

Spoken Languages in Eurasian Geography

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Abstract: *This informative paper scrutinizes the languages spoken in Euroasian region; namely Turkish language and its dialects. It also gives background information about the historical period of Turkish language, starting from the period of the Association of Altay Languages to Modern Turkish (20th Century and after). At the end of the paper, focusing on the national language problem of the Independent Turkic Republics, some solutions are suggested.*

Keywords: *Languages, Euroasian languages, Turkish language.*

Avrasya Coğrafyasında Konuşulan Diller

Öz: *Bu bilgilendirici çalışma Avrasya bölgesinde konuşulan dilleri özellikle Türkçe ve lehçelerini incelemektedir. Aynı zamanda Altay Dil Ailesi'nden Modern Türkçe'ye kadar uzanan süreçte (20. Yüzyıl ve sonrası) Türk dilinin tarihi hakkında bilgiler sunmaktadır. Çalışmanın sonunda Bağımsız Türki Cumhuriyetlerinin ulusal dil problemine odaklanarak bazı çözüm önerileri verilmektedir.*

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Diller, Avrasya Dilleri, Türk Dili*

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Introduction

Language is a system of either oral or written symbols that provides communication among people. Language, one of the basic means of communication among people, is an inheritance that nations get from the past. Through language people lead each other from the past to the present day and also to the future. It is generally accepted that people speaking the same language have the same history, share the same culture, and have the same habits and values.

“Every language is characterized by variation within the speech community that uses it. Those varieties, in turn, are more or less divergent from one another. These divergent varieties are often referred to as dialects” (http://www.ethnologue.com/ethno_docs/introduction.asp#history). Therefore, we can identify a dialect as the different forms of the same language spoken within the same community in different areas or historically speaking in different ages. It is a variety of a certain language, differing in vocabulary, grammar or accent from others (Vardar, 1988). “They may be distinct enough to be considered separate languages or sufficiently similar to be considered merely characteristic of a particular geographic region or social grouping within the speech community. Often speakers may be very aware of dialect variation and be able to label a particular dialect with a name. In other cases, the variation may be largely unnoticed or overlooked (http://www.ethnologue.com/ethno_docs/introduction.asp#history).

There are three basic criteria for defining a language in relation to varieties which may be considered dialects stated in this web site. These are:

1. Two related varieties are normally considered varieties of the same language if speakers of each variety have inherent understanding of the other variety at a functional level (that is, can understand based on knowledge of their own variety without needing to learn the other variety).
2. Where spoken intelligibility between varieties is marginal, the existence of a common literature or of a common ethnolinguistic identity with a central variety that both understand can be a strong indicator that they should nevertheless be considered varieties of the same language.
3. Where there is enough intelligibility between varieties to enable communication, the existence of well-established distinct ethnolinguistic identities can be a strong indicator that they should nevertheless be considered to be different languages.

These criteria make it clear that the identification of “a language” is not solely within the realm of linguistics.

The paramount common feature of the related communities is that they speak the same language in order that, through language, continuity of both language and national unity is maintained. However, in the period before the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Turkic communities embodied in it and being manipulated through different written and oral languages were forced to be divided from one another. What is

more, a great care was taken so that these communities used different languages so as not to provide cultural exchange through their common languages. For example, Russia, at the outset, did not intervene in the first switch of Azerbaijan to Latin alphabet; however, Russia's great efforts to make Azerbaijan return to Cyrillic alphabet again after Turkey accepted the Latin alphabet stems from the goal of Russia to prevent cultural exchange and communication between these two cognate communities (Korkmaz, 2001).

Turkish Language and its Dialects in Eurasian Geography

The term "Eurasian" is not only a geographical concept including East Europe, all the West Asia and Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, Central Asian and Caucasus countries, but also a concept that explains historical, economical and cultural interaction of Eurasian people living in these large lands (Kireev, 2002). According to Kireev, this concept expresses primarily Russian and Turkey, as well as the interaction between Slavic and Turkic people.

Today, Turkish language is spoken dispersedly in an extensive area from the ends of the Balkans in the west to the Pacific Ocean in the east and from the Arctic Ocean in the north to Tibet in the south.

Languages spoken on earth, today, are evaluated in certain language families (Tuna, 2002). According to Tuna, Turkish which has the characteristics of an agglutinative language is evaluated in Altaic Language Family. He defines the term "language family" as the one used for special languages. To him, a language family is a group of languages with different branches from a main language through development process. He reports that it is a common belief that the languages in this group come from a common root. Namely, genetic kinship should be considered when mentioning a language family. In such a language family, sub-branches, going backwards, end up in a common language, he believes. In this frame, when we examine *Altaic language family*, in the narrow sense, Turkish, Mongolian, Manchu- Tungusic, in the broad sense, Korean and Japanese languages are called *Altaic Language Family*, he adds. He concludes that, today, the studies about *Altaic Language Theory* are a field that is interested in *Altayistic area* in the world and there are lots of studies on this issue. I am not going to mention the speculations about this theory here because it is not relevant to our topic directly.

