

LANGUAGE POLICY IN TURKEY AND AZERBAIJAN: A COMPARATIVE APPROACH TO THE TWO LANGUAGE REFORMS

Türkiye ve Azerbaycan'da Dil Politikası: İki Dil Reformuna Karşılaştırmalı Bir Yaklaşım

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Anahtar Kelimeler

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ÖZ

Dil politikası, dil araştırmacıları, etnik liderler, toplumdilbilimciler veya eğitimle ilgili politika yapımcılar dahil olmak üzere hükümet veya kamu kurumları tarafından alınan bir dizi kararı ifade eder veya bunların uygulamalarına atıfta bulunur. Ancak karar alma süreci, yöntemler ve sonuçlar bir ülkeden diğerine farklılık gösterebilir. Bir dil politikasının başarısızlığını veya başarılarını ifade etmek, ölçülebilir verilerin azlığı hatta yokluğu veya güvenilmezliği nedeniyle bir toplumdilbilimci için zor bir durumdur. Ancak, bir dil politikasının başarısızlığını veya başarılarını incelemek, bu süreçlerin farklı kültürler ve deneyimler için ne kadar etkili olduğunu değerlendirmek sonraki çalışmalar için de önemli bir aşamadır. Bu makale, Türkçe ve Azerbaycan dil reformlarının bir değerlendirmesini sunarken, her birinin önde gelen dilbilimsel olan ve olmayan etkenlerini karşılaştırmanın yanı sıra, bunların sürecini ve sonuçlarını açıklayarak, neden bu dil reformlarından birinin - Türk dil reformunun - diğerine - Azerbaycan dil reformuna- göre daha başarılı olduğunu göstermeye çalışacaktır. Bu bağlamda, bu iki dil reformunun tarihsel geçmişi, amaçlarına, işlevlerine ve sonuçlarına odaklandıktan sonra, bu makale bazı sosyolingüistik kıstasları kullanarak bu iki dil politikasının başarısını değerlendirecek ve karşılaştıracaktır. Bu iki dil politikasının karşılaştırmalı analizinde kullanılacak sosyolingüistik kıstasları ise dil reformunun gerçekleştiği siyasi /sosyal /kültürel ortam, halkın farkındalığı ve katılım derecesi, etkili siyasi yetkili bir karar alma organının mevcudiyeti, dil planlama korpusunun ve durum planlamasının birbirini tamamlaması, dil reformu ile ilgili alınan kararların devamlılığı oluşturmaktadır.

ABSTRACT

Keywords

Language policy, Turkey, Azerbaijan, language reform.

Language policy refers to a set of decisions (or their implementations) made by government or public institutions including language reviewers, ethnic leaders, language agencies, or educational policy makers etc. However, the process of decision making, the methods, and the results vary from one country to another. Stating the failure or success of a language policy is a difficult task for a sociolinguist because of the absence, scarcity, or unreliability of quantifiable data. However, examining the failure or success of a language policy and evaluating how effective these processes are for different cultures and experiences is also an important step for further studies. This paper will attempt to give an assessment of the Turkish and Azerbaijani Language Reforms while comparing the leading linguistic and nonlinguistic factors of each one, as well as describing the process and outcomes in order to show why one- Turkish language reform- has been more successful than the other- Azerbaijani language reform. In this respect, after focusing on the historical background, goals, functions, and outcomes of these two language reforms, this article will evaluate and compare the success of these two language policies, utilizing some sociolinguistic criteria including the political/social/cultural environment in which language reform takes place, the degree of

public awareness and participation, the existence of an effective politically empowered decision-making body, the complementarity of language planning corpus and contingency planning and the continuity of decisions taken on language reform.

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GİRİŞ

Turks have been involved with many cultures throughout history. These different cultures have influenced many elements including the alphabet and the language. Turks, who abandoned the Uyghur alphabet and used the Arabic alphabet after the adoption of Islam in the 11th century, did not only change the alphabet, but borrowed both words and lexical structures from the Arabic and Persian languages, which were prestigious in scientific, literary and religious terms at that time. With this change, two different traditions of language and literature developed over time. However, a number of developments in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire (the Tanzimat period) raised the need for a language unity that was easily understood by the masses to spread new ideas and knowledge. Therefore, the beginning the process of language reform started. The importance of this evidence to the debate on language purification and alphabet change is that purification and changes did not originate in the Republic of Turkey but had started at the end of the Ottoman Empire, especially during the Tanzimat period.

