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TYPOLOGICAL FEATURES OF PREFIXATION IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH

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Abstract

The article examines prefixation in Uzbek and English from a typological point of view. English is a language of the fusional and increasingly analytic type with a large prefix inventory of Germanic and Latinate origin; Uzbek is agglutinative and suffixing, with no inherited prefixes and a borrowed prefixal inventory acquired through contact with Iranian, Russian and English. The study relates this difference to the established typological generalisations connecting affix position with basic word order, according to which languages with verb-final order and postpositions tend strongly towards suffixation. It then examines the consequences of the difference for four parameters: the size and origin of the prefix inventory, the effect of prefixation on part-of-speech membership, the position of prefixation relative to the inflectional system, and the interaction of prefixation with the competing techniques of suffixation, compounding and analytic construction. The article argues that the recent growth of prefixation in Uzbek does not indicate a typological shift but represents the borrowing of a lexical technique within an unchanged grammatical framework.

Keywords: linguistic typology, prefixation, suffixing preference, word order, agglutination, fusion, language contact, Uzbek language, English language, morphological borrowing.

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INTRODUCTION

The position of an affix relative to its base is one of the parameters along which languages differ most systematically, and it is not distributed randomly across the languages of the world. Suffixation is considerably more frequent than prefixation in the languages surveyed by typological research, and the preference is stronger for inflectional than for derivational morphology [1]. The preference is also not independent of other structural properties: languages with verb-final basic order and postpositions show a marked tendency towards suffixation, whereas languages with verb-initial order and prepositions admit prefixation more readily. This correlation was formulated in the early typological literature and has been confirmed by later large-scale surveys [2].

Uzbek and English occupy contrasting positions with respect to this parameter, and the contrast is not accidental but follows from the rest of their grammatical structure. Uzbek is a Turkic language of the agglutinative type with rigid verb-final order, postpositions rather than prepositions, and an exclusively suffixal inflectional morphology; it possesses no inherited prefixes whatever, and the prefixal formatives that occur in it have all been acquired through contact. English is a Germanic language whose inflectional morphology has been drastically reduced and whose word order has become largely fixed as subject-verb-object; it employs prepositions, and it has retained an inherited Germanic prefix inventory to which a much larger Latinate inventory has been added through borrowing from French and Latin.

The aim of the article is to describe the typological features of prefixation in these two languages and to determine what the differences between them follow from. The tasks are to relate the presence or absence of prefixation to the general structural type of each language, to compare the inventories in respect of their size and origin, to establish the categorial and positional behaviour of prefixes in each language, and to assess whether the recent growth of prefixal formations in Uzbek represents a typological change. The methods applied are contrastive

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typological analysis, the analysis of derivational structure, and comparison with the generalisations established in the typological literature.

MAIN BODY

The typological background to the comparison is the suffixing preference, the observation that affixes are far more often placed after than before the base. Several explanations have been proposed for it, and they are not mutually exclusive. Processing accounts hold that the beginning of a word carries a disproportionate share of the information required for lexical access, so that placing grammatical material at the left edge would delay the recognition of the lexical item; on this account suffixation is preferred because it leaves the lexically informative onset intact. Diachronic accounts derive affixes from independent words that have undergone grammaticalisation, and relate their position to the position that the source word occupied in the syntax: in a verb-final language with postpositions, the elements that become affixes stand after their host, and the result is suffixation [3]. The two accounts converge on the prediction that a strictly postpositional, verb-final language will be suffixing, which is exactly what Uzbek is.

Uzbek conforms to this prediction with unusual completeness. Its entire inflectional apparatus is suffixal: case, number and possession on the noun; tense, person, number, mood, voice and negation on the verb. Its derivational apparatus is likewise suffixal, and the productive word-formation means of the inherited layer are exclusively suffixes such as -chi, -lik, -dosh, -kor, -zor, -gar, -siz and -li. The negation of the verb is expressed by the suffix -ma-, placed inside the word between the stem and the tense markers, where a prefixing language would place it before the stem. There is no position in the inherited Uzbek word in which a grammatical element precedes the root, and it is this fact, rather than any accidental gap in the lexicon, that grammarians record when they state that Uzbek has no prefixes [4].

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English presents the opposite picture with respect to derivation while agreeing with Uzbek with respect to inflection. Its inflectional morphology, reduced to a small number of endings, is entirely suffixal, and English therefore also conforms to the generalisation that inflection favours suffixation even more strongly than derivation. Its derivational morphology, however, makes extensive use of prefixes, and the inventory falls into two historically distinct groups. The inherited Germanic group includes un-, mis-, for-, fore-, be-, out-, over-, under- and with-, several of which are transparently related to independent prepositions and adverbs and illustrate the grammaticalisation path described above. The borrowed Latinate group, acquired from French and Latin, includes in-, dis-, de-, re-, pre-, post-, sub-, super-, inter-, trans-, ex-, pro- and anti-, and it is considerably larger than the inherited one [5].

