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## **Problems of Translation and Publication of Turkish Fiction in Azerbaijan**

### ***Abstract***

*This article scientifically investigates the existing problems in the translation and publication of Turkish fiction in Azerbaijan. Despite the linguistic and cultural closeness between Azerbaijan and Turkey, translation activities have not yet fully developed in terms of quality and professionalism. It notes that government initiatives such as the TEDA program in Turkey have been successful in the field of translation and that adopting similar practices in Azerbaijan is essential. In conclusion, state support, a scientific approach, and institutional reforms are crucial for the advancement of the translation and publication of Turkish fiction in Azerbaijan. This will contribute both to the deepening of literary ties and to the enrichment of the national cultural heritage.*

**Keywords:** *Turkish fiction, translation problems, publishing process, Azerbaijan–Turkey cultural relations, translation policy*

## **Azerbaycan'da Türk Romanının Çeviri ve Yayın Sorunları**

### **Öz**

*Bu makale, Azerbaycan'da Türkçe roman çevirisi ve yayıncılığındaki mevcut sorunları bilimsel olarak incelemektedir. Azerbaycan ve Türkiye arasındaki dilsel ve kültürel yakınlığa rağmen, çeviri faaliyetleri kalite ve profesyonellik açısından henüz tam olarak gelişmemiştir. Türkiye'de TEDA programı gibi devlet girişimlerinin çeviri alanında başarılı olduğunu ve Azerbaycan'da da benzer uygulamaların*



*benimsenmesinin elzem olduğunu belirtiyor. Sonuç olarak, Azerbaycan'da Türkçe roman çevirisi ve yayıncılığının ilerlemesi için devlet desteği, bilimsel bir yaklaşım ve kurumsal reformlar büyük önem taşımaktadır. Bu hem edebi bağların derinleşmesine hem de ulusal kültürel mirasın zenginleşmesine katkı sağlayacaktır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Türk Romanı, Çeviri Sorunları, Yayıncılık Süreci, Azerbaycan-Türkiye Kültürel İlişkileri, Çeviri Politikası*

## **Introduction**

In the 20th and 21st centuries, the acceleration of globalization processes, the development of information and communication technologies, and the softening of cultural boundaries have contributed to the expansion of literary and cultural relations among the peoples of the world. In this context, the literary ties established between Azerbaijan and Turkey are not only based on the shared cultural heritage of two brotherly nations but are also developing as an essential component of contemporary political and economic integration. From this perspective, the translation and publication of Turkish fiction hold particular significance for the Azerbaijani reader. Although the Turks of Azerbaijan and Turkey share a common language and cultural heritage, translation activities are not limited to linguistic similarity alone. The translation of literature is a complex process involving philological, stylistic, and cultural interpretation. In this sense, the translation and publication of Turkish fiction in Azerbaijan face both technical and aesthetic challenges. Factors such as the quality of translation, fidelity to the original text, stylistic consistency, reader-oriented approaches, the interests of publishing houses, and the role of the state further highlight the relevance of this topic. Following independence, the intensification of Azerbaijan–Turkey relations in various fields — including cultural and literary spheres — has led to an increase in the translation and publication of works by Turkish authors. On one hand, this has fostered growing interest among readers in Turkish literature; on the other hand, it has revealed gaps in the field of translation, such as the lack of professional approach and inadequate editorial work. The aim of this article is to analyze the current state of the translation and publication of Turkish fiction in Azerbaijan, identify existing problems, and propose scientifically grounded solutions to address them. The study is conducted within the context of linguistics and literary studies, as well as publishing practices and reader audiences. In writing this article, comparative analysis, statistical, and analytical methods have been used. As primary sources, examples of Turkish fiction translated

after 1991, the quality of their publication, print runs, reader feedback, and expert evaluations were examined. In addition, scholarly works and journalistic materials by Turkish and Azerbaijani researchers on literary relations have also been studied. Thus, the proper transmission of Turkish fiction to Azerbaijani readers serves not only as an indicator of cultural relations but also reflects the level of development in translation professionalism, the publishing market, and reader culture. This research aims not only to explore existing gaps in the field but also to offer theoretical and practical recommendations to ensure that these literary ties continue on a more solid foundation.

