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Hybrid language practices on Turkey's national Kurdish television station: Iconic perspectives on form

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Abstract: The language policy of Turkey's state-run Kurdish television station (TRT Kurdî) allows for Kurdish-Turkish hybridity, which reflects common practice among Turkish Kurds (Schluter, Anne. 2014. Competing or compatible language identities in Istanbul's Kurmanji workplaces? In Kristina Kamp, Ayhan Kaya, Fuat Keyman & Özge Onursal-Besgül (eds.), *Contemporary Turkey at a Glance. Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Local and Trans-local Dynamics*, 125–137. Wiesbaden, Germany: Springer.) and promotes ownership among minority language speakers (Hinnenkamp, Volker. 2003. Mixed language varieties of migrant adolescents and the discourse of hybridity. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 24(1–2). 12–41.). Nevertheless, the mixing of Turkish and apparent disregard for Kurdish language rules has led some of the target audience to reject the station (Öpengin, Ergin. 2012. Sociolinguistic situation of Kurdish in Turkey: Sociopolitical factors and language use patterns. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 217. 151–180.). Such attention to form, according to (Lemon, Alaina. 2002. Form and function in Soviet stage Romani: Modeling metapragmatics through performance institutions. *Language in Society* 31. 29–64.) is usually reserved for minority language activists and dominant language speakers whereas marginalized minority language speakers frequently focus on function. Through semi-structured interviews with twenty politically engaged Kurdish migrants of Istanbul, the current study investigated metalinguistic criticisms about the station to deconstruct perceptions of the suitability of a hybrid Kurdish broadcasting language in relation to findings from (Lemon, Alaina. 2002. Form and function in Soviet stage Romani: Modeling metapragmatics through performance institutions. *Language in Society* 31. 29–64.) and (Hinnenkamp, Volker. 2003. Mixed language varieties of migrant adolescents and the discourse of hybridity. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 24(1–2). 12–41.). In contrast to (Hinnenkamp, Volker. 2003. Mixed language varieties of migrant adolescents and the discourse of hybridity. *Journal*

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of *Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 24(1–2). 12–41.), participants viewed linguistic hybridity on TRT Kurdî as *iconic* (Irvine, Judith & Susan Gal. 2000. Language ideology and linguistic differentiation. In Paul V. Kroskrity (ed.), *Regimes of language: ideologies, politics, and identities*, 35–84. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.) of the Turkish state’s agenda to assimilate its Kurdish population. Furthermore, the transfer of this agenda onto a sub-group within the same in-group, TRT Kurdî’s producers, provided evidence of fractal recursivity (Irvine, Judith & Susan Gal. 2000. Language ideology and linguistic differentiation. In Paul V. Kroskrity (ed.), *Regimes of language: ideologies, politics, and identities*, 35–84. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.). Results call for a broadening of Lemon (2002) to allow for the inclusion of a larger portion of minority language-speaking populations whose language, similar to the Istanbul-resident Kurdish community profiled in the current study, has been deeply politicized.

Keywords: Kurdish, media, metalinguistic comments, hybridity, iconization

1 Introduction: Language practices, ideologies, and the media

1.1 Hybrid language practices vs. legitimacy through publication

Simultaneously indexing ties to the homeland and the local setting, linguistic hybridity is common throughout migration contexts because it allows for the expression of a trans-regional identity (Cf. Moje et al. 2004; Pennycook 2007; Schneider 2014). This is the case for both second generation speakers’ ethnolects, like *Moroccan flavored Dutch* in western cities of Holland (Nortier and Dorleijn 2008), as well as cross-generational speakers’ heritage and target-language mixing like Cantonese and English in Detroit, U.S.A. (Williams 2005). Migrants who are minority language speakers in their places of origin often bring hybrid language practices with them to their adopted home, where patterns of usage are redistributed across domains to help fuse individuals’ trans-local bilingual practices with norms from the new local setting. (Brandt and Clinton 2002; Canagarajah 2005). The ubiquity of hybrid language practices has contributed to the vast literature on code-mixing and code-switching over the last few decades. More recently, renewed interest in individuals’ multilingual repertoires has led to a period that May (2014) refers to as the *multilingual turn*, which has given rise to such new terms as

translanguaging (García 2009; Creese and Blackledge 2010; García and Wei 2014), *metrolinguism* (Pennycook and Otsuji 2015), and *flexible bilingualism* (Creese et al. 2011), each of which includes its own literature. In each of these contexts, hybridity allows its speakers to appropriate an autonomous space in which they can take ownership of the discourse and, in so doing, move beyond the confines of the linguistic resources defined by the dominant society (Hinnenkamp 2003).

Ethnically Kurdish citizens of Turkey live throughout the country; however, Kurmanji¹-speaking Kurds are typically associated with Turkey's Southeast for both historical and political reasons. Historically, the high concentration of Kurdish inhabitants that populates this region predates the founding of the Turkish Republic and continues through today. Politically, many members of this population consider the Southeastern city of Diyarbakır to be the capital of Turkey's Kurdish region, which they refer to as Kurdistan. This distinction between regions has also influenced language practice: language attrition is far more pronounced among the Kurdish population that has migrated to Turkish-dominant cities to the west than those that have remained in their Kurdish-dominant villages. Migration to a region in which a native language is no longer the dominant language, regardless of the specific setting, is a key factor that reduces the ethnolinguistic vitality and intergenerational transmission of minority languages (Cf. Bourhis et al. 1981; Yağmur 2004). In the case of Turkey's Kurdish population, this effect has been intensified as monolingual Turkish language policies have been used, with some degree of success, to promote Kurds' assimilation into Turkish society (Gunter 1997; İçduygu et al. 1999). At the community level, adopting Turkish monolingual norms in Turkish-dominant areas comes with the additional benefit of allowing Kurdish speakers to avoid the stigma associated with Kurdish ties (Saraçoğlu 2009; Saraçoğlu 2011; Çoşkun et al. 2011). Even in Kurdish-dominant communities, as the description in the following paragraph outlines, the higher status of Turkish influences language choice as it relates to topic and speaker (Öpengin 2012). In this way, the dominance of Turkish has influenced language practices in both diaspora and native Kurdish communities. The magnitude of this influence has been strongest among Kurds who have migrated to Turkish-dominant cities; nevertheless, it has also contributed to widespread bilingualism and Kurdish language attrition (with dominance determined by regional and social factors) throughout Turkey's Kurdish-speaking population (See Öpengin 2012 for a more in-depth analysis of language shift among Kurdish speakers).

