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LOANWORDS AND LANGUAGE CONTACTS: THEORETICAL APPROACHES

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Abstract

This article examines the phenomenon of language contact and the linguistic nature of borrowed words from a theoretical perspective. The study highlights the role of internal and external sources in the development of a language, with particular emphasis on lexical borrowing that occurs as a result of interaction between languages. The theoretical foundations of language contact are analyzed based on the works of U. Weinreich and E. Haugen, focusing on the stages of borrowing, phonetic and grammatical adaptation, and the integration of borrowed words into the receiving language system. Using examples of words borrowed from Arabic and Persian-Tajik into the Uzbek language, the processes of phonetic adaptation and semantic expansion are illustrated. The findings demonstrate that borrowed words play a significant role in enriching the lexical system of the Uzbek language and represent a natural outcome of language contact.

Keywords: Language contact, borrowed words, lexical borrowing, phonetic adaptation, semantic expansion, language system, sociolinguistics, lexicon, language development.

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Introduction

Language represents the most essential communicative instrument of human society and continuously evolves under the influence of historical, social, and cultural factors. Throughout its development, every language inevitably comes into contact with other languages, which leads to various forms of linguistic interaction. In linguistics, such interactions are commonly referred to as **language contact**. One of the most significant consequences of language contact is the emergence of **loanwords**, which play an important role in enriching and transforming the lexical system of a language.

The lexical system of any language develops through two primary sources: **internal resources** and **external influences**. Internal resources include processes such as word formation, semantic extension, and the activation of existing lexical units. These mechanisms allow a language to expand its vocabulary while maintaining its structural integrity. However, linguistic development is not limited to internal factors alone. Historical experience demonstrates that languages also evolve through interaction with other linguistic systems.

The Uzbek language provides a clear example of such a process. Its vocabulary has been formed and enriched both through internal development and through contact with other languages. Historical interactions with **Arabic, Persian–Tajik, and Russian** have significantly influenced the lexical structure of Uzbek. These contacts were shaped by political, cultural, economic, and religious relations in Central Asia, which facilitated the introduction of numerous lexical items into the Uzbek language.

The study of language contact and lexical borrowing therefore represents an important area of linguistic research. Investigating the phonetic, semantic, and functional adaptation of loanwords allows scholars to better understand the mechanisms of lexical change and the broader processes of language development.

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Literature Review

The theoretical foundations of language contact were systematically developed in twentieth-century linguistics. One of the most influential contributions to this field was made by **Uriel Weinreich**, who defined language contact as a linguistic interaction that occurs when speakers of different languages coexist within the same social environment. According to Weinreich, borrowing is not merely a lexical phenomenon but a complex process involving the interaction of entire linguistic systems.

Another important contribution was made by **André Martinet**, who introduced the term language contact into linguistic scholarship and emphasized the role of functional and structural factors in language interaction. Martinet highlighted that language change often occurs as a result of communicative needs arising in multilingual societies.

The theory of lexical borrowing was further developed by **Einar Haugen**, who proposed a model describing the stages of borrowing. According to Haugen, the borrowing process typically involves three stages: the introduction of a lexical unit into a new language, its phonetic and grammatical adaptation, and its full integration into the linguistic system of the recipient language.

Subsequent sociolinguistic research has expanded these ideas by emphasizing the role of social, cultural, and historical factors in shaping language contact. Scholars have noted that borrowing processes are often associated with political dominance, trade relations, migration, and cultural exchange.

In the context of Central Asia, numerous studies have demonstrated that the Uzbek language has been strongly influenced by Arabic, Persian-Tajik, and Russian languages. These influences have contributed significantly to the development of the Uzbek lexical system, particularly in the domains of science, religion, administration, and culture.

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Methodology

The present study employs a **descriptive and comparative linguistic approach** in order to examine the processes of lexical borrowing in the Uzbek language. The research focuses on the phonetic and semantic adaptation of loanwords that entered Uzbek through language contact.

Several methodological principles were applied in the analysis:

Descriptive analysis – used to identify and describe loanwords present in the Uzbek language and their linguistic characteristics.

Comparative analysis – applied to compare borrowed lexical units with their original forms in the source languages, particularly Arabic and Persian–Tajik.

Phonetic analysis – used to examine sound changes that occur during the adaptation of borrowed words to the phonological system of Uzbek.