As stated in the article titled "Language Policy and Official Ideology in Early Republican Turkey", the Turkish language reform took shape in two main stages: the first was the adoption of the Latin alphabet, and the second was the creation of "pure Turkish (Öz Türkçe)" by eliminating all foreign elements (Çolak, 2004). First, it began as an idea of modifying the Arabic alphabet by Ahmed Cevdet, an Ottoman statesman, historian, sociologist, and legislator, in 1851, and by Münif Pasha in 1862, an Ottoman statesman, politician and scientist, who blamed the inadequacy of literates on the shortcomings of the alphabet. He uttered this problem during a conference of the Ottoman Scientific Society and praised the European writing system (Lewis, 1999). With the attempt of Münif Pasha, the issue about the alphabet drew attention of intellectuals and they decided to create an identical alphabet. However, they could not decide on a uniform spelling of Turkish words. Almost every writer had his/her own writing system of spelling. In a situation like this, reading and writing remain a privilege of the educated class, and the high rate of illiteracy is a direct consequence of the difficulty in reading and writing. During the Tanzimat period, the intellectuals were united enough to adopt a definite writing system to make reading and writing easier. However, the activities mostly focused on the improvement of the Arabic script. Coming to the Constitution period, we see that these discussions rose and were made more freely because an educational system designed to save people from illiteracy was accepted by the government. Two language plans, the Letter Reforms and Letter Modification, were stated as measures directed towards

improvement (Levend, 1953). This period was a transition period for the language reform, because during this period, there were people who supported either the old writing system or were proponents of the Latin letters. Opponents of the new alphabet were mainly concerned about changes in terms of religion and the language if the new alphabet was implemented. They associated the new script with other examples of cultures in which the language changed along with the religion. However, the supporters of the new alphabet knew that changes in religion and language were not foregone conclusions.

Looking at the early Turkish Republic period, the first attempt to present the plan regarding the acceptance of the Latin alphabet was in 1923 at the İzmir Economic Congress. However, it was rejected. In 1924, in the National Assembly, Şükrü Saraçoğlu, Minister of Education at that time, and, later, the sixth prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey, suggested and supported the new Latin Alphabet, but Latin letters were opposed again (Levend, 1953). However, this attempt created a consciousness in the mind of some intellectuals to think about the Latin letters in a serious manner.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, as the president of the New Turkish Republic, supported the adoption of the Latin alphabet rather than trying to improve the old script system. His main motive in making this decision was to facilitate learning and education so that the literacy rate of the country, which was about %10 of the population, would increase. Although he was the supporter of the Latin script, he thought that a meticulous and careful preparation was needed. For this reason, when the adoption of the new script was recommended in Economic Conference in 1923, he rejected this idea saying “the time for the script reform was not then ripe” (Spearman and Turfan, 1979). He made a careful and conscious preparation for this. For example, in 1924, the religious schools were closed, which made the acceptance of new script easier.

In 1928, the Language Committee was set up. The members of the Committee’s first concern was the decision of the alphabet question. They recommended the acceptance of the Latin alphabet and a period of 5 to 15 years for the full practice of the new letters. When the plan was presented to Atatürk, he said: “This will happen either in three months or never ... Even with half a column of old script left in the papers, everyone will read these old scripted pieces. If by any chance there happens a war, a domestic crisis or something goes wrong ... our script will be abandoned immediately” (Spearman & Turfan, 1979). Thus, the Turkish Alphabet Law was put into practice after a two-month period. During these two months, both alphabets were used in newspapers. After this very short period, all printing materials were printed in Latin letters, so the problem of alphabet was solved. Therefore, the first stage of the Turkish Language Reform was completed.

