

DIWANU LUGATI'T-TURK AND CONTEMPORARY LINGUISTICS

Timur KOCAOĞLU*

The branches of linguistics such as Sociolinguistics and Applied Linguistics are relatively young disciplines compared to the much older fields of linguistics such as General Linguistics, Historical Linguistics, and Theoretical Linguistics.¹ These new disciplines have not only brought new dimensions to linguistics, but have also expanded our general understanding of the world languages. In this article, I will attempt to evaluate both the approaches and techniques that had been employed in the composition of the eleventh century Turkic dictionary *Diwanu Lugati't-Turk* (DLT) by Mahmud Kashghari (1072-1077).² To undertake this task, I will examine this work consistent with the most recent approaches in Applied Linguistics and Sociolinguistics.

First of all, it should be noted that this earliest Arabic-Turkic dictionary was compiled with an obvious intention to assist the Arabic-speaking elites around Caliphs of Baghdad who would like to improve their knowledge on the culture and language of the Turks, especially the Oghuz Turks, as a rising great political power in the Middle East and Central Eurasia in the tenth and eleventh centuries as stated in the introduction of the dictionary:

* Timur Kocaoğlu is professor of Turkic Languages and director of Center for Strategic Studies at Koc University in Istanbul, Turkey.

¹ Although the beginnings of some of these contemporary branches can be traced back to late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, their developments as independent linguistic fields emerge after World War II. See, *The Handbook of Linguistics* (ed. By Mark Aronoff and Janie Rees-Miller). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001, p. 564; Rl. L. Trask, *Key Concepts in Language and Linguistics*. London: Routledge, 1999, pp. 171-173.

² The precise dates of this work is from 25 June 1072 (1 Jumadil-ula 464) to 9 January 1077 (12 Jumadi'l-axir 469), see Robert Dankoff, James Kelly, *Mahmūd al-Kāshgārī: Compendium of the Turkic Dialects (Dīwān Luyāt at-Turk), Parts 1-III*. Duxbury, Mass.: Sources of Oriental Languages and Literatures, 1982, 1984, 1985; these dates are discussed in detail in the Part I (p. 7) of this work. The full name of its author is given in the preface of the dictionary in Arabic as Mahmud ibn al-Husayn ibn Muhammad al-Kashgari (DLT, I. 2/3; Dankoff-Kelly, *ibid.*, Part I, p. 70).

I heard from one of the trustworthy informants among the Imams of Bukhara, and from another Imam of the people of Nishapur: both of them reported the following tradition, and both had a chain of transmission going back to the Apostle of God, may God bless him and grant him peace. When he was speaking about the signs of the Hour and the trials of the end of Time, and he mentioned the emergence of the Oghuz Turks, he said: “Learn the tongue of the Turks, for their reign will be long.” Now if this Hadith is sound – and the burden proof is on those two! – then learning it is a religious duty; and if it is not sound, still Wisdom demands it.³

Therefore, Mahmud Kashghari has deliberately incorporated many pedagogical features along with encyclopedic background information in order to educate the learners of the Turkish language in a broad cultural methodology. The English translators of the dictionary, Dankoff and Kelly, points that Mahmud Kashgari “follows the model of the Arabic lexicographers” by citing “a large number of illustrative sentences and also proverbs and verses of poetry” in explaining the meaning and usage of the Turkish word entries.⁴ Mahmud Kashgari, however, needs to be credited for his choice of this methodology from various other models available in the Arabic lexicographic schools. The major input by Mahmud Kashgari in his dictionary is the use of explanatory texts (phrases from daily conversations, proverbs, selected parts of poetry, etc.) and other cultural background data (from ethnography and folklore) in the instruction of a foreign language (Turkish) to the Arabs as seen in the following entries of the *Diwanu Lugati't-Turk*:

ağız “Mouth of a man or animal.” Proverb: **ağız yése köz uyadur** “When the mouth eats the eye is ashamed.” This is coined about someone who has “eaten” another person’s gift and then is ashamed for failing to do what he should in return.⁵

³ English translation: Dankoff-Kelly, *ibid.*, Part I, p. 70; Arabic text: DLT I. 2/3 – I. 3/4.