### **1. The Main Part**

The History of Interest in Turkish Fiction in Azerbaijan. The historical roots of literary and cultural relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey date back to ancient times. However, the intensity and nature of these relations have varied across different periods (Ismayilov & Bayramova, 2022b). Notably, in the early 20th century, during the era of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (1918–1920) and the early years of the Turkish Republic, there was a noticeable revival in literary circles. Works by Turkish writers and poets were published in the Azerbaijani press, and mutual exchanges of ideas took place. However, after 1920, the Soviet ideological system severely restricted these relations. Turkish literature was perceived by Soviet censorship as a bearer of "bourgeois-nationalist" ideology and was isolated from Azerbaijani readers. Despite this, some works by Turkish authors continued to reach Azerbaijan through various informal means during the Soviet era and were read unofficially. Particularly among intellectuals with an enlightened mindset, there was interest in the works of writers such as Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Halide Edib Adıvar, Reşat Nuri Güntekin, Nazım Hikmet (although he was an exception due to ideological reasons), Orhan Veli, and Sabahattin Ali. However, the number of translations during this period was quite limited, and most were indirect translations from Russian or presented in selected anthologies.

With the restoration of Azerbaijan's independence in 1991, a completely new phase began in this field. As Azerbaijan–Turkey relations developed based on principles of friendship and brotherhood, mutual interest and exchange in the literary sphere rapidly intensified. From this point on, Turkish fiction began to enter the Azerbaijani book market in a more systematic manner. (Balginova, Maydangalieva, Satygalieva & Mahammadli, 2018). Works by popular Turkish authors — especially Orhan Pamuk, Elif Shafak, Ahmet Ümit, İskender Pala, and other contemporary writers — started to be translated and published by Azerbaijani publishing houses.

This process was accompanied by a growing interest from readers. The rise of interest in Turkish fiction in Azerbaijan was also significantly influenced by the media, television, and internet resources. The widespread popularity of Turkish TV series and the film industry increased Azerbaijani audiences' familiarity with the Turkish language, which in turn facilitated the reading of translated works. Moreover, social networks and online book platforms created opportunities for greater recognition and dissemination of Turkish authors' works.

At the same time, during this period, some Azerbaijani translators began to translate Turkish authors directly from the original language. This had a positive impact on the quality of translations and allowed readers to engage with works that better preserved the authors' style and spirit. Nevertheless, the lack of a fully developed professional translation culture and editorial standards remains one of the factors negatively affecting the quality of these translations (Bayramov & Məhəmmədli, 2025). In conclusion, the history of interest in Turkish fiction in Azerbaijan has been shaped by political, ideological, and cultural factors. The period of independence created favorable conditions for the systematic and continuous development of this interest. However, issues regarding translation quality, the interests of publishers, and reader-focused approaches still persist in the field.

*\*The Tradition of Translating Turkish Literature in Azerbaijan*

Translation activity has always played an important role in Azerbaijan's literary and cultural environment. Especially in the field of literary translation, established traditions and professional translators have played a key role in delivering works from various languages to Azerbaijani readers. In this context, the translation of Turkish literature into Azerbaijani holds particular significance (Heydar, 2023). Despite the linguistic proximity of Turkish and Azerbaijani, differences at both the language and cultural levels have created certain challenges in translation practices. During the Soviet period, translations of Turkish fiction were extremely limited and primarily included works by authors deemed ideologically acceptable, translated indirectly from Russian into Azerbaijani. These translations were often heavily edited and deviated significantly from the original style and content. As a result, Azerbaijani readers were unable to fully experience the authentic spirit of Turkish literature. After the years of independence, the situation changed fundamentally. Works of Turkish authors began to be translated directly from the original, that is, from Turkish. During this period, both classical and contemporary Turkish writers' works were

presented to Azerbaijani readers by various publishing houses. Works by authors such as Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil, Reşat Nuri Güntekin, Yaşar Kemal, Orhan Pamuk, and Elif Şafak were widely translated. Experienced translators and editors played an important role in this work.

