Language Policy and Planning in the Mediterranean World

Edited by

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In memoriam

This volume is dedicated to the memory of my friend and colleague Pavlos Pavlou who this project was initially conceived with
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MAINTENANCE AND RENOVATION IN THE ATTITUDES OF OTTOMAN GREEK INTELLECTUALS TOWARDS OTTOMAN TURKISH
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1. Premises

Renovation as an action within corpus planning, a term introduced by Cooper (1989: 154), involves “an effort to change an already developed code, whether in the name of efficiency, aesthetics, or national or political ideology”. Cooper coined the term to refer to the Turkish language reforms that began in the 1920s, as well as other renovation movements. However, the term did not catch on, and was not used on a large scale by subsequent scholars. Renovation as an act of language policy also implies its counterpart, maintenance, motivated by a social or political attitude established as language ideology and language beliefs. The motivation for renovation, as described by Cooper (efficiency, aesthetics, ideology), will be used in the present paper as the premise for an analysis of language beliefs—resulting in true language management—roughly half a century before the actual reform movement in Kemalist Turkey, and, specifically in the attitude of Ottoman Greeks (Rums) in Istanbul and Asia Minor.

2. Aesthetics

2.1 Elsine-i selâçe – The Three Languages

The Turkish Language Reform has been cited in language policy and language planning (LPLP) literature as one of the most “dramatic” and “radical” examples of language planning in the framework of modernization. This view often neglects or disregards the fact that the language discussion on the status of Ottoman Turkish, on the alphabet and on language renovation within the Ottoman society preceded the actual reforms that took place during the 1920s and 30s. However, most researchers dealing extensively with the Turkish reform—for example Heyd (1954: 9-18), Gallagher (1971), Lewis (1999: 5-26)—underline the importance of the development of a “moderate language reform” by Ottoman intellectuals like Ziya Paşa or Namik Kemal. These intellectuals stressed the need for linguistic simplification, including the substitution of the Arabo-Persian lexicon with “genuine” Turkic words, and the reform of the Arabic graphic system. Yet it must be emphasized that, at that time, these efforts were not supported by a nationalist ideology. Standard Ottoman Turkish was considered an odd system of symbols that concerned a linguistic elite and hindered political westernization and democratization. Traditionally, Ottoman is seen, both from an ideological and from an aesthetic point of view, as a compound of three languages (in Ottoman elsine-i selâçe), Arabic, Persian and Turkish, where every language has its own prestige and status: Arabic as a religious symbol, Persian as the literary language of the Turkish states for many centuries, Turkish—which was formerly considered of inferior status—as an emerging means for ideological self-expression. Namik Kemal (1840-1888) is one of the first Ottoman intellectuals who questioned the ideological axiom of the “three languages,” and more generally argued against borrowing from foreign languages, which he considered a sign of “domination” (cited in Lewis 1999: 13). It is interesting to note that he rhetorically uses the Christian term eşânim-i selâçe (trinity) when, in 1866, he criticizes the growing divergence between the spoken and written varieties of Ottoman:

Türkçenin eşâ-ı terkibi olan üç lisân ki, telâhînizde olduğu inîhâd bulmuşken tahribde hâlâ heyê-et-i astâylerini muhafaza ediyor. Eşânim-i selâçe gibi sözde güya mültehâ ve hâşapte zedd-i kâmikîr.

While the three languages of which Turkish is compounded have attained a certain unity in speech, they still preserve their original form in writing. Like the three persons of the Trinity, they are said to be united, but are in fact the reverse of integrated. (Taşvir-i Ejâr 416 [1866]; Lewis 1999: 13)

Thus, the ideological discussion about language actually begins in the 1860s; this could be considered the first period of Turkish language reform. The first efforts to find a new name for the standardized variety of Ottoman Turkish, without—or without yet—effectively changing linguistic structure, must be analyzed from the perspective of status planning.
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2.2 Ottoman Grammar Books in Turkish and Greek

