



Antik Çağlardan Günümüze Van Gölü Havzasında Konuşulan Dillere Tarihsel Bir Bakış ve Dil Eğitimine Etkileri

A Historical Overview of the Languages Spoken in the Lake Van Basin from Antiquity to the Present and Their Implications for Language Education

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Öz

Bu çalışma, Van Gölü Havzası'nda Antik Çağ'dan günümüze kadar konuşulagelen dillerin tarihsel gelişimini inceleyerek, bu çokdilli yapının günümüz dil eğitimi politikaları ve uygulamaları üzerindeki yansımalarını değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmada tarihsel doküman analizi yöntemi kullanılmış; arkeolojik buluntular, yazıtlar, tarihi metinler, etnografik raporlar ve çağdaş akademik çalışmalar doğrultusunda nitel veriler toplanmıştır. Elde edilen veriler, betimsel analiz tekniğiyle çözümlenmiş; dillerin bölgedeki egemenlik ilişkileri, göç hareketleri, dini dönüşümler ve kültürel etkileşimler bağlamında nasıl dönüşüm geçirdiği ortaya konulmuştur. Çalışmada, dil değişimi, çokdillilik ve kültürel etkileşim kavramları teorik çerçeve olarak ele alınmaktadır. Bulgular, Urartuca, Eski Ermenice, Süryanice, Arapça, Farsça ve Osmanlı Türkçesinden günümüzün Türkçe, Kürtçe ve Zazaca kullanımına kadar uzanan geniş bir dil yelpazesi bulunduğunu göstermektedir. Bu tarihsel çokdillilik, bölgenin kültürel yapısının ve toplumsal çeşitliliğinin oluşumunda önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Elde edilen bulgular, bölgenin dil eğitimi açısından zengin bir mirasa sahip olduğunu ve bu çokdilliliğin modern dil eğitime katkılar sunduğunu göstermektedir. Sonuç olarak, dilsel çeşitliliğin tarihsel bağlamda çok katmanlı bir yapıya sahip olduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Bunun, dil, kimlik ve kültür arasındaki etkileşimin uzun vadeli tarihsel süreçler boyunca daha bütüncül bir şekilde analiz edilmesine imkân sağladığı düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Van Gölü Havzası, Dil Eğitimi, Çokdillilik, Tarihi Diller, Kültürel Etkileşim.

Abstract

This study aims to analyse the historical development of the languages spoken in the Lake Van Basin from antiquity to the present day and to evaluate the reflections of this multilingual structure on contemporary language education policies and practices. In the research, historical document analysis method was used; qualitative data were collected in line with archaeological finds, inscriptions, historical texts, ethnographic reports and contemporary academic studies. The data obtained were analysed with the descriptive analysis technique and it was revealed how the languages transformed in the context of sovereignty relations, migration movements, religious transformations and cultural interactions in the region. In the study, the concepts of language change, multilingualism and cultural interaction are discussed as the theoretical framework. The findings show that there is a wide range of languages ranging from Urartian, Old Armenian, Syriac, Arabic, Persian and Ottoman Turkish to contemporary Turkish, Kurdish and Zazaki. This historical multilingualism has played an important role in the formation of the cultural structure and social diversity of the region. The findings show that the region has a rich heritage in terms of language education and that this multilingualism contributes to modern language education. As a result, it has been observed that linguistic diversity has a multi-layered structure in the historical context. This is considered to enable a more holistic analysis of the interaction between language, identity, and culture through long-term historical processes.

Keywords: Lake Van Basin, Language Education, Multilingualism, Historical Languages, Cultural Interaction.

Introduction

The Lake Van Basin consists of the districts of Tuşba, İpekyolu, Edremit, Gevaş, Gürpınar, Özalp, Saray, Çaldıran, Muradiye, and Erciş of Van, as well as the districts of Adilcevaz, Ahlat, and Tatvan in Bitlis. Due to its strategic geographical location and fertile lands, Van has been home to many different civilizations throughout history (Işık, 2017). This situation has resulted in the region being repeatedly subjected to wars, exiles, and invasions. The basin has served as a frequent destination for those migrating from east to west, becoming a settled area for them (Eriçok, 2019). Thus, the Lake Van Basin has been a cradle of various civilizations throughout historical processes, and this situation is reflected in the region's linguistic diversity. This profound relationship between language and culture is of critical importance for understanding the socio-cultural structure of the region (Demircan, 2010), and these investigations may yield rather influential data on the map of language variation in the area.

