish parties, they were not able to propose regulations for more Kurdish linguistic rights since then they would be pursuing separatist politics.

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[17] Turkish Constitution 1982. For instance, Article 68/4 of the Turkish constitution states the following on the political parties:

> The statutes and programmes, as well as the activities of political parties shall not be in *conflict with the independence of the State, its indivisible integrity with its territory and nation*, human rights, the principles of equality and rule of law, sovereignty of the nation, the principles of the democratic and secular republic; they shall not aim to protect or establish class or group dictatorship or dictatorship of any kind, nor shall they incite citizens to crime. [emphasis added]

European Union Membership

The year 1999 is of great significance for Turkey: It is not only the year where Öcalan the

PKK leader, was captured (since it looked as if the armed struggle against the Kurdish

guerilla was over after his capture), but also the year when Turkey's negotiation for

candidacy for European Union (EU) membership started, if it fulfilled certain criteria.

Turkey's aspiration to be part of the West did not just start with the establishment

of the European Coal and Steel Community in the early 1950s which has been called the

EU since 1992. In reality, from the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 and

even earlier, the founder of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal, had big aspirations for Turkey to

follow the lead of the West and of Europe. In 1987, Turkey initially submitted its

application to be part of the European Union even though the negotiation process did not

begin with the EU member states until 1999.

Any country interested in joining the EU has to meet certain criteria or in other

cases, alter its laws and policies according to the EU's rules. These conditions known as

the Copenhagen Criteria[18] lay down the rules for a country to meet before it can become

an accession candidate. One of the requirements in the political sphere is that the

candidate member state is a democratic country with the rule of law as well as the

protection and respect of the human rights in general and of the minorities. Accordingly,

Turkey's difficulties in gaining candidacy status for the membership in the EU was also

related to human rights violations towards its Kurdish minority.

According to Kirisci (2011), the European Union played an essential role in

initiating greater cultural rights for the Kurdish minority in Turkey since the EU

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[18] Europa 2015.

membership application was approved in 1999. Some of the concerns which had significance for the Kurdish question were "enabling broadcasting and education in minority languages, liberalising freedom of expression and association, and the adoption of a modernised penal and civil code" (Kirisci 2011, 335). Thus, as a result of initiating accession talks, Turkey adopted several harmonization policies to align its laws with the EU law such as abolishing the death penalty. However, the legal standing of minority rights is still contested as Turkey does not recognize Kurds as a minority, since the only legally existing minorities are non-Muslim groups. This shows that Turkey continues with the invisibilization process of the 20th century with not recognizing the Kurds as a group.

In regard to linguistic rights, over the following years, more progress and opportunities occurred following the opening of the Kurdish courses in 2003, as will be analyzed more thoroughly in the next chapter. However, overall the EU does not lay down rules about what kind of a political system a member state should adopt and specifically what kind of institutions the member state should have besides being democracies. For instance, in cases like Turkey, where different groups of people exist, a better alternative could be a consociational, power-sharing democracy similar to the political system of Switzerland. Since the EU does not go this far with its regulations for the political system or a threshold for political parties, the extent to which political rights of Kurds could be achieved by Turkey becoming a candidate country to join the EU remains questionable.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the rising prevalence of the Kurdish issue especially through

nationalistic movements led by the student organizations that turned into the PKK

movement. Also, for the first time in Turkey's history, a Turkish President acknowledged

the Kurdish issue and temporarily lifted the ban on the Kurdish language without

granting any further rights such as education and its use in the media. Further domestic

factors are based on political parties and politicians who brought the Kurdish issue to the

table. However, once the president died, matters stood still and instead Turkish officials

interpreted events such as the Newroz celebrated by Kurds as Turkish traditions in a way

to show that all citizens of Turkey go back to Turkic roots and again denied the existence

of the Kurdish minority. Events like these are still part of the transition period because

they reflect the last desperate attempts of the Turkish state to argue that Kurds were part

of the Turkish people.

  As an external factor, the European Union played a major if not the necessarily

significant part since Turkey had to grant more cultural rights to its minority groups

which resulted in the introduction of private Kurdish courses in 2003.

CHAPTER V

End of Turkish Language Hegemony in the 21st Century?

This section analyzes the first 15 years of the 21st century. As of early 2015, the official

status of the Kurdish language in Turkey still remains ambiguous. It certainly does not

enjoy the same status as the Turkish language does. While the previous chapter surveyed

existing secondary literature by various scholars, this chapter heavily relies on analyses

of primary data, mainly newspapers in English and Turkish and party websites.

Newspaper articles are essential because they can heavily influence the public and they

provide the Turkish government and other political parties' newest arguments and

viewpoints. Also this analysis sheds light on the various existing arguments regarding the

Kurdish language and possibly gives hints for what these viewpoints could mean for the

survival of the Kurdish language in the years to come.

Originally, I focused on three newspapers which had the highest circulation

numbers, namely *Zaman*, *Sabah*, and *Hürriyet*[19]. At the same time I decided to analyze

their English editions for a more thorough analysis. Balci (2010) categorizes these three

or six newspapers in terms of ideology in the following way. He describes Hürriyet as a

secular or Kemalist[20] media; Sabah is viewed as a liberal oriented media with some leftist

and conservative writers; and Zaman's political affiliation is conservative/Islamist and

pro-government although the English edition might host columnists with a liberal

orientation, as well (Balci, 2010, p.77). The content I examined ranges from 2003 until

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[19] Haber Aktüel 2008.
[20] The term Kemalist, refers to someone who is an ardent supporter of the revolutions of Mustafa Kemal
Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey.

2015; however, most of the articles I ended up using are closer to the year 2015. Due to low search results on the Kurdish language in relation to the different political parties, I decided to conduct a general search using the "google" search engine for a wider range of online news articles from other online outlets.[21] The political orientation of the other outlets was predominantly conservative/Islamist or leftist/socialist.

More specifically this chapter looks into two areas: Education and the use of Kurdish language by political parties. The former speaks for itself as education in a language is essential to produce more literature, maintain its survival, and expand the status of a language. Education also influences the youth and their identity, if they acquire the language generationally and especially if accompanied by literacy – then its survival can be ensured. Politics, in contrast is about what adults are doing, but more importantly it is about the regulatory environment and the large-scale mass-media circulation of language and language ideologies. By focusing on political parties and the extent to which they support the spread of Kurdish and to what extent they make use of Kurdish during political events can impact the hindrance or the survival of Kurdish. Additionally, there are many other pivotal areas where a language's status and importance can be observed as in entertainment and trade. For the scope and nature of my thesis I deem these two areas most useful to adequately answer my research questions. Before, the newspaper analysis and its impact on the two research areas, I will illustrate how the realities of the public on the Kurdish language in the 21st century look like.

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[21] For a complete list, see Appendix 3.

Some Realities on the Use of Kurdish

Nicole Watts (2010) explained in her book *Activists in Office: Kurdish Politics and Protest in Turkey* that although Kurdish is not an official language in Turkey, it is predominantly used in the Southeast region, including in official political settings, such as municipalities. She observed that in these regions Kurdish is often used for daily communications by mayors of municipalities (Watts 2010). In one of the author's interviews, the mayor of Diyarbakir (one of the most populous cities in Southeast Turkey, approx. 2 million inhabitants) argues that:

> For a long time during the conflict one of the goals of the state was to destroy Kurdish language and culture. One of the signs of peace would be to be able to use Kurdish freely, in public and official places. It was also very important as a way of reestablishing the municipality's relations with the people. So as soon as I came into office we started using Kurdish in some official documents and in most meetings, except the most official. Of course there was some debate about it, but it was very important to me. The governor didn't like it— he told us to stop— but he couldn't do anything about it (Baydemir, interview, 2005, as cited in Watts, 2010, p. 151).

The Kurdish language was not only used in spoken communications such as in festivals, concerts, and conferences, but also distributed through written pamphlets in the Turkish and Kurdish languages. This occurred even though as of 2009 the Turkish law

> still required all party business (campaigns, congresses, and official correspondence, for instance) to be conducted in Turkish. The law applicable for municipalities was somewhat more vague, requiring Turkish for "official business" but stating that municipal use of other languages for interpersonal communication was permissible if necessary. Pro-Kurdish mayors in some municipalities, especially in Diyarbakır, tried to take advantage of this loophole. (Watts 2010, 151).

Watts' research shows that the bans on the Kurdish language did not hinder the Kurdish language being spoken in people's daily lives, including in governmental offices.

