



■ Article ■

## Identity Construction through Language: The Case of the Turkish Language Reform

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### Abstract

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923, and the new regime aimed to construct a national identity through a series of reforms. Among them, one state-sponsored project was culturally significant: the Turkish Language Reform. Two institutions, the Turkish Historical Society and the Turkish Linguistic Society, helped to legitimize the language reform and construct a new cultural identity for the citizens of the new nation-state. The Turkish Language Reform, arguably the most radical of all Kemalist reforms, has been a successful component of the republican social engineering project. This paper examines the centrality of the language issue in the Kemalist nation-building effort and the role of the two above-mentioned institutions in the process. The Turkish Language Reform remains one of the most effective state interventions on language. The present paper explores the reasons behind the reform's success and the importance of language as a marker of national identity.

■ **Keywords** : language, identity, nation-building, Turkish Language Reform

### Introduction

The multiethnic Millet System of the Ottoman Empire (1299–1922), which was the longest lasting of all imperial systems, was a “pre-modern multicultural” system (Sachedina, 2001, p. 96) and an “imperial regime of toleration” (Walzer, 1997, p. 17). In the Millet System, self-governing

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communities were religious in character and the primary organizing principle of the society was faith. Even though Ottoman rulers were themselves Muslims, the three other religious groups of the empire—Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, and Jewish communities—were permitted to form autonomous organizations under their watch. The Millet System was by no means neutral towards religious minorities but respected and tolerated them. The religious minority groups had rights, and the system itself was “a useful reminder that individual rights are not the only way to accommodate religious pluralism” (Kymlicka, 1996, p. 87).

For centuries, the Ottoman administrations had accommodated communities that were subdivided along ethnic, linguistic, and regional lines. During the decline period of the empire in the late nineteenth century, with the rise of nationalism, it became predictable that the Millet System would no longer function as social cement. The attempts to redefine the Ottoman identity and give it an Islamic tone in the last decades of the empire aimed to curb nascent proto-nationalist activities among Muslim Ottomans, but these efforts failed (Hanioglu, 2008). A significant shift “from the imperial rainbow to the nationalist black and white” (Birtek, 2007, p. 27) was inevitable. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, when a Turkish nation-state was established, a new national identity was to be formed. The founding elite of the new state aimed to construct the new identity through a series of reforms. In this process, two institutions launched by the new regime played a central role. The first one is the Turkish Historical Society (*Türk Tarihi Tetkik Cemiyeti*, later *Türk Tarih Kurumu*). Founded in 1931, the Turkish Historical Society promoted studies on the “Turkish History Thesis,” which claimed that ancient Middle Eastern, Asian, and Balkan civilizations were Turkish in origin. The second institution, the Turkish Linguistic Society (*Türk Dili Tetkik Cemiyeti*, later *Türk Dil Kurumu*), was founded a year later. The two institutes were the prime movers of the republican nation-building project and were considered to be “brother” institutions in the early 1930s (Ünaydın, 1943, p. 3). This article proposes to discuss how the Turkish Historical Society and the Turkish Linguistic Society contributed

to the construction of the new national identity and provided the ground for language reform. I argue that discourses of the two institutions are inseparable: While the Turkish History Thesis prepared the conditions for a language debate, the Turkish Language Reform, arguably the most radical of all republican social engineering projects, became a major component of the nation-building effort. The present paper examines the reform process and the centrality of the language issue in national identity construction.

