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Realization of Turkic Peoples' Language Potential

Abstract: Turkic peoples are counted among ethnic groups widely spread at vast territories and numbering hundreds of millions of people. Meanwhile as opposed to ethnic groups that have common literary languages, Turkic peoples at present do not have one. Availability of common language would provide the Turkic peoples with the advantages that ethnic groups possessing common literary languages already have. Turkic peoples had several languages served as above-dialect standardized languages for several Turkic peoples. Turkic languages are considered to be mutually intelligible and they are closer to each other than the languages of many ethnic groups possessing common languages. In this connection it is very realistic to create the language that would serve as above-dialect language for the whole Turkic community. The prospects of its implementation will depend on several factors including convenience, neutrality and ability to be used in high spheres. Several principles of the language creation that would provide its maximum perfection are recommended. Propagation of the language will depend on how much the Turkic peoples will be interested and successful in creation of common cultural and information space. Independently of how successful the common-Turkic language implementation will proceed, Turkic peoples should follow the minimum program in order to utilize Turkic languages' potential.

Key words: ethnic groups, Turkic peoples, the advantages of common literary language, principles of the common-Turkic language creation, minimum program.

The modern globalizing world is characterized firstly by increasing amount of international relationships and interdependency, and secondly by sharp increase of magnitude of information and its exchange in these relationships. This, in turn makes the problems of communication means, including linguistic problem, more topical.

As a result of need in international communication means the English language has spread worldwide. English has already formed as a language of international intercourse, and as per intensification of above mentioned trends is penetrating deeper into various spheres. If, for example before World War II, French held a solid position in the sphere of international diplomacy, and German in scientific-technical sphere, nowadays English predominates in these spheres too.

Besides English that has already formed as a universal language, there are also regional languages which serve to many countries or populations of many millions, such as Chinese, Hindi-Urdu, Spanish, Arabic, French, bahasa Indonesia-Malayan, German, Farsi and others.

There are several ethnic groups in the world whose settling in vast territories greatly increased the number of speakers of their languages, which provided formation of these languages as regional ones. Let us see some of these groups.

Russians and English-speaking nations have colonized predominantly sparsely populated regions and mixed little with indigenous populations; that is why there are just a few differences in language and culture between different groups of Russian- and English-speaking nations. In contrast to them Arabs, Spanish-speaking nations, and the Chinese have settled in the territories that had been densely populated before their settling.

Arabic nations have formed by superimposition of Arabic prides onto various, mainly Semitic peoples, and nowadays Arabic dialects actually are separate languages markedly differing from each other (mainly because of the influence of local substratum). Classical Arabic language, in which the Qur'an was written, had served as a common literary language for Arabic peoples over the centuries. At present, availability of this language lets Arabs from different countries communicate with each other, have common Arabian literature, common informational, educational and media space etc.

The Spanish-speaking nations of Latin America have formed as a result of mixture of Spanish with different Indian peoples (as well as African and other European peoples) in different proportions. Spanish-speaking nations speak differing dialects, but they also have a common literary language.

The Chinese nation is in fact a group of peoples which differ in language, culture and have some racial differences. Southern groups of Chinese were formed by the mixture of Chinese with various local peoples. Dialects of local groups of Chinese differ so much that are considered to be mutually unintelligible. The situation is eased with that the words pronounced differently in different dialects are indicated by identical hieroglyphs at script. In many experts' opinion if China did not have a common script it would have disintegrated long ago.

The availability of common standardized language creates huge advantages to the close ethnic groups. Literary languages of above mentioned ethnic groups are UN official languages.

Turkic peoples are settled on the vast territory from the Arctic and Pacific Oceans to the Mediterranean Sea and Balkans. All Turkic languages except the Chuvash and Yakut languages are considered by scientists to be mutually intelligible. It is explained with that in the past Turkic peoples were a single people and then a group of geographically and ethnically close peoples, which later settled in the vast areas of Eurasia.

Until the 20th century Turkic peoples had several above-dialect languages, i.e. literary languages used at vast territories that had differing oral dialects, the Turki language can be referred to them. In the 20th century division of the Turkic world to more than 30 literary languages took place as a result of creation of Turkic literary languages for each area on the basis of local dialects.

