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Using Social Media for Preliminary Vocabulary Investigations in Endangered Turkic Languages: Experiments with Gagauz

Abstract

The Gagauz language is considered to be one of the endangered Turkic languages. Indeed, UNESCO's Languages Atlas lists it as "definitely endangered." And yet its situation remains ambiguous. On the one hand, the number of speakers appears to be decreasing; on the other hand, we see efforts not only to preserve the folkloric tradition, but also to use it in areas such as journalism and significant new artistic productions. There is no simple answer, then, to the question whether it is flourishing or whether it is increasingly endangered because both are happening at the same time. Only time will tell which prevails.

This article examines how social media, primarily Facebook, can be used in preliminary or tentative vocabulary investigation to supplement the lack of adequate dictionaries. We will describe exercises in crowd-sourcing vocabulary for the purpose of translating texts into the Gagauz language and original writing in the language, both fiction and non-fiction. In some cases our crowd-sourcing experiments resulted in verifying vocabulary items already in use; in other cases, they yielded new terms for things from modern life which apparently had not yet had any name at all in common use in the language. Since the methodologies used do not conform to scientific standards for lexicographic / lexicological investigations, though, we weigh the pros and cons of the experiments in the hope that this account may provide a starting point for researchers into other endangered Turkic languages to build on them while exercising due caution.

Key words: Gagauz, Endangered Turkic Languages Endangered Turkic Languages, Using Social Media, Facebook

Tehlikedeki Türk Dillerinde Temel Sözvarlığı Araştırmaları için Sosyal Medya Kullanımı: Gagauzca ile Deneyler

Öz

Gagauz dili, tehlike altındaki Türk dillerinden biri olarak kabul edilmektedir. Nitekim UNESCO'nun Diller Atlası bu dili "kesinlikle tehlike altında" olarak listeliyor. Yine de durumu belirsizliğini koruyor. Bir yandan konuşanların sayısı azalıyor gibi görünüyor; diğer yandan sadece folklorik geleneği korumak için değil, aynı zamanda gazetecilik ve önemli yeni sanatsal üretimler gibi alanlarda kullanmak için çabalar görüyoruz. O halde folklorun gelişmekte mi

olduğu yoksa giderek tehlike altına mı girdiği sorusunun basit bir cevabı yok çünkü her ikisi de aynı anda yaşanıyor. Hangisinin üstün geleceğini sadece zaman gösterecek.

Bu makale, başta Facebook olmak üzere sosyal medyanın, yeterli sözlüklerin eksikliğini tamamlamak için temel veya geçici kelime araştırmasında nasıl kullanılabileceğini incelemektedir. Gagauz diline metin çevirmek ve bu dilde hem kurgu hem de kurgu dışı orijinal yazılar yazmak amacıyla kitle kaynaklı kelime dağarcığı alıştırmalarını ele alacağız. Bazı durumlarda kitle kaynak kullanımı deneylerimiz, halihazırda kullanımda olan kelime ögelerinin doğrulanmasıyla sonuçlandı; diğer durumlarda ise, modern yaşamdan gelen ve görünüşe göre dilde ortak kullanımda henüz herhangi bir adı olmayan şeyler için yeni terimler ortaya çıkardılar. Kullanılan metodolojiler sözlükbilimsel/sözlükbilimsel araştırmalar için bilimsel standartlara uymadığından, bu açıklamanın, tehlikedeki diğer Türk dilleri üzerine çalışan araştırmacılar için bir başlangıç noktası oluşturması umuduyla deneylerin artılarını ve eksilerini tartıyoruz.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gagauzca, Tehlikedeki Türk Dilleri, Sosyal Medya Kullanımı, Facebook

The current state of the Gagauz language: are things getting better or worse?

Perhaps the most reliable and most-cited source for the classification of the Gagauz langauge as endangered is the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger,[1] which categorizes the "vitality" of Gagauz as "definitely endangered" and gives 180,000 as the figure for the number of speakers as of 2002.