In order to further illustrate the significance of a language, one can look into recent studies about what it means to speak Kurdish on a daily basis. For instance, a recent project pointed out the importance of language to young Kurds and Turks in Turkey. This project conducted by Leyla Neyzi in 2011/2012 on "Young People Speak Out: The Contribution of Oral History to Facing the Past, Reconciliation and Democratization in Turkey" is filled with interviews of young Kurds and Turks (mostly in their twenties) in two big cities in Turkey (Mugla in Southwest Turkey; Diyarbakir in Southeast Turkey). The outcome of the project made it evident that people of roughly the same age living in the same city were having completely different experiences.

One of the interviewees, male, 26 from the Kurdish city Diyarbakir recalls the economic difficulties his family faced as a result of migration when his family left their village to move to the city (Gencleranlatiyor website 2012a):

> You migrate to the district or to the city, and then again you're without work, the children are hungry, many different needs become a priority, it was really hard, difficult for the family, I mean. It was really a difficult process, and there were nine of us children. Each one of us started working when we were 7, 8, 10 years old. That's how it was. Because there is no alternative, I mean you have to work. You either go hungry or you work, there's no other option.

Another male interviewee, 29, from Mugla, the Western part of Turkey talks about the implications of Kurdish migration to bigger cities in the West and the unequal wage gap (Gencleranlatiyor website 2012b):

> Because it's cheap labor. It always concerns the Kurdish population, though they say the same is true in the Black Sea region, but in the construction sector labor is cheap and in the tourism sector labor is cheap. I don't think they have insurance,

for example. Most probably the people working in the bars are paid monthly or daily. I think that's why they don't raise their voices much. Who else can they get to work in their restaurant, their bar? If you bring a professional barman from Antalya, he will ask for 5000TL [$1800], but when young man who has never handled a whiskey bottle comes to your bar you can say, "I'll give you 1000TL [$350]." Maybe he'll learn late, but he will learn in some way. I think that's the reason.

In a different interview a female, 24, this time from Diyarbakir, while she seems to better economically better off, talked about the challenges and effects of not being able to converse in the Kurdish language (Gencleranlatiyor website 2012c):

In the end, nobody speaks Kurdish, and you are the child of working parents. Most of my classmates there were the children of officers. Because they were also the children of working parents, they were my friends. So that's how you grow up. You don't learn anything about your language, regardless of how much it's spoken at home. But because my mother and father spoke Turkish outside the home, they also started to communicate and speak in Turkish at home. And so you only learn Turkish. People got on my case a lot for this. It's like, "What kind of a Kurd are you, you don't speak Kurdish, you're this, or that… How does this happen" and so on.

In an interview by the newspaper *Today's Zaman* the director, Leyla Neyzi, also emphasized that throughout the dozens of interviews they conducted, language specifically was a major contributing factor to these different experiences among Turkish and Kurdish youth:

The language is so symbolic for Kurds, it's the most important issue, I think," Dr. Neyzi [the author of the project] commented. "It's sort of the tip of the iceberg and yet when people hear Kurdish music or when they hear Kurds speaking to one another people are disturbed by that. I, personally, encounter it all the time. So in a way, even speaking that language [Kurdish] becomes a point of aggression. The Turkish youth, in and of themselves, you know, are wonderful people. It's just that they don't have the experience or the knowledge of what these other people have experienced. They are living in another country (Karatas 2014).

This project exemplifies that speaking another language has an impact on someone's world view and identity. Since Kurdish is subjected to discrimination, this results in Kurds and Turks in Turkey having different life experiences based on the languages they speak. Some of the interviewees recalled their difficulties when they started elementary school and were not able to understand any Turkish. Others complained that Turks would view Kurdish as a dialect rather than a distinct language. As the example above shows there are also cases in which the younger Kurdish generation has stopped learning Kurdish due to the dominance of Turkish[22].

Another country-wide survey prepared in 2009[23] on *Public Perception of the Kurdish Question in Turkey* underlines this vast gap between Kurds and Turks in regard to their perceptions of the significance of the Kurdish language. The survey was carried out face-to-face in 12 regions in Turkey in August 2009 with a total number of 10,577 respondents in 601 urban and rural areas. However, this national survey does not detail any information on the specific percentages of the number of Kurdish vs Turkish respondents and therefore one cannot answer to what extent the sample is representative of the population and similarly how many of the self-identified Kurds identified with each of the parties.

One of the relevant questions posed in the survey was whether all bans on the Kurdish language should be lifted in order for the Kurdish conflict to be resolved. From this survey, one can observe a few major trends amongst the Turkish and Kurdish

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[22] To listen to more interviews visit the website:
http://www.gencleranlatiyor.org/static/english/main/v5.html
[23] SETA (Foundation for Political, Economic, and Social Research) 2009.

respondents. Kurds emphasize the importance of the Kurdish language for their daily lives and identity. Furthermore, the respondents are categorized by their political party affiliation. This divide can provide indicators of the specific political parties' positions and the politicians' stance on the Kurdish language who again influence the public. In this case one can determine that some of the parties are more favorable towards introducing more Kurdish language rights and others not.

The exact wording of the questionnaire survey from 2009 is: *"Is it acceptable to lift the bans on the use of Kurdish language for the settlement of the Kurdish question" (p.57/8)?*

Distribution by Political Parties - Ethnic Origin Kurdish

Chart values:

Yes: AKP 74.1, CHP 67.5, MHP 58.6, DTP 87.2

No: AKP 16.7, CHP 24.2, MHP 27.6, DTP 9.9

No Idea: AKP 9.2, CHP 8.3, MHP 13.8, DTP 2.9

Legend: AKP, CHP, MHP, DTP
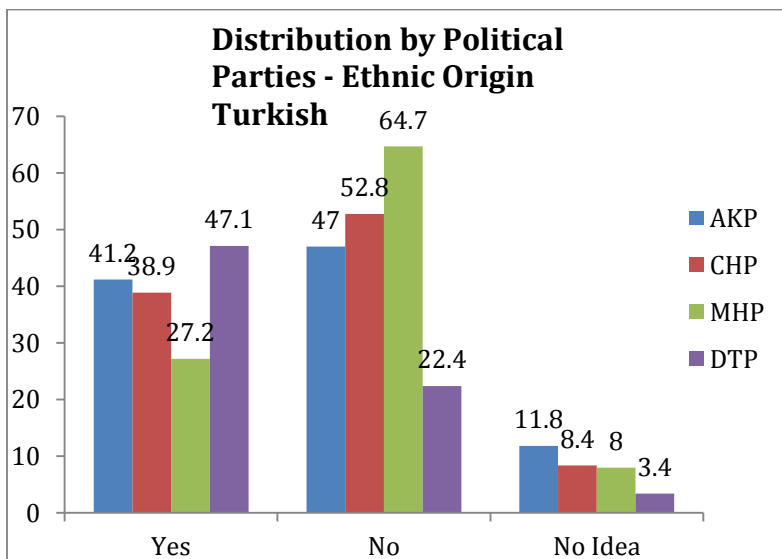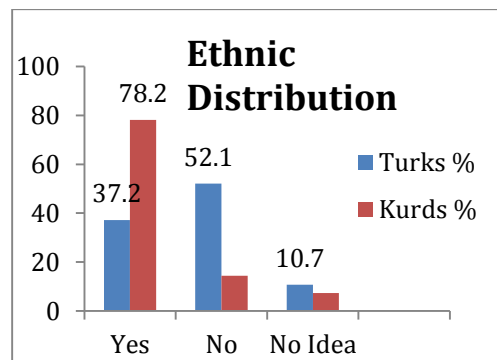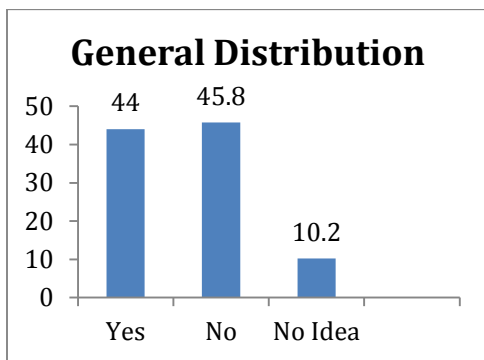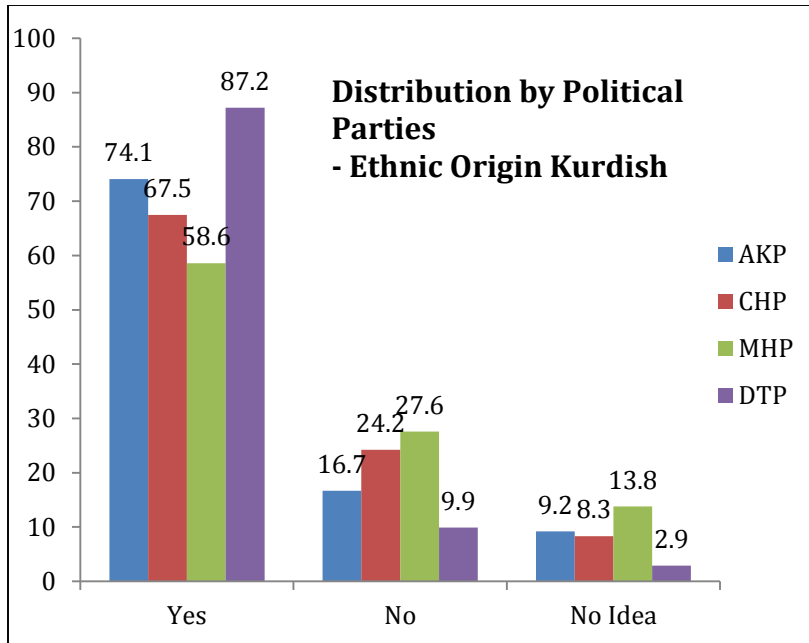
In these charts, there are five different political parties included which are/were represented in parliament in 2014 (except that the DTP/pro-Kurdish political party joined the parliament in 2015 for the first time). While I will introduce each of these parties more in detail in pages 65-68 of this chapter, for a better understanding of these charts I will briefly point out the leanings of each party.