The size and origin of the two inventories express the difference between the languages compactly. English has roughly comparable numbers of productive prefixes and productive suffixes, and both are drawn from an inherited and a borrowed source. Uzbek has a large and fully native inventory of productive suffixes and a small inventory of prefixal formatives, none of which is native: the Iranian group of be-, no-, ba-, ser-, kam- and ham- was acquired from Persian and Tajik, the international group of anti-, mikro-, makro-, super-, post- and others through Russian and English, and the recent group of kiber-, veb-, eko- and nano- directly from English. This asymmetry is typologically significant: it shows that prefixation entered Uzbek as a consequence of lexical borrowing rather than as an internal development, and that the language borrowed the technique together with the words in which it was embodied.

The two languages also differ in the categorial behaviour of their prefixes. The generalisation that prefixation does not alter part-of-speech membership holds almost without exception in Uzbek, where every prefixal formative produces a word of the same class as its base: standart and nostandart are both adjectives, xavfsizlik and kiberxavfsizlik are both nouns. In English the generalisation holds

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for the great majority of prefixes but not for all: en- and em- derive verbs from nouns and adjectives, as in enable, enrich and embody, and a- and be- have similar effects in a limited set of formations. English therefore possesses class-changing prefixation as a marginal but genuine phenomenon, whereas Uzbek does not possess it at all. This difference is a direct consequence of the borrowed status of Uzbek prefixation: a borrowed formative is acquired with the semantic function it had in the source language, and the class-changing functions of English en- have no counterpart in the vocabulary that Uzbek has borrowed [6].

A further parameter concerns the position of prefixation relative to the inflectional system. In both languages prefixation is confined to derivation and plays no part in inflection, but the consequences of this confinement differ. In English the boundary between derivation and inflection is not sharply marked and prefixal derivation feeds directly into syntax, so that a newly coined de-escalate is immediately available with the full verbal paradigm. In Uzbek a prefixal formation must be integrated into a rich suffixal paradigm, and the integration is straightforward only when the base is a noun or adjective: kiberxavfsizlik takes the full nominal paradigm without difficulty, whereas verbal prefixation would require the formative to stand outside a long chain of suffixes and is consequently absent. This explains an otherwise puzzling gap: the prefixal formations of Uzbek are overwhelmingly nominal and adjectival, and prefixed verbs occur only as unanalysed borrowings such as dekodlash, which are verbalised by the native suffix -lash rather than by the prefix itself.

The interaction of prefixation with the competing word-formation techniques differs correspondingly. In English prefixation competes chiefly with compounding and with phrasal verbs, and the boundary between prefix and first compound element is often unclear, as the debate over elements such as self-, half- and mini- shows. In Uzbek prefixation competes with three techniques at once: with the native suffixes, most visibly in the pair no- against -siz; with compounding, since many prefixal formatives are homophonous with free words

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and their formations may be analysed as compounds; and with analytic constructions, which express by a syntactic phrase what English expresses by a prefixed word. The outcome of this competition is a complementary distribution rather than a displacement, in which the borrowed prefix occupies the domains that the native techniques leave unfilled, principally international terminology and stems of foreign origin [7].

The question that these observations raise is whether the growth of prefixal formations in modern Uzbek constitutes a typological change. The evidence suggests that it does not, and for three reasons. First, the change is confined to derivation and has not affected inflection, which remains exclusively suffixal; typological shifts in affix position characteristically begin in inflection or are accompanied by it. Second, the change has not affected the syntactic properties that the suffixing preference is correlated with: Uzbek remains verb-final and postpositional, and no reordering is observable in the syntax. Third, the prefixal formatives have not been extended to the inherited layer of the vocabulary in any systematic way, remaining largely confined to borrowed and internationally shared bases [8].

What has occurred is better described as the borrowing of a lexical technique within an unchanged grammatical framework. Language contact regularly transfers derivational morphology, and the transfer of prefixes into a suffixing language is documented for several contact situations; it is comparatively easy because derivational morphology is closer to the lexicon than inflection is, and because the transfer takes place through the borrowing of whole words that are only subsequently reanalysed. Uzbek illustrates this path clearly: *antibiotik* was borrowed as an unanalysed word, the accumulation of similar borrowings made anti- visible as a recurrent element, and only then did the formative become available for new formations on native bases. The typological profile of the language is unchanged; what has changed is the size and the internal structure of its lexicon.

