

Language Policy in Turkey: Recent Perspectives



Orient-Institut Istanbul Lecture Series

November / December 2021



Dr. Zaur Gasimov
University of Bonn

Forgotten Intermediaries? Turkish Language Reform's Polish, Hungarian and Russian Traces

Wednesday, 3 November 2021, 7:00 pm (Turkish time, GMT+3)

Dr. Nevra Lischewski
University of Munich

Multilingualism and Language Planning in the Period of the Late Ottoman Empire and the Early Turkish Republic

Wednesday, 17 November 2021, 7:00 pm (Turkish time, GMT+3)

Max Scherberger
Independent Scholar, Freiburg

Sadri Maksudi Arsal and His Ideas about the Turkish Language

Wednesday, 1 December 2021, 7:00 pm (Turkish time, GMT+3)

Prof. Dr. Jens Peter Laut
University of Göttingen

Dr. Ruth Bartholomä
Orient-Institut Istanbul

The Turkish Language Reform and Beyond: A Never-Ending Story?

Wednesday, 15 December 2021, 7:00 pm (Turkish time, GMT+3)

Registration Information

The lecture series will be held online via Zoom.

To attend, prior registration is necessary. Please send an e-mail specifying your name and academic affiliation to events@oiist.net.

You can either register for the whole series or for individual lectures. For the latter, please specify the lecture you want to attend and send your e-mail at the latest two days before the respective event, i. e. by Monday (1 November, 15 November, 29 November, 13 December).

For technical reasons, the number of participants is limited. You will be informed about the organizational and technical procedure one day in advance of each lecture.

Orient-Institut Istanbul Lecture Series

Language Policy in Turkey: Recent Perspectives

In the case of Turkey, »language policy« is usually more or less automatically associated with the extensive language and script reform carried out for the Turkish language under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in the 1920s and 1930s. Earlier studies have focused mainly on this period, but language policy remains an important topic to this day, one that has the potential to provoke fierce debates among experts and in the public, even in recent years. Topics discussed included gender-equitable language, the substitution of foreign words (mostly borrowed from English) in Turkish, the use of language in public spaces, as well as debates about the evaluation of the reforms in the 1920s and 1930s, to name just a few examples. This lecture series, held at the Orient-Institut Istanbul in November and December 2021, is intended to present new research findings that address the language situation in the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey, deliberate interventions in the development of language and writing, as well as the role of individuals and groups in these processes. By examining previously neglected sources, re-examining well-known ones and applying new research perspectives and methods, previous assumptions about language policy can be re-evaluated.

Ruth Bartholomä



Wednesday

3 November 2021

7:00 pm

Turkish time, GMT+3

on Zoom

Dr. Zaur Gasimov
University of Bonn



Forgotten Intermediaries? Turkish Language Reform's Polish, Hungarian and Russian Traces

The Turkish Language Reform is one of the most fascinating cultural projects of the first half of the 20th century. Throughout the 1920s, numerous distinguished linguists from Hungary, Soviet Russia and Poland visited the University of Istanbul and maintained close contacts with Turkish academia. Mészáros Gyula, Wilhelm Barthold and Süreyya Szapszal were important inspirers, commentators and co-shapers of the Turkish linguistic purism of the 1920s. Neglected by international scholarship, Hungarian, Polish and Russian specialists along with the Turkic exiled linguists based in Istanbul and Ankara heavily contributed to the Language Reform in Turkey by knowledge and experience transfer. The paper tries to shed light on the East European impact on the Language Reform in Turkey in the 1920–30s.



Dr. Zaur Gasimov studied international relations, international law and history in Baku and Berlin. In 2009, he graduated from the PhD program at the Catholic University Eichstätt-Ingolstadt and joined the Leibniz-Institute of European History in Mainz, Germany. From 2013 to 2019, Gasimov was a Senior Research Fellow at the Orient-Institut in Istanbul, Turkey. In 2020, Gasimov joined the Russian Studies Department of the University of Bonn, Germany, as a DFG Principal Investigator. He has published extensively on Russian-Turkish relations and entangled history of Eastern Europe and the Middle East (last monograph: *Historical Dictionary of Azerbaijan*, New Edition, Rowman & Littlefield 2018).



Figure: Gyula Mészáros (1883–1957), Mehmet Fuat Köprülü (1890–1966), Theodor Menzel (1878–1939), Paul Wittek (1894–1978), Ali Turan Hüseyinzade (1864–1940) at the Turkological Congress in Baku (1926).