The second step was the purification of the language from foreign - mostly Arabic and Persian - elements. With this aim, first and foremost, a language commission was set up, and then officially founded with the name of Türk Dili Tedkik Cemiyeti (Society for Research on the Turkish Language) in 1932. The association continues its activities in the present day with the name of Türk Dil Kurumu (Turkish Language Society). This committee was assigned to produce a “New Turkish Standard Dictionary” to eliminate the Arabic and Persian elements from Turkish for the creation of öz Türkçe (pure Turkish). The members of the society set an agenda. The aims of the

society which played an important role in the purification of the Turkish language were to organize scientific meetings, determine and codify the Turkish language in accordance with its roots evolution and needs, obtain all materials useful to study Turkish languages and collect new words from old books and dialects of people from various places of the country, and publish the products of the Turkish Language Societies' activities (Çolak, 2004). Two years after the establishment of Turkish Language Society, a dictionary titled *Osmanlıca'dan Türkçe'ye Söz Karşılıkları Tarama Dergisi* (A Collection of Turkish Equivalents for Ottoman Turkish Words) was published by the society. Besides the activities of Turkish Language Society, a lot of campaigns were launched by the state for the purification and standardization of Turkish.

What all this historical information shows us is Turkish Language Reform took place in two main stages and was not a decision taken over night. The process took shape gradually with the consciousness of leaders and intellectuals of the Republic of Turkey.

The language reform in Azerbaijan has occurred concomitantly with the alphabet changes. In the twentieth century, Azerbaijan experienced three script changes: In the 1920s, from the Arabic script to the Latin alphabet, in the 1930s from the Latin script to the Cyrillic alphabet, and finally in 1940 from the Cyrillic one to the Roman script, again. After Azerbaijan was incorporated by the Soviet Union in the 1920s, the Soviet Union initiated the script shift from Arabic to the Latin one. Then, the Soviet Union forced Azerbaijan to make another shift from the Latin alphabet to that of the Cyrillic overnight. With the fall of the Soviet Union, finally Azerbaijan adopted the Latin alphabet again. In this part, we will look into the background of these shifts in detail.

When Arabs arrived in Azerbaijan in the seventh century, they were using the Arabic script. Until the 1920s, they continued to use this alphabet. In the first decades of the 20th century, the Soviet Union followed a policy for the unification of the nations under its rule. The Soviet Union stated that no official language was declared for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and that everyone had the right to speak whichever language they wanted, privately or publicly (Hatcher, 2008). When this was stated by the Soviet Union the discussion about the alphabet change was brought onto the scene. It is inevitable that there were proponents and opponents to the alphabet change to shift from the Arabic script to the Latin one in particular. Intellectuals were divided into two main groups as Reformists (Islahatçılar) and Pro-Latinist (Latinciler) (Balim-Harding, 1994). In 1923, the government of Azerbaijan came out in favor of the Latin script and declared the Latin alphabet official. By June 27, 1924, the Latin alphabet had become the official script and on May 1, 1925, the Roman alphabet became mandatory for newspapers, and official documents and it began to be taught in all schools (Ergün, 2010). In this process, not only did intellectuals play an important part regarding the decision of Latin alphabet, but the authorities of the Soviet Union also dealt with the issue, and they were in favor of Latinization for their long- term strategy. From 1924 to 1930, intellectuals and leaders in Azerbaijan and in other Turkic communities strove to deal with the issue of a Common Turkic Alphabet.

In the 1930s, Azerbaijan had to handle difficult situations with another language planning issue. The Soviet Union, which had stated the independence of the countries to decide their language, started to view the Latin

alphabet as a threat because it would unite all the “Oriental peoples” of the Soviet Union (Balim-Harding, 1994). The Soviet Union did not see the Latin script as international anymore, and therefore their new focus was the Russian language and the Cyrillic alphabet. It paralleled the politics of unification for the peoples of the Soviet Union, and, in this process, the shift of the alphabet had a significant role. Therefore, in 1940, Azerbaijan was forced to replace the Latin alphabet with that of the Cyrillic. It came into play overnight without any public discussion and was based solely on the decision of the Soviet Union language planners and the rulers’ desire to reach their political, cultural, and social aims.

Finally, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, intellectuals became more independent and they had a chance to discuss the issues regarding their country, and alphabet was one of the most important issues among them. After more than a year of discussion in printed media about Romanization, the Latin alphabet was officially adopted, one more time, on November 25, 1991. Since that date, the Roman script has been used in Azerbaijan.

Seegmiller and Balim state in their article, “Alphabets for the Turkic Languages: Past, Present, and Future,” that there are two kinds of factors, linguistic and nonlinguistic, which are significant in the revision or replacement of an existing writing system. According to them, the linguistic factor is the phonology of the language with which the accuracy of the writing system is represented. Nonlinguistic factors, they argue, include the political, cultural, religious, technological, economic, and other issues. We will examine the objectives and goals of the language reform in Turkey and Azerbaijan in light of this classification.