Van, one of the highest-elevation settlements in Anatolia, is situated on the shores of the largest lake in Anatolia. The presence of Lake Van moderates the basin's climate, and although fertile soil is distributed in separate parts, it contributes to its agricultural potential (Mangaltepe, 2005). Like many provinces of Anatolia, the Lake Van Basin has attracted attention throughout history due to its climate, geographical position suitable for agriculture and animal husbandry, and its geostrategic location (Işık, 2017). However, due to its high altitude and frequent snowfall, the basin formed a natural defence line against threats from other nations such as the Assyrians during ancient times (Lebrun, 2005). Since Van, one of the highest-elevation settlements, is located on the shores of the largest lake in Anatolia, the moderating effect of Lake Van results in a relatively mild climate in the basin. The basin's climate is mild, due to the presence of Lake Van, which creates a moderating effect. The region has fertile soil, although this is distributed in separate parts (Mangaltepe, 2005). Similar to many regions in Anatolia, the Lake Van Basin holds significance owing to its climate, geographic suitability for agriculture and animal husbandry, and its strategic geopolitical location (Işık, 2017). However, due to its high altitude and frequent snowfall, the basin formed a defence line against threats from other nations such as the Assyrians during ancient times (Lebrun, 2005). This region has attracted attention throughout history, surrounded by steep and impassable mountains, fertile plateaus, and pastures, and it has been a location for numerous tribes and communities. It has changed hands many times (Zülfükar, n.d.). Therefore, Lake Van and its surroundings have been a settlement area for human communities since prehistoric times. Historical records indicate that many different nations have inhabited the Lake Van Basin over time. Although each nation spoke a different language, it is understood that some languages were dialects within the same language group. Accordingly, Hurrian, Mittani, Urartian, Armenian, Latin, Arabic, Turkish, and Kurdish were spoken in the region. In this context, the current study is rather significant in terms of preserving the linguistic heritage of the region and transmitting it to future generations (Kılıç, 2015); therefore, it attempts to analyse these languages, examine their interactions, and investigate their contributions to language education. No comprehensive source has been found regarding the languages spoken in the region throughout history, and we believe that this study contributes to the existing literature.

1. Theoretical Framework

The transformations undergone by the languages in the Lake Van Basin are discussed within the framework of language change, multilingualism, and cultural interaction. The theoretical framework of the current study encompasses a multidisciplinary approach, intertwining historical linguistics, sociolinguistics, and educational theory. This framework begins with an exploration of the linguistic ecology of the Lake Van Basin, identifying and categorizing the languages historically spoken in the region—such as Urartian, Armenian, Kurdish, Arabic, and Ottoman Turkish—before and after the spread of Islam. It examines the transformative influence of Islamic culture on linguistic dynamics, particularly focusing on how the introduction of Arabic as a liturgical language and the later adoption of Ottoman Turkish for administrative purposes redefined the linguistic hierarchies in the region. The concept of linguistic ecology, which examines the interactions between languages and their social, cultural, and geographical environments, provides a robust lens through which to analyse these historical shifts (Haugen, 1972). Sociolinguistic principles play a crucial role in understanding language contact, borrowing, and shifts that occurred because of socio-political changes, migrations, and cultural exchanges associated with the spread of Islam. Language contact theory, for instance, elucidates the mechanisms of borrowing and language shift in multilingual settings (Thomason & Kaufman, 1988). Additionally, the framework integrates perspectives from language education theory, analysing how the historical interplay of these languages has shaped contemporary language education practices, such as the teaching of heritage languages, second-language acquisition, and multilingual education policies. By leveraging these theoretical perspectives, the study aims to bridge historical and modern insights, shedding light on how the legacy of linguistic changes in the Lake Van Basin informs the current challenges and opportunities in language education. This

framework not only contextualizes the topic within historical and sociocultural dimensions but also provides a foundation for evaluating the pedagogical implications of preserving linguistic diversity in a historically rich and complex region.

