Wait a Minute! Istanbul Does Not Speak Turkish: An Analysis of a Story in the Turkish Press from 1937

Author(s): Reyhan Kadriye Göksel

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Wait a Minute! Istanbul Does Not Speak Turkish: An Analysis of a Story in the Turkish Press from 1937

Reyhan Kadriye Göksel*

Abstract

In the early years of the Turkish Republic, Turkey endeavoured to spread the Turkish language among non-Turkophone Turkish citizens. These efforts were also reflected in the Turkish press of the early Republican years. Asserting that the Turkish press of the early Republican years reflected hitherto Turkish political discourse, this article aims to analyse the argumentation of the letter written by the Turkish Member of Parliament Şeref Aykut and published in the Cumhuriyet newspaper in 1937. The letter problematizes the lack of Turkish language fluency among street vendors in Istanbul in 1937. To analyse the letter, I will combine the methods of the Viennese School of the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) by Reisigl & Wodak 2001; Wodak 1990, 1994; Wodak & Meyer 2001; Wodak & Chilton 2005; Wodak et al. 2009 with the categories of storytelling mentioned by van Dijk (1984, 1987).

Keywords: Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA); Topos/Fallacy; Topos of Locus Amoenus; Positive Self-Portrayal Strategies

1. Introduction

In 1923, the Turkish Republic was founded as a modern Western-style nation-state on the remains of the multicultural, multi-ethnic and multilingual Ottoman Empire. As with all nation-states in the 1930s, the concepts of “Kulturnation” and “Staatsnation” had an impact on the formulation of Turkish collective national identity in the first decades of the Turkish Republic. According to the Staatsnation definition of nation, a nation is a community living in a recognised compact territory in which its socio-cultural rights, property and honour are guaranteed by the state and in which all citizens are equal before the law and have the same responsibilities and duties before the law (Bärenreuter 2005; Brockmann 2006; Thaler 2001), while according to the definition of Kulturnation, a nation is a community based on common ethnic-symbolic values such as a common language, a common culture and common ideals (Bärenreuter 2005; Brockmann 2006; Thaler 2001). In this respect, all Turkish citizens are equal before the law in the Turkish Republic, regardless of their ethnicity, religion or language. The Turkish Constitution of 1924 guarantees this equality. For example, Article 69 of the Turkish Constitution of 1924 states: “All Turks are equal before the law and are expected to conscientiously abide by it. Every kind of group, class and individual special

*Reyhan Kadriye Göksel, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Abdullah Gül University, Kayseri, Turkey. Email: rgoksel@alumni.bilkent.edu.tr
privilege is abolished and prohibited” (quoted in Shaw & Shaw 1977: 378). Article 88 of the Turkish Constitution includes that “The People of Turkey, regardless of religion and race, are Turks as regards citizenship” (quoted in Shaw & Shaw 1977: 378). On the other hand, the common language, the common culture and the common ideals are also important values of the Turkish Republic.

Especially in the first decades, Turkey made efforts to standardise and homogenise the Turkish language. In 1928, the Turkish Republic carried out the reform of the Latin alphabet by replacing the Ottoman alphabet with the Latin alphabet (Zurcher 2007: 187-188) and endeavoured to remove Ottoman and Persian words from the Turkish language. The purification of the Turkish language from Persian and Arabic words was seen by many scholars as an important step by the Turkish Republic towards the secularisation, modernisation and westernisation of Turkish society (Ahmad 1993; Aktuna 1995; Boeschoten 1997; İnan 1981; Kushner 1977; Lewis 1968; Yılmaz 2013). For many scholars, the reform of the Latin alphabet served above all to strengthen Turkish national consciousness among Turkish citizens by reducing the influence of the Islamic traditions of the Ottoman Empire (Feyzioğlu 1987: 40; İnan 1981: 193; Lewis 1968: 10; Poulton 1997: 110; Timur 1987: 4-5; Yılmaz 2013: 140). In 1932, the Turkish Language Society was founded, whose task was to replace Ottoman words with new Turkish words from archaic “dialects” (Findley 2010: 255; Zurcher 2007: 190).

The Tarama Journal, founded in 1934, began publishing new Turkish words that had been discovered “from various dialects or old books and mythology” (ibid.: 175). In 1928, the student association of the Faculty of Law at Istanbul University initiated the “Citizen! Speak Turkish” campaign to spread the Turkish language among non-Turkish speakers (Aslan 2007: 250; Bali 1999: 135). The head of the student association at Istanbul University’s Faculty of Law said: “Not speaking Turkish in Turkey is tantamount to not recognising Turkish law” (quoted in Bali 1999: 135). As part of the campaign, Istanbul University students put up posters on public transport and on the walls of cinemas, theatres and hospitals to urge non-Turkophones to speak Turkish in public (ibid.: 135). However, the campaign first emerged in Istanbul, as it was mainly aimed at the non-Muslims in Turkey, namely Greeks, Armenians and Jews; the campaign spread to other cities such as Bursa, İzmir and some cities in Western Thrace, where the non-Muslims of Turkey mainly resided (Aslan 2007: 253; Cagaptay 2006: 26). Bali (1999: 136) notes that as a result of the campaign, speaking in languages other than Turkish in public spaces was viewed negatively. People who did not speak Turkish were harassed if they spoke another language on the street (ibid.: 136). Those who resisted the harassment were accused of not respecting Turkish identity and were prosecuted under Article 159 of the Turkish law on “insulting Turkishness” (ibid.: 137).

