

Reforms to the Turkish Language

Before modern Turkey became a country in 1923 the area was ruled by the Ottoman Empire. A year after the Ottoman Empire was dissolved in 1922, a man named Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (he was given the name Atatürk later, meaning “Father of the Turks”) came into office. Atatürk made many reforms; one of them was a reform of the Turkish language. The Turks have their own language; it’s not like Arabic, it’s not like European languages, it is Turkic. Ottoman Turkish is not the same as Modern Turkish. It had many non-Turkish words in it from Arabic and Persian. Ottoman Turkish was written in a version of the Arabic alphabet. Atatürk wanted to make a new, more modern language and a more “Turkish” language. So he declared that they would make a new alphabet for the Turkish language; they would do so by using the Latin alphabet and modifying it.

The Modern Turkish alphabet has 29 letters, 8 vowels: a, e, ı, i, o, ö, u, ü, as well as 21 consonants: *b, c, ç, d, f, g, ğ, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, r, s, ş, t, v, y, and z.*

A a	B b	C c	Ç ç	D d	E e	F f	G g
a	be	ce	çe	de	e	fe	ge
[a]	[b]	[ɕ]	[tʃ]	[d]	[e]	[f]	[g/ʒ]
Ğ ğ	H h	I ı	İ i	J j	K k	L l	M m
yumuşak ge	he	ı	i	je	ke	le	me
[Ø/j]	[h]	[w]	[i]	[ʒ]	[k/c]	[t/l]	[m]
N n	O o	Ö ö	P p	R r	S s	Ş ş	T t
ne	o	ö	pe	re	se	şe	te
[n]	[o]	[ø]	[p]	[r]	[s]	[ʃ]	[t]
U u	Ü ü	V v	Y y	Z z			
u	ü	ve	ye	ze			
[u]	[y]	[v]	[j]	[z]			

The Turkish language was heavily changed during Atatürk's time in office. He helped establish the Turkish Language Association in 1932, as well as starting a process of getting rid of foreign words in the language.