

# Nicholas Demetrius KONTOVAS

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## Specializations & Areas of Interest

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Digital Humanities, Historical Linguistics, History of Culture, Iranian Languages, Language Contact, Language Documentation, Language Evolution, Languages of Chinese Turkistan, Languages of the Mediterranean, Languages of Turkey, Lexicography, Morphology, Slang, Sociolinguistics, Turkish Languages

## Education

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- (ongoing) Ph.D. LEIDEN UNIVERSITY – Faculty of Humanities, Institute for Area Studies  
Specializations: Central Asian Studies, Persian Studies, Linguistics
- 2012 M.A. INDIANA UNIVERSITY BLOOMINGTON – Central Eurasian Studies  
Specialization: Turkish & Iranian Languages  
Thesis: *Lubunca: The historical development of Turkish Queer slang & a socio-functional approach to diachronic processes in language*
- 2008 B.A. UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO – Linguistics  
Bachelors of Arts with Honors  
Thesis: *An analysis of recent loans into the Standard Uyghur lexicon: What semantic distribution and phonological interpretation reveal about transmission environment*

## Employment History

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- 2018 – present LEIDEN UNIVERSITY – Doctoral Candidate  
Leiden Institute for Area Studies — Central Asia Initiative
- Four-year research position culminating in a doctoral dissertation defence. Turkish language specialist for a team of researchers on the project *Turks, Texts and Territory: Imperial Ideology and Cultural Production in Central Eurasia*, funded by the Dutch Academy of Sciences project number 277-69-001.
- 2015 – 2018 BOĞAZIÇI UNIVERSITY – Lecturer  
Department of Turkish Language and Literature
- Three course per semester teaching load. Instruction of multiple levels of Turkish language for foreigners, Ottoman Turkish & topical electives in other Turkish & Turkish minority languages. Collaborative course design & curriculum planning. Programming, implementation, and maintenance of online grammar modules & interactive syllabi.
- 2012 – 2017 INDIANA UNIVERSITY – Introductory Turkish Instructor  
Summer Language Workshop
- Intensive instruction of Introductory Turkish to 4-20 adult learners. Course design, lesson planning, the choosing of materials, the creation of new materials, the assignment of course- and homework, testing, and language assessment. Collaboration with intermediate level instructor on the development of a cohesive two-year curriculum and program of extra-curricular activities.
- 2010 – 2015 INDIANA UNIVERSITY – Editor & Linguistic Consultant  
Center for Languages of the Central Asian Region (CeLCAR)
- Development of grammatical explanations and exercises for Dari/Afghan Persian, Uyghur, and Uzbek language pedagogical materials. Collaboration with native speaker instructors in the composition, review, and editing of elementary, intermediate, and advanced level textbooks.

2005 – 2008 UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO – Research & Laboratory Assistant  
Phonology Laboratory – The Karen Landahl Center for Linguistic Research

As Laboratory Assistant, the conducting of experiments to investigate the relationship between tonal contour and the perception of syllable length. As Research Assistant, contribution to a project aimed at the preservation and revitalization of Washo, a Native American language.

2010 – 2015 UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO – Research Assistant  
The Susan GOLDIN-MEADOW Laboratory

Observation, data organization and analysis for a project investigating the acquisition of number concepts in Nicaraguan Deaf home-signers.

2010 – 2015 UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO – Assistant  
Chicago Linguistic Society (CLS)

General clerical work, including the negotiation of purchases of published materials. Helping to organize the annual Chicago Linguistics Society conference.

## Publications

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Shimunek, Andrew, C. Beckwith, J. Washington, N. Kontovas, & K. Niyaz. 2015. The earliest attested Turkic language: The Chieh 𐰉𐰺 (\*KIR) language of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. *Journal Asiatique*. 303.1 (2015): 143-151.

Kontovas, Nicholas. 2014. *Singing around Turkey: An exemplary collection of folk songs*. Bilingual Turkish/English informational booklet accompanying original audio recordings. Inner Asian & Uralic National Research Center, Bloomington, Indiana.