Fr Sergiy Kopuşçu commented with good insight on the thinking of Gagauz parents who do not encourage their children to learn their mother tongue well enough to us it in daily life:

> Mothers and fathers who do not speak Gagauz with their children explain their actions with this sort of argument, that the Gagauz langauge does not bring a great deal of profit to their child. It is better, [they say], for the child to learn a few foreign languages, not just the mother tongue. It is very clear that these parents do not know what their sons and daughters are losing when they think this way, that their children will live better by earning more money, and go to foreign countries to earn it.[2]

Since late 2015, I have lived in Komrat, the capitual of Gagauzia, for most of the year each year. It will be profitable to supplement the official account of the current state of the Gagauz language with some admittedly anecdotal observations of my own along, and to add news of a few recent events which offer additional relevant information. As I will note, the situation in the capital city of Komrat tends to differ from that of the villages.

Signs that the Gagauz language is in danger

In Komrat, the diglossia situation is quite clear. Russian is the prestige language, while Gagauz is the most prominent minority language. Russian is, for the most part, held in higher esteem, and is the "default language" in Komrat to such a degree that, for example, I have encountered many shopkeepers in Komrat, for example, who do not speak Gagauz at all.[3] One of the most amusing

[1] http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/en/atlasmap/language-iso-gag.html, accessed April 14, 2018.

[2] "Geçmiştä hem şindiki zamanda gagauz dilinin kullanılması klisedä hem hergünkü yaşamakta hem beklentilär." Sergiy Kopuşçu. Ankara: Balkan Mektubu, 2013. My translation.

[3] This situation resembles that of Moldova as a whole in a certain respect, so that even in Chişinău, the capital of the country, there are many people who use Russian in preference to Romanian (the official language of

incident was at a kebap shop, which was run by a man who did not speak Gagauz or Turkish but only Russian. I have run into similar situations in pharmacies, in both of the two supermarkets, in the post office, and in other places. As I walk down the street in Komrat on any average day, I hear more conversations in Russian than in Gagauz, including overheard telephone conversations. It seems to me that I hear more conversations in Gagauz in the two markets (panayır, like Turkish çarşı) than in stores, but this is an unscientific and impressionistic report. All of the street signs are in Russian. Most of the billboards are in Russian, although there are some in Romanian, with few or none in Gagauz. As for signs on stores, a few are in Gagauz or Turkish, but that does not necessarily mean that the people who work there speak Gagauz. On the occasions of presenting a newly published book — even when the book is written in Gagauz and is about the Gagauz language — it is common for at least half of the speakers to give their comments in Russian rather than Gagauz.

When inhabitants of Komrat do speak Gagauz, they often speak a sort of hybrid language which, in comparison to the Gagauz spoken in the villages, shows a larger than ordinary amount of Russian vocabulary and syntax. There are also some Gagauz who live in Komrat who use Romanian vocabulary in speaking Gagauz, even for the most common words, to the point that they do not even consider the ordinary Gagauz words to be part of their vocabulary. My landlady, for example, always uses the Romanian word "scaun" (rather than "skemnä") for "chair," and one days she explained to me that she was going over to bring food to a woman she knew who had been "hasta bütün viaţa." The word "viaţa" is of course the Romanian word for "life." When I laughed and asked her why she said "viaţa" instead of "yaşamak" or "ömür," she said that she didn't know the word "yaşamak" — although she knows the verb "yaşamaa" (to live) — and that she knew the word "ömür" only from hearing it in church services, but had never heard it or used it in conversation, and she considered it to be Turkish rather than Gagauz. These are only a couple of examples of a fairly widespread phenomenon.

It was a pleasant surprise, at the Fourth World Gagauz Congress in 2017, when İrina Vlah, the Governor (Başkan) of Gagauzia, gave the opening address in Gagauz. I had heard her give speeches on a number of occasions previously, and this was the first time she did so in Gagauz rather than Russian. It remains to be seen whether this indicates a new trend or not.

