

TRANSLITERATION, A TRANSLATION PROCEDURE OR A TOOL OF RESISTANCE?

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Öz: Azerbaycan Cumhuriyeti'nin bağımsızlığından sonra Latin alfabesiyle yazılmış eserlerin Arap alfabesine değiştirilmesi İran Türkleri tarafından başlatılmıştır. Çeviribilimciler transliterasyonu bir çeviri yöntemi olarak tanımlarlar. Ancak İran'da bu süreç farklı bir amaçta kullanılmaktadır. Bu araştırmanın amacı, İran Türkleri transliterasyonu bir çeviri çözümü olarak ya da Farsî-Arî kültür hâkimiyeti karşısında bir direniş aracı olarak kullanmalarını ispatlamaktır. Bu çalışmada Azerbaycan Cumhuriyeti'nden yapılan çeviri verilerine ihtiyaç duyulmuştur. Sonuçlar transliterasyon düşüncesi, Türk kimliğini korumasında ve Fars kültürü asimilasyonu karşısındaki direnişe önemli rolü ve katkısı olmuştur. Diğer bir ifadeyle, İran Türkleri transliterasyonu bir direniş aracı olarak kullanmaktadırlar.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Transliterasyon, (İran) Türk dili ve kimliği, direniş, çeviri süreci, azınlık dili ve transliterasyonu ve sömürgecilik.

Transliterasyon, Bir Çeviri Süreci Mi Yoksa Bir Direniş Aracı Mı?

Abstract: After the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the transliteration of the works written in Latin alphabet into the Arabic alphabet was initiated by the Iranian Turks. Translational scientists describe transliteration as a method of translation. However, in Iran, this process is used for a different purpose. The aim of this study is to prove that the Iranian Turks use the transliteration as a translation solution or as a means of resistance against the Persian-Arî cultural dominance. In this study, translation data from the Republic of Azerbaijan was inquired. Conclusions, the idea of transliteration had an important role and contribution to the preservation of Turkish identity and resistance to assimilation of Persian culture. In other words, the Iranian Turks use the transliteration as a means of resistance.

Keywords: Transliteration (Iran), Turkish language and identity, resistance, translation procedure, minority language and transliteration, and colonialism.

1. Introduction

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Republic of Azerbaijan declared its independence and forcibly imposed Cyrillic alphabet replaced by Latin one which opened the way for Turks in Iran to transliterate literary works from Latin script to Perso-Arabic script. In spite of the fact that Latin script is much easier to use and learn, Turks in Iran tend to use Perso-Arabic script since Persian is the official alphabet and language in Iran. Turkish is a phonetic language; however, Arabic is basically syllabic. Each letter stands for a consonant and the following vowels are implied. The vowels can be represented by special diacritical marks if need be.

In Translation Studies, transliteration is seen as a translation procedure which is used to convert a word from one writing system to another. Translation scholars like Catford, Newmark, and Hervej and Higgins believe that transliteration is a translation

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procedure which is used to translate proper nouns, brand names, religious terms, etc. Since transliteration is not of high importance in Translation Studies and is considered as a simple act, it has not received much attention.

The emergence of postcolonial theories and issues associated with translation and minority languages indicated that translation is a political act to preserve and improve minority cultures and languages. In other words, translation is a tool to resist linguistic and cultural colonialism. In this research, it is hypothesized that transliteration like translation is a political tool to resist Persian cultural and linguistic colonialism in Iran. In addition, the emergence of machine transliteration systems in Iran has accelerated the process of Turkish language preservation and standardization.

The research attempted to prove that transliteration is a tool of resistance, a political tool to stand against Persian colonialism. The research question is as follows:

1. What is the role of transliteration used by Turks in Iran?

In this research, Cronin's translation and minority language (1995, 1998, 2003) was used as a theoretical framework to understand the function of transliteration in Azerbaijani Turkish literature in Iran.

