Folk Linguistics in Istanbul: The Perception of Dialectal Variation

İstanbul'da Halk Dilbilimi: Diyalektal Çeşitlilik Algısı

GİZEM KARAKÖSE - KAMIL STACHOWSKI

Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, Poland.
(karakosegizem4@gmail.com), ORCID: 0000-0003-2542-745X.

Jagiellonian University, Cracow, Poland; Istanbul University.
(kamil.stachowski@gmail.com), ORCID: 0000-0002-5909-035X.

" "

Abstract: Despite its cultural diversity, Turkey remains a notable gap in the research map of folk linguistics and perceptual dialectology. This paper presents the results of a pilot study on the perception of dialectal variation conducted in Istanbul using the *draw-a-map* method. The proclamations of great dialectal diversity in Turkey notwithstanding, only a small minority of the respondents admitted to using a dialect themselves. Nonetheless, certain sociodemographic variables have been found to correlate with the selection of certain cities on the map. The discussion examines the potential linguistic and sociological factors influencing the responses, as well as the perception of dialectal variation in general. It emphasises the interplay between exposure, knowledge, and cultural diversity, and touches on the sociolinguistic context in Turkey.

Keywords: Perceptual dialectology, Turkish, sociolinguistics, cultural diversity, social identity, stereotypes.

Özet: Türkiye'nin kültürel çeşitliliğine rağmen, halk dilbilimi ve algısal diyalektoloji araştırma haritasında dikkate değer bir boşluk olarak kalmaktadır. Bu makale, İstanbul'da gerçekleştirilen ve çizim harita yöntemi kullanılan diyalektal varyasyon algısı üzerine bir pilot çalışmanın sonuçlarını sunmaktadır. Türkiye'deki büyük diyalektal çeşitlilik iddialarına rağmen, katılımcıların yalnızca küçük bir azınlığı kendilerinin bir diyalekt kullandığını kabul etmiştir. Bununla birlikte, bazı sosyodemografik değişkenlerin haritada belirli şehirlerin seçilmesiyle ilişkili olduğu bulunmuştur. Tartışma, yanıtları etkileyen olası dilbilimsel ve sosyolojik faktörleri, ayrıca genel olarak diyalektal varyasyon algısını incelemektedir. Maruz kalma, bilgi ve kültürel çeşitlilik arasındaki etkileşime vurgu yapmakta ve Türkiye'deki sosyodilbilimsel bağlama değinmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Algısal diyalektoloji, Türkçe, toplumdilbilim, kültürel çeşitlilik, sosyal kimlik, stereotipler.

Perceptual dialectology is a field that stretches across the border of sociology and linguistics, though for the majority of its relatively brief history it has been populated more by sociologists and psychologists than linguists. The primary concern of perceptual dialectology is the question of how different societies, in particular non-linguists, perceive dialects and dialectal variation.

The origins of perceptual dialectology date back to the 1930s in the Netherlands and Japan, but the idea only really gained momentum after D.R. Preston's works from the 1980s and 1990s. Since these publications, a considerable number of studies have been conducted for various languages, e.g. Arabic,[1] English,[2] German,[3] Polish,[4] Spanish,[5] Ukrainian,[6] and others. Turkish, however, remains largely untapped. We are only aware of four publications. Three of them are all based on the same single study in Bursa,[7] and the fourth concerns itself with the perception of a dialect,[8] not of dialect variation as this paper does.

─────────

1 Laila Alhazmi, "A Perceptual dialect Map of Western Saudi Arabia," *White Rose College of the Arts & Humanities Student Journal*, no. 3 (2017): 2-16.

2 Chris Montgomery and Joan C. Beal, "Perceptual Dialectology," in *Analysing Variation in English*, ed. Warren Maguire and April McMahon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 121-148.

3 Christian Schwarz and Philipp Stoeckle, "Stadt, Land, Berg. Vom Zusammenspiel von Dialektwahrnehmung und Topographie," *Linguistik online*, no. 85 (2017): 257-274.

4 Kamil Stachowski, "Przyczynek do dialektologii percepcyjnej Polski: Szczecin," *Język polski* 98, no. 1 (2018): 5-17.

5 María del Carmen Morúa and Julio Serrano, "Dos mil kilometros de por medio: dialectología perceptual contrastiva del español mexicano," in *VII Encuentro Internacional de Lingüística en el Noroeste*, ed. María del Carmen Morúa Leyva and Rosa María Ortiz Ciscomani (Hermosillo: UniSon, 2004), 253-276.

6 Марія Редьква and Каміль Стаховський, "Особливості сприйняття та розрізнення говорів української мови з погляду перцептивної діалектології (на основі анкетування, проведеного у м. чернівцях)," Науковий вісник Чернівецького університету 812 (2019): 86-94.

7 **1)** Mahide Demirci, "Gender Differences in the Perception of Turkish Regional Dialects," in *Handbook of Perceptual Dialectology*, vol. 2, ed. Daniel Long and Dennis R. Preston (Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2002), 41-50. **2)** Mahide Demirci and Brian Kleiner, "Gender and age-based Variation in the Perception of Turkish Dialects," *Language Awareness* 7, no. 4 (1998): 206-222. **3)** Mahide Demirci and Brian Kleiner, "The Perception of Turkish dialects," in *Handbook of Perceptual Dialectology*, vol. 1, ed. Daniel Long, and Dennis R. Preston (Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins. 1999), 263-281.

8 Müberra Seydi Ertek, "Dil Algısı Bağlamında Ağız Konuşurlarının Olası Tutumları: ANADOK Örneği," *Turkish Studies* 11, no. 4 (2016): 829-844.

This relative absence of Turkish from perceptual-dialectological research is surprising because Turkish appears to be a very promising subject due to the country's cultural diversity. Regardless of the ongoing conceptual debate regarding cultural pluralism in Turkey, the country stands out as a region where various communities with distinct cultural, historical, and linguistic backgrounds coexist.[9] The interactions among cities, regions, and people influence the formation of multicultural individuals, which simultaneously affects perceptions of language and dialect.

This paper presents the results of a pilot study into the perception of dialectal variation among the residents of Istanbul. It employs one of the methods introduced to perceptual dialectology by Preston, which he called *draw-a-map*,[10] though its origins date back to the 1940s.[11] Details of the design of the study, as well as its results, are given in sec. 2; their discussion can be found in sec. 3; and sec. 4 outlines some of the potential directions for future research, based on our trial survey.