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A comparison with the other Turkic languages confirms that the Uzbek situation is not idiosyncratic but reflects a shared structural constraint together with different contact histories. All the Turkic languages are agglutinative, verb-final and exclusively suffixing in their inherited morphology, and none of them has developed native prefixes. All of them, however, have acquired prefixal formatives through contact, and the source of the formatives differs according to the contact situation: the languages of Central Asia have taken the Iranian layer of be-, no- and ser- through Persian and Tajik, as Uzbek has, whereas Turkish has taken a comparable Iranian layer through Ottoman and has since added a Western European layer directly, and the languages of the Russian Federation have taken the international layer almost exclusively through Russian [9]. The parallel is instructive because the outcome is the same in every case: the borrowed formatives remain confined to derivation, are attached predominantly to nominal and adjectival bases, and do not disturb the suffixal inflection. The constraint appears to be structural rather than accidental.

The theoretical significance of this uniformity lies in what it suggests about the limits of morphological borrowing. Derivational morphology is borrowable, and prefixes are borrowable into suffixing languages, but the borrowing is subject to conditions. It proceeds through whole words rather than through the direct transfer of an affix, so that the formative becomes available only after enough words containing it have been borrowed for it to be reanalysed as recurrent. It attaches first to bases of the same origin as itself and only later to native bases, which is why the productivity of a formative on native stems is the most reliable index of its integration. And it does not extend to the inflectional system, which is protected both by its greater grammatical integration and by the absence of any position in the word where a preposed element could stand [10]. The Uzbek data thus support a graded rather than an absolute view of morphological borrowability, in which the position of an affix and its place in the derivation-inflection continuum jointly determine how readily it can be transferred.

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One further parameter deserves attention, namely the behaviour of the two languages at the boundary between prefixation and compounding, since the position of this boundary is itself typologically informative. In English the boundary is genuinely unclear for a set of elements that are historically free words and are still partly analysable as such: self-, half-, mini-, near- and cross- behave in some respects like prefixes and in others like first compound elements, and dictionaries treat them inconsistently. In Uzbek the boundary is unclear for a different reason: several prefixal formatives are homophonous with free words of the language, so that kam in kamquvvat and ham in hamkor can be analysed either as prefixes or as the first elements of compounds, and both analyses are defensible. The two kinds of indeterminacy have opposite sources. In English it arises from the gradual grammaticalisation of free words into affixes, an internal process; in Uzbek it arises from the coincidence between a borrowed formative and an unrelated native word, an accident of form.

The consequence is that the criteria used to draw the boundary must be different in the two languages. For English the decisive criterion is semantic bleaching: an element that has lost the concrete meaning of its free counterpart and contributes an abstract, schematic meaning is treated as a prefix. For Uzbek this criterion is unusable in the very cases where a decision is needed, since a borrowed formative never had a free counterpart in Uzbek and cannot be said to have bleached. The applicable criterion here is distributional: an element that occurs in an open series with a constant semantic relation to its base is a prefix, whatever its relation to a homophonous free word. Applied consistently, this criterion classifies ser- and kam- as prefixes on the strength of series such as serunum, sersuv and serqatnov, and it classifies occasional first elements as compound components. The example illustrates a general methodological point: criteria developed for one structural type do not transfer unmodified to another, and typological comparison must adapt them rather than apply them mechanically.

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CONCLUSION

Uzbek and English illustrate two contrasting positions with respect to the typological parameter of affix position, and the contrast follows from the rest of their grammatical structure rather than being an isolated fact about their lexicons. Uzbek is verb-final, postpositional and agglutinative, and it conforms with unusual completeness to the typological generalisation that such languages are suffixing: its inflection, its inherited derivation and even its verbal negation are all expressed by suffixes, and it possesses no native prefix at all. English has an equally suffixal inflection but a rich prefixal derivation, drawn from an inherited Germanic inventory and a larger borrowed Latinate one.

Four parameters of comparison have been examined. The inventories differ in size and, more importantly, in origin, since every prefixal formative of Uzbek is borrowed while English draws on both native and borrowed sources. The categorial behaviour differs in that English possesses a marginal class-changing prefixation in *en-* and *em-*, which Uzbek entirely lacks. The relation to inflection differs in that a prefixal formation in Uzbek must be integrated into a rich suffixal paradigm, which restricts prefixation almost entirely to nominal and adjectival bases and accounts for the absence of prefixed verbs. The competition with other techniques differs in that Uzbek prefixation competes simultaneously with suffixation, compounding and analytic construction, and occupies the domains the native techniques leave unfilled.

The growth of prefixal formations in modern Uzbek does not constitute a typological shift. It is confined to derivation, it has not affected the inflectional system or the syntactic properties with which the suffixing preference correlates, and it has not been extended systematically to the inherited layer of the vocabulary. The phenomenon is best described as the borrowing of a lexical technique within an unchanged grammatical framework, transferred through whole words that were subsequently reanalysed. Further comparative work on the other Turkic languages, which have undergone similar contact with Iranian,

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Russian and English, would establish whether the same limits on the borrowing of prefixation hold across the family.

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