2. Methodology

A qualitative method was used in this research, and historical documents and academic sources were consulted. In recent years, qualitative research has expanded into a diverse and sometimes overwhelming field. It has become an integral part of empirical research training across numerous disciplines, ranging from sociology and psychology to cultural studies, education, and economics, among others. Beyond these traditional academic fields, it has gained increasing recognition in more practical domains such as social work, nursing, and public health. Qualitative research has always been characterized by its applied nature, both in the questions it explores and its methodological approach, and it now plays a crucial role in these areas. Within social sciences, it is difficult to find any research field that does not, at least to some extent, utilize qualitative methods, particularly when viewed from a global perspective. Qualitative research aims to explore and describe people's lived experiences from their own perspectives, capturing these realities. Its primary goal is to enhance the understanding of social phenomena by highlighting patterns, processes, and structural aspects that are often inaccessible to outsiders and are not consciously recognized by individuals immersed in their habitual routines. Through detailed and nuanced descriptions, qualitative research does more than merely portray reality—it refrains from sensationalizing the unfamiliar solely for intrigue. Instead, it harnesses unexpected or unconventional elements as tools for insight and reflection, enabling the unfamiliar to shed light on the familiar and vice versa. To illustrate how these perspectives are achieved, classic qualitative studies often address four central questions that guide this method (Flick, U., von Kardorff, E., & Steinke, I., 2004). Data were analysed using the content analysis method. Content analysis refers to the systematic examination of communication content, focusing on the meanings, contexts, and intentions embedded within messages. This method serves as a flexible and valuable tool for researchers in fields such as social sciences and media studies. While it has also been utilized in historical and political research, its greatest recognition and widespread application have been within social science disciplines and communication studies (Prasad, B. D., 2008). This approach allows for the systematic analysis of textual and media content, enabling researchers to identify patterns, themes, and underlying meanings within qualitative data. Besides, it facilitates the critical examination of how media representations shape social perceptions and cultural narratives across different contexts.

3. The Historical Evolution of the Languages Spoken in the Lake Van Basin

The current study attempts to discuss the development of languages spoken in the Van Lake Basin before and after the advent of Islam. Due to its geographical and topographical features, the region has attracted human communities' attention from prehistoric times to the present day. Thus, many different nations have made this basin their home, preserving their culture, civilization, and language. In the meantime, it has been influenced by neighbouring civilizations, and it has also influenced these civilizations in terms of the languages they spoke. Excavations in the Lake Van Basin have shown that civilizations in this region date back to 15,000-8,000 BC (Algül, 2018). However, the findings indicate that societies with close relations to the Middle East and the Caucasus lived in this region during the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods, around 3000 BC. It has been determined that this region hosted Hurrian tribes around 2000 BC, and the Hurrian-Mittani civilizations were in contact with the Hittite civilization in Anatolia. Hurrian and Mittani languages are known to have had clear similarities. The findings and philological comparisons indicate that the Urartians established a civilization in and around the city of Van, which served as their capital between 900-600 BC. Some archaeological findings suggest that the Urartians' dominance in Van lasted until the beginning of the 7th century BC, and that the Scythians captured the Urartian territory shortly after 609 BC (Tarhan, 2015). After the Scythian domination, the region came under the rule of the Medes for a time, followed by Persian rule over these lands (Erzen, A. et al., 1961). The region came under Roman control in 133 BC. Roman rule was established in 66 BC, and the city remained a buffer zone between Rome and the Parthian states (Sümer, 2009). As a result of the empire's division, the region changed hands between the Sassanids and the Eastern Roman Empire (Haldon, 1997). Armenians living in the region during this period remained independent for a short time (Payaslı, 2007). However, in the book review titled *Armenian Van*, written by Sedat Laçiner, it is claimed that the history of Armenians in the region of Van dates back to the Prophet Noah (Laçiner, S., 2001). It remained under Sassanid rule from the 2nd to the 7th centuries. In 625, the Khazar Turks arrived in the region (Brook, 2006). These successive political transitions not only redefined territorial control but also contributed to the region's ethnolinguistic and religious diversity, providing a foundation for subsequent social and cultural developments, and holding an effect on the distribution of languages. Thus, it may be claimed that such historical dynamics are critical for understanding the long-term processes of identity formation and intergroup relations in the area.