Due to its speakers' positioning within an officially Turkish-speaking nation and their bicultural identity, hybridity is omnipresent in Turkey's regional varieties

¹ This paper primarily addresses the Kurmanji variety of Kurdish. In subsequent uses of the word Kurdish, it refers to Kurmanji unless otherwise specified.

of Kurdish. A legacy of Turkey's restrictions on the public use of Kurdish is the invisibility of the language (Haig 2004; Schluter and Sansarkan 2014). For this reason, it may be tempting to view Kurdish-Turkish bilingualism through the prism of diglossia in which Kurdish went underground and became the language of L domains while Turkish took over the language of H domains. However, analyses of Kurds' daily language practices suggest the situation to be far less straight-forward (Jamison 2016): the use of Turkish versus Kurdish in daily life is tied to individual speakers' age, gender, education level, and residence in urban vs. rural settings (Öpengin 2012). As children have become educated in Turkish and they increasingly seek out Turkish-language media, Turkish has seeped into the L domains of conversations between peers. At the same time, the politicization of Kurdish has led to the current campaigns to increase the visibility (and use) of Kurdish in the public and formal H domains, such as literary texts and official public signs that had been traditionally reserved for Turkish (Öpengin 2012; Jamison 2016). Findings from Öpengin (2012) also suggest that language shift appears to be taking place as younger Kurds are becoming increasingly dominant in Turkish. As Kurdish migrants move to Turkish-dominant Istanbul and use Turkish across a broader number of domains, they also interact with Kurds from other regions of Turkey whose lexical and pragmatic knowledge of Kurdish likely varies from their own. In this context, hybridity continues to characterize their language albeit in a way that is reshuffled to accommodate new interlocutors and local norms.

Within this reshuffling of language domains and mixed codes, the functions of Kurdish vs. Turkish remain important pragmatically. For example, in an Istanbul workplace setting, a Kurdish manager's use of Kurdish to issue a command to his Kurdish employees can help to diminish social distance; his use of Turkish for the same purpose can help to emphasize his authority (Schluter and Sansarkan 2014). According to Lemon (2002), this importance placed on the *function* (i.e. domains of usage) of language is common to marginalized minority language communities. This focus is contrasted with dominant language communities' tendency to place more importance on the *form* (i.e. the metalinguistic aspects) of language. Exceptions to this distinction can be found among minority language activists who often seek to legitimize their language through attention to its form. This perspective describes the *metalinguistic community* of Yiddish discussed in Avineri (2014), for example, whose members are no longer proficient in the language but, nevertheless, remain deeply invested in preserving the language through metalinguistic discussions about the language. Addressing minority language speakers' focus on form represents a primary aim of the current paper. Specifically, it deconstructs this notion as it relates to politically active, Istanbul-resident migrant Kurds' framing of the language and programming of the Turkish state-run Kurdish-language television station, TRT Kurdî.

1.2 A brief history of Kurdish language policy in Turkey

With its founding in 1923, The Turkish Republic borrowed concepts of the nation-state and ethnolinguistic identity from European examples, most notably France. As is consistent with other projects of modernity (Fernandes 2012), the Turkish language was adopted to serve as the single official language in the new land of the Turks. The status of the Turkish language was simultaneously elevated to represent the high moral standing of the Turkish people (Coşkun et al. 2011). With this aim of forging a new monolingual, monocultural identity for the nation, the new constitution forbid languages that were not Turkish. Bottom-up grass roots campaigns and top-down language policy worked in tandem with resettlement initiatives to assimilate Turkish citizens who spoke one of many minority languages (Cf. Gunter 1997; İçduygu et al. 1999; Heper 2007; Coşkun et al. 2011; Zeydanlıoğlu 2012; Schluter and Sansarkan 2014). Kurdish was not recognized as a language in its own right but, rather, as a corrupt variety of Turkish. As Kurdish represented the most commonly spoken minority language and the Kurdish people had shown the greatest opposition to assimilationist policies, it was considered the language that posed the largest threat to national unity. As a result, it became the primary target of these initiatives (Bozarslan 2009; Öpengin 2012). Later associations between Kurdish and terrorism led to extremely strict enforcement of assimilationist policies, including those that restricted the use of non-Turkish languages (Zeydanlıoğlu 2012). In addition to forbidding public use of Kurdish, these policies also placed bans on all types of Kurdish language media (Coşkun et al. 2011). Many middle-aged Kurds can recall writing the names of Turkish singers on their contraband Kurdish-language cassette tapes to mislead any Turkish authority who might encounter them during routine searches.

Such measures gradually became unnecessary with the emergence of the *Kurdish Opening* in the 1990s. Motivated by an interest in joining the European Union, Turkey began to implement a number of reforms that would help to make its case as a country that was taking steps to improve its human rights record. Included in these human rights initiatives were enhanced Kurdish language rights. During the early 2000s, bans were lifted on many public uses of the language. These changes were gradual, though, and Kurdish speakers were still subject to routine punishment for committing language-related infractions to laws that had not yet been rescinded during this transition period. One example includes the use of Kurdish letters w, x, and q in Turkish names; these letters only achieved official legal status in October of 2013 (Akyol 2013; Liberman 2013).

In terms of publication and broadcasting rights, too, this transition period brought changes. At first, these changes were mostly symbolic: Turkey's state-run

television started to allocate a thirty-five-minute time slot to tightly regulated Kurdish-language programming two times a week in 2004 (See Coşkun et al. 2011; Zeydanlıoğlu 2012; for more in-depth overviews of these developments). However, as the Kurdish Opening continued, more meaningful developments emerged. The Kurdish Opening appeared to reach its peak in 2009 with the establishment of TRT 6 (now TRT Kurdî), a state-run Kurdish-language television station that was gifted to the Kurds in an opening ceremony that featured the prime minister at the time (currently the president), Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, expressing his best wishes for the station in a few words of Kurdish. While TRT Kurdî has been widely criticized for its attachment to the ruling party's political agenda (Zeynel 2009; Glastonbury 2015), it, nevertheless, has improved the official status of Kurdish from unrecognized to legitimate (Zeydanlıoğlu 2012).