Indications that the Gagauz language is flourishing

The situation is different in the villages. I spent five days in the village of Beşalma in the summer of 2016, for example, and I was pleased to note that most of the conversations I overheard on the street, including telephone conversations, were in Gagauz. At least in that village, and based only on that short visit there, I could say that Gagauz has more the status of the default language for everyday verbal communication among people who know one another.

For some years there have been promotions of the Gagauz language in the sense of attempts to preserve the folkloric tradition. Important efforts to publish folklore could be mentioned, among which are certainly *Gagauzluk*, edited by Todur Zanet, which came out in 2010. It is over 550 pages long and is decribed by Professor Mihai Cimpoi in the front matter — accurately, I believe — as presenting "in an erudite, encyclopedic form, 'Everything about the Gagauzians'" (Chişinău:

the country) in their everyday business, and there are even people who have lived in Moldova all their lives who have never learned to speak Romanian.

Pontos, 2010, p. 6). Also worthy of note is the volume *Gagauz Folkloru* edited by Sofiya Koca, and focusing on folklore in the Valkaneş dialect of the southern part of Gagauzia.[4]

Another impressive publication relating to Gagauz language and culture is the three-volume anthology edited by Todur Zanet,[5] financed by the American Embassy and published in 2018. The first volume contains Gagauz folk tales; the second consists of Gagauz songs, proverbs, and riddles; the third focuses on Gagauz holidays, customs, and rituals. Each volume of this anthology contains four sections, with all the texts in Gagauz, English, Romanian, and Russian. It is illustrated throughout with newly-commissioned artwork.

From time to time there are literary contests, and master classes in writing poetry. These master classes usually take place at the Atatürk library in Komrat. Classes in the Gagauz language, at various levels, are offered at no cost by the M. V. Maruneviç Scientific and Research Center. These classes are all taught in Russian. Gagauz Radio and Television (GRT) was established in the year 1996 and broadcasts in both Russian and Gagauz. It is the only provider of television programs in the Gagauz language. There have been attempts to provide online news news in the Gagauz language, but they have faded away due to lack of support. Each has relied primarily on volunteer labor, which worked well enough when the project was new, but was not able to sustain it in the long term.

Popular songs are broadcast in the Gagauz langauge two to three hours a day.[6]

One of the most exciting recent events was the premiere of a new feature film in the Gagauz language in the summer of 2017, *Dünürcülük*. This is the first feature film in Gagauz. All the dialogue, apart from a few short scenes which are in Romanian, is in Gagauz. For the few scenes in Romanian, subtitles are provided in Russian. Otherwise, everything is entirely in the Gagauz language.

Efforts continue on the part of the Institute for Bible Translation to produce a full Bible in the Gagauz language. The translation of the New Testament was published in 2006,[7] and a "children's Bible"[8] consisting of stories from the Bible, in 2010. Two of the shortest books of the Old Testament, Ruth and Jonah,[9] were published in a single booklet in 2017. Work is underway on the first book of the Old Testament, Genesis, with a draft of that book approximately half finished.

My work: difficulties due to inadequate resources

My work in the Gagauz language began in 2012, when, as a monk at the Monastery of St John of Shanghai and San Francisco in California, I was given the assignment by our abbot of that time of finding out whether there were any Orthodox Christian men's monasteries in Gagauzia, and if so, writing to them to establish bonds of friendship. Since I did not at that time have any idea of proper writing style, and was just learning the language, I wrote a short note in April 2012 to Dr Güllü

[4] Koca, Sofiya. Gagauz folkloru. Gagauziya Bakannık Komiteti: Chişinău, 2011.

[5] Vol 1: *Gagauz halk masalları*; vol 2: *Gagauz türküleri, söleyişleri, bilmeceleri*; vol. 3: *Gagauz yortuları, adetleri, sıraları*. Chişinău: Pontos, 2018.