Literary scholars and translators who represent the traditional translation school, such as Ramiz Rövşən, Nigar Köçərli, Aydın Məmmədov, and Mətanət Vahabova, made valuable contributions in this field (İsmayilov, İsmayilov & Mammadova, 2019). Their translations focused not only on linguistic conversion but also on preserving the aesthetic load and literary style of the original text. However, some publishing houses without a serious professional approach published hurried and poor-quality translations, which created negative impressions among readers. Some translations remained faithful to the original works while attempting to culturally and psychologically bring them closer to the readers. However, sometimes this "localization" process was done in a way that contradicted the author's intention and literary style. For example, some translations replaced regional expressions in Turkish with Azerbaijani variants or localized dialogues, which caused the work to lose its originality.

In recent years, discussions in Azerbaijan about translation issues have mainly focused on increasing professionalism, developing literary translation as a specialized field, and raising the level of methodological preparation (İsmayilov, 2022). Involving young specialists trained in translation, as well as cooperation between translation laboratories and publishing houses to produce quality works, are important for the development of this area.

In conclusion, although the translation of Turkish literature in Azerbaijan has a rich tradition, systematic approaches, professional personnel training, and state support are necessary for continuous development. To faithfully convey the spirit of literature to the reader, a translator must not only be proficient in the language but also be a creative person with literary and aesthetic taste.

#### *\*Main Problems Encountered in the Translation Process*

Against the backdrop of growing Azerbaijani reader interest in Turkish fiction, the relevance of translation activities is steadily increasing. Unfortunately, the observed development in this field is often not accompanied by quality results (İsmayilov & Khalafova, 2023). Translation is not merely a technical conversion but a complex activity requiring cultural, aesthetic, and psychological adaptation. The following main problems are especially notable:

- *Language and Style Issues:* Despite the closeness of Azerbaijani and Turkish, there are lexical, syntactic, and semantic differences. Ignoring these differences results in dull, unnatural, or confusing translations. For instance, certain metaphors, idioms, and expressions in Turkish do not carry the same emotional and cultural weight in Azerbaijani (İsmayılov, Mahammadli & Gasimli, 2023a). If the translator does not adapt these properly, the aesthetic and spiritual value of the text decreases.
- *Departure from the Original or Mechanical Translation:* In many cases, translations either fail to preserve the original style and spirit of the work or rely on literal translations, producing meaningless, mechanical texts (İsmayılov, Mahammadli & Khudiyeva, 2022). This results from the translator's insufficient understanding of the author's intent, artistic criteria, and context. Such translations feature artificial dialogues and tasteless descriptions, causing readers to disengage.
- *Translator Preparation and Professionalism:* Not all individuals engaged in literary translation in Azerbaijan are specialized in philology or translation studies. Sometimes, people who only understand Turkish act as translators, significantly reducing quality. Moreover, lack of proper editing and proofreading leads to numerous language, style, and logical errors in the translated works.

*\*Publishing Interests and Market-Driven Approaches*

Many publishers prioritize commercial aspects, aiming to quickly print and sell popular authors' works. This leads to prioritizing speed over quality (İsmayılov & Aliyeva, 2023). Consequently, professional translation and editing processes are either skipped or superficially done. Although such products might achieve short-term sales success, they create negative long-term cultural and literary trends.

- *Terminology and Cultural Adaptation Issues:* Some terms and socio-historical contexts used in Turkish literature may be unclear to Azerbaijani readers. Translators need to provide explanations or find suitable cultural equivalents. Otherwise, confusion arises, especially in historical novels, religious-themed works, or writings based on cultural stereotypes (İsmayılov & Khalafova, 2022b).

- *Gaps in Editing and Proofreading:* Professional attention is required during the editing of translated works. Some publishers neglect this stage, leading to publications with severe language and stylistic errors. This is unfair to both the translator and the original author.