According to the British researcher Mark Dickens, the Bolsheviks could have created common-Turkic language in USSR in 1920s in the frame of the policy of merging of peoples. But this contradicted the

interests of Bolsheviks to disunite the Turkic community; that is why they carried out the policy of not simply creation of separate Turkic languages but emphasizing the differences between them¹.

Turkic peoples whose languages are probably closer to each other than the languages of local groups of above mentioned peoples, do not have a common literary language in contrast to them.

The negative trend is that Turkic languages developed and continue to develop independently from each other, and that influenced their estrangement from each other.

The numbers of the above mentioned language speakers in the world is as follows:

| | Language | Number of speakers |
|---|------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Chinese dialects | 1,136 billion |
| 2 | Spanish dialects | 322-400 million |
| 3 | English | 309-400 million |
| 4 | Arabic dialects | 186-422 million |
| 5 | Russian | 164-170 million |
| 6 | Turkic languages | 180-185 million |

Source: Wikipedia

If Turkic peoples created a common literary language and practice in it the Turkic community, this language in accordance with its potential could be rated as regional one.

But at present due to the absence of the sole standardized language Turkic peoples are divided beyond the bounds of national level to the incidences of the other regional languages – Russian, English, Farsi, and Chinese, etc. For official intercourse, for example between Turkic countries of CIS Russian is used, between Turkey and Turkic countries of CIS English language is used, a Turk from Iran and a Turk from Afghanistan will probably use Farsi to communicate with each other, etc.

Here is approximate number of Turkic-speakers settled in regions with certain language domination within region or above national level (particularly in inter-Turkic communication):

| | Dominating language | Region | Number of Turkic Population | Share in total Turkic Population |
|---|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 | English | Turkey | ≈ 75 million | ≈ 41% |
| 2 | Russian | CIS | ≈ 66 million | ≈ 36% |
| 3 | Farsi | Iran and Afghanistan | ≈ 23 million | ≈ 12,5% |
| 4 | Chinese | China | ≈ 15 million | ≈ 8,2% |

Source: Wikipedia

Many smaller Turkic peoples, especially in Russia, are under the process of physical and linguistic assimilation. Even such large Turkic nations as Kazakhs, Tatars and Kyrgyz face a big problem with the knowledge of native language by its people. The situation is worsened with that Russian, Chinese and

¹ Dickens Mark. *Soviet language policy in Central Asia*. <http://www.oxuscom.com/lang-policy.htm>

Farsi languages are the languages which have large geography and number of speakers, rich cultural, scientific background and importance, international significance, official usage and government support, so it is too hard for the small Turkic languages to compete with them.

To avoid linguistic assimilation it is necessary to increase the importance of the Turkic languages by creating and practicing a common-Turkic language close to all Turkic languages and widening cooperation between Turkic nations in language and cultural spheres, including approximation of Turkic languages to each other.

Practicing the common-Turkic language is not only the issue of Turkic nationalism, because not only the Turkic world but humanity as a whole would benefit from its adoption. The main part of rural population in Turkic countries does not know any of regional languages and does not have means to learn them, and implementation of a regional language close to spoken one in a region will lead to educational and cultural improvement, will ease communication problems not only within a certain region, but between region and the outer world, will be a step to globalization via regionalization.

Importance of a language is determined by which opportunities it gives. Nowadays a Turkic-speaker needs to study other regional languages to get a better education and information. Creation of a common language would enable storage of information sources of not one but all Turkic nations; would let to the better management of this language, which in addition would be native to all Turkic-speakers.

Proximity of Turkic languages creates huge opportunities for Turkic nations, which benefits are getting lost with time. Creating and practicing a common-Turkic literary language would give to Turkic peoples the following advantages:

- 1) Enlargement of opportunities for inter-Turkic intercourse.
- 2) Keeping and utilizing the information sources of all Turkic peoples.
- 3) Increase in importance of every Turkic language.
- 4) This language in contrast to other regional languages would be native to Turkic peoples.
- 5) Studying of this language would be much easier than studying other regional languages.
- 6) Resource-saving would be achieved both in communication and information sharing and on account of small expenditure required for studying this language.

