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# Emergent bilingualism of Turkish-French bilingual children in France

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## Introduction

Bilingualism not only irritates but also fascinates. Whatever the approach, being bilingual is at the heart of a collective interest and stirs up controversy. There is a very important gap between the linguistic reality lived by many children and what political institutions believe or wish. Both research (Garcia, 1983; Harding-Esch & Riley, 2003; among others) and the evidence by numbers of speakers all over the world show that multilingualism is the norm. As Grosjean (1982) has already noted and Kroll & De Groot (2005, p. 3) recently state, “*Multilingualism is humankind’s norm. With perhaps 6,000 languages of the world, far more than the 200 or so countries, an equally rough-and-ready calculation suggests that human beings are more likely than not to be able to speak more than one language*”. It has been estimated that more than half the world’s population is bilingual, that is, lives with two or more languages. Bilingualism is found in all parts of the world, at all levels of society, in all age groups. However, this phenomenon is misunderstood; it seems not especially well-known by those most concerned: parents, professionals (teachers and speech therapists) and institutions.

The last three decades have seen a significant increase in research dedicated to the language practices and schooling of children from migrant backgrounds (Extra & Verhoeven, 1993, 1999), including in France (Dabène & Billiez, 1987; Deprez, 1994; Gadet & Varro, 2006; Moore, 2006; Hélot, 2007, among others). The area attracts growing attention from parents (keen to see their children succeed at school but also wishing to maintain and transmit their language of origin), politicians (concerned with school and social integration) and, increasingly, also from teachers (concerned with better support to prevent academic failure) and speech therapists (wishing to provide better treatment). These divergent desires are often reflected in two discourses: on the one hand, a pro-bilingualism discourse widely supported by the latest psycho- and sociolinguistic research that credits bilingualism with many benefits (De Houwer, 1995; Kroll & De Groot, 2005; Cummins, 2014). This view is often found in the dominant social representations when it comes to the learning of valued foreign languages at school, such as English, German, Spanish, Russian or Chinese. On the other hand, we find anti-bilingualism discourses perpetuated by myths about

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bilingualism (Tabouret-Keller, 2011) or propagated by non-professionals who wonder how a child could acquire language from two very different linguistic systems. The prevalent belief that monolingualism is the normal and natural way of linguistic development and that an alternative developmental path could involve risks gives rise to many negative attitudes, which reveal a profound misunderstanding of this matter. From this perspective, children are perceived as facing difficulties in finding their landmarks and consequently having difficulties mastering both languages. The fear of “*semilingualism*” (currently called “*limited bilingualism*”: having no language “correctly” possessed, i.e. as a monolingual, see: Cummins, 1981) is still there. Such statements are common for younger bilingual children during their language development and, unfortunately, in the discourse of education specialists; in addition, they are sometimes taken up by politicians. Thus children themselves can also develop their own negative representations towards their bi- or multilingual skills. Parents also can exhibit this, about which Prohic & Varro (2007, p. 104) stated that “*it is interesting to observe, in people using both a dominant and minority languages, the almost unconscious choice not to transfer to their children the minority language in order to facilitate their integration*”. In sum, minority language speakers often internalize dominant ideology with regard to bilingualism. Finally, educational institutions are also often unaware of the extent of multilingualism of some of their students for two main reasons: firstly, teachers are not always attentive, and secondly, pupils do not always make it known (they probably hide it). In a survey we conducted in primary and secondary schools in a working class neighborhood of Rouen (Normandy, France), the institution had failed to identify nearly a quarter of pupils as speakers of another language than French. These pupils were presented to us as monolinguals (Delamotte & Akinci, 2012).

Building on research into bilingualism since the early 1960s, both in psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics, we will first present the state-of-the-art findings on bilingualism with a specific focus on young children from families with migrant backgrounds. We will especially look at Cummins’ (1979) theories with regard to the potential of bilingual education to promote school success and create favorable conditions for the development of sustainable individual and societal bilingualism. Then we examine the specific situation of the Turkish community in France, characterize the emergent bilingualism of the very young and analyze the development of biliteracy in both languages of Turkish-French bilingual children and adolescents born to immigrant parents.

## A historiographic excursion into the meaning of bilingualism: an open-ended semantical term<sup>2</sup>

All researchers who were interested in bilingualism have tried to define this concept in their own way and as objectively as possible. The conceptions are contradictory: on the one hand, to be considered bilingual those advocating a *maximal view* require perfect knowledge of both languages, as in Bloomfield's "*native-like control of two languages*" (1953, p. 56), and on the other, those who merely to assert that bilinguals are those who regularly use two languages for which the proficiency may be limited, display an *integrative or minimal perspective* (Weinreich, 1953; Grosjean, 1982). Haugen (1953, p. 7), for instance, claims that bilingualism starts at "*the point where a speaker can first produce complete meaningful utterances in the other language*".

In recent years, Grosjean (1989), Cook (1995), Lüdi & Py (2003), among others, have criticized what they call "monolingual prejudice" or "the monolingual view of bilingualism" and have proposed the notion of "multicompetence" to designate a unique form of language competence that is not necessarily comparable to that of monolinguals. For Grosjean (1982, 2015b) "*a bilingual is not two or more monolinguals in one person, but different type of communicative person*" (2015b, p. 33). In this sense, the language competence of bilinguals should not be regarded as simply the sum of two monolingual competencies, but should rather be judged in conjunction with the user's total linguistic repertoire. Thus could be seen the favor of a *minimal view* of bilingual competencies. Grosjean (1984, 2015b) defines a continuum between two modes: the *bilingual mode* in which both languages are simultaneously activated in the brain and mental processing of the speaker/hearer and the *monolingual mode* where only one language is activated and the other is de-activated as far as possible.

Accordingly, speakers are considered bilingual if they "*use two (or more) languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives*" (Grosjean 2001, p. 11), regardless of their language proficiency. Using this minimal point of view, one may say that "*the majority of the world's population*" (Mackey 1967, p. 11) or even "*everyone is bilingual*" (Edwards 1994, p. 55). As for children from migrant background families in France, it is more important than ever to adopt the *minimal view* and consider them as being on a continuum of proficiency (Grosjean, 2015b). Indeed, these children have competencies in multiple languages, albeit to varying degrees, but most of the time they comprehend more than they can productively express.

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<sup>2</sup> "Bilingualism as a term has open-ended semantics" (Baetens-Beardsmore, 1986, p. 1).

The *maximal* approach often reflects myths of balanced bilingualism. Researchers who adhere to this view consider the balance between both languages from any person as *sine qua non* requirements for defining bilingualism, while it is very easy to see the rarity of balanced bilingualism, since bilinguals rarely have the same skills in both languages. For Deprez (1994), “*it is still yet another avatar of ‘ideal’ bilingualism which is called ‘equilingualism’ for a person who speaks both languages equally well, has no preference for one or the other and never confuses them*” (1994, p. 23). For Deprez, as with the *maximal* conception of bilingualism, balanced bilingualism remains in most cases a myth.

Parallel to this discussion, some studies including those of Cummins (1976) and Skutnabb-Kangas & Toukomaa (1976) developed the *Threshold Hypothesis* to account for an apparent conflict in findings regarding the cognitive benefits of bilingualism. Earlier studies concluded that cognitive progress and school achievement were negatively affected by bilingualism, while more recent researches appeared to show “positive cognitive consequences”. Cummins noted that the studies that found a negative effect involved linguistic minorities, and those finding a positive effect involved a condition of “*additive bilingualism*,” in which linguistic majority children learn an additional language. Cummins theorized that the linguistic minorities were undergoing loss of their first language, and that “*the level of linguistic competence attained by a bilingual child may mediate the effects of his bilingual learning experiences on cognitive growth*” (1976, p. 4). That is, there were reports of negative effects of bilingualism for “cognitive and scholastic progress” related to minority children’s (hypothesized) lower level of linguistic proficiency in the first language, as affected by acquiring a second, while children in the “additive” bilingual programs had the benefit of continued support of their first language. As Cummins (1976, p. 20) put it, “*Subtractive bilingualism, where L1 is being replaced by L2, implies that as a bilingual in a language minority group develops skills in L2, his competence in L1 will decrease. It seems likely that, under these circumstances, many bilingual children in subtractive bilingual learning situations may not develop native-like competence in either of their two languages*”.

In the strict *minimal* view, everyone is bilingual. However, as underlined by Edwards (1994), the question of the degree of bilingualism remains. Instead of considering the bilingual person separately in both languages, current research prefers to use the concept of “multilingual competence” (Coste, 2001). Thus each individual, including young children whose daily lives are spent in a bi- or multilingual environment, has a multilingual repertoire, regardless of their competence in each of their languages. Molinié (2010), who encourages teachers to consider the multilingual competences of their pupils as a resource to increase their chance of success, says it is

also important to recognize even bilingualism designated as “unbalanced” as a “*substrate from which recognized multilingual skills can develop*” (Molinié, 2010, p. 103).

It is more appropriate to adopt a functional “complementarity principle” (Grosjean, 2015a/b) of bilingualism rather than looking for equal skills in both languages. Starting from the principle that bilinguals do not generally make use of each language for the same reasons, in the same circumstances and with the same person, it is natural for them not to have the same skills in both languages. We speak in this case of functional bilingualism, in the sense that both languages have distinct functions for the individual, and of complementarity, in the sense that the uses of both languages complement rather than finding themselves in competition vis-à-vis the degree of control. Grosjean (2015a/b) notes that bilinguals should be studied in terms of their total language repertoire, and the domains of use and the functions of their various languages should be taken into account. Regarding multilingual repertoires and the need to draw this balance, Coste, Moore & Zarate, (1997, p. 12) confirm that “*plurilingual and pluricultural competence refers to the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social actor has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures. This is not seen as the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather as the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the social actor may draw*”.

Failing to provide an adequate and fully satisfactory definition that would allow a fine delimitation of bilingualism, other linguists have proposed descriptive typologies of different types of bilingualism. In particular, according to Hamers & Blanc (1983, p. 24), another classification of bilingual subjects is both easy to apply and very useful, one that uses age of acquisition combined with context of acquisition and use of both languages. According to the authors, age and language background often go hand in hand; for example, early acquisition of two languages is often linked to a common family background, while late acquisition of L2 is often linked to a school setting. Thus, the authors distinguish among early bilinguals (0 - 6/7 years), late bilinguals (6/7 - 10/11), teen or school-age bilinguals (10/11 - 16/17), and adult bilinguals (L2 acquired after 16/17).

In early bilingualism, bilingual experience occurs simultaneously with the general development of the child. Researchers divided this category into two sub-groups:

- *Early simultaneous bilingualism* (0 - 3 years)<sup>3</sup>, where the child develops two languages in early language acquisition, as is the case often in mixed couples where each parent uses his/her stronger language (L1) with the child; and
- *Early consecutive /sequential bilingualism* (3 - 6/7 years), where the child learns L2 in early childhood but after having acquired his/her L1. This is the case of children who, having grown up in a family with only one language, encounter, upon starting school, the new L2 which is that of the school or that of the society around them.

In the case of consecutive bilingualism, the second language (L2) is acquired after the threshold of 3 years, often spontaneously and naturally, in the interaction with the social environment, sometimes with various pedagogical measures from bilingual play groups to formal language classes at school, or through immersion classes. Several different outcomes are possible: the resulting bilingualism can be stable and grow stronger with age; L2 can also remain in the state of approximate skill and fossilize; at the other extreme, it replaces the L1 as the dominant language (for example under the effect of schooling). Finally, the languages can both develop, but in different settings and functions. The first language of the child is the family's and the one for personal situations, and the second is the academic language and the one of more formal social functions.

The development of simultaneous bilingualism occurs in an informal learning context, often within the family, the development of consecutive bilingualism can also occur informally, as in the case of children from migrant families. It can also result from an educational intervention, such as bilingual education programs or during the early teaching of languages. In both cases, if the two languages are sufficiently valued, the child can derive maximum benefit in terms of cognitive development and enjoy a rewarding stimulus, allowing it to develop greater cognitive flexibility compared to monolinguals (Bialystok, 2001). On the contrary, if the sociocultural context is such that L1 is devalued in the social environment, the child's cognitive development may be slowed or even delayed compared to monolinguals.

What precisely is going on in the bilingualism of children from families with immigrant backgrounds? This is the question that the following part attempts to answer.

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<sup>3</sup> Helot & Rubio (2013, p. 43) "McLaughlin (1984) fixed rather arbitrarily limit to the age of 3 while Houwer (2005) distinguish more finely between first bilingual acquisition in the case of exposure to two languages from birth, and a second bilingual acquisition in the case of exposure to the second language which would start from one month to six months later. Deuchar and Quay (2000) use the term bilingual acquisition to refer children exposed to two languages during their first year".

## Bilingual children from immigrant background

Until the early 1970s, bilingualism was the subject of little research in France. The reluctance of France with regard to early foreign language teaching or home languages and cultures classes or regional languages is known (Hélot, 2007). However, since the 1990s, many studies have been conducted, particularly addressing the problem of early language learning in primary school or even at kindergarten, from the perspective of a multilingual and multicultural Europe (Hélot & Erfurt, 2016). However, unlike France, there is a large literature especially in countries facing this problem like Canada and Switzerland (Extra & Verhoeven, 1993, 1999; Lüdi & Py, 2003). These works often concluded from the incapacity of the children from minorities to become bilingual that there should be bilingual education and immersion programs.

Since the first studies of Skutnabb-Kangas & Toukomaa (1976) that showed that there was a direct relation between children's competence in their first language and their competence in the second language, numerous studies have been carried out to confirm these findings. According to Cummins (1984, 1991, 2000), in a precursor of the *developmental interdependence hypothesis*<sup>4</sup>, competences in L1 and in L2 of a bilingual child are not only common but also interdependent. They are common in the sense that two or more languages, although working in appearance as separate mechanisms, operate using the same central cognitive system. This aspect common to both languages is also called the "common underlying competence" by Cummins (1979, 1991). Going in that direction, Baker asserts: "*When a person owns two or more languages, there is one integrated source of thought*" (2001, p. 147). They are interdependent because L1 language level may influence L2 acquisition. Knowledge acquired in L1 can be positively transferred during L2 acquisition. Children's knowledge and abilities in their L1 can greatly contribute to the development of the same knowledge and abilities in their L2. However, according to Cummins (1991, 2014), there are essential prerequisites needed for the transfer to occur: the first concerns L1, which should be sufficiently developed before there is intensive exposure to L2, for instance, in schools. The other conditions relate to the L2: first, children should have sufficient exposure to L2, both at school and in their home environment and, secondly, they should be motivated to learn it. Cummins (2014) reminds us that transfer will not take place if these conditions are not met.

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<sup>4</sup> The hypothesis assumes the existence of a common underlying competence in L1 and L2 that enables the transfer of skills from one language to another. The initial distinction between compound and coordinate bilingualism (Erwin & Osgood, 1954), as well as the two-switch model (McNamara, 1967) led to the formulation of the dichotomy of the existence of two separate linguistic codes, or alternatively of the existence of two linguistic codes with a common underlying competence.



When looking at children from migrant background families from the perspective of the developmental interdependence hypothesis, one should take into account their L1 level at the time of enrollment and the conditions of L2 exposure from that time. For many of these children, kindergarten enrollment is the place of their first contact with L2 as it is for them the beginning of intensive exposure to that language. According to Cummins' hypothesis, conditions for L2 arise just from the time children are attending school, that is, when they are "submerged" in L2. It is at that time that children from migrant families will be sufficiently exposed to L2 and motivated enough to learn it, having no other choice for communication within nursery schools.

As for France, we should question whether L1 of these children is sufficiently developed when they begin to be regularly exposed to French in nursery school. At this level of observation, Cummins (1984, 2000) emphasized diversity of language skills levels. Cummins (1984) distinguished two principal continua of second language development in a simple matrix: *Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills* (BICS) vs *Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency* (CALP). The first one describes the development of conversational fluency, whereas the second describes the use of language in decontextualized academic situations. According to Baker (2001) "*BICS is said to occur when there are contextual supports and props for language delivery. Face-to-face context embedded situations provide, for example, non-verbal support to secure understanding. Actions with eyes and hands, instant feedback, cues and clues support verbal language. CALP, on the other hand, is said to occur in context reduced academic situations. Where higher order thinking skills (e.g. analysis, synthesis, evaluation) are required in the curriculum, language is disembedded from a meaningful, supportive context. Where language is disembedded the situation is often referred to as context reduced*" (Baker, 2001, p. 174).

As for children from migrant background families, the first case, BICS, corresponds more to communication situations in which they may be exposed within the family, namely exclusively in L1, while the second case, CALP, is more consistent with communication situations they may face in schools, i.e. only L2. This means that these children have basic level of competence in L1 (and L2 for some) when they begin to acquire a level of academic proficiency in L2. The development of CALP requires adaptations and special adjustments of classroom environment and teaching strategies for minority children. Therefore, the lack of skills transfer from L1 to L2, if any, is likely to be based on the L1 level at the time of L2 intensive exposure rather than either a failing in L2 exposure in households or a lack of motivation for its acquisition that are often given as the main reasons for these children's academic difficulties or failure.

Since Cummins' *Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis* (see for synthesis Cummins, 2014; and see MacSwan & Rolstad, 2003, for a critique of Cummins' hypothesis) much research has shown that poor development of skills in the first language hinders progress in the second language, both in quantity and in quality. Thus schooling by 'immersion' in the language of the host country and urging students to give up their home language following strict assimilation policies put both the cultural identity and linguistic development of migrant children at risk (Hamers & Blanc, 1983, Hélot & Erfurt, 2016). As discussed by Skutnabb-Kangas & Toukomaa (1976) and Haugen (1977), some theories concerning bilingualism do not hesitate to classify children with an immigration background as semilinguals who not only confuse and mix both languages but also share with second language learners the instability of their skills, as indicated by restricted vocabulary, faulty grammar, hesitation in production and difficulties in expression in both languages.

The study conducted by Gonzo & Saltarelli (1983) concerning immigrant families advances the idea that linguistic and cultural attrition can take years with first generation immigrants. Children belonging to the second generation may acquire a weakened language and culture of origin. These languages and cultures are in turn transmitted in an even weaker form to a third generation. Influenced by a follow-up effect, the authors argue that in three or four generations, the languages and cultures of migrant children who are in contact with the language and culture of the host environment may have become extinct, (on this subject see also Thomason & Kaufman, 1988; Lüdi & Py, 2003). Therefore, migrant background children's bilingualism is taken to be transitional (Lüdi & Py, 2003). The authors explain that whereas *"bilingualism of migrants is generally a transient affair, assimilation may take two or three generations, but it is very rare that descendants of migrants immersed in the host society maintain their language long term, except in very particular circumstances, such as ghettos"* (2003, p. 25-26).

Yet all studies concerning language practices of children of Turkish immigrants in Europe prove otherwise (Backus, 2013). In particular, we showed in our previous study on language practices of urban schoolchildren in Lyon (France) a high linguistic vitality index for Turkish language (Akinci *et al.*, 2004). This proves that Turkish is particularly resistant and is maintained from one generation to another (Akinci & Decool-Mercier, 2010). As Hélot reminds us (2007, p. 85) *"one should start by recognizing bilingualism of children from immigrant background families who speak or understand the language of their parents as equally as valid as children from mixed couples and high SES groups, and affirming that these children are bilingual. This may seem obvious but it is not a common practice in the school system"*. It is this relationship between migration and education that we will discuss in the next section.

## **Education of children from migrant background in France**

When talking about children from migrant backgrounds, one often sees, in the common imagination, the “immigrant” variable emerging as an explanation for their underachievement. Even if a statistical relationship between educational attainment and migration is proven, it does not mean that the “immigrant” variable is discriminatory or that it alone can explain inequalities. If we compare fathers’ profession and family size, migrant background children perform as well as or as badly as, and sometimes better than, their French monolingual peers (Baudelot & Establet, 2009). In this regard, Vallet & Caille (1996, p. 1) argue that “*in disadvantaged populations, migrant background children are often enrolled in school in a more positive achievement than other students*”. The reasons for their difficulties or school failure come from the fact that they mainly belong to underprivileged classes. The problem is the same as for children of migrants and those of lower classes: why are immigrants are overwhelmingly workers rather than executives and why do their children as children of workers face lower educational opportunity?

Before presenting the results of research on Turkish bilinguals in France, in the following part, we will briefly present some characteristics of the Turkish community in France as well as the schooling of their children and their languages.

### **Turkish immigrant community in France**

The first bilateral immigration agreement between France and Turkey was signed on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1965, but massive Turkish migration only started at the beginning of the 70s and continued in the 80s and 90s. Between 1968 and 1972, the Turkish population increased to 50,860; and between 1972 and 1982, it rose further to 123,540. The increase is not only due to labor migration, but also family reunification for those immigrants whose families had remained in the home country. In the 1982 census, the consequences of family reunification were already obvious. It revealed a sharp rise in the number of both women and young people (between 10 and 34 years). By the year 1990, there were 202,000 Turks in France. In 1990, for half of the Turkish population, the average age was below twenty. Thus, as opposed to less-educated first generation Turkish immigrants, the younger generations have been through the French school system, and their educational and vocational profiles are much better than the previous generations. This modifies the general profile and outlook of the Turkish population in France. Many Turkish families have now settled in France. They

maintain contacts with the homeland. Today, the Turkish population in France is estimated to be 611,515<sup>5</sup>, of whom around half have acquired French citizenship. The majority of Turkish immigrants in France are blue-collar workers. The largest proportion of the Turkish population can be found in these regions: Île de France, Rhône-Alpes, and Alsace.

One of the community's characteristics is its attachment to ethnocultural origin, structuring a transnational community phenomenon around extended family and neighborhood circles (Tapia, 1995). The result is an emergence of an in-group solidarity based on common experience of migration and life in a diaspora. Several signs point in that direction:

- There is an increase in the number of community associations, over 320 according to Rollan & Sourou (2006) which allow maintenance of language, culture and religion (Akinci & Yağmur, 2012).
- We infer a strong attachment to the country of origin by in-group marriage tendency and by frequent returns on vacation.

The migration process is continually renewed. The Turkish population in France is thus in a secluded lifestyle. These support factors presumably help maintain the Turkish language and provide a wide (and rich) social network for Turkish immigrants in France. The use of Turkish remains very active in many families, as demonstrated above. Turkish mothers, whose French skills are often very limited, are a strong source of input guaranteeing language transmission and maintenance. Thus, during early childhood and until the beginning of nursery school, these children develop their language in an exclusively Turkish linguistic environment. The entry to school marks a break in language learning. In what follows, we will present briefly the characteristics of Turkish-French bilingual second generation youths before and during their schooling.

### **The Turkish-French bilingual second generation youths**

In order to better understand language practices, some general considerations on relationships between Turkish children and parents are helpful. As in low SES European families, also in Turkish families, parents are less exchanging with children. Parents rarely ask children for their opinions. In traditional Turkish culture, children were considered not yet capable of communication with adults. They are treated as royalty until the age of 6-7 years. However, they are rarely asked to speak or even express their opinions or report their problems. In her study of Turkish families in France, Tinelli (2004, p. 47) notes that “*very few words circulate between generations. It is difficult to*

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<sup>5</sup> T.C. Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Bakanlığı. Dış İlişkiler ve Yurtdışı İşçi Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü (2014) in Akinci (2016).

*determine if this is due to cultural phenomenon, or social consequence of migration trauma. But it is hard for children of Turkish immigrants to take their place as legitimate speakers”.* These traditions were still alive with the first generation migrants but, more contact with the surrounding culture makes things change dramatically for the young second generation, who were born, grew up and educated in France.

Before describing the schooling and language practices of Turkish bilingual children, it is necessary to emphasize that they do not constitute a homogeneous group. Indeed, we can group them according to whether they were born to first or second generation parents or whether they arrived in France before or after the age of 6 years (early consecutive bilingualism vs late bilingualism). In all cases, parents may share the same nationality and speak only Turkish; the couple may be mixed and use only one language, often French, or they may use both languages. One parent may have been born and raised in France and will therefore use French with his/her child.

A child born in France of Turkish migrant parents first begins learning to speak Turkish. The language spoken around children in the majority of Turkish families is only Turkish. Surrounding family, neighbors and parents speak Turkish to them. Even though children are living in France, they will thus develop their Turkish-language capacities. Their first babbling, sounds and words are in Turkish. The lexicon develops according to parental interaction with the child, and also according to the cultural and linguistic environment<sup>6</sup>.

Children born in France thus develop their language and their linguistic abilities in an exclusively Turkish-speaking environment. The first contact with French language for these children will be done only with the entry to nursery school around the age of two-and-a-half or three. However, young children have obviously already heard French around them in the neighborhood, at supermarkets, on television, without needing to adopt French as a means of communication.

### **The schooling and language practices of Turkish-French bilinguals**

The entry to nursery school is a major turning point in several respects: children leave the safe environment of their family to enter a new space where they will first need to find their own way. They find themselves in an unknown environment with peers and adults who do not speak the same language they do and with whom they will spend long hours during school days. This new situation

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<sup>6</sup> To our knowledge, up to now, no studies have been carried out on babies born following Turkish immigration to France.

will represent for them a break in the language learning process. In a typical monolingual situation, the school should constitute the place where children increase their knowledge of the language. As for children with a Turkish migrant background, since the linguistic continuity of Turkish is not ensured by school, they will then be confronted with a new situation in which they have to speak French. Language development thus occurs on two levels, in two different areas. In her study, Tinelli (2004, p. 49) reports what a seven-year-old Turkish girl answered when asked whether she liked French: “*not too much because when I was a baby, I could speak a little bit of Turkish. Then I went to nursery school, and after I learned French. Then for me, my head speaks in Turkish*”, she continued, “*I spoke with nobody at school, I could understand nothing, nobody played with me*”.

Parents’ motivation and a child’s personality play an important role in dealing with this new environment and language, and determine the speed of progress in French and the child’s integration into the class. In our previous studies (e.g. Akinci, 2001), we showed that for Turkish children, French very quickly becomes their dominant language by the age of five or six, which matches the beginning of primary school. Even if their Turkish continues to develop, their mother tongue becomes their weaker language. There exist two types of Turkish children: those who are beginning to learn academic Turkish in the second year of the French primary school (within the framework of *Teaching of language and culture of origin*) and those whose access is limited to what their parents and extended family can transmit to them. For the first group, Turkish will continue to develop, whereas for the second group, there may be fossilization of the language of origin. However, for both groups with French schooling, the effect is that they have better control of French than Turkish and feel more comfortable speaking French. According to our previous studies (Akinci, 1996; see also Akinci, 2008), 68% of Turkish children use only French with each other, 23% use both languages and 9% use only Turkish. In addition, we also showed that Turkish children mostly speak only Turkish with their parents. These results are supported by findings of previous research carried out in France (Gautier-Kızılyürek 2007; Irtis-Dabbagh, 2003; Yağmur & Akinci, 2003; Akinci & Yağmur, 2012), in which children and adolescents from Turkish immigrant families in France report that they almost exclusively communicate in Turkish with their parents but mostly in French with their siblings.

### **Turkish language teaching in France**

Like in most other Western European countries, immigration to France started on a temporary basis, and became permanent. As a result of French legislation allowing family reunification, many of the immigrant workers’ spouses and children came to France as well. This reunion of families led to

provide formal education to young children. In the early 1970s, these children were given the opportunity to learn their languages and cultures of origin, in part in response to requests of the countries of origin. To establish such classes, bilateral agreements were concluded between France and many immigrants' countries (Petek, 2004). This agreement was signed with Turkey in 1978 (Gauthier-Kızılyürek, 2007; Akinci, 2012). To establish *Teaching of language and culture of origin* (TLCO, in French 'ELCO' '*Enseignement des Langues et Cultures d'Origine*') classes in any public school, a minimum of 12 pupils is required. This causes a real problem for the teaching of those languages. In areas with few pupils, the minimum condition of pupils cannot be met. In such cases, those isolated pupils cannot receive mother tongue instruction. Another factor that plays a role is the availability of teachers, as their weekly teaching times are limited. These classes are given in the periods after regular classes, on Wednesdays or Saturdays. On the other hand, the required number of 12 children is easily be reached in most areas by placing children from different grades and/or schools in one TLCO class.

Since a ministerial decree in 1994, Turkish is also taught in secondary and high schools in France as second or third foreign language (FLT). This teaching is under the responsibility of an Inspector of Turkish language nominated by the French Ministry of National Education. At the beginning, as for all foreign languages, there was a common program for Turkish drafted by a language commission which until the middle of 2000 was regulated on the basis of *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR). Accordingly, starting from primary school, even high school graduation exams in foreign languages are prepared according to the criteria specified in this CEFR.

Turkish as FLT is usually chosen by children of Turkish immigrants. The number of students at secondary school is not very high, and in high schools, the only information is an estimate made by De Tapia (2010, p. 153) who declares: "at the moment, it is not less than 3,200-3,500 pupils of final years that spent a test of Turkish language in the high school diploma, to whom are added more than 400 students of BTS (Brevet de Technicien Supérieur)".

TLCO has much lower status in primary schools; there are insufficient teaching materials. In secondary schools, Turkish has a much higher status and formally students from all ethnic backgrounds can enroll in these classes. These courses are more important to success in the French educational system; which increases pupils' commitment to these classes. In its report to Prime Minister on the Challenges of integration at schools (Gaubert, 2011) High Council for Integration (HCI) recommends the introduction of Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) and, at the same time,

recommends abolishing teaching of the language and culture of origin teaching (TLCO), arguing that TLCO retards the integration of second generation pupils of immigrant background.

Unfortunately, many pupils of Turkish background have no access to either TLCO or FLT classes. The main reasons are, on the one hand, the lack of teachers, and on the other hand, the fact that the Turkish population is geographically dispersed (Gauthier-Kızılyürek, 2007; Akinci, 2012). In the late 1970s, TLCO's purpose was the maintaining maintenance of language and culture of origin in order to prepare for eventual return. As this goal has no point nowadays, transforming TLCO into FLT in schools where Turks live most densely could be one of the solutions (Petek, 2004).

Extra & Yağmur (2004, p. 406) suggested the following principles for the enhancement of multilingualism at the primary school level. According to the authors, in the primary school curriculum, 3 languages should be introduced for all children: i) The standard language of the particular nation-state as a major school subject and the major language of communication for the teaching of other school subjects; ii) English as lingua franca for international communication; iii) an additional third language chosen from a variable and varied set of priority languages at the national, regional, and/or local levels of the multicultural society. The teaching of these languages should be part of the regular school curriculum and subject to educational inspection.

If we want Turkish-French bilinguals to become well-balanced in both languages, they need formal education in the language of origin. Turkish parents often complain about TLCO classes saying that: *"it is not necessary that my child attends Turkish class, he/she already knows it"*. He/she knows the basic Turkish but not the academic register. If it is difficult to convince the French teachers of the benefits of bilingualism, then it is just as difficult for Turkish parents too. The interdependence hypothesis, discussed above, (Cummins, 1979) is a proven reality: a low level in Turkish may have a negative impact on French. Recent researches indicate that there are benefits of early bilingualism. If the positive aspect of a Turkish as FLT seems evident, it would be relevant to study the impact that each of these types of mother tongue teaching (TLCO and FLT) can have from the point of view of the representations of the pupils, their family as well as the actors of the educational system.

In the following section, we will summarize results of studies on Turkish-French bilinguals in France. Although their number is very small, the issue of language difficulties of young bilingual children born in France, on the one hand, and their school failure, on the other hand, could lead to increasing interest from more public authorities (teachers, speech therapists etc.).



## Bilingualism of Turkish-French youths in France

In the late 1980s, Manigand<sup>7</sup> (1991, 1999) was often challenged by teachers of nursery and primary schools for children aged 3 to 7 years of Turkish origin who were mainly “silent”. He wondered whether these children were actually pathologically “mute” or merely silent children and also if there was really a specifically Turkish problem or simply a spotlight effect on a little-known migrant population. For him, the explanation comes, firstly, due to ignorance of teachers of Turkish immigrant community in France and, secondly, because schools of the Republic do not fully play their host role and do not help these children enough, by providing L1 programs in nursery schools where children most need it. These L1 classes would support language development of these children in their two languages as much research has already proven (Akinci, 2001).

In 1996, we emphasized the extent of negative representations concerning language skills of children of migrant background families in France by underlining: *“The school tends to see the language of migrant parents as a handicap, a difficult obstacle to overcome viewing French as the only language that matters. This negative view is sometimes shared by parents and children as well and has a detrimental effect on pedagogical expectations and relations of parents and teachers”* (Akinci 1996, p. 17).

Speech therapists are often consulted for language or speech delay or, on rare occasions, for dyslexia or dysgraphia when in reality these difficulties stem from other factors. In order to verify these statements and determine factors, Tinelli (2004), who raises the problem of the relationship between speech therapy and migrant families, conducted a survey with 60 pathologists in Alsace, who deal mainly with the Turkish community. Using this survey, the author tries to understand the issues of speech therapy with bilingual Turkish children and to determine difficulties and questions in relation to this population. Only 20 speech therapists returned the questionnaire, undoubtedly those for whom this issue is a real concern. However, 3 of them said they had no Turkish-speaking children in their patient base. For others, depending on their location, the number of children as patient varies from 1 to 20. It appears from answers that the first concern is the language barrier. Moreover, culturally speech therapy is (still) not widely practiced in Turkey, so Turkish families do

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<sup>7</sup> Manigand was a trainer in CEFISEM Bordeaux (south west of France) (Training centers for information and education of migrant children). The CEFISEM were created in 1975 to intervene in the initial and continuing training of teachers and provide assistance to educational teams for hosting newly arrived children. As migration trends evolved, so did the goals of this institution (Circular 2002-102 of 25 April 2002) and CEFISEM became CASNAV (Academic Center for Education of Newcomers and Traveler children). These new centers are both resource centers for schools and institutions and cooperation places with institutions and associations of school. Three new circulars are published in the Official Bulletin of Education No. 37 of 11 October 2012.

not understand this approach and consider speech therapy as language tutoring. Besides the language barrier, Tinelli (2004) also notes cultural obstacles. Cultural references, religion and traditions are all factors that make understanding between families and speech therapists difficult. For Turkish families rehabilitation seems long and inefficient because the effects are not palpable.

The research conducted by Chalumeau & Efthymiou (2010) concerns L1 influence on L2 French acquisition for early consecutive bilingual children of Portuguese and Turkish origin. They assume that, according to L1 / L2 typological distances, and based on a modular language design, language skills of bilingual children are significantly different or not as proposed language module. This work is based on observation of two bilingual groups of children in kindergarten: a sample of six Portuguese and ten Turkish children. The authors' objectives are i) to reach a basic linguistic level (pragmatic dimension of language use, processing words to phonological and lexical levels and treatment of sentences); ii) to search for explanatory factors (perceptive, attentional, mnemonic, cognitive and praxis components).

Turkish-French bilingual children are characterized by phonological deficiency and significant or very important difficulties in lexicon and morphosyntax, both in production and comprehension. The only field where there were no difficulties was speech acts. For Portuguese-speaking children, on the other hand, results are characterized by good skills for pragmatics and speech acts, as expected for their age and also lack of phonological impairment.

Comparing Portuguese and Turkish bilingual children to monolingual French-speaking children shows that, firstly, Portuguese-speaking children's language skills are near of monolingual French standard and, secondly, Turkish speaking children are insufficient in phonological, lexical and morphosyntactic skills, but not in pragmatics skills, with respect to this same standard. Comparison of the two groups of bilingual children shows significant difference for phonological, lexical and morphosyntactic modules but not for pragmatics. Two years of contact with French language at school seem, therefore, not to be sufficient for Turkish speaking children to bridge the gap with their monolingual peers, in contrast to Portuguese children.

Le Coz & Lhoste-Lassus (2011) studied nursery school teachers' difficulties dealing with language use patterns and competencies of 20 bilingual Turkish and 20 French monolingual children of the same age. The fact that one of the parents was educated in France was the inclusion criterion for bilinguals while for monolinguals; it was mainly children attending the same schools as bilinguals. They investigated lexical and morphosyntactic patterns using the speech therapy evaluation

software and picture stories frequently used in child language acquisition, and in particular, to study narrative competences of the children. Story-telling data were collected in both Turkish and French languages for bilingual children. Taking both language of origin and French into account facilitates the interest and cooperating of Turkish parents.

In general, for lexical naming test, statistical analyses highlight significantly lower scores for bilingual children compared to monolinguals, except for “Colors” and “Fast naming of colors” tests. Turkish-French bilingual children make errors on everyday life words such as “brush” (13 subjects out of 20), “toothpaste” (13), “pan” (10) and “yoghurt” (9), “ladybird” (7), “cheese” (7), “giraffe” (6) and “tractor” (6). Both bilingual and monolingual children had difficulties with words that are rare in everyday speech, such as tractor. When a word was unknown, Turkish children preferred not to name the picture while monolingual child adopted a substitutional strategy. For example, lots of monolingual children proposed “penguin” or “chick” for “duck” or “cabbage” or “cauliflower” for “salad”.

Admittedly, a majority of bilingual children did not know French words for objects from everyday life. It remains to be determined if the difficulty lies in access to the word in French language (meaning) or if the concept is unknown to the child. One factor which helps to partly answer this question is the whether or not the lexical items in Turkish and French are cognate. Partly, to answer this question: results revealed higher performance on the denomination task for cognates (words whose pronunciation and signification are identical in both Turkish and French) (Oker & Akinci, 2012). That concerned 9 of the 36 words of the test. It is the case in particular for “bicycle”. Whereas monolingual children use all “vélo” for “bicycle”, bilingual children use systematically “bicycle”, (this denomination is also accepted by the test). That proves that Turkish bilinguals refer to Turkish word to indicate bicycle, the word “bicyclette” being less used in French language, in particular by children at this age.

There was a statistically significant difference between bilingual and monolingual children, in expression as well as in comprehension. Monolingual children’s competences are significantly better than those of bilingual ones. The main errors remain gender marking, contracted articles and verbal inflections, in particular of number. These difficulties are linked to the typological characteristics of the Turkish language. On all 20 bilingual subjects, 2 were indexed as being in great difficulty and showing consequently delays in French. These individual children omitted subjects, determiners and auxiliaries in French. For these two children, it appeared that production

in Turkish was better than in French; that is, Turkish is still the language in which they exhibit better control, compared to French.

The “story comprehension” test showed that none of the bilingual children were in great difficulty although their scores were lower than those of monolinguals. This task was more difficult for them not only because they do not have a command of language, but moreover because the story was presented orally only, without any visual aids. Concerning the picture story-telling test in Turkish, Coz & Lhoste-Lassus (2011) observe use of French words. These children used lexical resources available in one code in order to fill the gaps in the other code. This phenomenon was not observed in their French stories. This result once more proves what we observed of various previous works (Akinci, 2001, Akinci & Decool-Mercier, 2010), that at this age their dominant language becomes French while Turkish becomes the less controlled language.

Recently, work done by Hamurcu (2015) aimed to observe and understand in a longitudinal perspective language development in L1 (Turkish, home language) and in L2 (French, school language) for 6 children resulting Turkish immigrant families in a small town in Alsace region. It is question of comparing language development according to home language practices of families namely, i) Type I: use of Turkish mainly, and ii) Type II: use of Turkish and French. Table below show results of lexical diversity<sup>8</sup> in oral productions of the two types of child in Turkish (L1) and in French (L2) and their development between first meeting of observation (September of the small section of nursery school, mean age 3 years-old) and the last meeting (mid-courses of average section of nursery school, mean age 5 years-old).

Children Type I				Children Type II			
Turkish		French		Turkish		French	
Session 1	Session 5	Session 1	Session 5	Session 1	Session 5	Session 1	Session 5
4.2	5.4	0.8	5.3	3.9	4.6	2.4	5.6

Table 1: Development of lexical diversity for Type 1 and Type 2 children in Turkish and French (in Guiraud index) (Hamurcu, 2015, p. 304-305).

<sup>8</sup> Calculation was carried out with Guiraud index (Guiraud, 1954) which consists in dividing number of all words, both content and function words, lemmatized or not, (V) produced by the child in an interaction by the square root of full number of produced words (NR). The formula of Guiraud is thus as following:  $G = V/\sqrt{N}$ .

First of all, we can observe that lexical diversity of the two types of child increases between 3 and 5 years of age, and this holds for both languages. Then, table 1 shows that at 3 years, lexical diversity is higher in Turkish for both types, with a higher rate for Type 1 children (4.2 compared to 3.9). In other words, for all Turkish-origin children, and especially Type I children who use Turkish at home, Hamurcu, (2015) found a richer vocabulary in Turkish at the beginning of schooling. This is not an unexpected result, since they mainly begin French at 3 years-old with schooling. On the other hand, in French, Type I children have very low lexical diversity compared to that of Type II children, which is probably due to their earlier use of French.

In their Turkish production, Type I children preserve a rate of lexical diversity higher than Type II children at the end of two years of schooling in French. Moreover, their lexical diversity also increases in French, and this considerably reduces the gap between lexical diversity in Turkish and French to reach a lexical diversity rate very near to that of Type II children at the age of 5 years-old. Therefore, at the same time, Type I children reach better lexical diversity in Turkish due to their Turkish use at home and, in French, almost the same lexical diversity rate as Type II2 children due to their French use and what they learn at school.

It is also interesting to observe the balance of lexical diversity for both languages of Type I children at the age of 5 years. Indeed, they have almost the same rate of lexical diversity in their both languages (5.4 in Turkish and 5.3 in French). However, this balance is not observed for both languages of Type II children because their lexical diversity is definitely higher in French at the age of 5.

These results show that after two years of schooling in nursery school, Turkish migrant background children reach the same level of lexical diversity in French whatever their home language practices. Differences between Type I and Type II children are noted particularly for Turkish. At the age of 5 years old, Type I children do not differ in lexical diversity measures in their two languages whereas Type II children seem rather dominant in French, with a schooling effect in addition to that of language use at home.

## **Conclusion and discussion**

Child bilingualism is a complex phenomenon, at the crossroads of two languages. Previous studies (see Backus, 2013) on Turkish bilingual children's languages in European countries agree in affirming that these children face important problems at school of learning the language of the

country in which they live. Research results in France but also in Belgium (Crutzen & Manço, 2003) suggest that indeed very young Turkish bilinguals encounter difficulties, but these are essentially limited to gaps in vocabulary.

For the vocabulary, things are far from alarming since there is not any critical period for lexical acquisitions. Therefore, the increasing number of experiences for children, through early school attendance as well as their many contacts with French children, will allow them to quickly acquire vocabulary. Particular attention on the part of teachers to literacy activities in both languages could help these bilingual children to expand their vocabulary in their two languages (Cummins, 2014).

As for syntax, indeed, capacities are significantly lower among Turkish-speaking children compared to same age monolingual peers. However, it is important to note that these performances are far from being pathological and are not by nature concerned with a delay in acquiring language competence. On the contrary, performance on syntactic comprehension tests (which precede competence in production) are encouraging and offer hope that deficient constructions will soon be controlled by these children in production as well as comprehension.

One possibility to improve the French results of these very young children in nursery schools could come from consideration of the L1, as Crutzen suggests (2003, p. 136) “*Pupils’ mother tongue should be rehabilitated, valued and taught within schools, not as nostalgic folk or gadget, but as language development tool and identity recognition vector*”. By acquiring two languages through bilingual education, pupils could fully benefit from many advantages of early bilingualism. Control of their L1 can only be beneficial when learning French (for a synthesis see Cummins 2014).

To conclude this paper, we will focus on three main points about language practices of Turkish migration descendants in France.

First, we should reconsider TLCO<sup>9</sup> classes. In February 2016, the French Minister of Education expressed her intention to end TLCO, for the reason that they do not convey “language teaching of quality” and lock up pupils in “culturally restrictive, in-group logic”. Beginning this school year (2016-2017) with Arabic and Portuguese, TLCO classes will be gradually replaced by “international sections” in elementary schools, adding to the few hundreds of these which already exist. Pupils in these sections follow some FLT classes, for which they are gathered outside their

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<sup>9</sup> This device is intended to allow foreign students to better integrate into the French education system, while maintaining ties with the language and culture of the country in the event of return someday.

class. While waiting for creation of these FLT classes all over France, one may fear that the gap is filled by religious fundamentalist associations whose objectives could be much different from those of educational initiatives such as of TLCO.

The second point concerns problems encountered by nursery and primary school teachers with Turkish-speaking children. Faced with these problems, speech therapy is often offered. But to date, speech therapists are not aware of issues in bilingualism and sometimes they have misconceptions. Therefore, in many speech therapy practices, the therapeutic support offered to bilingual children confounds techniques designed for language rehabilitation with those for teaching French. It is necessary to provide speech therapists with training to offer integrated knowledge about bilingualism and to create better-adapted tests to these bilingual children. That could ensure that only children who are in real language difficulty are dealt with.

The last point is a question: What will happen to Turkish-speaking bilingual youths of the third or fourth generation? Will there be total L1 attrition, 'language shift' or will L1 competence be maintained?

If the Turkish language and culture are not maintained and reinforced by formal learning, and if they are not overtly valued within the family, one can be certain that in the long term children will not develop bilingualism, but will face what is commonly called a subtractive bilingualism<sup>10</sup> and attrition of language and culture of origin of parents. As Bensekhar-Bennabi (2010) reminds us, transmission of family languages to children is not only a guarantee of maintaining intergenerational links, but also of integration and academic success.

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<sup>10</sup> Bilingual situation where child developed his/her L2 to the detriment of his/her asset in L1 and which can involve disadvantages on the side of cognitive development (Cummins, 1979.2014...); this state is found when entourage devalues L1 of the child compared to a dominant language, socially more prestigious.

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