### **First Step: Turkish History Thesis**

Following the fall of the Ottoman Empire after the World War I, the Turkish War of Independence (1919–1922), led by Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk), resulted in the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. The new nation-state, stretching across the Anatolian peninsula, was the successor of a much larger empire that had reigned for six centuries in three continents. After taking power, Mustafa Kemal, who became the first president as the natural candidate, immediately initiated a series of reforms, known as the Atatürk reforms (*Atatürk inkılapları*) or Kemalist reforms, to build a new national identity. These reforms included the abolition of the caliphate, a new dress code, and Latinization of the script. The abolition of the caliphate in 1924 was an early sign of Mustafa Kemal's intention to break with the nation's Islamic past. The Hat Law of 1925, which made European-style hats compulsory for men, was a symbolic state interference with gender identities and an attempt to redefine manhood.<sup>1)</sup> Almost a decade later, the clothing reform (1934) demanded the abandonment of Muslim-style garments and guided both male and female Turkish citizens to wear Western-style outfits. These top-down state interventions aimed to construct and establish a new national identity and cultural norms for the nation-state's citizens. The most culturally significant Kemalist project, however, was the language reform, which replaced the Perso-Arabic script with the Latin alphabet and purified Turkish from foreign influence. As Geoffrey Lewis

(2002) points out, nowhere has such a linguistic engineering campaign been “so long sustained and effective as in Turkey” (p. 2).<sup>2)</sup> But to prepare the public for such a substantial change, the republican regime needed a legitimizing ideological ground.<sup>3)</sup> Thus, the Turkish Historical Society was founded and the Turkish History Thesis emerged.

A year after the foundation of the republic, in 1924, the Council of Turkish History (or Turkish Hearths) was launched under the roof of Istanbul University. The council was, indeed, a continuation of the Ottoman Council of History. Initially, it was a scientific association publishing an academic journal. However, toward the late 1920s, Mustafa Kemal considered the council as far from satisfying the regime’s ideological needs. The period between 1924 and 1930, when Kemalist reforms became more stable, was crucial. During the first decade of his administration, Mustafa Kemal had also carried out reforms such as the unification of education to activate secular education. Above all, the reference to Islam as the religion of the state was deleted from the Constitution. Now, “the disestablishment of Islam was completed” (Lewis, 1961, p. 276) and conditions were ripe to introduce the new national identity through a new account of Turkish origins (the Turkish History Thesis) and through language reform.

The plan to establish a historical society was first publicly discussed in April 1930, during the sixth convention of the Council of Turkish History. The origin of the discussion was Mustafa Kemal’s objection to the Western classification of Turks as a part of the inferior “yellow” race. Even though this seems to have been an objection to Orientalist stereotypes about Muslim Turks, later Kemalist ideology would employ similar rhetoric towards the Ottoman past, which can be described as self-Orientalism. At the convention, Mustafa Kemal’s protégée Afet İnan (2007), a history teacher, gave a lecture about the ancient roots and nobility of the Turkish race. After the event, Mustafa Kemal and his administration decided to commission a state-level study on the nation’s historical roots. Thus, a committee for the Study of Turkish History under the roof of Turkish Hearths was founded. It would be the core of the

Turkish Historical Society. Mustafa Kemal set an ambitious goal for the newly established committee:<sup>4)</sup>

The history of the Turks is as old as the history of humanity. The Turks founded empires all over the world even before the Ottomans and the Seljuks. These empires collapsed over time. Nevertheless, wherever a Turkish state had collapsed, a new state was founded from its ruins. What is the place of the Turks in world history and civilization? All these issues should be addressed properly (Barut, 1993, p. 5).<sup>5)</sup>

On April 12, 1931, the Turkish Historical Society was officially launched. The honorary president was Mustafa Kemal, and the first task of the society was producing an outline of Turkish history and preparing high school textbooks. Thus, the new Turkish History Thesis first appeared in the four-year high school history program and then was expanded to the rest of the educational system.

The Turkish History Thesis was primarily based on race as a cultural unit. The essential argument can be summarized in a single sentence: “Turks are the fathers of all civilizations and humanity.” According to this theory, Turks had originally lived in Central Asia but forced by drought and hunger to migrate to other continents and created the world’s greatest civilizations. It was an ideologically loaded argument: by linking ancient Asian and Anatolian civilizations to Turks, the new regime’s History Thesis extended “the roots of the citizens of the republic in the soil they inhabited” (Zürcher, 1993, p. 199).