In summary, these problems hinder Azerbaijani readers' full and accurate understanding of Turkish literature (İsmayilov & Khudiyeva, 2023). Improving quality requires a systematic approach, professional translator training, developing editorial culture, and responsible publishing policies.

*\*Issues in the Publication and Distribution of Turkish Authors' Works*

The publication and distribution of Turkish fiction in Azerbaijan have significantly increased over the past three decades. After gaining independence, Azerbaijan expanded literary and cultural relations with Turkey, leading to wider dissemination of Turkish authors' works in the local book market (İsmayilov & Məhəmmədli, 2024). However, the quality and sustainability of this process face several problems.

- *Commercial Tendencies in Publishing Policies:* Many Azerbaijani publishers are interested in printing works by popular Turkish authors. Among the most printed authors are Orhan Pamuk, Elif Şafak, İskender Pala, Ahmet Ümit, and Zülfü Livaneli. These authors attract publishers not only for their literary-aesthetic qualities but also as commercially successful brands. (İsmayilov, Mahammadli & Gasimli, 2023b). This weakens literary pluralism and sidelines less-known but valuable writers.
- *Problems in Preparing Works for Translation and Publication:* Sometimes, the original structure and composition of Turkish works are altered during adaptation into Azerbaijani (Karabalina, Maydangalieva, Satygalieva, Ahmetalina & Mahammadli, 2018). The editing process is superficial, negatively affecting publication quality. Additionally, issues with copyright are often neglected, leading to unauthorized printings without author or agency consent. This approach is ethically and legally problematic and harms international cooperation prospects.
- *Weaknesses in Distribution and Sales Strategies:* Azerbaijan's book distribution and sales system has shortcomings. While Turkish books are relatively accessible in major cities (mainly Baku and Ganja), access is very limited in regions (Kazimi & Mahammadli, 2021). Online book sales platforms lack organization, advertising, and logistical efficiency, preventing the formation of a broad reader audience.

- *Role of Book Fairs and Exhibitions:* Book fairs and exhibitions play an undeniable role in promoting Turkish literature in Azerbaijan. Annual events such as the Baku International Book Fair feature presentations, autograph sessions, and discussions with Turkish authors (Mammadov, 2022a). These events increase reader interest and foster new collaborations among authors, translators, and publishers. However, the lack of sustained and institutionalized efforts limits the full utilization of these opportunities.
- *Advertising and Promotion Issues:* Advertising and PR are crucial for book dissemination and reaching readers. Due to the absence of systematic activity in this area, Turkish authors' works remain known only within limited circles. Competition among publishers is weak, and creative, modern tools (e.g., social media campaigns, cooperation with book bloggers) are underused.
- *Digital Platforms and E-book Market:* Despite advances in technology expanding digital publishing, Azerbaijan's e-book market is still in an early development stage (Kenzhebayeva, Urmurzina & Mahammadli, 2018). Turkish online book platforms like "İdefix," "D&R," "Babil," and "Trendyol Kitap" have no or very limited counterparts in Azerbaijan, causing difficulties for Azerbaijani readers to access Turkish authors' works electronically.

Thus, the main problems in the publication and distribution of Turkish authors' works in Azerbaijan relate to unsystematic organization, lack of professional approaches, and short-term commercial strategies. Development in this area requires joint efforts from the government, publishers, and literary community, including long-term and strategic planning.

*\*Reader Interests and Public Reception*

In recent years, Turkish fiction has become one of the most popular literary fields among Azerbaijani readers (Khalafova & Ismailov, 2024). This interest is due partly to linguistic and cultural similarities and partly to the development and renewal process of Turkish literature in the modern era. Several social, psychological, and cultural factors play a significant role in shaping, directing, and evaluating reader interests.