So long as we accept the theory which states that Turkish, Mongolian, Manchu, Tungusic, Korean and Japanese languages come from a common root, the main Altaic language, the earliest period for Turkish is undoubtedly the period of the Altaic language unity (*Altaic Period*) (Özyetkin, 2006). That is, Altaic Period is a hypothetical, suppositional period that Turkish, Mongolian, Manchu, Tungusic and Korean languages constitute a main language, she reports. She indicates that unfortunately, the beginning and ending date of this period are not known. She states that today, the knowledge about this period consists of the hypothetical knowledge and conjectures that the comparative linguistic studies give us.

Turkish spoken in a wide geographical area, **after it was separated from Altaic language unity**, was exposed to some historical periods and branching with certain characteristics. We may classify the historical periods of Turkish language in general as below:

Historical periods of Turkish language

1. The period of the Altaic Language Unity,
2. The period of First Turkish-Chuvash- the period of Turkish Language Unity (Pre-Turkic)
3. The period of Main Turkish (Proto-Turkish)
4. The period of Old Turkish (6.th-10.th Century)
5. The period of Middle Turkish (11.th - 16.th Century)
6. The period of New Turkish (New Written language) (16.th Century and after),
7. The period of Modern Turkish (20.th Century and after)
(Özyetkin, 2006)

According to Özyetkin (2006) today, a great many of the Turkish dialects are used in the status of state language, written language, literary language etc. In the republics of Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan; in the republic of Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Chuvash, Kabardino- Balkaria, Karachaevo- Cherkessia, Dagestan, Tuva, Saha (Yakut), Altay Khakas in Russian federation, Turkish dialects named as the same of these republics have the stated status in these republics, independent republic or land, autonomous republics that were mentioned above. In the People's Republic of China, Uighur Turks living in the region of Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous use their own written language.

At this point, today's modern Turkish language area in terms of geographic and linguistic basis should be mentioned; there are 6 groups briefly according to Özyetkin (2006):

1. South- west Turk- Oguz Turkish dialects,
2. North-west Kipchak Turkish dialects,
3. South- east Uighur- Karluk dialects,
4. North- east Siberia- Turkish dialects,
5. Chuvash
6. Halach

The following information given from 2.1. to 2.6. has been the translated version of Özyetkin's study in 2006 for which I am thankful to her providing us with such an indepth

research.

South –West Turkish Dialects (Oguz)

Among these dialects are

a. Turkey Turkish b. Azerbaijani c. Gagauz d. Turcoman and e. Khorassan. We accept these five dialects as Oguz–group Turkish dialects. In these dialects, Khorassan does not have a **written language**. The other Turkish dialects each are **written languages**. Turkish, Azerbaijani and Gagauz that are very close to each other are Turkish languages. Turcoman has a special place in Oguz group and is located in the far eastern part of the Oguz geography and so, is very close to the East Turkish.

The Turks of Turkey are the largest group in terms of the number of speakers and the dispersive geography of the speakers in Oguz group. Turkish of Turkey is being spoken in Turkey, the republic of Cyprus, Balkan states, Greece, Bulgaria, the lands of Former Yugoslavia, Macedonia and Romania, the states of west Europe and the continent of Australia. Latin script was adopted in Turkey with the alphabet revolution in the year of 1928. Turkish writing language is shaped with the basis of Istanbul accent. Turkey Turkish has an area of a great deal of sub- dialects as Anatolian and Rumelia dialects.

Gagauz Turkish is composed of the smallest branch of Oguz group. Today, a major part of the speakers of this branch that remains in the western of Oguz language live in the south of the republic of Moldova and in the south – west of Ukraine. Besides, there are Gagauz communities living in Bulgaria and Dobrogea and also in Caucasus. Gagauz people are among Christian Turks. They founded an autonomous state named “the place of Gagauz” on 20 august 1990. The official speaking languages of their state are Gagauz language, Romance and Russian. When we examine the Gagauz Turkish in terms of linguistics, actually, it is an accent of Turkey Turkish. In 1957, it got an official statue as wring language in Soviets Union and was written with Cyrillic alphabet until 1996. Today, it is under intense influence of Slavic language. Especially, this Slavic impression attracts the attentions in the morphology of Gagauz language.

