

Advanced Turkish

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Product at a glance

Product type	Tutorial
Language	Turkish as a Foreign Language (TFL)
	- Level: Advanced
	- Activity: Multiple Choice, Fill-in-the blank, Audio Flashcards, Pronunciation, and Listening Dictation. Learners with microphone-equipped computers can also record and play back their own voices, and compare their pronunciation with that of the native speakers.
	- Age group: 12 – Adult
Media Format:	1 x DVD-ROM
Computer Platforms:	Windows 2000/XP/Vista with a DVD-ROM drive
Hardware Requirements	PC: 468 processor or above
	1024 × 768 or higher screen resolution
	Hard disk space: 30 Mb
	DVD-ROM drive
	VGA with 256 colors
	MPC compatible Sound Card (e.g. SoundBlaster)
	Speakers or headphones
	Microphone (Recommended & necessary)
	Internet Explorer 5.5 or greater
	68030 processor or above
	8 Mb
	Windows Media Player 7
Price:	Individual copy: Suggested Retail Price: \$79.95
	Site licence: Contact producer for details at http://clp.arizona.edu/cls/ or brill@u.arizona.edu

1 General Description

Advanced Turkish is advertised as language software aiming to expand target learners' knowledge of Turkish language and culture through engaging, in-depth dialogues by native speakers. This classroom-tested, peer-reviewed DVD-ROM contains 19 video dialogues and readings and over 5000 audio recordings (over 70 minutes) made with native speakers. It features a wide range of topics such as *art, food, contemporary media, legal issues, travel, soccer, horoscopes, folk tales, and music* through scripted dialogues and unscripted discussions between native speakers.

Advanced Turkish contains 20 lessons. The first ten lessons feature complex Turkish sentence structures which are mostly found in formal written Turkish. The second ten lessons are recorded conversations between native speakers. The Turkish in these lessons is conversational and informal.

Each lesson consists of three sections: (a) *Introduction*; (b) *Text, Video & Exercises*; and (c) *Lesson Summary & Further Practice*.

- (a) *Introduction*: The *Introduction* section for each lesson unit outlines the material the learners should cover in each lesson.
- (b) *Text, Video & Exercises*: This section consists of a main text and dialogue with accompanying audio and video segments. There is both English and Turkish audio for all of the text. This section also features different types of exercises such as *flashcards, fill-in-the-blank/CLOZE, multiple-choice comprehension questions, listening dictation and pronunciation exercises*.
- (c) *Lesson Summary & Further Practice*: This section provides the learners with the opportunity of revising what they have learnt in the *Text, Video & Exercises* section. This section of each lesson consists of two different parts. The first part is entitled 'Neler öğrendik...' (What we have learnt). The second part is entitled 'Öğrendiklerimizi kullanalım...' (Let's use what we have learned...).

Advanced Turkish also (1) provides learners with on-line help; (2) has tutorial videos that explain how to make the best use of the software; (3) features *Alphabet, Phonology* and *Grammar* section that provides information about Turkish language and grammar; and (4) enables the learners to print out any section of the software.

2 Evaluation

Technological features

The software is quite easy to load because of the 'Auto play' feature in Windows 2000/XP/Vista. In addition to easy loading, it also performs very well. In order to find out whether it had any problems in terms of performance, the author ran it on a few separate computers (PC) and did not encounter any difficulties. It never crashed. The software is designed for PCs, and has a mechanism to *minimise, maximise* or *close* the window. It also has menu and tool bars.

Since the video window features a volume control, sound level can be increased or decreased according to individual needs. The problem is, however, that this feature is

not available for audio clips. To this end, the learners can adjust the speakers or on screen volume controls.