In this article, I argue that the Turkish press reproduced Turkish political discourse in the early years of the Republic, because during my research I found that most newspaper editorialists, columnists and newspaper owners were also political figures, i.e. they were also members of the Turkish parliament. For example, Asım Us, Abidin Daver, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, Yunus Nadi and Mahmut Esat were not only political members but also journalists in the 1930s (Goksel 2024a: 90; Goksel 20024b: 59). In the broadest sense, in this article I would like to examine how Turkey’s efforts to spread the Turkish language among
non-Turkish speakers in Turkey were reflected in the Turkish print press of the 1930s. Specifically, I will focus on Abidin Daver’s column “Having it Both Ways”, which was published in the Cumhuriyet newspaper on 7 May 1937. In his column of 7 May 1937, he published the letter of Şeref Aykut, who was also a member of the Turkish Parliament between 1931 and 1939. The letter contains a mundane story that problematises the street vendors’ lack of speaking Turkish in Istanbul. In this article, I will try to analyse the argumentation of the letter by using both the Viennese School of discourse-historical approaches (Reisigl & Wodak 2001; Wodak 1990, 1994; Wodak & Meyer 2001; Wodak & Chilton 2005; Wodak et al. 2009) and the storytelling categories mentioned in van Dijk 1984, 1987. In the following, I will first focus on the scholarship on early republican Turkish historiography on Turkishness and Turkish collective national identity and then explain how I selected the material and which methods of analysis I applied. After that, I will analyse Şeref Aykut’s letter published in Abidin Daver’s column in Cumhuriyet newspaper. Finally, I will draw a conclusion.

2. Scholarship on Turkishness

The Turkish constitution does not define Turks according to their ethnicity, religion or language. In the Turkish constitution of 1924, the definition of Turks is civic-territorial. Article 88 of the Turkish constitution, for example, defines a Turk as “The name Turk, as a political term, shall be understood to include all citizens of the Turkish Republic, without distinction of, or reference to, race or religion. Every child born in Turkey, or a foreign land of a Turkish father; any person whose father is a foreigner established in Turkey, who resides in Turkey, and who chooses upon attaining the age of twenty to become a Turkish subject; and any individual who acquires Turkish nationality by naturalization in conformity with the law, is a Turk. Turkish citizenship may be forfeited or lost in certain circumstances specified by law” (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasa Mahkemesi 1924 Anayasasi). This article of the Turkish constitution makes it clear that a Turk is a Turkish citizen, regardless of religion, ethnicity or language. In 1924, however, there was a parliamentary debate about the definition of a Turk (Cagaptay 2006: 15). The question of who was a “Turk” was discussed. The parliament was divided into two groups: The first group of deputies advocated the idea that all Turkish citizens should be considered “Turks”, while the second group of deputies argued that not every Turkish citizen could belong to the Turkish nation (ibid.: 15). Thus, Hamudullah Suphi Tanrıoever, who was among the deputies of the second group, said during the discussions that “although they could be citizens, it was not possible to acknowledge Armenians and Jews as Turks unless they abandoned their language as well as Armenianness and Jewishness” (ibid.: 15). In the years between 1925 and 1930, the Turkish Ministry of the Interior used the term “Turks-by-law” for non-Muslims in Turkey (ibid.: 15).

The question of the concept of Turkishness has also attracted the attention of many scholars. The scholarship on the early years of the Turkish Republic has endeavoured to define who is a “Turk”. Scholarship is divided into two camps: The first camp looks at Turkishness from a civic-territorial perspective and argues that the term “Turk” encompasses every Turkish citizen regardless of ethnicity, religion and language (Çeçen 1998; Çınar 2015;
The second camp is concerned with Turkey’s relationship with the non-Turkish and non-Muslim citizens of the Turkish Republic (Adanır 2001; Aktar 1996a, 1996b, 2000; Bali 1999; Bayar 2014; Beşikçi 1977; Cagaptay 2006; Eligür 2017, 2019, 2020; Maksudyan 2005; Parla 1992; Poulton 1997; Oran 2004, 2009, 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2014; Özdoğan 2001; Yıldız 2001). Their common argument is that Turkish national identity has ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic characteristics. In this camp, some scholars, Bali 2013; Bayar 2014; Bora 1995; Cagaptay 2002, 2006; İçduygu & Kaygusuz 2004; İçduygu & Soner 2006; İçduygu et al. 2008; Keyman & İçduygu 1998; Kirişçi 2000; Kushner 1977; Özbudun 1998; Özdoğan 1996; Soner 2005; Toktaş 2008; Uzer 2016, argue that the concept of the Ottoman millet system has influenced Turkey’s national identity. The millet system of the Ottoman Empire categorised Ottoman subjects according to their religion and emphasised the superiority of Muslims over non-Muslims. These scholars essentially argued that the Turkish Republic in the early republican period believed that non-Turkish Muslim citizens, including Circassians, Pomaks and Arabs, could integrate into Turkish culture more easily than non-Muslim Turkish citizens.

