

Glocalization Tendency in Local Newspapers:

“Merhaba Arapça” Case

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ABSTRACT As Marshall McLuhan already mentioned, technological developments in communication turned the world to “a global village”. Boundaries on time and space shattered and new information technologies changed the views on “globality”. A new understanding emerged by defining globalization a process that local properties become prominent. In a global news environment that the news material is standardized, local news gathering becomes a vital source. While global media organizations make local elements a part, adaptation capabilities of local elements to global news system is notable. In this study glocalization tendency will be discussed on a local newspapers’ activities to engage with the process of going from local to global as an example. “Merhaba Arapça” is a Konya based newspaper having a strategy “to go from local to global” reflecting a new trend in local media and will be our focus of study. In this study we will briefly discuss globalization with respect to glocalization theory and reflections of it in the newspaper field. And finally investigate the consequences on “Merhaba Arapça” example.

Keywords : Communication Technology, Glocalization, Local Press, Merhaba Arabic Newspaper.

1. A New Wave of Globalization: Glocalization

Globalization emerges as one of the most important features of information society today that is used to indicate the influence of information and communication technologies in a large part of life and the expansion of their areas of application. The concept of globalization, which has economic, political social dimensions and for which definitions were made in this context, has spread simultaneously with developments in communication technologies. However, the beginning of globalization, seen as a process, is not new at all. Various opinions have been expressed related to the beginning of the globalization process and they have been discussed for years. But, generally-accepted opinions divide the globalization process into three periods: the first wave takes it up to geographical discoveries. While industrialization launched the second wave of globalization, internet that constitutes the network society, refers to the third and final wave (Robertson, p. 99-101).

The most important feature of the internet-based new communication technologies is that it eliminates many barriers of access. Obstacles in information, capital, interpersonal communication, geographical distances and business ventures disappeared with the new communication technologies and as stated by Friedman (2006), 'world became flattened' by the globalization wave experienced. Friedman, with the concept of flattening, draws attention to the ease of access in any kind of opportunities particularly information at local level as it is easy to access to it at global level. In other words, accessing any information and capital, starting a business venture and engaging in an economic activity have become a result of the developments in communication technologies (İnan, 2012, p. 237-247). While the integration of printing, publication and telecommunications systems and disappearance of differences between them were pointing out the convergence (Mueller, 1999, p. 11), this new communication medium has also been recognized as the global media system. Technology, both as equipment or as information, has gotten beyond the national boundaries and gained admission into a global circulation through the transformation in communication systems. Media messages, texts, images that are in a continuous influx and ideologies and opinions in parallel with this transformation have had the ability to influence beyond borders (Güven, 2007, p. 327). Publication companies, which are turned into holding companies through globalization experienced in communications industry, have become global media companies with horizontal and vertical mergers. While Ben Bagdikian, upon this matter, stated in the first edition of his book called 'Media Monopoly' in 1983 that there were 50 holding companies that dominate the world media, he reduced this number to 10 in the fifth edition of his book in 1996 (Alger, 1998, p. 32). It is possible to say that this number is further reduced today. Globalization in media heads towards the cross-media ownership everywhere. Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation is considered the epitome of this incorporation-clustering process. The arms of Murdoch's media conglomerates have extended all over the world. He has already distributed media investments equally in newspapers and magazines and television and cinema (Keane, 1999, p. 83).

However, the new wave of globalization has also encouraged the emergence of different perspectives related to universality. In this regard, globalization, in fact, is linked with the

dynamics of re-localization. In other words, it universalizes many things and causes an increase in the value of the things that belong to the local through a new perspective. New Age’s ‘Think Globally, Act Locally’ mantra became reserved thus and has brought a new tribal perception with ‘Think Local, Act Global’ (Naisbitt, 1994, p. 36).

Robertson, addressing globalization process in the context of the relationship between global and local, has developed a very different perspective related to the birth of a new concept and globalization. Glocalization, formed by shortening ‘global’ and ‘local’ and nestling them together, puts emphasis on space/extension/geography. Expressing the concept with a simple expression of ‘the one who is different sells’ (Robertson, 2011, s. 188), Glocalization vindicates the idea that spatial differences and localization did not lose their importance by globalization, but, on the contrary, gained more importance by it. According to Morley and Robins (2011, p. 160-162), globalization is to bring pieces of a puzzle together and to place many localities to the new global system. In the words of Bauman (2012, p.8), whatever was seen as globalization for some came to mean glocalization for others. This was also stated as the universalization of local and the localization of the universal (Kahraman, Keyman, & Sarıbay, 1999, p. 15). According to Robertson, the interdependence increased in the world scale and this dependence was also recognized with the new globalization. Putting emphasis on the necessity that globalization is not a homogenizer that suppresses local identities, cultures and traditions and similarizes the world, Robertson stated that globalization, on the contrary, increased local differences and diversity and brought about the rise of local heterogeneity together with itself (Hsiao, 2003, p. 57).