2. Theoretical Framework

Cronin's (1995, 1998, 2003) translation and minority languages was employed to understand what role transliteration has played in Turkish literature in Iran. Cronin is the leading scholar on the issue of minority language and translation. In fact, Cronin discusses the issue of minority languages and translation within Europe in terms of internal colonialism. According to Cronin (1995), languages are not inherently minor, but it is the diachronic or spatial relation between languages that puts a language in minority position. He sees translation as a double-edged sword which can be a friend or an enemy to minority languages. Nevertheless, translation is necessary to revitalize a language. Cronin (2003, p. 150) regards technological advances as a key element in improving the language making it available. The use that is made of technology by minority languages is not just for improving the language but "it also challenges the antiquarian illusion, the notion that somehow minority languages are unable to cope with the complexity of modern life and technology".

3. Literature Review

Toury (1985) is among the first scholars who studied the issues of minority languages in translation. In 'Aspects of translating into minority languages from the point of view of translation studies', he defined minority languages as weak, not only in relation to the majority language of the community but also "due to the inherent difficulties of producing in them the entire range of discourse types". Toury considered translation a "filling-in device" which can be used to fill the gaps in minority language and culture. Consequently, it occupies a primary position in minority literature, and brings about changes "in TL and the target discourse habits" (p. 3). As believed by Toury, translation is seen as a tool to preserve, and develop minority languages so that they "resist displacement" (p. 7). Translation is an economic way to revitalize an under-used language limited to certain spheres of usage, provided that a translation planning, systematic prescriptive intervention, is provided, and interferences are directed "to those levels and domains where it is needed for the evolution of the minority language into a more or less full-fledged communication system", otherwise using translation for the development of the minority languages is intuitive (pp. 4-5). As a solution for minority languages, Toury points out that the weakness of a minority languages can be modified "where there is another community where the minority language in question is used as a majority language, such as the cases of Arabic in Israel, Swedish in Finland, or Albanian in Yugoslavia" (p. 7).

Cronin is the leading voice on the issue of minority languages and translation. In fact, Cronin discusses the issue of minority languages and translation within Europe in terms of internal colonialism. Cronin (1995) questions other postcolonial translation scholars, namely Niranjana, who give an account of the unbalanced power relationship between people, repression of the majority over the minority and European colonization and criticizes them for ignoring the colonization inside Europe itself. On defining the concept of minority, Cronin argues that "the concept of 'minority' with respect to language is dynamic rather than static" and it "is the expression of a relation not an essence" (p. 86).

The relation between minority and majority language is of two forms, i.e. diachronic and spatial. Diachronic relation is characterized as "an historical experience that destabilizes the linguistic relations in one country so that languages find themselves in an asymmetrical relationship" (Cronin, 1995, p. 86). Concerning the spatial relation, Cronin (1995) believes that a language finds itself in minority position owing to a change in national boundaries, and "those which occupy the same territory but are no longer in a dominant position" (p. 87). Translation, Cronin (2003) argues, is "both predator and deliverer, enemy and friend". Minorities can utilize translation to develop their language and resist incorporation, or they can be assimilated through translation into the dominant language. In other words, translation is of two kinds: translation-as-assimilation, and translation-as-diversification.

In her article 'Language, Translation and the Promotion of National Identity', Woodsworth (1996), exploring two cases of translation into two minority languages, Scots, and Romansh, considers translation as a means to enrich a minority culture by importing foreign values. Woodsworth believes translation into a minority language is practiced for sustaining and promoting minority cultures. Therefore, translation is not just meant for simple communication but for the preservation of an identity. As a support for this view, she maintains that "translation serves to stimulate and preserve the language, enrich the indigenous literature and strengthen a sense of cultural identity" (p. 212). Woodsworth asserts that translation is a purposeful and teleological activity, and it is no longer source-oriented which involved "evaluating the adequacy of the translation and measuring the "equivalence" of two texts", but she stresses "what translations are for" (p. 212). For bilingual minority speakers, translation is not needed. Therefore, translation "is a means of strengthening the minority language and culture, of helping to ensure its survival, and hence of promoting national identity, or a new vision of "nationhood" (p. 235).