Beginning with the nonlinguistic factors of the Turkish Language Reform, the role of these factors in nation-building will be the first consideration. Most of the classic studies about nationalism such as Anderson (1983), or Hobsbawm (1990) underline the importance of the language on the process of nation-building. Turkey is one of those countries in which the relationship between the language and national identity was, and is, very strong. Therefore, one of the significant aims of the language reform in Turkey was to create a unified national community. In the process of building the institutions of a nation state during the early years of the Republic of Turkey, a common national language was fundamental to the development of the people’s consciousness for being a part of a nation. The people who raised the issue of language, intellectuals, especially the rulers in the new Turkish Republic, regarded language as essential for the creation of a unique and unified nation. They realized the two different languages were being used in the country, spoken Anatolian Turkish and Ottoman Turkish. In order to facilitate the communication among all the people of the nation, purification of the language was initiated. In other words, a national language was created to bring the masses and elite all together and build a unified nation. The Turkish Republic was established as nation-state, as defined in modernist thought. Although there were a number of unofficial languages spoken in Turkey at that time, the state supported the Turkish language through teaching it in schools, in military services, and in other institutions. Therefore, the official language was standardized to create the Turkish language identity. Among the intellectuals in the early Turkish Republic, Ziya Gökalp came forward because of his views about the Turkish

language as the touchstone of the nationality. Atatürk, also, stated the importance of language for the Turkish nation: “A person who says that he belongs the Turkish nation, should, primarily and absolutely speak Turkish. If a man who does not speak Turkish claims his loyalty to the Turkish culture and community, it will not be correct to believe him (Aydingün, 2004).

What he believed in and worked on was that cultural unification could only be realized through education in which language was the most important tool. In short, the first aim of language reform in Turkey after its establishment was the creation of a unique and unified Turkish nation and nation-state. The second nonlinguistic aim of the Turkish Language Reform was to build a modernized and secular state. As mentioned earlier, at the beginning of the establishment of the Turkish Republic the language was Ottoman Turkish, which consisted of Turkish, Arabic, and Persian, with an Arabic alphabet. There was a gap between written and spoken language. Therefore, the literacy was incredibly low, at approximately 10 % of the population. In order to make progress, the leader of the Turkish Republic adopted the idea of modernization (westernization) and worked on this. The ideology was that Turkey was a new state wanting to achieve modernization and advance culturally, socially, economically within the framework of a democratic system. Therefore, language reform was the main part of the modernization process of the country. The aim was increasing the literacy rate, which would, in turn, accelerate the modernization. In other words, the state intended for the Turkish nation to be led into modernization with the reforms and the language reform had significant role which is made very clear in the following words of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk: “So long as Turkish was written from right to left, it could never properly express the ideals of European civilization. The picturesque involutions and intricacies of Arabic script afforded a psychological background to the Oriental mentality which stood as the real enemy of the Republic (Çolak, 2004).

In addition, with the language reform, Turkey aimed to be a secular state. Using an Arabic alphabet and having elements mostly from Arabic and Persian was regarded as comprising the language with religious meaning and understanding. Thus, with the Turkish Language Reform, leaders and intellectuals aimed to purge all those elements to construct a secular state. The Latin alphabet symbolized the conversion from imperial-religious state to national-secular culture, because the changing alphabet and cleansing the Arabic and Persian words (which implied religious connotations) would bring about the loss of religious tradition.

When we look into the linguistic factors, we see the Turkish Language Reform as reaching a writing system which was suitable to usage of the Turkish language. Arabic script was markedly unsuitable for Turkish vowel system because it has only three letters to represent vowel sounds, “alif”, “waw”, “ya” used in Arabic to show “a”, “u”, and “i”, whereas Turkish has eight. These three Arabic letters were used in Ottoman Turkish for a/e/i/o/ö/u/ü alternately. Thus, the Arabic script caused many equivocal readings. As an illustration, in Arabic letters the sentence “مدلوا اشب دمحم” can be read as “Mehmed (Muhammed) paşa oldu (Mehmed - Muhammed- became a pasha)” or “ Mehmed paşa öldü” (Mehmed Pasha died) (Lewis, 1999). Also, with the usage of the Arabic alphabet, education was more difficult. Therefore, with the Language Reform it was aimed

to adopt a script which was suitable for the Turkish sound system, so that to increase the literacy in the country.