2. Local Media with Respect to Glocalization

In human history, humans were seen to have realized the process of communication by limiting it primarily with the environmental level. Communication took place for the first time at ‘local’ level within the facilities of the communication tools that were owned (Vural, 1999, p. 5). In other words, communication, born with a local nature in essence, has gained a global nature with the technological facilities. ‘Timeliness’ ranks the first and ‘proximity’ the second among the most important elements in the context of ‘newsworthiness’ and ‘the basic principles of journalism’ that were generally accepted in terms of journalism. Proximity, which pays attention to the news’ acquisition of acceptable newsworthiness, refers to the answer to the question ‘where’ (Tokgöz, 2003, p. 203). Because humans beings, by nature, show their interest and feel curious about the events that happen in their close surroundings. This curiosity arises from the need to know about the developments concerning human beings and their relations and the impulse to determine what sort of actions they will take against these as an outcome of an opinion and result. Due to all of these criteria, geographical proximity to the target audience is of great importance when newsworthiness was attributed to the events in the professional application of journalism (Şeker, 2007, p. 11).

Locality has dominated the emergence of tools in mass media. It gradually took a global state with the development of communication technologies. Therefore, it would be correct to state that locality lies on the basis of communication tools. It would be seen when looking at the

history of mass communication tools that the press was born locally and showed an inclination towards becoming widespread and international (Erdoğan, 2007, p. 71).

The most important advantage of the local newspapers is their physical and social proximity to the environment in which they were related. Local newspapers can be spokesman of a small community which is concrete and close enough to touch beyond becoming an abstract reflecting of a strong statement of 'us' in their places. Even, it should overcome the shortcomings in competition with widespread newspapers by characterizing the distinction of being the spokesman for the community (Bostancı, 1998, p. 170-171). Another feature of local newspapers is that they have a functional ability to preserve cultural heritage and diversity. As a result, the most important function of local newspapers as a political system is to provide an alternative media environment against monopoly which prevents the healthy execution of democracy (Çakır, Güllü, Kacur, & Tanyeri, 2009, p. 2).

The issue of 'diversity' is generally addressed with the aspect of 'source' and 'content' variation in media literature. Source diversity refers to the state associated with the variation of media ownership. It is measured by the number of media institutions (newspaper, radio, television) on the market and the shares they have (Çevikel, 2012, p. 112). In this context, local journalism offers diversity both as a source and content. In addition, the number of local media tools (newspapers, radios, televisions and magazines) is increasing according to the results of the research conducted in the United States in 2007. The view of 'Diversity of voices', in other words, the variations of voices, adopted by the government, gained acceptance as on the basis of this increase (Arabacı & Uzunoğlu, 2010, p. 17). There has been a significant increase in the number of local newspapers in Turkey in the last 10 years.

Table 1. Number of Newspapers According to Geographical Coverage (Zone of Publication)

Type of Publication		Total	Local	Regional	Common
Newspaper	2005	1848	1713	47	88
	2006	1993	1850	52	91
	2010	2780	2501	92	187
	2011	2905	2618	91	196
	2012	3004	2717	102	185

(TSİ, Statistics on Printed Media -2012, 2013).

Local media, which is the main element of democracy and pluralism, has become the representative of globalization in communication sector brought by the wave of globalization. Presenting an alternative perspective against the dominant ideologies of global or national media, local media has achieved an opportunity to perform its duty effectively with the use of new communication technologies. Local journalism, being a proximate media, can be made more attractive provided that it becomes accessible by remaining local

instead of disappearing within global. In other words, local press, which manages to preserve its essence within global, will have the opportunity to become the media of future. Survival of media, which does not lose its essence within the global, finds expression as the most successful localization rather than following the same policy with the globalized media (Arabacı & Uzunoğlu, 2010, p. 19). Questioning whether there would be or would not be a phenomenon called local newspaper in such an environment based on the fact that the world entered into a tendency for rapid globalization, Alkan (1998, p. 63-64) provides the answer as ‘yes’ and explains his rationale as such: *“Because localness is a natural feature that can never be digested. We occasionally observe the presence of trends that resemble tidal currents in the history of the world towards globalization and decentralization. Periods, dominated by great empires, are in a tendency for globalization. But, this was certainly followed by periods in which local features prevailed again. Therefore, I would like to say that I am extremely hopeful about the future of local press.”*

3. An Example of Glocalization in Local Press: Merhaba Arapça (Hello, Arabic)

Local newspapers in Turkey set examples of globalization in communication industry by delivering their publications in four corners of the world through the use of new communication technologies. Local televisions via satellites, and local newspapers and news sites on the internet become the voice of regions/cities. Some local newspapers, in addition to using new communication technologies, reach people in different cities, especially fellow townsman, through printed newspapers. Local newspapers, in lieu of the provincial printing of widespread newspapers which was in practice in the past as well as in practice today, also publish metropolitan city or capital city prints. Local newspapers that can be provided as examples for these in Turkey are Karadeniz and Taka newspapers based in Trabzon. These newspapers also publish Ankara and Istanbul prints in addition to its publication in Trabzon. Thus, those, who reside in Ankara or Istanbul or, in more general words, want to reach the news from the Black Sea region, follow these newspapers. Here, the sense of townsmanship dominates these people and it directs them to follow that newspaper.