The first convention of the Turkish Historical Society was held in 1932 in Ankara, the new state’s capital. It was time to announce the “Turkish History Thesis” to the public. Mustafa Kemal was involved in the preparation phase and selected the papers to be presented; he was also present in all sessions during the convention. It was the first scientific congress on the soil of the Republic of Turkey. The convention had four main sections: utilization of ancient historical sources, discussion on the

Turkic languages, discussion on the reasons behind the Turkish migration from Central Asia, and discussion on the school textbooks (Behar, 1992).

The first convention of the Turkish Historical Society was the first step of the Kemalist project of introducing and legitimizing a new national(ist) identity. The second convention was organized five years later, but during that period the “brother institution,” the Turkish Linguistic Society, would lead the nation-building process. In his memoir, Ruşen Eşref Ünaydın (1943), a writer from in Mustafa Kemal’s circle, notes that Mustafa Kemal decided to establish a linguistic institution on the last day of the First History Congress. At the closing night ceremony, Mustafa Kemal declared his intention of launching a new state institute: “Now, it is time to think about the language issue” (p. 9).<sup>6)</sup> Two days later, the Turkish Linguistic Society was officially founded.

### **Turkish Linguistic Society and the Language Reform**

The language issue in Turkey has a long history; it did not first come into question with the republican regime. As a result of encounters with Islamic culture in the eleventh century, two major languages of the Muslim civilization, Arabic and Persian, had highly influenced Turkish. By the thirteenth century, from its very beginnings as a literary language, Turkish “contained a great number of words borrowed from Arabic and Persian” (Heyd, 1954, p. 9). The first serious reaction to the Islamic influence on the language was the *Turkî-i Basit* (simple Turkish) movement in the fifteenth century. However, the renovation efforts were fruitless due to the rise of the Ottoman Empire as a political power. During the empire’s victorious days, Istanbul became the cultural capital of the Islamic world, and Ottoman/Turkish culture was open to the influence of Persian and Arabic more than ever. Landmark literary works of the Ottoman high culture from that period were produced in a mixed language called *Osmanlıca* or *Osmanlı Türkçesi* which was formed under the deep influence of Arabic and Persian. The language was written in Perso-Arabic script; the Ottoman Turkish grammar was largely based

on Persian, and most of the vocabulary was derived from Arabic. Furthermore, the official court language was substantially different from spoken dialects. Later, during the empire's period of decline, as a result of the Westernization process, the Ottoman Turkish language was influenced by French. The new Western-influenced language of the nineteenth-century literati was as pompous as fifteenth-century Ottoman Turkish and far from being simple. Prominent literary figures of the era, such as Ziya Paşa, Namık Kemal, Ahmet Mithat Efendi, and Rezaizade Mahmut Ekrem, desired a simpler and purified Turkish (Parla, 1990). Debates on reforming the language during the late Ottoman period would later inspire Mustafa Kemal and his circle to implement a radical change.

The Turkish Language Reform had two closely linked stages (Lewis, 2002). The first stage is the alphabet reform (*harf devrimi*), announced in August 1928 by Mustafa Kemal, which replaced the Perso-Arabic script with the Latin alphabet. In his announcement, Mustafa Kemal emphasized the importance of “participating in Western civilization” and implied that changing the script was a necessity (Şavkay, 1996, p. 41). A striking aspect of the representation of this reform is labeling the new alphabet the “Turkish Alphabet,” instead of the “Latin Alphabet.” The new script was represented as easy and simple, creating a contrast with the difficulties of reading Turkish in Perso-Arabic script due to lack of vowels to represent sounds. As Christopher Benfey (2019) reminds us in the American context, a radical simplification is “a utopian gesture typical of the founders of nations” (p. 4). The other leitmotif of the language reform was putting an end to people's ignorance. Such a discourse corresponds to Edward Said's (1979) definition of Orientalism, an aspect of which is the assumption that subject peoples do not know what is good for them. It can be argued that the Orientalist tone of the language reform discourse, and the Kemalist cultural project in general, would become influential on Turkish literature in the following decades.<sup>7)</sup>

