

09. Language Policies During Atatürk's Era: The First Turkish Language Congress¹

Ahmet Murat KADIOĞLU²

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Abstract

The Republic policies shaped around Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's efforts to create a nation-state were centered on establishing a common culture and language. Language policies, which were among Atatürk's key concerns, gained momentum particularly from the early 1930s onward. Following the Alphabet Reform of 1928, the Turkish Language Association (Türk Dili Tetkik Cemiyeti) was founded in 1932, and soon after, the First Turkish Language Congress was held. All these efforts were carried out with Atatürk's direct involvement. The aim was to create a Turkish language that was simple and free from foreign words. Therefore, the First Turkish Language Congress holds great significance. This study examines the reflections of the First Turkish Language Congress in the Cumhuriyet newspaper using the document analysis method. Issues of the Cumhuriyet newspaper from September 25, 1932, to October 10, 1932, were analysed, and the relevant issues were obtained from the archive of the Digital National Library. The study found that there were 155 news articles in Cumhuriyet regarding the First Turkish Language Congress. As a result, it was determined that the articles presented theses that not only advocated for a pure and simple Turkish language but also instilled a sense of nationalism. The theses claimed that Turkish was a literary language and suggested, based on similar words, that nations such as the Hittites, Sumerians, and Ionians could be of Turkish origin.

Keywords: Atatürk era, republic policies, language policies, Turkish Language Association, First Turkish Language Congress.

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² Dr. Öğr. Üyesi., Ostim Teknik Üniversitesi, Ortak Dersler Bölümü / Dr., Ostim Technical University, Department of Common Courses (Ankara, Türkiye), ahmetkadioglumurat@gmail.com, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9786-1904> ROR ID: <https://ror.org/049xhb141>, ISNI: 0000 0004 6418 2448

Atatürk Döneminde Dil Politikaları: Birinci Türk Dili Kurultayı³

Öz

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk'ün ulus devlet oluřturma çabaları etrafında řekillendirdiđi Cumhuriyet politikaları, ortak bir kültür ve dil oluřturma etrafında birleřmiştir. Atatürk'ün önem verdiđi konuların bařında gelen dil politikaları özellikle 1930'lu yılların bařından itibaren hız kazanmıştır. 1928 yılında gerçekteřtirilen Harf İnkılabından sonra 1932 yılında Türk Dili Tetkik Cemiyeti kurulmuř ve hemen akabinde Birinci Türk Dili Kurultayı düzenlenmiştir. Tüm bu çabalar Atatürk'ün bizzat gayretleriyle gerçekteřtirilmiştir. Amaç, sade ve yabancı sözcüklerden arındırılmıř bir Türkçe oluřturulmasıdır. Bu yüzden Birinci Türk Dili Kurultayı'nın büyük önemi bulunmaktadır. Bu çalıřmada Birinci Türk Dili Kurultayı'nın Cumhuriyet gazetesindeki yansımaları doküman analizi yöntemiyle incelenmiştir. Çalıřmada Cumhuriyet gazetesinin 25 Eylül 1932-10 Ekim 1932 tarihleri arasında sayıları incelenmiř ve ilgili sayılara Dijital Milli Kütüphane'nin arřivinden elde edilmiştir. Çalıřmada, incelenen sayılar içerisinde Cumhuriyet gazetesindeki Birinci Türk Dili Kurultayı'yla ilgili 155 haber olduđu belirlenmiştir. Sonuç olarak ilgili haberlerde öz ve sade Türkçe'nin yanı sıra milliyetçilik duygusunu da ařılayan tezler sunulduđu belirlenmiştir. Sunulan tezlerde Türkçe'nin edebiyat dili olduđu, Hitit, Sümer ve İyonyalılar gibi milletlerin Türk olabileceđi kullanılan benzer kelimeler üzerinden iddia edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Atatürk dönemi, cumhuriyet politikaları, dil politikaları, Türk Dili Tetkik Cemiyeti, Birinci Türk Dili Kurultayı.