⁴ Dankoff-Kelly, *ibid.*, Part I, p. 5. In citing this and other entries from Dankoff and Kelly’s work in this article, I avoided the diacritical marks and the Arabic phrases used by them. It is also extremely difficult to represent the letters of the transcription alphabet used in their book, instead I changed those complex letters with their equivalents in the Latin alphabet of Turkey (with the addition of letters “q” and “x”). Thus, these simplified and abridged excerpts here don’t exactly match with the original entries of the Dankoff-Kelly edition.

⁵ Dankoff-Kelly, *ibid.*, Part I, p. 101.

av “Hunt” **beg avğa çıqtı** “The emir went out to hunt”⁶

aq “White” of anything. Oğuz dialect. Among the Turks it is used for horse colors: **aq at** “Gray horse.”⁷

ay “Month,” also **qışqa anun kelse qalı qutluğ yay / tün kün keçe alqınur ödleg bile ay** “Prepare for winter when blessed summer comes, for Time runs out and months come to an end with the passing of night and day.” The reason “month” is called by the word for “moon” is simply that the passing of the month is known by it. Proverb: **ay tolun bolsa elgin imlemes** “When the moon is full one does not point to it with the hand” – since anyone who has eyes can see it. This is coined about any matter of which the defect is apparent.⁸

The above entries illustrate finely how Mahmud Kashgari makes a great effort in the word entries of his dictionary to enhance the knowledge of the Arabic-speaking readers about the deep cultural background behind the given Turkish words in the daily lives of the various Turkic groups. The contemporary foreign-language teaching textbooks and handbooks in the US and other European countries, especially ones that are published in the last two decades, incorporate more and more cultural information about the given foreign country or the people. In the field of second language teaching, the emphasis is now being switched from heavy reliance on grammar and lexicon to more cross-cultural discourse:

Accurate description of language use with the ultimate goal of teaching has motivated research in cross-cultural discourse and pragmatics. Concentration on spoken language, combined with speech act theory among others, has engendered numerous research projects in applied linguistics investigating specific speech acts such as making requests and apologies in different languages and cultures.⁹

Living in the eleventh century, the first-known Turkologist Mahmud Kashgari was well aware and familiar with the pedagogical methods of teaching and learning a

⁶ Dankoff-Kelly, *ibid.*, Part I, p. 118.

⁷ Dankoff-Kelly, *ibid.*, Part I, p. 118.

⁸ Dankoff-Kelly, *ibid.*, Part I, p. 119.

⁹ Janie Rees-Miller, “Applied Linguistics” in *The Handbook of Linguistics*, *ibid.*, p. 643-644.

foreign language. Because of its rich cultural information in the word entries, the Turkish linguist Ahmet Caferoğlu wrote that “As its name point out, the *Diwanu Lugati’t-Turk* is not a dictionary of the living Turkic dialects of that time, but an unequaled treasury of Turkish language and culture of its era”.¹⁰ We can further formulate that DLT is not a plain dictionary which assembles the Turkish words and their Arabic meanings in a mere fashion, but is a bilingual guide that has an affluent pedagogical dimension in the contemporary sense. Mahmud Kashgari proudly states in the introduction that he had “adorned it with words of wisdom and elegant speech, proverbs, verses of poetry, and sentences of prose” by having spend “long years of labor over it, causing each word to lie down in its proper place, and lifting each one out of obscurity; so that the one who seeks it may find it in its correct compartment, and who desires it may observe it in its allotted order.”¹¹

Aside from its importance in regard to Applied Linguistics, *Diwanu Lugati’t-Turk* is also remarkable for containing invaluable features that falls within the discipline of Sociolinguistics. Both the introductory part and many entries comprise information about the language contact between the Turks and other nations. The section, entitled “On the Turkic Dialects,” of the introduction begins with:

The most elegant of the [Turkic] dialects belongs to those who know only one language, who do not mix with Persians, and who do not customarily settle in other lands. Those who have two languages and who mix with the populace of the cities have a certain slurring (*rikka*) in their utterances – for example, Sogdaq, Kençek and Arğu. The second category are such as Khotan, Tübüt [Tibet] and some of Tangut – this class are setters in the lands of the Turks.¹²

Mahmud Kashgari gives further information that “the people of Masin and Sin have a language of their own, although the sedentary population know Turkic well and their correspondence with us is in the Turkic script.” According to Mahmud Kashgari, the peoples in both Tübüt (Tibet) and Khotan don’t know Turkic well. He informs that Qay, Yabaqu, Tatar, Basmil know Turkic well, although each of them has its own language. He names Qırqız, Qıfçaq, Oğuz, Tuxsi, Yağma, Çiğil, Oğraq, and Çaruq as speaking “pure Turkic” by having a single language. He also

¹⁰ Ahmet Caferoğlu, *Türk Dili Tarihi*, Cilt II. Istanbul, 1972, p. 21. (its new edition with both volumes together: Ahmet Caferoğlu, *Türk Dili Tarihi*. Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1984).