Tymoczko and Gentzler are scholars who see translation as an activity which takes place in a socio-political context. In their book 'Translation and Power' (2002), they discuss the relationship between power and translation, and define translation as not "a process of faithful reproduction", but a deliberate act of "selection, construction, and omission". In other words, "it is inextricably linked to issues of cultural dominance, assertion, and resistance -- in short, to power" (p. 246).

Postcolonial theories consider the unequal relations of power and domination between the colonizer and the colonized and create a relationship between translation and political processes including assimilation, resistance, and subversion (Robinson, 1997). In their introduction to 'Postcolonial Translation Theory and Practice', Bassnett and Trivedi (1999) take into account the problem of colonization in the field of translation studies and state,

There was a time when the original was perceived as being *de facto* superior to the translation, which was relegated to the position of being merely a copy, albeit in another language (p. 2).

From this standpoint, translation is no longer considered as marginal and a copy of the original but as a primary activity which can become a process of manipulation and even resistance. According to Fernandez and Flitter (2013), postcolonial theories in the context of minority culture can begin to be a means of resistance and "the translated text can be transformed into the symbolic representation of its cultural and/or national self-affirmation and its struggle for cultural and/or political differentiation" (p. 67).

In Translation Studies, transliteration is generally seen as a procedure to convert a word from one script into another. Catford (1965) and Newmark (1988), along with other translation scholars, studied the issue of transliteration. Catford (1965) defines transliteration as a process in which "SL graphological units are replaced by TL graphological units". However, these graphological units are not considered by Catford to be translation equivalents, since "they are not selected on the basis of relationship to the same graphic substance" (p. 66). Catford (1965) draws a distinction between translation and transliteration that the latter is, unlike the former, a conventionalized process, but the former "is carried out anew, or ad hoc" (p. 68). Catford (1965) maintains that transliteration consists of three steps:

- a) SL letters are replaced by SL graphological units; this is the normal literate process of converting from the written to the spoken medium
- b) The SL phonological units are translated into TL phonological units
- c) The TL phonological units are converted into TL letters, or other graphological units (p. 66).

Newmark (1988) proposes several translation procedures. Transliteration which is included in one of the translation procedures, transference, is the conversion of words from one writing system into another. Newmark also uses transliteration for conversion of words from one writing system into another (p. 81).

In Hervey and Higgins' (1992) view, transliteration is a translation procedure which is defined as "conversational conventions" used "to alter the phonic/graphic shape of a ST name so that it comes more into line with TL patterns of pronunciation and spelling" (p. 29).

Generally, Machine Transliteration system is used as an assistant machine translation and information retrieval. According to Oh and Choi (2005) machine transliteration "is an automatic method to generate characters or words in one alphabetical system for the corresponding characters in another alphabetical system" (p. 450). These systems are useful for linking two languages together removing the scriptural barriers.

4. Methodology

The descriptive method was utilized in this research. The research aimed to determine the role of transliteration in Turkish literature in Iran. Two sets of data were required in the research. Firstly, the data related to the number of books transliterated into Turkish after the Islamic Revolution were collected. Secondly, the data related to machine transliteration systems developed by Turks in Iran were gathered. The primary tool for gathering the data was the Internet. Following links were accessed in order to obtain the information regarding the transliterated books:

1. <http://www.nlai.ir/>
2. <http://ishiq.net/>
3. <http://buxca.ir/>
4. <http://www.lib.ir/>
5. <http://www.gisoom.com/>
6. <http://arzublog.com/>
7. <http://www.ketab.ir/>
8. <http://bulaq.ir/>
9. <http://bilimsesi.com/>
10. <http://duzgun.ir/>

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| 11. http://www.mugham-pub.ir/ | 12. http://turkkitab.com/ |
| 13. http://www.rezahamraz.com/ | 14. http://turuz.com/ |
| 15. http://www.yashmaq.blogfa.com/ | 16. http://buta.ir/ |

In order to obtain the data concerning the number of transliterated books, firstly, various keywords were searched in the above-mentioned websites which are given below:

کۆچورن [=Transliterator], کوچورن [=Transliterator], کۆچوره [=Transliterator], چوکورن [=Transliterator], کوچورمن [=Transliterator], کۆچورمن [=Transliterator], چوکورن [=Transliterator], چوکوره [=Transliterator], حاضیرلایان [=preparer], حاضیرلایانی [=preparer], حاضیرلایان لار [=preparers], حاضرلایان [=preparer].