Apart from Gagauz language, Azerbaijan Turkish which is the most close to the Turkish of Turkey is being spoken in the republic of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and as the most crowded part in Iran. (Accent of Tabriz, Kashkay- Eynallu). Kirkuk Turkish spoken in Iraq should be regarded as an accent of Azerbaijan Turkish. In the second period of 19th C, a new era started in Azerbaijan history divided into two by Russian occupation with Turkmenchay Treaty (1828). While North Azerbaijan was getting into Russian sovereignty, South Azerbaijan was in the sovereignty of Iran and solely Azerbaijan Turks lived in two different mental, cultural and religious environments. South Azerbaijan people who adopted Shia tradition of Islam live under the immense influence of Persian which is the Lingua Franca of the region, and in interaction with Iran culture.

Turcoman Turkish is primarily, spoken in the republic of Turkmenistan intensively, Iran and Afghanistan. Turuhmen which is an accent of Turcoman Turkish is being spoken

in Caucasus and the places from Stavropol to Astrakhan. On the other hand, Turcoman is the dialect which has protected the characteristics of Old Oguz Turkish as the best in Oguz group.

Khorassan Turkish that takes place in eastern part of Oguz world is spoken in the North East of Iran, the region of Khorassan. It had not been known a lot about that Turkish dialect until recently. It was considered that this dialect was an accent of Turcoman. However, it has been revealed in the important studies (1969) in this field by German Turcologist G. Doerfer that Khorassan Turkish has as equivalent features as other dialects in Oguz group as well,. Even if Khorassan Turkish resembles to Turcoman, it differs in terms of many features.

We can consider the geography where Oguz dialect is spoken and the approximate number of speakers as in the following (She has taken this information from Boeschoten's study "The Speaker of Turkic Languages", **The Turkic Languages**, Lars Johanson/Eva Csato, 1998.

In our study the current number of speakers is out of our focus. However, this may give us an idea.

a. The Turkish of Turkey

Turkey	(70.000.000)
Bulgaria	(approximately 1.000.000)
Cyprus	(150.000)
Australia	(40.000)
Macedonia	(80.000)
Romania	(24.000)
In the lands of former Yugoslavia	(approximately 20.000)
Greece	(approximately 150.000)
The states of West Europe	(above 2.000.000)

b. Azerbaijani

Azerbaijan	(6.000.000)
Armenia	(40.000)
Georgia	(300.000)
Iran	(13.000.000)
Iraq	(400.000)

c. Gagauz

Moldova	(150.000)
Bulgaria	(5.000)
Kazakhstan	(1.000)

Romania	(not known)
Russian Federation (Caucasus)	(10.000)
Ukraine	(32.000)

d. Turcoman

Turkmenistan	(3.000.000)
Afghanistan	(380.000)
Iran	(500.000)
Iraq	(400.000)

e. Khorassan language

Iran	(2.000.000)
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North-west Kipchak Dialects

These are a. Tatar, b. Bashkir, c. Kyrgyz, d. Kazakh, e. Kara kalpak language, f. Nogay, g. Karachai- Balkaria, h. Konyk, i. Karayim language and j. Crimea Tatar.

One of the dialects spoken in the far western of Kipchak group is Karayim language. These are Jewish Turks. In terms of origin they are linked with Caspian Turks who are also Jewish. It is spoken in Lithuania, West Ukraine, Crimea and Poland. Today, Karayim Turkish is one of the Turkish dialects which are on the verge of the danger of language death, language loss. It is one of the Turkish dialects, the number of whose speakers is getting less and less and nearly forgotten. It is said that Karay people wrote their language with Hebrew, Latin and Cyrillic alphabets until 1930's. A lot of old, ritual, manuscripts that belong to Karayim people were naturally written in Hebrew.

a. Tatar

Russian Federation Tatarstan	(2.000.000)
Bulgaria	(11.000)
Kazakhstan	(340.000)
Romania	(24.000)
Russian Fed. Bashkortostan	(1.000.000)
China	(5.000)
Turkey	(25.000)
Finland	(1.000)
The USA	(1.000)
European Countries	(8.000)
Ukraine	(86.000)
Tajikistan	(72.000)
Kyrgyzstan	(39.000)

Azerbaijan	(28.000)
b. Bashkir	
Russian Fed. Bashkortostan	(1.000.000)
c. Kyrgyz	
Kyrgyzstan	(2.400.000)
Afghanistan	(500)
China	(140.000)
d. Kazakh	
Kazakhstan	(7.300.000)
Afghanistan	(2.000)
China	(1.000.000)
Mongolia	(100.000)
Turkmenistan	(80.000)
Uzbekistan	(900.000)
e. Karakalpak Language	
Uzbekistan	(450.000)
Afghanistan	(2.000)
f. Nogay	
Russian Fed. Caucasus	(77.000)
g. Karachai- Balkaria	
Russian Fed. Caucasus	(70.000 Karachai) (40.000 Balkaria)
h. Konyk	
Russian Fed. Caucasus	(300.000)
i. Karayim language	
Lithuania	(50)
Poland	(20)
Ukraine	(6)
j. Crimea Tatar	
Crimea	(200.000)
Uzbekistan	(300.000)