The AKP has been the ruling party since 2002 and is considered a center-right party with more religious leanings. The CHP is the founding party of Turkey and is a center-left-wing party with a Turkish nationalistic orientation. The MHP supports the interests of Turkish nationalist and religious voters. The DTP is a pro-Kurdish party primarily interested in Kurdish issues, but the successor parties have been aiming to capture a broader spectrum of leftist voters positioning the party into central left.

These charts indicate two key points. Firstly, there is a major ethnic distinction between Turks and Kurds when it comes to having all bans towards the Kurdish language lifted. Secondly, the differences are not only based on ethnicity, but also reflected by the

political affiliation. In general, one can note that Kurds are highly in favor of the lifting of

all bans towards the Kurdish language regardless their political affiliation.

Simultaneously, by looking at the charts only, one can observe that the length of the

charts are similar in each category based on whether the respondents from each party are

in favor or in opposition of the bans for the Kurdish language. For instance, in either

ethnicity, individuals adhering to the MHP party are least likely to accept the lifting of all

bans and most likely to oppose the legalization of the Kurdish language. In other words,

the political parties whose members are most likely to accept the lifting of all bans on the

Kurdish language and are therefore more Kurdish friendly are in descending order: the

DTP, AKP, CHP, and MHP.

Area One - Political Parties

As this paper looks at the Kurdish language question from a political perspective, it is

essential to analyze view points of the political parties listed in the charts above.

Similarly, it is sensible that this analysis focuses solely on these four political parties to

better understand the dynamic between language and politics in Turkey because these are

the major parties which are usually represented in the Turkish Parliament since their

emergence.

Before going more into detail and presenting each party's views in regards to the

Kurdish language, I will briefly introduce each party and its ideological background in

the 21st century.

Ruling Party: AKP - The Turkish State

The Justice and Development Party abbreviated as the AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*) was founded in 2001 and won the general elections in 2002. More specifically, the AKP is a fundamental actor as it has been the ruling party, representing the Turkish State since the beginning of the 21st century (precisely 2002).

The AKP was not an entirely new party. It was influenced by various past parties that also had religious leanings, but were banned due being considered not secular enough (Bahcheli and Noel 2010, 189). According to the AKP, it is a conservative democratic party, not an Islamist party, but many secularists (Kemalists) "fear that it has a hidden Islamic agenda and that its ascendancy poses a threat to the secularist nature of the Turkish state" (Rabasa et al. 2008, 53). Yavuz argues that Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the leader of the party and current President of Turkey, changed the party program over the years to place more emphasis on the "creation of a strong state capable of providing welfare and socioeconomic justice" (Yavuz 2004, 285).

Republican People's Party - CHP

The Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyyet Halk Partisi*, CHP), founded by Mustafa Kemal, emerged in 1923. As discussed in chapter three, it was the only governing party until 1946 in Turkey. It is famous for its six tenets or arrows as shown in their party flag. These arrows represent the principles of 'republicanism, populism, nationalism, secularism, etatism, and revolutionism' (CHP website 2015). This party is also known as the Kemalist party as Mustafa Kemal founded it; thus, if a person regards herself as Kemalist, she probably adheres to the aforementioned six principles and is a

follower/admirer of Mustafa Kemal. Since the second half of the 20th century until 2015, the CHP has remained the main opposition party and only received twice the majority vote, in the 1961 and 1977 elections where they benefitted from the military coups (Özkan 2007).

Nationalist Movement/Action Party – MHP

The Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP) was established in the 1960s and is viewed as an ultra-nationalist and conservative (in a religious sense) party in Turkey (Global Security 2011). Its emblem is the three crescents which represent the Muslim religious background and the grey wolves to symbolize a Pan-Turkic nationalist ideology. This party reflects a synthesis of ultra-Turkish nationalism and Islam (ibid). Yavuz (2002) writes that in the early 1990s three main identity dilemmas arose in Turkey, with which the *Kemalist* state ideology could not cope:

> "the relationship between Islam and secularism; the rigid nation-state ideology versus the rights of Kurdish and Alevi [a minority religious group that derives from Shia Islam] groups; and economic liberalization versus a state-guided economic system" (Yavuz 2002, 202).

In short one can argue that the MHP's ideology is very centered on the Turkish nation-hood. This radical right-wing ideology of the MHP has remained a hindrance for promoting greater cultural rights for Kurds as "there is no place of identity politics in MHP's political language other than the Turkish identity" (Odul 2010, 136).[24]

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[24] However as the charts above show there are some Kurds even if the number seems very small who might identify and or support this party for many reasons such as possibly due to their love to the country as a whole and wanting to preserve its unity.

Pro-Kurdish Political Parties: DTP, BDP, HDP

Since the 1990s, several pro-Kurdish parties were established in Turkey over the course

of the years to represent the interests of the Kurds. In the charts above the Democratic

Society Party (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi*, DTP) is listed for pro-Kurdish political

parties.This party was dissolved in 2009 and succeeded by the Peace and Democratic

Party (*Baris ve Demokrasi Partisi*, BDP) which was intact from 2008 until 2014.

Therefore, the focus will be primarily on the BDP and its successor. What remains noted

is that the chairman of this party, Selahattin Demirtas, continued to remain in position

when the BDP was banned and the People's Democracy Party (*Halklarin Demokratik

Partisi*, HDP) emerged in late 2014.

In a little over two decades, nine pro-Kurdish political parties were established,

but eight of them were eventually dissolved and/or banned by the Turkish Constitutional

Court. The reason for the party's ban from the Turkish parliament had its grounding in

the argument that the alleged party was supporting a terrorist agenda and threatening the

security of the country. Even though none of the pro-Kurdish political parties ever used

any kind of wording indicating "Kurdish" in their names, yet it is widely known that they

are predominantly engaged in the representation of Kurds and for greater recognition of

their rights. The parties name choice thus also reflect a degree of invisibilization of the

Kurdish language and culture. Especially, the more recent parties such as the BDP and

its successor the HDP are most committed to advocate for increased recognition for the

Kurdish cause and to increase Kurdish cultural capital in Turkey, for example through

introducing mother tongue education in Kurdish.

For future studies it would be interesting to further investigate the role of the HDP

as it has been very vocal especially in the 2015 parliamentary elections. As their

surpassing the 10% threshold in 2015 showed, the HDP is no longer only advocating for

Kurdish rights, but they also declared more protection for other minorities, such as the

LGBT community and increased protection for women rights. However, at this point it

remains difficult to assess to what extent the use of the Kurdish language aided this party

in gaining entrance into the parliament in June 2015 for the first time as a pro-Kurdish

party.