At the time of writing this paper (the fall of 2017), it is legal to speak, broadcast, and publish in Kurdish across most public and private domains. However, many of these freedoms are highly regulated, as with the case of broadcasting/publication rights, which are extensive for state-run programming like TRT Kurdî but highly restrictive for non-state-affiliated broadcasts. Much of Kurdish-language media are now subject to routine bans due to off limits content – such as coverage of Newroz, the politicized Kurdish new year celebration – rather than the language used to disseminate this content (Jamison 2016). These restrictions have become even more widespread during the last two years which have brought renewed aggression toward Kurdish fighters in the Southeast, the arrests of Kurdish journalists and politicians, the criminalization of opposition to the government's Kurdish policy. Such developments, in fact, have signaled the closing of the Kurdish Opening. A remnant of this period is TRT Kurdî, which will receive further consideration throughout the current paper. For this reason, it is a useful endeavor to address the origins and content of TRT Kurdî in the section that follows.

1.3 TRT Kurdî: origins, programming, and language policy

Prior to Turkey's lifting of the ban on Kurdish-language media, Kurdish-language satellite television stations such as MED TV (broadcast from the U.K. from 1994–1999), MEDYA TV (broadcast from Belgium from 1999–2004), and Roj TV (broadcast from Denmark starting in 2004) were accessible to Kurds residing primarily in Europe, Turkey, Iraq, and Iran (Price 2009). The Turkish government took measures to close down these stations, which they criticized for both their ties to the PKK and their disregard for Turkish broadcasting law. Referred to as “Kurdistan in space” (Sakr 2002), media outlets such as these helped to

construct a common pan-Kurdish identity. As this identity was largely forged in opposition to the governments that had historically denied Kurds their rights, it was perceived by the Turkish government as a threat to national unity. The very short time slots allocated to Kurdish-language programming on Turkish state television prior to TRT Kurdî (referred to above), most likely, did little to steer the Kurdish audience away from these alternatives (BBC BBC News 2004). The introduction of TRT Kurdî onto the Turkish market, thus, presented a more viable competitor to these stations and, thus, a new medium that aimed to engineer a Kurdish identity deeply rooted in Turkish culture.

With the broadcasting of material that reflects the Kurdish experience specific to Turkey, TRT Kurdî has the potential to sever some of the pan-Kurdish nationalist sentiment that came out of exposure to Kurdish satellite television. It achieves this in part through programming that appeals to the shared experience of ethnically Kurdish Turks. A program called *Rewî*, for example, follows a Kurdish man who travels around different regions of Turkey's Southeast to explore local Kurdish traditions and lifestyles. He does not cross borders into the Kurdish regions of neighboring countries. A second example includes the station's most popular sitcom, 'Cîran Cîran' (From Neighbor to Neighbor), which is based on a scenario that is quite familiar to the extremely mobile Kurdish population in Turkey: the daily life of an extended family that has moved from the village to the city. Comedy is created through the tension between old village habits and new city lifestyles. With a look at TRT Kurdî's news programming, a pro-government bias can be seen through coverage of the Kurdish issue, which, relative to both Turkish-language state broadcasting and Kurdish-language competitors, is addressed in a politically sanitized manner.

While the content on TRT Kurdî, similar to that on the other TRT channels, is controlled entirely by the state, it mitigates the appearance of this top-down control. The prime minister set this tone during the station's opening ceremony by implying that he was handing over control of the station to Kurdish management with the statement that he "believ[ed] in the Kurdish broadcasters to produce content that promotes togetherness, inclusiveness, and brotherhood in our nation." In practice, the station remains state-owned and operated; however, by incorporating programming that features the viewers themselves and encourages Kurdish language acquisition, it creates the impression of ownership by the Kurdish people. Viewpoints from the bottom-up are broadcast in opinion pieces that feature selected viewers' responses to questions such as "As you know, TRT Kurdî has made lots of progress with Kurdish. What do you think is missing on TRT Kurdî?" In this way, media consumers appear to also play a role in the shaping of content. The above question also suggests that the station

advocates for the Kurdish language cause, which is typically associated with the Kurdish political cause. This suggestion is strengthened further with its broadcasting of a popular Kurdish language quiz show that challenges contestants and viewers at home to improve their knowledge of *Kurdîya rastî* ‘proper Kurdish’, the variety promoted by the Kurdish political cause (Jamison 2016). A more thorough description of *Kurdîya rastî* will follow in Section 3.1 vis-à-vis its relation to iconization.²

In addition to providing programming that appears to encourage bottom-up participation and champion an important Kurdish political cause, TRT Kurdî further camouflages its top-down structure by incorporating diverse varieties of Kurdish from across Turkey’s Kurdish region. This practice suggests an inclusion of diverse Kurdish voices. As outlined in Section 1.1, many of these regional varieties tend to be heavily influenced by Turkish. The station dedicates air time to talk shows that feature Kurdish celebrities with a range of proficiency levels in Kurdish. The host of a religious program, for example, produces very fluent Kurdish that includes traditional expressions whereas the host of a popular cooking show typically begins explanations in Kurdish and finishes them in Turkish. Through the presentation of regional varieties that differ from one another in terms of hybridity, the language of TRT Kurdî projects the image of an inclusive, grassroots-led broadcasting structure. According to preliminary findings from a study conducted in a village in the Kurdish-dominant region of Muş, this inclusion of regionally bound Turkish-influenced Kurdish successfully attracts rural viewers because they can identify with the people they see on TV. In this way, incorporating language practices that are similar to those of village-resident Kurds in Turkey’s Southeast simultaneously gives the appearance of grass-roots origins and heightens its appeal to certain regional populations.

Despite its appeal to regional Kurdish populations, TRT Kurdî represents the object of many jokes among politically engaged Kurds. According to Öpengin’s (2012) survey about Kurdish language use and attitudes, less than 50% of respondents claimed to watch the station. Negative ratings of the station were tied to its tightly regulated state political agenda and its “incorrect use” of the Kurdish language. The current study builds on these findings to address the framing of negative attitudes about the station as expressed through metalinguistic criticisms. Hybridity is a common feature of many regional Kurdish varieties, and specific ways of mixing the two languages index ties to the territory in which these varieties are spoken; nevertheless, it is this feature

² Although Gal has proposed the term *rhematization* as a replacement for the term *iconization*, the term *iconization* will be used in this paper because of its recognition in the field.

that many politically engaged Kurdish speakers cite as their reason for rejecting the station. Furthermore, they consider the influence of Turkish on Kurdish to be representative of the station's agenda, which they deem to be assimilationist.

