

Chapter 1

Introduction

Turkish is a member of the Southwestern branch (Oghuz) of the Turkic language family. It is the most commonly spoken Turkic language, acquired as a native language by more than 77 million people worldwide. The variety of Turkish presented in this book is the standard variety of the modern Turkish spoken in Turkey today. Here are some quick facts about the modern Turkish language:

Turkish is an agglutinating language. In Turkish, you add a number of suffixes to a word to make a sentence. Gidiyorum is one single word in Turkish, which means 'I am going.' It is made up of the verb git 'go' and two suffixes iyor (the progressive marker) and um (first person 'I'). Kitaplarınızdan means 'from your books': kitap + lar + mz + dan (book + s + your + from). This is called agglutination, a term which means 'glue together' in Latin. Due to the agglutinating nature of the language, it is possible to form very long words. A very well-known example is

Avrupalılaştıramadıklarımızdan mısınız

'Are you one of those whom we cannot make European'?

However, in everyday speech, you almost never hear such super-long words. On average, a speaker adds about two or three suffixes to a verbal or nominal stem.

Turkish is a pro-drop language. You may drop (in most cases you have to drop, for some discourse reasons) subjects and/or objects. Turkish subjects are expressed with subject-verb agreement markers on verbs and other predicates. So if you would like to say 'I am laughing,' you just say (laugh-PROGRESSIVE-I) gülüyorum. The subject is marked on the verb in the form of a suffix.

Flexible word order. In Turkish, in contrast to English, the direct object comes before the verb, that is, while you say 'I am reading a book' in English, in Turkish you say I am a book reading. This is the neutral word order. You can change the order of words in a sentence in various ways. There are some restrictions on word order variation that will be discussed in the following chapters, but when compared to English, Turkish word order pattern is very flexible.

Missing stuff. Turkish does not have words such as the English am, is, are or the. So the Turkish counterpart of the English sentence 'the car is blue' is (car blue) araba mavi, and 'the man laughed' is (man laughed) adam giildii. The meaning and grammatical relationship that are expressed by these words are marked with suffixes in Turkish.



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Turkish alphabet. Turkish has been written using a variant of the Latin alphabet since 1928. The current alphabet replaced the Persian-based Ottoman Turkish alphabet as a part of the series of Turkish language reforms that took place after the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. In most cases, Turkish is spelled exactly the way it is pronounced, each letter corresponding to a distinct sound.

Vocabulary. Turkish words are not necessarily similar to the words in European languages because Turkish belongs to a different language family (Ural-Altaic), but Turkish has a lot of borrowings from English and other European languages as well as Arabic and Persian. It would be unrealistic to think that you can learn Modern Turkish easily if you already speak Arabic or Persian.

This book is not a comprehensive reference grammar book, it rather focuses on a variety of selected topics that are typically taught in Turkish classes during the first two or three years of learning the language. I have organized and grouped the topics according to the ordering and grouping I used when I was teaching these topics. They do not necessarily reflect any formal linguistic analysis or categorization. Some discussions are oversimplified to be able to reach students from every level and every linguistic background. This book can be used as a supplementary book to any textbook on the market, or students may use it on their own as a self-study resource.