The effort to name the standardized variety can be seen in the titles of Ottoman Turkish grammars published in the second half of the nineteenth century. The most widely used grammar book was written by Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, Rules of Ottoman (Qavā‘īd-i ‘Osmānîyye, first edition under Medhal-Qavâ‘īd in 1268/1851) and included all three languages treated in different parts of the grammar. After 1871 the section concerning Turkish was published several times separately under the title Rules of Turkish (Qavâ‘īd-i Türkiyye), while the integral Ottoman version continued also to be published (sixteen times until 1906; see Karabacak 1989). The first grammar to bear the word Turkish was the Science of Turkish grammar (İbn-i Şarîf-i Türki, 1293/1874) by Süleyman Paşa (cf. Lewis 1999: 16); it also contains a description of the Arabo-Persian elements of Ottoman. Until the end of the century, nineteen grammars specified Ottoman in their title, while six grammars (one published in 1885, two in 1890, 1892, 1893, and 1897) used the word Turkish. On the other hand, all the grammars that appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century, between 1906 and 1911, i.e. shortly before and after the revolution of the Young Turks, had only the term Turkish in their title.

The middle of the nineteenth century, with the publication of Adosidis’ grammar in 1850, is the starting point of the production of printed Ottoman grammars written in Greek. Throughout the century twelve grammar books and a large number of manuals, dialogue books, syllabaries and other language material were published in Istanbul and İzmir for the use of the Greeks in the Ottoman Empire who wanted to, or had to, learn Turkish. The linguistic variety named in the title of these books is always Ottoman. The books either include a separate discussion of the “three languages” in different chapters, or integrate the description of the Arabo-Persian elements into the main part of the text. It is interesting to note that the most widely used Greek Ottoman grammar, the famous Γραμματική της Οθωμανικής Γλώσσης [Grammar of the Ottoman language] by Ioannis Chloros, was renamed in its fifth edition in 1911, Γραμματική της Τουρκικής Γλώσσης [Grammar of the Turkish language]. The date is by no means a coincidence, since it overlaps with the foundation of the literary group and journal Γενικό Καλομήλη in Salonica in April 1911 and, generally speaking, reflects the change of attitude and ideology after the Young Turk revolution in 1908.

It has been stated that Turkish writers at that time—and since the end of the nineteenth century—to a great degree avoided Persian constructions and considered their language to be Turkish, not Ottoman (Lewis 1999: 21). Although the attitudes towards language have been exhaustively investigated in the major works on the Turkish language reform, the language beliefs of the Ottoman minorities (mainly Greeks, Armenians, and Jews) on the subject have not yet been studied. As far as the attitude of Ottoman Greeks in particular (Armenians and Jews probably present a rather different image), we find a valuable source in the prologues of the above-mentioned Turkish grammars written by Ottoman Greeks for Greek speaking learners during the nineteenth century. In the second part of the paper, I will try to describe the discussion on language among the Turkophone Greek Orthodox population, conventionally called Karamanli.

2.3 Ottoman Greek Grammars and Dictionaries

First of all, our sources clearly indicate that the Ottoman Greeks involved in language acquisition planning (school teachers, grammarians, state employees in the Ottoman Ministry of Education, curriculum planners) did not question the principle of the threefold nature of Ottoman, the “three languages” (ἐλεύθερη γέλαση), according to the Ottoman Turkish ideology. This point of view is expressed in some cases in a rather literary way:

1. Ἡ ἑθομανικὴ γλώσσα, φύσις σοβαρά καὶ μεγαλοπρεπῶς, προσαλαβοῦσα ἐκ μᾶς τῆς περικοῆς τὸ γλωσσᾶν καὶ ἀναγγέλλων, ἐκ δὲ τῆς ἀραβικῆς τὸ ἔσος καὶ ποικιλοφράζως κατάστη ἐξιχνίασθαι, δυναμένη ἐναρκτόντως μεταξὰ τῶν πλούσιοτέρων τε καὶ ἀρσενικῶν γλώσσῶν τῆς ὁκουμηνῆς. (Adosidis 1850: viii)

The Ottoman language, serious and majestic by nature, has received from Persian the elegance and the harmony, and from Arabic the elevation and richness of expression, and has thus reached an exceptional variety, and can boast to be among the richest and most beautiful languages of the world.