Such a perspective suggests a vision of language that is iconic of its users. In this way, it is in line with Irvine and Gal's (2000) notion of *iconization* in which a "linguistic feature somehow depict[s] or display[s] a social group's inherent nature or essence" (Irvine and Gal 2000: 37). The current study explores the presence of iconization among politically engaged Kurdish migrants in their framing of TRT Kurdî's broadcasting language. Guided by Erdoğan's presupposition that control of the station was given to Kurdish management, non-Kurdish-Turks are likely to categorize TRT Kurdî producers as members of the larger Kurdish-speaking community that the station attempts to serve. Such a grouping, however, is not supported by Öpengin's results. Instead, a finer distinction between members of the Kurdish-speaking in-group needs to be drawn. The use of language to further distinguish between in-group members, coupled with the transfer of negative attitudes of out-group members onto these in-group members, suggests that *fractal recursivity* (Irvine and Gal's 2000 term to describe the fracturing of apparent in-groups through iconization of the other) likely also plays a role in shaping Kurdish judgments about TRT Kurdî. In the analysis of metalinguistic comments below, therefore, the concepts of iconization and fractal recursivity will be further analyzed.

2 Guiding questions, methods, and participants

Specifically, the current study was guided by the following questions:

1. To what extent are certain linguistic elements (*form* as defined by Lemon 2002) considered central by the participants in their constructions of the language used on TRT Kurdî? How well does Lemon's characterization of minority language speakers' focus on form vs. function fit the findings of the current study?
2. What do metalinguistic comments about TRT Kurdî suggest about participants' stance toward linguistic hybridity in the context of Kurdish in Turkey? Does this stance reflect a connection between hybridity and ownership of the discourse as found in Hinnenkamp (2003)?

As Öpengin (2012) observes, "The ideas about the opening of TRT [Kurdî] show that perceptions of evolutions around Kurdish language and culture are highly politicized and shaped by speakers' political affiliations and convictions"(Öpengin

2012: 169). For this reason, the current study focuses on the descriptions of TRT Kurdî by members of Istanbul's politically engaged Kurdish population.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eighteen male and two female Kurdish migrants (Aged 19–35) to discuss their perceptions of TRT Kurdî. These interviews, which varied in length between forty-five minutes and two hours, took place in cafes and restaurants, some of which were Kurdish-owned. The participants did not consider themselves to be members of TRT Kurdî's viewing audience; however, all expressed strong opinions about the station. In an effort to ground their opinions in observations about the station, they were requested to view it prior to the interview. All interviews began with general questions about the participants' perceptions of the television station, including descriptions of its programming. Interviews continued with follow-up questions that targeted the participants' underlying attitudes in more specific ways. The topics of form vs. function were not addressed specifically by the interviewer until the participants introduced information that could be categorized according to these constructs. Once the language of TRT Kurdî had been established as a salient theme, participants were asked to provide examples and to compare the language of this station to that of their preferred Kurdish media outlet. They were also asked to describe their choices for Kurdish-language programming – in terms of both content and language – if they owned a Kurdish television station.

The interviews were conducted in English due primarily to the researcher's limited proficiency in Kurdish and the participants' simultaneously high proficiency levels in English. Although the researcher and the participants both mixed Turkish into the interviews, Turkish did not serve as the primary interview language for two reasons: its use would have made the information exchanged more accessible to the non-participants at the research site, and it would have required a reliance on a code that, for many of the participants, is deeply tied to its history as a tool for assimilation. Furthermore, English-language interviews had the added advantage of indexing the researcher's American identity, which, because of Kurdish-American political alliances, helped to increase some participants' level of comfort when the topics became more politically sensitive.

Participants' hometowns included Siirt, Van, Tatvan, Muş, Batman, Diyarbakır, and Silvan. With the exception of two participants who had been residing in Istanbul for two years, the participants had all lived in Istanbul for a minimum of eight years. The majority of the participants (16 out of 20 of them) were university educated or were pursuing a university degree at the time of the study. In the data and analysis that follow, participants are referred to by their pseudonyms.

Excerpts from these interviews serve as the data that will be presented below.

3 Results and discussion

Analysis of the interviews showed that participants often described their (primarily negative) attitudes toward TRT Kurdî through metalinguistic criticisms of the channel. The data presented in the sub-sections below highlight examples in which participants envision the form of the station's language as indicative of its Turkish nationalist agenda. Specifically, these forms include phonological, morpho-syntactic, lexical, and orthographic criticisms.

3.1 The fault of dependence on Turkish, iconization, and Kurdish with a Turkish accent

As discussed in Section 1.1, Kurdish-Turkish mixing is widespread among Kurdish communities both in Turkey's Southeast as well as its cities. Nevertheless, participants whose speech featured such hybridity voiced deep misgivings about it. Şebnem, a 20 year-old student at a state university in Istanbul who grew up in a Diyarbakır household that emphasized the use of Turkish to promote school success, expresses strong reservations about her reliance on Turkish. For her, language and identity cannot be separated from one another. As discussed in the excerpt below, she identifies as a Kurd who has resisted Turkish assimilation, so she is determined to make her language reflect this:

People who mix Turkish and Kurdish like in Adıyaman [a region in South-Central Anatolia] are also this way culturally. This is their identity. I hate that I feel more comfortable in Turkish than in Kurdish. It's very difficult for me, especially because of recent experiences ... But I am trying to fix this. I am taking Kurdish courses and I want to marry a Kurdish guy who speaks Kurdish fluently so that we can have children who speak Kurdish really well ...

In the above excerpt, Şebnem equates language choice with identity. She strongly rejects Turkish identity because “of recent experiences.” She later clarifies her reference to “recent experiences” with an explanation that her journalist uncle has recently been imprisoned because of his supposed ties to a terrorist organization, which is an unsettlingly common occurrence in Diyarbakır at this time. She disdains the Turkish nationalist ideologies that justify her uncle's imprisonment, and she seeks to rid herself, through Kurdish language study and the creation of a Kurdish-language household, of any linguistic evidence of her allegiance to them. By planning to raise children who are highly proficient in Kurdish, she plans to remove the traces of Turkish identity that resulted from her parents' Turkish-dominant family language policy.