It is very crucial to create a common-Turkic language for the tasks like intercourse, study, and information storage, because the worth of this issue is that every Turkic community will realize its unused potential and achieve the above-mentioned advantages or it will continue to lose most of its potential provided by the kinship of Turkic languages.

Turkic literary languages are above-dialect standardized languages created on the basis of standard of a chosen district in appropriate Turkic regions where dialects differing from each other exist. Taking into account the proximity of Turkic languages that allows considering them as dialects, it is very realistic to create a standardized Turkic language that would serve as above-dialect language for the whole Turkic community.

For that it is necessary to determine the basis of which standard it is expedient to create the above-dialect Turkic language, so that it could be acceptable for the whole Turkic-speaking community.

Practicing the standardized literary common-Turkic language will depend on the following factors:

1. Subjective interest, i.e. the will of Turkic peoples to instill as a lingua franca the very common-Turkic language.
2. Neutrality of the language.
3. Maximal perfection and richness of the language, its ability to become a language of government, science, technique etc.
4. Taking into account the language peculiarities of all Turkic languages.

Implementation of the language in Turkic community will depend mostly on objective factors not depending on the will of those who will form this language, such as the will of Turkic community to take some losses beforehand and so that this language could be widely implemented. But linguists' job will be to do their best to make this language as attractive, convenient and demanded for usage as possible.

The common-Turkic language should be created on the basis of the existing Turkic languages so as to provide proximity to all Turkic languages. This will ensure its coming-to-be the language of all Turkic nations. Thereby a very important advantage – neutrality and equality will be attained, i.e. this language will not be rejected due to psychological and political reasons. As an example we can mention the Swahili language in case of which such an advantage as neutrality contributed to its spreading in East African countries.

Inasmuch as the common-Turkic literary language will be created artificially, and at the same time on basis of Turkic languages, elements of naturalness and artificiality will be harmonized in it. This on the one hand will provide maximum perfection and richness of the language and on the other hand the language will not be taken out of nowhere, but from the really existing Turkic languages.

The most optimal way can be based on factors #2, #3, and #4 when methodically creating the averaged-Turkic language as suggested by the Uzbek scientist Bakhtiyar Karimov.

Professor Karimov is the author of the mathematic linguistics method. He is suggesting the creation of the common-Turkic language by means of computer averaging. The language suggested by professor Karimov was called ortaturk, i.e. averaged Turkic language. According to him the criterium for creation of the ortaturk language should be the availability of a word or a grammatical form used:

- 1) in the most Turkic languages
- 2) by the most Turkic persons
- 3) with the most semantic proximity
- 4) during the longest period of time

Currently professor Karimov is working on the creation of the ortaturk language at the Ortaturk Institute under the World Assembly of Turkic Peoples². Thus the main advantage of this method is the

² The international institute of language "Ana Turk" the World Assembly of Turkic People. http://dta1.org/eng/index_page1.6.htm

principle of averaging. This principle is optimal for solving the basic problem of the common-Turkic language – the lexical part.

Also the following principles when creating the averaged-Turkic language can be suggested:

1) Principle of Turkism. The priority in words selection should be given to aboriginal Turkic words, then to Arabian-Persian words (which have been traditionally used in Turkic languages), and then to European words. For example, in Uzbek such a simple word as “left” is of Persian origin – “chap” (though Uzbeks use “sol” also), so the variant “sol” will be chosen, so are simple words as “black” and “white” in Turkish – “siyah” and “beyaz”, the words “kara” and “ak” will be chosen accordingly.

Applying the purism principle is contradictory. On the one hand it enables to realize the desires of nationalists to purify the languages. On the other hand as we see in the example of the Turkish language, it went much farther from other Turkic languages because of its purification of Arabic-Farsi words. Following purism too much will also estrange Turkic languages from world languages. Because, say Arabic-Farsi words bring together Turkic languages not only with Arabic and Farsi, but also with many other world languages, including the most spread ones, for example Hindi³. In this connection, the purist principle should be used within reasonable limits, concerning predominantly with the simplest words, and secondly, when replacing words with a Turkic variant it is necessary to use the variant already implemented in Turkish. This principle should also include reestablishment of Old Turkic words.