Semantic analysis – applied to investigate semantic shifts and extensions that occur after lexical items are integrated into the recipient language.

Functional analysis – employed to analyze how loanwords participate in word-formation processes and lexical combinations in the Uzbek language.

The research material consists of lexical units borrowed primarily from **Arabic and Persian-Tajik**, which are analyzed through selected examples illustrating phonetic adaptation and semantic development.

The Main Part

Language is the most important communicative medium of human society, and it develops continuously under the influence of historical and social factors. Throughout its development, every language comes into contact with other languages to varying degrees. Such processes are referred to in linguistics as **language contact**. As a result of language contact, various linguistic changes occur between languages. One of the most significant outcomes of these interactions is the emergence of **loanwords**. In the course of its development, the lexical composition of the Uzbek language has relied on two main sources:

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a) internal sources

b) external sources.

The development of any language and the enrichment of its vocabulary are primarily connected with the potential of its internal resources. These internal resources are manifested through word formation, semantic extension, and the functional activation of existing lexical units. From this perspective, internal sources have played an important role in the formation and enrichment of the Uzbek lexicon. However, language development is not limited solely to internal factors. The experience of world languages demonstrates that no language has evolved exclusively through its own internal means. Similarly, the vocabulary of the Uzbek language is not confined only to words belonging to the native lexical layer. In the course of historical development, external sources-namely, contact and interaction with other languages-have also played a significant role.

As noted in linguistics, any language is inherently a social phenomenon and cannot exist in complete isolation from other languages. Historical, cultural, and economic interactions among different peoples give rise to various forms of linguistic relationships. Such language contacts primarily leave noticeable traces in the lexical system of a language. In particular, lexical units borrowed from other languages play a crucial role in the processes of vocabulary enrichment and renewal.

For this reason, two fundamental tendencies can be observed in the development of the vocabulary of the world's languages, including the lexical system of the Uzbek language. First, during the process of language development, obsolete or rarely used units gradually give way to new lexical items. Second, as a result of contact with other languages, a language adopts new words and adapts them to its own lexical system. These processes not only enrich the vocabulary of a language but also expand its functional potential.

In linguistics, loanwords are regarded as a natural component of the development of a language system. Any language enriches its vocabulary not only through

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internal mechanisms but also through borrowings from other languages. The linguist **Uriel Weinreich**, analyzing the issue of language contact, interprets borrowing as a complex linguistic phenomenon that arises from the interaction of two language systems [1].

The vocabulary of the Uzbek language has likewise been historically shaped through contact with various languages. In particular, the **Arabic language**, **Persian language** (Tajik), and **Russian language** have exerted a significant influence on the lexical system of Uzbek. This process is directly connected with the political, religious, and cultural interactions that historically developed in **Central Asia**.

Scientific Foundations of the Theory of Language Contact

The theory of language contact is one of the significant linguistic concepts that emerged as an independent research direction in twentieth-century linguistics. This theory examines the processes of interaction between different languages from a sociolinguistic perspective. The linguist Uriel Weinreich defines language contact as follows: “Language contact is the process of linguistic influence that arises when speakers of two or more languages live within the same social environment.” [1].

This definition indicates that language contact is not an individual phenomenon but rather a socio-linguistic process. In other words, language contact is not limited merely to the transfer of lexical items from one language to another; it may also exert a considerable influence on phonetic, grammatical, and semantic systems.

Language contact generally arises as a result of several socio-historical factors, including:

- political domination;
- trade and economic relations;
- religious influence;

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migration processes;
cultural exchange.

For instance, during the eighth and ninth centuries, the dominance of the Arab Caliphate in Central Asia led to the widespread use of the Arabic language as the language of science and religious literature. As a result, numerous scientific and religious terms entered the Uzbek language from Arabic. Among them are words such as ilm (knowledge), maktab (school), adab (literature/ethics), tarix (history), and qalam (pen). The majority of these lexical items remain actively used in modern Uzbek. This situation demonstrates that borrowed words have become deeply integrated into the lexical system of the language.

The term contact derives from the Latin word *contactus*, meaning “direct connection” or “immediate interaction” [3, p. 237]. The mutual interaction between two or more languages that influences their phonetic, lexical-semantic, and syntactic structures is referred to as language contact. From this perspective, the concept of language contact reflects the interaction and mutual influence occurring between different levels of languages.