[6] Message from Fr Sergiy Kopuşçu 28 April, 2018.

[7] *Eni Baalantı*. Moskva: Bibliyayı çevirän İnstitut, 2060.

[8] *Bibliya Uşaklara Deyni*. Moscow: Institute for Bible Translation, 2010.

[9] *Rufi İona*. Moscow: Institute for Bible Translation, 2017.

Karanfil, a Gagauz linguist and poet, asking her for advice. In her reply to me, she invited me to submit a writing sample to a literary contest that was underway. I said to myself, "why not? What do I have to lose by trying?" and did so, finding to my surprise that although I did not win a prize — which I certainly did not expect — my submission was included in the small anthology that resulted from the contest, *Akar Sel Gücü* (edited Güllü Karanfil; Ankara, 2013). My work was included probably not so much because of any literary merit as because it was such an odd thing that a non-Gagauz person would write in the language at all.

In late 2012, at the invitation of Viktor Kopuşçu, I transcribed the book of Psalms (from the Old Testament of the Bible) into modern Gagauz orthography. It had been translated into Gagauz by Fr Mihail Çakir, using the orthography of Romanian, and published in 1936.[10] From that point followed a short involvement in an effort on the part of the Institute for Bible Translation to produce a new Gospel book in Gagauz. Although that project never moved forward to completion, my involvment in it was the occasion for a visit to their headquarters in Moscow in the spring of 2014, and even more importantly, the opportunity to spend the entire month of February in Gagauzia. From that point on, I have had further opportunities to translate material for the Orthodox Church into the Gagauz language from Greek and English, and to write a wide variety of texts, both fiction, and non-fiction, in Gagauz. In the summer of 2015, I made another trip to Gagauzia for a month, and at that time I made a decision to split from the work of the Institute for Bible Translation and concentrate my attention on translation of liturgical material for the Orthodox Church (continuing original writing, of course) rather than Bible translation. This translation of church services is being carried out by a group of us, of whom I am the only one who is not a native speaker of Gagauz. In order not simply to abandon the translation team of the Institute for Bible Translation, I recruited other people to help them from among Gagauz literary people I had met. With the help of my co-workers, I have modernized the book of Psalms and prepared the texts of four short services and number of other shorter texts such as prayers. These texts are currently being used by Orthodox Churches in Gagauzia. I have also written a great number of articles on Orthodox Christian religious themes, printed in the monthly journal *Hakikat Sesi* and online.

Up until this point, all of these services have been based on preliminary work done in the early twentieth century by Fr Mihail Çakir. My next undertaking, however, will be a fresh translation of the *Octoechos*, a large collection of hymns used in the Orthodox Church, using as source texts the original Greek,[11] supplemented by standard translations into English[12] and Romanian. Fr Mihail Çakir did not ever undertake a translation of this work, so it will be a greater challenge than the previous efforts of modernizing work which he left in tentative form. The question, therefore, becomes more acute: what resources can I use when I am in doubt about vocabulary?

I do have a file which I have compiled over the years containing a Gagauz-English glossary from multiple sources, and that helps, but it is not fully adequate.

[10] *Psaltir Găgăuzcea (Tiurccea)*. Protoierei Mihail Ceachir. Chişinău: Tiparul Moldonenesc, 1936.

[11] Παρακλιτική ἤτοι Ὀκτώηχος ἡ Μεγάλη. Ἀθῆναι: Ἀποστολική Διακονία τῆς Ἑλλάδος, 2000.

[12] *The Octoechos: The Hymns of the Cycle of the Eight Tones for Sundays and Weekdays*. (4 vols.) tr. by the Isaac E. Lambertsen. Liberty, TN: St. John of Kronstadt Press, 1999.

