

THE USE OF BORROWINGS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LINGUISTIC CHALLENGES

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Abstract: This article presents a comparative analysis of lexical borrowings in Uzbek and English, examining the historical, linguistic, and sociolinguistic factors that influence the adoption and integration of foreign words into both languages. The study identifies key difficulties encountered by language learners and translators when dealing with borrowed vocabulary, including phonological adaptation, semantic shifts, and morphological integration. By exploring the parallel processes of lexical borrowing in these typologically distinct languages, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of language contact phenomena and offers practical recommendations for addressing borrowing-related challenges in language education and translation practice.

Keywords: lexical borrowings, loanwords, Uzbek language, English language.

Introduction

Language contact has been a fundamental driver of linguistic change throughout human history. As communities interact through trade, conquest, cultural exchange, and technological advancement, languages inevitably absorb vocabulary from one another. This process of lexical borrowing represents one of the most visible and well-documented aspects of language evolution, affecting all languages regardless of their typological characteristics or geographical distribution.

Uzbek and English, despite their vastly different origins and structural properties, share a remarkable commonality: both languages have been profoundly shaped by extensive borrowing from multiple source languages throughout their histories. English, a Germanic language, has incorporated substantial vocabulary from Latin, French, Greek, and numerous other languages, to the extent that borrowed words constitute approximately 80% of its lexicon. Uzbek, a Turkic language with Altaic roots, has similarly absorbed significant lexical material from Persian, Arabic, Russian, and more recently, English and other European languages.

The study of borrowings in these two languages offers valuable insights into the mechanisms of language change and the challenges that arise when foreign lexical items are integrated into recipient language systems. This comparative analysis aims to identify common patterns and language-specific difficulties associated with borrowing processes, contributing both to theoretical linguistics and practical applications in language teaching and translation.

Historical Background of Borrowings

The history of English borrowings reflects the complex social and political history of

the British Isles and the subsequent global expansion of English-speaking communities. The earliest significant wave of borrowing occurred during the Christianization of Anglo-Saxon England, when Latin words related to religion, education, and administration entered the language. Terms such as school (Latin *schola*), master (Latin *magister*), and verse (Latin *versus*) date from this period.

The Norman Conquest of 1066 initiated the most transformative period of borrowing in English history. For approximately three centuries, French served as the language of the ruling class, the courts, and high culture, while English remained the vernacular of the common people. This diglossia resulted in massive lexical transfer, particularly in domains associated with power and prestige: government (parliament, sovereign, council), law (justice, crime, attorney), military affairs (army, battle, siege), and cuisine (beef, pork, cuisine). The sociolinguistic stratification of this period explains the characteristic synonymy in modern English, where Germanic words often denote basic concepts while French-derived terms carry connotations of formality or prestige.

The Renaissance and Early Modern period brought renewed interest in classical learning, resulting in extensive borrowing from Latin and Greek for scholarly, scientific, and literary vocabulary. Words such as phenomenon, criterion, analysis, and hypothesis entered English during this period, often retaining their original plural forms and creating lasting morphological irregularities.

The colonial and post-colonial periods expanded English contact with languages worldwide, introducing vocabulary from Hindi (jungle, karma, yoga), Arabic (algebra, algorithm, cotton), Japanese (tsunami, karaoke, emoji), and dozens of other languages. Contemporary English continues to borrow actively, particularly in technology, cuisine, and popular culture.

The borrowing history of Uzbek reflects the geographical position of Central Asia as a crossroads of civilizations and the successive political and cultural influences that have shaped the region. The earliest significant borrowings entered from Persian, which served as the literary and administrative language of the region for centuries. Persian loanwords in Uzbek span multiple semantic domains: literature and poetry (*she'r* – poem, *bayt* – couplet), administration (*davlat* – state, *hokimiyat* – authority), everyday vocabulary (*oshxona* – kitchen, *darvoza* – gate), and abstract concepts (*mehr* – love/kindness, *umid* – hope).