1. Study
1.1. Design
The study consisted of a single-page questionnaire, presented in fig. 1. It contained two sets of questions.

The first group concerned the social background of the informants: age (three bins: ≤19, 20–29, and ≥30), gender (female/male/other), education (secondary/BA/MA), occupation (student/other; if "student" then university and faculty), together with three questions about their origin: the place of birth, the place where they grew up, as well as the rather Turkish concept of "nereli" (literally 'associated with where?'). With rapid industrialization, Turkey experienced major migration movements from rural areas to urban centres.[12]

---

9 Hacer Çelik, "Çokkültürlülük ve Türkiye'deki Görünümü," *Uludağ Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 9, no. 15 (2008): 319-332.

10 Preston, *Handbook*, vol. 1, xxxiv.

11 Saskia Schröder, "Mental maps als Zugang zu sprachlichen Wissen," in *Sprache, Literatur, Raum. Festgabe für Willy Diercks*, ed. Robert Langhanke (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2015), 163-181: 163.

12 Ertuğrul Güreşci and Ziya Yurttaş, "Kırsal Göçün Nedenleri ve Tarıma Etkileri Üzerine Bir Araştırma: Erzurum İli İspir İlçesi Kırık Bucağı Örneği," *Tarım Ekonomisi Dergisi* 14, no. 2 (2008): 47-54.

Individuals from the second generation of migrants face a choice between the identity inherited from their family and that associated with their place of birth or upbringing. They often choose the former; indeed, in our study less than a third of the respondents indicated the same place as their identity ("nereli"), and as their place of birth or upbringing.

The second group of questions was the study proper. Firstly, we asked the respondents whether they speak a dialect at home or with their friends, and if they do, whether they were corrected by teachers in school to speak the standard, i.e. Istanbul Turkish. The second question was the actual core of the study. As mentioned above, it was one of the five techniques proposed by Preston, the *draw-a-map* task.[13] The respondents were presented with the map of Turkey (fig. 1) with nineteen cities marked on it (mostly the largest cities, but also a few of the smaller ones to fill in the gaps in the east since the largest cities tend to be concentrated in the west of the country), and they were asked to mark the places where, according to them, Turkish is spoken differently. It was made clear to them that they are allowed to mark more than one place and to add cities and towns to the map. This question was followed by a request to explain why they chose the places that they did, and a little blank space for comments.

We did not feel it was necessary, or indeed advisable, to include nonce questions in the questionnaire in order to conceal the true nature of the study from the respondents. Be it from our own experience, or from the reports of researchers who have conducted similar studies, we are not aware of attempts to falsify the results, and we feared that we might inadvertently provoke just such a reaction should the purpose of the nonce question be guessed by one of the respondents, and the presumption of good will broken.

---

13 Preston, *Handbook*, 1:XXXIV. See also Schröder, *Mental Maps*, and Dennis R. Preston, *Perceptual Dialectology. Nonlinguists' Views of Areal Linguistics* (Dordrecht, Providence: Foris, 1989), 25-49.

Yaşınız: ☐ ≤ 19 ☐ 20–29 ☐ ≥ 30 Nerelisiniz: ....

Cinsiyetiniz: ☐ kadın ☐ erkek ☐ diğer Doğduğunuz yer: ....

Eğitiminiz: ☐ ortaokul ☐ lisans ☐ yüksek lisans Büyüdüğünüz yer: ....

Mesleğiniz: ☐ öğrenci
├ üniversite: ....
└ bölüm: ....
diğer: ....

Ailenizle evde ya da arkadaşlarınızla çevrenizde konuşurken bir ağız/lehçe kullanıyor musunuz?

└ Eğer evet ise, okulda öğretmeniniz tarafından İstanbul Türkçesi (standart Türkçe) konuşmak için uyarıldınız mı?

Lütfen haritada size göre Türkçenin farklı bir şekilde konuşulduğu yerleri işaretleyiniz
(birden fazla işaretleyebilirsiniz ve şehir ekleyebilirsiniz):

Eğer mümkünse, neden bu yerleri seçtiğinizi açıklar mısınız?

Yorumlar:

Çok teşekkür ederim!

Figure 1: The questionnaire used in the study (see the body text for an English translation of the questions).

Thus, the study was designed to be primarily quantitative. Whether the respondents would encircle entire regions on the map, or just select individual cities, both types of responses lend themselves quite well to quantitative analysis. The respondents were also asked to explain/justify their selection, the intention being to obtain qualitative data to complement the overall picture.

1.2. Results

The study was conducted in October 2023 among the students of Istanbul University. A total of 91 responses were collected. However, to minimise the number of variables, questionnaires with certain outlying answers were excluded (crossed-out entries in tab. 1), leaving a dataset of 70 responses. Given this relatively small sample size, the results presented in the paper need to be viewed as preliminary and treated with appropriate caution.

Questionnaires where the respondents selected their education level as "BA" (*lisans*) were not excluded even though in most cases they simultaneously said they are 19 or younger, which is not possible as this is the age at which studies can begin but not yet end. We believe that this is due to a misunderstanding of the question.

None of the variables has been considered to be a confounding factor.

Age		Education		Nereli	
≤19	46	secondary	1	Istanbul	16
20–29	30	BA	81	Çorum	5
≥30	14	MA	5	Kastamonu	4
NA	1	NA	4	Trabzon	4
				other	59
				NA	3
Gender		**University**		**Place of birth**	
female	58	Istanbul University	83	Istanbul	64
male	28	Yıldız Technical University	1	Izmir	2
other	4	NA	7	other	24
NA	1			NA	1
Occupation		**Department**		**Place of upbringing**	
student	81	American culture and literature	1	Istanbul	59
student + …	4	Anthropology	4	Izmir	3
other	6	Chinese language and literature	28	Bursa	2
		Electronics and communication engineering	1	Muğla	2
		Polish language and literature	41	other	24
		Theatre criticism and dramaturgy	10	NA	1
		NA	6		

Table 1: Social background of the respondents; crossed-out entries excluded from the study. (Derived from own data.)

In the first question, only ten respondents admitted that they speak a dialect at home or with their friends. Their answers in the *draw-a-map* task did not differ in a statistically significant way from the answers of those who speak the standard variety of Turkish.