This is how the book is organized. The second chapter focuses on vowels, consonants, and other phonological properties of Turkish, namely vowel harmony, consonant assimilation, k-g alternation, high vowel omission, consonant doubling and long vowel-short vowel alternations. The third chapter presents an overview of the noun structure in Turkish and includes topics such as nominal inflection and derivation of nouns. The fourth and fifth chapters deal with noun morphology. Accusative, dative, locative, and ablative case markers are presented, together with the instrumental $-(\gamma)lA$ in Chapter 4. The genitive case is presented and discussed together with the possessive marker -(s)I in Chapter 5. This chapter also has subsections on genitive-possessive constructions and on compounds. Chapter 6 focuses on various ways to express number marking and plurality. The main focus of Chapter 7 is the existentials var and yok and their various uses. Chapter 8 presents a discussion on pronouns, which include personal and demonstrative pronouns. It is followed by Chapter 9, which is a general discussion of the verb complex. Verbal inflections and various derivations are presented as an overview in this chapter. Chapter 10 presents a discussion and examples of the progressive marker -*Iyor*. Chapter 11 presents -(y)AcAK, the future tense marker. Chapter 12 is a discussion of the past tense marker -DI and -(y)DI that attach to nominal predicates. Chapter 13 is based on $-mI_{\xi}$, and $-(y)mI_{\xi}$ on nominals. Chapter 14 discusses the agrist -Ir and -Ar, which is a present tense marker that expresses mostly habitual events. Chapter 15 and Chapter 16 present some aspectual and mood markers -mAktA, -DIr, and the optative -(y)A. Chapter 17 deals with the use of tense, aspect, and modality markers that are used together with -(y)DI and -(y)mIş. Chapter 18 includes a discussion of person markers on both verbs and nouns in the predicate position. Chapter 19 presents the postpositions such as için 'for' and kadar 'until' and the structures where they appear. Chapters 20, 21, 22 and 23 are devoted to passive, causative, reflexive and reciprocal structures respectively. They present the suffixes and other sentential properties of such constructions, such as the case markers on various types of complements. Chapter 24 presents subordination through nominalization suffixes -DIK and -(y)AcAK. Chapter 25 then presents other types of subordination and the infinitives with -mA and -mAK. Chapter 26 is a discussion of the adjective word class in general and includes topics such as derivation of adjectives, comparative and superlative



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structures, question words, and quantifiers used as modifiers. Chapter 27 is a similar chapter on adverbials and focuses on the derivation of adverbials as well as adverbs categorized according to their meaning and function: adverbs of time, manner, frequency, place and location. At the end of the chapter, you will find a list of most commonly used adverbs and their properties. Chapter 28 presents conditionals formed with the conditional suffixes -sA and -(y)sA. Chapter 29 discusses the abilitative and possibility moods marked with the suffix -(y)Abil. Chapter 30 is on the expression of obligation and various ways of expressing necessity. Chapter 31 presents various types of relative clauses, formed by -(y)Anand -DIK or -(y)AcAK. This chapter is followed by Chapter 32 on word order variation and restrictions on word order variation. Chapter 33 is devoted to question formation. It presents both the yes-no question particle -mI and wh-questions such as 'what,' 'who,' and 'where.' Chapter 34 is on negation with the suffix -mA as well as negation on nominals with değil. It discusses various other types of negation. Chapter 35 discusses coordination and provides examples of some common conjunctions. Chapter 36 presents the diminutive structures. Chapter 37 discusses reduplication, a marginal word formation strategy. Chapter 38 provides a list of most commonly used interjections and some idiomatic expressions. Chapter 39 presents spelling and punctuation principles in Turkish. The last chapter, Chapter 40, is on some conversational patterns and idiomatic expressions and greetings. The book includes seven appendices that present verbal and nominal paradigm summaries and lists of verbs categorized according to their complement types. A list of grammar books for further study and an answer key to all exercises are included in the appendices, along with a glossary of grammatical terms.

The chapters are not ordered in any particular way, so that each chapter can be studied independently. However, when some relatively more advanced topics such as conditionals, or relative clauses, are discussed, some basic knowledge of word formation (e.g., consonant assimilation, vowel harmony) is assumed.

Each chapter has plenty of exercises that will help the reader revise the topics s/he has learned in that chapter and also use the grammar points in a variety of fun ways. An answer key to these exercises is provided as Appendix F. Here is the very first one of these exercises. You do not need to speak a word of Turkish to be able to do this exercise.

Exercise 1 Can you guess what these words mean in Turkish?

üniversite salata kahve futbol makarna hobi sandalet müzik profesör tiyatro zebra labirent	istasyon pizza kafe tenis pasta ceket sandal müze radyo termometre modern kültür	otomobil tren telefon yoğurt tuvalet pantalon bot taksi psikoloji türban milyon general	greyfurt çay gazete spagetti fobi televizyon otel park spor yat matematik film	apartman faks doktor ofis koridor kaset sekreter problem tango yoga fizik disket
labirent Ağustos	kültür banka	•	film minyatür	disket



Chapter 2

The sounds of Turkish

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2.1 Vowels

Turkish has eight vowels. We categorize vowels according to frontness and backness (where they are produced in the mouth) and roundness (whether or not you round your lips when you are producing them). This categorization is important for the vowel harmony rules that will be described in the following section. In the chart below, Turkish vowels are represented just the way they appear in the Turkish alphabet.

