

4 | Bengi

Get out of here! You speak so well!

5 | Büşra

Nah. It's so-so.

6 | Bengi

How are you learning? Are you going to a class?

7 | Büşra

No. I found a really great web site. It's called Turkish Tea Time.

Language Points

Intro to Turkish

Consider this lesson your crash course introduction to the Turkish language. If you're new to Turkish, this is the perfect place to get a broad view of the language's most important characteristics and features.

Turkish is spoken by about 70 million people in the world. Most of these people live in Turkey, but there are also substantial Turkish populations in Northern Cyprus, Greece, and Germany. Many of the central Asian countries speak extremely similar languages that we refer to as *Turkic*; some of these include Azerbaijani, Kazakh, Turkmen, and Uyghur.

Turkish and Turkic languages belong to the *Altaic* family. Japanese, Korean, and Mongolian are amongst the most similar distinct languages that you will find in the world.

Given the history of the Ottoman Empire's reach and influence, Turkish contains many words borrowed from Arabic, Persian, and (to a lesser degree) French. Many of these words have so-called "pure Turkish" or "Ottoman" equivalents that are often preferred.

Because the Turkish alphabet is a modern invention (reformed in the 1920s from Arabic script), Turkish is extremely easy to read and uses a character set nearly identical to that of English. Pronunciation shouldn't be too difficult for English speakers, with *ü* and *ö* being the only two sounds not found in English. Word and sentence-level stress does differ significantly, though, so mastering a Turkish accent still takes a lot of listening and practice.

The modern, standard Turkish accent is accepted to be that of native Istanbulites. For now, it's the only accent you'll hear on Turkish Tea Time.

Intro to Turkish Grammar

By far the most defining characteristic of Turkish is that it is *agglutinative*. *Agglutinative* refers to the fact that Turkish derives almost all of its meaning from adding different suffixes to word stems. This concept isn't completely foreign to English speakers. For example, we have the suffix -ly that turns adjectives into adverbs: sadly, quickly, slowly, etc. As another example, take the word *shamelessness* that is comprised of two suffixes. -less serves to negate while -ness creates an abstract noun. Turkish works in this exact same way, but with nearly everything from tense to prepositions to mood to person.

Another extremely important and ubiquitous feature of Turkish is what we call vowel harmony. *Vowel harmony* refers to the fact that Turkish suffixes must dynamically change their vowels depending on the word to which you are appending them. While this gives the language a nice, coherent sound across words, it also means that every suffix will have multiple slightly different forms that you must choose between. For example, the present tense suffix -iyor may also appear as -uyor, üyor, or ıyor depending on the vowels in the verb stem.

Turkish has no gender, as in languages like French or German. It does, however, use it's plural second-person (you) as a singular polite form, as well.

Word order in Turkish is Subject-Object-Verb, unlike English's Subject-Verb-Object. So, while in English we say *The boy is reading the book*, Turkish says *The boy the book is reading*. Modifiers do work the same way as in English, however - adjectives and adverbs come before the words that they modify. *Red book* or *Quickly ran* are the same in both.

Suffixes!

So that you can get a better idea of how suffixes can be used to form new meanings in Turkish, here is the word *çiçek* (flower) being suffixed to create new words.

Çiçek.

Flower.

Çiçekler.

Flowers.

Çiçeğim.

My flower.

Çiçeksin.

You are a flower.

Çiçekli.

Flowery.

Çiçeksiz.

Without flowers.

Çiçekle.

With a flower.

Çiçekte.

At the flower.

Çiçekten.

From the flower.

Çiçeğe.

To the flower.

Çiçekçi.

Flourist.

Çiçeklik.

Flower bed.

And here's a preview of some of the fun verb suffixes you have to look forward to:

Gelmek

To come.

Geliyor

He is coming.

Geliyorum.

I am coming.

Gelir.

He comes.

Geldi.

He came.

Gelecek

He will come.

Gelirdi.

He used to come.

Gelecekti.

He was going to come.

Gelmiş.

He came. (I heard, reportedly)

Gelmişti.

He had come.

Gelsin.

Let him come.

Gelelim.

Let's come.

Geleyim.

Let me come.

Gelsene.

Why don't you come.

Gelebilir.

He can come.

Gelmeli.

He should come.

Gelirse.

If he comes.

Gelemeyebiliyorsunuz.

You might not be able to come.

Vocabulary

sadece

only

harika

great

Türkiye

Turkey

öğrenmek

to learn

aferin sana

well done

dil

language

ilginç

interesting

Türkçe

Turkish

şöyle böyle

so so

web sitesi

web site

Review

1. Which of the following languages is most similar to Turkish?

- a. Arabic
- b. Japanese
- c. Persian
- d. French

2. Turkish is an agglutinative language. What does that mean?

- a. Turkish suffixes change their vowels dynamically.
- b. Turkish comes from the Central Asian family of languages.
- c. Word order follows Subject-Object-Verb.
- d. Meaning is primarily derived by adding suffixes to words.

3. Which of the following are features of the Turkish language? (pick all)

- a. Dynamic changing of vowel sounds.
- b. New meaning derived primarily from adding suffixes to words.
- c. Two genders: masculine and feminine.
- d. A complex and uniquely Turkish alphabet.
- e. Plural "you" can also be used to be polite.
- f. Word order follows Subject-Verb-Object, like in English.

4. Ne zamandır öğreniyorsun?

- a. Derste öğreniyorum.
- b. Şöyle böyle.
- c. Bir web sitesi buldum.
- d. Bir aydır öğreniyorum.

5. Translate: *Her name is Bengi.* (write)

Answer Key

1. b
2. d
3. a b e
4. d
5. Adı Bengi , Onun adı Bengi

More. . .

Visit turkishteatime.com/lesson/102/ to:

- Listen to our full podcast lesson.

- Listen to full audio of the dialog.
- See a word-by-word translation of the dialog.
- See the entire dialog broken down into suffixes.
- Complete the review and unlock a fun Turkish video.
- Ask questions.