Starting from the 9th and 10th centuries, this region, which came under the sovereignty of the Turkish-Islamic States, holds special importance as it was the region through which the gates of Anatolia were opened to the Turks. In the first half of the

9th century, the Abbasid-Byzantine and Abbasid-Armenian struggles dominated Van and its surroundings. In 852, the region known as the Armenian province, which included Van in Arab sources, was conquered by Boğa al-Kabir, a Turkish commander in the service of the Abbasids. In the 10th century, Van and its surroundings were under the rule of the Sajid dynasty, the Armenian Principality of Vaspurakan, the Mervanids, and the Byzantines (Grousset, 1995). During Byzantine rule, Armenian and Georgian princes served as the commanders of the Byzantine army, as they were no more principalities. However, the castle was conquered in 1064 by Sultan Alp Arslan's son Melikşah, along with many castles and cities around it. At the end of this campaign, Sultan Alp Arslan left the administration of these places to the vassal emirs who participated in the campaign. Thus, the area around Lake Van came under the administration of the Nakhchivan Emir, Sakaroghlu Abu Dulef. Soon after a short period of Umayyad rule, the region came under the sovereignty of the Anatolian Seljuk State. The region was ruled by various Seljuk Principalities, and the rulers were appointed by Timur and the Safavids. From 1533 to 1536, the Ottoman State was accepted as the ruler of the Lake Van Region. According to the information obtained from the yearbooks of 1850 in the second half of the 19th century, Van was organized within the Kurdistan Province (Baykara, T., 1988). In the early 20th century, there were many Armenian riots against the Ottoman state, which had negative effects on the people living in the vicinity. During the First World War, Armenian gangs massacred countless Muslims under the supervision of Russian armies (McCarthy, 2001; Erickson, 2001). Meanwhile, during the reign of Sökmen I (1100-1112), the first lord of the Ahlat-Shahs State, Van, Gevaş, Erciş, and Adilcevaz were within the borders of the Ahlat-Shahs State (Cahen, 1968). It is possible to assert that Understanding these dynamics is essential for contextualizing the social and cultural transformations that occurred in Eastern Anatolia during this period. The Mongol storm swept the region in 1260 with the Ilkhanate Dynasty (Keleş, E., 2018; Mangaltepe, İ., 2005). From the 13th century onwards, the Ilkhanate rule in the region began to lose its influence and ended in 1336. Van and its surroundings were governed by the Begs of the Jalayirids until Timur captured the region in 1374 (Aşan, M.B., 1992). As can be seen, a number of different nations ruled the region, and each nation spoke their own language. Accordingly, archaeological excavations carried out in Van Castle and examinations carried out in the remaining churches and mosques show that Christian Armenians lived in Van and its surroundings before and during the existence of Muslims. There are differences between the past and present place names in the geography of the Lake Van Basin. Some of these are in Turkish, as well as in Armenian and local accents (Mangaltepe, İ., 2005).

3.1. Pre-Islamic Period

The Lake Van Basin has attracted many different communities throughout history with its climate and fertile lands, and these communities spoke their own languages on these lands until they left the stage of history. This study evaluates the languages that came to the fore in the region, including the presence of Urartian, Parthian, Armenian, and Kurdish, as well as the Sassanid and Byzantine influences. In prehistoric times, around 2000 B.C., the Hurrians, who dominated the region, spoke a language like the Ural-Altai language of Turkish (Diakonoff & Starostin, 1986). This language, which has a close resemblance to Urartian, is not in the Indo-European language group and is believed to be related to languages currently spoken in the Caucasus (Lebrun, R., 2005). After the Hurrians, the Mittanis gained dominance in the region; they also used their own language. According to archaeological evidence, it is seen that the Urartians gained dominance in the region after the Mittanis. The Urartian state ruled for 300 years in the region from Lake Urmia, centred in the city of Van, to Malatya, from Gökçeğöl in the north of Yerevan, including Erzincan and Erzurum, and to Aleppo and Mosul in the south. In the Urartian state, Urartian was spoken, and cuneiform was used (Erzen, A. et al., 1961). The initial phase of native literacy in the region, lasting about 150 years, ended with the fall of the empire that created it, leaving little continuity in later traditions. However, the significance of Urartian, a non-Indo-European language, in records from the Taurus, Zagros, and Caucasus regions has deeply influenced views on the region's linguistic history and contributed to debates on Indo-European migrations. The spread of the related Hurrian language to northern Syria and Mesopotamia in the late third and second millennia BC, as well as potential connections to modern Caucasus languages (Lebrun, R., 2005). We have enough evidence to suggest that the Urartian Empire was a state with many ethnic movements (Salvini, 2008). This leads us to believe that there were multilingual ethnic structures within the borders of this state (Lebrun, R., 2005).