Although it was introduced as a fight against ignorance, the Turkish Language Reform's social engineering dimension would emerge soon. Prominent literary figures, such as the poet Yahya Kemal Beyatlı, ap-

proached the language reform cautiously. Due to lack of public support, the Alphabet Commission planned to complete the reform in five to ten years, but Mustafa Kemal's aim was to establish the new alphabet "in two- or three-months' time" (Şavkay, 1996, p. 42). To succeed in this radical transformation, the commander-in-chief initiated strict precautions: He ordered founding schools nationwide to boost literacy in at most four months. It became a crime for prison directors to release those sentenced to more than six months before teaching them to read and write in the new alphabet. Also, publicity groups were formed to explain the importance of the language reform program to people in coffeehouses, cinemas, and theaters.

The second stage of the language reform was announced at the First Language Congress, which was convened in Istanbul from September 26 to October 5, 1932. The success of the alphabet change had encouraged those who wanted to reform the language itself. When the Turkish Linguistic Society was established, its aim was defined as discovering "the beauty and the richness" of Turkish, simplifying the language, conducting research, and publishing in Turkish (Türk Dil Kurumu, 1933, pp. 4-5). The language reform should be understood in the context of Kemalist reforms as a whole. According to the new rhetoric, there had been utter chaos in Turkish history before Mustafa Kemal, who changed the destiny of the Turkish race (Şavkay, 1996). The subtext of this representation is that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who liberated the nation, was now saving the Turkish language and culture from corruption and informing people about their true origins. As Heyd (1954) notes, this depiction of Mustafa Kemal and the language issue at the First Language Congress demonstrates that the Kemalist conceptualization of the language reform had an ideological and emotional character rather than a scientific one. Participants of the meeting identified the new nation-state with the ancient roots of the Turkish race, suggesting pride in distant past and national identity, as well as separation "from the immediate past, that is to say, the Ottoman era" (Zürcher, 1993, p. 199). Now, the break with the Islamic Ottoman past was complete.<sup>8)</sup>



The agenda of the First Language Congress consisted of four main topics: (a) the origins of languages; (b) the expansion of the Turkish language in its own environment (dialects, grammar, vocabulary); (c) the contemporary situation of Turkish (in morphology, syntax, vocabulary, terms); and (d) prospects for development according to the highest present and future levels of civilization (Landau, 1993). Although most of the discussions focused on linguistic matters, there are two reasons to doubt that the convention's discourse was purely scientific. The first one is that without question the convention was held in response to the demands and orders of the president, Mustafa Kemal (Şavkay, 1996). Moreover, the outline of the Turkish Linguistic Society's program and the convention schedule was written by Mustafa Kemal himself (Ünaydın, 1943). In other words, the First Language Congress can be considered to be the component of the history convention and the Kemalist History Thesis. All speeches at the First Language Congress supported the Kemalist worldview and nation-building project. The second reason that shadowed the convention's claim of being scientific is the fact that amongst the 712 participants, only 8 were linguists (Landau, 1993). Instead, the participants included 60 members of the parliament, 76 journalists, 99 officials, 40 physicians, and 24 lawyers. Teachers constituted the largest group, with 312 participating.

The lectures on linguistics at the convention represented Turkish as an ancient language, and several speakers focused on this argument. Sumerians were described as the ancestors of the Turks. Construction and choice, rather than blood and inheritance, were the standard storyline of the new identity claim. According to the mainstream argument, Turks had come to Mesopotamia not around A.C. 1000 but earlier. This was a central argument of the Kemalist History Thesis. Moreover, the lecturer Artin Cebeli invented a term, "Sumerian Turkish," even though, as Şavkay (1996) notes, there is no evidence to support the existence of such a language (p. 69).