- *Demographic Composition of the Reader Audience:* Studies show that works by Turkish authors in Azerbaijan are mostly popular among youth, especially university students and readers aged 25–40 (Məhəmmədli, 2024). This audience tends to be modern-thinking,



active social media users interested in world literature (Kushzhanov & Dashgin, 2019a). Authors like Orhan Pamuk, Elif Şafak, and Ahmet Ümit appeal mainly to the literary tastes of this group.

- *Attractiveness of Turkish Literature to Readers:* Several reasons make Turkish fiction appealing to Azerbaijani readers:
  - Linguistic closeness facilitates easier understanding;
  - Shared cultural values—common historical background, religion, and mentality—give a familiar and native feeling;
  - Addressing contemporary issues—Turkish writers explore society, women’s rights, urban life, and family relations, sparking interest and reflection (Mammadov, 2022b);
  - Genre diversity—rich options in novels, novellas, detective stories, fantasy, and psychological drama (Kushzhanov & Mahammadli, 2019b).
- *Cultural Acceptance and Critical Approach:* Most readers view Turkish fiction positively and find it compatible with the Azerbaijani environment (Mahammadi, 2024). However, there is also a critical group of readers and experts who point out artificial philosophizing, commercialization of culture, and insufficient artistic depth in some works. Such views are especially common toward popular literature, indicating that the readership is not just passive consumers but active partners who evaluate and selectively engage with literary processes.

*\*The Influence of Social Networks and Digital Platforms*

The dissemination of literary trends, promotion, and discussion of books occur rapidly through social media (Mahammadli, 2018). Especially book bloggers active on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Goodreads play a key role in shaping reader interest. The younger generation tends to focus more on works presented on these platforms. This sometimes affects the quality of reading—because instead of valuable classics, emotional and “trendy” themed novels tend to come to the forefront (Muhammadli, 2023).

*\*Limitations in Literary Analysis and Reader Education Opportunities*

Unfortunately, there is a weak systematic approach to Turkish literature in schools and higher education institutions. This hinders the reader’s independent development of literary taste (Mammadov, 2013). Since literary clubs, discussion groups, seminars, and presentations are not regularly organized, the culture of literary criticism and analysis among readers is underdeveloped.

Progress in this area is limited to individual initiatives and the activities of some non-governmental organizations.

In conclusion, it can be said that the social acceptance level of Turkish fiction literature in Azerbaijan is high, and reader interest shows positive dynamics (Nadir & Sevda, 2022). However, to channel this interest qualitatively, there is a need for systematic literary education, professional criticism, and promotional activities.

*\*Comparative Analysis: The Experience of Translating Turkish Fiction into Other Languages*

The global recognition and dissemination of Turkish fiction literature have undergone significant stages in recent decades. Translation activities and state support have played an important role in this process (Qasımlı & Məhəmmədli, 2024a). Compared to Azerbaijan, in some developed countries, the translation of Turkish literature into foreign languages is carried out more systematically and purposefully.

*\*The Role of the TEDA Program*

TEDA (Turkish Literature Promotion and Translation Support) program, implemented by Turkey's Ministry of Culture and Tourism since 2005, is one of the main initiatives in this field. The program aims to support the translation and publication of works written in Turkey into foreign languages. Under TEDA, more than 3,000 translation projects have been funded in over 70 countries worldwide. The works have mostly been translated into English, German, French, Arabic, Russian, Spanish, Japanese, and Chinese (Qasımlı & Məhəmmədli, 2024b). The success of this program has contributed to the global recognition of Turkish literature and the international market fame of authors like Orhan Pamuk and Elif Şafak. Such projects improve translation quality and strengthen relations with foreign publishers.

*\*Translation Approaches in Western Countries*

Interest in Turkish literature in Western countries primarily focuses on orientalist and modernist themes. Here, translation activities are supported by independent publishers, university centers, and cultural foundations. Professional translators working on Turkish works in the UK and USA (for example, Maureen Freely, Alexander Dawe, and Aron Aji) pay special attention both to artistic value and contextual appropriateness. In these countries, translation is viewed not only as linguistic conversion but also as a strategy for culturally adapting the content to the audience.

