Language ideologies in Turkey
The discourse related to mother tongue-based multilingual education
Outline

- Language situation in Turkey
  - Linguistic make-up
  - Language policies
- Theoretical framework - *language ideologies*
- Methodology
- Recurrent themes so far
Language situation in Turkey

Languages spoken in Turkey
Lausanne Treaty and language rights

Language rights in 1924, 1961, and 1982 Constitutions

Article 42 of 1982 Constitution “No languages other than Turkish shall be taught as a mother tongue to Turkish citizens at any institutions of teaching or education.”

Turkey-EU relations and language rights

- Regulation on the teaching of traditional languages and dialects used by Turkish citizens in their daily lives (2003)
- Living languages and dialects elective courses (2012) 5 languages
- Private schools to teach in the mother tongue (2014) – Kurdish schools recently shut down
Theoretical framework


- “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (Silverstein, 1979, p. 193)

- “the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests” (Irvine, 1989, p. 255)
Methodology

- Qualitative research - CDA
  - News / articles / politicians’ discourse on mother-tongue education from the last 14 years
  - Semi-structured interviews: Not finalized yet
    - individuals of different gender, age, profession, political orientation, ethnicity and religion from Turkey
Points to consider

- Mother tongue education = Kurdish education
- Turkish immigrants in Germany
- Confusion of terms – teaching a mother tongue vs. teaching in a mother tongue
One nation-one language

- Most common theme while objecting mother-tongue education
- ‘The official language of Turkey is Turkish!’
- State motto - “One nation, one state, one flag, one language”
- MOI official language / recognition as a separate nation power sharing
- A single official language seen as a must to survive as a nation
- Monolingual education seen as a guarantor for a unified nation
- Official bi-/multilingualism is inconceivable by most
Individual monolingualism

Apart from official bi-/multilingualism, individual bi-/multilingualism is also not imaginable

- Most perceive bilingualism or bilingual education as learning a foreign / second language
- Bilingualism of Turkish immigrants regarded positively / bilingualism in Turkey seen as a possible cause for separation and chaos
Public vs. private sphere

- Turkish as the only legitimate language in the public sphere
- Existence of different languages in the country is mostly accepted and tolerated, if kept in the private sphere – emphasis on the right to use, speak or learn one’s mother tongue
- It is the family’s responsibility to teach their children their own languages
- Language-cultural-local-traditional
Modern vs traditional-local languages

- Some languages are not ‘developed’ enough to teach math or science
  - Deputy Prime minister Arınç in 2012 questioned whether Kurdish is a ‘language of civilization’
  - Presidential nominee İhsanoğlu in 2014 said Kurdish is not a ‘scientific language’
- Minority languages are mostly not taken seriously and the fact that they are local is used as proof of their being ‘underdeveloped’
Linguistic market - linguistic capital

- Turkish is the only mother tongue through which one can financially survive / gain status in the country – this fact is used as the legitimization of the non-existence of mother tongues in the education system
  - The current linguistic market is objectified / accepted as “always has been”
  - Bilingualism of Turkish immigrants is a valued capital in the linguistic market of Germany / bilingualism in the mother tongues in Turkey is unnecessary
Purism - standardization

- Some minority languages, especially Kurdish, have not been considered 'real' languages or considered to be dialects for having 'borrowed' words and having similarities to other languages / also for not being standard
  - This theme seems to have lost popularity
Final comments

- Not just nationalist or political propaganda but used by any majority speaker who do not want to question their privileged status (apparent in the “us vs. them” discourse)

- Awareness regarding bi-/multilingual education is almost non-existent

- Language policies of the country have created such a situation that the results are objectified and taken as ever-existing facts
Suggestions

- Top-down policy changes for MTB-MLE would only create more conflict between majority and minority groups and would not change the attitudes of many members of minority language groups who devalue their languages and do not pass them on to their children.

- There is a need for country-wide awareness-raising projects for both the majority and minority language speakers to change the monolingual imagining of the public sphere, education system, and life.