Subsequently, publishing houses producing Turkish books in different cities of Iran were searched in the websites which are stated below:

Tabriz: Hashemi Sudmand, Anvar Ketab, Yeylagh Ghalam, Daniyal, Sepand, Bahardokht, Darvish, Akhtar, Nabati, Azar Turk, Nedayah Shams, Danizchin, Mehran, Aydin Sav, Yashar Ghalam, Yaran, Zar ghalam, Qizil Ghalam, Hadaf Az Ghalam, Shayesteh, Ark, Mogham, Roshd Khalagh, Anas, Entesharat-e Aval, Eldar, Ilqar, Sumer Nashr, Arman Nasl-e No, Ons.

Tehran: Andisheh No, Donyayeh No, Alhoda, Takderakht, Temsal, Shani, Pardis-e Danesh, Anjoman-e Shaeran Iran, Payetakht, Avaz, Dorsa, Darmangar, Donya, Sadaghat, Negah-e Sabz, Nokhbejan.

Urmia: Buta, Yaz, Olker, Adiban, Farsar.

Ardabil: Savalan Igidlari, Nasim Sabalan.

Zanjan: Hidaji, Nikan Ketab.

Qom: Bakhshayesh, Avayeh Monji, Molavi, Ostad Motahari, Navid-e Eslam.

Maragheh: Maktab Asnund, Rastan.

Naghadeh: Soluzbajejan.

Bonab: Parlagh Ghalam.

Bushehr: Yashil Alma.

Karaj: Pinar: Shani, Payetakht.

Shiraz: Qashqayi.

Nevertheless, some problems were encountered during obtaining the data. Firstly, in some cases transliterators failed to specify whether the book was transliterated or not. Therefore, it was necessary to find the book and check the contents or original author. Prepared [=حاضیرلانمیش] books, sporadically, were not specified whether they were transliterated or not. Thirdly, in a few cases, the translated and transliterated books were not differentiated in the lists. Thus, it was necessary to search for the work on the other websites that are mentioned above, download if it was available or purchase it. Fourthly, National archives categorized the transliterated works under the title of Persian language. Finally, in some cases, the sources failed to give full information about the transliterated books.

5. Results

5.1. Transliterations

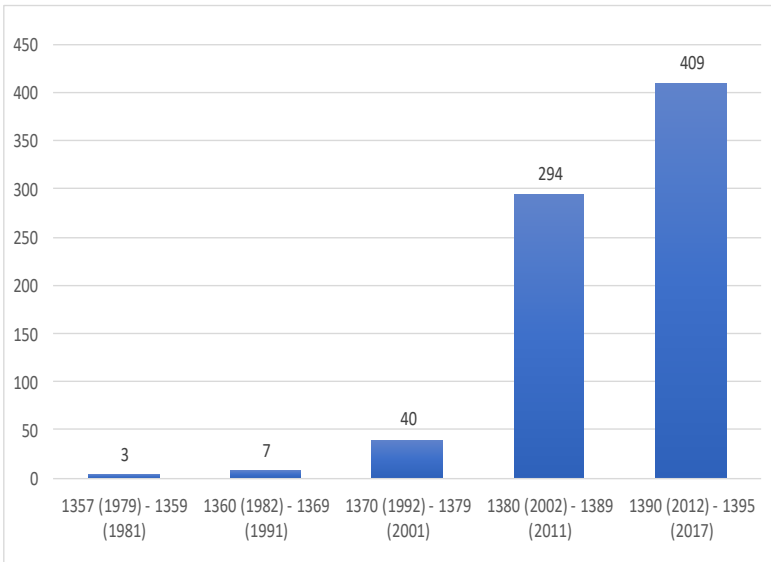


Figure 1. Number of Transliterations 1357 (1979)-1395 (2017)

