

Turkisms in English Lexicographic Sources

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Abstract: The process of foreign words entering different languages and acquiring vocabulary is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has occurred in different historical periods. The influence of one language on another, especially in the case of Turkisms in English, provides valuable information about the development, assimilation, and adoption of languages over time. This article examines the interpretation of Turkish loanwords in English and sheds light on the mechanisms and historical conditions that contributed to their integration.

Keywords: Turkizms, assimilation, adoption, interpretation, historical, influence, lexicographical, etymological, loanwords.



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Introduction

One of the historically developing phenomena is language, which is inextricably linked with the development of society. The process of language creation includes the transmission and adoption of national ideas, as well as the adoption of cultural resources. Assimilation is the process of introducing a foreign language element into the language system, and similarly, assimilation is the act of removing it. In other words, the system of another language adapts to the system that it has mastered in the foreign language department. The material of Turkic words in English is taken from various lexicographical sources, including the emergence and development of the work over the centuries, their movements, and the results of related communication. According to the “Dictionary of the English language, explanatory, pronouncing, etymological, and synonymous”¹ and other dictionaries, the composition of terms borrowed from the Old Turkic English language, as a rule, often has exotic or ethnographic meanings. They are commonly used to describe the ecosystems, fauna, lifestyle, political and social life, and administrative-territorial system of the Turkic worlds, but they have no English equivalents and they are not synonymous with the main terms. Even though there are a number of Turkic borrowings that are still frequently used in the active vocabulary.

The transfer of words from one language to another, also called word adoption, is an important

¹ Noah Webster, LL. D. As rev. by Chauncey A. Goodrich, D. D. and Noah Porter, D. D. By William A. Wheeler, *A dictionary of the English language, explanatory, pronouncing, etymological, and synonymous, with a copious appendix*. NEW YOEK: IVISON, BLAKEMAN, TAYLOE, & CO. SPRINGFIELD, MASS.: G. & C. MERRIAM, 1865.

aspect of language evolution. However, some loanwords can still be found in modern Turkish, as G.L. Lewis (1999)² notes that “the Turkish language reform (1928) was a part of the elimination of Arabic and Persian grammatical features, which included thousands of Arabic and Persian loanwords.” Languages have always influenced each other, especially through migration, trade, and interaction of populations. The process of vocabulary acquisition includes several stages, including the identification of gaps in the vocabulary, the adoption of foreign words to phonetic and morphological patterns, and the integration of these words into the cultural and social structure of the receiving language. During historical periods of conquest, trade, and diplomacy, such as the Ottoman Empire's relations with European nations, Turkisms, words of Turkic origin, entered European languages, including English. The historical periods in which these Turkic words appear in English lexicographical sources are crucial to understanding their significance. During the height of the Ottoman Empire, from the 14th century to the early 20th century, the empire's interactions with the wider world, including Europe and Asia, led to an exchange of culture, ideas, and vocabulary. The spread of words borrowed from the Ottoman Empire through trade routes and military conquests as a result of Ottoman influence led to the incorporation of Turkic terms into the languages spoken in areas under Ottoman control or influenced by Ottoman culture (Saydam, Y. 2006)³.

Turkisms in English can be divided into different categories according to their function and the areas they represent. Some of the most common Turkisms in English are related to political terms, food, culture, and clothing, and can also be found in the "Devonu lug'otit turk" from the activity processes of that century in often reflecting the extensive cultural exchange (Berdiev, H. 2020)⁴. In the process of assimilating Turkic words German, Polish, Russian, French, Arabic, Armenian, Hungarian, Hindi, Spanish, Italian, and Latin served as intermediaries to varying degrees, and many of them are polysemous words. For example, words entered English through Turkish from other languages such as from Arabic **ĀF'FEE**, n. [Ar. Qahuah, or qahoeh, which the Turks pronounce qahveh, wine, coffee.]-the berries of a tree growing in the warm climates of Asia and America. [p75], **LĪ'LAĒ**, n. [Turk, leilāk.]-a well-known flowering shrub. [p252], from French **PŌRTE**, n. [Fr., Portcullis, a gate.] The government of the Turkish empire. [p326], **SĒIGN'IOR** (seen'yur-), n. [Fr. *Seigneur*, O. Fr. *Seignor*, from Lat. *Senior*, elder.] A lord; the lord of a manor. Grand Seignior, the sultan of Turkey. [p384]; from Latin **ĒRĒS'ĈENT** a. [Lat. *crescens*, p. pr. of *crescere*, to increase.] Increasing, growing. n. 1. The moon in her first quarter. 2. The Turkish flag itself, on which is a figure of the new moon. 3. The Turkish power. [p98] (“Dictionary of the English language, explanatory, pronouncing, etymological, and synonymous”, 1865). According to Saydam (2006), political and military phrases such as "bey" and "yangisar" demonstrate Turkic influence on the English language, noting that these words were introduced during periods of armed war or diplomacy. What's more, some terms were often popularized through trade and the spread of culinary and cultural practices, the Silk Road, and other trade networks. Through these borrowings, English speakers were introduced to concepts related to governance, military hierarchies, and social structures that were different from those of European states.