Şebnem is highly critical of her Turkish-language dominance because, she believes, her reliance on Turkish indexes her dependence on her Turkish oppressors. For her, her use of language represents an “enregistered emblem of ethnic identity” (Agha 2007: 235): her ability to express herself in Kurdish is emblematic of her Kurdish identity, and her shortcomings in Kurdish cast doubt on the legitimacy of this identity. Such a match between language and identity is in line with Sheyholislami’s (2010) findings about users of Kurdish language media. According to his results, Kurdish language emerges as “one of the most important and salient manifestations of Kurdish identity” (290). Similarly, (Jamison 2016) finds that Kurdish in Turkey, despite its decreasing number of speakers, serves as a code that unifies Kurds. Kurds’ shared history of struggle for language rights as a part of their struggle for human rights has heightened the political importance of their language. This has sharpened the language’s currency as a code of in-group affiliation and distinction from the dominant language community. In this way, it can be said that the use of Kurdish in Turkey, similar to the indigenous American languages highlighted in Avineri and Kroskirty (2014: 3), “marks community boundaries and makes identities within them”.

The attachment of such symbolism onto the form of the language shows the influence of iconization (Irvine and Gal 2000) in Şebnem’s thinking. In fact, iconization is common to the interview data across the participants, who, like Şebnem, equate Turkish language features with assimilation into Turkish culture. Sazan, a doctoral student in Kurdish linguistics at a different state university in Istanbul, expresses this connection between language and ethnic affiliation through her response to a question about her impressions of people who speak good (Kurmanji) Kurdish: “How a person speaks Kurmanji [Kurdish] says something about their identity. When I met a person who speaks good and fluent Kurmanji [Kurdish], I thought that he is a conscious person and sensitive about Kurmanji [Kurdish]. S/he considers Kurmanji [Kurdish] an important language and valuable. And most probably s/he works on it to contribute [to] the language and society.”

Through this iconic view of Kurdish language use, according to Sazan, a speaker’s use of lexicon and structure makes it possible to understand the importance that speakers place on the language. Moreover, those who value the language also value the Kurdish political cause. From this perspective, the opposite also likely holds true: those who do not attempt to speak “good and fluent” Kurdish, which is the case for many of the speakers featured on TRT Kurdî, are not engaged in the Kurdish political cause.

A “good and fluent” variety exists in the Kurdish context under the label of *Kurdîya rastî* ‘proper Kurdish’. This variety is governed by systematic morphological, phonological, syntactic, and semantic rules; furthermore, its lexicon displays little clear evidence of its contact with Turkish. With its use of Kurdish lexical items

and structures that are not widely used in colloquial Kurdish varieties, a limited number of Kurdish speakers can fully understand Kurdiya rasti. An even smaller number can demonstrate proficiency in this variety. Nevertheless, it has persisted as the variety used on Med, Roj, and Sterk TV. As Med and Roj TV served as the first major televised media outlets to unify Kurds virtually and were considered disseminators of the Kurdish political movement, they wielded substantial influence. In the absence of officially mandated language planning strategies, these stations' decisions to allocate air time to content presented in Kurdiya rasti – similar to the Irish-language media highlighted in Kelly-Holmes (2001) – have played implicit roles in the status planning of Kurdish. As a result, the vision of a standard norm for Kurdish is represented by Kurdiya rasti and is prestigious among members of politically engaged Kurdish communities (See Jamison 2016 for a more detailed explanation about Kurdiya rasti as it relates to language practices in Diyarbakir). As seen in the discussion below, this iconic vision of Kurdiya rasti as the appropriate representative variety extends to written domains.

The effusive publication of bulky Kurdish-language literary texts and reference books, along with politicians' and activists' use of these texts to provide evidence of the legitimacy of Kurdish as described in Jamison (2016), suggests that, similar to modernist examples of minority language endangerment (Makoni and Pennycook 2007; Urla 2012), the movement to elevate the status of Kurdish in Turkey draws heavily on its literary register. Although such resources tend to remain unread because only a small percentage of Kurdish speakers possess the literacy skills that are adequate for engaging with them, they provide material evidence of the prestigious variety of Kurdish embodied in Kurdiya rasti. By focusing on literary language with its own "self-contained set of syntactic rules and words that exist before and outside of talk" (Johnstone 2008: 43 in; Schneider 2014), politically engaged members of the Kurdish-speaking community have found an additional way to impart legitimacy to Kurdish. Such was the impetus behind the establishment of the Académie française (Cooper 1996), which served as a model for The Turkish Language Academy (Türk Dil Kurumu) (Schluter and Sansarkan 2014). Efforts to defend the legitimacy of Kurdish as a language that is *commensurate* (Hankins and Yeh 2016) to Turkish borrow from these examples that place importance on the language in the context of prestigious written genres.

Iconization and an orientation toward Kurdiya rasti shape Şebnem's views on TRT Kurdî. In her statement below, her deep disdain for Turkish-influenced Kurdish informs her very negative opinion of the television station: "You can tell by the way that TRT Kurdî uses Turkish and Kurdish that they are Turkish people trying to manipulate the Kurdish people. The shows on that channel assume that Kurds don't have any brain. I don't watch it. I won't watch any of it."

In the above excerpt, Şebnem equates the influence of Turkish on TRT Kurdî programming as indicative of the station's Turkish assimilationist agenda. The mixing of Turkish features with Kurdish is representative of attempts to slip in Turkish nationalist ideas/propaganda with topics related to Kurdish culture so that the Kurdish audience will begin to grow used to them and, because of their supposed lack of intelligence, accept them. By refusing to watch TRT Kurdî, Şebnem categorically rejects the prospect of being unwittingly lured into accepting Turkish nationalist ideals.

Although Şebnem admits to never viewing the station, she continues her characterization of the channel and its assimilationist agenda by underlining its major phonological flaw: TRT Kurdî features “Kurdish with a Turkish accent.” Furthermore, she believes that the news programs provide the most extreme examples of mispronounced Kurdish. Similar comments are issued by Fırat, a 30 year-old English teacher from Siirt, who explains that “TRT Kurdî cannot be taken seriously as a professional station because of its Turkish accent.” Similar to Şebnem, he finds greatest fault with the language of news reporters because they “sound like Turks who are just reading directly off of teleprompters. They really don't seem to know about Kurdish intonation.”

By discussing the accents and intonation of newscasters, Şebnem's and Fırat's accounts both draw attention to the phonetic and phonological form of TRT Kurdî. In accordance with a perspective influenced by iconization, different shows vary in their mixing of Turkish according to the degree to which they conform to the Turkish state's agenda. For this reason, the clearest examples of Turkish-language influence are perceived in the language of newscasters, who serve as the most direct mouthpieces of the Turkish state. Later in Fırat's interview, he alludes to the difficulty of finding Kurdish actors and reporters who would willingly take on this role as disseminators of state-sanctioned news. For him, the heavy influence of Turkish in this case represents TRT Kurdî newscasters' disloyalty to the Kurdish cause. For Şebnem, the link to the Turkish state's agenda is directly embedded in the language. Because both Şebnem and Fırat's perspective is influenced by iconization, they believe that their examples of form belie the station's intended function.