2. Ὡθωμανικὴ γλώσσα συγκεκριμένη ἐκ τῆς Ἀραβικῆς, Περσικῆς καὶ Ταταρικῆς γλώσσας, συγκεντρώνει ἐν ἑαυτῇ πᾶσας τὰς ἀρχαιότητας τῶν τριῶν τούτων γλώσσων ἃς καὶ μᾶλλον ἐναόρατα, ἡ γάρ ἐκ τῶν περικοτῆς ἄνθροπου ἐκλυόμενα ἔκκλημα, ὡς καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἐκκλησίων ἀγίων ὑπάρχει. Ἡ δὲ τὸν παράθυρον τῆς γλώσσῆς ὁμολογεῖ τοὺς ἀνατολικοὺς γλωσσᾶς. Ἡ δὲ συμφωνεῖ αὐτῷ, ἡ γλωσσᾶς, ἡ ἀρμανικῆ, καὶ καλλιεργεί τοῦτον αὐτῆς εἶναίς ἐμφάνεισθαι ἐν ἑαυτῷ. (Fardys & Fotiadis 1860: 16-17)

The Ottoman language, composed of Arabic, Persian and Tatar, comprises in itself all the beauties of these three languages; like a good bee she gathered in herself all the finest part of the most beautiful flowers enriching and
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language, had not appeared and shown to me the original idiom of her graceful daughter.

It is not clear what Fotiadis means by "ancient Turkish," but we have to remember that the Orhon inscriptions (the oldest Turkic written source, dating to the seventh century AD) had already been discovered by Russian Turcologists in Mongolia eight years earlier, and Fotiadis likely is alluding to that. What is new in Fotiadis’ attitude is the status of the Turkic element, which he characterized as "respectable," "pure" and "graceful." This is a huge progress, which eventually led to the rejection of Arabo-Persian elements and the reshaping of the status of Turkish in relation to the Turkic origins of Ottoman Turkish. As a comparison, former Ottoman Greek grammarians characterized the Turkic part (often called “Tatar”) as "poor" or "rude":

4. Ὡς δὲ ἦσαν τῷ πλείστῳ τούτῳ τοῦ ἦλεκτρος, καὶ συνεργοὶ ἐν τῆς ἀντιπροσώπου, τῆς ἁγιασμοῦ, τῆς ἡσυχίας, τῆς ἀλήθειας, τῆς ἀγάπης, τῆς ἀληθείας, τῆς ἁγιότητος τῆς ἁγιάσματος τῆς ἁγίασμος. Οὐκ ἦσαν εἰς ἑαυτούς, οὐκ ἦσαν εἰς τὴν κοινωνίαν τῆς ἡσυχίας, τῆς ἁγιάδος, τῆς ἁγιότητος, τῆς ἀληθείας, τῆς ἀλήθειας, τῆς ἀγάπης, τῆς ἁγιάσματος τῆς ἁγιάσματος. (Fotiadis 1897: i)

My late father inspired me from my tender childhood years the love and utmost respect for the official language of the Ottomans, that gracious and modest maiden of the Orient. [...] Every time I tried to converse with that beautiful maiden, her two grave companions, Arab and Perse, took up the major part of the speech and made comprehension of what she said impossible. After much effort and labour, I managed to understand to a certain extent the speech of her two imperious and inseparable companions, but in spite of that perfect intelligence would not have been achieved if the respected mother of the pure maid, the ancient Turkish

3. Ideology

This traditional aesthetic evaluation of Ottoman finds fertile ground both in the phenomenon of “Ottomanism” (osmanlılık), characteristic of the second half of the nineteenth century, and, as regards the Rum millet, in the ideology of Helleno-Ottomanism which sought to legitimate the political power of the Sultan—and with the “national” power of the Orthodox Patriarch—as unchallengeable (see Anagnostopoulou & Kappler
4. Karamanli: Efficiency and Education