Regulations on Election Campaigns

The Turkish constitution lays down in Article 81 of the Law 2820 that political parties

cannot argue that minorities exist in Turkey and also "it is forbidden to protect or develop

non-Turkish cultures and languages" (Skutnabb-Kangas and Bucak 1995: 356)" (as cited

in Zeydanlioglu 2012, 110).[25] Up to 2011, political candidates could be convicted for

even speaking Kurdish during an election campaign.

Between 2002 and 2007, five politicians were convicted for up to one year

because they had spoken Kurdish during election campaigns. The persons concerned had

spoken Kurdish to a crowd of people during rallies because part of the gathered group

could not comprehend them otherwise (ECHR 2013; 022 (2013) "Conviction for

speaking Kurdish during election campaigns breached freedom of expression"). When

the case was brought to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) the judges decided

that the Turkish Constitutional Court had violated Article 10 of ECHR on the individuals'

freedom of expression. The precise verdict was that "while states had discretion to

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[25] For the Law on Political Parties see the website of the Turkish Parliament:
http://www.anayasa.gen.tr/2820sk.htm

determine their linguistic policies and were entitled to regulate the use of languages

during election campaigns, a blanket ban on the use of unofficial languages coupled with

criminal sanctions were not compatible with freedom of expression" (ibid). Since these

candidates were not elected officials yet, they had not spoken Kurdish in political

buildings or settings, the conviction of the politicians was deemed illegal. Due to this

violation, the Court held that Turkey pays the five individuals over 60,000 Euros

compensation in total.

This case was significant as it led to the amendment of the articles regulating

election campaigns and specifically which languages could be used during them. Since

2011 new regulations were established for campaigning, including that now

advertisements could be made in languages other than Turkish (OSCE 2014). This

accomplishment was primarily due to the decisions of the ECHR. The new rule was a

huge success particularly for (pro-Kurdish) politicians since now more citizens in Turkey

could be approached and language is no longer a barrier for a candidate to communicate

with the voters.

However, another regulation affecting the political parties which persists is the

10% threshold. Even though this rule might seem like it does not affect the survival of

the Kurdish language, in reality it affects which parties can enter the parliament and thus

which further regulations are adapted. For instance, the high threshold of 10% hinders not

only regional parties such as the pro-Kurdish political parties, but many others from

entering the parliament. In 2002, for instance, five small parties with a percentage over

5% did not gain entrance into the parliament; in total over 45% of the votes were

disenfranchised since none of their political party entered the parliament. Thus, from the

18 parties contesting the election, only two parties passed the threshold, the AKP (34%)

and the CHP (19%), which shows that only about half of the voting population were

represented in the parliament (OSCE 2002, 7).[26] This threshold barrier is thus not only an

obstacle for pro-Kurdish parties. Some extreme islamist parties have also been banned,

the majority of the parties remaining pro-Kurdish political parties.

     Thus, these electoral outcomes make the parliament less democratically

representative, as in 2002 when the AKP party gained two-thirds of the seats even though

they only received 33% of the votes (ibid). Since the introduction of the 10% threshold,

many politicians have criticized this high percentage barrier and requested that Turkey

lowers it.

     However, Erdogan, the former PM and current President, has frequently opposed

this request. In a recent press interview in 2013 he dismissed the reduction of the 10%

threshold with this reasoning (Hurriyet Daily News 2013):

> My thoughts on the threshold are clear. We don't have that on our agenda. This
> wasn't something that has ever been done in our time. We don't want to put our
> country through any suffering, we want to continue with a process that has been
> tried before.

The comment suggests that Erdogan is not interested in more parties being represented in

the parliament. He only wants to ensure that his party remains in power and receives a

bigger share of the seats like most political parties do. Reading through diverse

newspaper articles on the 10% election barriers, all the political parties except the AKP

criticize them. This is not surprising, since the AKP is the party that has profited the most

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[26] Five parties which gained over 5% of the votes were the MHP with 8.3%, the Motherland Party (ANAP)
with 5.1%, True Path Party (DYP) with 9.55%, The Youth Party (Genc) with 7.25% and DEHAP with
6.2%.

from this rule. In the 2014 presidential elections and also the 2015 parliamentary elections, this threshold continued to be an obstacle for more voices to be heard and represented. For instance, even though Erdogan as the President of the country, is constitutionally required to be non-partisan (Yildiz 2014), yet he continued to favor the AKP party as it was seen in the 2015 parliamentary elections. However, after the June 2015 election results there has been a "hung parliament" as no coalitions could be formed and re-elections are likely to occur. As voters of the pro-Kurdish party experienced that their vote counts this could result in more voters to voting for the HDP, instead of the AKP, for instance.

Use of Kurdish in Election Campaigns

As mentioned before, since the 2011 elections it has been legal to initiate election campaigns in languages other than Turkish. A number of political parties and politicians have done so. One example is how the Turkish state handled broadcasting rights in Kurdish. As of 2009, a state-owned Kurdish TV channel (TRT 6) was introduced which broadcasts in the different Kurdish dialects 24/7. However, some believe that this channel was mainly established to counter-balance the Denmark-based Kurdish nationalist Channel "Roj TV" which has existed since 2004 and is aired all over Europe and also in Turkey (Siddique 2009). Another controversy is about the timing, as the channel was introduced in January 2009. Erdogan provided an opening speech where he said "May TRT-6 be beneficial" in Kurdish to welcome the channel (ibid). Some have argued that this was a very tactical timing as in March 2009 local elections were taking place and Erdogan was hoping to win over Kurds' hearts with the Kurdish sentence, receive their

votes and to hinder Kurds voting for pro-Kurdish political parties.

In the 2014 first presidential elections of Turkey, as a result of a new presidential system, the AKP party also heavily used the Kurdish language for campaigning purposes, such as composing a campaign song in Kurdish and distributing posters all over Southeast and East Turkey in Kurdish (Bugun 2014). In a different article, one of the AKP candidates explains why the party has decided to have banners in the Kurdish language during the elections (Today's Zaman 2014b):

> In the end, this is a local election. We, as the AK Party, thought that using the language that the people of Diyarbakir can understand is the right thing to do. For that reason, we decided to display our banners in Turkish, Kurdish and Zaza, which is a language related to Kurdish. These are our languages and we need to embrace them. Until not too long ago, other languages were regarded as representing fear, separatism and division between people; but today, we don't have these kinds of problems.

In this quote one can observe two major points, one that Kurdish is regarded as a local language instead of nation-state language and second some distinction is provided on how languages were used then compared to now, namely while not long ago Kurdish was banned out of fear, the AKP politician claims that these sort of challenges towards the Kurdish language no longer exist.

Similarly, the pro-Kurdish political party BDP/HDP campaigned heavily in Kurdish (including composing their election song in Kurdish), while the two other parties, the CHP and the MHP did not participate in electioneering Kurdish (Karadeniz 2014). Even though the MHP did not seem to participate in any election advertising in the Kurdish language, as their ideology is primarily about exalting the Turkish ethnicity, in 2011 in one of the Eastern cities in Turkey, one MHP candidate followed his own philosophy. He argued that while he does not have an election song in Kurdish, yet when

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he goes door to door to introduce himself to the citizens, he speaks Turkish and at other times Kurdish when necessary (Aktif Haber 2011). Since the MHP is a pro-Turkish party, this example could suggest that a Turkish politician had learned Kurdish for political purposes. However, it is rather difficult to trace how many Turks show the desire to learn Kurdish since the language still has a low prestige. It is more likely, as the charts earlier in the chapter indicated, that some Kurds are affiliated with the MHP because they identify with the party's ideology. This affiliation does not necessarily lead to the loss of Kurdish if they were taught the language by their families, however there is no data on how many people are affected by these diverse identities. In general, it is difficult to make sense of what it means for a Kurd to identify with the MHP (which is a right right-wing Turkish party) while still identifying him/herself as Kurdish.

In the case of the Kemalist party, the CHP, it needs to be noted that it was the first party to propose in 2010 that election campaigning should be allowed in the Kurdish language even though they do not seem to have done it themselves (Zaman 2010).

Besides electoral campaigns, there are other events where political leaders promote or use the Kurdish language. A controversial event happened in November 2013 when the Turkish Prime minister visited Diyarbakir to give a speech (Yegin 2013).[27] He was accompanied by the leader of the autonomous Kurdish region of Iraq [Barzani] and two Kurdish music artists from Turkey (one of the artists returned to Turkey after almost four decades in exile for his lyrics in the Kurdish language). On the one hand, this meeting seemed of great symbolic significance in Turkish history, as for the first time, a

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[27] It further needs to be noted that Diyarbakir (aka Amed by Kurds) plays a significant role for Kurds being one of the most populous cities (2 million) in Turkey and the unofficial capital of Kurdistan.

