

## Change in Progress: An Update on Bulgarian Turkish

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In Rudin and Eminov (1990) and Eminov and Rudin (1993) Ali Eminov and I described changes we had observed in the linguistic behavior of the ethnic Turkish minority in Bulgaria during the decades leading up to the late 1980's.<sup>1</sup> While virtually all Turks remained fluent in Turkish and spoke Turkish most of the time in their homes and neighborhoods, most young and middle-aged people also used Bulgarian in their daily life, particularly in school and at work. This increasing bilingualism had resulted in frequent usage of borrowed Bulgarian words and even some grammatical influence from Bulgarian in the spoken and written Turkish of younger members of the Turkish ethnic minority; a dramatic change from the 1940's and 50's, when many Turks in Bulgaria were monolingual. Changes in official nationality policy, which veered from encouraging Turkish literacy to outlawing all public use of Turkish, complicated the situation.

In 1990 it was unclear to us whether ongoing political and social changes would reverse or accelerate the trend toward adoption of Bulgarian linguistic elements. Here I provide an update and at least a partial answer to this question, based on data from recent letters and other personal contact with Bulgarian Turks and on commentary in the Turkish-language media since the 1991 change of government. The results of this reexamination are mixed: indications can be found both of a movement toward "pure" standard Turkish usage and of continuing Bulgarian influence.

The evidence from personal observation clearly indicates that Bulgarian borrowings continue to be used. In spite of much freer contact with Turkey, access to Turkish mass media, and some teaching of Turkish in the schools, Bulgarian Turks still frequently use Bulgarian lexical items when speaking or writing Turkish in informal situations. These Bulgarianisms are most frequently nouns, often connected with Bulgarian society or modern technology, but they can be other types of words as well. A few typical examples from recent letters and conversations are given in (1). (Bulgarian elements are italicized here and in all later examples.)

- (1) a. Okulda bir *sibranie*ye gittik. [spoken]  
'We went to a *meeting* at school.'
- b. Bu günlere gene hepden *april* mayıs ayını andıryor havalar.  
'These days the weather absolutely reminds me of *April* or *May*.'
- c. Durdugül yeni *antena* aldık şimdi türkîyeden bakıyortuz.  
'Durdugül we bought a new *antenna* now we watch [tv] from Turkey.'
- d. İşinde ona göre iş yerinizi bir *çarşno* *firma* aldı şimdi çok üzgün bir haldeyiz  
bin levadan 1,800 indirdi aylıklarımız.  
'My work is like that too a *private company* bought our workplace now we are in a very sorry state our monthly salary was cut from three thousand to 1,800 levs.'

One of the strongest and most obvious areas of Bulgarian influence is in written language. In fact, in 1990 we foresaw Turkish rapidly becoming only a spoken language in

Bulgaria. Many younger Turks, particularly those who had their schooling during the 1970's and 80's when Turkish language instruction was unavailable, read and write only in Bulgarian. Some express regret at not knowing how to write Turkish. Some have learned the Roman alphabet and are able to read Turkish; one unintended effect of the ethnic assimilation drive of the mid-1980's was to mobilize some Turkish parents to teach their children to read and write their native language. Still, many of this generation do not feel comfortable writing in Turkish. The 19-year-old woman who wrote the letter quoted in (2) is a typical example of this generation. She writes in Bulgarian to her aunt and cousin in America, even though they would normally speak Turkish to each other, and in spite of her apparent embarrassment at using the "wrong" language.

### (2) [First line of letter]

Надявам се, че не сте забравили българския език, защото все още ниевора да пиша на турски.

'I hope that you have not forgotten Bulgarian, because I still can't write in Turkish.'

[A few lines later]

Ако искате ми пишете на турски мора да чега.

'If you want write to me in Turkish I can read it!'