Vowels

	Front		Back	
	-round +round		-round	+round
High	i	ü	1	u
Low	e	Ö	a	o

A/a is pronounced as the u in the English word 'sun.' Some Turkish examples where a occurs are Ahmet, salata. In a few words such as kar 'benefit' the /a/ sound is fronted, that is produced more like an /e/. Such words are mostly the borrowings from Persian and are relatively few in the modern Turkish language. Unfortunately, such examples are not predictable in the present Turkish orthography, so you need to learn whether a word has a fronted /a/ or a regular /a/. They are marked with a diacritic or accent (e.g., $k\hat{a}r$) in some old texts.

E/e is pronounced as the e in English 'fed' and the word Edirne is an example. In some words where e is followed by either r, l or n, it sounds more like the first sound of the word 'an' in English. Some examples are gen 'gene,' ger 'stretch,' gel 'come.'



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 \dot{I}/i is pronounced as the i in English 'bit.' Some examples where it occurs are \dot{I} stanbul, sis, Ali. Its upper-case character has a dot just as the lower-case character has. Note that the version that does not have a dot is a different sound, as shown below.

I/i is pronounced as the *iv* sequence in the English word 'nation.' Note that this character does not have a dot in its lower-case version. While producing /i/ pull your tongue back in your mouth, and you will get this sound. *Işıl* or *ılık* are two examples of words where it appears. It is very important to note that the dot makes a difference to the meaning and these characters with and without a dot are completely different sounds and alphabet characters. The word *ilik* for example means 'button hole' while *ılık* means 'warm.'

O/o is pronounced as the o in 'no' in English. *Osman* and *koro* are two examples where it occurs. It rarely appears in the final syllable of a word. Here are some rare examples: *imparator* 'emperor,' *feribot* 'ferry.'

 \ddot{O}/\ddot{o} is pronounced as the eu in 'peu' in French. It is not similar to a sound in English. You may produce it by rounding your lips while saying the e as in 'bet'. Just like e, it rarely appears as the last vowel of a word. O/o and \ddot{O}/\ddot{o} are different sounds. Note the meaning difference in the following words: e on 'ten' vs. \ddot{e} on 'front.'

U/u is pronounced as the u in English 'pull'. It appears in words such as uzun 'long' in Turkish.

 \ddot{U}/\ddot{u} is pronounced as the \ddot{u} in German 'über'. It is not similar to a sound in English. $\ddot{U}z\ddot{u}m$ is an example where it appears. You may produce it by rounding your lips while saying the i as in 'bit'. Note, again, that U/u and \ddot{U}/\ddot{u} are different sounds, resulting in a difference in meaning when they appear in the same position in a word. $\ddot{U}\varsigma$, for example, means 'three,' while $u\varsigma$ means 'end, extremity, tip.'

2.2 Long vowels

Turkish has long vowels as well, and such vowels are not marked in any way in writing. You will need to learn such examples individually. Long *a* is more frequent than the other long vowels. Here are some examples of words that have long vowels:

Long a: ga:zi, bera:ber, ma:lum, ma:li, ca:hil, ifa:de

Long e: te:sir

Long u: numu:ne, Kanu:ni Long i: i:man, i:lan, și:ve

Vowels in some words become long when a vowel-initial suffix is attached. There is no indicator of such an alternation on words, so you will have to memorize those words that undergo such a change. Some examples are the following:

hukuk 'law' becomes huku:ku zaman 'time' becomes zama:ni icat 'innovation' becomes ica:di taç 'crown' becomes ta:ci hayat 'life' becomes haya:ti cevap 'answer' becomes ceva:bi iman 'faith' becomes ima:ni itibar 'regard' becomes itiba:ri ilan 'ad, announcement' becomes ila:ni



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In addition, the soft- $g(\check{g})$ lengthens the preceding vowel and results in long vowels: $A\check{g}a\varsigma$ is pronounced as /a:a ς / and $Da\check{g}$ is pronounced as /da:/.