Coppola, Marie, E. Spaepen & N. Kontovas. 2006. Number signs in adult home sign gesture systems. *Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research (TISLR) 9: 9 Congreso Internacional de Aspectos Teóricos das Pesquisas nas Linguas de Sinais. December 6 - 9, 2006, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina Florianópolis, SC Brasil*: 55-56.

## Courses Taught

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### LANGUAGES OF TURKEY

Boğaziçi University – autumn 2017

An introduction to the linguistic diversity of the Turkish Republic. This course begins with a brief overview of the languages that have existed in the region of what is now Turkey in the past before discussing in greater detail the histories, structures, genetic and contact-based affiliations, and literatures of the languages widely used in Turkey today. This course is aimed at students of linguistics, literature, history, and sociology. (This course is taught in Turkish.)

### INTRODUCTION TO MODERN UYGHUR LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Boğaziçi University – spring 2017

This course is intended as an introduction to the language of the Uyghur ethnic group, primarily settled in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China. Its aim is to enable those with a native or advanced knowledge of Turkish to understand Modern Standard Uyghur in the Uyghur Arabic alphabet, as well as the context in which Modern Uyghur language and literature have developed. (This course is taught in Turkish & Uyghur.)

## INTRODUCTION TO OLD UYGHUR: BUDDHIST OLD TURKIC

Boğaziçi University – spring 2016

An introduction to the primary literary Turkic language of the Turfan basin during the 9th-14th centuries, with a focus on Buddhist literature. This course includes an in-depth discussion of the grammar and structure of the language, exercises intended to familiarize the student with the Old Uyghur script, and short passages from clear but exemplary manuscripts. Attention is given to the cultural and historical context in which these texts were written, as well as the history of Buddhism in Turkic lands. (This course is taught in Turkish.)

## WORKSHOP ON OTTOMAN LANGUAGE & CULTURE

Indiana University Bloomington – summer 2012-2014

A weekly three-hour, non-credit workshop for interested students in the Summer Language Workshop. Sessions were designed to teach students with some background in Turkic languages basic Ottoman reading skills commensurate with the ability to read authentic printed materials, and some manuscripts depending on students' abilities. At least one hour of every session was devoted to guided round-table discussion on various aspects of Ottoman history, and society.

## OTTOMAN TURKISH I

Boğaziçi University – autumn 2015, spring 2016, autumn 2016 (two sections), spring 2017

An introduction to the Ottoman Turkish. This course imparts knowledge of the Ottoman writing system, some grammatical features, historical development, transcription systems, and some basic research tools necessary to begin reading and writing in Ottoman. Students gain proficiency in the writing of Turkic elements and gain familiarity with the structure, use, orthography, and pronunciation of some Persian and Arabic elements in preparation for Ottoman Turkish II. (This course is taught in Turkish.)

## INTENSIVE INTRODUCTORY TURKISH

Indiana University Bloomington – summer 2012-2017

An accelerated, daily, four-hour summer course at the Indiana University Summer Language Workshop designed to teach and reinforce the fundamental elements of Turkish grammar, vocabulary, and idiom. Students should complete this course with a firm grasp of all basic verb tenses, all noun and pronoun cases, and a number of methods of simple clausal subordination. The course also imparts a broad knowledge of the culture, history, and politics of the Turkish-speaking world. (This course is taught in Turkish & English.)

## INTRODUCTORY TURKISH I

Boğaziçi University – spring 2015, autumn 2015 (two sections), spring 2016

This course begins with basic phrases and knowledge about the Turkish language, then moves onto non-compound verb tenses, case endings, and possessive markers. Lessons also provide examples from everyday language which students could then relate to their daily lives in Istanbul. (This course is taught in Turkish & English.)

## INTERMEDIATE TURKISH II

Boğaziçi University – spring 2015 (two sections)

A continuation of Intermediate Turkish I. This course covers a number of common methods of clausal subordination, reviews structures related to evidentiality and compound tenses, and introduces real and unreal conditionals. Lessons are also geared towards increasing students' communicative capacity as they became more integrated in academic life in Turkey. (This course is taught in Turkish.)

