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COMPARISON BETWEEN BALTIC LANGUAGE AND TURKIC LANGUAGES

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The language diversity of Baltic languages and the Turkic-speaking world introduces a rich history which reflects in the linguistic landscape. This article endeavors to conduct a thorough constructive analysis between Baltic languages and the Turkic languages, diving into their unique linguistic features, historical roots, as well as cultural indications. By exploring the indicated nuances that set them apart and the common similarities that connect them, we aim to reveal the complexities of these linguistic worlds.

Introduction

Turkic languages, group of closely related languages that form a family within the Altaic language group. The Turkic languages show close similarities to each other in phonology, morphology, and syntax, though Chuvash, Khalaj, and Sakha differ considerably from the rest. The earliest linguistic records are Old Turkic inscriptions, found near the Orhon River in Mongolia and the Yenisey River valley in south-central Russia, which date from the 8th century CE. Baltic languages can be found throughout Northern Europe, east and southeast of the Baltic Sea. Baltic tribes are thought to have lived in this area as early as 98 BC. Lithuanian first appeared in printed form in 1547. Today, it is an official language of the European Union. It is also the most widely spoken Baltic language, with approximately 4 million speakers in total, including 3 million native speakers. It is unique in that it contains a very large number of archaic expressions, and it retains many characteristics of the ancient Proto-Indo-European language.

Phonological Comparison

One of the most striking distinctions between European and Turkic languages lies in their phonological systems. European languages typically exhibit a relatively simple consonant inventory, with a focus on plosives (stops and fricatives). In contrast, Turkic languages boast a richer consonantal array, often incorporating palatalized consonants, which involve the fronting of the tongue towards the palate. Moreover, European languages often feature

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complex vowel systems with diphthongs and triphthongs, while Turkic languages tend to have a simpler vowel inventory with only a few distinct vowel sounds.

Turkic word structure is characterized by possessing rich possibilities of expanding stems by means of relatively unchangeable and clear-cut suffixes, of which many designate grammatical notions. Thus, *kız-lar-ım-a* ‘to my daughters’ is composed of *kız* ‘daughter’ and plural (*-lar*), possessive (*-ım* ‘my’), and dative (*-a* ‘in’) suffixes. The transparent and regular morphology is subject to sound harmony. Thus, words tend to consist of syllables produced with either a back or a front tongue position. Most suffixes vary according to the preceding syllable, containing either back or front sounds. The Turkish primary stem *kül* ‘ash’ yields words that contain only front consonants and vowels—e.g., *kül-ler* ‘ashes,’ *kül-ler-i* ‘its ashes,’ *kül-ler-in-den* ‘from its ashes’—whereas *kul* ‘slave’ yields words that contain back sounds only—e.g., *kul-lar* ‘slaves,’ *kul-lar-ı* ‘his slaves,’ *kul-lar-ın-dan* ‘from his slaves.’ Besides this “palatal harmony,” most languages also adopt a “labial harmony” between syllables with respect to rounded and unrounded vowels—e.g., *pul-u* ‘his stamp’ versus *pil-i* ‘his battery.’ Harmony rules, which may also be applied more or less to loanwords, vary across languages, labial harmony being most developed in Sakha and Kyrgyz. In Karaim, Gagauz, and Uzbek dialects and others, Slavic or Iranian influence has caused harmony to be phonetically differently realized, though harmony is far from lost.

Morphological Features

Morphology, the study of word formation, reveals another facet of divergence between European and Turkic languages. European languages generally follow an inflectional morphology, where grammatical information is encoded through prefixes, suffixes, or both. This approach results in words with complex morphological structures, often involving multiple affixes. Turkic languages, on the other hand, typically exhibit an agglutinative morphology, where grammatical information is expressed by adding suffixes to a root word. This results in words with a linear arrangement of suffixes, each conveying a specific grammatical function.

Syntactic Structure

Syntactic structure, the arrangement of words in sentences, also showcases distinct patterns between European and Turkic languages. European languages predominantly follow a subject-verb-object (SVO) word order, where the subject precedes the verb and the object. Turkic languages, in contrast, typically adhere to a subject-object-verb (SOV) word order, placing the subject before the object and the verb. This difference reflects the underlying grammatical structures of these language families. Despite these notable divergences, European and Turkic languages have also witnessed instances of convergence. Borrowings, the incorporation of words from one language into another, have enriched both language families. For instance, Turkish has borrowed numerous words from Persian and Arabic, while European languages have absorbed words from Turkic languages, particularly in the context of military and cultural exchange.

Lexical and Historical Aspects

Additionally, the geographical proximity of Europe and Turkey has led to linguistic influences, with European languages adopting certain grammatical features from Turkic languages, and vice versa. For example, some European languages have adopted Turkic postpositions, while Turkish has incorporated European loanwords related to technology and science.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a comprehensive contrastive analysis of European and Turkic languages offers a panoramic view of linguistic diversity. From phonological intricacies to cultural implications, these languages weave a tapestry of human expression. By bridging the linguistic worlds of Europe and the Turkic-speaking regions, we not only celebrate the diversity of human communication but also foster a deeper understanding of the historical, cultural, and linguistic bonds that connect us across linguistic landscapes.

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