The spread of Islam introduced Arabic as the language of religion and scholarship, bringing extensive borrowings in religious terminology (*masjid* – mosque, *namoz* – prayer, *tavba* – repentance), education (*kitob* – book, *maktab* – school, *ilm* – science/knowledge), and abstract vocabulary (*haqiqat* – truth, *odil* – just, *sabr* – patience). Arabic borrowings are so thoroughly integrated into Uzbek that speakers often do not perceive them as foreign.

Russian influence intensified during the Tsarist colonial period and reached its peak during the Soviet era (1924–1991), when Russian served as the language of interethnic communication, higher education, science, and technology throughout Central Asia. Russian loanwords penetrated virtually all semantic domains: technology (*mashina*, *traktor*, *telefon*),

science (universitet, laboratoriya, eksperiment), administration (sovet, respublika, konstitutsiya), and daily life (stol, stul, poyezd). Many of these words were themselves borrowed into Russian from Western European languages, creating chains of indirect borrowing.

Since independence in 1991, Uzbekistan has experienced shifting language policies and new patterns of borrowing. Direct English borrowings have increased dramatically, particularly in business (biznes, menejer, marketing), technology (kompyuter, internet, fayl), and youth culture. Simultaneously, there have been conscious efforts to replace Russian loanwords with native Turkic vocabulary or Persian-Arabic alternatives, reflecting broader processes of national identity construction.

Typology of Borrowings

Understanding the difficulties associated with borrowings requires a clear typology of the different forms that lexical transfer can take. Linguists traditionally distinguish several categories based on the degree of integration and the nature of the transferred material.

Direct borrowings (also called loanwords proper) involve the adoption of both form and meaning from the source language, with varying degrees of phonological and morphological adaptation. English telephone → Uzbek telefon and French restaurant → English restaurant exemplify this category.

Loan translations (calques) reproduce the morphological structure or semantic extension of a foreign expression using native language material. The English term skyscraper has been calqued into numerous languages, including Russian neboskryob (literally "sky-scraper"). In Uzbek, oyoq kiyimi (literally "foot clothing") calques the Russian obuv' (footwear).

Semantic loans occur when an existing native word acquires a new meaning under the influence of a foreign word with similar form or related meaning. The English word mouse extending to denote a computer input device represents a semantic loan from technical jargon.

Hybrid formations combine borrowed and native elements. English television combines Greek tele- with Latin visio, while Uzbek teledastur (television program) combines the international element tele- with the Persian-derived dastur (program).

The behavior of borrowings differs significantly depending on their category, and each type presents distinct challenges for learners and translators.

Difficulties Associated with Borrowings

One of the most immediate difficulties in dealing with borrowings concerns their pronunciation. When words move between languages, they encounter phonological systems with different inventories of sounds, different phonotactic constraints, and different prosodic patterns.

English phonological challenges: English borrowings from French and other Romance languages often retain spelling patterns that conflict with native English grapheme-phoneme correspondences. The pronunciation of French-derived words such as rendezvous /'rɒndivʊ:/, genre /'ʒɒnrə/, or coup /ku:/ cannot be predicted from English phonological rules alone.

Similarly, Greek and Latin borrowings preserve consonant clusters and vowel patterns foreign to Germanic phonology. Learners must essentially memorize the pronunciation of each borrowed word individually, as systematic rules provide limited guidance.

The coexistence of multiple pronunciation norms for borrowings creates additional difficulties. Words like *either*, *schedule*, and *controversy* exhibit variation between British and American pronunciations, while recent borrowings from languages like Japanese show inconsistent adaptation (*karaoke* may be pronounced /ˌkæriˈoʊki/ or /ˌkɑːrɑːˈoʊkeɪ/).

Uzbek phonological challenges: Uzbek has undergone several script changes in the past century (Arabic script → Latin → Cyrillic → Latin again), and borrowings from different periods may reflect different transliteration conventions. Russian loanwords entered primarily during the Cyrillic period and were spelled according to Russian orthographic norms, which do not always align with Uzbek phonology or the current Latin-based orthography.