## ADVANCED TURKISH GRAMMAR I

Boğaziçi University – autumn 2016

Students develop their higher-register spoken and written Turkish through short readings on language-related topics, frequent oral presentations, short essay writing, and detailed discussions of advanced aspects of Turkish grammar and usage. The primary goal of this course is to give students a level of comfort with native Turkish idioms and complex clausal subordination strategies with which they may already be familiar. Supplementary grammar instruction and practice is also provided based on individual need for advanced level grammar to which students have yet to be exposed. (This course is taught in Turkish.)

## ADVANCED TURKISH GRAMMAR II

Boğaziçi University – spring 2017

A continuation of Advanced Turkish Grammar I. Students are exposed to a wide variety of carefully selected reading materials and grammar explanations in order to learn how to implement aspects of structure and idiom in a more naturalistic fashion. Emphasis is placed on understanding Turkish roots and derivational morphology, so as to better understand new vocabulary and successfully form new words on the basis of existing vocabulary. Students are also taught how to better understand grammatical aspects of regional dialects, colloquial idiom, formal rhetorical style, and highly poetic or literary idiom. (This course is taught in Turkish.)

## Projects

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EASTERN TURKI GLOSSARY – with Eric Schluessel

url: [http://niko.qalaymiqan.com/eastern\\_turki\\_glossary/](http://niko.qalaymiqan.com/eastern_turki_glossary/)

The first ever searchable electronic dictionary for the literary language of southern Xinjiang from the 18<sup>th</sup> century until 1930. The data were transcribed into electronic format by historian Eric Schluessel at Harvard University, which I then transformed into a relational database with dynamic but user-friendly online interface. Full UTF8 compliance and a careful consideration of potential user needs ensures that reliable searches can be performed with input from multiple Arabic script language keyboards and in Latin transcription.

LANGUAGE CONTACT IN ISTANBUL: DOCUMENTATION & INVESTIGATION

– with Aslı Göksel, Didar Akar, Balkız Öztürk, & Ceyda Arslan-Kechriotis

*Supported by Boğaziçi University Research Fund (BAP 11500)*

A fieldwork-based project aimed at documenting the ways in which fluent elderly bilinguals of Istanbul Greek, Ladino, Armenian, and Turkish Sign Language have contributed to and witnessed the evolution of their languages and speech communities. Data are collected over the course of several one- to two-hour interviews with fluent and semi-fluent researchers, then analyzed with attention to language attitudes, code-switching practices, and interference both of Turkish on the research language and of the research language on the varieties of Turkish spoken by members of minority communities.

DİLKİ: TURKISH GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY MODULES

url: <http://niko.qalaymiqan.com/dilki/> (beta)

Online modules intended for Elementary and Intermediate non-native learners of Turkish. Virtual card “decks” provide a variety of question types with varying levels of difficulty so that learners can progress at their own pace and focus on topics with which they feel they need more practice. Learners can check their progress and compare their answers with the correct answers in order to better understand their learning process. Instructors can also use these modules as a teaching and diagnostic tool, checking the progress of the students in their courses. (Login required, available upon request.)

## NENAPUNA.NET: LAZ DICTIONARY PROJECT

url: <http://www.nenapuna.net/> (beta)

An online searchable dictionary of the Laz language, with Turkish definitions provided by İsmail Avcı Bucaklışı and English by Eylem Bostancı. For the moment this dictionary includes over three thousand entries, modified –with permission of the authors –from the Lazika Yayın Kolektifi’s *Temel Lazca Sözlük* (Istanbul 2014). Once completed, the goal of the dictionary will be to provide a resource for scholars, learners, and speakers of Laz endeavoring to preserve, revitalize, and develop their language.

## OSMANLICA İRFAN BAHÇESİ

url: <http://www.turkolog.ist/tkl101/>

An integrated curriculum for introductory Ottoman language instruction designed for students at Boğaziçi University in İstanbul, Turkey. This site features around 200 pages of original material designed to introduce and practice concepts ranging from the Ottoman script to Arabic word formation. It also references some textbooks commonly employed in Turkey to teach Ottoman so that students needing additional help can refer to other resources. Materials are conveniently organized into weekly lessons, with an additional page of general resources for students to use in developing their skills at writing and interpreting handwritten Ottoman.