In the *draw-a-map* task, four respondents marked entire regions while the remaining 66 only selected individual cities. We converted these four responses to the format chosen by the majority. An aggregate map is given in fig. 2, and the discussion in sec. 3.2.

Several respondents marked additional cities and towns on the map. These have not been included in the aggregate map because none has been marked by more than one person. They were: Bingöl (added by a person who identifies with this city ("nereli")), Bolu (likewise), Edirne (no connection), Kastamonu (from and born in the city), Rize (no connection), and Tunceli (from the city).
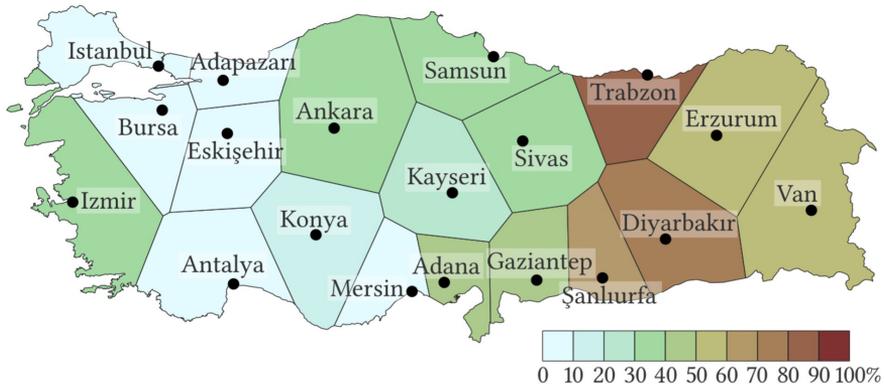

Figure 2: The percentage of respondents who selected various cities, with Voronoi tessellation for better legibility. (Derived from own data.)

Using Fisher's exact test, we tested the correlation between social variables (the first group of questions as discussed in sec. 2.1) and which of the cities featured on the map the given respondent selected. We found five pairs with a *p*-value of $\leq .05$. Bearing in mind that our sample consisted of only 70 responses, and therefore statistical results need to be approached with due caution, we can say that the correlations we found appear to fall into two different types.

The first type are correlations that can be explained using sociological and psychological reasoning. Two have proven to be statistically significant:

the correlation between the department in which the respondent studies, and whether they selected Izmir on the map (p = .003; tab. 2), as well as the correlation between the respondent's gender and whether they selected Ankara (p = .022; tab. 3). See the discussion in sec. 3.3.

"Department"	Selected "Izmir"	Not selected "Izmir"
Anthropology	0	2
Chinese language and literature	15	9
Polish language and literature	8	29
Theatre criticism and dramaturgy	4	3

Table 2: Contingency table comparing the variables "Department" and "Izmir".
(Derived from own data.)

"Gender"	Selected "Ankara"	Not selected "Ankara"
female	20	22
male	4	21
other	1	2

Table 3: Contingency table comparing the variables "Gender" and "Ankara"
(Derived from own data).

The second type are correlations where it appears that the low value of p can be more reliably explained by statistics than by sociology or linguistics: that is to say, false positives. These include three pairs: "Nereli" with "Ankara" (p = .05); "Place of upbringing" with "Adana" (p = .034); and "Place of upbringing" with "Diyarbakır" (p = .037). The variables "Nereli" and "Place of upbringing" have a large number of levels: "Place of upbringing" has twenty, and "Nereli" as many as 38 (cf. tab. 1). This necessarily results in contingency tables that have a large number of cells with very low values in them, a situation that is known to significantly increase the risk of a false positive. When we binned these two variables into just two levels: the most frequent value ("Istanbul" with both "Nereli" and "Place of upbringing") versus the sum of all the others (tab. 4 and 5), Fisher's exact test no longer returns p-values below the threshold of significance. (In the same order as above: .199, .074, .138).

"Nereli"	Selected "Ankara"	Not selected "Ankara"
Istanbul	7	6
other	18	39

Table 4: Contingency table comparing the variables "Nereli" (binned) and "Ankara" (Derived from own data).

"Place of upbringing"	Selected "Adana"	Not selected "Adana"	Selected "Diyarbakır"	Not selected "Diyarbakır"
Istanbul	7	15	14	8
other	27	21	39	9

Table 5: Contingency table comparing the variables "Place of upbringing" (binned) and "Adana"/"Diyarbakır" (Derived from own data).

Because the great majority of respondents selected each city independently, rather than marking entire regions on the map, we decided it is justified to calculate the correlations between the individual city variables. As many as sixty pairs have proven to be statistically significant, but in the majority, the correlations between them are low ($\varphi \leq .4$). Two groups stand out, one in the centre of the country which encompasses the cities Adana, Kayseri, and Sivas; and another one in the south-east with Erzurum, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, and Van (tab. 6). The map in our questionnaire featured five cities in the south-east of the country; however, Diyarbakır was the last one indicated. It was the most selected one (cf. fig. 2) but curiously, its link to the remaining four turned out to be considerably weaker, with $.36 \leq \varphi \leq .47$ (see tab. 6). See the discussion in sec. 3.3.

	"Sivas"	"Şanlıurfa"
"Adana"	.59	
"Kayseri"	.58	
"Erzurum"		.53
"Gaziantep"		.56
"Van"		.57

Table 6: Correlations between individual city variables where $|\varphi| \geq .5$ (in all cases $3.011 \times 10^{-6} \leq p \leq 3.629 \times 10^{-5}$) (Derived from own data).

Most of our respondents, 64 out of 70, provided an explanation for why they selected the cities that they did. Unfortunately, the responses only afford us a limited insight into the decision process. The great majority are a variation