One of these ventures, which aim to broadcast in wider areas as a new business model for local newspapers, is Merhaba newspaper based in Konya province. Merhaba, being one of the deep-rooted newspapers in Konya, began to publish newspaper for immigrants who intensely migrated to Turkey due to internal turmoil experienced in the Middle East recently, particularly in Syria and Iraq. Published in Konya, local Merhaba Newspaper plans to address to Arabs in Turkey as well as in countries of the Middle East by printing a newspaper in Arabic language.

Merhaba Arapca (Hello Arabic), whose each issue is printed around 5 thousand copies in average, is sent to the provinces such as Mersin, Adana, Hatay, and Gaziantep, in addition to Konya, and to certain regions of Iraq and Syria. In addition, it is also published online as

e-newspaper at merhabahaber.com. Thus, it also reaches around the world.

4. Analysis on the Content and Discourse of Merhaba Arapca Newspaper

Merhaba Arapca Newspaper addresses to Arabs living in Turkey as well as in the Middle Eastern countries. The language of the paper is Arabic. Its title is written as 'Ceridetü-l Merhaba'. There is also a waving Turkish flag above the heading Merhaba. Its Executive Editor is Kerem İşkan and Editor in Chief is İbrahim Büyükeken on its copyright page. These people also carry out the same duties in Merhaba Newspaper. No different tasking was made for the newspaper published by Merhaba Newspaper.

Merhaba Arapca Newspaper began its publication life with its first issue printed on July 16, 2014. The newspaper published a total of 7 issues including August 6, August 21, September 4, October 1, November 1 and December 5, 2014 respectively (as of December 29, 2014). It was seen when looking at the publication dates of the newspaper that it does not have a fixed publication period.

All pages of the newspaper, published in tabloid size and 16 pages, are printed on colored paper.

Figure 1. The first issue of of Merhaba Arapca Newspaper dated July 16, 2014.



Announcements of inner pages are located on the first page of Merhaba Arapca Newspaper. There are 2 pages of news from the Middle East, 2 pages of sports, 2 pages of news from Konya, politics, health, city promotion, special news, interview and advertising pages. News included in these pages was mainly created in the context of Syrian refugees and Arabs.

Newspaper presents a structure which includes a simple logo design, layout and a photo in average for each news item and maximum 4 news per page. There are over 30 items ranging from current, politics, foreign policy, economy, legal and sports news in every issue of the newspaper. In addition, there are over 5 columns and caricature drawings and puzzles are included in each issue.

It was seen to constitute mainly of news related Syrian refugees in Konya when examining the news in the 7th issue of the newspaper. In this context, the religious ties between Syrian and Turkish people primarily comes to the foreground and the network of relationships are built on this when looking at the handling style of the news. The motto ‘ummah’s voice’, found in the logo of the newspaper, is already the indication of this. In other words, the newspaper has built the relationship of Syrian refugees with Konya on the Muslim brotherhood. In the headline of the newspaper’s first issue, Konya Metropolitan City Mayor Tahir Akyürek’s view that Turkey and Syria are two brother countries, Syrians are accepted as the residents of Konya now as well as the activities of the municipality related to the refugees were described in a report entitled “Syrians are not guests, but rather hosts”. Again in the same issue, Konya Governor Muammer Erol’s statements related to the mobilization of state’s all facilities for Syrians had been included with heading entitled ‘Ansar-Muhajir beauty is being experienced’. In addition to official institutions and organizations, the activities of civil society organizations, which operate across Konya, carried out for the integration of refugees had also been reported in the newspaper. Other aspects of integration, such as refugees’ obtaining of information about the city, legal procedures being implemented for them, and health and economic facilities provided for them frequently included as news in the pages of the newspaper. These news reports have the characteristics to provide guidance to refugees in meeting their critical needs.

In a news report entitled “Residence permit became 50 TL”, it was stated that number of Syrians living in Konya has become 30 thousand, they need to get residence permit from Konya Police Department for benefiting from health, education and social welfare services and the price of residence permit, which was previously taken by 200 TL, has come down to 50 TL. In a report ascribed to Police Department officials, the need for Syrians who reside in Konya and have no residence permit to get their permit by visiting the Foreigners Branch.