¹¹ Dankoff-Kelly, *ibid.*, Part I, p. 71.

¹² Dankoff-Kelly, *ibid.*, Part I, p. 24; the words in brackets are mine.

report that the peoples of Balasaghun, Titaz (Talas), and İsfijab speak both Soghdian and Turkic. This information is strikingly significant for contemporary Sociolinguists. Mahmud Kashgari undoubtedly describes the linguistic contacts (of adstratum, substratum, and superstratum types) between two communities belonging to diverse language groups from each other. He finally refers to bilingualism and multilingualism among various Turkic and other ethnic groups living in the areas where the Turks are settled.

I would like to make a final remark on Mahmud Kashgari's dictionary concerning its various translations. For any detailed linguistic inquiry, one desperately needs a reliable text. The only sound translation of Diwanu Lugati't-Turk so far is its English edition by Dankoff and Kelly.¹³ The dictionary has also four editions in various Turkic languages (Turkey Turkish, Uzbek, Uyghur, and Kazakh).¹⁴ The Uzbek, Uyghur, and Kazakh editions are mainly based on the Turkey Turkish edition by Besim Atalay and therefore repeat the errors of this edition. The English edition, however, was a new attempt to translate it from original Arabic manuscript with cross examination of the Besim Atalay edition. One previous Uzbek translation by Abdurrauf Fitrat from 1927 has remained unnoticed by other Turkologists for a long time.¹⁵ Fitrat's edition, entitled "The Specimen of Ancient Turkic Literature," consists of the transcriptions in the Arabic script of the verses of poetry that scattered throughout the dictionary and their Uzbek translations. Unaware of Fitrat's work, the Turkish scholar Talat Tekin also produced a Turkish edition of the verses of poetry in the DLT in 1989.¹⁶ Another recent effort to prepare a new Turkey Turkish edition of the dictionary by the Turkish scholar Ahmet Bican Ercilasun hasn't been completed yet.¹⁷

¹³ Robert Dankoff, James Kelly, *Mahmūd al-Kāshgarī: Compendium of the Turkic Dialects (Dīwān Luḡāt at-Turk)*, Parts I-III., ibid.

¹⁴ Aside from its Arabic transliteration by Kilisli Rıfat, *Mahmud al-Kaşgarī: Kitāb Divān Luḡāt at-Türk*. 3 Cilt. İstanbul, 1917-1919, the Turkish edition is by Besim Atalay, *Divanü Lûgat-it-Türk Tercümesi, I-III*. Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 1939-1941 (New edition: 1985-1986); *Besim Atalay, Divanü Lûgat-it-Türk Dizini "Endeks"*. Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 1943 (New edition 1986); the Uzbek edition is by Salıq M. Muttalibov, *Türkiy Sözlər Divanı I-IV*. Taşkent: 1960, 1961, 1963, 1967; the Uyghur edition is by Mahmud Qaşgarı, *Türkiy Tillar Divanı: Divanü Lûgat-it-Türk* (3 Cilt). Ürümqi: Şincang Xalq Neşriyati, 1981 (Yayınlayanlar: Abdusalam Abbas, Abdürrahim Ötkür, Abdurrahim Habibullah, Damulla Abdülhamit Yusufi, Halimi Salih, Hacı Nurhacı, Osman Mehmed Niyaz, Sabit Ruzi, İbrahim Muti, Emin Tursun, Mir Sultan Osmanov); the Kazakh edition is by Asqar Qurmaşulı Egeubay, *Maxmut Qaşqariy: Türk Sözdigi I-II-III*. Almatı: Cediger, 1997-1998.

¹⁵ Fitrat, *Eñ Eski Türk Edebiyatı Nemüneleri*. Taşkent-Semerkant: Özbekistan Devlet Neşriyati Neşri, 1927.

¹⁶ Talat Tekin, *XI. Yüzyıl Türk Şiiri*. Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 1989.

¹⁷ Ahmet Bican Ercilasun informed me in 2001 about his continued work.