The Medes put an end to the Urartian state; thus, the region came under the rule of the Medes (Curtis & Tallis, 2005). Minorsky and Marr attribute Kurdish people to the Medes. Minorsky suggests that, based on historical and geographical evidence, the Kurdish nation likely emerged from the merging of two closely related tribes, the Mardoï and Kyrtoï, who spoke similar Median dialects. Furthermore, as the Kurds expanded westward, they are believed to have assimilated various local elements into their cultural and social fabric (Bois, T., & Welland, M. W. M., 1966). Naturally, the Medes spoke their language in the region. It is understood that the Armenians first came to this basin in small groups in the 6th century BC. After the short rule of the Medes, the region came under the rule of the Romans. They ruled until the Roman Empire. Then, Latin was spoken officially in the government offices. After the divisions, the ruling power of the regions changed between Romans and

Persians (Daryae, 2009). During this time, Persian was spoken in the area (Mangaltepe, İ., 2005). At the beginning of the 6th century BC, the country of Urartu became a subject of struggle between the Medes and the Lydians, and eventually, Eastern Anatolia remained under the Medes' rule. It is said that during the struggles of these two communities, Armenians migrated from the west and came to the region as a foreign element (Redgate, 1998). There are three inscriptions written in three languages in cuneiform on the wall of Van Castle. Researchers have stated that one of these three languages is the Zende language. Other scholars think that these inscriptions may belong to the Persian monarchy. The reason for this is that the name of Xerxes, the son of Darius, is found in seven places on the inscription. It is understood that these inscriptions, all written in cuneiform, are similar to the characters on the monuments of the ancient Assyrians (Mangaltepe, İ., 2005). This indicates that Van Castle served as a significant settlement in antiquity, inhabited by Assyrians and Persians, dominant powers in Mesopotamia, each speaking their respective languages. All these languages are indicated in the following table below:

Table 1. Historical Languages and Dominant Powers in the Lake Van Basin

Historical Period	Dominant Power / Civilization	Languages Spoken	Notes
ca. 2000 BCE	Hurrians	Hurrian (related to Ural- Altaic/Turkic)	Not Indo-European; linked to Caucasian languages
ca. 1500–1200 BCE	Mittanis	Mitanni Language	Indigenous language: little is preserved
ca. 900–600 BCE	Urartian Empire	Urartian	Cuneiform used; influenced regional linguistics
ca. 600 BCE	Medes	Median	Related to Kurdish; Minorsky & Marr link Kurds to Medes
6th century BCE onward	Armenians (early arrival)	Armenian	Migrated from west; grew in influence during Roman Persian period
ca. 66 BCE – 395 CE	Roman Empire	Latin (official)	Latin used in administration
ca. 224–651 CE	Sassanid Empire (Persians)	Middle Persian (Pahlavi), Zende	Inscriptions attributed to Xerxes found in Van Castle
Assyrian and Persian Rule	Various	Assyrian, Persian (Zende)	Multilingual inscriptions in cuneiform found in Van

Table 1. provides a chronological overview of the dominant languages and ethnic-linguistic communities inhabited the Lake Van Basin, based on historical, archaeological, and linguistic sources, revealing the multilingual and multicultural character of the region, with linguistic transitions influenced by successive empires and migrations which are mentioned earlier.

3.2. Post-Islamic Period until Today

The spread of Arabic and the influences of Persian, Ottoman, and Turkish in the Seljuk and Ottoman periods were seen in the Lake Basin of Van. There is no information about the city centre of Van in Arabic and Armenian sources from the 9th-10th centuries. This shows that the city of Van was not an important centre in that period, which indicates that Arabic and Armenian were the two major languages in the region during that time. During the Seljuk period, which dominated the region in the 11th century, Turks migrated from Central Asia to the Lake Van Basin in large groups. This clearly demonstrates that

Turkish has been the language spoken by the great majority of the people living in the area since then (Tekin, R. 2023). The Lake Van Basin was also suitable for the socio-economic living conditions of the nomadic Turkish and Mongol tribes that arrived with the Mongols. In this context, many Turkish tribes were settled in the region by the Ilkhanate for military purposes (Keleş, E. 2018). Turkmens escaping from the Mongol invasion flocked to Anatolia and settled there. This population, coming from Central Asia, changed the balance in Anatolia and became an important element in the formation of the social structure and the flourishing of Turkish-Islamic civilization in the region (Turan, O. 2015). The Eastern Anatolia Region, especially the Van Lake Basin, has seen the dominance of various Turkish states from the time of the Khazar Turks, who maintained their presence in the northern and eastern parts of the region during the 8th century, up to the present day. Starting from the 11th century, states such as the Ahlatshahs, Ayyubids, Dilmachoğulları, Khwarezmshahs, Anatolian Seljuks, Ilkhanids, Karakoyunlus, Akkoyunlus, Safavids, and ultimately the Ottoman Empire established control over the region. Over time, Turkish emerged as the primary language spoken across Eastern Anatolia (Gökçür, E. 2012). Therefore, this prolonged succession of Turkish-ruled states not only influenced the linguistic landscape but also shaped the region's administrative structures, cultural practices, and social hierarchies, contributing to the consolidation of Turkish as the dominant language and identity marker in Eastern Anatolia.