South-West Uighur-Karluk Dialects

These are;

a. Uzbek

Uzbekistan	(16.000.000)
Afghanistan	(1.400.000)
China	(15.000)
Kazakhstan	(350.000)
Kyrgyzstan	(600.000)
Tajikistan	(1.000.000)
Turkmenistan	(350.000)

b. Modern Uighur

China	(8.300.000)
Kazakhstan	(245.000)
Mongolia	(1.000)

c. Yellow Uighur

China	(5.000)
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d. Salar Language

China	(74.000)
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North- East- Siberia Turkish Dialects

These are;

a. Yakut (Saha) language

Russian Fed. Yakutstan	(400.000)
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b. Tuva language

Russian Fed. (Altaic region and South Siberia)	(200.000)
Mongolia	(6.000)
China	(400)

c. Hakas language

Russian Fed. Hakas Autonomous Republic	(58.000) (10.000=Shor language)
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d. Altaic language

Russian Fed.	(52.000=Oyrot and Teleut languages)
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Chuvash

Chuvash is a Turkish dialect which composes an independent group on its own in the classification of Turkish language. As we said before, the development of general Turkish dialects and Chuvash language developed in the completely different branches from each

other. Chuvash is regarded as the current heir of Old Bulgarian Turkish. Today, Chuvash people are supposed to be in Turkish Idyll-Ural.. They live in Chuvashia, Tatarstan and Bashkortostan which are under Russian Federation. Chuvash people are Orthodox Christians. They have been in contact with Finno- Uighur people in these regions where the Chuvash people live since ancient times. The name of Chuvash was firstly encountered in a Russian document written in 16th century. Chuvash people, who were Muslim before, were Christianized through missionary activities in Russian people.

As a result of modern language researches developed in the early 20th century it has been proved that Chuvash language is Turkish. Today, Chuvash is in a top-dialect position among Turkish languages and it should be evaluated in an alternative group in the classification of the dialect.

Chuvashia	(900.000)
Tatarstan	(135.000)
Bashkortostan	(119.000)

Halach

This Turkish dialect spoken in the Central Iran was discovered by German Turcologist G. Doerfer in the recent history (1968). It is a characteristic Turkish dialect that has a great deal of archaic features of Old Turkish and takes place in a private group in modern Turkish dialects in terms of the language features it has. Halach language does not have a written language.

Other Languages Spoken in Eurasian Geography

Balkans

The Balkan Peninsula, due to its geological situation, is the largest one of three major peninsula of Europe as a historical region demonstrating the union of a history and culture for ages. The peninsula, surrounded by the seas on three sides; the Mediterranean Sea in the south, the Aegean Sea and the Turkish Bosphorus with the Marmara Sea and the Black Sea in the east, is a geography of which the east- west width is 1300 km, the north- south length is 1050 km including 23.764 km- Turkish Thrace and has approximately 800.000 km² area and almost 78 million people.

The languages stated in the frame of “the Union of Balkan Languages” are “a. Albanian, b. Greek, c. Roman (Gipsy) language, d. some Latin languages (Rumanian, Vlah language, Megleno- Rumanian and Istria- Rumanian), e. Some Slavic languages (Bulgarian Macedonian and Serbian, especially the *Torlakian dialect* which is transitional between Macedonian, Bulgarian and Serbian. All the same, it should be remembered that these languages have similarities coming from the common origin among them. f. Turkish and g. Ladino (the language of Jewish who resided in Balkans by emigrating from Spain in 15th Century until 20th Century)” (http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balkan_dil_birli%C4%9Fi).

However, not all of these languages have the same number of features shared. That is why they are divided into three groups (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balkan_sprachbund):

1. Albanian, Romanian, Macedonian, Aromanian and Bulgarian have the most properties in common.
2. Serbian language (especially transitional Torlak dialect) and Greek share with the others a lower number of properties.
3. Turkish - shares mainly vocabulary and replacement of infinitive with subjunctive.

The Finnish linguist Jouko Lindstedt computed in 2000 a “Balkanization factor” which gives each Balkan language a score proportional with the number of features shared in the Balkan linguistic union. The results were (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balkan_sprachbund):

Table 1. Balkanization Element in the Available Languages

Language	Score
Slavic languages	11.5
Albanian	10.5
Greek and Rumanian	9.5
Roma(gipsy) language	7.5

In order to see the grammatical features of Balkan languages in terms of case system (nominative, accusative, dative/genitive, and vocative), vocabulary, and phonetic features, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balkan_sprachbund.