3. Material

This article is the result of my doctoral thesis, which involved four months of archival research in the summer of 2014. During my archival research in the microfilm department of the Turkish Parliament, my aim was to collect as many press resources related to Turkish national identity as possible. The period I focused on was between 1929 and 1938, and during my research, I found that there were columns, editorials and news reports in the Turkish press of the 1930s about the non-Muslim minorities in Turkey, namely Greeks, Armenians and Jews. During my archival research, I came across press columns, editorials and news reports about the non-Muslim minorities in Turkey. As far as the Greeks in Turkey are concerned, there were several editorials and columns in the Turkish press of the 1930s comparing the socio-political and economic conditions of the Greeks in Turkey with those of the Turks in Greece. In the Turkish press of the 1930s, it is argued that the Greeks in Turkey had better conditions than the Turks in Greece. As far as Armenians in Turkey are concerned, I have come across a few publications in which the Turkish press published interviews with the Armenian Patriarchate and respected members of the Armenian community between 1936 and 1938. As far as the Jews in Turkey are concerned, I have found that the Turkish press of the early republican years was mainly concerned with the extent to which the Jews in Turkey might be able to adapt to the Turkish Republic. The Turkish press mostly problematised the fact that the Jewish community did not speak Turkish and had no attachment to Turkish ideals, culture and language. Moreover, there are quite a number of stories reflecting the lack of Turkish fluency among the daily life of the Jewish community in Turkey. I find stories about the Jews in Turkey very interesting. For this article, I have deliberately chosen the letter of the Turkish Member of Parliament Seref Aykut, which was published in 1937 in the “Have both” section of the newspaper Cumhuriyet. The reason for this is that the letter
contains a story, the only story I have found, that deals not only with the Jewish community in Turkey, but with all non-Muslim minorities in Turkey. The story is about how the street vendors in Istanbul do not speak Turkish, but Greek, Armenian, Jewish and Albanian. Secondly, this story is unique because it was written by a Turkish member of parliament, while all the other stories I came across were written by ordinary Turkish people.

4. Method

In order to analyse the data, I will apply two methods, the Viennese School of the discourse-historical approach (Reisigl & Wodak 2001; Wodak 1990, 1994) and the storytelling categories explained in van Dijk (1984, 1987). The Viennese discourse-historical approach, abbreviated to DHA, was developed by Ruth Wodak for the study of Austrian anti-Semitic discourse during Kurt Waldheim’s presidential election campaign in 1986 (Wodak 2011: 352; Wodak 2015a: 1). The DHA attaches particular importance to the historical and socio-political background of the discursive event (Wodak 2001: 65). Even though the DHA's motivation is the anti-Semitic discourse in Austria, its research interests also include racism, sexism, discrimination, xenophobia, Islamophobia, the collective national identity of European countries including the discourse on asylum seekers, immigrants and refugees, the institutional discourse of the European Union, the discourse of the printed press and media, environmental changes, the health discourse between patients and doctors and the commemorative speeches of European politicians (Reisigl 2017: 47). After the 1990s, most DHA scholars focused on the way in which European national identity is formed. They conducted extensive research by examining European countries' parliamentary debates on asylum seekers, immigrants and workers, and by interviewing Europeans about their identity. These scholars have found that European identity is based on the differentiation of non-European workers, immigrants and asylum seekers (see: Krzyzanowski 2009; Krzyzanowski 2016; Krzyzanowski & Ledin 2017; Krzyzanowski et al. 2018; Reisigl 2007, 2014; Richardson & Wodak 2009; Watson 2009; Wodak & Forchtnet 2014, Wodak 2015b; Wodak & Krzyzanowski 2017; Wodak & van Dijk 2000). After the 2000s, some DHA scholars engaged in the discourse on environmental changes (Forchtnet & Kolvraa 2015; Reisigl & Wodak 2009, 2016; Krzyzanowski 2013b, 2015).