3.2 A morpho-syntactic marker of linguistic insecurity: The case of -miş and language purism

During the interviews, seven of the twenty participants made unsolicited reference to a morpho-syntactic feature of the Kurdish found on TRT Kurdî which they found to be an especially salient example of Turkish influence: the suffix

-miş. Other participants (nine of the remaining thirteen) were eager to discuss -miş when prompted by the interviewer. As -miş serves a clear function in Turkish grammar, its use in Kurdish may be mistaken as simple borrowing from Turkish. However, through discussions with participants, it became clear that it is used specifically to indicate lexical borrowing from Turkish that is embedded in a Kurdish-language sentence. For the most part, this lexical borrowing occurs because the speaker cannot remember the Kurdish word, and the use of -miş indicates the speaker's awareness of this reliance on Turkish.

Mahmut, a twenty-year-old university student in Istanbul who comes from a village in Batman, is familiar with this feature because it is common in his village and he sometimes uses it in his own speech. Below, he describes the pragmatic function of the -miş construction: "I guess it's kind of normal to put -miş when you use words from Turkish. It tells the listeners, 'shame be upon me. I am using a Turkish word in Kurdish...' It can be better to switch a whole phrase completely into Turkish if you know that you are going to have to use a word from Turkish."

Based on Mahmut's description, the use of this feature functions as an acknowledgement that a speaker is using language that does not conform to the pure variety, most likely *Kurdîya rastî*. The use of this discourse marker fits Poplack & Sankoff's (1988) definition of *flagging*, which refers to speakers' insertion of features as a means of signaling their awareness of a switch between codes. In this case of flagging, the speaker simultaneously expresses his/her respect for this variety and embarrassment over his/her reliance on the dominant language. Inter-sentential code-switching is considered more acceptable than intra-sentential code-switching because it preserves the integrity of the code choice for at least the duration of a sentence. Such attitudes toward this use of -miş provide evidence of a speaker's *linguistic insecurity*. Made famous by Labov's classic (1966) department store study that highlighted sales clerks' hypercorrection strategies to compensate for a gap in proficiency in standard prestige forms of their native English, the term has also been used to describe minority and heritage language speakers' lack of confidence in their attriting mother tongue (Martinez and Petrucci 2004; Oakes 2007). Linguistic insecurity in these populations is directly comparable to Turkey's Kurdish speakers: Jamison (2016) describes frequent apologies by native Kurdish speakers of politically plugged in Diyarbakır – including the elderly monolingual Kurdish women who are often considered the primary transmitters of the language – that they do not speak *Kurdîya rastî*.

An important component of linguistic insecurity is the speaker's awareness that a more standard variety exists; it is his/her proficiency level that falls short of this standard. The stigma associated with incorporating a Turkish element into a Kurdish sentence points to a purist language ideology that influences participants' attitudes toward their word choice. This type of language ideology is, in fact, quite

common among the defenders of non-dominant languages (Friedman 2010; Kroskrity 2000; Kroskrity 2009; Kroskrity 2014; Kickham 2015) whose language ideologies are often guided by essentialist perspectives (Jaffe 1999, 2007; Clampitt-Dunlap 2000; Auer 2007). According to Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes (2011), linguistic purism helps to further language activists' aims through its presentation of a language that is distinct from the dominant variety but is, nevertheless, of equal legitimacy. A commensurate (Hankins and Yeh 2016) and clearly defined code creates a more compelling case for protection by willing governments as well as supranational human rights organizations (Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2011). Such a perspective – although generally rooted in its opposition to the dominant language ideology – often merely transfers the dominant language ideology onto that of the minority language (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994). For, appeals for recognition from the state are more effective when they are framed according to the nation-state's own founding discourses about language. Juxtaposed against the purism that has largely characterized the monolingual Turkish national language planning strategy, the Kurdish language movement largely replicates Turkish language essentialism with its embrace of the non-Turkish influenced Kurdish variety, *Kurdiya rastî*. For a variety of reasons, therefore, purist language ideologies influence politicized minority language activists' notions of language to a far greater extent than their actual language practices, and the case of Kurdish language activists in Turkey is no exception (Friedman 2010).

In discussing the topic of *-miş*, Serkan, a twenty-eight year-old doctoral student from Van, describes the morpheme as “something that's kind of made up and stuck in there.” He continues to explain that “This isn't Kurdish. We don't talk like that.” For Serkan, the *-miş* construction deserves no place in Kurdish. The use of the *-miş* construction on TRT Kurdî greatly diminishes the station's appeal for him. Furthermore, it is symbolic of its inability to represent the Kurdish people. Later in the interview, Serkan admits that his younger brother, who is “rather assimilated” and speaks “broken Kurdish” uses the *-miş* construction. Serkan's comments suggest that, in fact, this use of *-miş* exists in broken Kurdish, but its association with non-standard Kurdish and linguistic assimilation disqualifies it for consideration as part of the language according to his purist conceptualization and, by extension, a broadcasting language.

The salience of the *-miş* morpheme, coupled with an ability to identify its syntactic function, suggests interviewees' awareness of form in this context. Furthermore, linguistic insecurity suggests an orientation to a purist language ideology in which form helps to measure a speaker's degree of adherence to the standard. With this awareness, it becomes difficult for participants to accept a station like TRT Kurdî as a medium that represents Kurdish speakers because it borrows so flagrantly from Turkish.

3.3 The Turkish state's attempts to co-opt the Kurdish language through orthographic changes

Turkish-influenced Kurdish orthography represents the third metalinguistic feature addressed in this paper. Before entering into an analysis of the highlighted orthographic change, some background information on Kurdish and Turkish orthography is in order. Turkish and Kurdish share the two sounds, /i/ and /u/; however, they have traditionally been represented by different letters. The sound /i/ has traditionally been represented by the letter *î* in Kurdish and *i* in Turkish. The letter *i* in Kurdish, however, has traditionally referred to the sound /u/, which is represented by the letter *ı* in Turkish.