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Introduction

Communication fundamentally represents a rupture and simultaneously the beginning of a new era with every innovation introduced in language. In this respect, changes in language affect more than just politics and lead to transformations across all socio-cultural structures of society. Perhaps the most fundamental rupture between the Ottoman Empire and the new Republic of Turkey occurred with the Alphabet Reform. The implementation of the Alphabet Reform in 1928 and the subsequent establishment of the Turkish Language Association (Türk Dili Tetkik Cemiyeti)⁴ in 1932 accelerated the language simplification movements (Şendeniz, 2014: 309).

The newly established Republic of Turkey emphasized nation-state policies, and the reforms carried out were the product of efforts to build a nation-state. In this context, language represents a crucial aspect of nation-state ideology because it guarantees the continuity of states in terms of culture (Eren, 2018: 230). Mustafa Kemal Atatürk also recognized the importance of language for a state. Thus, he personally engaged in efforts to simplify the language and Turkify it by eliminating foreign words. Atatürk's statement in 1930 reflects the importance he placed on language: "The bond between national sentiment and language is very strong. A national and rich language is the primary factor in the development of national sentiment. The Turkish language is one of the richest languages; it only needs to be worked on consciously. The Turkish nation, which knows how to protect the high independence of its country, must also free its language from the yoke of foreign languages."

From the 1930s onwards, under Atatürk's leadership, emphasis began to be placed on the field of language following social and cultural efforts. As a result of these endeavors, the Turkish Language Association was established in 1932. Through this association, efforts began to purify Turkish from foreign words, find Turkish equivalents for frequently used foreign words, and uncover the origins of the Turkish language (Sezer Arıç, 2020: 48). Among these efforts, the Turkish Language Congresses stand out as particularly significant. During Atatürk's era, the First Turkish Language Congress was held from September 26 to October 4, 1932, the Second Turkish Language Congress from August 18 to 23, 1934, and the Third Turkish Language Congress from August 24 to 31, 1936. Thousands of people participated as attendees and observers in these congresses. Through these congresses, it was aimed to implement reforms based on the theses presented by researchers to advance the Turkish language. One of the fundamental goals of these congresses was to ensure that Turkish would be among the world's esteemed languages. These congresses also gave meaning to the nation-state ideology that the new Republic of Turkey sought to establish through language.

Undoubtedly, today, thanks to Atatürk's emphasis on the Turkish language and efforts towards a pure Turkish, a common language has begun to be used across the Turkish geography. Furthermore, thanks to the efforts of the Turkish Language Association, Turkish has started to receive at least the value it deserves among world languages and continues to exist as a guarantee of the Republic of Turkey's presence (Baş and Temizyürek, 2022: 89). This study will examine the reflections of the First Turkish Language Congress, which holds great significance for the development of Turkish and the elimination of foreign words, in the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper. The study will analyze the news related to the First Turkish Language Congress in the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper.

⁴ Initially known as the Turkish Language Association (Türk Dili Tetkik Cemiyeti), this institution's name was changed to the Turkish Language Institution (Türk Dil Kurumu) in October 1935 (Szurek, 2015: 69).

Language Policies During the Republic Era

In the early years following the proclamation of the Republic, Turkish society entered a rapid phase of renewal and modernization under the leadership of the state. Significant meetings, such as the İzmir Economic Congress, were organized to set the direction in the economic field. However, no new steps were taken in the areas of culture and language during this period, which can be characterized as a five-year preparatory phase marked by silence. During this phase, the state and society developed ideas and strategies that would form the foundation for subsequent reforms (Kahraman, 2017: 1289). Over time, discussions began to emerge about reforms that would ensure cultural development alongside economic progress. Language and culture became significant areas of debate and policy during this period. The state took various steps to develop and simplify the Turkish language, encouraging the use of purer Turkish words in place of those of Arabic and Persian origin. Efforts by the Turkish Language Institution aimed to preserve the richness of the Turkish language while making it more comprehensible and functional. Language policies played a crucial role in the process of identity formation for Turkish society during this period (Tavlı, 2013: 10-11).

