

What is normal?

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This study explores the category of 'normal' in content analysis performed on comments submitted to an online survey of language attitudes regarding the use of German-Turkish code-mixing in popular media. The survey contained two parts: 1) demographic and language background questions, and 2) a series of short video clips followed by questions about the characters in the clips. The survey gathered subjects' reactions to characters in films on a variety of attitudinal scales as well as their responses to open-ended questions regarding the clips.

The survey was administered to 20 native German speakers, 26 native Turkish speakers, and 12 native German-Turkish bilinguals. A group of 41 native speakers of American English were included as a control.

This talk will discuss the open-ended responses to the survey which contained evaluative comments regarding language use. Content analysis of the comments began with categorization of the evaluation according to polarity: positive, negative, and neutral. Turkish-German bilinguals submitted far more negative evaluations of code-mixing than any other group. However, an interesting category emerged within the neutral evaluations which was labeled 'normal'. The categorization of Turkish-German code-mixing as 'normal' could itself be indicative of covert prestige.

As seen in work by Preston (e.g. 2010), speakers with high linguistic security often describe their own variety as "normal". While the "normal" evaluations came from all groups of respondents, those from native bilinguals fit a different pattern in expressing the sentiment that mixing is 'normal', often identifying themselves as code-mixers.

The implications of the category 'normal' and its distribution among participant groups will be explored, and the presentation will include a discussion of how the submission of 'normal' comments compare to sentiments about code-mixing as expressed in each group's negative and positive comments.