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CALL FOR PAPERS
FOR THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL “PALIMPSEST”

**LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE / SHIFT AND SPEAKERS'
ATTITUDES IN TURKEY: THE CASE OF MACEDONIAN
IN MUSTAFAPAŞA, CAPPADOCIA**

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Abstract: This study examines the language attitudes and choices of the Macedonian-speaking Muslim community of Mustafapaşa, Cappadocia, nearly a century after their forced resettlement during the 1923 Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey. The community, descendants of approximately 400 immigrants from Jerveni (Agios Antonios) near Kastoria, Greece, has since integrated into Turkish society while retaining symbolic ties to their heritage language. Although the community expresses strong affective attachment to Macedonian, this attitude does not consistently translate into active maintenance. Drawing on Fishman's (1964) framework of language maintenance and shift, findings indicate that Turkish, reinforced through education, socioeconomic prestige, and intermarriage, has become the dominant language across generations. Macedonian persists mainly among older speakers and in receptive multilingual exchanges, but younger generations acquire only fragments, often framed as nostalgic "words from grandmothers." Within international frameworks, the community is situated between "threatened" and "shifting" on the EGIDS scale (Lewis & Simons, 2010) and between "vulnerable" and "definitely endangered" in UNESCO's (2011) classification. The case demonstrates that positive attitudes toward a heritage language alone are insufficient to ensure intergenerational transmission. Unless Macedonian is repositioned as a second language with educational support, it risks survival only as cultural memory, rather than as a living medium of communication.

Keywords: *Macedonian; Mustafapaşa Village; Language Attitude; Language Choice; Language Maintenance.*

1. Introduction

This study examines the socio-psychological context shaping language choice among the Macedonian-speaking Muslim community of Mustafapaşa, a village in Cappadocia, Central Anatolia. It argues that linguistic practices within this bilingual community do not necessarily align with the affective components of their attitudes toward Macedonian (the heritage language) and Turkish (the dominant societal language). While positive feelings toward Macedonian persist, they do not consistently translate into sustained efforts of language maintenance. The inhabitants of Mustafapaşa are largely descendants of immigrants who arrived following the 1923 Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey. The

continuity between the Ottoman millet system and the minority regime established by the Treaty of Lausanne is particularly visible in Cappadocia, where religious affiliation historically functioned as the primary marker of communal belonging. Under the millet system, this confessional logic enabled multilingualism and shared cultural practices to persist (Bayar, 2018). This principle was later preserved by the Treaty of Lausanne, which defined minorities exclusively in religious terms and recognized only non-Muslims as minorities (Republic of Turkey, 1923). As a result, Turkish-speaking Orthodox populations were expelled to Greece, while Muslim communities, regardless of linguistic repertoire, were incorporated into the Turkish nation-state (Gürel, 2025). This process rendered the region's ethno-linguistic plurality politically invisible, although material and cultural traces continue to testify to a plural past (Canpolat, 2023). Within this context, the Macedonian-speaking Muslim community of Mustafapaşa is distinguished by its migration history, religious affiliation, and linguistic repertoire. Today, community members are predominantly bilingual, speaking Turkish alongside their dialect of the South Slavic language, Macedonian, a dialect locally referred to as *nashta* or *nashki* ("our language"), originating from the village of Jerveni near Kastoria in northern Greece. Despite near-complete social and economic integration, Macedonian lacks official recognition; in Turkey's 1969 census, it was excluded from minority language categories, likely subsumed under Pomak, rendering the community statistically invisible. Against this backdrop, this study examines language maintenance and shift among the Macedonian-speaking Muslims of Mustafapaşa using Fishman's (1964) framework and a domain-based approach, demonstrating how affective attachment to a heritage language can coexist with a gradual shift toward the dominant national language, shaped by forced migration, religious affiliation, and historical memory.

