

## THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE CULTURE AND LANGUAGE OF INTIMACY

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*Immigrants originating from »traditional« societies go through a transformation of culture and language of intimacy in Denmark. Many first and second generation Turkish immigrants either use Danish words or shift totally to Danish when speaking about sexual and intimate matters in Turkish. Turkish males make use of the new possibilities for sexual and intimate gratification with Danish women, while trying to preserve the original ethnic culture, especially in areas pertaining to women's control over their bodies and sexualities. Research on immigrants should take into account both the willingness and resistance to change among immigrants and avoid cultural patronizing.*

»Kæresteri'yi legal etmek için iki yüzük kafi« wrote a second-generation young Turkish-Danish girl to me during a personal correspondence, that is: »Two wedding rings are enough to legalize the *kæresteri*«. The Danish word »*kæresteri*« means »flirtation« or »having an affair« depending on the situation. During various conversations in Turkish she kept on using the Danish word instead of a Turkish word corresponding to it, and it gradually became evident that she did not know the right word or words in Turkish.

She is not the only Turk who I have observed using a Danish word or shifting wholly to the Danish language when speaking about sexuality or intimacy in Turkish. During my 23 years of residence in Europe I have observed many times that both young and middle-aged Turks tend to shift to the language of the majority in the European country they live in when they speak about love, intimacy and sexuality. Besides shifting, for instance, to Danish, I have observed another cultural and sociolinguistic phenomenon among the first and second generation Turkish immigrants. Many Turkish men of different ages, who I spoke with in a number of European countries, used the Turkish word »*dost*« for their European female lovers or for the European lovers of somebody they knew. Now, »*dost*« means »good friend« or »comrade«, but it is also used pejora-

tively for a married man's mistress, or for a prostitute, who a married or an unmarried man regularly visits. It was apparant from the way the Turkish men used the word that they did not use it in the positive sense. Did they then use it in the pejorative sense? I have not been able to answer this question unequivocally, but I have always been struck by the negative connotations inherent in the word »dost« each time I have heard it used for a European female lover. Their usage was not unambiguously pejorative, since it was clear from the way they talked about their lovers that they loved and cared for them in their own ways. But, asked if they would marry their European »dost«s, most of them answered negatively, and added that they would definetely prefer to marry a Turkish virgin. It has to be pointed out that there is a common feature between the earlier and the new usage of the word »dost«: They both refer to pre- or extra-marital intimate relations. They are pre- or extra-relations, that is, relations whose cultural value are below that of a »real marriage«.

That Turks either use words and expressions in an European language or shift to a European language while speaking about sexuality and intimacy and the ambiguous way Turkish immigrant males use the word »dost« underline the difficulty many Turkish immigrants have in using »the correct« Turkish words which refer to premarital sexuality and intimacy. In a broader sense, these difficulties are symptoms of a broader cultural transformation and change which the Turkish society itself and Turkish immigrants in Europe go through.

Various experiences with Turks of different ages and generations in different European countries when speaking about intimate and sexual subjects have inspired me to take into account the dimensions of love and sexuality amongst young Turks in my Ph.D. research, which was based on the ethnic identity and language use of second-generation Turks in Denmark (Necef 1996). During my research I conducted taped interviews with 20 young Turks (ten girls and ten boys) and two first-generation Turks. Moreover, I spoke with approximately 50 Turkish men and a few women under informal circumstances. Among other things I asked them about their »intimate« lives. I tested if they shifted to Danish, when I asked questions about love and sexuality. I started the conversation in Turkish and resisted the young Turks' tendency to shift to Danish by continuing the conversation in Turkish. After I »warmed them up« to speak Turkish, I began asking questions like »Do you have a lover?« or »How many lovers have you had?«. Almost each time I asked something about love and sexuality, young Turks tended to switch to Danish. I have also detected the same tendency among first-generation Turks.

In this paper I will also present some of the results of a research project carried out in Germany by Ramazan Salman, a bilingual Turkish-German social researcher, himself a second-generation Turk (Salman 1993).

Let us begin with some of Salman's findings.

## Young Turks in Germany

»Around half of the 40 young Turkish men I interviewed felt more comfortable speaking Turkish and the other half German. However, by and large when talking about sexuality they preferred to speak German, if they could speak *some* German.«

This is how Ramazan Salman (1993: 75-76) comments on the choice of language amongst Turkish young men when talking about sexuality. Salman interviewed 40 adolescents between the ages of 16-21, living in the German state of Lower Saxony.

In his report to the Ministry of Social Affairs of the provincial government of Lower Saxony, Salman gives the example of Kemal, an adolescent who grew up in Germany. According to Salman (1993: 75), the Turkish youngster, uses German words and expressions in the middle of Turkish sentences for everything which impinges remotely on sexuality. Kemal, for example, code-switches between German and Turkish when talking about a girl with whom he was once in love: »*War ich verknallt, ama olmadi*« (I had a crush – in German, but it did not work – in Turkish).