The conclusion of the First Language Congress can be summarized in three topics: (a) not only the Republic of Turkey but the whole

Turkish-speaking world should get rid of the influence of Arabic and Persian;<sup>9)</sup> (b) Turks are the ancestors of the whole Mesopotamian civilization; and (c) Turks are of the Aryan race, not different from Western races. Some speakers further argued that Turks are the ancestors of the Aryan race.<sup>10)</sup> The convention's message can be summed up in a single sentence: "Turks belong to Western civilization, and this is our new identity." This conclusion was the declaration of the link between the language reform and identity construction.

The primary goal of the First Language Congress was to develop and support the "Turkish History Thesis" which provided an ideological ground for the new national identity claim. In the Kemalist social engineering process, there was task sharing between the linguistic and historical societies. It can be argued that one of the primary reasons behind the durability of the reform is this ideological unity. The more elaborated and radical arguments about the new ethnic-based identity came in the second Turkish Language Congress, held on August 18, 1934. Between the first and second meetings, Atatürk's secularization measures had reached their peak. In the summer of that year, Hagia Sophia Mosque was turned into a museum and the weekly holiday was transferred from Friday to Sunday. The central topic of the convention was legitimizing the Turkish History Thesis by focusing on the archaism of the Turkish race. In the opening speech, the minister of education Abidin Bey underlined the archaism of the Turkish race and asserted that in the Ottoman period the identity of Turks had been lost (Şavkay, 1996). Disdain towards and exclusion of the Ottoman-Islamic past was stronger this time. In a self-Orientalistic manner, the Ottoman Empire now was portrayed as the prime example of despotism.

In the Second Language Congress, speakers mostly focused on the relationship between Turkish and other languages. The linguist Ahmet Cevat Emre argued that Turkish is the source of Indo-European languages and noted that he believes serious research would prove this claim. This rhetoric indicates that belief preceded evidence for the supporters of the language reform. Another example of the Kemalist approach is the lin-

guist İbrahim Necmi Dilmen's speech. Although İbrahim Necmi confessed that scholars would need several years to discover the relationship between Turkish and other languages, he argued that the first examples of Turkish came from Sumerian and Hittite languages. One of the most interesting claims in the convention came from the diplomat Tahsin Ömer, who as a result of his research explained the affinity between Turkish and the Mayan language in Mexico. According to Tahsin Ömer's theory, the Mayans were grandsons of the Tola Turks, a group that had immigrated to South America from Central Asia (Şavkay, 1996). Tahsin Ömer was not a linguist, and the affinity he found between the two languages was most probably only a vocalic similarity. It was, in Zürcher's (1993) words, "nationalizing through fake etymology" (p. 198). The attempt to reframe the new Turkish identity as a part of Western civilization was a central component of the Kemalist nation-building project, and the Turkish Linguistic Society succeeded in reinforcing this argument in a pseudo-scientific manner.

### **New Identity, New Nation**

At first, the aim of the Turkish Language Reform seems to have been "to align Turkish nationalism with the modern, Romanized civilization of Western Europe" (Anderson, 1991, p. 46). However, as a part of a larger social engineering program, the reform stretched beyond that. The essential function of the language reform was legitimizing excessive Westernization and the nationalist shift from the Ottoman Millet System to an ethnic-based identity. As Anderson (1991) quotes from Ernest Gellner, "Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist" (p. 6). The discourse created by the Turkish Language Reform and the History Thesis corresponds to Gellner's argument and can be defined as "invented Turkishness" (Birttek, 2007, p. 27). The pseudo-scientific Kemalist arguments on the archaism of Turkish language functioned to cover the fabricated nature of the new identity claim. It is sobering to note that during

the 1940s and 1950s, many new words in the Turkish language were literally fabricated by the fierce supporters of the language reform, such as Nurullah Ataç.<sup>11)</sup>