As mentioned above, there are three alphabet changes in Azerbaijan, and the goals of each change are different from each other. To examine the goals of the language reform in Azerbaijan in the 20th century, it is necessary to look into the three alphabet changes separately. In this respect, we will attempt to show the linguistic and largely nonlinguistic goals of each alphabet change in Azerbaijan separately.

Beginning with the nonlinguistic reasons for the first alphabet change from the Arabic script to the Latin one in Azerbaijan in the 20th century, we see that the first aim was the modernization and the progression of the country. Ayça Ergün states that in the early twentieth century many influential members of the Azerbaijani intellectuals regarded the Arabic script as a symbol of backwardness and under-development. Mirza Fethali Akhundzade, one of the people who played a significant role in the process of Romanization, stated that

Railways are required, but the alphabet change is more required. Telegrams are required but changing of the old alphabet is more required. Because the most important thing among everything else is knowledge. Knowledge is dependent on the simplicity of the alphabet. Due to the difficulty of our script, we became deprived of science, and we are unable to acquire education and knowledge. In the countries where there are a high number of literate people, the number of intellectuals would increase. In places where there are higher number of intellectuals, people would advance day by day in all spheres of social life (Ergün, 2010).

Therefore, the goal was to rupture with the Arabic world and its heritage and to be modernized and developed through the Roman script, which symbolized modernization. With the transformation of the alphabet from Arabic to the Latin, it would also create a pathway for Azerbaijan to be integrated with the West. Another goal of the shift was creating an Azerbaijani- Turkish identity, instead of having a Arab-based one. The Arabic script was regarded as being an instrument of the Arabian culture whereas the Latin alphabet was interpreted as symbolizing their Turkish identity by intellectuals.

Finally, considering the linguistic factors of the first language change, intellectuals thought that the Arabic script was unsuitable for the phonetic system of the Turkic languages, because, as mentioned in the case of the Turkish language reform, there are three vowels in the Arabic script, while eight vowels are needed in Turkic languages. Therefore, as we can see from the words of Mirze Fathali Akhundzade, using an unsuitable alphabet caused low literacy rate in Azerbaijan. With the adoption of the new alphabet, it was aimed to increase the literacy in the country.

If we compare this stage of the language reform in Azerbaijan with that in Turkey, we can see the similarities of the goals between the two. We can even say that the intellectuals in Turkey were influenced by the attempts made by the Azerbaijani intellectuals. However, the next phases of the script changes caused complications

and interruptions of the decision, which ultimately caused less success in the Azerbaijani language reform, whereas the Turkish one became more successful.

Concerning the second script change from the Latin alphabet to the Cyrillic script in Azerbaijan in the 20th century, the conditions and goals should be evaluated in the context of the Soviet Union, because this shift took place as dictated by the Soviet Union. The change occurred by force without any discussion and the aim was to promote the Russian language and Russian culture, which was a completely political decision. The shift was an integral part of the unification process in the Soviet Union. According to the policies of the USSR, homogenization was required and changing the alphabet had a significant importance for this aim. In addition to the goal of a unified state, the Soviet Union also wanted to disrupt the ties between Turkey and Azerbaijan. Therefore, adopting the Cyrillic alphabet had a crucial role to put end to the idea of Pan-Turkism among the Turkish speaking people. In this second shift, there was no important reason concerning the linguistic goals of the language reform, although the Soviet Union pretended to make this change because of linguistic factors beside the political ones.

Finally, the last alteration of the alphabet in Azerbaijan from the Cyrillic script back to the Latin was in order to gain the Azerbaijani-Turkish identity back. After the break up the Soviet Union, debates over the need to return to Roman alphabet took place. The Cyrillic alphabet was associated with Russian oppression, Russian cultural and political imperialism. Intellectuals taught that the Cyrillic script was being used as a tool for weakening the Azerbaijani national identity. Therefore, to put end to this political authority, dominance, and characteristic of previous Russian regime, intelligentsia called for a return to the Latin alphabet. This shift was a political choice rather than a linguistic argument. It was aimed to be integrated with the West and Turkey. In this process, there were some people suggesting to change from the Cyrillic alphabet to the Arabic script. However, most of the people did not agree with this idea, because they did not want to construct a future with founded on integration of the East. They wanted to turn their face to the West. Also, most of the intellectuals knew the problems of the Arabic script for the phonetic system for Azerbaijani and other Turkic language. Another problem associated with the Arabic script was the difficulties of learning it. Therefore, they decided to shift from the Cyrillic script to the Latin one with these aims on November 25, 1991.