The adaptation of sounds absent in Uzbek presents systematic difficulties. Russian palatalized consonants, the vowel /ɨ/, and consonant clusters foreign to Turkic phonotactics require modification. The word *industriya* (industry), for example, contains the cluster /str/ that violates Uzbek phonotactic preferences. English borrowings present similar challenges with sounds like /θ/, /ð/, and /w/, which have no Uzbek equivalents; *thriller* may be realized as *triller*, and *website* as *vebsayt*.

Stress patterns create another layer of difficulty. Uzbek has consistent final-syllable stress in native vocabulary, while Russian and English borrowings often carry stress on other syllables. The borrowed word *telefon* retains penultimate stress from Russian, conflicting with native Uzbek prosodic patterns.

The integration of borrowed vocabulary into the grammatical systems of recipient languages generates numerous morphological complications.

English morphological challenges: English has incorporated words from languages with grammatical categories absent in the Germanic system, most notably the retention of foreign plural forms. Latin neuter nouns in *-um* may form plurals in *-a* (*datum/data*, *medium/media*, *curriculum/curricula*), while Greek nouns in *-on* may pluralize as *-a* (*criterion/criteria*, *phenomenon/phenomena*). The competition between foreign and native plural forms (*formulae* vs. *formulas*, *appendices* vs. *appendixes*) creates uncertainty even among educated speakers.

Borrowed verbs present different challenges. French-derived verbs entered English primarily through their infinitive stems and were integrated into English conjugation patterns without difficulty (*arrive* → *arrived*, *continue* → *continued*). However, verbs borrowed from Latin in more recent periods sometimes retain foreign principal parts in formal registers (*curriculum vitae* alongside *vita*).

Uzbek morphological challenges: The agglutinative structure of Uzbek, with its extensive system of suffixes for case, possession, number, and tense, creates complex integration requirements for borrowed nouns and verbs. Russian nouns, which carry grammatical gender in the source language, lose this category when borrowed into Uzbek but

must accept Uzbek case suffixes: mashina (car) → mashinada (in the car), mashinani (the car, accusative).

Borrowed verbs require special adaptation strategies. Uzbek typically integrates foreign verbs by combining the borrowed stem with the auxiliary verb qilmoq (to do) or etmoq (to make): kontrol qilmoq (to control), tahlil qilmoq (to analyze). This construction, while grammatically productive, can create stylistically marked or awkward collocations.

The interaction between borrowed roots and native derivational morphology generates additional complexities. While some borrowed words freely accept Uzbek suffixes (kompyuterchi – computer specialist, telefonsiz – without a phone), others resist derivation or produce forms that native speakers find unnatural.

Perhaps the most subtle and persistent difficulties associated with borrowings involve their meanings. Words rarely transfer between languages with their full semantic range intact; more commonly, borrowings undergo semantic narrowing, widening, or shift.

Semantic narrowing occurs when a borrowed word acquires a more restricted meaning than it possesses in the source language. English chef, from French, refers only to professional cooks, while French chef means any leader or head. Similarly, English borrowed denim from French serge de Nîmes (serge from Nîmes), but the word now refers only to a specific type of cotton fabric.

In Uzbek, the Russian loanword kultura has narrowed to refer primarily to artistic and intellectual culture, losing the broader anthropological sense of the Russian original. The English borrowing businessmen specifically denotes a successful businessman, often with connotations of wealth, rather than anyone engaged in business activity.

Semantic widening involves the expansion of a word's meaning in the recipient language. The English word garage, borrowed from French, has extended beyond its original sense of a shelter for vehicles to include automotive repair shops—a meaning it lacks in French.

Semantic shift produces more dramatic changes. English apartment, from French appartement, refers in American English to any rental dwelling unit, while British English preserves a meaning closer to the French (a set of rooms within a larger building). The phenomenon of "false friends"—words that appear similar across languages but differ in meaning—represents an extreme case of semantic divergence: English sympathetic (feeling compassion) vs. French sympathique (likeable); Uzbek magazin (store) vs. English magazine (periodical).