Circassians who migrated from Russia have lived in Van Province since the second half of the 19th century. They have a small population in two or three villages of Erciş district. They engage in agriculture there. Their neighbours are disturbed by the presence of the Circassians. In addition, although they do not show enough respect for the property of others, their loyalty to the government and courage have helped them obtain many useful jobs, such as becoming police officers (Cuinet, V. 1894). Besides, Kurdish nomads, known as Koçer, differ significantly from Bedouin Arabs. They inhabit mountainous regions rather than deserts, and their primary livelihood—animal husbandry—focuses on raising goats, sheep, and buffaloes, with occasional reliance on horses but rarely on camels. Their population is most concentrated in the highlands of the Turkish-Armenian plateau, the upper areas of the Kura, including the upper Araxe, the Murad Su, and the Euphrates, as well as the Lake Van Basin and the southern slopes of the Taurus Mountains (Bois, T., & Welland, M. W. M. 1966).

After 1932, increasing the concentration of the Turkish population in Van was among the goals of the Republican government. The government tried to increase the population density by distributing houses and land to the needy who had returned from migration and were homeless. Therefore, the aim was to bring and settle Turkish families from the Black Sea, Caucasus, Iran, and Azerbaijan, instead of the tribes sent to the West. With this aim, approximately 300 immigrants brought from Iran to İskele Village in Van were initially settled in houses built for them by the state. Later, houses and land were given to the families coming from the Küresin and Bruki tribes and from Ahıska, Bulgaria, and Crimea. The majority of the families coming to Van were settled in the İskele Village of the center and Edremit, and houses that could be examples of regional architecture were built for them (Kardaş, A. 2022). Today, most of the population living in the Lake Van Basin speaks Kurdish (Bois, T., & Welland, M. W. M. 1966).

Milligen (1998) claimed that there were more Armenians than Muslim Turks and Kurds living in the centre of Van in 1870, which contradicts other censuses. In 1898, Lynch divided the people into the following groups: Turks with their flowing dresses and wide headscarves, Kurds in sheepskin jackets, and Persians with tall felt hats, which is evidence that Turkish, Kurdish, and Persian were spoken in this city at the end of the 19th century (Eriçok, A. K. 2019). In the census conducted in the Ottoman Empire in 1892, the total population of the Van central district was determined to be 109,591, of which 53,183 were Muslims and 56,408 were Christians. In the 1899 Van Province yearbook, 32 mosques and masjids, as well as 15 monasteries and churches, were identified in the Van central district. This shows that, in addition to Muslims, Armenian Christians lived in Van, which confirms that Armenian was a language spoken in the region (Uluçam, A. 2000). According to Karaca, A. (1993), the majority of the population was Muslims; however, there were citizens living in the city of Van in 1896 pertaining to various religious nations such as Armenians, Nestorians, and Jews, denoting that languages belonging to these communities were spoken in the city at that time.

Table 2. Languages Spoken After Islam in the Lake Van Basin

Period / Year	Languages Spoken	Description
Seljuk Period (11th Century)	Turkish, Arabic, Persian	Due to Turks migration from Central Asia.
Ottoman Period (14th Century - Early 20th Century)	Turkish, Persian, Arabic, Kurdish, Armenian	Turkish was the state language while Kurdish and Armenian were spoken by the local communities.
Late 19th Century (1870s - 1890s)	Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian, Persian, Russian	In Van, Turkish, Kurdish, and Armenian were spoken, influenced by ethnic diversity.
Republican Period (1932 and after)	Turkish, Kurdish	After 1932, with the increase of Turkish population, Turkish became the dominant language, while Kurdish remained widely spoken.