This distinction can cause some confusion for Kurdish-Turkish bilinguals, the majority of whom have never received literacy instruction in Kurdish. In fact, the representation of this contrast through the Turkish characters has been adopted by some Kurdish speakers and has been accepted as a legitimate variant by some Kurmanji Kurdish reference grammars (Thackson 2006).³ Nevertheless, confusion between these Turkish and Kurdish letters represents a primary criticism about TRT Kurdî for Zana, a thirty-five-year old hotel clerk from Tatvan: “They’re changing our language. ... Now we have *ı*, which we never had before ... I guess they’re probably gonna be taking away our *î* too.”

Zana’s comment, similar to those highlighted in previous sections, communicates anxiety about the introduction of Turkish features onto a Kurdish-medium television station. The borrowing of *ı* from Turkish orthography serves as an example to fuel speculation that the *i-ı* contrast will eventually be borrowed wholesale from Turkish. Despite the acceptance of this orthographic variant by some reference grammars of Kurdish, Zana interprets this borrowing from Turkish as symbolic of a larger tendency of Turkish language domination over the Kurdish of TRT Kurdî. As the *î* has been used in the title of the station, however, this character will likely remain in the orthography used at TRT Kurdî for the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, this fear of losing Kurdish-language orthography to that of Turkish appears to be wide-spread among politically engaged Kurds. It is reflected in Jamison (2016)’s observations of Kurdish-language text messages among Diyarbakır residents that display an overabundance of the most salient orthographic features of Kurdish that do not exist in the Turkish alphabet. Similar to the composers of these messages, Zana aligns himself with an orthographic backlash to Turkish language dominance, especially with respect to the earlier bans on Kurdish language characters.

³ Many thanks to the anonymous reviewer of this paper who brought this point to my attention.

Zana's use of the collective pronoun *they* without any antecedent suggests his vision of TRT Kurdî's producers as part of an out-group, the members of which tend to be subject to more negative traits than in-group members (Perdue et al. 1990). In this way, he creates an iconic other and, thus, invokes *fractal recursivity* (Irvine and Gal 2000) to distinguish himself from the Kurdish speakers who may be considered a part of his speech community, but who he envisions as part of a separate sub-group. Specifically, he categorizes himself differently from this sub-group of Kurdish speakers, whom he associates with the government's assimilationist agenda. In line with the concept of fractal recursivity is his borrowing of iconization from larger Turkish-Kurdish distinctions to mark differences between this sub-group and his own.

This positioning suggests an implicit rejection of the station's attempts to fashion itself as an inclusive media outlet in which consumers of the media also take ownership of the media by helping to shape it. Such a response signals that the language of TRT Kurdî may not be perceived by some as the territorially-bound language of Turkey's Kurdish region, but, rather, as a language that is artificially manufactured by state-affiliated Kurdish speakers to ease Kurdish speakers' transition to Turkish monolingualism. Such a view supports Şebnem's earlier comments about the Turkish state's use of TRT Kurdî as a vehicle to carry out an underlying agenda of manipulation. Zana's and Şebnem's perspectives, in fact, are supported by Glastonbury, whose (2015) analysis suggests that TRT Kurdî co-opts the Kurdish audience to make them more amenable to Turkish nationalist causes. In reference to TRT Kurdî and two other state-sanctioned Kurdish-language initiatives, he offers the following critique:

The legal sanctioning and subsequent emergence of these new, so-called autonomous avenues toward Kurdish 'freedom' are an expansion of existing governmental technologies; they are insidious mechanisms of domination that render themselves invisible by providing the illusions of choice and mobility through the possibility of limited recalibration. (Glastonbury 2015: 49)

With these words, Glastonbury, like Zana, categorizes the producers of TRT Kurdî as part of a distinct sub-group, which is directly affiliated with the state. Contrary to the image of autonomy and freedom projected by Erdoğan, the prime minister at the time, in the opening of the station, these Kurds act at the behest of the state to carry out the Turkish assimilationist agenda albeit in a more clandestine manner. The use of Kurdish serves merely as a more palatable medium through which to maintain the existing social hierarchy.

The Kurdish speakers (and would-be audience members) who recognize this agenda represent one faction; the Kurdish speakers who help the state to carry out this agenda represent another faction. A third faction exists: those who make

up TRT Kurdî's primary viewership, many of whom embrace their newfound ability to watch Kurdish-language media without regard to the station's governmental ties. Throughout the interviews, when asked to define TRT Kurdî's audience, participants pointed to apolitical Kurds, many of whom reside in Kurdish villages. Zana's description provides a representative example: "They are these guys ... these guys who live in villages, who work really hard, and don't have too much else in their lives besides tea, television, and family. They don't care about politics. Maybe sometimes they play backgammon with their friends at the men's tea house. They can't imagine Istanbul."

Zana characterizes TRT Kurdî's primary audience with respect to their rural existence that limits their world view and renders them uninterested in politics. Because of his exposure to diverse ways of life and political viewpoints in Istanbul, Zana views himself as part of a distinct group. Although many outsiders would categorize these villagers as part of the same language community as Zana, Zana rejects this vision with his description. It also does not apply to any of the participants, all of whom know Istanbul well. Such splintering of Kurdish speakers along political lines into these factions serves as an example of fractal recursivity. The group that rejects the station for political reasons transfers their visions of the out-group (the mainstream Turkish population) onto the Kurdish-speaking producers of TRT Kurdî. Through their strong rejection of the station, they also distinguish themselves from the apolitical group that makes up TRT Kurdî's primary audience. In an effort to differentiate themselves from TRT Kurdî's audience, most claim to never watch the station even if they may do so on occasion. Metalinguistic criticisms of the station serve as the primary means through which participants articulate this rejection.

4 Conclusion

The preceding discussion highlights language essentialism, iconization, and fractal recursivity through the analysis of metalinguistic comments of politically engaged Kurdish migrants living in Istanbul. In discussing their negative opinions about TRT Kurdî, they point to the station's borrowing of phonological, lexical, and orthographic features from Turkish. The discussion about Kurdish with a Turkish accent underlines a perception of language as iconic (Irvine and Gal 2000) of its deeper purpose and the people who produce it. As the form, according to participants, is directly tied to the essence of the content, it represents the underlying function of TRT Kurdî, which they view as promoting a Turkish nationalist agenda.

With reference to the morpho-syntactic flagging of lexical borrowing, linguistic insecurity receives attention. A pre-requisite for linguistic insecurity is the awareness of the presence of a language variety that is more prestigious than one's own. According to interview data, this more prestigious variety is characterized by purism that is rooted in essentialist language ideologies. Kurdish speakers' adoption of essentialism represents a reconstruction of the nationalist language ideologies they have been exposed to through Turkish; nevertheless, they take up this positioning to further their cause for language advocacy (Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2011). Through these data, participants articulate a preference for the use of a non-native code that is uninfluenced by Turkish to represent them on Kurdish television.

