

Chapter 4

THE LANGUAGE ATTITUDES OF MERSIN ARABS IN TURKEY: SCRUTINIZING FROM FIVE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

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1. INTRODUCTION

Turkey is a multicultural country which shelters citizens from more than seven ethnical origins. A predictable outcome of this situation is that although the official language in Turkey is Turkish, different minority languages are spoken in different parts of the country. Karahan (2005: 1160) lists 31 languages-Kurdish, Arabic, Circassian, Greek, Georgian, Armenian and many other languages-spoken in the borders of the Turkish Republic. Some of these languages are spoken more widely (like Kurdish and Zaza Language), and younger generations acquire them as their native languages. The use of some other languages decreases as new generations do not acquire them as native languages, because they are not exposed to their native languages as much as the older generations were. Arabic is one instance of the latter case.

The 1995 census in Turkey demonstrated that the number of settled Arabic-origin citizens of Turkey is between 800.000-1.000.000. The Arabic ethnical minority mostly resides in the cities near the Syrian border such as Hatay, Adana and Mersin. Some of them are Christians, but mostly, they are Muslims from different minor sects. 70% of these Arabic citizens adopt Alewi religious belief (Metz 1996).

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