The concept of language reform in the Republic was viewed not only as a reform of the language itself but also, and certainly beyond that, as a lever for a transformation of mentality, a paradigm of modernization, and a key element in the idea of nation(-state) building. Therefore, during the Republic era, the state apparatus, with all its institutions, became involved in the matter of language simplification (Kaynar & Kalkan, 2019: 444). One of the most important steps in the Turkification process was undoubtedly the Alphabet Reform. The initial attempts to transition to the Latin alphabet were met with criticism during the İzmir Economic Congress in 1923 when Ali Nazmi Bey's proposal on this matter was debated. Congress President Kazım Karabekir Pasha particularly viewed this proposal as "damaging to Islamic unity" and impeded these ideas for the time being (Özer, 2012: 146).

Subsequent serious steps toward transitioning to the Latin alphabet were taken with the establishment of the Language Commission on May 23, 1928, to determine the suitability of Latin letters for Turkish. The Language Commission examined and prepared reports on the grammatical and phonetic appropriateness of the Latin letters. They also attempted to inform the public about the Latin alphabet through newspaper articles (Elçarpar, 2018: 27). The Commission focused on creating a spelling dictionary, taking Şemsettin Sami's "Kamus-ı Türkî" and Mehmet Baha's "Yeni Türkçe Sözlük" as the basis. While preparing the spelling dictionary, Turkish words were categorized into two main groups (Tan, 2001: 3):

1. First Group: a. Words of Turkestan origin and Turkish origin, b. Words collected from Anatolia and Rumelia that have been incorporated into Turkish, c. Words of Western origin.
2. Second Group: Words accepted by writers but not by the public: a. Words used by early Turkish writers to replace Arabic and Persian words used in the vernacular, b. Arabic and Persian words accepted by early and contemporary Turkish writers due to the lack of Turkish equivalents, c. Words derived by Turkish scholars from Arabic for new scientific terms, d. Words borrowed from French, German, and English for which there were no Turkish equivalents or which were of Arabic origin.

Although the Commission reported that the transition to the Latin alphabet would require a longer and more planned process, Atatürk rejected this and insisted that the process be completed as soon as

possible. Atatürk emphasized the importance of the Latin alphabet with his statements on August 9-10, 1928, regarding the new Turkish alphabet: "Our regular and rich language will reveal itself with the new Turkish letters. For centuries, we have been keeping our minds within an iron frame, freeing ourselves from incomprehensible and undecipherable signs. In the near future, the world will witness the works of what you understand. I am absolutely certain of this." (Arşan, Borak and Kocatürk, 1997: 273).

Following Atatürk's resolute stance, a significant language revolution was formally realized in Turkey with the adoption of Law No. 1353, approved by the Grand National Assembly on November 1, 1928. With this law, the Latin alphabet was officially accepted, replacing Ottoman script with Turkish in writing. This step constituted a material dimension of language planning during the Republic era and made a significant contribution to the development of Turkish as a national language. Opting for a simpler and more understandable alphabet instead of the complexity of Ottoman script marked an important step towards national language and cultural unity (Sadoğlu, 2010:230).

The Law on the Adoption and Implementation of Turkish Letters, published in the Official Gazette on November 3, 1928, consisting of 11 articles, determined that all official institutions and private organizations in Turkey would henceforth be obliged to accept only texts written in Turkish letters, effective January 1, 1929 (Tongul, 2004: 125).

Following the Alphabet Reform, efforts to simplify the language and create indigenous Turkish words gained momentum. Atatürk, aiming to orient towards the West, was concerned about the dominance of Arabic and Persian-origin words over Turkish and believed that the use of local resources would render foreign words unnecessary (Lewis, 2004). However, the transition to the Latin alphabet was not easy for the public. *Son Posta* newspaper organized a Language Survey in 1931, and Hüseyin Cahit, expressing his thoughts on this matter, emphasized the difficulty of this process with the statement: "It is undeniable that our alphabet in its current form is incapable of writing Turkish correctly. But attributing this to the inadequacy of the alphabet is a great mistake" (*Son Posta*, 1931, August 12, 1).