In the metalinguistic criticism about orthography, the Turkish-like form becomes symbolic of the general context of Turkish dominance over Kurdish as well as the specific context of Turkish ownership of a Kurdish-language television station. Data provide evidence of in-group vs. out-group distinctions within the Kurdish community that serve as an example of fractal recursivity. Insisting on the use of distinctly Kurdish characters rather than accepted variants borrowed from Turkish further aligns this metalinguistic criticism with the orthographic practices of a larger group of politically engaged Kurdish speakers. By positioning TRT Kurdî producers as the other and using the station's language as a means of justifying this assertion, participants reject the semblance of the station's ownership by Kurdish community actors like themselves.

With these findings, it is possible to address the research questions:

1. *To what extent are certain linguistic elements (form as defined by Lemon 2002) considered central by the participants in their constructions of the language used on TRT Kurdî? How well does Lemon's characterization of minority language speakers' focus on form vs. function fit the findings of the current study?*

In terms of Lemon's concepts of attention to form vs. function, the study's participants, although they have been marginalized, attach substantial importance to the form of the language featured on TRT Kurdî. In fact, they do so as a means of delegitimizing the channel. Viewed through the prism of language ideologies that emphasize iconization and purism, participants assert that the Turkish-influenced form suggests its function: to disseminate state propaganda. Participants' framing of TRT Kurdî in this way is consistent with Glastonbury (2015), who claims that the station co-opts Kurdish as a means of transmitting a Turkish nationalist message.

Participants' use of metalinguistic comments to voice their criticism of the station is consistent with Lemon's (2002) assertion that a focus on form is

common to both dominant language communities and language activists of marginalized speech communities. Despite this consistency with Lemon, there is some misalignment with the study's findings in terms of the narrowness of her provision for language activists; the data presented here suggest that this focus on form is far more widespread than Lemon suggests. With its long history as a focal point of the Kurdish political movement, the language has far more than a few speakers who, armed with metalinguistic justifications, seek to defend it. The results of the current study reflect a focus on form across the Istanbul sample. Jamison's (2016) findings from Diyarbakır (highlighted in Sections 3.1 and 3.3) provide an additional setting in which Kurdish speakers are deeply engaged with the form of the language. Together, these data suggest that the form-focused language activists described by Lemon appear to be far more common than her analysis suggests. In this way, results support a call for a broadening of Lemon's narrow provision for minority language speakers who focus on form. In the case of Kurdish in Turkey, politically engaged Kurds are numerous, and they see Kurdish language forms as central to their cause.

2. *What do metalinguistic comments about TRT Kurdî suggest about participants' stance toward linguistic hybridity in the context of Kurdish in Turkey? Does this stance reflect a connection between hybridity and ownership of the discourse as found in Hinnenkamp (2003)?*

Participants' metalinguistic comments about TRT Kurdî suggest that while hybridity likely features prominently in their own speech (Schluter and Sansarkan 2014) and serves as a marker of identity in spoken contexts (Schluter 2014), they assume a very negative stance toward it in the context of Kurdish-language television broadcasting. Hybridity differs according to region. Among migrants who come from different regions, it varies considerably according to individuals. These individual styles cannot be captured by a television station that attempts to serve Turkey's entire Kurdish-speaking population and, as discussed in Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes (2011) and Kelly-Holmes (2012), "provide all things to all people". Linguistic hybridity, according to Hinnenkamp (2003), provides an autonomous space for individuals to take ownership of their spoken language. When this variety moves from individual frames to an H domain, however, this hybridity is cited as a reason for participants' rejection of the television station. In this way, unlike in Hinnenkamp (2003), hybridity does not allow the participants to envision the station as their own. Instead, it is resented by those who wish to represent themselves through a different variety like *Kurdîya rastî*.

Participants' preference for a pure variety of Kurdish in this H domain reflects Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes's (2011) observation that early producers

of new minority language media often choose and are well served by purist language policies. By producing media in this variety, minority language advocates increase the potential for their language to achieve a status that is commensurate (Hankins and Yeh 2016) with the dominant language. As described previously, commensuration has also been sought in the Kurdish-Turkish context in which politically engaged Kurds of Diyarbakır have published an overabundance of literary and reference texts in *Kurdîya rastî*, a prestigious Kurdish variety that is not accessible to the majority of Kurds (Jamison 2016). These efforts to broaden a Kurdish-medium H domain have worked in parallel with activists' attempts to reassign Kurdish to different H domains that were traditionally reserved for Turkish (Öpengin 2012). Participants' preference for a non-hybrid variety of Kurdish on TRT *Kurdî*, an H domain that claims to operate exclusively in Kurdish, thus, fits well within the scope of these activities.

Alignment with the Kurdish political cause and membership in Istanbul's Kurdish diaspora unify the current study's participants, all of whom use metalinguistic criticisms as a means of articulating their disdain for TRT *Kurdî*. For the participants, the Turkish-influenced Kurdish varieties featured on the station serve as icons of two groups of political others: 1.) the station's apolitical audience that is not concerned about Turkish attempts to assimilate them and 2.) the station's state-affiliated producers who carry out these assimilation efforts. In line with Irvine and Gal (2000) notion of iconization, the mixing of Turkish with Kurdish symbolizes group 1 members' acceptance of efforts to assimilate them and group 2 members' imposition of these assimilation efforts. The findings also adhere to the tenets of fractal recursivity (Irvine and Gal 2000) in which the out-group's perceived objective – Turks' attempts to assimilate Kurds – is transferred onto members of a different sub-group within the same larger in-group, the Kurdish producers of TRT *Kurdî*.

The current study evaluates these topics through the perspective of one sub-group of Turkey's Kurdish-speaking population. Preliminary results of an investigation into the attitudes of a second sub-group, the apolitical Kurdish village dwellers who are positioned as TRT *Kurdî*'s primary audience, suggests that some of the participants' characterizations hold true: the village sample claims to identify more closely with the characters and the content of TRT *Kurdî* because their regional variety is featured on the station. Such results appear to support Hinnenkamp (2003); however, the degree to which this characterization is widespread across the village sample and the match between this sample's language attitudes and political beliefs requires further investigation. These are the subjects of an on-going study that seeks to compare perceptions of TRT *Kurdî* from the perspective of urban vs. rural members of its target audience.

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