Turkish Prime Minister, Erdogan, went on stage with Kurdish singers and showed his

acceptance towards the language. On the other hand, some feel that other motives were

behind this meeting, namely the construction of an oil pipeline from the autonomous

region of Kurdistan in Iraq to Turkey (Letsch 2013). As parts of the Iraqi Kurdistan are

rich in oil resources, a peace settlement with Kurds in Turkey could hold benefits for the

Turkish state when engaging in a partnership with the Iraqi Kurds. Regardless of the true

nature of the motives, this action by the Turkish prime minister is a first in modern

Turkish history.

Looking into the laws regulating elections in regard to the Kurdish language, one

can identify two major findings. One is that there is some progress which allows the

promotion and use of the language, such as free campaigns in Kurdish. The second goes

along with the first, namely the way the Kurdish language is being put into play. The

Kurdish language is not being promoted or favored for the sake of being a language *per

se* and for its survival, but rather the Kurdish language is being used as a means to an end.

Politicians and the Turkish State exploit the language to win over the Kurdish public for

primarily one cause: re-election. However, this accomplishment is still a huge success as

this way especially the pro-Kurdish party can more easily communicate and reach out to

potential voters. In many videos about the 2015 parliamentary elections gatherings in the

Southeast, some Kurdish was always spoken and in many cases Kurdish entirely

dominated the political events/speeches given by the political candidates. Most of these

videos are available on online social media group platforms, such as facebook under the

group name "Kurdish Network Studies" where scholars and advocates post anything

related to Kurdish issues.

Area Two – Education

In school education, the language of instruction plays a significant role in students'

academic success. Scholars have argued that language is even most of the time the *main*

cause among minority children's low rates of achievements. Suzanna Romaine (2000)

puts the role of dominant languages in a society this way:

> As one of society's main socializing instruments, the school plays a powerful role
> in exerting control over its pupils. It endorses mainstream and largely middle-
> class values and language. Children who do not come to school with the kind of
> cultural and linguistic background supported in the schools are likely to
> experience conflict. This is true even of working-class children belonging to the
> dominant culture, but even more so for children of ethnic minority background
> (Romaine 2000, 205/6).

While this paper does not directly go into the ramifications of the ban of the Kurdish

language for its speakers, the next sections illustrate that despite the importance of an

ethnic language the path towards establishing a Kurdish language presence in schools has

been long and to what extent it should be more widespread is continuously debated on.

Below I have divided my discussion into three main areas: Kurdish language

courses, middle school education, and higher education. I have found out that not all

political parties have voiced their concerns equally on this issue; in some cases there was

little to no substantial content available to determine a party's position. However, I was

able to identify extensive commentary by the government/ruling party, AKP, as they hold

the majority in the parliament and are responsible for most of the changes which occurred

in the education system.

Private Kurdish Language Courses

Teaching instruction in the Kurdish language was only introduced in 2003 as a compliance agreement with the EU membership candidacy negotiation regulations. In big cities such as Istanbul several private courses for teaching Kurdish opened. But these courses soon shut down within two years for several reasons, including strict regulations and no funding (Öpengin 2012, 161). This concludes that even though the EU's regulation demanded the opening of Kurdish language courses in what manner these courses took place was left to the Turkish state which in this case resulted in a conflict with the survival of the language courses.

Others fault the strict regulations enforced by the Turkish state for the closure of the Kurdish courses.

> For example, courses could only last for 10 weeks and no more than 18 hours per week and were for adult students only; teachers had to be native speakers of Turkish and have a diploma (it was not clarified how these diplomas were to be obtained); students were to pay high fees and the buildings in question were to meet unusually strict regulations and that the private courses were not to receive financial support from the state (Yildiz and Muller 2008: 87–88; as cited in Zeydanlioglu 2012, 115).

Zeydanlioglu (2012) calls these severe regulations an example of how the Turkish authorities followed the letter but not the spirit of the EU law so that very few courses in Kurdish were actually taught. This language policy aimed at placing obstacles to the development of the Kurdish language which also attributed to the closure of the courses. This way, Zeydanlioglu argued that the state officials were able to demonstrate that "Kurds were not interested in learning their own language" (Zeydanlioglu 2012, 116).

These restrictions were also disadvantageous for young people, as only adults could sign up for these courses.

There was not only an age requirement, but students also had to complete eight years of schooling in Turkish before they could take these private Kurdish lessons. Öpengin remarked that even though the closure of the private teaching courses could look like a failure and point to a disinterest from the Kurdish speakers' side, yet the courses awarded a total of 1,179 certificates to students and 1,180 learners were still signed up for the classes when the programs shut down (Akin 2007: 35 and Öpengin 2012, as cited in Öpengin 2012, 161).

Lastly, the programs did not close unnoticed. A substantial campaign for continuous Kurdish education was initiated by Kurdish activists who brought hundreds of thousands of signatures to Parliament's attention (Zeydanlioglu 2012, 115). Mater (2002) argued that "authorities responded to this campaign by arresting hundreds of students for "supporting an illegal organization" under Article 169 of the Penal Code (as cited in Zeydanlioglu 2012, 115). The European Union published a yearly report on all the member candidates where they include the happenings in the country and to what extent the state is going in a direction which aligns with European legal codes such as protecting human rights and the rule of law. However, it has not enforced any legal sanctions on Turkey for the mistreatment of the citizens at this point. Rather there exists the rhetoric that as Turkey continues to restrict freedom of expression and violate human rights, it should be suspended from joining the EU (Duff 2014).[28] These developments and

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[28] Also, several articles appeared alone in 2014 in the German news magazine "Der Spiegel" with the message that it is unlikely for Turkey to join the EU due to its undemocratic nature as seen in elections etc., accessed 6-5-2015 from http://www.spiegel.de/thema/eu_beitritt_der_tuerkei/

attitudes towards the Kurdish language show that more efforts and support are needed to normalize languages studies in Kurdish.

Middle School Education

Since 2012, only middle school (grades 5 – 8) not primary or high school students, can choose Kurdish as an elective in Turkish public schools (Sabah 2012). This regulation was introduced in June 2012 by the Prime Minister at that time, namely Erdogan, who announced that Kurdish could be taken as an elective in primary and secondary schools if there was enough demand (Zeyrek 2012). For instance, in 2012 when Kurdish was introduced for the first time, a total of 18,847 fifth graders across the country chose Kurdish as an elective course among other languages which were titled 'elective living languages and dialects' in Turkey (Hurriyet 2013).

However, many argue that Kurdish language education in the K-12 school category does not seem to be progressing in a way to maintain its survival in Turkey. Instead, that it is necessary that Kurdish be taught as a mother tongue to school children, instead of the kids learning Kurdish as if it were a foreign language. Yet, education in the mother tongue remains much contested and is illegal. Article 42 of the Turkish Constitution says that "no language other than Turkish shall be taught as a mother tongue to Turkish citizens at any institution of education" (Turkish Constitution 1982). This regulation is viewed by some as a disadvantage for Kurdish kids not being able to learn their mother tongue sooner in schools (Haig 2004; Sheyholislami et al. 2012, as cited in O'Driscoll 2014, 279):

> Having to begin their education in Turkish is a serious disadvantage for Kurdish children, as demonstrated by the following statement by a Turkish teacher: 'The

kids did not understand me and I did not understand them. . . . The first year of education is wasted. There is no time set aside for the kids to learn Turkish. They have to learn a new language and catch up with their peers elsewhere in Turkey (International Crisis Group 2012:13 as cited in Driscoll 2014, 279).

In 2011, the pro-Kurdish political party the BDP filed a petition with one million signatures to have education offered in Kurdish to students in school. However, this request was denied by all the major parties (AKP, CHP, MHP) while MHP expressed concerns that education in a language other than Turkish will segregate the country.

> The Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) is also among political party leaders who openly expressed their opinions on the issue. Stating that the use of a language other than Turkish in public education will start a process that would divide the country, Bahçeli [the chair of the MHP party] has always opposed the idea of education in one's mother tongue (Today's Zaman 2011 and Bianet 2011).

In the same article it is pointed out that Erdogan, had said in a speech in September 2010 that education in one's mother tongue cannot be made possible for Kurds because it would lead to separatism:

> I am appealing to those who demand education in their mother tongue. You can open language schools wherever you want to teach your mother tongue. But do not request education in the mother tongue from us because the official language of Turkey is Turkish. Do not attempt to exploit this issue. I underline that these moves aim to divide our country (Today's Zaman 2011).