The transition to the Latin alphabet in 1928 is considered the most important step in the Turkification of language in the early Republic era. After the Alphabet Reform, many steps were taken towards creating authentic Turkish. Following the establishment of the Turkish Historical Society in 1931, Atatürk's interest in history increased, and he advocated for advancements in language as well. The first step in this regard was the establishment of the Turkish Language Institution on July 12, 1932. The first article of the institution states: "Under the auspices of the President of the Republic of Turkey, Gazi Mustafa Kemal, a society named (Turkish Language Institution) has been established in Ankara" (Sakaoğlu, 1991: 23).

The establishment of the Turkish Language Institution marks the beginning of an important period for the development and preservation of the Turkish language. After its establishment, the Turkish Language Institution prepared the necessary groundwork for the First Turkish Language Congress, which was to be held on September 26, 1932. The language reform led by the Turkish Language Institution began to take shape through significant congresses. The most important of these congresses, where the idea of language reform of the Republic was conceptualized and materialized, is the First Turkish Language Congress. The celebration of September 26 as Language Day emphasizes the symbolic importance given to this congress. The First Congress served as the starting point for the language reform, laying out a roadmap for the reform with the determination of working groups and tasks. The decisions made at this congress set the agenda for the Second and Third Congresses. Additionally, the

first traces of the Sun Language Theory emerged during this congress. The First Turkish Language Congress can be characterized as a foundational congress that outlined the Republic era language reform, pioneered the institutionalization of state policy, and organized the language reform (Kaynar & Kalkan, 2019: 447).

This congress provided a platform for significant discussions on the origin, importance, and relationship of the Turkish language with other languages. Following the congress, important decisions were made to strengthen the original identity of the Turkish language. There was a determination to reduce the use of foreign-origin words and derive Turkish equivalents. This step is considered an important move towards preserving and strengthening the richness of the Turkish language (Özdemir, 2018: V).

In the early Republic era policies and in Atatürk's personal views, the return to authentic Turkish held an important place. In this regard, significant steps were taken during Atatürk's era to develop Turkish and especially to reduce the use of foreign words. The First Turkish Language Congress stands out among these steps. Therefore, this study will examine the reflections of the First Turkish Language Congress, its significance, and developments in the Cumhuriyet newspaper, one of the important newspapers of the period.

Method

Following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, various reform efforts were initiated to modernize and revitalize the nation. Within the framework of nation-state policies, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk placed special emphasis on Turkish history and language. As a result, extensive efforts were made to purge Turkish of foreign words and promote a return to native Turkish. The First Turkish Language Congress was organized as a result of these efforts to replace foreign words with Turkish ones after the Alphabet Reform. This congress, convened under the efforts of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, is crucial for understanding the language policies of the Atatürk era. In this study, the reflections of the language policies were examined through the First Turkish Language Congress in the Cumhuriyet newspaper using document analysis.

Documents are considered a part of the fabric of our world. Document analysis is employed to examine and interpret data systematically to reveal meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge, much like other analytical methods in qualitative research. Document analysis involves examining political documents, press releases, annual reports, newspaper articles, and official archive documents, especially to better understand the conditions of the period being studied. It helps uncover the meanings of actions and how they are framed, particularly by determining the stylistic differences in newspapers and the level of importance given to the subject. Document analysis is often used in conjunction with other techniques to produce more meaningful data. It serves as a triangulation tool, combining methodologies in the investigation of the same phenomenon.

Newspapers are defined as socially organized forms of producing, sharing, and using social realities. In this study, the Cumhuriyet newspaper was examined to understand the reflections and importance of the First Turkish Language Congress, an essential congress for understanding the language policies of the Atatürk era. The 15-day issues of Cumhuriyet newspaper between September 25, 1932, and October 10, 1932, were examined. The study is based on document analysis, but qualitative content analysis was also employed to facilitate the systematic examination of news. Categories such as page location, size, and date were used to determine the importance of the analyzed news through a coding sheet.