The main sense of the Turkism principle is not purism, but restoration of some aboriginal Turkic phonemes lost in some Turkic languages. For example in Uzbek because of loss of aboriginal Turkic phonemes the words like «ün» - «sound» and «un» - «flour», the words «böl» - «divide» and «bol» - «be» became homonyms. In Turkish because of loss of velar «ñ» phoneme the words «añ» - «mind» and «an» - «moment» became homonyms. Other Turkic languages were also influenced by the local substratum that led to their distancing from aboriginal Turkic pronunciation. Elimination of such defects is in the context of the following principle, too.

2) Principle of richness. Maximal enrichment of the common-Turkic language should be carried out owing to usage of words, virtues and word-formation means available in all Turkic languages. For example in Turkish there is a separate form of future tense expressed with «acak»-«ecek», whereas in Uzbek future tense is similar to the simple present tense. In Uzbek and Kazakh there are dual verbs making meanings richer, and they do not exist in Turkish. In the common-Turkic language all forms should be used. If there are several variants of a word the aboriginal Turkic one should be chosen, if several variants are aboriginal Turkic, then they could be used simultaneously, for example, both “emas”-“yemes” and “değil”-“tügül” (“not”).

One more example: in Kazakh “ch” is changed into “sh”, and “sh” is changed into “s”. So the word “ach” (“hungry”) is changed into “ash”, the word “ash” (“food”) is changed into “as”, and the word “as” (“hang”) is also spelled as “as”. In other words, because of the absence of one phoneme (“ch”) the

³ Singh Gajendra. *Turkic languages: their contribution into the development of Hindustani.* <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/papers7/paper681.html>

language has in some way become penurious. Then in selection of consonants for the common-Turkic language it is inexpedient to choose Kazakh-Nogay variant of consonants.

3) Principle of simplicity. In contrast to the principle of richness, the principle of simplicity stipulates abolition of unnecessary virtues and non-admission of language complication. For example in Kypchak languages in genitive case “ti”-“ti”, “di”-“di”, “ni”-“ni” suffices are used, whereas it could be sufficient to use only “ni”-“ni” in genitive case in order not to complicate the language. Or in plural tense instead of lar, dar, tar, ler, der, ter it could be sufficient to use only lar, ler. But on the other hand this consonant harmony in Kypchak languages is convenient for pronunciation, so this suggestion on suffices is disputable.

Another example: in adopted words in Uzbek for some reason sonants are used like in original “kitab”, “talab”; also “kelib”, “ketdi”. If we use dull sounds in words kind of these it will fit the principle of simplicity, because the literal language would approximate to the spoken language, and as a result of approximation to the aboriginal Turkic pronunciation the principle of Turkism would also be realized in this case.

Turkic languages in many cases differ from each other only with the variants of consonant sounds used in certain regularity. For example: “dağ”-“tağ”-“taw” (“mountain”). For such cases as a simplified example the following variants of phonemes which can be accepted as a standard in averaged-Turkic language can be offered:

1) For the vowel sounds the vowel sounds of Oguz and Kypchak languages should be chosen, because the vowel sounds of Karluk languages have lost aboriginal Turkic characteristics.

2) For the consonant sounds the consonant sounds of Karluk languages should be chosen, because the consonant sounds of Karluk languages hold intermediate position between the Oguz and Kypchak languages: “k” and “t” in the beginning of words (instead of “g” and “d”) – similar with Kypchak languages, “y” in the beginning of words (instead of “j”) – similar with Oguz languages, “ğ” in the middle and endings of words (instead of “w”) – similar with Oguz languages, not missing of “n” in the affixes – similar with Kypchak languages.

3) Also the consonant sounds in the affixes can be used of Karluk languages due to the following reasons:

1. The consonant sounds in the affixes in Kypchak languages are in variance with the principle of simplicity. See the example given in the principle of simplicity.