The arguments from both the MHP party and also the ruling party AKP simply contend that education in mother tongue for Kurds cannot be made possible as it would divide the country. Thus, one can observe a temporal discussion, where the discussions of fear and separatism from the past is still used in the present.

In a similar speech Erdogan states the impossibility of mother tongue education in Turkey by arguing that the request for education in mother tongue derives from the PKK

(Haksoz Haber 2012). He does not reference the requests of legitimate political parties (such as those mentioned before by the BDP and their one million signature petition) or what the needs of the Kurdish minority actually are. Simultaneously, in the same speech Erdogan exclaims out that the "Kurdish issue will be solved with no one other than our Kurdish brothers".[29] He separated the Kurdish people from the PKK organization, from the legal political party BDP, the Kurdish citizens, and at the same voiced convinced that this issue will be solved *with* his Kurdish brothers and sisters. This speech like other speeches shows how Erdogan makes contradictory arguments and vague offerings to the Kurdish community.

While Erdogan argues education in Kurdish language is not a right, this view is not consistent with his requests for Turkish school education in Germany (Der Spiegel 2010). In the case of Turkish immigrants, Erdogan argues that education in Turkish is indispensable since "one needs to know her/his own language first" (ibid).[30] Erdogan made this request at other times as well, arguing how essential education in the mother tongue is for Turks living in Germany. While it was not explicit in the text, since this demand was directed towards the Chancellor, one can conclude that Erdogan wanted public funds in Germany to be used to open Turkish schools (Gymnasien) as in Germany anyone can open a school if the person compensates the costs (Röbke 2010). From this example one can draw the conclusion that the Turkish president believed mother tongue education to be a human right, at least in some cases. Since the same right is not provided for the Kurds in Turkey this illustrates that Erdogan was on the one hand he was trying to

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[29] Author's translations from Turkish: Kürt kardeşlerimin sorunlarını hiç kimseyle değil sadece onlarla çözeceğiz.
[30] Author's translation from German: "Man muss zunächst die eigene Sprache beherrschen".

mobilize Turkish expats for votes in Turkish elections and on the other hand it becomes evident that the issue of individual human rights is in the case of Kurds more polemical than analytical.

Despite vague prospects for mother tongue education, there are initiatives to open Kurdish-only schools. Originally, these private Kurdish schools were supposed to be opened in the 2014 academic year, but the newspapers uniformly wrote that the applications for Kurdish schools were submitted too late and approval could not be granted. This decision made by the Turkish Ministry of Education resulted in boycotts such as parents not sending their children to school. In some areas of the Southeast region, schools were set on fire by Kurds so that about 2,000 students lost their schools. While some articles do not entail much detailed information or commentary, one specific author commented that setting schools on fire is very counter-productive since pupils will not be able to go to school until the buildings are restored or some might have to quit school if the nearby schools are too far (Today's Zaman 2014).

Similarly, Kurdish language teachers were very dissatisfied with their job prospects. In the summer of 2014 before the start of school, Kurdish language teachers participated in hunger strikes since they had yet not been appointed to public schools to teach. The article quoted the co-spokesperson of the Kurdish Language Teachers Platform saying that 1,700 graduates across Turkey are waiting to be recruited by the Ministry of Education. Further, the spokesperson added that:

> According to official data, last year 22,000 students chose Kurdish as an elective course, but they were not able to take Kurdish due to a lack of teachers. They were compelled to choose different courses, although they wanted to learn

Kurdish. Appointing 20 teachers is only for show. We do not want perfunctory recruitments (Today's Zaman 2014b).

As this quote shows, the regulations for teaching K-12 (or so far only in middle schools) education remain unclear. Especially for Kurdish language teachers there is not always guaranteed employment in spite of the large demands from pupils to take elective courses in Kurdish. Much more planning and action need to be taken by the Ministry of Education and the government to have more transparency on the regulations to ensure the spread and survival of Kurdish. At the same time, it is also remains the responsibility of the Kurdish speech community to ensure the survival of the language by placing more emphasis on Kurdish literacy also among the older, not just for the youth.

Higher Education

The regulations for Kurdish in K-12 education seems unsatisfactory since not all grades can participate in the language classes and only instruction in Kurdish is still debated on. However, this initiative of opening Kurdish language courses in 2003 has led to a growing number of universities providing Kurdish language courses and programs since 2010 even before elective Kurdish courses were introduced in middle schools.

Still, some obstacles are created by Turkish officials for universities to oblige by, such as restricting the number of students who can enter "the pedagogical formation training necessary to teach in schools" (Edîs 2012; Tayanç and Karanfil 2012; Yöney 2012; as cited in O'Driscoll 2014, 280). In this section, I will discuss a few universities which offer Kurdish language courses throughout Turkey.

One leading university in Kurdish Studies (or so-called Kurdology) is the public Mardin Artuklu University in Southeast Turkey. O'Driscoll pointed out that one of the

language courses offered in 2010, on a master's level in Kurdish was only open to 20 students, the bachelor's addition also only accepting 20 students. This is not a big number, considering that this was one of the few public universities providing language courses (O'Driscoll 2014, 280). Already in 2011, more progress in the spread of Kurdish language courses was seen; Mus Alparslan University, also located in the Southeast, opened a 4-year bachelor's program in the Kurdish language and literature which was also offered as an elective so that a total of 300 students could be enrolled (ibid).

While most universities merely offer Kurdish language courses, some programs go beyond the language and literature studies. Starting 2015, Dicle University introduced religious studies in the Kurdish language and the university had also started other programs such as encouraging medical students to take Kurdish courses to improve the communication with patients (Sol 2014 and Hurriyet 2015). Slowly more and more universities include Kurdish in their programs, and it is noteworthy that there are talks about Turkey's first Kurdish university starting soon (Today's Zaman 2013b).

Compared to K-12 education, the spread of Kurdish language education in universities seems be more successful as more and more universities offer Kurdish language classes and programs where the medium of instruction is Kurdish. Still, it needs to be noted that these universities are not free of scrutiny by the Turkish state. Artuklu University, which founded Turkey's first Kurdology program in 2010 as mentioned above, has been under much pressure and the staff has received threatening letters from the Turkish authorities. In another case the article stated that, "in 2012, 480 out of 500 students admitted on the basis of their command of the Kurdish language and literature were deemed objectionable because of their political leanings" (Taştekin 2014).

Chapter Summary

Important events/policies that affected the use of Kurdish language

Year	Events/Policies
1991	Official lifting of the ban of Kurdish language
2003	Introduction of private Kurdish courses
2010	Introduction of Kurdish language courses at universities
2011	Kurdish allowed during political campaigns
2012	Introduction of Kurdish language as an elective for middle school students (starting with grade 5)
2013	Renaming of towns, villages from Turkish to Kurdish
June 2015	Pro-Kurdish political party, HDP, is voted into the parliament with about 13% (first time a pro-Kurdish party surpasses the 10% threshold in Turkey)

In this chapter I have analyzed the status of the Kurdish language in two different areas: how it is used in election campaigns and the place of Kurdish in the Turkish education system. In each case, the views of the political parties and also the Turkish state were taken into account. It becomes apparent that the pro-Kurdish political parties are still disadvantaged due to the high threshold for political parties to pass and that until 2011 it was not possible to communicate in Kurdish with constituents. Their lack of representation in the government negatively influences the progress of Kurdish as other parties are not as committed and in some cases (as with the MHP) willing to stop any spread of Kurdish under the umbrella of Kurdish leading to separatism.

Still, the legalization of Kurdish during campaigns is a big step and may result in more meaningful political debates where more citizens can be approached and informed without the politicians fearing arrest or the closure of their parties arbitrarily.

While this text heavily discusses the ramifications of the 10% threshold, it also

needs to be noted that in the June 2015 elections, the pro-Kurdish party (HDP) for the first time made into the parliament with a total vote of 13%. This is a huge step and the expectations of Kurds are high from this victory for greater inclusion of the Kurds.

The presence of the HDP in the parliament could also affect the status of Kurdish in education, possibly the introduction of mother tongue education and in general more tolerance towards the use of Kurdish overall. After all, there still is a lack of transparency as to how Kurdish language courses can be elected by pupils and the possibilities for mother tongue education remains highly contested. Despite the dense Kurdish population in the Southeast, Kurdish is not a mandatory class for pupils. On a different note, the Ministry of Education proposed that Ottoman Turkish should be made mandatory to high school students (Milliyet 2014), a dead language that nobody in Turkey speaks. By contrast, having Kurdish mandatory in the populous Kurdish regions will be even advantageous for native Turkish speakers.