The table above highlights the evolving linguistic landscape of the Lake Van Basin after Islam, shaped by migration, political changes, and ethnic diversity. It is known that The Seljuk era brought Turkish alongside the prestigious Arabic and Persian (Bosworth, 1963). Besides, the Ottoman period-maintained multilingualism including a wide scope of languages, with Turkish as the state language and Kurdish and Armenian as local vernaculars (Lewis, 1999). The late 19th century experienced Russian effect, adding to the linguistic complexity. The Republican era led to Turkish dominance alongside the continued presence of Kurdish, reflecting language policies and demographics (Erdoğan, 2012). This history indicates the basin as a linguistic intersection influenced by centuries of interaction.

4. Contribution of Linguistic Diversity in the Van Lake Basin to Language Education

The linguistic diversity of the Lake Van Basin holds crucial implications for both individual and societal language acquisition. The region has a complex historical language landscape, including various languages such as Urartian, Armenian, Kurdish, and Turkish throughout history, offering a unique context for examining language contact, maintenance, and shift. Thus, it may be asserted that these dynamics trigger language education by shaping both the curriculum and language policies within the region's educational systems. Moreover, understanding how historical languages intersect with modern practices is crucial for developing effective language education strategies that address the multilingual realities of the region. As Grosjean (1982) argues, multilingualism is a multifaceted phenomenon that provides valuable insights into language acquisition and its role in shaping educational frameworks. Considering the roots of the Turks living in the Lake Van Basin, which trace back to the first conquerors of this country (Cuinet, V. 1894), it is possible to claim that the first Turks to come to the Van region in 625 were the Khazars (Toplu, A. 1996). Subsequently, many Turkish tribes chose the Lake Van Basin as their homeland until the Ottoman Empire rule. Therefore, the great majority of people living in the region speak Turkish. Additionally, the long-standing presence of Turkish in the region has naturally shaped the linguistic environment and educational practices, with Turkish serving as the primary language of instruction and administration in modern times. Consequently, many language education systems were shaped to meet the needs of the society.

Kurds do not have a common language (Wilhelm, E. 1883). There are different dialects in the Kurdish language (Collas, B. C. 1864). Millingen, F. M. (1998) states that Kurdish is rarely spoken, that there are some peculiarities in this language, that there is no grammar, and there are as many dialects as there are tribes. He also states that there is no writing system of its own. The language used by the Kurds is a corrupted dialect of Persian, a mixture of Arabic and Persian (Mathieu, H. 1857). Despite historical debates on its standardization and written forms, Kurdish has been employed as a significant language in the region

for centuries, and its presence necessitates consideration in language education policies, particularly regarding heritage language instruction (Fishman, 1991). Currently, some universities in Turkey offer Kurdish undergraduate and postgraduate programs aimed at boosting the language learning capacity of the population. According to philologists, the Armenian language, although it belongs to the Indo-European group, has been mixed with the ancient Anatolian native languages, which were not pure (Erzen, A. 1992). The historical presence of Armenian, with its unique linguistic features influenced by contact with other Anatolian languages, provides a valuable case study for understanding language contact and the evolution of Indo-European languages in a multilingual setting (Thomason & Kaufman, 1988). There might be similarities and differences, and this could enhance the language skills of learners. Additionally, Circassians speak Circassian (Cuinet, V. 1894). The presence of Circassian, a language from the Northwest Caucasian family, further contributes to the linguistic diversity of the basin and indicates the importance of recognizing and potentially supporting the linguistic rights and educational needs of smaller language communities. Similarly, Chaldeans hold a significant place among Catholic Christians living in Van and its surroundings (Cuinet, V. 1894). The Chaldeans, considered a branch of the Nestorians, lived scattered throughout the Ottoman Empire. The Nestorian community takes its name from its religion, and its origins are based on the Assyrians, although there is no definitive information on this subject (McCarthy, J. 1998). These two communities speak their own languages. The Aramaic-based languages spoken by the Chaldean and Assyrian communities represent another layer of the region's linguistic heritage, offering opportunities for exploring the historical connections to ancient Mesopotamian civilizations and the challenges of maintaining minority languages in modern educational contexts.