Source: <https://habergalerisi.com/2020/07/27/birinci-turkoloji-kongresi-karari/>



Wednesday

17 November 2021

7:00 pm

Turkish time, GMT+3

on Zoom

Dr. Nevra Lischewski
University of Munich



Multilingualism and Language Planning in the Period of the Late Ottoman Empire and the Early Turkish Republic

The Ottoman Empire was a fundamentally multilingual society. In the course of the late Ottoman and early Republican period, certain policies, rules and practices were introduced in order to influence the linguistic situation and to establish the dominant language in the society, without a perspective for maintaining its linguistic diversity. In this talk Dr. Nevra Lischewski introduces a conceptual framework of language planning. In doing so she undertakes a detailed, long-term analysis of the linguistic situation, policies and practices of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey with the aim of explaining linguistic issues by addressing larger social and political matters and of evoking awareness of multilingualism and linguistic diversity.



9 Teşrîn-Evvel 1928

Dr. Nevra Lischewski is lecturer of Ottoman and modern Turkish at the Institute of Near and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Munich. She studied linguistics at Ankara University and then worked as a Turkish language instructor at the Language Centre of Ankara University. In Germany, she continued to work as a Turkish language instructor at the Institute of Near and Middle Eastern Studies and the Language Centre of the University of Munich. She graduated with a Master's degree in Linguistics with minors in Turkish studies and intercultural communication at the University of Munich. She received her PhD in Turkology and linguistics at the University of Munich.

Her research interest as a linguist focuses on the social aspects of language. Hence, language is not an object that can be considered in isolation, but rather is a social practice that is inseparable from its social and historical context. She applies this view on language, which refers to the disciplines of sociolinguistic and linguistic ecology, in her PhD thesis »Sociolinguistic Profile and Language Planning of the Ottoman Empire between 1850–1950« (soon to be published by Harrassowitz under the title »From Multilingualism to Monolingualism«).

Excerpts from the newspaper Cumhuriyet (9, 10 and 11 October 1928)

İkinci Alfabe Dersleri

2

a i o

p y r v

b l s ş

baba al as aŞ ala yala
pala paŞa ol bol sol boŞ
yol soba
sopa ova
oya sarı
baŞ yavaŞ
sor salon
boya solar
baba yavaŞ yavaŞ boya, abia
oya yapıyor.

10 TeŞrîn-Evvel 1928

İkinci Alfabe Dersleri

u

k t c ç

ak ok at ot aç
uç uy ulu uslu
yavru soba kuş kul
koyu kuru kulak kuşak
korku koy koyar kuyruk
çocuk baca bacaK çatı
kutu çarık çalar kaçır
koca koŞ koşuyor
kovalar kaŞ kaşkaval
su şu

bu çocuk çok iyi arkadaşları ile koşuyor. kollar açıpolar.

11 TeŞrîn-Evvel 1928



Wednesday

1 December 2021

7:00 pm

Turkish time, GMT+3

on Zoom

Max Scherberger
Independent Scholar, Freiburg

Sadri Maksudi Arsal and His Ideas about the Turkish Language

Like Yusuf Akçura, Abdullah Battal-Taymas and other intellectuals of Tatar origin, Sadri Maksudi Arsal (1879–1957) from Kazan played an important role for the construction and development of the Turkish Republic. He met Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and made important contributions to the Kemalist reforms of law, politics, history and language. His role in the Turkish Language Reform is often underestimated. In his huge book *Türk Dili İçin* (For the Sake of the Turkish Language) he defended the idea of establishing a pure modern Turkish literary language not only for Turkey, but for all Turkic people in the world. He analyzed the language reforms of several other nations like the Romans, Arabs, Germans, French, Czech, Finns, Russians and Hungarians and explained that Turkish, in his view one of the richest and most ingenious languages in the world, should be reformed accordingly. He was convinced it was possible to replace almost all loan and foreign words with genuine Turkish words and expressions taken from the spoken language in Turkey and its dialects, from Ancient Turkish and other Turkic idioms, or with new words coined with the help of the rich fundus of Turkish suffixes. This idea was crucial during the first period of the Kemalist language reform. The book had considerable impact on Mustafa Kemal who wrote a short preface for it saying that an independent nation needs an independent language. These words became





Sadri Maksudi Arsal (in 1907).

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sadretdin_Maksudov.jpeg

the main slogan of the language reform and are cited in numerous studies. The contents of Maksudi's book, however, mostly did not become the subject of a deeper analysis. Max Scherberger will take a closer look at the book and Maksudi's ideas about the Turkish language and its reform.