Salman gives more details and examples of the use of language amongst adolescents when they talk about sexual matters: »Sometimes they would not understand something in German, then I and my bilingual associates would try in Turkish, or vice versa«. An example is Hassan, with whom mostly Turkish was spoken during the interview :

Interviewer: *Sence kondomun yan etkileri nedir?* (What according to you are the disadvantages of condoms?).

Hassan: Hm.

Interviewer: *Was sind deiner Meinung nach die Nachteile von Kondomen?*

Hassan: *Bozulabilir* (They may tear).

This is how Salman evaluates this conversation:

It was clear that he didn't understand the question in Turkish and so I tried in German. He understood the question better in German and answered nevertheless in Turkish. Hassan reacted similarly to other questions, which impinged on his sexual life. Although he spoke better Turkish than German, he disposed of no Turkish vocabulary by which he could express sexual matters. The adolescents, who master Turkish better than German, speak nevertheless German, if they did not recall certain words in Turkish.

Salman gives a third example:

Ünal spoke Turkish as well as German. During the interview, we used both of the languages. I had the feeling that when dealing with emotional topics, for instance talking about falling in love or other feelings, Turkish would be used. German would be used when discussing but sexual or AIDS-related topics.

These comments are interesting from a linguistic point of view. First of all, they are the first evidence of code shifting among immigrants when they talk about sexuality or love in their mother tongue that I have encountered since I began my research. Indeed, it is one of the few studies which deal with the theme of love and sexuality amongst immigrants.<sup>1</sup> This aspect of their lives has been ignored by researchers, most possibly because sexuality is still regarded as taboo among social researchers, and the sexual life of male immigrants is seen as a politically incorrect issue to focus on, due to the fear of reinforcing the accusations within the anti-immigrant circles that »immigrant men steal our women from us.«

It is a pity that the sexual aspect of the lives of immigrants and the role of sexuality in the process of their integration into the mainstream society is virtually being ignored. This area is not only interesting *per se*, but as the British social historian Randolph Trumbach (1977: 24) puts it, when describing the sexuality of eighteenth-century London:

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1. Salman notes that in the German-speaking area, knowledge about the sexual attitudes and behavior of Turkish male adolescents is generally a by-product of migrant studies, and that there are only a few works which deal with the study of the sexuality of young male immigrants.

According to him, the first larger study which discusses the sexual problems of immigrant male adolescents is the ethnologist Werner Schiffauer's *Die Gewalt der Ehre* (The Power of Honor) (1983). This was a study of 13 young Turkish men in Berlin.

Salman then mentions the study of Salich (1990), »Sexualität und interpersonale Intimität«. Her study is, according to Salman, a sign of an awakening interest in the sexuality of young male immigrants. Here are some of the conclusions she stated in her work:

- 1) the stages of development of sexual activities are similar to those of Germans;
- 2) the Turkish adolescents have sexual intercourse at about the same age as Germans;
- 3) Turkish adolescents change sexual partners more frequently than their German peers.

I did some work on the sexual lives of immigrants in my magistral thesis *Etnisk kitsch* (Ethnic Kitsch) in the chapters »The Aestheticization of sexuality and pre-modern society« and »Sex Tourism at Home – «Ethnic Sex Tourism» (Necef 1992).

Sexual behavior (perhaps more than religion) is the most highly symbolic activity of any society. To penetrate to the symbolic system implicit in any society's sexual behavior is therefore to come closest to the heart of its uniqueness.

Secondly, these findings problematize a popular view among some social scientists (see e.g. Fishman 1991) that if ethnic minorities can retain their mother tongue in the spheres of the home and intimate circles, a stable bilingualism, or a diglossic situation, can be created and maintained. Contrary to such assertions, my and Salman's findings tend to demonstrate the difficulties which the Turkish immigrants have in retaining their mother tongue in the most intimate of all spheres, that is, the sphere of love and sexuality. My basic point in this article will be that when traditional Turkish culture and the culture of intimacy of the North European societies collide, it is not only a confrontation between Turkish and the local languages but, perhaps more importantly, a clash between traditional and modern values of life.

### **Why do they choose Danish and German?**

The question that naturally comes to one's mind is why immigrants and their children prefer Danish or German when they talk about love and sexuality. Shouldn't they naturally choose their mother tongue, when expressing the most intimate aspect of their lives? Aren't these findings surprising and paradoxical?

One reason which comes to mind to explain why people codeshift when talking about love and sex is that there might be less emotional attachment to certain sexual or intimate expressions and words when speaking in a foreign language. Therefore, it can be asserted that people feel more free and uninhibited to talk about love and sexuality in a foreign language.

But I think more is at stake when we are dealing with people coming from traditional areas of rural Turkey and moving to modern Northern European industrial societies. In order to understand why young Turks shift language when they talk about love and sexuality we have to look at their sexual lives, and we have to consider the influence tradition has on their sexuality, since the majority of the Turkish immigrants are of peasant background.

Although there is not much research available on the sexual and intimate lives of peasants in Turkey and Turkish immigrants in European countries, we still have enough compelling evidence to enable us to state the following:

Not only premarital sex, but also friendship between Turkish boys and girls after puberty, is strictly forbidden (Delaney 1991: 43-52).<sup>2</sup> However, young male teenagers may go to prostitutes, and they have the possibility of having sex with liberated city girls, or female tourists in Turkey, and with European girls in Europe.<sup>3</sup> According to the moral code of Turkish society, there is no problem with such relations as long as a long-term love relationship or unwanted children do not threaten the parents' control over the young man's marriage plans (Mortensen 1991).

For women, the possibilities of premarital sex, both with Turkish or European men, are extremely limited and sanctions are very strict. Two factors which make premarital sex extremely difficult for them is their limited spatial mobility and the cult of virginity: a woman who has willingly »lost« her virginity would be a total outcast, and maybe even risk physical punishment. A young man demands that his future wife be a virgin, and if he finds out that she is not, he has the right to give her back to her family, according to the Turkish traditional culture.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, a young woman whose husband dies, or who is raped, would not have a great chance of getting married to anyone but an elderly man, or to a widower who is much older than herself, due to her lack of »worth« as a non-virgin.

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2. A problem for the Turkish youngsters is the notion of the majority of the parents that girls and boys may play together until the age of 11 or 12, but after that, being together should be actively hindered. Ninety percent of the Turkish parents, who Iranian-German sexual pedagogue Heidar-Ghazwini (1990) spoke to, said that girls and boys can play together until they are 11-12 years old without supervision. Many of the parents, according to Heidar-Ghazwini, think that children do not have any sexuality until puberty. With the onset of puberty, the girls are expected not to be inviting, and are told to cover their womanly charms.
  3. The majority of the young men (21) stated that it is very important to have premarital sexual relations. Around one quarter of the young men think that premarital sex is indeed good, but not necessary. The reasons they give for why premarital sex is desirable has to do with the fear of impotency on the first night of marriage, and later during marriage. Only three said they want no sexual relations before marriage (Salman 1993: 105).
  4. Salman (p. 107) also asked them what they thought about their future wives' premarital sexual experiences. He puts the answers into three categories ( four did not want to answer this question at all):
    - 1) More than half (24) said it was unacceptable for them that their future wife should have had sexual experiences. All of the young men who had grown up in Turkey belong to this category. It is also interesting to note that seven young men who adamantly refused to speak with their future wives about sexual matters were also strongly against these women having any premarital sexual experience. It is only self-evident for the majority of these young men that while they themselves should have premarital sex, their future wives should not. One of the youngsters is not against the girls' experiences, but he demands virginity:

Sexual and intimate relations between persons, as well as marriage, are not seen as belonging to the private and intimate sphere, which basically involves certain individuals. They concern the community at large and especially the families of the persons involved. Therefore, marriages are either arranged or controlled by the parents, and premarital romantic love is not necessarily seen as a prerequisite for the establishment of a family. In contrast, marriage in modern societies is supported by a pervasive ideology, the dominant themes of which are romantic love, sexual fulfillment, self-discovery, and self-realization through love and sexuality, and the nuclear family as the social site for these processes (Berger & Kellner 1977). The modern institutions of romantic love and marriage have their roots in one of the much broader cultural constructs of modern society: the self. Sexuality plays a crucial role in the construction of the self and talking about one's inner self is, for the most part, talking about our sexuality.<sup>5</sup> In traditional Turkish society, »talking about sexuality« is not seen as a part of a broader lifelong project of self-discovery, self-realization, and self-development, but it is discussed in purely erotic terms, or as a matter concerning procreation.

My interviews and conversations with female and male Turkish immigrants lead me to think that Turkish women talk quite freely among themselves about their sexual lives, which are, of course, restricted to sex with their husbands. Conversely, a man would never speak with his friends

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»Look. They may have had as many as ten friends, but they should be careful not to have lost their virginity.«

2) Six young men could accept that their future wives have had premarital sex, but not without reservations. As one of them puts it: »If I can rely on her that she will not do it again with others, it is O.K. But I must believe her. But if she is still virgin, I would give her my life. I like it better that way.«

3) Several of the young men who grew up in Germany expressed such a qualification: They would accept that a future *German* wife be a non-virgin. But they had rather ambivalent feelings if the non-virgin wife was *Turkish*. For Turkish girls, they tend to set other criteria. For instance, Salman asks Ünal, who was born in Germany, if he would accept that his future wife had had sex with another man. Yes, she may have had it, but: »If and only if she was not Turkish, in any case. Actually girls also have that right, but in the Turkish religion there is something called tradition. Turkish girls must be virgins. I can of course also imagine that in Turkey many young girls have done it already with a guy before marriage.«

As Salman notes it seems as if the young men who grew up in Germany expect Turkish girls, but not German girls, to adhere to traditional norms.

5. To modern individuals, the practice of parent-arranged marriages therefore seems a serious violation of one's right to privacy and intimacy. In traditional societies, marriage establishes an alliance between two kinship groups in which the newly joined couple is merely the most conspicuous link. Thus marriage is not just an individual affair, since the bride and groom marry not only each other, but also all their relatives as well (Melville: 1983).

about his sexual life *with his wife*. A woman talking about her sexual life would most possibly do so in the form of boasting and praising her husband's sexual prowess. Thus it is not seen as a means of problematizing her self and sexuality, or seeing this discussion as some kind of therapeutic soul-searching, as is the case in modern society.

The rules which govern the way one speaks about sexuality and intimate topics are different in traditional Turkish culture than e.g. the contemporary Danish culture, and the cultural space for such conversation includes more restricted and narrower rules compared to modern societies.

First of all, conversations on sexuality take place mostly among same-sex groups. Conversations between males and females on sexual matters, even between wife and husband, are unthinkable.<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, conversations on sexual matters take place between peers. Both younger and older Turks would be afraid of losing their mutual respect, if sexual or other intimate subjects were mentioned. This means, among other things, that there is no tradition for talking about sexuality or sex-related love between parents and their children, or »on the home front«.

One may point out that a similar lack of communication concerning love and sexuality between parents and children may also be found in

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6 Salman asked if the young men would speak with their future wives about sexual matters. He categorizes the answers into four groups:

- 1) Eight out of 40 rejected the idea of speaking with their future wives on sexuality. The family is the wrong place to speak about such things. Three found it unnecessary to speak about such things in a family;
- 2) Seven said they would but with some conditions;
- 3) Seventeen said they would. Their reasons were the following: it is better for the marriage, and sex can be more pleasant. Sexual problems can be solved by talking about them;
- 4) Others reacted rather ambivalently. Indeed, theoretically they find it right, but doubt whether they can do it themselves.

Salman notes that the young men raised in Turkey orient themselves towards the traditional role allocation. They refuse to speak about sexuality with women. An adolescent said to him:

»It should not be necessary to speak about such things. The most important thing is that the man has enough experience and then everything will go as it should.«

Salman has found, on the other hand, that the young men having grown up in Germany tend to advocate the position that one ought to speak about sexuality with one's wife.



modern societies, but that would be missing the point.<sup>7</sup> In modern societies it is generally accepted as a principle that parents and children should be able to speak »like good friends« and »freely«, principles which do not exist in traditional sections of Turkish society, and which would, furthermore, be seen as outrageous and immoral.

It is evident that a series of cultural and identity problems will arise when people from Turkish villages, still holding on to traditional norms and values, end up in modern Northern European societies which are highly individualized and sexualized. The second generation, who at home are expected to adhere to traditional roles, norms and values, and who in the society at large are expected to follow the culture of the dominant modern society, experience the dilemma of being pulled in two different directions in a much more problematic way than their parents who basically only have one set of rules to obey.

To clarify the dilemma facing the young people: on the one hand, there is a traditional culture which has strict and restrictive rules about when, how, and with whom one may engage in sex, have intimate relations or even talk about sex. On the other hand, they live in modern societies in which everybody is expected to »talk« about »it«, not just for the fun of it, but in order to discover and build up one's identity, that is, to find the authentic inner self and yearn for self-fulfillment, notions which simply make no sense in a traditional culture (Foucault 1978; Bech 1989a). »Talking« openly about sexuality takes place everywhere: on special TV and radio programs, in newspapers, and magazine columns, therapeutic consultation rooms, weekend courses on experiencing the authentic self, therapy groups, consciousness raising groups, anti-rape groups, male bonding groups, women's groups, classrooms, cafés, bars, living rooms, conferences, and in scientific articles. Not only do we talk about it, but we are, furthermore, encouraged to »think« about it all the time. Our daily lives are eroticized through the constant flow of strangers around us in public places, through the visual media, the press as well as through commercials, films, music videos and pornography, all of which serve to aestheticize and sexualize male and female bodies (Bech 1989b).

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7. Two of the results of the above-mentioned (see note one) study by Salich show the difference between Turkish and German working class attitudes about speaking about sexuality or sex-related topics:
- 1) On the threat of AIDS/HIV, about the same percentage of Turks and Germans would speak with their fathers. With their mothers, 56 percent of the Turks would »never« speak, in contrast to 18 percent among Germans, who would not do that either.
  - 2) On sexual relations 80 percent of the Turks would »never« or »seldom« speak with parents, in contrast to 30 percent of Germans.

## Vocabulary of intimacy and sexuality

This »urge« to speak about self and sexuality creates an elaborate discourse with its own vocabulary. A positive or neutral vocabulary for expressing premarital sexual and intimate relations emerges in different languages, as premarital relation itself becomes a legitimate institution, not condemned, but on the contrary supported by a number of the social and cultural institutions. On the other hand, it will be natural to expect that in a society in which premarital relations are forbidden or looked down on or in principal related to prostitution, words and expressions related to such relations will be pejorative and will have vulgar connotations.

Some words that once had negative or vulgar connotations, such as »fuck« and »gay«, gradually lose their old connotations and take on more positive or neutral meanings.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the languages being spoken in modern societies have a positive vocabulary concerning premarital love and sexual relations, such as »dating«, »flirting«, »being lovers«, »living together«, and so on, words which languages spoken in traditional societies, in which premarital love and sex is forbidden, naturally do not have.

Since the 1950s the Turkish society has experienced the breaking down of the traditional ways of life and traditional gender roles together with a radical industrialization and urbanization. These changes had an enormous effect on the sexual morals of the society and the ways public and private intimacy between the sexes are regarded and controlled.

In the 1970s and especially the 1980s more and more members of the Turkish upper and middle classes began having open premarital relations and the country saw a boom in the number of places like cafes and discotheques, where people could meet each other freely and legitimately in the public spaces of the urban centers. Parallel to these developments the Turkish urban upper and middle classes developed and created positive

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8. A similar process can be observed in other languages spoken in modern societies. For example, in Danish, the word »at bolle«, which corresponds to »to fuck«, as well as the word »bøsse«, which means »male homosexual« or »gay«, now to a great extent have lost their vulgar connotations and can be used in serious books, or on TV and in radio programs about sexuality. In other words, people get used to using these words in public without feeling embarrassed.

The Turkish urban middle class is also creating its own register of serious sexual discourse. During the last couple of years several youth journals, or soft pornographic magazines, have created a neutral sexual register by normalizing some old words. For instance, until recently the word »düzmek«, which corresponds to »to fuck«, had vulgar connotations. But now even serious weeklies like *Nokta* have begun to use it. (See f. ex. *Nokta* September 26 – October 2 1995, p. 62).

vocabulary through which one can positively or neutrally verbalize, express and describe premarital intimate relations. For this purpose, these social groups have either created new words or have begun using old words with new meanings and connotations. For example, they imported the word »to flirt« and made it to »flört etmek«; they began using age old words »arkadaslik« (friendship), »iliski« (relation), »sevgili« (lover) and »arkadas olmak-arkadaslik yapmak« (originally »to be friends«, but now also »to be lovers«) in a new context; or they created new expressions like »biriyle cikmak« (to go out with somebody) and »kiz-erkek arkadas« (girl-boy friend).

Although the urban modern social groups use and hear these words and expressions on a daily basis, this vocabulary has not yet been assimilated by other social groups, especially by those who still live in »traditional« ways of life and therefore still strongly condemn premarital relations. In his classical work *The Civilizing Process* the Swiss historian and sociologist Norbert Elias (1978) describes how feelings, affects, manners and vocabulary first transformed and created in upper classes spread slowly throughout society<sup>9</sup>. A similar phenomenon of diffusion »from top to bottom« of the society takes place in the Turkish society. It has to be stressed in this specific context that the »centers« and »circles«, where new ways of life and new vocabularies first develop, are not primarily to be found in the economic upper classes, but among the well-educated and the most westernized and modernized sections of the urban Turkish society. It also has to be underlined that the majority of the »traditional« people see the relations of unmarried – and to a certain degree also of married men – to prostitutes as legitimate relations. Therefore Turkey has a well-developed prostitution network.

If we focus on the immigrants and their children: Many of them have not yet acquired the intimate vocabulary of the Turkish modern urban classes. Many first generation Turkish immigrants originate from rural areas where it was and still is impossible to have open and legitimate premarital intimate relations. The younger generations, who were born in or brought to European countries in early age, most possibly have had intimate relations with local Europeans and their co-ethnic young people. Though not exclusively as often thought, this is especially true for the males. However, the young generations do not yet have direct contact with the Turkish urban culture and therefore have not yet acquired the vocabulary of intimacy of the Turkish urban upper and middle classes. Therefore, they resort to two linguistic strategies: They either code-shift,

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9. For similar formulations see for example p. 115-16 of the first volume. After giving many examples of what he calls »civilizing process«, he writes: »We see more clearly how relatively small circles first form the center of the movement and how the process then gradually passes to broader sections«.

that is, they insert a word or a sentence in the language of the majority society they live in, as we have seen in the example of »kæresteri«, or they shift totally to the language of the majority. Or they use an already existing word in a new context, e.g. »dost«. But my impression is that many young Turks, through Turkish TV-channels (five of them can be received in Europe) and during vacations in big Turkish cities or in summer vacation resorts like Marmaris and Antalya, meet urban modern Turkish culture and vocabulary and acquire it.

I am not going to dwell on what kind of problems the different sexual morals and conceptions between traditional and modern societies create for the immigrants. But I want to stress that these differences are indeed a source of conflict for the individual Turkish immigrant, and that the sexual discourse in modern societies has a powerful impact on the sexual imagery of partly traditional societies. According to Turkish men's fantasies, as Salman (1993: 42) writes in his report, Northern Europe is a »sex paradise« where people indulge freely in sexual activity. Salman says: »In my vacations in Turkey people often ask me if it is really true that 'In Germany everybody goes to bed with everybody'«.

What interests me most here is both the way in which intimacy and sexuality are regulated in different types of societies and the sociolinguistic situation amongst the young Turks, which makes the maintenance of their traditional ethnic culture and mother tongue problematic.

One evident linguistic consequence is that young Turks miss an opportunity to speak Turkish and to develop their skills in their mother tongue at home. In a very intimate area like love and sex, they refer to speak in the language of the majority in order to express themselves due to the traditional Turkish rule about not speaking about such topics with parents, or with Turks older than themselves. Thus a European language becomes the language of sexual and emotional intimacy.

As a part of my Ph.D. dissertation, besides making taped and non-taped interviews, I also made a post survey in which I among other things asked young Turks which topics they talked about with which people. The answers to the question show that young Turks talk about their emotional lives mostly outside the family with their co-ethnic and Danish friends (Necef 1996: 240-243). In the family, it is primarily the sister and secondly the mother, who are the typical conversation partners (see table). The male members of the family are the ones with whom young Turks speak least about, for instance, their emotional lives.

**Topics and with whom to talk best with\***

	Father	Mother	Brother	Sister	Co-ethnic friends	Danish friends	Nobody	No response
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
What happened at school	22	31	22	32	35	37	6	19
Turkish film	20	26	25	31	46	9	12	20
Religion	47	53	20	25	39	25	8	12
Emotional life	7	21	9	26	39	35	13	16
A book one has read	10	13	15	26	35	40	15	21
What happened at work	32	42	22	30	39	37	7	22
Future plans	42	51	27	33	41	40	9	13
Column total	180	237	140	203	274	223	70	123

\*The respondents could check as many topics as they wanted.

The persons young Turks talk most with about their emotional life are first of all co-ethnic friends, secondly – and surprisingly – *Danish* friends, thirdly the sister, fourthly the mother. If we keep in mind that approximately 70 and 68 percent of the young Turks speak only, mostly or »half Danish, half the mother tongue« with their siblings and with co-ethnic friends respectively (Necel 1996: 234), we can conclude that an important part of the talk about emotional life takes place in Danish. Every fifth respondent speaks about emotional life with their mother, who becomes the staunch defender of the mother tongue in the domain of emotional life. We should note that the father and the brother are those, young Turks speak least with, and few respondents speak with their father and brother(s) about their emotional life. Male family members do not figure on the intimate map!<sup>10</sup>

The reason why there is not much oral interaction with the father is probably the patriarchal structure of the family, where the younger generations, and especially the females, are expected to show respect to the elder males by, among other things, not talking to them without directly being asked to and not talking to them about intimate subjects.

The topics of religion, future plans and »what happened at work« are mostly talked about with parents, and, therefore, the mother tongue is obviously used while talking these subjects through.

In order to better understand in which language the intimate lives of young Turks take place, the source of information on sexuality was also investigated (see table).

10. In personal communication sociolinguist Sharon Millar (University of Southern Denmark) reminded me that this is not just a Turkish phenomenon, more of a one influenced by gender

**Source of information on sexuality**

	Male %	Female %	N
Sexual education at school	68	65	393
Danish friends	41	38	235
Danish tv	43	34	226
Turkish/Kurdish friends	36	39	223
Lovers	53	18	188
Mother	5	22	85
Father	7	4	31
Mother tongue instruction	2	1	6
Don't know – No response	6	10	47
N	261	231	592

\*Respondents could check as many items as they wanted.

The most important source of information about sexuality is the sex education classes in the Danish public school: approximately 66 percent of the young Turks pointed to this source. The second and third most important sources of information are Danish friends (about 40 percent) and Danish television (about 39 percent), respectively. It is interesting to note that there is not much difference between the males and females, with respect to having Danish comrades as the source of sexual information, but a significant difference emerges with regard to television, which is probably due to the control exercised by family members over which programs the girls may watch on television.

*The most important difference between the males and the females is in having lovers as a source of sexual information.* There is a statistically very significant difference in this respect.<sup>11</sup> While slightly more than half of the males checked them as a source, only 18 percent of the girls did. This situation is clearly due to the ban on premarital sexuality for Turkish girls, while males are free to experiment with their sexual lives – with Danish girls.

While mothers are not a significant source of information for males, about every fifth girl had her mother as a source. Put in sociolinguistic terms, here again the mothers are also the defenders of the mother tongue. The fathers are a source of information for very few. Moreover, mother tongue instruction has been a source for approximately only 1 percent.

11. Chi-Square= 77.07576; DF= 1; Significance= .00000

These numbers show primarily two things about the source of sexual information. First, young Turks have received their sexual information mostly outside of the family, and secondly, mostly in Danish.<sup>12</sup> Danish is the primary language of intimacy, especially of sexual intimacy for the young Turks.

The cult of virginity and the ban on premarital love relations make it very difficult for Turkish youngsters to have open loving relationships with *each other* in which Turkish might be used as the language of intimacy. Some Turkish youngsters still have love relationships with other Turks, but these relations are secret and risky. These restrictions lead young Turkish men to have relations with mostly European girls, thus creating a linguistic situation in which their sexual and love lives are expressed in a European language.<sup>13</sup>

Out of 40 young men, 13 did not have a girl-friend at the time of the interview. The remaining 27 said they had girlfriends or partners.<sup>14</sup> Twelve of the girl-friends are Germans, 11 are Turks, and the remaining 4 are of other nationalities. This means that, most probably, German is being spoken exclusively with 16 out of 27 girl-friends. Of course, the fact that both partners are Turks does not automatically favor a Turkish language environment. In the very few examples I have seen of young Turkish couples, both of whom are raised in a European country, the language of communication was mostly the language of the European country where they lived.

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12. Closely related to the general lack of discussion concerning sexuality and love in the family is the fact that Turkish youngsters receive no sexual information from family members. The Turkish-German sociologist Salman carried out a research in Germany on inter alia the sexual life of Turkish youths (For Salman's research see the first article in the Appendix. Hardly anybody among Salman's interviewees mentioned a family member as a source of sexual information. Only two mentioned that they got some information from their brothers. Parents were never mentioned. (p. 134). On the other hand, the majority of the youngsters who grew up in Germany received information on sex at school in German from their teachers. The fact that 12 of the 40 young men mentioned German television as their primary source of sexual information questions the link between the home environment and intimacy (p. 134).

13. Salman writes that many parents forbid their sons to have a girl-friend. Therefore most of these young men act as if they respect this ban, which is a way of circumventing restrictions. But under such conditions, a deep and intimate relationship is indeed very difficult. Most of the relations with girls take place in an aura of mystery. The parents do not hear about them; this, at least, is what the young men believe.

14. Salman and his collaborators tried to find out whether these relations were long term-love relations, or just good friendships, or only loose acquaintances, but they could not see the distinctions clearly.

Having German girl-friends influences Turkish youngsters not only linguistically, but probably also culturally. Salman doesn't comment on that aspect of the issue. Yet another German researcher, von Salich (1990), has studied this aspect of relationships and has concluded that Turkish adolescents who do not yet have a German girl-friend are generally more inclined to have traditional values and attitude patterns.<sup>15</sup> Turkish adolescents who have a German girl-friend have about the same level of knowledge about sexuality, or they have had similar experiences, as their German peers.

These issues point to the fact that any project to revive the Turkish language among young Turks will run into a dilemma which will probably arise whenever the sexual and love lives of immigrants from traditional societies are studied: Either you radically change the fabric of the culture you are trying to save from being taken over by modernity, yet by paradoxically modernizing it; or you leave the whole area of love and sexual intimacy to the »howling wolves«, that is, the language of the majority. Of course a third option is to advocate that Turkish youngsters should not avail themselves of the aesthetic and erotic possibilities they have in modern societies, and thus not have sex or fall in love until they marry a Muslim Turk with whom they can speak Turkish. How many young Turks will follow these recommendations is an open question.

This brings us to another aspect of the language situation: Young Turks have a tendency to associate the Turkish language with restrictions imposed on their personal freedom, with strict hierarchic relations between the younger and the older generations and between the sexes, and, conversely, the local European languages are associated with personal freedom, with free sexuality, and more egalitarian relations. These associations are not the most helpful for maintaining any minority language.

In the sociolinguistic literature it is stressed that receding minority languages are often associated with poverty, drudgery, and penury, and the language of the majority with social and economic success and prestige (Edwards 1985:94). This is certainly true, and my own impression is that Turkish immigrants have similar negative associations, especially concerning their own Turkish dialects. But we should broaden our focus by adding associations on the personal and intimate level to the social and economic ones.

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15. This study is based on a questionnaire answered by 425 young males between the ages of 15 and 18 in 1988. Later, a sample of 41 adolescents selected at random were compared with a control group of German adolescents who belonged to the same age group and the same social class, namely, the working class.



## Different narratives of the immigrant drama

The drama of the transformation of the culture and language of intimacy among immigrants from »traditional« societies can basically be narrated in two opposite ways: The first narrative has been the most popular in the research on and the debate about immigrants in the 1980s. The basic structure of the narrative is about the cultural resistant immigrant who, under the leadership of ethnic leaders, struggles against the cultural assimilation policies of the dominant society which either by manipulation or by sheer force aims at ironing out the authentic culture of the immigrants. In other words, it is about the immigrant who is a victim of arrogant cultural imperialism and omnipotent social structures which suppress him or her. We now have the kidnapped beauty and the villain, and I ought to point out who has put him- or herself on the scene as the hero of the drama: The intellectual, who is critical of the power structure in modern society and of the contemporary culture, and who as a *patron saint* will defend and protect the oppressed.

An alternative narrative on the immigrant drama could be that immigrants are willing to integrate into the Danish society and its modernity, in other words to take over the values, norms and life forms of modern society, keeping their ethnic and religious identities at the same time. According to this narrative, the immigrants are not victims of omnipotent and omnipresent structures, but are rather active subjects. Therefore, they are, in principle, able to adjust to new circumstances and have the capacity and the intellect to decide to what degree they are ready to take over the values and norms of the majority.

The first narrative is a problematic way to present the immigrant drama because it is reductionistic. It reduces a complex process full of crisis, the cultural transformation of immigrants from »traditional« societies, to a narrative of decay and loss of identity and culture. However, the main problem is, in short, the universal issue of modernity, the struggle between centrifugale and centripetale sociocultural forces, an issue which has been one of the most important of sociology since its emergence as a science: The struggle between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, between mechanic and organic solidarity, between particularism and universalism and between localism and globalization.

In the post survey (Necsef 1996: 206-211) I asked young Turks two questions to investigate if they went through a cultural change, and in which domains they were willing to change or maintaining their original ethnic culture. The first question was: »Which society's attitudes do you prefer, if you were to make a position on the following topics? The

Turkish or the Danish?»« I listed 11 topics<sup>16</sup>. The second question was: »Which parts of the Turkish/Kurdish culture ought immigrants maintain in Denmark?»«. Six topics were listed.<sup>17</sup>

In the questionnaire there were a number of questions on visits to bars, discoteques and cafés and sources of information on sexuality. The general conclusion from the survey and the impression I got from the formal and informal conversations were that the young Turks were not especially willing to maintain traditional Turkish culture. On the contrary, they are pertaining to some issues more than eager to take over the modern ways of life they first meet in Denmark.

Under intimate circumstances the Muslim immigrant males and European women do not only exchange body liquids, but also feelings, emotions, ideas and points of view. With a sharp formulation, one can even claim that the most direct road to the hearts and minds of immigrants are these intimate meetings and relations. The European women have a veritable role in the transformation of the male immigrants from traditional societies without claiming that one can unambiguously talk of »white woman's burden«.

It is true that especially Muslim men are on some points willing to maintain their original cultures, especially in areas pertaining to the rights and possibilities of Muslim girls to have full control over their own sexualities and bodies. When I, for instance, asked if girls should keep their virginity before marriage, 60% of the young men stated that they »absolutely ought to« maintain their virginity. Only 9% answered that they »absolutely ought not to«. To my surprise, I found out that there was no statistically significant difference between males and females pertaining to this question. However, many of the female respondents, who ticked off »absolutely« or »maybe« regarding their virginity, wrote remarks in the margins of the questionnaire next to the question such as: »So should men also« and »Only if men do it too«.

Moreover, one can observe a pattern in the answers: The stronger they identify with the original ethnic identity as Turkish or Kurdish, the more they think that girls ought to maintain their virginity. For example, while 70% of those who only identify themselves as Turkish or Kurdish, think that »girls ought to maintain their virginity«, 58% of those who identify

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16. The topics were: treatment of the elderly, child raising, women's rights, the freedom of the individual, divorce, democracy, treatment of minorities, the treatment of citizens by the police and authorities, social welfare, the possibilities of the poor to improve conditions and love affairs between boys and girls.

17. The topics were: husband-wife relations in the family, general woman-man relations, girls' preservation of virginity, relations between members of family and relatives, relation between parents and children, attitude towards sexual morals.

themselves as Turkish or Kurdish-Dane do the same. I should add that there is an interesting difference- but not surprising for people, who know about the ethnic and religious differences among the population of Turkey – between two religious groups, between the Sunnis and the Alawis. The Alawis are more open to adapt to modernity.

Moreover, when I discussed with Turkish men during interviews or informal conversations about the maintenance of Turkish or Kurdish culture, I often got the impression that what they mean by cultural maintenance is that Turkish girls should maintain their virginity and Turkish women should act decently, as decency is understood in traditional Turkish culture. According to a lot of Turkish men, »to become Danish« does not mean that the sexual or intimate lives of Turkish men becomes increasingly similar to that of Danish men. Neither does it mean that the patterns and ideals of consumption among Turks get more and more similar to those of Danes. To give some examples from the survey: 52% of the young men prefer attitudes pertaining to love relations between boys and girls of the Danish culture, not the Turkish one.

This preference for Danish culture was evident in the following. 56% preferred the individual freedom of Danish culture, 66% the democracy, 77% the treatment of the citizens by the police and the authorities, 87% the Danish social security net, 82% the possibilities of the poor to improve living conditions in Denmark. On these issues they are obviously quite »danified«. However, they still often use »becoming Danish« pejoratively for Turkish girls who want to live as the majority of the Danish girls, and for Turkish men who accept and respect that Turkish girls should live as they choose.

All these observations mean that the Muslim male immigrant follow a certain cultural policy which can be described as selective assimilation and selective acculturation (Necéf 1997a). In other words, he takes over new norms and qualifications which not only give him access to social and economic mobility, but also open up new erotic possibilities. Nevertheless, he rejects the characteristics of modernity which potentially can threaten his dominance over women.

Besides maintaining traditional norms pertaining to the legitimate and proper conduct of females, the majority of immigrants wish to maintain a feeling of belonging to their respective ethnic and religious groups. But this does not mean that they do not interpret and modernize the content of being for instance Turkish and Muslim in a new context.

In conclusion, I want to underline that any theory on cultural integration, acculturation, cultural change and homogenization which does not integrate the wishes of immigrants themselves to adopt new and modern ways of life is onesided and reductionistic. Any theoretician, who closes his/her eyes to what is really happening among immigrants in the society, and instead engages in moralizations about what immigrants ought to do to maintain their authentic cultures, is patronizing. What we need in

research about immigrant cultures are theoretical positions which neither cultivate cultural differences for their own sakes nor gloss over them, but which try to move beyond an emphatic stress on cultural differences<sup>18</sup>. In other words positions which can be described with terms such as post-culture, post-ethnicity, post-»the other«, in short post-difference<sup>19</sup>.

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18. I have elaborated on these issues in Necef 1997b.

19. I borrow the expression post-difference from Bech (1996: 203).

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