2.3 Consonants

We categorize the consonants according to their voicing, and again, show them just as they appear in the alphabet. The categorization is important for the consonant assimilation rule that we will learn in Section 2.6 below.

```
\label{eq:Voiceless consonants: p, t, k, s, s, s, s, h, f} Voiced consonants: b, d, g, v, z, c, \check{g}, j, l, m, n, r, y
```

Here are some examples for each consonant in the alphabet. Most of the sounds in the Turkish language are very similar to the sounds in English. The following are the exceptions: G_{ζ} is pronounced as the *ch* sequence in English. Similarly, G_{ζ} is pronounced exactly like the *sh* sequence in English. G_{ζ} or yumuşak- G_{ζ} (soft- G_{ζ}) does not represent a sound in the standard variety of Turkish presented in this book. It rather lengthens the vowel that it follows. It never appears in word-initial position. In terms of suffixation, it behaves like a voiced consonant, it is followed by suffixes that follow voiced consonants. For example, note the accusative-marked form G_{ζ} (mountain-accusative). It is not G_{ζ} , which would be the form if the word were ending in a vowel. For this reason, the so-called soft- G_{ζ} is listed among the consonants above.

```
as b in 'baby'
Bb
                             baba
Cc
       as j in 'jump'
                             Cemil
Çç
       as ch in 'church'
                             çanta, Çin
       as d in 'dad'
Dd
                             dede
Ff
       as f in 'fish'
                             Fatma
Gg
       as g in 'go'
                             gemi
Gğ
       (yumuşak-g)
                             ağaç (lengthens the preceding vowel)
Hh
       as h in 'he'
                             herkes
       as s in 'measure'
Ŧj
                             jandarma
Kk
       as k in 'king'
                             kedi
Ll
       as l in 'lion'
                             limon
                             Mehmet
Mm
       as m in 'me'
       as n in 'nurse'
                             ne
\mathcal{N}n
Pp
       as p in 'pen'
                             Pazartesi
Rr
       as r in 'rain'
                             Recep
Ss
       as s in 'sun'
                             su
Şş
       as sh in 'she'
                             şeker
Tt
       as t in 'tea'
                             teşekkür
       as v in 'very'
                             ve
\gamma_y
       as y in 'yellow'
                             ye
Zz
       as z in 'zip'
                             zeytin
```

Among these consonants, t, d, and n are pronounced as dentals, i.e., you touch the tip of your tongue against the gum above the top teeth when you are pronouncing them. In this sense, their sound quality is slightly different than their counterparts in English. Similarly, f and v sound a little bit different when compared to the f and v in English. You do not bite your lips as much as you do when you pronounce these sounds in English. When v

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appears between vowels such as /a-u/ (as in the word tavuk 'chicken,' it is pronounced more like w in English. The words such as ufuk where f appears between two round vowels, are produced with a gentle flow of air, without biting your lips.

Other than these differences, it is important to note that there are two different pronunciations of k, g, and l in Turkish. The k and g in words that have front or fronted vowels such as k in kagu, Kamil, Kazm, mahkum, and g as in the words gavu and gol, are more fronted than the k sound that appears in words such as kamyon or the g sound in gar. Similarly, the l sound that appears around front or fronted vowels (as in the words limon, Leyla, hol 'hallway') is more fronted than the so-called dark-l that appears around back vowels (as in the words kol 'arm,' kalm 'thick,' olmak 'to be'). Dark-l does not appear as the first sound of a word, except in very rare, infrequent or old words such as langvt 'table football,' lala 'male nanny, tutor.' Voiced consonants (b, d, g, v, z, c) rarely appear at the end of words. When they do, they are devoiced. So the word lig 'league' is pronounced more like /lik/ and the words hac 'pilgrimage' and hac 'cross' are pronounced almost the same.

When spelling a word aloud, Turkish consonants are pronounced with the vowel e. For example, PTT is read as pe-te-te.