Up until now, Kurdish remains stigmatized and for many Kurdish students the low status of Kurdish hinders their aspiration to learn it. Even Kurdish political leaders are scrutinized and are readily associated with terrorism and separatism. Still, there is a growing number of universities not only offering Kurdish courses but using Kurdish as a medium of instruction in courses ranging from literature to religion. It is still too soon to speak of continued threats of linguicide. But at the same time uncertainties remain to what extent Kurdish will be fully developed in Turkey.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This thesis investigated language policy in Turkey and its effect on the public use and status of Kurdish language since the foundation of modern Turkey through the turn of the century to the year 2015. The first time frame, the long period of the 20th century elaborates on the origins of the Kurdish language with the establishment of Turkey. The thesis demonstrated the role the government played in establishing and inventing a nation-state based on Turkish ideals. Here, I illustrated how the planning and imposition of the Turkish language affected education and literacy schools in Turkey. Above all, one can observe an asymmetrical development of the languages Kurdish and Turkish in which the former was negatively affected by restrictive state policies. Once the decades long invisibilization and exclusion of Kurdish is understood, it becomes easier to assess the revitalization of Kurdish in the 21st century through opening of Kurdish language courses in various educational areas to its use during political campaigns.

The contemporary time frame relied on current and original information through newspaper to portray the use of Kurdish language. The contrasting views of political parties on Kurdish language education indicated the level of tolerance each political party had towards Kurdish and for the general Kurdish issue. The two areas analyzed in chapter five, while education is proposed to serve the youth, politics is concerned with the adult population and how its presence can maintain the survival of the Kurdish language.

The most thought provoking findings about this research has been how much education and literacy schools played a role in spreading the hegemonic view of the Turkish language which was the characteristic of the first half of the 20th century. It was

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surprising to find out that at the end of the Ottoman Empire and the beginning of modern Turkey, only a small percentage of the entire population was literate and therefore the change of the script from Arabic to Latin did not matter as much as one would think. This enabled the educated elite to impose strict rules for the newly created state in a top-down approach with an emphasis on secularism, modernization, and one nation-state similar to the European states. Language planning was an essential part of nation-building as language helps the state to control the behavior of citizens and build communities based on a specific unified identity (Haig 2004 and Anderson 1991), as illustrated through the speeches by Kemal Atatürk and other politicians, in addition to literacy campaigns.

Furthermore, literacy campaigns did not only teach adult citizens how to read and write but also assisted in teaching adults and children alike the state's ideals for how to become a good citizen. Realizing to what extremes the Turkish state went in order to manifest Turkish nationalism – executions and mass killings in the early years of the republic, random arrests and severe punishments, enforcing relocation of Kurds, opening boarding schools and just ban the publications and public use of a language – were some measures taken to create a forced unity across the country. At the same time, one could argue that all the attempted state policies to target linguicide ultimately failed as almost after one century there is still does not exist a unified Turkey where every citizen only speaks Turkish. The Kurdish population with an estimate of 15-20 million is the biggest minority group in Turkey and its demands and rights can no longer be ignored.

Still, the severe policies, also the restrictions imposed by the military limited the freedom of expression and introduced the 10% threshold for political parties to avoid the rise of minority groups and opinions to the parliament. For decades, it has been made

challenging if not impossible for pro-Kurdish political parties to gain access to the political arena and have the opportunity to bring forward unresolved Kurdish issues along with more cultural and linguistic initiatives to maintain the survival of a Kurdish identity.

Some scholars argued that during the 20th century linguicide was exercised by the Turkish state/military, even though this thesis points out that it was an attempted linguicide since in practice the Kurdish language is well maintained over many generations. However, one cannot deny the implications of the restrictive policies and now to what extent the revitalization of Kurdish in the 21st century can ensure the survival of the language for the future. As shown throughout this thesis, the Kurds were indirectly talked about and whenever they were mentioned it was to ban their identity, organizations, and language which made Kurdish invisible since the founding of modern Turkey.

Thus, the symbolically most important and visible positive step towards the revival of the Kurdish language occurred in 2003 with the introduction of *legal* private Kurdish courses. In this process for Turkey to achieve candidacy status to join the European Union, the European Council (heads/governments of the member states) required the expansion of rights to minorities as one major criterion. However, these Kurdish courses were short lived. Many closed after a couple of years due to financial and legal hardships, even though their closure did not halt the spread of Kurdish language. A few years later, in 2010, Kurdish was introduced at Turkish universities and since 2012 middle school kids can take Kurdish language courses as an elective.

Similarly, since 2011 the rules on election campaigns have been loosened so that political parties and politicians can use Kurdish when speaking to the public about

elections or politics in general. While not all political parties make use of Kurdish, yet it is not just the pro-Kurdish political parties who take advantage of campaigning in Kurdish. Considering that just a few years ago it was unthinkable for anyone to use Kurdish in political events, the widespread use of Kurdish in education and the political sphere are huge developments in Turkey's history. However, from the newspaper articles it became evident that not all political parties welcomed the progress of Kurdish language issue or were interested in promoting more improvement and accessibility for Kurdish in schools and universities. Particularly, the nationalist political party, the MHP, is strongly opposed to any concessions towards Kurdish, while the Kemalist party, the CHP, if not explicitly opposing the progress and maintenance of Kurdish, it also expressed little incentives for more education in Kurdish. The ruling party, the AKP, takes a more ambiguous stance, while it heavily uses Kurdish during elections campaigns, yet the party also exclaims that mother tongue education in Kurdish is not a viable right.

When comparing the Turkish government and its role over the past 100 years towards the Kurdish language, different aims, mainly restricting and recently loosening policies were enforced. The different roles and views of politicians on the Kurdish language throughout Turkey's history reflect that the "state is not a fixed ideological entity. Rather, it embodies an ongoing dynamic, a changing set of aims, as it engages other social forces" (Aslan 2007, p.249, citing Joel Migdal).

Despite the undeniable recent loosening of restrictions on the language's use, the literal survival of Kurdish language over many generations is not guaranteed. The long denial and invisibilization process almost during the entirety of the 20th century prevented the language from developing or establishing any legal status in Turkey. Since for many

generations the language was only passed on orally, some argue that it is due to this that very few Kurds today can actually write and read in Kurdish and that this would continue to be a problem even if literature in Kurdish were developed more extensively.

Therefore, some push for education to be conducted only in Kurdish for the language to survive. Such schools could counter the low status of the Kurdish language and more students might therefore desire acquiring it. In return, these Kurdish schools could lead to more Kurdish university programs and eventually an increase in scholarly literature. At the moment, universities mainly offer Kurdish language and literature classes or some courses on religious studies in Kurdish. Additionally, as scholars continue to be harassed for conducting research in Kurdish under the pretense that their actions are of a separatist nature, this sets grave limits to Kurdish enjoying the same legal status as Turkish. Thus, some politicians argue that, if Kurdish had a legal status in Turkey and was considered as one of the official languages, then the language would gain significance and others besides Kurds themselves would develop an interest in it and above all, the language would be depoliticized.

Even though this thesis especially focuses on the Kurdish language policies of the Turkish state, the language's survival goes beyond linguistic rights. The broader issues of minority rights in general with a growing Kurdish population are still left unanswered. The Kurdish issue does not only show implications from an ethno-linguistic perspective. As briefly pointed out in this thesis the uneven socio-economic developments in the Kurdish regions of Turkey bring along further inequalities among the Kurdish and Turkish citizens. Among these groups, women especially are most left out from

prosperous and literate careers even though their high illiteracy rates abetted the oral survival of Kurdish. Thus, more equality in many areas of East and West Turkey needs to be addressed besides mutual recognition and understanding among Kurds and Turks. Increasing awareness and open practice of Kurdish language and culture may also challenge the Turkish society – built on Kemalist values – to look for alternative ways to transform Turkey democratically and construct a new common identity which includes linguistic and cultural diversity (Gunes 2012). However, as noted briefly in the thesis, the recent entrance of the pro-Kurdish political party into the parliament shows some indication that the preservation of cultural and linguistic diversity in Turkey may become a real possibility.