Within this framework, it is important to distinguish between the terms language contact and contact language. A language that enables linguistic interaction between communicators is considered a contact language [4, p. 3]. In this context, two situations may be observed:

1. A contact language may be the language of one of the ethnic groups involved in the interaction. In such cases, linguistic communication within the society may occur in either the first or the second language depending on the communicative situation.
2. In certain cases, neither of the languages of the interacting communities functions as the contact language. Instead, communication is carried out through a third language, which serves as a **mediating language** or **lingua franca** [4, p. 3; 2, p. 130].

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The term language contact was introduced into linguistic scholarship by the French linguist André Martinet and was later widely disseminated in sociolinguistic research by Uriel Weinreich.

Language contact is closely related to the practical use of language and manifests itself in the process of speech. The basis of the speech process is communication. Communication can be defined as the exchange of ideas between two or more individuals. In the communicative process, one participant acts as the **speaker**, while the other functions as the **listener**.

In linguistic terminology, the speaker is referred to as the **addresser**, whereas the listener is called the **addressee**. The message is transmitted by the addresser through linguistic units and subsequently received and interpreted by the addressee. This process is known as communication. It possesses an individual psychological character, and the psychological nature of language is manifested precisely through speech and speech activity.

If the speaker-addresser and the listener-addressee belong to the same speech community, language contact does not occur in the process of communication. For communication to be based on language contact, the speaker-addresser and the listener-addressee must belong to different linguistic communities. In addition, it is essential that the speaker-addresser know the language of the community to which the listener-addressee belongs, and that the listener-addressee know the language of the community to which the speaker-addresser belongs. Otherwise, language contact cannot arise.

For example, if an individual belonging to the Tajik-speaking community enters into communication with an individual belonging to the Uzbek-speaking community, the medium of communication must be either Uzbek or Tajik. Therefore, if the speaker-addresser belongs to the Uzbek speech community, he or she should also possess a good command of the Tajik language. Likewise, if the speaker-addresser belongs to the Tajik speech community, he or she must have a good knowledge of Uzbek. Thus, for communication to be based on

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language contact, the participants in communication must know, in addition to their native language, another language that functions as the medium of communication.

The language that serves as the medium of communication in such cases is referred to as a **contact language**. For instance, if communication between two individuals belonging to the Tajik and Uzbek linguistic communities is conducted in Uzbek, Uzbek functions as the contact language; if it is conducted in Tajik, Tajik serves as the contact language.

If, however, the speaker-addresser does not know the language of the community to which the listener-addressee belongs, and the listener-addressee likewise does not know the language of the speaker-addresser's community, then the function of the communicative medium is assumed by a third language. Such a language, which serves as the medium of communication but does not belong to either of the interacting linguistic communities, is called a **mediating language** (or **lingua franca**). For example, if communication between representatives of the Tajik and Uzbek speech communities takes place in Russian or English, then Russian or English functions as the mediating language.

The Linguistic Nature of Loanwords

In linguistics, **loanwords** are interpreted as the process through which lexical units from one language enter and become integrated into the system of a recipient language. This process is not limited to the mere transfer of lexical items; it also includes their **phonetic and semantic adaptation** within the receiving language.

The linguist **Einar Haugen** explains the borrowing process through three main stages [5]:

- a) the entry of a word into another language;
- b) b) phonetic and grammatical adaptation;
- c) c) full integration into the linguistic system.

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For example, the Arabic word *kitāb* entered the Uzbek language and, after phonetic adaptation, took the form **kitob**. In this case, the following phonetic change can be observed:

Arabic: *kitāb*

Uzbek: *kitob*

The long vowel “ā” in Arabic is rendered by the vowel “o” in Uzbek. This phenomenon is referred to in linguistics as **phonetic adaptation**.

Similarly, phonetic changes can also be observed in certain words borrowed from the Persian-Tajik language. For instance:

Persian-Tajik: *azodor*

Uzbek: *azador*

This example clearly demonstrates the adaptation of loanwords to the phonetic system of the recipient language. In this case, the Persian-Tajik vowel “o” is represented by the vowel “a” in Uzbek.