*\*Comparison with Regional Countries: The Balkans, Central Asia, and the Caucasus*

In the Balkan countries, especially Bulgaria, Romania, and Albania, interest in Turkish literature is linked both to historical ties and cultural proximity (Ismayilov & Khalafova, 2022a). Translations here are mainly carried out by local publishers and sometimes supported by state aid. In Central Asian countries, particularly Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, Turkish works are published in Latin and Cyrillic scripts. However, translation activities are mostly driven by individual initiatives, and systematic programs are scarce. In the Caucasus, except for Azerbaijan, the translation of Turkish literature in Georgia and Armenia is less developed. This is due to both political relations and intercultural barriers.

*\*Comparison with Translation Activities in Azerbaijan*

In Azerbaijan, the translation of Turkish fiction is primarily based on linguistic closeness and is often presented not as originals but in adapted or edited forms. Methodological approaches and systematic organization in the translation process are weak (Kushzhanov & Dashqin, 2019a). For comparison, it should be noted that:

- State support for translation projects in Azerbaijan is very limited.
- The professional translator institution and collaboration between editor-translators are underdeveloped.
- Conservative approaches dominate in the translation and publication of works coming from Turkey (Askerova, Sevinj & Mammadov, 2025).

This situation shows that translation activities in Azerbaijan are more commercially driven compared to Western and some regional countries, rather than aimed at literary-cultural development.

*\*Literary and Cultural Effects of Translation*

For comparison, it is important to note that successful translations of Turkish literature have influenced local literary processes in those countries. For example, the works of Elif Şafak and Orhan Pamuk are studied as interesting cases in the exploration of feminist and postmodernist discourse in Europe. In Azerbaijan, the integration of such translations into scientific-literary discourse is very weak. In conclusion, it can be stated that systematic approaches, state support, and professional translation institutions exist in the field of translating Turkish fiction into other languages. Azerbaijan should benefit from these experiences to form its own national translation policy and pay special attention to the quality presentation of Turkish works.

## Conclusion

The common language, history, and cultural ties between Azerbaijan and Turkey make close integration in the field of fiction literature both possible and necessary. Although certain progress has been observed in recent years in the translation and publication of Turkish fiction literature in Azerbaijan, the lack of systematic and coordinated efforts hinders the overall pace of literary and cultural development. The scientific analyses conducted in the article allow the formulation of the following conclusions and recommendations: The unprofessional and commercially driven nature of the translation process negatively affects translation quality and leads to the loss of value of the original texts. Since publishers primarily focus on sales potential, works of high artistic value but “risky” from a commercial standpoint are not published. Although reader interest in Turkish literature is high, this interest is based on social media trends rather than a systematic reading culture. The scarcity of research on Turkish fiction literature in the scientific and academic environment results in a weak scientific-theoretical knowledge base in this field. Turkey’s experience in translation and presentation (e.g., the TEDA program) shows that state support and coordination play a crucial role in this area. The Azerbaijan State Translation Center and relevant institutions should develop a translation strategy for Turkish literature, identify priority works, and support their translation. Professional translator training and editor-translator collaboration should be systematized, with trainings and professional development programs organized in this field. Specialized courses, lectures, and academic seminars on Turkish literature should be conducted at university faculties of philology and translation. Through state tax incentives and financial support, the publication of works with high artistic quality but weak commercial potential should be encouraged among publishers. To cultivate reader taste, book festivals, literary discussions, meetings with authors, and analytical programs should be organized. Local translation promotion mechanisms similar to the TEDA program should be established, and a coordinated literary-cultural presentation policy should be implemented in Azerbaijan, as it is in other Turkic world countries. To strengthen literary relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey, joint literary journals, online platforms, and translation centers should be established. In conclusion, the development of literary and cultural relations between Azerbaijan and Turkey must be based not only on linguistic and emotional closeness but also on a systematic and professional approach. High-quality

translation and publication of Turkish fiction literature in Azerbaijan will enrich the reading culture and serve as a model for forming an international presentation of Azerbaijani literature.

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