on the idea that those cities have their own dialect, people there speak with an accent and pronounce words differently. Let us review a handful of examples (if not indicated otherwise, all the comments are adduced in full): "aksanlı konuşuyorlar" 'they speak with an accent'; "Çünkü bu şehirlerin kendine özgü ağızları var" 'Because these cities have dialects specific to themselves'; "karadeniz şivesi Gerçek Türkçe gibi duyulmuyor" 'the black sea accent doesn't sound like Real Turkish'; etc. Some respondents mentioned that their selection was based on their personal experience: "Arkadaşım Karadenizli" 'My friend is from the Black Sea region'; "[...]'den arkadaşlarım vardı ve kendilerinin istanbul türkçesinden daha farklı konuştuğunu söyleyebilirim" 'I had friends from [...] and I can say that they spoke different from istanbul turkish'; etc. Several respondents indicated the ethnic composition of various regions as a factor: "Lazlar ve Kürtler var" 'there are Laz people and Kurds'; "Seçtiğim illerdeki insanların çoğu Türkçe ile karışık veya Türkçe olmadan Arapça, Farsça ve Kürtçe gibi dilleri konuşmaktadırlar" 'Most people in the provinces I selected speak languages such as Arabic, Persian, or Kurdish mixed with or without Turkish'; etc. Some respondents only mentioned culture, but not dialect, in their explanations: "Çünki kültür ve yaşayış biçimleri farklı" 'Because cultures and lifestyles are different'; "All of the cities in Turkey Because there are culture difference every city. Even their traditions and cuisines are different"; etc. One person noted the greater spread of dialect, as compared to Istanbul: "Çünkü bu bölgelerde yöresel ağız daha yaygın" 'Because the local dialect is more common in these regions.' This summary, though brief, effectively exhausts the entire range of themes that can be found in the respondents' explanations, which in our eyes only serves to emphasise the need for further research.

2. Discussion
Most likely, the results presented in sec. 2.2. are a product of a mix of sociological and linguistic factors. To fully separate and isolate them will require a broader study, probably studies, with an increased focus on qualitative data. Some progress, however, can also be made based on the already available material. We will begin by examining the social circumstances surrounding language and dialect usage in Turkey (sec. 2.2.), and then proceed to the linguistic side by discussing the aggregate map (sec. 3.2.) as well as the correlations that emerged from our study (sec. 3.3.).

2.1. Social circumstances

In the sociological context, one must consider the power dynamics between dialect and standard language, particularly in a culturally diverse country such as Turkey. These power relations trace back to the recognition of Turkish as the official language in the 1921 constitution, a status reaffirmed in subsequent constitutions. The function of the official language implies the use of the standardised variety across all language domains. The regulation of the language is overseen by Türk Dil Kurumu (Turkish Language Association), which defines the standard and promotes its cohesive use in both the spoken and written forms. One side effect of this effort, whose importance for our research cannot be overestimated, is that it greatly influences the perception of local dialects of Turkish, as well as that of other languages spoken in Turkey, and in this way fosters linguistic nationalism in daily life.

Within said framework, the Türkiye Radyo ve Televizyon Kurumu (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation), as the state channel and media school in Turkey, emphasises the importance that using the standardised variety has for the linguistic unity of the nation.[14] This approach has over the years strengthened the position of Istanbul Turkish as the favoured variety, at the cost of marginalising other dialects. This leads us to another issue: the relationship between language and identity.

The perception of dialects plays a crucial role in the construction of social identity markers. The representation of standard Turkish and dialects in Turkish media often reflects the divide between urban and rural societies. Historically, dialects have been associated with rural areas and a lower socioeconomic status, which painted a stigmatised picture. Post-World War II Turkey saw an exceptionally rapid rate of urbanisation and mass migration to cities but, rather than erasing the divisions and unifying the nation, this has led to the phenomenon of "gecekondu" ghetto areas[15] which only deepened the pre-existing split and solidified the perception of rural groups among city populations.

---

14 Füsun Ünsal and Hakan Şahin, *Spikerlik ve Türkçenin Kullanımı* (Ankara: TRT, 2014).
15 Oğuz Işık and Melih Pınarcıoğlu, *Nöbetleşe Yoksulluk: Gecekondulaşma ve Kent Yoksulları: Sultanbeyli Örneği* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002).

Ertek's study[16] shows that individuals who speak the local dialect of Ankara exhibit positive attitudes towards the standard, i.e. Istanbul Turkish, and perceive it as a marker of linguistic correctness and, therefore, education. Their assessment of their dialect, as well as that of other dialects, tends to lean into the negative. This sociolinguistic divide further manifests itself in language usage. Individuals from more affluent backgrounds show a particular preference for the standard variety, underlining the crucial role of socioeconomic factors. The hegemony of Istanbul Turkish influenced the use of dialects in daily life, especially in city centres. Over time, individuals from rural and ghetto areas adapted their habits and began to speak the standard language in public places to escape the association with a stigmatised identity.

This dynamic introduces another dimension to the relations between social class and dialect in Turkey. Drawing on Bourdieu's explanation of linguistic practices,[17] which focuses on the framework of political economy, we note that in the Turkish linguistic market, as indeed in many other countries, the standard language holds a higher symbolic value than the local dialects. We acknowledge that there exist certain cases where this proportion might be reversed, e.g. in political activities as of late, but our focus here is on the general trend rather than on individual examples which go against it.

The image that emerges from our study is one where the standard language is valued higher in terms of universal acceptance in the economy, in the media, and generally also in political markets, influencing the process of identity construction for different groups. Speakers associate specific dialects with exclusion or belonging and form a connection between language and social identity. One of the explanations provided by a respondent in our questionnaire, "Lazlar ve Kürtler var" 'there are Laz people and Kurds,' proves that language/dialect can be used as a marker of social–ethnic/national identity. In this sense, we argue that it is not possible to sever the relationship between, on the one hand, regional and dialectal identity, and on the other, the perception of regions and dialects. We did not ask our respondents whether they have had personal experience with the

---

16 Seydi Ertek, *Dil Algısı*.

17 1) Pierre Bourdieu, "The Economics of Linguistic Exchanges," *Social Science Information* 16 (1977): 645-668. **2)** Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John Thompson, transl. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

speakers of various dialects, or have ever visited the various regions – or, in other words, whether regional and, by implication, dialectal stereotypes form before or after actual contact. It is certainly an interesting question for future studies.

Stereotypes about dialects often permeate the media, reinforcing the association with rural areas and certain behaviours or characteristics. By way of example, the inhabitants of the Black Sea region are frequently presented as quick-witted and stubborn, while Şanlıurfa as a place frozen in the feudal system and mired in the conflict between landowners and peasants. Parker[18] explains stereotype as a product of friction generated during the interaction between people in everyday activities. In our case, these stereotypes are inherently connected to language, identity, and ethnicity. We argue that the perception of dialects in Turkey closely follows stereotypes created by certain common behaviours, situations, and outside influences such as the media. This transformation parallels the tumultuous history of Turkish-Kurdish relations and the evolution of the perception of the Kurdish ethnicity in Turkey, particularly before and after the failed peace process in the 2000s.[19] Notably, this change takes on a more negative connotation within the broader context of political developments, such as the transformation of urban social life, as discussed by Saraçoğlu.[20] These macro-level shifts exert a discernible impact on social behaviours and relationships, and therefore also on the perception of dialects in particular regions. The alterations in societal norms find support in and amplification through media representation which in a vicious circle further influences the psyche and linguistic practices of the nation.