Semantic Development of Loanwords

In the process of language contact, not only the **form** of a word but also its **meaning** may change. This phenomenon is known as **semantic borrowing** or **semantic adaptation**.

For example, the Uzbek word **yulduz** originally referred only to a celestial body. However, in modern Uzbek it is also used to denote a **famous person**. For instance:

kino yulduzi (film star)

estrada yulduzi (pop star)

This semantic extension can be explained by the influence of the English word *star*. Such phenomena illustrate the impact of **global communication processes** on language development.

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Another example can be observed in the borrowing of the Persian-Tajik word *barodar*, which entered Uzbek in the form **birodar**. In this case, it is important to distinguish two processes: **phonetic adaptation** and **semantic development**.

Phonetic Adaptation

The Persian-Tajik word *barodar* entered the Uzbek language in the form **birodar**. In this case, the primary transformation is related to the adaptation of the word to the phonetic system of the Uzbek language. In other words, the borrowed lexical unit has undergone modifications in pronunciation and orthography in accordance with the phonological patterns of Uzbek.

barodar → *birodar*

This process is referred to in linguistics as **phonetic adaptation** or **phonological assimilation**, whereby a borrowed word is adjusted to the phonetic norms of the recipient language.

Semantic Development

In Persian-Tajik, the word *barodar* primarily denotes “a brother” or “a male sibling.” In the Uzbek language, however, the word **birodar** is frequently used not only in its literal meaning but also as a form of address referring to a **close friend, associate, or like-minded individual**.

For example:

“U mening eng yaqin birodarim kabi inson.”
 (“He is like my closest brother.”)

“Aziz birodarlar, sizlarni tabriklayman.”
 (“Dear brothers, I congratulate you.”)

In these examples, the meaning of the word has undergone **semantic expansion**. In linguistics, this phenomenon is known as **semantic extension**, whereby a lexical unit acquires additional meanings in the recipient language. Consequently, these cases may be analyzed as examples in which **phonetic adaptation and semantic development occur simultaneously in the process of lexical borrowing**.

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Linguistic Analysis for Discussion

In order to analyze the role of loanwords within the linguistic system, it is essential to examine their **functional usage and productivity**. For instance, the word **ilm**, borrowed from Arabic, forms several lexical combinations in Uzbek:

- ilmiy tadqiqot (scientific research)
- ilm ahli (scholars; people of knowledge)
- ilm-fan (science)

This demonstrates that loanwords may generate **new semantic and syntactic combinations** within the language system.

Similarly, the word **rang**, borrowed from Persian-Tajik, participates actively in the formation of various derivatives and compound expressions in Uzbek:

- rang-barang (multicolored)
- rangsiz (colorless)
- rangdor (colorful, vivid)

These examples indicate that loanwords become fully integrated into the lexical system and actively participate in **word-formation processes** in the Uzbek language.

Language contact constitutes a natural and inevitable process in the historical development of languages. No language develops in complete isolation; rather, languages evolve through continuous interaction with other linguistic systems. One of the most significant outcomes of such interaction is the emergence of **loanwords**.

The lexical system of the Uzbek language has historically developed under the influence of various language contacts. In particular, interactions with **Arabic, Persian-Tajik, and Russian** have significantly enriched the Uzbek vocabulary. Therefore, the study of loanwords is of considerable scholarly importance not only from **phonetic and linguistic perspectives**, but also from **historical and sociolinguistic viewpoints**.

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Conclusion

Language contact represents a natural and inevitable aspect of linguistic development. Throughout history, languages have interacted with one another, leading to the exchange of lexical, phonetic, and semantic elements. One of the most visible results of such interaction is the emergence of loanwords.

The Uzbek language has developed within a multilingual cultural environment and has therefore incorporated numerous lexical elements from other languages. In particular, contact with **Arabic, Persian-Tajik, and Russian** has played a significant role in shaping the Uzbek vocabulary.

The analysis presented in this study demonstrates that loanwords undergo various processes of **phonetic adaptation, semantic development, and functional integration** within the recipient language. These processes illustrate how borrowed lexical units gradually become an integral part of the linguistic system. Therefore, the study of loanwords is of considerable importance not only for understanding the lexical structure of the Uzbek language but also for revealing broader mechanisms of language contact and linguistic change. Further research in this field may contribute to a deeper understanding of the historical and sociolinguistic processes that shape language development.

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