There are Gagauz-Turkish resources available[13] (but not Turkish to Gagauz). Similarly there are bilingual dictionaries between Gagauz and Russian, but Russian is not one of my languages. In fact, because of the reality of the diglossia situation, I began to learn Russian but then decided not to proceed. Since the linguistic situation in Gagauzia is one of diglossia with Russian as the dominant language and Gagauz as the subordinate language, I made a choice not to learn Russian in order to coerce other people — who might otherwise settle for conversations in Russian — to speak with me in Gagauz. When someone speaks to me in Russian, I reply in Gagauz that I don't speak that language and ask them if we can carry on the conversation in Gagauz. This strategy works very well. There are also Gagauz to Romanian resources available, the best of which is a Romanian to Gagauz dictionary, *Dicţionar Român-Gagauz* by Dr Todur Angheli (Chişinău, 2013).

Since I am usually using the Greek text as my base text for translation of liturgical materials into Gagauz, it would be wonderful to have a Greek-Gagauz dictionary at my fingertips when I need to find the right word. There is none, however. As a second-best resource, since I also consult the translation of these texts into English, it would be helpful to have an English-Gagauz dictionary. None exists. Given the fact that the most reliable resource I have found is the Romanian-Gagauz dictionary mentioned above, much of the time I have to go from the big Oxford Greek dictionary (*A Greek-English Lexicon* compiled by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott; Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1996), which gives me the English equivalent of the Greek word, then to an English-Romanian dictionary (or to the equivalent "google translate" resources), and from there to my Romanian-Gagauz dictionary. When I consult an English translation, clearly I can skip one step in this process and go from an English-Romanian resource to my Romanian-Gagauz dictionary, but we still have a multi-step process. For the Octoechos project, I have gathered three source texts: the Greek original; a standard and reliable English translation; and the translation into Romanian published by the Church of Moldova.[14]

In my original writing in Gagauz, I most often use my own Gagauz-English file supplemented by the combination of English-Romanian resources with my Romanian-Gagauz dictionary. I have found through experience that the resources currently available, as good as they are, are not always sufficient for my needs. Of course, I ask Gagauz-speaking friends — my landlady, for example, shows a remarkable degree of patience with me — but sometimes more help is needed. In this article, I would like to explain a strategy I have employed using posts on Facebook, followed by an analysis of its advantages and drawbacks. It is my hope that other researchers into endangered Turkic languages may find this strategy to be helpful to them in their work, although I will say clearly at the outset of this discussion that I am using it to assist in the practical work of translating and creative writing, rather than linguistic research. I recognize that this method falls short of the careful methodology required in lexicological or lexicographic research, although it may prove to be useful in preliminary or supplementary investigations.

[13] For example, İsmail Kaynak and A. Mecit Doğru.. *Gagauz-Türkçesinin Sözlüğü*.. (tr. from the Gagauz-Russian dictionary prepared by G. A. Gaydarci, E. K. Koltsa, L. A. Pokrovskaya, and B. P. Tukan). Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1991.

[14] *Octoihul Mare*. Orhei, Moldova: Editura Bisericii Ortodoxe din Moldova, 2007.

Using Facebook for purposes other than what Facebook might have intended[15]

Naturally there are resources on Facebook already which the researcher will want to use, for example, groups such as Forum of Turkic Languages. I have found it a rather frustrating experience, however, to ask for help with Gagauz vocabulary on a group such as that, because it almost always generates a lot of discussion about equivalent terms in other Turkic languages, and very little about the question I am raising: what is the common word for this in Gagauz?

What has been more successful is simply to put my question in a post on my own timeline. I will give several examples to illustrate the sort of post I have done in the past. What has worked best is to accompany my question with a photo, which I usually found online and then copy / pasted into my post.[16]

first post:

Saygılı gagauzça lafedän dostlarım! Zaman hayır olsun. Acaba var mı nasıl yardım edäsiniz bana bir laflan? Gagauz dilindä angı laf kullanêrsınız bu küçük hayvan için?

Çok saa olun.