The information on the number of refugees in Konya being indicated to exceed 40 thousand, only half of refugees were being registered and a fine of 10 thousand TL to be given to companies that hire unregistered employees had been provided in another news report.

In a report entitled “Syrians loved Turkey so much,” the interest for Turkish language courses, offered to Syrians by Konya Metropolitan Municipality Vocational Training Courses (KOMEK), was conveyed. Thus, information for speakers of Arabic, mainly Syrians who want to learn Turkish had been made.

The spread of 'Leishmania' disease due to the arrival of Syrian refugees and precautions and warnings of the Ministry of Health against it were included on the corner dedicated to health news. In this sense, newspaper carries out the task of providing information between speakers of Arabic living in Turkey and public institutions. Thus, it has become the vehicle of information on rules to be observed by foreign citizens for social integration.

An announcement by Konya Police Department concerning refugees was included in another news report. Statements, such as "Recently, some Syrian citizens, living our province, had been involved in begging, sleeping in parks and on the streets, participating in the crime, these matters made everyone uncomfortable and also damaged the image of our Syrian guests. According to the new notice issued by the Ministry for the resolution of problems in this context, Syrians, who involve in crimes, continue to beg, and sleep in parks and on the streets from now on despite warnings, will be sent to the nearest camps/accommodation centers under the supervision of law enforcement," had been included in the news report.

In a sense, the newspaper serves as the communication tool for these people whose numbers exceeded 50 thousand with the city. As can be understood by the news report analysis, overall opinions of public institutions and organizations, civil society organizations and people had been transmitted. Thus, a refugee who arrives in Konya comes to obtain information related to the city through the newspaper. The number of refugees in Konya, their general problems and policies developed by various social structures, especially by public institutions has been reflected in newspaper reports both as directly informative and indirectly adaptational. Refugees become aware of the city and, in a sense, assume an integrated identity to the city by means of this newspaper.

The promotion of a variety of historical and touristic places in Konya and the region had also been included in each issue of the newspaper. Thus, it has become a source for foreigners to obtain information related to Konya.

Discourse on Turkey's foreign policy is specifically observed in the news reports included in the newspaper. Discourse on Turkey's Arab and the Middle East policy made itself felt in the news reports related to the policies executed by the President, Prime Minister and the relevant ministers towards refugees especially coming to Turkey from Arab and the Middle Eastern countries in each issue. These news reports indicate that the newspaper serves the function of providing information to the refugees as a carrier of official discourse. Interviews with significant people in opposition to the Syrian government are also presented in the direction of Turkey's foreign policy in each issue.

Another type of news reports frequently included in the newspaper are criminal cases. Since the most important issue for the refugees who settled in Turkey by fleeing from civil disturbance or war in their country is to ensure their survival, one of the most priority

issues for them is criminal cases. Newspaper, with reference to this opinion, has made much use of judicial cases especially in Konya scale related to the refugees in Turkey. 4-5 legal incidents on average were included in each issue. In addition to these news reports, remarkable legal incidents which took place in Arab and Middle Eastern countries and would concern refugees were included in the newspaper in this context. Political, economic and current news related to Syrians and the Arab world was given a place in the newspapers with the headings of “Explosion in Cairo: 2 dead” and “Israeli aircrafts struck the Gaza Strip”. The observations of Kerem İşkan, Editor in Chief of the Newspaper, related to the regions of the conflict and refugee camps in Syria and Iraq have been presented in each issue in the form of research file.

Mostly legal cases in the news reports related to the Middle Eastern countries, mainly Syrian immigrants have been included in the newspaper. It is possible that this type of news reports will be one of the first issues that these people will follow when considering the conflict and disorder in their countries. Syria, Iraq, Palestine and Egypt are the leading countries in which news reports had been provided. A page of Arabic job advertisements is included on average in each issue of the newspaper. It acts as a mediator in helping foreigners to find jobs in this way. There are also classified ads for restaurants that were established by Syrians among advertisements.

5- Conclusion and Suggestions

New wave of globalization, experienced by communication technologies, has brought ‘glocalization’ that thrusts locality into the forefront. Glocalization, which brings the differences of locality in the foreground, offers great opportunities for local newspapers. It is necessary for local newspapers, which desire to survive in the environment of global communication, to be aware of these opportunities and develop new business models. Merhaba Newspaper, printed in Konya, is published in Arabic as a new business model among local newspapers. Thus, it mainly reaches refugees from Middle Eastern countries particularly in Konya and Turkey and around the world via the Internet in general. Merhaba Arapca newspaper attracts attention as a successful example of glocalization among local newspapers. Newspaper, which includes a discourse compatible with Turkey’s foreign policy, plays an important role in the adaptation of refugees to the city in Konya.

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