## Language Proficiencies

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*Native:* English

*Near Native:* French, Turkish

*Advanced:* Greek, Mandarin, Persian, Uyghur

*Intermediate:* Arabic (Standard), Castillian, Kurmancî, Occitan, Russian, Uzbek

*Basic:* Arabic (Moroccan), Arabic (Syrian), Balochi, Dutch, Evenki, German, Ladino, Laz, Romani, Yiddish

*Reading Proficiency:* Chaghatay, Ottoman, Old Uyghur, Middle Turkic, Latin, Middle Persian, Classical Chinese

## Computer Programming & Markup Proficiencies

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*Proficient:* PHP, JavaScript, HTML5, CSS, L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X

*Familiar:* Python, Perl

## Certifications

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2017 *Modern Greek: C1 (all skills) with “very good” distinction*  
Greek Language Center, Certification Exam for Knowledge of Greek

2007 *Mandarin Speaking: Advanced-Mid*  
American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages, Oral Proficiency Interview

## Awards & Honors

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2016 – 2017 AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING (EĞİTİMDE ÜSTÜN BAŞARI)  
Boğaziçi University

2003 – 2008 COLLEGE DEAN’S LIST  
University of Chicago

2006 FIRST PLACE  
American College Students in China Chinese Language Speech Competition

2006 FIRST PLACE  
Chinese Bridge: Chinese Proficiency Competition for Foreign College Students (Midwest Region)

## Grants, Fellowships & Scholarships

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- 2012 FOREIGN LANGUAGE & AREA STUDIES GRANT  
Inner Asian and Uralic National Resource Center
- 2012 FOREIGN LANGUAGE & AREA STUDIES GRANT (Declined)  
Islamic Studies Program, Indiana University
- 2011 FULBRIGHT STUDENT RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP  
Institute of International Education
- 2011 FOREIGN LANGUAGE & AREA STUDIES GRANT  
Middle Eastern Studies Center, Ohio State University
- 2010 FOREIGN LANGUAGE & AREA STUDIES GRANT  
Center for the Study of Global Change, Indiana University
- 2009 CRITICAL LANGUAGE SCHOLARSHIP  
US State Department, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
- 2009 FOREIGN LANGUAGE & AREA STUDIES GRANT  
Inner Asian and Uralic National Resource Center
- 2008 CRITICAL LANGUAGE SCHOLARSHIP  
US State Department, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
- 2007 SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL FELLOWSHIP  
Social Science Research Council
- 2006 CIEE SCHOLARSHIP FOR ADVANCED CHINESE LANGUAGE  
Fulbright Groups Project Abroad
- 2006 DAVID L. BOREN UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP  
National Security Education Program
- 2006 FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION GRANT  
University of Chicago

## Academic Service

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- 2018 – present MEMBER  
LIAS-LUCSoR PhD Council, Leiden University
- 2012 – 2013 PRESIDENT  
Association of Central Eurasian Students, Indiana University
- 2010 – 2011 SECRETARY  
Association of Central Eurasian Students, Indiana University

## Invited Talks

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- 2017 *Türkiye’de Queer alanların dilsel yapısı ve tarihî gelişimi*  
SALT Galata, Slavs and Tatars Exhibit. İstanbul, Turkey.
- 2017 *Lubunca: Osmanlı İstanbulu’ndan günümüz Türkiye’sine Kuir Argosu.*  
Siyah Pembe Üçgen İzmir LGBTİ Center, 9<sup>th</sup> annual Baki Koşar Cultural Festival. İzmir, Turkey.
- 2016 *Lubunca ve Osmanlı’dan Günümüze Kuir Argosu.*  
Association for Projects on Social Policy, Gender Identity and Sexual Identity. İstanbul, Turkey.
- 2016 *Lubunca: Türk LGBTİ’lilerin argosu.*  
Lambdaİstanbul LGBTİ Rights and Cultural Center. İstanbul, Turkey.
- 2016 *Osmanlı’dan Gelen Queer Argo: Lubunca.*  
Lion Queer student group, Galatasaray University. İstanbul, Turkey.
- 2014 *Rethinking Language Evolution.*  
Scientific Şehir Lecture Series, İstanbul Şehir University. İstanbul, Turkey.