Moreover, dialects can be tied to regional, ethnic, and cultural identities and thus serve as a marker of identity. Language becomes in consequence a tool that reflects power dynamics, as demonstrated in previous studies,[21] intertwined between the linguistic identity of individuals and communities, and power dynamics.

———

18 Alexandra Parker, "The Spatial stereotype: The Representation and Reception of Urban Films in Johannesburg," *Urban Studies* 55, no. 9 (2018): 2057-2072: 2059.

19 Oktay Bingöl, "An Analysis of the Failure of the Peace Process (2013–2015) with PKK through the Ripeness Theory," *Gazi Akademik Bakış* 15, no. 30 (2022): 281–302. Arin Savran, "The Peace Process between Turkey and the Kurdistan Worker's Party, 2009–2015," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 22, no. 6 (2020): 777-792.

20 Cenk Saraçoğlu, "The Changing Image of the Kurds in Turkish Cities: Middle-class Perceptions of Kurdish Migrants in Izmir," *Patterns of Prejudice* 44, no. 3 (2010): 239-260: 240.

21 E.g. Seydi Ertek, *Dil Algısı*.

2.2. Aggregate map

The direct product of the circumstances discussed above is a map that aggregates all of the responses in our study (fig. 2), being as such also its briefest possible summary. Let us examine it in more detail.

Perhaps the most conspicuous and tangible social factor is the multilingualism of certain parts of Turkey. It surprised us to some degree that the respondents only rarely mentioned this in their explanations (sec. 2.2.) but let us nevertheless briefly compare figures 2 and 3. The latter is based on the 1965 census because newer data are unfortunately not available.[22] The precise percentages have surely changed since that time but there are reasons to believe that the geographic distribution has not changed dramatically. If this assumption is correct, then the presence of other languages besides Turkish must be concluded to have overall little impact on the perception of dialectal diversification: $\rho = -.336$, $p = .16$, $N = 19$ – though see sec. 3.3. on one particularity in our results.
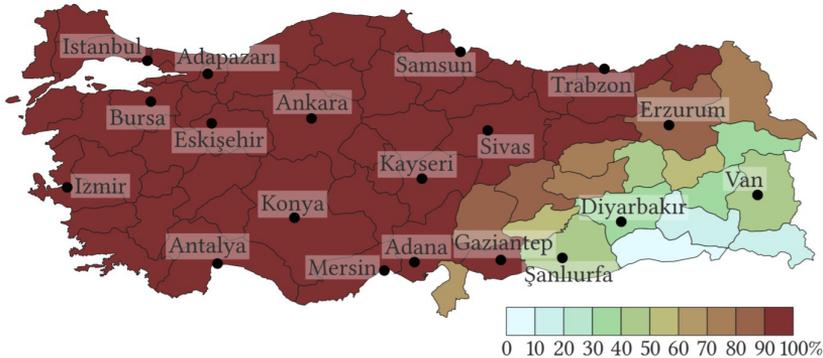

Figure 3: Prevalence of Turkish by province (After the 1965 census[23]).

This being the case, an explanation for the results of our study has to be looked for in Turkish dialects themselves. To the best of our knowledge, only one full classification of Anatolian dialects has been proposed so far, by Leyla Karahan.[24] This is a classification based exclusively on linguistic features which

---

22 Fuat Dündar, *Türkiye Nüfus Sayımlarında Azınlıklar* (İstanbul: Çiviyazıları, 2000), 55, 139.

23 Dündar, *Türkiye Nüfus Sayımında Azınlıklar*, 218-221.

24 1) Leyla Karahan, *Anadolu Ağızlarının Sınıflandırılması* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 1996). See also minor amendments in 2) Leyla Karahan, "Suriye Türk(men) Ağızlarının Türkiye

entirely ignores social factors such as ethnicity, education, etc. It combines multiple features,[25] and does so in such a way that the overall result can effectively be viewed as a measure of distance, particularly phonetic distance, from the dialect of the westernmost part of Anatolia.[26] It distinguishes three groups which are then subdivided into three, four, and nine subgroups (fig. 4), and then even further into sub-subgroups.

A comparison of figs. 2 and 4, however, reveals multiple points of divergence. The most notable are probably "Izmir," selected by considerably more respondents than those who chose "Bursa," "Eskişehir," or "Antalya," which are in the same dialectal subgroup; and "Van," which was selected by considerably fewer respondents than "Diyarbakır," which is in the same subgroup. Perhaps also "Erzurum" should be considered together with "Diyarbakır" and "Van," as it is the last of the four cities from the eastern group of dialects that were featured on the map in our questionnaire.

One possible explanation for this divergence is that there is not very much overlap between the features that Karahan had selected for her 1996 classification and those that are most readily observed by laymen. Unfortunately, we have no way of directly comparing the two sets because our respondents failed to mention any specific dialectal features in their commentaries. It may be that the perception of otherness is purely intuitive and the particulars are never consciously realised. This is certainly an interesting question for future research.

Another possible explanation is that the perception of otherness is only one of the components that make up the numbers in the aggregate map. A second

---

Türkçesi Ağızları İçindeki Yeri," last modified 2019, https://www.academia.edu/67831553/ SUR%C4%B0YE_T%C3%9CRK_MEN_A%C4%9EIZLARININ_T%C3%9CRK%C4%B0YE _T%C3%9CRK%C3%87ES%C4%B0_A%C4%9EIZLARI_%C4%B0%C3%87%C4%B0NDEK% C4%B0_YER%C4%B0; **3)** Leyla Karahan, "Türkiye Türkçesi Ağız Gruplarının Sınırları Üzerine Düşünceler–2," in *IX. Uluslararası Türk Dili Kurultayı. Bilge Tonyukuk Anısına (Ankara: 26–30 Eylül 2021)*, vol. 2, (Ankara: Türk Dili Kurumu Yayınları, 2021), 1147-1156; and **4)** Leyla Karahan, "Türkiye Türkçesi Ağız Gruplarının Sınırları Üzerine Düşünceler–1," in *Geçmişten Günümüze Yazılmayan Türkçe – Türkçenin Art ve Eş Zamanlı Değişkeleri – 5. Uluslararası Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Kurultayı Bildirileri (11-12-13 Mayıs 2022)*, ed. Şükrü Haluk Akalın and Emine Gürsoy-Naskali (İstanbul: Elginkan Vakfı, 2022), 39-49.