As is evident from figure 1, 3 books were transliterated prior to 1982. The number of transliterations from 1982 to 1991 is low. This is due to the fact that the Republic of Azerbaijan did not gain its independence until 1991. From 1992 to 2001, a total of only 40 transliterations appeared. This was the time when the literature of the Republic of Azerbaijan was flourishing. The volume of transliterations began to increase in 2002, reaching a peak in 2011. With the emergence of machine transliteration systems in 2012, the number of transliterations increased significantly, reaching a peak in 2017. Evidently, the volume of transliterations has increased every decade.

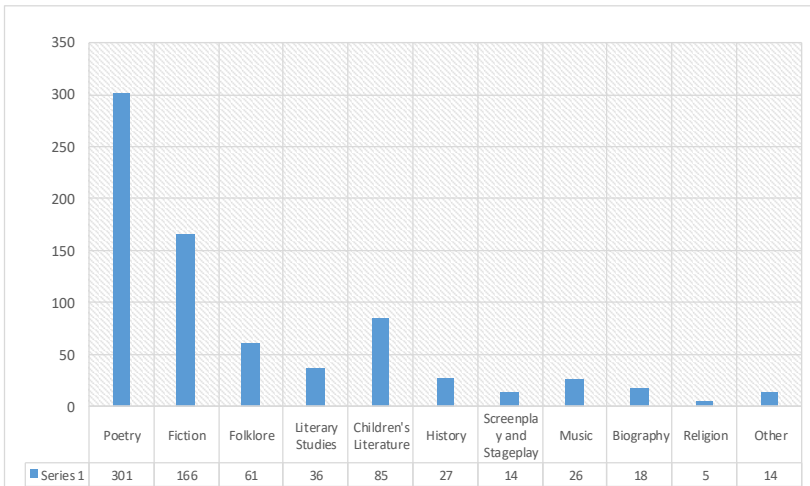


Figure 2. Number of Transliterations in 12 Categories

Transliterations were predominantly in twelve categories: poetry, fiction, folklore, literature studies, children's literature, history, screenplay and stage play, biography, music, religion and other categories which include law, philosophy, industry, satire. Poetry is the top transliteration category with 301 transliterations. In the category of fiction which included short stories and novels, 166 instances of transliteration were found. The number of transliterations related to folklore was 61. For literary studies, there were 36 transliterations. In the category of children's literature, 85 instances were found. There were 27 transliterations related to history. There were 14 transliterations for both screenplay and stage play. The number of transliterations related to music was also 26. For transliterations related to biography, there were 18 records. For religious transliterations, there were 5 instances. Finally, the overall number of other transliterated works was 14.

5.2. Machine Transliteration

Several transliteration programs were developed by Turks in Iran, all of which aimed at transliterating from Latin script to Arabic script and vice versa. However, there are also one or two transliteration programs that perform the task of transliteration from Cyrillic script to Latin script and vice versa. In spite of the fact that transliteration programs are generally used to handle proper nouns and out of vocabulary words along with the translation systems, transliteration programs developed by Turks are intended to transliterate texts. The programs are mostly used by publishers and transliterators. They are explained below:

5.2.1. Türkçə Yazıq

Türkçə Yazıq is a transliteration program developed by Oxtay Nejad Muhammad in 2010. It was designed for Windows and it is mainly applied to transliterate from Latin script to Arabic script and vice versa. It can also be applied to transliterate from Cyrillic script to Latin script unilaterally. Using special diacritics for vowel sounds, developed by Pro. Javad Heyat at the Seminar on Orthography of the Turkish Language has made the program unique among its kind. The algorithm of the program includes segmentation of words into morphemes. The main problem in designing the program was some Arabic letters which have one form in Turkish. For example, Arabic letters (ت, ط, ث, ص, س), (ز, ظ, ض, ذ) have one form (ت, ز). In order for the designer to cope with the problem, 70000 words were checked. Thus, a dictionary of 20000 words was made in order to improve the performance of the program. In transliteration process, the words firstly are segmented into morphemes, then suffixes are analyzed. According to the Seminar on Orthography of the Turkish Language, a half-space must be inserted between some words and suffixes. Normally, one month or two is needed to transliterate a book in the absence of the program. However, the time reduces to 30 minutes by having the use of the program (O. Nejad Muhammad, personal communication, July 19, 2016). Türkçə Yazıq provides other services which can make the transliteration process fast including detecting diacritic errors, highlighting the syllables, converting numbers into words and vice versa, adding Azerbaijani calendar and teaching Turkish language.

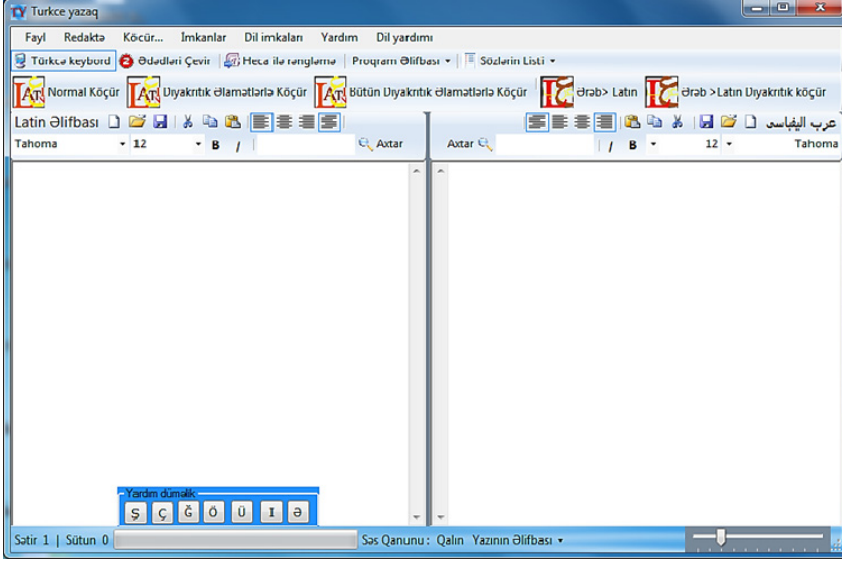


Figure 3. Türkçe Yazak Main View

5.2.2. Köçürgə

Köçürgə is a transliteration program developed by Oxtay Nejad Muhammad. It was designed for Android smartphones. The program transliterates from Latin script to Arabic script and vice versa. It can also transliterate from Cyrillic to Latin unilaterally. In addition, Köçürgə provides another service which is converting numbers into words and vice versa.



Figure 4. Köçürgə Main View

5.2.3. Azconvert

Azconvert is developed by Mousa Moradi who is a computer engineering student at Sharif University in Iran. The program, a free open source transliterator, was designed for Windows and it supports transliteration from Latin script to Arabic script and vice versa. The program is also capable of converting Cyrillic script to Latin script and vice versa. Based on the dictionary which is included in the program, firstly, common words (words that are defined in the dictionary) are transliterated, then unknown words are transliterated letter by letter based on the rules of the Seminar on Orthography of the Turkish Language (M. Moradi, personal communication, November 5, 2016). Uncommon words can be added any time to the program. Additionally, the program has a built-in calendar converter which converts Gregory and Solar Hijri calendar and vice versa.

