

Essential Turkish Skills
for English Speakers
A Comparative Explanation

by Ahmet Göğüş



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Preface

The idea for this book occurred to me about five years ago during a conversation with some foreigners about the challenges of learning Turkish. Yes, in some ways, learning Turkish is handicapped because the structure of sentences is reversed compared to Indo-European languages. On the other hand, once you understand how to form new words and verb tenses, the rest becomes relatively easier to learn.

Turkish is an agglutinative language, which means that several new words can be formed from a single root word by adding suffixes. This allows for the creation of nearly complete sentences from just one word.

An exclusive feature of Turkish is its vowel harmony, which applies when adding suffixes. Each vowel has a corresponding matching vowel used in the formation of new words. This vowel harmony contributes a musical quality to the language. With few exceptions, the rules are consistent across the entire vocabulary. Additionally, Turkish has a very logical and mathematical structure.

Turkish is part of the larger Altaic language family and is also spoken in Central Asia, where Turkic languages can be divided into several groups. The majority of speakers belong to three of these groups. One of these three larger groups consists of the Uyghur and Uzbek languages, which are spoken in southeastern Asia. The second largest group includes the Tatar, Kazakh, and Kirghiz languages, spoken in northwestern Asia, covering areas from Crimea to the Volga-Ural region and the Kazakh steppes. These two groups have been significantly affected by the Russian language, leading most individuals to be bilingual in both Russian and their native tongues. Finally, the third largest linguistic group comprises the language spoken in southwestern Asia and the Middle East, which includes Turkmen, Azeri, and Turkish. In addition to these three largest groups, there are smaller groups such as the Yakuts, which are spoken by a small population in Siberia, and two other isolated groups: the Chuvash in Russia and the Khalaj in Iran.

The term "Turkish" refers to the Anatolian Turkish language, spoken by nearly 100 million people, including those in Northern Cyprus and the Balkans. Prof. Carter Vaughn Findley at Ohio State University argues in his book "The Turks in World History" that *'Turkic languages have less differentiated than Indo-European languages.'*

The closest languages to Anatolian Turkish are Azeri Turkish and Turkmen Turkish which are different dialects of the same language. These three belong to the Oghuz Turkish branch, which has significant differences from Uyghur and Kazakh Turkish.

About two thousand years ago Turks started to reign in Inner Asia. In time they have migrated and expanded towards the West. They have developed different stages from Asian Steppes to the Anatolian Seljuk Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and finally, today's Turkish Republic. Today, the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Türkiye consider themselves brother nations. The Azerbaijani language is quite similar to Anatolian Turkish.

The Turkish language is the 12th most spoken language in the world. Aside from Türkiye, large groups of people living in Western Europe speak Turkish. For example in Germany the second most widely spoken language is Turkish as this is where you'll find the largest immigrant community of Turks. This linguistic expansion enriches cultural interactions and highlights the importance of understanding the Turkish language in today's global landscape.

This book offers a clear understanding of the fundamental skills needed for English speakers learning Turkish. It highlights the differences and similarities between the two languages wherever necessary, to assist learners in navigating their studies more effectively.

Regarding the grammar rules and sentence structures, it is not asserted to be comprehensive, anyways it is not possible to be comprehensive in such a short book. However it is aimed to cover, as much as possible, the basics of Turkish grammar and to give most of the daily usages that a Turkish learner would need in his or her daily encounters. After you have learned all the sentence structures given in the book, you will still need to learn many idioms, speech styles, proverbs and more grammar.

Throughout the book, new words will be given to the reader the first time they are encountered. This way, the reader will not need to spend time looking them up in a dictionary. This book offers you more than 1200 words commonly used in the country. New sentence patterns, which we recommend you memorize, are given in boxes.

The book also has a vast number of practical exercises. Once you learn basic sentence patterns you will easily be able to utter the daily expressions that you can encounter while on your journey in Türkiye. Thus you can naturally have conversations and establish contacts with the habitants.

This book can also be used as a course book that teaches the fundamentals of Turkish grammar in a cumulative manner, that is no sentence structure is used before it is comprehensively explained. An important challenge in teaching a foreign language is having to use a sentence structure that hasn't been explained yet while explaining a different sentence structure.

In this book, grammar knowledge is presented cumulatively. Each concept is introduced in a sequence that facilitates understanding. I hope it yields the best results for English speakers. Naturally, the book aims to help the English-speaking world recognize, understand, and utilize the basic patterns of modern Turkish.

This book is dedicated to the people of Türkiye, hoping they achieve the position they deserve among the nations of the world. The writing of this book would not have been possible without the first Turkish teachers of the young Republic, especially Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who made a revolutionary change to the alphabet.

Ahmet Göğüş

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