25 See the list and explanation in Karahan, *Sınıflandırılma*, 2f, 53.

26 Cf. maps in Karahan, *Sınıflandırılma*.

component may likely be how widely various dialects are known, or even known about. Izmir is considerably larger than Antalya, Bursa, or Eskişehir; it is quite plausible that our respondents in Istanbul have simply had more exposure to its dialect than to the dialects of the three smaller cities. Erzurum and Van are also smaller than Diyarbakır and Şanlıurfa, though in this case, the difference is not as drastic. Perhaps the same reasoning may also be applied to them. However, it seems to us that the two larger cities, especially Diyarbakır, are featured more frequently in the media on dialect-related topics than either Erzurum or Van are, which would explain their higher position in the aggregate map.
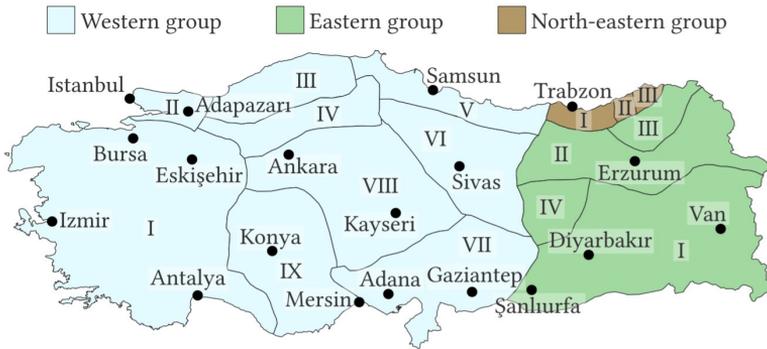

Figure 4: A classification of Anatolian dialects (After L. Karahan[27]).

To conclude, the final numbers in the aggregate map appear to be ultimately a product of several separate yet interconnected sociological and linguistic factors. Assuming that the respondents are truthful, whether they select a certain region or not, depends directly on only two conditions: whether they have been exposed to or otherwise know anything about this region's dialect, and whether they perceive or otherwise know it to be different. These two conditions are inherently linked: one cannot perceive a dialect as different if one knows nothing about it, and simultaneously the very exposure to a different dialect puts it on one's mental map. However, the same two conditions are also separate in that they are caused by partially different factors. Exposure can also occur randomly, through a friend or a TV show, and the chance of such an occurrence is mostly a function of the region's size and economic or cultural

27 Karahan, *Sınıflandırılma*.

prominence. Cultural and linguistic diversity can influence the latter, but they can also influence the dialect of the region. They do not, however, define the dialect because language is primarily shaped by history in all of its interlinked aspects: contacts, migrations, economy, politics, etc. – and, last but certainly not least, random mutations. See a summary in fig. 5.

At this moment, it is not clear how the numbers in the aggregate map can be deconstructed to reveal the relative weights of all of their components. We saw above that the direct impact of cultural and linguistic diversity is small. We also saw that actual dialectal differences play a greater role but their influence is also limited. The other factors are unfortunately even less tangible.
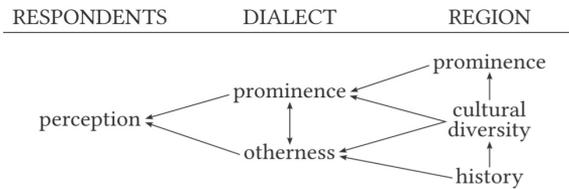

Figure 5: Major factors influencing the perception of dialectal variation.

2.3. Correlations

Of the statistically significant correlations presented in sec. 2.2., three require a slightly more extensive discussion: "Department" and "Izmir" (p = .003; tab. 2); "Gender" and "Ankara" (p = .022; tab. 3), and also the correlations between individual city variables (tab. 6).

The first, we are afraid, cannot be viewed as anything else than a simple case of spontaneous cooperation between the respondents. We cannot think of any reason why Chinese philology students should, en masse, have an opposite view of the Izmir dialect than the students of Polish philology – except that they were surveyed in two separate groups, and that we could see that several individuals did not comply with our request to fill the questionnaires independently.

The second case, where male respondents almost never selected "Ankara" while female respondents were split in half, is less clear. Demirci also noted gender-based differences in her study conducted in Bursa. She does not clarify whether they were statistically significant but what is interesting is that she recorded the opposite tendency: females did not single out "Ankara," but

males did.[28] She does not attempt to explain this result. The brief commentaries provided by the respondents in our study also do not offer any clues (sec. 2.2.). Admittedly, our sample size was limited (70 responses) but Demirci's was twice as large,[29] so if both studies suggest a link between gender and the perception of the dialect of Ankara, it would seem that it must be real. Its direction, however, and its roots require further study.

Lastly, we must discuss the fact that those respondents who selected "Sivas" and "Şanlıurfa" also tended to select certain other cities. It seems that two distinct regions centred around these places emerge from the responses when they are viewed as a collective. It needs to be borne in mind, however, that the majority of our respondents appear to have selected cities on an individual basis, each city independently of all the others, so the fact that they selected any two cities does not allow us to infer that they necessarily viewed these two cities as belonging to one group.

One of the two regions lies in the centre of the country and includes three cities, "Sivas," "Kayseri," and "Adana." This is the more mysterious one. The correlation between these three variables cannot be explained away as a false positive because none of the cities was marked by a very small number of respondents (between 18 and 34), the p-values for all the pairs are clearly below .05 (the largest is .002), and the values of φ are also relatively high (tab. 6; "Adana": "Kayseri" has .41). We must admit that we do not know why our respondents tended to select or to not select, these three cities together, as if a single group.

The other region lies in south-eastern Turkey and includes five cities: "Diyarbakır," "Erzurum," "Gaziantep," "Şanlıurfa," and "Van" (tab. 6). Of them, "Diyarbakır" is correlated more loosely with the other four, as in its case φ ranges between .36 and .47. This is probably because it was selected more frequently than the others, and was sometimes the only one of the five that the given respondent indicated. Statistically, the group is visibly centred around "Şanlıurfa." The correlations between all the other pairs are significant (.0001 ≤ p ≤ .007) but weaker, with .36 ≤ φ ≤ .48.