There are five strategies developed by Reisigl & Wodak (2001) and these strategies help DHA researchers to analyse their data. These five strategies are referential, predicational, argumentation, perspectivization, and intensification/mitigation strategies. Referential strategies are concerned with the way in which actors/events are defined and categorised, therefore referential strategies include synecdoche, metonymy and metaphor. Predicational strategies refer to positive or negative attributions to the actors/events through adjectives, adverbs, noun phrases or relative clauses. Perspectivisation strategies refer to how the author/speaker expresses his/her attitude and opinion about the actors and events. Perspectivisation is about the character of the author or speaker when they express their ideas. Techniques of positive self-presentation, such as acting honestly, kindly and in accordance with social norms, are related to perspectivisation strategies. Mitigation and intensification strategies are part of the author's perspectivisation. For instance, mitigation
enables the author/speaker to weaken their arguments. For example, passive voice can be used to conceal the responsible actors. Intensification strategies are used to strengthen arguments. Hyperboles and adverbs such as “very” and “more” are among the intensification strategies. Argumentation is important for the DHA. DHA scholars are interested in how speakers/writers produce their arguments and deal with argumentation schemes (topoi/fallacies) (Reisigl & Wodak 2001). According to Walton (2006: 1), an argument is “the giving of reasons to support or criticize a questionable claim or open to doubt”. According to academic research on argumentation theory (Reed et al. 2001; Reed et al. 2007; Toulmin 1964, 2003; Walton 1990, 1992, 1996, 2006, 2013, 2016; Walton et al. 2008; van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992, 2004), an argument must first contain a conclusion/claim and then statements or propositions to support or refute the conclusion/claim. Topoi/fallacy is an argumentation scheme and includes a conclusion rule (Reisigl 2014: 75). For many critical discourse analysts, including Eriksson (2012), Reisigl (2014) and Macagno & Walton (2016), topoi/fallacy is an argumentation scheme. Eriksson (2012: 210) points out that authors/speakers are able to persuade their recipients by using argumentation schemes that involve an assertion/conclusion supported by premises. “Conditional” or cause-effect propositions such as “if x then y” or “if y because X” are forms of topos (Reisigl 2014: 75).

In this respect, my analysis will examine how actors and events are described, defined and categorised by the letter writer Şeref Aykut. In this context, I will examine what kind of metaphors, metonymies, synecdoche, adverbs, adjectives, noun phrases or relative clauses were used for the actors/events. I will also examine the style of Turkish Member of Parliament Şeref Aykut. For example, I will examine whether or not he considers his own positive self-presentation by adhering to socio-cultural and legal norms. I will look at how Şeref Aykut develops his argumentation; in particular I will focus on what kind of topos he uses to persuade the readers. Since the letter published in Abidin Daver’s column contains a story, I will also use the method of storytelling technique clearly explained in van Dijk (1984, 1987).

The categories of a story are summary, setting, complication, resolution, evaluation and conclusion/coda (van Dijk 1984, 1987). In the summary category, the exciting points of the story are presented (van Dijk 1984: 82). This category therefore not only introduces the topic, but is also intended to attract the audience’s attention (ibid.: 86). The setting category provides details about the time, place and people involved in the story (ibid.: 87). Orientation is concerned with the behaviour of the characters in the story (ibid.: 87). Complication often focuses on the negative opinions of the majority group about minority groups and emphasises the out-group’s deviation from the norms and values of the majority (ibid.: 88). Resolution is concerned with the individual’s reactions to the complications (ibid.: 90). van Dijk (1987: 72) notes that there is no resolution in many stories, indicating their functional nature, as they imply the inaction of the authorities. The evaluation includes the author’s thoughts and feelings about the case, while the conclusion/coda section contains the author’s assessment of the complication, the resolution category includes the proposed steps to resolve it (van Dijk 1984: 90-92). In this article, I will also examine whether Şeref Aykut’s story contains these narrative categories.
5. Analysis of the Story

In the following I will analyse the letter of the Turkish MP Seref Aykut, which was published in the column “Having it both ways” in the newspaper Cumhuriyet in 1937. I will enumerate the paragraphs and sentences so that readers can follow my analysis. The original version of the letter is in Turkish. I have translated it to English here:

“The
1. In Turkey there are us Turks and fellow countrymen who are from Turkey.
2. Those who are from Turkey can only become Turks through unification in language which leads to unity in goals and ideals. 3. It is therefore that we invite our citizens from Turkey to respect with the purpose of including them in this wonderful existence.
2. They may speak the many tongues that pollute the streets of Istanbul elsewhere as much as they wish. 2. However, is it not the right of Turks to demand reverence at least to this language from those who cry out, when it serves their purpose, that they are a subject of the flag, a member of the nation when it is a debt even for a visitor to observe the honour of the flag under which they take shelter while enjoying the many pleasures of life?
3. I spent a night as a guest in the Taksim home of an Istanbulite who unsparingly extended to me his hospitality. 2. In the morning all hell broke loose on the streets. 3. Vendors started shouting with all their breath from every street corner. 4. My God, what was going on?
4. These chaotic brayings drove me out of my mind, please excuse the expression. 2. I was baffled because we do not see such things in Ankara. 3. I wondered where I was, whether I was in Yerevan, Tirana, or Tel Aviv. I ran outside at once.
5. The noises went on.
   - Enginare! Artichoké!
   - Palamşdes isparya! Seabreeme Annularo!
   - Ispanakya, kabakis fresko! Spinacchio, Squashe fresco!
   - Ha more ciyer!
   - Gala, Gala!
   - Tazes Tiri!
6. I do not know what all that was about. I saw two policemen at the street corner. 2. They were also witnessing this atrocity which drove me mad. 3. Perhaps they were municipal police. 4. I approached them and asked:
   - Why do you not intervene on these shouting men?
   - That is not our duty. Besides, everyone is free to sell their goods as they desire; they said!
7. I will not say another word. 2. I leave the rest to your idealist and mighty pen which describes the feeling and fine thoughts that spring from your heart that burns with the sacred Turkish flame”
[Abidin Daver quotes Şeref Aykut, the deputy from Edirne, Cumhuriyet, 7 May 1937]
In his column entitled “Having it Both Ways”, Abidin Daver publishes a letter from Şeref Aykut, a member of parliament who represented the city of Edirne between 1931 and 1939. The letter deals with the lack of Turkish language skills of non-Muslims in Turkey. Following the publication of the letter, Abidin Daver gives his own assessment of the issue that Şeref Aykut spoke about. The publication of Edirne MP Şeref Aykut’s letter can have two implications. Firstly, it can be interpreted as a positive self-portrayal strategy for the newspaper as well as for the column and the columnist Abidin Daver. This is because the publication of Turkish MP Şeref Aykut’s letter could present both the newspaper and the column as a platform on which readers’ opinions are not only taken into account but also published. Secondly, it can also be interpreted as a topos of authority. Reisigl & Wodak (2001: 79) define the topos of authority as follows: “x is right or X has to be done or X has to be omitted because A (= authority) says that it is right or that it has to be done or that it has to be omitted” (ibid.: 79). Reisigl & Wodak (2001: 72) state that the topos of authority is “backing one’s own standpoint by means of reference to authorities considered to be or passed off as being competent, superior, sacrosanct, unimpeachable and so on”. In this column, Abidin Daver uses the topos of authority, because the letter comes from a member of parliament who can be seen as an authority that can reflect the attitude of the Turkish politics. In addition, this move contributes to the positive self-portrayal of the editorialist, as the editorialist Abidin Daver refrains from making his own explicit arguments and instead uses the letter from the MP Şeref from Edirne to argumentation.

The letter deals with the fact that various languages other than Turkish are still spoken in the streets of Istanbul. The theme is supported by an illustrative example based on a story showing that Armenian, Greek and Hebrew are still spoken in Taksim. The deputy of Edirne, Şeref Aykut, begins the letter with an obvious referential distinction between Turkish citizens. In the first sentence of the first paragraph, through references “Us – Turks” and “fellow countrymen who are from Turkey”, he constructs a “we group” versus a “they group” in Turkey. The “we group” is linguistically referred to as “we Turks”. The use of “We Turks” reinforces the we-group for solidarity and power among Turks. In addition, the possessive pronoun “we” means that the author considers himself a member of the “we group of Turks”. The discursive construction of the “they-group” as “others” is essentialised by the dissimulative reference to “fellow countrymen who are from Turkey”. Here, the letter writer, Abidin Daver, does not clearly explain who the they-group is. However, in the above-mentioned letter, he uses the term “they group”, by which he implicitly means the Jews, Greeks and Armenians. Here he does not explicitly refer to them because he is relying on the readers’ knowledge and hopes that they will understand that he is talking about the Jews, Greeks and Armenians.

In the first sentence, the term “fellow countrymen” in reference to “the group of non-Muslims” functions not only as a mitigation strategy to soften his construction of the “we-group” versus the “they-group” by emphasising that “they-group” is also those who belonged to Turkey. But it also implicitly transfers responsibility to the “they-group” because the term “fellow countrymen” can be interpreted as a flag word, defined by Wodak et al. (2009) as “that is as a programmatic, positively connotated, declarative concept such as “freedom”, “democracy”, “solidarity” and so on, transporting strong ideological commitment” (Wodak et
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al.2009: 154). Seref Aykut may have used the term “fellow countrymen” to remind the “they-group” that they are Turkish citizens and must act in accordance with Turkish citizenship. In the first sentence, he does not explain what he means by using the term “fellow countrymen who are from Turkey”. In the second sentence of the first paragraph, however, he will explain the term he uses for “they group”.

In the second sentence of the first paragraph, he emphasizes a condition for belonging to the Turkish nation. He explains that they can be considered Turks as long as they are committed to the language, goals and ideals of Turkey. Even though this condition is reminiscent of the aforementioned concept of the Kulturnation, which is based on the unity of ideals and goals, I believe that in the first paragraph the letter writer, Edirne deputy Seref Aykut, considers the Turkish nation to be a combination of Kulturnation with the Staatsnation because he not only emphasises the need for a common language, common ideals and a common culture, but also highlights the terms “countrymen” and “our citizens”, which have a civic-territorial meaning, including equal rights and duties that citizens have before the law. Furthermore, in the second sentence, the letter writer deliberately uses the term “those” for they-group to reinforce the distinction between the “we” group of Turks and the they-group of non-native Turkish speakers. In the letter, Seref Aykut implies that the We-group consists of Turkish citizens who are ethnically Turkish and whose mother tongue is Turkish, while he defines the They-group as Turkish citizens who do not bear Turkish ethno-symbolic characteristics, including the Turkish language, customs and traditions.