Additionally, categories were created to determine the content of the news to expand discussions about its importance and changes over time. By examining the framing and forms of news presentation in the newspaper, the study aimed to identify how facts and events were placed, which themes were used, and which frames were emphasized.

In the study, relevant issues of the Cumhuriyet newspaper (September 25, 1932 - October 10, 1932) were accessed from the Digital National Library (<https://dijital-kutuphane.mkutup.gov.tr/>), which is publicly accessible. A total of 155 news articles related to the First Language Congress were identified during the 15-day period under investigation. The relevant issues of the Cumhuriyet newspaper were legally downloaded from the digital platform and saved in an electronic format. Subsequently, the news articles in the identified issues were analyzed within this framework.

The study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Did newspapers show interest in the First Language Congress?
2. Are the topics discussed at the First Language Congress supported in the newspapers?

In addition to the texts in newspapers, evaluations were made regarding the photographs used. Photographs serve as important visual evidence to determine which individuals or institutions are highlighted and framed in newspapers. Therefore, it was determined that there were 155 news articles related to the First Turkish Language Congress in the period examined in the Cumhuriyet newspaper.

Findings

Interest in the Congress began in the Cumhuriyet newspaper on September 25, 1932, a day before the Congress. The newspaper's headline stated, "Congress opens tomorrow," and it reported that "Yesterday, the executive committee held a lengthy meeting under the presidency of Gazi Hz." On the other hand, one of the initial points highlighted by the Cumhuriyet newspaper was the arrival of linguist Agop Martayan (Dilaçar), a professor at Sofia University, to Istanbul to attend the Congress. Martayan's photograph was published along with information about his arrival. Martayan stated to journalists, "The roots of the Turkish language are very rich. Every idea can be expressed in Turkish words without needing any foreign language."

On September 26, the newspaper headlined, "First Language Congress Convenes Today," and stated, "Our Leader Gazi Hz. will also be present at this historic meeting and follow the deliberations." Information about the Language Congress was provided in this issue of the newspaper. It was announced that the Language Congress would begin at 2 o'clock at Dolmabahçe Palace. The article stated, "Today, the foundation stone of a new revolution, the language revolution, is being laid. The first language congress will convene, and discussions will begin based on the agenda prepared for the scientific and civilizational needs of the Turkish language's future developments."

The article highlighted the individuals attending the meeting, including Minister of Education Reşit Galip Bey and President of the Turkish Language Research Society Samih Rifat Bey, among others, with a total of 730 participants. The article concluded by stating, "The language congress will start its deliberations precisely at two o'clock," providing information about the program from Ruşen Eşref Bey, the General Secretary of the Turkish Language Research Society.



Image 1. Mustafa Kemal before the Turkish Language Congress (September 26, 1932, p.1).

The Turkish Language Congress was inaugurated on September 27, 1932. The Cumhuriyet newspaper announced the opening with the headline "The First Language Congress Opened with Great Ceremony." Visuals related to the opening day of the Congress were used in Image 2. The presence of a radio receiver in the images is also noteworthy, indicating that the proceedings of the Congress were intended to be communicated to the public.



Image 2. Opening Ceremony (September 27, 1932 p.1).

From the very first day, Gazi Mustafa Kemal participated in the Congress. The Cumhuriyet newspaper used the expression, "Our great Gazi who honored the assembly followed the discussion until the end." The opening speech of the Congress was delivered by Samih Rifat Bey, the President of the Turkish Language Association. Samih Rifat used the following words: "This Congress, established with the aim of seeking the development of the Turkish language within its own national powers, has many meanings for the children of this generation, not only with its noble purpose but also with the history of the eras it stands above and the national and cherished panorama under the building where it was established."

On the opening day, Gazi Mustafa Kemal also delivered a speech. In his opening address, he used striking expressions, particularly emphasizing that sentences changed in terms of the essence of Turkishness during the Ottoman Empire. Atatürk stated, "Even if some Arabic terms and expressions in our language have not lived as foreign clichés, we are obliged to renew and change all of them due to the scholastic meanings they have inculcated in life" (p.5).