We believe that in this case, our respondents might have actually viewed these cities as belonging together even if such a conclusion cannot be directly derived from the statistical analysis alone (see the beginning of this subsec-

28 Demirci, *Gender Differences*, 43-45.

29 Demirci, *Gender Differences*, 42.

tion). The reason why we believe so is that the emergence of this group could be explained both by dialectal differences (fig. 4) and by the presence of other languages besides Turkish (fig. 3), which, we must suspect, contributes to the perception of these cities as being distinct. Both these explanations are weakened, however, by "Gaziantep," which did tend to be selected together with the other four cities but unlike them, it does not have a sizeable non-Turkish minority, and its dialect is not part of the eastern group. We suspect that, despite it not possessing these characteristics, Gaziantep is nevertheless commonly viewed as "an eastern city" and mentally grouped together with Şanlıurfa, etc. If our supposition is correct, it would probably have to mean that in this case the perception of Gaziantep through the prism of stereotypes outweighed whatever linguistic knowledge our respondents had about its dialect.

3. Conclusions

The paper presents the results of a pilot study that was conducted in Istanbul to probe the perception of dialectal variation in Turkey.

Despite the written and oral claims of some of the respondents, the study has shown that not all the major cities in the country are universally viewed as having their distinct dialects. Trabzon has proven to be the most frequently indicated place (86% of the replies), followed by Diyarbakır (77%), Şanlıurfa (74%), Erzurum (60%), and Van (56%). The remaining fourteen cities were selected by less than half of the respondents (fig. 2). These results align only partially with the linguistic and dialectal maps of Turkey.

Two regions appear to have emerged from the replies, in that certain cities tended to be or to not be selected together. One encompasses Adana, Kayseri, and Sivas; the other one Erzurum, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, and Van. It is not clear, however, that the respondents viewed them as belonging to distinct groups.

Another mysterious finding is the statistically significant correlation between gender and the selection of Ankara. In our study, female respondents were more likely to indicate the capital city as possessing its distinct dialect. This may be viewed as a surprising result in itself but it is even more so that the only other comparable study in Turkey, which was conducted by Demirci in Bursa,[30] found the same phenomenon but with the proportions reversed.

---

30 Demirci, *Gender Differences*.

Besides these two special problems, the study highlights the need for further research in pursuance of answers to more general questions concerning the interplay of sociological and linguistic factors. Despite all the progress that has been made so far in folk linguistics, those factors appear to us still as a tangled knot, which we have no method of undoing to examine all the individual strings in isolation. One particularly interesting step on the path towards such a method would be to continue Preston's work[31] and to examine the salience of specific features of Turkish dialects, as they are viewed by linguists versus laymen.[32] Another compelling issue is that of how and exactly when linguistic stereotypes are formed, and how they relate to the stereotypes about the inhabitants of various regions. All this points to the need for deeper, more qualitatively-oriented research.

Continuing in this vein, we also want to indicate two new directions that are opening up in folk linguistics. One, termed *perceptual phraseology*,[33] concerns itself with the perception and knowledge of phrasemes and idioms among native speakers. We are certain that Turkey offers it a rich researching ground. The other one, notably, is being born on the basis of Turkish and as such stands in defiance of the otherwise neglected position of this language in folk linguistics. Named *perceptual etymology*,[34] it aims to introduce the sociological perspective into etymological research where it can play a crucial role and yet has been so far widely ignored.

---

31 Dennis R. Preston, "Whaddayaknow?: The Modes of Folk Linguistic Awareness," *Language Awareness* 5, no. 1 (1996): 40-74.

32 Cf. also Joanna Lustański, "Wymiary potocznej świadomości językowej i relacje między nimi," *Socjolingwistyka* 35 (2021): 283-302.

33 Michał Głuszkowski, Magdalena Grupa-Dolińska, and Aleksandra Miaskowska, "W stronę frazeologii percepcyjnej. Badanie znajomości i oceny poprawności frazeologizmów u studentów kierunków społeczno-humanistycznych – uwagi wstępne," *LingVaria* 33 (2022): 21-38.

34 1) Hüsnü Çağdaş Arslan, "Algısal Etimoloji ve Yeni Düşüncelerle Eski Türkçe 'Imga' ile 'İl Imga'nın Kökeni," *Túrkologıa* 4, no. 112 (2022): 74-91. **2)** Marek Stachowski, "Perceptual etymology, or three Turkish culinary terms in Croatian and Slovene, and a Polish social term inteligencja 'intelligentsia'," *Studia Linguistica Universitatis Iagellonicae Cracoviensis* 138 (2021): 221-225. **3)** Marek Stachowski, "Perceptual Etymology. A Social Aspect of Etymological Research," *Studia Linguistica Universitatis Iagellonicae Cracoviensis* 139 (2022): 61–67. (See also **4)** Piotr Sobotka, *Etymologizowanie i etymologia. Od semantyki ontologicznej do etymologii hermeneutycznej* (Warszawa: Polska Akademia Nauk, 2015), 129-138.

References

Alhazmi, Laila. "A Perceptual Dialect Map of Western Saudi Arabia." *White Rose College of the Arts & Humanities. Student Journal* 3 (2017): 2–16.

Arslan, Hüsnü Çağdaş. "Algısal Etimoloji ve Yeni Düşüncelerle Eski Türkçe 'Imga' ile 'İl Imga'nın Kökeni." *Túrkologıa* 4, no. 112 (2022): 74–91.

Bingöl, Oktay. "An Analysis of the Failure of the Peace Process (2013–2015) with PKK through the Ripeness Theory." *Gazi Akademik Bakış* 15, no. 30 (2022): 281–302.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Economics of Linguistic Exchanges." *Social Science Information* 16 (1977): 645–668.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Edited by John Thompson. Translated by Gino Raymond, and Matthew Adamson. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991.

Çelik, Hacer. "Çokkültürlülük ve Türkiye'deki Görünümü." *Uludağ Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 9, no. 15 (2008): 319–332.

del Carmen Morúa, María, and Julio Serrano. "Dos mil kilometros de por medio: dialectología perceptual contrastiva del español mexicano." In *VII Encuentro Internacional de Lingüística en el Noroeste*, edited by María del Carmen Morúa Leyva, and Rosa María Ortiz Ciscomani, 253–276. Hermosillo: UniSon, 2004.