The Turkish Language Reform functioned as a key element for the New Republic of Turkey in many ways. First, of all, it took on a significant role in the creation of Turkish nation. As mentioned earlier, with the Turkish Language Reform, the leaders aimed for a unified nation. The Turkish Language Reform functioned as an important tool for the building of this unique and unified nation. Through the Turkish language, the people who lived in this country identified themselves as being a part of Turkish nationality. Second, it cut the ties between Turkey and the East by leaving Arabic script and its elements and accepting a new alphabet which was used in the West, so that the Republic of Turkey turned its face to the West. Literacy rate was considered a main characteristic of being a modernized state. Therefore, the function of the reform was to increase the literacy in the country.

Furthermore, the reform also functioned as a principle symbol for the secularization process. The campaign for secularization in the Republic of Turkey was an integral component of civilization, as was the deinstitutionalization of the religious structure. Therefore, language policies were arranged with this aim of the Republic in mind. Changing the Arabic script functioned as leaving the religious establishment of the Ottoman State, and as being a secular country. Therefore, for the Turkish Republic, which was just established at that time, and aimed to be a unique and unified nation, as well as a modernized and secularized country, the role of the Language Reform cannot be emphasized enough.

The language changes in Azerbaijan in general functioned as a political tool for the goals of the political authorities. Changing the script from Arabic to the Latin in 1924 was meant to symbolize cutting ties with the East and turning face to the West. For the Soviet Union this change functioned as an important step to alleviate the oppositions and the debates over the Arabic script associated with the Islamic heritage. Therefore, it would be difficult, even impossible, for the Soviet Union to adopt the Cyrillic alphabet in Azerbaijan. They would have met with severe reactions and they could not have reached their goals. Thus, they had a long term strategy and this change was necessary for their plan. In order to adopt the Cyrillic alphabet, the first step was discarding from the Arabic script. However, in the mind of Azerbaijani intellectuals, the shift functioned at totally different level, as they attempted to find a suitable alphabet for their phonetic system, a way to westernized and a modernized state.

The shift from the Latin alphabet to the Cyrillic one again functioned politically. This shift had nothing to do with phonetic problems, modernization, or westernization, but was a political decision made by the Soviet Union in order to apply their long term strategy. The change functioned as a unifying tool for the nations under the hegemony of the Soviet Union. Finally, the alteration of the alphabet from the Cyrillic one to the Latin functioned as way for Azerbaijan to find its own identity. The people in Azerbaijan wanted to look to the West and they wanted to strengthen the ties with Turkey. Thus, language was an important tool for this aim. As a matter of fact, it has functioned as planned thus far.

Turkish language was liberated from the domination of foreign languages with the language reform. The usage of the Turkish words increased. While the usage of Turkish words in newspapers in 1933 was only 33%, in 1970 this increased to 70% (Spearman & Turfan, 1979). The Turkish Language Reform fulfilled goals of an authentic Turkish language which could be used for the nation-building as a unifying source. With this reform, the gap between masses who spoke Anatolian Turkish and elites who used Ottoman Turkish was bridged. Both sides started to be able to understand each other. Therefore, ideas and information about the new policies and changes in the country spread rapidly and widely. More people took part in the process of decision making. Turkey became known as a modern and secular country with the new Latin alphabet and the purified language from Arabic and Persian elements. With this new alphabet and purified Turkish, education became easier, so literacy rate increased. The Republic of Turkish aimed to reach the highest level of world civilization quickly. With the help of the Language Reform, an important step was taken in the process of civilization,

modernization and secularization, especially by leaving the Arabic script and purging the Arabic and Persian elements of the language. Finally the Turkish Language Reform brought about the Turkish Language Society, which continues to work on preserving and adapting Turkish to modern-day needs.

In the case of Azerbaijan, there has been three alphabet changes in the 20th century, each for completely different reasons. One of the outcomes of the first change was getting a suitable alphabet in Azerbaijan in terms of a phonetic system. Also, this opened the door between the Western world and Azerbaijan since it broke up the ties between the East and religion based governmental system. Also, this resulted in Azerbaijan having a strong relationship with Turkey.