Exercise 1 Answer the following multiple-choice questions on Turkish vowels and consonants.

	cons	onants.			
1.	Which	of the fol	lowing is	a vowel in the Turkish alphabet?	
		(b) ö	_		
2.	Which	of the fol	lowing is	a consonant in the Turkish alphabet?	
	(a) ĉ	(b) č	(c) ć	(d) ç	
3.	Which	of the foll	lowing is	a consonant in the Turkish alphabet?	
	(a) x	(b) w	(c) ş	(d) ž	
4.	Which	of the foll	lowing ca	nnot start a word in Turkish?	
	$(a) \ \check{g}$	(b) ş	(c) ç	(d) 1	
5.	Which	of the foll	lowing ve	ry rarely occurs in the last syllable of a word	1?
	(a) 1	(b) ü	(c) e	(d) ö	
6.	Which	of the foll	lowing oc	ccurs very rarely at the end of a word?	
	(a) r	(b) k	(c) g	(d) s	
7.	Which	of the fol	lowing is	a back vowel?	
	(a) a	(b) e	(c) i	(d) ü	
8.	Which	of the foll	lowing is	a front vowel?	
	(a) 1	(b) o	(c) i	(d) a	
9.	Which	of the foll	lowing is	a voiceless consonant?	
	(a) p	(b) d	(c) g	(d) \check{g}	
10.	Which	of the foll	lowing is	a voiced consonant?	
	(a) t	(b) ç	(c) ş	(d) z	

Exercise 2 Find out how you say these country names in Turkish. The initial letters of each country name are given. Match the country names and their Turkish counterparts.

Ü _____ New Zealand Ç _____ Japan



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C	Jordan
Н	China
Ş	Algeria
J	Chile
Y	Uzbekhistar
F	Spain
İ	Morocco
Ö	Egypt
М	India
I	Iraq

Exercise 3 Some foreign place names are spelled just as they are pronounced in Turkish. Guess how these words are spelled in Turkish.

Texas ______
Chicago _____
Washington _____
California _____

2.4 Vowel harmony

There are two major types of vowel harmony: internal vowel harmony that concerns the internal structure of a word, and external vowel harmony that is important for suffixation. According to internal vowel harmony, in very simple terms, words can have either all front vowels or all back vowels in Turkish. You cannot have a word that has both back and front vowels. This is one of the ways you can distinguish borrowed words. Although it is an interesting phenomenon in linguistics, as a language learner you should not worry about this type of vowel harmony, as distinguishing borrowed words does not really help you with anything. External vowel harmony, however, is very important and you need to master it as early as possible.

When you add a suffix to a word, you change the vowel in the suffix according to the last vowel of the word that you are attaching it to. We represent the vowels that change due to vowel harmony in upper-case characters when we mention these suffixes in this book. For example, the plural suffix is -lAr. It appears as either *ler* or *lar* depending on the word it is attached to. It appears as *ler* after the vowels e, i, i, and i (front vowels). It appears as *lar* after the back vowels (a, i, o, and u). The upper case A in the suffix shows that the vowel alternates and does not appear only as a.

A-type or two-fold vowel harmony

Last vowel of the word	Suffix	Examples
Front vowels (e and vowels that have dots): e, i, ü, ö	+ler	kare-ler, iş-ler, üzüm-ler, göz-ler
Back vowels (a and vowels without dots): a, ı, u, o	+lar	araba-lar, martı-lar, kutu-lar, koro-lar



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There are two types of external vowel harmony in Turkish. We will refer to the one described above as A-type vowel harmony or two-fold vowel harmony as it alternates between two vowels. The second type is I-type vowel harmony or four-fold vowel harmony. It applies when the vowel in the suffix is a high vowel that surfaces as i, i, u, or \ddot{u} due to the frontness and backness as well as the rounding of the vowel. The third person singular possessive marker -(s)I that is attached to nouns is an example of such a suffix. The (s) part is pronounced when the suffix is attached to a word that ends in a vowel. Just pay attention to how the vowel in the suffix changes.