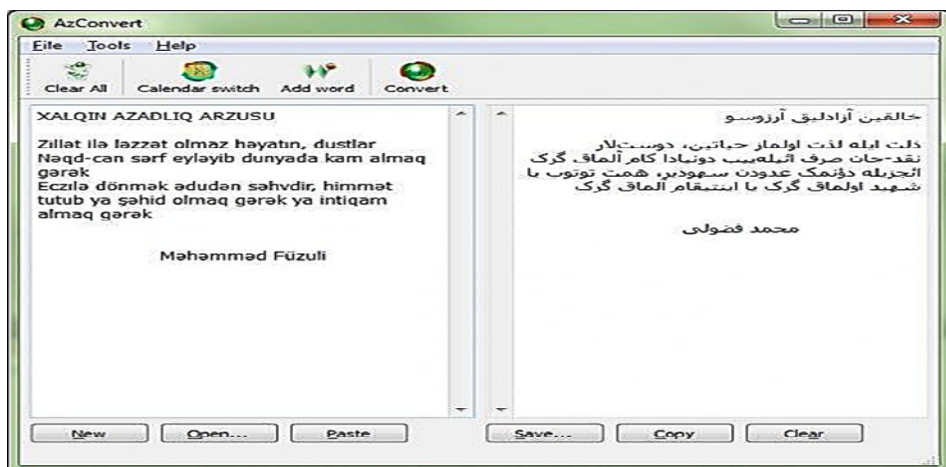


Figure 5. Azconvert Main View

5.2.4. Köçürgə Yazılımlı

This is a transliteration program developed by Ghafour Alipour in 2015. In comparison with the other transliteration programs, its design is simple. It is mainly used to transliterate from Latin script to Arabic script. However, it is designed to transliterate from Cyrillic to Latin unilaterally. In this program, words are segmented into morphemes, then suffixes are analyzed. It is designed for Windows.

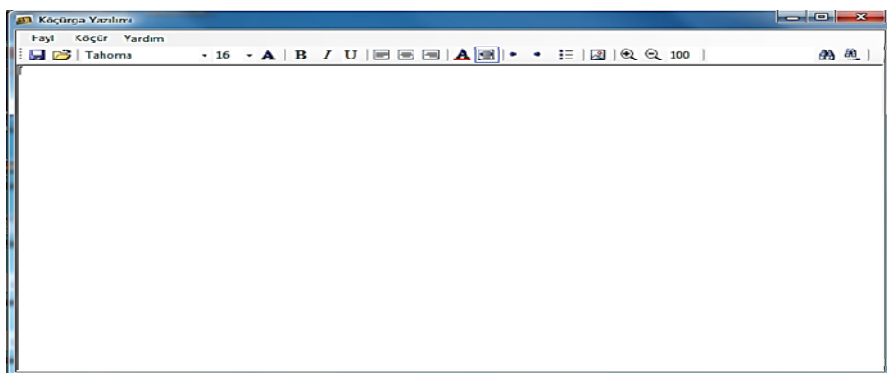


Figure 6. Köçürgə Yazılımlı Main View

5.2.5. Köçürgə

Köçürgə is a free transliteration service provided by Ghafour Alipour in 2013. It offers a web interface which transliterates from Latin script to Arabic script and vice versa. Köçürgə can also transliterate from Cyrillic to Latin unilaterally. In transliteration process, the words firstly are segmented into morphemes, then analyzes suffixes. The program is also able to transliterate from Istanbul Turkish written in Latin script to Arabic script which makes translation from Istanbul Turkish into Azerbaijani Turkish easy.



Figure 7. Köçürgə Main View

1. What is the role of transliteration used by Turks in Iran?

In his 'A Textbook of Translation', Newmark (1988) introduces 17 strategies for translating culture-specific items. Transference, which is one of the procedures, is the process of transferring SL word to a TL text and includes transliteration (p. 81). It is a procedure which is fundamentally used for transliterating proper nouns, brand names, religious terms, etc. In Iranian Turks' case, transliteration which is a 'conventionalized process' (Catford, 1965, p. 68) is employed in order to transliterate from Latin and rarely Cyrillic into Perso-Arabic script. Here, transliteration is not used for words but texts and it goes beyond its normal use as a translation procedure. It is used as a tool for connecting Iranian Turks and the Republic of Azerbaijan. In fact, the alphabetic and orthographic barrier has made Turks unable to read each other's literature, a situation which is called by Ebulfez Elchibey as 'Alphabet Despotism' (Asgharzadeh, 2007, p. 109). Thus, transliteration is not the mere conversion of a text from one script to another, but it is related to resistance, language standardization, and preservation of Azerbaijan language. It is used as an ideological tool for national self-definition and identity, a defensive measure against assimilation. Transliteration from the republic of Azerbaijan plays an extremely important role in establishing cultural and linguistic affinity with the republic of Azerbaijan. The strong bond between two nations and literatures paves the way for cultural revival and nationalist struggle against the centripetal Persian. It is used as a political tool to introduce innovative patterns and

