

## The diachronic use of the apostrophe with proper names in Turkish

Donnerstag,  
05.03.2010  
10:00–10:30  
VMP5 2098/2194

Javier Caro Reina, Işık Akar

University of Cologne

javier.caroreina@uni-koeln.de, iakar@smail.uni-koeln.de

Modern Turkish exhibits graphematic dissociations – that is, formal differences between proper names and common nouns. These include capitalization and the use of the apostrophe. Capitalization applies to proper names (*Emir, İzmir*), but not to common nouns (*amir* ‘man’, *şehir* ‘city’). Similarly, the apostrophe (*kesme işareti*) is employed for separating inflectional endings from proper names (*Emir’-in* ‘Emir-GEN’, *İzmir’-in* ‘İzmir-GEN’), but not from common nouns (*amir-in* ‘man-GEN’, *şehir-in* ‘city-GEN’). According to the Turkish Language Association (*Türk Dil Kurumu*), the apostrophe is employed with all proper name classes, which include personal names (*Atatürk’ün* ‘Atatürk-GEN’), place names (*İstanbul-un* ‘İstanbul-GEN’), and object names (*Türk Dil Kurumu-nun* ‘Turkish Language Association-GEN’).

### AG 5

In contrast, after the introduction of the Latin alphabet in 1928 graphematic dissociations were restricted to capitalization. With regard to the apostrophe, we can distinguish between two stages. In a first stage, the apostrophe occurs with Arabic loan words where it transliterates the Arabic letters <ء> (*hamza*) and <ع> (*ayin*), which represent the sounds [ʔ] and [ʕ], respectively. Nowadays, these loan words have been either replaced or are written without apostrophe (e.g. *sür’at* > *sürat* ‘speed’). As a result, the phonetic value of the apostrophe no longer exists. In a second stage, the apostrophe is refunctionalized as a strategy for the preservation of the proper name body (*Ankarada* > *Ankara’da* ‘Ankara-DAT’). The use of the apostrophe with inflected proper names evolved and developed in the mid twentieth century (Steuerwald 1964: 22–23, 68–69). However, little is known of the patterns of this graphematic change.

In this paper, we will provide the results of a corpus analysis that will enable us to detect the factors conditioning the occurrence of the apostrophe with proper names and, further, to document the loss of its phonetic value with common nouns. The sources are comprised of two different text types: the transcripts of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (*Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*) and the newspaper *Cumhuriyet*. The occurrence of the apostrophe was coded according to the following variables: noun class (common noun vs. proper name), morphological boundary (presence vs. absence), and proper name class (personal name, place name, etc.).

**References:** Bunčić, D. (2004). The apostrophe: A neglected and misunderstood reading aid. *Written Language & Literacy* 7(2), 85–204. Steuerwald, K. (1964). *Zur Orthographie und Lautung des Türkischen*. Berlin: Langenscheidt.