For language learners and translators, these semantic discrepancies create significant pitfalls. Learners may assume that borrowed words have identical meanings in source and recipient languages, leading to errors in production and comprehension. Translators must navigate between the meanings of cognates that have diverged semantically, selecting appropriate equivalents rather than relying on formal similarity.

Borrowings carry sociolinguistic connotations that extend beyond their denotational meanings. In both English and Uzbek, the choice between a native word and a borrowed

synonym may signal register, education level, political orientation, or social identity.

In English, the Norman French stratum provides formal and prestigious alternatives to Germanic vocabulary: commence vs. begin, purchase vs. buy, residence vs. home. Academic and scientific registers employ Latinate vocabulary heavily, and the ability to manipulate this register marks educational attainment. Excessive use of borrowings, however, may be perceived as pretentious or obscure.

In contemporary Uzbek, language choice reflects complex negotiations between Soviet-era linguistic norms and post-independence national identity. Russian loanwords, particularly those with available native alternatives, may be perceived as outdated, unpatriotic, or associated with older generations. Conversely, some speakers view puristic avoidance of established Russian vocabulary as artificial or politically motivated. English borrowings carry connotations of modernity, globalization, and youth culture, but excessive Anglicization may be criticized as culturally inauthentic.

These sociolinguistic dimensions create challenges for language learners, who must develop sensitivity to register and connotation alongside denotational knowledge. Translators face difficult decisions about how to render borrowings that carry source-culture associations into target languages where the same words may have different sociolinguistic values.

Comparative Analysis and Pedagogical Implications

The preceding analysis reveals both parallels and differences in how borrowings function in English and Uzbek. Both languages have absorbed massive vocabulary from prestige contact languages (French for English; Persian, Arabic, and Russian for Uzbek), and both continue to borrow actively from global English in the contemporary period. In both languages, borrowings cluster in similar semantic domains: religion, administration, technology, science, and culture.

The difficulties associated with borrowings, however, manifest differently due to typological differences between the languages. English, with its relatively impoverished inflectional morphology, integrates borrowed nouns with minimal adaptation but preserves foreign plural forms as irregularities. Uzbek, with its agglutinative structure, requires borrowed words to accept case and possessive suffixes, creating questions about the phonological and morphological integration of foreign stems.

For language pedagogy, these findings suggest several recommendations:

1. Explicit instruction on borrowing patterns: Learners benefit from understanding the historical strata of vocabulary in the target language and the characteristic features of each stratum. English learners should recognize French, Latin, and Greek patterns; Uzbek learners should understand Persian-Arabic, Russian, and English contributions.
2. Attention to phonological adaptation: Pronunciation of borrowings requires specific attention, as neither native-language phonological rules nor source-language pronunciation provides reliable guidance. Learners should be exposed to acceptable variation and given explicit instruction on common pronunciation patterns.
3. Awareness of semantic divergence: Cognate vocabulary cannot be assumed to share

meaning across languages. Learners should be trained to verify meanings independently rather than assuming transparency.

4. Sociolinguistic competence: Understanding the register and connotational values of borrowings is essential for appropriate language use. Learners should be exposed to the same vocabulary in multiple registers and guided to develop sensitivity to stylistic variation.

Conclusion

Lexical borrowing represents a universal linguistic phenomenon that has profoundly shaped both English and Uzbek throughout their histories. While the specific source languages differ, the underlying processes of phonological adaptation, morphological integration, semantic change, and sociolinguistic evaluation show remarkable parallels across these typologically distinct languages.

The difficulties associated with borrowings present persistent challenges for language learners, translators, and educators. Phonological irregularities, morphological exceptions, semantic shifts, and register sensitivities all require explicit attention and cannot be assumed to transfer automatically from knowledge of source or native languages.

This comparative study contributes to our understanding of language contact phenomena while offering practical insights for language teaching and translation practice. Future research might extend this analysis to other language pairs, examine acquisition patterns for borrowed vocabulary, or investigate attitudes toward borrowings in contemporary language policy discourse.

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