The focus of the Congress was to create a pure and simple Turkish language. However, to avoid damaging diplomatic relations, certain clarifications were made. While aiming to rid Turkish of dominant Arabic and Persian words, it was also stated that this was not against those nations. On this matter, Reşit Galip Bey said, "Our complaint about Arabic and Persian words or rules that we say have been inserted into our language by ourselves cannot be interpreted as a lack of love and respect towards Arab and Persian nations or their languages" (p.5).

On September 28, the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper published with the headline "The second day of the Congress." The news stated, "Yesterday, a 15-member Organization committee was elected." In this session, the speeches of Dr. Saim Ali, Ahmet Cevat, and Agop Martaya were particularly highlighted. A notable point is that General MacArthur, the President of the United States, attended the Congress and followed it with Atatürk. On the second day of the Congress, evaluations related to the essence of the matter were made. On this day, Ahmet Cevat Bey compared the Sumerian language with Turkish. Agop Martayan discussed the similarities between Turkish, Sumerian, and Indo-European languages. According to Martayan, "Considering the characteristics in the fields of phonetics, morphology, grammar, and syntax, Turkish should be linked to the family of Alp languages. To prove that Turkish is fundamentally connected not only with Indo-European languages but also with Finno-Ugric, Caucasian, Semitic, and even ancient Egyptian languages, I take the word 'Kır' in Turkish as an example and see that in more than fifty languages, it retains and expresses the same meaning as in Turkish" (p.5).

Martayan especially praised Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's efforts to return to pure Turkish. For instance, "After 12 centuries of neglect, it will be realized by the creative hand of Gazi Mustafa Kemal, and the whole world will repeat the historical words of Gül-Tekin: O Turkish nation, you will preserve an eternal empire!" (p.5).

On September 29, the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper published with the headline "The third day of the Congress was intense," emphasizing that three people made presentations on the third day. Among the most important events of the third day was the discussion of the "Great Language Encyclopedia" and the desire to name it after Mustafa Kemal. On the third day, Artin Cebeli made a speech. In his thesis, Cebeli stated, "There is a wrong term in history and anthropology: Indo-European. I propose that this term be accepted as Turko-European. When the Turkish language is examined through etymology and philology, it is evident that Turko-European languages belong to the same family as the languages of the white races. We can scientifically prove this claim. Many of the words we consider Persian and Arabic are actually ancient Turkish words." In this thesis, it was also suggested that the Turkish language is superior to other languages.

Another speaker at the Congress, Hakkı Nezih, presented a thesis on the Indo-European language family. Nezih researched the connection between Indo-European languages and Turkish languages. According to Nezih, "The similarity of the first syllables, which constitute the first result, indicates the unity between these two languages."

The last speaker on the third day of the Congress was Yusuf Ziya. In his thesis, Ziya addressed the points that differentiate Indo-European languages from Turkish. According to him, the absence of the definite article in Turkish is one of the main differences (p.5).

The Congress discussed the following fundamental issues: A. Origins of Language

1. The antiquity of the Turkish language and its relations with:
 - a. Indo-European languages
 - b. All languages of the white races
 - c. Other languages of Asia and Europe
 2. The direct development of the Turkish language within its environmental conditions:
 - a. Its dialects
 - b. Historical grammars
 - c. Vocabulary
 - d. Its high literary capability free from all foreign influences
 3. The continuation of this capability in the popular language and its decline in the written language
- B. The current state of the Turkish language, its modern and civilized needs
1. Changes in the Turkish language from the Tanzimat period to the present:
 - a. Phonetics
 - b. Syntax
 - c. Vocabulary
 - d. Terms
- C. The future developments of the Turkish language The goal is to make the Turkish language a beautiful, harmonious means of expression that can fully embrace today's and tomorrow's civilization with:
- a. Phonetics
 - b. Syntax
 - c. Word formation
 - d. Term creation (p. 6)

On September 30, the Cumhuriyet newspaper published with the headline "The Congress witnessed great excitement yesterday," stating, "A single line of pure Turkish cannot be expressed on today's literary pages." In this session, Samih Rifat especially made analyses through literature. According to Rifat, "The aruz meter was first used in Turkish and by Turkish poets." In his thesis, Samih Rifat opened by discussing the literature of the Karahanlıs. According to Samih Rifat, "The first Persian poem was not written by a Persian but by a Turk from Khorasan." According to Rifat, it is possible to see points specific

to aruz in Turkish poems. Before Islam, Turks wrote Turkish poems in accordance with the aruz meter.

