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Review

Şeyda Ozil: Review of Friederike Braun, *Geschlecht im Türkischen. Untersuchungen zum sprachlichen Umgang mit einer sozialen Kategorie*. (Turcologica 42.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000. 465 pp.

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In this book, Friederike Braun investigates the expression of gender in Turkish. From this point of view Turkish is a neutral language. It may at least be stated that it lacks a grammatical tool to identify gender. For instance, it does not have masculine and feminine definite articles, and pronouns do not distinguish gender. Marking gender is not a structural necessity of Turkish (p. 82). Turkish grammars do not provide any information about gender differentiation (p. 47).

Braun wishes to investigate how gender is shown in Turkish, and starts off with the following statements: In this area Turkish uses explicit linguistic tools (Section 3): Similar to other languages, Turkish has words which show masculine/feminine distinctions: e.g. *kız* ‘girl’ / *erkek* ‘boy’. Loan suffixes from other languages show gender, e.g. *müdür* / *müdire* ‘director [male]’ / ‘director [female]’, *imparator* / *imparatoriçe* (‘emperor’ / ‘empress’). However, these are frozen expressions that are not in common usage today. The most commonly used forms of expressing gender are word combinations such as *bayan başbakan* ‘female prime minister’, *kadın öğretmen* / *erkek öğretmen* ‘female teacher’ / ‘male teacher’. But these devices are not sufficient to identify gender distinctions. Since Turkish does not have the necessary grammatical tools, it must use implicit tools referred to as ‘covert gender’ (p. 14).

The dominant idea of the book is that language is closely related to the culture, traditions, habits and customs of the society it is spoken in. Language and culture constantly interact. Section 5 deals with theories of interaction between language and culture. Benjamin Lee Whorf’s linguistic relativism theory reckons with a major influence of language on culture: Formations in society progress along the path language-thought-culture. Opponents to this view claim that the impact of culture on language is more pronounced. A more generally accepted view is that social relationships within a society are reflected in language (p. 115). Language is a mirror of social life, habits and environment. Braun adopts the view that social life influences language. Socio-cultural parameters affect the meaning of words (p. 113). The book is thus a sociologically oriented study rather than a purely linguistic one. As the title suggests, the purpose is to explain how social norms are expressed in the language, i.e. to determine which linguistic tools are employed to show gender differences as

social norms. Looking at the problem from this point of view, one might conclude that gender differentiation does not play an important part in the everyday life of Turkish society or that the social structures of this society are egalitarian since gender differentiation is not displayed grammatically.

The fourth section of the book deals with the historical issue of how gender has been approached and regarded in Turkey, first in pre-republican Ottoman society and later in the republican period, beginning with the Atatürk era. The conclusion reached is that gender differentiation exists in Turkish social life and takes on the characteristics of a male-dominant society. Males have more rights, move easily and live better. Women are in the background, while men are at the front. Life is controlled by men, not by women. Male dominance is evident in (1) controlling material and financial resources (2) sexual life, and (3) access to religion ('God speaks to men', p. 111). Therefore, the theory advocated in the book takes the following shape: Given that life in Turkish society is male-dominated, this fact must also be reflected in language. The language must surely display this dominance, in lexical, if not in grammatical devices (p. 114). Consequently, the hypothesis that Turkish has covert gender must be explored.

The author introduces five hypotheses to demonstrate that Turkish has a covert gender mode. Personal descriptions in Turkish are grammatically gender neutral but not neutral in meaning. Personal descriptions referring to the masculine domain display masculine-oriented meanings. To give an example, designations such as *şoför* 'driver', *kuyumcu* 'jeweller', unless otherwise designated as *kadın şoför* 'woman driver', *kadın kuyumcu* 'woman jeweller', refer to males. The same holds true for the feminine domain. Designations such as *hemşire* 'nurse', *hizmetçi* 'domestic servant' refer to females. Personal descriptions in the neutral domain generally refer to males.

Sections 6 to 10 contain the studies undertaken to prove these hypotheses. They comprise questionnaires and interviews. Each questionnaire is designed to solidify the results of the previous one and covers various areas such as modes of address and textual usages. When required, the hypotheses are further developed. Interviews are employed either to strengthen the results of the questionnaires or to verify them. The subjects of the questionnaires and conversations are Turkish-speaking university students living in Turkey.

The conclusion discusses the degree to which the hypotheses are actually proven. The conclusions reached mainly, if not entirely, verify the hypotheses. Covert gender and context information interact in Turkish to determine gender (p. 191-192). Unless there are special explanations, covert gender determines gender. The conclusions show that, from a gender point of view, communal arrangement is not neutral in Turkey. Turkish, with the characteristics defined in this study, is not an egalitarian language (p. 322). The study also shows that neutrality in form and manner does not remove gender differentiation in meaning. The absence in a language of the grammatical tools to show gender does not mean that the society using that language is free from gender differentiation. If the language is gender-neutral, this does not

prevent society from having a male orientation in its social relations. The language will reflect this with its semantic devices. Turkish is a typical example of this.

The tenth section explores theories of linguistic categorization and cognitive semantics. None of them is considered suitable for the purposes of this book.

Braun's study is important for Turkey and Turkish society because it is the first book of its kind to investigate gender in Turkish. The study explores the subject in all its necessary aspects and details, a subject which has not been examined in any of the available grammars. Braun's study also puts an important emphasis on social relations in Turkey and shows how gender relations heavily lean towards males. Analysing the language, Braun shows that social life is male-dominated.

Braun's book is an empirical study that satisfactorily proves its hypotheses, stating the results in a clear and lucid manner. It is also a very readable scientific work. It will interest not only linguists but also sociologists, anthropologists, teachers and researchers working in women studies. This book will be an important reference work for future studies in linguistics and sociology. The author states that her work is a first attempt in this field, intended to open up the subject to future research, with the conclusions reached providing the basis for this research. She suggests that similar methods may be applied to other languages in order to explore the relationship between cultures and language typologies (p. 328).