The paradox of the new national identity claim through the Turkish History Thesis and the language reform is that it was presented as a fresh ideology; however, it was asserted to have links to the distant past. Thus, Kemalist discourse contains the prominent paradox of nationalism, described as “the objective modernity of nations to the historians’ eye vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists” (Anderson, 1991, p. 5). In Kemalist nationalism, ethnicity emerges as the dominant paradigm and Kemalist discourse attributes the roots of this new identity to an immemorial past. This discourse matches well with the accepted features of nation-states that are widely conceded to be both new and historical. Mustafa Kemal’s last name is a good example of the reference to the immemorial past: *Atatürk* (Father of Turks). Mustafa Kemal also named the first two state banks as *Etibank* (Hittite Bank) and *Sümerbank* (Sumerian Bank), referring to pre-Islamic history.

The pattern of inventing a distant past would reach its peak with the Sun-Language Theory (*Güneş Dil Teorisi*) at the Third Language Congress in 1936. According to the Sun-Language Theory, all human languages are descendants of one Central Asian primal language, which is Turkish. The theory is based on the arguments of Dr. Hermann F. Kvergić, a scholar from Vienna, who asserted that Turkish was the first human language to take shape.<sup>12)</sup> In Kvergić’s theory, when the primitive man saw the sun, he gave exclamations like “Aa!” and “Oo!” and thus the language emerged. Kvergić explained his theory in a letter to Mustafa Kemal, who welcomed the argument.

The Sun-Language Theory dominated the Third Language Congress. In lectures, prehistoric humans were labeled and presented as Turks. It is the most extreme stage of Kemalist language reform and identity construction. According to the supporters of this theory, not only was Turkish the origin of all languages, but the Turkish race was also the father of humanity. It was the peak point of Kemalist ideology, where

the language reform's discourse met with the Turkish History Thesis. The Sun-Language theory turned the language reform from transforming the language to completely inventing it. It was four years after the First Language Congress. In such a short time, the Kemalist linguistic project had evolved from an effort at renovation to an attempt to legitimate an ethnic-based nationalist identity claim.

## Conclusion

After 1923, the new Turkish nation-state alienated itself from the Ottoman past by employing a linguistic boundary. An organization needed to be set up so that the policy could be successfully implemented and the Turkish Historical and Linguistic societies performed this duty (Eastman, 1983). By the agency of these two institutions, the four steps of the language planning were accomplished: formulation, codification, elaboration, and implementation.

In today's Turkey, a country that has been ruled by an Islamist political party for the first two decades of the twenty-first century, the abolishment of the caliphate or the hat reform are no longer subjects of serious public debate. It is safe to argue that the larger socio-political project of Kemalism has been successful and well established. However, the language issue, with all its cultural and ideological connotations, has always been a hot topic. While no one can deny the success and scope of the language reform, this issue has become a theme in the culture war between Islamists and seculars. For example, teaching Ottoman Turkish as a selective course in high schools has been periodically brought up as a public discussion point. So, what does the "catastrophic success" (Lewis, 2002) of the language reform tell us about identity construction in Turkey?

The language issue remained a subject of debate because it is part of a larger cultural shift and ideological debate.<sup>13)</sup> The break with the Ottoman legacy has been the main point of criticism against the language reform. According to the critiques of the reform, new generations' inabil-

ity to create a bond with the pre-republican period has caused a void in Turkish cultural memory. The reaction from conservatives and Islamists against the language reform, however, is not generated from seeking a balanced identity. After a long period in which people adopted Western customs, a large number of young people in Turkey have started to wear the headscarf or turned to other Islamic customs, seeking pride in their identity (Fukuyama, 2018). Contemporary debates on the Turkish Language Reform should be read in this context.

Language is “a marker of identity” (Suleiman, 2004, p. 13) and the designers of the Kemalist nation-building project were aware of this crucial fact. Even though Mustafa Kemal abandoned the campaign of radical language purification at the end of his life, the mission of the language reform was already largely completed. The Turkish Language Reform is one of the most effective social engineering initiatives to establish a new identity in which the state religion was replaced by the state language (Safran, 2008). Due to the fact that language is closely connected to the notion of identity, the Turkish Language Reform will likely remain a central topic in future cultural debates.