Max Scherberger studied Islamic studies and history at the University of Freiburg (1993–2000). From 2000 to 2003 he worked at CEBHEM (the Center for the Economic and Business History of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East), a project at the University of Tübingen that included studies in the Archives of Poche (Aleppo) and the Ottoman Archives of the Prime Minister's Office (Istanbul). In 2019 he graduated from the Department of Turkology and Central Asian Studies at the University of Göttingen with a PhD dissertation about Sadri Maksudi Arsal and his book *Türk Dili İçin* (about to be published). His main research fields are Eastern Middle Turkic ascension literature, Ottoman-Safavid relations, Ottoman and modern Turkish, Language Reform in Turkey. His publications include: »*Türk dili, dillerin en zenginlerindedir*«: *Sadri Maksudi'nin Türk Dili için adlı kitabına bir bakış* (2019), *Der tatarisch-türkische Intellektuelle Sadri Maksudi Arsal (1878–1957) und seine Bedeutung für die Entwicklung des Türkentums in Russland und in der Türkei* (2013), *Das Mi'râğnâme. Die Himmel- und Höllenfahrt des Propheten Muḥammad in der osttürkischen Überlieferung* (2003).



Wednesday

15 December 2021

7:00 pm

Turkish time, GMT+3
on Zoom

Prof. Dr. Jens Peter Laut
University of Göttingen

Dr. Ruth Bartholomä
Orient-Institut Istanbul



The Turkish Language Reform and Beyond: A Never-Ending Story?

This talk presents a newly published edited volume about debates on language policy and planning in the Republic of Turkey. The eight chapters deal with various aspects related to both the official language Turkish and the other languages used in Turkey, whether autochthonous minority languages or languages that have recently become important through migration. For their analyses, the authors, coming from different disciplinary backgrounds like Turkology, political science or history, use methods like discourse analysis, mixed-method approaches or concepts from the field of linguistic landscapes research.

Topics include re-evaluations of the Turkish Language Reform of the 1920s and 1930s, analyses of debates concerning the Turkish language in connection with questions of gender, loanwords and use in political speeches, the language on public and private signs, demands raised in connection with the so-called »Democratic Opening« initiated in 2009 or the migration of refugees from Syria since 2011. Attention to current developments also provides new perspectives on the early phase of language policy in Turkey and the question whether such developments can be seen as continuities or discontinuities. In any case, this book makes an engaging contribution to what seems to be »a never-ending story«.



Source: *Tercüman Gazetesi* (ed.). 1981. *Yaşayan Türkçemiz* (3 vols., 2nd ed.). İstanbul: Tercüman Gazetesi Yayınları. Here: vol. 3, p. 78



Prof. Dr. Jens Peter Laut studied comparative religion, Turkish studies and Indian studies at the Universities of Marburg and Giessen. In 1980, he obtained his M.A. degree with a Master's thesis on »Buddhist Ideas of Hell (with Special Reference to Old Turkish Texts)«. From 1980 until 1984, he was engaged in the project »Loanwords of Indic Origin in Old Turkish« at the University of Giessen. In February 1985, his dissertation in Turkish Studies on »The Uighur Text »Maitrisimit« and Its Importance for the Early History of Turkish Buddhism« was accepted by the University of Giessen. From 1985 until 1988, he was engaged in a project at the University of Tübingen (»The Tübingen Atlas of the Middle East«, TAVO) and published two historical maps of the Ottoman Empire and a book on »Asia Minor in the 17th Century«. From June 1989 until December 1991, he received a post-doctoral scholarship from the DFG. He submitted his habilitation thesis on »Language Reform in Modern Turkey« in 1993 to the University of Göttingen. This degree was granted in November 1993. From 1996 to 2008, he was Professor of Islamic Studies/Turkology at the University of Freiburg. Since October 2008, he has been Professor and Director of the Department of Turkology and Central Asian Studies at the University of Göttingen.

Dr. Ruth Bartholomä has been a research fellow at the Orient-Institut Istanbul since October 2019. She studied Islamic studies and Slavic studies at the University of Freiburg (Germany), spent one year at the University of Samarqand (Uzbekistan) and graduated from the University of Freiburg in 2005 with a thesis on the Hungarian Turkologist Arminius Vámbéry (1832–1913). In 2011, she received her PhD in Turkology from the University of Giessen (Germany) with a thesis on phenomena of language change in the lexis of the Tatar literary language between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 21st centuries. From 2012 to 2014, she was interim professor for Islamic Studies/Turkology at the University of Freiburg where she held the position of a »junior professor« from April 2014 to September 2019. Her research focuses on sociolinguistics. Currently she is conducting a research project on language policy and planning in the Republic of Turkey after 1980.





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Orient-Institut Istanbul Lecture Series
Convened by Ruth Bartholomä (Orient-Institut Istanbul)
November/December 2021

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