In the second sentence, through the synecdochic use of “those who are from Turkey” referring to “a whole standing for the part (totum pro parte)”, Şeref categorises the “they-group” as a single community by ignoring their differences in terms of ethnicity, religion and language. In the first three decades of Turkey, the Turkish demography was not homogeneous in terms of ethnicity, religion and language, as Turkey was founded on the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, which was multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual. In 1927, for example, the number of Greeks, Armenians and Jews in Turkey totalled 109,905, 77,433 and 81,872 respectively out of a total Turkish population of 13,269,606 (Cagaptay 2006: 16). Reisigl and Wodak (2001: 49) state that “tropes, by tropes, biological, naturalising and depersonalising metaphors and metonymies as well as by synecdoche in the form of a part standing for the whole (pars pro toto)” are used to construct and represent ingroups and outgroups. This synecdoche can be interpreted not only as an attempt to singularise all ‘non-Turks’ regardless of their differences, but also as the letter writer’s determination to exclude them from the in-group.

In the third sentence of the first paragraph, the letter writer clearly calls on Turkish citizens whose mother tongue is not Turkish to respect this condition and to commit themselves to the Turkish language, culture and ideals. He implies that their commitment to the Turkish language, culture and ideals will enable them to integrate into Turkey. In this sentence, through the metaphoric use of “this wonderful existence” to refer to Turkey, Seref Aykut resorts to topos of lovely, idyllic place (locus amoenus). Wodak et al. (2009) discovered the topos of lovely, idyllic place in their analysis of Austrian collective national identity by analyzing political speeches and interviews with ordinary Austrian citizens. They found that this topos was used to emphasise Austrian democracy, the rule of law, socioeconomic prosperity and Austria’s natural features, such as the beauty of Austrian lakes,
rivers and mountains (Wodak et al. 2009). In the letter, Şeref Aykut endeavours to present Turkey in a positive light. The argumentation scheme of the topos of locus amoenus (the beautiful idyllic place) can be interpreted as follows:

**Premise:** Turkey is a wonderful country.

**Conclusion:** Turkish citizens who do not have Turkish ethno-symbolic characteristics must adopt the Turkish language, culture and ideals in order to belong to the Turkish language.

In my opinion, the topos of locus amoenus is used to construct membership of the “we-group” as a prize which aims at encouraging the ‘they-group’ to speak Turkish for inclusion in the “we-group”. In the third sentence of the first paragraph, the pronoun “we” could be interpreted as a call for the “we-group” to act together and encourage the “they-group” to respect the Turkish language and its goals. Even though the use of “our citizens” in reference to the “they group” serves to include the “they group” in Turkey, this could indicate that the letter writer considers them as communities that are connected to Turkey by law.

What Turkey expects of them as citizens of Turkey becomes clearer in the second paragraph, in which he explicitly wishes “they-group” in Istanbul not to speak their mother tongue. The first sentence of the paragraph shows that the letter writer clearly disapproves of speaking other languages in Turkey. His disapproving attitude towards speaking languages other than Turkish is very clear in his description as “many tongues that pollutes the streets of Istanbul”. By saying in the first sentence of the second paragraph that they can speak their mother tongues anywhere “as much as they wish” he shows that his only goal is the unity of the language in Turkey, the standardisation of the Turkish language among the non-Turkish speakers in Turkey. He implies that his opposition is not to other languages, but to their use in Turkey.

In the second sentence of the second paragraph, he uses a rhetorical question to defend that it is the right of the Turks as a “we group” to demand that the “they group” speak Turkish. In the second sentence, the dichotomy between the “we” group of “Turk” Turkish citizens and the “they” group of “non-Turk” Turkish citizens is reinforced through predications. For example, the They-group is defined as “those who cry out, when it serves their purpose, that they are a subject of the flag, a member of the nation”. Here, even though the they-group is associated with the Turkish flag, i.e. Turkish citizenship, the letter writer portrays the they-group negatively as those who do not really want to commit themselves to Turkish values and culture, but only pretend to make an effort to integrate into the Turkish nation. The use of flag words such as “the right”, “the honour of the flag” serves to strengthen the argument by evoking virtue, loyalty and responsibility in the readers. In the same sentence, the use of “debt” is used to suggest that it is an obligation for them to speak Turkish. Furthermore, a person who has debts must pay them, and if he does not pay his debts, there are penalties. In this respect, by using the term “debt”, the letter writer Şeref Aykut may want to emphasise that there might be some legal sanctions or impositions for the they-group that does not speak Turkish and insist on speaking other languages. Therefore, the term “debt” has a kind of threatening character for me. Moreover, in the sentence “the honour of the flag under which they take shelter while enjoying the many pleasures of life...”, the
letter writer Seref Aykut positively portrays Turkey as a country that provides shelter for the they-group that can benefit from the “pleasures” of Turkey. The term “shelter” portrays Turkey as a safe and strong home that protects every member under its roof. However, the phrase “many pleasures of life” is vague in that the letter writer does not explain what kind of pleasures that Turkey offers to the they-group.