2. The consonant sounds in the affixes in Oguz languages are in the variance with the principle of richness. Because of missing the “n” sound in the affixes in Oguz languages “kitabniñ (sayfası)” and “(seniñ) kitabıñ” – “kitabın” become homonyms, “kitabni (oku)” and “(onuñ) kitabı” – “kitabı” also become homonyms.

This is not the compulsory variant of consonants and vowel sounds to be used, actually the usage of phonemes can be very free. If words differ not only with the variant of consonant used, but are totally different, several variants can be used like it was mentioned before.

The averaged-Turkic language can be for some extend variable. In my opinion the Karluk and Kypchak languages are very close to each other, and the Oguz languages are a little bit farther. The common-Turkic language can be implemented in two branches: Oguz – for Turkish, Azeri, Turkmens, Iran Turks, Gagauzs and Karluk-Kypchak – for other Turkic peoples. Then within these groups these variants would be very close to all.

Another advantage is that these two branches of averaged-Turkic language will be created on the principle of mutual approximation. For example, in Turkish there is no “yahshi” word, it exists in Azeri. In Azeri past tense is expressed with “ib”, while in Turkish with “ti-di” as in the Karluk-Kypchak languages. Therefore in the Oguz branch the “yahshi” word and “ti-di” for past tense will be used, i.e. the variant identical with Karluk-Kypchak will be used. In the Karluk-Kypchak branch also the variant identical with Oguz will be used. The maximal proximity between the Karluk-Kypchak and Oguz branches will provide their consideration as “k-t” (“keldi-tağ”) and “g-d” (“geldi-dağ”) dialects of the common-Turkic language.

Applying the abovementioned principles the following variants of phonemes can be offered (taking into account that it is a simplified approach):

1) In Karluk-Kypchak branch the following phonemes can be instilled

Vowel phonemes – of Kypchak languages – Turkism principle.

Consonant phonemes – of Karluk languages, because of the examples shown in 2nd and 3rd principles.

2) In the Oguz branch the “q” and “ñ” phonemes will be reestablished. So both the principles of Turkism and richness will be realized, and proximity to the Karluk-Kypchak branch will be achieved.

Big disadvantage of letting bilingual variability exist in the common-Turkic language is that instead of the sole language there will be two dialects for the Turkic world (though there are no more than 30 languages existing presently). But the advantage will be that each branch will be closer to the languages within referring groups rather than the common-Turkic language, so it will be easier to practice them.

Several widespread languages also exist in local variants like Farsi in Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, Hindi-Urdu in India and Pakistan etc.

Actually the common-Turkic language could be created not artificially but by the free intercourse of Turkic-speakers, each of who could use his own language and thus after a while an averaged language could occur. It could be realistic because of the proximity of Turkic languages.

But nowadays because of the wide usage of regional languages like Russian it is improbable that Turkic-speakers will use their own Turkic dialects facing problems in mutual understanding. Secondly, forming averaged language by free intercourse may require many decades. Thirdly, an unofficial intercourse language can be more likely created in this way. Fourthly, inter-Turkic communication is not so intensive at present that a Koine language could be formed. Fifthly, artificial creation of an averaged-Turkic language creates one more important advantage. Each language has certain disadvantages. Creation of common-Turkic language artificially, could allow elimination of some disadvantages and to create a language as perfect as possible.

The best-known example of an artificial language is Esperanto. About 2 million⁴ people in different countries use it, there is a lot of literature in it, including original, books and magazines are published in it. Esperanto failed to become universal language as it was proposed, because it could not compete with English. Nevertheless, Esperanto is relatively widely used — despite being an artificial language and close only to European languages — because of its enthusiasts' efforts. Compared to Esperanto the common-Turkic language, which will be close to all Turkic languages has much more chances to be realized within the Turkic community.

The main disadvantage of the averaged-Turkic language is that it will sound artificial, because it will not coincide fully with any Turkic languages. But I believe that after using it for some time firstly in written and then in oral forms, because of its proximity to Turkic languages, simplicity, richness and perfection it will be convenient and acceptable for usage within the Turkic community.