Demirci, Mahide. "Gender Differences in the Perception of Turkish Regional Dialects." In *Handbook of perceptual dialectology*, vol. 2, edited by Daniel Long, and Dennis R. Preston, 41–50. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2002.

_____, and Brian Kleiner. "Gender and Age-based Variation in the Perception of Turkish Dialects." *Language Awareness* 7, no. 4 (1998): 206–222.

_____, and Brian Kleiner. "The Perception of Turkish Dialects." In *Handbook of perceptual dialectology*, vol. 1, edited by Daniel Long, and Dennis R. Preston, 263–281. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins. 1999.

Dündar, Fuat. *Türkiye Nüfus Sayımlarında Azınlıklar*. İstanbul: Çiviyazıları, 2000.

Głuszkowski, Michał, Magdalena Grupa-Dolińska, and Aleksandra Miaskowska. "W stronę *frazeologii percepcyjnej*. Badanie znajomości i oceny poprawności frazeologizmów u studentów kierunków społeczno-humanistycznych – uwagi wstępne." *LingVaria* 33 (2022): 21–38.

Güreşci, Ertuğrul, and Ziya Yurttaş. "Kırsal Göçün Nedenleri ve Tarıma Etkileri Üzerine Bir Araştırma: Erzurum İli İspir İlçesi Kırık Bucağı Örneği." *Tarım Ekonomisi Dergisi* 14, no. 2 (2008): 47–54.

Işık, Oğuz, and Melih Pınarcıoğlu. *Nöbetleşe Yoksulluk: Gecekondulaşma ve Kent Yoksulları. Sultanbeyli Örneği*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002.

Karahan, Leyla. *Anadolu Ağızlarının Sınıflandırılması*. Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 1996.

_____. *Suriye Türk(men) Ağızlarının Türkiye Türkçesi Ağızları İçindeki Yeri*, 2019. https://www.academia.edu/67831553/SUR%C4%B0YE_T%C3%9CRK_MEN_A%C4%9EIZLARININ_T%C3%9CRK%C4%B0YE_T%C3%9CRK%C3%87ES%C4%B0_A%C4%9EIZLARI_%C4%B0%C3%87%C4%B0NDEK%C4%B0_YER%C4%B0.

_____. "Türkiye Türkçesi Ağız Gruplarının Sınırları Üzerine Düşünceler–2." In *IX. Uluslararası Türk Dili Kurultayı. Bilge Tonyukuk Anısına (Ankara: 26–30 Eylül 2021)*, vol. 2, 1147–1156. Ankara: Türk Dili Kurumu Yayınları, 2021.

_____. "Türkiye Türkçesi Ağız Gruplarının Sınırları Üzerine Düşünceler–1." In *Geçmişten Günümüze Yazılmayan Türkçe – Türkçenin Art ve Eş Zamanlı Değişkeleri – 5. Uluslararası Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Kurultayı Bildirileri (11–12–13 Mayıs 2022)*, edited by Şükrü Haluk Akalın, and Emine Gürsoy-Naskali, 39–49. İstanbul: Elginkan Vakfı, 2022.

Lustański, Joanna. "Wymiary potocznej świadomości językowej i relacje między nimi." *Socjolingwistyka* 35 (2021): 283–302.

Montgomery, Chris, and Joan C. Beal. "Perceptual Dialectology." In *Analysing variation in English*, edited by Warren Maguire, and April McMahon, 121–148. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Parker, Alexandra. "The Spatial Stereotype: The Representation and Reception of Urban Films in Johannesburg." *Urban Studies* 55, no. 9 (2018): 2057–2072.

Preston, Dennis R. *Perceptual Dialectology. Nonlinguists' Views of Areal Linguistics*. Dordrecht, Providence: Foris. 1989.

_____. "Whaddayaknow?: The Modes of Folk Linguistic Awareness." *Language Awareness* 5, no. 1 (1996): 40–74.

_____. *Handbook of Perceptual Dialectology*. vol. 1. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1999.

Red'kva/Stachowski (2019) = Редьква, Марія, and Каміль Стаховський. "Особливості сприйняття та розрізнення говорів української мови з погляду перцептивної діалектології (на основі анкетування, проведеного у м. чернівцях)." Науковий вісник Чернівецького університету 812 (2019): 86–94.

Saraçoğlu, Cenk. "The Changing Image of the Kurds in Turkish Cities: Middle-class Perceptions of Kurdish Migrants in Izmir." *Patterns of Prejudice* 44, no. 3 (2010): 239–260.

Savran, Arin. "The Peace Process between Turkey and the Kurdistan Worker's Party, 2009–2015." *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 22, no. 6 (2020): 777–792.

Schröder, Saskia. "*Mental maps* als Zugang zu sprachlichen Wissen." In *Sprache, Literatur, Raum. Festgabe für Willy Diercks*, edited by Robert Langhanke, 163–181. Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2015.

Schwarz, Christian, and Philipp Stoeckle. "Stadt, Land, Berg. Vom Zusammenspiel von Dialektwahrnehmung und Topographie." *Linguistik online* 85 (2017): 257–274.

Seydi Ertek, Müberra. "Dil Algısı Bağlamında Ağız Konuşurlarının Olası Tutumları: ANADOK Örneği." *Turkish Studies* 11, no. 4 (2016): 829–844.

Sobotka, Piotr. *Etymologizowanie i etymologia. Od semantyki ontologicznej do etymologii hermeneutycznej*. Warszawa: Polska Akademia Nauk, 2015.

Stachowski, Kamil. "Przyczynek do dialektologii percepcyjnej Polski: Szczecin." *Język polski* 98, no. 1 (2018): 5–17.

Stachowski, Marek. "Perceptual Etymology, or Three Turkish Culinary Terms in Croatian and Slovene, and a Polish Social Term *inteligencja* 'intelligentsia'." *Studia Linguistica Universitatis Iagellonicae Cracoviensis* 138 (2021): 221–225.

_____. "Perceptual Etymology. A Social Aspect of Etymological Research." *Studia Linguistica Universitatis Iagellonicae Cracoviensis* 139 (2022): 61–67.

Ünsal, Füsun, and Hakan Şahin. *Spikerlik ve Türkçenin Kullanımı*. Ankara: TRT, 2014.