The appearance of the screen is commendably simple, uncluttered and consistent. This is a positive aspect of the software since it creates positive attitudes towards language software, particularly with software intended for autonomous learners. All navigational menus and icons are consistently placed and sized. The icons and the menus that represent functions such as 'Back', 'Print', 'Help', 'File', 'Pron', 'Cloze' and so on are internationally standard. Additionally, all icons (except the video icon) have captions to make them more meaningful and helpful, which is a great design principle (Lonfils & Vanparys, 2001: 414). This helps the software look simple, clear, professional and makes it easier to use. Moreover, the related ones are grouped together and consistently placed such as exercise buttons/icons. This helps learners to remember which one is where (*ibid*: 413, 417), which is a useful design principle, where visual appearance is so important to learners (e.g. Schlotter, 2009: 468).

Colour is very well handled in the software. Restrained colour usage avoids distracting the learner's attention. In this software specific colours are consistently associated with different purposes. The software's use of a dark foreground on a light background is also to be recommended, since such a colour scheme contributes to lower error rates and faster completion times (Clarke, 1992: 45–6).

Activities (Procedure)

In terms of positive aspects, most activities progress gradually from easy to more difficult. At the same time, they allow learners the freedom to move around as desired. This type of flexibility matches what learners want (e.g. Trinder, 2002: 73, 75, 81). Activities do not limit the time of exposure, so learners can complete them at their own pace and speed and it is also seen as being more useful in comparison with program controlled approaches. Activities require that learners respond with answers. Such interactivity is particularly important with materials intended for self-study (*ibid*: 2002: 83).

In terms of type, different types of exercises are provided. This avoids boredom and helps meet the needs of different language learners with different learning styles. For example, typing words in *Fill-in-the-blank/CLOZE* and *listening dictation* exercises are for learners who are tactile and kinaesthetic. Similarly, *flashcards* require learners to discard the words, and *multiple-choice comprehension questions* require learners to choose the correct answer. Likewise, the *pronunciation* exercise requires learners to record and compare their voice with that of the native speakers. Since *listening dictation* and *pronunciation* exercises require learners to focus on what they hear, these exercises are auditory orientated. Some of these exercises are both auditory and visual orientated in that they require learners to focus on what they hear as well as what they type. However, providing more activities types such as *Drag & Drop*, *Typing a letter/number*, *Matching*, *Ordering* and so on may motivate learners more.

Teacher Fit (Design)

The lessons focus on making learners comfortable in expressing themselves in a variety of formal and informal settings and include aural and written comprehension

skills along with cultural content. The lessons outline more complex grammar structures. The grammar focuses on sentence structures and types of phrases within these complex sentences. Also, the causative and passive tenses, and relative clauses are covered. The underlying theoretical framework of this software seems to be structuralist with an interactionist SLA model: – input – apperception – comprehension – intake – integration – output.

Surprisingly, given this software's pedagogical approach, the learners' attention is not drawn to cognates at all, which can play a vital role in learning new words in the target language. A number of Turkish/English cognates such as *film (film)*, *internet (internet)* *music (muzik)*, *television (televizyon)*, *cigarette (sigara)* are in fact present in this software, and learners' attention could easily be drawn to them through feedback by saying, for instance, 'Is the word *müzik (music)* similar or the same in your language?' (with 'Yes' and 'No' choices).

In the *Introduction* section of each lesson, the learners are informed of what grammar topic each lesson would focus on and they are given a recommended course of study. Simply telling learners what they should do is not enough. The aim of this stage should solely be to prepare and accustom learners cognitively and affectively for the texts they are going to read or view. In other words, it is to provide learners with what, at least, information native speakers would have in real life situations. This can only be achieved by providing tasks that require learners to participate actively. For example, tasks that activate the learners' knowledge of the particular (1) grammatical structures and (2) culture in English can be provided and this can be linked with that specific topic or culture in Turkish. Similarly, the learners can be given tasks that require them to use certain strategies. To this end, textual and audio/visual instructions can be provided as well. Moreover, the learners can be given tasks to guess the order of the topics, events or information that they are going to hear or view.