I-type o	r four-	fold	71070101	harmon	'n
1^{-i}	i jour-	join	uuwei	nui mon	ν

Last vowel of the word	Suffix	Examples
a or ı	+ (s)ı	araba-sı, martı-sı
u or o	+ (s)u	kutu-su, koro-su
e or i	+ (s)i	kare-si, iki-si
ü or ö	+ (s)ü	ütü-sü, göz-ü

2.5 Exceptions to vowel harmony

Some borrowed words have fronted vowels (fronted a, u, or o) in Turkish and this property is not necessarily marked in any way. So some a, u, and o, are not pronounced as back vowels although they look like back vowels in spelling. When a suffix is attached to a word that has a fronted vowel in its final syllable, it alternates as if it is attached to a word with a regular front vowel. The most frequent example is the word saat, which becomes saat-ler when the plural -lAr is attached because the last a of the word saat is a fronted a. Other examples with this kind of a are terminal, kalp, dikkat, and harf. The words gol 'goal in soccer' and mesul 'responsible' are other common examples with fronted o or o. Such exceptions are observed in some proper names as well: temal, telal, and temal are three examples. You need to learn these words as exceptions.

Another exception to vowel harmony is seen in the behavior of the suffix -ki. It does not alternate when it is attached to words and occurs as ki, regardless of the preceding vowel: arabadaki, ordudaki. Some exceptions to this unusual suffix are dün: dünkü, bugün: bugünkü.

Similarly, there are some other suffixes that do not undergo vowel harmony. The suffix -ken is one of them: Ankara'dayken, yıkarken, çocukken. The suffix -leyin does not alternate due to vowel harmony either: Akşamleyin, sabahleyin. Similarly, the suffix -gen does not alternate: üçgen, altıgen. In addition to these, suffixes and prefixes of foreign origin do not alternate: The prefix bi- in biçare and the suffix -izm in şamanizm are some examples. The second vowels of the progressive marker -(I)yor, the diminutive suffix -Imtrak, and the abilitative suffix -(y)Abil, do not undergo vowel harmony either. Note that their last vowels do not change: gidiyor/okuyor, yeşilimtrak/sarımtırak, arayabil-/gidebil-, etc.

Exercise 4 Which of these words can take *-ler* as a plural suffix?

bardak göl masa kalem telefon kelebek kalp saat kahve çay



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Exercise 5 Add	either - <i>ler</i> or - <i>lar</i> to	the following	words.	
ders sınav öğrenci okul saat dikkat gece ev	üniversite öğretmen	kitap kalem tahta gün akşam defter simit harf	sinema taksi radyo çikolata metre hal su kalp	
Evercise 6 Add Ev Oda Masa Üniversite Hava Çanta Banka Öğrenci Bu adam Kitap Film	the plural suffix -ler kalabalık -lar dolu beyaz uzak sıcak soğuk Amerikalı kapalı Türk kısa sıkıcı	4r and make se	entences, e.g., Evler	soğuk.
			h and it undergoes	A-type vowel harmony.
al bul düşün hasta ol kalk öğren otur	ara dans et geç kal iç konuş öğret sev telefon et	bekle dinle gel iste koş oku şarkı söyle _ uyu	ver	
mear Su-su follov ev uyku	ning 'without.' It is z (water-sIz) means wing words, applyin bilet para _ süt aşk	similar to the s 'without wate ng the I-type v arkada radyo	-less suffix in Englisher,' for example. Acrowel harmony. aş izin kalp	saat
dikkat gece ev ev Exercise 6 Add Ev Oda Masa Üniversite Hava Çanta Banka Öğrenci Bu adam Kitap Film Exercise 7 -mAk Attac al bul düşün hasta ol kalk öğren otur tatil yap gül Exercise 8 The second follow ev uyku	ödev — banka — numara — the plural suffix -let -ler kalabalık -lar dolu beyaz uzak sıcak soğuk Amerikalı kapalı Türk kısa sıkıcı is the infinitive ma ch it to the followin ara — dans et — geç kal — iç — konuş — sev — telefon et — yat — suffix -sIz, which is ning 'without.' It is iz (water-sIz) means wing words, applyin bilet — para —	defter simit harf Ar and make set and mak	hal su kalp su sentences, e.g., Evler sentences, e.g., e.g	A-type vowel harmony. In nouns and adds the sh (as in 'homeless'). dd this suffix to the emsal saat