Turkic words in English can be directly adopted or introduced through intermediary languages. The extent to which these words are adopted depends on their phonetic convenience, frequency of use, and cultural significance. These words fill lexical gaps and provide terms for concepts or practices that were not previously part of the English vocabulary. It is necessary to examine the direct and indirect borrowing of Turkish words from Turkish (or Turkic languages) into English. Lexical borrowing is an important part of language evolution, as it often reflects cultural and

² Lewis, G. L., *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success*, Oxford University Press, 1999.

³ Saydam, Y., *Language use in the Ottoman Empire and its problems (1299–1923)*. University of Johannesburg, 2006.

⁴ Berdiev, H., ЛИНГВОПОЭТИКА МАСАЛАЛАРИ ТАДҚИҚИДА “ДЕВОНУ ЛУҒОТИТ ТУРК” НИНГ ЎРНИ. *Scienceproblems. uz*, 2020, 2(2), 7-7.

historical relationships. Direct and indirect borrowing, as well as semantic changes, contribute to the dynamic lexicon of a language. Direct borrowing refers to the acquisition of words with little or no change, while indirect borrowing can occur through intermediary languages, leading to semantic or phonetic changes.

➤ **Direct Borrowings:** *Kismet* (fate, qismat) is directly borrowed from the

Turkish meaning fate or destiny which was introduced into English with minor changes while retaining its original meaning. The concept of fate or destiny has cultural significance in the Turkic and Islamic traditions, which contributed to its adoption into English, particularly in literature and popular culture (Collins English Dictionary, 2024)⁵; *Haram* (forbidden, forbidden) is derived from Arabic and refers to something forbidden, especially under Islamic law. It is often used in English when discussing religious customs and morals (Oxford English Dictionary, 2024)⁶

➤ **Indirect borrowings:** *Yogurt* (fermented milk product) entered English via

Greek and Russian before becoming widely used in English which originally comes from the Turkish "*yoğurt*", which referred to a fermented milk product that was a staple in Turkish cuisine for centuries. The word passed from Greek to "*yoghurt*" and from Russian to "*üoçyп*" before entering English (Fisberg, M., & Machado, R., 2015)⁷. Furthermore, words that fit into existing concepts or cultural practices are more suitable for everyday use because they serve practical purposes and fill lexical gaps. Loanwords have retained their original meaning while adapting this terminology to the demands and cultural circumstances of English speakers. This phenomenon illustrates how cultural and social practices, as well as political and military contacts between the Ottoman Empire and English-speaking peoples, influenced the language through direct and indirect borrowings.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach to examine Turkisms in the English language. It involves analyzing lexicographical sources, including historical dictionaries and etymological references, to trace the origins and development of Turkish loanwords in English. A comparative analysis is conducted between direct and indirect borrowings of Turkic words, as well as their cultural and semantic adaptations. The research includes a review of historical texts and modern English dictionaries to identify key Turkic terms and their contexts in English usage.

Results

The study finds that Turkisms in English are predominantly borrowed from Turkish through intermediary languages, such as Arabic, French, and Russian. The research identifies key Turkic loanwords in English, particularly in political, military, and culinary contexts, with notable examples including "*kismet*" (fate) and "*yogurt*" (fermented milk product). These loanwords have retained their original meanings but have been adapted to fit English phonetic and cultural norms. Turkic words are found in English primarily through trade, military interaction, and cultural exchange.

Discussion

The integration of Turkic words into English highlights the historical influence of the Ottoman Empire and the role of cultural exchanges between Turkey and Europe. The study emphasizes the adaptability of English to foreign influences and the importance of lexical borrowing in enriching

⁵ Collins English Dictionary-*Kismet*. Collins. Retrieved December 29, 2024, from https://www.collinsdictionary.com/collins-api#google_vignette

⁶ Oxford English Dictionary (OED), 3rd ed. "Haram." Accessed December 2024.

⁷ Fisberg, M., & Machado, R., *History of yogurt and current patterns of consumption*. *Nutrition Reviews*, 73(7), 391–398, 2015 <https://doi.org/10.1093/nutrit/nuv020>

the language. Furthermore, it discusses the process of word adoption, including the transition from Turkish to intermediary languages before becoming part of the English lexicon. The research also points out that many of these Turkisms serve as cultural and conceptual bridges, reflecting the dynamic nature of language evolution through social, political, and cultural interactions.

Conclusion

This paper examines the interpretation of Turkisms in English that demonstrates the dynamic process of vocabulary acquisition, shaped by historical, social, and linguistic factors. As languages continue to interact, they facilitate the exchange of new ideas, concepts, and vocabulary. The historical context of Turkisms in English highlights the role of language contact in shaping the lexicon, and the adaptation of foreign words provides a fascinating insight into past cultural exchanges. In my future research, I will continue to explore the mechanisms of lexical borrowing, especially in the context of ongoing globalization and the continuous interdependence of languages and cultures.

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