In the *Lesson Summary & Further Practice* section, which is really the exploitation stage or the follow-up phase, the purpose should be to diagnose the potential causes of failure and potential sources of difficulty. These can be grammatical, lexical, cultural, pronunciation based or the theme of the sequence or relevant to any particular features of the texts. Only the first question of *Öğrendiklerimizi kullanalım...* in this section serves this purpose. Two of the questions require the learners to *Think of a recent...* and *Look for*. The author really wonders what percentage of the learners would complete such tasks. At this stage, the considerations should be to (1) focus on potential causes of failure and certain features of the text, (2) draw attention to syntax and lexis, and their role in understanding texts, (3) draw attention to strategies and elements, and their role in understanding texts, (4) draw attention to authentic features and (5) provide feedback, which is complementary and explanatory.

As indicated above, feedback is restricted to simple *Correct/Incorrect* responses with the correct answer indicated. Inevitably, this is not always enough, and learners definitely need to be provided with more than this in many cases. In short, they should be told as much as possible, not only whether their answer is wrong or correct. Since feedback is mainly useful for conscious learning and appreciated by learners (e.g. Jordan & Mitchell, 2009: 308), as it (1) facilitates the negotiation of meaning, (2) forces learners to focus attention on certain aspects of the input (e.g. Smith, 2003: 39–40) and output, and (3) helps learners improve cognitive and

meta-cognitive strategies, feedback should also explain why an answer is correct or wrong and what strategies should be followed. In other words, feedback should help learners to diagnose their problems and find out why they have failed. This is especially necessary for autonomous learners, as they are by themselves, and autonomous materials need to function as a surrogate teacher so that they can raise learners' consciousness and strategic knowledge. Feedback should not only feature written texts, conversely it should be multiple format feedback. In short, the requirement of the dual-coding theory, the generative theory of multimedia and learning channels and styles should be considered in the design of feedback as well. While providing feedback, the implications of the cognitive overload theory should not be ignored, as too much information can cause boredom, hinder processing, and easily de-motivate autonomous learners. Another aspect of the feedback is that learners are not praised and this is not needed as the target learners are not children. A positive aspect about the feedback is that the learners' answers are always graded although answers with mistakes have points deducted.

The socio-cultural aspects of the program are generally accurate and it contains detailed information about cultural aspects. For example, when 'imam bayıldı' [a Turkish dish of eggplant, tomatoes, mince and onions/literally means 'the imam fainted' from delight, or so it is implied], 'dört gözle' [look forward to/literally means 'look forward to with four eyes'] and 'Atatürk ilkelerine' [Atatürk's principles] phrases are clicked in the *Footnote mode*, detailed information is displayed at the bottom of the page. Since multimedia enables us to explain cultural differences effectively in different ways, cultural differences could also be explained through motion pictures or animations. For example, a short video clip or a picture along with a textual explanation could present 'imam bayıldı' [the imam fainted] better than a textual explanation only.

Learner Fit (Design)

Since *Advanced Turkish* is directed to self-learners; it is responsive to individual needs and adapts to different learning style preferences, as explained above. Learners are given full control of the software so that they can pause, repeat, record their voice and listen as many times as they want.

Advanced Turkish software can also be incorporated by language teachers into their curriculum. In fact, all parts could be used in class as a whole. Similarly, different parts can be used for different purposes in a classroom environment. For example, the written text of each lesson can be used for reading, while audio and video segments can be used for listening. In the same way, tasks in *Lesson Summary & Further Practice* can be used for writing. Moreover, new pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening tasks can be prepared to be used with audio and video segments according to the needs of the target learners.

Summary

Advanced Turkish is beneficial and effective language software for expanding learners' knowledge of Turkish language and culture. Since it (1) is responsive to individual needs, (2) adapts to different learning-style preferences, and (3) features written texts,

audio and video segments on a wide range of topics, it can motivate and help learners in expressing themselves in a variety of formal and informal settings as well as enhancing their mostly aural and less written comprehension skills along with cultural content.

Scaled Rating

(1 low – 5 high) Implementation possibilities (for self-study): 5; Pedagogical features: 4; Socio-linguistic accuracy: 5; Use of computer capabilities: 4.5; Ease of Use: 4; Over-all evaluation: 4.5; Value for money: 4

Producer Details

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