threaten Persian language hegemony. In addition, transliteration contributes to language normalization and preservation. Since Turkish language is a dominant and official language of the Republic of Azerbaijan, transliteration from the Republic of Azerbaijan has played a significant role in absorbing new patterns and strengthening Turkish language in Iran. Thus, transliteration is a resisting factor against making Turkish language being assimilated and incorporated by Persian language.

Machine transliteration system is a tool to preserve a minority language which is used to make the process of transliteration easy and fast, thus making available texts within a short period of time. Turkish language needs machine transliteration system in order to keep the cultural and linguistic relationship going strong between Iranian Turks and Republic of Azerbaijan. Machine transliteration bridges the gap between two scripts which are the barriers to cultural communication. It enables minority language speakers to communicate with the majority language speakers of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Machine transliteration has its own pros and cons, the main advantage of it includes time. There is no need to spend hours converting a text from one script to another. Instead, the software can transliterate promptly and provide a quality output apace. In addition, one of the main disadvantages of it is the problem of accuracy. Since Perso-Arabic script is totally different from Latin script and Perso-Arabic has some deficiencies in representing all of the vowels, some trivial problems occur in the process of machine transliteration which can be solved by developing more complex and modern softwares. The appearance of machine transliteration softwares in 2011 in Iran significantly increased the volume of transliterations. These systems are effective tools in the hands of Turks that help them accelerate the process of language normalization. Thanks to transliteration, Iranian Turks have had access to many prominent works. Transliteration is a means for expanding the social domains in which Turkish can be used. By importing registers and forms needed for the development of the language, transliteration becomes a socio-political tool for cultural revival.

Despite the fact that there are 35 million Turks in Iran, all of them are banned from learning their own mother language, and transliteration can become a method to preserve Turkish language and resist language displacement. As Woodsworth (1996, p. 218) argue, translation is “a means of affirming a distinct identity”. Transliteration in Iran is also a means of maintaining a distinct Turkish identity and a way of promoting national identity. Transliteration supports Turkish language in Iran through importation of prestigious works from the Republic of Azerbaijan which leads to an increase in the prestige of Turkish culture. Thus, transliteration is the political means of strengthening Turkish language and identity, it is the act of self-affirmation and resistance.

6. Conclusion

The rise of nationalism in the late nineteenth century and the beginning of Reza Shah's nation-building project in Iran led to a long period of repression and subjugation of ethnic minorities by the Persian state. The existence of non-Persian identities and languages was denied and his nationalistic ideology presented Iran as a country having one identity, one language, one history and one culture. (Elling, 2013). Transliteration which is considered by translation scholars as an approach for translating proper nouns is used as a tool by Turks to remove the orthographical barrier between Iranian Turks and the Republic of Azerbaijan. In this context, transliteration is not used for translating proper nouns. Instead, it is used for transliterating texts from Latin script into Perso-Arabic script and vice versa. It is clear that transliteration is an important way to import new values of the Republic of Azerbaijan and enrich Turkish culture and identity in Iran. In this context, transliteration goes further than its normal use and becomes a socio-political tool for preserving and standardizing Turkish

language in Iran. Transliteration is a means of strengthening the verbal and cultural repertoire which helps the survival of Turkish culture and promote its identity. The emergence of machine transliteration systems in 2012 has accelerated the transliteration and improvement of Turkish language.

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