In the 20th century, public officials in Turkey viewed the Kurdish language and Kurdish issue as a security issue and therefore imposed strict rules banning the language, relocating people, imprisoning, executing, enforcing Turkish language and names, and even establishing boarding schools for Kurdish children in order to prevent any secession attempts by Kurds. By contrast, the discussion of the 21st century presented in this thesis shows that politicians still talk about security and how the spread of Kurdish language is a threat to the unity of the country. However, it is being so openly and extensively discussed which was not the case even a decade ago. Now the Kurdish language has entered a different arena and can be viewed as a legitimate political issue that can be publicly discussed. The question remains then how long it will take for Kurdish language discussion to leave the political platform and become an inviolable human right.

Appendix A: Literacy rates

Adult population literacy rate by sex **-** Population 15 years of age and over

(%)

Year	General	Male	Female
1935	18.70	30.81	8.04
1945	28.45	44.25	13.51
1950	31.80	47.60	16.72
1955	38.70	56.10	21.20
1960	38.09	54.70	21.15
1965	46.22	64.22	27.50
1970	53.61	70.96	36.24
1975	61.50	77.20	45.00
1980	65.62	81.33	49.77
1985	75.90	87.50	64.23
1990	79.23	89.85	68.52
2000	86.50	94.42	78.50

Year	Male	Female
2008	95.98	84.18
2009	96.38	85.35
2010	97.30	88.07
2011	97.93	90.31

Note. Proportions are calculated by excluding unknown and foreigners are not included.

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK), 2012

**Appendix B:** Kurdish speech area in the Middle East (map from 1960)
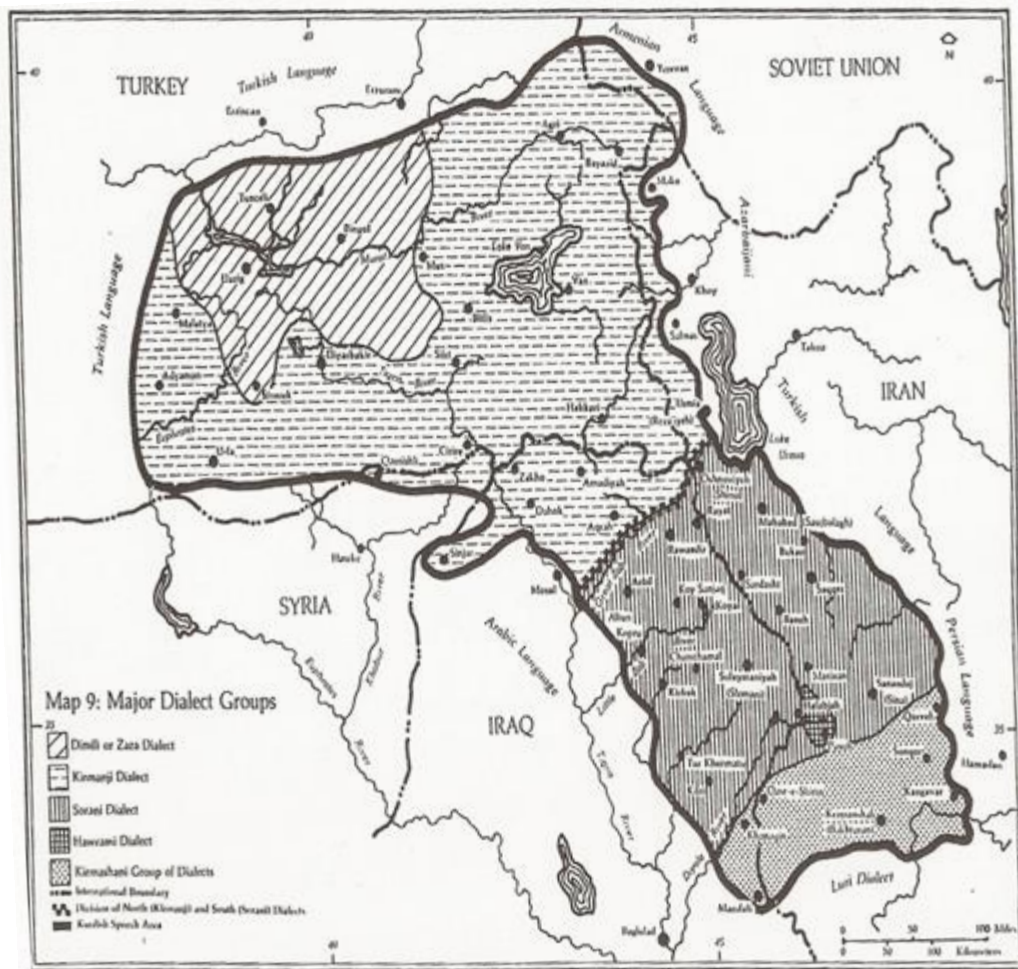
Source: Hassanpour 1992, 22

Appendix C: Most used online news outlets

Newspaper	English translation	Circulation[31]	Political Affiliation[32]
Zaman	Trans.: Time Eng.: Today's Zaman	1,154,804	Islamist
Hürriyet	Trans.: Liberty Eng.: Hürriyet Daily News	398,950	Secular/Kemalist
Sabah	Trans.: Morning Eng.: Daily Sabah	326,744	Pro-government/ Conservative
Milliyet	Trans.: Nationality Eng.: –	171,104	Secular
Bugün	Trans.: Today Eng.: BGN News	179,674	Pro-government/ Conservative
Bianet (Bağımsız İletişim Ağı)	Trans.: Independent communication network Eng.: English Bianet	Online only	Liberal/Progressive
Sol	Trans.: Left Eng.: –	15,485	Left-wing/socialist
Haksöz Haber	Trans.: Righteous Word News Eng.: –	Online only	Islamist

Appendix D: Number of 5th grade students by region who elected Kurdish in 2012
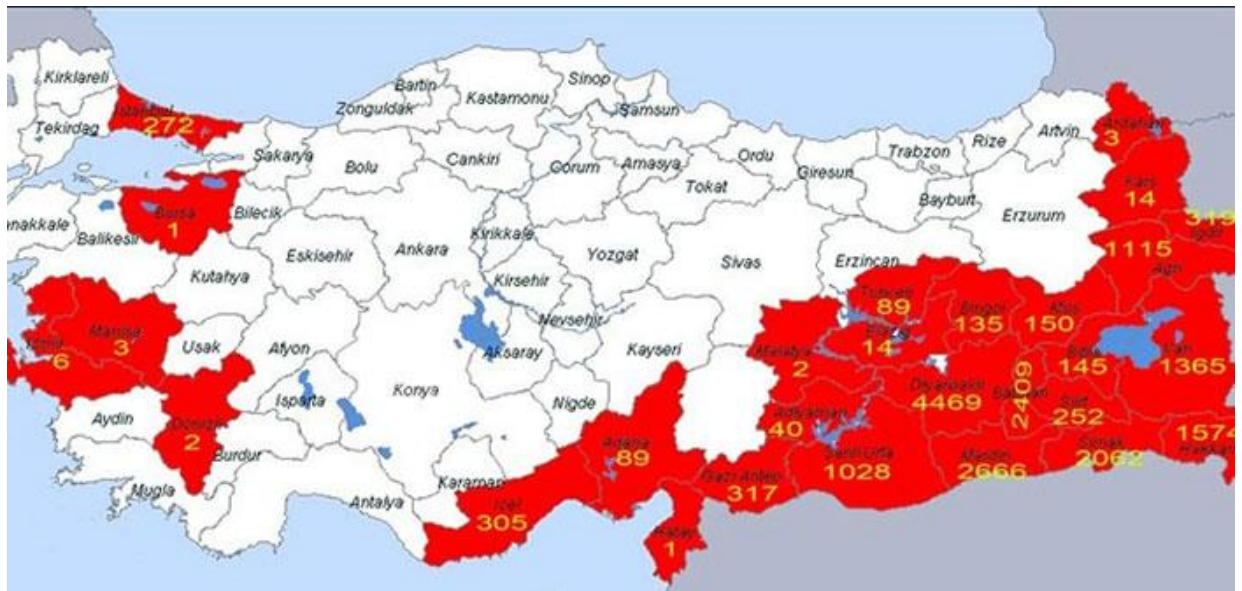
Source: Hurriyet 2013

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[31] These are weekly numbers for print newspapers (Turkish version) for the week of Feb. 17th, 2014, accessed on 7-22-2015 from http://tiraj.org/

[32] For a summary of Turkish media outlets visit: http://turkishpressguide.blogspot.co.uk/2011/06/leading-newspapers-in-turkey.html

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