## Guest Lectures

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- 2018 *Central Asia and the Turks*  
in “Culture and Conquest: Impact of the Mongols and their Descendants”, Leiden University, Netherlands
- 2017 *Religion and Politics in Turkey from the Ottoman Empire to Today.* (pre-recorded video lecture)  
in “Introduction to Comparative Politics”, Indiana University East, Richmond, USA.
- 2017 *Religion and Daily Life in Turkey.* (pre-recorded video lecture)  
in “Introduction to Comparative Politics”, Indiana University East, Richmond, USA.
- 2017 *Introduction to Islam: History, Beliefs, and Practices.* (pre-recorded video lecture)  
in “Introduction to Comparative Politics”, Indiana University East, Richmond, USA.
- 2016 *Kısaca Çağatayca Grameri.*  
in “Special Topics: Chaghatay Literature”, Boğaziçi University, İstanbul, Turkey.
- 2105 *Contact Linguistics and Turkish Slang.*  
in “Sociolinguistics”, Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey.
- 2014 *Language and Heritage in Central Eurasia from the Middle Ages to the Present*  
in “Politics, Religion & Social Change”, Boğaziçi University, İstanbul, Turkey.
- 2012 *Lubunca: The historical development of Queer slang in İstanbul*  
in “Sociolinguistics”, Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey.
- 2011 *Romani Language & Linguistics: An Overview and Learning from the Romani Language*  
in “Roma History & Culture”, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA.
- 2009 *Standards of evidence in historical linguistics*  
in “Rus, Bulgars, & Khazars”, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA.
- 2008 *Contact Linguistics: An Overview*  
in “Introduction to Linguistics 3”, University of Chicago, USA.

## Seminars

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- 2017 *Spices, herbs, and resins: The link between food and medicine in Medieval Eurasia*  
Indiana University Summer Language Workshop. Bloomington, IN, USA.
- 2017 *Steeped in Memory: The long voyages of coffee and tea through the Middle East*  
Indiana University Summer Language Workshop. Bloomington, IN, USA.
- 2017 *What Comes Next: Language Maintenance Roundtable*  
Indiana University Summer Language Workshop. Bloomington, IN, USA.
- 2017 *Tools not Rules: Basic grammar concepts to boost your language learning ability*  
Indiana University Summer Language Workshop. Bloomington, IN, USA.
- 2016 *Tools not Rules: Basic grammar concepts to boost your language learning ability*  
Indiana University Summer Language Workshop. Bloomington, IN, USA.
- 2015 *Tools not Rules: Basic grammar concepts to boost your language learning ability*  
Indiana University Summer Language Workshop. Bloomington, IN, USA.

## Conference Talks

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- 2013 *Queer slang and the trafficking of non-Muslim women in Late Ottoman and Early Republican Istanbul*  
Human Trafficking Graduate Research Symposium, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA.
- 2013 *Queer slang and demographic change in Early Republican Istanbul*  
Central Eurasian Studies Conference, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA.
- 2013 *How much contact can change a language? The case of Kyrgyz, Khalkha, and Uyghur*  
(with Jonathan North Washington & Andrew Shimunek)  
Central Eurasian Studies Society, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA.
- 2012 *The Effect of Language Contact on the Phoneme Inventory of Central Eurasian Languages*  
(with Jonathan North Washington & Andrew Shimunek)  
Central Eurasian Studies Conference, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA.
- 2010 *Romani lexemes in İstanbul gay slang: Register & social space in contact-induced language change*  
Lavender Languages Conference, American University, Washington DC, USA.
- 2008 *Lexical Renegotiation: Loanword adaptation, language attitudes, and the Standard Uyghur lexicon*  
Central Eurasian Studies Conference, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA.