# Communities of practice and

# Lexical variation in the Montréal Turkish community

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Our study examines the organization of the Turkish community in Montréal and the influence of this organization on language use. Bilge (2004) explained the fragmented structure of the community through ethnicity. However, recent socio-politic changes in Turkey are mostly based on religion rather than ethnicity. This raises the following questions:

1- What is the impact of these sociological changes in Turkey on the organization of the Montréal Turkish community?
2- Is the social identity of the Montréal Turkish community members observable through lexical variation?

To answer these two questions, we used a double methodology: participant observation and interviews (N=40).

Our ethnographic study confirms that conflicts triggered by the socio-political structure in Turkey are determining factors in the organization of the community. Montréal Turks form an immigrant community divided into at least three sub-groups: Two communities of practice (CP), traditionalist and progressive, each with its own socialization sites and its own discourse/style; and peripheral members around these two CPs.

We first examined how the participants defined the community and its subgroups. Our results confirm our ethnographic observations. The participants mostly referred to the division in the social structure of the community, regardless of which CP they belong to. However, our results reveal that the terms used by participants while describing the subgroups are related to the priorities of the CP's they belong to.

The second part of the analysis focused on two variables related to gender. The first variable concerns the terms used to refer to women: *kadın* (Eng. *woman*), *hanım* (Eng. *lady*), and *bayan* (Eng. *~miss*). Our results does not show significant differences between the three groups: the frequency of *kadın* (Eng. *woman*) is very high in all cases (above 86%).

The second variable is the term used to refer to spouses by male and female participants. We compared three variants for female participants: *bey* (Eng. ~*mister*), *koca* (Eng. *husband*) and *eş* (Eng. *spouse*), and three variants for male participants: *hanım* (Eng. *lady*), *karı* (Eng. *wife*) ve *eş* (Eng. *spouse*). For female participants, our results do not show significant differences among the three groups. However, men from the traditional community preferred the word *hanım* (Eng. *lady*), while those from the progressive community chose the word *eş* (Eng. *spouse*). These findings suggest that while men use matrimonial terms to index their social affiliation, women prefer to appear unaffiliated.

Bilge, S, (2004). *Communalisations ethniques post-migratoires : le cas des « Turcs » de Montréal.* Presses universitaires de Paris III- Sorbonne nouvelle, coll. du Centre d'études canadiennes, 650p.