For example for Tashkent inhabitants the literary Uzbek language used on TV and radio also sounds very artificial, because it differs very much from the Tashkent dialect, but Tashkent inhabitants accept it as a standardized variant, taken as for official usage.

In Indonesia the Bahasa Indonesia language was accepted as a governmental language which had been created on the basis of Malayan⁵, while Malayan people make only 3.4%⁶ of the Indonesian population and because of the proximity of Indonesian peoples' languages to Malayan language Bahasa Indonesia could be spread as the national language of Indonesia. Several other examples can be pointed out when a language gained a wide ground (further expansion) within a geography because of its acceptance as an official or national language, say – Hindi in India, Tagalog – in Philippines. Thus the success of spreading of a language in many respects depends on giving it a status, if not legal, then moral.

The common-Turkic language could become a part of ideology of the Turkic peoples. In the 20th century the national project of the Jewish people – Israel was realized. Restoration and implementation of the Hebrew language played an important role in this process. It has to be emphasized that the Hebrew language was literally restored from the status of a dead language. This example is a good argument for skeptics of the common-Turkic language.

In the beginning the common-Turkic language can be learned and used by enthusiasts whose number may make about several thousand people. Primarily it is supposed to use the language for internet-communication and creation of internet resources including Wikipedia in the common-Turkic language.

Further propagation of the language will depend firstly on its ability to face communication and information challenges and secondly on necessity of its implementation, which is directly connected with how much the Turkic peoples will succeed in the creation of a common cultural space.

⁴ *Esperanto*. Wikipedia. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esperanto>

⁵ *Indonesian language*. Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indonesian_language

⁶ *Demographics of Indonesia*. Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Indonesia

Minimum Program

As in Arab countries, where literal Arabic is used in inter-Arabic formal and informal intercourse and partly at formal national level, the common-Turkic language can be also used in inter-Turkic formal and informal intercourse, while Turkic languages will remain at national levels. So, special attention should be paid to the approximation of Turkic languages to each other and to the common-Turkic language.

Independently of how successful the common-Turkic language project will turn out, in order to utilize advantages and potential of Turkic languages kinship, Turkic peoples should follow the minimum program as follows:

1) Transition of all Turkic peoples to a uniform (or maximum possible close) script. Only the Latin script can be a uniform script for Turkic peoples due to the next reasons:

1. Two other script variants – Cyrillic and Arabic are the scripts used in countries where Turkic peoples are under the greatest threat of assimilation – Russia, Iran, and Afghanistan. The Latin script could be the facility of overcoming this factor.

2. The Latin script is the most spread in the world and it is the means of maximum access to the global information system.

3. The Latin script is the means of connection of Turkic languages with the Turkish language which is the most advanced and possessing the richest information sources among Turkic languages.

2) Putting in order coordination in development of Turkic languages, which should provide maximum identity of implemented terms, up to abolition of the earlier inculcated terms and transition to common ones.

Each Turkic language is a key to other Turkic languages. I mean if one learns for example the Tatar language it will only take him another 2-3 months to learn Kazakh etc.

History provided Turkic peoples with relatively close languages. It is the duty of Turkic peoples to deepen this great chance. The closer the Turkic languages to each other are:

1. The more it enables utilization of information resources and literature available in one Turkic language by other Turkic peoples.

2. The more importance each of Turkic languages separately has.

The important thing is that none of the languages stands still; all languages are in the process of development. Turkic languages are also permanently moving in some direction and it is necessary to give the desirable direction to this process, i.e. coordinately promote their motion towards each other.

The averaged-Turkic language could be the standard for mutual approximation of Turkic languages.

3) Inculcation into Turkic languages of words and word-formation means available in other Turkic languages.

It is desirable to follow the principle of Turkism, i.e. implementing new terms of Turkic origin, restoration of old Turkic words etc. in the development and coordination of Turkic languages.

One of the main disadvantages of Turkic languages is their relatively less developed vocabulary, word-formation means and partly expression means. So the words available in one Turkic language need to be implemented in another Turkic language too in order to enrich them. Enrichment of Turkic languages will increase their seductiveness, ability to be used in high spheres; enrichment of them owing to each other will also mutually approximate them.