When they were gaining their Azerbaijani-Turkish identity and strengthening the relationship with Turkey, another alphabet change came into the scene. One of the reasons of this change from the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet was the weakening the ties between the Turkey and Azerbaijan. Also, the Soviet Union reached its long-term goal, largely through force, which was the unification of the nations under its hegemony. This resulted in Azerbaijan, for many reasons, to become dependent on the power of the Soviet Union.

Moreover, the last change, which is still in effect today, served a symbol for Azerbaijan in terms of gaining power and shaping its identity. Until this date, it seemed that the only outcomes of this shift had been the breaking the ties with the Soviet Union and becoming independent. Fortunately, other positive outcomes have resulted, including a strengthening of their relationship with Turkey.

CONCLUSION

Spolsky and Shohamy state (1999) that studying the failure or successes of a language policy is a difficult task for a sociolinguist because of the absence, scarcity, or unreliability of quantifiable data. This is very true for the case of the language reforms in Turkey and Azerbaijan. However, this paper attempts to evaluate the success of these two language reforms concerning some factors which are needed for an effective language policy.

First of all, the settings under which the language reform occurs are very important in evaluating the effectiveness of a language policy. In Turkey, with the establishment of the new state, there was a need for a purified Turkish language in order to provide communication between masses and elites and to act as a unifying source. The language reform fulfilled this function successfully. However, in Azerbaijan, although the conditions were appropriate for an effective language reform, the second alphabet change from the Latin script to the Cyrillic with the force of the Soviet Union was an unexpected and inexorable event. Therefore, this alteration prevented the possible success of the language policy in Azerbaijan. In addition to the settings, the degree of public awareness and engagement is a very important criterion for the success of a language policy. As Doğançay-Aktuna states “an effective language planning requires that people are made aware of and somehow convinced of the righteousness of language planning efforts in order for them to adopt the decisions and products of planners” (Doğançay-Aktuna, 2004).

In Turkey, with the purification process and the activities of the Turkish Language Society, the public, along with the intellectuals, became more aware of the issues concerning their languages. Although there were opponents to these changes, most of them agreed on the benefits, and their participation in this process resulted in a high increase in the literacy rate. In Azerbaijan, however, the second script change again hindered the success of the language reform because the decision was taken solely by the authorities of the Soviet Union and put into effect by force. Therefore, there was no chance for people to discuss the decision before or after the alphabet change.

Another factor for a successful language reform is a political authoritative decision-making body. In Turkey, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the decision to change the alphabet and purify the language was taken carefully. Also, to this aim, a language committee was founded, and it set an agenda. In Azerbaijan, although there were some influential people, they could not play an effective role in this process. At the same time, the participation and the activities of institutions are very important. The Turkish Language Society worked with enthusiasm throughout this process. In a short period, it published its first books to facilitate the usage of pure Turkish. However, there was no corresponding institution in Azerbaijan.

Moreover, for an effective strategy, the language planning corpus and status planning should complement each other. According to Fishman “status planning without corpus planning results in networks that cannot, even with the best intentions, use a language itself lacks the lexicon that such functions require. Similarly, corpus planning without status planning is no more than a busy work, since there is no dynamic leading to the use of the course material or the nomenclatures that may have been proposed” (Fishman, 1982). In Turkey, with the

purification process, Turkish was cleaned from the foreign elements; therefore, the status of the Turkish language became higher.

Also, the Latin script was accepted as a suitable alphabet for Turkish. Therefore, corpus and the status planning in Turkey complimented each other in the process of language planning. However, in Azerbaijan, after the script change to find a suitable alphabet for the Azerbaijani Turkish, there was almost no attempt to create a purified language. Even the complete usage of the alphabet did not take place. In fact, most of the intellectuals criticized the newspapers for using the Arabic and Latin alphabet at the same time. For example, in the newspapers, titles were written in the Arabic script whereas the other part of the text was written in the Latin script, or vice versa.

Finally, and most importantly concerning these two language reforms, the persistence of the decision on the language reform is a crucial factor for the effectiveness of the language reform. The Turkish language reform started with the alphabet change in 1928, and it has continued to develop to the present. However, the Azerbaijani people had to face three script changes in one century. These interruptions are the main factors that caused a less successful language planning in Azerbaijan.

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