

GORANIAN

21 February International Mother Language Day

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Gorania language (or the Gora dialect) that's spoken in the Gora region of southern Kosovo is not my mother tongue; it is more like my "granny" tongue.

I'm the third generation of our family who has migrated to Turkey in the 1960s, which makes me the last heir of the language.

If I hadn't learnt Gora dialect when I was young, then I wouldn't have been able to understand the adventurous migration story that my grandmother told a thousand times or the way she describes her village that she had to leave at the age of 40. The village that still haunted her in her dreams because she could never go back.

When I first visited our mountain village Brod, everybody who saw me fell silent. To see their relief and smile when they realized that I understood the language gave me great pleasure. Being able to speak our language with its oldest and most pristine form added onto that pleasure. Because of people who migrate to larger cities, there have been new words added to it and some old ones have been forgotten.

As I saw my grandmother less and less, my aptitude for the language diminished as well. But it still rescues my mom and me whenever we need to gossip in public or right before we start bargaining while shopping.

The strangest thing about our language is that there is no "hello." Instead, when you see someone, you would ask "are you eating?" if they're eating, "are you walking?" if they're walking, or "are you riding a horse?" if they're riding a horse; so basically you salute the person you see by asking whether they're doing the thing that they're doing at the moment.

One of the greatest treasures of our language, which is thought to sound “cruder” than Turkish, is that there are two separate words for “noisy” and “silent” farts. I’ve always wondered whether this kind of distinction exists in any other language...