In this web site we can also witness that “another language that may have been influenced by the Balkan language union is the Judeo-Spanish variant that used to be spoken by Sephardi Jews living in the Balkans. The grammatical features shared (especially regarding the tense system) were most likely borrowed from Greek.”

“Since most of these features cannot be found in languages related to those that belong to the linguistic union (such as other Slavic or Romance languages), early researchers, including Kopitar, believed they must have been inherited from the Paleo-Balkan languages (Illyrian, Thracian and Dacian) which formed the substrate for modern Balkan languages. But since very little is known about Paleo-Balkan languages, it cannot be determined whether the features were present. The strongest candidate for a shared Paleo-Balkan feature is the postposed article” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balkan_sprachbund).

Greece

On the other hand, “Greek appears to be only peripheral to the Balkan linguistic union, lacking some important features, such as the postposed article. Nevertheless, several of the features that Greek does share with the other languages (loss of dative, replacement of infinitive by subjunctive constructions, object clitics, formation of future with auxiliary verb “to want”) probably originated in Medieval Greek and spread to the other languages through Byzantine influence” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balkan_sprachbund).

According to the data of Ethnology Database, those below are the languages spoken in Greece apart from Greek and the ethnic groups who speak these languages are (<http://www.diplomatikgozlem.com/TR/belge/1-5385/yunanistan-azinlik-raporu--1-.html>):

Language Groups in Greece

The following information has been downloaded from the web site “http://www.diplomatikgozlem.com/haber_oku.asp?id=1359.”

Albanian

Ranging from 50.000 to 140.000 people speak it in Attic, Viotia, South Evia, Salamina island and in the rural parts and villages of Athens and Epir region. People speaking this language are called “Arnevits”. Generally, the elderly people speak it; the young migrate to Athens and they are subjected to assimilation by Greeks. These people speaking Albanian in Greece are Christians.

2. Armenian

20. 000 Armenians speak Armenian in Greece and they are Christians.

3. Bulgarian

It is spoken by about 30.000 Pomaks in Greece. They are Muslims.

4. Macedonian

It is spoken by 180.000 (according to 1986 census) Macedonian minority who constitute 1.8 % of Greece population. Greeks use the expression “Slavic” for this language.

5. Balkanic Romanian

It is a gypsy language. It is spoken by 40.000 Muslim gypsies in total, 30.000 of whom speak Greek Romanian in Greece and 10.000 of whom speak Arlija dialect.

6. Vlach Romanian

The Lovari dialect of this language which is also named with the names of “Romanes, Tsingani and Rom” is spoken by a group of 1.000 Christian gypsies in Greece. They call themselves “Rom”. While some settled gypsies call them with a second name as “Tsingani”, they call unsettled gypsies “Yifti”.

7. Romany Greek

It is a gypsy language which is also called “Helleno-romani”.

8. Romanian of Mased

This language which is also called “Arumence, Aromence and Armina” is spoken by 50.000 people in Northwest Thessaloniki and North Greece, and around Pindus Mountain and Trikala. The children of this group, studying at Greek schools and known as “Armini,” are assimilated in Greek culture in a fast way. People at the rate of 20% go on their traditional lives.

9. Romanian of Meglen

This language also called “Meglenitik” is spoken in the south of Thessaloniki which is Meglen region.

10. Croatian of Serb

One part of those speaking this language, which is also called Serbian is Muslims, one part is Christian.

11. Tsaconian

This language otherwise called as “Kastanitas- Sitena” and “Lenidi- Prastos” is spoken by a group of people between 1.200 and 10.000 in cities such as Kastanitas, Stena, Prastos, Karakovonve, Pramatefti, Spounakeida, Tyros and in the east beaches of Peloponnes. In summer, these people go up the mountains which are in the west of Leonidi located in the east of Peloponnes, and when winter comes, they go down Leodini and the neighbor cities. Tsakonian emerged from the dialect of old Spartan and “Doric” dialect spoken in Lokania. There was “monolingualism” there in 1927. This language does not have natural comprehensibility with the modern Greek. Children who continue Greek schools go to kindergartens in winters (http://www.diplomatikgozlem.com/haber_oku.asp?id=1359)

Bulgaria

Population: 7,204,687 (2009)

Ethnic distribution of population: Bulgarian 83%, Turk 8.5%, Rumen 2.6%, Macedonian, Armenian, Tatar, Gagauz, Circassian, the others (1998)

Language: Bulgarian

Kosovo

Turks who constitute the majority especially in Pristine and Dragaş (a city near to Gora region in the south of Kosovo) try to keep their identity lively by means of cultural associations and political parties.