The lineage of the Israelites in Van consists of the captives brought by the Armenian king Tigran III from the Palestine expedition during the captivity of Nineveh (Galanté, A. 1937). These captives increased in number over time. However, most of them gave up their religion and converted to Christianity. In the Eastern Anatolia Region, in the 19th century, there were very few Jews left who preserved the religion and identity of their ancestors (McCarthy, J. 1998). Jews speak a Syrio-Chaldaic dialect written in the Jewish language script (Cuinet, V. 1894). V. Cuinet (1984) stated that there were 1,000 Jews living in Van Sanjak and 500 in Van city center. J. McCarthy (1998) stated that there were 1,798 Jews in Van Province in 1914-1915. In 1927, it was determined that 75 Jewish families lived in Başkale. The historical presence of Jewish communities speaking Syrio-Chaldaic dialects adds another dimension to the region's linguistic mosaic, underscoring the long history of diverse religious and linguistic groups coexisting in the area. At the foot of Mount Süphan, Yazidi tribes are encountered. Pushkin, quoting from Priest Gardzoni, who was a missionary in Iraq for many years, states that Yazidis generally speak Kurdish, and that there are also those who know Turkish and Arabic (Pushkin, A. S. 2003). The multilingualism observed within the Yazidi community, often involving Kurdish, Turkish, and Arabic, highlights the fluid nature of language use in a region with extensive intergroup contact and the potential for leveraging this existing multilingualism in educational settings.]. The historical presence of multiple languages in the Lake Van Basin, including Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian, Circassian, Chaldean, Assyrian, Jewish dialects, and Yazidi, reflects the region's rich linguistic diversity. This multilingual landscape has significantly influenced language education, fostering a unique environment where the interplay of these languages shapes curriculum development, language policies, and instructional practices. The region's complex linguistic heritage provides a valuable context for exploring the challenges and opportunities of multilingualism, highlighting the importance of inclusive language education strategies that not only preserve linguistic diversity but also promote effective language acquisition in a multilingual society. The ongoing interaction between historical languages and contemporary language practices underscores the need for dynamic, culturally responsive educational frameworks that address the diverse linguistic needs of the population.

Conclusion, Discussion, and Recommendations

The linguistic transformation in the Lake Van Basin has been shaped by the region's multicultural structure throughout history. This study reveals how historical languages contribute to modern language education and offers recommendations for future researches. The linguistic landscape of the Lake Van Basin holds a rich tapestry of languages that emerged as a result of the region's history, culture, and educational practices. It is well known that the long-standing presence of diverse languages such as Turkish, Kurdish, Armenian, Circassian, and others has affected both individual and societal language acquisition, influencing the basin's lifestyle from the past to the present. The existence of these languages has endured for centuries, contributing to a multilingual environment that has shaped the educational frameworks of the region, as they have inter- and intra-relations with each other. The historical interconnections between these languages indicate the significance of understanding the complexities of language contact, maintenance, and shift, which have had ongoing effects on the development of language education systems in the basin. The sociolinguistic dynamics of this multilingual context provide a valuable framework for understanding language attitudes, language use patterns, and the challenges and benefits of linguistic

diversity (Baker, 2011). Hence, it may be concluded that the variety of languages in the basin throughout history offers a wide range of opportunities for becoming multilingual and learning other languages.

Since the Lake Van Basin holds various historical languages, it may be claimed that these are both challenges and opportunities for language education. Throughout history, Turkish has been the dominant language for instruction and administration; however, the presence of Kurdish, Armenian, and other languages has also been evident around the Basin. These languages suggest a balanced approach to language education because they promote both heritage language learning and support for the national language. It may be asserted that possessing substantial data about the historical context of language contact in the region is essential for developing educational practices that accommodate linguistic diversity and foster cross-cultural communication. Moreover, research in multilingual education suggests that acknowledging and supporting students' home languages can positively impact their academic achievement and overall well-being (Cummins, 2000). Therefore, employing a curriculum incorporating both native and official languages may yield efficient results in succeeding in the target languages. To foster a more inclusive and effective language education system in the Lake Van Basin, it is essential to develop curricula that focus on the region's linguistic diversity. Employing various languages in many contexts enhances the capacity of language education. Thus, educational policies should encourage intercultural communication and respect for linguistic diversity, creating an environment where students from different linguistic backgrounds can succeed. Drawing on best practices in other multilingual regions, the development of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy is crucial for creating equitable educational opportunities for all students (Gay, 2010). By addressing these needs, the region's educational systems can better accommodate the multilingual realities of its population and contribute to the creation of a more inclusive and equitable society. Future studies could investigate the effectiveness of multilingual curricula through longitudinal assessments in diverse classroom settings within the Lake Van Basin. Additionally, comparative research across other multilingual regions in Türkiye may offer valuable insights into best practices for inclusive language education policy development.

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