2. Literature Review

Attitude occupies a central place in social psychology and is commonly understood as an individual's tendency to respond positively or negatively toward objects, people, institutions, or events. Rather than being a fixed mental state, attitude is generally described as an evaluative orientation that develops over time. Ajzen (2005, p. 3) emphasizes this evaluative dimension, while Krech and Crutchfield (1948, p. 52) define attitude as "an enduring organization of motivational, emotional, perceptual, and cognitive processes." Zimbardo and Leippe (1991) further argue that attitudes emerge through the interaction of cognition, emotion, behavioral intentions, and experience. From this perspective, attitudes are dynamic and multidimensional, shaped by broader social and motivational contexts (Miserandino, 2007, p. 65). Within sociolinguistics, language attitudes refer to speakers' evaluations of their own language varieties, those of others, and the communities associated with them. Appel and Muysken (1987, p. 16) distinguish between a behaviorist approach, which focuses on observable linguistic behavior, and a mentalist approach, which examines internal beliefs guiding language use (Fasold, 1984). These perspectives are complementary. Language attitudes are also shaped by social hierarchies: languages associated

with socially dominant groups tend to acquire greater prestige (Feifel, 1994, p. 55), reinforced by political, economic, and cultural power (Grenoble, 2011, p. 32). The concepts of language maintenance (LM) and language shift (LS) provide key frameworks for linking attitudes to practice. Language maintenance refers to the continued use of a minority or heritage language across domains despite the presence of a dominant language (Pauwels, 2005, p. 719). Research highlights the central role of intergenerational transmission within the family (Fishman, 1991; Clyne & Kipp, 1999). Language shift, by contrast, unfolds gradually and becomes visible through reduced proficiency, narrowing domains of use, and declining speaker numbers (Dorian, 1982, p. 44). Pauwels (2016) identifies duration of use, domain range, and exclusivity as key indicators of maintenance and shift. Studies conducted in Turkey provide important insights into these processes. Research on Bosnian Turks (Karahana, 2004) and the Kabardian community under urbanization (Alagözlü, 2002) demonstrate how attitudes, social networks, and language ideologies shape everyday linguistic practices. More recent work on Hemshin, Romeyka, and Lazuri offers detailed accounts of language use, transmission, and speaker attitudes (Akın, 2023; Akkuç, 2024; Ünlü & Hewitt, 2023). In parallel, sociological and historical studies of Balkan-origin Muslim communities emphasize migration, identity, and memory, while often treating language as a secondary concern (Dikici, 2014; Günçen, 2013; Svetieva, 2009). Situated at the intersection of these strands, the Macedonian-speaking Muslim community of Mustafapaşa provides a valuable case for examining the relationship between language attitudes and linguistic practice. Adopting a behaviorist perspective (Appel & Muysken, 1987; Fasold, 1984) and drawing on Pauwels's (2016) framework and Dorian's (1982) model of gradual language loss, this study addresses a recurring gap in the literature: the coexistence of positive attitudes toward a heritage language with declining everyday use in contexts where overt language repression is absent.

3. Adopted Methodology: Data Collection and Data Analysis

Data were collected through a questionnaire-based survey conducted in Mustafapaşa, during fieldwork in 2018-2019. Participants were recruited using purposive and community-based sampling, with initial contacts established through local networks and additional informants reached via snowball sampling. This approach was particularly suitable given the village's close-knit social structure and the sensitivity surrounding language use and identity. The questionnaire was administered in person to ensure accessibility across age groups and educational backgrounds and to allow clarification where necessary. Participation was voluntary, and informants were informed about the purpose of the study and the academic use of the data prior to participation. Informed consent was obtained orally from all participants, with family consent sought for younger informants when required, in line with local norms. The study does not claim strict statistical representativeness; however, care was taken to include participants of different ages, genders, and neighborhoods in order to capture a broad range of language practices. In total, 64 informants participated in the study, representing over

10% of the village's year-round population, estimated at around 600 residents. Participants ranged in age from 12 to 80 and included both women and men. The inclusion of a wide age range reflects contemporary sociolinguistic approaches that emphasize synchronic variation and everyday language use. The questionnaire was structured into eight sections: (1) demographics, (2) language awareness, (3) language use across contexts, (4) language use in governmental and public domains, (5) education, (6) ethnic identity and religion, (7) motivations related to language maintenance, and (8) open-ended questions and comments. The data were analyzed using SPSS (version 22). Cross-tabulations were employed to explore relationships between demographic variables, such as age, gender, number of children, occupation, educational background, and parental migration history and linguistic factors, including languages spoken, distinctions between mother tongue and additional languages, and patterns of language use across different domains. Sociocultural dimensions, such as religion and cultural identification, were also taken into consideration. Informants were drawn from six neighborhoods: Yeni Mahalle, Hamam, Manastır, Yukarı Mahalle, Davutlu, and Kırkdokuz Evler, and included 43 men and 21 women. The age distribution comprised 11 participants aged 12–24, 15 aged 25–44, 16 aged 45–54, and 22 aged 55 and above. Responses to the optional open-ended questions were systematically coded and numbered, allowing for a more nuanced qualitative interpretation alongside the quantitative analysis. This combined quantitative and qualitative approach provides a robust framework for examining the interplay between language attitudes, usage patterns, and social factors within the Mustafapaşa community.

3.1. Demographic Variables

The participants in this study were drawn from Mustafapaşa's Macedonian-speaking Muslim community, focusing on individuals with ancestral ties to Jerveni. Informants were grouped into four generations: second (50–80 years), third (45–54 years), fourth (24–44 years), and fifth (12–24 years), while the first and sixth generations were excluded due to age considerations. Age distribution shows 17.2% aged 12–24, 23.4% aged 25–44, 25% aged 45–54, and 34.4% aged 55+, making the second generation the largest group. Immigrants predominantly reside in clusters within the village, though many live alongside longstanding local families. All informants practice Islam, the only commonality with local inhabitants upon initial settlement. Only 4.7% of respondents are illiterate, while the remainder received at least primary education in the Turkish system.

3.2. Language Repertoire and Self-Identification

All informants were born in Turkey and speak Turkish. Survey results indicate that 65.6% consider Turkish their mother tongue, while 40.6% view it as a second language. Mother-tongue Turkish increases progressively with each generation, reaching 100% in the fifth generation. Conversely, 85.9% reported speaking Macedonian, though only 40.6% consider it their mother tongue, with 59.4% regarding it as a second language. By the fifth generation, Macedonian is no longer considered the native language; Turkish has become their mother tongue.

3.3. Language Choice and Context

This section of the survey examines language choice across interlocutors through open-ended questions, which resulted in multiple responses as well as some non-responses. When overall language use is considered without age differentiation, neither Turkish nor Macedonian is used exclusively in any context. At the intimate level, exclusive use of Turkish remains limited (35.9%), while exclusive use of Macedonian is marginal (6.3%). The highest rate of exclusive Turkish use occurs in interaction with other Turkish speakers (76.56%), whereas exclusive Macedonian use is most frequent within the family (40.63%) and with relatives (43.75%). Overall, language use at home is predominantly bilingual, combining Turkish and Macedonian. Communication with children reveals a marked asymmetry in language transmission. The lowest rate of exclusive Macedonian use is observed in interaction with children (1.6%), while exclusive Turkish use with children is notably high (54.7%). These patterns indicate that although the heritage language continues to be used among adult members of the community, it is not effectively transmitted to the younger generation. Bilingual use with children suggests limited exposure to Macedonian, raising questions about the long-term viability of the heritage language within the community. When language choice is analyzed across generations, all age groups primarily use Turkish in communication with children. While some informants report using only Macedonian or both languages with children, particularly in the second, third, and fourth generations, these practices remain marginal. Outside the home, bilingual language use predominates in interactions with neighbors and in coffee houses, whereas Turkish dominates institutional domains such as school, the market, and the workplace. These findings collectively point to a shift toward Turkish in both private and public spheres, with Macedonian increasingly confined to restricted and symbolic contexts. The data summarized above are presented in Table 1 and Table 2 below:

Table 1. Language Choice and Context

N=64, Frequency %	Age Distribution	Only Turkish	Only Macedonian	Both (Turkish and Macedonian)
Which language(s) do you prefer speaking to ...? (Q13)	<i>Mother / Father</i>			
	55 +	2 (9.1)	12 (54.5)	8 (36.4)
	54-45 yrs	3 (18.8)	4 (25.0)	9 (56.3)
	44-25 yrs	6 (40.0)	4 (26.7)	5 (33.3)
	24-12 yrs	9 (90.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (10.)
	<i>Children</i>			
	55 +	15 (71.4)	1 (4.8)	5 (23.8)
	54-45 yrs	11 (73.3)	0 (0.0)	4 (26.7)
	44-25 yrs	8 (72.7)	0 (0.0)	3 (27.3)
	24-12 yrs	1 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)

N=64, Frequency %	Age Distribution	Only Turkish	Only Macedonian	Both (Turkish and Macedonian)
Which language(s) do you prefer speaking to ...? (Q13)	Siblings			
	55 +	10 (45.5)	7 (31.8)	5 (22.7)
	54-45 yrs	7 (43.8)	2 (12.5)	7 (43.8)
	44-25 yrs	8 (53.3)	1 (6.7)	6 (40.0)
	24-12 yrs	9 (90.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (10.0)
	Spouses			
	55 +	8 (38.1)	6 (28.6)	7 (33.3)
	54-45 yrs	7 (46.7)	0 (0.0)	8 (53.3)
	44-25 yrs	8 (66.7)	1 (8.3)	3 (25.0)
	24-12 yrs	1 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
	Relatives			
	55 +	0 (0.0)	4 (18.2)	18 (81.8)
	54-45 yrs	2 (12.5)	1 (6.3)	13 (81.3)
	44-25 yrs	3 (20.0)	0 (0.0)	12 (80.0)
	24-12 yrs	8 (72.7)	0 (0.0)	3 (27.3)

Table 2. Language Choice and Context

N=64, Frequency %	Age Distribution	Only Turkish	Both (Turkish and Macedonian)
Which language (s) do you prefer speaking in... ? (Q14)	Neighbors		
	55 +	5 (22.7)	17 (77.3)
	54-45 yrs	6 (37.5)	10 (62.5)
	44-25 yrs	5 (33.3)	10 (66.7)
	24-12 yrs	8 (72.7)	3 (27.3)
	In the Market		
	55 +	11 (50.0)	11 (50.0)
	54-45 yrs	13 (81.3)	3 (18.8)
	44-25 yrs	11 (73.3)	4 (26.7)
	24-12 yrs	9 (81.8)	2 (18.2)
	In the Coffee Houses		
	55 +	4 (23.5)	13 (76.5)
	54-45 yrs	5 (38.5)	8 (61.5)
	44-25 yrs	5 (41.7)	7 (58.3)
	24-12 yrs	7 (77.8)	2 (22.2)
	At Work		
	55 +	6 (35.3)	11 (64.7)
	54-45 yrs	13 (81.3)	3 (18.8)
	44-25 yrs	8 (57.1)	6 (42.9)
	24-12 yrs	6 (85.7)	1 (14.3)
	At School		
	55 +	15 (88.2)	2 (11.8)
	54-45 yrs	13 (100.0)	0 (0.0)
	44-25 yrs	13 (100.0)	0 (0.0)
	24-12 yrs	11 (100.0)	0 (0.0)

3.4. Ethnic Identity and Cultural Affiliation

Ethnic and cultural self-identification reveals a complex pattern. The second and third generations predominantly identify ethnically as Turkish (68.2% and 75%, respectively) but culturally as both Turkish and Macedonian (86.4% and 87.5%). The fourth generation shows a shift toward dual ethnic identification (60%), while the fifth generation largely identifies as ethnically and culturally Turkish (81.8% and 54.5%). Despite this, Macedonian remains an important cultural reference, though only a small minority identifies solely with it. Overall, 73.5% of respondents acknowledge language as significant for maintaining ethnic identity. See Tables 3 and 4 below:

Table 3. Ethnic Identity, Cultural Affiliation and Language

N=64, Frequency %	Age Distribution	Only Turkish	Only Macedonian	Both (Turkish and Macedonian)
How do you describe yourself ethnically? (Q15)	55- +	15 (68.2)	0(0.0)	7 (31.8)
	54-45 yrs	12 (75.0)	0(0.0)	4 (25.0)
	44-25 yrs	6 (40.0)	0(0.0)	9 (60.0)
	24-12 yrs	9 (81.8)	0(0.0)	2 (18.2)

Table 4. Ethnic Identity, Cultural Affiliation and Language

N=64, Frequency %	Age Distribution	Only Turkish	Only Macedonian	Both (Turkish and Macedonian)
How do you describe yourself culturally? (Q16)	55- +	3 (13.6)	0 (0.0)	19 (86.4)
	54-45 yrs	2 (12.5)	0 (0.0)	14 (87.5)
	44-25 yrs	1 (6.7)	0 (0.0)	14 (93.3)
	24-12 yrs	6 (54.5)	1 (9.1)	4 (36.4)

3.5. Education, Language Proficiency, Government and Public Use

Turkish is the primary language of education for nearly all informants, with minimal exceptions. However, 82.8% expressed a preference for bilingual education. While written Macedonian in Cyrillic is rarely used, spoken proficiency persists, particularly among older generations. Across generations, competence in Turkish dominates in all skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing), whereas Macedonian proficiency is largely oral and limited.

Table 5. Language Proficiency Rates

N=64, Frequency %				
Proficiency Rate in Turkish (Q24)	Very Well	Well	Not Well	Not at All
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Speaking	33 (51,6)	28 (43,8)	3 (4,7)	0 (0.0)
Listening	34 (53,1)	27 (42,2)	3 (4,7)	0 (0.0)

Reading	32 (50,0)	25 (39,1)	4 (6,3)	3 (4,7)
Writing	32 (50,0)	24 (37,5)	4 (6,3)	4 (6,3)
Proficiency Rate in Macedonian (Q25)	Very Well	Well	Not Well	Not at All
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Speaking	14 (21,9)	15 (23,4)	27 (42,2)	8 (12,5)
Listening	18 (28,1)	26 (40,6)	13 (20,3)	7 (10,9)
Reading	1 (1,6)	2 (3,1)	3 (4,7)	58 (90,6)
Writing	0 (0,0)	2 (3,1)	3 (4,7)	59 (92,2)

When asked about the use of Macedonian in public institutions, 60.9% supported it. Generational differences emerged, with the highest support among the fourth generation (73.3%) and the lowest in the fifth generation (45.5%). The absence of a standardized written form of Macedonian in public contexts may contribute to the community's limited institutional use.

3.6. Language Perception and Motivation for Language Maintenance

Perceptions of Macedonian are largely positive: 62.5% perceive it as sincere, 28.1% as friendly, and 35.9% as traditional. Turkish, by contrast, is associated with education, conservatism, and religiosity. Overall, respondents demonstrated a nuanced view, attributing distinct social and emotional values to each language. Over generations, attitudes toward bilingualism are predominantly positive. Older generations overwhelmingly support teaching Macedonian to younger generations (>80%), while the fifth generation shows moderate support (>50%). Some respondents link Macedonian knowledge to potential employment opportunities and cultural engagement, particularly in cultural institutions. Social considerations, such as historical integration and group esteem, influence whether respondents feel comfortable using Macedonian in public, with most reporting no reluctance to use it in front of local Turks.

4. Conclusion

This study has explored the relationship between language attitudes and language practices within the Macedonian-speaking Muslim community of Mustafapaşa, focusing on the tension between Turkish as the dominant societal language and Macedonian as a heritage language. The findings demonstrate a clear disjunction between strong affective and cognitive attachment to Macedonian and the lack of sustained practices ensuring its intergenerational transmission. Although Macedonian-speaking *muhacirs* (Turkish borrowing meaning “migrants”) are fully integrated into local social and economic life and often describe themselves as Turkish or as both Turkish and Macedonian, linguistic practices reveal an unmistakable shift toward Turkish. Turkish has become the first language of younger generations, while Macedonian is no longer transmitted as a native language, largely due to schooling and the socioeconomic prestige attached to Turkish. Fieldwork findings suggest that this language shift did not result primarily from overt coercion or direct experiences of linguistic repression, such as the “*Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş!*” (“Citizen, Speak Turkish!”) campaign, but rather from the gradual internalization of language hierarchies that confined

Macedonian to private and affective domains. While emotional attachment to Macedonian remains strong and bilingualism is often framed as a potential asset, this attachment rarely translates into concrete action. As a result, Macedonian persists mainly through receptive multilingualism, particularly among older speakers, and continues to circulate informally in everyday interactions without institutional reinforcement. Within established frameworks of language vitality, Macedonian in Mustafapaşa occupies a fragile position between vulnerability and endangerment. For older generations, however, the language retains profound moral significance and is frequently conceptualized as an *amanet* (Turkish borrowing meaning “trust”), capturing both a sense of intergenerational responsibility and the increasing fragility of linguistic inheritance. Thus, this study reveals a clear mismatch between positive language attitude and actual maintenance practices, though it is constrained by its single-community scope and time-bounded design. Future research could adopt longitudinal and comparative perspectives across similar communities. Overall, the findings challenge linear models of language maintenance, demonstrating that strong symbolic attachment does not necessarily inhibit language shift under sustained sociolinguistic and structural pressures.

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