[Dear Gagauz-speaking friends! Greetings. I wonder if you can help me with a word. What word do you use in Gagauz for this little animal? Thank you very much.]

second post:

Saygılı gagauz dili lafedän dostlarım! Zaman hayır olsun. Taa bir kerä bana lääzım sizin yardımınız bir laflan. Angı laf kullanacez bu iş için? Aşçı kullanêr onu aşçılıkta, kopmaa yımırta ya da karıştırmaa türlü işlär barabar, örnek süt hem şeker.

Çok saa olun.

[15] I know, of course, that this is a "kedi" in Gagauz, just as in Turkish. I am using this just as an example of method.

[16] In order not to create any copyright problems in this article, I am using photographs for this article that I have taken myself.

[Dear Gagauz-speaking friends! Greetings. Once again I need your help with a word. What word do we use in Gagauz for this thing? A cook uses it in the kitchen to beat eggs or to mix various things together, for example, milk and sugar. Thank you very much.]

third post:

Saygılı gagauzça lafedän dostlarım! Zaman hayır olsun. Afedin, ani bän devam ederim yapmaa sizi raametsiz, ama var mı nasıl yardım edäsiniz bana taa bir kerä bir laflan? Angı laf kullanêrız bu iş için? Kullanêrız onu kesmää odun. İngiliz dilindä deeriz "chainsaw" (= "sincirli testerä"), ama bilmeerim gagauz dilindä islää lafı.

Çok saa olun!

[Dear Gagauz-speaking friends! Greetings. I'm sorry, that I keep bothering you, but can you help me again with a word? What word to we use for this thing? We use it to cut firewood. In English we call it a "chainsaw," but I don't know a good word for it in Gagauz.

Thank you very much

Posts of this sort often generate comments from half a dozen people or more. Usually it is the same group of people each time, Facebook friends who enjoy this sort of discussion.

Now let's look at some of the pros and cons of this strategy to learn vocabulary from native speakers of an endangered language such as Gagauz which is not, in some ways, adequately documented.

Clearly this process works reasonably well in eliciting suggestions about concrete nouns for things that are fairly well-known to average speakers. It's obvious that I am making several qualifications here in order to lead into a discussion of the ways in which this process is less effective.

First, by using photos, one can ask for a word for a concrete thing. On the other hand, this method seems to be useless in learning nouns for abstractions. It is also difficult to use in order to learn words which belong to other parts of speech such as adjectives, adverbs, or verbs, except in cases where a photo will convey clearly what one is trying to learn, such as "what is the Gagauz equivalent for 'looking at someone out of the corner of one's eye?'[17] I did have some success in obtaining suggestions for color adjectives by posting photos of the Pantene color sample, but that success probably had to do with the fact that colors are also concrete.

Second, this method works well in asking about things that are well-known to the average speaker. I encountered some difficulty in verifying the Gagauz word for "quail," a type of small bird (*Coturnix coturnix*). I needed that term for the version of the Old Testament book of the Psalms that I was preparing, because in that text it mentions that God miraculously fed the children of Israel with flocks of quail during their period of wandering in the desert. I encountered a difficulty in response to this post, however, because quail are not native to Gagauzia. Therefore, several people looked at the photos I posted and misidentified them as a bird that looks somewhat similar, the partridge (*Perdix perdix*). One man posted a comment saying, "Oh, I know what those are! I am a hunter, and I have shot those birds many times!" He then gave the Gagauz word for partridge. He was quickly corrected by someone else, however, who called him stupid and gave the correct word. Sometimes these posts of mine requesting help with vocabulary generate long and vigorous dialogue. Fairly often, also, those responding specify the village in which they live, so that it is clear that there are regional variations. The comments that are most valuable to me are those in which the contributor says that he or she called an older relative in his or her village of origin and discussed it with them. In such instances, it is clear that their suggestion has been backed up with at least a small amount of research.