People who attended the Turkish language schools which existed until the 1960's do write in Turkish. Since late 1992 Turkish language classes have again been available, but only in primary schools in ethnically mixed areas, and only a few hours a week.<sup>2</sup> These classes are optional. They are sometimes held outside of normal school hours, making them inconvenient. There is some red tape involved in enrolling one's children in Turkish language classes, and some political pressure not to do so. Nonetheless, at the beginning of 1994 approximately 80% of the Turkish schoolchildren in Bulgaria were enrolled in such classes (Eminov 1994). They are learning to read and write Turkish and studying standard Turkish grammar, although the main language of their education is Bulgarian. The 20% who are not enrolled (some 17,000 out of the total 92,000 Turkish children) presumably do not know how to write Turkish or have little facility with it.

Among those Bulgarian Turks who do write in Turkish, both children and adults often show interference from Cyrillic in their spelling and handwriting. The examples in (3), which could easily be multiplied, represent two common types of errors. Letters that occur in both scripts but with different sounds are frequently confused (y for u in the first example in (3); also g for d, c for s, occasionally n for p). And the affricate [dz], spelled with the letter c in standard Turkish, is often spelled *dj* or *dr*; a calque on Cyrillic *дж* as in the second example below.

- (3) olyrsanz (y for u; olursanz)  
ahadjim (dj for c; ablacim)

Along with the return of limited Turkish instruction, a major change in the status of Turkish in Bulgaria since four years ago is the reappearance of Turkish language publications and other media—a weekly newspaper, a recent book of poetry (the first published in Bulgaria in nearly 30 years), programs on Radio Sofia, and so on.

<sup>1</sup> See these works for much more detailed historical and demographic information on the Turkish minority in Bulgaria as well as on patterns of linguistic usage.

<sup>2</sup> See Eminov 1994 for detailed discussion of recent developments in Turkish language education in Bulgaria.

The new publications, unlike earlier ones, which I discuss shortly, are written in very standard Istanbul/Ankara Turkish. They provide a model of standard Turkish, and may make people more conscious of the Bulgarianisms in their speech. In addition, there has been some overt negative commentary on the increasing Bulgarianization of Turkish in the weekly newspaper media. The two passages in (4) and (5) are excerpts from recent columns in the weekly newspaper *Hak ve Özgürlük* ("Rights and Freedom") which parody or even ridicule the Bulgarian-filled speech of younger Turks. (Bulgarian words italicized; spelling as in original.)

- (4) Son zamanlarda gençlerde anadili Türkçeyi Bulgarca sözler karıştırarak konuşanlar göğalıyor. Yani, iki dil bir dil oluyor. Bu bazı güzelim Türkçe sözleri bilmemekten ileri geliyor. Biricik sebep Türkçe'nin yıllardır okunmamasında aramaktadır. İşte burada bir konuşmayı olacağı gibi aktarmak istiyorum.

Üç genç kadın aralarında konuşuyorlardı, Ben de kulak kabarttım:  
Biniçi kadın: "Buğün obşınmki saevve gittim. İkinci etapta bir çimovnikamin yanına *izprasta* yaptılar. Oradan *nasledstvo* meselesini diylemek için *pevat* ve *podpis* aldım. *Dano da se opravi* ..." İkinci kadın: "Ben de, bizim *krysnikka* basalamış da, *bolnısaya svıdanıye* gittim."

Üçüncü kadın: "Bu sabah uşaklara *zakuskuoyu* yaptım ve sekiz *revıstle pıtuva* yaptım. Kasaba içinde bir *obkolka* yaptım. Te sizinle görüştüm. ... *hıçce* iyi ve hoşuz. ..."

Böyle acayıp duruma düşmenek için Türkçemizi iyi bilmek ve konuşma dilini dürtüst öğrenmek kutsal bir görevimizdir. Toplum ve vatan dilimiz Bulgarca'yı da öğrenmek ve dürtüst konuşmak başka bir zevk ve zenginliktir.

Lately, the number of young people who mix Bulgarian words in their native Turkish is increasing. That is, the two languages are becoming one. This is due to not knowing some of our beautiful Turkish words. The single reason for this lies in the fact that for years Turkish was not taught. So here I want to reproduce a conversation just as I heard it.

Three young women were talking among themselves. I pricked up my ears.  
First woman: "Today I went to the *city council*. They sent me to a *clerk* on the *second floor*. There I got a *seal and signature* to take care of an *inheritance* problem. *Let's hope it works out* ..." Second woman: "As for me, our *godmother* is sick, so I went to *visiting hours* at the *hospital*."