Population: Approximately 2,000,000 (2010)

Ethnic distribution of population: Albanian 92%, others 8%.

Languages: Official language is Albanian, Serbian.

(<http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kosova>)

Albania

Population: 3, 639,453 (July, 2009) 50% of the population locates in the rural areas.

Ethnic distribution of population: Albanian 95%, Greek 3%, the others 2% (Rumen, Serb, Bulgarian).

Languages: Official language is Albanian. Besides, Greek is spoken.

Macedonia

Population: 2, 066, 718 (July, 2009). About 170.000 of the population are estimated to be Turks.

Ethnic distribution of population: Macedonian 66.6%, Albanian 22.7%, Turk 4%, Rumen 2.2%, Serb 2.1%, the others(1994)

Languages: Macedonian 70%, Albanian 21%, Turkish 3%, Serbian- Croatian 3%, the others 3%.

Croatia

Population: 4, 489, 409 (July, 2009)

Ethnic distribution of population: Croatian 78.1%, Serb 12.1%, Bosnian 0.9%, Hungarian 0.5%, Slovenian 0.5%, Czech 0.4%, Albanian 0.3%, Rumen 0.2%, the others 6.9% (1991).

Languages: Croatian 96%, the others 4% (Italian, Hungarian, Czech, Slovenian and Deutsch).

Bosnia- Herzegovina

Population: 4,613,414 (July, 2009)

Ethnic distribution of population: Bosnian 48%, Serb 31%, Croatian 14.3%, the others %0.6 (2000).

Languages: Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian (Tree of them are all official languages)

h. Romania

Population: 22,215,421 (July, 2009)

Ethnic distribution of population: Romanian 89,5%, Hungarian 7,1%, Roma 1,8%, German 0,5%, Ukrainian 0,3%, others 0,8 (1992)

Languages: Romanian, Hungarian, Deutsch, Romanian are the representatives of Latin languages at easternmost.

i. Montenegro

Population: Approximately 684,736 July (2007)

Ethnic distribution of population:

Languages: Official language is Montenegrin.

<http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karada%C4%9F>

j. Serbia

Population: Approximately 7,334,935(2010)

Ethnic distribution of population: 82.86% Serbian, 3.91% Hungarian, 1.81% Bosnian, 1.44% Roman, 1.08% Yugoslavian, %10 Others

Languages: Official language is Serbian.

Slovenia

Population: Approximately 5, 447,502 (2007)

Ethnic distribution of population:

Languages: Official language is Slovak.

<http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slovakya>

Turkey

Population: 76,805,52 (2009)

Ethnic distribution of population:

Languages: Official language is Turkish.

<http://www.ulkeler.net/turkiye.htm#02>

Italy

Population: 58,126,212 (July, 2009)

Ethnic distribution of population: Italian.

Languages: Official language is Italian, German, French, Slovene, <http://www.ulkeler.net/italya.htm#02>

Caucasus

When classified in terms of the languages they speak, it is seen that Caucasus people belong to three different language groups.

1. Caucasus languages

a. Abkhazia- Adige languages (in the west Caucasus)

It is spoken by people of Abkhazia, Abaza, Şapsıĝ, Bjeduĝ, Jane, Besleney, Abzeh, Hatkoy, Temirgoy (Kemirguey), Natuhay, Kabardey.

b. Chechen- Lezgin languages (in the middle Caucasus)

It is spoken by the people of Chechen- Ingushetia, Lezgin, Avars, Lak, Dargı, Tabasaran, Rutul, Tsaahur, Agul.

2. Turkic languages

a. Karachai- Malkar (in the middle Caucasus)

b. Kumyks (in Daĝıstan)

3. Iranian languages

a. Ossetian (in the middle Caucasus)

b. Tat (in Daĝıstan)

3. Iranian languages

-Ossetian (in the middle Caucasus)

-Tat (in Daghistan)

a. Azerbaijan

Population: 8,238,672 (July, 2009)

Ethnic distribution of population: Azerbaijani 90%, Dağıstan 3.2%, Russia 2.5%, the others 4.3%.

Languages: Azeri 91%, Russian 3%, the others 6%.

b. Georgia

Population: 4,615,807 (July, 2009)

Ethnic distribution of population: Georgian 70.1%, Armenian 8.1%, Russian 6.3%, Azerbaijani 5.7%, Ossetian 3%, Abkhazia 1.8%, the others 5%.