On October 1, the Cumhuriyet newspaper informed its readers with the headline "The Congress will hold its fourth session today." The Minister of Education, Reşit Galip Bey, stated, "We will witness astonishing results in a short time."



Image 3. Turkmens from Adana (October 1, 1932 p.1).

Three citizens from the Adana Turkmen tribes attending the Language Congress stated, "Pure Turkish will be used in this country, and we have no tolerance for those who do not want it, they should leave us" (p.1).

On October 2, the newspaper, under the headline "Great Language Revolution," mentioned that five people had spoken. Among the speakers, Abdullah Battal Bey remarked, "Chagatai and Ottoman are artificial languages. Our benefit in the language revolution will be to take the Turkish elements involved in the formation of these artificial languages." Hüseyin Namık Bey drew attention by stating that the ancestors of the Ionians were Turks, saying, "The Hiyonnular (Ionians) called the sky 'Tın-li,' and in Turkish, one meaning of Tanrı (God) is sky" (p.6).

On October 3, the newspaper, using the headline "There were heated debates at the Congress yesterday," stated, "The thesis of Hüseyin Cahit Bey, who defended the idea that simplicity in language should be left to evolve, attracted objections, and various speakers voiced their opinions." Hasan Ali, Fadıl Ahmet, and Ali Canip objected to Cahit Bey's claim that the language would improve on its own over time. Cahit Bey said, "The purification of the language is a long process; it should be entrusted to a committee. The implementation of these can be debated" (p.6).

On October 4, the newspaper, with the headline "The Congress will conclude its work on Thursday,"

highlighted the words of Halit Ziya. Halit Ziya stated, "Regarding the improvement and purification of our language, we have all reached a port of trust and safety. For this, we owe a debt to Mustafa Kemal, who has led us to safety and security in many fields" (p.1). Ziya also emphasized, "In matters of language, we should be revolutionary, not evolutionary" (p.6).

Another speaker at the Congress, Ali Canip, explained the situation of writing in Turkey after the political reorganization. He noted that the literature of the new era had consumed these forms, causing the disappearance of Divan forms, with sonnets and various other Western forms becoming prevalent in poetry, and short stories and novels emerging in prose (p.6). Ali Canip criticized the Servet-i Fünûn and Tanzimat writers for the language they used, stating, "Neither the Servet-i Fünûn writers nor the Tanzimat writers could escape the meaninglessness of this artificial language" (p.6). On the eighth day of the Congress, October 5, the newspaper used the headline "The eighth day of the Congress," and included the photograph in Image 4.



Image 4. A view from the congress (October 5, 1932 p.1).

On the eighth day of the congress, Saim Ali Bey posed the question, "Can Turkish be a language of science, art, and profession? If we work diligently, it certainly can, and the existing elements are sufficient for this." He continued, "For this, we will rapidly Turkify the reforms. This process has already begun. In medicine, there is no right or left side; there are simply the right and left sides." The head of the Board of Education, İhsan Bey, noted that "those attempting to replace French expressions in the Faculty of Medicine with Turkish have not been fully successful." Ruşeni Bey stated, "The Turks have greatly contributed to science. Today, many words in Iran are Turkish." According to him, "The greatest enmity towards the Turkish language came from the Ottoman sultanate. For seven centuries, literary figures and religious authorities in the palace have trampled on our language, and the sultans did not even deign to write in Turkish."