In the third paragraph, he resorts to the strategy of illustrative examples by telling a story based on his own personal experience with the they-group. This story is important because it clearly shows who the they-group is. Through the story, the reader eventually learns that the “They group” is the Greeks, Armenians and Jews in Turkey. The story also aims to problematise the lack of fluency in Turkish language in the “they group”, which he believes is contrary to the norms and values of the Turkish Republic. The story consists of the setting, two complications, two resolutions and the conclusion. The third paragraph contains the categories of setting and complication. He begins the story with the category of setting by explaining that he was a guest in the house of an Istanbullite in Taksim. The place is Taksim, a neighbourhood in Istanbul that was home to Turkey's Greek, Armenian and Jewish communities in the 1930s. The setting suggests that this is an everyday story. As Seref Aykut is a guest in a house, he does not know what he would encounter during his stay. In the first sentence of the third paragraph, he portrays the person who is hosting him in a positive light, using the term “an Istanbulite” who is unfailingly hospitable to him. The hospitality of the host is emphasised by Seref Aykut and the use of the adverb “unsparingly” reinforces the positive portrayal of the host as hospitable. In the second sentence of the third paragraph, the first complication is formulated: the clamour of the vendors in the streets of Taksim. This complication is supported by the negative predicates in the third and fourth sentences. The use of “hell” shows how much the storyteller Seref Aykut perceived the shouting negatively and in the fourth sentence “Vendors started shouting with all their breath”, the storyteller portrays the vendors negatively as those who shout. In the fourth paragraph he goes on to discuss the category of complication. The first sentence of the fourth paragraph emphasises the negativity of complication. The expression “These chaotic brayings drove me out of my mind” could lead to a negative portrayal of the storyteller, Seref Aykut, because defining the shouting of the vendors “brayings” is an unkind expression, and if we consider that he is a Turkish member of parliament, such expressions would not be accepted by the readers. Therefore, he apologises by saying, “Please excuse the expression”. This apology could be seen as a mitigation strategy to soften the unfriendly expression. Furthermore, in the second sentence, by saying that he did not know these shouts in Ankara, he tries to explain why he was so surprised by the shouting of the vendors, which is meant to soften the unfriendly expression in the first sentence. Meanwhile, there was a contrastive comparison between Ankara, a capital city of Turkey, and Istanbul, the largest city of Turkey. In the sentence, Ankara is depicted as a city where vendors do not shout, while Istanbul is depicted as a city where vendors shout. In the sentence “We do not see such things in Ankara”, The plural pronoun “we” is used to construct a “we-group of people living in Ankara”. In the third sentence, by explicitly mentioning Yerevan, Tirana and Tel Aviv, the letter writer perhaps wants to imply that the languages spoken in the streets of Istanbul do not belong to Turkey, but to countries such as Armenia (Yerevan), Israel (Tel Aviv) and Albania (Tirana). In the last sentence of the fourth paragraph, with the statement “I ran outside at
once”, he indicates that he is ready to do something or solve the complication. The last sentence can therefore be interpreted as the first resolution.

By emphasising in the fifth paragraph that “the noises went on”, he returns to the category of complication and reinforces it by quoting from the shouting of the vendors, which consist of Greek, Armenian and Hebrew. In the story, the main complication is that the vendors on the streets of Istanbul speak Greek, Armenian, Albanian, and Hebrew.

By saying in the first sentence of the sixth paragraph that “I do not know what all that was about”, he uses an avoidance strategy that serves to construct him as a person who has never witnessed such an event where languages other than Turkish were spoken. The story is set in Taksim in Istanbul, the place where Turkey’s non-Muslims have been residing in for many years. Here, the storyteller Şeref could be making an implicit comparison between Ankara and Istanbul, where there is a rhetorical contrast between Ankara and Istanbul: Ankara as a city that has the republican values that require Turkish to be the official language of the Turkish Republic, and Istanbul as a city of the Turkish Republic that still bears the multilingual, multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious traces of the Ottoman Empire. Here he has seen two policemen on the street and decides to talk to them in the hope that they can solve the problem. In the second sentence, “They also witnessing this atrocity which drove me mad”, the term “this atrocity” is initially used to portray the street vendors, who do not speak Turkish, in a negative light. The use of “drove me mad” can be seen as a mitigation strategy that softens the use of “this atrocity”, because here Seref Aykut is trying to say that the word “atrocity” was only used by him, but not by other Turkish citizens. These claims and opinions belong only to him. In doing so, he prevents any negative portrayal of the Turkish people as being prejudiced against those who speak languages other than Turkish. Secondly, he tries to imply that he was not the only witness, but that the two policemen could also testify that the vendors did not speak Turkish. This can be interpreted as a step to increase credibility, which can confirm Seref Aykut’s statement about the vendors’ lack of knowledge of Turkish.

In the third sentence of the sixth paragraph by stating that “perhaps they were the municipal policemen”, he tries to construct them as people who have the power and authority to solve this problem. Şeref’s question to the two policemen “Why do not you intervene with these shouting men?” is the resolution where the storyteller wants the policemen to stop these vendors who are shout in different languages. Here, too, Şeref implicitly constructs himself positively, as he refrains from intervening directly in the matter, because if he had intervened with these vendors who wanted them to stop shouting in Greek, Armenian and Hebrew, he would have portrayed himself as aggressive and prejudiced. So he turns to the two policemen, by seeing them as authorities and demanding that they intervene in the situation.