Another interesting source of information, albeit with a different perspective, comes from that part of the millet-i Rum, the Orthodox Christian community, who are not Hellenophones or, at least, do not have Greek but Turkish as their mother tongue, the so-called Karamanli, or Karamanlides. At the end of the nineteenth century, Karamanli had already spread throughout the entire Ottoman Empire, leaving behind their motherlands situated in Inner Anatolia and settling along the coastal areas of the peninsula, and, particularly, in the capital Istanbul. It is in these urban settings that was published the most long-lived Karamanli newspaper, Anatoli, the first newspaper in Turkish written in the Greek alphabet at the intention of the Turcophone Christians all over the empire. For this speech community, the “language question” has a completely different dimension, bearing aspects of status and corpus planning not from the point of view of language acquisition, but from the very base of language practice inside and outside the religious borders of the millet. However, the same attitude of “maintenance,” or language conservatism, observed in the Hellenophone Ottoman Greeks, can be found in the Turcophone Orthodox circles, too. From a discussion on the language issue between the editors and the readers of the newspaper Anatoli in 1890, it becomes evident that the views expressed by the director N. T. Soullidis, a native speaker of Turkish, concur with the language beliefs of the Ottoman Greek curriculum planners and grammarians.

8. Προς γαλατή λυπηρήνα να δεύνει κουλλαλήν και δένυται ενόδημωσθήναι διακοίμησις ο δείκτης της λαλήσεως. Περί οικίων των Εδρείιων [edrevn] λαλήσα για λειτουργία, να δεύνει και από σεμείο εμπειρίας αυτόν ο δικαστής να εξετάσει την και διαπραγματεύσει επιστολή διαφορετικής οδηγίας, καθώς και για την επικοινωνία της ιερικής θυσίας, και από τον καθεδρικό του Νίκου πέραν του ήχου του Άγιου Βασιλείου, και όσες συνελέγεις, τέλος, είναι εάν ο παν ιερομόνικος και το Οθωμανικό είδος της ελληνικής μεθοδοσίας από τον οίκο και δεύνει και διαπραγματεύσει επιστολή διαφορετικής οδηγίας.

ιστορικο-ουίκιτσιαλικού, αλλά και Ματσούνιτσικό, χαρακτηριστικά ολοκληρωμένη και ανεξάρτητη ιστορικο-ουίκιτσιαλική μορφή, μη περιοριστική με την ιστορική σειρά. Αυτό οδηγεί σε μια ακόμα περισσότερο ανεξάρτητη και ανεξάρτητη ιστορικο-ουίκιτσιαλική μορφή, μη περιοριστική με την ιστορική σειρά.

Αποτελείται από την ιστορικο-ουίκιτσιαλική μορφή της ιστορικής σειράς, μη περιοριστική με την ιστορική σειρά. Αυτό οδηγεί σε μια ακόμα περισσότερο ανεξάρτητη και ανεξάρτητη ιστορικο-ουίκιτσιαλική μορφή, μη περιοριστική με την ιστορική σειρά.

To our compatriots. Nobody can deny that the world of the press is the sole means of ensuring science and knowledge, justice and rights, of enlarging trade and industry, of registering peoples and tribes, in short of illuminating the distinguished qualities acquired naturally by mankind, and of uniting their aspirations in order to obtain happiness in the present and the future world. (...) Specifically, as for all my other compatriots, so for myself, the aim of reading this newspaper is not exclusively to get informed generally on events and to acquire concise knowledge about international affairs, but also to improve language. Since our mother tongue, Ottoman, is spoken in every part of Anatolia in different ways and with different accents, it is regrettable to hear constantly that nobody uses these languages correctly or at least in the way as close as possible to the original. Therefore, since the reading of this newspaper helps my compatriots all over Anatolia basically to improve and unify their language, and apart from being elevated because of the various compounds of pure and eloquent Ottoman expression through extensive examples, it was natural that this newspaper also took that route since it is perfecting this era of instruction protected by the Sultan to degrees which reach the prosperity of the world and the increasing adornment of language.