Some of the most interesting results, though, come when I ask for vocabulary help about a thing which does not already have its own word in Gagauz, and those who respond help to create a new expression. On August 11, 2016 I needed a word for "escalator." I copied two photographs of escalators, and added this text:

Saygılı gagauzça lafedän dostlar! Var mı nasıl bana yardım edäsiniz bir laflan? Gagauz dilindä bu nedir? Bilerim lafı merdiven, ama bu başka.

[Dear Gagauz-speaking friends! Can you help me with a word? What is this in Gagauz? I know the word "merdiven" (staircase), but this is different.]

I will copy below a few suggestions to offer a realistic idea of the kind of contributions I received. I am copying these suggestions as they were written, without correcting misspellings:

Bu haylaz merdveni

Aylak merdiven de olabilir

yürüyen merdiven

Kosmas Şarţ, gagauzça var terminnär "basamak"; "eşik", "eşiin basamakları"; onun için gagauzça denilebilir "Gezen/örüyen, elektrik basamak(lar)" yeki "Êskalator". Burada, gagauzça, taa uygun "basamak" terminini kullanmaa, nekadar "merdiven".

[17] The best suggestion seemed to be "aykırı bakmaa bir insana."

"basamak" — это ступенька

Yuruyen merdiven

Gozeldir o. Hem de gözel hem de pak ve temiz sözdür. "(Y)örüyen basamak(lar)" deyelim.

It is probably worth pointing out that the suggestions "haylaz merdveni" and "aylak merdiven," which I take to mean "lazy person's stairs" and "idle person's stairs," were most likely offered as jokes. In a social media experiment of this sort, that sort of thing is to be expected.

Naturally several other people also proposed the word "eskelator," which is basically just a transliteration from Russian and very close to the English word, but I thought that we could do better by creating a new expression from good Gagauz lexical material, a term which would be clear in context. The idea of "örüyän merdiven" seemed good at first, until someone pointed out that the "staircase" does not move, but only the steps, and then we settled on "örüyän basamaklar.".

Is this a scientific approach?

If we ask whether this use of social media in vocabulary investigations is scientific, the clear answer must be, "No, obviously it is not." In practical work, such as the translation work I am doing and to supplement resources needed for original writing, it serves its purpose, but in the context of serious linguistic research it can be used only with several qualifications.

The most obvious inadequacy of this method from the viewpoint of methodology is simply that it relies on an unreliable sample. My posts go out only to my own Gagauz-speaking friends. That group of people does not necessarily represent a reliable sample of Gagauz speakers. Genuine linguistic research would aim for a balanced selection of respondents based on age, sex, education, occupation, place of residence, and other such factors. Clearly I have not taken factors of that sort into account when saying "yes" to friend requests on Facebook.

In addition, I find that among those friends, the same small number of people respond to the posts over and over, so that in reality I am consulting a small group, consisting of the same people who reply over and over, who are what we might call a self-selected group. As I have gotten to know this small group of people, I have come to see that most of them have some interest in linguistics. Linguistic research, however, is best done not among specialists in linguistics, but among ordinary people who happen to speak the language in question as their native language.

What use could others make of this method, though, in their investigations into endangered Turkic languages?

It's clear from what has been said above that this method falls far short of the standard methodology required in good scientific linguistic field work. It also has obvious shortcomings by not being applicable to research into all parts of speech. All the same, it could be used, as I have used it, for practical investigations that are not intended to meet scientific standards. And it can also be used for preliminary investigations, so as to make up a tentative wordlist in certain domains — for example, words that pertain to musical instruments, or parts of an automobile, or architectural features of the traditional house, or plants and animals native to a particular region — so as to prepare material for further and more intensive field work. It is an odd thing about the world today that some of the remotest regions, which might seem otherwise cut off from the rest of the world, are inhabited by people who, for the most part, have smart phones and internet access. Perhaps my experiments in Gagauzia — which does not fit that description — may suggest a modification of the technique described in this paper, which can be put to use in more remote regions, as *one item* in the researcher's bag of tricks.

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