Languages: Georgian 71% (official), Russian 9%, Armenian 7%, Azeri 6%, the others 7%.

c. Armenia

Population: 2,967,004 (July, 2009)

Ethnic distribution of population: Armenian 97.9%, Kurds 1.3%, Russian 0.5%, others 0.3% (2001).

Languages: Armenian 96%, Russian 2%, the others 2%.

Central Asia

While different ideas are set forth on the geography of Central Asia, the term is mostly used for the region surrounded by Russian, China, Afghanistan, Iran and Caspian Sea, which extend from Volga to Yellow Sea, from Siberia to the Himalayas. This region, called Central Asia, was named as Turkistan in the past. Persian-Turkish languages, Islamic religion, patriarchal family and hierarchical authority structure are among the determining factors of the region.

Kazakhstan

According to Kazakhstan State Statistical Institute, it is the largest Central Asian state. Besides, that it has the most ethnical varieties and that the main ethnic group reaches just half of the population differentiate Kazakhstan from other Central Asian states. According to 1999 census, of 15 million population, 53.4 % is Kazakh, 30% is Russian, 3.7% is Ukrainian, 2.5% is Uzbek, 2.4% is German.

This institute reports that official language is Kazakh. Kazakh comes from Nogai-Kipchak language family group and there are several dialects of it that do not differ from each other. Besides, Kazakh is also spoken in Afghanistan, China and Iran. According to

the data in 1991, while the rate of Kazakhs knowing Russian is 59.4 % in Kazakhstan, the rate of Russian population knowing Kazakh is 0.9 %. <http://www.Kazstat.asdc.kz/1913-1999/4.htm>.

Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan, having the most positive image about democratization among Central Asian states and being defined as a democracy island, is in a very ethnic structure with that Russian constitute 13 %, Uzbek constitute 14 % of the population. According to 1999 census, Kirghiz constitute 65 %, of 4.8 million population (Yüce, 2006).

According to this study, Kirghiz, put into practice with the Arabic alphabet in 1923 for the first time, was started to be written using Latin in 1928 and Cyrillic alphabet in 1940. Kirghiz, which has showed improvement until 1960, started to progress as a result of change of Soviet language policy in this period. He maintains that Kirghiz courses were removed from universities and schools almost all, and as a result only one school providing Kirghiz education remained in the center.

Uzbekistan

The Uzbeks constitute 71% of Uzbekistan population. The Russians, having 10% rate come second. Other ethnic elements and their rates to the general population are: the Tajiks 4.7%, the Kazakhs 4%, the Karakalpaks 2%, the Tatars 1.7%, and the Crimea Tatars 1%. The rate of ethnic elements outside of these is under 1%. (<http://www.enfal.de/uzbekistan.htm>)

Tajikistan

In IRNA a study on “25 Percent uzbeks among Tajiks Celebrating Language day” in 2001, it has been stated that Tajik identity is improved with Soviet period and helped the Tajiks to differentiate themselves from other publics speaking Persian, as was the case with Uzbeks. 2/3 of the population of Tajikistan lives in rural areas and they are interested in agriculture since its land is suitable for agriculture. It is believed to be one of the twenty poorest countries in the world. With its sectional and mountainous geography, it seems to have lost two great civilization centers, and this has made Tajikistan not able to have a national identity of its own.

The same study also reports that Tajik, written with Arabic alphabet in 1930 and Cyrillic alphabet in 1940, continued to be used during the Soviet Union period. While language laws were put into practice almost everywhere in the Soviet Union in 1989, Tajik was accepted as the state language in Tajikistan in July 22, 1989.

Turkmenistan

The 3.5 million population of Turkmenistan in 1989, the smallest and poorest country

of Central Asia, was calculated as 4.5 million in 1995. The rate of Turkmen group to total population is 72% in 1989, 77% in 1995, and 81% in 1999. These numbers were determined to be 9% in 1989, 6.7% in 1995 and 4% in 1999 for Russians and 9% 1989, 9.2% 1995, 10% 1999 for Uzbeks respectively (Ochs, 1997).

Table 2. The Rate of Muslim People in Turkmenistan, Adopting Turkoman or Russian as Mother Tongue

Ethnic Group	The Rate of People Speaking Turkoman as Their Mother Tongue %			The Rate of Those Speaking Russian as Their Mother Tongue %		
	1959	1970	1979	1959	1970	1979
Uzbek	22	1.9	2.6	-	-	-
Kazakh	0.7	0.6	0.7	-	-	-
Azerbaijani	1.6	1.0	1.2	-	17.3	18.7
Tatar	2.1	1.2	1.1	-	15.8	19.8

(Benningesen & Enders Wimbush, 1986)

Relationship of Turkey with Turkish Republics

In the Report of Turkey-Turkic Republics Relations (1995), Turkey tended to be quiet and indifferent towards the Turkish world outside her borders until now. However, the events which occurred so far made Turkey the focus of attention for the independent Turkish states, Russian Federation and Turkic communities living in different positions in other states. The most important reason for this is the distance kept by Turkey that is in the same ancestry and culture circle with federal states and communities as a result of her experiences in values and practices such as democratic, pluralist parliamentary system, freedom of religion and conscience, and market economy.