In spite of this policy towards language use adopted by the editors of Anatoli, and implemented at least by some of its readers, there are, though admittedly very rarely, voices of protest. An anonymous reader, with the initials A. N. from Eskisehir, writes:

10. Έσκισερι, 19 Μαΐου 1890. ΑΝΑΤΟΛΙΑ Ματσούνιτσικό Ν. Θ. Σουλλίδης Ούκιτσιαλικό. Μαλακού άλλων διαλέκτων, ραογιέλλεν Ευχερεία. Ματσούνιτσικό Σουλλίδης Ζωμανόν Άρετα. Βεραία τούλια έντερα άλλων διαλέκτων.
We sincerely and really thank the esteemed person for his suggestion, but there is no difference or very little difference between the language of our newspaper and the language that he used in his own letter. Since our only aim and wish is to serve our dear compatriots who do not know any language other than Turkish, we make sure and write in a language which is as clear as possible. However, as this Arabic term [mamafish] has been employed also by A. N. Efendi, we use it too; otherwise we would have used the term bunun ike beraber, there are some words and terms which cannot be translated into formal and clear Turkish; their usage is obligatory. Apart from this, we think that it is more useful than harmful if gradually some Arabic and Persian words and terms are learnt. Let us quote A. N. Efendi’s letter as an example: although words and terms such as ekerije (majority), maksad (aim), mamafish (however) are unknown in our [homeland] Anatolia, they have been learnt and are used through constantly reading a newspaper and hearing how they are said in the correct language, and can gradually be pronounced, if not in the manner of a literary man (i.e., of learned people, scribes, language experts), then at least close to that. It is as clear as day that more such things like this can be learnt.

The view of the director of the most widely read Turkish newspaper for Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire, together with that of the Greek curriculum planners and grammarians, might be representative of the conservative language ideology of Ottoman Greeks in general. Interestingly, the attitude expressed by Greeks stands in striking opposition to the views of the most influential Turkish Ottoman journalists of the same time, who are striving for a simplification and a renovation of the language, and in this sense prepare the ground for the Kemalist language reforms in the twentieth century. Important examples are Namik Kemal, already quoted above, editor and founder of several Ottoman newspapers; Ahmed Midhat, the most prolific writer of the Tanzimat period; and Şemseddin Sami, who compiled the first comprehensive Turkish dictionary (Qâmil-i Türkî).

This wide gap between Greek (be they Hellenophone or Turcophone) and Turkish Ottomans may be explained either by historical and political arguments related to the ideology of Helleno-Ottomanism, or by sociological constraints, since the Greeks, being a minority within the leading intellectual elite, would tend toward greater conservatism than the Muslims, who constitute the majority. Unlike many of their Muslim fellow citizens, the Greek elite and the head of the Greek community, the Ecumenical Patriarch (in Ottoman milletbey), were closely linked to Ottoman power, and quite naturally defended its language.

5. Conclusion

In view of the above findings, future research should concentrate on the overlapping and contacts between the Turkish and Greek Ottomans, asking questions such as: Was there a dialogue between Greek and Turkish Ottomans on the issue of language reform? Was there a Greek contribution to the renovation efforts in the early stages of the Turkish language reform? Future research should also include other minorities, such as the Armenians, among whom the number of Turcophones was much more important than among Greeks and who, as is well-known, played an important role in the main period of the Kemalist language reforms; or the Jews, among whom there was also a growing percentage of Turkish speakers. Whatever results further research may yield, the resistance of Greek intellectuals to Turkish language renovation may well be an important indication of a wider societal phenomenon which has not yet been investigated in terms of language and might well shed light on one of the most striking examples of language management worldwide.

Notes

1. Actually the first printed Ottoman Greek grammar, that of Alexandridis (1812), is exempted because it was published in Vienna.

2. The first hand written Ottoman grammars in Greek date to the seventeenth century, but are only adaptations/translations of European grammars (see Kappler 1999, 2001). The first Ottoman Greek grammar, which is not an adaptation, is known to be written in the eighteenth century by Kanellos Spanos (see Siakotis 2006).

3. For a first attempt to consider these attitudes see Kappler 2007.

4. Anatoš was founded by Evangelinos Mispalidiss in the 1840s in Izmir. After 1859 the newspaper was published in Istanbul. Although its founder died in 1890, the newspaper circulated until probably 1923; cf. Şişmanoğlu 2010: 111-112; Balta 2005.

5. The following quotations were initially published in part by Şişmanoğlu (2010) in Latin transcription. For the purposes of the present contribution, the passages were checked and completed according to sources. They are quoted here in their original polytonic Greek script.
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Bibliography