### Note

- 1) For the Hat Reform’s impact on masculinity, see Jana (2015).
- 2) To describe the Turkish Language Reform as “successful,” a comparison with other state-level attempts of language planning is required. Although a comparative analysis of the Turkish Language Reform is not this paper’s topic, a quick look at a similar experience in Iran would be insightful. Like Mustafa Kemal in Turkey, Iran’s Reza Shah fostered a Westernization program that included a state-sponsored language reform. Founded in 1935, Persian language academy followed the example of Turkish Linguistic Society. As a major difference, alphabet change was never seriously considered in Iran. As Paul (2010) suggests, the answer to the question of whether the Iranian language reform succeeded is not a straightforward and simple one. For a comparison between Iranian and Turkish language reforms, see Perry (1985).
- 3) As historical evidence suggests, reforming the language was Mustafa Kemal’s intention long before the republican era. In his memoir, the writer and educator Mahir İz (1990), who worked as a clerk at the parliament during the War of Independence, states that Mustafa Kemal was already discussing the language issue with his close circle and

consulting with scholars before declaring a new regime. At the time, as İz notes, the majority of prominent Turkish intellectuals opposed the idea of changing the script.

- 4) All translations are the author's.
- 5) "Türklerin tarihi insanlık tarihi kadar eskidir. Türkler, Osmanlılardan ve Selçuklulardan önce de bu dünyanın her tarafında imparatorluklar kurmuşlardır. Bu imparatorluklar zamanla çökmüşlerdir. Ama nerede bir Türk Devleti yıkılmış ise bunların kalıntıları üzerinde yeni bir devlet kurulmuştur. Türk tarihi insanlık tarihi kadar eski ve engindir. Türklerin dünya tarihinde ve yeryüzü medeniyetindeki yeri nedir? Bütün bu meselelere cevap bulunmalıdır."
- 6) "Dil işlerini düşünecek zaman da gelmiştir."
- 7) Indeed, the language reform created a split in Turkish literary history. Some influential figures, such as the critic Nurullah Ataç, fiercely supported a radical language reform, and their approach shaped the mainstream literary tendencies in Turkey. Also, for Orientalism in early republican Turkish literature, see Yavuz (2005).
- 8) In his memoir, the literary critic Fethi Naci (2012) provides an anecdote indicating the enormity of the cultural break from an outsider's perspective: "Jewish professors, running from German fascism, had taken refuge in Turkey. Turkish universities were competing to hire them. Prof. Neumark, our professor of finance, was complaining about the Turkish language all the time by saying: 'In Turkey, I learned Turkish twice; once with the 'old' words, and then with the 'new' ones.'" (p. 42)
- 9) Even though the Turkish-speaking world was discussed, the First Language Congress was criticized for neglecting the languages of Turkic groups elsewhere (Landau, 1993).
- 10) Hasan Ali Yücel, the influential Minister of Education of the 1940s, elaborated this argument by asserting that whole Eastern societies were, in fact, Turks (Şavkay, 1996). According to Yücel, the poets who wrote in Persian were Turks as well. About this argument, see Onat (1944). In his 435-page book, Onat claims that Arabic is a mutant Turkish language: "Bundan on iki yıl önce Arapçanın bükünleşmiş ve değişmiş bir Türk dili olduğu davasını, ilk defa olarak ortaya atmıştım [Twelve years earlier, I asserted for the first time that Arabic is a changed version of Turkish.]" The book was published six years after Mustafa Kemal's death.
- 11) For the words invented by Ataç and Ataç's huge contribution to the language reform, see Tekin (1958). It is also important to note that Mustafa Kemal himself invented some words too, in his little book on geometry, see Lewis (2002).
- 12) For the Sun-Language Theory, see Lewis (2002) and Aytürk (2009).
- 13) See, for example, Balım-Harding (1999).

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