On the last day of the congress, October 6th, the newspaper headline read, "The Language Congress concluded its work yesterday and dispersed." The subheadline was "The General Central Committee was

elected yesterday." On the last day of the congress, the regulations for the operation of the Turkish Language Research Society, established on July 12th, were adopted. The acceptance statement celebrated the establishment of the society with the words, "A society called the Turkish Language Research Society has been established with the aim of revealing the inherent beauty and richness of the Turkish language and elevating it to a status befitting its value among world languages." The regulations also established that the center of the Turkish Language Research Society would be in Ankara, with the Minister of Education as its honorary president. Samih Rifat was again elected as the head of the Turkish Language Research Society.

Following the congress, the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper continued to cover related developments. In the subsequent days, particular focus was given to the efforts of the Minister of Education, Galip Bey, and his initiatives. The primary focus of these efforts was the implementation of the issues discussed at the First Turkish Language Congress. Preparations began immediately after the congress, and on October 7th, 1932, Galip Bey announced, "We will mobilize 15,000 teachers for language research."

The First Turkish Language Congress lasted ten days, and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk attended from the beginning to the end. Thousands of people attended the congress as spectators, and numerous prominent figures presented their theses. The *Cumhuriyet* newspaper closely followed the First Turkish Language Congress from the first day, reporting developments to its readers.

Conclusion

This study examines the reflections of the First Turkish Language Congress, one of the most significant steps within Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's language reform, in the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper. Atatürk and his colleagues exerted great efforts to create a pure Turkish language and a simplified form of spoken and written language. Despite the debates it sparked, the First Turkish Language Congress was crucial for the creation of pure Turkish and the establishment of a straightforward language usage.

An analysis of the news articles in *Cumhuriyet* regarding the congress reveals that many of the presented theses emphasized the importance of the Turkish language and claimed its superiority over other languages. Due to the adoption of Ottoman Turkish as the written language during the Ottoman Empire, numerous foreign words were incorporated into Turkish. Criticisms were directed at this phenomenon, particularly the influx of Persian and Arabic words, which were seen as corrupting the essence of Turkish. As a result, the theses focused on eliminating foreign words. It was also proposed to replace the French terms predominantly used in the medical field with Turkish equivalents.

According to the approved work program of the congress, the following activities were decided upon (Özdemir, 2018: 107):

1. Comparing the Turkish language with other language families.
2. Writing historical and comparative grammars of the Turkish language.
3. Collecting words from Anatolian and Rumelian dialects and finding Turkish equivalents for Ottoman words.
4. Preparing a Turkish dictionary and grammar.

5. Publishing a journal as the organ of the society.
6. Collecting domestic and foreign works written on the Turkish language.
7. Establishing committees for grammar-syntax, dictionary-terminology, linguistics-philology, etymology, collection, and publication to work on the Turkification of terms.

Moreover, literary texts constituted another focus of the congress presentations. Particularly, the works of the Servet-i Fünun and Tanzimat periods were heavily criticized. It was also noted that the earliest literary texts were written by Turks and in Turkish. This indicates that the First Turkish Language Congress aimed not only to create a pure Turkish language but also to promote the idea of nationalism. Some theses even suggested that the Sumerians and Hittites were of Turkish origin (Özdemir, 2018: 223). Similar arguments were made for the Ionians, based on the use of similar words among societies.

This study, by examining the reflections of the First Turkish Language Congress in the Cumhuriyet newspaper, highlights the importance Atatürk placed on this congress. He ensured the participation of people from different regions of Anatolia, as well as foreign guests. Additionally, the establishment of radio and telegraph frequencies to broadcast the discussions to the public underscored the congress's significance.

The First Turkish Language Congress is crucial for the creation of the pure and simple Turkish language and the introduction of many words we use today into everyday life. This congress marked the beginning of numerous innovations in the steps towards language simplification. The subsequent organization of the second and third congresses indicates that the desired success was achieved in the first one. In conclusion, this study shows that, in addition to the steps towards a pure and simple Turkish language, many steps were taken in the name of Turkish nationalism during the First Turkish Language Congress. Future studies could compare the coverage of this congress in other newspapers and examine the media reflections of the second and third Turkish Language Congresses.

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