Third woman: "This morning I made *breakfast* for the boys and *travelled* on the 8:00 *bus*. In town I *walked around*. I happened to run into you. *Otherwise* we are *fine* ..."

In order not to fall into such curious situations, to know and speak Turkish well, to learn the language properly is our sacred duty. To also learn the language of our society and country, Bulgarian, and speak it properly is another delight and richness.

[Hüseyin Hayrullah: *Hak ve Özgürlük* no. 43, 10/22/93]

- (5) Unutuyoruz Türkçeyi.  
Hem yonika çalın, hem şarkılar, türküler söyleyen on yaşındaki Reyhan'ı dinlerken, kitabımın dibinde iki gençin konuşmasını da dinliyorum ister istemez. İşte örnek olarak sadece iki cümle:

—Yenden *vitroveni sıda obşılva* yapacaklarınız ...  
—Brak, brak ... Bundan daha da *strıgnası* var ...  
Evet, gençlerimiz Türkçeyi unuttuyor. Bundan beceri olur mu?

We are forgetting Turkish.

While listening to ten-year-old Reyhan play the yonika and sing ballads and folksongs, I couldn't help overhearing the conversation between two young people. Here as an example I give you only two sentences:

—It seems they're going to *appeal* again to the *supreme court*.  
—Forget it. There's something even *worse* than that.  
Yes, our youth are forgetting Turkish. Is there anything worse than that?

[Osman Aziz, *Hak ve Özgürlük* no. 46, 11/12/93, p. 5]

The excerpt in (4) is part of an article in which the author recalls problems he had as a child because of not being fluent in Bulgarian; he rather evenhandedly emphasizes the need for Turks to learn both languages well and use them both correctly. The article from which (5) is taken is more negative. Besides the quoted section, which claims young people are forgetting Turkish, the article contains a scathing description of a young Turkish woman who proposes to discuss the language of Turkish radio broadcasts in Bulgarian since her Turkish is too poor. The woman is reluctant to give her name, and the author of the article implies the reason is that she is embarrassed to admit she has kept her Bulgarian name.<sup>3</sup> In short, this article is quite critical of Turks who are too "assimilated".

The quoted speech in both passages (4) and (5) is obviously chosen specifically for its high density of Bulgarian words and is probably not entirely typical. However, it is not unrepresentative. Bulgarian Turks do frequently use Bulgarian words, especially for Bulgarian institutions like *odunıckı cåem* 'city council' and *evprıvoeni cåd* 'supreme court', but also more ordinary nouns and other parts of speech; an example in (4) is the conjunction *unıve* 'otherwise'. Borrowing of Bulgarian verbs by pairing a third person singular form with an appropriately person/number/tense marked form of *yapmak* 'to make', as in *obşılva yapacaklarınız* 'they're going to appeal', literally 'appeal they're-going-to-do', *izprasta yaptılar* 'they sent/send they-did' and *pıtıuva yaptım* 'I travelled/travel I-did', is also very typical of everyday Bulgarian Turkish speech. Eminov and I gave numerous similar examples gleaned from informal conversations and letters in our earlier papers.

Regardless of how representative these two samples are, they stand in stark contrast to the language in the rest of the newspaper, which is almost entirely free of Bulgarianisms. Even the letters to the editor contain very few Bulgarian words: apparently people who write to the paper are trying extremely hard to write pure Turkish, or perhaps all Bulgarianisms are edited out before publication. Sometimes the letters include word which local Turks may not even recognize. For instance, one letter to the editor referred to an ambulance with the standard Turkish word *cankurtaran*, which we have never hear spoken in Bulgaria; everyone, including Turks, says *öbpaş nıomıu*. Other letters use rarely

<sup>3</sup> Turks were forced to change their Moslem/Turkish names to Bulgarian ones in 1986. Most switched but to Turkish names as soon as this became legally possible in 1991. However, for various reasons some have chosen not to change their names back.

encountered Turkish equivalents instead of the much more common Bulgarian words *cevnpa* 'nurse', *AH zapa* 'train station', and many others.

The language of *Hak ve Özgürlük* is probably difficult for many Bulgarian Turks to understand at times, especially for the less educated. People who read the newspaper are reminded of Turkish words that have not been used in Bulgaria for generations and exposed to new ones. Along with the teaching of standard Turkish in the schools, this provides some counterforce against the use of Bulgarian vocabulary in Turkish.

Between 1985 and 1991 no Turkish language publications were available in Bulgaria. Prior to 1985 there were Turkish newspapers and books, but they were not particularly a force toward use of standard Turkish. In fact, at least in some periods, official policy was to encourage the use of Bulgarian loans in Turkish publications. Ali Eminov reports (p.c.; Rudin & Eminov 1993) that in the 1960's 'native Turkish writers in Bulgaria were told not to imitate the language of Turkish writers in Turkey, but to write as Turks in Bulgaria spoke; that is, to include in their writings the Bulgarian words used in everyday native Turkish speech'.

This policy continued into the 1980's. An example of newspaper prose from 1984, just before the banning of the Turkish language media, is given in (6):

- (6) Tabii bu sahnı ve ebedi güne şhırlı bir değneđi savurarak ulaşılmadı. Bu, devrimci *teoria* ve *praktika* alanlarında büyük bir birikimin, gelmiş geçmiş görüş ve eylemlere yapılan tahlilin, *Partizanizm*, *Sovyetler birliđi* Komünist *partiası* ve *Sovet halkının devrim* ve kuruculuk tecrübesinden bol bol yararlanılıp zenginleşmenin sonucudur.

Of course, this glorious and eternal day [9/9/44] was not attained by waving a magic wand. This was the end result of a great accumulation of developments in revolutionary *theory* and *practice*; interpretation and analysis of present and past events, our *Party's* enrichment, benefiting from the abundant revolutionary and formative experience of the Communist *Party* of the Soviet Union and the *Soviet* people.

Typical of this style is the use of Bulgarianized form of political terms: *partia* instead of *parti*, *Sovet* rather than *Sovyet*. Bulgarian political vocabulary also permeated the Turkish spoken by radio announcers through the 1960's, 70's, and 80's. Cengiz (1967: 849) quotes a Turkish broadcast on Radio Sofia:

- (7) *Narodno Sibiraniem* dödüncü sevası açıldı. *Narodno Sibirani* Prezidyumı *predsednetelci* Georgi Traykof yoladı. *narodun predstavitelleri* selânladı.

'The fourth session of the *National Assembly* opened. *President of the Presidium of the National Assembly* comrade Georgi Traykof greeted the *national deputies*'.

It is likely that few members of the Turkish population actually read or listened very carefully to much of this kind of prose; however, to whatever extent they did, their tendency to freely adopt Bulgarian words into their Turkish was supported. The media today send the opposite message that 'pure' Turkish is to be valued and admixture of Bulgarian elements to be avoided.

Thus, Bulgarian influence on the Turkish lexicon certainly continues to be felt. However, speakers seem to be more conscious of Bulgarianisms than in the past, and many

may try to avoid them at least in formal speech and writing. Grammatical influence has always been minor, and the trend toward using only Bulgarian as a written language may be being reversed. Exposure to standard Turkish in the media, in school, and through direct contact with Turkey, has greatly increased in the last several years. It is difficult to measure how much effect this has had on everyday speech, but it has at least led to more awareness of standard Turkish. As Turkish literacy becomes more widespread and as more people turn their satellite dishes toward Turkey, we can expect this awareness to continue to grow. If the political situation in Bulgaria remains stable, it now seems much more likely than it did in 1990 that Bulgarian Turkish will resist massive Bulgarian influence.<sup>4</sup>

## References

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted, however, that even the Turkish of Turkey, like all other languages, is not 'pure.' In fact, as Spidehanoglu (1993) reminds us, there has been some Slavic influence on Turkish for a very long time. She also shows that some Bulgarianisms have been introduced into Turkey by recent immigrants from Bulgaria, primarily in the area of personal names and toponyms, but to some extent also in general vocabulary.