Languages Spoken in the Other Eurasian Countries

China

Population: 1,338,612,968 (July, 2009)

Ethnic Distribution of Population: Chinese 91.9%, Zhuang, Uyghur, Hui, Yi, Tibetan, Miao, Manchu, Mongolian, Buyi, Korean and other ethnic groups 8 %.

Languages: Standard Chinese or Mandarin which is Beijing Dialect, Yue (Cantonese), Wu (Shanghaiese), Minbei (Fuzhou), Minnan (Hokkien- Taiwanese), Xiang, Gan, Hakka Dialects, other local languages.

India

Population: 1,166,079,217 (July, 2009)

Ethnic Distribution of Population: Indian- Aryan 72%, Dravidian 25%, Mongolian

and the others 3% (2000)

Languages: English, Hindi, Bengali (official), Telugu (official), Marathi (official), Tamil (official), Urdu (official), Gujarati (official), Malayalam (official), Kannada (official), Oriya (official), Punjabi (official), Assamese (official), Kashmiri (official), Sindhi (official), Sanskrit (official), Hindustani.

Russian

Population: 140,041,247 (July, 2009)

Ethnic Distribution of Population: Russian 81.5%, Tatars 3.8%, Ukrainian 3%, Chuvash 1.2%, Bashkir 0.9%, White Russian 0.8%, Moldavian 0.7%, the others 8%.

Languages: Russian, the others

Iran

Population: 66,429,284 (July, 2009)

Ethnic Distribution of Population: The Persians 51%, Azeris 24%, Gilaki and Mazandarani 8%, Kurdish 7%, Arab 3%, Lur 2%, Baloch 2%, Turkoman 2%, the others 1%.

Languages: Persian and Persian Dialects 58%, Turkish and Turkish Dialects 26%, Kurdish 9%, Lurice 2%, Balotice 1%, Arabic 1%, Turkish 1%, the others 2%.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Language is one of the most important elements of a nation. There are many nations in Eurasian geography we have examined. Each of them has their own languages and also these languages have a specific history. In this geography, Indo-European languages (such as Greek and Albanian), Slav language (such as Bulgarian, Macedonian, and Serbian) and Uralic- Altaic languages (such as Turkish and its dialects) are the mostly spoken languages.

In the historical process, another feature developing together with language is independency. Nations were able to use a language of their own only when they were free and independent, like in countries which reached their independence in the Central Asia and Caucasus. We can say that the use of a national language is the sign of freedom and independent identity of that state. This conclusion even proves that language is a national asset that should meticulously be protected and improved.

Among the paramount issues of the independent Turkic Republics comes the “national language problem” first. A big difference between Turkish languages (dialects) is not seen in the regions Turks lived before Soviet invasion. Dialects of Kazakh, Karakalpaks, Kirghiz, and Tatars were very similar to each other, and people living in these regions could understand each other easily.

As language issue is an important problem in the Turkish world, the issue of common alphabet also holds an important place. Central Asia Turkish Republics have used Arabic

alphabet until 1928. Following the foundation of Turkish Republic, Latin letters were switched in 1928 while Cyrillic alphabet, used by communists, was imposed on Turks in Central Asia in 1940.

In addition, in our opinion, these criteria should be taken into consideration to analyze the questions related to language in Eurasian geography in general.

1. Considering that language has an instrumental function related to communication and that language has a symbolic function related to national identity and providing that these functions are in balance as much as possible.
2. Noticing that language problems are solved radically in almost no country, avoiding rigid/ strict policies that have high possibility to come back.
3. Taking into account that language can partially be planned and only in the long-run it can be changed in parallel with other social changes, preferring sudden and isolated language policies.
4. Keeping in mind that not the languages, but the language groups with different benefits and attitudes towards language conflict; considering that solutions to the language problems lie in changing language attitudes, a set of values and beliefs about language.
5. As they all point out that consciousness about the political dimensions of language is vital, taking steps about this issue; training experts, providing universities with research facilities, setting up centers, making the public conscious about language via media are very necessary.

Last but not the least; we can say that a language will only have fulfilled its real function when it acts as a bridge not an obstacle for nations to become free, communicate, establish connections with others in economy, culture, history, policy, etc.

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