The reaction of the two policemen represents a second complication category because they refused to intervene, by stating that it was not their duty and emphasising that in Turkey everyone was free to sell their goods as they wished. In this response of the police officers lies an overtly unifying strategy that considers all citizens equal regardless of their language, ethnicity and religion. The police officers in the story portray themselves as an authority that guarantees freedom and equality. Even though the reaction of the police officers is the second complication category for Seref Aykut, it contributes to the positive portrayal of Turkey as a country where equality, freedom and the rule of law are protected. Nonetheless, Şeref Aykut
implicitly calls on the Turkish government to address this issue and take more steps to spread the Turkish language among Turkey’s non-Muslims.

The following sentences of the last paragraph are dedicated to the assessment of the columnist Abidin Daver, who publishes the letter from the Edirne Şeref MP in his column. Abidin Daver praises Seref Aykut as an “idealist and mighty pen that describes feelings and fine thoughts that spring from your heart, your heart that burns with the sacred Turkish flame”. The metonymic use of the “idealist and mighty pen” in relation to Seref Aykut serves to emphasise Seref Aykut’s talents as a writer. The use of the “sacred Turkish flame” foregrounds Turkish nationalism and subtly functions as a justification strategy which justifies what is being said. The bullet points of the editorial, 1. the topos of authority merged with the columnist Abidin Daver’s strategy of positive self-portrayal. 2. the letter from Edirne deputy Şeref contains the construction of the “we” group of Turks against the “they” group of non-Turkish speaking Turkish citizens, problematising the fact that Greeks, Armenians and Jews do not even speak Turkish in their daily lives. What is important here is that the Edirne deputy Şeref does not make a distinction between the non-Turkophone citizens of Turkey in his letter through the generalising synecdoche with the use of “they”, but considers them as a single identity by disregarding their differences in terms of ethnicity, language and religion.

6. Conclusion

In this article I have analysed the letter of the Turkish Member of Parliament Seref Aykut, which was published in the newspaper Cumhuriyet in 1937. The letter described the lack of Turkish language skills among street vendors in Istanbul. This article contributed to existing research in two ways. This article focussed on non-European discourse, namely Turkish press discourse in the 1930s. However, the Viennese School of Discourse-Historical Approach is interested in the European discourse on European national identity in the post-Cold War period (Krzyzanowski 2009; Krzyzanowski 2016; Krzyzanowski & Ledin 2017; Krzyzanowski et al. 2018; Reisigl 2007, 2014; Richardson & Wodak 2009; Watson 2009; Wodak & Forchtner 2014, Wodak 2015b; Wodak & Krzyzanowski 2017; Wodak & van Dijk 2000). Therefore, my research has contributed to the Viennese School of Discourse-Historical Approach by looking at a different time period, namely the 1930s, and focussing on a non-Western discourse, namely the Turkish press discourse.

Secondly, this article has contributed to Turkish early republican historiography on Turkish national identity. As mentioned above, the scholars who dealt with collective Turkish national identity in the 1930s consisted of two groups. The first group advocated the idea of civic-territorial citizenship in relation to Turkish national identity (Çeçen 1998; Çınar 2015; Dumont 1984; İnan 1981; Karal 1981; Kazancıgil 1981; Kişlalı 1996; Kili 1969, 1982; Mango 2002, 2008; Parla & Davison 2004; Webster 1979), while the second group emphasises that Turkish national identity in the 1930s adopted an ethno-linguistic approach by attaching importance to the homogeneity of ethno-symbolic values. In this regard, these scholars focus on Turkish citizenship policies towards non-Muslim and non-Turkish elements in Turkey (Adanır 2001; Aktar 1996a, 1996b, 2000; Bali 1999; Bayar 2014; Beşikçi 1977; Cagaptay 2006; Eligür 2017, 2019, 2020; Maksudyan 2005; Parla 1992; Poulton 1997; Oran
2004, 2009, 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2014; Özdoğan 2001; Yıldız 2001). In my analysis of the Turkish Member of Parliament’s letter published in the Turkish newspaper Cumhuriyet, I found that standardizing and homogenizing the Turkish language among Turkish citizens was important in 1930s. It was also clear that the lack of Turkish language among street vendors was described negatively in the letter.

Notes
1. Some parts of this article are produced from my PhD thesis.

References


About the Author

**Reyhan Kadriye Göksel** holds a Ph.D. in European and International Studies from King’s College London, University of London, United Kingdom. She also studied at Bilkent University, where she completed her B.A. and M.A. degrees. She holds a B.A. in Translation and Interpretation Studies and an M.A. in International Affairs and Public Policy. She is a sociolinguist and is interested in the relationship between discourses and national identities. In particular, she has specialised in the rhetoric of Turkish newspaper editorials published in the 1930s.